



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 76, No. 23

Thursday, February 5, 1998

81st Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Ministry backs housing plan

Israel's Interior Ministry approved plans by U.S. millionaire Dr. Irving Moskowitz to build 132 apartments for Jews in predominantly Arab eastern Jerusalem.

But a spokesman for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the government would block the move because it could exacerbate tensions with the Palestinians. [Page 4]

Knesset backs compromise

Sixty-five legislators in the 120-member Knesset signed a letter supporting the recommendations of a government committee seeking to resolve the crisis over conversions performed in Israel.

Four members of the National Religious Party were among those signing the letter, which was submitted to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Poland assures Jewish leaders

Poland's deputy prime minister promised Jewish leaders that the new Polish government would press forward on issues of restitution to the Jewish community.

Poland's minister of art and culture also said she is going to press the idea of extending a silent zone around the Auschwitz concentration camp to "maintain the dignity of the site," according to Kalman Sultanik, vice president of the World Jewish Congress and president of the Federation of Polish Jews in the United States.

Firebomb thrown at Amir home

A firebomb was thrown at the home of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's convicted assassin, Yigal Amir, causing damage to a fence, but injuring no one. No suspects were caught.

The incident came one day after vandals spray-painted slogans calling Rabin a traitor and a murderer on a memorial to him in Jerusalem.

State Dept. omits 'Palestine'

The U.S. State Department plans to change a reference to "Israel-Palestine" in an interim report on religious persecution around the world.

The new version, which officials said would be posted on the State Department web site, will instead make reference to the "Israel-Palestinian" conflict.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Papon may benefit from extended war crimes trial

By Lee Yanowitch

PARIS (JTA) — The war crimes case against accused Nazi collaborator Maurice Papon appeared to be open and shut at the start of his trial.

But what once seemed simple has become complex, making the verdict increasingly unpredictable with each day of proceedings.

The 4-month-old trial has visibly exasperated the media — and some lawyers fear it could have the same effect on the jurors.

"I am afraid that public opinion may change," said lawyer Gerard Boulanger, who launched the first suit against Papon in 1981. "The exasperation could become so great that it would cause the jury to revolt. That would be catastrophic."

The numerous postponements sought by the 87-year-old Papon because of complaints of ill health have contributed to the slow pace of the trial.

These delays were so frequent at the start of the trial that lawyers for Holocaust victims and their families accused Papon last November of using his health as an excuse to delay the trial.

The trial encountered another difficulty last week, when a prosecution lawyer dropped a bombshell that could have derailed the proceedings entirely.

Arno Klarsfeld, son of famed Nazi-hunter Serge Klarsfeld, called for the presiding judge to remove himself because of a conflict of interest, saying he was related to Jews whom Papon allegedly had deported from the southwestern city of Bordeaux during the wartime Vichy regime and who later perished at Auschwitz.

Part of the reason behind Klarsfeld's call was the fear that if he had not revealed the family link, the defense would do so to discredit a conviction.

But Klarsfeld himself admitted that the move was also motivated by a personal vendetta against Judge Jean-Louis Castagnede, who has allowed Papon to go free for the duration of the trial instead of keeping him in prison, as is customary in France, or under surveillance in a hospital.

The public prosecutor, as well as the other lawyers for the civil plaintiffs, denounced Klarsfeld's motion and France's umbrella group for Jewish secular groups, CRIF, asked him to back off.

In a sharp turnaround Monday, Klarsfeld withdrew his motion calling for the judge to step down — a move that brought evident relief to those who did not want to see the already drawn-out trial thrown into further disarray.

But beyond Papon's health claims and the abortive move by Klarsfeld, the proceedings — which opened Oct. 8 and initially were scheduled to end Dec. 23 — have also been extended by lengthy testimony from historians and witnesses, as well as by a painstaking analysis of the hierarchy of the Bordeaux prefect's office, where Papon was the second-highest-ranking official and acted as supervisor of the Office for Jewish Questions during the Nazi occupation.

A Paris police chief and budget minister after the war, Papon is accused of ordering the arrest of 1,560 Jews, 223 of them children, for deportation to death camps between 1942 and 1944.

Papon denies the charges against him, saying he was a powerless underling who spent the war saving Jewish lives.

Now, even those who had been fervently in favor of the trial have voiced their disappointment. "Poorly prepared, poorly organized and above all, poorly explained,

MIDEAST FOCUS

Netanyahu convenes Cabinet

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gathered his Inner Security Cabinet to discuss the growing crisis involving Iraq.

The minister of public security, Avigdor Kahalani, and Netanyahu spokesman David Bar-Illan later joined the meeting to discuss ways to keep the Israeli public informed during the crisis.

Meanwhile, the coordinator of Israeli activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip said it was up to the Palestinian Authority to decide whether to distribute gas masks to the Palestinian population. Shlomo Dror's comments came as increasing numbers of Israelis, concerned that Iraq might launch a strike, lined up at gas mask distribution centers.

Helicopter crash remembered

Memorial services took place throughout Israel to mark the first anniversary of the worst military air disaster in Israel's history.

Seventy-three Israeli soldiers died on Feb. 4, 1997, when two helicopters ferrying troops into southern Lebanon crashed near Kiryat Shmona in northern Israel. The disaster prompted two days of national mourning.

Israel targets Bekaa Valley

Israeli jets rocketed Hezbollah positions in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. The assault took place north of the 9-mile-wide security zone Israel maintains in Lebanon to protect northern Israeli communities.

Barak wins mock election

Israeli opposition leader Ehud Barak was elected prime minister — in a Ramat Gan high school election. Barak took 65 percent to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's 35 percent in the mock vote.

The election attracts widespread interest in Israel because it is widely viewed as a litmus test of the national mood.



Daily News Bulletin

Caryn Rosen Adelman, *President*
 Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*
 Lisa Hostein, *Editor*
 Kenneth Bandler, *Managing Editor*
 Lenore A. Silverstein, *Business Manager*

JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
 © JTA Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

the Papon trial is in danger of becoming a disaster," Jewish writer Marek Halter recently wrote in an opinion piece in the French daily Liberation.

The worst blow came from the widely read news magazine l'Express, which described the trial in an article last week as rambling and aimless.

"This artificial dragging out not only creates boredom, but it stresses the shortcomings and irregularities of the proceedings," the article said, blaming the delay on the exhaustive and "repetitive" cross-examinations of the 18 lawyers representing the civil plaintiffs.

The day after the l'Express article appeared, Castagnede summoned the lawyers from both sides to a meeting and ordered them to speed up the proceedings, saying he would also require witnesses to be more concise.

Many observers blame the delays on Castagnede himself for allowing witnesses to ramble endlessly and failing to impose discipline on the proceedings.

While Castagnede's directive to the lawyers may help create order and accelerate the daily arguments, much of the damage may have already been done.

Boulanger, the lawyer who launched the 1981 trial against Papon, voiced the fear that the evidence against Papon — documents from the prefect's office concerning the roundup and transport of Jews — has become lost amid the months of interrogation and testimony by some 50 witnesses.

Another 50 are expected to take the stand.

"The arguments have been diluted. We have gone too far off the track. The main obstacle we must imperatively surmount is the slow pace of the debates," he said.

One critic said that the trial was destroying all the soul-searching France had done to come to terms with its collaborationist past.

"All the historical, pedagogical and cultural work accomplished during the last 20 years is being smashed to pieces," said Maurice Szafran, editor of the weekly magazine Marianne.

Papon is the highest, and undoubtedly the last, French official to go on trial for crimes against humanity.

Legal action was first taken against him 16 years ago, but was repeatedly obstructed by the administration of late President Francois Mitterrand, who was reluctant to see the painful aspects of France's past dragged out for re-examination. □

Holocaust survivor in Holland asks for compensation for forced labor

By Elise Friedmann

AMSTERDAM (JTA) — A Holocaust survivor is asking for compensation from a Dutch company for forced labor during World War II.

Rene Lijdesdorff, who is asking for \$12,500, claims that Heidemij never paid him for his work. "It is impossible to check whether all payments were made correctly," said a spokesman for Heidemij.

Other Holocaust survivors say they worked for the company without payment in other camps.

Heidemij, now renamed Arcadis, denied responsibility following a similar claim in 1963 and continues to do so now.

The spokesman for the company said, however, that Arcadis would try to reach a solution with Lijdesdorff.

Lijdesdorff worked in a camp called Mantinge. Located in the north of Holland, Matinge was one of several camps established in the 1930s for the unemployed, and some 5,000 Jewish men were forced to dig trenches and cultivate land there during the war.

In July 1942, the Jewish laborers of Mantinge were taken to Westerbork — a transit camp for Dutch Jews on the road to Nazi concentration camps.

"Heidemij profited from these camps. I'm not claiming this money for myself; I'm doing it for the boys who didn't return," said Lijdesdorff.

If the compensation is paid, Lijdesdorff said he would donate it to the Westerbork memorial. □

JEWISH WORLD

Anti-persecution summit held

Religious leaders, lawmakers and human rights activists held a summit in Washington to build momentum for legislation aimed at dealing with religious persecution abroad.

Congressional backers of the Freedom From Religious Persecution Act said they hoped to pass the bill later this year.

Commission absolves Jews

A Russian government commission charged with investigating the death of the last Russian czar and his family did not rule out the possibility that it was a Jewish ritual murder, but said it was unlikely.

The commission was responding to a question about Jewish involvement in the death of Czar Nicholas II and his family that had been posed by the Russian Orthodox Church. Jewish officials widely criticized the church for posing the question.

Lileikis trial may start soon

Lithuanian investigators said the trial of a suspected war criminal could begin in four to six weeks.

Aleksandras Lileikis, 90, is suspected of having handed Jews over to death squads in the capital of Vilnius during World War II, when he was deputy head of the Nazi-sponsored Lithuanian security police. Jewish groups have been pressing Lithuania to bring him to trial.

E.U. head to visit Middle East

The head of the European Union's executive body said he would visit the Middle East later this week.

Jacques Santer said he was "very concerned by the fact that the Mideast peace process is blocked," adding that the 15-nation European bloc had a right to involve itself in the process because of the "considerable aid" it has given to the area. The European Union is the largest foreign donor to the Palestinian Authority.

FAA may fine Tower Air

A U.S. federal agency proposed fining New York-based Tower Air \$276,000 for allegedly operating two airplanes that were not fit to fly.

One of the planes flew 32 times between Kennedy International Airport in New York and Israel's Ben-Gurion Airport, the Federal Aviation Administration said in a statement.

Olmert visits Russian hometown

The mayor of Jerusalem visited his family's hometown in Russia. "I've waited for this minute all my life," Ehud Olmert said upon arriving in Samara, located on the Volga River 620 miles east of Moscow.

New York rabbi to lead Reform synagogue in London

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — Great Britain's largest Reform congregation will soon have an American at its helm.

Mark Winer, 55, will be taking over the 2,400-family pulpit of the West London Synagogue as senior rabbi later this month, though on a part-time basis until the synagogue officially approves his appointment in June.

He is succeeding the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn, who was the well-known standard-bearer for Reform Judaism in Great Britain.

Gryn died in August 1996.

Controversy surrounding Gryn's death underscores the deep rift between Reform and Orthodox Jews in Great Britain — a rift that many believe is worse than the one in America.

Britain's chief rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, who is Orthodox, had refused to attend Gryn's funeral.

Later, Sacks wrote a letter saying he would eulogize Gryn in a memorial service as a Holocaust survivor, not as a Reform rabbi.

The letter, sent to the head of an Orthodox organization, was leaked to the London Jewish Chronicle, which published it.

In the letter, Sacks described the Reform movement as a "false grouping" of Jews "who destroy the faith."

Winer said that although the liberal-Orthodox split in England is even worse than it is in America, he anticipates that he and Sacks will have the same kind of close working relationship that he has had with Orthodox rabbis in America.

Winer was an official of the Synagogue Council of America, a now-defunct intradenominational organization that represented the Jewish community in dialogue with non-Jewish religious bodies.

Winer is also walking into a situation not unlike one he recently left in New York, where he was the senior rabbi for 10 years at the Jewish Community Center of White Plains, N.Y.

His congregation, which is now called Congregation Kol Ami, wanted to make his associate rabbi, Shira Milgrom, his professional equal by giving them both the titles "co-rabbis."

Winer, who had brought Milgrom to the congregation, refused and ended up leaving the congregation with the title "rabbi emeritus."

At West London Synagogue, the associate rabbi, Jacqueline Tabick, has run things since Gryn's death 18 months ago and, according to a recent account in the London Jewish Chronicle, many in the congregation believed that she should be appointed his successor.

Tabick, the first woman ordained as a rabbi in Great Britain, has worked at West London for 22 years.

"If I believed for a moment that sexism were the reason she didn't get the job, then I wouldn't take the position," Winer said in a phone interview.

He added, "I am committed to egalitarianism and I look forward to working with her as my colleague."

Since leaving the White Plains congregation, Winer has focused his energies on establishing and leading the National Council of Synagogues, an umbrella group of Reform and Conservative congregations that tried, with only partial success, to succeed the Synagogue Council of America as the central address for dealings with interfaith affairs on a national and international level.

The National Council of Synagogues works with the national leadership of both the Catholic Church and the main Protestant umbrella group, the National Council of Churches of Christ, on issues of Jewish concern.

Of his new job, Winer said, "It is so much of the kind of synagogue and life and values that I treasure Jewishly and culturally.

"This was too good to pass up."

(JTA correspondent Douglas Davis in London contributed to this report.) □

Netanyahu to block move to build in eastern Jerusalem

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — It's a case of *deja vu* all over again.

Replaying a scenario from last year, Israel's Interior Ministry approved plans by an American land developer to build 132 apartments for Jews in predominantly Arab eastern Jerusalem.

But a spokesman for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the government would block the move because it could exacerbate tensions with the Palestinians.

Netanyahu also blocked a project funded by Dr. Irving Moskowitz six months ago to head off mounting political confrontation with the Palestinian Authority.

Interior Ministry officials said the approval for the construction on land owned by Moskowitz, a Miami developer, was granted along with approval for the construction of more than 500 units for Arabs in the Ras al-Amud neighborhood.

Earlier this year, Arab residents of Ras al-Amud filed a suit demanding that the plan for Arab housing be approved. But it was found at the time that both the Arab project and Moskowitz's project had to be approved for either to begin.

Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert said he would not block the two projects.

"I am all for construction for Arabs and Jews," he told reporters.

The Palestinian Authority official in charge of Jerusalem affairs said he hoped the prime minister intended to keep his pledge to block the building.

"We do not understand, why don't the Israelis build in western Jerusalem?" said Faisal Hussein.

The Palestinians want eastern Jerusalem as the capital of a future, independent Palestinian state. The status of the city is one of the issues to be decided in final status negotiations.

The Palestinians broke off political negotiations with Israel last March, after ground was broken for a new Jewish neighborhood in southeastern Jerusalem, saying it was a unilateral move that altered the status quo. □

Estonia suspects Israelis performed illegal transplants

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Kidney transplants recently performed in Estonia have thrown the spotlight on the issue of Israeli organ transplants.

The controversy, which one leading daily newspaper in the Baltic nation has labeled the "scandal of the year," began in early January, when Israeli surgeons transplanted kidneys into Israeli patients at the Central Hospital in the Estonian capital of Tallinn.

The doctors claimed at first that the donors also came from the Jewish state, but this claim was cast into doubt after a report quoted a Russian citizen who said he was a relative of one of the donors.

The surgeons now say that the donors were citizens of Russia, Moldova and Romania, and that the donors gave the organs for free.

Authorities and medical officials in Estonia are questioning this version as well — and the Baltic nation's government and police suspect the transplants may have been linked to the illegal international trade in human organs.

The chief physician of the Tallinn Central Hospital has been fired, while Israel's health minister, Yehoshua Matza, has demanded that Estonia launch criminal proceedings against Zaki Shapira, one of the surgeons who performed the operations.

Estonian police probing the case say the two Israeli doctors who carried out the surgery, the six Israeli patients and the donors concealed the aim of the visit in their visa applications.

In a special session last week, the Estonian Cabinet slammed the operations themselves as "unethical," although it acknowledged that no Estonian laws had been violated.

Estonia is a signatory to an international agreement that bans trade in human organs, but the Estonian Parliament has not yet ratified the document.

According to Dr. Shmuel Penchas, the director general of Hadassah Medical Organization in Israel, the practice of Israelis traveling abroad for transplants is relatively commonplace.

"The only thing new about this is that it's Estonia — and not Turkey or India," he said in a telephone interview. "There are even stories about Israelis getting transplants in Iraq."

The reason for this practice is simple: Transplants are difficult to obtain in the Jewish state. Unless the donor is a relative of the patient, live organ transplants require the approval of the Health Ministry.

The ministry is preparing to submit a bill to the Knesset that would give more power to the committee that decides whether organs from live donors who are not relatives can be carried out.

There are religious obstacles as well. Some Jews oppose transplants because they want their bodies intact when the Messiah comes, when some believe that all Jews are brought back to life. Israel's Chief Rabbinate has officially recognized kidney and heart transplants, according to Penchas, but not all rabbis follow this edict.

In addition, he said, many Israelis who are not observant still have a sense that Jews do not want to bury bodies that are "incomplete."

As a result, Penchas said, "if you get a donor, you empty him," taking all of the organs and body parts that may be transplantable.

While there is a movement in Israel to write living wills and carry donor cards stating a person's wishes to be an organ donor, the legalities of these issues have "not been ironed out," Penchas said. □

(JTA staff writer Peter Ephross contributed to this report.)

Israel cancels plans for pageant

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel has called off plans to host this year's Miss Universe pageant.

In canceling its plans, the Tourism Ministry cited the high costs of staging the event.

The pageant had been slated to be held the Red Sea resort of Eilat this spring. The ministry said that in anticipation of commemorations for the year 2000, it is unable to shoulder the burden of the contest.

The decision drew anger from Eilat's municipal government, which had been banking on the contest to boost its economy. □