



# Daily News Bulletin

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81<sup>st</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Hamas threatens Arafat

The military wing of Hamas warned of civil war if the Palestinian Authority continues its crackdown on the Islamic group.

Saying that Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat had "reached the point of treason," the Izz a-Din al-Kassam brigade warned in a statement that the "beginning of infighting has appeared, and no one can put out its fire."

Hamas' first direct threat to Arafat's government came after Palestinian security officials placed Hamas leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin under house arrest and arrested more than 100 Hamas activists in the wake of last week's suicide bombing of a jeep escorting a busload of Israeli schoolchildren in the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, the leader of Hezbollah militants in Lebanon called for Arafat's assassination.

Denouncing the latest Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah said "Arafat's presence on the face of this earth is shameful to the Palestinians and the Muslims."

### U.S.-Israel pact signed

President Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu signed a memorandum of understanding pledging to strengthen Israel's defenses against the threat of ballistic missile attacks.

The pact calls for the creation of a joint strategic planning committee to recommend how to upgrade the "U.S.-Israel strategic and military relationship" against the missile threat, the two leaders said in a joint statement. [Page 4]

### Vatican may apologize

Pope John Paul II gave a strong but qualified indication that the Vatican may ask forgiveness for the Inquisition.

The pope said Saturday that the Inquisition belonged to a "tormented" phase of church history, and he noted that he had already called upon the faithful to reflect deeply and sincerely on this past.

But, he added, "Only when historical science has managed to establish the true facts can theologians and ecclesiastical authorities express an objectively-based judgment."

The Inquisition was set up in the 13th century as a permanent tribunal charged with rooting out and combating heresy.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### Researchers race to compile fate of all Jews on doomed refugee ship

By Mica Schneider

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Whatever happened to Charlotte Atlas and Ladislav Bajor? Names. They roll across tongues with ease, but the memories they trigger can cause one's train of thought to derail.

Since 1996, against all odds, a small core of researchers have sought to find out what happened to all 936 passengers aboard the S.S. St. Louis, the ill-fated refugee ship that Cuba and the United States denied safe haven in 1939.

Most of the passengers were permitted entry to Belgium, France, Great Britain and the Netherlands. Many later perished in the Holocaust.

The stories of 40 passengers remain unknown. Researchers hope to determine their fate before the 60th anniversary of the ship's voyage next May.

"By nature it's easier to find the victims," said Scott Miller, coordinator of the St. Louis Project. "Survivors are harder to find because one of the reasons they survived is that they were hiding."

The St. Louis, manned by non-Jewish Germans, left Hamburg, Germany, on May 13, 1939, and arrived in the port of Havana, two weeks later. Only 28 of the 936 passengers held valid visas and were permitted entry to Cuba.

"The first Spanish word I learned was *manana*," Herbert Karliner, who traveled on the St. Louis at age 12, said in a recent interview. "The Cubans kept saying, 'maybe tomorrow,' but *manana* never came."

Despite protests by American Jewish leaders, the United States also denied safe haven to the Jewish refugees after Cuba turned the ship away.

"It looked so nice," said Karliner, recalling how the palm tree-speckled shores of Florida were in plain view from the St. Louis. "I said, someday I'm going to come back here."

And he did. He lives there today. "I wish my family could see it."

Karliner's story is a good example of the results of turning the St. Louis away.

The ship returned to Europe just one month after its passengers fled persecution.

Karliner's family was taken to France, but when Nazi troops advanced toward their town, only Karliner and his brother were sent to a Jewish children's camp in an unoccupied zone, where they hid throughout the remainder of the war. His parents and two sisters were murdered.

"To imagine, my family went half way around the world to end up being killed at Auschwitz, just 20 miles from where they were born," Karliner said.

"When we left Germany, everyone was dancing and celebrating. When we were returning, everyone was very much depressed," said Karliner.

"A lot of men on the ship had already been prisoners at Buchenwald, so we knew what the Germans were doing to the Jews. My father's brother had been killed there in 1938."

Said Sara Bloomfield, the acting director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, which is coordinating the St. Louis Project: "The years up to the war are not just part of European history, but also an important part in American history. America had a potential for action between 1933 and 1939, a window of opportunity. The Americans' depth of anxiety over 900 people is striking."

The museum hopes to use the story of the St. Louis to educate visitors about U.S. wartime policies. In a 1997 survey for the museum, only 29 percent of respondents

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Premier heckled at ceremony

Hecklers jeered Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu when he laid a wreath at the grave of Yitzhak Rabin. During Sunday's ceremony marking the third anniversary of Rabin's assassination, the hecklers shouted that Netanyahu incited the murder.

Rabin's widow, Leah, did not shake hands with Netanyahu during the ceremony at Jerusalem's Mount Herzl Cemetery. The evening before, some 200,000 people took part in a memorial rally in Tel Aviv.

### Cabinet vote expected

An Israeli Cabinet vote on the latest accord with the Palestinians is expected Tuesday, one day after the Palestinian Authority said it would provide a detailed plan to fight terrorism to American officials.

The Palestinian Cabinet approved the accord last Friday.

### Israel approves project's start

Israeli officials gave the go-ahead for ground clearing work at a Jewish-owned property in the predominantly Arab neighborhood of Ras al-Amud in eastern Jerusalem.

Israel has prevented the right-wing group Ateret Cohanim from developing the site for more than a year, citing concerns that construction could lead to disturbances with local Arab residents.

### Ayatollah: Arafat a 'lackey'

Iran's supreme leader condemned the latest Israeli-Palestinian peace deal and branded Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat a "lackey" of Israel.

Speaking to Muslim worshipers and dignitaries at Teheran University, Ayatollah Ali Khomeini said the peace deal is doomed to fail and challenged Arafat's legitimacy as leader of the Palestinian people.

His comments prompted speculation that he will authorize additional funding to militant groups in the Palestinian self-rule areas.



## Daily News Bulletin

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knew that the United States did not grant all refugee requests to Jews fleeing the Holocaust.

"People thought it was impossible to find out what happened to each person, but we're doing it," Miller said.

The passenger list has transformed from a plain list of foreign names into a collage of stories of lives led, deaths faced and lessons to be learned.

"We have the documents, but they aren't all complete, so the personal, human contact fills in the gaps," Miller said.

Sarah Ogilvie, director of the museum's Survivor's Registry, realized a couple of years ago that it was possible to learn what befell each of the passengers.

In 1996, four passengers visited the registry in the same week and she traced the paths of their companions easily with the abundance of documents produced in Western Europe.

"After the first year of researching, we began to run out of information," said Ogilvie.

"When Scott Miller came to the registry, he had a lot of connections worldwide and turned this project into an internationally-supported search and a personal one," Ogilvie added.

Adding to the challenge is the fact that many passengers married or moved to mandatory Palestine and changed their names to Hebrew ones.

The museum's message through the St. Louis Project is intended for the bystanders. "There is no such thing as an innocent bystander," Miller said. "The majority of the people involved in the Holocaust were bystanders."

That's the lesson the museum hopes to carry nationwide once all 936 passengers have been registered into the museum's database.

Letters, e-mails, phone calls and tips arrive daily and offer a flicker of hope as each could lead to the checking off of more sets of names and families.

The fates of Frida and Johanna Gross and of Adolf, Bertha, Horst Martin and Lutz Gruntal are not known.

It makes working on the project an emotional roller coaster.

"We're always one step away from completing someone's story," Miller said, "but we have to be accurate."

Ogilvie said the highlight of the last year for her was a phone call from a physician in Texas who completed an unfinished story she shared on National Public Radio of a 15-year-old passenger on the St. Louis.

The teen-ager was the only passenger known to have survived after being deported to a Nazi death camp, Ogilvie learned from his relative.

He'd moved to America after the war and built a family and a new life in the Midwest.

While many commend the St. Louis researchers and marvel at the idea that someone took on the task, others are quick to recall their animosity to the United States for turning their families away.

St. Louis passenger Michael Barak, who now lives in Israel and aids the project team in its search, said in an e-mail to Miller last year that it was ironic that the United States is compiling a survivor list.

"If the multibillion country would have let them in, we all could have been spared the tedious work of lists and many tears and pain," Barak wrote.

"I shall never forget this fact and hope that someday I will have the power really to forgive."

Other survivors do not hold such grudges.

"In 1939, Uncle Sam didn't want us," said Karliner, who immigrated to the United States in 1947.

"But in 1950 he needed me, so I served in the U.S. Army in the Pacific."

But where are the rest?

What happened to the people preceding Fritz Zwiegenthal(I), the last man on the list?

"It's so rewarding when we can find the ending of someone's story," Ogilvie said. "Especially when that person survived. You see that person's full history, and once in a while you get to talk to them, too." □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Plaques placed near Auschwitz

Polish Catholic fundamentalists erected religious plaques on some 240 crosses they erected earlier this year at a site near the former Auschwitz concentration camp.

The plaques were added to indicate where the "faithful should gather," said Kazimierz Switon, the self-appointed leader of the campaign to erect the crosses.

The Polish government last month lost a court bid to take over the site of the crosses, which have been criticized by Jewish groups and the Polish Catholic Church.

### Guard to be deported

An alleged former Croatian concentration camp guard will be extradited from Argentina to Croatia on Wednesday to join her husband, who is also facing charges of involvement in atrocities during World War II, according to Croatian officials.

Esperanza Sakic is alleged to have been a guard in the women's section of the Jasenovac concentration camp, which was run by her husband during the war.

### Le Pen probe begins

German prosecutors opened a formal investigation of French far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen for calling the Holocaust a "mere detail" of history during a speech in Germany.

The move came after the European Parliament lifted the immunity of Le Pen, who is a member of the European Union's legislature.

Le Pen is expected to be questioned before the end of the year, but it is not clear yet whether this will be done by French or German officials, a German prosecutor said. The investigation may lead to a trial of Le Pen in Germany, where it is a crime to trivialize the Holocaust.

### Hussein gets fifth treatment

Jordan's King Hussein began a fifth round of chemotherapy. The 62-year-old king has received treatment in the United States since July for non-Hodgkins lymphoma, a type of cancer that primarily affects the lymph nodes and spleen.

### Bomb targets far-right concert

A bomb exploded in a theater where France's far-right National Front was planning to hold a rock concert.

A group that says it represents anti-Nazi resistance fighters claimed responsibility for the explosion in the southern French town of Vitrolles. The group has claimed responsibility for previous attacks on the offices of Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant Front.

## Israeli-Jordanian trade rises amid misgivings over peace

By Avi Machlis

AMMAN, Jordan (JTA) — The last thing a traveler from Israel to Jordan sees before crossing the Sheikh Hussein Bridge are the shiny "golden arches" of a McDonald's restaurant — a sign of the foreign investment Israel enjoyed in the mid-1990s as regional peacemaking progressed.

But four years after Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty on Oct. 26, 1994, the Hashemite Kingdom is showing little sign of benefitting economically from that accord. On a recent morning, only three Jordanian trucks were preparing to enter Israel at the Hussein bridge, the main crossing over the Jordan River for traffic between the industrial town of Irbid in northern Jordan and Israel's northern port city of Haifa.

After crossing the river, visitors to the Hashemite Kingdom are confronted with poor villages, half-completed buildings and idle men on unpaved roadsides, a stark reminder of why most Jordanians are not celebrating this anniversary of peace.

Jordanians hoped the accord would help the kingdom end its prolonged economic crisis by attracting foreign investment, tourists and sparking trade with Israel and the West Bank. However, since 1994, Jordan's economy has deteriorated. Unemployment is believed to be twice as high as the official 15 percent figure, and poverty is rampant. Although peace alone cannot solve these problems, frustrated Jordanians are waiting impatiently for their "peace dividend."

For Jordan, the most pressing issue is access to the Palestinian market.

"There are many non-tariff barriers on the ground that make it very difficult" to trade, Abdul Ilah al-Khatib, Jordan's foreign minister, said in an interview with JTA. "The importance of trade between Jordan and the Palestinians goes beyond financial benefits. It proves that peace is working and providing financial benefits to the people."

According to al-Khatib, Jordan exported about \$17 million worth of goods to the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1997, and about \$9 million in the first half of 1998. "These figures fall below our level of trade before the peace treaty," he said. "We are trying to get Israel to loosen its grip on the Palestinian economy. It is not good politically or economically."

Israel restricts entry of many goods to the West Bank, based on Israeli-Palestinian economic accords that protect Israeli products. Bureaucratic and security measures on the borders are another big barrier.

"Maybe there is red tape, like there is anywhere, but blaming us for trying to hold trade to a minimum is unfair," said Roey Gilad, spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Amman. Gilad said trade between Israel and Jordan has rapidly climbed from \$14 million in 1996 to \$32.5 million in 1997, and in the first half of 1998 it jumped by 60 percent to \$20 million. Most of this bilateral trade is from Israel to Jordan.

He added that economic cooperation secured qualified industrial-zone status for Irbid, allowing duty free exports to the United States for joint Israeli-Jordanian ventures. Joint agricultural projects and plans to open another duty free zone that will straddle the border are also moving ahead.

However, one Israeli businessman active in Jordan said the Israeli government and many Israeli companies are not promoting trade with Jordan, since cheaper Jordanian goods are a threat to Israeli firms. Projects that succeed are usually in sectors such as textiles, where struggling Israeli firms profit from low labor costs across the river.

The Jordanian government is also reluctant to promote trade amid growing Arab criticism of its "warm" peace with Israel. Jordan's private sector has not taken strong initiatives, fearing bureaucracy, security and aggressive Israeli businessmen.

Despite the challenges, Omar Salah, a Jordanian businessman, has forged partnerships with Israeli companies. Salah is chairman of Century Investment Group, a holding company that has seven joint ventures with Israeli companies employing 2,500 Jordanians. "Politicians in Israel do not realize the true importance of these joint ventures," said Salah. "People-to-people business ties do more to neutralize hostility than anything else. I've hired people who hated Israelis, and their attitude changed completely. People bury the hatchet very quickly." □

## French Jews argue education more important than restitution

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — Leaders of the French Jewish community have asked the World Jewish Congress for moderation as it pursues Holocaust restitution in France.

Educating the French people about their wartime past takes priority over monetary reparations, the community's president said during an Oct. 28 meeting in New York.

"We know you want to help us," said Henri Hajdenberg. "We thank you for your help and your support, but you have to understand — it's a French problem."

The appeal comes as the WJC prepares to negotiate payment of Holocaust-era claims with 15 countries, including France, on behalf of Jewish victims and their heirs.

Some critics have maintained that the WJC was too strong-handed in its efforts to wrest a settlement from Swiss banks and that this posture contributed to an anti-Semitic backlash in that country.

Others have defended the WJC, saying the recent \$1.25 billion Swiss settlement would never have been reached without the group's persistent pressure.

The call for moderation from French Jewish leaders reflects fears that too aggressive an approach in their country would only fuel the right wing, which has attracted 15 to 20 percent of the French vote in recent elections.

Noted Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld, a member of the French delegation meeting with the WJC here, also cited the "deep roots of anti-Semitism in France," punctuated by the Dreyfus Affair of 100 years ago and the Vichy government of World War II.

"We have to deal with that complex situation," said Klarsfeld, who is one of four Jews sitting on a nine-member, French government commission that will inventory assets looted from Jews living in France during the war. The commission is expected to present a final report of its findings in December 1999.

The French Jewish community's objective concerning material restitution, Hajdenberg said, is threefold:

- to inventory bank accounts, money and possessions taken from Jews deported from France;
- to ensure that heirs of foreign Jews living in France who were deported receive restitution; and
- to make sure that stolen artworks are returned to their rightful Jewish owners or their survivors.

An international meeting to discuss the return of artworks stolen during the war is scheduled to take place in several weeks in Washington.

Elan Steinberg, the WJC's executive director, was pleased by Hajdenberg's desire to work together when dealing with French authorities. "Counter to French tradition," Steinberg said, the French Jewish community "is taking on their government, and they want to do it in coordination with us. They want to assure us that they are willing to take on the burden." He added, "This is exactly the kind of relationship we sought to establish."

Hajdenberg stressed that the community's overarching goal is to encourage historical accuracy and honest dialogue concerning French collaboration and deportations. "We do not want the question of money to come first so that the French will think that the only purpose of our fight is to get money," he said.

"The ideology of French society is more important." □

## Clinton, Netanyahu sign accord to deepen strategic cooperation

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — President Clinton and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have signed a memorandum of understanding pledging to strengthen Israel's defenses against the threat of ballistic missile attacks.

The pact, signed during two ceremonies Saturday in Washington and Jerusalem, calls for the creation of a joint strategic planning committee to recommend how to upgrade the "U.S.-Israel strategic and military relationship" against the missile threat, the two leaders said in a joint statement.

The agreement said the United States would boost Israel's deterrent capabilities and called for raising the level of military and strategic relations between the two countries.

Sources in the Prime Minister's Office said the pact was intended to counter possible threats faced by Israel from Iraq and Iran, which have been working to develop mid- and long-range ballistic missiles that would be capable of reaching Israel.

The document states that the U.S. government would view as very grave any threats to Israel posed by the deployment of such missiles.

The understanding states that the two countries would consult on the diplomatic or other aid that the United States would give Israel in the wake of any missile deployment.

Israeli officials said the final details of the agreement were discussed by Netanyahu and Clinton during last month's summit in Maryland, where Israel and the Palestinian Authority reached their latest accord for advancing the peace process. □

## Jewish sheriff in Los Angeles dies during re-election campaign

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Sherman Block, the first Jewish sheriff in the 148-year history of Los Angeles County, has died at age 74.

As head for 16 years of the nation's largest county law enforcement agency, with 12,400 employees, Block was also the highest paid elected official in the United States, with an annual salary of \$234,000.

Born in Chicago into a closely knit Orthodox family, Block recalled in an interview that "nothing trefe ever came into our house. I remember every year bringing up the dishes from our basement to make them" kosher for Passover.

After World War II, the future sheriff opened Block's Kosher Kitchen on Chicago's South Side. After the business failed, due to overexpansion, Block moved to Los Angeles. As "the best deli counterman in the business," he quickly found work at the landmark Canter's Deli on Fairfax Avenue.

But an old longing to become a law enforcement officer reasserted itself and at age 32 he applied for a job as deputy sheriff trainee. He quickly rose through the ranks and was elected sheriff in 1982. He won three subsequent re-elections handily, but was locked into a tight race for a fifth term when a massive brain hemorrhage caused his death Oct. 29. □