



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 80, No. 57

Monday, March 25, 2002

85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israelis killed in shootings

An Israeli woman was shot and killed near the West Bank city of Ramallah on Sunday.

The victim, identified as Esther Klieman, 23, was riding on a reinforced bus on a bypass road, Israel Radio reported.

Israeli security forces conducted a thorough search of the area for the gunmen, entering a number of Palestinian villages in the area and demolishing Palestinian roadblocks.

Later on Sunday, an Israeli was killed in a shooting attack near the West Bank city of Hebron.

Cheney won't meet Arafat yet

Vice President Dick Cheney said he would not meet Yasser Arafat this week. On Sunday, Cheney said on NBC's "Meet the Press" that the Palestinian Authority president had not done enough to crack down on terror to warrant a meeting before this week's Arab summit, which begins Wednesday.

Infiltrators killed on Golan

Israel killed four infiltrators who entered the Golan Heights area from across the Jordanian border. The four entered Israel near the Sea of Galilee.

Three were shot dead immediately and another was caught and killed after a long chase into the Golan Heights. Two other members of the squad were killed on the other side of the border by Jordanian forces.

Thousands show solidarity

Thousands of Jews gathered in more than 100 cities across North America to show solidarity with Israel on Sunday.

Sens. Chuck Schumer and Hillary Clinton, who both represent New York, appeared at the flagship gathering of nearly 1,000 people at the 92nd Street Y in New York.

A live simulcast featured Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, memorials at Israeli terror attacks and a terror victim in a hospital bed.

Israel "is a peace-seeking nation" that supports U.S.-led cease-fire efforts, said Sharon.

The gatherings were sponsored by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the United Jewish Communities and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Variety of armed Palestinian groups raises question: Can Arafat deliver?

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Suppose for a second that Israel strikes a cease-fire deal with Yasser Arafat: Would the Palestinian Authority president be able to deliver?

Arafat himself may not know for sure, as the extent of control he retains over the many military factions he has created or allowed to flourish in his territory is unclear.

On paper, the Palestinian Authority is made up of eight major security organizations, each with a specific agenda.

In practice, however, many of the groups compete with each other, making it difficult to maintain a clear military hierarchy and discipline — and obfuscating P.A. responsibility for each group's actions.

Complicating the scene further is the fact that there are at least four nonofficial organizations actively involved in intifada terrorism, and it is unclear to what extent they respond to Arafat's orders or signals.

They are the Izz a-Din al-Kassam Brigades, the military wing of the Muslim fundamentalist Hamas organization; the fundamentalist group Islamic Jihad; the secular Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a prominent faction in Arafat's PLO; and the Tanzim, a militia of Arafat's Fatah movement that in recent months has been particularly active in terrorism both in the West Bank and Israel proper.

Until the outbreak of the intifada, little was known of the Tanzim, whose Arabic name can be translated as "the organization."

A militia of some 10,000 to 40,000 Fatah supporters, the Tanzim usually recognized the authority of the Palestinian Authority in the past.

In the Gaza Strip, the group was led by Ahmad Hils, but its more prominent West Bank leader was Marwan Barghouti, a veteran of Israeli prisons but also a supporter of the Oslo peace process.

The 18-month-old intifada has changed Barghouti. From a marginal local activist in Ramallah, he has become a national leader, a militant who time and again has vowed loyalty to Arafat — but also has made it clear that he will not hesitate to carry on attacking Israelis even if Arafat orders him not to.

Less than one month after the intifada began in September 2000, Brig. Gen. Yossi Kupperwasser — then the intelligence officer for the Israeli army's Central Command, and now the research chief of military intelligence — predicted that Barghouti would use the violent confrontation to heighten his standing and become a political threat to Arafat.

Indeed, Barghouti's influence has expanded to such an extent that some Israeli analysts believe that, sooner or later, Israel might prefer to negotiate with him rather than with Arafat.

Others have floated the possibility of assassinating Barghouti, but the assassination idea has been rejected both because of the outrage it likely would provoke on the Palestinian street and because Barghouti is seen as a potentially reasonable interlocutor in the future.

Barghouti has reached his lofty status through violence. Some of the bloodiest recent attacks have been carried out by the Al-Aksa Brigades, a group created during the early stages of the intifada by militant Tanzim elements.

The brigades have overshadowed another Fatah-linked militia known as the Pioneers of the Popular Army — The Brigades of Return. Last week the U.S. State Department officially labeled the Al-Aksa Brigades a terrorist organization — much to

MIDEAST FOCUS

Report: Arafat/Iran ties

Yasser Arafat has formed an alliance with Iran to back the Palestinian intifada, according to The New York Times.

Citing American and Israeli intelligence officials, the Times says Iran is supplying the Palestinians with heavy weapons and millions of dollars. The partnership reportedly was launched during a meeting between two Arafat aides and Iranian officials in Moscow in May, as the Palestinian Authority president was visiting with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Palestinian officials denied any ties with Iran.

Egyptian convicted as Israel spy

An Egyptian man was sentenced to 15 years of hard labor for spying for Israel.

Shereef Fawzi Mohammed el-Filali, 36, was acquitted of the charges in June, but was convicted this time after Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak personally ordered a new trial. Both he and Israel deny the charges.

New Israeli chief of staff OK'd

Israel's Cabinet approved Maj. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon as the next army chief of staff. Ya'alon is scheduled to replace Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz, whose term expires on July 9.

Ya'alon, the current deputy chief of staff, has been the head of military intelligence and commander of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, among other roles.

Israelis keep bronze medal

The International Skating Union rejected a protest against a bronze medal finish by an Israeli ice-dancing pair.

The union ruled that there were "no grounds" to a Lithuanian protest over the medal awarded to Galit Chait and Sergei Sakhnovsky last Friday at the World Championships in Japan.

the delight of brigade members, who said it would induce them to increase the pace and ferocity of their attacks.

The P.A. leadership occasionally has called on Palestinians to refrain from attacks on civilians inside Israel proper — arguing that they hurt the Palestinians' international image — and to concentrate instead on attacks in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Yet the Al-Aksa Brigades have continued to engage in terror on both sides of the 1967 border. In fact, the radical Muslim organizations no longer have a monopoly on suicide bombing, as secular Al-Aksa Brigades terrorists also have adopted this mode of fighting.

While the fundamentalist groups believe that no accommodation with Israel is permissible, members of the secular factions — with wide popular support, according to opinion polls — believe that a steady drumbeat of terror attacks alongside peace talks will force Israeli negotiators to make additional concessions.

A spokesman for the Al-Aksa Brigades told the BBC in a recent interview that the group has some 300 suicide bombers ready to attack Israelis.

Since the intifada began, secular organizations such as the Tanzim have shown close military cooperation with Hamas and Islamic Jihad, undermining the classic division many analysts used to make between the secular and supposedly moderate PLO and its "extremist" fundamentalist opposition.

The rising popularity of the secular militias has affected the political power of security bosses like Jibril Rajoub in the West Bank and Mohammad Dahlan in the Gaza Strip, the influential chiefs of the P.A.'s security apparatus.

Perhaps in response, Rajoub, a longtime participant in security talks with the Israelis who is often described as a relative moderate, recently came out with strongly anti-Israel statements.

Apparently stung by local criticism of the fact that his offices remained unscratched in the Israeli invasion of Ramallah earlier this month, Rajoub praised the Al-Aksa Brigades as the finest development in the history of Fatah, and said the Palestinian Authority would never act against them or against other groups carrying out terrorist attacks.

The militias and fundamentalist groups complement the Palestinians' official military force, whose 35,000-45,000 members are divided among the security groups, intelligence groups and police forces.

Even if the thousands of armed members of groups such as Tanzim, Hamas and Islamic Jihad aren't counted, the official Palestinian forces contain far more armed men than the number stipulated in the various agreements that accompanied the Oslo peace process.

While many elements of the official Palestinian bodies have planned or participated in terror attacks, the forces have not been deployed against Israel in a coordinated military manner during the intifada, a development that Israeli officials fear.

Consistent with Arafat's tactics during his 35-year leadership of the PLO, he has placed the various security organs in competition with each other, and they are riddled with personal rivalries.

The fact that the Palestinian Authority is geographically divided between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip also creates considerable duplication, so much so that critics have nicknamed the authority "dawlat al-ajhizeh," or "the state of security organs."

Despite their rivalries, the majority of the security bodies remain loyal to Arafat.

The big question mark remains Barghouti. Some Israeli security experts believe Barghouti's refusal to heed the limits set by Arafat has positioned him as the main challenger to Arafat's leadership. Despite the fact that Barghouti's hands are stained with Israeli blood, many Israelis see him as a potential negotiating partner — primarily because they consider the Tanzim "the least of all evils" if Arafat leaves the scene. □

Ukraine is Russia's 'matzah-basket'

MOSCOW (JTA) — Jews in Moscow will have Ukrainian-made matzah this year. More than 200 tons of matzah, baked in Kiev from Russian flour, arrived earlier this month in Moscow.

Until recently, the bulk of matzah available in Russia came from Israel. According to sources in Moscow synagogues, the demand for matzah in the city has grown by 50 percent over the last two years. □



Daily News Bulletin

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

Switzerland's WWII role blasted

Switzerland avoided its moral responsibilities to victims of the Nazis, according to an international panel of historians.

In a final report after a five-year study of Switzerland's wartime role, the nine-member panel said Switzerland's neutrality was abused to justify business dealings with the Axis powers. The panel criticized the country's refugee policy that turned away thousands of people to near-certain death.

"The refugee policy of our authorities contributed to the most atrocious of Nazi objectives — the Holocaust," said Jean-Francois Bergier, a Swiss historian who chaired the panel.

The report also blasts Switzerland's excessive cooperation with Nazi Germany and bad restitution policies.

Deadline extended on artwork

Czech legislators extended a deadline for Jews seeking the return of Nazi-looted artwork.

The amendment approved last Friday extends the deadline for applications from the end of 2002 until the end of 2006.

So far, 7,000 looted artworks have been found but only a few have been returned, according to Tomas Kraus, a Czech Jewish leader.

Rebbe's centenary marked

Celebrations were planned around the world for the 100th anniversary of the birth of Lubavitch Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson. As part of the celebration, 24,000 people reportedly were expected to visit Schneerson's grave in Queens, N.Y., on Sunday.

A native of Ukraine who increased the numbers and strength of the Lubavitch movement worldwide, Schneerson died in 1994.

WWII loan repayments kosher

An independent historical committee cleared the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee regarding its repayment of loans to Holocaust survivors.

During World War II, the JDC was unable to transfer funds to areas under Nazi occupation, and borrowed from local Jews. The process enabled ghettoized Jews to safeguard their money while allowing the JDC to continue its relief programs.

The committee of Holocaust experts found that "the loans served the needs and interest of both parties," and found "no flaw in the manner in which JDC operated insofar as repayment of the loans were concerned."

Although the JDC stated that most of the loaners had been repaid — most by the 1960s — it will continue to honor any debts without deadlines, and has formed a new committee to examine such claims.

Former Czech wartime camp being used as site of porno film

By Magnus Bennett

PRAGUE (JTA) — Czech Jewish leaders are shocked about reports that the former wartime transit camp of Terezin is being used to shoot scenes for a pornographic film.

The Czech tabloid Super reported Saturday that the film, starring top Czech porn star Robert Rosenberg, is set at the end of World War II and will tell the story of how women at the camp were raped by Nazis.

The paper, which printed the story with a collage of a semi-naked woman posing in front of a picture of Terezin, said the film's working title is "How It Was."

Rosenberg, 27, was quoted in Super as saying that the main plot will revolve around Terezin but there will be no erotic scenes shot inside the former camp, which was also known as Theresienstadt.

"Terezin will not have anything to do with erotica, we don't want to treat the victims of the war with disrespect," he told the newspaper.

But Jan Munk, director of the Terezin Memorial, said he was outraged by the idea that Terezin could be used as a backdrop for a porn film.

Munk said there may be a problem in taking the filmmakers to court, however.

"We will be looking into the legal position, but it may be very difficult to make a case if they are just using pictures of Terezin and mixing them into the film," he said.

Newsstands in the town of Terezin were said to be busy as people lined up to read the story. The overwhelming reaction was one of disgust.

"When I read that they were making a porn film using Terezin, I felt sick in the pit of my stomach," Prague schoolteacher Jana Stolova told JTA.

The mayor of Terezin, Ruzena Cechova, has said she plans to contact the police to ascertain whether any laws have been broken.

This is the second scandal surrounding Terezin to hit the headlines in the past year.

In February 2001, a German entrepreneur angered Jews by offering families cheap trips to a shooting range next to Terezin. Czech-born hotel owner Rudolf Potucek used the Internet to advertise trips from his hotel in the town of Litomerice to a range on the outskirts of the former ghetto. The Web site was removed after widespread protests. □

Hungarian Jews welcome decision for a Holocaust center in Budapest

By Agnes Bohm

BUDAPEST (JTA) — The government has approved the establishment of a public foundation for a Holocaust center to commemorate the 600,000 Hungarian Jews who died during World War II. The center will include a museum housed in a former synagogue that belongs to the local Jewish community.

The state will pay \$530,000 to renovate the building. The French government also has offered \$500,000 to build a Holocaust documentation center in the compound.

The Holocaust center's board will include representatives of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, the French and Hungarian governments and the Hungarian Jewish community.

The renovations are due to be finished by the end of 2002, and the museum and documentation center could be ready in 2003.

The Holocaust center will follow the House of Terror, which opened recently in Budapest to commemorate victims of the Nazis and the Communist dictatorships.

"Our goal is to show Hungarian history and to demonstrate realistically the Holocaust era," Tibor Vamos, chairman of the Holocaust center's board, told JTA.

The House of Terror building belonged to the family of a famous Jewish painter before becoming the headquarters of Hungary's pro-Nazi Arrow Cross Party, which ruled from October 1944 to March 1945. From 1945 until the end of the 1960s, the building served as headquarters for the Communist security police.

Members of the Jewish community and some Jewish historians have criticized the House of Terror, saying it devotes a disproportionate amount of space to the Communist era and stresses the brevity of the Arrow Cross regime. □

OBITUARY

Claims Conference leader Israel Miller dies at age 83

By Amy Sara Clark

NEW YORK (JTA) — Rabbi Israel Miller, a longtime Jewish communal leader who most recently was head of the Claims Conference, died at his Jerusalem home March 21 after a long illness.

He was 83.

A passionate advocate for the interests of Holocaust survivors, Miller had served as president of the Claims Conference, a central organization that dealt with restitution for Holocaust survivors, since 1982.

Friends and colleagues remember Miller as a soft-spoken, modest man whose patience and respect for each individual made him an exceptional negotiator.

"For me he was one of the great Jewish leaders of this era," said Gideon Taylor, executive vice president of the Claims Conference. "He had vision, courage and wisdom."

Taylor remembers that at the end of one particularly stormy Claims Conference meeting, Miller made a speech that "drew together all the different heated opinions into a compromise solution with elegance, humor, and even a story from the Talmud."

"Everyone left the room feeling that their views had been heard and justice had been done," he remembered.

Under Miller's leadership, the Claims Conference helped negotiate compensation and restitution agreements with Germany and other European countries leading to the payment of approximately \$2 billion (in today's dollars) to more than 400,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors.

In addition, Miller negotiated the return of unclaimed Jewish property in the former East Germany — the sale of which allowed the Claims Conference to allocate approximately \$500 million to organizations assisting needy Holocaust survivors.

The Claims Conference's nominee as the next chairman, Julius Berman — who also knew Miller when Miller served as chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations — remembers Miller as "a great compromiser" and a "great listener."

"That was his basic ability. He could sit there and listen and listen and listen" while everyone else was "climbing the walls."

Miller also was a fervent advocate for the rights of Soviet Jewry, leading a delegation of the Rabbinical Council of America to the Soviet Union and serving as national chairman of the American Jewish Council on Soviet Jewry in the 1970s.

Saul Kagan, executive vice president emeritus and corporate secretary consultant at the Claims Conference, worked closely with Miller for 35 years.

He remembered him as a "modest, soft-spoken man with a quiet strength and determination."

Miller, Kagan remembered, was always "deeply concerned with the fate of the individual human survivor."

Miller also served as a high-ranking official at Yeshiva University for more than 25 years, serving as senior vice president since 1979 and senior vice president emeritus since 1994.

Kagan remembers Miller as "always having an open door" at the university. "He was loved by whomever had the good fortune to know him," Kagan added.

Miller was born in Baltimore. He earned his bachelor's degree,

magna cum laude, at Yeshiva University in 1938, was ordained at the University's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in 1941 and was awarded an honorary doctor of divinity from the school in 1967.

During World War II, Miller served as chaplain in the Army Air Corps.

Miller was active in American Jewish communal life for decades.

In addition to his roles at Yeshiva University, the Conference of Presidents and the Claims Conference, Miller also served as founding president of the American Zionist Federation, founder of the Jewish Community Relations Council in New York and chairman of the American Zionist Council.

Miller also held leadership roles in the Jewish Agency for Israel, the World Zionist Organization, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and the Rabbinical Council of America — and numerous others.

Miller was consulted and honored by numerous U.S. presidents and Israeli prime ministers.

In 1975 Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin presented Miller with an award for distinguished leadership and service to Israel and the Jewish people.

Former President Reagan consulted with Miller prior to his summit meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev in Geneva, and invited Miller to visit South Africa as a member of his fact-finding mission in 1986.

Former President Johnson appointed Miller to the National Citizens Committee for Community Relations to help implement civil rights legislation.

"I can't begin to tell you how much I loved Rabbi Miller," said Rep. Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.), who remembered him as "a beautiful person."

"For me he will always remain a bright spot in my heart for how good people can really be."

Miller is survived by his wife, Ruth, and four children: Rabbi David Miller, associate director of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary's Gruss program in Jerusalem; Rabbi Michael Miller, executive vice president of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater New York; Deborah Kram, director of Ma'ayan, a Jewish women's study institute; and Judith Kalish, an administrator at Hebrew University.

He also is survived by 19 grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren, his brother, David, and his sister, Dorothy. □

Jews protest SS honor

MOSCOW (JTA) — Two Ukrainian Jewish groups have denounced a decision to offer veterans' privileges to fighters from a local Waffen SS unit.

The city council of Ivano-Frankivsk decided last week to grant the benefits to former members of the Waffen SS "Galichina" division.

The United Jewish Community of Ukraine and the All-Ukrainian Jewish Congress called the council's move a "blasphemous decision" which "not only reverses the verdict of the international tribunal in Nuremberg that denounced the SS as a criminal organization, but insults our memory."

The statement also calls upon Ukraine's president and other authorities to cancel the council's decision because it "contradicts the basic tenets of civilized society." □