



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 79, No. 32

Thursday, February 15, 2001

84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Terror attack kills 8 Israelis

At least eight Israelis were killed and 20 wounded when a bus driven by a Palestinian plowed into a group of soldiers and civilians waiting at a bus stop in a suburb south of Tel Aviv.

Seven soldiers were among the dead. An anonymous caller to Israel Radio's Arabic service said the military wing of Hamas carried out the attack. Israeli police said the driver was a Palestinian from the Gaza Strip who had security clearance. [Page 1]

Settlement bloc closed off

Israel's army closed off the Gush Etzion settlement bloc Tuesday night because of threatened Palestinian attacks, according to Army Radio.

The Israel Defense Force has begun setting up a defense line, including tanks and snipers along the Tunnel Road that links Jerusalem to the bloc. On Sunday, Palestinian gunmen shot and killed an Israeli on the road. They have regularly targeted Israeli motorists in the vicinity. [Page 1]

Lithuanian collaborator convicted

A Lithuanian court convicted a Nazi collaborator of war crimes.

The court ruled Wednesday that Kazys Gimzauskas was guilty of handing over Jews to death squads while he was an official with the Lithuanian security police during World War II.

But the court refused to sentence the elderly Gimzauskas, saying he suffers from Alzheimer's disease. In the wake of the conviction, the Simon Wiesenthal Center called on the Baltic nation to prosecute other suspected Nazi war criminals.

E.U. blasts Israeli assassinations

The European Union criticized Israel's policy of assassinating Palestinians it accuses of attacking Israeli targets. "The European Union reiterates its strongly held opinion that Israel's policy in this regard is unacceptable and contrary to the rule of law," said a statement issued this week by E.U. officials.

Because of the Presidents Day holiday in the U.S., the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Feb. 19.

Palestinians step up violence; Eight are killed in terror attack

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Palestinians appear determined to guarantee that Ariel Sharon does not enjoy a honeymoon.

Just as Israeli security officials predicted, Palestinian violence has surged since Sharon's victory in prime ministerial elections last week.

On Wednesday, at least eight Israelis were killed and 20 wounded when a Palestinian driver plowed a bus into a crowded bus stop south of Tel Aviv, the deadliest terrorist attack in Israel in four years.

Seven soldiers were among the dead.

An anonymous caller to Israel Radio's Arabic service said the military wing of Hamas carried out the attack.

The driver was wounded during a police chase and apprehended some 20 miles south of the scene of the assault, which took place outside the Tel Aviv suburb of Holon.

The attack came a day after Israel assassinated a Palestinian security official in a pinpoint helicopter attack in the Gaza Strip.

Missiles destroyed the car in which Massoud Ayad, 54, was traveling on Tuesday.

A member of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Force 17 bodyguard unit, Ayad had been recruited by Hezbollah in Lebanon to carry out attacks against Israel from inside the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Israeli officials said.

On Wednesday, President Bush called for an end to the escalating violence.

Bush said he called Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak after the Palestinian terror attack.

"As I told the prime minister, the tragic cycle of violent action and reaction between Israel and the Palestinians, particularly the escalation this week, needs to stop," Bush said.

Barak called Wednesday's deadly hit-and-run attack an "abominable crime" and tightened a blockade of Palestinian-ruled areas.

He also suspended VIP permits that enable senior Palestinian officials to travel between the West Bank and Gaza Strip through Israel.

Sharon said through a spokesman that the attack proved terrorists do not differentiate between the West Bank and Gaza Strip and "the heart of Israel."

Arafat dismissed the incident as a "road accident."

Police said the driver of the bus was a 35-year-old Palestinian father of three who had Israeli security clearances and had worked for the Egged bus company for the past five years ferrying Palestinians to jobs in Israel.

Witnesses to the attack said the bus stop was packed with soldiers and civilians waiting for lifts when the bus driven by the Palestinian careened into the stop shortly before 8 a.m.

The bus then sped south on the main highway toward Gaza.

Ro'i, a soldier who travels from the stop every day and arrived shortly after the attack, said, "People didn't know what had happened, there were heads with no bodies. It was horrific."

The driver's relatives said he was not affiliated with any Islamic group.

His brother said his desperate economic situation due to the Israeli closure, or the Israeli "aggression" against Palestinians, may have driven him to his act.

Israeli security officials said the driver had his clearance renewed just two weeks ago.

Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh said the Jewish state's security establish-

MIDEAST FOCUS

Madrid peace forum suggested

Spain's prime minister suggested convening a second Madrid peace conference later this year, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Speaking during a visit this week to the Middle East, Jose Maria Aznar said the conference would create a new international framework for the continuation of the process begun 10 years ago in Madrid.

Israeli official visits Moscow

An Israeli official is visiting Moscow as an envoy of Prime Minister-elect Ariel Sharon.

Eitan Ben-Tsur met Wednesday with Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov.

Muslims still traveling to Israel

The ongoing violence has not reduced the number of Muslim tourists visiting Israel, according to researchers from the University of Haifa.

Many of these tourists come from pro-Arab countries having no diplomatic ties to Israel. According to Israel's Tourism Ministry, some 100,000 Muslims visited the Jewish state last year.

Egypt court won't register group

An Egyptian court refused to register an Egyptian-Israeli friendship association as a non-governmental organization.

The court said this week it made the ruling "in the light of the provocation to Arab sentiments that Israel practices on a daily basis, which could lead the region into a devastating war."

Israeli banks checked in scandal

Swiss banking authorities are investigating allegations that two Israeli banks accepted questionable deposits from former Peruvian leader Alberto Fujimori. Reports quoted an Israeli banking official as confirming that an inquiry is under way into deposits received by Swiss branches of the two banks.

ment would have to review the screening process for granting Palestinians entry permits into Israel.

Palestinian officials blamed Israel for the attack.

The Palestinian Authority official in charge of justice, Freih Abu Medein, said the attack was a result of what he called Israel's use of excessive force against the Palestinians.

In another development Wednesday, Palestinian officials claimed Israeli security forces killed a West Bank Fatah leader in an ambush near Nablus. Iyaad Abu Harb was reportedly close to another Fatah leader, Thabet Thabet, who was assassinated by Israeli security forces in December.

The European Union this week criticized Israel's policy of assassinating Palestinians it accuses of attacking Israeli targets.

Sneh said Ayad, the target of Tuesday's helicopter strike, had been involved in arms and drug smuggling in Lebanon, where he was recruited by the Shi'ite Muslim group Hezbollah.

An Israel Defense Force spokesman said Ayad headed a terrorist cell whose activities included recent mortar attacks on the Jewish settlement of Netzarim and plans to kidnap Israelis.

Israel recently arrested Ayad's son, Nasser, who allegedly was a member of his father's cell.

"It is a clear message to anyone who is planning to attack Israelis that they will not be able to do so with impunity, and that the armed forces will find them and settle accounts with them," Barak said in a statement praising the assassination.

Tuesday's operation came amid a marked surge in Palestinian violence in recent days, which Israeli security officials say is a response to Sharon's election.

In other violence Tuesday, Palestinians claimed a 13-year-old boy was shot in the chest and killed by Israeli fire near the Netzarim junction in the Gaza Strip.

The IDF flatly denied involvement in the incident, saying Israeli troops were not involved in any gunfighting in the area.

Israel's Army Radio reported that Palestinians fired anti-tank missiles at IDF positions in the Gaza Strip for a second straight day.

There were no Israeli injuries.

There were additional shooting incidents in the West Bank, and Jerusalem's southern neighborhood of Gilo again came under fire from an adjacent Palestinian town. There were no reports of injuries.

On Sunday, an Israeli driver on a main road linking Jerusalem to the Etzion Bloc of West Bank settlements was killed when he was shot in the head by gunmen in Beit Jalla, a Palestinian town next to Bethlehem. Israeli ambulance workers who came to the man's aid also came under fire.

The Israeli army on Tuesday set up portable bomb shelters in the Jewish settlement of Netzarim.

Palestinians have bombarded the settlement daily during the recent unrest.

Israeli security officials are divided as to the degree of responsibility the Palestinian Authority bears for the surge in attacks in recent days, which may be intended to test Sharon's declaration that he will not negotiate under fire.

Arafat may not have given direct orders, Israeli officials say, but he shows — by doing nothing to urge restraint on his forces — that he condones the attacks. □

Anti-Semitic film causes German uproar

NEW YORK (JTA) — A controversy erupted over the planned screening of a Nazi-era anti-Semitic film at a Jewish museum in Fuerth, Germany.

Members of the city's small Jewish community protested plans by the publicly run museum to show the 1940 film "Jud Suss" as part of an exhibition on the powerful 18th century financier Joseph Suss Oppenheimer, and have called for the museum director to be replaced.

The museum's director, Bernhard Purin, said the screening would include a lecture placing it in historical context and demonstrating the Nazi use of propaganda.

The film has been shown in other Jewish museums in Germany and elsewhere, and Jewish community organizations have also used it in educational programs. □



Daily News Bulletin

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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.
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JEWISH WORLD

After attack, U.S. tells Sharon men: Cycle of Mideast violence must end

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The United States is calling on Israel and the Palestinian Authority to put a stop to the escalating violence in the Middle East.

The message came as a three-member delegation dispatched by Ariel Sharon visited Washington to convey to top U.S. officials the prime minister-elect's future policies.

On Wednesday — after a Palestinian plowed his bus into a crowd at a bus stop south of Tel Aviv, killing at least eight Israelis — President Bush called for an end to the escalating violence. Bush said he called Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak after the Palestinian terror attack.

“As I told the prime minister, the tragic cycle of violent action and reaction between Israel and the Palestinians, particularly the escalation this week, needs to stop,” Bush said.

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell echoed these sentiments during his meeting Wednesday with the delegation representing Sharon.

For their part, the three officials — who are serving as advisers to Sharon — told Powell that Palestinian leaders are responsible for the bus attack.

“These are not spontaneous acts of violence,” said Dore Gold, a former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations. “The Israeli government has a duty and right to protect itself against terrorism.”

The three envoys — Gold, Moshe Arens and Zalman Shoval — said an end to the violence would be required before peace talks can be resumed, a point Sharon has repeatedly stated. Powell, who also spoke Wednesday with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, told the Israeli delegation that both sides needed to take responsibility for the violence.

Powell called on the Palestinians to bring to justice people suspected of terrorist attacks and said Israelis should end the “targeted killings” of Palestinian militants, according to State Department spokesman Richard Boucher.

A day before the bus attack, Israel assassinated a Palestinian security official in a pinpoint helicopter attack in the Gaza Strip. Israel said the man had been recruited by Hezbollah in Lebanon to carry out attacks against Israel from inside the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

On Tuesday, Boucher said the Israeli strikes, coupled with “Palestinian attacks against settlements and motorists,” are “producing a new cycle of action or reaction which can become impossible to control.”

During their meeting with Powell on Wednesday, the Israeli delegation affirmed that most, if not all, of the blame rests with the Palestinians. Mark Regev, a spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Washington, made the same point Wednesday.

“There is no political or moral equivalency between acts of terror and a surgical strike against a terrorist leader who has planned operations against civilians,” Regev told JTA.

The Israeli team met Wednesday with Vice President Dick Cheney, other Bush administration officials and Jewish members of Congress to outline Sharon's agenda.

Sharon is considering making his own visit to the United States next month for the annual policy conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

Arens, a former defense minister and ambassador to the United States, is considered a possible candidate for a high-level Cabinet post, possibly his fourth turn as defense minister. Shoval is also a former Israeli ambassador to the United States.

On Tuesday, the three held an hourlong meeting with Edward Walker, assistant secretary of state for Near East affairs, and later met National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice. The group is also scheduled to meet this week with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

The meetings with Walker focused on the United States and Israel's bilateral relationship, Sharon's plans once he forms his government and efforts for peace in the region, a State Department spokesman said.

Speaking Tuesday after the talks, Arens said he did not think there are “very big gaps between our views and the views” of the Bush administration, particularly that violence must cease before Israeli-Palestinian talks resume. □

Bee book all the Jewish buzz

A novel by Philip Roth and a story about how a young girl's triumph in a spelling bee triggers a family revolution are among the fiction nominees in the 51st National Jewish Book Awards.

In addition to “The Human Stain” and “Bee Season,” journalist Samuel Freedman's book “Jew vs. Jew” was nominated in the nonfiction category for its description of conflict within the American Jewish community. The awards will be presented March 29.

Bill would help Jewish veterans

Rep. Robert Wexler (D-Fla.) introduced a bill into Congress that could increase the number of U.S. Jewish veterans given the Congressional Medal of Honor.

The bill would instruct the armed forces to review the war records of Jews who served in the armed forces beginning in World War II and who may have been denied the medal because of anti-Semitism.

Maccabiah money applauded

Australian Jewish leaders applauded Israel's decision to pay \$4 million in compensation to Sasha Elterman, an Australian athlete seriously injured when a bridge collapsed at the opening ceremony of the 1997 Maccabiah Games.

Community leaders told JTA it is now likely that Australia will participate in the 16th Maccabiah Games slated for July in Israel, but this is conditional on Israel's settling other cases related to the tragedy, in which four Australian athletes were killed.

Teen program opens in Argentina

The Jewish Agency for Israel is launching a program in Argentina that brings Jewish high school students to study in Israel.

The establishment in Argentina of the Na'aleh program, which has operated in the former Soviet Union, comes amid efforts to encourage immigration from the largest Jewish population in South America.

Swastikas mar Minsk subway

Posters with swastikas recently appeared in the subway in the Belarus capital of Minsk. The posters are part of increased activity of the Russian National Unity, the largest neo-Nazi group in the region. Members of the group, who wear Nazi-style black uniforms, gather regularly in Minsk gyms and sports clubs to recruit new members.

Rabbi David Twersky dies at 79

Rabbi David Twersky, leader of a branch of the Chasidic Skverer dynasty, died Feb. 2 of complications from heart and kidney ailments. He was 79. Twersky, who lived in Brooklyn, helped many Holocaust survivors immigrate to the United States.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Do teens tune in or drop out after their Bar or Bat Mitzvahs?

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — The “report card” for non-Orthodox American Jewish teens merits either an A or a C — depending on which of two new studies you read.

With teen outreach a growing concern in the American Jewish world, a number of communities and agencies, including the Reform movement, have launched special teen initiatives and task forces in recent years. The Conservative movement has set itself a goal of doubling youth group membership.

But results of the two new studies are mixed enough that translating them into policy recommendations will not be easy.

The two projects on affiliated Jewish teens — a national study of Conservative teens commissioned by the Jewish Theological Seminary, and a multid denominational survey of Boston-area teens conducted by Brandeis University’s Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies — are the most comprehensive surveys yet of Jewish teen involvement.

Both studies consisted of interviews with approximately 1,300 teens who have celebrated Bar or Bat Mitzvahs.

The Conservative study interviewed its participants twice, shortly after their Bar or Bat Mitzvahs and then again four years later. The Brandeis study surveyed teens aged 13 to 17 once in 1998-99.

Like most American Jewish youth, the majority of respondents in both studies had attended congregational Hebrew schools, rather than day schools.

Some of the differences may stem from the fact that the JTS study focused on Conservative teens, while the Brandeis study included teens in Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist and independent congregations.

The Conservative study was more upbeat.

The two studies’ findings differ in several key areas:

- Feelings about pre-Bar/Bat Mitzvah Jewish education. In the Conservative study, 97 percent of respondents described their Bar/Bat Mitzvah training as positive, with 44 percent of them describing it as “very positive.” In contrast, more than half of the Brandeis respondents said they seldom or never enjoyed Hebrew school.

- Gender differences. The Conservative study concluded that gender explains “very little about individual variations among the sample population.” In contrast, the Brandeis study reported that girls are more likely to participate in formal Jewish education as teens, feel positively about their Jewish education and find Israel experiences personally meaningful.

- Attitudes toward intermarriage. Fifty-five percent of the Conservative study teens said they think it is very important to marry someone Jewish, while only 32 percent of the Brandeis respondents agreed.

The Conservative teens differed from their Reform and Reconstructionist peers in their strong opposition to intermarriage, the Brandeis researchers said.

That’s not surprising, since the Conservative movement forbids rabbis from officiating at intermarriages and does not allow non-Jewish spouses to become congregation members.

But on other issues, the Brandeis researchers said, the

Conservative teens — approximately one-third of the total — had attitudes similar to those of other respondents.

It’s also possible that no single metropolitan area, like Boston, is representative of the national scene.

Some commentators said the phrasing of the questions could explain the divergent findings.

Steven Cohen, a sociologist at Hebrew University of Jerusalem who has authored a number of key studies on American Jewish identity, pointed out that Hebrew school and Bar or Bat Mitzvah training are “not at all the same.”

For example, Bar or Bat Mitzvah training might include tutoring and experiences at day school, and a small percentage of the respondents in the Conservative study went to day school.

Other differences may be due to spin.

Leonard Saxe, director of Brandeis’ Cohen Center, described the divergences between the two studies as the difference between seeing the cup as “half empty” or “half full.”

“Do we celebrate the involvement and the knowledge of a substantial group of our B’nai Mitzvah,” Saxe asked, “or do we worry about the people who didn’t get to the bimah in the first place and who didn’t end up continuing to be involved?”

Neither study found particularly high rates of post Bar/Bat Mitzvah Jewish education, such as part-time Hebrew high school.

Twenty-seven percent of the Conservative teens graduated from a Hebrew high school program. Twenty-two percent of the 11th graders in the Brandeis study were enrolled in formal Jewish education. Other key findings of the Brandeis study include:

- Parents have a strong influence on teens’ attitudes and behavior when it comes to issues such as continuing Jewish education, intermarriage and the importance of raising children as Jews. For example, teens whose parents strongly oppose intermarriage are more likely to oppose intermarriage than peers whose parents are less concerned about the issue.

- Secular schools exert a “powerful, even dominating influence” on teens. More than a lack of interest in things Jewish, academic demands help explain the decline in Jewish involvement.

Key findings of the Conservative study include:

- The overwhelming majority of teens said they want to maintain or increase their level of Jewish observance.

- Ninety percent of teens attend synagogue on the High Holidays, 75 percent have “some connection with organized Jewish activities” after their Bar or Bat Mitzvahs and half have been to Israel.

- The intensity of the teens’ Jewish involvement dropped significantly between their Bar or Bat Mitzvahs and senior year of high school. The exception is opposition to intermarriage, which increased as the teens matured.

The decline in intensity was most marked in the teens’ feeling that Jewish education is “very important to their sense of Jewishness.” Two-thirds of respondents felt this after their Bar or Bat Mitzvahs, but only half did four years later. Synagogue attendance also fell, from 65 percent who attended services at least once a month at age 13 to just 40 percent four years later.

The Conservative study says that “the myth of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah as an exit from Jewish life, at least in today’s Conservative synagogues” has been “debunked.”

The conclusions of the Brandeis study are more nuanced. Judaism is “important” to today’s teens, the authors write, but “only as it fits into their lives and their goals in a secular, pluralistic society.” □