



Daily News Bulletin

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84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Car bombing wounds eight

At least eight Israelis were lightly wounded when a car bomb exploded in a city about five miles from Tel Aviv.

A brother, 12, and sister, 8, were among the wounded, according to the Jerusalem Post.

A police spokeswoman said Monday's bombing in Or Yehuda may have been a terror attack, "but the criminal angle is also being investigated."

Israel prevents West Bank bomb

Israeli officials arrested a Palestinian from the West Bank who was carrying a bomb.

Israel Radio said the suspect was on his way Monday to the Jewish settlement of Har Bracha, and the device was set to be detonated by a cell phone.

In another development, Israeli police said a bomb that went off Sunday at a major intersection in Haifa, lightly injuring three police officers, was planted by Palestinian militants.

Federation leaders plan rallies

North American federation leaders are planning two large Israel solidarity rallies in New York and Los Angeles in June.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and other top Israeli officials are planning to attend the New York rally.

The rallies were announced Monday by federation officials attending a national meeting of the United Jewish Communities in Washington.

Thousands mourn rabbi's death

Thousands gathered in Brooklyn on Sunday to mourn the death of Rabbi Avigdor Miller, a leading Chasidic rabbi.

Miller died last Friday at the age of 93.

Miller, who was born in Baltimore, sought to bridge American and European traditions of Judaism.

He spent the final 20 years of his life at Congregation Bais Yisroel, which he founded in Brooklyn.

Ex-Nazi's trial begins in Germany

A former Nazi SS officer was pushed in a wheelchair into a Munich courtroom Monday for the start of his trial on war crimes charges.

Anton Malloth, 89, is accused of killing three people while he was a guard at the Terezin transit camp near Prague.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Sharon's education minister seeks to renew Zionist dream

By Jessica Steinberg

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As Israel celebrates its 53rd birthday, Education Minister Limor Livnat wants future generations of Israeli children to have textbooks that reflect the Zionist dream at the heart of the nation's creation.

In most countries, it might be self-evident that the school curriculum should reinforce national pride, but Livnat is fighting to undo the effects of the "post-Zionist" critique of the Zionist project that has gained increasing acceptance in Israeli academia and society in recent years.

The question of how to tell the story of Israel's creation has been a matter of debate for the last 20 years.

The debate came to a head last November, when the Knesset's Education Committee called on the Education Ministry to prevent use of a controversial 20th-century history textbook, "A World of Changes."

Committee members accused the text's authors of ignoring important events in Jewish and Israeli history.

At the time — two months after the eruption of Israeli-Palestinian violence — the government was in flux.

A month later, former Prime Minister Ehud Barak resigned, calling for new elections.

With a new government in place, Livnat, a member of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's Likud Party, has decided to shelve the textbook, calling it a "failure in faithfully representing Zionist values."

The Zionist narrative traditionally taught in Israel's schools viewed Jewish history as the story of a unique nation, which during centuries of exile and persecution continued to hope for a restoration of its homeland.

Zionism, in this traditional view, was the culmination of the Jews' desire to return to Israel and restore their political sovereignty.

By the 1970s, Israeli academics began re-examining this ideology. Beginning with a handful of scholars unafraid to challenge Zionist historiography, the "post-Zionist" movement gained steam in the past decade, extending to most fields of the social sciences.

It won adherents among young, native-born Israelis eager to shed the siege-like mentality of the country's early decades — and increasingly exposed to the world as the peace process advanced — who doubted the need to retain a particularistic Jewish identity.

Part of the process was a rethinking and retooling of school textbooks during the last decade.

Historical truths that once seemed self-evident were wiped out of Zionist and Israeli history, Jewish history, literature, civics and social studies curricula.

Out went the myths and the heroes, the Holocaust victims, the stories of Menachem Begin and his pre-state underground warriors, and of Yonatan Netanyahu, the sole Israeli fatality during the daring 1976 raid at Uganda's Entebbe airport. It was time to reinterpret modern Jewish history.

Critics, however, saw the changes as potentially dangerous at a time when continuing Arab belligerence might still demand of Israelis a strong sense of national purpose.

"The old books told the story of Zionism so that students could empathize" even if

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel mulls peace proposal

Israel is sending signals that it may be willing to consider an Egyptian-Jordanian proposal for reviving Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

In a marked turnaround from earlier statements, a senior aide to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said Monday that while Israel still had reservations about the plan, "there's no need for the proposal to be rejected outright." Under the plan, Israel would lift its closures on Palestinian cities and freeze new settlement activity. The Palestinians would renew security cooperation and stop inciting violence.

Peres to visit Washington

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres is slated to meet with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell on May 4, according to the U.S. State Department. In another development, President Bush invited Israeli President Moshe Katsav to visit the White House, according to an announcement Monday in Jerusalem. The date of the visit is yet to be determined.

Israel arrests Force 17 members

Israeli officials disclosed Monday that they had recently arrested several activists in Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Force 17 guard.

Officials from the Shin Bet domestic security service said two of the detainees were Force 17 commanders who were personally involved in recent terror attacks against Israelis.

Book: Israel targeted U.S. ship

A new book claims that Israel's 1967 attack on a U.S. intelligence ship was deliberate.

"Body of Secrets" says that despite Israeli claims to the contrary, Israel attacked the Liberty to prevent the United States from eavesdropping on its military activities. The attack killed 34 U.S. sailors and wounded 171 others.

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they did not always agree "with the Jews who worked to establish the state of Israel," Yoram Hazony, the president of the conservative Jerusalem think-tank The Shalem Center, wrote last year in The New Republic magazine as part of a scathing critique of Israel's revisionist "antisocial texts."

"The new books, on the other hand, are frequently so preoccupied with being 'universal' that they are in fact completely neutral toward the Zionist cause."

"A World of Changes," the ninth-grade textbook released last year to about 5 percent of Israel's high schools, was among the most controversial of the new books.

The Holocaust, Zionism and Israel were relegated to about 30 percent of the book. Israel's War of Independence got two paragraphs; there were no photographs of founding father David Ben-Gurion; the 1967 Six-Day War barely got a mention.

Instead, the book takes a much broader world view, examining everything from McCarthyism and the Vietnam War to artist Salvador Dali and the Beatles.

The omissions are an embarrassment, according to Livnat.

"We shouldn't be embarrassed about Israeli or Jewish history and the story of Zionism," she told JTA. "That is the source of our being able to live in the state of Israel, and we need to emphasize that."

Like Sharon, Livnat has made a reputation as something of a bulldozer in her nine years as a Knesset member and Cabinet minister.

As communications minister under former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, she is credited with introducing competition into Israel's long-distance calling market. She also started the process of privatizing the state telecommunications company, Bezek, a long-term project that is still under way.

A champion of free markets, capitalism and the high-tech revolution, Livnat now has to deal with several crucial questions facing the nation's school system.

One such question was raised recently by the chairman of the Knesset's Education Committee, Zevulun Orlev, a National Religious Party member who accused Israeli Arab leaders of supporting an anti-Zionist curriculum.

The program he cited teaches Israeli Arab high school students about "Al Nakba" — Arabic for "the catastrophe," which is how the Arab world describes the creation of the State of Israel.

As part of this program, Israeli Arab teen-agers tour Arab villages destroyed during Israel's 1948 War of Independence.

Orlev wants the program banned.

At the Education Ministry, a spokeswoman said the program appeared to be "left over" from the days of former ministry head Yossi Sarid, a member of the dovish Meretz Party.

Livnat faces other pressing questions.

Last week, Saleh Tarif — the first Druse minister in Israel's history — wrote the minister a letter saying the study of Arabic should be mandatory for Jewish high school students.

"It's an astounding fact that the state of Israel doesn't ensure that its Jewish citizens have a working knowledge of Arabic and Arab culture," he said.

Livnat said she is "looking into" the issues raised by Tarif.

But while unity and respect for the different sectors of Israeli society are important to Livnat, she is determined that the educational system impart a Zionist outlook.

"In education, just as with transportation or the economy, the government has to invest in infrastructure to allow for a free market of ideas and concepts," she said. "We don't want to hide facts or developments, but we have to couch our educational system from a Jewish-Zionist standpoint." □

Miss Israel to wear flak jacket

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Miss Israel plans to make a fashion statement with an army-issued flak jacket at next month's Miss Universe pageant.

The top of Ilanit Levy's silk dress at the May 11 competition in Puerto Rico will be covered with the jacket, adorned with diamonds and pearls.

The dress to be worn by Levy, an 18-year-old soldier from Haifa, sends a message that everyday life in Israel should continue despite the ongoing violence, the dress' designer said. □

JEWISH WORLD

Bush pressed on peacekeepers

Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) said he would send a letter urging President Bush not to pull American peacekeepers out of the Sinai.

The withdrawal "would be interpreted by Israel's enemies as a weakening of U.S. support for Israel" and could further destabilize the region, says the letter, which is being sent to members of U.S. Congress for support.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is urging Bush to withdraw the 800 peacekeepers, who have been stationed in the Sinai since 1982.

Knicks guard in foul trouble

The American Jewish Congress is calling on Florida's secretary of state, Katherine Harris, to remove as the official spokesman for a state reading program a New York Knicks basketball player who was quoted as saying that Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus.

Meanwhile, Knicks' fans booed Charlie Ward when he took the court Sunday.

But by the end of Sunday's playoff game against the Toronto Raptors, the fans cheered Ward, who helped the Knicks win the game.

Clinton speaks at Philly-area shul

About 850 people visited a Philadelphia-area synagogue to hear former President Clinton discuss the Middle East, which he described as the "most difficult place to make peace."

Speaking for 90 minutes Sunday at Old York Road Temple Beth Am, Clinton said his attempts at forging a Middle East peace produced some of the toughest challenges of his administration.

Goussinsky to leave for Israel

Spain lifted all travel restrictions on Russian Jewish media magnate Vladimir Goussinsky, after a Russian attempt to extradite him failed.

Saying "Mr. Goussinsky is totally free," his lawyer said he plans to leave for Israel on Tuesday.

Russian prosecutors want to charge the former leader of the Russian Jewish Congress on embezzlement charges.

British groups face funding woes

Jewish volunteer groups in Britain are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit people and raise funds, according to a new study by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

A shrinking, aging and less insular Jewish population, more women in full-time work, and religious divisions within the community are the primary causes, according to the report, which is available online at www.jpr.org.uk.

Argentina marks the Holocaust, but the events are poorly attended

By Nicolas Penchaszadeh

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — Following the lead of President Fernando de la Rúa, Argentina has begun commemorating Holocaust Remembrance Day with a host of events in schools, religious institutions and an art gallery.

But some are complaining that last week's events did not reach those who most need to learn about the Nazi-led genocide of 6 million Jews.

The classes held in schools throughout the country — in which students discussed issues of discrimination — were officially incorporated into the education curriculum last year by de la Rúa, who dubbed the classes part of the "National Day of Living Together in Cultural Diversity."

Since taking office in December 1999, de la Rúa has worked to make the Holocaust a public issue.

On April 19, the anniversary of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto uprising, a two-day Holocaust forum was held in Buenos Aires. De la Rúa proposed the forum during an international Holocaust education meeting last year in Stockholm.

Also, the Simon Wiesenthal Center has organized an exhibit at the Recoleta Cultural Center with photographs and information depicting the history of Nazi persecution of Jews from 1933 to 1945. The display was sponsored by the U.S., Israeli and German embassies here, as well as the Argentine government, and will stay up for three weeks.

But one of the two featured speakers at the Holocaust forum lamented that the gathering received scant attention in Argentina, whose 230,000 Jews constitute the largest Jewish community in Latin America.

"It's not enough to speak to those who are already very familiar with the Holocaust," renowned writer Marcos Aguinis said, noting the empty chairs throughout the auditorium.

He said the organizers, which included government agencies, should have done a better job at getting media coverage.

"Not even the state-run news organizations are here," he said.

JTA was the only accredited media organization covering the event, which included eight workshops on an array of issues related to the Holocaust, including survivors' testimonies.

Similar frustration was expressed a few days earlier at a session to train more than 500 teachers on how to teach the Day of Living Together. The session included a video put together by the Holocaust Memory Foundation, which has organized the first Holocaust museum in Latin America.

Fewer than 50 teachers showed up for the workshop.

"It's a continuing struggle to put this into full motion," foundation President David Fleischer told JTA. "But we are making a lot of progress and getting a lot of results. The forum is a starting ground. We expect to expand the reach not only in Argentina but also in Latin America."

At the John F. Kennedy public school in Buenos Aires, history teacher Cristina Rins taught the cultural diversity class to 26 high school seniors.

The class began with a discussion about cultural diversity and discrimination, focusing first on current and past ethnic relations in Argentina. After a video was shown, the students talked about the Holocaust and discrimination.

"I try to make them think about how these issues impact them in their daily lives," Rins said, "how they relate to each other in class and in their communities, the language they use."

Since de la Rúa took office, he has spoken out on the Holocaust several times.

De la Rúa's first trip as president, a month after taking office, was to Stockholm for the January 2000 Holocaust Forum.

Shortly afterward, he welcomed a group of survivors for lunch with his family and most of his Cabinet.

De la Rúa also has apologized for Argentina's role in harboring Nazi war criminals during and after World War II. And during his first trip to the United States, last June, he visited the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Vote fraud case in Britain embarrasses country's Jews

By Richard Allen Greene

LONDON (JTA) — Two observant Jews who served as local elected officials here have been sentenced to jail for vote fraud.

Isaac Leibowitz, of the Conservative Party, was given a six-month jail sentence; Zev Lieberman, a Liberal Democrat, was sentenced to four months.

The two fervently Orthodox defendants were convicted in March of fraudulently adding names to London electoral rolls. The investigating officer called the case "the largest attempt to subvert the democratic process that I am aware of."

The case has embarrassed Britain's Jewish community.

"Wider society tends to look at us as a homogenous group," said a representative of one community organization.

"Their names tell the whole story. Non-Jews see Jews doing this, and they'll draw their own conclusions," said the representative, who asked to remain anonymous.

Leibowitz, 36, and Lieberman, 29, manufactured phantom voters and tricked legitimate voters into signing away their proxy ballots, resulting in a 2,000 percent increase in the number of absentee ballots in their ward in a May 1998 local election.

About 75 percent of the 241 absentee votes went to the Liberal Democrats, Lieberman's party. The prosecution argued that the fraud had affected the overall composition of the local council in the northeast London borough of Hackney.

In handing down the relatively mild sentences last Friday — the men could have been jailed for up to 10 years each — Judge Jeremy Connor described the defendants as men of "good character" who had committed their crimes out of "enthusiasm for public office in order to do good things."

The Jewish community representative said the kind of vote fraud the men had committed could happen in any tightly knit ethnic community.

But Samuel Heilman, author of "Defenders of the Faith: Inside Ultra-Orthodox Jewry," said the lifestyle of fervently Orthodox communities makes it particularly important for them to have political influence.

"They have huge financial needs," said Heilman, a professor at Queens College, which is part of the City University of New York.

Fervently Orthodox communities often do not have a "large number of people who are gainfully employed," he said. "There is a growing tendency to study Torah as a full-time profession. Yeshivas have to provide stipends not only for students, but for their families."

Government becomes the major source of funds for these communities, Heilman said.

"There is less and less sympathy within the wider Jewish community to Orthodoxy, and therefore they are not willing to shell out money to support these folks," he said. "The public sector is the last source of support."

As a result, if these communities show that they can deliver votes, "political officials will give them what they want — subsidized housing, food stamps, education," Heilman said.

A rabbi familiar with political issues in London's fervently Orthodox community said Leibowitz believed the community was getting "a raw deal" from local government.

"The council had not been meeting their needs. He saw" the vote fraud "as a way of redressing an imbalance," said the rabbi, who also asked not to be named.

Another Jewish community leader said the crime was partly due to the fervently Orthodox community's insularity.

The community leader agreed that the conviction reflected badly on Britain's Jews.

"The stink they create blows onto more people than just their own sect," the leader said.

The rabbi agreed. "There was respect for the community, and this has eroded it," he said.

Britain's fervently Orthodox community has refrained from publicly condemning Leibowitz and Lieberman, reflecting a "lack of maturity" on the community's part, the rabbi said.

"We'd feel that we are condemning ourselves," the rabbi said. "We're not able to deal with these issues. We're decades away from that kind of maturity."

Leibowitz and Lieberman both were found guilty of conspiracy to defraud an electoral official and of two counts of forgery each. Leibowitz also was convicted of a second conspiracy charge.

Both have resigned their council seats.

During the trial, both men were acquitted of a number of other forgery and conspiracy charges.

A third defendant, Mesifita Talmudical College caretaker Chananya Gross, 22, was acquitted of a conspiracy charge.

The court accepted the prosecution's stance that Gross was an "unwitting dupe" of the two politicians.

Two more defendants, including one fervently Orthodox man, were acquitted of a number of forgery and conspiracy charges. □

Jewish promoter becoming a heavyweight in South Africa

By Michael Belling

JOHANNESBURG (JTA) — A Jewish boxing promoter who credits the local Lebanese community for his success was the force behind the heavyweight title fight that took place over the weekend near Johannesburg.

Promoter Rodney Berman described the Sunday morning match between Lennox Lewis and Hasim Rahman as "a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for South Africa."

The program also included the International Boxing Federation's junior welterweight title bout between local champion Lehlohonolo "Hands of Stone" Ledwaba and the Mexican challenger, Carlos Contreras. Ledwaba retained his title.

In the big fight, underdog Rahman knocked Lewis out in the fifth round in a major upset.

A member of Johannesburg's Sandton Synagogue, Berman also said he had drawn much support for the event from the Jewish community — "probably because I am Jewish."

Rahman has indicated that he wishes to defend his title in South Africa, so Berman could have another major promotion here soon.

Berman started in the fight game 25 years ago.

A business friend instructed him to sue Maurice Toweel, a member of the legendary South African boxing family of Lebanese origin.

"Maurice and I hit it off immediately," Berman said.

Rather than becoming enemies because of the legal action, "Maurice became my adopted stepfather," Berman said. □