



# Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Threat against Jewish institutions

Masked anti-terror police with machine guns stood guard Saturday outside New York's Temple Emanu-El.

The move took place as security was beefed up at Jewish sites after authorities went on a heightened state of alert for a possible Al-Qaida attack.

The decision to raise the nation's terror-alert level reportedly was made because of a surge in threats against Jewish institutions.

Newsweek reported that FBI officials began contacting Jewish leaders last Friday to warn them to be especially vigilant and to enhance security at Sabbath services and other weekend events, law enforcement sources said. [Page 3]

### Israel, P.A. renew contacts

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon suggested a partial cease-fire when he met Feb. 5 with Ahmed Karia, the speaker of the Palestinian legislative council.

At the meeting, Sharon proposed that the Palestinian Authority choose one or two cities for which it will assume full security responsibility.

If the Palestinian Authority takes action to halt terrorist attacks, Israel would withdraw its troops from those areas.

### Israel elected to U.N. body

Israel was elected to a U.N. General Assembly body for the first time in decades.

The General Assembly unanimously chose an Israeli delegate as one of three vice chairs serving on the Working Group on Disarmament, headed by Indonesia.

Israel's candidacy was presented by the Western European and Others Group, the regional grouping Israel joined in May 2000 after years of being the only country excluded from one of the U.N.'s regional groups.

It was the first time since then that WEOG presented Israel's candidacy for a U.N. body.

"Israel's election marks an important step toward ending the anomaly of Israel's treatment at the U.N., whereby Israel was the only member state excluded from actively participating in the U.N. election process as a full and equal member," said Israeli U.N. official Arye Mekel.

## AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

### Film blasting media coverage of Mideast galvanizes French Jews

By Philip Carmel

PARIS (JTA) — Even after 10 screenings a day for the past two weeks, a film charging that the French media is biased against Israel is still playing to packed houses in Paris.

The film, "Decryptage" or "Decoding," has caught the attention of French Jews who long have felt that the French media's depiction of the Mideast shows a pro-Palestinian slant.

The film's producers, Jacques Tarnero and Philippe Bensoussan, say it is "an opinion piece rather than a documentary."

But the film has succeeded in provoking widespread debate in the French media, not only for its content but also for the fact that it appears to have struck a chord among French Jews.

Each day, French Jews have gathered outside the Arlequin cinema in the heart of Paris' movie district on the Left Bank of the Seine, in what often appears more a gesture of solidarity with Israel than a desire for a night out.

The lines stretch down the street, and people who can't get tickets are forced to return for later showings.

"People come to feel united. It's something between personal therapy, a family visit, the synagogue and a football game," Bensoussan explained.

Indeed, the vast majority of viewers are Jews, a fact that irritates some in the audience.

"I knew everyone in there," student David Biton, 17, told JTA. "It's a good film, but it's much more important for non-Jews to see it. They should put it on at other cinemas. It's difficult enough as it is just to get tickets here."

Biton came to see the film with three friends, all classmates from his Jewish school in Paris. Most of his family and friends had seen the movie, he said, but he had had little success persuading non-Jewish friends to come.

"They should put it on TV," Biton said. "Then people might see the truth instead of the disinformation they constantly feed us."

"Decryptage" claims that there is a persistent campaign by important sections of the French media — most notably by the leading daily, *Le Monde*, and the international news agency, *Agence France Presse* — to blame Israel for the outbreak of the Palestinian intifada in September 2000.

The film charges that major French television channels consciously and deliberately blamed Israel's then-opposition leader, Ariel Sharon, for the violence that began the day after his visit to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

Moreover, the film details what it describes as evidence that the Palestinian Authority planned the intifada even while it was involved in peace negotiations with Israel, details that were ignored or glossed over by French media.

The film also includes footage of how Palestinian children are educated to hate Israel and Jews.

It also strongly criticizes the portrayal by the France 2 television channel of the death of a young Palestinian teen-ager in Israeli-Palestinian cross fire in the Gaza Strip in October 2000.

The image of the boy's death, captured by a French cameraman, became one of the indelible early images of the intifada and was used to whip up anti-Israel sentiment

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Sharon asked to form government

Israeli President Moshe Katsav invited Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to form the next government. Under the law, Sharon has six weeks to form a new governing coalition.

Sharon invited "all Zionist parties" to join a broad-based coalition. He also called on Labor Party leader Amram Mitzna to join his government, saying if Mitzna carries through on his repeated refusals to do so it would be a "breach of public faith."

### 3 Palestinians carry out bombing

Three Palestinians were killed in a suicide car bombing Sunday outside an Israeli army post in southern Gaza. Two Israeli soldiers were lightly injured in the blast and two others were treated for shock.

The three Palestinians first opened fire on the position from their car, and then drove up to it and detonated the explosives.

### United States issues advisory

The U.S. State Department warned private citizens not to travel to Israel as tensions with Iraq mount.

In an advisory last Friday, the United States also urged all but essential U.S. diplomats, along with their family members, to leave Israel, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. It also urged Americans to leave Iraq, adding that foreigners in Iraq have been used in the past as human shields and there are credible reports they may be kidnapped.

### Palestinians rally for Iraq

Some 1,000 Palestinians marched Feb. 6 in Ramallah, calling on Saddam Hussein to use chemical weapons against Israel. Demonstrators carried posters of Saddam Hussein and Yasser Arafat, and called on the Iraqi leader to bomb Tel Aviv.



## Daily News Bulletin

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around the world — even though investigations later showed that he might well have been killed by a Palestinian bullet.

But the film is not simply an apology for the current Israeli government; indeed, both Tarnero and Bensoussan are somewhat left of center when it comes to the Middle East.

Rather, they were motivated to produce "Decryptage" by what Tarnero describes as "a hateful holding to account of Israel and an intellectual scandal in France and in Europe."

"We have nothing against criticism of the policies of the government of the State of Israel," Tarnero states in the film's preamble. "But what we have seen for two years now, and under the appearance of political criticism, is just demonization, defamation and denunciation" of Israel.

The film takes the 1995 assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin as its starting point.

It includes interviews with leading members of Israel's peace camp — such as former Prime Minister Ehud Barak and his foreign minister, Shlomo Ben-Ami — as well as left-wing intellectuals in Israel and France.

From the moment of its release Jan. 22, "Decryptage" has gotten much publicity in the French media — though many publications accused it of presenting only one point of view.

Typical were the comments of Ange-Dominique Bouzet in the center-left daily Liberation, which itself comes in for criticism in the film. Bouzet described "Decryptage" as a "propaganda documentary" that is part of "a militant attempt at disinformation."

However, Philippe Cohen of Marianne noted that "Decryptage" was very much "a symptom of the fracture between those who guard Palestine in their hearts and those who live Israel in their guts."

Later, even Liberation ran a two-page spread on "Decryptage," describing it as a "docu-mirror of French Jews."

"Decryptage has mobilized the community," the paper said.

Interestingly, Marianne also wondered whether campaigns for more balanced media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were starting to have an effect.

Criticizing the tendency of the French media to see things in black and white, Marianne's publisher, Jean-Francois Kahn, wrote that the media was "generally pro-Palestinian, in the same way it was or is pro-Biafran, pro-Bangladeshi, pro-Bosnian or pro-Chechen."

Nevertheless, there was an increasing attempt within the media to adopt a more balanced approach to matters both Jewish and Israeli, "and we can only rejoice about that," he said.

Even among Jews lining up at the Arlequin, there was agreement on that score.

"You know, I watch TV here and I see the news, but I have children in Israel so I see both sides," Suzy Soussan told JTA.

"But it's getting better here and there's a lot less negative reporting because, finally, the community is doing something about it."

"Decryptage" ends with the famous quote from Hillel: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?"

With the seats at the Arlequin still filled to capacity, French Jews appear to have taken the message very much to heart. □

### 'Pianist' raises money for Prague

PRAGUE (JTA) — The Czech premiere of the Holocaust movie "The Pianist" raised more than \$3,000 to restore Prague Jewish sites damaged by floods last summer.

Czech Jewish leaders later expressed gratitude to director Roman Polanski, who attended the recent screening and visited the Jewish community's headquarters.

The film tells the story of a Jewish musician who spent five years in hiding during the Nazi occupation of Warsaw.

It is based on a memoir of the war years written by the Polish Jewish pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Communist leader blasts Jews

Russian Jewish groups are criticizing the leader of Russia's Communist Party for a comment they say will fan anti-Semitism. Speaking on Feb. 5, Gennady Zyuganov said Jews are overrepresented in the government, business and media.

Such remarks "can be viewed only as fomenting ethnic animosity toward Jews," the president of the Russian Jewish Congress, Yevgeny Satanovsky, said in a news release. Experts have predicted that Communist Party officials plan to play on anti-Semitic and xenophobic sentiment before the nation's parliamentary elections, slated for December.

According to the Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union, the comments by Zyuganov are the most openly anti-Semitic remarks the Communist leader has made since 1998, when the previous elections to Russia's Parliament were held.

### Holocaust denier arrested

A Holocaust denier was arrested Feb. 6 in Tennessee for failing to appear at an immigration-related hearing. Ernst Zundel, formerly of Toronto, moved to the United States about two years ago with the intention of becoming a permanent resident.

The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruled in his absence last year that he had broken the law through his operation of a California-based Web site that promoted hatred of Jews.

### Romania project launched

B'nai B'rith International launched a project to archive information about the Romanian Jewish community.

The Romanian Jewish Heritage Project, which was launched last week, will amass data on Romania's Jewish population in the 19th and 20th centuries, and will design walking tours of Bucharest and Iasi. B'nai B'rith received \$96,110 from the United States Agency for International Development for the project.

### Group honors lawmakers

The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding inaugurated the first-ever Latino/Jewish Congressional Awards Ceremony by honoring Reps. Bob Filner (D-Calif.) and Silvestre Reyes (D-Texas).

Filner, a Jewish member of Congress, scored 100 percent on votes monitored by the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda. Reyes, a Hispanic legislator, supported the creation of the El Paso Holocaust Museum in Texas. The National Council of La Raza and the World Jewish Congress were also honored at last week's event in Washington.

The foundation is planning on opening an office in Washington later this year, working directly with legislators in the Hispanic and black caucuses.

## After U.S. issues heightened alert, Jews try to go about their business

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — David Waldner isn't going to let new warnings that terrorists might be targeting U.S. Jewish sites change his routine.

"I'm not going to stop what I'm doing" just "because someone said, 'It's orange today,'" Waldner said Sunday as his 21-month-old son, Dylan, used a stair handrail as a jungle gym outside the District of Columbia's Jewish Community Center.

Waldner's use of the word "orange" referred to the increased state of alert announced by the U.S. government over the weekend.

Waldner's sentiment was shared by other members of Washington's Jewish community interviewed at the JCC this week: They said they would live their lives as before despite the upgraded alerts.

In New York, meanwhile, the state of alert was all too visible. Masked anti-terror police with machine guns stood guard Saturday outside the city's Temple Emanu-El.

Newsweek reported that FBI officials began contacting Jewish leaders last Friday to warn them to be especially vigilant and to enhance security at Sabbath services and other weekend events, law enforcement sources said.

State and local police also were asked to provide extra patrols for Jewish events.

Officials said the new information warned about the possibility of attacks by Al-Qaida on synagogues, Jewish community centers, Jewish or Jewish-owned hospitals, youth groups, hotels and resorts.

Officials said they are unusually worried both because of recent electronic intercepts that suggest an imminent attack as well as the sheer volume of incoming reports that have been coming in mentioning Jewish targets.

"This is a full-court press," one FBI official told the magazine about the bureau's sudden outreach to Jewish groups. "There's real anxiety about this."

In Washington, officials at several Jewish sites said security has been a particular priority since the attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. The government's latest announcement did not prompt specific actions or keep people away, the officials said. "We've been on constant high security," said Alan Caro, assistant executive director of the District of Columbia's Jewish Community Center.

Since Sept. 11, members of the JCC have had to show identification to enter, and additional security staffers were hired for the building. In addition, local police tried to beef up their patrols around the center.

Several people at the JCC said they were skeptical about the announcement, saying it could be motivated by a need to increase support for U.S. military action against Iraq.

"There's war-mongering, and this could very well be a part of that," said Sue Roemer, cantor emeritus at Temple Beth Ami in Rockville, Md.

Others suggested that law enforcement is making the warnings public to protect themselves from liability if a terrorist attack were to occur.

One Jewish organization is planning a major conference next week in Washington that was to include outdoor events at Jewish landmarks. Organizers said they would coordinate with law enforcement before proceeding.

"If they suggest we should move the event, we'll move it," said one of the organizers, who asked that his name and the organization name remain anonymous for security reasons. "Otherwise, we're planning to go forward."

The alert came as the Anti-Defamation League was holding its annual National Executive Committee meeting in Palm Beach, Fla.

Leaders received calls from the FBI, informing them of the heightened alert and asking them to circulate the information to other Jewish organizations.

"There's no specific indication that Jewish sites have been targeted," said the ADL's national director, Abraham Foxman, "but the fact that they reached out to us means that somewhere, someone felt that there was a specific need to reach out to the Jewish community."

Foxman added that because Jewish leaders were briefed in the past when there was a specific threat to the community, many are assuming law enforcement officials may have similar information this time around. □

## AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

## Czech Jews praise Havel; are uncertain about successor

By Magnus Bennett

PRAGUE (JTA) — Czech Jews are wondering whether the country's next president will prove as staunch a friend of the Jewish community as was Vaclav Havel.

Havel, who served two terms as president of the Czech Republic before stepping down on Feb. 2, was warmly regarded by the Jewish community for his readiness to confront anti-Semitism and keep the horrors of the Holocaust firmly in the public consciousness.

Among his achievements was the convening of an international conference in Prague in 1999, titled "The Holocaust Phenomenon," to examine the lessons to be learned from the past.

Havel also played a behind-the-scenes role in ensuring that all Czech schools study the Holocaust.

Jewish leaders now are facing the future with some uncertainty. It could take until the fall until a replacement for Havel is chosen. Three potential candidates with Jewish backgrounds already have pulled out of the race for personal reasons.

Tomas Kraus, executive director of the Czech Federation of Jewish Communities, said it will be very difficult to replace Havel.

"It's not so much the position as the man," said Kraus, who says the post of president is largely ceremonial in the Czech Republic.

"We certainly hope that the next president will be aware of Jewish issues in a wider sense," Kraus continued. "For example, warning against right-wing extremism, as Havel did, is a signal not only for the Jewish community, but for the whole of society."

Tomas Jelinek, chairman of Prague's Jewish community and a former employee in Havel's presidential office, said the former president is unlikely to fade from the scene.

"What's important is that Havel will remain a public person in Prague and can keep Jewish issues on the agenda," Jelinek said.

In addition, a number of influential politicians who have strong records of support for the Jewish community remain in office.

Jan Munk, president of the Czech Federation of Jewish Communities, praised Havel for helping to make anti-Semitism unacceptable in the eyes of the general public. "If someone has anti-Semitic feelings, he hides it now," Munk said. "Havel was well understood for his position, and he was always being attacked by anti-Semitic newspapers. I honor him very much for this."

Arthur Avnon, Israeli ambassador to the Czech Republic, told JTA in a rare interview that Havel had always "struggled for human dignity, democracy and principles for which the free world stands."

Avnon recalled what happened when he presented his ambassadorial credentials to Havel a year ago. "He spoke of the deep feelings he has for the Jewish people, the importance that he attaches to the preservation of the Jewish culture," and "expressed his very deep sympathy for the loss of lives" due to terrorism in Israel, Avnon said.

Havel, he said, had always tried to create dialogue between political or religious leaders to resolve disagreements, not least in the Middle East.

"He spoke with the leaders about the possibility of resolving the conflict, although he was always careful not to intervene or obstruct the processes that were already ongoing," Avnon said. "He is still among us, but the world is losing a world figure." □

## Germany urged to finish paying former slave and forced laborers

By Pavla Kozakova

PRAGUE (JTA) — Germany is being pressed to provide full compensation immediately to all Nazi-era slave and forced laborers.

According to the Czech Council for Victims of Nazism, time is of the essence, considering the advanced age of the former laborers.

The Council, which was co-founded by the Czech Federation of Jewish Communities, said paying the compensation in installments is creating unwelcome delays.

In July 2000, the German Parliament passed a law providing compensation to former slave and forced laborers through a "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future" Fund.

Some 240,000 slave laborers — about 140,000 of whom were Jewish — were to receive up to \$7,500 each from the fund, with about 1 million forced laborers — mostly non-Jews — getting \$2,500 each.

According to an installment process that was put in place, successful claimants received 75 percent of their compensation up front, with the rest to be paid out once 95 percent of recipients had received the first installment.

While that obstacle has already been cleared for slave laborers, the process has been held up by delays in obtaining documentation for the larger category of forced laborers.

"We are absolutely upset about the delay in payments," said Tomas Kraus, executive director of the Czech Federation of Jewish Communities. "We cannot understand the bureaucratic hurdles on the German side which are preventing the speeding up of the whole process."

Kraus said that in the Czech Republic, which he described as a "typical example" of a country affected by the bureaucratic delay, many victims died before their claims were met in full.

"There were perhaps 2,000 Jewish claimants here, mainly concentration camp survivors. Now there are only 1,500," he said.

The chairman of the Czech Council, Oldrich Stransky, said German lawmakers, by dividing payments into two installments, had poorly formulated the compensation law.

"It is not a question of money," said Stransky, an Auschwitz survivor and former president of the Terezin Initiative for victims of the former Theresienstadt transit camp. "It is about the symbol that is slipping away now that the promise is not being discharged fully."

According to Stransky, the delays have adversely affected Czech-German relations. "At the beginning, we could see their genuine attempt for remedy and their admission of responsibility, but they spoiled it all by the delays."

The council is calling for the immediate payment of the remaining 25 percent owed to all who received the first installment, and full payment to those who proved their claim before the end of last year. □