



Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Activist: Fight for choice

An abortion-rights activist urged Reform Jews to march on Washington to fight new anti-abortion measures.

Kate Michelman, outgoing president of NARAL Pro-Choice America, urged Jews to join the March to Save Women's Lives next April 25.

Her call came Thursday, a day after President Bush signed a ban on so-called partial-birth abortions. Warning that the Supreme Court only lacks one or two more votes to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 decision that legalized abortion, Michelman said the fight to "keep abortion safe and legal" is "the light we bear to women. But the flame is flickering."

Michelman, along with Israeli writer Amos Oz, was awarded the Eisendrath Bearer of Light Award from the Reform Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Some 4,200 participants attended the UAHC's biennial in Minneapolis, which began Wednesday and ends Saturday. It is the largest Jewish gathering in North America this year.

Santorum blasts Ford Foundation

Sen. Rick Santorum blasted the Ford Foundation's funding of Palestinian groups promoting anti-Semitism.

Santorum (R-Pa.) said Wednesday on the Senate floor that an investigative series by JTA showed that "respected foundations can undermine our policies and activities by making an end run and supporting those with whom we deeply disagree." He asked for the Senate Finance Committee to review controls placed on foundation activities overseas.

Yitzhak Rabin remembered

Israel's top officials gathered on the eighth anniversary of Yitzhak Rabin's funeral to remember the slain prime minister.

Standing near Rabin's grave on Jerusalem's Mount Herzl, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called on Israelis to "heal from the chasm" that has divided the nation since Rabin was assassinated after a peace rally in Tel Aviv on Nov. 4, 1995. Sharon also called Rabin "my commander and my companion" and cited the peacemaker's support of a united Jerusalem, media reports said.

Hundreds of others attended the ceremony.

For aging survivors of the Holocaust, the future means remembering the past

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Helen Potash stood in front of a cattle car at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's permanent exhibition, but she would not venture forward.

"I went through it once," the Holocaust survivor said. "I am not going again."

She went around it instead.

Potash was one of more than 2,200 Holocaust survivors who came to Washington this weekend for a reunion, part of a yearlong marking of the museum's 10th anniversary.

There have been Holocaust survivor reunions before, but this gathering focused more on the future than the past. The survivors here spoke candidly about their advancing age and said they looked to their heirs to tell their stories.

More than 4,000 children, grandchildren and great grandchildren joined the survivors on the unusually warm November afternoon, learning about their family members' experiences and pledging to keep the memory alive.

"It's an incredible lineage we all share," said Helen Burstin, of Washington, who came with her parents, both survivors. "It's a remarkable thing to walk into this tent and see 6,000 people connected to survivors."

At times the event resembled a wedding, with survivors and their families dancing the Hora to Israeli folk music in an enormous tent nicknamed "Survivor's Village." Later, there was a sing-along in Yiddish.

"It's totally overwhelming," said Rabbi Jay Miller of San Mateo, Calif., watching the dancing from the sidelines. He was on vacation in Washington and happened to find himself amid the festivities. He was one of the few in the tent whose family had not been directly affected by the Holocaust.

"The smiles on people's faces are an expression of vitality and commitment to life," said Miller. "I wish there was a way I could translate this to people when I go home."

In one room, survivors offered their artifacts to the museum; others related oral histories into tape recorders and to transcribers. Images from the museum's database flittered across a bank of computer monitors. Survivors researching the fate of their families used the computers; alongside each terminal stood a box of tissues.

Joan Weiss of Marlboro, N.J., brought her 18-year-old daughter to the reunion, even though her father, who survived the Holocaust, didn't make the trip.

"This is something I have waited for all my life," she said in the archive room. "I've been waiting for something special, to find someone who knew my parents or a relative we didn't know about."

There were to be no new revelations for Weiss, just an educational experience for her daughter, Natalie. "We shouldn't forget it ever," said Natalie, a high school senior. "We need to keep talking to our children."

Many of the survivors were viewing the museum for the first time. Some said they had always longed to come here, and found the reunion a great opportunity. Others said they avoided the museum, but felt a yearning to see it at least once.

"I felt this time I had to go," said Eddie Weinstein. "Because I am getting old."

Weinstein wandered the tent, slowly, with a cardboard placard resting on his chest, attached to a string around his neck. It read: "I am looking for people who escaped from Treblinka."

"I didn't find one person," said Weinstein, whose story of escape from the Polish extermination camp has been documented in a book, "Quenched Steel."

MIDEAST FOCUS

Note to Egypt: Democratize

President Bush called on Egypt to "show the way toward democracy in the Middle East."

Speaking Thursday in Washington at the National Endowment for Democracy, Bush applauded Saudi Arabian efforts at democratization and said, "Palestinian leaders who block and undermine democratic reform, and feed hatred and encourage violence, are not leaders at all; they are the main obstacles to peace and to the success of the Palestinian people."

Annan lauds 'Geneva accord'

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan praised an unofficial Israeli-Palestinian peace proposal.

Annan said this week that the "Geneva accord" is in line with the "road map" peace plan, which the United Nations supports.

The Israeli government says it should control diplomatic negotiations, not political opponents who no longer hold elected office, who drafted the Geneva plan.

Cabinet unsure on prisoner swap

Israel's Cabinet will be asked to approve a prisoner swap with Hezbollah, but support for the deal reportedly is uncertain.

Israel's Ma'ariv newspaper said Thursday that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has the support of only four other ministers for freeing as many as 400 Arab prisoners in exchange for the return of kidnapped Israeli businessman Elhanan Tannenbaum and the bodies of three soldiers kidnapped and believed killed by Hezbollah.

Eight Cabinet members oppose the swap because they believe it will encourage terrorist groups to extort Israel in the future, while eight other ministers are undecided, Ma'ariv said.

The Cabinet is set to vote on the possible swap Sunday.

extermination camp has been documented in a book, "Quenched Steel."

Nessie Godin, a survivor from Lithuania, volunteers at the museum once a week. She says it is her responsibility to those she survived in the camps.

"I wasn't any smarter and I wasn't any stronger," said Godin. "The wonderful Jewish women who held my hand, gave me hope and maybe a bite of bread, they told me that they should never be forgotten and to tell the world of this hatred."

She said the reunion and the museum shows the world that Hitler did not win.

Burstin says that children of Holocaust survivors have obligations to their parents and their experiences.

"We want to make it clear to our kids and our kids' kids and everyone who knows us that this is part of our heritage," she said.

Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel told the audience that amid the joy of the occasion is a void of sadness for the faces that were left behind.

"Your presence — our presence — here today is our answer to this silent question," he said. "We have kept our promise. We have not forgotten you." □

With UJC investing in security, assembly delegates feel confident

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — Anyone wanting to attend the North American federation system's upcoming conference in Jerusalem had to sign a waiver releasing the United Jewish Communities from any security-related liabilities.

But after accepting "any and all risks to my safety and security" — and despite a recently updated U.S. government travel warning for the region — delegates seem unfazed by the risks as they gear up for the UJC's annual General Assembly, to be held Nov. 16-19.

Asked if his community has shown signs of concern, Gary Weinstein, executive vice president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas replied: "No, no and no — no issues, no concerns and no one's talking about it." People "just get numb" to the ongoing Palestinian intifada, Weinstein said.

That insouciance may be due to the type of people attending the event.

"People going to the G.A. anyway are your most committed folks," Weinstein said. "The G.A. is primarily for leadership, and so we're not finding really any ripples."

In fact, fear about the security situation may be better measured by those who chose not to attend the conference.

Probably due to the ongoing violence, the Alabama delegation shrunk to seven from 15 or 20 in 1998, the last time the General Assembly was held in Jerusalem, said Richard Friedman, executive vice president of the Birmingham Jewish Federation.

But none of the seven Alabamians headed for Israel has "expressed any particular concerns about safety," Friedman said.

Several events on the program likely will require significant security measures. They include tours to more than 200 sites throughout Israel, from lunching with Israel Defense Forces soldiers in Tel Aviv to touring mixed Jewish-Arab cities to a solidarity march through the streets of Jerusalem.

While UJC officials would not go into details about G.A. security, it's clear that measures will be considerable.

"We are not limited by budget" or any other constraints, and are "simply doing everything possible so that all our participants will be safe while traveling in the country — in Jerusalem and elsewhere," said Nachman Shai, the UJC's director general in Israel. Shai said his office has been working with police and other agencies to secure the event.

For the Philadelphia delegation, the difficult time in Israel creates even more interest in attending this year's assembly, officials said.

"I think people are glad to be going to make a stand for solidarity," and are "very confident" about UJC security, said Susan Bodner, director of marketing and communications for the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia. "When people go and times are tough, it's even a deeper statement of commitment." □



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JEWISH WORLD

French to ban religion in schools?

Wearing religious insignia in French schools soon will become illegal, according to media reports.

The Europe 1 radio station reported Wednesday that both French President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin now support legislation that will be "very strict."

Leading left- and right-wing politicians have recently called for a law banning the wearing of crosses, yarmulkes and Muslim scarves in state schools. A presidential commission set up earlier this year to examine the secular nature of the French state now appears almost certain to recommend the legislation in its final report next month.

Jewish leaders are backing the proposed legislation.

Lawmakers press Bush on Israel

U.S. lawmakers told President Bush not to press Israel for concessions and to seek a Palestinian Authority crackdown on terrorists.

A letter signed by 70 lawmakers and sent to President Bush was drafted by the Zionist Organization of America.

The letter also criticizes Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei for saying he will seek a cease-fire with Palestinian terrorist organizations rather than dismantling them, as the Palestinian Authority is obligated to do under the "road map" peace plan.

Protest against Israel's fence

Left-wing activists are planning simultaneous protests against Israel's West Bank security fence in several cities across the United States.

The main "Stop the Wall" protest Sunday will be at Washington's National Mall. The events, to take place in San Francisco, Chicago and New York, among other cities, are being organized by the United for Peace and Justice organization.

The umbrella group includes the U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, the American Friends Service Committee, Al-Awda, Jews for Peace in Palestine and Israel, and SUSTAIN (Stop U.S. Tax Aid to Israel Now).

Ukrainian Jew buys U.S. paper

A Ukrainian Jewish leader reportedly will buy the largest Russian-language newspaper in the United States.

Vadim Rabinovich wants to turn the New York-based *Novoe Russkoe Slovo* into the "Financial Times of the Russian-speaking world," the *Forward* reported. The newspaper, founded in 1910 by pro-tsarist Russian emigres, is read by many Russian-speaking Jews but is not a Jewish paper.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Hopes to elect Jewish Republicans don't pan out in off-year's elections

By Ron Kampeas

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Decisive off-year gubernatorial wins in the South spurred some hopes for the Republican Party, but the hope of nurturing another representative constituency — Jewish Republican politicians — were undermined by decisive defeats of moderate Republican Jews across the country.

Republicans have been touting inroads into the Jewish vote, once thought of as solidly Democratic. They have cited increased contributions to the GOP from Jews, and polls last year showing an increase in Jews voting for Republicans in midterm congressional elections, credited in part to President Bush's pro-Israel record.

But there has been little progress among Jewish Republicans running for public office.

While moderate Jewish Republicans have won some recent elections — among them Sen. Norm Coleman of Minnesota and New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg — Tuesday's election did not portend a banner year.

Bloomberg and Philadelphia mayoral hopeful Sam Katz were among the big losers in Tuesday's election. The Republican Katz, who lost by a tiny margin to John Street in 1999, lost decisively to Street on Tuesday: 58 percent to 42 percent.

Street's backers were outraged by revelations of FBI wiretaps inside the mayor's office — a corruption investigation Street's supporters said reeked of political timing.

Bloomberg, a media magnate, spent his own money to promote a referendum on non-partisan elections in New York. It was buried by 70 percent to 30 percent, in part a reflection of unhappiness with what many consider his bland, aloof leadership.

Four other Republican Jews cited in an article in the *Forward* last week as "Coleman Republicans" were defeated.

In New York City Council elections, Josh Yablon and Jay Golub lost. Barry Honig lost a New Jersey State Senate bid against incumbent Jewish Democrat Byron Baer. Baer's victory was part of the Democratic reclaiming of the New Jersey Senate, a rare bright spot for the party. In Pittsburgh, Daniel Cohen lost decisively to incumbent city councilor Doug Shields.

Matt Brooks, the executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition, said the defeats were less important than the ascension of Jewish candidates to Republican nominations. Candidates are expected to lose a few elections at the outset of their careers, Brooks said. "Look how many Jewish candidates were empowered," he said. "That's how you build a base for the future."

The National Jewish Democratic Council's executive director, Ira Forman, said that off-year elections by definition are too local to support or undermine any perceived trend, including signs of greater Jewish representation among Republicans. Still, he said, Jewish Republicans ought to take responsibility for the losses, having touted the candidates. "They chose to make this a big deal," Forman said. "If you highlight it, you've got to live with it when you fail."

Jewish officials said that whatever the outcome, the heartening trend was greater Jewish involvement in the political process in both parties.

"It used to be that Jewish candidates were always Democrats, but Jews rising to top levels in both major political parties is a good thing," said Nathan Diamant, national director of the Orthodox Union's institute of public affairs.

Forman wondered whether Jews were ready for the Republicans, noting the victory of former GOP national boss Haley Barbour in the Mississippi governor race. Barbour's photo was posted on the site of an anti-Semitic group, the Council of Concerned Citizens, above an article entitled: "Did Rothschild Write the Protocols of Zion?"

Barbour refused to ask the group to take down the photo, in which he poses at a barbecue with a director of the group.

Brooks said Barbour always had been a close friend to Israel and to Jewish Republicans, and that making an issue of the barbecue ignored the essence of Southern politics, which is to avoid alienating any substantial power base. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Pro-Palestinian Jews take lead in organizing anti-Israel forum***By Rachel Pomerance*

COLUMBUS, Ohio (JTA) — Pro-Palestinian activists from around the country will flock to Ohio State University this weekend for the Third National Conference on the Palestine Solidarity Movement.

And the man who helped bring them here is a Jew.

In fact, Joseph Levine, faculty adviser to the Committee for Justice in Palestine, the local group hosting the event, says he grew up steeped in Judaism as a yeshiva student in Los Angeles. Levine nearly immigrated to Israel in the early 1970s.

But after reading more about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Levine says he came to feel that the Israel he had learned about as a child was “mythology.”

Today he an atheist and a professor of philosophy at Ohio State.

“We have a hard time seeing ourselves as the white men” oppressing supposedly indigenous Arabs, Levine says.

“We essentially expelled the people that lived there,” and “then we complain that they hate us,” he says. “We’re not looking at ourselves honestly.”

Levine shares that feeling with other Jews mobilizing on behalf of the Palestinians.

Ora Wise, 22, an active member of the New York-based Jews Against the Occupation, worked with Levine to create the Committee for Justice when she was an Ohio State student.

The daughter of a Cincinnati rabbi and a Jewish educator, Wise says her community and, at times, her family, accused her of being a “traitor or self-hating or brainwashed” when she “started extending my concept of social justice to include Palestinians and to hold our state accountable for its actions.”

Wise, who helped plan this weekend’s conference, says her organization has quadrupled to 100 members in the past year.

Both Levine and Wise say their Jewishness helps them to bridge the Israeli-Palestinian divide.

Levine says he is working to get the pro-Palestinian movement to issue a statement that “unequivocally condemns attacks on civilians on both sides.” And he hopes Jews will reconsider what he calls their “knee-jerk” rejection of the pro-Palestinian movement.

Toward that end, Levine wrote an editorial in the Cleveland Jewish News last week.

“Voice for Peace” — a California-based Jewish peace group — “and a host of others here in the U.S., as well as numerous Israeli peace organizations, speak to the depth of Jewish-Palestinian cooperation,” he wrote. “Anyone who hasn’t visited the website of Gush Shalom or Rabbis for Human Rights should see for themselves what committed Jewish activists are saying. You may not agree with their views, but you’ll see at least that the idea that this is all fueled by Jew-hatred cannot be reasonably sustained.”

According to Wayne Firestone, director of the Israel on Campus Coalition, an umbrella group for 26 Jewish organizations, there’s a clear difference between Levine and people who criticize Israeli policy but still support the Jewish state.

“Anyone who is a critic whose intention is to legitimately strengthen an Israel living in secure and recognized boundaries is a legitimate critic,” Firestone says. “The problem with the position taken by a lot of these organizations is that they only seek to condemn Israel.”

For example, calling on universities to divest their holdings in companies that do business with Israel — the key theme on the conference’s agenda this weekend — is a way to “punish and unfairly single out Israel to undermine her,” Firestone says.

Levine’s optimal endgame is a single state for both Jews and Arabs — a concept many supporters of Israel consider state suicide, rendering Jews a vulnerable minority among an Arab majority that has shown it does not respect minority rights.

There would “obviously have to be protection for Jews if they became a minority,” Levine concedes.

Levine says it is precisely his Jewishness that drives him to scrutinize Israel so closely.

As a Jew, he says, he is responsible for monitoring the actions of the Jewish state.

And as an American, he must examine Israel, which receives more U.S. aid than any other country.

Tamar Rudavsky, another philosophy professor at Ohio State and director of its Melton Center for Jewish Studies, agrees with some of Levine’s criticisms, but takes issue with his goal and his group’s tactics.

“Joe and I share a lot of the same concerns with regards to the direction Israel has taken with the Palestinian people,” Rudavsky says, suggesting that Israel be more humane in its treatment of Palestinians waiting to cross West Bank checkpoints.

“I think the critical difference is that Joe has no interest in the survival of Israel as a Jewish state,” Rudavsky says. “He would be just as happy to see Israel disappear off the face of this earth.”

Additionally, Rudavsky says, the pro-Palestinian group on campus stifles dialogue.

“By presenting a slanted, one-sided, biased version of contemporary events, it threatens to undermine the very conversation we faculty are so diligently trying to foster among our students,” she says.

Levine’s immediate goal is for Israel to withdraw to its 1967 borders, allow the Palestinians to establish a capital in eastern Jerusalem and dismantle all Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Asked about concessions Israel offered in previous peace talks — which the Palestinians rejected before turning to violence — Levine says Israel was not serious about peace. □

Danes may ax Nazi radio

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Danish government may stop funding a neo-Nazi radio station.

Radio Oasen, which broadcasts more than 60 hours a week of news and commentary, has been airing texts from Nazi magazines and Hitler’s “Mein Kampf.”

The station receives most of its annual budget of \$15,400 from the government, which funds many local radio stations that cater to special-interest groups. “I would describe the material they distribute as grossly offensive to Jews and other groups of people,” said Niels Erik Hansen of the Documentation and Advisory Center on Racial Discrimination. □