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84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli killed in West Bank

Tehiya Bloomberg, a 40-year-old Israeli mother of five, was killed in a Palestinian shooting attack near a West Bank settlement on Sunday night.

Bloomberg's husband and 14-year-old daughter were seriously wounded, and another passenger was moderately hurt in the attack.

Detainee said to be terrorist

Israeli security forces arrested a Palestinian on Monday who Israel said planned to carry out a terrorist attack in Tel Aviv.

According to Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, the arrested man planned the attack together with a Hamas militant who was killed in an Israeli missile strike on Sunday.

Israel publishes hit list

In an unprecedented move, Israel publicized a most-wanted list of seven Palestinians that many see as a "hit list" for future killings.

Palestinian leaders responded that Israel must arrest 50 Jewish settlers they suspect have been involved in attacks against Palestinians before they will consider arresting those on Israel's list.

ANC opposes changes at forum

South Africa's ruling African National Congress is opposing what it terms attempts to dictate the agenda for the upcoming World Conference Against Racism.

Sunday's statement by a party spokesman is being seen as criticism of U.S.-led attempts to exclude discussions of Zionism and racism, and slavery reparations, from the agenda at the conference, which is slated to be held in Durban, South Africa, beginning Aug. 31.

Mayor resigns over Jedwabne

The mayor of a Polish town where 1,600 Jews were killed by their Polish neighbors in 1941 resigned, saying town representatives failed to support efforts to memorialize the massacre.

"There were personal attacks connected with the fact that I was involved with commemorations" regarding the massacre, said Jedwabne's mayor, Krzysztof Godlewski. Last month, Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski asked forgiveness for the massacre at an official ceremony.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Delegation from U.S. Jewish group sees fruit of its Russian investment

By Michael S. Arnold

MOSCOW (JTA) — The microphones had been removed from the stage of Jewish School #1311 and the high school students, who had spent an hour serenading their guests in Yiddish and Hebrew and then another hour leading them on a tour of their school, had lapsed into casual teen-aged banter. The executive committee members of the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture gathered outside the building, where the sun still shone here at 10 o'clock on a summer night.

The Memorial Foundation delegation packed many memorable events into its three-day meeting last month, but many cited the visit to the school as particularly moving.

The evening began with a speech from principal Grigory Lipman — a former teacher who founded the school a decade ago — and featured a series of endearing performances by students who came to the school to deepen their Jewish identity.

The performance ended with a line of students dancing through the auditorium, joined by figures such as Hebrew University rector Menachem Ben-Sasson, and Menachem Elon, head of the World Union of Jewish Students and a former justice on Israel's Supreme Court.

The scene couldn't have been better scripted from the perspective of the New York-based Memorial Foundation, which was holding its annual executive committee meeting in Moscow for the first time, despite 35 years of activity in Russia.

"I wanted our people to see" this school, said Jerry Hochbaum, the Memorial Foundation's executive director. "Many American Jews still see Soviet Jewry in terms of 'Let My People Go,' " the slogan of 1970s efforts on behalf of Jewish refuseniks.

"They don't realize what the fabric of Russian Jewish life is today," Hochbaum said. "I take offense when people say there's no future for Jews in Russia. You can't tell me that a community like we saw tonight" has no future.

While it's not clear how many of the foundation's 36-person delegation would agree — dire demographic forecasts and the tenuousness of Russian Jewish identity were sources of frequent debate at foundation meetings — many members of the delegation were surprised by the extent of the Jewish renaissance they saw around them.

"I was moved to tears," Eli Zoborowski, chairman of the International Society for Yad Vashem, said of the performance at Jewish School #1311.

The last time he was in Russia, Zoborowski said, it was 1979 and the Jews he met were afraid to talk with him. One particularly brave soul slipped Zoborowski a note beneath the table, giving Zoborowski his address and asking him to write.

When they did finally speak it was haltingly — the Russian man speaking in German, Zoborowski replying in Yiddish.

At Lipman's school, the students speak decent Hebrew, and were informed enough about Israeli pop culture to mimic songs by their idols. Reflecting back to his 1979 trip, Zoborowski said, "we never dreamed we would see a day like this."

Lipman's school is part of a burgeoning system of Jewish education that is one of the Memorial Foundation's key projects. A decade after communism, the Association of Jewish Schools and Principals of the Former Soviet Union includes 53 elementary and high schools — of all ideologies and affiliations — that teach nearly 30,000 students.

At the university level, Jewish studies programs draw both Jewish and non-Jewish students. The Memorial Foundation has been one of the backers of Project Judaica, the Jewish Theological Seminary's graduate program at the Russian State University for

MIDEAST FOCUS

Report: Women join suicide teams

Dozens of Palestinian women are responding to a decree issued by Saudi Arabia's High Islamic Council to become suicide bombers, according to the Sunday Times of London.

The report of last week's decree comes after a 23-year-old mother of two was arrested with explosives at Tel Aviv's Central Bus Station last Friday.

Some Islamic officials reportedly had opposed allowing women to become suicide bombers, but changed their minds after an Israeli attack last week that killed eight Palestinians, including top members of Hamas.

Sharon wants U.N. to press Syria

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called on the United Nations to use Syria's desire to join the U.N. Security Council to pressure it to allow international representatives to visit Israelis kidnapped by Hezbollah in October.

Firm sues P.A., Israel

An Israeli firm sued the Palestinian Authority for losses suffered during the 10-month-old Palestinian uprising. Caprice Jewellery claims it acquired three companies under the assumption that the Oslo accords would boost tourism.

Caprice also sued Israel in case the P.A.'s contention, that Israel violated the Oslo accords, is accepted by the court.

Arab lawmaker to be investigated

Israel's attorney general will investigate whether remarks by an Israeli Arab legislator in a television interview justifying Sunday's shooting attack in Tel Aviv constitute incitement.

Speaking on Abu Dhabi television, Taleb El-Sana called the shooting attack, in which 10 Israelis were wounded, part of the Palestinians' "legitimate" struggle against Israel.



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the Humanities. While the first crop of students arrived at the university with virtually no Jewish background, Project Judaica is starting to receive graduates of schools like Lipman's, who have a fair amount of Jewish knowledge, according to director David Fishman.

In most countries, Jewish schools reflect the character and values of the community, Hochbaum said. In Russia, where Jewish life was devastated by the Holocaust and decades of Communist repression, the schools are the main building blocks of Jewish renewal and the onus is on students to teach parents about their heritage.

The educational projects are relatively new for the Memorial Foundation, which was founded in 1965 with Holocaust reparation money from West Germany and charged with rebuilding the Jewish life destroyed by the Nazis. The foundation has spent \$10 million on projects in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

For years the foundation focused mainly on publishing books on Jewish history and culture. To date, the foundation has published more than 600 titles in Russian.

The foundation also trained religious functionaries and communal workers — rabbis, those who perform ritual circumcisions — to work in the community.

After the Glasnost reforms, the foundation began educational and leadership training programs. The foundation also supports religious and cultural figures such as Lipman. Another was Ilya Altman, an archivist who received funding to help identify all the government and state archives in Russia that might contain Jewish material.

Several years later, Altman has finished his doctorate and directs the Moscow Holocaust Center, the country's leading independent institution for Holocaust research and education. The government recently agreed to use his books as part of the first Holocaust curriculum in Russian schools, Altman told JTA.

In addition, the foundation supported the training of both of Russia's chief rabbis — Adolph Shayevich, head of Moscow's historic Choral Synagogue, and Berel Lazar, the Chabad rabbi who heads the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia — and Reform and secular leaders, a remarkable display of ideological flexibility.

In all, the foundation has given nearly 1,000 institutional grants and 1,700 individual ones in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and more than 100 people have gone through its leadership training programs.

With the initial work of rebuilding Russian Jewish life well under way, the foundation is moving on to the second stage: Empowering local leaders to make decisions for the community.

As a generation of homegrown Jewish leadership develops, however, it could cause friction with international Jewish organizations that want to dictate the Russian Jewish agenda and, in some cases, justify their own budgets.

"We don't believe we have to call the shots," Hochbaum said. "The external agencies are still important, but it's inevitable that the Russians should be the leaders of their own institutions and shape them according to their own vision of Jewish life."

It's important for world Jewry to understand that "there's an authentic Jewish life developing here," with institutions sometimes "as good as institutions in the West."

A few members of the executive committee with extensive background in Russian Jewish affairs were not surprised by what they saw during the foundation meeting.

"If you had shown me this ten years ago I would have reacted with more emotion," said Herman Branover, a physicist at Ben-Gurion University in Israel and editor of the Encyclopedia of Russian Jewry. "Now we're already getting used to it."

But others considered the renaissance of Russian Jewish life a revelation.

"For me, this visit is like seeing the day after having seen the night," said Jose Meiches, a professor of engineering in Sao Paulo and former president of Brazil's Jewish community.

The last time he was in Russia, in 1989, was just before Glasnost, Meiches said. On a visit to Leningrad — known today as St. Petersburg — the group's guide refused to take them to a synagogue, dropping them off some distance away so he could tell authorities he didn't know their destination.

"It was quite an experience trying to find something Jewish then," Meiches said, comparing it to the student performance he had just seen at Jewish School #1311. "This is a real story of rebirth. We will keep these memories until the end of our days." □

(JTA Managing Editor Michael S. Arnold recently visited Moscow on a trip partially sponsored by the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture.)

JEWISH WORLD

Mideast politics, Holocaust denial rile local school board in Canada

By Bill Gladstone

TORONTO (JTA) — One of Ontario's largest school boards has voted unanimously to condemn an "anti-Semitic-like" article circulated by a member of the board's own race relations advisory committee.

Officials of the York Region School Board, which runs hundreds of schools in municipalities north of Toronto, are seeking a meeting with Bader Abu Zahra, a volunteer on the race relations advisory committee who distributed copies of a book review that characterized the Holocaust as an "industry" concocted by Jews to extort money from the international community.

Abu Zahra circulated a review of "The Holocaust Industry" by Norman Finkelstein at a teacher's conference in April.

The review treats the book's thesis as historical fact.

Abu Zahra has refused to meet a delegation from the board that includes its chairman, Alan Shefman, who had requested Abu Zahra's resignation.

After Abu Zahra refused to resign, the board voted narrowly to allow him to stay on the committee.

About 100 Islamic protesters demonstrated at a board meeting in late July in support of Abu Zahra, who is of Palestinian origin.

"They were ranting and raving and being so disruptive with their catcalls and rising anger that we were obliged to recess," Shefman said.

A spokesperson for the protesters complained that the board's Holocaust curriculum unfairly focuses on Jewish suffering to the exclusion of other groups, including what they consider the "Palestinian genocide" caused by Israel's founding.

York's superintendent of curriculum, Sharon Craigen, called the accusations patently false and vigorously defended the board's Holocaust curriculum.

"The Holocaust is taught because it was historically so monstrous and because it is by far the most thoroughly documented genocide in modern history," she said. "Of course, the whole effort is to be inclusive, to include other genocides, to affirm the worth of all peoples. That's precisely the point."

The controversy has generated a flood of letters, articles and comments on the Internet.

Writing in the Toronto Star, columnist Michele Landsberg expressed revulsion that "the bitter hatreds of the Middle East war have seeped into local school politics" and that the "strident attack" by the militant Muslims "might well unravel a decade of patient bridge-building between local Jewish and Islamic organizations."

Crescent International, an Islamic news service, has claimed that the school board "buckled under Jewish pressure" when it denounced the book review as anti-Semitic.

Abu Zahra remains equally unrepentant.

"In trying to silence me," he wrote, "you have only confirmed Prof. Finkelstein's point that politically powerful interests have exploited the suffering of Jews during the Second World War and that" they use "the specter of anti-Semitism to silence opinions with which they disagree."

Canadian Jewish Congress officials have written several letters of protest, including one from Ed Morgan, chair of CJC's Ontario region, expressing incredulity that "the board would be content to allow racism to flourish on its race relations advisory committee because 'there was a vote.'"

The Congress is not demanding Abu Zahra's resignation, Morgan said, but would like some sign from him that he "acknowledges the inappropriateness of distributing that type of literature, and never does so again."

Meanwhile, Shefman, an expert in Holocaust denial who assisted prosecutors during the trials of Ernst Zundel and other deniers, said board members are tired of dealing with objections about the Holocaust curriculum.

"The reason the Holocaust is taught in so many schools all over the world is because there is incredible documentation available" and because so much has been written on it, he said.

"The Holocaust opens a door to understanding of other genocidal acts in history," Shefman said. □

Sanctions act becomes law

President Bush last Friday signed into law a five-year extension of the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, which punishes foreign companies that invest in the countries' energy sectors.

Bush, who favored a two-year extension of the bill, expressed support for a new provision in the law that requires a report on the impact of the sanctions.

Israel gets historic Haggadah

A 15th-century Haggadah bought in April for more than \$1 million was donated last Friday to the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

The First Nuremberg Haggadah, written and illustrated in Germany in 1449 by a man known as Joel ben Simeon, was purchased by New York collector Erica Jesselson at a Sotheby's auction in Tel Aviv.

"This Haggadah is a patrimonial treasure, like the Mona Lisa," said James Snyder, director of the Israel Museum.

Israeli soldiers visit Russia

A contingent of Israeli career soldiers visited Russia for four days as part of a course on Israeli-Diaspora relations sponsored by the Jewish Agency for Israel.

During last week's trip, the group from the Israeli National Defense Academy met with Russian Jewish community leaders and potential emigres to Israel and held a series of discussions with representatives of the Russian military and political establishment.

N.J. shul threatened

A drawing of Yasser Arafat and a threat to kill Jews was left on the door of a New Jersey synagogue.

The drawing and threat, "We must murder the Israelis (the Jews) out of Palestine," appeared last Friday on an index card affixed to the door of a Lubavitch synagogue in the town of Ft. Lee.

Knot tied in Slovak town

In the first full-scale religious Jewish wedding in Kosice, Slovakia, in 60 years, Los Angeles-born Shawn Landres married Zuzana Riemer in an open-air ceremony Sunday. Landres, a graduate student at both Oxford University and the University of California at Santa Barbara, met his bride during a sports camp for Slovak Jewish youth in 1998.

Shoah film gets 10 Emmy nods

A television film about the conference at which the Nazis agreed to implement the "Final Solution" was nominated for a record number of Emmy awards. "Conspiracy: The Meeting at Wannsee," an HBO/BBC co-production, received 10 nominations for the September awards.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Residents of Arab village hide; 'human shields' move right on in

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The rattle of gunfire floats on the warm summer night air over the ravine separating the West Bank village of Beit Jalla from its Jewish neighbor, the Jerusalem neighborhood of Gilo.

Anisse Hadoli lives with her husband and two of their five children in the heart of Beit Jalla, right in the front, facing Gilo.

When the almost-nightly counterpoint of Palestinian gunfire and Israeli retaliatory shelling begins, the Hadolis seek shelter on the ground floor of their old house.

They pray that the Palestinian snipers will keep their distance. They hope the Israeli soldiers won't target their house.

"We don't even know whom to complain to," Anisse told JTA over the weekend. "We don't know whom to blame."

On both sides of the ravine, sleepless nights have become the norm. The shrieking noise of the bullets and the thunder of shells have magnified the horror of people who don't care much for the intricacies of the conflict. All they know is the horror of this war of attrition — and the feeling of helplessness that no one really cares.

In recent weeks, however, the Hadolis have company from abroad. It's not the international intervention the Palestinians want to force on the Israelis — at least not yet.

The guests are young people from around the world who have come to live in this powder keg on behalf of the International Solidarity Movement, an umbrella organization of groups vowing to perform "nonviolent" resistance to "Israeli occupation."

The volunteers — 15 of them spent the weekend in Beit Jalla — have moved in with Palestinian families to act as "human shields" against Israel Defense Force shelling.

They believe that their presence — and the international uproar that might ensue if Westerners were injured — will make the IDF less "trigger-happy," as they see it.

Two volunteers have spent the last few days with the Hadolis. Among them is an Israeli — Netta Golan, 30, from Tel Aviv.

Until the Palestinian uprising began last September, Golan was a full-time physiotherapist. Now she describes herself as a "full-time peace activist."

"I came to Beit Jalla and I saw a Palestinian doing 'protest shooting' at a military outpost," Golan said. "In retaliation, Beit Jalla was heavily shelled. There was no proportion between the shooting and the shelling. As a result of the shelling, a 5-year-old boy got his arm blown off. I decided to stay there, with the people."

"Frankly," Hadoli said of the shields, "I don't understand them myself. Why they endanger themselves. They don't want to see anyone suffering."

Some might suggest that the "human shields" give cover to Palestinian snipers, who may feel they enjoy a kind of immunity from their attacks on Gilo. Golan rejects the idea.

"We are here only to provide cover for civilians hit by Israeli fire," she said.

Would she stop a Palestinian sniper if she saw one? Golan is asked. She doesn't answer directly. "We don't justify the shooting of anyone, and that includes the Israeli civilians in Gilo," she said.

A few minutes later, she clarifies this statement.

"The settlement of Gilo" — a neighborhood built on land Israel won in the 1967 Six-Day War, and now an integral part of Jerusa-

lem — "is part of the occupation. People under occupation have the right to put an end to occupation, even by armed struggle."

She feels sorry for Gilo residents, Golan said, claiming that "they are abused by the government."

Many Israelis, who say there would be no shelling of Beit Jalla if the Palestinians didn't fire first on Gilo, reject Golan's logic.

"The Palestinians are the ones who abuse those volunteers," said Ra'anun Gissin, media adviser to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. "Why don't those human shields go to Gilo," whose residents "pass from one night to another in fear of shooting from the other side?"

Most of the volunteers are American. Later this week, reinforcements are expected from France. They will be followed by groups from the United Kingdom, Italy, and more Americans.

Although no one says so explicitly, it is believed that the volunteers are attracted to Beit Jalla and the adjacent city of Bethlehem because they are Christian towns.

Damage to historic Christian sites in Beit Jalla or Bethlehem likely would be magnified tenfold in the international media compared with similar damage elsewhere.

That, Israeli analysts suggest, is precisely what Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat wants, hoping to provoke a tragedy that will trigger international intervention in the conflict.

According to that analysis, it is no accident that of all the places from which Palestinian gunmen might have targeted Israeli neighborhoods, they chose Beit Jalla. In fact, a Beit Jalla nun was wounded over the weekend by Israeli fire, an indication that Arafat's alleged plan may not be too far from reality.

Ironically, if the Israeli analysis is correct, the supposed concern for Beit Jalla's Christians masks a deep cynicism.

The years since the Palestinian Authority took over Bethlehem and environs have seen a wholesale exodus of Christians. A Bethlehem merchant who asked to remain anonymous told JTA that the Christian community feels trapped between the Israelis, who treat them like all other Palestinians, and the Muslim majority, which distrusts them.

Only 170,000 Christians live in Israel and the Palestinian Authority, about 2 percent of the population. According to the Bethlehem merchant, those who can leave, do.

"We are considering leaving as well, but we really don't want to," he said. "This is our home, where shall we go?"

Many have gone to Peru, which has a large Christian Palestinian population.

Father Raed Abu-Suheila of the Catholic Church in Jerusalem said that although violence encourages Jewish and Muslim emigration as well, the Christians are hardest hit because of the small size of their community.

Golan rejects allegations that the Palestinians deliberately heated up the Beit Jalla-Bethlehem region, noting that "they are also shooting from Ramallah at the settlement of Psagot," in the West Bank north of Jerusalem.

Last week, Golan and her friends at the Solidarity Movement convened a press conference in which they demanded that the international community intervene against "Israeli aggression."

This week the group will initiate a two-day campaign to show the delegations from abroad how Palestinians are suffering.

"The ultimate goal is to get the international committee to send observers to change the situation," she said.

Although Israel rejects Arafat's initiative for an international team of observers — feeling they could not monitor Palestinian terror as well as they could the IDF response — Golan and her friends intend to keep the pressure on. □