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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Pressure grows for monitors

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The United States supported the idea for the first time. [Page 4]

Shoah denier denied appeal

British Holocaust denier David Irving was denied permission to appeal his defeat in a libel suit he brought last year against historian Deborah Lipstadt and Penguin Books, her publisher.

Last Friday, the Court of Appeal in London rejected his request for an appeal, with one of the three judges on the panel calling Irving "one of the most dangerous spokespersons for Holocaust denial." Irving must quickly pay the first installment in a legal bill estimated at close to \$3 million. [Page 3]

Bombing thwarted in Haifa

Israeli police on Sunday arrested a Palestinian who planted a bomb near an office complex in Haifa.

A police spokesman described the device, which a police bomb squad safely defused, as being "very large."

Earlier in the day, police on alert for Palestinian bombers had set up roadblocks around entrances to the city.

IDF may seek reservists abroad

The Israel Defense Force is making preparations to call up tens of thousands of reservists abroad in the event of a major war.

According to an IDF spokesman, recruitment branches have opened in nine cities: Los Angeles, New York, London, Paris, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Johannesburg, Bombay and Bangkok.

Brouhaha over Moscow shul

A conflict erupted in Moscow over the use of one of the city's five synagogues.

The Russian Jewish Congress, which built the synagogue in 1998 as part of a Holocaust memorial, insists that the shul be used to educate about the Nazi genocide of the Jews, but a group of observant Jews is demanding access to the synagogue for prayer.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Faced with Palestinian attacks, some settlers become vigilantes

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — For months, Israeli settlers have been warning that they are losing patience.

In recent weeks — faced with daily Palestinian attacks and with what they consider an insufficient response from Prime Minister Ariel Sharon — some settlers have begun taking matters into their own hands.

The issue of vigilantism was thrown into sharp focus last week, when Israeli extremists killed three Palestinians, including a 3-month-old baby, in a drive-by shooting near Hebron. The Committee for Road Safety — a group headquartered in the Hebron suburb of Kiryat Arba and associated with the outlawed Kach movement — claimed responsibility for the deadly July 19 attack.

The attack "was a horrifying and abominable act," Peres said Sunday. "These people brought shame to the Jewish people and disaster to Israel," he said, calling on those responsible to turn themselves in to police.

Other Israeli officials, including the president, Sephardic chief rabbi and settler leaders, were swift to condemn the killings. The incident came after weeks of growing resentment among some settlers, who believe that Sharon's policy of restraint in dealing with Palestinian violence has made them little more than sitting ducks.

Earlier this month, settlers in the West Bank city of Hebron rampaged for hours, beating up Arabs, throwing stones at Palestinian houses, wrecking cars and burning gardens and fields.

The Committee for Road Safety also took responsibility for those attacks.

Just the same, the violence appeared more spontaneous than organized.

In another incident, dozens of settlers briefly occupied a house in the Arab market in Hebron on July 15, but left peacefully when ordered out by police.

The settlers said their actions came in reaction to the slayings of two settlers in the Hebron area two days earlier by Palestinian militants.

On July 13, Yehezkel Mualem, a member of Kiryat Arba's city council, was shot by Palestinian gunmen while protesting a previous terror attack in the same area. A 49-year-old father of four, Mualem was murdered at the very place where another Hebron-area resident, Mordechai Lapid, was murdered seven years ago.

A day earlier, at the entrance to Kiryat Arba, terrorists shot and mortally wounded David Cohen, 31, of Betar Illit, who later died in a local hospital.

Earlier this month, two other Israelis — Yair Har-Sinai and Shai Cohen — were killed by Palestinian gunmen in the West Bank. All the attacks came after the Palestinians ostensibly agreed to a cease-fire plan reached through American mediation.

While the Hebron rampages appeared to be spontaneous outbursts by angry settlers, earlier incidents in the West Bank had some characteristics of organized vigilante operations planned by settler militias.

On July 13, for example, shots were fired from a passing vehicle at houses in the Al-Aroub refugee camp on the Bethlehem-Hebron highway.

Earlier this month, unidentified gunmen wounded three Palestinians in a Palestinian taxi near Ramallah. A similar attack on a Palestinian truck took place last month in the Ramallah region.

No one was arrested for the attacks, and no organization claimed responsibility. However, spokesmen for the settlers said they expected more to come.

"One cannot stop people from vengeance," said Noam Arnon, spokesman for

MIDEAST FOCUS

Palestinian killed in Gaza

Israeli soldiers killed a Palestinian man Saturday night in the Gaza Strip when a tank shell hit his home, Palestinian sources said. Israel said the soldiers had fired a tank machine gun at two Palestinian gunmen who attacked a military post.

U.N. team to probe kidnap video

A U.N. team arrived in Beirut on Sunday to investigate a videotape that a U.N. peacekeeper made a day after Hezbollah gunmen kidnapped three Israeli soldiers last October. The team will also look into reports that U.N. peacekeepers may have witnessed the kidnapping or collaborated with Hezbollah.

Border police deny slaying

Israeli border police said all its forces are alive and well following a statement from Palestinian militants that they killed an Israeli border officer over the weekend. According to the statement, the militants dumped the officer's body in eastern Jerusalem.

Rabbis: March on Temple Mount

Settler rabbis called for a march on the Temple Mount on July 29, the holiday of Tisha B'Av, which marks the destruction of both biblical Temples.

Islamic authorities closed the plaza to all non-Muslims after the Palestinian uprising began last fall, and many Jews for years have followed a self-imposed religious ban on visiting the holy site. Palestinians have warned that any attempt to allow Jewish prayer at the site would be met with a violent reaction.

Academics call for peace talks

A group of Israeli and Palestinian academics issued a joint call to return to the negotiating table.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported that the meeting was initiated by former Israeli Justice Minister Yossi Beilin and the Palestinian Authority's information minister, Yasser Abed Rabbo.

Jewish settlers in Hebron. Orit Struck, a Jewish activist whose son was wounded by a sniper several weeks ago, said the question was why "the private Jewish reaction" waited until now.

"We are facing a real crisis," she said.

"In principle, we are all law-abiding citizens," she said of the settlers. "But this is Russian roulette. One victim a day means 365 victims a year. Can anyone expect us to accept it?"

Last week, Army Radio reported that a leaflet being distributed in West Bank synagogues urges settlers to take revenge on Palestinians.

"Only a firm response to attacks will guarantee that Jewish blood will not be shed with abandon," the leaflet read.

For months — while friends and neighbors were shot on West Bank roads — the settlers bit their lips as Israeli leaders called for restraint.

Two weeks ago, Palestinian officials denied a report in the Israeli daily Ma'ariv that Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat issued a directive to "kill a Jewish settler every day." Ma'ariv cited information received by Israeli officials.

Whether or not Arafat ever issued such an order, Palestinian attacks have resulted in a political asset the settlers have not had for years — sympathy from the general Israeli public.

With Palestinian terrorists also targeting population centers within Israel proper, more Israelis have come to view the settlers as "present-day pioneers," in Sharon's words.

Even former Prime Minister Ehud Barak — a frequent target of settler ire — spoke two weeks ago of the state's "duty to protect its citizens, wherever they are."

As the Palestinian attacks on settlers continued, the settlers began to demonstrate against Sharon, their former hero. At the same time, they built their own outposts on the very West Bank roads where Arab gunmen were fixing their sights — with deadly accuracy — on Jewish drivers. Some of those illegally built outposts were removed by the army, but more than 50 remain.

In addition, the settlers conducted their own armed patrols along main traffic arteries, wore bulletproof vests, bought armored vehicles and upgraded their command rooms in the settlements — which now look more and more like military headquarters.

It may have been only a matter of time before some settlers translated this new level of security into vigilante action against Palestinians.

With no end in sight to more than nine months of Israeli-Palestinian violence, the road to anarchy has become shorter. Seven years ago, a resident of Kiryat Arba, Dr. Baruch Goldstein, decided to avenge the murder of friends at the hands of Palestinian terrorists. In February 1994 he opened fire at Hebron's Tomb of the Patriarchs, killing 29 Palestinian worshippers, before he himself was killed by an angry Arab mob.

In the eyes of the Israeli security establishment — not to mention almost all sectors of the public — Goldstein came to symbolize the worst-case scenario in Israeli-Palestinian relations. In the eyes of some fellow settlers, however, he was a hero who may have forestalled a coming Arab attack.

Now, as settler deaths mount, is another Goldstein in the making?

The problem, settlers say, does not lie with the Palestinians, but with Sharon's policy of restraint in the face of Arab violence.

The Kiryat Arba local council issued a communique charging that this month's fatal shooting of David Cohen at the entrance to Kiryat Arba was the result of "the policy of weakness vis-a-vis terror."

Zvi Katzover, mayor of Kiryat Arba, charged that had the army placed roadblocks "in critical points," the deadly attack could have been prevented.

Settler leaders charge that Sharon is captive to the policy of his dovish foreign minister, Shimon Peres, and as a result the government will not provide the settlers with adequate security.

Settler leader Elyakim Haetzni said last week that Sharon does not dare stand up to Peres because Peres has given Sharon international legitimacy — particularly in light of the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacre in Lebanon for which Sharon, defense minister during the Lebanon War, was considered indirectly responsible.

"If the threat of Sabra and Shatila pushes you into the arms of Shimon Peres," Haetzni wrote Sharon in an open letter, "then you must draw the patriotic conclusions — resign and call for new elections." □



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JEWISH WORLD

Groups back Muslim woman

The American Jewish Congress and other Jewish groups urged the U.S. Supreme Court to hear the case of a Muslim woman subjected to employment discrimination because she wears a head scarf to work.

The AJCongress, the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League and Agudath Israel of America withdrew their names from another brief in support of Zeinab Ali when the Council on American Islamic Relations, which has defended terror attacks against Israel, signed on.

Russian lawmaker maligns Jews

A Russian legislator known for anti-Semitic comments made another such remark in the Russian Parliament, according to the Union of Councils for Jews in the FSU. While lawmakers were discussing a bill that would allow Russia to import nuclear waste, Nikolai Kondratenko called the bill a Zionist conspiracy. "Let the Zionists send their children to hell," he said. "We Russians want to live."

Hitler slay plotters remembered

The leader of German Jewry appeared at an event marking the 57th anniversary of a failed attempt to assassinate Hitler. The plotters, who later were executed, "were the real heroes of German 20th-century military history," Paul Spiegel said last Friday.

N.Y. graffiti suspect arrested

New York police arrested a young Latvian immigrant for scrawling swastikas and other anti-Semitic graffiti in an Orthodox section of Brooklyn. Police are investigating the background and associates of the 16-year-old, who they say acted with accomplices.

Berlin leader backs Shoah ad

The head of Berlin's Jewish community approved a controversial ad campaign in an effort to raise funds for a national Holocaust memorial.

"The purpose justifies this wording," Alexander Brenner said. Officials in Berlin are using "The Holocaust Never Happened" as the controversial slogan going up on billboards across Germany.

Smaller text underneath the headline reads: "There are still many people who make this claim. In 20 years there could be even more. Make a donation to the memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe."

Russian Jewish teachers fan out

The first graduates of a Moscow teachers' program aimed at boosting Jewish and Israel-oriented education in Russia are taking up posts across Russia.

The 21 teachers recently completed a three-month course at Reform Judaism's Machon center, funded by the Jewish Agency for Israel.

Holocaust denier must pay millions in legal expenses, say British judges

By Richard Allen Greene

LONDON (JTA) — Holocaust denier David Irving is facing possible bankruptcy after being denied permission to appeal his defeat in a libel suit he brought against an American scholar.

The Court of Appeal in London rejected Irving's request to appeal last year's verdict by Judge Charles Gray that labeled him a racist anti-Semite who had deliberately misrepresented and distorted historical evidence about the Holocaust.

Gray ruled that Deborah Lipstadt and her publisher, Penguin Books, did not libel Irving in her 1994 book "Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory," in which she called Irving a Holocaust denier.

Last Friday, the three-judge appeals panel supported Gray's ruling and said Irving was "one of the most dangerous spokespersons for Holocaust denial."

"No objective, fair-minded historian would have serious cause to doubt that there were gas chambers at Auschwitz and that they were operated on a substantial scale to kill hundreds of thousands of Jews," the ruling said.

The court ordered Irving to pay a first installment of \$210,000 toward Lipstadt and Penguin's legal costs by Aug. 10. If he does not come up with the money, he faces bankruptcy. Under the terms of Gray's original ruling, Irving must pay Lipstadt and Penguin's legal costs, which are estimated to be as high as \$3.3 million.

Irving relied on donations from supporters to bring his legal challenge last month.

In his online diary, Irving says that it is "his own business" how he will meet his financial obligations and that he will "never" reveal the names of his supporters, "whatever the penalty."

Irving was not in court to hear the decision. His lawyer, Adrian Davies, said he was promoting a new book on Winston Churchill.

In an unusual move, the appeals court allowed Davies to present three days of argument supporting his client's request for permission to appeal. These types of oral arguments rarely last more than an hour or two in Britain.

Lipstadt's lawyer, Richard Rampton, said that Irving was trying to turn the request for an appeal into an appeal itself.

"The court heard all the arguments to see if there was a glimmer of merit," Rampton told JTA. "As it turned out, they didn't see a glimmer. In effect, they've heard the merits of the case, so I think that's the end of the line" for Irving.

In theory, Irving could appeal to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France, but Rampton said he doubts the international court would hear an Irving plea.

Irving has not asked for the House of Lords, Britain's highest legal authority, to hear his appeal.

"He hasn't exhausted all domestic remedies, so he is unlikely to be heard at Strasbourg," Rampton said.

Rampton said he did not know how far Lipstadt and Penguin were prepared to pursue Irving through the courts to recover their legal costs.

British Jewish leaders welcomed the ruling.

"The decision confirms beyond all doubt that David Irving is a falsifier of history and a Nazi sympathizer whose aim has been to sanitize Nazism and absolve Hitler," said Neville Nagler, director general of the Board of Deputies, an organization that represents most British Jews.

"His reputation as a historian has been completely destroyed," Nagler added. □

Belgium to introduce law on Nazi art

NEW YORK (JTA) — Belgium plans to introduce a law enabling the return of assets to families of Jewish victims of Nazi Germany's wartime occupation.

The law will set up a commission that will oversee restitution efforts.

The initiative announced July 19 follows similar actions in France and the Netherlands. □

Israel may relent amid drive for international peacekeeper force

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As Israeli-Palestinian violence continues, a push to send international monitors to try to reduce tensions is gaining momentum.

The G-8 group of leading economic nations, meeting in Genoa, Italy, over the weekend, endorsed a proposal to dispatch an international peacekeeping team in an effort to end Israeli-Palestinian violence. The United States for the first time supported the proposal, which long has been advocated by the Palestinian Authority.

Israel has long opposed the force, claiming such bodies are ineffective and would only provide Palestinian militants cover to continue their anti-Israel activities.

But with the growing international pressure, two ministers are saying that Israel should not reject the idea out of hand.

Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer said last Friday that he questions the efficacy of international monitors — and that Israel would agree to such a body only if the observers are American. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres added his voice on Sunday. Speaking on Army Radio, Peres said a distinction must be made between a monitoring force that would have some powers and one that would function only as an observer.

In any case, Peres said, Israel has not yet received a formal proposal for dispatching an international team. "When the matter is raised, we will consider it and decide," he said.

Last Friday, the U.S. ambassador to Israel, Dan Kurtzer, met with Peres and asked him why Israel opposes the idea.

"The observers won't be able to enter the headquarters of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, or the places where booby-trapped cars are being prepared," the Israeli daily Ha'aretz quoted Peres as saying. "They will only be able to report on the Israeli response."

There were media reports Sunday that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's son, Omri, had told Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat that Israel is not ruling out the idea of monitors. But the premier denied during Sunday's weekly Cabinet meeting that Omri and Arafat had discussed the matter.

Meanwhile, Israeli security forces went on heightened security, fearing that Palestinian militants will try to avenge the July 19 killing by Israeli vigilantes of three Palestinians, including a 3-month-old baby.

Israeli newspapers carried banner headlines Sunday that warned of possible revenge attacks.

Israeli officials also were expecting reprisals after a Palestinian militant was killed in an explosion in Hebron last Friday.

Israel denied any involvement in the blast that killed Rajai Abu Rahab. Palestinian sources accused Israel of assassinating him, but Israeli security forces called the incident a "work accident" that occurred as the man was preparing a bomb to use against Israel.

Amid cries for vengeance, the funeral for the Palestinian infant killed last week was held over the weekend.

After carrying out the drive-by shooting near Hebron, the assailants were believed to have fled toward Israel.

A Jewish group calling itself the Committee for Road Safety claimed responsibility for the shooting. Israeli police believe right-wing Israeli extremists carried out the attack.

Last week, Israeli security officials said a Jewish underground cell operating in the West Bank has been involved in attacks on

Palestinians, but it was not clear whether this cell was behind the latest shooting.

At the same time, however, the organization Zo Artzeinu, Hebrew for This Is Our Land, published an ad in a settler newspaper last Friday calling for Arafat to be killed.

Army Radio reported Sunday that the Palestinian Authority may present Israel with a list of Israeli settlers and settler groups it considers a threat to the Palestinian population.

The politically loaded move would mirror the lists of wanted Palestinian militants that Israel has submitted to the Palestinian Authority. □

Years after they hid in woods, Holocaust survivors have reunion

By Bill Gladstone

TORONTO (JTA) — Five people who survived the Holocaust in a makeshift shelter in a Ukrainian forest have been reunited for the first time since their liberation by the Russians in April 1944.

The five are the only remaining survivors of a group of 10 women and children from Rokitno, a town in the Volhynian district of Ukraine, who lived together in the forest for nearly two years.

Though several now live in Toronto, they had never gotten together until last month, when they met in Toronto with another survivor, Chaim Bar Or, a retired bus driver from Haifa.

"If you can picture a group of grown-up people crying like babies, that's what it was like," says Larry Gamulka, a retired English teacher. "We remembered every little detail."

Gamulka was 7 years old when the Germans and Ukrainians rounded up the Jews in Rokitno's market square and, instead of counting them as they had said they would, began slaughtering them with machine guns. Amid the pandemonium, some people, including Gamulka and his mother, Gitel, ran behind some cattle cars from a freight train and escaped into the woods.

Deep within the forest, 10 refugees built a rough shelter. Aided by some partisans, they enlarged it into a low dugout with earthen walls and a roof made of branches. It would be their home, summer and winter, for nearly two years.

"In the summer we would pick berries in the woods, which were plentiful. The fall and winter were tough," Gamulka recalls.

"At night my mother and the older people would go out to the nearest village and beg. Sometimes they would get a potato, sometimes they would be chased away. Some peasants were very kind; they themselves didn't have much to eat, but they would give a few potatoes once in a while."

They had no axe, matches or shoes. Their clothes were rags. They were half-starved and infested with lice and scabies.

"Sometimes, we had visitors — wolves," Gamulka says. "The only way to get rid of them was with burning pieces of wood. They don't approach you if you have fire in your hand."

Two of their party died of dysentery and hunger.

"We buried them in the woods," Gamulka says. "It was an experience that all of us still live with."

After the Russians liberated the surviving group members, some went to Israel, some to Russia, some to Canada.

Only about 200 of Rokitno's roughly 2,000 Jews survived the war, Gamulka says. "The happy news," he adds, is that the five survivors "have made very good lives for ourselves. We've managed. We enjoy life." □