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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Goldberg tapped to head UJC

Robert Goldberg, an Ohio Bank president, is poised to become the next chairman of the United Jewish Communities, the federation umbrella group.

The nominating committee of the UJC tapped Goldberg on Thursday to succeed James Tisch as the top federation lay leader.

Morton Plant, UJC's treasurer, was nominated to succeed Goldberg, who held the No. 2 federation lay position as chairman of the executive committee. The recommendations will be considered for approval by UJC's board of trustees in June, with the new positions becoming active in November. [Page 3]

3 Palestinians killed in Gaza Strip

Two armed Palestinians and a 12-year-old boy were killed during an Israeli army operation in the northern Gaza Strip on Thursday.

Palestinians said at least 10 other people were wounded Thursday in exchanges of fire during the incursion, which involved dozens of tanks accompanied by bulldozers.

NPR blasted on Israel coverage

Protesters rallied across the United States charging National Public Radio is anti-Israel.

Demonstrators in three dozen cities and towns blasted NPR for slanting its coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and urged people to stop contributing to local NPR affiliates until the publicly funded broadcaster changes its ways.

In lower Manhattan, some 75 protesters held signs saying, "No Pledge Radio" and "Hey NPR: Your Bias is Showing."

In Washington, another 75 or so people, some with signs like "National Palestinian Radio" and "NPR, Tell the Truth," rallied at NPR's national headquarters, said the Washington Jewish Week. "It's time to close this place down unless they change," said veteran activist Morris Amitay. Among other examples, NPR uses the terms "activists" and "militants" instead of "terrorists" in referring to Palestinians who attack Israeli civilians, he said.

Josh Chadayo, executive director of the Coalition for Jewish Concerns-Amcha in New York and a leader of the Manhattan march, said NPR's alleged bias should concern everyone. "It's not simply a Jewish issue; it's a truth and honesty issue," he said.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Pro-Israel campus activists claim victories, worry about future

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — Israeli rock music filled the Greenwich Village basement where New York University students downed kosher hot dogs and chips for Israel's 55th birthday.

Some flaunted their Hebrew-language skills in animated chatter around smoky grills, and a piercing Sephardi ululation rang through the room.

But despite the celebratory atmosphere, two students lamented what they see as the anti-Israel animus of the school's Middle Eastern studies department.

Furthermore, "Jewish professors are afraid to take a clear stand for or against Israel," Scott Dubin, an activist with Geshet, a Zionist group on campus, said. "Part of that comes from a desire to remain academically neutral, but at the same time, just like the rest of the world, they're leaving the fight for Israel up to students."

The glimpse of the NYU party reflects the broader picture on North American campuses, pro-Israel activists say: It capped a year during which pro-Israel students felt relief, pride and progress regarding Israel's profile on campus, but the struggle is far from over.

Campus debate on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has lost a bit of its urgency during the past year, overtaken by activism surrounding America's war against Iraq.

Anti-Israel activists found a home in the anti-war movement, but they made little headway in building support for the Palestinian cause, and even alienated some students who supported U.S. troops.

At the same time, Jewish groups and activists answered the call to defend Israel's name. Twenty-six groups, ranging from Aish Ha'Torah to the Reform outreach group Keshet, came together to form the Israel on Campus Coalition, a national coordinating body that provided high-profile speakers and advocacy training for students.

A movement to have universities divest from companies that do business with Israel garnered headlines, but it was roundly condemned by university presidents and sank under the weight of counter-petitions supporting Israel.

Dialogue even bloomed on several of the most heated campuses.

"Tides really have turned," said Daniel Spector, 20, formerly president of Georgetown University's Jewish Student Association. "Two years ago, American college campuses were really in a bad way for Zionist Jewish students," who now "feel comfortable on the campuses again."

But the pro-Israel activists aren't declaring victory yet.

Some worry animosity will resume once Americans no longer are preoccupied with rebuilding Iraq.

Officials with Jewish campus groups fear anti-Israel forces will link America's occupation of Iraq with Israel's presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

They also anticipate increased pressure on Israel as the world presses for implementation of the "road map" to rejuvenate Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

"I don't think" anti-Israel activists "produced any major results on campus in the second semester," said Wayne Firestone, director of the Israel on Campus Coalition. "The question is whether they will regroup under this new banner of 'End the occupation' for the coming semester."

The slogan already has surfaced at several conferences of anti-war groups, according to Jonathan Kessler, leadership development director for the American Israel

MIDEAST FOCUS

World Bank faults fence

A security fence Israel is building for defense against terrorism will harm Palestinians, the World Bank warns.

The fence will impinge on Palestinian access to water sources, schools and businesses, the report states. Nigel Roberts, the bank's representative in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, called the fence a "unilateral and unplanned step on the part of the Israeli government as a substitute for negotiations and with far-reaching implications."

But Israel's Foreign Ministry called the fence "one of the components of the Israeli government's responsibility to protect its citizens."

About eight miles of the planned 90-mile fence are complete.

Romania shielded Israel

Romania's intelligence agency reportedly prevented an Iraqi terrorist strike against Israel.

The Romanian intelligence agency SRI worked with foreign intelligence agencies to scotch plans by the Iraqi Embassy in Bucharest to strike Israeli and Western targets in Romania before the recent war, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported, citing the Romanian news agency Romspre.

The plans prompted Romania to expel 10 Iraqi diplomats in March and April, along with 31 other people of Iraqi and other nationalities.

Strike intensifies in Israel

Israeli public sector workers intensified strike actions Thursday, as negotiations between Treasury and labor officials failed to make progress. Flights could not take off from Ben-Gurion Airport for several hours as part of the action.

Negotiating teams from the Treasury and Histadrut labor federation were still trying to bridge differences regarding pension funds.

Public Affairs Committee. Anti-Israel activists never intended to focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the war, Kessler said. Instead, they wanted to broaden their constituency within the anti-war movement, building alliances they could plumb for new supporters once the war ended, he said.

But activists say students are only part of the problem: Some of the most entrenched anti-Israel voices belong to professors, campus watchers said.

"In the 39 years that I've been teaching, this is the worst year," Alan Dershowitz, a Harvard law professor, told JTA. "The deliberate lies that have been put forward by distinguished professors has had no match in this country."

While pro-Israel students have been louder than in the past, "the faculty still has been deafeningly mute," he said, calling the silence of some pro-Israel faculty members a "great scandal."

Barnard student Avigail Appelbaum, 20, agreed.

"I can't take classes at my Middle East" studies department at Columbia "unless I'm willing to sit through diatribe after diatribe given by professors who are not willing to hear that Israel is legitimate," she said.

Students are "afraid to be connected with Israel," she said.

Appelbaum, who founded and chairs the North American Jewish Student Alliance, a new group on 62 campuses, said national Jewish groups "truly failed the students" by adopting a posture that was too defensive and not sufficiently aggressive.

But most Jewish students interviewed for this article lauded national Jewish organizations and resources, saying they had been instrumental in pro-Israel forces' gains on campus.

With a grant from the Avi Chai Foundation, Neta Retter, 19, organized a "Got Israel?" campaign at the University of California at San Diego.

Activists from the school's Hillel papered the campus with fliers inquiring "Got Genes?" or "Got AIM?" and then mounted a blue and white balloon arch on campus to publicize how Israeli research — on genetics and instant messaging, for example — personally affect students' lives.

The activists also passed out condoms emblazoned with the slogan "Israel: It's still safe to come."

Like many other campuses, UCSD was more tranquil this year than last. Last spring, for example, anti-Israel students dressed as Israeli soldiers shot squirt guns at other students pretending to be Palestinians at a checkpoint. This year, a Middle East dialogue group formed.

At San Francisco State University — where anti-Israel protesters taunted Jewish students last spring by chanting "Hitler didn't finish the job" — a comparative religion course on Judaism, Islam and Christianity is "filled to capacity," said Marc Dollinger, acting director of the school's Jewish studies program.

Major Jewish organizations have made noticeable inroads as well.

Student activists with AIPAC, for example, collected 55,000 signatures on pro-Israel petitions at 60 college campuses. The signatures were published in 50 campus newspapers with the sponsorship of campus groups such as the College Democrats and College Republicans.

Caravan for Democracy, a Jewish National Fund program highlighting Israel's democratic values, brought high-profile Israeli speakers to about 20 campuses this year.

But the air of victory among many pro-Israel activists is tinged with tension.

When junior Daniel Frankenstein ran for student body president at the University of California at Berkeley last month, his peers spat on him and launched into anti-Zionist diatribes. Frankenstein ascribes his loss partly to an anti-Zionist campaign against him. But he still thinks pro-Israel activists on campus have scored something of a victory this year.

"Despite these problems, we are crushing" the pro-Palestinian forces, he said.

"Last year we were simply trying to cover our asses," he said, referring to the storm of activity that jarred Jewish students at Berkeley, site of some of the most intense campus anti-Israel propaganda.

Too afraid to sport his Israeli soccer jersey on campus last year, Frankenstein now proudly wears pro-Israel clothing, attributing his confidence to advocacy training provided by AIPAC. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Canada's Jewish population up

The Canadian Jewish community grew during the 1990s to nearly 330,000.

According to the 2001 census, the number of people who identify themselves as Jewish in Canada increased by 3.7 per cent during the 1990s.

More than half of Canada's Jews — 190,800 — live in the province of Ontario, census figures show.

Of those, about 175,000 live in the Toronto area.

French court rejects claim

A French court rejected a claim by a Holocaust survivor against the French national railway company for its role in transporting Jews to death camps.

The court ruled Wednesday that the claim did not fall within the statute of limitations for civil actions against state-owned enterprises.

Kurt Werner Schaechter, whose parents were killed in Sobibor and Auschwitz in 1943, had claimed a symbolic 1 euro in damages from the company but had demanded that it accept responsibility for organizing 77 convoys to the death camps.

Rabbi backs Muslim scarves

France's chief rabbi said he is opposed to legislation banning the wearing of religious insignia in public schools.

"I understand that the government wants to ban the Muslim scarf in certain conditions such as on ID cards. But wearing a scarf in a public school doesn't shock me anymore than a cross does," Joseph Sitruk said in an interview to be published in Friday's *Le Monde* newspaper.

Several French legislators recently have called for a new law banning the wearing of Muslim head scarves, yarmulkes and crosses in state schools.

Ukraine synagogue to reopen

A major synagogue in Ukraine is set to officially reopen after years of renovation.

The Bet Menachem Great Choral Synagogue, now named after the late Lubavitch rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, will reopen at a ceremony Monday in the city of Kharkov.

Described as the largest synagogue in Europe when it was erected in 1913, the synagogue was nationalized by Soviet authorities 10 years later.

Jewish baseball cards available

A set of Jewish baseball cards is now available.

The 130-player sets, which cost \$60, are said to feature every Jewish major leaguer ever.

The cards are available from the American Jewish Historical Society.

More information on the cards can be found at www.ajhs.org.

UJC nominates candidates for group's top lay positions

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — Robert Goldberg, an Ohio bank president, is poised to become the next chairman of the board of the American Jewish federation system.

The nominating committee of the United Jewish Communities, the federation umbrella group, tapped Goldberg on Thursday to succeed James Tisch as the top federation lay leader, according to UJC officials.

The nominating committee's recommendation will be considered for approval by UJC's board of trustees in June, with the new chairman taking office in November.

Goldberg currently holds the No. 2 federation lay position, chairman of the executive committee. The nominating committee on Thursday selected Morton Plant of Baltimore — currently UJC's treasurer — to replace Goldberg as chairman of the executive committee.

The selections for new leadership come as many in the federation system are pushing for reform of the four-year-old UJC.

Several member federations have criticized the services they receive and the cost of the system. In an apparent response to those concerns, UJC's budget committee last month recommended trimming the group's annual budget by nearly 10 percent, from \$42.5 million to \$38.3 million.

The budget also is expected to be voted on at the June 8-9 board meetings in Washington.

Goldberg, president of Ohio Savings Bank, is from Cleveland, the same hometown as UJC's CEO, Stephen Hoffman.

Goldberg, a member of the board of directors of JTA, has held several other high-level positions in the federation system. He has served as chairman of the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland and has chaired the assets and liabilities committee of the Jewish Agency for Israel.

In February, Goldberg lost a vote to chair the Jewish Agency's board of governors to Carole Solomon, a fund raiser for the Jewish Agency. □

Austrian Jewish leader lashes out at chancellor over funding dispute

By Fredy Rom

ZURICH (JTA) — The head of Austria's Jewish community is accusing the country's chancellor of malice toward the Jewish community over a funding spat.

Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel gives him "the feeling that his goal is the liquidation of the community," a Viennese newspaper quoted Ariel Muzicant as saying.

The dispute arose after Muzicant warned that without government financial help and compensation for Jewish property stolen during World War II, the community might go bankrupt and Austria's few remaining Jews be forced to emigrate.

Schuessel's office did not respond to requests for comment.

The community has been fighting with the government for years over assets that were stolen or destroyed by the Nazis during World War II. Vienna's Jewish community, which numbered about 170,000 in 1938, was among the richest in Europe before the war. Today it numbers 6,710.

The head of the European Jewish Congress backed Muzicant's stance.

"It's not because of mismanagement that the Jewish community is out of money; it's because their assets were stolen," said Michel Friedman, a German Jew who is president of the European Jewish Congress.

The issue is "explosive," he said, especially when the community has to spend more than 20 percent of its budget on security — which Friedman thinks should be the government's responsibility.

Mediating in the dispute, sources say, is former U.S. Undersecretary of State Stuart Eizenstat, who was the Clinton administration's point man for restitution issues and who happened to be in Austria on a private legal case. □

Jews and Arabs join to issue grass-roots call for peace plan

By Joe Berkofsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — A group of Israeli and Palestinian moderates hope the “people’s road map” to peace they unveiled this week will draw hundreds of thousands of backers on both sides.

Unlike previous peace plans, this one is slated to go before the Israeli and Palestinian people, who will vote on its content.

“This is the mother of all polls,” said Mohammad Darawshe, an Israeli Arab political strategist and one of the plan’s authors.

Officially called OneVoice, the campaign was co-authored by Daniel Lubetzky, a Mexican Jew who in the mid-1990s launched an Israeli-Palestinian food distribution company known as PeaceWorks. Darawshe and Lubetzky detailed their plan in a news conference Tuesday at the New York headquarters of billionaire philanthropist George Soros’ foundation.

“We want to achieve a concrete vision of what are the self-interests of the Israelis and what are the self-interests of the Palestinians, and where do they meet,” Lubetzky said.

OneVoice is the most recent example of a new crop of popular peace movements springing up in recent weeks.

Last week, the Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace launched a national petition drive for a plan that would pay to move Jewish settlers back inside pre-1967 Israel.

And on Wednesday, the Tikkun community, an offshoot of Michael Lerner’s Tikkun magazine, announced a “National Teach-In to Congress” slated for June 1-4 in Washington.

That event, announced in a full-page ad in The New York Times, includes another national petition drive, this one urging Congress to back an international buffer of “neutral forces” between Israeli and Palestinian troops; the return of Israel to its pre-1967 borders; the creation of a Palestinian state; compensation for Palestinian refugees from Israel’s 1948 War of Independence as well as for Jews forced to flee “persecution” in the Muslim world; and a “truth and reconciliation commission” to oversee steps toward peace.

Reflecting on the OneVoice initiative, Stephen P. Cohen, a scholar at the Israel Policy Forum and an expert on nongovernmental diplomacy, said, “There has been a tremendous explosion of grass-roots activity for peace.”

But one critic called the OneVoice effort “naive.”

The president of the Zionist Organization of America, Morton Klein, said the crux of the conflict does not rest in Jewish settlements or “road maps” to peace.

“After 10 years of a regime that promotes murder and hatred in the entire culture, that orders and finances the murder of Israelis and doesn’t arrest the killers,” those behind efforts such as OneVoice “don’t understand that the issue is Israel’s existence,” Klein said.

Cohen said OneVoice and Jewish Alliance’s “Call to Bring Settlers Home to Israel” mark the first time such activism has emerged since the Oslo peace process collapsed with the eruption of the Palestinian intifada in September 2000.

The intifada created “a sense of shock that petrified the peace instinct,” Cohen said. “That’s been replaced by a feeling that it’s time to do something. And let’s just do it.”

OneVoice is running with the Nike marketing slogan — “Just do it” — and aiming high. By the end of the summer, the group hopes to convince 10,000 Israelis and Palestinians to sign a

statement of “principles for reconciliation” that would get both sides to back a two-state peace plan and stir new trust.

So far, OneVoice has collected signatures from more than 1,550 Israelis and Palestinians.

The principles include:

- accepting the rights of Israelis and Palestinians to coexist independently, with personal and state security;
- calling for an end to Israel’s “occupation” of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, while ending “terrorism”;
- recognizing the “suffering experienced by both sides”; and
- backing efforts by leaders to pursue a two-state peace agreement.

OneVoice’s sponsors say most Israelis and Palestinians are moderates who support these goals, despite opinion polls in Israel backing the fight on terror and among Palestinians supporting terrorist attacks against Israel.

This week’s announcement kicked off a major telephone, newspaper, TV and online media campaign, largely in Israel and the Palestinian territories. Group leaders say they hope to raise \$5 million for the overall effort.

OneVoice has won some major backing already. Computer giant IBM kicked in \$450,000 for a Web site, www.silentmolonger.org, where Israelis and Palestinians will be able to vote on the standards for peace.

Like the cash-for-settlement plan, this effort also has gone after celebrity support. Lending their names are Hollywood figures such as Brad Pitt, Jennifer Aniston, Danny DeVito and Jason Alexander; Washington figures such as former undersecretary of state Stuart Eizenstat and Arab American pollster James Zogby; religious and communal leaders such as Sufi Muslim Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf and World Jewish Congress President Edgar Bronfman; media names like the editor of Time magazine, Joshua Cooper Ramo.

For the plan’s next phase, OneVoice assembled a team of Israeli and Palestinian academic and political experts who were involved in past Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts.

Those experts will draft a one-page, 10-point plan that will go before Israelis and Palestinians in a kind of referendum known as the “People’s Mandate.”

People who backed the original statement will be able to vote online for the new document.

Experts then will reconvene to negotiate a final document based on the popular priorities — but OneVoice officials take pains not to dub it a peace plan to rival the “road map” or other efforts.

“The process is important,” said David Leffler, OneVoice’s Israeli executive director, a former aide to Yitzhak Rabin and former director general of the Ministry of Science, Culture and Sport under Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Such issues as “the right of return — I don’t know the way around it,” Leffler added. “Let’s see what the people have to say.”

OneVoice officials say they hope to get the ears of top government leaders on both sides.

On the Israeli side, Leffler represents a key connection to figures such as Labor Party legislator Matan Vilnai.

Leffler’s Palestinian counterpart is Fathi Darwish, who has connections to Yasser Mahmoud Abbas, son of the new P.A. prime minister

OneVoice will affect government policy either by prodding government leaders to act or by building a following so big the politicians will have to listen, Darawshe said.

“We will force it onto the public agenda,” he said. □