



Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Continental divide

Ariel Sharon blamed Muslim influence for growing anti-Semitism in Europe.

"These days, to conduct an anti-Semitic policy is not a popular thing, so the anti-Semites bundle their policies in with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," the Israeli prime minister said in an interview published Monday by EUpolitix.com, a European Union current affairs site.

"An ever-stronger Muslim presence in Europe is certainly endangering the life of Jewish people," he said. "E.U. governments are not doing enough to tackle anti-Semitism."

European governments are trying to deal with a wave of recent attacks on Jewish sites carried out by Muslims living in Europe.

Report: Hezbollah in Iraq

Hezbollah is active in Iraq but is not taking part in attacks against Americans, The New York Times reported.

Quoting unnamed administration officials, the Times reported Monday that Iran is preventing the Lebanon-based Shi'ite group from attacking American soldiers.

Claims Conference meets

The Claims Conference will urge Germany to pay for home care of ailing Holocaust survivors around the world.

The decision to push the German government for additional support of survivors around the world came at a Claims Conference executive meeting in Jerusalem on Monday.

The conference also said it would pressure the Karstadt company to drop its claim to disputed property in Berlin that belonged to a prominent German-Jewish family before World War II.

Last week, the German government dropped its opposition to a court decision awarding the Claims Conference rights to the property, originally owned by the Wertheim family and estimated to be worth several hundred million dollars today.

Because of Thanksgiving, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Friday, Nov. 28.

Jews in Georgia are optimistic after Eduard Shevardnadze resigns

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Jews in the former Soviet republic of Georgia are trying to keep a low political profile following the ouster of President Eduard Shevardnadze — but they're confident the change of power won't endanger the community.

Community institutions, including a Jewish day school and a kindergarten, are functioning normally this week, Georgia's chief rabbi, Avimelech Rosenblat, told JTA in a telephone interview Monday from the capital city, Tbilisi.

Under increasing pressure following charges of fraud in recent parliamentary elections, Shevardnadze went on national television Sunday to announce his resignation.

The move came after leaders of the opposition parties brought tens of thousands of supporters from across the country to central Tbilisi, seizing the national television station and government offices and threatening to storm the presidential residence if Shevardnadze didn't resign.

Rosenblat said Shevardnadze's ouster does not threaten the Jewish community.

"Of course what happened was an extraordinary event, yet I can't say it added anything to our security concerns," he said. "When it comes to security issues, we are now more concerned over what is happening in Turkey than in Tbilisi," Rosenblat said, referring to recent terrorist attacks in Georgia's neighbor to the south.

Shevardnadze, 75, became a political icon when, as Soviet foreign minister under Mikhail Gorbachev, he played a key role in ending the Cold War, negotiating the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and easing German reunification.

As the president of post-Communist Georgia, however, Shevardnadze lost popularity when he was unable to cope with uncontrolled corruption, crime and poverty.

Members of Georgia's Jewish community, which dwindled in post-Soviet years to approximately 10,000 people from its peak of 100,000, are divided over the change of power, though many are believed to sympathize with the opposition.

Throughout the Caucasus region, and in Georgia in particular, anti-Semitism had far less of a historical presence than in Europe. During their 2,600-year presence in Georgia, Jews have been allowed to own land and prosper. However, many Jews fled Georgia during the country's civil war and economic crisis from 1989 to 1995.

Opposition leader Nino Burdzhaniadze, speaker of the outgoing Parliament, has proclaimed herself acting president until new elections are held in 45 days.

Analysts say Burdzhaniadze and two other opposition leaders, Mikheil Saakashvili and Zurab Zhvania, are most likely to emerge as the nation's top elected leaders.

The Shevardnadze regime — which in recent years emerged as a strong ally of the United States and the European Union — generally had been supportive of the Jewish community. Yet some Jews say they hope the country's next leaders will prove even more sympathetic to Jews and Israel.

Disillusioned by a decade of economic chaos and poverty, many Georgians have pinned their hopes on the opposition leaders, who portray themselves as open-minded liberals capable of ensuring the country's future.

Jewish leaders have tried to avoid statements reflecting their political sympathies in the current situation, but younger Jews — like many other young Georgians — seem to be supporting the opposition.

"We are neutral," said Maurice Krikheli, director of the Jewish Youth Foundation Hillel-Tbilisi. "Yet deep down we are on the side of the opposition."

Krikheli said he believes some of the problems the Jewish community in Georgia has faced since the collapse of communism — most importantly, the issue of synagogue

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel sends three to Gaza

Israel sent three Palestinians from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip.

Human rights activists criticized Monday's deportation which took place without charges or a trial of the suspected terrorists, one of whom belongs to Islamic Jihad and two to Hamas.

Palestinian officials called the move a crime.

Italian disavows fascism

Italy's deputy prime minister, on a visit to Israel, denounced his country's fascist past and its complicity during the Holocaust. At Yad Vashem on Monday, Gianfranco Fini said he lamented "the shameful pages that are in our past history."

Fini has sought to distance his National Alliance Party from its fascist roots. Fini wore a yarmulke and lit a flame at Yad Vashem to honor the 6 million Jews killed in the Holocaust.

Meanwhile, Mussolini's granddaughter, Alessandra Mussolini, told Ha'aretz that the world should beg forgiveness from Israel for the Holocaust.

Soldiering on

An Israeli couple's appeal for a surrogate mother to be inseminated with their dead son's sperm drew 28 applicants.

The Ma'ariv newspaper, which carried Ya'acov and Rachel Cohen's advertisement, reported the response Monday and said the couple was conducting interviews to find a suitable mother for their grandchild.

The Cohens' son, Kevin, was shot dead by a Palestinian sniper while serving as a soldier in the Gaza Strip last year.

His sperm was harvested under Israeli laws allowing the practice unless it was expressly opposed by the deceased. According to Ma'ariv, the applicants included single mothers and one married couple.



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restitution — remained unresolved because Georgian leaders, including Shevardnadze, were unable to shed their Communist mentality.

Another reason for Jewish optimism over the leadership change stems from the fact that some opposition leaders and activists have Jewish roots.

For example, on a visit to Israel a few years ago, Zhvania, who at the time was speaker of Georgia's Parliament, noted that his mother was Jewish.

"This is quite customary here that someone who reached a high-ranked post would conceal their Jewish roots," Krikheli said. □

University without Jewish students plans to add Jewish studies program

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — This campus of California State University, home to few Jewish students, hardly seems fertile ground to introduce classes in Jewish history and culture.

But the classes starting next year are important, says a school official.

"Our students, who are tomorrow's public school teachers, have no connection with Jews in their lives and studies," said Carl Selkin, a dean at the school. "Many are immigrants, or the children of immigrants, and they need to know about the Jewish contributions to American society and the building of Los Angeles."

The school becomes the latest college campus without a large Jewish presence on campus to offer classes in Jewish studies.

Cal State-Los Angeles has some 21,000 students, of whom more than half are Latino, almost a quarter Asian-American, and 8.4 percent African-American.

Among the 15.7 percent that are non-Hispanic whites, Jews make up such an insignificant portion that no statistics, or even good guesstimates, are available.

The campus site is near Boyle Heights, home to a vibrant Jewish community before and during World War II. But by the time the campus was opened in 1956, almost all Jews had left the area.

That means that few students have had any regular contact with Jews, leaving only a residue of anti-Semitic stereotypes and myths.

The Jewish studies program will start out fairly modestly in 2004 by expanding existing courses to reflect Jewish contributions in a given field. Selkin expects that the first courses will be ones covering the history of American film and literature.

As the program's financial resources grow, he hopes to add Jewish-oriented lectures by visiting experts, research projects, scholarships and special events.

These studies and activities will be part of the university's American Communities Program, which has received challenge grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Rockefeller Foundation.

However, to put the Jewish program on sound financial footing, Selkin is seeking an endowment of \$200,000 from Jewish community organizations and individuals.

The campus has never enjoyed the Jewish activism and presence found at the top American academic institutions. But the campus has also been largely immune to pro-Palestinian demonstrations and confrontations.

"These issues don't really interest our student body," Brier said.

The obvious question remains, then: Do Latino, Asian and black students have the interest, and time, to study about American Jewish culture, history and the immigrant experience?

Time is a factor since most students commute to campus, hold part-time jobs, and frequently are older men and women preparing for second careers.

Nevertheless, there are "lots of possibilities for the program to make an impact, if carefully planned," said professor Peter Brier, who has taught English on campus for three decades.

"Many students are curious about Jews, beyond the myths and stereotypes," he said. "There is a growing interest in religious studies, including Judaism and Islam."

One plus factor is the relatively large number of Jewish faculty members on campus. Seymour Levitan, who served as chairman of the psychology department, recalled that in the 1960s roughly one-quarter of his 100-member academic staff was Jewish. □

JEWISH WORLD

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Leadership crisis erupts in Prague after porn scandal at Jewish school

By Magnus Bennett

PRAGUE (JTA) — A crisis involving pornography that has engulfed Prague's only Jewish school has thrown the leadership of the city's Jewish community into disarray.

Community representatives voted 13-11 on Tuesday to remove the principal of the Lauder Jewish community school from her post following a fight over the discovery of pornography hidden on the school's Internet server.

The principal, Vera Dvorakova, is being dismissed for firing a senior teacher in connection with the discovery, despite a lack of concrete evidence of his involvement.

The community representatives also voted to hold early elections next year for a new Jewish parliament, the body that elects officials in the community.

Insiders say the unexpected move was a direct attack on the leadership of Tomas Jelinek, who won the chairmanship of the 1,500-strong community in 2001.

The decision to hold early elections comes after months of strife at the community-run Lauder school. Teachers and students have staged repeated protests over the appointment of Dvorakova, a former head of the community's secretarial department.

Community insiders say the scandal at the school unleashed feelings of discontent with the community's leadership.

"This is very unfortunate, but it has developed into two groups: those who are more or less for Mr. Jelinek and those who are more or less against him," one senior community figure said. "I am very worried that this could even lead to the collapse of the community."

Jelinek, who can apply for re-election once elections are held in February — two months earlier than scheduled — said he was ready to fight to remain in his post.

"When I became chairman, my vision was to build an open and transparent Jewish community and to improve inefficient management of the community's resources," he said in an interview with JTA. "There are those who do not share my vision."

Jelinek said he recently had come under personal attack from unidentified critics.

"I found a poster in the toilets at the Jewish community comparing me to a dictator. This is very personal. I simply want to build a democratic institution," Jelinek said.

It's not clear how much longer he'll have the chance.

"Tomas Jelinek has made some enemies during his time as chairman, and they want to see a change at the top," observed one community member, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Tomas Kraus, executive director of the Czech Federation of Jewish Communities, played down the significance of the early parliamentary election.

"Whether the election is in February or April is not a big issue for us," he said.

Kraus expressed anger, however, at the way teachers and students at the Lauder school had behaved in recent months by going on strike.

More than 20 teachers on the school's staff of 28 went on strike earlier this month to protest the firing of a senior teacher for the pornography find. The material was found some weeks ago by the school's new Web site administrator.

The striking teachers claimed that their colleague had nothing to do with the material and that a Web site administrator previously connected to the school had claimed responsibility for the pornography.

Police are investigating the find, which involves sexually explicit images downloaded as far back as December.

"Whatever their reasons may have been, those teachers and parents behind the protests really damaged the name of the community. Their actions were absolutely irresponsible," Kraus said.

Leo Pavlat, the adviser in the Czech Republic to the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, which funds the school, said he hoped the school would return to normal soon.

"The main mission of the foundation is to concentrate on lessons and education in accordance with the Jewish spirit," Pavlat said.

"The crisis at the school is very sad, but on the other hand it should be said that there have been great achievements at the school." □

Poll: Freedom Party gains

More than one-fifth of Austrians want a xenophobic party to join the country's next government, a new poll found.

A poll in Monday's Standard newspaper showed 22 percent of Austrians back the right-wing party associated with Jorg Haider. But 72 percent oppose the party's return.

The Freedom Party won 27 percent of the vote in 1999, joining the government for a time, but its popularity fell sharply after party infighting and Haider's resignation.

Chabad and the 70 nations

Chabad-Lubavitch announced it has emissaries in more than 70 countries, a record for the movement.

New countries that added full-time emissaries this year include Cyprus, Croatia, Finland and India. Also for the first time, Chabad had a representative in Iraq during the holidays, Col. Jacob Goldstein, state staff chaplain of the New York Army National Guard.

The announcement was made at Chabad's 20th annual Shluchim convention, which drew about 2,000 Jewish outreach emissaries, or shluchim, to the five-day conference in Brooklyn.

Group presses Bush on AIDS

The American Jewish World Service told U.S. officials that funds for treating AIDS in Africa should focus more on prevention and treatment.

Three African officials who lead AJWS-funded programs in Uganda and Zimbabwe told White House officials at a panel in Washington last week that too much U.S. funding for AIDS-related services is lost through corruption or bureaucracy.

The Bush administration arranged the forum to address how to use \$15 billion in U.S. money earmarked for AIDS treatment.

NYC mayor names Israel center

Michael Bloomberg named a health center in Jerusalem for his mother.

On Monday, the New York City mayor dedicated the Charlotte R. Bloomberg Mother and Child Center at Hadassah University Medical Center in honor of his mother's upcoming 95th birthday.

His mother's "enduring commitment to Hadassah as a life member and her devotion to Israel are profound, and she has served as an inspiration to us on the importance of giving back and community," said Bloomberg, who was joined at the dedication ceremony by his mother and sister.

Bloomberg's gift will enable the six-story facility to add three floors for departments of pediatric hemato-oncology and pediatric psychiatry, as well as high-risk pregnancy and fetal therapy units.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Worried about Jerusalem fence,
local Arabs make some new plans***By Gil Sedan*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Life is changing quickly for thousands of Arab residents of the Jerusalem area.

Three years of the Palestinian intifada and deteriorating Jewish-Muslim relations have taken a toll on the Arabs who live in and around Jerusalem, but that's nothing compared to the potential impact of the new West Bank security barrier, residents say.

To protect Jerusalemites from terrorist attacks, Israel is erecting a fence that will separate the capital city from some of its Arab suburbs.

To prepare for the new security barrier, many Arabs are making contingency plans — including purchasing homes in Jewish neighborhoods of Jerusalem in case life gets too tough on the Palestinian-populated side of the barrier.

Around Jerusalem, many Arabs have been able to pledge allegiance to the Palestinian national cause, while enjoying the social benefits they receive as citizens of the Jewish state.

They receive benefits like unemployment insurance and allowances for children. They are entitled to receive health services, just like the rest of the country's citizens. They are free to travel anywhere in Israel, and their cars bear Israel's signature yellow license plates.

The new security fence won't change any of that — but it could make traveling more difficult for many of them.

The Jerusalem section of the new fence separating Israel from most of the West Bank will cut through Arab neighborhoods, dividing communities and families and introducing significant changes into residents' daily lives.

"I used to get into my car and reach the Knesset within 10 minutes," Ahmed Tibi, a Knesset member from the Hadash Party, told JTA. "Now this will change. I will need to take the roundabout way, to drive north, go through the Kalandiya checkpoint on the outskirts of Ramallah — the only passage through the fence — and only after I have passed the soldiers' inspection will I be able to pass the checkpoint, make a U-turn and drive into Jerusalem."

Tibi, a former adviser to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, is a resident of Dahiyat al-Barid. His home is located in the West Bank, not Jerusalem, but it borders the Jerusalem-Ramallah highway and is not far from the capital's municipal boundaries.

There are about 225,000 Arab residents of Jerusalem, most of whom have turned down offers of Israeli citizenship for political reasons. Instead, they enjoy permanent-residency status.

Over the years, many have moved to West Bank suburbs in search of less expensive housing and a higher quality of life — much like the tens of thousands of Israeli Jews who have moved to Jewish suburbs in the West Bank.

Many of these Arabs still work in Jerusalem. Depending on where they live, some may pay taxes to the Palestinian Authority.

This arrangement might have continued were it not for Palestinian terrorism. Repeated attacks in western Jerusalem have led Israeli officials to draw up a barrier protecting Jerusalem from Palestinian assailants from the West Bank.

The Jerusalem portion of the barrier now runs more or less

along the city's municipal border, but it will divide neighborhoods that skirt Jerusalem's boundaries.

Over the years, Jerusalem neighborhoods merged with adjacent West Bank neighborhoods, erasing the line between the two. Without a detailed map, one can hardly tell where Jerusalem ends and the West Bank begins.

The new fence will revive the demarcation line — at a heavy cost for those whose lives straddle it.

Shehdeh Burkan, 36, is a resident of Azariyeh, a West Bank suburb of Jerusalem on the old Jericho Road. Burkan's family is originally from Jerusalem, and he says he acquired Israeli citizenship to protect himself.

"I smelled trouble," Burkan said. "The Interior Ministry hunted down Jerusalemites who could not prove that Jerusalem was their so-called 'center of life.' I did not want to find myself deprived of all social benefits. So I applied for citizenship."

For years, Burkan has worked in the western part of Jerusalem in a small construction firm with a Jewish partner. Burkan used to get up early in the morning, pass through the army checkpoint on the old Jericho road and join his partner.

But that routine ended about six months ago when the army erected a barrier separating Azariyeh from the Jerusalem village of Abu Dis, the hometown of P.A. Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei.

Since then, Burkan has had to travel to Jerusalem in a roundabout way: He drives east toward the Jewish West Bank city of Ma'aleh Adumim, then heads back west after passing through an army checkpoint.

After the fence is built, Burkan fears it will take him much longer to get through the checkpoint.

So Burkan came up with a solution: He bought a small two-bedroom apartment in a Jewish neighborhood of Jerusalem, East Talpiot. He hasn't moved in yet, and in fact hopes he won't have to use the apartment.

His three children will not live with him in East Talpiot. In case he has to be absent from his West Bank home, Burkan already has arranged for his children to be driven by someone else to their Arab school in eastern Jerusalem.

"I'm not alone," Burkan said. "I know at least five of my friends who also have purchased apartments in Jewish neighborhoods, and I know of others who plan on doing the same."

Shalom Goldstein, the Arab affairs adviser for Jerusalem's mayor, Uri Lupoliansky, confirmed that there has been a sharp increase in the number of Arabs moving to Jerusalem from the West Bank in recent years.

At one time, he said, "the Ministry of Interior ruled that anyone who could not prove that Jerusalem was his 'center of life' in the past seven years would lose his Israeli residency. As a result, some 30,000 Jerusalemites who have lived in the West Bank for their convenience moved back to Jerusalem."

But many Arabs have chosen to move back to crowded Jerusalem rather than give up their Jerusalem residency status altogether. The irony is that a policy seeking to limit the number of Arabs in the capital by imposing more stringent requirements for permanent-residency status has led Arabs to move into the city.

The phenomenon has intensified with the imminent completion of the city's security fence.

The fence will be erected, and Israelis will pay the bill. But it is the Palestinians, whose terrorism gave birth to the fence, who will bear the burden. □