



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 78, No. 44

Tuesday, March 7, 2000

83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Gore warns Arafat on statehood

Vice President Al Gore is warning that it would be "unwise" for Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat to deliver on his promise to unilaterally declare a Palestinian state later this year.

In a New York campaign stop before the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the Democratic presidential candidate said Arafat should not assume a declaration "would have a positive outcome for them."

Gore would not elaborate on what the U.S. reaction would be, saying the scenario is still "hypothetical."

He suggested that Arafat's threat is more for internal Palestinian consumption.

"The threat of making a declaration is a little more useful to them than actually making such a declaration," he told the Jewish leaders.

Hezbollah claims victory

Hezbollah claimed victory in its fight to oust Israel from southern Lebanon.

A day after the Israeli Cabinet voted to withdraw its soldiers from Lebanon by July, Hezbollah issued a statement describing the decision as a "historic defeat" for Israel.

Syria's state-run newspaper Tishrin meanwhile said Israel's decision to withdraw from southern Lebanon is meant to destabilize the region.

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy said Sunday's Cabinet decision to withdraw troops by July would test whether Syria is serious about reaching a peace agreement.

His comments came as Israeli jets struck at suspected Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon for a fourth straight day.

Czech leader vows no Iran sales

The president of the Czech Republic pledged not to allow the sale of equipment to Iran that could be used for building weapons of mass destruction.

"We're a part of the international community, and we will not allow any such exports," Vaclav Havel said after meeting Sunday with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

Last year a Czech company signed a deal to help build an Iranian nuclear plant, which U.S. officials say is part of an Iranian effort to develop weapons.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Conservative Judaism acts locally, begins to think globally across Europe

By Joshua Schuster

PARIS (JTA) — Germany has one Conservative rabbi, a determined woman named Bea Wyler.

She covers three cities 150 miles apart, serving nearly 500 congregants. She works full time but receives a part-time salary; she has no secretary, no teaching staff and no car. For five years, she's asked for support from the New York-based World Council of Conservative/Masorti Synagogues, whose member organizations and congregations promote the movement's growth.

But no aid has come.

"In Germany we get the feeling that we are very left out," she said.

Now the Conservative movement wants that to change.

Over the weekend, the World Council met in Paris — the first time it has ever held a conference in continental Europe — to discuss ways to help rabbis like Wyler.

Acknowledging that it has largely ignored the opportunity to expand the Conservative movement in Europe, the World Council vowed to make itself a major presence in the burgeoning communities scattered across the continent.

"Conservative Judaism didn't initially see itself as a global movement," said Rabbi Alan Silverstein, the World Council's president. "Today it does."

Approximately 200 Conservative Jews from such countries as France, Germany, Sweden, Hungary, the Czech Republic, England, Ukraine and Russia convened to voice problems and brainstorm for solutions.

Many said that it was the first opportunity they have had to address the Conservative leadership about the issues facing their communities. Although many spoke of feeling neglected, the consensus seemed best expressed by a statement from Peter Gyori, the program director of Bejt Praha in Prague: "There is enormous opportunity to build community in Europe. We need someone to make a commitment."

But the current problems facing the Conservative movement are many and large:

- The Czech Republic has no rabbi who is willing to stay longer than a few weeks.
- In Russia and Ukraine, there are sizeable Jewish communities where not a single Jewish activity takes place.

- In England the Conservative movement might have more of a chance to grow if it did more marketing instead of being constantly drowned out by the aggressive publicity efforts of the Reform and Chabad movements, said a rabbi from London.

- Sweden has a problem of consistency: On some days, a dozen people show up for Jewish activities organized by the Conservative movement; on others, no one attends.

- In Hungary there is a liberal stream of Judaism called Neolog — yet the synagogues do not have the money to offer Shabbat dinner to young people who seem interested in their heritage, said Vilmos Frank, 25, of Budapest.

Despite the many difficulties that were discussed at the conference, several people spoke of achievements and tremendous promise for their communities.

Gyori said he took out a newspaper ad announcing High Holidays services last year, the first time such a thing has been done in Prague since the Holocaust. He expected 100 people to show up. Some 700 arrived.

In France the Conservative community opened its first synagogue last year.

Rabbi Rivon Krygier — a young, energetic, native French-speaker who was trained in Jerusalem and is the only Conservative rabbi in France — presides over the

MIDEAST FOCUS

Palestinians nab Hamas member

Palestinian security forces detained a Hamas activist suspected of being a sixth member of a terrorist cell uncovered last week by Israeli security forces in the Israeli Arab town of Taiba.

At the same time, Palestinian security forces discovered a bomb-making factory in the self-rule town of Tulkarm where militants were believed to have prepared the explosives the cell planned to use in attacks in Israel.

Students call for more attacks

Some 2,000 Palestinian students demonstrated in the West Bank, urging Hamas suicide bombers and Hezbollah gunmen to launch attacks on Israel.

Some of the demonstrators at Hebron's Polytechnic University on Sunday wore "suicide bomber" belts similar to those used in past Hamas terror bombings.

Secret maps blowin' in the wind

The Israel Defense Force's intelligence chief reprimanded the head of its mapping unit after top-secret maps detailing the southern Lebanon security zone and Israel's northern border blew off a truck driving in Israel.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz said a civilian driving behind the car saw what happened and tried to overtake the truck to alert the soldiers.

The truck stopped and the soldiers began recovering the maps.

Hackers attack Israeli Web site

An Israeli Internet service provider filed a complaint with police over disruptions by hackers to a site it operates with Microsoft.

Officials at Internet Gold said heavy hacker traffic over the weekend slowed access to the site for about an hour.

An official said the hackers used the site to get to another site outside Israel.



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.

congregation of approximately 400 active families.

"There is a great need for more Conservative Judaism here, but it suffers from not enough awareness," said Krygier, whose synagogue hosted the conference.

"In France no one has heard of the Conservative movement. We have had to do all the work ourselves to explain who we are."

Had there been international backing, Krygier believes that "what took us nine years to build now could be done in only two or three."

Rabbi Gordon Freeman, of B'nai Shalom in Walnut Creek, Calif., said that an organizational structure has been lacking because "in the past, the money was all directed to North America, since that's where the movement was.

"We are just now beginning to get direction on a global scale. We have to create from the bottom up, with grass-roots organizations."

Conservative organizational leaders explained that the ability to find funding for these Conservative communities will in part depend on how well they can be integrated into groups such as the World Council and Merkaz Olami, the World Masorti/Conservative Zionist Movement.

The European synagogues currently have little to no representation in these groups.

Pledging that "the organizational structure of our movement needs to change," Silverstein, the council's president, said he would like to establish a committee, a Web site and publications in several languages to unify Conservative Jews in Europe.

Gyori, the program director in Prague, said he was leaving the conference feeling encouraged, but still unsure if he will ever get the full-time rabbi his community needs.

"They said, 'We'll see what we can do.' But we know it will take energy and money and personnel."

One person attending the conference testified to the possibilities.

Rina Mihailova, a young woman from Moscow who had been active in the Jewish community for several years, converted to Judaism early Sunday morning.

She bathed in a Paris mikvah to mark her conversion. Later that day, she told the group tearfully, "This is probably the happiest day of my life which I have been dreaming of for many years. I am so happy to share this day with you." □

Israel on alert for terror attacks in aftermath of raid on Hamas cell

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's prime minister says the public should stay alert because Islamic militants opposed to the peace process may try to carry out terrorist attacks in the coming months.

Ehud Barak's remarks before the Cabinet on Sunday came as Israeli security forces went on heightened alert for possible attacks in central Israel after four Palestinian terrorists were killed and another apprehended in a shootout last week.

"We are prepared throughout the central region in order to prevent and thwart attempted attacks. There is no need to panic, those who need to look" for terrorists "will do so and in the end will find them," Israel's central district police commander, Ze'ev Even Hen, was quoted as saying.

The head of the Palestinian security forces in the West Bank, Jibril Rajoub, said the Palestinian Authority would do its part to thwart any attacks — despite what he termed Barak's failure to uphold his end of the agreements with the self-rule government.

"We should not exaggerate, but there is a basis to the warnings. There are certain groups that want to stop the process by killing innocent people," Rajoub told Israel Radio.

Rajoub said he was unaware of reports that one of the bodyguards to Hamas founder Sheik Ahmed Yassin was linked to the Hamas terrorist cell uncovered in the northern Israeli Arab village of Taibe on March 2. Four terrorists were killed and another apprehended in a daylong siege by Israeli security forces on the building the cell had chosen to serve as a base for attacks inside Israel.

Police roadblocks hindered traffic Sunday morning around Tel Aviv and other urban areas. Security was also stepped up in bus stations and shopping centers. □

JEWISH WORLD

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Dutch Jewish cemetery the Nazis left alone now being ruined by time

By Bram Eisenthal

OUDEKERK AAN DE AMSTEL, Netherlands (JTA) — Some five miles outside of Amsterdam, there is a site where a miracle took place during the Holocaust.

Here, in this tiny town with quaint, pretty houses and narrow streets, the Nazis allowed Jewish history to survive. At a time when they were desecrating Jewish burial places all over Europe, they left this one alone.

"No, the Germans didn't destroy the Beth Haim Cemetery. Jews who were already dead were of no use to them," said Rabbi Rodrigues Pereira, administrator of Beth Haim for the past decade.

"What they did do was reduce the 5,000-strong Portuguese Jewish community to several families who were, of course, unable to meet the financial burden of preserving the cemetery," said Pereira. The maintenance costs alone are more than \$75,000 each year, he added.

Now, however, what the Nazis did not destroy is being ravaged by time and neglect, and the cemetery administrator is trying to raise the money to restore it.

The Portuguese Jewish community, which settled in Amsterdam in 1590, purchased an estate to bury their dead. The first burial at Beth Haim took place April 11, 1614, of a child named Joseph, son of David Senior. The memorial stone is inscribed with a poem in Hebrew and is still quite legible.

Two years later, the cemetery was in official use and could be accessed by road as well as by boat via a nearby river. The cemetery was extended in 1663 — and twice more over the years.

It was originally estimated that the space would be depleted by 1963, but the ravages of World War II ensured it will last for another 80 years. Eight hundred spaces are still available.

Beth Haim, however, is a victim of time. Many of its stones are damaged or missing. Thanks to the diligent work in 1866 of David Henriques de Castro, much is known about stones that had, for instance, sunk into the marshy ground.

Those of special historical or artistic merit were raised on brick bases to prevent further submersion, while the remaining ones were covered with earth. De Castro's findings were published in his 1883 book, "Keur van Grafsteen, A Selection of Gravestones," which is being reissued.

Many famous people have been buried in Beth Haim. Perhaps the most famous is Rabbi Menashe ben Israel, a friend of artist Rembrandt van Rijn, who, apart from making etchings of his friend, also illustrated many of his books.

Other well-known Jews reposed here include Dr. Eliahu Montalto, Maria de Medici's personal physician, as well as the parents of the philosopher Baruch Spinoza.

Many visitors to Beth Haim leave notes on the tomb of Rabbi Sasportes, renowned in his time for battling false messiahs. Indeed, the grounds provide a fascinating look at the culture of the day.

Engraved upon some of the stones is art that is at once macabre, whimsical and poignant. This is in stark contrast to the latter-day section, featuring bleak, modern stones for deceased Jews like Salomon Nunes Nabarro, son of Rebecca and Jacob Nabarro, inscribed "in Auschwitz did the Nazis murder (his parents)."

The Holocaust is recalled in a small memorial area, commemorating the thousands of community members who perished at the Westerbork camp or were murdered elsewhere during World War II. A fund bearing the name of David Henriques de Castro has been set up to restore and preserve the cemetery.

"Beth Haim must not be allowed to just fade away," Pereira said. "Even if it is just to give those people who lost parents and grandparents during the war a place where they can find their ancestral roots." □

Inquiries or donations may be made to the David Henriques de Castrofonds Foundation, Kerkstraat 7, 1191 JB Ouderkerk a/d Amstel, or by e-mail at bethaim@wxs.nl.

Nazi hunter chides Australia

Scores of Holocaust-era war criminals are living in Australia with little hope that they will ever be brought to justice, according to the U.S. government's top Nazi hunter.

Eli Rosenbaum also said Monday that both Australia and the United States unwittingly allowed war criminals to enter their countries at the end of World War II.

He is visiting Australia to collect evidence on a war crimes suspect living in the United States.

Clergy vow to help with census

Leaders from the Jewish, Catholic and Muslim communities pledged to help the U.S. Census Bureau get an accurate count of America's diverse population.

Clergy from the three faiths said they would take time during and after services to encourage congregants to return questionnaires for the once-a-decade census.

French minister: No WWII liability

France is not legally responsible for crimes committed by the nation's wartime Vichy regime, according to the country's interior minister.

In a letter he wrote earlier this year that was released Monday, Jean-Pierre Chevenement said the present French republic is the "very negation" of the pro-Nazi Vichy government.

ADL: U.S. Anti-Semitism declining

Anti-Semitism in American society is declining, according to the civil rights director of the Anti-Defamation League.

Elizabeth Coleman's comment came amid indications that discrimination against Jews in workplace hiring, promotion and firing has become rare.

Eatery sorry for serving pork

The culinary standards of an Italian restaurant in California were questioned after it was revealed that the eatery used pork in a veal dish.

Bella Mia in San Francisco may face criminal charges for the substitution by its chef, according to the Jewish Bulletin of Northern California.

After issuing an apology to the public, the restaurant's co-owner invited anyone who feels deceived to come back for a free meal.

Jamaican Jewish leader dies

The spiritual leader of Jamaica's 300-member Jewish community died of a heart attack at the age of 67 after celebrating Sabbath services Saturday.

A photographer by profession, Ernest de Souza led the Caribbean nation's Jewish community since the last ordained rabbi left in 1978.

FOCUS ON ISSUES**Pope's desire for reconciliation clashes with strained relations***By Ruth E. Gruber*

ROME (JTA) — Pope John Paul II will act this month on two prominent themes that have colored his papacy: seeking forgiveness for past Catholic errors, including the treatment of Jews, and his intense personal dream of making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

But his actions on these issues are coming amid questions, controversy and strained relations between the Vatican and the Jewish state.

On March 12, which the Vatican has declared a "day of request for forgiveness" for Catholics, the pope will lead a Mass at the Vatican dedicated to pardon and repentance.

Little more than a week later, coinciding with the holiday of Purim, he flies to the Holy Land, where he will retrace the footsteps of Jesus in Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian self-rule areas.

At the March 12 Mass, the pope is expected to deliver a sweeping church apology for past sins.

But a document slated to be issued this week in advance of the papal pronouncement set a theological framework for seeking forgiveness for past errors without necessarily admitting responsibility for them.

The document, "Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Mistakes of the Past," lists a few major areas where the church had failed, including the Inquisition, forced conversion and treatment of the Jews.

"The hostility and wariness of numerous Christians towards Jews over the course of time is a painful historic fact," the document says.

But primarily it reiterates assertions made in earlier documents and statements, including a landmark 1998 Vatican document on the Holocaust that disappointed many Jews for having defended the wartime behavior of Pope Pius XII.

As in the 1998 statement, the new document says that while the Roman Catholic Church accepts responsibility for the sins of its followers, the sins themselves were committed by individuals, not the church.

It contains no specific apology for the attitude of the church or the inaction of church leaders like Pope Pius XII during the Holocaust.

Critics charge Pius with having aided in the killing of Jews by not speaking out against the Holocaust.

The document says that while some Christians helped Jews during the Holocaust, others did not do enough.

"This constitutes an appeal to all Christians of today; it requires an act of repentance and becomes a spur to redouble efforts," the document says, adding that such efforts should be made so that the "moral and religious memory of the wounds inflicted to the Jews are maintained."

Debate over these latest pronouncements and continuing controversy over the role of Pius XII already have colored the run-up to the pope's March 20-March 26 pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

In an interview late last month, Archbishop Pietro Sambi, the papal representative in the Holy Land, strongly defended Pius XII,

repeating the Vatican's stance that Pius saved Jews by remaining silent.

"I am convinced that a great strong condemnation would have increased the persecution of Hitler against the Jews," the archbishop said.

John Paul's trip will be the first papal visit to the Holy Land since Pope Paul VI visited Jerusalem in 1964 — before Israel took control of the entire city as a result of the 1967 Six-Day War.

It is meant to be a voyage of intense spirituality and symbolism that will enable the frail, 79-year-old pope to have direct contact with the actual sites where Christianity was born.

During his trip, the pope will meet with local leaders and visit sites sacred to Christians, Jews and Muslims. His crowded itinerary includes visits to the Western Wall and the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial.

Debate over Pius XII is just one element of controversy that has surfaced in the run-up to the trip.

Last month, leading rabbis in Israel requested that the pope postpone a Mass scheduled to be held in Nazareth on Saturday, March 25, saying it would force Israeli security officials to desecrate the Sabbath.

They also voiced concern about Christian evangelical activities targeting Jews.

Anti-pope graffiti has been found scrawled on the walls of Israel's Chief Rabbinate and elsewhere.

Last week, members of the outlawed Jewish extremist group Kach demonstrated outside the offices of Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, carrying signs reading, "The Pope, Cursed Be He."

Volatile relations among Jews, Christians and Muslims and continuing tensions between Israel and the Palestinians over the peace process — and particularly over the contested status of Jerusalem — have also helped raise the heat prior to the papal visit.

In Nazareth, where Jesus grew up, Israel late last year granted permission to Muslims to build a mosque next to a major Christian basilica.

This angered the Vatican, which issued strongly worded protests against the move and accused Israel of fomenting religious divisions.

The latest incident was an agreement signed last month between the Vatican and Palestinian leaders.

In a clear message to Israeli leaders, the agreement said unilateral decisions on Jerusalem were "morally and legally unacceptable."

The accord, signed at the Vatican during a visit by Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, drew sharp criticism from Israel.

The Palestinian Cabinet, meanwhile, hailed the agreement, issuing a statement calling it "a historic turning point in the benefit of peace" and "a guarantor of Palestinian national rights."

Christian sites in Jerusalem that the pope will visit lie in eastern Jerusalem, which the Palestinians claim as the capital of a future Palestinian state.

These include the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Mount of Olives.

The pope is also planning to visit the Dheisheh Palestinian refugee camp, which came under Palestinian rule in 1995.

Palestinians expect him to support their return to the Israeli villages they left during the 1948 War for Independence. □