



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Twenty-five Jews who have worked on furthering relations between Catholics and Jews will meet with Pope John Paul II in New York on Saturday night. The brief meeting with the pope is expected to be more ceremonial than substantive, but Jewish leaders say the meeting reflects the seriousness with which the pope takes the subject of Jewish-Catholic relations.

■ Egypt's largest Islamic militant group reportedly threatened to use "all means of violence" against Americans in the wake of the conviction this week of terrorist leader Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman. The Islamic Group, many of whose members consider the sheik their spiritual leader, issued the threat in pamphlets circulated in southern Egypt.

■ Argentine police arrested 20 people in Buenos Aires in an effort to find those responsible for the July 1994 bombing of the Jewish community center there. The arrests came in the wake of criticism at a recent U.S. congressional hearing that the Argentine government had not carried out a vigorous investigation of the bombing, which claimed the lives of 86 and left more than 300 wounded.

■ Jewish settlers broke into a Palestinian girls school in the West Bank town of Hebron, angered by the raising of a Palestinian flag there. The settlers reportedly scuffled with parents and officials at the school, the site of repeated Jewish-Arab confrontations last month.

■ Masked gunmen shot dead a Palestinian Authority official's bodyguard in Gaza in an attack whose motives were unclear. The killing took place outside the home of Brig. Gen. Mahmoud Abu Marzook, head of civil defense in Gaza.

■ The Israel Defense Force removed one of its checkpoints in the West Bank town of Hebron as part of Israel's pledge to take steps to normalize life for Arab residents of the town during the interim-phase agreement. The Palestinian Authority called on Israel to dismantle other major IDF checkpoints in the heart of Hebron as a further confidence-building measure.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Five years after German unity, Jews in Berlin remain divided

By Miriam Widman

BERLIN (JTA) — Five years after German reunification, the East-West difficulties that have affected nearly every aspect of the consolidation have also spilled over into the Jewish community.

"The East-West conflict was brought into our community," says Eva Nickel, a social worker who is a longtime member of east Berlin's Jewish community. "It didn't come from within."

Since the two Germanys officially united Oct. 3, 1990, serious tensions have appeared in the Jewish community.

In Berlin, the front line for unification, there is often little interaction between the two halves of the city's Jewish communities.

Few west Berlin Jews regularly attend services in east Berlin's only functioning house of worship, the Rykestrasse Synagogue — and few easterners go west.

In addition, there are no east Berliners on the five-member board of directors of the city's approximately 11,000-strong Jewish community.

Peter Ambros, a spokesman for the community, says the board is representative of all Berlin Jews.

There are only about 180 Jews in east Berlin, Ambros said.

But to the annoyance of some Jews in the east, the west Berlin community often appears to take action as it sees fit without consulting them.

They cite what is for them a perfect case in point: At recent Rosh Hashanah services at the Rykestrasse Synagogue, an organ was brought from west Berlin to the east Berlin synagogue so that a west Berlin cantor could sing with a choir there.

This occurred without any consultation with the Rykestrasse members, they say. Many were outraged at the action and did not appreciate having an organ and a choir suddenly arrive in their place of worship.

Conversations with Berlin Jews indicate that many westerners are unaware of what Jewish life is like in the east.

Asked about the current tendency in the Rykestrasse Synagogue toward a more liberal German Reform-style service, Jerzy Kanal, chairman of Berlin's Jewish community, said, "There are 20 to 30 people at best who go to the Rykestrasse. And most of them are immigrants. They don't know anything about religion."

Women wear kipot during services

The previously minuscule Jewish communities in the former East Germany have grown, largely due to the influx of Jews from the former Soviet Union.

Congregants at the east Berlin synagogue say that theirs is the only one in town that adheres to the liberal prewar principles of German Judaism.

Thanks largely to a group of activist women and to an open-minded cantor, women wear kipot during services at the Rykestrasse and occasionally organize special events.

For some east Berlin Jews, it is not surprising that those in the west are unaware of Jewish activities on the other side of town.

"The east is treated by the west community like a stepchild," said Lara Daemmig, an east Berlin librarian who regularly attends services in the Rykestrasse.

Jews in west Berlin "don't observe so closely what is happening here. It isn't so important to them," she said.

"We have had people from the west come and tell us about anti-Semitism in east Germany," says Heinz-Joachim Aris, a member of the board of directors of the Jewish community in the eastern German city of Dresden.

In an interview in the community's renovated offices, Aris, whose father was the longtime president of the Association of Jewish Communities of the former East Germany, said he is not surprised by such utterances. The problem, he said, is not a Jewish one, but an East-West one.

Unlike the issues dividing the Berlin communities, there is one problem that confronts Jewish communities throughout Germany. Peter

Fischer, a member of the board of directors of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, said it is still impossible to find a rabbi from abroad who is willing to work in Germany — east or west.

Thus, in at least one respect, there has not been any change since unification: No Jewish community in the east has a full-time rabbi.

"I'm rather disappointed about this," Fischer says. "The numerous declarations from abroad about a solidarity partnership cannot stop with money. But I think it is a problem for Jews to come to Germany." Fischer, attempting to explain the situation, believes that it stems from a disbelief among Jews abroad that any Jew would want to live in Germany after the Holocaust.

The rise of anti-Semitism and xenophobia in the wake of the Berlin Wall's fall has not made Germany any more attractive in foreign eyes. But Jews who lived in the Communist era say they actually prefer the current surfacing of such sentiments rather than the hidden anti-Semitism that was present earlier.

"I don't know any country where it's easy to be a Jew," says Salomeah Genin, an east Berlin Jew who immigrated with her family to Australia and returned to Germany in the 1950s. A devoted Communist, she fought to enter the former East Germany — and got her wish in the early 1960s.

Commenting on statements issued by the East German government — that there was no anti-Semitism and that the country was a home for Jews — she says she could never speak out in public against those lies.

But nowadays, "I'm less afraid," she says, adding that anti-Semitism is "at least spoken out loud. I know what I'm confronted with, and I can scream." □

Study: Breast cancer strikes Jewish women more than others

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — A new finding that as many as 1 percent of American Jewish women of Ashkenazi descent have a breast cancer-causing genetic defect means that breast cancer has become the most common genetically caused disease in the Jewish community.

The defect is also found in Jews at least three times more often than in the general American population, the study found.

The discovery was a joint effort by American and Israeli researchers, led by the United States' National Institutes of Health, which are based in Bethesda, Md., and Hadassah Hospital, located in Jerusalem.

"With every bit of new information we can find we're that much closer to a cure," said Judy Garner, national chairwoman of Hadassah Cares, Hadassah's breast cancer awareness program.

"Our government has to fund a lot more breast cancer research. We can't put our heads in the sand," she said.

The finding, published in the October issue of the medical journal *Nature Genetics*, is based on a study of blood samples from 858 U.S. Jews whose ancestors are from Central or Eastern Europe. Between 80 percent and 90 percent of American Jews are of Ashkenazi heritage.

About a year ago, the mutation of the gene known as BRCA1 was found to be linked to cases of breast cancer that run in families.

Between 5 percent and 10 percent of breast cancers run in families.

The question of whether the mutation was linked to Jewish ancestry was raised because several Jewish participants in the initial study were found to have a mutation of the very same gene.

None of the 815 non-Jews in the sample whose findings were just reported had the same defect.

A woman with a family history of breast cancer and the genetic mutation has an 80 percent to 90 percent likelihood of getting breast cancer and a 40 percent to 50 percent chance of getting ovarian cancer. Those with the mutation may also be more likely to get colon cancer. Men with it may be more likely to get prostate cancer.

The finding raises questions about whether all 6 million American Jews should be encouraged to test for the mutation.

Two larger-scale studies are getting under way to determine whether this is, in fact, the next step.

The National Cancer Institute, based in Washington, is conducting a study of 4,000 to 5,000 Jewish women and men in the Washington and Baltimore areas.

The study, which will involve testing for the BRCA1 mutation and extensive family medical histories, is expected to be completed next spring.

A similar study will be conducted in New York.

"This exciting finding should allow us to move rapidly toward our goal of identifying high-risk women and helping them to prevent breast cancer before it strikes," Donna Shalala, health and human services secretary, said in a statement from the National Institutes of Health.

In recent years, scientists — and Jewish women — have noticed that breast cancer seems much more prevalent in the Jewish community than among non-Jews. Being Jewish has even ranked inclusion on the list of risk factors determined by researchers.

But some observers say that much of the breast cancer among Jews may not be because of ethnicity or religion, but because of the way Jewish women live.

Earlier studies found a 10 percent to 20 percent higher rate of breast cancer among Jewish women than non-Jewish, but suggested that the increase was based on diet and other nonhereditary factors.

More likely to stay single

For example, higher rates of breast cancer are found among women who do not bear children or who give birth for the first time after age 30.

Jewish women are twice as likely as non-Jewish white women to be more extensively educated and remain single — and therefore less likely to give birth — through their early 40s, said Susan Weidman Schneider, editor of the Jewish women's magazine *Lilith*.

"Jewish women are not only the best-educated women in America today, but it certainly looks like they are the ethnic group most likely to get breast cancer," said Schneider, whose quarterly magazine first examined the links between breast cancer and Jewish heritage in an article by Yael Green in 1994. The current issue includes three stories about being Jewish and having breast cancer.

The article in *Nature Genetics* about the Ashkenazi mutation on BRCA1 was written by Drs. David Goldgar and Philip Reilly.

North American Jewish women with Ashkenazi ancestors are not the only ones to have an extraordinary link to breast cancer.

In an earlier study, a similar link was documented more than a year ago by Hadassah Hospital researchers, who found a significantly higher incidence among Ashkenazi immigrants to Israel than among immigrants from Sephardi, or Middle Eastern, countries.

They also found that breast cancer attacks 80 out of every 100,000 Jewish women in Israel, but only 17 out of every 100,000 non-Jewish women there.

In North America, between 100 and 110 women out of every 100,000 in the general population get breast cancer. □

Settlers cross Jordan River to protest Palestinian self-rule

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A group of Jewish settlers crossed the Jordan River and entered Jordanian territory on what was their second day of protest against expanding Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank.

Israeli security forces reportedly failed in their efforts to prevent about 100 settlers from breaking through a border fence and wading across the Jordan River.

Carrying placards written in English, Hebrew and Arabic, the residents of Jordan Valley settlements said they were demonstrating against what they called security threats confronting them as a result of the Interim Agreement, signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization last week in Washington.

"We just don't know what will happen," said Coreen Friedman, a resident of a farming settlement. "We are tired of being left in the dark."

Settlers said they were protesting plans to expand the Jericho self-rule enclave. They said they would rather live under the rule of Jordanian King Hussein than under Palestinian autonomy.

The group agreed to return to the Israeli side of the Jordan River after they met with two Jordanian army officers and presented them with a message to deliver to Hussein.

About 13 of the settlers were arrested by Israeli security forces after they crossed back into Israel.

Military sources said charges may be filed against them for illegally crossing a border.

In Jerusalem, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin dismissed the settlers' claims.

He told a Cabinet meeting that no changes had been made to the West Bank maps signed by Israel and the PLO, and that the Jericho self-rule area would only be expanded by about three or four miles.

No Palestinian police stations would be set up in the Jordan Valley, he said.

Meanwhile, Likud opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu toured Jewish settlements in the region Monday, charging that Rabin had allowed the Jordan Valley to slip out of Israel's hands.

Netanyahu also maintained that Rabin had broken his promise to make the Jordan Valley region Israel's security border.

Netanyahu told settlers that he planned to submit a bill in the Knesset that would call on the government to annex the region. □

Monument unveiled honoring massacre victims at Olympics

By Gil Sedan

BONN (JTA) — On the eve of the signing of the Interim Agreement between the Palestinians and the Israelis, a monument unveiling halfway around the world served as a reminder of the darkest days of Palestinian terrorism.

Near the site of the 1972 massacre that took the lives of 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics, a monument in their memory was revealed last week.

But even as German and Jewish dignitaries gathered alongside the victims' family members to commemorate the dead, there was bitterness over the monument and what it stood for.

They had originally thought to boycott the event just 10 days before — but the German Olympic Committee agreed to say on the plaque that the Israelis were victims of a terrorist attack.

The original text said the athletes were victims of simply "violence," which had enraged many Jews invited to the ceremony.

The plaque unveiled at the Wednesday ceremony did not reflect the change, because the new one was not ready in time.

Palestinian terrorists belonging to the Black September movement infiltrated the Olympic Village on Sept. 5, 1972, the 11th day of the Munich Olympics. The terrorists killed two Israeli athletes and took nine other hostage, demanding the release of 200 Arab prisoners in Israel.

In a shootout in the airport later that day when German police attempted to free the Israeli hostages, the nine were killed, as were a German police officer and five of the terrorists. Three of the Palestinians were arrested.

Relatives of the victims have blamed the German police for responsibility for the attack, and have sued the local authorities for compensation. The trial is pending. □

One of largest neo-Nazi trials under way in western Germany

By Gil Sedan

BONN (JTA) — One of the largest trials against neo-Nazis began last week under tight security measures in a court in Koblenz, a city in western Germany.

Sixteen people were accused of belonging to three unlawful neo-Nazi organizations — Deutsche Alternative, Aktionfront Nationaler Kameraden and Deutschen Nationalisten.

Those charged were between 17 and 65 years old. Among the defendants is Michael Petri, the chairman of Deutsche Nationalisten, who is one of the key figures in the neo-Nazi scene in Germany.

Deutsche Alternative was declared unlawful Dec. 8, 1992. Four months later, a federal court ruled that the organization was of an anti-Semitic and racist nature and was patterned after the Nazis.

The defendants allegedly recreated the banned organization under new names: Aktionfront and Deutschen Nationalisten.

Police recently broke up violent clashes between neo-Nazis and leftist opponents in the southern town of Passau, which borders Austria. More than 20 people, both neo-Nazis and leftists, were arrested, police said. □

Court: Why no Shin Bet prosecution?

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's Supreme Court has ordered authorities to explain why two Shin Bet interrogators who shook a detainee to death were not prosecuted.

Abdel-Samad Harizat, 29, died after an April interrogation by the Shin Bet, Israel's domestic intelligence service.

A pathologist who attended his autopsy said he had suffered fatal injuries from being violently shaken.

After a petition from a group called the Committee Against Torture, the court gave Attorney General Michael Ben-Yair 45 days to explain why the interrogators and their superior were not prosecuted in a criminal court for Harizat's death.

The two interrogators were censured in an internal disciplinary hearing.

Harizat, reportedly a member of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement, had been questioned in connection to a series of bomb attacks against Israel.

The interrogators had violently shaken Harizat under a special permit allowing the Shin Bet to use harsher methods in questioning suspected Islamic militants. □

O.J.'s lead attorney criticized for using Holocaust metaphors

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — The verdict may be in, but reverberations from the closing arguments of the O.J. Simpson murder trial continue.

Just when watchers of the O.J. Simpson murder trial thought they had heard everything, a flamboyant defense lawyer managed to drag in Hitler and the Holocaust on the final day of arguments.

Jewish agencies immediately denounced the rhetoric by Johnnie L. Cochran Jr., Simpson's lead attorney, while a local Jewish lawyer said the suffering of his family at Nazi hands was a source for Cochran's remarks.

The reference to Hitler was introduced by Cochran while denouncing former Los Angeles Police Detective Mark Fuhrman, a key prosecution witness.

During the trial, Fuhrman had been called a racist. According to one witness' testimony, Fuhrman had said that if he had his way, "all the niggers would be gathered together and burned."

In comparing Fuhrman to Hitler, Cochran told the jury that "there was another man not too long ago in the world who had those same views, who wanted to burn people, who had racist views and ultimately had power over people in his country."

Cochran said: "People didn't care. People said he's just crazy. He's just a half-baked painter. And they didn't do anything about it. This man, this scourge, became one of the worst people in the world, Adolf Hitler, because people didn't care, didn't try to stop him."

"Fuhrman wants to take all black people now and burn them or bomb them," said Cochran. "That's genocidal racism."

The Anti-Defamation League and the Simon Wiesenthal Center immediately criticized Cochran's analogy. In a written statement, the ADL reported that its offices throughout the country had been "besieged with calls of outrage."

"However vile Fuhrman's words have been, the comparison to Hitler's deeds is insulting and demeaning to the millions of his victims and to a world that was racked by war for six years," the ADL said. "The metaphor trivializes a profound historical tragedy."

'Comparison wholly inappropriate'

Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Wiesenthal Center, said, "The whole world knows Mark Fuhrman is a racist and an anti-Semite, to boot. That said, Johnnie Cochran's comparison of one racist Los Angeles policeman to mass murderer Adolf Hitler was, to say the least, completely inaccurate and wholly inappropriate."

Most incensed was Fred Goldman, the father of murder victim Ronald Lyle Goldman. "We have seen a man who perhaps is the worst kind of racist himself, someone who compares a person who speaks racist comments to Hitler, a person who murdered millions of people," said Goldman, who is Jewish.

Expanding on the controversy, the Los Angeles Times reported Saturday that Charles Lindner, a Jewish lawyer who helped Cochran in fashioning his closing argument, drew on his family history in introducing the Holocaust theme.

Lindner said he told Cochran that his grandmother's German Jewish family "was killed in the gas chambers by a house painter who was crazy and no one took him seriously until it was too late."

"I was trying to get Johnnie (Cochran) into the frame of mind to talk about Fuhrman as the personification of evil," Lindner told the Los Angeles Times.

Although he was surprised by Cochran's specific reference to Hitler, rather than to Nazis in general, Lindner defended the Simpson attorney. "Remember, Marcia Clark, who is also Jewish, said Fuhrman 'shouldn't be on the planet' in her closing argument," said Lindner. "She and I are both Jewish and we understand evil. I am a Jew. I was the stimulus for Johnnie's comments."

Lindner added: "And for those who say that Hitler is proprietary to the Jews, he isn't. What we were trying to convey, what Johnnie was trying to convey, is that we shouldn't allow men like this — either Hitler or Fuhrman — to have control over people's lives."

Cochran told the Los Angeles Times that he was deeply hurt by criticism of his controversial remarks. He said that when he was younger, he was one of the pioneers of the black-Jewish coalition. "I have been to Israel on two occasions. I have been to Yad Vashem. That is why this is so painful to me. The Holocaust should never be repeated," said Cochran.

"I would never trivialize the tremendous loss of lives during the Holocaust," Cochran concluded. "But when you have a person who says he would like to burn all black people, is that such a quantum leap to say if this man is left unchecked he would be a scourge?"

Cochran was also criticized privately by some Jewish observers for surrounding himself last week with eight bodyguards from the Nation of Islam, headed by Louis Farrakhan, who is notorious for frequent anti-Semitic slurs. □

Air Force library to change name due to scientist's Nazi past

By Alissa Kaplan

NEW YORK (JTA) — The sadistic Nazi background of a late German scientist known as the "father of U.S. space medicine" has resulted in plans to remove his name from a U.S. Air Force library, the World Jewish Congress said.

In 1993, soon after the scientist's background was first uncovered, his portrait was removed from a mural of medical heroes at Ohio State University.

Scientist Hubertus Strughold, who died in 1986, was secretly brought to the United States in 1945 to work on the space program, even though he was sought for prosecution at Nuremberg.

These types of stories are always "shocking," but no longer "surprising," Elan Steinberg, WJC executive director, said in an interview last week.

The library at the School of Aerospace Medicine at Brooks Air Force Base in Texas had been named to honor Strughold, who helped develop the pressure suits used by astronauts as well as the U.S. space capsule.

Steinberg said the recent announcement about the library was delayed for bureaucratic reasons, among others. But he added: "To the credit of the Clinton administration, there is a genuine desire to face history honestly."

Strughold's name had appeared in a formerly secret intelligence document showing that the U.S. Army listed him as "wanted" on its 1945 Central Registry of War Criminals and Security Suspects.

As the head of Nazi Germany's Air Force Institute for Aviation Medicine, Strughold participated in a 1942 conference that discussed "experiments" on human beings carried out by the institute. The experiments included subjecting Dachau concentration camp inmates to torture and death by being immersed in water, placed in air pressure chambers, forced to drink sea water and exposed to freezing temperatures.

Strughold had denied approving the experiments and said he learned of them only after World War II. □