

IN THE NEWS

Arrests made in Uzbek blasts

Uzbek officials said they had made a number of arrests in connection with three suicide bombings, one of which took place at the Israeli Embassy in Tashkent.

The blast at the Israel Embassy last Friday killed two Uzbek security guards, and a third died in an attack on the U.S. Embassy in the former Soviet republic.

A team of Israeli investigators traveled to Tashkent over the weekend to help in the probe.

A group known as the Islamic Jihad Group in Uzbekistan claimed responsibility for the blasts, saying it was an attack on links between the Uzbek government "and its infidel allies of Americans and Jews."

Meanwhile, Israel said it is boosting security at all of its embassies.

Chaos deepens among Palestinians

West Bank vigilantes abducted three foreigners and torched a Palestinian Authority office.

The three Christian volunteers kidnapped in Nablus on Saturday were released without incident, but the move, by renegade members of Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction, was seen as a new blow to the prestige of a P.A. that is beset by corruption scandals and protests.

In Jenin, members of the Al-Aksa Brigade, Fatah's terrorist wing, set fire to the office of a P.A. intelligence service, accusing its officers of collaborating with the Shin Bet, Israel's domestic security service.

Court limits ban on neo-Nazi protests

Neo-Nazi rallies can be banned only if the demonstrations are likely to endanger public safety, Germany's highest court ruled.

The July 30 ruling overturned a June decision by a lower court that allowed a city to stop a far-right rally against the building of a new synagogue.

WORLD REPORT

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Motivated for political change, young Jews work in campaigns

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

BOSTON (JTA) — Three weeks ago, Richard Rosenthal was a successful lawyer in Miami with a six-figure salary and a nice view of Biscayne Bay from his office.

Last week he was in Washington licking envelopes in the presidential campaign headquarters of Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), and making no money.

"You can have a large role in things that don't matter, or you can have a tiny role in things that do," said Rosenthal, 31. "Right now, I've traded one for another."

Rosenthal planned to leave his job at the County Attorney's Office this summer to start his own appellate practice, but wanted to take a detour first.

He considered a trip to Australia but then signed on as a volunteer with the Kerry campaign, packed up his car and moved to the nation's capital through November.

He was in his car again last week, on July 28. At noon, he was told he could have a ticket to the Democratic convention that night, so he started driving to Boston, arriving shortly before Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C.) accepted the vice presidential nomination.

Rosenthal's pass gave him access to the building but didn't provide him with a seat. He finagled a chair in the nosebleed section, claiming he was returning to a seat he had left.

"Twenty years from now, I'm not going to think about the paychecks I didn't get or the 15 weeks I wasn't setting up my law practice," he said. "But I'll remember what

I'm doing now."

He's not alone. As the Democrats met in Boston last week for their nominating convention, the cubicles and makeshift offices of Democratic campaigns and activist groups are filled with young people, including many Jews, who have taken time off to work on campaigns in hopes of making a difference.

Certainly, young Democrats aren't the only ones gearing up for a fight this November; Republicans also have their share of committed young volunteers.

But Republican control of the White House and Congress has added momentum to a surge of young Democrats wanting to get involved.

Energetic youth working on the campaign trail is nothing new. But what makes this crop of volunteers

and staffers different is that not all are political junkies.

Fueled by concern over the state of the nation, young Jewish activists who were on different career paths have taken a respite from their real lives to hit the streets.

They're concerned about the war in Iraq, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, terrorism and civil liberties — and they want to be part of the solution.

"I kind of thought that if I didn't do something, I would regret it," said Aaron Friedman, a Milwaukee organizer for the League of Conservation Voters, an environmental political group.

Friedman, 26, was a classical composer in New York City and was rather apolitical until shortly after Bush took office, when he began getting nervous about the country's

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DECIDES
2004

■ *Young Jews leave their jobs to volunteer for their candidate*

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direction. He was supposed to spend this year studying at Columbia University with a composer of spectral music.

Instead, Friedman is organizing volunteers to tout environment-friendly candidates and issues.

"There's nothing I would rather be doing than writing chamber music that 200 people in the world might care about," he said. "But there's some point where I realized that the world is revolving outside my own life and I would feel so silly if Bush won, we started three wars or global warming took hold."

Many of the temporary politicians say they are getting the same things out of the experience as do colleagues who are in it for the long haul, such as leadership and communication skills.

For example, Friedman, who describes himself as something of a recluse, said talking to voters all day has made it easier for him to talk to girls in bars at night.

"That was a situation that would have paralyzed me in the past," he said.

But life experience is still secondary to the cause, they say.

"I grew up in a very strong Jewish community with a sense that you treat people with respect and you respect your neighbor," said Matthew Slutsky of Massachusetts. "That doesn't feel like the way we're living now. It's against what I grew up with and the culture I was surrounded by."

Slutsky, 23, was motivated to find a job in the Kerry campaign after taking a class

last year at Northeastern University with a former Democratic presidential nominee from Massachusetts, Michael Dukakis. Dukakis stressed the importance of public service, a message that resonated with Slutsky, who was unsure about his career path.

Last week he was at the Democratic convention, arranging surrogates to speak to the media from a hotel room nearby. His twin brother also was bitten by the political bug: He's organizing voters in the swing state of Oregon.

Slutsky says he was motivated by what he heard about the United States on recent visits to Europe.

"To meet people and hear them saying things about America I know are not true shows me we need to restore respect from the world," he said.

Ann Lewis, who served as White House communications director under President Clinton, said she receives numerous calls from friends, predominantly Jewish, who want help finding jobs on Kerry's campaign for their children and grandchildren.

"The biggest favor I can do is to get them a job with incredibly long hours, very little pay, sleeping on a couch and no job security," Lewis said.

Young people understand that the stakes are high in this election, Lewis said.

More significantly, she said, the Florida recount in 2000 proved that every individual makes a difference.

Rosenthal worked as a legal adviser

during that recount, sitting to the side of the men and women reviewing hanging and dangling chads.

The experience moved him, and helped motivate him to explore what he calls "the road not traveled."

"People were saying in 2000 that it doesn't make a difference," he said. "We know that's not the case now. Anyone with two eyes can see the difference that politics make."

Not all activists have quit their jobs to get involved. During the week, Merrill Zack is a staffer for the National Council for Jewish Women.

But it was her Sunday mornings that launched her political activism. Zack and her Sunday brunch friends

began talking about political issues, then educated each other on the candidates.

Now they've formed an advocacy group, The Public Works, and are raising money for Democrats.

"We all just felt we're all fairly well-read and fairly progressive and we wanted to do more in a group," said Zack, 32.

In less than two months, Zack and her peers put together a fund-raising concert, netting \$13,000 for the Kerry campaign and several political action committees.

Zack says she wants to put someone new in the White House, but in any case believes the strong feelings against the Bush administration have brought her generation together.

"I hope there are major changes in the months to come," she said. "But even if that doesn't happen, I feel like a movement has started." ■

'People were saying in 2000 that it doesn't make a difference. We know that's not the case now.'
Richard Rosenthal
 Lawyer turned Kerry campaigner

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U.N.: Palestinians in a slump

NEW YORK (JTA) — Palestinians living conditions are declining precipitously, a U.N. report said.

The U.N. Economic and Social Commission report was issued last Friday.

The review period, January 2003 to February 2004, showed "mounting economic and social damage under military occupation," rising malnutrition and "new forms of dispossession and destruc-

tion of private and public assets of all kinds," Reuters said.

The report also said Israel had stepped up assassinations of Palestinian terrorist chiefs and inhumanely treated Palestinian prisoners.

"The sustainable option for addressing the current economic and social deprivation lies in lifting the occupation of the Palestinian territory," the report said. ■

Questions raised about future of WZO

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — A meeting has marked the early stages of a discussion that could spell trouble for the future of the World Zionist Organization.

Sallai Meridor, chairman of the executive of the Jewish Agency for Israel, which runs immigration and absorption in the Jewish state, has met with leaders of the United Jewish Communities, the coordinating body for the North American Jewish federation system, to discuss the WZO's future funding.

The meeting comes as the Jewish Agency, the primary beneficiary of federation dollars overseas, is reconsidering its funding contract with the WZO, a representative body of Zionist groups from Israel and the Diaspora.

Highlighting the partnership between the Jewish Agency and the WZO, Meridor chairs both organizations. But they have different agendas: The Jewish Agency is devoted to aliyah and Jewish education, while the WZO, a fiercely political organization, is bent on spreading Zionism in its myriad forms.

Surrounding the discussion are two opposing opinions about the 107-year-old WZO, which has been struggling to boost its profile within world Jewry for decades despite a shrinking budget.

Some call the WZO a moribund group that burdens the Jewish Agency with extraneous expenses and political headaches. Others argue that it's both the genesis and the future of Zionism, and a critical mainstay of the Jewish Agency.

The WZO's power comes through the Jewish Agency. Despite the fact that it has only a \$14 million budget, the WZO makes up half the Jewish Agency's board of trustees and influences its \$350 million budget.

In the middle of the talks, and holding

the purse strings, is the UJC.

The political triangle boils down to this: The WZO influences the UJC's overseas partner, the Jewish Agency, yet the UJC has little control over or familiarity with the WZO.

Josh Schwarcz, secretary-general of the Jewish Agency, said there was no indication the agency would cut WZO funding.

The meeting between Meridor and UJC leaders is just an opportunity to examine the ongoing cooperation between the Jewish Agency and the WZO, Schwarcz said.

"The World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency have a historical, long-standing relationship, which is reflected in shared activity and funding agreements," he said.

An agreement is expected in time for the Jewish Agency's October board meetings, when the agency's annual budget is set, he said.

Since 1999, the Jewish Agency has provided \$8 million of the WZO's \$14 million budget. Even WZO officials concede that the group's budget does not allow for much programming, with more than 80 percent of funds going to salaries.

The WZO may be best known for its worldwide elections, in which Zionist groups of all stripes run for seats on the parliamentary-style governing body. Its backers tout the WZO as the only Jewish organization that democratically represents world Jewry.

"The size of one's pocketbook does not determine the extent of one's influence," said Robert Golub, executive director of Mercaz USA, the Zionist arm of the Conservative movement.

The WZO also is known for its Haggshama youth division, which provides Israeli programming on college campuses around the world, develops Zionist student leaders and promotes long- and short-term programs in Israel.

Founded by Theodore Herzl at the first Zionist Congress in 1897, the WZO became a partner of the Jewish Agency when that body was founded in 1929.

But its budget has withered since 1972, when it struck a deal to hand its assets to the Jewish Agency, which took over the

WZO's budget and debt. The WZO also agreed to stop fund raising independently.

Today, the balance of the WZO's budget — some \$5.5 million — comes from Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael-Jewish National Fund. But JNF plans to cut funding to the WZO by as much as half due to its own budget woes.

Some say the WZO would be better off on its own. "I'd be quite happy if we divorce the Jewish Agency and divorce the UJC and even the JNF, and let each one take its assets," said Martin Stern, a member of the WZO's finance committee.

Calling the WZO "a political farce," hamstrung by too little money and too many

competing political interests, Stern argued that the external funding supply lets the WZO putter along complacently.

"Zionism to me is the biggest miracle of the 20th century," he said. "It is very important that we should all wake up before it's too late and we have destroyed our own invention."

American Zionist groups also stressed the WZO's importance. The WZO is "the only vehicle for the religious streams — Reform, Conservative and Orthodox — to be involved as such within the operations of the Jewish Agency," Golub said.

If American Zionist groups are asked to help ensure funding from the Jewish Agency, Golub said his group and others likely would press the WZO's case with local federations.

But some WZO members feel no reason to fret. David Breakstone, the WZO's head of Zionist activities, said he has "full confidence" that Meridor "is doing everything he can to assure continued funding."

Breakstone said he expects the "full funding that we've had up until now" to continue.

Others are skeptical.

The WZO marginalized itself when it gave up its independent fund-raising ability, said Jacques Torczyner of San Francisco, past president of the Zionist Organization of America.

Now, "the Jewish fund raising is in the hands of the fund-raisers nationally, and they're not interested in the WZO," he said. ■

The World Zionist Organization is a 'political farce.'

Martin Stern

WZO finance committee

THIS WEEK

MONDAY

■ Claims Conference distributes \$422 million from the group's slave labor fund to 130,681 Holocaust-era slave laborers. The distribution, the second payment installment from the fund to the survivors, will be the largest ever single Holocaust-related payment. About \$704 million already has been paid from this fund to former slave laborers, each of whom will have received about \$7,500.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Four Palestinians killed

Israeli troops killed four armed Palestinians planting a bomb last Friday near a Gaza Strip refugee camp.

Later in the day, an Israel Air Force helicopter fired a missile at a metal workshop in Gaza City that the army said was used to produce explosives for Hamas. The attack came hours after Palestinian terrorists launched Kassam rockets into the southern town of Sderot. Six Israelis were treated for shock, and some of Sderot's municipal infrastructure was damaged.

Security officials said army operations in northern Gaza have not proven effective, and a reassessment of the situation is needed.

Ma'aleh Adumim expansion seen

Ariel Sharon reportedly approved a West Bank settlement's expansion in violation of understandings between Israel and the United States.

The Israeli prime minister and Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz ordered 600 new housing units for Ma'aleh Adumim, Ma'ariv said Sunday, which would almost certainly necessitate expanding the settlement's jurisdiction and violating an understanding with U.S. Ambassador Daniel Kurtzer whereby Washington has to clear any such move first.

The Defense Ministry and U.S. Embassy did not immediately comment on the order, which was reportedly given two months ago.

Kassam hits highway

A Palestinian-fired rocket struck a highway in Israel, lightly wounding four drivers.

The Kassam rocket, fired Sunday by Hamas terrorists in the Gaza Strip, landed on Highway 34 outside a kibbutz in the western Negev. Four motorists were treated for shock.

The latest rocket attack came despite a monthlong Israeli military siege on Beit Hanoun, the Gaza village which serves as Hamas' favorite launch area.

Security sources said military leaders had recommended to Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz that he order a withdrawal from Beit Hanoun, but he has decided the Israeli forces should stay indefinitely.

Baby-food scandal settled

A German baby-food firm agreed to compensate Israelis whose infants were hurt by nutritional deficiencies in one of its products.

Humana said Saturday it would pay up to \$22 million to 17 Israeli families whose babies fell ill last year after being fed its Remedia formula.

Two of the babies eventually died of what was determined to be a lack of the B-1 vitamin in Remedia.

"We sympathize with the families," Humana's representative in Israel, Moshe Miller, told Channel Two television. "We know a financial settlement, no matter how big, will not assuage the suffering of the families. That knowledge will be with us forever."

Cops under fire

Israeli police officers in the West Bank have had to relocate due to death threats, their commander said.

"Dozens of personnel have been threatened — by Palestinians, by Jews — and many have had to move home," West Bank police chief Shachar Ayalon told reporters Sunday, adding that most of his subordinates live in the West Bank. "They are on the receiving end of anger by the settlers," he said.

Although Ayalon noted higher tensions in the West Bank in response to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to remove Israeli

settlements, he played down Shin Bet warnings that there could be a surge of Jewish terrorism.

Wary of U.S.-Jordan deal

Israel is trying to block a sale of U.S. anti-aircraft missiles to Jordan. Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz has personally asked the Pentagon to cancel its planned sale of AMRAAM air-to-air missiles to the Hashemite Kingdom, security sources said Sunday.

Although Jordan is not considered a major threat to the Jewish state and the AMRAAM is a medium-range weapon that is more than matched by the Israeli arsenal, Israeli security chiefs fear its sale to Amman could encourage Egypt to make similar arms deals with Washington, tipping the strategic balance in the Middle East.

There was no immediate comment from Israeli or American defense officials.

NORTH AMERICA

Sharon calls Kerry

Ariel Sharon called John Kerry to congratulate him on his nomination as the Democratic presidential candidate.

The Israeli prime minister and the Massachusetts senator spoke last Friday, Kerry campaign officials said, and Kerry expressed his condolences to Sharon over the attack on the Israeli Embassy in Tashkent. Kerry told Sharon that he looked forward to the emergence of an alternative leadership to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

Gender gap for Conservative rabbis

Male rabbis in the Conservative movement are paid more and occupy more senior positions than female rabbis, according to a new study.

The movement's Rabbinical Assembly surveyed 177 rabbis ordained since 1985 and found that the gender discrepancy can be explained only in part by family-status issues. The study, marking 20 years since the movement began to ordain women, also found that half as many female rabbis as male rabbis were married.

The data in the study mirrors data on women professionals elsewhere in American life.

Jewish stars plug federations

Jewish celebrities will plug the federation system in its first national TV campaign.

The United Jewish Communities, the coordinating body for the North American Jewish federation system, is sponsoring the commercials, hoping that Jewish stars will draw young Jews to donate and participate in local federations. The advertisements, under the slogan "Live Generously," were shot July 30 and will air in September, accompanied by print advertisements.

WORLD

French reparations extended

France is to extend reparation payments to those who lost parents as a result of Nazi crimes, the government announced. Payments already have been given to children of Holocaust victims, but Holocaust survivors groups in France long have backed restitution demands from former resistance movement members and for children whose parents in the resistance were killed or tortured during World War II.

The payments are to be at the same level as those for the children of French Holocaust victims. Recipients can choose either a lump sum of \$33,000 or monthly payments of \$550.