



Daily News Bulletin

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83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Hezbollah rains rockets on Israel

Hezbollah gunmen fired dozens of rockets Thursday into a northern Israeli town, injuring 28 people, causing damage and setting fires. [Page 3]

Cardinal's death prompts sorrow

Jewish leaders expressed sorrow at the death of New York's longtime archbishop. Cardinal John O'Connor, who died Wednesday at 80 after battling brain cancer, "forged a close bond with the Jewish community," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League. [Page 4]

Bombing suspects seek Israel aid

Libya reportedly tried to enlist Israeli intelligence experts to testify on behalf of two Libyans who went on trial this week for the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, 11 years ago.

According to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, lawyers for the two tried to locate Israeli experts willing to substantiate claims that a Palestinian terrorist group was responsible for the attack that killed all 270 passengers and crew on board the flight.

Palestinians reject map

Israeli negotiators presented to their Palestinian counterparts a map of a proposed Palestinian entity covering about two-thirds of the West Bank.

The Palestinian team refused to consider the map and broke off the session.

Ministry pressed on council

Israel's Supreme Court gave the Religious Affairs Ministry 20 days to explain why it appointed an alternative committee to the Jerusalem religious council that does not include Reform or Conservative representatives. The Supreme Court will reconvene to discuss the issue in mid-June.

Clinton seeks school guidelines

President Clinton called for guidelines to control the involvement of faith-based groups in the charter school movement, but made clear that charter schools have to be non-sectarian. The American Jewish Congress says faith-based groups can have arrangements with charter schools provided they abide by constitutional limitations requiring the separation of church and state in public education.

NEWS ANALYSIS

In its 53rd year, Israel will continue to ask, 'Who am I?'

By Avi Machlis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As Israelis prepare to fire up their grills for their Independence Day barbecue ritual on Israel's 52nd birthday next week, the existential debates that dominate the public agenda are almost sure to get lost in the clouds of smoke.

But amid the smog that will descend upon the country, there is also a feeling that in Israel's 53rd year, an intense debate about the nature of the Jewish state and the future of Zionism will heat up.

"The attempt to find a middle road between a Jewish and democratic state will be the essence of the ongoing public debate over Jewish and Israeli identity," said Moshe Lissak, professor emeritus of sociology at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

"But I don't think that Israeli society is ripe for these discussions because as long as diplomatic arrangements with her neighbors have not been secured, it will be difficult to address these issues in a rational way."

Experts say that after the barbecues are doused, the debate about the nature of the Jewish state will proceed along two main paths. First, the very fundamental definition of Israel as a Jewish state is likely to face sharper challenges than ever before from Israeli Arabs, who make up 20 percent of Israel's population of 6 million. Second, the struggle between religious and secular segments of society about what it means to be a Jewish state will be played out in new ways.

The impetus for the Arab challenge was provided nearly two months ago, when the Qadan family from the Galilee won the right from Israel's High Court of Justice to build a home in Katzir, a Jewish community established by the Jewish Agency for Israel.

With that landmark decision, the Supreme Court shattered one of the fundamental tenets of modern Zionism, which sought to secure land exclusively for Jews. While ruling that it was illegal to discriminate against Arabs in land allocation, the court insisted this did not clash with the Jewish nature of the state.

In fact, Justice Aharon Barak argued that the "Jewish character of the state did not permit Israel to discriminate between its citizens. In Israel, Jews and non-Jews are citizens with equal rights and responsibilities." The ruling injected a new sense of self-confidence into Israel's Arab community, which says it suffers from widespread discrimination in areas such as employment and government funding.

Mohammed Baraka, a Knesset member and leader of the predominantly Arab Hadash Party, said Israeli Arabs will now step up their struggle for equal rights and press ahead with a campaign to remove the Jewish symbols of the state: from the Star of David flag to the national anthem, Hatikvah, to the Jewish Agency itself.

Though Baraka said he understands this strikes at a raw nerve of most Jewish Israelis, he added, "The state can express Jewish national aspirations, but it cannot be a Jewish state if one of every five citizens is an Arab," he said. "Healthy logical reasoning says that when the Jewish and democratic nature of the state clash, the democratic way should win out."

Such a campaign, said sociologist Lissak, is likely to reignite dormant Zionist feelings among many Israelis.

"I fear a backlash from a large portion of Jewish society," he said.

But at the Jewish Agency — an organization Baraka wants dismantled — Sallai Meridor, the Jewish Agency chairman who opposed the Supreme Court ruling, believes

MIDEAST FOCUS

Ministry proposes tax reforms

Israel's Finance Ministry unveiled recommendations for a sweeping package of tax reforms.

The centerpiece of the reforms is a new capital gains tax of 25 percent on income from investments and savings. Next month, the Knesset is expected to begin debating the package, which will take effect in 2001 if approved.

Report: Laser system passes test

A high-energy laser developed by Israel and the United States that could eventually be used against rockets passed its first test last week, according to The New York Times.

Israel hopes to deploy the Tactical High Energy Laser after its planned troop withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

Report: Peace unlikely this year

Israel's hopes of reaching comprehensive peace in the Middle East this year appear unlikely, according to a London-based think-tank. The International Institute for Strategic Studies said the now-deadlocked Israeli-Syrian talks had become trapped in an "unrealistic timetable" and said there could be violence among Palestinians if their negotiations with Israel do not result in a final peace accord by September.

Palestinian planes intercepted

For a third time this week, Israel intercepted a Palestinian airplane flying from Gaza International Airport to Jordan. Israeli military officials said the planes were using the wrong flight paths and were endangering Israeli fighter jets patrolling the area.

Israel, Sri Lanka restore ties

Israel and Sri Lanka resumed diplomatic ties. The South Asian country, which broke off relations with Israel in 1970, is expected to send a delegation to Israel in the coming days to discuss the move.



Daily News Bulletin

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Israelis are up to the challenge, even in the face of post-Zionist trends and history books that are rewriting what once were sacred beliefs about the heroism of Israel's founders.

"After having built the state physically, we are now moving on to the phase of adding the spiritual content of what it means to be a Jewish and democratic state," he said. "I think this is a very exciting challenge."

While Meridor believes the Jewish state must be particularly sensitive to its non-Jewish population — even using affirmative action at times — he also foresees a growing Arab trend to "de-Zionize and de-Judaize" Israel.

In addition, there will be groups of Israelis who join in and want Israel to relinquish all identity as a Jewish state. Such a threat, he said, could indeed galvanize mainstream support for a more Jewish state.

"But the true challenge is to choose to be Jewish or to stay Jewish without anti-Semites, and to be united without enemies," he added.

Yet at the same time, Israeli Jews are likely to experience a contradictory trend. More and more Israeli Jews see different cultural, religious or political sectors within Israel as enemies, and this will make cohesion a difficult task.

Many believe the same court that gave its nod to the land challenge by the Arab family will also present a different set of challenges for religious and secular Jews.

Secular Jews feel increasingly threatened by the rising political power of haredi, or fervently Orthodox, parties. Many see the Supreme Court as a last line of defense against religious politics. The haredim meanwhile, feel defenseless against an increasingly activist judicial system. On all sides, the rhetoric is ugly.

Ironically, the haredim, who largely do not attach theological significance to Israel as a Jewish state, are battling harder than ever to maintain the state's clutch on Judaism.

Jonathan Rosenblum, director of the Israel office for the fervently Orthodox Am Echad group and a commentator for the Jerusalem Post newspaper, explains the paradox. On the one hand, he said, an increasingly materialistic, secular society with a shrinking connection with Judaism vindicates the classical haredi rejection of secular Zionism as a replacement for Judaism.

"At the same time, we are fearful that to the extent that people lose any awareness of themselves as Jews as a distinctive entity, it will make it much more difficult to reconstitute the Jewish people around its natural center, which is the Torah," he added.

Rosenblum rejected accusations that haredim want to create a Jewish theocracy. He sees the group's attitude toward religion and state as performing the role of a teacher.

It is this, he explained, that drove the haredi struggle against the shipment of a large turbine on Shabbat last year, in one of the odder religious-secular battles of the year and a signal of what is to come.

"The point about the turbine was that both the government and the Supreme Court basically took the position that Shabbas is an irrational consideration, and only financial consideration matters," Rosenblum said. "On that, we had to go to war."

Meanwhile, beyond the ideological wars between Jew and Arab and Jew and Jew, there is yet a new type of Israeli emerging. They are high-tech capitalists, a breed apart from the socialist-Zionists who were dominant among the founders of the state.

The new entrepreneurs see themselves as redefining Zionism for the new millennium. Sociologist Lissak says Israel's high-tech boom and prosperity has not had a mitigating influence on the ideological conflicts, as might be expected, because only a small number of Israelis actually have a direct stake in the profits.

However, Neil Cohen, a partner at Israel Seed Partners, a venture capital fund that raised \$180 million last month from top U.S. investors and leading Internet figures, said he believes the high-tech boom is affecting the country in bigger ways — and creating new challenges.

"We have created hundreds, if not thousands, of jobs," said Cohen, who immigrated from London 11 years ago. "It gives us a degree of satisfaction and a feeling of pride that we wouldn't feel if we were in the U.K. or the U.S."

The first challenge is to bridge the gap between the haves of the new economy and the have-nots of the old economy.

"The second is maintaining Jewish identity," he said. "We have been so good at what we've done that all the things that have differentiated us from just any other nation have broken down, and we run a risk of becoming just like any other nation." □

JEWISH WORLD

Holocaust remembered at Capitol

Members of the U.S. Congress and leaders of the Jewish community commemorated the Holocaust in a ceremony at the U.S. Capitol Rotunda. Thursday's program included a traditional candlelighting ceremony with the participation of Holocaust survivors.

Crown Heights verdicts appealed

Lawyers for two men convicted in the 1991 slaying of a Chasidic man in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn are questioning the jury selection process in one of the cases and the constitutionality of the federal civil rights law used in the other.

The lawyers took the actions before arguments were heard Wednesday in the cases of Lemrick Nelson and Charles Price at a U.S. appeals court.

The two had been convicted on charges related to the stabbing death of Yankel Rosenbaum.

House presses Red Cross

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution calling on the International Committee of the Red Cross to grant full membership and recognition to the Magen David Adom Society and its Star of David emblem. The international body recently suggested it may accept Israel's relief agency if it uses a different emblem.

Jews for Jesus logo protested

The Canadian Jewish Congress is fighting a governmental decision that allows an international Jews for Jesus group with churches in Toronto and Montreal to use a menorah as a copyright-protected logo. The Canadian Jewish Congress said it is "offensive, scandalous and immoral" for Chosen People Ministries to use the menorah as its emblem.

GOP said to draw religious voters

Religious voters in the United States are becoming Republican while non-religious voters are turning to the Democratic Party, said CNN political analyst William Schneider. Speaking at the annual meeting of the American Jewish Committee, Schneider also said the religious right still wields a good deal of power over the Republican Party.

ADL blasts campus' mock camp

The Anti-Defamation League called on officials at Sarah Lawrence College to speak out against a mock concentration camp that was set up on the campus as part of a protest against Israel's treatment of Lebanese citizens. Students at the Bronxville, N.Y., school have the right "to air their views on the complex situation in the Middle East," the ADL wrote to the school's president, but comparing that situation to the Holocaust is "highly offensive."

Hezbollah rockets hit northern Israeli town

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — In a sharp escalation of tensions along the Israeli-Lebanese border, Hezbollah militants fired dozens of rockets into a northern Israeli town, injuring 27 people.

Thursday's attack, which also caused damage and sparked fires, marked the first time Kiryat Shmona has come under fire in nearly a year.

Twenty of the people were treated for shock and then released, according to the Israeli Consulate in New York.

Israel soon retaliated by launching three airstrikes, knocking out power lines in some parts of southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah officials said they fired the rockets to retaliate for "continuing Israeli aggression" against Lebanese villages.

The rocket attack came hours after two Lebanese women were killed by shells fired by Israel and its ally in the region, the South Lebanon Army.

It also came less than a day after 14 Lebanese civilians were reportedly lightly hurt by an Israeli bombing of a village.

Israeli military sources have said Hezbollah is deliberately stepping up its attacks in the wake of Israel's announcement that it will withdraw troops from the area by July. Some Israeli officials have been calling for immediate implementation of the pullback.

Thursday's Katyusha rocket attack hit Kiryat Shmona and other northern towns along the border to which the IDF is expected to redeploy.

Reports said the rockets set cars on fire in Kiryat Shmona and sent thousands of Israelis into bomb shelters. □

New Zealand school resists calls to revoke work on Holocaust denial

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — A case of Holocaust denial has heated up in New Zealand.

Jewish leaders in New Zealand are calling on Canterbury University to withdraw a 1993 master's thesis that questioned whether Jews were killed in gas chambers during the Holocaust.

The author of the thesis, Joel Hayward, recently sent a letter to the New Zealand Jewish Chronicle saying that his thesis' "conclusions are wrong" and that he now believes the Nazis did, indeed, kill 6 million Jews.

Hayward, who is now a senior lecturer in history at Massey University, received his masters degree from the University of Canterbury in 1993 on the topic of Holocaust revisionism.

Hayward's thesis shared many of the conclusions of David Irving, who was labeled a Holocaust denier by a British judge after he lost the libel suit he had filed against American scholar Deborah Lipstadt.

The president of the New Zealand Jewish Council, David Zwartz, said he applauds Hayward's recent letter, but added that "the university's reputation for scholarship is in question as long as it stands by this thesis, which has been repudiated even by its own author."

The official position of Canterbury University is that Hayward wrote an addendum to his work that "sets out the perspectives he now has on this sensitive issue and the validity of the references he used in the thesis."

But Professor Dov Bing, of the department of political science and public policy at the University of Waikato in New Zealand, said the addendum is misleading and does not go as far as the outright apology in Hayward's letter to the Jewish Chronicle.

"I believe the addendum should be removed and replaced with a clear and precise statement from Dr. Hayward," Bing said. □

OBITUARY**Jews mourn New York cardinal as a fierce foe of anti-Semitism***By Brianne Korn*

NEW YORK (JTA) — Jewish leaders are joining Catholics in mourning the loss of New York's Cardinal John O'Connor, who died Wednesday at the age of 80.

O'Connor was heralded as a man of conscience who helped improve Catholic-Jewish relations.

"He had the largest Jewish diocese in the world," said Rabbi Mordecai Waxman of Temple Israel in Great Neck, N.Y., a past leader of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations. O'Connor was known for his fierce opposition to anti-Semitism.

"No one who is truly Catholic can be an anti-Semite. It's a contradiction in terms," the cardinal said when he was awarded an honorary doctorate of humane letters by the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College — Jewish Institute of Religion, making him the first Catholic cardinal to be so honored by a Jewish seminary.

In line with these beliefs, O'Connor sent a letter last year to his Jewish friends before the High Holidays expressing his remorse for violence committed against the Jews throughout the ages.

Though he omitted any direct reference to the Holocaust, Jewish leaders took his statement as a positive step toward bridging the gap between Catholics and Jews.

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

"The Jewish people lost a champion and I lost a friend," said Rabbi A. James Rudin, interreligious affairs director for the American Jewish Committee. Rudin said he was inspired when Rudin inquired as to the cardinal's well being, O'Connor replied, "Rabbi Jim, everyday is a holiday."

"He meant the joy of it all," Rudin said. "He loved being the cardinal."

Rudin also recognized O'Connor's role in matters concerning the Jewish state.

"I consider him a chief architect in establishing Vatican-Israel relations."

In 1987, O'Connor made a landmark visit to Jordan and Israel, where he provoked controversy over his endorsement of a Palestinian homeland and acquiesced in a Vatican request to downgrade his meetings with Israeli officials.

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations heavily criticized him at the time, but the same group later recognized him for his role in urging the pope to grant political recognition to the Jewish state.

"He set the bar very high in terms of what should be done vis-a-vis Jews," Rudin said.

Though no one has been selected as O'Connor's successor, media reports have placed Bishop Edward Michael Egan of Bridgeport, Conn., at the top of the list.

Laurie Groff, director of community relations for the Jewish Center for Community Services in the region of Connecticut served by Egan, said the bishop has attended several interfaith events when invited.

"In his remarks, he always indicates a desire to improve Catholic-Jewish relation," she said. "He is also aware and proud of the strides that have been made so far."

Aside from his achievements as a community leader who often spoke out against popular opinion, O'Connor will also be remembered for his sense of humor.

Rabbi Aaron Landes, senior rabbi of Beth Sholom Congregation in Elkins Park, Pa, served as a Navy chaplain with O'Connor. He remembered a Christmas trip to Antarctica to visit sailors.

"He regaled us with stories, especially about the seals," reminisced Landes, who laughed as he conjured up the image of O'Connor as he "acted out the parts of the seals."

Rabbi Marc Schneier, president of the North American Boards of Rabbis, will always remember one moment he shared with the cardinal.

Prior to his installation as president of the New York Board of Rabbis in 1998, Schneier met with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican. Four days later at his installation ceremony in New York, O'Connor served as the keynote speaker. When Schneier spoke afterwards he addressed the cardinal and said, "The pope asked me to bring the cardinal blessings — under rabbinical supervision."

The cardinal, not to be out-joked, took the statement a step further. "He stood and removed his red skull cap and placed it on my head."

The red skull cap is on permanent display at the Museum of Jewish Heritage — A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in New York.

"That became the symbol of the great love and admiration he had for the Jewish community," Schneier said. □

ARTS AND CULTURE**Planned Jerusalem museum will focus on how to get along***By Tom Tugend*

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Unlike its prototype in Los Angeles, a planned museum of tolerance in Jerusalem will not deal with the Holocaust, said the founder and dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

Instead, the museum's focus will be on promoting civility and tolerance among Jews, and between Jews and non-Jews, including Arabs, said Marvin Hier. As a result, the museum will not compete with Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial.

Hier made his comments before plans for the creation of the museum, a \$120 million project, were unveiled last week in Los Angeles, where the center is located.

Architect Frank Gehry will design the museum and conference center, which will rise on a three-acre site at the foot of Jerusalem's Mount Scopus, home to the Hebrew University.

It will take about two years to complete the designs, to be approved by the Jerusalem municipality, and another two to three years to finish construction and install the exhibits.

As in the Los Angeles prototype, exhibits in the Jerusalem museum will be high-tech, interactive and geared to the Internet generation.

"We are not interested in the state-of-the-art now, but what will be available on the market four years from now," explained Hier. □