



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 78, No. 48

Monday, March 13, 2000

83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Pope criticized for ignoring Shoah in his apology for sins against Jews

By *Brianne Korn*

Pope atones for church sins

Pope John Paul II asked forgiveness for the past sins of the Roman Catholic Church, including its treatment of Jews.

"We are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer," said the pope on the first Sunday of Lent. "We wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant." [Page 1]

Chechen hostage beaten to death

A Jewish hostage was beaten to death several days ago by his Chechen captors, according to a retired Russian major who has arranged the release of dozens of hostages in Chechnya.

Vyacheslav Izmailov told JTA he had recently tried to rescue Michail Kurnosov, 36, the son of a prominent Russian nuclear researcher who was kidnapped in Jan. 1999 from a ski resort in the North Caucasus and held for ransom in Chechnya.

Auschwitz doctor won't be tried

The last surviving doctor who worked at Auschwitz was declared unfit to stand trial on murder charges. German officials confirmed that prosecutors had dropped their investigation of Hans Munch, 88, after medical examiners found he was suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

Resumption of Syria talks denied

Israeli and Syrian officials denied reports of an imminent resumption of peace talks. Prime Minister Ehud Barak told the Cabinet he had no information on when talks would resume.

Arab ministers warn of war

Israeli officials say they are perplexed by warnings from Arab foreign ministers that Israel could face war if its planned withdrawal of troops from southern Lebanon is not part of a broader agreement with Syria. Israeli Justice Minister Yossi Beilin called the position surreal.

Meanwhile, senior Israeli military officials are cautioning against a unilateral withdrawal from southern Lebanon. The Israeli daily Ha'aretz said the officials are warning that a pullout without an agreement with Syria could threaten stability in the region.

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Vatican has again missed a historic opportunity to apologize for its silence during the Holocaust, say many Jewish leaders.

Pope John Paul II issued a broad apology Sunday for sins committed by the church throughout the ages, including those against the Jews. But the pope, who has worked to improve Catholic-Jewish relations, did not mention one of the darkest chapters in Jewish history.

"We're very disappointed that the Vatican did not make a reference to the Holocaust and its silence during the Holocaust period," said Seymour Reich, chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations, the main Jewish partner in formal dialogue with the Vatican.

"It's an omission that's hard to comprehend."

Rabbi A. James Rudin, the American Jewish Committee's national interreligious affairs director, called the pope's speech Sunday at St. Peter's Basilica "unprecedented." However, Rudin said, "We expected more than what came today."

He echoed the opinions of other Jewish leaders who said they believe the plea for forgiveness was groundbreaking but lacked proper acknowledgment of the church's role during the Holocaust.

"We are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer," said the pope on the first Sunday of Lent. "We wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant."

While the pope continues to hold the respect of many Jewish leaders for his attempts to strengthen ties between the communities, this is not the first time he has disappointed the Jewish community for his failure to place blame on the Roman Catholic Church for its silence as 6 million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust.

"I was especially pleased there was no defense of actions of previous popes," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, referring to a 1998 Vatican document in which the silence of the Holocaust-era pope was defended. "The unnecessary defense of Pius XII weakened the document a great deal."

The silence of Pius XII was hailed as a rescue effort by the church in the 1998 document, which declared that any words of disapproval from Pius would have only exacerbated the violence against Jews.

The pope's attempts to seek forgiveness for past sins has become a theme of his papacy. A week before the pope's speech, the Vatican issued a document, "Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Mistakes of the Past," that lists several major areas where the church had failed, including the Inquisition, forced conversion and treatment of Jews.

"In certain periods of history, Christians have at times given in to intolerance and have not been faithful to the great commandment of love, sully in this way the face of the church," the pope said Sunday.

The document and Sunday's speech came a week before the pope's planned visit to Israel. It will be the first papal visit to the Holy Land in 36 years. Pope Paul VI visited Jerusalem in 1964 before Israel gained control of the entire city after the Six-Day War. John Paul II is scheduled to visit the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial, where he is slated to give another major speech.

Israel's chief Ashkenazi rabbi, Yisrael Meir Lau, said he hopes the pope will use

MIDEAST FOCUS

Poll: Israelis fear Barak giveaway

A majority of Israelis fear Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak is too eager to make peace with Syria, according to a poll published in the Israeli newspaper Yediot Achronot.

In the survey, 57 percent of Israelis said they do not trust Barak's management of peace negotiations with Syria, fearing he is too willing to sign an agreement that would hand over all of the Golan Heights.

Jerusalem debate ignited

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak reiterated his government's commitment to Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Barak's remarks to the Cabinet came amid heated political debate set off after a top prime ministerial adviser said it is possible that Arab areas surrounding the capital may be transferred to Palestinian self-rule.

Arrow missiles called inadequate

Israel's Arrow anti-missile defense system is incapable of providing an adequate response to long-range missiles, such as the Shihab 3 being developed by Iran, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported, citing some officials in the defense establishment.

El Al plans flights to Morocco

Israel's national airline is planning four special flights from Tel Aviv to Morocco this spring and hopes to offer regular service in the future. The special flights will be available only to groups, according to an El Al spokesman.

Israeli acquitted of threat charge

A jury acquitted an 18-year-old Israeli charged with threatening a ground stewardess in London with a cigarette lighter in the shape of a pistol. Jurors believed Tomer Tabak had only asked for advice on how to board the plane with the lighter, which he had purchased for his mother's collection.



Daily News Bulletin

Shoshana S. Cardin, *President*
Mark J. Jaffe, *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.

his visit as an opportunity to address, more specifically, the church's wrongdoing during World War II. Expectations of a broad apology for the Holocaust were extinguished last week when Vatican officials announced that the Sunday Mass should not be viewed as a "spectacular self-flagellation."

Jewish leaders, however, were still anticipating a more specific apology for the Holocaust. "Expectations were high because of who he is," Foxman said.

Rudin said he thinks the Jewish community should view Sunday's plea as a building block for future relations with the church. All eyes should be on the effect the speech has on future teachings of the church, he said.

"How will it affect the Catholic liturgy in the days, months and years ahead?" Rudin said. "How will it affect the average Catholic?"

Greater acknowledgment of the anti-Semitic atmosphere leading up to the Holocaust will lead to greater acceptance of an apology, he said. □

100 Years of Vatican-Jewish relations

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Following are some of the high and low points of Vatican-Jewish relations during the past century:

1904 — Pope Pius X rejects Theodor Herzl's request that he support the Zionist movement.

1919 — Vatican warns of the danger of a Jewish state, just two years after the Balfour Declaration is issued, supporting the Jews' right to a homeland in Palestine.

1940-1945 — Pope Pius XII is aware of the Holocaust, but fails to speak out against it.

1949 — Pope Pius XII urges that Jerusalem be internationalized.

1964 — Pope Paul VI visits Israel for one day during the first papal pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

1965 — Pope John XXIII convenes the Second Vatican Council, whose initiatives culminate in the Nostra Aetate decree, which repudiates the Catholic teaching that Jews were collectively responsible for Jesus' death.

1968 — Pope Paul VI drops the Vatican's call for the internationalization of Jerusalem and instead calls for international guarantees of access to holy shrines.

1974 — The Vatican establishes a commission for relations with the Jews.

1978 — Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, Archbishop of Krakow in Poland, is elected pope and takes the name John Paul II.

1979 — Pope John Paul II pays homage at Auschwitz to the victims of Nazism during his first trip back to Poland after his election to the papacy.

1984 — The Vatican gives its first formal recognition of the significance of the State of Israel for the Jewish people.

1986 — Pope John Paul II visits the main synagogue in Rome, where he embraces Rome's chief rabbi and refers to Jews as Christianity's "older brothers."

1993 — The Vatican and Israel establish formal ties; Israel's chief Ashkenazi rabbi, Yisrael Meir Lau, meets Pope John Paul II in the Vatican, the first official encounter between a pontiff and chief rabbi from Israel.

1997 — Israel and the Vatican sign an accord formally recognizing the legal status of Roman Catholic Church institutions in Israel. Pope John Paul II hosts a menorah-lighting ceremony at the Vatican to mark Chanukah.

1998 — The Vatican issues "We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah," a document assessing the Roman Catholic Church's behavior during World War II. The document praises Pope Pius XII for saving hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives during the Holocaust, sparking criticism from Jewish groups who say the paper failed to condemn Pius' silence in the face of the Nazi slaughter.

2000 — The Vatican issues "Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Mistakes of the Past," which lists several major areas where the church had failed, including the Inquisition, forced conversion and the treatment of Jews. One week before a planned trip to the Holy Land, Pope John Paul II apologizes for the church's treatment of Jews. □

(Compiled by JTA correspondent Avi Machlis in Jerusalem and Foreign Editor Mitchell Danow in New York)

JEWISH WORLD

Documentary helps Jewish parents talk to kids about loss of loved ones

By Brianne Korn

NEW YORK (JTA) — Though death is a topic many keep quiet about, a documentary geared toward helping parents discuss the subject with children is making noise in the film industry.

The Detroit-based film "From Generation to Generation: Jewish Families Talk About Death," was recently awarded the Golden Eagle Award from CINE, the documentary and informational film organization, and named a silver award winner in the 42nd annual International Film and Video Awards competition.

Produced and directed by Academy Award-winning producer Sue Marx, the documentary is intended to compensate for a dearth of dialogue about death between parents and children, who are, too often, left to their own devices to conjure up explanations about death, according to the film's creators.

"What we're really saying to the parents is 'Get over it,'" Marx said.

"Death is a subject that's sad, and most people don't want to deal with it," said David Techner, the film's executive producer.

"People say, 'I don't know how to tell my kid' about death, he said, but "kids know more than parents think they know."

The documentary centers around personal interviews with children, mostly 7- to 11-year-olds, still pondering the loss of loved ones.

Many admit they are more perplexed by adult silence on the matter than by death itself.

"It's still scary to know," said one youngster in the film, "but it's scarier if you don't know."

Techner, grief therapist Rozanne Friedman and Rabbi Irwin Groner of Shaarey Zedek Synagogue in suburban Detroit appear in short clips throughout the film commenting on the best way adults can broach the subject of death.

Jewish rituals such as the job of the shomer, the person who stands guard over the body from death until burial, and the chevra kadisha, who prepare the body for burial, are described as well.

A mock funeral ties everything together at the film's end.

"The worst part about death for a child is that they don't feel safe or secure," says Friedman in the film.

"Structure," she adds, "helps them do that, rituals help them do that."

Techner, funeral director for Detroit's Ira Kaufman Chapel, has made television appearances as an expert in explaining death to children.

"It's geared for children," Techner said of the film, "but we really want parents to pay attention."

"The film has the potential to fill a variety of voids," according to Harlene Appleman, director of the Federations Alliance for Jewish Education in Detroit and one of the creators of the film.

Edited to 35 minutes, the film can be shown in a classroom without losing the attention of its young viewers.

Marx said a nondenominational film with the same theme is in production so the message can reach a broader audience, and a study guide will accompany all films ordered by schools.

Techner's mission to educate children dates back to his grandfather's death in 1960.

Nine years old at the time, Techner knew his grandfather was sick and remembers coming home from school one day and seeing his house surrounded by cars. As it turned out, the family had just returned from cemetery services.

"They buried him without even telling me he had died."

"I hope it really gets used by families in crisis and before crisis," said Marx of the film.

"Everyone wants closure," Techner added, "everyone wants the chance to say goodbye." □

Panel backs terror victims bill

The U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously endorsed legislation to allow American victims of terrorism to collect court judgments through the seizure of frozen assets of terrorist countries.

Among those who might benefit is the family of Alisa Flatow, who was killed in a terrorist bus bombing in Israel.

Women more avid students

American Jewish women are more likely to be engaged in Jewish learning than Jewish men, according to a study conducted by Hebrew University sociologist Steven Cohen. The study documents a major cultural reversal, following thousands of years in which Jewish education was overwhelmingly a male province.

Clinton hosts religious leaders

Jewish religious leaders joined President Clinton in a White House meeting on racial reconciliation.

"The Jewish community needs to look at where we are on race relations," said Rabbi Kenneth Hain, president of the Rabbinical Council of America, an Orthodox umbrella group. "There's more to be done."

Neo-Nazis march for Haider

Some 500 neo-Nazis chanting anti-foreigner slogans marched through Berlin to show their support for Austrian far-right leader Jorg Haider.

The march took place on the 62nd anniversary of the Nazis' annexation of Austria.

Putin urged to combat racism

Ninety-eight U.S. senators signed a letter to acting Russian President Vladimir Putin expressing their concern over the rise in anti-Semitism at the national and local levels of Russian society and politics.

"Anti-Semitism in Russia must not become a weapon in the struggle for power by political parties," said Sen. Gordon Smith (R-Ore.).

L.A. museum probes artwork

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art is investigating whether a 15th-century painting of the Madonna and Child was looted by the Nazis from Holocaust victims. The work, a panel painted around 1425, was sold by Nazi art dealer Hans Wendland, according to the museum.

Police confiscate parade float

Police in northern Italy confiscated a float that featured dancing concentration camp inmates and Nazi guards. The float shows inmates and guards dancing together under a banner showing clasped hands, with white doves flying out of a crematorium.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Should accused JCC shooter die if convicted? Jews remain divided

By Naomi Pfefferman

The Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Eleanor Kadish had only returned to work for a couple of weeks when she learned that federal prosecutors were seeking the death penalty for Buford Furrow Jr.

For six months, Kadish, a recruiter for an employment agency, took off work to care for Benjamin, now 6, who was confined to a wheelchair after he was shot in the abdomen and the left upper thigh.

Furrow is awaiting trial for allegedly shooting Benjamin and four other people at the North Valley Jewish Community Center before murdering a Filipino-American postal worker last August.

Kadish, who says her son still walks with a limp and cannot play with other children during recess at his public school, is still haunted by what happened at the community center.

"I still worry, 'Where are my children now? Are they well-protected?' These thoughts go through my mind all day long," she says.

Kadish did not find comfort when the media reported that Furrow, if convicted, could die by lethal injection.

The daughter of Holocaust survivors, she is resigned to the fact that hate crime is integral to society.

Even if Furrow dies, she says, "I think there are many more people out there very much like him."

Kadish, who spoke to prosecutors before they sought the death penalty, would not comment on whether she feels Furrow should die for his alleged crimes.

Like other victims' relatives interviewed by The Journal, she does not want her remarks to interfere in any way with the prosecution.

While the Jewish Community Centers of Greater Los Angeles vowed to support whatever sentence is handed down by the courts, and the Anti-Defamation League left Furrow's fate "up to the informed decision of the prosecutors," according to a spokesperson, other Jewish leaders are considerably more vociferous in their opinions.

"Buford Furrow is a poster boy for capital punishment," says national radio talk-show host Dennis Prager, agreeing with the 55 percent of Americans who support the death penalty for the avowed racist, according to an August 1999 Gallup poll.

"Furrow had the premeditated desire to murder as many human beings as possible. And the only way that society can declare how it feels about a crime is by the punishment it inflicts."

Rabbi Isaiah Zeldin of Stephen S. Wise Temple, another longtime supporter of the death penalty, advocates the death penalty if Furrow is convicted, because hate killers "have become subhuman and are a menace to humankind."

And Todd Carb, the 41-year-old Jewish paramedic who rushed to the community center last August, agrees for a more personal reason.

Carb still thinks about the morning that he knelt beside Benjamin in the center's hallway, struggling to work an IV into the boy's deflating veins, which demonstrated no discernable pulse.

He remembers the bloody floor of the center — as well as other scenes of violence and murder he has witnessed in his nearly

20 years as a paramedic.

"Based on what I've seen at work," he says, "I know that some people's actions are so offensive that only the death penalty is appropriate."

Nevertheless, Carb and others who support lethal injection for Furrow are aware of a strong, albeit minority opinion against the death penalty.

Twenty percent of Jews polled for a 1998 survey published in the Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics oppose capital punishment.

Their qualms reverberate in the larger society.

In late January, the governor of Illinois called for a moratorium on executions in his state because of a perceived pattern of racism and error by the criminal justice system.

This month, The New York Times ran a front-page story, "Questions of Death Row Justice for Poor People in Alabama."

And late last year, the Reform and Conservative movements issued a joint statement with the Catholic Church calling for an end to the death penalty.

In Los Angeles, perhaps no one is more outspoken against capital punishment than attorney Stephen Rohde, who serves on the board of Death Penalty Focus and the Progressive Jewish Alliance, and is president of the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, where he also chairs the death penalty committee.

Rohde, who has represented a man on California's death row, is slated to speak this week at a candlelight vigil on the eve of the execution of another convicted murderer at San Quentin.

He will no doubt do the same for Furrow, if the racist is convicted and sentenced to death.

Rohde has been opposed to capital punishment since he was a boy, when he was chilled by the execution of convicted spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

He remains so opposed to the death penalty that he would not have supported execution for Hitler, let alone for Furrow.

"I just don't believe that the state should model its conduct after the worst moment of a person's life, namely the moment that a person commits murder," he says.

Doug Mirell, an ACLU board member who also opposes the death penalty "under all circumstances," questions whether prosecutors are seeking the death penalty for Furrow because of the outcry and media attention that last August's shootings generated.

Rohde points out that the federal government accepted life imprisonment for Ted Kaczynski, the "Unabomber" who terrorized America with a series of first-degree murders and maimings.

Loyola Law School Professor Laurie Levenson, who was the CBS legal commentator during the O.J. Simpson trial, believes that the courts accepted life imprisonment for Kaczynski because he was found mentally ill.

Nevertheless, Levenson, who is "not a big fan of the death penalty," says she is troubled about whether the ultimate punishment is appropriate for Furrow and is awaiting release of psychological studies on the avowed racist before finalizing her opinion.

Had several Jewish children been killed at the JCC, according to Levenson, there would probably be less disagreement than there is now regarding what to do with the convicted killer.

"There would be a huge clamor for the death penalty, and not just among Jews," Levenson says. "Because when you kill children, people tend to be unforgiving." □