



# Daily News Bulletin

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81<sup>st</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### **Papon gets 10 years**

Former Vichy France official Maurice Papon was sentenced to 10 years in prison for his role in deporting French Jews during World War II.

But the jury absolved Papon, who served as a high-ranking official in Bordeaux during the war, of complicity in the deaths of Jewish deportees.

Papon, 87, will remain free during the appeals process. [Page 3]

### **Crown Heights suit settled**

New York City agreed to pay \$1.1 million to 91 members of the Jewish community in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, N.Y.

The payment, which includes an additional \$250,000 to cover the claimants' legal costs, comes as settlement of a lawsuit brought by the community, which charged that the city had not done enough to protect them during the 1991 riots there.

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, citing "a spirit of conciliation," apologized to victims of the melee on behalf of the city, which he said had "made mistakes" in its handling of the rioting.

### **Bomb explodes at Riga shul**

A bomb exploded in the only synagogue in the Latvian capital of Riga.

No one was injured, but the blast seriously damaged the 93-year-old building.

Latvian President Guntis Ulmanis condemned the bombing and called for a separate meeting of the Baltic country's National Security Council to discuss the incident. [Page 1]

### **Lebanon may deploy in south**

Top Lebanese officials are saying that its army will deploy in the southern part of the country if Israel carries out a unilateral withdrawal, a senior American official was quoted by an Israeli newspaper as saying.

Earlier this week, Israel indicated it would accept U.N. Security Council Resolution 425.

The resolution calls for an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon if security can be guaranteed for its northern residents.

Lebanon has officially refused to discuss with Israel security arrangements that would accompany the Israeli pullout because of opposition from Syria, the main power broker in Lebanon.

## **Synagogue bombing rocks Latvian government, Jews**

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — The Latvian government and the Baltic nation's Jewish community are reeling from a bombing that seriously damaged the only synagogue in the Baltic nation's capital city of Riga.

"People are angry and they don't know what to do," Rabbi Mordechai Glazman, said in a telephone interview from Riga.

The early morning blast to the 93-year-old building in Riga's historic Old Town caused an estimated \$20,000 to \$40,000 in damages, but no injuries.

The head of the Latvian Parliament's national security committee, Andrejs Pantelejevs, said the bombing could lead to a shake-up in the country's security establishment. He suggested that the incident occurred "only because Latvian security institutions fail to fulfill their duties."

No has claimed responsibility for the attack, which came on the heels of a recent parade in Riga of Latvian veterans who served in a Nazi SS unit during World War II.

"Someone wanted to intimidate the Jewish community," said Glazman, a Lubavitch rabbi who officiates at the synagogue. Latvia is home to a 17,000-member Jewish community — most of whom live in Riga.

Morning prayers held a few hours after the bombing were attended by a regular group of 30 worshipers.

The Latvian government, which has come under international criticism for allowing the March 16 parade of Nazi veterans was quick to respond to the synagogue bombing.

A few hours after the attack, Latvian Prime Minister Guntars Krasts visited the synagogue and promised that the government would make sure the damage is fixed within a week.

But while the prime minister pledged to have the damaged parts of the synagogue fixed before the Passover holiday, which begins on the evening of April 10, he said it would be impossible to restore the historic synagogue exactly.

Latvian President Guntis Ulmanis condemned the bombing and convened a meeting of his security advisers to discuss the incident and the fate of two senior security officials — State Police Chief Aldis Lieljuksis and the Interior Ministry's state secretary, Andris Staris — who were suspended just hours after the blast.

The two are said to have failed to implement security measures requested by the Jewish community after swastikas and anti-Semitic slogans were painted on a synagogue wall in December. No suspects have been apprehended for that act of vandalism or for a 1995 bombing that took place at the synagogue.

Grigori Krupnikov, chairman of the Latvian Jewish community, said in a telephone interview that it was too early to make a judgment as to who might be behind the latest incident. "We should wait until the results of the investigation are in," he said.

But officials with the Moscow-based Russian Jewish Congress and the Lithuanian Jewish community linked the Riga bombing to last month's Latvian SS Legion reunion.

The explosion, which occurred at 1:50 a.m. Thursday, tore out the 200-pound wooden synagogue door, destroyed all the windows and casings in the basement and the first and second floors, and left deep gouges in the synagogue's wall. The windows of the bottom five floors of two apartment buildings across the street from the synagogue were also shattered.

The bomb had reportedly been placed on the front steps of the synagogue building.

The Peitavas Street Synagogue is the only Jewish house of worship in Riga that

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Palestinians declare strike

Palestinians declared a general strike in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and eastern Jerusalem to protest the killing of Hamas fugitive Mohiyedine Sharif.

Disturbances were reported in various cities and towns in the West Bank as Sharif, a top Hamas fugitive who was killed over the weekend, was buried.

In the West Bank town of Ramallah, Palestinian security forces, who have accused Israel of being behind the murder, detained a number of Hamas activists suspected of being close to Sharif. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has denied that Israel had any involvement in Sharif's death.

### Hamas official to file suit

The Hamas leader who was the target of a botched Mossad assassination attempt last September plans to file a civil suit in Jordan against Israel and the Mossad agents, according to the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz.

According to the report, Khaled Mashaal hopes the court will rule Israel is a state that practices terrorism.

The botched attempt, as well as a failed Mossad operation in Switzerland in February, helped lead to the replacement of Mossad head Danny Yatom.

### Pollard rejects statement

An Israeli ministerial committee approved in principle a statement which declares that Jonathan Pollard was "recruited by people who worked on behalf of the state of Israel."

The statement also said that the former U.S. Navy intelligence analyst serving a life sentence in an American jail for spying for Israel could consider himself an agent for the state "even if his handlers did not receive the necessary authorization."

Pollard said in a statement that he had instructed his attorney to reject what he termed a "bogus offer," saying Israel didn't go far enough.

survived the Nazi occupation. The synagogue's door and stained-glass windows were its original ones and had survived the Nazi bombings and occupation of the country, which occurred from 1941 to 1944.

During the war, all of the other synagogues in Riga were burned down by the Nazis. The buildings in the city's Old Town were built adjacent to each other and burning the synagogue would have led to destroying the entire block.

The Nazis used the synagogue as a warehouse and a stall for their horses.

Earlier this week, the Latvian president sought to quell criticism over the recent gathering of the Latvian SS Legion in Riga.

The legion was part of Latvia's "tragic past," Ulmanis said in a statement issued Tuesday, adding that international society cannot be reproached for not being informed about "details of our history" and for not understanding "the complicated situation at that time in Latvia."

Many Latvians consider the legion heroic because its soldiers fought the Soviet forces that overran the country at the beginning of the war. March 16 was designated the commemoration day because it was on that date in 1943 the legion had its first major fight against the Red Army in western Russia.

During the Nazi occupation of Latvia, most of the country's prewar Jewish community of 90,000 was exterminated. □

## Deportations compared to Passover ritual 'burning'

By Avi Machlis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs has compared the deportation of illegal foreign workers to the ritual of burning chametz, or leavened bread, traditionally performed before the Passover holiday.

Hanna Zohar, coordinator for Kav La'Oved, an organization working to protect the rights of foreign workers, said the terminology reeked of racism.

The ministry said in a statement that police and Labor Ministry officials in Eilat had raided workplaces employing illegal workers in "Operation Biur Chametz" — burning the chametz. They issued deportation orders to 97 illegal foreign workers in the southern resort town.

The operation aimed to "clean up the city ahead of the Passover holiday, from elements that are disrupting public order," said the ministry. It added that the workers rounded up were "homeless people and call girls" who came from India, Thailand, Turkey and Eastern Europe.

Israel's Labor Ministry is headed by Eliyahu Yishai of the fervently Orthodox Shas Party. Ministry spokesman Nahum Ido said he did not know who named the operation — the ministry or the police — and said the name was probably chosen because of the operation's proximity to Passover.

"It was not meant to say the workers are not kosher," he said, adding that he did not think anyone had "given it much thought."

Zohar, from the organization assisting the workers, said the term given the operation "expresses the deep-seated causes behind the entire phenomena of delegitimizing and exploiting foreign workers." Foreign workers had earned a bad reputation, she said, simply because "they are not Jews."

According to Zohar, branding the Eilat deportees "homeless and prostitutes" was also aimed at dehumanizing them. She said many of the workers rounded up in the Eilat campaign were actually Romanian construction workers who left their employers because they have not been paid. There are about 100,000 legal workers and another 150,000 illegal foreign workers in Israel today.

Most labor in the construction industry, which has been short of workers due to repeated closures of the West Bank and Gaza Strip that prevent Palestinians from working in Israel. Yishai has said that importing foreign workers is "a severe mistake which has very negative effects on Israeli society."

The ministry plans to deport up to 1,000 of these workers a month this year. The government deported 953 workers in 1996 and 2,768 in 1997. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Court rules against Kiryas Joel

The New York State Supreme Court again invalidated a special school district established for a suburban New York village whose residents are all Satmar Chasidim.

The court twice before struck down laws drafted by the New York State legislature for the benefit of Kiryas Joel. Lawmakers have been attempting to preserve the community's special school district so that students there can receive the same publicly financed remedial instruction services that students elsewhere are entitled to receive.

### U.S., Austria reach agreement

The United States reached an agreement with Austria that will give American officials access to Austrian archives dealing with World War II.

The agreement, expected to help U.S. officials track down suspected Nazi-era war criminals, came after Austria refused for eight years to provide assistance to the United States in war crimes cases.

### Court convicts Le Pen

A French court convicted far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen of assaulting a Socialist politician during last year's general election campaign. The decision meant Le Pen could be ineligible to run in next year's European Parliament elections.

### Airline: More flights to Israel

A Russian airline announced that it will expand its service to Israel later this year to meet a growing demand. Transaero Airlines said it would add three weekly flights between Moscow and Tel Aviv to the five it currently operates. The route is one of the busiest among a dozen foreign routes operated by Russia's largest privately-owned carrier.

### Judge rules on anti-hate symbol

Five students at a Pennsylvania high school suspended for wearing an anti-swastika symbol returned to class after a federal judge ruled in their favor. School officials had asked the students to stop wearing the symbol — a swastika with a red line through it — saying some people might not understand the anti-racism message.

### Mandela appoints Jewish judge

Judge Richard Goldstone, an internationally renowned Jewish jurist, is among three South African judges appointed by President Nelson Mandela to probe an alleged high-level plot to overthrow the country's government.

Mandela's former wife, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, and senior defense officers were part of the plot, according to a military intelligence report.

## 10-year sentence for Papon evokes relief and bitterness

By Lee Yanowitch

BORDEAUX, France (JTA) — For many Jewish leaders in France and elsewhere, the punishment did not fit the crime.

After 19 hours of deliberation, a jury in this southwestern French city convicted Maurice Papon of complicity in crimes against humanity and sentenced the former Vichy official to 10 years in prison. The mixed verdict left many in the courtroom — including lawyers for the prosecution and defense, and some relatives of Jews deported from France during World War II — far from satisfied.

Thursday's sentence "leaves behind a certain bitterness," CRIF, the umbrella group of secular French Jewish organizations, said in a statement.

Many expressed concern that because of Papon's age and the appeals process, he might never spend a day in jail.

CRIF and other French Jewish organizations applauded the guilty verdict against the 87-year-old Papon, but they were clearly expecting a harsher sentence.

The Jewish Student Union of France said the jury, attempting not to disappoint anyone, managed to disappoint everyone. The group said it "deplores the inadequate link between the crimes he is accused of and the sentence he got."

The trial was the longest in French postwar history and has forced the country to re-examine its role in the wartime Nazi occupation.

French Jewish groups and the lawyers for the civil plaintiffs in the case had expected a life sentence — the legal norm in France for crimes against humanity. However, the state prosecutor in the case, Henri Desclaux, had recommended a 20-year term. In its verdict, the jury of nine civilians and three judges said Papon was guilty on the charges of arrest and illegal deportation of some of the Jews deported from the Bordeaux region. But the jury did not convict him of complicity to murder, accepting the defense argument that Papon was not aware of Hitler's "Final Solution" plan to exterminate the Jews.

One of the lawyers for the civil plaintiffs, Alain Levy, charged that Papon's lawyer had misled the jury by insisting in his closing argument that Papon could not be convicted as an accomplice to murder if he had not known of the Final Solution.

Levy had argued during the trial that Papon knew the deportees would be led to their deaths, even if he did not know the full dimensions of the Nazi genocide.

Indeed, Papon had admitted during the trial that children taken out of hiding and deported from Bordeaux during the war would meet a "cruel fate."

At the postwar Nuremberg Trials, where the definition of crimes against humanity was established, the judges said the mere knowledge that Jews were going to their deaths established the guilt of those involved in the deportations.

Nearly all of the Jews deported from Bordeaux died in the Auschwitz gas chambers. For his part, Papon, who was hospitalized several times during the course of the trial, showed no emotion when the verdict was read.

In a final statement to the jury on Wednesday, Papon had expressed defiance and anger, saying, "The accusations are false and this trial is a fake."

Relatives of some of the victims gasped when the verdict was read out and they heard that Papon had been absolved of the deportees' deaths. But some expressed relief that Papon had at least been found guilty and sentenced to 10 years. "For a man of such standing, a man with such a high idea of himself, you can't say this is nothing," said Michel Slitinsky, a plaintiff in the case who brought the first charges against Papon in 1981 and whose father was among those rounded up by Papon's police.

While many believed the sentence should have been greater, the symbolism of the verdict was important. "The symbolic conviction shows the French people consider the Vichy government and its civil servants to be fully responsible for the deportation of France's Jews," said CRIF, the French Jewish group. The Simon Wiesenthal Center in Israel expressed the view of many when it said, "This conviction reinforces the important principle that there can be no statute of limitations on the crimes of the Holocaust." □

## 10 deaf workers claim Manischewitz discriminates

By Rebecca Segall

NEW YORK (JTA) — Just a week before Passover, 10 Russian Jewish workers are claiming that Manischewitz — famous for producing matzah, the food of liberation — discriminates against its disabled workers.

"We can't hear the fire alarms," Semyon Freydel, a Russian immigrant who has been baking for Manischewitz for more than 10 years, said, using sign language. "A hearing person had to run in and get me during a fire a few years ago."

The deaf workers — many of whom have been at the company from 10 to 20 years — are demanding three things: phones for the deaf, flashing fire alarms and professional interpreters on the premises during meetings and during mandatory religious services at the kosher company. Their lawyer, Alan Rich, sent Manischewitz a letter stating these requests in December.

Dissatisfied by the reaction, Rich is planning to file a \$36 million lawsuit against both Manischewitz and the union, Local 3 — which the workers believe has neglected to protect their rights — as soon as he gets approval from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Receiving this approval is a requirement of almost all discrimination claims.

Rich said he would file the suit on charges that Manischewitz violated the Americans With Disabilities Act.

He has already filed an order to show cause with the U.S. District Court, Eastern District of New York. In reaction to the allegations, Robert Kroll, president and chief executive officer of Manischewitz, said the company has "worked hard to provide jobs for new arrivals to our country and to individuals in our company."

He said immigrants make up 8 percent of the workers of the New Jersey bakery in which these bakers work.

In addition, Kroll said management is installing special phones and ensuring that interpreters attend every meeting.

Moreover, he added, the fire alarm system automatically sets off sprinklers throughout the company, which would indicate a fire to "every employee," including those hard of hearing.

The deaf workers were unable to give the exact year of the fire in which two of the bakers claim to have been left in danger; Manischewitz said it could not discuss the matter, but a spokesman for the company said Manischewitz has "always maintained a safe workplace for its employees." In reaction to the letter received from the bakers' lawyer, Kroll said the company "consulted with local fire authorities who advised us that our fire alarm system complies fully with all relevant regulations."

One of the managers at the New Jersey bakery is the son of two deaf Russian immigrants and is fluent in Russian sign language.

But workers say he is not a skilled interpreter and that he often says he is too busy to translate. "Sometimes he even says in meetings, 'That's baloney! I'm not even going to translate that,'" said Freydel.

The workers added that they don't feel comfortable using a manager as a translator when discussing issues with their union representative. The bakers also said the phone Manischewitz is installing does not receive incoming calls, making it impossible for them to be contacted in the case of emergency.

"I love baking," signed one of the bakers, Garri Volfman, "but I want to be safe." □

## U.S. moves to create panel to examine assets

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Jewish groups welcomed a move this week by U.S. lawmakers to create a presidential commission to examine Holocaust victims' assets in the United States.

The proposed commission would be charged with examining the fate of dormant bank accounts, artworks, insurance policies, looted gold, and a range of other assets that made their way to the United States during the Holocaust-era.

"While we have sought answers from Switzerland and other nations on the disposition of dormant bank accounts and Nazi gold, we have not pursued those same issues here in the United States, and thus the search begins," said Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.), who is sponsoring legislation to create the commission together with Sen. Carol Mosley-Braun (D-Ill.) and a bipartisan group in Congress.

Reps. James Leach (R-Iowa) and Sam Gejdenson (D-Conn.) are the lead sponsors in the House.

The legislation, introduced this week, is likely to pass easily.

Stuart Eizenstat, undersecretary of state for economic affairs and the Clinton administration's point man on Holocaust restitution issues, endorsed the creation of the commission, saying it "will strengthen further our moral authority and diplomatic credibility around the world."

Twelve other nations, including Switzerland, have already set up national commissions to probe their handling of Holocaust assets.

The United States last year released a major report examining Switzerland's wartime gold transactions and U.S. policy toward looted assets. A second U.S. report, dealing with the way countries that remained neutral during the war handled looted assets, is due out at the end of the month, Eizenstat said.

The proposed 23-member Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States would include private citizens, officials of federal agencies, members of Congress and the chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

The commission would be charged with issuing a final report to the president and making recommendations no later than Dec. 31, 1999 — a date Eizenstat has said should be a target for all nations to complete historical research and commit to restitution.

"We will send a message: that the United States government will leave no stone unturned in our determination to address the fate of Holocaust assets as we enter the new millennium," Eizenstat said. The World Jewish Congress and other Jewish groups welcomed the idea of a presidential commission.

"You're not going to find that the U.S. itself was holding on to large sums belonging to Holocaust victims," said Elan Steinberg, executive director of the WJC, said. "But we cannot run away from the responsibility that we allowed others to do so, and that our facilities were used in the postwar period for that purpose."

In a related development, Eizenstat announced the date that the State Department and the Holocaust museum will co-host a conference on Holocaust-era assets. A follow-up to a conference held in London last year that dealt largely with Nazi-looted gold, the Washington conference, slated for Nov. 9-12, will focus on insurance policies, artwork and other Holocaust assets. □