



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 76, No. 72

Thursday, April 23, 1998

81st Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel marks Holocaust Day

Israel's observance of Holocaust Remembrance Day began with a torch-lighting ceremony at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem. This year's commemorations are focusing on contributions made by Holocaust survivors to the state of Israel. Observances were scheduled to continue Thursday with a two-minute siren sounded for the 6 million Jews who perished at the hands of the Nazis.

Genetic conference held

Top genetic scientists, policy-makers, rabbis and Jewish leaders gathered in Washington to discuss genetic research and its implications for the Jewish community. The conference, sponsored by Hadassah and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, addressed concerns among Jews about discrimination resulting from genetic research and testing.

Poll finds false beliefs

Four out of five Americans picked the Holocaust as one of history's most important lessons, according to a recent survey commissioned by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. But more than 70 percent falsely believed that the United States granted asylum to all European Jews who wanted it.

The survey of 1,641 adults, which comes as the museum marks its fifth anniversary, has a margin of error of 2.5 percentage points.

Israel detains murder suspects

Israeli security forces detained 11 Palestinians from the West Bank for questioning about suspected involvement in the murder of Jewish settler Dov Dribben earlier this week.

Palestinians said some 38 residents of a village near the West Bank town of Hebron have been detained since Sunday's clash in which Dribben was killed. The violence was triggered by a long-standing dispute in the area over land use.

Church-state dispute settled

An Alabama school board voted to settle a lawsuit brought by a Jewish family who claimed their children suffered from religious harassment.

The board agreed to abide by a federal judge's decision restricting coercive religious practice in another Alabama case last year.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Confrontation in West Bank highlights tension over settlers

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — It could have been a scene out of the American Wild West: Jewish settlers and Arab shepherds confronting each other violently this week in the Hebron hills over a piece of land.

Both the settlers and shepherds made the all-too-familiar claim: This West Bank land is my land, and mine alone. The result was also an all-too-familiar one: violence. Dov Dribben, 29, an Israeli was fatally shot in the confrontation.

Dribben's friends, Yehoshafat Tor and Ephraim Perl, were wounded, as was a Palestinian shepherd.

But while the claims made by the parties in the clash near the settlement of Maon rang familiar, as did the resulting violence, the fatal shooting of Dribben, according to an initial investigation, was not a premeditated terrorist attack.

Rather, it was a personal dispute over land that escalated into violence.

Whatever the reason, the incident highlights the conundrum that could become a core challenge of the Middle East peace process if it ever moves beyond its more-than-one-year-old stalemate: what to do with the roughly 120,000 Jewish settlers who live in the West Bank.

Because, at some point, if negotiations progress, they will have to focus on this Jewish presence there.

The settlers themselves perceive themselves as pioneers in their own land.

The Palestinians regard them as invaders, while most Israelis view them at best with indifference, and at worst with hostility.

More than 30 years after the resumption of Jewish settlement in the West Bank, on Israel's 50th anniversary, the settlers are still struggling for legitimacy within their own society.

Of course, a majority of the Jewish residents of the West Bank are settlers by convenience — they came to the territories because of inexpensive housing.

But there are also a hard-core group of settlers, numbering several thousand, who live in places like Hebron, Beit El and Elon Moreh.

Samech Yizhar, the old sage of Israeli literature, recently described them as people who do not hesitate to rule over others and take advantage of them.

"The settlers and the settlements are a dark stain in the history of modern Israel," Yizhar wrote this week in the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot. "They stain anything humane, Jewish and Zionist.

"If the Jewish religion agrees with their deeds, then it is a religion without morals, and if the people of Israel agrees with them, then it is a people of robbers. It is difficult to believe that a people which was the most persecuted among nations has become yet another savage persecutor and another suppressor of the persecuted," he wrote.

Of course, the settlers do have their supporters, as evidenced by the thousands of Israelis who rallied in Hebron to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Jewish settlement there.

The conflict that exploded this week in the Hebron hills began a year ago, when Jewish settlers built a farm on territory the Palestinians claimed was theirs.

The settlers, for their part, prevented Palestinian shepherds from grazing their herds on land they considered part of their settlement.

When Dribben spotted a herd of goats near the farm Sunday, he went down to the

MIDEAST FOCUS

Protests mount against 50th

An Israeli peace group is protesting the exclusion of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination from the list of historic moments to be remembered during the main event marking Israel's 50th anniversary. The producer of the event, which is scheduled for April 30, was quoted as saying that the event will focus on the "joyful moments and achievements of the state from the past 50 years."

Meanwhile, thousands of Israelis plan to lay a cornerstone at the controversial neighborhood of Har Homa in southeastern Jerusalem during the jubilee celebrations to show support for an undivided Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Cabinet discusses redeployment

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu convened his Inner Security Cabinet for further discussions of the scope of the next West Bank redeployment. Meanwhile, Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak met to discuss the stalled Middle East peace process.

Lebanese refuse Israeli offer

Lebanon's foreign minister reiterated his country's refusal of Israel's recent offer to withdraw from southern Lebanon. In meetings with ambassadors of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, Faris Bouez said his country would only accept an unconditional Israel withdrawal.

Israeli board meets over Vanunu

An Israeli prison parole board met for five hours to consider nuclear spy Mordechai Vanunu's request for early release. Vanunu has served two-thirds of an 18-year term for treason for giving photographs of Israel's Dimona nuclear facility to the Sunday Times of London in 1986. The parole board is scheduled to meet again next month.

ravine with his two friends to scare them. Dribben was apparently not armed; his friends carried pistols.

As they demanded that the shepherds clear the area, the shepherds apparently attacked, shooting Dribben and his friend Tor.

Perl managed to return to the farm to retrieve his M-16 rifle. As he shot the attackers, they fled, carrying the settlers' pistols.

Unnamed military sources later criticized the behavior of the settlers for contributing to the tragedy.

Had the settlers refrained from confronting the shepherds partially unarmed, had they been wise enough not to allow the shepherds to seize their two pistols, the whole incident could have been prevented, the sources said.

Everyone appeared to understand the political implications of the attack.

The settlers of Maon rushed to issue a statement that the event was not a conflict between shepherds, but rather "an attempt by local Arabs to take over lands belonging to the settlement of Maon, which are state lands."

The settlers won unexpected support from Israeli President Ezer Weizman.

The president visited Dribben's widow Monday and told her he had no doubt, in contrast to the results of the preliminary investigations, that this was a deliberate murder with a nationalist motive.

The Palestinian Authority, interestingly enough, refrained this week from playing up the confrontation at Maon — perhaps because it wanted to keep the focus on the plight of the Palestinian refugees, which came to the surface during British Prime Minister Tony Blair's visits to refugee camps in Amman, Jordan and the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, such conflicts between Palestinians and settlers have become a matter of daily routine.

Just a few hours after the fatal confrontation at Maon, Israeli soldiers and Palestinians confronted each other over a Palestinian construction project near Morag in the Gaza Strip. There, no one was hurt. Leaders of the settlers, like Elyakim Haetzni of Kiryat Arba, have repeatedly claimed that had the politicians stayed away, the settlers would have gotten along just fine with their Arab neighbors.

But another settler, a former director general of the Prime Minister's Office, recently presented a different approach: separation.

In a proposal similar to one made by the former Labor government, Avigdor Lieberman suggested the separation of Jews and Palestinians inside the West Bank by developing several hundred miles of roads, which would allow Jews to travel freely without passing through Palestinian population centers.

Palestinians, for their part, could travel throughout the West Bank, without having to stop every few miles before an army roadblock.

"Just like in Eastern Europe, first there should be separation, than cooperation," said Lieberman in a recent interview.

"Look what happened in Yugoslavia. Everyone fought each other, but once they managed to separate, cooperation began immediately. This is our only practical chance here."

Meanwhile, as the politicians continue to bandy about plans, the number of victims of the conflict continues to grow. □

Philippine paper denies Holocaust

SYDNEY (JTA) — A leading daily newspaper in the Philippines has published an article that manages to be both anti-Semitic and anti-papal at the same time.

The article in *Business World* claimed that the Vatican has changed its religion from Catholicism to "Judeo-Christianity" and lamented the "infiltration of talmudism in our churches."

The article also denied the Holocaust as a myth "invented by Hollywood" and claimed that Pope John Paul II is Jewish. It further claimed that Anne Frank's diary is a forgery and that the Auschwitz death camp was an "agricultural research" center.

Colin Rubenstein, national policy chairman of the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council, which operates throughout Australia and Asia, called on *Business World* to "redress the damage caused by this pernicious and deplorable article." □



Daily News Bulletin

Caryn Rosen Adelman, *President*
Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*
Lisa Hastein, *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.

JEWISH WORLD

Jeffrey to run against Gingrich

A professor who was hired and quickly dismissed as historian of the U.S. House of Representatives says she wants to run for Congress against the man who fired her, House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.).

Soon after Gingrich hired Christina Jeffrey, a professor of political science at Kennesaw State University in Georgia in 1994, she was dismissed after it became known that Jeffrey helped block federal financing for a Holocaust educational program on the grounds that it did not present the views of Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan.

Croatia demands inquiry

A Croatian prosecutor demanded an investigation to decide whether his country should call for the extradition of a World War II concentration camp commander. Dinko Sakic was discovered in Argentina after he was shown on a television show. Yugoslavia has also said it would compete with Croatia to extradite Sakic.

Minsk court convicts rabbi

A Belarussian court convicted an American rabbi of attempting to smuggle historic Jewish texts out of the country in January.

The ruling barred Velvl Tabak from leaving the country until he pays \$5,150 in fines.

Poland calls for respect

Poland's prime minister called on Poles to show respect during Thursday's march to commemorate the Holocaust.

There is a concern that some groups may try to demonstrate during the annual March of the Living to protest Jewish calls for the removal of a controversial cross near Auschwitz.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is planning to attend the event.

U.S. Embassy urges caution

The U.S. Embassy in Moscow cautioned Americans to be careful after reports that neo-Nazis attacked foreign students. Two Taiwanese women were apparently attacked Monday in Moscow by a group of skinheads.

Paper apologizes for photo

A Hong Kong newspaper apologized for publishing a photograph of Hitler in its sports section Tuesday. The photo ran in a special on the upcoming World Cup soccer tournament alongside a feature that described the German soccer team as a reflection of the unyielding and intelligent German people.

The article said the German team would probably win the tournament.

Reform may back away from vote on gay marriage

By Rebecca Segall

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Reform movement is in such turmoil over an anticipated resolution sanctioning religious marriage ceremonies for lesbians and gay men that it may just back away from the whole thing. Although most Reform rabbis condone civil marriages for homosexuals, the question of whether to sanction religious marriages has created a deep rift in the movement.

Years of work by the Reform rabbinate to formulate a policy on gay marriage was scheduled to come to a head in June, when the Central Conference of American Rabbis was slated to vote on a resolution endorsing the idea of a Reform Jewish ceremony aimed at sanctifying same-sex unions. But rabbis opposed to bringing the issue to vote have intensified their opposition in recent weeks.

Given all the controversy, informed sources suggest that a resolution might not be brought when the group meets in California in June.

"It is not certain that a resolution will be brought to the floor at the convention," said a Reform rabbi close to the issue who asked not to be identified. "That would be a good thing," this rabbi said, "if a way could be found to respect the divergent views" of individual rabbis "without bringing a resolution to the convention."

Although the resolution has been endorsed by the Reform movement's top official, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, many in the movement worry that such a move would further alienate Reform Judaism from other streams of Judaism.

They also worry about risking the newly formed — and arduously won — bonds with the Israeli public and government.

The controversial issue is emerging in the wake of a bruising battle over the issue of non-Orthodox conversions in Israel, which remains unresolved.

"The masses of Israelis — secular and traditional Jews who are our target audience — will turn against us. The worst propaganda of the ultra-Orthodox will be confirmed in their minds," Rabbi Ammiel Hirsch, executive director of the Association of Reform Zionists of America, said in a memo he recently sent to all Reform rabbis.

Already, Israeli Reform leaders made their case against officiation at same-sex marriages a few weeks ago, saying that the passage of such a resolution would "jeopardize the progress made in Israel toward recognizing [Reform's] legitimacy as an authentic movement."

"The Israeli government would never have invited Reform representatives to sit on an official government commission if it did not perceive them as our representatives," Hirsch said, referring to the Ne'eman Committee, whose Reform, Conservative and Orthodox representatives had sought to resolve the conversion issue.

Hirsch and others questioned the value of the resolution altogether, saying this is not an issue worth the wrath it invites.

"We will be spending the next two months in a full-blown ideological confrontation, all played out in colorful detail in the media," he said, noting that in any case, "Reform rabbis do not require a resolution to officiate at same sex ceremonies."

Hirsch said he has been encouraged by the response to his letter and he hopes that it serves as a "catalyst" to avoid a vote in June.

The issue has become so controversial in the movement that Yoffie, the president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, who has been quoted endorsing the idea of rabbinic officiation, now is referring requests for comment to the CCAR, the movement's rabbinic body.

Furthermore, many Reform supporters of the resolution believe that Conservative Jews, and eventually modern Jewry as a whole, will follow the lead of the Reform and Reconstructionist — the only movement to officially sanction religious gay marriages — to accept gay Jewish marriages.

But Hirsch disagrees. He and others worry that this move will risk the alliance created with the Conservative movement over recognition in Israel. "When we lose our Conservative alliance in Israel, the conversation will cease being one of rights for non-Orthodox Jews and become one of how out of the mainstream is the Reform movement," Hirsch warned his fellow Reform rabbis. □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Sephardi immigrants boost Austrian Jewish community

By Tom Tugend

VIENNA (JTA) — "You seem to be a nice guy. What are you doing living in Austria?"

That's a question Paul Grosz, the president of Vienna's Jewish community, says he now expects from foreign visitors.

"It's not taboo for a Jew in London or New York to say I'm British or I'm American, but it's quite different to maintain I'm a good Jew, but I'm also an Austrian," he says.

But despite the skepticism from outsiders, Grosz believes in the future of Austria's Jewish community — which has received a population influx in recent years from Sephardi Jews.

He would not have dared to make such a statement at the end of World War II, when the memory of the Austrians cheering the 1938 Nazi Anschluss marching into their country was raw.

The once-proud Viennese Jewish community — one of the wealthiest in Europe, home to a thriving cosmopolitan community that boasted intellectuals such as Sigmund Freud, Theodor Herzl and the composer Gustav Mahler — had been reduced to a shambles. Grosz, the 20-year-old son of a furrier, was one of some 2,000 Jews — out of a prewar population of 180,000 — to have survived the war in Vienna.

Grosz owed his survival partly to the odd circumstance that his mother — though Jewish — was abandoned soon after her birth, and her birth certificate was signed by the local parish priest.

Today Austria's Israelite Religious Community, as the official Jewish community is called, numbers 8,000 dues-paying members. There are another 8,000 unaffiliated Jews, Grosz estimates, living in the country. About 90 percent of Austria's Jews live in Vienna — a proportion that is similar to the prewar distribution — with smaller communities in Salzburg, Innsbruck, Linz and Graz.

Many of the properties and businesses confiscated by the Nazis have been returned to the Jewish community in the decades since the end of the war. Rents on these properties and other enterprises now provide the Jewish community with 90 percent of its income. Those funds pay for a Jewish school system, which is attended by two-thirds of the Jewish youngsters in Vienna.

Grosz also points with satisfaction to the community-run Vienna City Temple, the only one of 90 prewar synagogues to survive. There is a strong Chabad presence and educational system in place and a variety of social and religious institutions.

The Jewish museum, which was originally founded as the first of its kind in the world, in 1869, was closed in 1938 by the Nazis, re-established in 1989, and reopened in new quarters in 1993.

The museum is financed almost entirely by Vienna's municipal government and attracts some 100,000 visitors a year, says Georg Haber, the museum's managing director.

The majority of Austrian Jews — like their German counterparts — are immigrants, or children of immigrants, from former Communist countries.

These immigrants arrived in three major waves: The first wave came from Poland after the anti-Semitic outbreaks of 1948; the second from Hungary after the failed uprising of 1956; and the third from the former Soviet Union between the late 1960s and 1990. Prominent in the latter group are immigrants from Bukhara,

in Central Asia, who have large families and form a tight sub-community.

Thanks largely to the high birthrate among Bukharans, and among smaller groups of fellow Jews from the Caucasus, "we have had more births than deaths during the last two years," says Grosz. He predicts that shortly Sephardi Jews will take over the main leadership post in the Vienna Jewish community.

In the 1990s, Austria clamped down on both Jewish and non-Jewish immigration. This restrictive situation may change radically in the next few years as the European Union mandates free movement and immigration among its member-states.

When that happens, says Grosz, Austria will be the first stop for new waves of both Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia and Slovenia.

As a result of this immigration and natural population increases, the organized Jewish community in Austria will expand rapidly over the next 10 years, perhaps nearly doubling in size from 8,000 to 15,000 affiliated members, says Grosz.

With all this in mind, Grosz says confidently, "The Austrian Jewish community is now a permanent fact." □

On Yom Hashoah, Israel honors role of survivors

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — This year's Holocaust Remembrance Day commemoration here focused on the contribution of Holocaust survivors to the State of Israel.

The observances, which began Wednesday night with a torch-lighting ceremony at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, come a week before Israel's 50th anniversary.

Speaking at the Yom Hashoah ceremony, President Ezer Weizman spoke about the survivors' struggle when they immigrated during the chaotic years of the founding of Israel. "The survivors did not speak of what they underwent, but focused on learning the language and fitting in."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech spoke of Israel's Holocaust survivors, whom he termed heroes.

"Sitting here among us are survivors, resistance fighters, who are survivors, not just today, but every day, in the towns, cities and kibbutzim around Israel. With their help, we built a strong and prosperous country," he said.

This year's torch-lighters were chosen for their contributions to education, the defense of the state, science and technology.

Observances were to continue Thursday morning with a two-minute siren for the 6 million Jews who perished at the hands of the Nazis.

Name-reading ceremonies of those who were murdered in the Holocaust were slated to be held around the country throughout the day.

As part of the commemoration, Israel also honored diplomats who risked their careers and livelihoods to rescue Jews from German-occupied Europe.

Some 20 percent of all Jewish survivors of the Holocaust are believed to have been saved by diplomats who granted them visas and travel documents to reach other countries.

In many cases, these actions were taken without the approval of their home countries. □