



# Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 79, No. 151

Wednesday, August 15, 2001

84th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Israeli tanks hit West Bank city

Israeli tanks demolished a Palestinian police station during a three-hour operation early Tuesday morning in the West Bank city of Jenin.

Before pulling out, the troops reportedly took with them about 70 Palestinians jailed for collaborating with Israel.

The army said the incursion came in retaliation for recent terrorist attacks in Israel.

The Israel Defense Force chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz, said Jenin had become a "city of bombers" loyal to Islamic Jihad.

Palestinian official Saeb Erekat said Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon had "opened the gates of hell" with the incursion.

### Beit Jalla houses captured

Israeli paratroopers captured three houses in the Palestinian village of Beit Jalla on Tuesday afternoon, according to Israeli news reports.

The move came after Palestinian gunmen in Beit Jalla opened fire on the nearby Gilo section of Jerusalem for about six hours.

At least one Israeli was wounded by Palestinian fire.

### Poll: Americans back Israel

Most Americans support Israel over the Palestinians in the ongoing conflict, according to a new Gallup poll.

The poll, conducted for CNN and USA Today, also found that 64 percent of respondents believe there will never be peace between the two sides.

In addition, 65 percent said the United States should not play an active role in trying to end the violence.

### Macedonian clergy urge calm

Jewish leaders in Macedonia joined officials from the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Islamic community, the Roman Catholic Church and the Methodist Church to issue a joint declaration condemning the ongoing violence in the former Yugoslav republic.

In the statement, the religious leaders deplored the deaths of young people — regardless of their religious affiliation — and expressed alarm at the constant threat to and the destruction of religious buildings.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Under fire for his 'no talks' policy, Sharon agrees to let Peres negotiate

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's policy of "no talks under fire" is coming under fire within Israel.

Initially, Sharon's refusal to hold diplomatic talks with the Palestinian Authority until Palestinian violence against Israel ceases completely was supported by Israelis virtually across the board.

Increasingly, however, it is being criticized by Israeli opinion-makers, who cite examples of other nations that simultaneously fought and talked with their enemies.

Five months into Sharon's term of office, pundits note that the prime minister has restored neither peace nor security to Israel — and they are wondering if it is time to change tactics.

This week, Sharon finally budged.

Amid talk that a frustrated Foreign Minister Shimon Peres was considering leaving the government, Sharon agreed to let Peres meet with the Palestinian leadership to discuss a cease-fire.

However, Sharon stipulated that a senior army figure must be present, ensuring that Peres does not negotiate anything of broader diplomatic significance.

At the same time, however, Sharon was assiduously courting both the settler-oriented National Religious Party and the moderate Center Party.

In fact, just as rumors flourished that Peres might pull Labor out of the government, stories began circulating in the Israeli media that Sharon would offer the Foreign Ministry to Center Party leader Dan Meridor as an incentive to join the government.

In any case, Sharon's new-found diplomatic flexibility has had little practical effect, as the Palestinians now refuse to talk to Israel.

Palestinian officials said this week that as long as Israel maintains its "occupation" of Orient House, the Palestinians' unofficial headquarters in Jerusalem, there is nothing for the two sides to discuss.

The Security Cabinet ordered Israeli security forces to seize Orient House and Palestinian Authority offices in Abu Dis, located just outside the Jerusalem city limits, after a Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up Aug. 9 in a Jerusalem pizzeria, killing 15 people, many of them children.

Along with two other Labor ministers, Peres opposed the largely symbolic seizure of Orient House, saying that it would set back any hope of resuming diplomatic contacts with the Palestinians.

But the Cabinet majority — including Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, also of Labor — preferred this form of reprisal to a large-scale military action that could result in heavy casualties.

Sharon allowed Peres to launch the new diplomatic overture after a wave of unrest within Labor ranks appeared to threaten the stability of the national unity government.

Last week, Peres, the interim Labor leader, found himself repeatedly challenged by party loyalists to demonstrate how Labor's presence in the Cabinet was influencing Sharon's policies.

The two contenders for Labor leadership in September 4 primaries — Ben-Eliezer and Knesset Speaker Avraham Burg — both say they would stay in the unity government. However, some political observers believe that if front-runner Burg is chosen, he will move to end Labor's union with Likud.

Prominent party doves like Yossi Beilin long have argued that Labor is damaging

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Three Israelis wounded

An Israeli woman and her 2-year-old daughter were wounded in a Palestinian shooting attack near the West Bank city of Hebron.

The woman sustained moderate wounds while the child was slightly hurt.

In other violence, three Palestinian gunmen were wounded in clashes with Israeli troops near the West Bank city of Bethlehem.

In another incident Tuesday, an Israeli child was slightly wounded when Palestinian stone-throwers attacked his family's car near the West Bank city of Nablus on Tuesday, according to Israel's Army Radio.

### Arafat guard injured

A member of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's elite Force 17 unit was seriously injured in an explosion in the West Bank city of Ramallah. Israel would not comment on Palestinian accusations that it was behind the blast.

Meanwhile, a Palestinian man was killed Tuesday in an explosion in the West Bank city of Nablus.

Medical workers said the man was killed while preparing a bomb.

### Israel kills Palestinian suspect

A Palestinian suspected of involvement in the murder three weeks ago of Jerusalem teen-ager Yuri Gushkchin was shot and fatally wounded by undercover Israeli police when they tried to arrest him Monday.

### Israeli astronaut to blast off

Israel's first astronaut, Ilan Ramon, will blast into orbit on May 23, 2002, the Prime Minister's Office announced Monday.

The announcement followed a meeting between Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and NASA administrator Daniel Goldin.

The two also agreed to continue cooperation between Israel and NASA.

itself by staying in Sharon's government. The prime minister's mantra of "no talks under fire" has become one of the main irritants to Laborites.

Sources close to Peres argue that now, since Sharon has given him the go-ahead to hold cease-fire talks, the source of controversy has evaporated.

Granted, Sharon's permission was only for talks toward a cease-fire, not political negotiations on wider-ranging issues. In practice, the sources say, it is impossible to fully separate military and political issues.

They also hope that a cease-fire will produce immediate progress on the recommendations of a U.S.-led panel, known as the Mitchell Commission, to bring the two sides back to peace talks.

The sources say that Peres' influence in Sharon's smaller, inner Cabinet was crucial in convincing a reluctant premier to accept the Mitchell Commission recommendations. They include an Israeli military redeployment, a freeze on Israeli settlement construction in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and further confidence-building measures from each side.

Similarly, they say, Peres' influence prevented a huge military escalation in the wake of the June 1 Palestinian terror bombing outside a Tel Aviv disco that killed 21 Israelis and wounded more than 100.

Right now, however, Peres' influence is more hypothetical than real, as no progress has been made with the Palestinians on the diplomatic front.

There are no signs that the Palestinians will respond to the shift on the Israeli side. Instead, Palestinian officials appear more concerned with voicing outrage over the seizure of Orient House.

Behind the scenes, though, Israeli officials who have maintained informal ties with the Palestinian leadership are redoubling their efforts to bring Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's top men back to the table.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported that Peres met recently with former Justice Minister Yossi Beilin and Ron Pundak, architects of the original Oslo peace accords. The pair are said to be operating an "alternative Foreign Ministry" from the Tel Aviv office of the Economic Cooperation Foundation.

Beilin is trying to organize a "Second Madrid Conference" for the end of October, the 10th anniversary of the international conference that followed the Gulf War and marked the beginning of open peace talks between the Arab states and Israel, the paper said.

Beilin reportedly visited Cairo this week in an attempt to advance the idea. He already has a number of backers in the international community, including U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana.

Other Israelis who favor renewing negotiations argue that if the Palestinian Authority demonstrates a "100 percent effort" against terrorism — a phrase reiterated this week by President Bush — then international pressure would force Israel to ease its restrictions on Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

This, they say, would move the two sides back from the abyss and toward a full diplomatic engagement. Informed Israeli sources say that Sharon knows this would be the inevitable price if the Palestinians finally "bite."

Sharon likely would face resistance from parts of his own constituency, who believe that Arafat has discredited himself as a negotiating partner and that Israel should seek to deter Palestinian violence through harsh military responses rather than the promise of political gains.

However, the best reading of Sharon appears to be the he wants to end the spiral of violence, and is prepared to take political risks to do so.

So far, however, the Palestinians are not "biting." That was the unfortunate political reality as another week of blood and suffering drew to a close. □

## Report: Egypt helping arms smuggling

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli defense officials suspect Egyptian police officers of helping Palestinians smuggle arms across the border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz. The officials believe Egyptian border patrols and police are involved in the smuggling, either by turning a blind eye or by actively helping the smugglers. □



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JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org).

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Ad campaign bashes Arafat

An ad campaign was launched in the United States holding Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat responsible for the recent wave of suicide bombings in Israel.

"How many more people in Israel will have to pay with their lives while Chairman Arafat fosters an atmosphere that glorifies suicide attacks?" asks the American Jewish Committee-sponsored ad, which appeared Tuesday in *The New York Times*.

### Teachers may get 'boot camp'

Several North American Jewish organizations, including the federation system and Birthright Israel, hope to have a Jewish version of Teach for America in place by next summer, according to Ron Wolfson, vice president of the Los Angeles-based University of Judaism.

The project, which Wolfson describes in the latest issue of the *Jewish Life Network's* magazine and which the university is spearheading, would recruit hundreds of college students and alumni of Israel trips to teach in Jewish schools and would train them in a Jewish teachers' "boot camp."

### N.C. rabbi sees charges dropped

A judge in North Carolina dropped charges against a rabbi who had been accused of indecent exposure, according to the *Raleigh News & Observer*.

The judge ruled last Friday that there wasn't enough evidence to pursue assault charges against Rabbi Pinchas Lew, who allegedly exposed himself and touched his genitals in front of his housekeeper.

Lew, who drove the getaway car in a 1991 Iowa robbery, most recently ran an Orthodox Jewish center for college students in North Carolina.

### Band won't rock Israel

The popular rock band Red Hot Chili Peppers canceled a scheduled performance in Israel later this month because of the security situation. Some 20,000 tickets already had been sold for the one-time concert.

### Hungarian Jews call for probe

Jewish leaders in Hungary requested that state prosecutors probe whether spokesmen for a far-right party in Parliament incited hatred against Jews by denouncing the sale of Hungary's most popular soccer team to a leading Jewish businessman.

The request came after leaders of the extremist Hungarian Justice and Life Party, known by its Hungarian initials MIEP, had described the sale as a betrayal of the Hungarian nation. Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who is believed to be eyeing a coalition with MIEP for the 2002 elections, has been criticized for his silence in the face of MIEP's criticism of the sale.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### Problems with insurance payouts leave Holocaust heirs in the dark

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Holocaust survivors and their heirs waiting for payments on Nazi-era insurance policies are less sure than ever how long their wait may be.

European insurers involved in the issue have been accused of not paying claims expeditiously — and now it appears the issue could wind up again in court.

The International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims, known as ICHEIC, was created in 1998 by insurance companies and Jewish organizations to solve the problem of insurance policies, dating back to the prewar years, that were never paid to policyholders or their heirs.

Faced with lawsuits totaling billions of dollars from policyholders, the insurers agreed to participate in the commission as a means of settling those claims.

But the commission's work has not been as speedy as many had hoped.

While thousands of former Nazi-era slave and forced laborers have begun to receive payments from Austrian and German compensation funds, survivors who filed insurance claims and were hoping for a swift payment appear to be in for a long wait.

Congress also is exerting pressure to spur the process along. Earlier this month, Reps. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) and Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.) introduced a bill to require all insurance companies operating in the United States to disclose the names on Holocaust-era policies.

The lawmakers say few names have been published, and with less than six months left before the Jan. 31, 2002, filing deadline, the majority of claims remain unresolved because claimants cannot identify the company holding their assets.

Much of the anger of Jewish organizations and ICHEIC has been leveled at Allianz, Germany's leading insurer, which signed onto the agreement but has yet to pay any claims.

Former U.S. Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, chairman of ICHEIC, publicly accused Allianz of failing to make good on its commitments to the commission. In coming weeks, Eagleburger is expected to report on the commission's status to the U.S. judge who last year dismissed pending cases against German insurance companies.

But the cases were dismissed conditionally — that is, only if the companies were negotiating and implementing a mechanism to resolve claims — and many believe that Eagleburger will tell the judge the companies have not complied with the conditions. That would allow the cases to be reinstated.

The World Jewish Congress, which is represented on ICHEIC by the WJC's executive director, Elan Steinberg, plans to ask the judge to impose sanctions on German insurance companies that are not complying.

"The companies want legal closure, but they really want economic peace," Steinberg said. "They'll get neither."

Companies also say there is no proper documentation on many of the submitted claims.

"These are all kinds of excuses not to pay," said Roman Kent, chairman of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors. "Their behavior is disgraceful."

At the end of the five-year ICHEIC process, Steinberg still expects that \$650 million to \$700 million will have been paid out for settlements.

ICHEIC, too, has come in for criticism, accused of using its money inefficiently. According to internal ICHEIC documents cited in a class-action lawsuit and a May newspaper report, the organization has spent more than \$30 million for salaries, hotel bills and newspaper ads, while the five companies that fund the commission have distributed only \$3 million to claimants.

Eagleburger has acknowledged some of ICHEIC's shortcomings, but said ICHEIC had to spend nearly \$9 million on newspaper ads to inform potential claimants, as well as additional sums to search Holocaust-era archives.

The five participating insurers are Allianz of Germany, Italy's Assicurazioni Generali, AXA Group of France, and Switzerland's Winterthur and Zurich.

These companies wrote about 35 percent of the life, homeowner and dowry insurance policies in Europe between 1930 and 1945. □

## AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

**Slovak town's first Jewish wedding since Shoah is a bittersweet event**

By Ruth E. Gruber

KOSICE, Slovakia (JTA) — The Riemer family is something of a rarity in the Jewish world of post-Communist Central Europe.

Not only are Daniel Riemer and his wife Magda both Jewish, but both of their 20-something daughters, Zuzana and Sandra, have found Jewish men to marry.

This is no small feat in a part of the world where intermarriage is the norm and where tiny, far-flung Jewish communities still suffer the effects of the Holocaust and Communist-era repression.

Zuzana Riemer's wedding on Aug. 5 made local Jewish history. It was the first full-scale, traditional Jewish wedding for a member of Kosice's Jewish community in 60 years.

"The message is that they've broken the ice," says Rabbi Hershel Gluck, a London-based Chasidic rabbi who officiated at the wedding.

"In a place where for decades people have been battered — by the Holocaust, by communism, by internal squabbling and other difficulties of the post-Communist period — it says that positive and constructive things can happen here, too."

But the family's nachas is bittersweet.

Both daughters are marrying Jews from other countries and will live far from Kosice, a city of 250,000 in the far eastern tip of Slovakia. Zuzana is moving to the United States; Sandra already lives in Israel.

Not only are they leaving family and friends behind, but they also are moving away from a Jewish community struggling for survival.

"The most important thing is that they're happy," their father says with a shrug.

The quest for a Jewish spouse is a universal preoccupation among Jews wherever they live — witness the plethora of personal ads, Web sites, matchmaking agencies and singles events such as "speed dating" in the United States.

But the challenge is particularly great in parts of Europe, where individual Jewish communities — such as Kosice's — may be only a few hundred or even a few dozen individuals. There are only about 3,000 Jews, most of them middle-aged or older, in all of Slovakia.

"It's not easy for young Jews to meet and marry in Europe," says Gadi Gronich, program director for Yachad, which is affiliated with the European Council of Jewish Communities and is described as Europe's largest Jewish singles network.

With more than 3,000 Jewish singles in more than two dozen countries on its mailing list, Yachad organizes singles weekends, parties, trips and other events that generally attract 75 to 100 people from across Europe. Gronich says the events have resulted in at least 50 marriages.

Other communal and private organizations also aim to help Jewish singles meet and match.

The annual Summer University of the European Union of Jewish Students, for example, provides what one Belgian student calls "the perfect opportunity to meet up with hundreds of Jewish students of all different nationalities — and to think, talk and party." The weeklong event, held each year in a different country, draws about 400 young Jews from across Europe.

"Except for the United Kingdom and France, we are speaking

in Europe about small- and medium-size communities, so the chance to meet new people is very low," Gronich says. "Young people in Jewish communities grow up together from kindergarten. They know one another very, very well — even too well. It's like a big family and makes the chance of meeting new people very low."

Shawn Landres, a Los Angeles-born scholar of anthropology and religious studies, says that such proximity can create problems.

"If young Jews in small communities date mainly in the local Jewish world, it means that many of their friends are de facto 'exes,'" he says.

Landres, 29, has a particularly incisive take on the issue.

He is working on a doctorate in religious studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara, writing about "intimacy and memory among Generation X Jews in Los Angeles" — that is, an analysis of the L.A. Jewish singles scene.

He is also the new husband of Zuzana Riemer.

The couple met in 1998 at a winter sports gathering in the Tatra mountains, organized by the Union of Jewish Students for young Jews from several central European countries.

At the time, Landres — who also is a research student at Oxford University — was doing field work in Slovakia, and actively looking for a bride.

"To me, marrying a Jew was a given. There was no question about it," he says. "The problem came in finding someone whose values and worldview were even remotely similar to mine — and I did not meet anyone like this in the United States."

The couple's Orthodox wedding was the first traditional Jewish wedding held here since the Holocaust.

The pair had a civil wedding in Los Angeles last fall, but decided it was important to have a religious ceremony in Kosice to make a statement, even though neither is strictly observant.

"I don't know if we inspired anyone to greater observance by doing the wedding this way, but we felt that it was important to show people the beauty of the ceremony and of Judaism," Landres says.

Both wearing white, the couple stood under a red, blue and gold velvet chupah, or canopy, in the Jewish community courtyard, flanked by the looming wall of a partially ruined synagogue.

Zuzana wore a floor-length gown in honor of her grandmother, who had not had the chance to wear a wedding dress. Her grandparents wed in haste during World War II, just one day before a mass deportation of unmarried women from Kosice.

The wedding was officiated by Gluck, who for more than 20 years has traveled widely in Europe to promote Jewish revival in small, remote communities.

He was aided by British Jewish scholar Jonathan Webber, who carefully explained each step of the ceremony to guests, many of whom had little knowledge of traditional Jewish rites.

"We are celebrating a marriage in the way marriages were celebrated in this part of the world for hundreds of years," Gluck says. "Thank God we are here again, celebrating a marriage like this in Slovakia."

Still, Zuzana's move to the United States, and her sister's earlier departure, mean that the critical mass needed for Jewish survival in Kosice and Slovakia as a whole will be that much harder to achieve.

Landres doesn't see it quite that way.

"I don't feel as if I'm stealing Zuzana from the Slovak Jewish community, because I maintain close ties here and we plan to visit a lot," he says. □