

IN THE NEWS

Rabin remembered 10 years after killing

Israelis marked the 10-year anniversary of Yitzhak Rabin's assassination Friday.

Speaking to Ha'aretz at a ceremony by the slain prime minister's grave, Rachel Ya'akov, Rabin's sister, said Israel is in worse shape today than before Rabin was killed on Nov. 4, 1995, by right-wing extremist Yigal Amir.

President Clinton, meanwhile, told an Israeli television station that he thinks Israel and the Palestinians would have achieved a peace treaty by now had Rabin lived.

Israel back on board joint aircraft project

Israel and the United States will resume cooperation on the Joint Strike Fighter.

The agreement on the state-of-the-art combat-aircraft project emerged last week after meetings between U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and his Israeli counterpart, Shaul Mofaz.

The agreement ends a crisis precipitated in recent years by Israel's sale of arms to China.

Kofi Annan postpones Iran trip

Kofi Annan postponed a trip to Iran after its president called for Israel's destruction.

The U.N. secretary-general, who was to visit Iran on a trip through the Middle East next week, postponed the visit after Mahmoud Ahmadinejad called Oct. 26 to "wipe Israel off the map."

"In light of the ongoing controversy, it would have been difficult to address the agenda that he had wanted to discuss with the Iranian leadership," said Annan's spokesman, Stephane Dujarric.

WORLD REPORT

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Boosting funds for overseas needs remains a challenge for federations

By RACHEL POMERANCE

SYRACUSE, N.Y. (JTA)—When Jewish communal leaders gather for the annual meeting of the North American Jewish federations this month, one thorny issue will persist — how to allocate funds for international needs.

When the United Jewish Communities, the umbrella group of federations, was created six years ago, the move was partially aimed at boosting federation dollars to its overseas partners, the Jewish Agency for Israel, which operates aliyah and Zionist education worldwide, and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which provides relief and welfare for Jews abroad.

With the UJC came the Overseas Needs Assessment and Distribution Committee, referred to as ONAD, intended to establish broad-based participation in determining overseas allocations and inspire a new sense of responsibility.

But ONAD was mired in bureaucracy and widely considered a failure. Howard Rieger, the former president of the United Jewish Federation of Pittsburgh, declared it so when he took the helm of the UJC last year.

While the federations' annual campaign, which tops \$800 million, increased by 4 percent since 2000, dollars overseas have dropped by more than 4.5 percent since 2001, albeit at a less drastic rate than before the merger, according to an Oct. 11 report of the ONAD review process by UJC's executive committee chair, Morton Plant of Baltimore.

After a year of brainstorming and review of the process, federation leaders are slated to determine a new plan at the General Assem-

bly of the United Jewish Communities, which is being held Nov. 13-Nov. 16 in Toronto.

This will be one of many issues explored at the G.A., which will hold workshops on subjects from public speaking and "energizing your e-philanthropy" to finding life balance and promoting leadership opportunities for women.

The opening plenary, "Celebrating Our Accomplishments," will trumpet such federation achievements as raising nearly \$25 million for victims of Hurricane Katrina to aiding the Jews

of Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union.

In fact, the G.A. comes soon after the Sept. 16 launch of Operation Promise, a plan to raise \$160 million over three years to revitalize Jewish youth and aid the Jewish elderly in the former Soviet Union, and to help bring the remaining Jews of Ethiopia to Israel and absorb those currently living there.

Operation Promise already has raised \$25 million in pledges to date, according to UJC spokesman Glenn Rosenkrantz.

It follows earlier attempts at a campaign to absorb Ethiopians in Israel that were ultimately overshadowed by the intifada and related fund-raising priorities.

But some suggest the new campaign is just filling in where ONAD failed.

"There are significant portions of Operation Promise that would not have required a separate initiative had federations been wholly responsive to a succession of ONAD recommendations" on overseas needs, said Richard Wexler of Chicago, UJC vice chair and head of the Jewish Agency's North American Council.

Meanwhile, proposals for a new overseas allocations system are still circulating, with

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FOCUS
ON
ISSUES

■ How to boost federations' overseas funds?

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everyone weighing in, from the federations to their overseas partners — a fact that is inspiring some optimism.

“While the proposal is still a work in progress, I believe that anytime we depend more on democracy of the marketplace rather than top-down planning, we are more likely to obtain a positive result,” said Steven Klinghoffer of Metrow-

est, N.J., the immediate past chair of ONAD.

Sources say early drafts indicate a modified return to the old days — when the Jewish Agency and JDC negotiated their own split in funding of UJC's overseas dollars. That split has long favored the Jewish Agency by a three to one margin. But federations also have a reserve of elective dollars, for which the JDC has increasingly been campaigning directly.

The top priority for UJC's overseas partners is to ensure they receive a minimum amount of federation dollars.

That's particularly on the minds of Jewish Agency leaders, who were meeting this week in Israel for their board of governors meetings.

The board on Wednesday approved a budget of \$287 million for 2006, \$4.3 million less than in 2005. The decrease in the budget came because of a drop in funds from overseas contributions, officials said. The

board passed the budget unanimously but also made provisions for a larger budget, should more funds become available after additional fund raising.

Jewish Agency officials say there were \$92 million worth of programs they were planning to launch but cannot because of the lack of money.

“The Jewish Agency will do what it is supposed to do, the question is will it do enough of what it is supposed to,” said Jay Sarver of St. Louis, the Jewish Agency's budget and finance chairman.

Referring to the new overseas agree-

ment, Sarver said, “What everyone wants to get out of this is a renewed commitment on the part of the American community to fulfill its overseas responsibilities.”

Steven Schwager, JDC's executive vice president, agrees.

“We're interested in a system where everyone bears their fair share of overseas responsibility.”

Appearing to support an old model of negotiation, Schwager said that for 60 years, a handful of JDC and Jewish Agency representatives successfully negotiated their overseas funds from the federation system.

At the same time, Schwager said ONAD bore some positive results, like the creation of overseas committees among federations and increased awareness of overseas needs. ■

We're interested in a system where everyone bears their fair share of overseas responsibility.'

Steven Schwager

JDC's executive vice president

Slovak officials apologize

By DINAH SPRITZER

TOPOLCANY, Slovakia (JTA) — Officials in a Slovak town have apologized to local Jews for a pogrom in September 1945, shortly after the end of World War II.

“We express deep regret of the tragic event, which has no equivalent in our modern history in terms of its evil and inhuman character,” said the statement by Topolcany municipal officials presented to representatives of the Federation of Jewish Communities at a meeting Sunday attended by more than 50 of the town's former Jewish residents.

Topolcany today has a population of approximately 15,000. Some 3,000 Jews lived there before the war. About 10 percent survived the Holocaust and returned from concentration camps, only to face the anti-Semitic wrath of their neighbors, witnesses recalled.

One of them was Ruzena Hornova, 90, who survived the pogrom after some “good-hearted people” from town warned her about it and she managed to hide.

Jan Emila, Topolcany's deputy mayor, said it was hard to find proper words for the apology. Some councilors said they should wait for a comment from the Institute of National Memory.

Frantisek Alexander, chairman of the Slovak Federation of Jewish Communities, told JTA that the apology “was a very good thing, in spite of being quite late. I do not think people have changed that much in the town from the time of the pogrom,

but it was very important for them to hear the words of town officials on the subject.”

Israeli historian Robert Buchler said the riot against Topolcany Jews on Sept. 24, 1945, was provoked by a rumor that a Jewish doctor was injecting children with a poisonous serum. During the pogrom, 48 people were seriously injured, according to the federation.

During World War II, Slovakia was a puppet fascist state that cooperated with Nazi Germany. The regime paid Germany 500 German marks for each Jew deprived of Slovak citizenship and deported to concentration camps. Some 70,000 Slovak Jews were sent to extermination camps, where most of them perished.

The issue remains controversial, even today.

Less than a year ago, the Slovak public TV company broadcast a documentary about the pogrom, but the film, which documented the hatred against Topolcany's Jewish population, caused unintended controversy.

The station director halted the screening shortly before the scheduled broadcast because of extreme anti-Semitic statements made by one resident in the film. The station director said airing the program could violate laws against racial and national defamation.

Critics, including Jewish groups, argued that the program needed to be seen so that an open debate about current anti-Semitism could be held in Slovakia. Following protests, the film was broadcast. ■

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THIS WEEK**MONDAY**

■ The Middle East Institute opens a three-day seminar Monday in Washington on "A Middle East in Crisis." Several sessions deal with the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and include former top-level negotiators from Israel, the Palestinian areas and the United States.

TUESDAY

■ Israel's Labor Party holds its leadership primaries. Incumbent party chairman Shimon Peres faces off against several challengers, including Histadrut labor union leader Amir Peretz.

THURSDAY

■ Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. Secretary of State, departs for a Middle East-Asia tour that will start with stopovers in Israel and the West Bank. She will meet with Israeli and Palestinian leaders and spur them to resolve transit issues between Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Rice wants to strengthen Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas ahead of legislative elections in January.

■ Leaders of B'nai B'rith International and the diplomatic community recognize the 60th anniversary of the United Nations at a reception in the U.N. Delegates Dining Room in Manhattan. Speakers include U.N. General Assembly President Jan Eliasson, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton and Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Dan Gillerman.

■ Investors in venture capital funds and senior executives from leading U.S. technology companies participate in a conference of the Israel Venture Association in Silicon Valley, Calif. Senior members of Israel's own venture capital community also will take part in the conference, which aims to identify partnership and acquisition opportunities among Israeli startup ventures.

■ The U.S. House of Representatives' Education and Workforce Committee's Employer-Employee Relations Subcommittee holds a hearing on the Workplace Religious Freedom Act, which promotes the workers' right to wear ritual clothing and take off their religious holidays. The act is backed by a wide spectrum of the Jewish community.

SATURDAY

■ Former President Bill Clinton, his wife Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice join the family of Yitzhak Rabin in Tel Aviv to inaugurate a center for democracy education 10 years after the Israeli prime minister was assassinated.

SUNDAY

■ The United Jewish Communities holds its annual General Assembly, in Toronto, through Wednesday.

Reform want more involvement

By SUE FISHKOFF

OAKLAND, Calif. (JTA) — When the Union for Reform Judaism got together two years ago for its last biennial, the focus was on Torah and tradition, the reinvigoration of Jewish learning and worship from a Reform perspective.

At this month's national convention in Houston, they'll be talking about how to keep their members in temple long enough to enjoy that heritage.

"The most serious challenge facing North American Jewry today is the low rate of synagogue affiliation,"

URJ president Rabbi Eric Yoffie writes on a Web site devoted to the topic.

The numbers are "so serious," Yoffie says, that he'll launch an initiative at the Nov. 17-20 biennial to promote lifelong synagogue membership. It's the first time he has announced a major initiative in advance of a biennial.

With 900 synagogues and 1.5 million members, the Reform movement is the largest Jewish stream in North America, claiming 39 percent of all affiliated Jews, according to the 2000-01 National Jewish Population Survey.

But the movement also has the highest dropout rate, with 38 percent of members eventually leaving the fold, according to San Francisco's Institute for Jewish and Community Research.

Then there are those who don't belong to any congregation — 54 percent of American Jews, according to the NJPS.

Reaching out to those unaffiliated Jews "remains high on our agenda," Yoffie says, but he adds, "we have a particular responsibility toward those who enter our gates and then ultimately walk away."

That means convincing Reform Jews not to drop out of synagogue life after their kids' bar mitzvahs. It means reaching out to elderly members who have paid their dues for years and now feel marginalized.

It means making sure the synagogue is a warm and meaningful place for singles, interfaith couples, gays and lesbians and childless couples.

"Only 23 percent of our members are two-person families raising children, yet look how much of congregations' budgets are devoted to them," says Kathy Kahn, the URJ's outreach director.

Too many congregations focus on getting new members on the rosters, and don't

follow up to make sure their needs are being met later down the road, Kahn says. She points out that most Reform Jews who drop out do so after family life-cycle events such as a bar or bat mitzvah or confirmation.

Holding onto the "empty-nesters" — couples whose children are out of the home — is "a crucial focus

for congregations," agrees Rabbi James Prosnit of Congregation B'nai Israel in Bridgeport, Conn.

Some Reform congregations have created special programs for each age group, and will share some of those ideas at the biennial.

To make members feel part of a community, the East End Temple in Manhattan created three separate social groups: one for people in their 20s and 30s, one for empty-nesters and a chevrat nashim, or women's group, for elderly women living alone.

Two years ago, Community Synagogue in Rye, N.Y. created specific tracks for members at every stage of life, and with funding from a concerned congregant was able to hire a professional to run its senior program.

The result, says Rabbi Daniel Groper, is that the synagogue building is busy throughout the week, with "adults coming into the building during the daytime, learning and socializing."

But it's not just about programs, some rabbis say.

Rabbi Harry Danziger, president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the Reform movement's rabbinic arm, says most of the 1,700 families in his Memphis congregation "stay cradle to grave."

Members' important life moments are acknowledged and celebrated, Danziger says, "to make certain that we are a congregational family. We leave organizations, but we don't leave family." ■

Too many congregations focus on getting new members on the rosters, and don't follow up to make sure their needs are being met later down the road, Kahn says.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Bahrain ready to end boycott

Bahrain is ready to sign a free-trade agreement with the United States that includes a commitment to end its boycott of Israel.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee worked closely with Congress to shape the agreement.

The U.S. House of Representatives' Ways and Means committee referred the bill to the full House this week with a provision for a yearly assessment of whether Bahrain indeed has ended the boycott.

Ya'alon criticizes Abbas, Assad

The former head of Israel's military said Mahmoud Abbas wants to keep terrorist elements strong as a political tool.

Speaking last Friday to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon said he believes Israel is vulnerable to attacks from the Gaza Strip, and that Abbas, the Palestinian Authority president, is not willing to take steps toward peace.

Ya'alon also said he didn't expect Syrian President Bashar Assad to last in power. "He is performing very badly," he said. "He made all the possible mistakes."

Sixth dies from Hadera bombing

An Israeli woman died of injuries suffered in an Oct. 26 suicide bombing in Hadera.

The 66-year-old woman, who died over the weekend, became the sixth fatality of the attack on the town's marketplace.

The bombing was carried out by Islamic Jihad.

Palestinian's organs to be donated

The family of a Palestinian boy accidentally killed by Israeli troops plan to donate his organs to Jews and Arabs alike.

Ahmed Khatib, 11, was shot Nov. 3 after soldiers scouring the West Bank city of Jenin for terrorists mistook his toy gun for a real weapon.

Khatib's family said that they decided to donate his organs to whomever needs them, including Israeli patients.

Church relics found in jail

The remains of an ancient church were discovered in an Israeli prison.

The Israel Antiquities Authority announced Saturday that the remains of an altar, a mosaic with inscriptions in Greek and a mural showing fish were found in Megiddo Prison, a top-security installation in the Galilee where Palestinian terrorists are held.

The relics may date as far back as the 3rd century.

Jail time for Versailles owners

The owners of an Israeli wedding hall that collapsed in 2001, killing 23 people and injuring more than 350, were jailed.

Jerusalem Magistrate's Court sentenced the two owners of the Versailles hall to 30 months behind bars and gave one of their partners a four-month suspended prison term Sunday.

The three were convicted of negligent manslaughter for ignoring design faults that caused the hall's floor to collapse during a May 2001 wedding.

WORLD

Dutch teen said to threaten El Al plane

A Dutch teenager is under arrest on suspicion of planning to shoot down an El Al plane.

Netherlands television reported last Friday that the 19-year-old son of Moroccan immigrants was among seven terrorist suspects arrested last month.

According to the report, the suspect planned to shoot down an El Al passenger plane as it took off from Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport.

Germany to rebury Jewish bones

Germany ordered authorities to rebury remains thought to belong to Jewish slave laborers killed in the Holocaust.

The bones, discovered during construction work at Stuttgart Airport, are to be put back in the ground without DNA tests that might establish a Holocaust link, Ha'aretz reported.

Jewish religious authorities opposed exhuming and testing the remains.

The bones, found in a mass grave, are thought to be those of Jewish slave laborers who died of starvation or typhoid while working in a Nazi camp between 1944 and 1945.

Poland's chief rabbi becomes Polish

Poland's New York-born chief rabbi became a Polish citizen Nov. 3.

Michael Schudrich, who was appointed to the post in December, told JTA he felt it was unfair to hold such a high honor in the country without accepting the civic responsibilities that go with it.

Schudrich, who will have dual citizenship, has been helping to revive Jewish life in Poland since 1992, when he worked for the Ronald Lauder Foundation there.

He is chief rabbi of Warsaw and Lodz as well.

NORTH AMERICA

Conferees approve Israel aid

House and Senate conferees approved \$2.5 billion in assistance for Israel.

The package, approved by the House last Friday, keeps funding to Israel at current levels, but the Senate vote — likely to take place next week — still could cut foreign aid by an across-the-board percentage because of the costly hurricane season.

The package, which the American Israel Public Affairs Committee lobbied for, includes an additional \$40 million in refugee-resettlement assistance for Israel, money that helps absorb Ethiopian Jews, and provides up to \$75 million annually in additional funds by cutting administrative costs.

The package also preserves \$150 million in assistance to the Palestinians as requested by President Bush, though the money is subject to tough congressional oversight.

JDL member murdered in prison

Jewish Defense League member Earl Krugel was murdered in prison.

Krugel, sentenced to 20 years in prison for his role in a plot to bomb a mosque and the office of an Arab-American congressman, was killed last Friday evening when another prisoner hit him over the head with a cement block, authorities said.

Krugel, 62, had been at the medium-security federal prison in Phoenix for three days.

The murder comes after Irv Rubin, a JDL leader imprisoned for the same plot, died in prison in 2002 in what has been described as a suicide.

Foxman: groups aim to 'Christianize' U.S.

Abraham Foxman pledged to convene Jewish leaders to address what he described as a sophisticated coalition of groups aiming to "Christianize America."

"Today we face a better-financed, more sophisticated, coordinated, unified, energized and organized coalition of groups in opposition to our policy positions on church-state separation than ever before," the national director of the Anti-Defamation League said in a Nov. 3 address at the group's National Commission meeting.

Foxman said he will call the meeting sometime in January to discuss ways to address these concerns, which he said must be done delicately.