



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 79, No. 169

Tuesday, September 11, 2001

84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Sides disagree over talks' site

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat will meet Tuesday to discuss a cease-fire, according to a senior Israeli official quoted by The Associated Press.

The two sides are still discussing where to hold the meeting. Palestinians want the talks to take place in Egypt, while Israel wants to hold them at the Erez Crossing separating Israel and the Gaza Strip.

Israel sought bomber's arrest

The man who carried out Sunday's terror bombing at the train station in Nahariya was an Israeli Arab, according to Israeli officials.

Cabinet Minister Danny Naveh said Israeli security forces had been searching for Mohammed Shaker Ihbeishi for more than a week after hearing that he was planning an attack, adding that Israeli security officials had asked their Palestinian counterparts to locate and arrest him in the West Bank city of Jenin. The bomber killed three Israelis — an architect, a photographer and a soldier — and wounded 40 other people.

Rumsfeld backs Israeli policy

The U.S. secretary of defense backed Israel's policy of retaliating for Palestinian terror attacks.

"I think that any time people are doing suicide bombings and blowing up your people at bus stops and in restaurants, you certainly cannot sit there and tolerate that," Donald Rumsfeld told the "Fox News Sunday" TV program.

Auschwitz disco to close

A disco located near the former Auschwitz death camp will close following protests by Jewish organizations and the international community, its landlord said Monday.

Since it opened a year ago, Jewish groups had pressured Poland to shut the disco, which is located in a former tannery used by the Nazis to sort luggage and clothes belonging to the camp's inmates.

"The whole fiasco was simply not worth the battle," the landlord was quoted as saying.

The August 2000 opening of the disco — with flashing lights, semi-nude dancers and wet T-shirt contests — raised a storm of outrage from survivor groups, as well as from the Polish government.

Organizers of pro-Israel rally choose message to appeal to all

By Matthew E. Berger

NEW YORK (JTA) — "Standing together with the people of Israel" may not be the most forceful slogan organizers of this month's pro-Israel solidarity rally could have devised, but North American Jewish leaders say the pareve message should appeal to all parts of the diverse community.

In an effort to build a wide net of support for the Sept. 23 rally, North American Jewish leaders say organizers purposely chose a noncontroversial message. If they had been more specific — asking for a return to the Oslo peace process or increased U.S. intervention in Israeli-Palestinian relations, for example — part of the coalition of sponsoring organizations might have bolted.

The rally, to be held near U.N. headquarters here, is expected to draw tens of thousands of people from across North America. It will feature speeches by American and Israeli political leaders, including Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Knesset Speaker Avraham Burg, Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) and a representative of the Bush administration.

Organizers say about 800 buses already are registered for the rally, with groups planning trips to New York City to attend what is being called one of the most significant gatherings of North American Jews in decades.

Other people are planning to participate in satellite rallies throughout Europe, Australia, Africa, Israel and North America. Some will be linked to the New York event via video linkup. Hundreds of Jewish groups, including JTA, have signed on to support the rally, and their names have been featured in a mass advertising campaign.

"The whole point of the program is the integration and the balance, both in terms of political views and religious balance," said Arthur Naparstek, vice president of the Israel and Overseas Pillar at the United Jewish Communities and national director of the Israel Now Solidarity Rally. "So it's around balance that we are focusing on, not siding on one side or the other."

A diverse array of speakers will express a wide range of views, Naparstek said.

Some Jewish leaders say they worked to ensure that the rally agenda is vague enough not to alienate sectors of the community.

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, said he raised concerns that the message be broad enough to include all viewpoints American Jews hold on Israel and the causes and tactics of the past year's violence.

"We thought it was important that the message not just reflect one end of the spectrum, but reflect views from across that spectrum," Yoffie said. "We were very emphatic; if this was just representing the radical right wing, it would have undermined the purpose of the rally."

An official with a pro-peace Jewish organization said his group was apprehensive to sign on to the rally because of bad experiences at events in the past year. Since the current wave of Palestinian violence began last September, smaller pro-Israel rallies have been held with messages further to the right than the peace organizations had expected, the official said.

At a rally in New York last October, Jews carrying signs in favor of the peace process were harassed, officials with left-wing organizations said. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) — who in the past had come out in favor of a Palestinian state and who, on a visit to Gaza, had remained impassive as Palestinian first lady Suha Arafat accused Israel of using poison gas against children — was booed as she addressed the

MIDEAST FOCUS

Cabinet defers buffer zone plan

Israel's Cabinet on Sunday postponed implementation of a military plan to set up buffer zones along the "seam line" separating Israel from the West Bank.

The plan had been proposed as part of efforts to prevent Palestinian terror attacks in Israel.

P.A. policeman killed in raid

Israeli helicopters fired at a Palestinian security position in the northern West Bank. A Palestinian police officer was killed in Monday's raid, which came in retaliation for attacks by Arab terrorists a day earlier. In other violence, Israel fired machine guns at a Palestinian elementary school in the northern West Bank late Sunday night.

The army said shots had been fired from the school at a nearby Israeli army post.

Iran denies nuclear goals

Iran rejected charges by the United States that it is seeking nuclear weapons. A Foreign Ministry spokesman issued the denial Monday following a CIA report last Friday that accused Iran of being one of the most active seekers of foreign technology for weapons of mass destruction.

The denial came as Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi visited Brussels to hold trade talks with E.U. officials.

E.U. efforts to engage Iran through diplomacy and commerce contrast sharply with the stance of U.S. officials, who consider the Islamic Republic a state sponsor of international terrorism.

Bomb found near Israeli Arab city

Israeli police safely detonated a bomb Monday near the Israeli Arab city of Umm el-Fahm. Police were called to the scene after a border police unit discovered the suspicious object on a road that passes near the West Bank, according to the Jerusalem Post.



Daily News Bulletin

Shoshana S. Cardin, *President*

Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*

Lisa Hastein, *Editor (on leave)*

Michael S. Arnold, *Managing Editor*

Lenore A. Silverstein, *Business Manager*

Paula Simmonds, *Marketing and Development Director*

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.

© JTA Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

crowd. Organizers say they hope for a different attitude at this rally, with people coming together under a unifying message.

Indeed, the rally's Web site, sponsored by UJC, lists suggested slogans for signs. All have a pro-Israel message, including "Our Hearts Are With Israel" and "I Stand With Israel."

The only suggestion that addresses violence in the region is one saying "Stop the Terror."

"These are messages that are very important at this time because Israel is under attack and Jewish communities around the world are under attack," Naparstek said. "It's a message that something very serious is going on, and Jews have to pay attention."

Naparstek sees the rally as the start of a pro-Israel revitalization among American Jews.

It also will kick off a new solidarity initiative and fund-raising drive called "Israel Now" designed to increase North American Jews' connection to the Jewish state.

"Too many American Jews haven't been as strongly connected to Israel as in the past," Naparstek said. "This is an attempt to build towards that, and I think people are beginning on their own."

Naparstek said rally organizers also hope to send a pro-Israel message to the United Nations, whose General Assembly session commences a day later.

Rally organizers also will express gratitude to the Bush administration for its actions in recent months, specifically walking out of the U.N. Conference Against Racism last week after the forum in South Africa became stridently anti-Israel.

However, the rally will not take a stand on some of the major issues in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians — including Israeli settlements or Israel's policy of "targeted killings" of leading Palestinian militants — because the North American Jewish community is divided on these issues.

Some supporting organizations are concerned that the rally's message is not political enough.

The Zionist Organization of America was one of only a few Jewish groups that declined to sponsor a rally for Prime Minister Shimon Peres at Madison Square Garden shortly after the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in 1995.

ZOA National President Morton Klein said he did not support the rally because it favored continuing with the Oslo peace process, which the ZOA opposed.

ZOA is sponsoring this year's rally, but Klein said he is disappointed that the message does not specifically mention support for the positions of the Sharon unity government.

"This rally should unequivocally state, 'We support the government of Israel,'" Klein said. "I think all of the governments around the world expect the Jews to show solidarity with the State of Israel. It would be more worthwhile to show support for the government."

Klein said he does not think this year's rally sends a clear message, in contrast to a massive 1987 Washington rally for Soviet Jewry that focused on the slogan "Let Our People Go."

Meanwhile, some Jews on the far left and some Arab groups are expected to participate in counter-protests on the day of the rally.

American Jewish leaders acknowledge that the Israel rally's message is broad and a bit simplistic, but say that's not necessarily a bad thing.

Yoffie said reaffirming the North American Jewish community's solidarity with Israel is like prayer — doing it often does not decrease its value.

"In a sense, it's like a religious ritual," Yoffie said. "You do rituals again and again." □

Texas firm may have Hamas ties

NEW YORK (JTA) — A federal anti-terrorism task force is investigating whether a Texas office of a company that runs computer Web sites has ties to Hamas.

InfoCom Corp. said it hosts sites of groups that are critical of Israel, but that the company is innocent of any criminal charges.

Muslim groups are complaining that the raid is politically and religiously motivated, a charge the FBI denies. □

JEWISH WORLD

Lithuania to press for extradition

Lithuanian prosecutors said they would continue to press for the extradition of an 85-year-old man charged with murdering Jews during World War II.

Monday's vow followed a recent decision by Scottish officials not to extradite Anton Gecas because of his poor health. In a letter to Scottish officials, the prosecutors asked for "constant surveillance of the accused's health."

'Japan's Schindler' to be honored

Japanese and Lithuanian officials are planning to begin planting 250 cherry trees in Lithuania's capital next month in memory of the man known as "Japan's Schindler."

About 500 people are expected to attend an Oct. 2 ceremony in Vilnius to plant trees to remember Chiune Sugihara, who during World War II saved more than 6,000 Jews by issuing them transit visas to Japan.

Grants to help preserve shuls

The World Monuments Fund announced \$140,000 in grants to help preserve synagogues in England and in seven countries in Eastern and Central Europe.

The recipients include the biggest Sephardic synagogue in the Balkans, a Baroque synagogue in Hungary and a ruined synagogue complex in Lithuania. The grants will be awarded through the New York-based organization's Jewish Heritage Program and the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, which last year made a five-year, \$500,000 commitment to such preservation projects.

Additional funding came from private donors.

Polish president to hear Kol Nidre

Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski plans to attend Yom Kippur Kol Nidre services at the Fifth Avenue Synagogue in New York, according to the synagogue's cantor, Joseph Malovany.

Malovany, who is friendly with Kwasniewski and has sung in Poland a number of times, said Kwasniewski will be in New York for the U.N. General Assembly and asked if he could attend synagogue in order to hear an authentic Kol Nidre service.

Ex-Nazi guard appeals ruling

A man from the Philadelphia area is asking a U.S. appeals court to reinstate his U.S. citizenship. The appeal was filed after a judge ruled last year that Theodor Szezhinsky, 77, would have been barred from immigrating to the United States in 1950 if he had not hidden his service as a Nazi SS guard. Szezhinsky denied he worked as a Nazi guard, but federal prosecutors say Nazi war records list him as an SS guard at three concentration camps between 1943 and 1945.

In Russia, Sharon finds sympathy — both from Jews and President Putin

By Lev Gorodetsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — When Israel's then-prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, visited Moscow in 1994, he was widely booed by a group of Russian Jews who considered him a traitor for signing peace accords with the Palestinians.

The protesters even tried to hurl rotten tomatoes at Rabin.

But when current Prime Minister Ariel Sharon entered the hall of the brand-new Lubavitch-run JCC in Moscow last week, security guards did not have to worry about rotten tomatoes.

As Sharon moved through the 1,000-strong crowd to the strains of "Haveinu Shalom Aleichem" sung by a children's choir, he found widespread sympathy.

"He is the right man; he knows what should be done," said Valery Yarov, a resident of a small town in the Ural Mountain region.

The grandfather of a 14-year-old who was the youngest victim of the Tel Aviv disco bombing in June, Yarov was one of dozens of Jewish activists from across the former Soviet Union who came to Moscow to meet with Sharon during his three-day visit to Russia.

If anything, many Russian Jews would prefer Sharon to take a more hard-line stance toward the Palestinian uprising.

"I told him, 'What are you waiting for, strike the Palestinians, strike them right now as strongly as possible.' He looked at me, and I saw that he understands what should be done, but also knows that he can't do that," said Mikhail Kunin.

Kunin, a professor of chemistry at a Moscow university, managed to shake hands with Sharon and even exchange a few words with the Israeli prime minister after the meeting.

Despite the violence in Israel, Sharon emphasized that Russian Jews should move to the Jewish state.

"I have come to tell you, make aliyah yourselves, or send your children to study in Israel. We need you," Sharon said.

Apparently realizing that Jews aren't scrambling for exit visas as they did in the past, however, Sharon added, "I know that your life here is good and free, thanks to President Putin, but don't get accustomed to that."

Sharon did not lose any opportunity to praise Putin for his relative friendship toward Israel and his relations with the Russian Jewish community.

"I am very satisfied with the visit," Sharon told JTA. "We have been received with great friendliness."

Aside from the signing of some minor economic agreements, the main result of the visit seemed to be the strengthening of Sharon's personal connection with Putin. Sharon also held rather unproductive talks with Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov.

Indeed, during Sharon's visit, Russia announced it would soon send a team to Iran to assemble at least one more nuclear reactor there. Israel and the United States believe the nuclear technology Russia shares with Tehran may help Iran produce nuclear weapons.

Russian analysts claimed Israel wants Russia to increase its involvement in the Middle East as a co-sponsor of the peace process. If true, the Israelis would seem to be betting on two things.

The first is the resemblance between the terror threat Russia faces from Chechen Muslims and the one Israel faces from Palestinians, a point Sharon likes to stress.

The second is the presence of hundreds of thousands of Israeli citizens from the former Soviet Union, many of whom hold dual Russian and Israeli citizenship.

Putin repeatedly has said he believes Russia needs to defend these citizens from Islamic terrorism.

At the same time, even if Putin may feel sympathy for Israel, many in the Russian foreign and defense ministries maintain their traditional pro-Arab stance.

According to a Moscow-based Jewish political analyst, Dmitry Pinsker, a significant segment of the Russian political establishment still clings to Soviet anti-Zionist attitudes colored by an oft-hidden — and sometimes not-so-hidden — anti-Semitism. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

With Jewish Museum, Germany seeks normalization with its Jews*By Toby Axelrod*

BERLIN (JTA) — Berlin's long-awaited Jewish Museum opens its doors this week, offering the public a depiction of nearly two millennia of Jewish life in Germany.

At the inaugural gala on Sunday night, the zinc-covered, angular building designed by architect Daniel Libeskind was dressed in a veil of driving rain and lit by camera flashes.

The museum officially opens on Wednesday, but on Sunday, some 850 invited guests — including German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, President Johannes Rau and former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger — descended a slate and concrete staircase into the museum for a preview.

The exhibit's aim is to connect a rich history with a hopeful future, mindful of the break in civilization that was the Holocaust.

"The National Socialists wanted not only to destroy European Jewry physically, but to have control over how Jewish culture and German-Jewish relationships would be portrayed," Rau said at the dinner, referring to the museum of an "extinct" people that Hitler planned to build after he killed off Europe's Jews. "That is why it is so important that in this museum we find images and witnesses of the German-Jewish relationship from almost 2,000 years."

After visiting the museum, Schroeder said he always finds it "miraculous that there are Jews living in Germany today, and that we meet together as friends."

It was the late Heinz Galinski, former head of Berlin's Jewish community, who pushed for such a museum in the 1970s, Museum Director W. Michael Blumenthal said. Many debates, architectural competitions and directors later, he said, "the not-to-be-forgotten story" of German Jewry can finally be told, "with all its struggles, successes and disappointments."

The memorial is "a signal that Germany recognizes that the Holocaust meant a loss for everybody, not just the Jewish people," said Norma Drimmer, former cultural director for the Jewish community of Berlin. The museum, she said, is a reminder that "one cannot think about German culture without Jews, and one cannot think about Jewish culture without Germany."

Sunday's ceremonies were televised live.

The sense of anticipation was heightened by the fact that almost no media gained entrance before opening night. In addition, an international group of museum directors, not invited on Sunday, held their own anti-gala party, and visited the museum the next day.

The exhibit has a hands-on quality and includes artwork, books, Judaica and household items. Displays are both high-tech and down-to-earth, with computer consoles and children's corners.

The museum deals with stereotypes, such as the notion that Jews are greedy. In that case, a display explains how during a certain period Jews weren't permitted to work at any jobs aside from moneylending, thereby perpetuating the stereotype.

The religious meaning of Jewish rituals like circumcision are explained and the ceremonial instruments are on display.

The oldest item is a 10th-century book on loan from the Vatican, whose text refers to a Jewish community in Germany. In a space devoted to accomplishments of Jews in the 20th century, there is a page from Albert Einstein's notebook, with the famous equation $E = MC^2$.

One of the few rooms left unadorned is the Holocaust Tower,

a dark concrete chamber that functions as a place for contemplation. Its door, when shut, disappears in darkness. Entering this room, a chattering group of visitors fell silent.

The museum is federally funded, with a budget of about \$10 million.

Whether loved or hated by critics, the museum, already a landmark, is sure to become a top destination for Berliners and tourists. Even the empty building drew some 350,000 visitors from the time it opened in January 1999 until it closed a year later to prepare for the exhibits.

Germany already has several Jewish museums.

The Berlin museum is different. This is no restored Jewish building, but rather a provocative modern structure. Its mandate is to tell the history of Jewish life in all of Germany, not just Berlin. Aside from Weidt's workshop, the museum is not what Germans call "an authentic place" where historical events took place.

But the location in Germany's capital is significant. It symbolizes Germany's struggle to free itself from the Nazi stigma and to establish a "normal" relationship with its Jews.

These goals are virtually impossible to achieve, for it is the Holocaust that has made a Jewish museum necessary in Berlin. Like the empty spaces that Libeskind created in the building, the Holocaust divides everything before from everything since.

A "normal" life for Jews in Germany is hard to imagine, compared with the Jewish life that existed in Germany in centuries past or compared to a modern center of Jewish life such as New York, where Jews are one of many minority groups defining the city's character.

Germany had half a million Jews in 1933, when Hitler came to power. Today, there are only about 90,000 Jews in the country, three-quarters of whom came in the last 10 years with the influx of ex-Soviet Jews. With the recent increase in right-wing extremist crimes, some Jews use the notion of "living with packed suitcases" to describe an unease similar to that of the postwar years.

On the other hand, Jews today hold a kind of fascination for many non-Jewish Germans. Klezmer concerts sell out, even when the musicians are not Jewish. Bagels are "in," as are other typical Jewish foods.

In the early 1990s, a major Berlin exhibit on Jewish life and culture drew record crowds. Some non-Jews attend synagogue services out of curiosity, giving themselves away by opening prayer books upside down or backward.

That fascination with things Jewish is certain to draw many visitors to the new museum. But the creators also hope to reach those who don't know much — or who think they know it all.

In addition, they hope to be part of the renewal of Jewish life in Germany.

"Once again there are Jewish communities in German cities, with synagogues, schools and an active religious and cultural life," Blumenthal said. "Germany's Jews are part of German history not only as victims, but as living members of society."

His words echoed those of a young girl who, only one day before, stood on the bimah of a Berlin synagogue for her Bat Mitzvah. On Saturday, Rachel Libeskind, daughter of the architect, became the first person in her immediate family to observe this tradition. She did this, she said, because she was influenced by Berlin, the city where her family has lived since 1989.

Tragic history is in Rachel Libeskind's backyard, but so is renewal and celebration.

Her father's museum is part of that renewal — and, now, so is Rachel. □