



Daily News Bulletin

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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel takes over Tulkarm

The Israeli army took over the West Bank city of Tulkarm. This marked the first time since the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising in September 2000 that Israel took over an entire Palestinian city.

Shortly before the incursion began early Monday morning, Israel informed the Palestinian Authority of the operation, saying it was going to target the terrorist infrastructure in the city, not the Palestinian Authority. [Page 4]

Syria blasted for U.N. comments

Syria equated the Sept. 11 terror attacks against the World Trade Center and Israel's recent demolition of Palestinian homes in the Gaza Strip. A U.S. official told reporters that last Friday's speech, Syria's first since it assumed a seat on the U.N. Security Council, was "outrageous."

Syrian representative Fayssal Mekdad said the Security Council engages in a double standard in denouncing terrorism around the world but avoiding criticism of Israel. The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations said the "blasphemous" remarks show that "Syria does not belong in the Security Council."

Jews' wait for Messiah OK'd

The Vatican says the Old Testament validates the Jewish waiting for the Messiah.

In a document that appears to show a shift in Catholic thinking, the Vatican declared, "The Jewish wait for the Messiah is not in vain."

Jews and Christians both are waiting for the Messiah — though Christians are awaiting the second coming of Jesus, while Jews believe in a first coming, the pope's theologian wrote.

Now part of official church doctrine, the document also calls on Catholics to recognize the moral value of the Old Testament. The document reportedly was released last month with little fanfare.

New exits for Wall plaza

Israeli police are building seven new emergency exits for the Western Wall Plaza. Commander Ze'ev Weldinger, head of the police's security division, told a building safety inquiry commission that the exits would help evacuate people from the plaza in case of an emergency, Ha'aretz reported.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

One of Lithuania's few Jews fights to rebuild Vilna Ghetto

By Adam B. Ellick

VILNIUS, Lithuania (JTA) — It's a shivery winter Shabbat evening and Emanuelis Zingeris is immersed in a spiritual moment at Europe's largest synagogue.

That would be normal enough, except that the Great Synagogue was destroyed decades ago and Zingeris, totally unfazed by the Baltic chill, stands outside facing the once-holy site, which now houses a Soviet-style kindergarten and a dilapidated playground.

"It's like a desert," says the teary-eyed chairman of Lithuania's Jewish Heritage Fund. "They finished us completely."

Such dolorous pauses are rare for the stocky, bulldogged taskmaster. In September, Zingeris completed a four-year mission by rebuilding a Yiddish theater left in ruins after six decades of Nazi and Soviet rule. In August, he founded the first World Litvak Congress.

His latest bid is a highly controversial, \$32 million proposal that aims to rebuild the stone, Renaissance-styled Great Synagogue — built in the 1630s — and a portion of the 17th-century historic Jewish ghetto in Vilnius.

"As we go with cosmic speed into the 21st century, we're burying the former Jewish ghetto," says Zingeris, 44. "We have Italian, Indian, Chinese, Irish cafes here now, but no one space feels like Vilna 1939."

That's what prompted him to draw up his proposal. Under Zingeris' plan, the state would donate three vacant plots of land to his Jewish fund, which would woo foreign investors — mainly from Israel, America and Germany — to reconstruct buildings to historical specifications.

In exchange for lucrative property in the city center, companies would leave some space on upper floors for Jewish communal institutions like a library, museum, and studios for Jewish artists.

The mixture — Yiddish on the outside and commercial on the inside — might be attractive to tourist-hungry businesses like restaurants, shops and hotels, Zingeris argues.

Zingeris will demand that companies donate a certain percentage of their profits to fund the synagogue and future Jewish endeavors. He plans to cull investors based on their willingness to finance his cultural agenda.

Despite his drive, Zingeris may never realize his dream. Like most government activity in Eastern Europe, red tape and clashes of interests have stalled the proposal.

A resolution to rebuild Jewish Vilna received sweeping approval in Parliament last year, but has been stalled in government ministries for the past 15 months, giving Zingeris "an uncertain ill" feeling about its future.

"It's not Manhattan. We don't have 250,000 Jews in power here," he says. "I'm alone. Graves and history are not political powers."

One foreign diplomat describes Zingeris as "a lonely bee swarming around with no beehive — and everyone is swatting at him."

"For a Jewish politician and a socially engaging person," the diplomat notes, Lithuania "is not an easy environment."

Vice Minister of Culture Ina Marciulionyte blames the delay on the country's complex legal infrastructure. In addition, she says, Zingeris' proposal isn't well organized and contains many loose ends — an accusation many people confirm.

Marciulionyte says Lithuanian law prevents nongovernmental organizations like the Jewish Heritage Fund from owning state property. Amending the law is too demanding

MIDEAST FOCUS

Burg: Implement Mitchell Report

The speaker of the Knesset said the "only way" to end the intifada is to begin implementing the Mitchell Commission report. The commission, led by former U.S. Sen. George Mitchell, called for an immediate end to violence and for Israel to cease construction in settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Speaking last Friday before New York's Jewish Community Relations Council, Avraham Burg also called on the two sides to implement the Oslo peace accords, and those proposed at unfinished talks at Camp David and Taba.

Israelis now understand "there is no military solution" to their conflict with the Palestinians, Burg said. Burg also urged Diaspora Jews to help Israel address the economic and social difficulties of Israeli Arabs.

Israeli jailed for contact with Iran

An Australian man living in Israel was sentenced to two years in prison for offering to spy for Iran.

Mark Idan, 37, admitted to entering the Iranian Embassy in Cyprus in 1998 and offering to work for the Iranians, who turned him down.

Religious leaders meet in Egypt

Jewish, Islamic and Christian leaders began a three-day dialogue Sunday in Egypt.

Sephardi Chief Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron and Deputy Foreign Minister Rabbi Michael Melchior are heading the Israeli delegation. The Alexandria meeting, kept secret until now, was initiated by Melchior with the assistance of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Israel Radio reported.

The Palestinian Authority delegation is headed by Sheik Taysir Tamimi, the head of the P.A.'s religious courts. Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Michel Sabah heads the list of Christian leaders from the region.

a task, says Marciulionyte, who says she will introduce another solution in early 2002.

One possibility, she says, is for the Vilnius municipality to own the land while allowing the Jewish Heritage Fund to operate it.

But Zingeris wants none of that. He insists that the land be donated to his fund as a "moral restitution," like similar ghettos in the Czech Republic and other post-Communist nations where Jewish communities are putting returned property to lucrative use.

Meanwhile, Vilnius' mayor, Arturas Zuokas, doesn't want to lose his grip on the precious property. Although the proposed land composes only 10 percent of the historic Old Town, it is the last remaining underused territory in the commercial center of this rapidly Westernizing capital.

"Everyone wants this land," Marciulionyte says bluntly.

Zuokas, who basically supports the project but wants to implement it differently, says Zingeris is unrealistic if he thinks investors will agree to turn over profits to the Jewish community.

One senior government official, who requested to remain anonymous, says the problems are deeper still.

"It's like a fight over territorial issues. The mayor still claims it's his city, and he can cause some problems," the source said. "It simply could be that he promised certain building interests in these areas."

Sixty years ago, Vilna — the city's Yiddish name — was nearly half-Jewish. Then, in the Holocaust, Nazis and their Lithuanian collaborators murdered 94 percent of the country's 250,000 Jews.

Today the remains are scarce — only one of Vilna's 40 prewar synagogues, a handful of memorial plaques — most of which were erected by Zingeris — and the gentrified Zydu, or Jewish street, that slashes through the old town.

Zingeris' plan calls for the reconstruction of 32 buildings in the Old Town. That means the return of archways and pastel-colored facades plastered with Yiddish inscriptions like the kind that once adorned tailor shops and food markets.

The Lithuanian government gave Zingeris \$60,000 for extensive research. Architectural plans, based on prewar photographs and blueprints, have been finalized.

Zingeris says the project would educate Lithuanians, most of whom are unfamiliar with Vilnius's famed Jewish past. There are no obligatory Holocaust studies in Lithuanian public schools.

Plus, the project would open the doors for foreign investment, something Lithuania has sorely needed since gaining independence in 1991.

But Zuokas and Marciulionyte both wonder why the Jewish community, only 4,000 strong, requires more space and funding.

"The community is not big enough to have so many buildings," Marciulionyte says. "It has to be for the Jewish community and everyone else. They can't just have their own ghetto doing their own events. We are a multicultural city."

Zingeris acknowledges that the community is quite small, but he wants extra space to host events like international Jewish conferences. Citing the Jewish quarters in Prague and Krakow, he predicts that the project would double tourism to Vilnius.

Even Zingeris's supporters are critical.

"It will not be Jewish Vilna," says Linas Vildziunas, chairman of the House of Memory, a Holocaust study center in Vilnius, who passively supports the plan. "It will only be reconstruction and memorials. Educational activities are what we need."

Zingeris, a former member of the country's Parliament who spent five years researching European Yiddish roots for the Council of Europe, is backed by Wilfried Seemann, general manager of the German-owned Vereinsbank in Vilnius. Seemann vowed "to force the Cabinet to sign this resolution in the nearest future."

Zingeris also has received encouraging words from Israeli real estate moguls and Western diplomats. But getting local companies to support Jewish affairs will be tough.

"There is no reason, business-wise, why we should care about the Jewish community," says Antonio Meschino, an Italian-Australian man who owns five prominent restaurants in Vilnius. "But the Jewish business people will do it."

The final barrier is anti-Semitism, which still runs strong in Lithuania. Some insiders say Prime Minister Algirdas Brazauskas is purposefully delaying approval because he knows that ratifying the plan won't win him many votes if he runs for president next year. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Poland holds Day of Judaism

The Roman Catholic Church in Poland marked its fifth annual Day of Judaism. The church held a series of events Jan. 17 that were devoted to commemorating the Holocaust and exploring Jewish teachings.

Events included a prayer ceremony in the former Majdanek concentration camp near Lublin. During one discussion about biblical topics, Polish church officials stressed that anti-Semitic attitudes are against church teachings.

Rabbi blames Muslims

Britain's Orthodox chief rabbi says Muslims are the new anti-Semites, while the State of Israel plays the role of the persecuted Jew.

In an interview with Ha'aretz, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks said, "It's moved from Europe to the Middle East, from Christian culture to Islamic; from the individual Jew to the Jews as a sovereign nation. But essentially it remains the same: the inability, or at worst refusal, to grant Jews a space." Sacks sees this as the backdrop to the current surge of anti-Semitism in England, both among Muslims and among the "liberal media."

Mass Bar Mitzvah in Moscow

Fifty-one boys celebrated their Bar Mitzvah at a Moscow synagogue. The ceremony at the Marina Roscha synagogue celebrated the 51st anniversary of Rabbi Menachem Schneerson's assuming the leadership of the Lubavitch movement.

The boys prepared for their Bar Mitzvah during the last 6 months at weekly seminars run by the Lubavitch community in Moscow.

Group wants pro-choice judges

A Jewish women's group wants pro-choice judges on the federal bench.

The National Council of Jewish Women is urging people to call their senators on Tuesday, the 29th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision, to tell them to confirm only those judicial nominees who will uphold abortion rights. "NCJW's BenchMark Campaign will rally the entire organization to ensure that the hard-won right of women to choose a safe, legal abortion will not be further undermined by a hostile judiciary," NCJW President Jan Schneiderman said.

Yeshiva student earns honor

A yeshiva student in New York was named an Intel semifinalist.

Mordechai Bronner, a student at the Rambam Mesivta, earned the honor for his project that explains how a chemical compound added to Firestone tires made these tires fall apart. Finalists in the competition will be named Jan. 30.

Germans mark six decades since 'Final Solution' planned

By Toby Axelrod

BERLIN (JTA) — Germany has marked the 60th anniversary of the Nazi plan to exterminate Europe's Jews.

Calling the Holocaust "the darkest chapter of our history," German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said the Wannsee Conference demonstrated the "perversion of the Nazi system."

Historians believe the "Final Solution" was formally organized and the Nazis officially planned the genocide of Jews at the Wannsee Conference, which took place on Jan. 20, 1942.

The building where the meeting took place was turned into a public memorial and education center 10 years ago. Some 60,000 people visit the center yearly, about one-third of them from outside Germany.

Much has been written about the brief meeting that took place among 13 senior Nazi officials in the Wannsee Villa in Potsdam, outside Berlin.

According to British historian Martin Gilbert, in "Never Again: A History of the Holocaust," SS Gen. Reinhard Heydrich announced at the meeting that he had been charged with the task of preparing "the Final Solution of the European Jewish Question."

"Europe will be combed from East to West," he said, in order to accomplish this goal.

In his book, "The Holocaust: A Short History," German historian Wolfgang Benz writes that "the men at the discussion table were in high spirits."

During his trial in Israel in 1961, Adolf Eichmann, who headed the Gestapo's Department of Jewish Affairs, recalled that there was "not only a general atmosphere of enthusiastic agreement, but beyond that of something completely unexpected, of what I would call a willingness that surpassed all expectations in respect to the Final Solution of the Jewish question."

The meeting resulted in a 16-page protocol, including Eichmann's alphabetical list of 33 European lands from which the Jewish people were to be eliminated. □

Budapest residents honor ghetto, lash out at today's anti-Semitism

By Agnes Bohm

BUDAPEST (JTA) — A commemoration of the liberation of the Budapest Ghetto turned into a demonstration against anti-Semitism in Hungary.

The Jan. 17 ceremony in front of the Hungarian Parliament building hit some notes similar to ones heard at Holocaust ceremonies around the world.

Hungarian President Ferenc Madl's message was read to the audience at the 57th anniversary of the ghetto's liberation: "The Holocaust was the shame of world history, and this tragedy cannot ever be forgotten."

Rabbi Peter Kardos, representing the leadership of Hungary's Jewish community, ended the event with the Kaddish.

But many of the approximately 10,000 Jews and non-Jews appeared more interested in countering a present-day scourge — the rise in anti-Semitism in Hungary.

Some carried posters reading, "Do not let the walls of the ghetto be rebuilt" and "We want to live freely as human beings, as Hungarians, as Jews."

Budapest Mayor Gabor Demszky added his voice to the protest.

"It would be the biggest scandal in the 12 years of a free and democratic Hungary if the anti-Semitic, racist, xenophobic ultra-right can again get near the newly elected government," Demszky said, in a reference to the far-right Hungarian Justice and Life Party, known as MIEP.

Some observers believe the ruling conservative party, the Young Democrats, will count on the unofficial support of MIEP to form a ruling coalition after the country's next round of elections, scheduled for April. □

Israel seizes control of Tulkarm in effort to root out terror cells

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — After months of calling on the Palestinian Authority to crack down on terrorists, Israel took matters into its own hands this week.

Days after a Palestinian terrorist from the West Bank city of Tulkarm opened fire at a Bat Mitzvah in northern Israel, killing six Israelis and wounding more than 30, the Israeli army seized control of Tulkarm and launched an operation aimed at rounding up terrorists who had found safe haven there.

The move was a part of a new cycle of attacks and reprisals that shattered a period of relative calm and appeared to end hopes that the two sides could reach a cease-fire any time soon.

Israel said the incursion was temporary and aimed at rooting out terrorists, but the move was seen as a further blow to Arafat's prestige.

The incursion marked the first time since the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising in September 2000 that Israel took over an entire Palestinian city.

Around 3 a.m. Monday, Israeli ground troops backed by helicopters seized positions in the city.

The army imposed a curfew, began arresting militants and rounded up weapons.

Palestinian sources said a 19-year-old Palestinian was killed and three other people wounded in clashes between Palestinian gunmen and Israeli troops.

Shortly before the incursion, Israel informed the Palestinian Authority of the operation, saying it was targeting the terrorist infrastructure in the city, not the Palestinian Authority.

The army spokesman said terrorists — including the gunman who carried out the Jan. 17 terror attack in Hadera — were being sent from Tulkarm to attack Israeli targets.

The Israeli army said the troops would remain in Tulkarm "until the completion of the search and detention of terrorists."

In other reprisals for the Hadera attack, Israeli troops Saturday destroyed Palestinian radio and television broadcasting headquarters in Ramallah.

A day earlier, Israel rocketed Palestinian Authority offices in Tulkarm, killing one Palestinian policeman and injuring at least 20 people.

Transportation Minister Ephraim Sneh hinted at possible action in other hotbeds of terrorist activity.

"Mainly in the northern West Bank, there is a very profound infrastructure of terrorist attacks from all organizations, which is likely to blow up among us at any time in the most deadly fashion," Sneh told Israel's Army Radio.

Palestinian officials accused Israel of planning to reassume control over the entire West Bank and called for an emergency session of the U.N. Security Council.

Arafat said Monday the Israeli action "crossed all red lines," and warned that the Palestinians would not stand idly by.

Tensions were further deepened by reports that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon may reopen Jerusalem's Temple Mount to Jews.

Sharon has been telling aides he wants the site opened again to Jews, Christians and everyone else, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported Monday.

The Temple Mount has been closed to non-Muslims since the

outbreak of the Palestinian uprising in September 2000.

Palestinians warned that re-opening the site to Jews would be viewed as a provocation.

At the same time, former President Clinton, who coaxed Israel into far-reaching concessions under former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, urged Israelis not to lose hope for peace.

In a speech Sunday in Tel Aviv, where he received an honorary doctorate from Tel Aviv University, Clinton also said there would be no peace while terrorism prevails.

He also said Arafat had missed a "golden opportunity" for peace at the July 2000 Camp David summit.

"I think the violence and terrorism which followed were not inevitable, and have been a terrible mistake," he said.

Last week, after a relative lull in Palestinian terror, the violence and terrorism escalated yet again.

After four Israelis were killed in a series of shooting attacks early in the week, the Palestinian terrorist opened fire at the Bat Mitzvah celebration.

The Hadera attack was the largest since Arafat called for a cease-fire a month ago.

Israeli officials said they held Arafat responsible for the attack, because he failed to implement a thorough crackdown on terrorist groups and left their military infrastructures intact.

The attack was claimed by the Al-Aksa Martyrs Brigade, a militia of Arafat's Fatah Party.

Inside the David's Palace banquet hall, guests were celebrating the coming of age of Nina Kardashova when a Palestinian man burst through the glass doors, shouting in Arabic and firing an M-16 assault rifle.

"Suddenly, somebody charged through shouting and immediately began to start firing," an employee of the banquet hall told the Jerusalem Post.

"I don't know how many people were in the hall at the time, because it was toward the end of the reception."

Kardashova's grandfather was among the victims.

"The terrorist destroyed the happiest day of my life," Kardashova told the Israeli newspaper Ma'ariv.

The dead were identified as Aharon Ben Yisrael-Alis, 32, of Ra'anana, an American citizen; Dina Binayav, 48, of Ashkelon; Edward Bakshayev, 48, and Anatoli Bakshayev, 63, both of Or Akiva; Avi Yazadi, 25, of Hadera; and Boris Melihov, 56, of Sderot.

The attacker, who was beaten unconscious by Bat Mitzvah guests and then shot by police, was identified as Abed Hassouna, 24.

The Al-Aksa Martyrs Brigade said the killing was in retaliation for the bombing death earlier last week of Raed Karmi, a leader of the group in Tulkarm.

Palestinians accused Israel of assassinating Karmi.

Israel neither confirmed nor denied the charge, but accused Karmi of being behind the deaths of nine Israelis in a series of terror attacks.

The United States denounced the Hadera attack as "horrific" and "vicious."

Israeli spokesman Ra'an an Gissin said Arafat was responsible for the attack because he had not acted to control terrorism.

"We will do what he failed to do," Gissin told The Associated Press.

"We will arrest those who need to be arrested. We will stop those who need to be stopped." □