



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 78, No. 166

Friday, September 1, 2000

83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli commander resigns

The commander of Israeli forces in the West Bank resigned as a result of last weekend's botched raid on a Hamas militant in which three Israeli soldiers were killed, apparently by "friendly fire."

In addition to Brig. Gen. Shlomo Oren, the leader of the elite Duvdevan unit, which conducted the raid, also resigned.

It was not clear whether the Israeli army's chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz, would accept the resignations.

Lieberman 'disagrees' with ADL

Democratic vice-presidential candidate Joseph Lieberman said the Anti-Defamation League misinterpreted his recent statements on religion on the campaign trail.

"I respect the ADL, but I respectfully disagree," said the Connecticut senator, adding that he thinks faith can play a "constructive role" in the United States.

Meanwhile, the ADL said it did not believe he should downplay his Jewishness or refrain from discussing his faith, only that he should "refrain from overt expressions of religious values and beliefs on the campaign trail."

U.S. lawmakers talk with Iran

American legislators broached the issue of the 10 Jews imprisoned in Iran with Iranian lawmakers at a New York museum function.

The Iranian delegation, which includes Iran's lone Jewish lawmaker, is in town in advance of next week's U.N. Millennium Summit.

Meanwhile, Jewish leaders and elected officials will demonstrate Tuesday outside the Iranian mission to the U.N. in New York to support the 10 Iranian Jews convicted last month of spying charges.

That rally, timed to coincide with Iranian President Mohammad Khatami's visit to the United Nations, will be followed by a rally outside the United Nations that is being billed as the largest-ever rally of Iranian Americans.

REMINDER: The JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Sept. 4.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Spending restitution money pits survivors against groups

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — Since 1996, Jewish groups and their lawyers have gone to the mat with the likes of the Germans, the Swiss and the French, extracting \$9 billion in restitution for the evil wrought in Europe by Nazi forces and their collaborators.

While the entire process is gradually winding down, a few more battles loom: with the Austrian government, museums holding looted artwork and the U.S. companies whose wartime German subsidiaries profited from slave labor.

But the clash that promises to be particularly wrenching will actually pit Jew against Jew: what to do with the hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars in "residual" funds, or those without direct heirs or claimants.

On Sept. 11, the World Jewish Congress will formally announce the creation of a foundation — tentatively named the Foundation for the Jewish People — that will determine the spending priorities. The foundation was actually established in June in Jerusalem, but the WJC chose to announce it at a gala event in New York to honor the politicians who have played a key role in restitution, including President Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The foundation board will be made up of representatives of various Jewish organizations, Holocaust survivor groups and the Israeli government. Among the ideas floated are funding Jewish and Holocaust education, restoring Jewish communities in Europe and building Holocaust museums and memorials, said Elan Steinberg, WJC's executive director.

"The Nazis sought to wipe out not only the Jewish people, but Jewish communities and Judaism itself," Steinberg said. "Obviously, this has been 50 years too slow. But I think the issue we have to address, are now forced to address, is to ensure that how these residual assets are used reflects the best interests of the Jewish people as a whole."

Many Holocaust survivors vehemently disagree. While they support the general need for education, commemoration, documentation and research, they believe there are more pressing needs: health care for the 250,000 survivors worldwide, including 130,000 in the United States. An estimated 1,000 survivors die each month.

"Yes, money should be spent for Jewish education and culture, but that is the obligation of klal Yisrael — of all Jews," said Roman Kent, a survivor who serves as chairman of the American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors and vice president of the Claims Conference. "But to me, this money has one specific purpose: All of it should go to the survivors. As long as there are still survivors who are old and sick and needy, they are the first obligation."

The \$9 billion figure is a bit misleading, and most of it is already spoken for, according to the WJC's Steinberg.

Per an agreement reached with Germany in July, \$5.2 billion will go to some 1.25 million forced and slave laborers. In real terms, Jewish laborers will receive 30 percent of the sum, with 140,000 slave laborers collecting up to \$7,500 apiece.

Of the \$1.25 billion from the Swiss banks, \$200 million went into a humanitarian fund for the 250,000 Jewish survivors around the world. Lump-sum payments ranged from \$500 to \$1,400. In the United States, nearly \$30 million was allocated to more than 60,000 survivors, or \$500 apiece.

In addition, in negotiations with the Claims Conference in the 1950s, Germany agreed to pay annual pensions to some 85,000 survivors. That total has run to nearly \$50

MIDEAST FOCUS

Sea Scrolls copyright upheld

Israel's Supreme Court recognized an Israeli scholar's claim to the exclusive copyright over the ancient text known as the Dead Sea Scrolls because of his effort in filling in the gaps in the fragmented text.

Ben-Gurion University Professor Elisha Qimron sued a U.S. magazine publisher, Hershel Shanks, after he printed Qimron's reconstruction in a book without seeking his permission or crediting him.

Shanks argued that the copyright belongs to the original author of the 2,000-year-old text.

Mayor backs 'divine' compromise

The mayor of Jerusalem supported for the first time the idea of declaring the area around the Temple Mount to be under "divine sovereignty."

The Likud Party's Ehud Olmert said that as long as Israeli police have the right to enter the site, he is not opposed to the idea, which would give Muslims complete access to holy sites in the area.

The idea has been raised among Israeli and Palestinian peace negotiators as one possible way of resolving the dispute over control of Jerusalem and the Old City.

Israel accuses Iraq at parley

Israel accused Arab states of harboring illegal weapons and accused Iraq of harboring weapons of mass destruction.

An Iraqi representative at a U.N. disarmament forum in New York responded Thursday by accusing Israel of not admitting that it possesses nuclear bombs, and of refusing to implement U.N. Security Council resolutions.

CIA director to arrive for talks

CIA director George Tenet is scheduled to arrive in the Middle East on Friday for talks on the peace process with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.



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.

billion, and about \$500 million a year. The Claims Conference is also responsible for selling off unclaimed property from the former East Germany, which now generates close to \$80 million per year.

Twenty percent is allocated for Holocaust-related research and documentation, while 80 percent goes for welfare programs for survivors in the former Soviet Union, Israel and the United States. This includes home care assistance for 18,000 survivors in all three regions, and 3 million hot meals and 800,000 food packages per year in the former Soviet Union, said Gideon Taylor, the conference's executive vice president.

"We've been able to make a huge difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of people," Taylor said.

"The question is, how do we use the limited resources available from restitution to help the neediest survivors all around the world. It's what our allocations process grapples with: balancing resources with competing needs."

But what lies at the heart of this intracommunal debate are two contentious issues: Who are the rightful heirs to all that was lost in Europe, and who has the right to decide how the money should be spent?

Holocaust survivors and their advocates say the stolen property and assets lost did not in fact belong to "the Jewish people as a whole," but to European Jewish communities and individuals. Furthermore, they say, it is the survivors who are entitled to decide the spending priorities, not the groups that negotiated on their behalf.

Their side was incensed by an Aug. 22 Reuters report stating that "for the past five decades" groups such as the WJC and the Claims Conference "have been designated as the heirs of the six million people killed by the Nazis." While survivors say this reflects the attitude and arrogance of these groups, Steinberg told JTA that Reuters got it wrong. He reiterated that "the Jewish people are the heirs of Jewish assets."

Weighing in for the Claims Conference, spokeswoman Alissa Kaplan added: "I don't think there are right or wrong answers. Who is the heir of those who didn't survive is a philosophical question, and a very difficult question."

"Survivors should have a voice and they do have a strong voice. Most of our negotiators are survivors," Kaplan said.

That's not enough to placate some survivors or their advocates. The need for financial assistance is particularly acute in South Florida, which is home to the second largest community of survivors in the United States, numbering at least 15,000.

"If these survivors are placed in a position, which many of them are, where they have to choose between food, medication and rent, something is very wrong with this picture," said Rositta Kenigsberg, a survivor's daughter and executive vice president of the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center at Florida International University.

"I'm not saying there aren't other elderly in this situation. But this is a population that is justifiably the hereditary and biological heirs, if you will, to what was stolen in Europe. That this is so difficult to understand for those negotiating these settlements, in the name of these survivors, is a shocking, shocking revelation."

In South Florida, the survivors have decided on a \$46 million plan that would provide six to eight hours of home health care, primarily to the home-bound or bed-ridden, in order to avoid their institutionalization.

Joe Sachs, co-chairman of the Florida Survivors Coalition, said his group has requested \$10 million to \$15 million in "seed money" for the plan from the Claims Conference. The Florida Insurance Commission supports the plan, Sachs said, and it may be adopted by other survivor groups in New York and California, the first and third largest survivor communities. The Claims Conference's Taylor said he has discussed the proposal with Sachs and others, but no decision has been made.

Sachs said he is discouraged by the response.

"We should have had a voice from the beginning; now we've wound up pleading for what's rightfully ours," said Sachs, 74, who was confined for three years in the ghetto in his native Poland, then suffered three years in labor and concentration camps. He lost his parents and brother, and 52 of 58 relatives overall.

"We're not going to be around forever. Let's give these people their due. Just a little justice. A little peace of mind from their health care problems in their last few years."



JEWISH WORLD

Sex abuse panel to end work

A commission investigating the way the Orthodox Union handled complaints that a youth group employee sexually harassed and molested teen-agers expects to complete its research by mid-September and then finish its report.

The commission's chair, Richard Joel of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, said the panel has conducted more than 125 interviews and reviewed thousands of pages of documents.

Laser system passes test

A U.S.-Israeli laser weapon system designed to simultaneously shoot down multiple rockets similar to those used by Hezbollah in Lebanon was successfully tested in New Mexico on Wednesday.

The \$250 million Tactical High Energy Laser may be delivered to Israel as early as February.

Agent: Terror evidence absent

The U.S. government lacks evidence that a Palestinian immigrant who has been held for three years without charges raised money for a terrorist group or helped organize any violence, said a federal agent. The comments came in the trial of Mazen Al-Najjar, who helped organize a conference organized by the Islamic Committee for Palestine.

Tulsa cemetery desecrated

Two men were arrested on charges they desecrated more than 90 Jewish headstones last week in a Tulsa, Okla., cemetery.

After the crime, local Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders and the mayor of Tulsa led a gathering of hundreds for a re-consecration ceremony, according to the United Jewish Communities.

Russian court bans neo-Nazis

The Supreme Court of an autonomous region within Russia temporarily suspended the activities of the local branch of the country's strongest neo-Nazi group, according to the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.

The court in Karelia based this decision against Russian National Unity mainly on technicalities.

Family of Brooklyn Chasid sues

The family of a mentally ill Chasidic man in Brooklyn killed last year by New York City policemen filed a wrongful-death lawsuit against the officers involved in the incident.

The officers involved in this week's lawsuit were already exonerated by a grand jury for shooting Gidone Busch, who police say was threatening officers with a hammer.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Football prayer movement worries Jews in the South

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — There is a growing Christian movement involving prayer, football and schools — and it has U.S. Jewish groups worried as the new academic year begins.

Some communities, mainly in the Southeast and Texas, are organizing "spontaneous" prayer before high school football games, only a few months after the Supreme Court ruled that student-led prayer at school sporting events was unconstitutional.

National and local Jewish agencies are watching the grass-roots effort closely and are worried.

The court had ruled in June that students may pray, just as long as the school does not sponsor or facilitate the prayer. Providing a public address system or holding prayer rallies, for example, would be illegal.

But if school officials are not involved, then participants are legally free to say the Lord's Prayer, as has been the practice at games in a number of states so far.

School officials can't even create a window for prayer to take place, said Marc Stern, co-director of the American Jewish Congress' legal department, but if fans alone are involved, then the issue "may be beyond the reach of the law."

Jeffrey Sinensky, director of domestic policy and legal counsel for the American Jewish Committee, said he is not sure whether the spontaneous prayers are legal, but they are a clear attempt to circumvent the message of the court.

The AJCommittee has heard about the prayer movement from some of its chapters, but said it would wait and see how the issue plays out before it would consider challenging the practice. Sinensky said religious leaders should unite to say this practice is not appropriate.

Local Jewish leaders are upset because of the animosity the issue is creating for their communities.

"It's not a legal issue, but a sensitivity issue," said Jay Kaiman of the Anti-Defamation League in Atlanta.

Kaiman, director of the ADL's Southeast region, which includes South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama, said local churches are advancing the reintroduction of prayer at football games.

Steve Benen of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, a group that monitors religious liberties, says groups of local ministers have started formal projects in certain areas and are telling people through the churches to support the prayer movement.

But so long as the school is not involved, the practice can't be stopped, Benen said.

The June ruling was the latest major decision that showed the high court wants a strong separation between church and state with regard to school prayer. In 1962, a Supreme Court landmark decision outlawed organized, officially sponsored prayers in public schools; and in 1992, the justices barred clergy-led prayers at public school graduation ceremonies.

But the prayer movement seems to be catching on. At a recent rally in Asheville, N.C., thousands proclaimed they would pray at school events as often and as publicly as the Constitution permits. A group called No Pray, No Play is working to ensure that the Lord's Prayer is said at games. The group is offering to help people organize prayer at events around the country.

In a "Statement to Non-Christians" on the group's Web site, the group says it is not trying to impose its faith.

"We agree with the Supreme Court's decision to prevent public schools from encouraging or allowing a student to pray over the school's P.A. system," the site says.

"It is definitely not their job to promote one religion over another. It is our job to promote Jesus Christ according to Scripture. You are free to promote your belief (or lack of) as much as you want. We don't pray to force our religion on people, we pray to honor God."

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Echoes of the Munich Massacre heard amid Sydney preparations***By Simon Reeve*

LONDON (JTA) — With just over two weeks to go before the start of the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, final preparations are being made for this huge sports festival.

More than 10,000 athletes and 340,000 foreign tourists are expected to visit Australia for the Games, and organizers naturally want the event to be a huge success.

Just outside the main Olympic stadium, a simple stainless steel panel bearing 11 names has been suspended from a tower in the Olympic plaza. Above it, a double-sided blue glass panel displays inscriptions in Hebrew — a reminder of what the organizers desperately hope to avoid.

This poignant memorial commemorates the greatest disaster in the history of the modern Olympics: the massacre of 11 Israeli athletes and officials at the 1972 Summer Games in Munich.

The monument symbolizes the need for security in Sydney and is a constant reminder that the families of the dead Israelis are still campaigning for justice.

The Munich tragedy began in the early hours of Sept. 5, 1972, when Palestinian terrorists burst into the building housing the Israeli delegation to "The Games of Peace and Joy."

The attackers killed two Israelis, took hostages and demanded the release of prisoners in Israeli jails.

When Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir refused their demands, a day of tense negotiations and torturous deadlines began.

As the minutes ticked by toward each deadline it was, says Ankie Spitzer, wife of hostage Andre Spitzer, an Israeli fencing master, "like dying a little bit."

After a daylong siege — watched live on ABC-TV and by 900 million people around the world — the Germans eventually decided to shift the problem away from the Olympic Village and try to rescue the Israelis using force.

The terrorists were told they would be flown to a "safe haven," and were taken by helicopter with their hostages to an airfield outside Munich.

Zvi Zamir, the head of the Mossad, the Israeli secret service, arrived in Munich to see the hostages shuffle to the choppers.

"Jews once again walking tied on German land," Zamir recalls.

"It was a thing which I'll never forget in my life."

As the choppers took off toward the airfield, the terrorists began to suspect something was wrong: It had all been too easy.

"We began to get the feeling that a trap was waiting," said Jamal Al-Gashey, the sole surviving member of the terrorist unit. "We began to prepare ourselves."

Moments after the terrorists landed at the airfield, the Germans launched a rescue operation. It was bungled.

Police snipers missed their targets and the terrorists hid under the helicopters and raked the airfield with bullets. The sporadic gun battle lasted for more than an hour, until the arrival of German armored cars at the airfield.

The terrorists apparently thought they were about to be machine-gunned, and they massacred the nine Israeli hostages still

inside the two helicopters.

There were more than 450 policemen at the airfield.

Three terrorists and the four German helicopter pilots all survived.

But not a single Israeli survived. The German "rescue" operation was a grand failure.

Soon after the incident, the relatives of the Israeli athletes sued the German authorities and demanded they release all their files on the Munich massacre.

For decades, the Germans stonewalled, perhaps fearing their officials would be accused of anti-Semitism, and claimed there was just one short report on the attack.

But then a few years ago, Ankie Spitzer received an anonymous package that included details of a hidden hoard of documents, reports and files relating to the Munich massacre. It proved there had been a huge cover-up.

"Suddenly everything was there," said Spitzer. "There were 3,808 files of information, things that we were denied for 20 years."

The Germans had no choice but to open their files, and the relatives soon realized why they had been hidden. They make the Germans look like "fools," according to Spitzer.

Recent investigations have discovered that a crucial group of German police officers, who were supposed to ambush the terrorist leaders at the air field, actually voted to abandon their position just before the hostages and terrorists landed in two helicopters.

This left five snipers to deal with eight heavily armed terrorists.

The snipers had no walkie-talkies, no flak jackets or helmets, inadequate rifles, and no proper rifle sights or infrared equipment. Police marksmanship was also poor.

"I am of the opinion that I am not a sharp shooter," admitted "Sniper Two" later.

Apart from revealing new details of the inept rescue operation, the secret German files show that security officials had warned of a possible terrorist strike at the 1972 Olympics.

Interpol issued an alert just weeks before the Games warning that Palestinian militants were grouping in Europe, and German intelligence sent a letter to the Munich police warning of Palestinian plans to do "something" at the Games.

Yet nothing was done to protect the most vulnerable guests.

Relatives of the athletes still campaign to remind the world what happened.

They have been to every Olympics since Munich.

"It must never happen again," said Spitzer, "not anywhere, but especially not at the Olympic Games."

Spitzer's daughter Anouk, who has grown up without a father, believes it is important that people still talk about the massacre.

"We always say that they didn't only murder 11 athletes and 11 Israelis, but they murdered the Olympic dream," she said.

"And a dream that, as much as I know, my father really believed in."

Anouk is desperate that her father's spirit should not be forgotten.

"I think the world has to remember. He deserves, and his friends deserve, to be remembered." □

(Simon Reeve is the author of "One Day in September: The Story of the 1972 Munich Olympics Massacre." In March, the film of the same name won an Academy Award for best documentary.)