



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 79, No. 52

Friday, March 16, 2001

84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Poland moves to admit blame

Polish authorities removed a stone monument that for decades blamed the Nazis for an infamous World War II massacre of Jews.

On July 10, 1941, some 1,600 Jews of the town of Jedwabne were herded into a barn that was then set alight — not by the Nazis but by Polish villagers according to a recent book on the subject.

With the 60th anniversary of the atrocity approaching, there has been much debate in Poland about Poles coming to terms with their own Holocaust-related crimes.

Israel arrests Fatah members

Israel arrested three members of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction who Israel alleges planned to carry out a bomb attack in Jerusalem.

The three members, arrested Sunday, admitted they were sent by their Ramallah commanders to set off a bomb in a northern Jerusalem neighborhood, according to a statement released by Israel's Foreign Ministry.

Bus driver killer has no regrets

A Palestinian who drove his bus into a group of Israelis at a bus stop near Tel Aviv last month said he does not regret his actions. Halil Abu Ilba, of Gaza, was charged with premeditated murder for his attack, which killed eight and wounded 21.

Peres to U.N.: Don't send force

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres urged the U.N. Security Council not to take "one-sided measures" and to reject a renewed Palestinian request for a U.N. observer force. The Palestinians "don't need a protection force," Peres told the council. "The minute they will stop shooting, there won't be any need for protection."

Slave payments to be delayed

A U.S. judge's refusal to dismiss class-action lawsuits against German companies who used slave labor during World War II will delay payments from a restitution fund, according to the German negotiator in the talks that established the fund.

Otto Lamsdorff said the judge's decision "is legally wrong."

ARTS & CULTURE

New Anne Frank film seeks fuller portrayal of child diarist

By Katka Krosnar

PRAGUE (JTA) — Anne Frank sits on a stool in a dimly lit and dusty room, whimpering as she clutches her arms to her chest, shivering from fear and cold. Her large brown eyes have an unforgettable, haunted look.

As the Auschwitz inmate starts to hack off Anne's beloved long brown hair, a loud call echoes through the barren room, breaking the silence: "Cut!"

The inmate, however, continues to hack off the young girl's locks with his large scissors.

Realizing the double entendre, director Robert Dornhelm rushes over, changing his instructions to "Stop! Stop!"

Crew and observers watching the filming of the heart-wrenching scene cannot help but smile.

The elderly extra, a former hairdresser, is struggling to be as brutal with 13-year-old actress Hannah Taylor Gordon's hair as the scene requires.

Getting it right the first time the cameras roll is crucial, as stars and crew agree that there will be no wigs — and therefore no repeat takes — for this scene in "Anne Frank," a four-hour ABC miniseries.

Welcome to Prague and the filming of a \$12 million production, starring Oscar- and Emmy-winning actor Ben Kingsley as Anne's father, Otto Frank, and Golden Globe-winner Brenda Blethyn as family friend Auguste Van Pels.

Writer Kirk Ellis, who based his script on German writer Melissa Mueller's biography of Anne, claims that the new production is the first to give a truer, broader picture of Anne's life before, during and after her two-year confinement in a secret annex of the Amsterdam home where she wrote her famous diary.

The show covers Anne's life from age 9 to her death at 15 from typhus at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp weeks before its liberation.

"This shows Anne as a typical girl affected by remarkable events," Ellis says. "Once you understand the context of her life, it puts the achievement of her diary into a far greater context."

Filming of the miniseries, slated to be aired in May, involved recreating the three concentration camps where Anne spent the last few months of her young life: Westerbork, Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen.

It also involved the painstaking recreation of the secret annex where the Franks and four family friends hid from the Nazis, and building a facade along Prague's waterfront to resemble 1940s Amsterdam.

British actress Gordon won the role of Anne over 1,200 other girls worldwide, and is taking the star turn in stride.

"I am just enjoying going on the set and being as much like Anne as I can imagine," she says during a break in filming.

While Gordon's remarkable physical resemblance to Anne was the first thing that grabbed producer David Kappes and executive producer Hanns Proppe during the casting process, it was her personality and acting skills that quickly impressed the cast and crew.

Kingsley is among those praising her talents.

"She is the best leading lady I have ever had. She is intelligence on legs," he says, relaxing in his trailer.

"Ninety percent of what I do is reacting to her. I just hold her hand and play her dad

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel to work with commission

Israel will resume cooperation with a U.S.-led commission investigating the outbreak of violence in the Middle East last fall, according to Ha'aretz.

The decision to cooperate with the Mitchell Commission goes against the recommendations of security officials, who said Israel should not cooperate with the commission until Palestinian violence ceases.

Israel further relaxes sanctions

Israel's Security Cabinet approved a number of measures to ease sanctions on the Palestinians.

The measures, taken before Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's first official visit to the United States next week, will allow raw materials to enter Palestinian-ruled areas and let Palestinians to travel between villages in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Water dispute runs shallow

Israel toned down its rhetoric regarding a water dispute with Lebanon. Israel "should certainly not be talking about war," said Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz, the Israeli army's chief of staff. The comments Thursday came as a U.N. spokesman said fears Lebanon is trying to divert water supplies from Israel are exaggerated.

Rabin accomplice wants pardon

Margalit Har-Shefi, convicted and sentenced to nine months in prison for knowing about the plot to assassinate Yitzhak Rabin and failing to stop it, asked for a presidential pardon.

'Disappeared' Jews investigated

An Israeli committee on the fate of Jews who disappeared during the military regime in Argentina began hearing testimony on Thursday.

The committee is seeking to determine the fate of an estimated 2,000 Jews among the tens of thousands of Argentinians imprisoned, abducted and murdered between 1976 and 1983.



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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and allow my character to love her character."

For Gordon, who is not Jewish, playing the role is about being herself — and she repeatedly refers to the character in the present tense.

"I think I'm really like her. That's why I love playing this part. Anne is really bubbly and bright — I'm quite like that," Gordon says. "I love dreaming and making up little stories. But she could also be really deep and intense — I can just imagine her in a corner scribbling really fast.

"I think the people in the annex survived the confinement because of her; she kept them going," she says.

Although Gordon knew about Anne, it was not until she won the role that she read her diary closely.

"I had browsed through the diary before, but two months ago I was given a copy, and as I read it properly I started to know Anne better and understand her thoughts," she says.

"During her confinement in the annex, her style of writing becomes really impressive," Gordon says. "I hadn't previously understood that at the beginning of the diary she was just a child."

Gordon has made a big impression on her fellow cast and crew members, but Anne obviously has left a lasting impression on Gordon as well.

Gordon has been keeping a diary about playing Anne, and plans to turn it into a script when she has time.

Even the prospect of having her hair cut off — something the producers insisted on from the start — does not faze her.

"I'm quite excited about it, but also nervous," Gordon admits moments before the scene is shot.

Producers Kappes and Proppe considered filming in Amsterdam but opted for Prague, largely because of cost.

"There was rarely an original, intact block in Amsterdam that still looked the way it did in 1944, without a modern addition," Kappes says.

Instead, an Amsterdam facade was built along Prague's Vltava River, and other parts of Prague were used as well.

Another strike against an Amsterdam location was the passion the topic arouses there.

"Amsterdam's residents are very polarized about Anne," Kappes says.

For Kingsley, this is his third Holocaust role, after "The Murderers Among Us" — in which he played Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal — and the Steven Spielberg epic "Schindler's List."

"I vowed after both films that I would never go back to the Holocaust," Kingsley says.

"But, quite simply, there was a little girl who said, 'I want to be famous after I'm dead,' and even though it's very difficult, demanding and complex, that's the deal."

Kappes is quick to defend the filming of yet another adaptation of Anne's story.

"Many people say that Anne Frank has been done nine times, so why do it again? But this production tells the parts we don't know — Anne's childhood and the horror of being sent to the camps," he says.

"It is a story that has to be told continuously," he says. "In the U.S., children are not aware of the horror and inhumanity, and they have to be so that this does not happen again." □

Find helps Slovak Jews' claim

PRAGUE (JTA) — The Slovak Jewish Community has taken a significant step forward in its fight to reclaim millions of dollars the Slovak government paid to have Nazi Germany deport 57,800 Jews to concentration camps.

Community leaders said Wednesday they had found a key document outlining the agreement between Germany and the Nazi-puppet Slovak state for the deportation of Jews in 1942.

The document, found in the Slovak State Archives three weeks ago, is regarded as vital to the Slovak Jewish community's case against Germany, which is slated to be heard in a Berlin court on March 28. □

JEWISH WORLD

Life sentence urged for SS officer

A German prosecutor urged a life sentence for a former SS officer accused of killing seven Jewish prisoners as they dug trenches in 1945 near the Theresienstadt prison in Czechoslovakia.

"There's no evidence to suggest" Julius Viel was "acting on orders," the prosecutor said Thursday. Viel, who later became a respected journalist, said he was in Vienna when the seven Jews were murdered.

Tycoon wants to stay in Spain

A Russian Jewish leader and media tycoon told a Spanish judge that he does not want to be extradited to Russia to face embezzlement charges.

Vladimir Goussinsky told the judge he is the victim of a political vendetta by President Vladimir Putin and that he would not try to flee Spain, where Goussinsky has lived since last July.

Haider again in hot water

An Austrian far-right leader again attacked the leader of his country's Jewish community. Jorg Haider told an Austrian news magazine that Ariel Muzicant stabbed Austria in the back during Holocaust compensation negotiations and used his political connections to advance his real estate business.

Reform Jews squeezed in Belarus

Belarus is refusing to register some Reform Jewish communities, according to the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.

Without the registration, a community's religious activities can be restricted. Also, advocates of the Reform and Reconstructionist movements asked the U.S. State Department to include them at more official events in Belarus, Ukraine and Russia.

Greek bishop blames Jews

Jews are to blame for the Greece's plans to remove religion from the country's identity cards, said the leader of Greece's Orthodox Church.

Archbishop Christodoulos said U.S. Jewish leaders persuaded Prime Minister Costas Simitis in 1996 to change the identity cards.

Slovak Jews boycott ceremony

Slovak Jews boycotted a ceremony in Budapest celebrating the 100th anniversary of the birth of the only legislator of Slovakia's WWII-era pro-Nazi state who voted against the deportation of Jews to concentration camps.

A Jewish community leader said historical evidence showed the late Janos Esterhazy supported all other anti-Jewish bills and opposed the deportation order only because he feared that other minority groups would be deported next.

AIPAC's agenda changes with Israeli, U.S. governments

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — As the U.S.-Israeli relationship undergoes a transition, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee is sharpening its attack.

The policy agenda for the annual AIPAC policy conference, which convenes here Sunday, has been significantly trimmed down in an effort to discipline its message.

The number of items on the agenda has been cut in half from last year, and some changes have raised eyebrows.

Left off the platform this year are calls for the United States to condition relations with Syria on the end of its support for terrorism, a call for Egypt to foster peace and stability in the region and a plea for the United States to offer rewards for information about Palestinians who have killed American citizens.

But not everyone is happy about the changes.

"When special issues are omitted, it can be misconstrued that AIPAC considers these issues of lesser importance," said Morton Klein, national president of the Zionist Organization of America.

Klein, who serves on AIPAC's executive committee, said he would introduce resolutions on those issues at the executive session.

AIPAC spokesman Kenneth Bricker said the agenda should focus on consensus issues.

"The purpose of AIPAC's action agenda is to promote issues of consensus within the community in regards to U.S.-Israeli relations," Bricker said. "It's not an opportunity for every single individual to throw in their pet project."

At the top of the list of this year's agenda is securing U.S. economic aid and military assistance for Israel. AIPAC member organizations said while the group has shifted its focus from promoting peace deals to preventing war because of the ongoing violence, the need for aid to Israel never changes.

"AIPAC's essential role has been to protect Israel's portion of the foreign aid budget and to expand aid in its entirety," said Martin Raffel, associate director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

Getting pro-Israel initiatives through Washington in the last few years was relatively easy, as the Clinton administration was more than willing to play a role in the pursuit of peace.

"When you are a pro-Israel group and advocating a pro-Israel position, and the administration is already pro-Israel, it makes your job a lot easier," said Lewis Roth, associate executive director of Americans for Peace Now. "You are pushing on an open door."

APN and the Israel Policy Forum were closely aligned with the agenda put forth by former Prime Minister Ehud Barak and President Clinton. Now, with those administrations gone, those organizations have been, in effect, marginalized, said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"There are always organizations that come up at particular periods," Hoenlein said. "That changes when the circumstances change."

And with the violence and the election of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, AIPAC's work may be harder. While many of the significant developments during the Oslo peace process were handled through direct communication between Barak and Clinton, the new administrations in both countries may need congressional support to get their pro-Israel agendas passed.

Bricker said AIPAC will work to educate Congress to try to tell them "the whole story."

AIPAC's conference will feature the new faces of the U.S.-Israeli relationship, newly elected Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Bricker is enthusiastic about the number of people attending the conference, and said he thinks the pro-Israel community in America will be vocal during this period of instability in the region.

"Clearly, the community has gotten the message that Israel needs them now," Bricker said. □

OBITUARY

Leopold Page dies; made sure world knew about Schindler's list

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Holocaust survivor Leopold Page, whose crusade got the story of death camp rescuer Oskar Schindler made into a book and a movie, died last Friday at 87.

For four decades, Page cornered every writer who entered his Beverly Hills, Calif., leather goods store to tell the story of German industrialist Schindler, who saved Page's life and that of 1,200 other Jews during World War II.

"Were it not for Leopold Page, Oskar Schindler would only be known by those survivors of the Shoah whom he saved and by scholars and historians," said Steven Spielberg, whom Page convinced to direct "Schindler's List."

Born Leopold Pfefferberg in Krakow, Poland, and known to friends as "Poldek," Page became a physical education instructor.

Page served as an officer in the Polish army when World War II broke out. He was wounded and captured, interned first in the Krakow Ghetto and then in the nearby Plaszow concentration camp.

He and his wife Mila were saved from the nearby Auschwitz death camp by Schindler, who put them and other Jews to work in his enamel factory, shielding them from the Nazi extermination program.

Liberated at the end of the war, Page came to the United States and opened his leather goods store. His real mission, however, was to let the world know of Schindler's extraordinary deeds.

His determination paid off when Australian author Thomas Keneally wandered into Page's store on a hot summer day in 1980 to buy a briefcase.

While waiting for Keneally's Australian credit card to clear, Page told the Schindler story. Keneally was impressed, but said he couldn't write the story because he was only 3 when World War II started, knew little about Jews and, as an Australian Catholic, had learned little about the Holocaust.

"I got angry," Page recalled later, "and told him that those were three reasons why he should write the book."

Keneally was no match for Page's legendary, at times maddening, persistence, and "Schindler's List" was published in 1982, becoming an international best seller. Keneally dedicated the book to Schindler and to Page, "who by zeal and persistence caused this book to be written."

The next to get the full Page treatment was filmmaker Spielberg. He, too, was impressed, but said he would need another 10 years to reach the mental maturity needed for the project.

"Schindler's List," the movie, was completed 10 years after Page's initial meeting with Spielberg.

At the 1993 Academy Awards presentation, Spielberg publicly credited Page as the catalyst for the film.

"I was jittery," Page recalled, "because I had promised Spielberg 10 years earlier that if he made 'Schindler's List,' he would get an Oscar for Oskar.

"When they announced that Spielberg had won as best director, I jumped so high, and when he talked about Mila and me, we were crying," Page said. "When they said that 'Schindler's List' was the best picture, everybody cried."

When the picture became an international phenomenon, Page

became a celebrity in his own right. He was interviewed by Larry King on CNN and profiled by ABC anchorman Peter Jennings as "Person of the Week."

He also became a sought-after speaker before civic, military and religious groups, but he enjoyed talking most to schoolchildren. When this reporter once described Page as a Holocaust survivor, he protested, saying, "I'm not a survivor, I am a witness to the truth." □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD**As Croatia faces a new census, country's Jews face identity crisis**

By Vlasta Kovac

ZAGREB, Croatia (JTA) — When Croatian Jews receive their census questionnaire this year, they'll face a dilemma: Which nationality are they going to mark down?

In the country's 1991 census, fewer than 600 out of about 2,000 registered members of the nine official Jewish communities in Croatia formally declared themselves as Jews. The rest said they were either Croats or Serbs; some even declared themselves as Chinese or Eskimo.

Since 1945, most Jews in Croatia declared themselves as Yugoslavs.

But since Croatia broke away from Yugoslavia, they have preferred to remain ethnically uncommitted rather than officially declare themselves as Jews.

Jews now have the official status of a national minority, equal to the status of Czechs, Hungarians and Slovaks, for example — the minorities who moved to Croatia when it was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

As an official minority group, Jews are eligible for aid from the state, including money for a kindergarten, retirement home, newspaper and a variety of Jewish cultural projects.

Jewish leaders here are worried that their status with the government could be lost as fewer declare themselves as Jews. Ognjen Kraus, president of the Zagreb Jewish Community, wrote a letter appealing to Jews to mark "Jewish" on their census questionnaires.

The issue becomes complicated because more than 80 percent of the 1,500 members of Zagreb's Jewish community were either born in mixed marriages or married a non-Jew.

Indeed, many grandchildren of Holocaust survivors have just one Jewish grandparent.

Many Jews feel strongly attached to both their Jewish and Croatian identities, but their Jewish identities stem primarily from family memories of the Holocaust.

From 1945 until 1990, in Communist Yugoslavia, atheism was official state policy — there was no rabbi in Croatia for more than 50 years. Now there is a rabbi in Zagreb and a growing number of younger Jews attend synagogue.

Most community members, however, think of religion in terms of Jewish tradition and culture: They attend family Shabbats organized by the Jewish community's social club and they make Purim cakes at home.

Kotel Dadon, a young Orthodox rabbi who was born in Israel, came to Zagreb two years ago.

In a recent discussion about the upcoming census, Dadon said: "How can a Jew be a Jew if he declares himself as a Croat and an atheist? I find it is a joke." □