



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 76, No. 160

Monday, August 31, 1998

81st Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Premier receives threats

Security around Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has increased in the wake of death threats from right-wing extremists opposed to his ceding any more of the West Bank to the Palestinians. Taking the threats seriously, the premier has begun wearing a bulletproof vest and is limiting his public appearances. [Page 4]

Response to Vatican planned

A coalition of Jewish groups will respond formally this week to a Vatican document on the Holocaust.

The International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations disputes the Vatican's view that the wartime pope, Pius XII, saved hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives during the Holocaust. The group also takes issue with the Vatican's refusal to assign any blame to the church for the centuries of anti-Semitism that spawned the Nazi ideology.

Synagogue to be rebuilt

New York's Central Synagogue is structurally sound despite a fire last Friday that gutted the building's roof, building engineers said. Congregants are vowing to rebuild in the wake of the fire, which was caused by a workman's propane torch.

Built during the 1870s, the landmark structure is New York's oldest continuously operating synagogue. Damage is estimated in the millions of dollars.

New suit to be filed

A class-action lawsuit is expected to be filed Monday against several German firms that allegedly profited from slave labor during the Holocaust. Volkswagen, Siemens and Daimler-Benz are among the firms to be named in the suit, which will be filed in New York and California.

Generali settlement approved

The board of directors of Italy's largest insurance firm approved an agreement made earlier this month to pay \$100 million as part of a settlement of Holocaust-era claims.

The board of Assicurazioni Generali also said its agreement was conditioned on the acceptance of the settlement by all other parties involved in the negotiations. [Page 4]

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Synagogue in Atlanta charts new path to religious pluralism

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — An experiment in religious pluralism is unfolding in Atlanta, where a new synagogue is bringing together, under one roof, Jews connected with each of the four main movements of Judaism — Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist.

The newly established Congregation Shema Yisrael currently meets in a hotel and works like this: The various groups of worshipers gather, each in their own space, with their own prayer books and Torah scroll, in a ballroom divided into separate sections with movable walls.

After their respective prayer services end, they open the dividing walls, rearrange the chairs and, together, listen to each rabbi and prayer leader present a brief sermon. A discussion ensues, and then they share kiddush.

Orthodox/traditional and Conservative groups meet each week. The Reform group gathers three out of four Sabbaths. On the fourth, a Reconstructionist havurah takes its place. Call it "multiplex Judaism."

It is an idea whose time has come, says the rabbi and creator of the concept, Juda Mintz. "Everyone's talking about Jewish pluralism but not doing anything about it," he said. "This, I pray, will be a model for others."

It is apparently the first such congregation ever created, though a similar approach regularly takes place on college campuses under Hillel's aegis — the model that Mintz says inspired him.

A recent Shabbaton on the Amherst campus of the University of Massachusetts similarly brought together Jews from each of the movements — but it was for a single Sabbath, rather than as an ongoing effort.

To be sure, there are a few synagogues that accommodate two different styles of worship.

For instance, in the wake of discord over the issue of women being called to read from the Torah, some Conservative synagogues have split off into egalitarian and traditional services. But never have any of the sources contacted for this story ever heard of a pointedly multid denominational and ostensibly permanent effort like Shema Yisrael.

"There is a great hunger for unity," said Rabbi Harold Schulweis of Conservative synagogue Valley Beth Shalom, in Encino, Calif. "There is a revulsion against the apartheid that exists among Jewish denominations."

But it is also a sign of these tendentious times that when contacted, senior executives at two major Orthodox organizations, one centrist Orthodox and the other fervently Orthodox, both reacted with enthusiasm — privately, that is.

Neither was willing to say anything publicly supportive of the Atlanta effort.

"Mintz is a visionary. It's a brilliant idea, though truthfully I can't congratulate him publicly on founding non-Orthodox minyanim," said the centrist Orthodox executive. "If I did, I'd be crucified."

The fervently Orthodox executive said, with a shade of doubt, that "it sounds like a prayer mall. But it fills me with a good feeling that there's a place where people are all sitting and being Jewish together."

Shema Yisrael's Rabbi Mintz, who was ordained in the fervently Orthodox Torah V'Daas yeshiva in Brooklyn, was for 17 years the spiritual leader of another Atlanta synagogue, a congregation affiliated with the Orthodox Union. He left in June with some

MIDEAST FOCUS

Hassan: No peace dividend

Jordan's Crown Prince Hassan said his country's peace with Israel is not paying any economic dividends. Hassan added that Jordan's trade with the West Bank and Gaza Strip had decreased in recent years because of Israeli actions.

Two Palestinians executed

Two Palestinians were executed in the Gaza Strip in what are believed to be the first death sentences carried out under Palestinian self-rule.

The two security officers, whose sentences were upheld by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, had been convicted in the premeditated murder of two of their fellow officers. Arafat commuted the sentence of a third officer also convicted in the crime.

Mordechai to visit China

Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai is slated to visit China this week in an effort to bolster defense ties with Beijing. Mordechai, along with top executives from Israel's main weapons manufacturers, is expected to visit Chinese military bases and defense industries.

Israel expects more Russians

Israel is bracing for a possible new tide of immigration by Russian Jews sparked by the deteriorating economy and political instability there.

Immigration Minister Yuli Edelstein said an influx of immigrants could provide a boost to Israel's flagging economy.

Israeli injured twice

An Israeli woman injured last year in a bomb attack by Islamic militants was hurt again in last week's bomb blast in Tel Aviv. Ora Kaufman was among 21 people hurt when a bomb filled with nails exploded in a trash can in downtown Tel Aviv. Her injuries were not serious.

30 families in tow. Another unique aspect of his idea in forming Shema Yisrael is that it asks for no dues: Mintz expects congregants to pay what their heart decrees. That, he believes, will be enough to sustain them, though he also anticipates turning to the Atlanta Jewish federation and private foundations.

Between 125 and 150 followers have turned out each Shabbat for services, and so far, they are putting their money where their hearts are.

A congregant donated a suite of offices. And from the first paycheck his secretary got from Shema Yisrael, Mintz said, she wrote a \$500 check back to the congregation.

Mintz, like the other rabbis and prayer leaders, are working without pay, for now.

Fifteen congregants are now each taking out \$2,500 personal bank loans to provide Shema Yisrael with most of the \$50,000 that it needs to pay its bills now through the High Holidays.

Some of that will go for ads, promoting the congregation's free Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services, that will run each of the next three weeks in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and in the city's Russian Jewish newspaper.

Services will be conducted in the Atlanta Civic Center, which can hold up to 4,000 people. Because just 30,000 of Atlanta's estimated 80,000 Jews are affiliated with any Jewish organization, Mintz thinks it will be possible to fill all the seats.

In the course of bringing such diverse religious ideologies together, Shema Yisrael has already faced a few challenges.

One Shabbat morning the Conservative prayer leader could not come, so Mintz led an Orthodox service up until the Torah reading, when the egalitarian group took over. "There was some degree of discomfort, but there was respect. No one left, which was amazing," he said.

And the movable hotel ballroom walls do not entirely block sound from neighboring sections. When Cheryl Joss, a member of the Orthodox/traditional section, was setting up the joint kiddush on Shabbat morning, she could hear the sounds of the Reform guitar coming from one side and the sound of the Orthodox cantor's voice coming from the other.

"The sound of the instrument was absolutely foreign," said Joss, "but this whole idea is about acceptance and tolerance, and it made me feel great to think we are all Jews, but all doing our own thing. It was quite a moving experience."

Another congregant, Alexandra Moore, goes to the Reform service. She had not been to synagogue for 20 years, she said, but is finding something at Shema Yisrael that she cannot imagine at any other congregation.

"I'm interested in seeing how this concept evolves, because I think it's quite unique and a modernist idea," said Moore, who teaches literature and performs modern dance.

Married to a non-Jewish man, Moore feels more comfortable here than she has anywhere else. "This environment is accepting, an unconditional acceptance of all people," she said.

"Non-judgmental acceptance" is his goal, says Mintz.

"In this tiny little way, it could happen, our coming together without judging each other. And if it could happen here, maybe it really could happen everywhere for the Jewish people." □

Torah hits cyberspace

NEW YORK (JTA) — A modern English translation of the Torah is now available in cyberspace.

Jewish Community Online, a location on America Online, last week became the first location to present such a translation of the entire Torah, according to Marc Klein, the publisher of the Jewish area.

The well-known 1962 translation of the Five Books of Moses from the Jewish Publication Society is available on the online service at Keyword: Jewish.

"AOL members can go to keyword: Jewish to find just about anything Jewish. But until now, they couldn't find our most sacred text," said Klein, who is also the editor and publisher of the Jewish Bulletin of Northern California.

The online version of the Torah is currently available by chapter; users are eventually expected to be able to access the weekly portions of the Torah as well. □



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.

JEWISH WORLD

Court rules against Iran

Iran must pay \$65 million in damages to three Americans held hostage in Lebanon during the 1980s, a U.S. judge ruled.

The three — Joseph Cicippio, Frank Reed and David Jacobsen — had sued under a 1996 law that lets American victims of terrorism in foreign countries sue in U.S. courts if the foreign nations involved are listed by the U.S. State Department as sponsors of terrorism.

In March, another federal judge employed the law in ordering Iran to pay \$247.5 million to the family of Alisa Flatow, a Jewish student killed in a 1995 suicide bombing in the Gaza Strip.

In both cases, the Muslim state was found to have funded the organizations carrying out the acts of terror.

Deportation proceedings begin

The U.S. Justice Department began deportation hearings against an Illinois man who lost his citizenship for lying about the atrocities he committed during World War II.

Earlier this year, a judge ruled that Bronislaw Hajda "unquestionably" participated in a massacre of Jewish prisoners during the liquidation of the Treblinka death camp in 1944.

Hajda was also found to have served as a guard at the Trawniki camp.

Sixty people have lost their U.S. citizenship for hiding their Nazi past since the Justice Department began rooting them out in 1979. Of those, 48 have been deported.

March organizer slams mayor

The organizer of the Million Youth March called New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani a "cracker" — slang for "poor white" — after a federal judge overruled the mayor and said the march could be held in Harlem over the Labor Day weekend.

Khalid Muhammad also warned against a "police riot" during the march, saying it could "ignite the collapse" of the city.

Muhammad was dismissed from the Nation of Islam after calling Jews "bloodsuckers" and insulting the pope, gays and whites.

B'nai B'rith elects leader

The newly elected president of B'nai B'rith said the organization would not hesitate to speak out regarding sensitive issues involving Israel.

Richard Heideman, a Washington lawyer living in Maryland, was elected to the post during the group's biennial convention in Jerusalem.

He defeated Hugh Schwartzberg of Illinois and Bernard Friedman of South Carolina.

Controversy erupts over publication of missing pages of Anne Frank diary

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — The publication of new excerpts of Anne Frank's diary has triggered threats of possible legal action.

The threats come after a leading Dutch newspaper, *Het Parool*, reproduced what it claimed were excerpts from five missing pages of the famous diary of Anne Frank, the Dutch teen-ager who died of typhus in Bergen-Belsen after the Nazis discovered the family hiding place in an Amsterdam attic.

The missing pages, which were suppressed by Anne's father, Otto, the only member of the family to survive the Holocaust, reportedly contain critical comments about her parents' relationship.

"It isn't an ideal marriage," she wrote. "Father isn't in love, he kisses her the way he kisses us . . . he sometimes looks at her teasingly or mockingly, but never lovingly."

Pierre Loewe of the Swiss-based Anne Frank Fund, which owns the copyright to the diaries, warned that "the case is in the hands of our lawyers."

Het Parool's deputy editor, Frits Campagne, responded by saying, "We think the whole subject is news, and there is no copyright on news. If they send their lawyers, we will ask our lawyers to answer them."

Otto Frank, who died in 1980, is understood to have given the missing pages to a family friend, Cor Suijk, as a gift, but it is not known how the excerpts were passed on to *Het Parool*.

Suijk, a former employee of the Dutch-based Anne Frank Foundation, has demanded that proceeds from publication of the pages go to the Anne Frank Center USA in New York, where he now works.

According to David Barnouw of the Netherlands State Institute for War Documentation, Otto Frank wanted the contents of the missing pages to remain private and unpublished.

When the diaries were published in 1947, he is believed to have deleted significant sections of her entries, including negative remarks Anne made about friends who had hidden with the Frank family.

At the request of the Catholic publishing house in the Netherlands that first printed the diaries, he is also believed to have deleted what were then considered explicit sexual passages.

Three years ago, a "definitive version" of the dairies, including the previously expurgated sections, was published in the United States, but it now is possible that a new edition will be produced.

Following are the excerpts from Anne Frank's diary that appeared last week: "Dear Kitty, Since I seem to have plenty of time to think these days and . . . my thoughts turned quite naturally to father and mother's marriage. They always held it up to me as an example of an ideal marriage . . . I get the impression that father married mother because he found her suitable to occupy the place as his wife . . . It can't be easy for a woman who loves her husband to know that she'll never come first in his heart . . . Father respects mother and loves her, but it's not the love that I imagine in a marriage . . ."

"Father isn't in love, he kisses her the way he kisses us, and he never holds her up as an example, because he can't. He sometimes looks at her teasingly or mockingly, but never lovingly . . . She loves him more than she loves anyone else, and it is hard to accept that this sort of love will always be unrequited." □

Kosher service at U.S. Open

NEW YORK (JTA) — A kosher food stand will operate for the first time this year at the U.S. Open tennis tournament in New York.

The menu will include hot dogs, pastrami and tuna fish sandwiches, and potato knishes. The opening of the kosher food stand at America's most prestigious tennis event comes after similar stands opened recently at several sports stadiums. □

Israel steps up security to prevent internal violence

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Security around Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has increased in the wake of death threats from right-wing extremists opposed to his ceding any more of the West Bank to the Palestinians.

Taking the threats seriously, the premier has begun wearing a bulletproof vest and is limiting his public appearances, according to Israeli media reports.

The Shin Bet, Israel's domestic security service, has also beefed up protection for other top Israeli officials, including President Ezer Weizman and the defense minister, Yitzhak Mordechai.

Netanyahu's spokesman, David Bar-Illan, cited the 1995 assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin as a reason for taking the threats seriously.

Jewish extremists in the West Bank town of Hebron are among those being questioned by the Shin Bet for allegedly being behind some of the threats.

Tensions involving Hebron's Jewish settlers have increased after a rabbi was slain in his mobile home there Aug. 20 by a suspected Palestinian intruder.

On Sunday, Israel lifted a 24-hour curfew on Palestinians living in the Israeli-controlled part of Hebron.

The curfew, which affected some 30,000 Palestinians, was imposed after the slaying of Rabbi Shlomo Ra'anan.

Israel lifted a closure on travel to and from Hebron last Friday.

There is also growing concern among security officials that right-wing extremists may try to sabotage Islamic sites on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem to create a crisis with the Palestinians.

Meanwhile, Transportation Minister Shaul Yahalom of the National Religious Party demanded at Sunday's weekly Cabinet session that the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations be suspended entirely until the Palestinian Authority cracks down on terrorists.

Netanyahu responded with some unusually positive words about the self-rule government: Contrary to the situation in the past, he said, there is now no evidence of cooperation between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas militants. □

Italian firm approves agreement

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — The board of directors of Italy's largest insurance firm has approved an agreement made earlier this month to pay \$100 million as part of a settlement of Holocaust-era claims.

The board of Assicurazioni Generali made its agreement conditional upon the acceptance of the settlement by all other parties involved in the negotiations — including the relatives of survivors and the Jewish groups who participated in the talks.

The board added that it would work with an international commission to probe survivors' claims that European insurers refused payments on policies taken out by Jews who perished in the Holocaust.

The international commission will be composed of 12 members — six representing the insurers and European regulators and six drawn from Jewish groups, according to Elan Steinberg, executive

director of the World Jewish Congress. He said the commission will also have a chairman independent of any of these groups.

In a series of hearings by U.S. state insurance regulators earlier this year, numerous witnesses charged that European insurance companies have been stalling for 50 years to avoid payment on policies taken out by Jews in prewar years.

Before reaching the settlement, Generali was one of 16 insurers facing a class-action lawsuit for \$16 billion filed on behalf of survivors.

Lawyers for the survivors estimate that the lawsuit, now pending in New York federal court, could affect 10,000 claimants and involve billions of dollars in damages. □

Global stock market tempest batters Tel Aviv exchange, too

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As the world markets go, so goes the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange.

The gloom plaguing the world financial markets caused the Tel Aviv exchange to drop by more than 2 percent Sunday.

For the month of August, the value of stocks traded on the exchange fell by nearly 10 percent.

The shekel has lost 4 percent of its value in recent days and is now trading at 3.87 to the dollar.

While the declines were linked to economic woes in Russia and the Far East, there were indications that Israel's economy is also troubled.

According to figures issued Sunday by the Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel's economic slowdown is continuing.

Israeli exports are declining for the first time in years, the bureau said, adding that there are some 215,000 people unemployed — which is 9.4 percent of the labor force.

Meanwhile, opposition leader Ehud Barak of the opposition Labor Party called for early elections, citing the state of the economy.

The leader of the Geshet Party, David Levy, issued a similar call and attacked the Netanyahu government's economic and social policies.

"It seems as if there is no government in Israel," said Levy, who resigned in January as foreign minister in a dispute with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over social funding.

Finance Minister Ya'acov Ne'eman assured the Israeli public this week that the nation's economy would regain its footing, but there also were less optimistic voices to be heard.

Hannan Achsaf, president of Motorola Israel, suggested that countries with sharply devalued currencies would soon begin making cheaper exports available on the world — and Israeli — markets.

Achsaf said this could reduce local sales by Israeli firms and thereby increase unemployment.

Ofra Strauss-Lahat, vice president of the Elite-Strauss Group, predicted that foreign investors would regard Israel as part of the world's developing economies and would divest their holdings on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange.

Danny Fishman, director general of the investment bank Tamir-Fishman, worried that Israeli high-tech firms would be adversely affected because they rely heavily on emerging markets for their exports. □