

## AFTERWARD

The B'nai B'rith World Center in Jerusalem is a unique institution within the B'nai B'rith international network. Established in 1980 by acclamation of the Order's supreme body—the International Convention—upon the initiative of Israel District #14, the World Center was charged by the International Board of Governors with a number of weighty tasks:

- to serve as the permanent and official presence of B'nai B'rith in Jerusalem
- to serve as the central B'nai B'rith project in Israel
- to serve all B'nai B'rith agencies working for Israel and for the unity of the Jewish people
- to serve as a major bridge linking the Jews of Israel and the Diaspora

The impetus for that initiative was the withdrawal from Jerusalem of nearly all the foreign embassies in reaction to passage by the Knesset of the Jerusalem Law, which extended Israeli sovereignty over all of the united city. Under the slogan “When they move out, we move in,” B'nai B'rith acted like no other Jewish organization at the time to show support for the Israeli government in its decision to place the entire city under Israeli sovereignty and in support of the Jewish people's claim over Jerusalem as its heart and soul.

As told earlier, B'nai B'rith had been present and very active in Eretz Yisrael since the establishment of the Jerusalem Lodge in 1888. But in 1980 there was a clear sense among the local and international

leadership of B'nai B'rith, and among Israeli government officials as well, that this new challenge to Jewish sovereignty over Jerusalem called for an extraordinary response—the establishment of an institu-



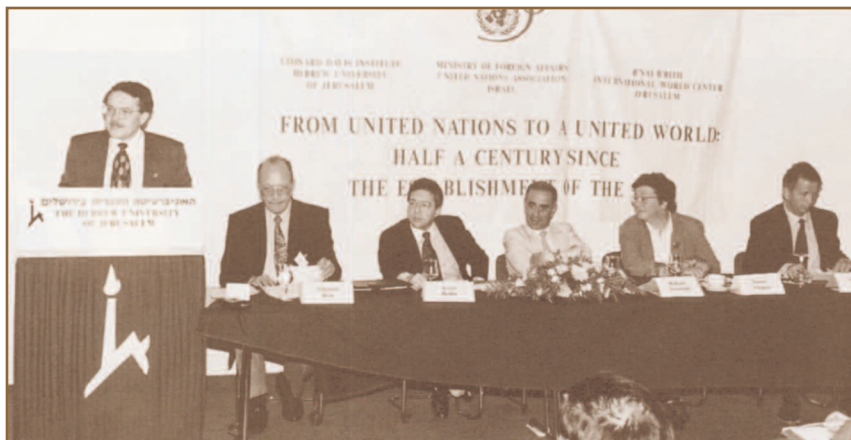
Meeting of the B'nai B'rith World Center Board of Trustees—Jerusalem, 1982.



Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek addressing B'nai B'rith World Center Board—1982. Sitting left to right: Jack J. Spitzer, hon. chairman; Fred S. Worms, chairman, Board of Trustees; Shalom P. Doron, chairman; G. Rabinowitz, president B'nai B'rith Israel; Avigdor Warsha, director, World Center.



Participants in World Center Leadership Seminar—1994.



U.N. Conference—May 1995.



International Conference on Religion and Politics—November 1997.

tion that would directly link B'nai B'rith headquarters in Washington and B'nai B'rith districts around the world with the realities, challenges, and promises of Israel. This was the background upon which the World Center was established.

Ever since the World Center began operations in 1982, its volunteer leadership and professional staff have striven to provide a high level of services to the leadership of the Order, to the international departments housed at B'nai B'rith headquarters, to districts and lodges around the world and to individual members. The World Center has also represented B'nai B'rith in various international bodies, has coordinated B'nai B'rith's delegation to the WZO and the Jewish Agency and has provided on-the-spot reporting on developments and trends in Israel. In addition to other fundraising efforts, the World Center's volunteer bodies—Board of Trustees, Board of Governors, Council, and Executive—contribute sizably to its budget. Those who were engaged in the work of the World Center in the past and those who continue to be engaged today do so in the best spirit of the great founders of B'nai B'rith in pre-state of Israel - to strengthen our people's unity and national character on the basis of pluralism, equality and tolerance.

The list of projects and initiatives undertaken by the World Center over the years is beyond the scope of this article, but a description of some of its most outstanding initiatives is in order:

- It has conducted Leadership Seminars for B'nai B'rith leaders from around the world, providing an opportunity to learn in-depth about the Israeli reality. These seminars were subsidized by funds raised by the World Center.
- It has conducted numerous conferences and symposia on some of the most con-

roversial and important issues facing Israel today: Israel and the Arab World, religious-secular relations, restitution, tolerance, and pluralism, and the economy.

- It established in 1990 its “Award for Journalism” in memory of Wolf Matsdorf, a member of its Executive Committee. The award recognizes excellence in reporting on the Diaspora in the Israeli media, helping to direct more journalistic attention to this vital issue.
- It has initiated programs that have become the mainstay of BBI programming, particularly the international Holocaust memorial project “Unto Every Person There is a Name,” conducted now by B’nai B’rith in over 250 communities across the United States.
- It has been instrumental in raising tens of thousands of dollars in funding and in-kind services for various B’nai B’rith projects such as the B’nai B’rith Klutznick National Jewish Museum, the International Convention, district, and lodge activities, etc.
- It has broken new ground in receiving grant funds from outside institutions such as the Israel Ministry of Tourism; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAF); the Hebrew University; and the German Federal Ministry of Women and Youth. Plans are underway for a second international conference on religion and politics for which KAF has allocated 100,000 DM.
- It has developed close professional links and has provided consistent assistance to B’nai B’rith national departments and Districts in implementing their Israel



Tolerance and Pluralism mission—conducted with UNESCO funding.



Award for Journalism—1997. Sue Fiskoff receiving award from MK. Addisu Messele, Shalom P. Doron and Executive Committee member Asher Weil.



Visit to Israel by B’nai B’rith Uruguay—“Fraternidad Award” winner Carlos Carzogilo—1998.



Congressional Staff Mission—January 1998.

programming prerogatives. These include B'nai B'rith Uruguay, the Center for Public Policy, B'nai B'rith Chile, B'nai B'rith Canada, B'nai B'rith Europe, B'nai B'rith England, the B'nai B'rith Klutznick National Jewish Museum, the B'nai B'rith Center for Community Action, and the B'nai B'rith Center for Jewish Identity. Most recently, the World Center and the Center for Public Policy conducted a mission to Israel for U.S. congressional staffers.

- It has planned and organized visits to Israel by B'nai B'rith international presidents, district presidents, center directors, and other senior members of the volunteer leadership and professional staff.



Ezer Weizman, President of Israel, and B'nai B'rith International President Tommy Baer (center) with World Center Chairman Shalom P. Doron and Director Alan Schneider—1996.



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