

Jewish Officials Pay Tribute to Albanians for Rescue of All Its Jews in the Holocaust



Shmuel Lenchevsky

L-R: Professor Richard Stone, Chairman, Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations; Ezra Friedlander, CEO, The Friedlander Group; Ron Rettner, Luncheon Co-chair; Senator Charles Schumer (speaking); Former Congressman and founding President of the Albanian American Civic League, the Honorable Joseph DioGuardi.

BY SHMUEL LENCHEVSKY

The Kennedy Caucus Room in the Russell Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C., was the venue for celebrating the 100th anniversary of the independence of Albania, which was hosted by the Albanian American Civic League and Albanian American Foundation to highlight the fact that Albania is the only nation that can claim that every Jew who either lived in Albania or sought refuge there was saved during World War II. Furthermore, few people know that the rescue in Albania could not have happened without the help of Albanians living in Nazi-occupied Kosova, which became an independent state in 2008.

Ambassador Barukh Binah, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Israel; Richard Stone, Chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish organizations; Rabbi Levi Shemtov, American Friends of Lubavitch; Bob Levi, newly elected Chairman of the National Council of Young Israel; Rabbi Warren Stone; and Rabbi Leonard Guttman all warmly paid tribute to Albanians whose families, both Muslim and Christian, participated in the rescue of Jews in Albania and Kosova.

Annette Lantos on behalf of her late husband, Congressman Tom Lantos, received recognition for their 20-year effort to bring peace to Southeast Europe and international attention to the story of Jewish survival in Albania.

Albania, which emerged after 400 years of occupation by the Ottoman Empire on November 28, 1912, has good diplomatic relations with the State of Israel.

The luncheon was chaired by Ron and Karen Rettner and hosted by the Albanian American Civic League and Albanian American Foundation, under the leadership of former Congressman and founding President Joe DioGuardi and Balkan Affairs Adviser Shirley Cloyes DioGuardi. The luncheon featured the participation of Representatives Dana Rohrabacher, Chairman of the Oversight and

Investigation Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Rohrabacher is a most forceful spokesman for human rights and democracy around the world and a great supporter of the quest for democracy in Albania. The luncheon also featured International Relations Committee Chair Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, whose grandmother fled the Balkan region during the First Balkan War.

Senator Charles Schumer of New York addressed the participants as well. Senator Schumer introduced a resolution commending the people of Albania for protecting and saving the lives of all Jews who lived in Albania or sought asylum during World War II. Other distinguished speakers included Lekë Reznqi, Secretary of the Kosova-Israeli Friendship Association; Representative Tom Reed; and Congressman Howard "Buck" McKeon, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, among others.

Congresswoman Nan Hayworth was commended for her leadership of the Raoul Wallenberg Congressional Gold Medal legislation. Participants at the luncheon included the leadership of the Jewish and Albanian communities. Johanna Neumann, a spokesperson for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, a living testimony to the above claims, spoke about how her family sought refuge in Albania from Germany and subsequently survived the Holocaust.

"To commend Albanians for protecting and saving the lives of all Jews who either lived in Albania or sought asylum there during the Holocaust is our everlasting obligation to the Albanian people and indeed a testament to the unique character of the Albanian people. The Jewish people will be eternally grateful to Albanians and I know that I speak on behalf of the Jewish community when I say we don't have enough praise for Joe DioGuardi and Shirley Cloyes DioGuardi for their commitment to bringing to light this incredible chapter of Holocaust history," said Ezra Friedlander, CEO of The Friedlander Group, whose firm coordinated the luncheon tribute.

Tehillim Kollel Opens Third Branch

Rabbi Asher Rubin, Rosh Yeshivah, Yeshivas Zichron Yoel, speaking at the *l'chaim*.The new *minyan* in Williamsburg saying *Tehillim*.

BY YOEL KRAUSZ, YHK SERVICES

On Wednesday, November 14, Erev Rosh Chodesh Kislev, the Tehillim Kollel officially celebrated the opening of its new Williamsburg branch, the third in the greater New York area. An inspiring program was held to mark the event at the Dinov shul at 77 Wallabout Street, where the Williamsburg *minyan* will gather on a daily basis all year long to complete *sefer Tehillim*.

As the clock struck six a.m., when the streets were still awash in darkness, the members of the new *minyan* gathered at the shul and began reciting *Tehillim* with heartwarming fervor. The sweet words of Dovid Melech Yisrael hung in the air, creating an uplifting atmosphere.

Tehillim was followed by a beautiful *Shacharis*, after which the participants wished each other *l'chaim* and enjoyed abundant refreshments prepared by the Tehillim Kollel. Harav Hershel Meisels,

spiritual leader of the Williamsburg branch, welcomed the participants and delivered the opening address.

Afterward, the distinguished founder and director of the Tehillim Kollel, Harav Mordechai Friedman, delivered a speech in which he extended an open invitation to Williamsburg residents to visit the new branch any day and join the *Tehillim minyan* in fervent supplication.

Harav Asher Mordechai Rubin, *Rosh Yeshivah* of Zichron Yoel, delivered inspirational words, reminding the members of the *minyan* that *Tehillim* has always been the most potent *segulah* known to *Klal Yisrael*.

Harav Bentzion Rabinowitz, son of the Rebbe of Dinov, *shlita*, spoke as his father's representative, expressing the Dinov community's gratitude for the opportunity to host such a great project — a *minyan* praying daily in the merit of Dovid, the eternal *melech* of *Klal Yisrael*.

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