



# Daily News Bulletin

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84th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Sharon to Schroeder: Press Arafat

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon pressed German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder to urge Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat to uphold a shaky cease-fire agreement.

Sharon met with Schroeder in Berlin on Thursday during what was the Israeli premier's first European trip since taking office earlier this year.

After meeting with Schroeder, Sharon told a joint news conference that Israel is "prepared for painful compromises for real peace, peace for generations."

Schroeder said he urged Sharon to be more flexible on the question of Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Sharon has repeatedly said Israel will not build any new settlements, but will expand existing ones to accommodate "natural growth."

Earlier in the day, Sharon and Schroeder laid wreaths at the Grunewald train station in Berlin, which served as the deportation point for an estimated 80,000 Jews during World War II.

### Israel to keep targeting terrorists

Israel's Security Cabinet gave the go-ahead to continue targeting Palestinian terrorists.

The decision, made in a meeting Wednesday, came after a smaller group of ministers had approved the policy earlier this week. During Wednesday's four-hour session, several ministers demanded that Israel topple Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, according to Israeli news reports.

### Moscow Jewish studies turns 10

A Moscow-based program that was one of the pioneers in Jewish studies after the fall of communism is celebrating its 10th anniversary.

Twelve students graduated this week from Project Judaica, bringing the total number of students who have finished the program to 48. The graduate-level program is jointly sponsored by the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary and the Russian State University for the Humanities.

### Mideast religious leaders meeting

Israeli and Palestinian religious leaders have held secret talks with the approval of their respective governments, according to an Israeli minister. Rabbi Michael Melchior said the main aim of the talks was to issue a joint call for an end to violence.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Internal Maccabiah dispute reflects angst over Israel visits

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — On the heels of the Reform movement's controversial decision last month to cancel its summer youth trips, the upcoming 16th Maccabiah Games have assumed even greater symbolic value.

And to that end, Israeli government officials and American Jewish leaders may have twisted some arms to persuade the U.S. delegation to participate, according to a letter of complaint obtained by JTA.

In a June 24 letter to the Maccabi USA leadership, 22 board members, organizing committee members and coaches charged that "political pressure" and threats of "potential financial consequences" — such as restricted funding for Maccabi USA — had helped to secure U.S. participation.

The group, known as MUSA, had been pushing for a postponement of "the Jewish Olympics," which will run from July 15-23, but reversed its decision June 14 after talks with Israel and U.S. Jewish organizational officials. A handful of Executive Committee members resigned as a result of the decision, said Bob Spivak, MUSA's president.

The MUSA leadership went on to explain the reversal to its delegation in a June 20 update that, according to the letter signatories, contained "a variety of inaccuracies, omissions and misstatements of facts."

America's involvement in the games had been considered critical, as it boasts the second largest delegation of athletes, after Israel's.

At this point, some 355 of 550 U.S. athletes will compete; overall, only 2,000 of the 5,000 who had originally registered worldwide will attend.

Just last week, the Maccabiah canceled the triathlon and marathon.

The Maccabi USA dispute seems to be more than an internal issue.

It also appears to be a microcosm of the situation confronting many Jewish organizations and institutions: whether symbolic "solidarity" derived from visiting Israel should trump concerns for safety and security.

Said one Jewish leader whose organization continues to send solidarity missions to Israel, "Anyone who tells you they have absolutely no worries about it, I think they're lying to you. But what we're saying is that the value and significance of sending groups now sends a message to Israel that outweighs any potential concern that people might have about travel to Israel."

With attacks on Israelis no longer restricted to the West Bank and Gaza, but targeting Israel proper, U.S. Jewish leaders striving for absolute solidarity seem to be struggling to hold the line with skittish Jewish groups.

And for those groups that "err on the side of caution" and cancel trips, their defection is being portrayed as a sign of disloyalty to the Jewish state.

The first significant breach was by the Reform movement.

On June 2, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations announced that it had canceled its summer youth trips.

The UAHC could not ensure the safety and security of their young charges, said Rabbi Eric Yoffie, its president. The UAHC was roundly denounced for handing a "victory" to terrorists aiming to isolate Israel internationally.

Some critics also proclaimed solidarity as a gauge of commitment to Israel — and charged that the UAHC had failed the test.

In their letter, the 22 MUSA signatories indicated that they, too, have had their loyalty called into question. They also complained that the decision had become

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Vandals break consul's windows

Israeli vandals threw rocks through three windows of the house of the Belgian consul in Jerusalem.

The vandals also scattered leaflets condemning the decision by a Belgian judge to open an investigation into Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's role in the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacre in Lebanon. Belgium has a 1993 law that enables the nation's courts to judge atrocities committed elsewhere, regardless of whether or not they involved Belgians.

### A 'peaceful' day in Gaza

The Israeli army exchanged fire with Palestinian gunmen in the southern Gaza Strip on Thursday.

In what was otherwise a relatively peaceful day in the West Bank and Gaza, the Palestinians threw at least 50 hand grenades at the soldiers during the fighting, the army said. Palestinian police denied that any grenades had been thrown.

### Man accused of collaboration

A Palestinian man was brought before a Palestinian military tribunal in the West Bank on charges he collaborated with Israel. Thaer Jaber was charged with having helped Israel kill two Palestinians in a May 12 helicopter attack in the West Bank city of Jenin.

Jaber confessed that he had helped Israel, but denied he had a role in the killings. Another hearing was set for Saturday.

### Remarks lead to coach's demise

The coach of Israel's top basketball team resigned for racial slurs he made about black players. Pini Gershon, the coach of Maccabi Tel Aviv, apologized for the remarks before an Israeli parliamentary committee on Tuesday.

"We were just acting as pals, joking around," Gershon said of his comments, which were made last November to a group of army officers and published this week on an Israel-based Web site.



## Daily News Bulletin

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politicized. "The infusion of the 'solidarity' issue into the discussions about our participation has angered and hurt many people associated with MUSA who feel that, as a political issue, it is not relevant to what should be our primary focus, that is, the safety and security of the U.S. delegation," said the letter.

"Any implication that a decision to not send the delegation reflects negatively on our commitment to Israel is offensive and unwarranted."

Spivak rejected the notion of political pressure.

"I don't feel there was. People were expressing their views and telling us why they thought it was important to be there."

The signatories, citing the controversial State Department warning about Americans in Israel being potential terrorist targets, said that "it would be best if we had erred on the side of caution in this matter."

In phone interviews with JTA, several of the dissenters declined to elaborate on the letter, saying that "it speaks for itself."

"This dispute is an internal matter; it wasn't intended for you, it wasn't intended for public consumption," said Jim Bronner, an MUSA Executive Committee member who declined to explain why he and five others had recently resigned.

Spivak described the dissenters as "a group in the minority who are angry about our decision." The MUSA reversal came about, Spivak said, because of "a tremendous influx of parents and athletes who said, 'Let's go.'"

The June 24 letter offers a glimpse at the anatomy of the decision — albeit from the perspective of 22 dissenters. In the letter, the signatories said they felt compelled to write "at the request of many athletes and parents" to voice their disagreement with both the decision and the procedures MUSA used to carry it out.

They said that for months, they had believed the violence in Israel would subside and that the security of the athletes would not be an issue.

At the same time, American Jewish leaders were criticizing the travel warning for all of Israel as unfounded, emphasizing that the violence against Jews occurred primarily in the territories.

The signatories then itemized the 22 most serious terrorist attacks to have occurred within Israel proper, culminating with the June 1 bombing outside a Tel Aviv disco that killed 21 Israeli teen-agers. In particular, they highlighted the attacks in Netanya, a suburb north of Tel Aviv, which has "traditionally been one of the cities where scores of Maccabiah athletes have been housed."

On June 2, the 30-plus members of the MUSA Executive Committee convened in Philadelphia and voted to ask that the MWU, which governs the Maccabiah Games, postpone the games until 2002.

According to the letter, the committee also voted "off the record" to warn that if the Games went on, it would be without a U.S. delegation.

Meanwhile, MWU officials from around the world met in Israel and agreed to postpone the Games. Soon after, said the letter, the Israeli government intervened and asked that the MWU delegates return to their respective countries and ask their constituencies to "reconsider their decision."

In the United States, the Executive Committee — whose members live across the country — convened via a June 14 teleconference call.

The dissenters say they were surprised to learn that a number of prominent American Jewish leaders were also in on the call.

According to the dissenting group's letter, "They said, without exception, that participation by the United States in the Maccabiah Games would be a victory for the solidarity of Diaspora Jews with Israel and urged the Executive Committee to reconsider its decisions."

Meanwhile, some of the dissenters "were either excluded" from the discussion or "not on the call," the letter stated.

Another vote was taken among the committee members on the call.

By a "strong majority," Spivak said, they voted in favor of a reversal and to participate, though he wouldn't divulge the precise vote count.

Spivak did not take issue with the chronology of events outlined in the letter, but he did dispute that any pressure was applied or that people were excluded from the decision-making process.

"This is a very democratic process," he said. "We had decided we would request a postponement. When we came back from Israel, there was a reconsideration." □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Conservative group slams 'tolerance' as harmful to the dignity of society

By Sharon Samber

#### Russian Jews ink prison deal

Representatives from a leading Jewish umbrella group will be able to visit and provide religious services to Jews held in Russian prisons, according to a new agreement.

The pact, signed by Russian Justice Ministry officials and the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia will allow the prisoners to have the "spiritual guidance they need during their incarceration," said Russian Chief Rabbi Berel Lazar.

#### Nazis tried to incite Arabs

The Nazis tried to encourage Arabs to rise up and kill Jews in Palestine during World War II, newly declassified British documents show.

The plan went awry when German and Arab agents involved in the plot landed in the wrong place after a parachute drop and were captured by the British.

#### Cleveland Jews get on the bus

The Cleveland Jewish community is donating \$150,000 toward an armored bus to protect Israeli schoolchildren from potential Palestinian attacks.

The Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland on Tuesday approved \$25,000 of the total.

An additional \$125,000 is being donated by several Cleveland families, and \$100,000 will come from the Israeli government.

#### Nursery schools to get God

Twenty North American Jewish community centers will test a new Jewish ethics curriculum for nursery school students this fall.

Based on the teachings of Pirke Avot, or Ethics of the Fathers, the multimedia curriculum aims to deepen the Jewish content of early childhood education, an area that suffers from lack of funding and a shortage of teachers.

#### Guide helps kosher eaters

A new guide depicts where to find kosher food in 32 cities in the United States.

More information about the guide, which also contains other information for the observant Jewish traveler, and a second guide on kosher food in London, is available at [www.kashrusmagazine.com](http://www.kashrusmagazine.com).

#### Former B'nai B'rith leader dies

Rabbi Benjamin Kahn, a former executive vice president of B'nai Brith International, died Wednesday at the age of 87.

Kahn was also a past director of the Jewish student organization Hillel when it was under B'nai B'rith's auspices. He also served on the U.S. Peace Corps National Advisory Council.

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A primarily Jewish group is calling for an end to modern "tolerance," saying it has led to increased pornography, hostility to faith and families and an assault on the dignity of human life.

In an ad placed on The New York Times Op-Ed page last Friday, the conservative interfaith group Toward Tradition said society was "terrorized by tolerance" and urged a return to biblical morality.

The ad confused and riled many American Jews. It also challenged the notion that Jewish organizations speak in a united voice for the Jewish community when it comes to issues like tolerance and pluralism.

Toward Tradition is a coalition of Jews and Christians that supports traditional, faith-based and American principles of constitutional and limited government. Its Web site states it supports the rule of law, representative democracy, free markets, a strong military and a moral public culture.

Founded in 1991, the Mercer Island, Wash.-based group has grass-roots chapters of activists throughout the country and distributes a regular newsletter and policy papers on topics such as taxation, education and other social and cultural issues.

Yarden Weidenfeld, national director of Toward Tradition, said the rhetoric of groups that claim they are fighting racism and anti-Semitism are really masking a liberal political, moral and social agenda, and that very agenda is dangerous to the Jewish community.

There is a tendency in the Jewish community to be on the anti-traditional side of debates, Weidenfeld said, and conservative groups get demonized and delegitimized.

"There's a lot of closed-mindedness in the name of open-mindedness," Weidenfeld told JTA.

"In 2001, you can't say anything is right or wrong anymore, except for vaguely defined intolerance," the ad said.

This situation is "especially ominous for Jews," the ad said, because it undermines "respect for all moral values, including respect for minorities."

The ad drew some harsh criticism from Jewish figures.

Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, called Toward Tradition a "fringe group" that gets attention by attacking majority Jewish opinions in an exaggerated fashion. While the ad argued that the Torah isn't particularly tolerant, Foxman countered that the concept of "Love thy neighbor as thyself," an important principle of Judaism, is the highest form of tolerance.

In 1994, Toward Tradition rejected the ADL report, "The Religious Right: The Assault on Tolerance & Pluralism in America," objecting to the study's conclusion that there is a conservative Christian threat to Jewish security.

Rabbi Daniel Lapin, the group's president and founder of the Pacific Jewish Center in Venice, Calif., was one of a few Jewish thinkers who was invited to meet with President Bush in the early transition days of the administration about the White House plan to fund religious groups that provide social services.

Rabbi Avi Shafran, director of public affairs for the fervently Orthodox Agudath Israel of America, said Toward Tradition is right: The word "tolerance" has often been twisted into a weapon for use against those who embrace traditional morality.

The tone of the ad was "a little harsh," Shafran said, but the group's increased visibility is a sign of the respectability of the conservative approach.

"It's important there be conservative voices in the Jewish world," Shafran said, adding he hopes the Jewish community gets to hear all sides of an issue and doesn't have to think a Jewish approach means a liberal take.

But Jonathan Sarna, a professor of American Jewish history at Brandeis University, said the ad indicates that the group is trying to reach out to non-Jewish conservatives.

"Toward Tradition does not even reflect the views of neo-conservatives in the Jewish community," Sarna said.

Toward Tradition said it had received hundreds of phone calls, most of them positive, about the ad. □

## NEWS ANALYSIS

## Anniversary of Polish pogrom prompts debate, soul searching

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — Sixty years ago this month, half the people in a small town in northeastern Poland brutalized the other half, torturing them before herding them into a barn and setting it on fire.

The horrific events took place in the town of Jedwabne. The victims were Jedwabne's 1,600 Jews. The perpetrators were their Polish Catholic neighbors.

On July 10, the anniversary of the massacre, Poland's president and prime minister will join local officials, Jewish leaders and relatives of the murdered Jews for a solemn ceremony to unveil a monument at the site of the slaughter.

Speakers include President Aleksander Kwasniewski, who is expected to apologize for the massacre on behalf of Poles, and the Israeli ambassador to Poland, Holocaust survivor Shevach Weiss.

Rabbi Jacob Baker, a representative of the victims' families, will also speak and lead prayers. New York cantor Joseph Malovany will chant Kaddish.

The official ceremony will be preceded by a commemoration in the synagogue in Warsaw on Friday — the 15th of Tammuz, which is the anniversary of the slaughter according to the Jewish calendar.

Jewish leaders said the commemoration would be a "complement, not a competition" to the official event. They expressed gratitude to Kwasniewski and other government leaders, despite lingering controversy over the wording on the monument, which does not firmly place the blame for the massacre on local Poles.

The ceremonies are the culmination of months of lacerating debate in Poland about both the Jedwabne massacre and its implications. The debates, carried out in the media, churches, public meetings, conferences and other forums, were sparked by the publication last year of "Neighbors," a book about the massacre by Polish-born New York University professor Jan Gross.

The often emotional, even painful, exchanges were the most open and in-depth exploration yet into Poland's role and responsibility in the Holocaust.

They could be compared to the postwar debates in Germany over collective guilt for the Holocaust. But, says historian Marta Petrusiewicz, the Polish debates, coming after decades of ignorance or denial, are even more complex.

"The debate in Germany was forced on the Germans as part of the whole program of de-Nazification," said Petrusiewicz, a Warsaw-born Jew who left Poland during the Communist regime's anti-Semitic purges in 1968.

"In a way, though horrible, this is a simpler debate than others," she said. "In other countries, such as France, such examinations came later, in the 1980s. There was a refusal for years to face it."

In Poland, she said, "the debate is the most complicated of all. It touches on the myth of Polish innocence. This myth is extremely deep among Poles — even in self-critical people."

Poles suffered deeply under the Nazis. The ideal of Polish resistance and heroism was bolstered under communism.

"Polish sins, our disgraceful deeds and shameful historical events were fully covered up to prevent conflicts with the official version of history," said a recent editorial in a Polish newspaper. "Children were brought up on tales of Polish splendor and heroism,

tolerance and undeserved misfortune plaguing our nation since its founding.

"An average person learned to attach emotionally to the history and affirm it," the editorial said. "In 1990 censorship disappeared, yet the frame of mind which resulted from 60 years of constant brainwashing turned out to be much more difficult to modify than political and economic institutions.

"The identity is shaped by generations, and only profound education or communal catharsis can reframe its illusionary content. The truth about Jedwabne could catalyze such a purifying process, yet it's hard to determine whether Poland is ready for the total reshaping of its identity."

Indeed, Poles in general did not and do not suffer the guilt of Germans as perpetrators of the Holocaust; if anything, they suffer another kind of guilt, a guilt one Polish writer has called "guilt by neglect."

This entailed the guilt of having been bystanders — victims of the Nazis themselves but at the same time witnesses, often indifferent or even complacent to genocide.

Communist-era taboos prevented an objective public analysis of the Holocaust, Jewish issues and history itself — and even dissident historians sometimes shied away from these issues.

Much of the material on Jedwabne that Gross consulted for his book — including research carried out by the Jewish Historical Institute — had been published or was otherwise easily available.

But, noted Petrusiewicz, it lay untouched by scholars.

"Not even important dissident historians, including Jews, looked into these openly accessible archives," she said.

"It is mind-blowing. There is no objective justification for it. There was an enormous block that made all of us totally blind."

This isn't the first time the issue of Poland's role and responsibility in the Shoah has been aired in Poland.

But it marks the first time such themes are being touched in a Poland that has a functioning democracy, market economy and free press.

For example, Claude Lanzmann's epic film "Shoah" sparked unprecedented discussion and generally outraged reaction after parts of it were shown on Polish television in the mid-1980s. Lanzmann himself accused Poles of involvement in the Holocaust, prompting an official protest from Poland's Communist government.

In 1987, a Krakow scholar published an article in a liberal Catholic weekly saying Poles should feel some complicity in the Holocaust, if only because of their indifference.

This touched off an exchange of articles that British scholar Antony Polonsky described as "the most profound discussion since 1945 of the Holocaust in Poland and, above all, of the vexed question of the Polish response to the mass murder of the Jews."

It was the first time these highly-charged issues, incorporating a full range of philo- and anti-Semitic views and rival visions of Poland and its past, were aired in a public, if still limited, forum.

The Jedwabne debates have included hundreds of published articles, broadcasts, round-table discussions, sermons and letters to the editor.

There are several Web sites devoted to the issue, including [www.pogranicze.sejny.pl/english/jedwabne](http://www.pogranicze.sejny.pl/english/jedwabne), which lists dozens of articles in English.

Few believe the official ceremony will put an end to the discussion or the difficult process of coming to terms with the past.

"It's a good thing it is happening, but it's not the end of the story by any means — nor should it be," said Petrusiewicz. □