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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Reporter given another day

Kidnappers gave an American journalist held hostage in Pakistan an additional 24 hours before they pledged to kill him.

A Pakistani organization is holding Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl, accusing him of being an agent for Mossad, the Israeli foreign intelligence service.

The Associated Press reports that an additional e-mail was sent from the captors, giving an additional 24 hours for the United States to free Pakistanis detained in the war against terrorism. An Israeli spokesman called the Mossad claim "ridiculous," "rubbish" and "totally unfounded."

Palestinians killed after bombing

Israeli troops killed two Palestinians who detonated a bomb in the Gaza Strip. The bomb exploded as a truck carrying foreign workers drove by, lightly injuring one of them.

The Palestinians opened fire and threw grenades at Israeli troops who arrived at the scene. The troops returned fire, killing the two. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack. Shortly afterward, an Israeli civilian sustained light wounds from two mortars fired from Palestinian areas.

Sharon regrets not killing Arafat

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said he regrets not having killed Yasser Arafat during the 1982 Lebanon War.

Sharon, who led the invasion as Israel's defense minister, told the Ma'ariv newspaper that he regrets an agreement among Israeli officials not to "eliminate" the PLO leader — today the Palestinian Authority president — as they forced the PLO out of Lebanon. But Sharon also said Arafat can still be a partner for peace if he cracks down on terrorism.

Austria's Haider apologizes

Austria's Jorg Haider apologized for comments he made against the leader of the country's Jews.

In return for Haider's apology and a vow not to insult him again, Ariel Muzicant agreed to withdraw his legal action against Haider. In a speech last year, Haider alleged that Muzicant is dishonorable and had used his political connections to further his business interests.

THIS YEAR IN SALT LAKE

Tight-knit group of Jews live in Utah, home to this year's Olympics

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — Utah is probably the only place where a Jewish political candidate has ever been criticized for being a gentile.

On the campaign trail in 1916, Simon Bamberger, who was elected the state's first and only Jewish governor, had to argue his way into a meeting hall by saying, "As a Jew I've been called many a bad name, but this is the first time in my life that I've been called a damned gentile."

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as the Mormons formally are called, is based in Salt Lake City and is a dominant presence in the region. In a custom some Jews find disconcerting, the church describes all non-Mormons as gentiles.

Whether they're called gentiles or not, Jews definitely are a minority in Utah.

Nonetheless, Salt Lake City, which is hosting the Winter Olympics beginning Feb. 9, has had a Jewish presence for almost 200 years and today is home to more than 3,500 Jews. Leaders of the small community report good relations with the Mormon establishment.

The region boasts a brand-new Jewish community center just yards from the Olympic Village — although the facility has more non-Jewish members than Jewish ones — a Reform-Conservative synagogue and Chabad house, each of which have a mikvah, and a Reconstructionist congregation.

The Jewish community is hosting two receptions for Israeli and other Jewish athletes. In addition, the Olympics will host an exhibit on the history of Utah's Jews, which will appear together with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's traveling exhibit on the 1936 Berlin Olympics.

Salt Lake City's Chabad rabbi, Benny Zippel, will serve as the Olympics' Jewish chaplain. Given the heightened security arrangements in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, even Zippel won't know until the last minute just how many Jewish athletes are competing, or who will be needing his services.

Utah's first Jewish settlers arrived in the 1820s. Most were fur trappers, explorers and, later, merchants capitalizing on the California gold rush, said Eileen Hallet Stone, author of the book "A Homeland in the West: Utah Jews Remember," and curator of the Olympic exhibit on Utah Jews.

In the 1860s, Utah's small community of Jewish merchants suffered from a boycott of non-Mormon stores. Ultimately they wrote to Brigham Young, the Mormon leader, asking him to buy out their businesses.

Young didn't, but the boycott eventually was lifted, Stone said.

Another milestone in Utah Jewish history came in 1911, when approximately 200 Jews arrived as part of a communal farm. The farm failed within a few years due to poor training and difficult agricultural conditions, but some of the Jews remained.

In recent years, Utah's Jewish community has been relatively stable — with an estimated 5,000 to 6,000 Jews — said Teresa Bruce, executive director of United Jewish Federation of Utah.

The federation raises just less than \$600,000 a year, she said.

The majority of Utah Jews live in Salt Lake City, but nearby Park City — home of the Sundance Film Festival — has a growing Jewish population and its own synagogue.

Utah has several Jewish families that have been there for generations. For the most part, however, the community is "very transient," said Bruce, who moved to Salt Lake City from San Francisco 14 years ago. "Many people will move here because of careers

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel suspends two soldiers

The Israeli army suspended two reserve soldiers who are refusing to serve in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Yaniv Itzkovich and David Zonshein had organized a group of more than 50 reserve officers and soldiers who took out ads in weekend newspapers voicing their refusal.

Abdullah warns against Iraq move

Jordan's King Abdullah warned of "immense instability" in the Middle East if the United States moves against Iraq. During his State of the Union speech Tuesday night, President Bush cited the danger Iraq, Iran and South Korea pose to the world.

Later, Abdullah said he hopes the United States will help bring a "just solution" to Israeli-Palestinian violence.

"It is very apparent that the Israelis and Palestinians alike as peoples are frustrated and desperate to find a way out of the suffering that is going on in that region, and I hope that our visits in Washington will try and find some sort of mechanisms to try and get or bring hope back to both sides to look to the future and peace and stability," Abdullah said in Washington after meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Abdullah was expected to meet Friday with President Bush.

Peres, Palestinian to meet in N.Y.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Palestinian official Ahmed Karia were due to meet in New York.

The two were expected to hold talks on a cease-fire proposal along the sidelines of the World Economic Forum, Israel Radio reported.

A senior political source was quoted as saying that Peres received Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's approval to continue contacts with Karia.



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or because they've taken early retirement," she said.

Rabbi Frederick Wenger, spiritual leader of Congregation Kol Ami, the Reform-Conservative synagogue, said the Jewish community has become younger and more diverse in the 15 years he has lived there. Chabad and the Reconstructionist congregation are relative newcomers.

"There was a historic Jewish community that went back to the founding of the state, and they've been built upon by people who've come in for the University of Utah and high-tech positions," he said. "It's a community that is asking for more options than in the past."

So what is it like to be Jewish in the shadow of the Mormon headquarters?

Wenger, who moved to Salt Lake City from Skokie, Ill., which has a much heavier Jewish influence, said the Mormon presence "makes us more active and makes our members just a bit more dedicated than they would be if we were in a community that makes religion less of a priority.

"Being here makes you appreciate your Jewishness and Judaism," he said.

The community's size, coupled with the large number of newcomers, makes it friendly and tight-knit, Bruce said.

"You walk into synagogue the first time and you're immediately recognized as a newcomer," she said. "Suddenly, 8-10 people are greeting you, and before you know it you're invited to Shabbos dinner.

"The common denominator with so many people not having family here means that you adopt everyone not only as being friends, but mishpoche," she said using the Yiddish word for family.

Proselytizing is a strong component of Mormon culture, but Jewish leaders say they generally have enjoyed good relations with the Mormon church, as well as other religions.

For his first Chanukah in Salt Lake City, in 1992, he put up a menorah outside the Chabad house, Zippel said. That gesture attracted an invitation from Gordon Hinckley, who now is the president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. After meeting, the two established a "very nice, friendly working relationship," Zippel said.

Proselytizing does take place, but it is fairly rare, he said.

Zippel, who is originally from Milan, Italy, said he tries to counter the proselytizing with a positive message about Judaism.

"It's more important to talk to Jews about the strengths and values of Judaism, rather than putting down Mormonism," he said.

"One of the strong points of the Mormon church is that they value very much the beauty and the richness of Judaism," he added. "When you tell them you're an observant Jew and believe in mitzvot," or commandments, "and Torah from God, they respect it very highly."

In the early 1990s, many Jews were outraged when it became known that Mormons — who believe the dead can achieve salvation through proxy baptisms — were posthumously baptizing Holocaust victims. Jewish genealogists now monitor Mormon baptismal lists to make sure Jews are not included.

Wenger said there have been occasional conflicts about separation of church and state in the public schools.

Still, he said, "generally speaking we've found the community to be very receptive when we've alerted them to it.

"There's been no issues that we couldn't resolve," he said. □

Heeb hits newsstands

NEW YORK (JTA) — An alternative magazine aimed at younger Jews has debuted.

The first issue of Heeb features an article about a former Jewish convict who is trying to destroy a private company that operates prisons; an interview with the man who made "Trembling Before G-d," a documentary about gay and lesbian Orthodox Jews; and a photo essay about Jews with Afro-style haircuts.

The magazine received start-up funds from the Joshua Venture, a fellowship program that encourages young Jews to pursue community-building entrepreneurial projects. □

JEWISH WORLD

U.N. seeks aid for Palestinians

The U.N. Relief and Works Agency asked U.N. states Thursday for \$117 million to help Palestinian refugees.

In its fourth appeal for emergency aid since the intifada began in September 2000, UNRWA said the funds would go primarily toward job creation and maintenance, with some used for food, shelter and medical supplies.

About 10 countries, including the United States, have said they will contribute, a U.S. government source said.

WZC elections have low turnout

The number of Americans who registered to vote in this year's world Zionist elections is down by nearly one-third.

Although the final numbers are not yet tallied, the American Zionist Movement estimates 110,000-115,000 people registered for the March elections, as opposed to nearly 150,000 in 1997.

The AZM primarily blamed Sept. 11 for the decreased participation in the elections.

Gypsies sue IBM for Nazi acts

Some Gypsies are suing IBM in a Swiss court for the alleged role the company's punch cards played in Nazi murders during World War II.

A controversial book published last year, "IBM and the Holocaust," argues that the custom-built IBM technology helped the Nazis make their wartime killing more efficient.

IBM says it is not responsible for the link because its German subsidiary was taken over by the Nazis during the war.

Anti-Semites meet in Moscow

Holocaust deniers and other anti-Semites held a conference in Moscow.

The conference, which occurred over the weekend, was attended by anti-Semites from Russia, several European countries and the United States, according to the Union of Councils for Jews in the former Soviet Union.

Oleg Platnov from Russia and Willis Carto, the founder of the U.S.-based Liberty Lobby, organized the conference.

Exodus from 'Jewish homeland'

More than 500 Jews left a Russian region last year that Stalin established as a "Jewish homeland."

The 2001 exodus left fewer than 7,000 Jews in Birobidzhan, which sits along the Russian-Chinese border.

More than half of those who left last year went to Israel or Germany.

BACKGROUNDER

With intifada raging, U.S. aid goes for basic Palestinian needs

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The 16-month-old intifada has taken its toll on American-supported projects in Palestinian areas, with money being shifted from infrastructure, health care and natural resources to more basic needs for a people in economic collapse.

Contrary to popular belief, U.S. aid does not go to the Palestinian Authority, government officials say.

The average of \$75 million designated annually for the West Bank and Gaza Strip is distributed by the U.S. Agency for International Development. Formerly earmarked for development projects, many of USAID's projects have been suspended or terminated as priorities have shifted to more basic needs such as emergency employment programs and health assistance.

Larry Garber, USAID's mission director for the West Bank and Gaza, said Israel's security closures of the West Bank and Gaza Strip have left about 75,000 Palestinians unemployed.

A majority of Palestinians, according to Garber, live on less than \$2 a day.

International organizations such as the World Bank's Holst Fund, the European Union and Arab states also provide money to the region, often giving funds directly to the Palestinian Authority.

With corruption rampant in the Palestinian Authority — one year, more than 40 percent of the P.A.'s \$800 million budget could not be accounted for — congressional legislation prevents the U.S. government from giving money directly to the Palestinian Authority.

Instead, it provides aid to nongovernmental organizations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Garber said the agency tries to ensure that the organizations it supports are not linked to terrorist organizations.

But a Congressional Research Service report last April suggested that funds may be inadvertently landing in the P.A.'s hands.

"It is possible that some U.S. assistance provided to the Holst Fund, contractors, or private organizations does reach PLO members or organizations through indirect means, but it is not the intention of USAID or the Department of State to provide funding directly to the PLO," the report said.

The budget for assistance to the West Bank and Gaza has grown since 2000, as the United States maintained its commitment under the 1998 Wye Accords to provide the Palestinians an additional \$400 million over three years.

Most of the \$400 million has not yet been spent, as conditions on the ground are not ripe for development. If the money is not earmarked by the end of this fiscal year it will be lost, but there are "contingency plans" to prevent that from happening, Garber said.

A year ago, the State Department earmarked an additional \$8.8 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency to address emergency needs of Palestinian refugees.

The additional aid places the Palestinian territories among the top five recipients of U.S. assistance programs in terms of total size, and probably the largest recipient on a per capita basis, Garber said.

Historically, a majority of the aid has been spent on improving access to and management of water resources, providing services to local governments and strengthening legal and democratic institutions. A smaller amount has been spent on economic growth, health care and educational programs.

U.S. aid to the Palestinians has caused concern in Congress. Last year, several pieces of legislation were introduced to cut nonhumanitarian aid to the region. None made it to the floor, however.

Earlier this month Rep. Eric Cantor (R-Va.) introduced a bill to cut all aid to the West Bank and Gaza. That bill still is pending.

Furor over a Palestinian ship carrying 50 tons of weapons, seized by Israel in early January, has only heightened the call for a review of whether U.S. money is ending up in the hands of P.A. President Yasser Arafat. □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD**Day schools face bleak future with Argentine economy in crisis***By Florencia Arbiser*

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — It's summertime in south-of-the-equator Argentina, but for Jewish schools here, the living ain't easy.

The financial crisis that sent Argentina into a tailspin at the end of last year has had a devastating effect on the nation's Jewish educational network.

Education experts predict there will be a "desertion rate" of 25 to 30 percent from Jewish schools during the coming year, which is causing the experts to predict a dire future for what was once considered one of the best Jewish school networks in the world.

The network has attracted a consistently high percentage of Jewish children from the community, higher than most communities in the Diaspora.

Of a population of some 36,000 Jewish students in Argentina, about 17,000 attended a Jewish school last year.

The network has produced its own textbooks and trained teachers and principals who went on to work elsewhere in Latin America. In greater Buenos Aires alone, there are 82 Jewish schools — 37 kindergartens, 13 primary schools and 32 high schools. But those totals could dwindle when the new school year begins in March.

Faced with financial hardship, only 50 percent of the families that have expressed a wish to continue with Argentina's Jewish school system have paid registration fees.

According to Bernardo Kliksberg, president of the Latin American Jewish Congress' Human Development Committee, any desertions from the school network would be a loss for the Jewish world as a whole.

"It increases the spiritual and educational poverty of Jewish family life and it increases assimilation risks. It is urgent to save the soul of every Jewish child," he said.

Daniel Pomerantz, the administrative director of AMIA, the main Jewish institution in Buenos Aires, agrees that a major threat looms.

"With the crisis in the educational system, the Jewish community is in danger. But not because of anti-Semitism. The problem is social and economic," he told JTA.

Kliksberg told JTA that most of the desertions are "strictly due to reasons of poverty." Even if schools reduce monthly fees, "families still have to be able to afford transportation, food and school supplies. And many cannot do it any longer," he said.

Batia Nemirovsky, director of the Central Council for Jewish Education in Argentina, told JTA that the country's Jewish educational institutions traditionally have been supported by monthly fees of about \$150 per family.

Nemirovsky added that many Jewish families used to pay more than the standard fee to help those that needed scholarships.

"But with the impoverishment process we are now going through, very few families can pay the standard fee," Nemirovsky said. At the same time, the "demand for scholarships is increasing. The slowness in paying is increasing, too."

As families unable to afford the fees send their children to public school, Nemirovsky spoke of the need to guarantee children a Jewish education.

"We cannot let the children drop out of the system," she said.

In an effort to deal with the crisis, the Central Council is heading up a committee trying to find ways to reduce educational costs and free up money for scholarships.

The committee plans to organize a buying club to get better prices for school supplies, catering, security, insurance and transportation. Since 1995, two new Jewish schools have opened in Argentina — but 10 have closed.

Soon there may be an 11th: the Doctor Herzl Institute, which has operated for approximately 100 years.

After years with a student body of some 800, the institute closed its high school in 2000. Last year, the institute had only 250 students — 50 percent of whom were on scholarship. □

Fire-damaged Jewish paper vows to publish on schedule*By Julie Wiener*

NEW YORK (JTA) — The offices of one of the largest Jewish newspapers in North America, the Detroit Jewish News, suffered extensive fire damage.

No one was injured in Sunday's blaze, which took three hours to quell. The fire started in the early evening, a time when no employees were in the sprawling one-story suburban office.

The cause was electrical, and the fire was deemed an accident by the local fire marshal.

Editor Robert Sklar said the experience had been "a nightmare."

However, the Jewish weekly will publish this Friday as usual, he said, with staff — many of whom gathered Sunday night to watch the fire — working from their homes and a nearby hotel.

"We're a very close-knit staff that really has regrouped," Sklar said. "There are a lot of important, significant issues that are on the table in the Detroit Jewish community and we're going to continue to follow them closely, continue to serve our readers and be a force in the community."

"The Jewish News continues to live; it's just the building that was taken from us," he said.

The fire — whose flames, Sklar said, shot 20 to 30 feet in the air — gutted the company's business and graphic design departments. The editorial department had water damage.

Arthur Horwitz, the newspaper's publisher, said he was working in the building until 2 p.m. on Sunday. He then received a call at home that evening, alerting him that smoke detectors had gone off and the fire department was on its way.

"Your first reaction is, Thank God nobody was inside," he said. "Your second reaction is a sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach, and your third reaction is, We're going to get the paper out as we have for 60 years."

Horwitz said he was relieved that the fire appears not to be arson.

A bound set of all the issues ever printed by the 60-year-old newspaper was removed from the building, but it is not clear whether the volumes will be salvageable. However, the volumes are also archived at a nearby temple.

The newspaper, which has approximately 50 employees, had leased the office space since the early 1990s.

Owned by Jewish Renaissance Media, a company in which Jewish mega-philanthropist Michael Steinhardt is a partner, the Detroit Jewish News has a weekly readership of 50,000. □