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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli wounded in train bomb

A bomb exploded beneath a commuter train in southern Israel on Sunday, moderately wounding the engineer.

The blast occurred shortly before 8 a.m., as the southbound train was traveling between the towns of Rehovot and Yavneh.

One a passenger was treated for shock.

Police, who are treating the incident as a terrorist attack, said the bomb was set off by remote control.

Israeli deportation plan rejected

Israel's attorney general rejected a plan to deport the relatives and friends of terrorists from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip.

Elyakim Rubinstein said the plan amounts to collective punishment and is therefore illegal.

He did, however, approve deportations on a case-by-case basis if it is proven that the deportee aided the terrorist or was involved in terrorist activity.

The international community, including the United States and United Nations, has protested the planned policy, which some Israeli officials believe will deter terrorists.

Hamas last week threatened "unique martyrdom operations" if deportations are carried out.

U.N. endorses three-year window

The U.N. Security Council endorsed a three-year timetable for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

On July 18, the Security Council officially endorsed a communique issued earlier last week by the Quartet — made up of the United States, United Nations, Russia and the European Union — that called for a revitalized effort to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and for reforming the Palestinian government.

Israel to close embassies

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres reportedly plans to announce on July 28 which of 10 embassies and consulates will be closed.

The closings are a cost-cutting move aimed at saving more than \$9 million, according to the Jerusalem Post newspaper.

The announcement was originally to take place Sunday, but was delayed in order to reveal the list to officials at the Foreign Ministry, the paper said.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Terror museum in Budapest frightens some Hungarian Jews

By Michael J. Jordan

BUDAPEST (JTA) — Five months after it opened, Budapest's controversial "House of Terror" has emerged as one of the capital's most popular destinations among both young and old, drawing crowds that endure two-hour lines in sweltering heat.

However, rather than achieving its aim of memorializing the victims of totalitarian terror — of both Hungarian wartime fascism and postwar communism — critics say the lavish museum symbolizes the charged, right-wing atmosphere that has swept Hungary.

The museum's prominent location at 60 Andrássy Street was chosen not because it sits among the elegant, fin-de-siècle mansions of Andrássy — known to some as "the Champs-Élysées of Budapest" — but because it was headquarters of the Hungarian Nazis between 1944 and 1945, then was taken over by the Communist secret police once Soviet troops liberated, then occupied, Hungary.

Hungary suffered under both Nazism and communism, "but Hungarian society has never confronted the crimes of these terror systems, or had a memorial to its victims," said the museum's director, Maria Schmidt, in an e-mail interview with JTA.

Hungary's Jews, though, are deeply troubled by the House of Terror.

They have several concerns: By presenting all victims as equal, and all victimizers as equal, the museum diminishes the uniqueness of the Holocaust, not to mention the Communist era; by painting Hungary as one of Germany's victims rather than an accomplice, it continues a trend in which right-wing Hungarian historians are whitewashing Hungary's role in the death of some 550,000 Hungarian Jews; and by devoting only one of nearly two dozen rooms exclusively to the Holocaust, it implies that communism was far worse than the Holocaust.

Finally, though Jews are mentioned nowhere in the Communist portion of the museum, the fact that the Hungarian right wing — especially its media — routinely highlights the Jewishness of some of Hungary's most notorious Communists means that many visitors to the House of Terror receive an implicit message that Hungarian Jews are to blame for communism.

"For several years, it's been in the air: They hint that communism was Jewish revenge for the Holocaust," said Gyorgy Litvan, a renowned Hungarian historian who as a teen-aged Holocaust survivor was himself drawn to the Communist Party, but later criticized the party leadership for its brutal excesses and was imprisoned for four years.

Following the war, of the couple hundred thousand Jews who survived and remained in Hungary — many others had emigrated to Palestine or to the West — a substantial number did indeed join the Communist Party.

Party records never detailed a cadre's religion or ethnicity, but historians estimate that anywhere from one-quarter to one-half of the remaining Jews — especially young people — flocked to the movement.

Their reasons for joining were myriad: gratitude, to the Soviet Communists who had liberated them from ghettos, forced labor and concentration camps; idealism, fueled by pervasive Communist propaganda that promised a society with no distinction between rich and poor, Christian and Jew; revenge, as it was clear that some of the Hungarian perpetrators of genocide roamed freely afterward; and opportunism and survivalism, as the Communist purge of fascists from power created many new job opportunities for Jews, who were viewed as reliably anti-fascist and, thus, trustworthy.

Some Hungarian Jews assumed highly visible positions after the war, including the first Communist dictator, Matyas Rakosi and the first head of the secret police, Peter

MIDEAST FOCUS

High-level contacts renewed

Israel proposed a troop withdrawal from some Palestinian areas in the West Bank, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said. The withdrawals would test the ability of Palestinian security forces to prevent attacks on Israeli civilians, Peres added Sunday.

"We have no interest in staying in those places where the Palestinians can prove that they can take control," Peres told Israel Radio. The proposal was made during several hours of talks Saturday night involving Peres and Palestinian Authority official Saeb Erekat.

Peres did not say from where the soldiers might be withdrawn, but Army Radio said the forces could withdraw from Hebron and Bethlehem as early as Tuesday if those areas remain quiet.

Ninth bus attack victim buried

The ninth victim of a West Bank terror attack was laid to rest. Hundreds of people attended the funeral last Friday of Yocheved Ben Hanan, 21, who died a day earlier from injuries sustained in the July 16 terrorist ambush of a bus near the settlement of Immanuel.

In another development, all three victims of the July 17 double-suicide bombing near Tel Aviv's old Central Bus Station were identified: Boris Shamis, 25, of Tel Aviv; Adrian Andres, 30; of Romania; Xu Hengyong, 39, of China.

Alleged terrorists' homes razed

Israeli security forces tore down the homes of two alleged terrorist leaders.

Troops demolished the home of Hamas member Nasser Assida, who is believed to have been behind the July 16 ambush of a bus near the settlement of Immanuel in which nine people were killed.

They also tore down the home of Ali Ajouri, who allegedly dispatched the two suicide bombers who killed three people in a July 17 attack in Tel Aviv.

Gabor. Yet, most Jews in the party were ordinary card-carrying members.

"Communism was our only guarantee that fascism would never return," said Agota Engel, who was 12 when Hungarian Nazis shot and killed her older sister in 1944, and dumped her corpse in the icy waters of the Danube River, which flows through Budapest.

Engel then joined the Communist youth movement. Now 70 and a librarian, she remains loyal to the ideology to this day. "However, not every Communist was a Jew," Engel said, "nor was every Jew a Communist."

Indeed, one detail Hungarian anti-Semites conveniently overlook is the fact that at its peak, in the early 1950s, the party numbered some 800,000 members, which underscores the fact that legions of workers and peasants also embraced the system.

Moreover, by the early 1960s, the party had purged virtually all Jews from prominent positions.

Blaming Jews for communism "is a falsification of history," Litvan said.

"It wasn't a terror by only a handful of secret police. Millions participated."

This distortion is not only aimed at scapegoating Jews and exculpating Hungarians; observers say the House of Terror also has contemporary political motives.

The right-wing government of Prime Minister Viktor Orban seemed to spare no expense in creating the museum, from the ubiquitous marble and high-tech multimedia exhibits, to the authentic Soviet tank parked in the atrium and the restored torture chambers in the cellar. The museum opened in February of this year, with two months left in a heated election campaign.

The main opposition party was the Socialists, the increasingly centrist heirs of the Communist Party. Together with the small, liberal Alliance of Free Democrats, they attracted the vast majority of Jewish voters.

After Orban's Fidesz, as his Young Democrats are known, assumed power in 1998, they missed no opportunity to remind the public of their opponents' Communist past.

In the process, Orban has earned a reputation for nationalist excess and chumminess with a flagrantly anti-Semitic party, the Hungarian Justice and Life Party.

As the elections approached and polls indicated it was too close to call, Orban began using with-us-or-against-us rhetoric to rally patriotic Hungarians, and warning, implausibly, that a vote for the Socialists meant a return to dictatorship.

The incitement frightened many of Hungary's roughly 100,000 Jews.

"That was the first time in my life that I thought maybe I have something to be afraid of," said Andras Daranyi, 33, the executive director of the Budapest Holocaust Museum, which will break ground this fall and open its doors in 2004.

"You can be freely Jewish here, but at that moment I felt there was something under the water's surface that could blow up."

Among the rhetorical weapons against the Socialists and liberals, say critics, was the House of Terror. "That was why it got immense money and was completed in record time," said Tibor Vamos, a Holocaust survivor and former Communist who is the head of Hungary's Auschwitz Foundation.

The main message was that the Socialists "are a direct continuation of the Stalinist regime" and its leaders "are the same who introduced the Stalinist terror," Vamos said. "That is a really terrible, brazen lie."

Schmidt, the museum's director and a close adviser to Orban, denies the charge.

"I trust that the explanation" for this "is just coincidental timing," Schmidt told JTA. "If the Socialist-liberal elites thought this museum is some kind of 'weapon' against them, then that reflects poorly on them, not us, since with this they are finding community with those behind the eras of terror. No one forced them to do that."

In the April 21 elections, the coalition of Socialists and liberals ousted Orban, but at age 38, most of his political career is still ahead of him. Earlier this month, Budapest police fired tear gas to put down a violent demonstration by Orban's supporters, who insisted the election was stolen and demanded a recount.

Some Socialists had indicated prior to the elections that, if elected, they would convert the House of Terror to a "House of Remembrance and Reconciliation."

With tensions still running high two months after the elections, the new Socialist government has yet to speak out about the fate of the museum.

Orban, who is now in the opposition, cites the House of Terror as one of his administration's greatest achievements and has vowed to put up a fight. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Officials hesitate to give motive in Rome Jewish grave desecration

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — Italian police and Jewish leaders are disagreeing over the motives behind the desecration of dozens of Jewish graves in a Rome cemetery.

Police over the weekend appeared to be focusing their investigation on local cemetery maintenance rackets rather than on neo-Nazi anti-Semites or Muslim fanatics.

"I don't think I agree with this, but they seem to be pursuing that line," said Riccardo Pacifici, a spokesman for Rome's Jewish community.

He urged "prudence," however, adding that if rackets were involved, it was hard to understand why only Jewish tombs were targeted.

Police over the weekend interrogated cemetery workers and seized tools and maintenance equipment.

Vandals smashed as many as three dozen tombs in the Jewish section of Rome's Verano cemetery on the night of July 17, the beginning of Tisha B'Av, the solemn fast day that marks the anniversary of the destruction of the First and Second Temples.

"It doesn't seem to me as if this attack came on a date chosen by chance," said Amos Luzzatto, president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities. "The coincidence is too suggestive to be ignored."

Police believe at least 10 people took part in the incident. They shattered marble tablets, destroyed vases and statues, wrenched off Stars of David and even dug down into graves. But unlike previous episodes of anti-Semitic vandalism in Rome, including the desecration of Jewish graves at another Rome cemetery in 1996, the perpetrators did not scrawl swastikas or anti-Semitic slogans.

The attack stunned local Jews and prompted an outpouring of sympathy and indignation from President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and other officials. Local Muslim groups also condemned the attack.

"This is extremely serious," Rome Mayor Walter Veltroni said July 18 after visiting the scene. "This was clearly done with the intention of damaging a place that is particularly dear to the Jewish community of Rome."

Jewish groups and other observers alike viewed the desecration as the latest in the wave of attacks on Jewish institutions and individuals in several countries in recent months, linked to the conflict in the Middle East. Most of those attacks appear to have been carried out by young Arabs lashing out at Jews as surrogates for Israel.

To date, no such attacks had taken place in Italy. But the cemetery desecration came less than a week after police virtually sealed off the historic Jewish Ghetto in Venice because of an apparent terrorist threat.

In a message last Friday to Rome Chief Rabbi Riccardo Di Segni, Pope John Paul II said he was "profoundly saddened by this detestable act that follows other similar events of a serious nature that have taken place with alarming frequency in Europe and on other continents." He also condemned such "ignoble acts and the anti-Jewish sentiments that inspire them."

The national director of the Anti-Defamation League, Abraham Foxman, was in Rome when the attack took place. He was in Italy for a meeting with Berlusconi as part of consultations with European leaders on how to combat the new wave of anti-Semitism. He, too, inspected the cemetery.

"The Jews of the world feel more vulnerable than they did 50, 60 years ago," he said.

Last month, in an address to the congress of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, the speaker of Italy's Chamber of Deputies dismayed his audience by minimizing concerns about anti-Semitism.

Anti-Semitism "could be the expression of a crazed and criminal fragment of society, but not certainly a mass phenomenon," Pierfernando Casini said. "To evoke the presence of anti-Semitism in our society, or in some political forces, or in the Catholic Church, demonstrates a mistaken image of our country."

Francesco Spagnolo, director of a Jewish music study center in Milan, said the cemetery attack proved Casini wrong. "Something really is going on here," he said. "I'm very disillusioned." □

U.S. seeks deportation

The U.S. government is trying to revoke the citizenship of a man who allegedly served as a Nazi concentration camp guard.

The Romanian-born Adam Friedrich served as a guard at the Gross Rosen camp in Germany, and a nearby subcamp, between 1943 and 1945, according to the U.S. Justice Department.

U.S. officials also charge that he lied about this service when he immigrated to the United States from Austria in 1955.

"Men like Friedrich made it possible for the Nazi regime to subjugate, persecute and ultimately murder the innocent men, women and children whom they targeted," said Eli Rosenbaum, director of the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations, the government's Nazi-hunting unit.

Friedrich, 80, who lives in St. Louis, became a U.S. citizen in 1962.

Synagogue honors Daniel Pearl

A New Jersey synagogue is renaming its school after slain Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl. Temple B'nai Shalom of East Brunswick, N.J., said the decision to name its school the Daniel Pearl Education Center was made with the blessing of the reporter's family, who will attend the Oct. 20 dedication ceremony.

The center will offer courses in tolerance, an annual Daniel Pearl memorial lecture and programs based on Pearl's love of music, writing and humor.

French premier blasts racism

France's prime minister condemned recent anti-Semitic acts in France as an insult to the nation. The moral values of France "can leave no room for anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia," Jean-Pierre Raffarin said Sunday. He promised that those who commit anti-Semitic acts would be found and punished.

He made the comments at a ceremony marking the 60th anniversary of a roundup of Jews in France. On July 16-17, 1942, French officials herded 13,152 Jews into the Velodrome d'Hiver, a Paris stadium from which they were deported to Nazi death camps.

Mandela prosecutor dies at 90

Percy Yutar, the prosecutor in the trial in the early 1960s in which Nelson Mandela and other African National Congress leaders were sentenced to life imprisonment, died in Johannesburg shortly before his 90th birthday.

In 1995, Mandela invited Yutar for lunch as part of the reconciliation process in South Africa.

Yutar played an active role in the local Jewish community.

NOTE TO READERS: Jews everywhere are looking to Israel's leaders to provide a vision for the future. In this special series commissioned by JTA, Israel's top political figures answer the vital question: Where do we go from here? Also included in the series are pieces by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer and Former Prime Ministers Benjamin Netanyahu and Ehud Barak.

Create a state, add the 'Quartet'

By Shimon Peres

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Labor Party believes that the way to avoid a threat to Israel's existence if turned into a binational state without a Jewish majority is to create a nonmilitarized Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel.

Labor looks upon an end to Israeli control over the Palestinian people as a measure consistent with the moral code of Jewish history and in the political and security interests of the State of Israel.

These goals can be accomplished only through separation by mutual agreement.

An agreement relating to a shared political horizon may lead to a real cease-fire, paving the road to permanent peace.

When the Palestinian side rejected the proposals of President Clinton at Camp David, it posed a serious question in the minds of many as to whether a Palestinian partner really existed for the peace process. It seems that in the wake of the skepticism generated by this rejection, it is necessary to introduce an additional partner into the equation, to impart credibility to the negotiations and confidence in their resolutions.

Such a partner already exists — the "Quartet" that was formed in Madrid by the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United Nations.

The mounting dangers in the Middle East — ballistic threats from outside the geographical range of the Middle East, across-border terror and unconventional weapons — elicit the urgent and consolidated intervention of the Quartet, so as to generate a renewed peace momentum.

A peace plan must consist of elements that are acceptable in Israel, and which will not be rejected by the Arab world. Such a prospect is being made possible by the Saudi peace proposals and the understandings reached with the Palestinians.

The Peres-Abu Alaa understandings reached between ourselves and the Palestinian representatives, under the leadership of Abu Alaa, the speaker of the Palestinian legislative council, did not provoke either formal approval or rejection, and exist by dint of the force of logic that closes ideological distances within Israel and bridges political gaps between ourselves and our neighbors.

These understandings are based on four stages:

- Stage I (a prerequisite): The creation of a single Palestinian security arm that will dismantle the fragmented Palestinian armed factions that enable extremist organizations to threaten peace, undermine Palestinian autonomy and provoke Israel into exercising its right for self-defense. Also, only by operating a single Palestinian headquarters that will consolidate overall control over arms and triggers will it be possible to achieve a real cease-fire.

- Stage II: Mutual recognition between the State of Israel and the Palestinian state within a short period of time (a few weeks).

Israel will recognize the Palestinian Authority as a Palestinian state, the boundaries of which will be determined through negotiations based on U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338, and the Palestinians will recognize Israel as a Jewish state.

- Stage III: Negotiations that will be ongoing for a year, with the aim of finding solutions to controversial issues — border lines, Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security measures.

- Stage IV: Will be dedicated to the implementation of the agreements reached, which will take a further year.

The accords and agreements reached will be endorsed by the Quartet, largely representing world consensus.

This kind of endorsement has real enforcement power, for a breach of agreement could trigger international delegitimization and even affect aid allocations.

There is no need for outside military intervention to arrive at an agreement or enforce its implementation. An army is unable to function except on a battlefield or to control a situation that will ensue from an accord between the sides. An army cannot replace an agreement, nor can it function when an agreement is absent.

It is not difficult to foresee the demands of the Quartet: disarm the Palestinian terror organizations and create a central headquarters that will have sole control over arms, put an end to terror, stop the incitement, freeze settlement activity, ensure Israeli withdrawal to outside of the Palestinian territories, ensure financial transparency and release of funds; a removal of roadblocks, opening of borders, erection of joint industrial zones, open labor markets, economic rehabilitation of the Palestinian entity and the development of a modern economy for all the peoples — based on global market prerequisites, European Union regulations, American free trade zone stipulations and a market resting on openness, competition, transparency and growth. □

Shimon Peres is the foreign minister of Israel. A former prime minister of Israel, he is also the former head of the Labor Party.

Jews dodge Croatian census

ZAGREB, Croatia (JTA) — Croatia's recently issued census for 2001 appeared to indicate that some of the nation's Jews are unwilling to admit their background.

The census indicated that 576 people described themselves as Jews "by ethnicity," but only 475 described their religion as Judaism.

Given that there are 2,000 registered members of Croatia's nine organized Jewish communities, the results showed there were many people who sought another self-description.

The issue of how many Jews there are among Croatia's population of 4,437,460 is more than academic.

As an official minority group, Jews are eligible for aid from the state, including money for a kindergarten, retirement home, newspaper and a variety of Jewish cultural projects.

Jewish leaders have long been worried that their status with the government could be lost as fewer declare themselves as Jews.

Before the census was held, Ognjen Kraus, president of the Zagreb Jewish community, wrote a letter appealing to Jews to mark "Jewish" on their census questionnaires.

Just the same, he was not surprised by the results.

"One should take into account that more than 90 percent of the members of the Jewish community have been born in mixed marriages and have married a non-Jew," two factors that would lead them to define themselves non-Jewishly. □