

IN THE NEWS

Author, Nobel Saul Bellow dies at 89

Saul Bellow, the Nobel Prize-winning author, died Tuesday at 89.

Bellow brought the American Jewish experience to a wider audience in North America.

His best-know works include such novels as "Herzog," "Mr. Sammler's Planet" and "The Adventures of Augie March."

When he received the Nobel in 1976, he was cited for the "human understanding and subtle analysis of contemporary culture that are combined in his work."

He also wrote a nonfiction work, "To Jerusalem and Back," an account of a trip to Israel that he took in 1975.

Bush down on settlement expansion

President Bush rejected any Israeli settlement expansion.

Administration officials said the president will raise Israel's plans to add 3,500 apartments in the West Bank settlement of Ma'aleh Adumim when he meets next week in Crawford, Texas, with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

"The 'road map' calls for no expansion of the settlements," Bush said Tuesday, referring to the U.S.-driven peace plan.

Israel says it does not plan to build the units in the foreseeable future, and that the 10-year-old plan merely passed one of a number of bureaucratic hurdles before building actually starts.

Senate: Palestinian aid, no conditions

The Senate will restore a presidential waiver to \$200 million in fast-track aid for the Palestinians, meaning the money will be spent without conditions.

The removal of the presidential waiver last month by the U.S. House of Representatives would have made it much harder for President Bush to send funds directly to the Palestinian Authority.

JTA has learned that the Senate Appropriations Committee will restore the waiver Wednesday when it refers the request to the full Senate.

WORLD REPORT

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Trade, property restitution on table as president of Ukraine visits U.S.

By VLADIMIR MATVEYEV

KIEV, Ukraine (JTA) — The Soviet Union may be a historical relic, but issues dating from that era still haunt Ukraine's new president.

As Viktor Yushenko visited the United States this week, two longstanding Jewish issues were on the agenda: the restitution of Jewish communal property and Ukraine's "graduation" from the 1974 Jackson-Vanik Agreement, which linked trade restrictions to Ukraine's treatment of its Jews.

In both Ukraine and the United States, Jewish officials said the two issues are intertwined.

"The Jewish community is certainly interested in a speedy repeal of the Jackson-Vanik amendment for Ukraine, but it is no less interested in restitution of communal property," said Josef Zissels, a prominent Jewish leader and head of the Va'ad of Ukraine, an umbrella Jewish organization.

On Wednesday, Yushenko was scheduled to visit the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. Yushenko, whose father was a prisoner of war in Auschwitz during World War II, first visited the museum several years ago.

He was slated next to meet with U.S. Jewish officials, with the issues of anti-Semitism, property restitution and Jackson-Vanik on the agenda.

"We have great hopes and expectations that President Yushenko will move forward" on issues that affect the Jewish minority in Ukraine, said Mark Levin, executive director of NCSJ: Advocates on Be-

half of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia.

When the Soviet Union broke apart, its former republics inherited the strictures of the Jackson-Vanik accord. For his part, President Bush appears ready to allow Ukraine to graduate from Jackson-Vanik, which was used as leverage to force the Soviet Union to relax emigration restrictions. Bush met Monday in Washington with Yushenko, and said he believes the trade restrictions should be lifted, noting they were from a "different era."

The decision is up to Congress, however.

Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Georgia and the Baltic states already have graduated out of the agreement. A few years ago there was momentum for Russia to graduate as well, until a dispute over U.S. poultry imports to Russia turned some

U.S. business interests into defenders of an agreement they long had opposed.

Jewish leaders in Kiev say they realize how important lifting Jackson-Vanik could be for Ukraine's economic development. Yet they insist that the Jewish community must press the issue of restitution.

In the 1920s and 1930s, hundreds of pieces of Jewish community property were nationalized by Ukraine's Soviet government. The properties, including schools, theaters and warehouses, often were passed from one state-run entity to another.

In March 1992, then-President Leonid Kravchuk signed a law on the restitution of former religious property. Local authorities should have returned the property to religious communities by the end of 1997, but

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ACROSS
THE FORMER
SOVIET UNION

■ Soviet-era issue haunts Ukraine's president during U.S. visit

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the law was never fully implemented.

Only 10 percent of Jewish properties have been returned to their original owners, Jewish leaders say.

Aside from any political dimension to the issue, large-scale restitution may play a crucial role for Jewish life in Ukraine, which still largely depends on overseas donors and a tight circle of wealthy domestic sponsors.

If they got the properties back, cash-strapped Jewish organizations could use them for their own activities, or sell or lease them to fund programs.

Jewish leaders in Ukraine argue that the debate over Jackson-Vanik should address how Ukrainian leaders are combating anti-Semitism.

■ Accusations of links to anti-Semitic groups dogged Yushchenko during his campaign. Yushchenko was among several top opposition politicians who signed a statement opposing a government threat to close the Silski Visti newspaper for publishing an article asserting that 400,000 Jews joined the S.S. during World War II.

Yushchenko called on the newspaper to apologize, but it never complied.

More recently, Yushchenko honored Silski Visti with an award seen as gratitude for the paper's role in opposing Kuchma.

Zissels said it would be wrong if discussion of Jackson-Vanik focuses narrowly on emigration. Jewish leaders say the concept of minority rights should be handled in a broad manner and should include the restitution issue.

Jewish leaders in Ukraine say their support for Yushchenko on Jackson-Vanik largely will depend on his ability to cope with anti-Semitism and make progress on restitution.

"We ask for the legal framework of the implementation of the issue of restitution. The Jewish community supports canceling the Jackson-Vanik amendment. I've lobbied for it in the United States. But the authorities must combat anti-Semitism in the country," said Rabbi Yakov Dov Bleich, one of Ukraine's chief rabbis.

While visiting a Kiev synagogue in December 2004, Yushchenko was asked by JTA about the prospects of restitution of former Jewish communal property. He said he would follow the law.

"Justice should be the dominant question in the issue of restitution of Jewish property," he said then. "The property must be returned to the owner."

Yushchenko has an additional incen-

tive to move on the property restitution issue — his goal of integrating Ukraine into NATO and the European Union.

But one Yushchenko adviser said resolving the issue might not be simple.

"The issue of the restitution of Jewish religious property is very important but it is not so easy. We also should think about where to move museums and other organizations from the buildings," Alexander Sagan told JTA.

"We should first convene a meeting of leaders of religious

organizations to discuss church-state relations, partnership with religious organizations in the social sphere and church land use. Then we can bring a comprehensive program to a meeting between Yushchenko and religious leaders," he said. ■

(JTA Foreign Editor Peter Ephross in New York and JTA Staff Writer Matthew E. Berger in Washington contributed to this report.)

'Justice should be the dominant question in the issue of restitution of Jewish property.'

Rabbi Yakov Dov Bleich

Ukraine

Victims of L.A. airport shooting lose

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — The families of two Israeli-Americans killed by a terrorist at Los Angeles International Airport are not due any compensation from the City of Los Angeles, a federal judge has ruled.

The victims, Yaakov (Jacob) Aminov, 46, and Victoria Hen, 25, were standing at an El Al check-in counter when they were gunned down by Egyptian immigrant Hesham Mohamed Hadayet on July 4, 2002.

Hadayet was killed immediately after the shooting spree while wrestling with El Al security guard Arie Golan.

In dismissing the \$87.5 million multiple suits against the city March 29, U.S. District Judge Alicemarie Stotler ruled that California law grants immunity to public agencies for failure to provide adequate police protection.

Attorney Richard Fine said the victims' families were "devastated and shocked," and he sharply criticized the judge and the city. He promised to take the

case to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

Fine represented Aminov's widow, Adat, their five children, and three children from Aminov's previous marriage. He also represented Hen's parents.

She had been working as an El Al ticket agent for less than two months when she was killed.

In an interview, Fine attacked the ruling in unusually harsh language. "The court and city are saying that the value of an ordinary citizen's life is zero," he charged. "It is a shande," a shame, "that violates every principle of humanity."

He was even angrier at the failure of city and airport police to provide protection, even though law enforcement agencies already had pinpointed the Los Angeles airport and the first July 4 after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks as likely terrorist targets.

"There was only one airport policeman on hand, and he was at the other end of the terminal," Fine said.

A civil suit for compensation against Hadayet's estate is still pending. ■

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At Columbia, tensions persist after report's release

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — A faculty committee investigating charges that Columbia University professors bullied pro-Israel students has issued its findings — but the controversy appears far from over.

The report, issued March 31, found just one incident where a faculty member “exceeded commonly accepted bounds” in responding to a pro-Israel student’s question about whether Israel sometimes warns Palestinians before it undertakes military actions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The report also found no evidence of statements by faculty that “could reasonably be construed as anti-Semitic.”

But pro-Israel students, including some who were interviewed by the committee and said their stories were ignored in its findings, blasted the report.

They said that by focusing on only three instances of alleged intimidation — and particularly on accusations that garnered the most media attention in recent months — the ad hoc committee had made plain its intentions.

Meanwhile, several university faculty have reacted by slamming the report as a McCarthyist assault on academic freedom. Addressing some 300 to 400 members of the university community Monday at an event sponsored by a group called Stop McCarthyism at Columbia, some of the professors also lashed out at Israel and Zionism.

“If some Columbia faculty are going to be stigmatized for being anti-Zionism, then let me be among them,” said Noha Radwan, an assistant professor in the Middle East & Asian Languages & Cultures department. “I am anti-Zionism.”

Gil Anidjar, also a MEALAC professor, said, “Palestinian rights have been trampled by the Israeli army, Israeli law and Israeli governments for the past 54 years.”

“I would prefer not to single out the State of Israel and those who support its ‘right to existence,’” Anidjar said. “I would prefer not to ask them to explain what that right to existence means, and whether it includes the right to exist as a violent state that discriminates among its citizens on the basis of religion and race.”

Pro-Israel students attacked the report from the other side of the spectrum last week.

“We’re ashamed that Columbia would undertake such a blatant whitewash,”

said Ariel Beery, one of the co-founders of Columbians for Academic Freedom, a student group that has spearheaded the effort to publicize complaints about teachers in MEALAC.

“They were more concerned with solving the problem that’s posed to the university’s image than addressing the injustices that were done to students,” Beery said.

In late October, the David Project, a pro-Israel advocacy group, screened “Columbia Unbecoming,” a documentary it made about student allegations of intimidation.

In December, the university’s president, Lee Bollinger, announced the formation of the committee to investigate the film’s allegations — such as the charge that assistant professor Joseph Massad asked an Israeli student who served in the army, “How many Palestinians have you killed?”

It was Massad who was reprimanded in the report for crossing the line of “accepted bounds” for giving a disparaging response to a questioner he considered too pro-Israel.

At Monday’s event, film professor Lewis Cole said that defending Massad “is the front line of academic freedom today.” Massad himself offered a point-by-point critique of the report, noting that he does not view the committee that issued it as legitimate and that it did not find the charge against him necessarily true, but only “credible.”

“The only possible logic that might have contributed to the findings reported by the committee is the logic of pressure exercised by the administration and outside groups on the committee to declare specific findings,” Massad said.

Even as the professors derided the report, a faculty panel a block away spoke with student leaders about expected changes to grievance procedures in the College of Arts and Sciences. University Provost Alan Brinkley said new guidelines would be announced shortly. The meeting was organized by campus pro-Israel and Arab groups.

Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation league, called the

report’s release a “sad day at Columbia University.”

The report “protects the faculty, gives little credibility to the students, and comes up with no solutions at all to deal with the concerns about intimidation,” Foxman said

in a statement. “The report’s finding that there was no anti-Semitism is a red herring, since no one in responsibility has ever charged the university with engaging in anti-Semitism.

The American Jewish Committee praised the report as “an important step forward,” the group’s executive director, David Harris, said in

a statement.

Just after the report was released, about 75 students, most of them Jewish, attended a news conference March 31 at the university’s entrance, arranged by Columbians for Academic Freedom.

“It’s not over. Oh, no,” Aharon Horowitz, who appears in the David Project video and is a co-founder of the student group, told JTA. “It’s not over until the students who’ve come forward with legitimate grievances are heard.”

Still, he said, “We recognize that our activism has brought the university to a place where issues that were not reckoned with a few months ago are now at the forefront of the agenda.”

The students were joined by at least two faculty members, who also took issue with the report. “We will be gathering together to see what our next step will be,” Awi Federgruen, a professor in the business school and a member of the Columbia chapter of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East, told JTA.

Citing 360 faculty members who have signed on to the scholars group’s listserv, Judith Jacobson, a professor of clinical epidemiology at Columbia, said that there are “enough concerned Columbia faculty to do another internal review.”

In a letter addressed to the Columbia community, Bollinger said he will announce specific actions in response to the report in the next two weeks, adding that the school has begun formulating its reaction. ■

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Ariel Beery

Columbians for Academic Freedom

BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

C-SPAN changes mind on denier

C-SPAN canceled plans to air a lecture by Holocaust denier David Irving.

The network had planned to air a talk by Irving to "balance" a talk by historian Deborah Lipstadt, but after Lipstadt got wind of the plan she refused to allow cameras into a recent talk she was giving at Harvard.

Instead, early this week the network aired a program featuring an interview with a reporter who covered a 2000 trial in which Irving lost a libel lawsuit against Lipstadt and her publisher, Penguin Books, after Lipstadt accused Irving of being a Holocaust denier.

More than 500 scholars had signed a petition protesting the decision to pair Irving and Lipstadt.

At the beginning of the program, C-SPAN executive Connie Doebelle defended the network, but said her use of the word "balance" in describing the original intent was wrong.

Bush official: Democracy trumps borders

Democratic institutions, not borders, are crucial to the making of a Palestinian state, a senior Bush administration official said.

"The true definition of a state is found in its institutions," not its borders, the official said this week in an off-the-record briefing with U.S. Jewish leaders.

The statement underscores President Bush's commitment that Israel will keep some of its West Bank settlements in any final peace deal, and squelches Palestinian hopes for a fast track to statehood.

Bush wants to see Palestinian democracy up and running before they achieve a state, the official said.

U.S. court rejects Palestinian sovereignty claim

A U.S. court rejected the Palestinian Authority's claim that it enjoys immunity from lawsuits.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the First District ruled Monday that the Palestinian Authority must pay \$116 million to the estate of a victim of Hamas terrorism.

The court rejected the P.A.'s claim that the state of Palestine exists.

"It is hard to pin down exactly when or how the defendants assert that Palestine achieved statehood," the court said.

The estate of Yaron Unger sued the Palestinian Authority after he and his wife were killed by Hamas gunfire in 1996.

Edward Bronfman dies

Edward Bronfman, a publicity-shy member of the Bronfman family, died Monday at 77 of colon cancer.

Bronfman was the nephew of Samuel Bronfman, the founder of Seagram Co.

In recent years, Edward Bronfman focused his efforts on philanthropic activity, supporting, among other causes, the Hebrew University and the United Jewish Appeal.

Cantor, you're no rabbi

A cantor in New York was ordered to repay more than \$30,000 to people he had married who thought he was a rabbi.

Jerry Heller, 72, was sentenced Monday.

Under Jewish law anyone can marry a couple, but Heller pleaded guilty in December to charges that he signed civil marriage certificates saying he was a rabbi.

MIDDLE EAST

Sharon, settlers mend fences

Ariel Sharon held a conciliatory meeting with representatives of Israeli settlers slated for evacuation.

The Israeli prime minister received nine leading Gaza Strip settlers in his office Tuesday, the first such meeting since he announced the plan to evacuate the coastal territory and northern West Bank in December 2003.

The visitors presented him with a proposal whereby the Israeli government would create a new town on Israel's southern coast and locate Gaza's settlers there. Environmental groups have protested, noting that the area includes a nature reserve, but Sharon said he would examine the idea.

He also agreed to appoint a government official to attend to the complaints of settlers dissatisfied with the work of the Disengagement Authority, which is handling relocation and compensation.

Shooting in Gaza

An Israeli man was wounded in a sniper attack in the Gaza Strip.

The victim was working on a periphery fence for the Morag settlement when he was shot from the nearby Palestinian city of Rafah.

The Popular Resistance Committees, a terrorist group that did not join the cease-fire brokered by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, claimed responsibility. The Israeli was hospitalized in serious condition.

Face-off in Hebron

Israeli settlers faced off with Israeli security chief Avi Dichter in the West Bank.

The head of the Shin Bet security service came to Hebron on Tuesday to show the flashpoint city to his successor-designate, Yuval Diskin, as he completes his five-year term.

Far-right settlers flocked to the scene, reminded Dichter that he initially had opposed the government's plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank as a security liability, and demanded to know why he had not resigned.

"Quitting is a luxury of the weak," Dichter was quoted as saying.

Prosecutor: Sinai bombers wanted to hit Israel

The terrorists who bombed two Sinai resorts frequented by Israelis did so after failing to infiltrate Israel itself, an Egyptian prosecutor's report said.

Two of the Egyptian plotters will face trial in Egypt for their alleged roles in the Oct. 7, 2004, attack, which killed 32 people, including 12 Israelis.

A third plotter will be tried in absentia. No date has been set for the trial.

Two other people believed to be involved in carrying out the attacks were killed in February.

WORLD

Neo-Nazis sentenced in Germany

Five neo-Nazis were convicted of planning to bomb a synagogue and Jewish center in Munich.

On Tuesday, a German court sentenced the five to probation for their plans to bomb the synagogue and center during a 2003 dedication.