



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 77, No. 199

Tuesday, October 26, 1999

82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Safe-passage route opens

Israel opened a safe-passage route for Palestinians traveling between the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Monday's move, which came after several weeks of delays, should bolster Palestinian confidence in the peace process, Israeli officials said.

Israel issued 600 magnetic cards enabling Palestinians to travel from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank.

About 400 cards were issued for the trip in the opposite direction. [Page 4]

Buchanan offers his platform

U.S. presidential candidate Pat Buchanan said he will make opposition to foreign aid a key part of his quest for the Reform Party nomination. In a speech announcing his candidacy Monday, Buchanan said the United States should also curtail its involvement overseas and implement a "timeout" in immigration.

Buchanan, who has come under fire recently for writing that Nazi Germany posed no threat to the United States, has routinely been accused of anti-Semitism, a charge he denies.

Switzerland shifts to the right

Swiss politics swung to the right in Sunday's parliamentary elections, which resulted in a second-place finish for the anti-immigrant People's Party. Swiss commentators are speculating that the head of the Zurich branch of the party, Christoph Blocher, may get a Cabinet seat.

Swiss Jewish leaders have repeatedly spoken out against Blocher, who has made speeches before Parliament laced with anti-Semitic references.

In 1997, when Switzerland was confronting charges that it profited from wartime dealings with the Nazis, Blocher launched a campaign to prevent public funds from being used for victims of the Holocaust.

Turkish relief project opens

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak traveled to Turkey to participate in the opening of a housing project for victims of the earthquake that devastated Turkey in August.

Israel spent more than \$4 million on the project, which was also supported by Israeli citizens as well as U.S. Jewish groups. Some 2,500 people will be housed in the village, which also includes a clinic staffed by Israeli doctors. [Page 3]

Europeans embrace Jewish revival as symbol of post-Communist future

By Ruth E. Gruber

WARSAW (JTA) — For European leaders, the recent inauguration of three Jewish schools in Central Europe symbolizes far more than a Jewish revival.

They also reflect hopes for a return to normalcy in the heart of Europe more than half a century after the Holocaust — and 10 years after the fall of communism.

After all, says Jerzy Kichler, president of the Union of Polish Religious Jewish Communities, "Poland, where political sympathy for Jewish causes is by now a normal element of Polish policy, is preparing itself for entry into the European Union."

In this context, the schools — and their message of Jewish renewal in Germany, Austria and Poland, the countries where the Holocaust raged most fiercely — are feathers in the caps of local governments. They exemplify the ideals of a pluralistic, democratic order, not to mention a brighter future.

"For me Jewish life, culture and identity are closely and inseparably linked with the new Europe in the coming new century," Austrian Chancellor Viktor Klima said Oct. 11 at the dedication of the new campus of the Lauder-Chabad

school in Vienna.

"Anyone who knows the history of this century knows how important we feel this revival of Jewish life to be," said Klima.

Klima was just one of the prime ministers, Cabinet ministers, members of Parliament, mayors and other VIPs who attended the dedications in Berlin, Vienna and Warsaw.

Not only that, the presidents of Austria and Poland presented Ronald Lauder, whose foundation funds the schools and many other activities aimed at promoting Jewish life in the region, with prestigious state awards honoring his work in strengthening Jewish life and in fostering local relations with Jews. The homage paid to the new Lauder schools is just the latest in a long series of pro-Jewish actions, gestures and policy on the part of state and local authorities in many countries, part of the volatile mixture of politics, memory and history that are at play in this region.

In the wake of the Holocaust and, over the past decade in the wake of communism, official attitudes toward Jews and Jewish issues have frequently been used as way of gauging the status of democracy, tolerance and civil rights in the region.

Governments, private organizations and even individuals have supported Jewish causes and commemorated victims of the Holocaust in a wide variety of ways, ranging from staging memorial ceremonies, erecting monuments, rebuilding synagogues and Jewish centers, sponsoring Jewish cultural endeavors and opening Jewish museums.

Starting in the early 1950s, West Germany consciously attempted to make amends to the Jewish people.

"Deeply flawed though the entire process may have been," it "represents a sustained effort to prove that Germany has changed and that its efforts to establish democracy and the rule of law are genuine," wrote Rodney Livingstone in the journal *Patterns of Prejudice*.

In Austria, such self-examination and confrontation with the past began much later.

Austria was annexed to Hitler's Third Reich in 1938, and many Austrians were fervent Nazi supporters. The country's Jews were persecuted, and tens of thousands were deported and killed. After the war, though, Austria was declared to have been the

Ten Years After the Wall Part of a Series

MIDEAST FOCUS

Apocalyptic Christians deported

Israeli officials plan to deport 21 people who belong to apocalyptic Christian groups.

Israel rounded up the 21, most of them Americans, during a midnight sweep, the third time since January that Israel has detained Christian groups.

"We are fearful that their presence in the country could lead to the endangerment of public safety," a police spokesman said Monday.

Soldier kills Palestinian

An Israeli soldier shot and killed a Palestinian who allegedly tried to stab him. The incident took place near Rachel's Tomb, an Israeli enclave near the West Bank town of Bethlehem.

After the shooting, more than 100 Palestinians marched to the site and threw stones at Israeli troops, who responded with tear gas and rubber bullets.

Restrictions eased on ex-militant

Israel granted permission for the head of a Palestinian group that has long opposed the Oslo peace process to enter the Palestinian self-rule areas. Prime Minister Ehud Barak said Nayef Hawatmeh, head of the Damascus-based Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, is free to enter because he now supports peace.

In recent weeks, Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat has been trying to get Hawatmeh's group, as well as others that have rejected the peace process, to present a united front for negotiations on a final peace agreement with Israel.

Israel razes Jerusalem homes

Israeli security officials demolished the homes of three Palestinian families living in eastern Jerusalem. Monday's action came after Israel recently promised to slow the pace of such demolitions. Since Prime Minister Ehud Barak took office in July, four Arab homes in eastern Jerusalem reportedly have been razed.



Daily News Bulletin

Shoshana S. Cardin, *President*

Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*

Lisa Hostein, *Editor*

Howard Lovy, *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.

"first victim" of the Nazis, and — unlike Germany — it did not openly begin to confront its role in the Holocaust until the late 1980s, when Kurt Waldheim was elected president despite evidence he had covered up his Nazi past.

Since then, Austria's leaders have formally owned up to the country's history on a number of occasions, but the issue remains highly sensitive.

In former Eastern Bloc countries, "filling in the blanks" that communism had created in historical memory has been a central motif over the past decade. These include gaping "blanks" about Jewish history and the Holocaust.

Under communism Jewish life was stifled, anti-Semitism was often state policy and study or discussion of Jewish topics was taboo. Most Communist states broke relations with Israel after the Six-Day War in 1967.

The post-Communist governments quickly moved to re-establish diplomatic relations with Israel, encourage Jewish study and open discussion of the Holocaust, including an examination of local involvement.

In these countries, much of this activity has represented a sincere attempt to make amends and come to terms with the past. But there have also — inevitably — been many examples of lip service, cynicism and exploitative image-polishing.

The lofty ideals of officialdom also have not trickled fully down to the mass public, where xenophobia is on the rise in some countries. Gypsies in particular are targets of discrimination, and grass-roots anti-Semitism occasionally surfaces.

Shortly before the dedication of the Lauder teacher training center in eastern Berlin, the city's biggest Jewish cemetery was seriously desecrated.

In the Czech Republic, President Vaclav Havel sponsored a conference on the Czech role in the Holocaust, held in early October at the former ghetto town of Theresienstadt. But at just about the same time, in the nearby town of Usti nad Labem, townspeople brought back chilling images of the ghetto by building a fence to separate a housing block where Gypsies live from the rest of the street.

Polish Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek, attending the dedication of a new campus for the Lauder-Morasha school in Warsaw, quoted a passage from the Talmud about the world being "sustained by children" and called the new campus "magnificent proof" of Poland's Jewish revival "after the Shoah."

Poland has taken many steps to demonstrate a commitment to bettering Polish-Jewish relations as part of its evolution into a modern democracy. Among these was the appointment of an "ambassador to the Jewish Diaspora" in 1995.

"Our authorities are very much conscious that if Poland wants really to become a full member of the family of democracies, it must not just transform its political system and economy, but also the less-well-developed sphere of minority rights, human rights, etcetera," Krzysztof Sliwinski, who served as this ambassador until early this year, told JTA during his tenure.

Numerous examples of such political goodwill take place, but they coexist schizophrenically with widespread lingering prejudice.

A year ago, Buzek and other senior state and Roman Catholic church officials took part in the dedication of a monument to commemorate the Kristallnacht pogrom in Wroclaw. But at the same time, anti-Semitic militant Catholics defied church and government orders to remove a forest of crosses they had erected at Auschwitz.

Another example, less dramatic but more typical, came in September, when the city government of Plonsk, a town north of Warsaw, sponsored an essay competition honoring David Ben-Gurion. Israel's first prime minister was born there in 1886, when Jews formed the majority of the population. No Jews live in Plonsk today.

The logo for the competition symbolized the long history of Jews in Poland — a menorah with branches shaped like, and enclosed by, the outline of Poland, with one flame burning at its top. Prizes were awarded as part of weeklong events highlighting local Jewish culture, history and traditions.

"The event was yet another proof of the fact that the commitment of the Polish elites to Polish-Jewish rapprochement is very real and not a passing fad," Konstanty Gebert, editor of the Polish Jewish monthly *Midrasz*, told JTA.

Nonetheless, he noted that there were several xenophobic slogans scrawled on town walls, and comments overheard on the street and in shops after the awards ceremony questioned the necessity of recalling Plonsk's Jewish history. □

JEWISH WORLD

Israeli premier dedicates village for victims of Turkish earthquake

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Some 2,000 victims of August's devastating earthquake in Turkey have new homes, thanks to the efforts of the Israeli government and its citizens.

Barak made a one-day visit to Turkey on Monday to mark the opening of the town in Adapazari, one of the areas hardest hit in the quake. He also held talks with Turkish government leaders on bilateral ties and cooperative projects.

The community, comprising some 300 prefabricated homes furnished with basic appliances as well as a school, clinic, playgrounds and grocery, is expected to provide housing for some 2,000 people. The Israeli government contributed nearly \$5 million to the project, which was also supported by Israeli citizens and U.S. Jewish groups.

"Out of a feeling of brave friendship, and duty to extend a human and warm hand to brothers who have come upon troubles, our two peoples, the Turkish and Israeli people, came together with determination," Barak said at a brief inauguration ceremony.

Following the earthquake in Turkey, Israel dispatched Israeli army rescue teams and staff, which toiled to locate survivors in the rubble and run a field hospital.

The village, the first to be constructed by a foreign country in Turkey for earthquake survivors, was built over the past two months by an Israeli Defense Ministry team. The village's school was funded by the American Jewish Committee, whose executive director, David Harris, participated in the dedication ceremony. The American Jewish World Service also raised funds for the village.

Meanwhile, Barak devoted part of his visit Monday to talks with Turkish government officials on a number of potential projects, including a tank upgrade and arms purchase, which are estimated to amount to hundreds of millions of dollars. □

Barak vows to help Jews of all streams become 'full partners' in Israeli society

By Avi Machlis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak has pledged to find ways to allow people from all Jewish religious streams "feel full partnership" in Israeli life.

Barak made his comments in a speech at the Conservative movement's Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies in Israel.

The speech, which took place last week on the fourth anniversary of the Hebrew date of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, is believed to be Barak's first appearance before a non-Orthodox movement since taking office earlier this year.

"I am certain that the blessed activities of the Schechter Institute will continue to be an important element in building a more tolerant society that respects the other and itself," he said, speaking at an awards ceremony for the Liebhaber Prize for Religious Tolerance sponsored by the institute.

Barak also said he hoped to find a way to increase pluralism either by implementing the findings of the Ne'eman Commission, a government-backed committee that recommended several steps to resolve religious-secular tensions in the Jewish state, or through "another forum," which he did not define.

He added that the institute played an important role in creating such a feeling by opening up its classes to all, supporting the traditional Jewish education network in public schools "and by representing Conservative Judaism in a very dignified way."

Conservative leaders welcomed Barak's remarks.

"The very fact that he was present at a gathering of our Conservative rabbinic seminary and that he directly addressed our movement was a positive sign," said Rabbi Ehud Bandel, president of the Masorti movement, as the Conservative stream is known in Israel. "I also have a very positive feeling that government ministers are taking the pluralism issues seriously." □

Secret network aided Papon

The short-lived flight to freedom in Switzerland by a convicted Nazi collaborator was organized by a clandestine network of aging French right-wingers, the London Sunday Times revealed.

A French inquiry has established that admirers of Maurice Papon smuggled him out of France on the eve of his appeal last week against a 10-year jail sentence for his role in the deportation of some 1,500 French Jews during the Nazi occupation.

The network was reportedly responsible for false rumors that Papon had fled to Spain.

Swiss officials returned Papon to France last Friday, when he began serving his sentence.

Argentine Jews press new leader

Argentine Jews called on the nation's president-elect to find those responsible for the March 1992 car bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires and the July 1994 bombing of a Jewish center there.

"We hope the promises of justice that were made during the electoral campaign become a reality," said a participant at a rally Monday involving relatives of victims of the 1994 bombing.

The rally was held after opposition candidate Fernando de la Rúa was declared the winner of Sunday's presidential election.

Leaders discuss refugee policy

More than 100 Jewish professionals from federations and social service agencies across the country met for two days in New York to discuss the future of refugee resettlement in the United States.

The conference, which began Sunday under the sponsorship of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and CLAL, the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, took place as the number of Jewish refugees from the former Soviet Union declines and Jewish communities decide how to allocate the resources set up for their resettlement.

French named Righteous Gentiles

Israel recently honored seven French citizens who saved Jews during World War II. Among the Righteous Gentiles honored at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial were two women who saved orphans by smuggling them to Spain and a piano teacher who was sentenced to Ravensbruck for aiding the Resistance.

Indian Jews head to Israel

Many of the remaining Jews in Cochin, India, are heading for Israel in order to beat a shortage of marriage partners. During the past 50 years, the community has shrunk from 2,400 to 60, with just 18 Jews left in Cochin's historic Jew Town, site of the city's only functioning synagogue.

Palestinians welcome route, but resent the security checks

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Five years after it was first envisioned by Israeli and Palestinian negotiators, Israel has opened a safe-passage route for Palestinians traveling between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Monday's move should bolster Palestinian confidence in the peace process, Israeli officials said. The route's opening brought mixed reactions from Palestinians.

On one hand, the opening brought the promise of contact for separated families and friends and represented an important milestone for Palestinian aspirations for an independent state. It will also likely open up potential job opportunities in the West Bank for unemployment-stricken Gazans.

On the other, the rigorous Israeli security checks on either end of the route, along with Israel's overall monitoring of traffic along the route, sparked feelings among Palestinians that Israeli officials still exert control over their lives.

The route was opened Monday, four weeks after its scheduled Oct. 1 opening under the terms of a land-for-security agreement signed last month in Egypt. Israeli officials said Monday they expect that some 1,000 Palestinians per day will use the route, which will link Gaza with a point near the West Bank town of Hebron and be open from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Israel issued 600 magnetic cards enabling Palestinians to travel from Gaza to the West Bank. About 400 cards were issued for the trip in the opposite direction. The permits are good for three months.

Under terms recently agreed to by Israeli and Palestinian negotiators, private Palestinian cars are granted 90 minutes, and buses two hours, to complete the route.

Failure to complete the trip in the allotted time will prompt Israeli authorities to launch a search for the vehicle.

Until now, Palestinians have been unable to travel through Israel between Gaza and the West Bank.

At the Erez Crossing, which separates Israel from the Gaza Strip, Moussa Abu Sa'adeh was the first Palestinian driver to embark on the route. He told Israel's Channel Two television he was headed for Ramallah, which he had not visited in five years.

At the nearby Yad Mordechai junction, a small group of Israelis demonstrated against the route, saying it will create security problems for nearby Israeli towns. However, one member of an Israeli regional council told Israel Radio he foresaw opportunities ahead along the route to serve Palestinian travelers. □

U.S. teen gets Israel's maximum of 24 years for murder in Maryland

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli court has given a 24-year prison sentence to a Maryland teen-ager who fled to Israel after a 1997 murder.

Sunday's decision reflected an August plea bargain Samuel Sheinbein reached with prosecutors in which he admitted to murdering fellow Maryland teen Alfredo Tello Jr. with a friend,

then dismembering and burning parts of the body.

The plea bargain angered U.S. prosecutors. They have repeatedly said Sheinbein, 19, would have received a life sentence in the United States. The jail term is the maximum sentence given in Israel to a juvenile offender.

Sheinbein's sentence includes time already served, and he could be free in 14 years. Prosecutor Hadass Naor said Sheinbein would be eligible for 24 furloughs in six years.

Sheinbein fled to Israel days after Tello's burned corpse was found in the garage of an unoccupied house in a Maryland suburb in September 1997. Though he had never visited Israel before fleeing there, he claimed Israeli citizenship through his father, who was born in prestate Palestine.

Sheinbein's alleged co-conspirator, Aaron Benjamin Needle, hanged himself in prison in a Maryland prison in April 1998, just days before his trial was scheduled to begin. □

Reports say Assad's brother seeks mercenaries in struggle

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — The brother of ailing Syrian President Hafez Assad has reportedly offered British mercenaries tens of thousands of dollars to join his side in a struggle for Syrian succession.

According to the London Sunday Times, the mercenaries were approached in London and asked to help protect Rifa'at Assad's property in the port city of Latakia, which has been repeatedly assaulted during the past month by forces loyal to the president.

The heavily guarded compound was most recently attacked last week, ostensibly to destroy an "illegal port" that Rifa'at had constructed.

The attacks on Rifa'at's loyalists and property are regarded as attempts to weaken him and his son, Sumer, who lives in London.

They are perceived to be seeking to undermine the possible transition of power from Hafez to his son, Bashar.

Sources close to Rifa'at told JTA they believe the attacks on Rifa'at's interests have been prompted by a serious deterioration in the health of the Syrian president, for whom the question of succession is now assumed to have become an urgent priority.

Rifa'at was dismissed as vice president of Syria last year and was also expelled from the ruling Ba'ath Party.

The main target in Rifa'at's quest to raise a force abroad was reportedly Dean Shelley, a veteran mercenary.

According to Shelley, he was telephoned Oct. 10 by a caller who identified himself as "Richard" and said he was acting on behalf of an Arab client who wanted Shelley to recruit about 20 mercenaries. When the two met in London, Shelley discovered that "Richard," a former British soldier, was working for a supporter of Rifa'at in London.

He told Shelley he should have his men in place for "a small paramilitary operation in a foreign country" on Oct. 26.

When they again met in London two days later, "Richard" revealed that the foreign country was Syria and that the mercenaries were needed to launch a counteroffensive against the Syrian presidential forces who had attacked Rifa'at's Latakia residence.

Last week, however, "Richard" was again summoned to meet with his boss and told that the mission was canceled. □