



Daily News Bulletin

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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli Arab killed in West Bank

An Israeli Arab was killed in a shooting attack in the West Bank.

The body of the man, a resident of eastern Jerusalem, was found Wednesday in a bullet-ridden car near the settlement of Sanur.

The car bore Israeli license plates, and Israeli security forces believe the terrorists thought they were shooting a Jew.

In other violence, Palestinian gunmen opened fire at several Israeli targets in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but no injuries were reported.

Member of 'Iran 10' freed

An Iranian Jew convicted of spying for Israel was freed from jail after serving his three-year sentence, according to an Iranian official.

Faramarz Kashi, a Hebrew teacher, is the second of 10 Iranian Jews convicted of the spying charges in July 2000 to be released, the official added Wednesday.

Ramin Nemati Zadeh, released in March of last year, was the first to be freed, the official said. Thirteen Iranian Jews were arrested in 1999 and accused of spying for Israel.

Following a closed-door trial that began in April 2000, three were acquitted and 10 others found guilty. [Page 3]

Israel wants Ze'evi's murderers

Israel said Yasser Arafat will remain confined in Ramallah until all the assassins of Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi are arrested.

Israeli officials said they were skeptical about a Palestinian Authority claim that it had detained the leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Ahmed Sa'adat, for questioning over his involvement in Ze'evi's murder.

An Israeli government official said Israel wanted proof that Sa'adat's arrest was genuine and not just a public relations ploy.

A PFLP source said Arafat told the group that Sa'adat would be the P.A.'s "guest" for the next two days, according to Ha'aretz.

Israel also is demanding that the Palestinian Authority arrest all four PFLP suspects directly responsible for the Oct. 18 killing of Ze'evi before Arafat can leave Ramallah.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

WJC debates a new focus amid changes in leadership

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — At first glance, the brouhaha at the World Jewish Congress appears to be a power struggle over the future leadership and direction of one of Diaspora Jewry's primary defenders.

But the shake-up at the WJC, which boasts representatives in 80 countries, also exposes a tangle of subplots that touch on some of the Jewish issues of the day: the priorities for world Jewry, the defense of Israel and the fate of Holocaust-related assets.

Myriad factors are fracturing the WJC's successful, long-running triumvirate: President Edgar Bronfman may step down in two years; Secretary-General Israel Singer is leaving the staff, though he will retain his influence as a lay leader; and Elan Steinberg, the group's executive director, will depart March 1 after being passed over as Singer's replacement.

And with the WJC declaring victory in the Jewish quest for Holocaust reparations, the group appears to be looking for a new *raison d'être*.

Some senior leaders are seeking to move the group toward pro-Israel advocacy, while others, including Bronfman and Singer, want to turn their attention to Jewish education as the weapon to combat assimilation and intermarriage in the Diaspora.

The WJC was founded in 1936, according to the 2001 American Jewish Yearbook, to "intensify bonds of world Jewry with Israel, strengthen solidarity among Jews everywhere and secure their rights, status, and interests as individuals and communities" and "encourage Jewish social, religious and cultural life throughout the world."

Over the past two decades, the WJC has been a three-man show, with a bare-bones staff beneath them.

Bronfman was perched at the helm with his towering wealth and political influence, funding 15 to 20 percent of the WJC's \$5.5 million budget.

Then came Singer, the rabbi-politician, and Steinberg, who skillfully used the media and applied political pressure.

Together the threesome claimed credit for working behind the scenes to help free Soviet Jewry, shining a spotlight on Kurt Waldheim's Nazi past and encouraging Washington to ban him from visiting the United States, and lobbying the former Communist countries of Eastern Europe to establish diplomatic relations with Israel.

But it's the WJC role in helping to capture up to \$11 billion in restitution that is seen as its crowning achievement.

The WJC took on, among others, Swiss banks that concealed dormant accounts of Jewish victims; German industry that profited from slave and forced labor; European institutions that held looted artwork; and European insurers that didn't pay out claims.

One WJC admirer said the confrontation with Austria and Waldheim in the 1980s was a watershed that emboldened Jews to go after other friendly European governments in the 1990s.

"For years the WJC has functioned with tenacity, moxie and a willingness to stand up to entire governments for a cause," said Neal Sher, who worked closely with the WJC on the Waldheim affair from 1985 to 1987 as head of the U.S. Justice Department's Nazi-prosecuting Office of Special Investigations.

"If you're fighting in the halls of Congress, the State Department and the White House to protect Jews around the world, you've got to be that tough."

The group had its share of critics, too, some of whom felt that the strong-arm tactics fueled misperceptions of Jewish influence and created problems for local Jewish

MIDEAST FOCUS

Magen David effort mounted

A new effort has been launched to seek the inclusion of Israel's medical relief agency in the International Red Cross. Jewish legislators representing 25 nations in Europe, Africa and Australia vowed to press their nations' Red Cross agencies to lobby for the admission of Israel's Magen David Adom.

New York State Sen. Seymour Lachman, who serves as president of the Washington-based National Association of Jewish Legislators, obtained the commitment from lawmakers attending the Sixth International Conference of Jewish Ministers and Members of Parliament, which met in Jerusalem on Jan. 6-10.

Fatah: Strike hard at Israel

The military wing of Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement called on all Islamic organizations to strike hard at Israel. The appeal was issued in a statement from Beirut and came against the backdrop of escalating violence in the West Bank.

Israel on Wednesday renewed a blockade of several Palestinian cities in response to a series of deadly attacks that killed four Israelis in less than 48 hours.

Meanwhile, Israeli military sources said they anticipate an escalation in violence after the killing of a Fatah terrorist earlier this week. They said Hamas and Islamic Jihad have lined up suicide bombers to carry out attacks against Israel.

Israel's jobless tops 200,000

The number of unemployed in Israel topped 200,000 for what is believed the first time ever. According to unemployment figures released Wednesday, the number of job-seekers in 2001 rose by 13 percent over the previous year.

Commenting on the figures, Labor Minister Shlomo Benizri said 2001 was one of the "toughest years" the State of Israel has ever known.

communities. Now the group's leaders are debating the group's future direction.

Isi Leibler, WJC's senior vice president, is tugging the group in the direction of pro-Israel advocacy.

Indeed, the new secretary-general, Avi Beker, will for the first time be based in Jerusalem, though Singer contends the political base will remain in New York.

"Israel is going through an existential crisis with its neighbors, and without Israel, there cannot be any future for the Jewish people," said Leibler, an Australian travel magnate now residing in Israel.

"Any organization that claims to be an umbrella of the whole Jewish community that does not today have Israel as its No. 1 focus would not be worthy of being described as a leading Jewish umbrella body," Leibler said.

But Singer says strengthening Jewish identity in the Diaspora bolsters Jewish support for Israel.

And the way to do that, in a post-Sept. 11 world, is to protect Jews physically while nourishing them spiritually, Singer says.

The WJC, he said, will work to create an international network — from New York to Jerusalem, from Paris to Buenos Aires — to inform communities worldwide as to who is making threats against Jews and how to protect Jewish institutions.

"But we cannot only fight our enemies and defend the Jewish body alone," Singer said. "Our goal is to create certain principles of Jewish continuity, to re-establish Jewish knowledge among younger Jews and older Jews, to create a worldwide renaissance of Jewish interest in Jewish values, so that they know what it means to be Jewish."

Debate over the direction of the WJC reveals a second subplot: jousting over how to spend — and who should control — hundreds of millions of dollars potentially left over from the billions of Holocaust restitution paid by European countries to survivors and families of victims.

The WJC is not the sole arbiter in these money matters.

But it's a prominent voice within the 24-member Claims Conference, which handles restitution from Germany and Austria, and the 10-member World Jewish Restitution Organization, which manages reparations from the rest of Europe.

Bronfman was the WJRO chairman. Singer is the Claims Conference vice president, was its lead negotiator and serves on the Conference's many different committees.

Still unknown is who will succeed Bronfman, and whether the group will lose its clout without him. Bronfman is 72, and after 21 years as WJC president, seemed ready to relinquish the post last year.

But he reconsidered when a challenge emerged from Ronald Lauder, the cosmetics magnate who recently served as chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

It's unclear whether the tension is based on personal rivalry, ideological differences or Bronfman's possible distrust of Lauder to carry forth his restitution legacy or to keep the WJC focus on the Diaspora, rather than Israel. Bronfman was re-elected last fall, but the Forward newspaper recently reported his plan to step down in two years, midway through his term, and to "install" Singer as his replacement.

Bronfman could not be reached for comment. But Richard Marker, executive vice president of the Samuel Bronfman Foundation, said Bronfman is "not sure if he's going to serve out the full" five-year term.

At the same time, Singer and Steinberg appear to have had a falling out in a clash of ego and ambition, observers say.

Steinberg, who is leaving March 1, indicates he is now headed for a job in the private sector, though he will continue in the lay position of executive vice president.

For his part, Singer, who said he is handling the transition probably until the end of February, is assuming the post of chairman of the WJC's Board of Governors, the No. 2 lay leader behind Bronfman and will return to university teaching and writing a book on his restitution battles.

He also said he will encourage Bronfman to finish out his five-year term.

As chairman, it will allow more time for strategic thinking, Singer told JTA, but some suspect he will retain control and deny Beker the latitude as secretary-general that he himself enjoyed.

Some also believe Singer may be seeking not only the WJC presidency, but also to become president of the Claims Conference. But Singer said he would push for Bronfman to head the Claims Conference. □



Daily News Bulletin

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JEWISH WORLD

Religious Day proclaimed

President Bush recalled George Washington's promise to the Jewish community to protect religious freedom.

Proclaiming Wednesday as Religious Freedom Day 2002, Bush noted that the first U.S. president promised the Jewish community at Touro Synagogue in Newport, R.I., that the new country would protect the rights of people of all faiths.

Bush called on Americans to use the day, set aside annually, to celebrate America's commitment to freedom of religion.

Canada honors Wallenberg

Canada is marking its first annual Raoul Wallenberg day on Thursday. "We must, individually and as a nation, examine the legacy of Raoul Wallenberg, and learn from his heroism," said Rochelle Wilner, President of B'nai Brith Canada.

A Swedish diplomat, Wallenberg helped save tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews during World War II.

Journalist conference canceled

An annual international Jewish media conference in Israel was canceled.

In a letter, the organizers of the Ninth International Jewish Media Conference said responses to the conference have been slow because of travel worries since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

The organizers said they hope to reschedule the event later this year.

French bank suspends Israel ties

A leading French bank said it has temporarily stopped some dealings with Israeli banks. Societe Generale on Wednesday took the step, which will last for two months, amid a money-laundering investigation that already has snared some of the bank's top executives.

French officials are trying to determine whether scores of fraudulent checks written in France are being cashed in Israel or the Palestinian territories.

Israel Bonds helps children

The State of Israel Bonds and an Israeli university launched a matching funds program to benefit children with immunological diseases.

Anyone who contributes Israel Bonds to the Jeffrey Modell Foundation will have the contribution matched dollar for dollar with a purchase of Israel Bonds by the American Society for Technion.

The planned pediatric genetic research facility will feature a state-of-the-art laboratory that will focus on gene therapy, bone marrow transplants, and other means of combating and treating immunodeficiency diseases.

Another of 'Iran 10' released, but advocates don't see shift

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — The second of 10 Iranian Jews jailed on charges of spying for Israel has been freed, but Jewish leaders don't see it as a shift in Iranian policy.

"We take no delight in an innocent man serving more than 1,000 days in a prison for exercising his religion," said Pooya Dayanim, spokesman for the Los Angeles-based Council of Iranian-American Jewish Organizations, referring to Faramarz Kashi.

Thirteen Jews originally were arrested on espionage charges. Many of the accused "confessed" to the charges, though Jewish groups scoffed at the idea that the confessions were offered freely.

Several later recanted.

Media and foreign ambassadors were not allowed to observe the court proceedings, in which the prosecutor also served as judge.

Three of the accused were acquitted, but the other 10 were convicted in July 2000 of national security violations and given sentences ranging from four to 13 years.

Israel denies that any of the Jews were its spies. Jewish groups contend that the case merely demonstrates Iran's virulent anti-Semitism.

"The arrests were politically motivated, the charges were politically motivated and the convictions were politically motivated," said Sam Kermanian, secretary-general of the Iranian-American Jewish Federation.

"This case has nothing to do with justice or with law. It was all politics from the beginning."

The other eight prisoners, Kermanian believes, will be released only when Iran views it as politically advantageous.

"I honestly think that Iran has been moving away from even the minimum moderations it gained during the first term of President Khatami," he said.

After spending three years in jail, Kashi was released Tuesday as "a result of ongoing efforts on behalf of the prisoners, in which many people have been involved," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Efforts included "the pressures that were brought to bear, the continuing interest of families there and perhaps" Iran's "own domestic interest," Hoenlein said.

Kermanian said he doesn't think American or Jewish pressure played a role in Kashi's release.

"What pressure?" he asked. "He spent every day of his sentence in jail."

However, Kermanian said, the intervention of Western countries was "instrumental" in saving the Jews from a death sentence when they were tried in 2000.

At the time, the prisoners were held in solitary confinement so authorities could squeeze confessions out of them, Kermanian said.

Now their conditions are relatively better, he said: They are allowed kosher food two or three times a week, and visitation rights have increased from once a week to twice a week.

However, their families, "who depend on them for their livelihood, are suffering and are in dire need," Kermanian said.

In addition, the fate of the imprisoned Jews "must make us all think about the future of the 25,000 Jews left in Iran," Dayanim said.

"The condition of the community has deteriorated substantially since the verdicts were announced," he said, as the entire Jewish community now is "regarded by their compatriots as traitors or spies."

Furthermore, Dayanim said, "avenues have been hindered" that would provide emigration to Iranian Jews.

"For some reason, governments, including the U.S., are denying many of the refugee claims by Iranian Jews," he said.

Hoenlein said several visas had been delayed in the general tightening of immigration processing after Sept. 11.

However, the government had given assurances that the problems would be resolved shortly, he said. □

ARTS & CULTURE

A Jewish soccer-playing hunk becomes TV latest 'survivor'

By Adam Wills

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — What started out as a joke between friends fast became a million-dollar goal for a retired Jewish soccer player.

Ethan Zohn emerged as the sole survivor of the CBS show "Survivor" during the two-hour Jan. 10 finale, defeating Kim Johnson, a 57-year-old retired teacher from Oyster Bay, N.Y.

"I was happy to do our tribe proud," Zohn told JTA.

"Survivor: Africa," plagued this season by dwindling audience share in the United States, was recorded last summer in Kenya's arid Shaba National Reserve. Sixteen contestants faced off in a variety of contests over 39 days, braving 100-degree heat, wild animals and conspiracies.

"It's one of the most difficult games out there," Zohn said. "It touches upon every part of one's being, every part of one's self — emotional, psychological, physical, social."

Throughout his life, the curly-haired 27-year-old has held tightly to his Jewish faith, traditions and culture, seeking out synagogues to pray with during Jewish holidays when the soccer teams he played with were on the road.

"It's a huge, huge part of my life," he said.

A committed soccer enthusiast, Zohn's journey into the harsh African terrain had a lighthearted beginning.

Zohn played goalie for soccer teams in Zimbabwe, Hawaii and Massachusetts and with the U.S. soccer team in the 1997 Maccabiah Games. Realizing that he wasn't going to be the next soccer superstar, Zohn hung up his cleats in 2000 and took a job with a product-naming firm.

But a hiring freeze ended his foray into full-time employment a day before he was scheduled to start. When he asked friends for job advice, they joked that he should try out for "Survivor."

"We made the video, sent it in and the next thing you know, I got on the show," said Zohn, who earned a reputation for being a nice guy and an introvert as the series unfolded. Zohn emerged victorious without a single elimination vote.

"I'm not the guy who is going to stand up and bark orders and tell people what to do," Zohn said. "I'm more the guy who is going to sit back, observe things — and then based on my observations, I'm going to make my moves."

Zohn has nearly gained back the 26 pounds he lost during the show's filming and is getting back into shape. On Dec. 3, the show's producers asked Zohn to regrow the beard he'd shaved off following his New York homecoming for a surprise series finale.

When "survivor" host Jeff Probst revealed the winner live from a reconstructed "tribal council" set in Hollywood, Zohn called out to his mother, Rochelle, and two brothers, Lenard and Lee, in the audience, "I'm the favorite son now."

Zohn's win wasn't a total surprise. Past "Survivor" winners Wesson and Richard Hatch had picked him to win during a Jan. 9 "Early Show" appearance, and Las Vegas oddsmaker Andy DeLuca had Zohn's win at 6-1 odds early in the game.

His rugged looks, reticence and honesty made him a fan favorite throughout the season.

"I wanted to play the game like I play life — be honest, be fair, play hard, play to win. It was important for me to come home from 'Survivor' with my dignity and my self-respect," Zohn said.

But the lack of soap opera-style drama and conflict that characterized the first two seasons has reduced enthusiasm for the show. Television critics point out that the show's audience is shrinking.

The first season's finale drew 51.7 million viewers, while the second season's pulled in 36.4 million. Despite the lower turnout of 27.3 million viewers in its third season, "Survivor" still helped CBS win the night, trumping NBC's 21.6 million viewers.

For Jews, Zohn's pride in his faith and culture was a refreshing change from the evangelical Christians cast in the show's previous seasons.

One of this season's most controversial moments involved what appeared to be a blatantly anti-Semitic comment directed at Zohn. Fellow contestant Tom Buchanan, a goat and cattle farmer from Rich Valley, Va., called Zohn a "Jew boy" after their team won a challenge. Instead of taking offense, Ethan looked on it as an opportunity to educate.

"He didn't mean any harm by it and didn't mean it in a derogatory term, and he wasn't being a racist," Zohn said.

"Tom had never met a Jew before," said Zohn, who also was the first Jew that contestants Clarence Black and Frank Garrison had met. "It was almost like a blessing. I got the opportunity to educate someone about Judaism."

"I'd tell him what it's like to be Jewish. He'd tell me what it's like to live on a farm, how to herd goat and sell cattle. It was a learning experience," he said.

Zohn, who attended the Conservative congregation Temple Emunah while growing up in Lexington, Mass., fondly remembers his Jewish upbringing. And despite the harrowing challenges thrown at Zohn by "Survivor," none could rival the ultimate challenge this newly minted millionaire faced growing up.

It's something Zohn, who freely discussed his Jewishness on camera, hasn't talked about publicly — the loss of a parent to cancer. After his Bar Mitzvah, Zohn's involvement with the congregation slowed after his father, Aaron, was diagnosed with colon cancer.

The entire family switched to a macrobiotic diet in the hope of prolonging Aaron Zohn's life, a regimen Zohn continues to follow.

Aaron Zohn died the following year, when Ethan was 14.

"I went and I did minyan for the year after," he said. "It was important for me."

In 1997, Zohn qualified to play for the men's U.S. soccer team in the Maccabiah Games. Playing soccer in Israel was a dream come true, Zohn said.

"In my mind it was probably was one of the biggest accomplishments I've made in terms of my soccer," he said. "We played Brazil, France, England and Denmark. It's probably some of the best soccer I played in my life."

He was slated to play in 2001 until the soccer portion was canceled when the Maccabiah was scaled back because of the Palestinian intifada.

Since 1998, the Vasser-educated Zohn has been the assistant coach for the Fairleigh Dickinson soccer teams in Teaneck, N.J. He is considering a variety of other soccer prospects, including a youth-development program proposed during the "Survivor" finale and joining soccer's upcoming World Cup in some capacity.

Zohn has kept in contact and visited with the other "Survivor: Africa" contestants since the series wrapped last summer. Zohn's visit to Buchanan in Virginia made an indelible impression.

"It was crazy," he said. "I tripled the population of Jews when I walked into that place." □