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82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Official: Jailed Jews confessed

Some of the 13 Jews held in Iran on charges of spying for Israel and the United States have confessed, a top Iranian judiciary official was quoted as saying Monday.

"The evidence against them was mostly based on these confessions," the official, who provided no further details about the confessions, told the daily newspaper Iran News.

The official added that a trial of the 13 will not be held in the near future because several witnesses are abroad.

Iran has come under international pressure to release the detainees, who were arrested in March.

Groups call for Disney boycott

Arab American and American Muslim groups called Tuesday for a boycott against the Walt Disney Co.

The groups object to the way Jerusalem is portrayed in an Israeli exhibit planned at Disney's EPCOT Center in Florida. [Page 4]

Buchanan book sparks criticism

Jewish groups and Holocaust historians this week repudiated the views about Hitler expressed in potential U.S. presidential candidate Pat Buchanan's newly published book. [Page 1]

Islamists may face crackdown

Israel's public security minister is expected to recommend that steps be taken to limit the activities of the Islamic Movement in Israel, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported Tuesday.

Shlomo Ben-Ami held consultations with senior police officials Sunday on how to deal with the movement after two of its members carried out car bombings earlier this month in Tiberias and Haifa.

The proposals raised at the meeting include revoking the licenses of religious leaders who preach against the Jewish state and placing restrictions on Islamic religious leaders suspected of anti-Israel incitement.

Because of Sukkot, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Sept. 27.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Presidential aspirant Buchanan attacked for 'aura of anti-Semitism'

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — Patrick Buchanan, a repeat candidate for the U.S. presidency who has been accused of anti-Semitism by numerous columnists, politicians and Jewish organizations, is roiling Jews again.

The latest flap concerning Buchanan, who is expected to switch his allegiance from the Republican Party to the Reform Party, is over the politician-commentator's newly published book, "A Republic, Not an Empire."

A treatise on the candidate's isolationist vision for foreign policy, the book questions whether the United States should have gone to war with Nazi Germany.

The book, which also criticizes Jewish and Israeli influences on U.S. foreign policy, comes after years of anti-Semitic and anti-Israel statements by Buchanan.

Jewish groups and Holocaust historians this week roundly repudiated Buchanan's latest views, calling him a "revisionist historian" whose comments have the "aura of anti-Semitism."

Among his most inflammatory comments in the past, Buchanan has called Adolf Hitler "a great man," referred to Capitol Hill as "Israel's occupied territory" and said that the only forces in favor of U.S. involvement in the Persian Gulf War were "the Israeli Defense Ministry and its amen corner in the United States," referring to Jewish columnists and pro-Israel lobbyists.

Buchanan has also been criticized for defending admitted Nazi war criminals and denying that Jews were gassed at Treblinka. In 1996, it was revealed that Buchanan's campaign co-chairman had ties to a white supremacist militia group.

Developer Donald Trump, Buchanan's potential rival for the Reform Party nomination, recently called attention to the passages in the book concerning World War II. Buchanan was not available for comment.

Buchanan's book cannot be interpreted as outright pro-German or pro-Nazi. Buchanan describes the Nazi regime as "authoritarian" and notes that Dachau began receiving prisoners as early as March 1933 and that "Jews were soon being subjected to ugly actions and discriminatory laws."

Instead, Buchanan's take seems to be that many governments are authoritarian and oppressive and that these traits do not mean the United States should always intervene.

He argues that Nazi Germany presented no threat to U.S. interests.

In addition to its criticism of taking on Nazi Germany, the book has numerous passages that many Jews will find troubling. It defends the America First Committee of the 1930s and 1940s and its supporter, aviator Charles Lindbergh, who is generally described by historians as an anti-Semite and Nazi sympathizer.

In a discussion of "interest group" influence over foreign policy, Buchanan writes extensively about Jewish lobbying, saying that "the Israeli lobby is the most powerful of the ethnic lobbies."

"After World War II, Jewish influence over foreign policy became almost an obsession with American leaders," writes Buchanan, citing a complaint by President Eisenhower's secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, of "how almost impossible it is in this country to carry out a foreign policy not approved by the Jews."

Buchanan buttresses his argument with quotes about Jewish influence from Cold War historian-diplomat George Kennan and President Truman as well as a 1973 quote from J. William Fulbright, then-chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee,

MIDEAST FOCUS

Barak visits Berlin

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak traveled Tuesday to Berlin, becoming the first foreign leader to visit there since the German capital was moved from Bonn. Accompanying him on the trip is former Knesset Speaker Shevach Weiss, a Holocaust survivor who is reportedly Barak's choice to serve as Israel's next ambassador to Germany.

Arafat applauds implementation

Israel is fully implementing the land-for-security accord signed earlier this month in Egypt, Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat said.

Israel is fulfilling the Wye II agreement "to the letter," Arafat said after meeting Tuesday with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Court opposes Sabbath closures

Israel's High Court on Tuesday sided with secular petitioners against barring Sabbath traffic on several Jerusalem streets that are adjacent to fervently Orthodox neighborhoods.

Israel remembers fallen soldiers

Ceremonies were held in military cemeteries throughout Israel on Tuesday for the 2,687 soldiers who fell in the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

At the state ceremony at the Mt. Herzl military cemetery in Jerusalem, Prime Minister Ehud Barak said the people of Israel owe a great debt to those who gave their lives. He also appealed to Syria to put an end to bloodshed and pursue peace.

Workers suing nuclear plant

Several dozen workers at Israel's nuclear plant are suing the state for millions of dollars in compensation after falling ill with cancers. The workers at Dimona filed the lawsuit earlier this month after failing for years to settle out of court, according to their lawyer.

that "Israel controls the Senate." On the Middle East front, Buchanan calls for an end to U.S. aid to both Israel and Egypt and urges a peace plan in which Israel returns the Golan Heights to Syria and withdraws from Lebanon, the Palestinians get a demilitarized state with a "Vatican enclave-capital in Arab East Jerusalem" and the United States makes a permanent commitment to Israel of "access to U.S. weapons to enable it to maintain a security edge."

Jewish groups and Holocaust historians this week roundly repudiated Buchanan's views on Hitler and Jewish political influence.

"I would say it borders on historical revisionism, and it certainly is bad history," Peter Black, senior historian at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, said of Buchanan's assertion that Hitler presented no physical threat to the United States after 1940.

Buchanan's views, he said, show a "flawed understanding" of Hitler's drive for expansion and racial purity and of Germany's alliance with Japan and its potential for interfering with free trade on the high seas.

"It's definitely ignorance of history, a political take on history," Black said of Buchanan's conclusions.

Elizabeth Coleman, civil rights director of the Anti-Defamation League, said his latest comments have an "aura of anti-Semitism."

"For him in 1999 to be looking back and downplaying the threat of Hitler to the U.S. and the rest of world," she said, "is an insult to Americans and to Jews."

"It seems like his comments ignore the course history took," Coleman added. "I think that becomes not only thoughtless but heartless, given the sacrifices we made and the millions of Jews and others who were victims of Hitler."

The National Jewish Democratic Council, for its part, seized on Buchanan's latest remarks as additional proof that Buchanan is a "Jew-obsessed xenophobe."

"Buchanan's decades-old obsession with the Jewish people," said Ira Forman, executive director of the NJDC, "is a time-tested character flaw that should disqualify him from any serious role in the GOP."

Jewish Republicans were no less critical.

Matt Brooks, executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition, said Buchanan's most recent comments provide additional evidence that he remains "way outside of the mainstream of the Republican Party, and certainly we believe that his views are not consistent with the core values of the Republican Party."

The RJC has sharply criticized Buchanan's rhetoric in the past and opposed his presidential candidacy in 1996, calling his views toward Israel and the American Jewish community "very troubling."

His new book and recent public comments raise even more questions, Brooks said, adding that it contains "a lot more revisionist history, a lot more code words and scapegoating of the Jewish community." □

(JTA Washington correspondent Daniel Kurtzman contributed to this report.)

Some Jews feel unsafe in Moscow

MOSCOW (JTA) — Some Jews in Moscow, especially those with roots in the Caucasus region and Central Asia, are afraid to leave their homes during a massive security sweep by police in the wake of recent bombings here.

Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov has blamed "Chechen gangsters" for recent apartment building bombings that left more than 200 people dead. He urged that "special attention" be paid to visitors from the Caucasus region, and police are singling out people with dark skin. Human Rights Watch has condemned the detention of 20,000 non-Muscovites by the Moscow police. Those who were rounded up were victims of police brutality and extortion, the group said.

One young man, a Moscow native with a Jewish mother and a Chechen father, said masked police came to his home and harassed his family at night, shortly after the second explosion in Moscow.

"Ten years ago, my parents thought it would be better if I had 'Chechen' instead of 'Jewish' on my papers," said the 25-year-old owner of an Internet company who did not want to be identified. "Now they see what a mistake they made." □



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JEWISH WORLD

Buenos Aires cemetery attacked

Argentina's president said he is appalled after vandals destroyed more than 60 tombstones at a Jewish cemetery Sunday near Buenos Aires.

"It is an act to be condemned in every sense," Carlos Menem said a day later.

The La Tablada cemetery has been the target of several similar attacks, most recently in December 1997.

Documents reveal Himmler plan

SS chief Heinrich Himmler sought to win asylum for himself and 200 leading Nazis in the final days of World War II by offering cash and the freedom of 3,500 Jews held in concentration camps, according to British intelligence documents released last Friday in London.

According to the documents, the concentration camp inmates were to be sent to Switzerland in two trainloads.

Athlete mulled playing in Israel

An observant Jewish high school basketball star recently discussed the possibility of playing for Israel's top team.

But Maccabi Tel Aviv did not offer a contract to 17-year-old Tamir Goodman, and the discussions broke off.

Goodman recently told the University of Maryland that he would not accept a scholarship to play there next fall after coaches at the school criticized his refusal to play on the Sabbath and were unimpressed by his basketball performance during the summer.

Nazis helped banks earn a billion

Two German banks earned about \$1 billion as a result of the Nazis' anti-Semitic policies, according to a German newspaper.

The estimate was published after Jewish groups said they would delay asking for sanctions against the Deutsche and Dresdner banks for their wartime actions until more talks are held with the banks on the matter.

Resistance hero dies at 90

A Jewish wartime Resistance hero who was one of the founding fathers of the postwar Italian republic died Saturday at 90.

Leo Valiani, who spent years in fascist prisons in the 1920s and 1930s for leftist activities, was a partisan leader during World War II and organized the final anti-fascist uprising on April 25, 1945.

Four days later, he signed the announcement of the firing squad execution of deposed dictator Benito Mussolini.

Valiani, born Leo Weitzen in 1909, was distantly related to Zionism founder Theodor Herzl.

New York cardinal writes letter of 'sorrow' for church anti-Semitism

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — In a High Holiday letter to Jewish friends, New York's Roman Catholic cardinal has expressed "abject sorrow" for centuries of anti-Semitism and called for a new era of respect and love between Christians and Jews.

The powerfully worded letter from Cardinal John O'Connor echoed personal expressions of remorse made by Pope John Paul II and other senior church leaders in recent years and also echoed the Vatican's official call for teshuvah, or repentance.

It appeared to be an attempt to heal recent friction in Catholic-Jewish relations over issues such as the possible beatification of World War II-era Pope Pius XII and a Vatican document on the Holocaust last year that many Jews believed offered too little, too late. Jewish leaders, including author Elie Wiesel, were so moved by O'Connor's "inspiring and courageous" message that they sponsored publication of the Sept. 8 letter as a full-page ad in Sunday's New York Times so the sentiments could be shared.

O'Connor couched his letter in the New Year's greetings that he sends annually to Jewish friends and leaders. But he underscored that, just as 5760 marks the beginning of a new decade in the Jewish calendar, the coming year marks the beginning of a new millennium for Christianity, to be celebrated as a jubilee, or holy year, by the church.

He stressed that the pope has called on all Catholics to use the year 2000 as a time to reflect and ask forgiveness for past sins, including anti-Semitism.

"Part of the process of jubilee is a call for teshuvah, or repentance," O'Connor wrote. "Ash Wednesday, March 8, has been specifically set aside as a day for Catholics to reflect upon the pain inflicted on the Jewish people by many of our members over the last millennium. We most sincerely want to start a new era.

"I pray that as you begin a new decade, and as we begin another millennium in our Jewish-Christian relationship, we will refresh our encounter with a new respect and even love for one another as children of G-d," O'Connor wrote.

"I ask this Yom Kippur that you understand my own abject sorrow for any member of the Catholic church, high or low, including myself, who may have harmed you or your forebears in any way," he wrote.

O'Connor did not specifically mention the Holocaust.

His reference to any member of the church "high or low" was taken by observers to be a possible reference to Pius XII — as well as to a host of popes, cardinals, bishops, priests, kings, queens and commoners who expelled Jews from cities and countries, burned them at the stake and otherwise persecuted them over the centuries.

It also followed the church's line in condemning individuals for their actions but absolving the church itself from wrongdoing.

O'Connor spokesman Joseph Zwilling said the cardinal was referring to Nazi atrocities and other anti-Semitic acts during the last 2,000 years.

Eugene Fisher, the U.S. Catholic bishops' staff expert on Jewish relations, said the letter "expresses the mind of the church very clearly and without any possible ambiguity. It's not a new statement. He was not intending to break any new ground."

Still, Wiesel, the Nobel Peace Prize winner and Holocaust survivor who helped sponsor the ad, said that "for the prince of the church to say the things he does, it's very strong. He went very far, and it's a great gesture of understanding." □

Israel hesitant on nuclear disarmament

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel will consider nuclear disarmament only if it has confidence in the regional peace process, according to a letter by the head of Israel's Atomic Energy Commission.

The letter, addressed to the International Atomic Energy Agency and published last week by the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, says "progress in the area of arms control" will only come about through "reconciliation" in the region.

Israel has never acknowledged having nuclear weapons, but the veil of secrecy has been lifted somewhat in recent years. □

Arab American groups call for boycott of all things Disney

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — Arab American and American Muslim groups, objecting to the portrayal of Jerusalem in a special upcoming exhibit at Disney World, are calling for a boycott against the Walt Disney Company.

Referring to plans for the Israeli pavilion at the planned "Millennium Village" as "propaganda disguised as entertainment," American Muslims for Jerusalem, which represents a dozen organizations, is calling for the boycott against Disney and Disney-held companies including Miramax Films, ESPN, Walt Disney and Buena Vista brands.

"Disney has failed to seriously address" concerns about the exhibit "that portrays Jerusalem as Israel's capital," the group says, adding that it will "use every legal means available to conduct this boycott." The boycott is the latest development in an ongoing controversy surrounding Israel's contribution to the Millennium Village in Disney's EPCOT Center, which is scheduled to open to the public on Oct. 1.

Pressure from Arab groups to preview the exhibit resulted in a meeting last Friday between Disney World representatives and a committee convened by the Arab League.

The American groups' call for a boycott comes as Arab foreign ministers are planning to meet Friday to discuss possible actions against the international entertainment company.

It also is reminiscent, say some Jewish officials, of the days of an Arab boycott against Israel.

At least one Arab American group, however, is advising ongoing discussion rather than economic action.

The Arab American Anti-Discrimination Committee, which took part in the meeting with Disney, is pursuing dialogue, not confrontation, said Hussein Ibish, director of communications for the Washington-based organization. "No decisions have been taken" regarding the exhibit, Ibish told JTA.

"Disney has agreed not to call Jerusalem the capital of Israel. They have also said they are not going to change the exhibit, but there are plenty of things to be done to ameliorate the project," he said, such as issuing a disclaimer or creating a Palestine pavilion in the future. "Our main objection is representing East Jerusalem as part of Israel," he said.

Israel claims the city as its "undivided, eternal capital." The Palestinians want a future Palestinian state to have as its capital eastern Jerusalem.

Israel's Foreign Ministry, which is sponsoring the exhibit, says it shows the centrality of the holy city to Jews, Muslims and Christians. But, says a Foreign Ministry statement, "there is no doubt that Israel is the capital of Israel" and "the position of Jerusalem as the key component to the Israeli pavilion at EPCOT speaks for itself without a clearer or stronger statement being necessary."

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak said Friday that while Israel views seriously the threat of an Arab boycott, "attempts to damage the status of Israel and Jerusalem as its united capital have failed in the past and will fail in the future."

Israel's Foreign Ministry contributed \$1.8 million to the pavilion, which cost a reported \$8 million, and worked with Disney to develop its content.

Other countries participating in the millennial project include Brazil, Eritrea, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Scotland and Sweden.

For its part, Disney is reiterating its position that as an entertainment company it is apolitical.

Disney maintains the exhibit will not portray Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and says in a statement that it "tells the story of the role the city of Jerusalem has played throughout history."

Arab leaders in the United States and abroad have been considering how to respond to the exhibit since details about its content made the news in August.

In early September, the United Arab Emirates threatened a boycott against Disney, but held off, pending a decision of the Arab League. At its meeting Sept. 12 and 13, the 22-member Arab League passed a resolution to form a committee to examine the exhibit and pledged to take "necessary and appropriate action" if Disney's presentation portrayed Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Arab foreign ministers are expected to meet Friday in New York to discuss possible action against Disney. Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdel-Meguid, who is in New York for this week's opening of the U.N. General Assembly, reportedly will chair the meeting. Despite some estimates that an Arab boycott of Disney could cost the company hundreds of millions of dollars, one influential shareholder in the Paris-based Euro Disney, Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, reportedly said Saturday that an Arab boycott of Disney will be more damaging to Arabs than to Disney.

Alwaleed reportedly had received assurances from Disney that in the Millennium Village, Jerusalem would not be portrayed as Israel's capital.

Last week, Disney World's president, Al Weiss, met with representatives of the Arab League in Washington to discuss the Israel pavilion. According to Khalid Abdalla, the Arab League's chief representative in Washington, his delegation saw a small replica of the exhibit, which has as its centerpiece a simulated tour of Jerusalem. He said Friday that the delegation submitted its objections to Disney following those discussions and are awaiting Disney's response.

But that response was insufficient, according to some American Muslim and Arab American groups. Khalid Turaani, the executive director of American Muslims for Jerusalem, said the exhibit's presentation will leave visitors with "one impression only and that is that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel."

His organization led a campaign last month to boycott Burger King until the fast-food chain withdrew its license from an Israeli franchise operating in the West Bank town of Ma'aleh Adumim.

Khalil Khashan, the president of the National Association of Arab Americans, told reporters Tuesday while visiting the West Bank city of Ramallah, "The denial by Disney was not convincing to us." He pledged to press on with a boycott of Disney and to call for boycotts "throughout the Arab and Muslim world and in the United States."

Martin Raffel, director for international concerns at the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, said the call to economic boycott was problematic.

"Clearly there is nothing illegitimate about the Arab community pressing its view of Jerusalem," just as Israel pushed American leaders in Washington to recognize Jerusalem "as the indivisible capital of Israel."

The problem, he said, is the use of an "economic weapon."

"It harkens back to the day when Arabs used a boycott to strangle Israel." □