

IN THE NEWS

Madrid bombers had Jewish targets

The terrorists believed responsible for last month's deadly suicide bombings in Madrid considered subsequent attacks on Jewish sites, a Spanish investigator said.

A map showing a Jewish community center and a Jewish cemetery was found in the ruins of an apartment destroyed two weeks ago when several of the suspects blew themselves up.

Mubarak: Economics to help Middle East

Boosting trade and economies will help bring peace to the Middle East, Egypt's president said.

Following a meeting Monday with President Bush in Crawford, Texas, Hosni Mubarak met 22 Jewish leaders in Houston on Wednesday, where he stressed economic solutions for stabilizing the region.

Mubarak, who initiated the meeting, asked the leaders to "make sure that we encourage the United States on economic plans and trade agreements," said Hannah Rosenthal, executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, which convened the meeting.

Mubarak also voiced support for an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip if it is done in coordination with the Palestinians. Jewish leaders asked Mubarak to demonstrate more assertive leadership against anti-Semitism in Egypt, but Mubarak reportedly said that anti-Semitic feeling is lessening in his country.

Security upped for Budapest museum

Security was increased for the opening of Budapest's new Holocaust museum after police thwarted a terrorist plot.

Israeli President Moshe Katsav joins senior Hungarian officials Thursday at a ceremony kicking off several days of events to open the new Holocaust Memorial Center. [Story, pg. 3]

WORLD REPORT

PUBLISHED WEEKDAYS BY JTA—THE GLOBAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE · WWW.JTA.ORG

Sharon wins big with Bush as U.S. shifts policy on Middle East

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — One historic concession deserves another.

Just four months after Israel Prime Minister Ariel Sharon — the father of the settlement movement — stunned Israelis by pledging to evacuate some settlements, he got his paycheck from President Bush, who reversed decades of U.S. policy and recognized Israel's claim to parts of the West Bank.

It was compensation, with interest: The Israeli prime minister had scored perhaps the most stunning diplomatic triumph in the U.S.-Israeli alliance in a generation.

"In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli population centers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final-status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949," Bush said Wednesday at a White House appearance with Sharon after the two leaders met.

"It is realistic to expect that any final-status agreement will only be achieved on the basis of mutually agreed changes that reflect these realities."

The statement, reiterated in a letter to Sharon, represents the first time that the U.S. government has provided a formal commitment to Israel's claim on parts of the West Bank.

The Palestinians had agreed to Israel's claim to some settlements in exchange for land swaps in non-binding negotiations in 2000-2001 that were shepherded by then-

President Clinton.

But Bush' commitment came without any mention of land from Israel and was widely seen as a significant shift in U.S. policy in the region.

According to a senior Israeli official, land swaps were never even discussed this time around.

It was a soaring historical moment fraught with grinding political realities.

Bush needs a Middle East success to bolster a reputation as a bold foreign policy leader that flags with each U.S. casualty in Iraq.

"Iraq points to the need of the administration for some achievement," said David Makovsky, an analyst with the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "The administration will want to showcase the Gaza pullout as an example of its success in the region."

Sharon, for his part, needs to show Israelis that his leadership through some of the nation's most traumatic years is resulting in a diplomatic breakthrough.

In addition, he faces a Likud Party referendum on his plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip on May 2 and other leaders of his party have already vowed to challenge any uprooting of settlements.

In a mutual admiration session extraordinary even by election-year standards, each man essentially recommended the other to his electorate.

"In all these years, I have never met a leader as committed as you are, Mr. President, to the struggle for freedom and the need to confront terrorism wherever it ex-

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ANALYSIS

■ *President Bush gave a lot, while Prime Minister Sharon gave little*

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ists," Sharon said, looking directly at the president.

Bush was even clearer in his endorsement of Sharon.

"He's a bold leader. That's what people want. They want leadership," Bush said in remarks that were addressed to Israeli cameras.

And in case the Likud slogan factory missed the message, he added: "I'm confident the Israeli people appreciate that kind of leadership."

It was Sharon, however, who clearly had the upper hand.

When talks on the dimensions of a withdrawal began in February, Americans rejected out of hand any recognition of Israeli claims in the West Bank. Subsequently, U.S. officials said they would consider such a recognition depending on the breadth of the withdrawal.

The disengagement plan Sharon presented to Bush, according to a senior Israeli official, calls for an Israeli withdrawal from all of the Gaza Strip and four settlements in the West Bank.

The settlements, encompassing 500 settlers, include Ganim, Homesh, Kadim, and Sanur, all of which are in the northern West Bank.

The withdrawal from these settlements would provide contiguity for the Palestinians between the cities of Jenin and Nablus, which has been a major concern for the Palestinians.

Any future withdrawals beyond that, the official said, would depend on how

the Palestinians respond to this proposal and whether they live up to their commitments.

The official also indicated that Sharon had been prepared to offer even a further withdrawal from the West Bank, but didn't have to present that option because the U.S. administration accepted the more limited offering.

In a sign of how confident Sharon was of his triumph, just before he left for Washington, he upped the number of settlement blocs Israel would claim from three to five, throwing in the combustible Hebron bloc.

The other four settlement blocs Sharon has said Israel will permanently claim are: Ma'aleh Adumim, Givat Ze'ev and Gush Etzion, all bedroom communities to Jerusalem; and Ariel, in the central West Bank.

Furthermore, no one expected Bush to so explicitly bury years of U.S. policy, which traditionally consigned every inch of territory captured by Israel in 1967 to negotiations.

At best, he was expected to recognize vague "demographic realities."

Instead, Bush said it is "unrealistic" to expect Israel to return to its pre-1967 lines.

Bush, moreover, threw in an endorsement of Israel's controversial security barrier as it is now routed.

Bush, who just last summer was strongly skeptical of Israeli claims that the barrier was not permanent, now accepted them at face value.

"The barrier being erected by Israel as a part of that security effort should, as your government has stated, be a security rather than political barrier," he said.

Finally, Bush expressed his most emphatic rejection to date of the right of Palestinian refugees to return to land they left in Israel.

"It seems clear that an agreed, just, fair and realistic framework for a solution to the Palestinian refugee issue as part of any final-status agreement will need to be found through the establish-

ment of a Palestinian state and the settling of Palestinian refugees there rather than Israel," he said.

Sharon gave very little in return. Against Bush's repeated assurances that the withdrawal from Gaza would spur forward the U.S.-led "road map" peace plan and its goal of a Palestinian state, the Israeli prime minister referred only obliquely to "your vision" in his public remarks Wednesday and never even hinted at Palestinian statehood.

Prior to leaving Israel, Sharon suggested that his planned withdrawal would likely squelch viable statehood for now.

In his letter to Bush, however, Sharon does refer to Palestinian statehood and the road map, and senior Israeli officials said the United States and Israel still share the goal of a Palestinian state at the end of the process.

Still, the biggest political loser Wednesday appeared to be the Palestinians, who were paying the price for a leadership that refused to stop terrorism and never successfully engaged Bush.

Palestinian leaders understood the historical dimensions of the day.

"He is the first president who has legitimized the settlements in the Palestinian territories when he said that there will be no return to the borders of 1967," Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei was quoted as saying by Ha'aretz newspaper.

Qurei's outlook was bleak. "We as Palestinians reject that, we cannot accept that, we reject and refuse it."

Senior Bush administration officials, however, said the Palestinians should view the letters as an opportunity.

"What we want is a situation where Palestinian leaders, committed to democracy and fighting terror, have a chance to take control of that territory as a down payment on the way toward a Palestinian state," one said.

"And we propose to engage very vigorously with the Palestinian Authority to try and create the institutions that will allow them to do that."

President Bush appeared to quash many Palestinian demands, including one for a 'right of return' for refugees who abandoned their homes in 1948.

JTA WORLD REPORT

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JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more 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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Threat overshadows Budapest museum debate

By RUTH ELLEN GRUBER

BUDAPEST (JTA) — Already stringent security is being stepped up for the opening of Budapest's new Holocaust museum after police thwarted a terrorist plot apparently intended to blow it up.

Israeli President Moshe Katsav is to join senior Hungarian officials at an official ceremony Thursday to open the city's new, state-run Holocaust Memorial Center. The ceremony kicks off several days of events, including an academic conference, that also mark the 60th anniversary of the deportation of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz.

On Tuesday, two days before the opening, Hungarian police arrested three Arabs for allegedly plotting to blow up "a Jewish museum" in Budapest. In addition to the new Holocaust museum, Budapest has a traditional Jewish museum in the complex that includes the city's main synagogue.

Police denied a link between the terrorist plot and Katsav's three-day official visit. Authorities said Katsav's trip would go forward as scheduled. Due to join him at the inauguration of the Holocaust Memorial Center were Hungary's president and other top officials.

"Security was already very tight, and authorities said it would be increased further," a source at the museum said.

The terrorism scare added further controversy to the opening of a facility that already had generated much debate.

In just eight weeks 60 years ago, Hungarian authorities rounded up more than 430,000 Jews and deported them to their deaths, mainly at Auschwitz.

Tens of thousands of other Hungarian Jews died in forced labor battalions, on ghetto streets or in mass executions. In Budapest, homegrown fascist thugs from the Arrow Cross movement shot at least 5,000 Jews and dumped their bodies in the Danube.

Tens of thousands of Roma, or Gypsies, also were murdered.

Such history essentially was taboo during the post-World War II Communist era.

Even since the fall of communism nearly 15 years ago, the subject of Hungarian involvement in the Shoah has been treated gingerly.

The opening of the national center for the study and commemoration of the Ho-

locaust comes just two weeks before Hungary joins the European Union on May 1, a move that effectively confirms its transformation into a modern western democracy.

Organizers hope the new, state-run center may help Hungary navigate its future by spurring debate on a complex past.

"This is not a Jewish institution," said Andras Daranyi, director of the Holocaust Memorial Center. "This is a Hungarian institution, founded and funded by the Hungarian government."

Its aim, he said, is "to present the Holocaust as a Hungarian national tragedy" and "an integral part of Hungarian history."

Daranyi noted that Hungary's first anti-Jewish law, restricting university attendance, was introduced in 1920.

"Within 24 years, from that small-scale segregation this country went on to willfully assist in destroying a half million of its citizens," he said. Without addressing the responsibility of Hungarian authorities, he said, you "cannot discuss the Holocaust honestly."

In a country where Roma still face forms of discrimination, he said, "we must imbue young people with the conclusions of the Holocaust in a generalized way, so that people will no longer be discriminated against, segregated, destroyed."

Despite its lofty aims and high-profile inauguration, the Holocaust museum has drawn sharp criticism over its goals, its concept and even its location — not to mention over local political maneuvers involved in its establishment.

The striking, \$8.5 million complex centers on an ornate synagogue on Pava Street, just outside the city center. The site served as an internment camp in 1944-45 and stood derelict for many years.

Architects beautifully restored the building, using photographs from the 1930s as a guide. Its classic style provides a contrast to surrounding new structures whose broken contours, slanted walls and narrowing corridors are aimed at evoking a nightmare world.

When fully functional, the complex

will include archives and databases concerning the Holocaust in Hungary. It also will include a memorial wall bearing the names of Holocaust victims; more than 40,000 have been inscribed so far.

A permanent exhibition tracing the development of the Shoah in Hungary will be installed next year to coincide with ceremonies marking the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II.

Critics, including prominent members of Hungary's Jewish community, have faulted organizers

for building the center too hastily, without first working out details of its scope.

"Construction began in the fall of 2002 without anyone knowing what they wanted — a museum with the necessary amount of space and where collection work is conducted; or a research and education center, where lecture rooms are needed; or maybe a memorial," wrote Szilvia Varro in Nepszabadsag, a leading Budapest daily. "In the end, they crammed it all into Pava Street."

She accused the museum curators of incompetence and said it was a "cultural scandal" that the permanent exhibition had not yet been defined.

Varro also said it was a mistake to center the facility around a synagogue owned by the Jewish community.

Among other things, she hinted that the decision was part of a "package deal" whereby the Jewish community could get the derelict building restored without having to pay for it.

Gabor Szanto, editor of the Jewish monthly Szombat, also criticized the decision to put a Holocaust center in a synagogue.

"A Holocaust museum cannot be in a place like this," he told JTA. "It does not allow for a modern museum. It mixes things. The synagogue was a religious building; the Holocaust was not religious."

It also undermines the aim of portraying the Shoah as Hungarian — not just Jewish — history, he said.

"The message it sends is that this is a place from Jews to Jews for Jews," he said.

The Budapest museum 'is a Hungarian institution.'

Andras Daranyi

Holocaust museum official

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Tombstones overturned in Toronto

At least 10 tombstones were overturned in a historic Jewish cemetery in Toronto over Passover.

The incident occurred at the Pape Avenue Cemetery, which was established in 1849 and is the oldest Jewish cemetery in Ontario. Vandals managed to enter the small cemetery despite the high fence surrounding it, which is topped in most spots by barbed wire. It marks the fourth Jewish cemetery desecrated in Ontario since mid-March, when extensive damage was discovered at Toronto's Bathurst Lawn cemetery.

Three teenagers were charged with mischief to religious property in that incident. Jewish cemeteries in the southern Ontario cities of Kitchener and Brantford were also damaged recently, but police in each city are unsure whether the vandalism was hate-motivated. A Jewish school also was firebombed earlier this month in Montreal.

Swiss bank money for survivors home?

Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) called for some money from a Swiss bank settlement to be used to aid Holocaust survivors in Brooklyn.

Nadler's call came Tuesday, three days before the special master in the Swiss case, Judah Gribetz, is slated to present his recommendations regarding the \$1.25 billion fund to the judge in the case.

"There are 30,000 survivors living in Brooklyn, and more than 7,000 of them live below the federal poverty level," Nadler said at a news conference.

Yahoos to be downgraded on Google?

A grass-roots campaign is trying to alter results that led Google users to an anti-Semitic Web site when the word "Jew" was searched.

As of Wednesday afternoon, entering "Jew" on the Internet search engine led some searchers to a free encyclopedia that defines the word "Jew," not to Jewwatch.com, an anti-Semitic Web site. The campaign was launched by the "Jewschool" blog, an interactive Web journal.

The campaign asked organizations and groups to link their Web sites to <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jew>. Google officials said that while the result was offensive, it trusts its search method and would not allow political pressures to affect the results. Google also posted an explanation of the results for the word "Jew," saying it does not endorse its search results.

Imagine all the people

A benefit concert was held in New York for groups of Israelis and Palestinians whose relatives have died in the ongoing Mideast violence.

Some 1,000 people attended Tuesday's concert for the Parents Circle and Families Forum, which featured the Israeli-born musician David Broza and American singer Patti Smith. The Parents Circle was formed in 1995 by Yitzhak Frankenthal, whose teenage son was kidnapped and killed a year earlier by Hamas.

Prayer dispute leads to vandalism

Red paint was splattered on the home of a Jewish family in Florida that is embroiled in a local prayer dispute.

Steven Rosenauer told the local sheriff's office that the incident occurred last Friday. He said he believes the vandalism was a "calculated act."

Rosenauer filed a lawsuit in early February aimed at stopping the Manatee County School Board from beginning its meetings with the Lord's Prayer. Local police are investigating the incident.

Not just whistling Dixie

A supermarket chain in the United States recently opened its first-ever kosher deli. The Winn-Dixie in Aventura, Fla., is certified by the Orthodox Union. Aventura, a city of 25,000, has one of the highest concentrations of Jewish residents in South Florida.

WORLD

Russian official canned

A local government official in Russia was fired after making anti-Semitic remarks about Russia's new prime minister.

Vladimir Torbokov, deputy prime minister in charge of social issues in the eastern Russian region of Altai, was relieved of his duties April 5, soon after the local Postscriptum newspaper published Torbokov's remarks about Mikhail Fradkov.

"What kind of need is there in a country like Russia to bring in some barely known person from abroad for a government post, and an ethnic Jew at that," Torbokov said of Fradkov, who was Russia's envoy to the European Union before President Vladimir Putin picked him as prime minister last month.

Fradkov, who Jewish leaders believe had a Jewish father, appears to be a practicing Orthodox Christian. On Sunday, he attended an Easter service at Moscow's main Orthodox cathedral, and was shown repeatedly on national television standing next to Putin, holding a candle and crossing himself.

Russian synagogue attacked

Vandals in Russia threw three bottles filled with a petroleum-based substance against a synagogue's walls, Russian news agencies reported. Police are investigating the incident, which occurred in the central Russian city of Nizhny Novgorod.

Vandalism in Lithuania

Two Jewish sites in Lithuania were vandalized in recent weeks, a monitoring group said. Earlier this month, police in the town of Kaisiadorys discovered that a Holocaust memorial was destroyed.

The monument marked a site in the nearby Strosiunai Forest, where nearly 3,000 Jews were massacred during World War II. In a separate incident, several Lithuanian newspapers reported that tombstones in Vilnius' Old Jewish Cemetery were vandalized April 7. The incidents were reported by the Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union.

MIDDLE EAST

West Bank barrier clash

Twelve protesters were hurt in a clash over Israel's West Bank security barrier.

Police fired tear gas and rubber bullets Wednesday to disperse the latest in a series of demonstrations at Biddu against plans to erect the fence over the Palestinian village's farmlands. Ten Palestinians, including a 12-year-old boy, were hurt, as well as two Israeli activists. In February, two Palestinians were shot dead by police during a riot in Biddu.

Likud rivalry deepens

A Likud politician is emerging as the most vocal opponent of Ariel Sharon's plan for Israeli disengagement from the Palestinians. Uzi Landau, a Cabinet minister who oversees Israel's secret services, is to face off with Sharon in two key Likud Party debates after the prime minister returns from his White House trip this week. The debates, scheduled for April 22 and 28, are aimed at swaying some 200,000 Likud members ahead of a May 2 referendum on the plan.