

June 22, 2013 Saturday 14 Tammuz 5773 16:40 IST

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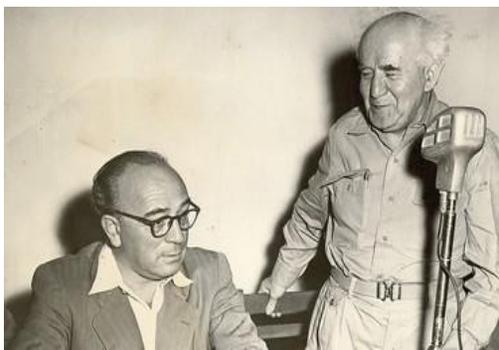


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Grapevine: Happy 80th Anniversary!

By GREER FAY CASHMAN
29/11/2012

The fact that 'The Jerusalem Post' is still going strong after 80 years is a tribute to his vision, especially because it is an English-language paper in a mostly Hebrew-speaking country.

Tomorrow, December 1, marks the 80th anniversary of the founding of *The Jerusalem Post* by Gershon Agron, who later went on to become the mayor of Jerusalem.

Beit Agron, on the capital's Hillel Street, was named for him, as was nearby Agron Street.

Beit Agron was once the hub of journalism, housing the Government Press Office, a branch of the Army Spokesman's Office, bureaus of numerous foreign media agencies and outlets and the Jerusalem Journalists' Association.

It used to have a restaurant and bar where local and foreign journalists rubbed shoulders and traded stories, and there was always an aura of anticipation and excitement.

But then things changed. As print media started to go downhill, many major newspapers began cutting down on their foreign bureaus and began relying more on wire services or a feed from some local source, which was not quite the same as getting the perspective of their own representative who had a special rapport with his or her editor. Those media outlets that remained either chose to work out of Jerusalem Capital Studios or moved their offices to Malha, the new Mecca of the media. The GPO recently followed suit.

In 2009, Dion Nissenbaum, the McClatchy bureau chief in Kabul, writing in his agency's Checkpoint Jerusalem blog, recalled that at one time, "the fourth floor of Beit Agron was coveted real estate. Journalists waited for months and years to get space on the fourth floor. Now the hall is deserted. In the last five years, I have

watched office after office close. Newsday. The Boston Globe. The Baltimore Sun. The Toronto Star. The Chicago Tribune. And now, McClatchy.”

Referring to the closure of their Jerusalem offices by various media groups, Nissenbaum argues that Israeli and Palestinian media sources cannot make for good substitutes because Israelis are bound by strict censorship laws and cannot go into Gaza; and Palestinians are frequently under threat both from their own government and from beyond.

The Jerusalem Municipality wants to turn Beit Agron into dormitories for university students. Whether this would make Gershon Agron happy, no one knows.

But there is some comfort in the fact that even if Beit Agron loses its identity, Agron Street remains.

Next Friday, *The Jerusalem Post* will carry an 80th anniversary magazine, which refers to Agron in various articles. The fact that the newspaper is still going strong after 80 years is a tribute to his vision, especially because it is an English-language paper in a mostly Hebrew-speaking country.

■ THIS WEEKEND, starting today, the Saban Forum of American, Israeli and Palestinian politicians, academics, journalists and other public figures will convene at the luxury Willard Hotel in Washington under the auspices of the Saban Forum, hosted by the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton will deliver keynote remarks tonight at the opening gala dinner, with her Israeli counterpart, Avigdor Liberman, speaking earlier in the evening. Both addresses will be broadcast and can be heard at 1:30 a.m. and 3:30 a.m. Israel time. The address on Saturday night of former prime minister Ehud Olmert will also be broadcast and can be heard at 3:30 a.m. on Sunday morning.

It is understood that former foreign minister Tzipi Livni will also be participating in the forum. On December 12, both she and Liberman will address members of Israel’s diplomatic community at a gathering of *The Jerusalem Post* Diplomatic Club at the Daniel Hotel, Herzliya. The arrangement with Livni was made before she had decided to throw her cap back into the political ring and form her own Tzipi Livni Party.

■ WHO COULD have imagined when Israel and China entered into diplomatic relations twenty years ago that one day a delegation of 25 Chinese billionaires and business leaders would come to Israel? But that’s what happening this weekend. Most of the people in the group will be seeing Israel for the first time. Organized by Cukierman Investment House and Catalyst Fund, in cooperation with Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Go4Israel tour has two goals: to introduce Israel to top decision-makers in China’s economy and to facilitate a meeting between leaders of various Israeli business and industry sectors to potential Chinese investors.

In addition to a business seminar that it will attend on Sunday at the Tel Aviv Hilton, where members will meet up with innovators from a number of Israeli start-up companies, the Chinese delegation will visit major tourist attractions, academic institutes and start-up hubs and companies to get some concept of Israel’s R&D. In Jerusalem, the visitors will meet with President Shimon Peres and governor of the Bank of Israel Stanley Fischer. The delegation is headed by Ronnie C. Chan, Chairman of Hong Kong-based Hang Lung Properties, one of the largest real estate developers in China.

Chan was one of the speakers at Go4Europe, a prestigious international business conference held every year by Cukierman Investment House and Catalyst Fund, where the issues of raising funds and establishing strategic international alliances were addressed. Go4Europe and Go4Israel are both managed by Nadine Lati Doubior, CEO of Go4Europe division at Cukierman Investment House.

■ ALTHOUGH ISRAEL’S medical achievements have been recognized around the globe, Prof.

Eran Leitersdorf, the dean of the faculty of medicine at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, asserts that medicine has been neglected by the State of Israel and is today at the bottom of the state's list of priorities. Leitersdorf's comment set the tone for the December 5-6 conference of graduates of the Hebrew University-Hadassah Medical School, which will mark the 60th anniversary of the school's first graduating class in 1952. Since then, the school has produced some 5,000 graduates.

According to Leitersdorf, "The portion of the national expenditures on medicine from the gross domestic product has not risen in the last decade," something which is in total contradiction to the other nations in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, of which Israel is a member.

While the amounts spent privately on medicine have continued to grow, public expenditures have gone down, he says, with the result that "equal medical care for all, in which Israel took such pride in the past and in whose spirit medical students were educated, is almost obsolete, and medicine is increasingly becoming available only for the rich." Leitersdorf sees the conference as a special opportunity to create a platform for academic discussion on the principle aspects and goals for medicine in Israel in coming decades, and also to call the government's attention to the importance of the security of the health of the nation's citizens and not just their political security.

Among those attending the conference will be President Shimon Peres, chairman of the Planning and Budgeting Committee of the Council for Higher Education Prof. Manuel Trajtenberg, director-general of the National Insurance Institute and former director general of Hadassah Medical Center Prof. Shlomo Mor-Yosef, president of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Prof. Rivka Carmi and Nobel Laureate Prof. Aaron Ciechanover. Among the issues to be raised at the conference will be the shortage of specialty physicians in the periphery and the long waiting periods for treatment that patients have to endure.

■ AT STATE dinners hosted by the president of Israel, it is customary for the entertainment segment to include a singer with roots in the home country of the guest of honor or a song in the native tongue of the guest. Meshi Kleinstein, the daughter of Rami and Rita, who have each separately performed at events in the President's Residence, has no Togolese background, nor, apparently, does she sing in French. But she got a lot of applause after singing in Hebrew and English, the latter with a most pronounced American accent. But then came the surprise: Togo's minister for planning, one of several ministers who came to Israel with President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe, announced that he had studied in Israel under the Foreign Ministry's MASHAV Agency for International Development Cooperation and one of the songs he'd learned was "Heiveinu Shalom Aleihem." He sang it to resounding applause.

In welcoming Gnassingbe, Peres mentioned how pleased he was that Gnassingbe had brought his mother. "Between a president and a mother, the mother is more important," said Peres, who also paid tribute to the Togolese president's late father, who had visited Israel several times and who Peres remembered with affection.

Israel attaches great importance to the visit of a young African leader who represents the reawakening of Africa from colonialism and imperialism, said Peres. "It is time to restore Africa's dignity and honor."

Three African ambassadors, all of whom are involved in multi-national African organizations, were present to hear what Peres had to say about their continent. They included dean of the Diplomatic Corps Henri Etoundi Essomba, who is ambassador of Cameroon; Jose Joas Manuel, ambassador of Angola; and Jean-Baptiste Gomis, ambassador of the Ivory Coast.

Gnassingbe said he wished that Peres would come to Africa so that leaders of all African states could hear about how Israel perceives Africa. He was certain that

such a visit would bring about a major change in relationships.

Gnassingbe also spoke about one of the most common problems of the world, which is terrorism

He had thought that Togo, with all its own problems, would not attract terrorist organizations, yet unfortunately it has, though not to the same extent as Somalia, Uganda, Tanzania, Angola and Mali.

“We are all struggling with the scourge of terrorism,” he said. “We cannot live with the illusion that terror affects only others. In Mali, two thirds of the country is ruled by terrorist organizations. We can’t condone terrorism in Gaza, and condemn it somewhere else. We have to condemn it everywhere.”

■ ROMANIAN AMBASSADORS try to hold their national day receptions on December 1, which is the actual date, but because December 1 falls on Saturday this year and they did not want to offend the sensibilities of Jewish invitees who might be religiously observant, Romanian Ambassador Edward Iosiper and his wife, Tatiana, hosted the reception on Wednesday. Speeches took a little longer than usual because Religious Affairs Minister Ya’acov Margi, who was there as the representative of the government, does not speak English and therefore his address had to be delivered twice – once by him in Hebrew and then an English translation read out by Shlomo Morgan of the Foreign Ministry’s Protocol Division.

Iosiper highlighted progress in economic cooperation, with the volume of bilateral trade-reaching \$400 million and Israeli investments in Romania amounting to something in the range of \$3 billion. He also reasserted Romania’s support for Israel and opposition to unilateral measures, such as that introduced by the Palestinians at the United Nations. He concluded his address on an emotional note, stressing his country’s and his own solidarity with Israel during the difficult days of Operation Pillar of Defense, when he and his fellow diplomats got a taste of what ordinary Israelis in the South were enduring.

Margi noted the large influx of Romanian immigrants in the early years of the state and said that in the neighborhood in which he grew up, there were many youngsters of Romanian background. Romania and Israel have had a continuous diplomatic relationship since June 1948. When other countries in the Communist bloc severed relations with Israel in 1967, Romania did not, and was the only Communist country to maintain a steady relationship with Israel. Romania and Israel cooperate strongly on Holocaust studies.

■ MEMBERS OF frequent flyer clubs use the points they accrue for upgrades and free trips, but Maya Green of Herzliya, an executive in a hi-tech company who deals with human resources, never expected to instantly get two free tickets to Europe plus a gold Globaly card when she applied for frequent flyer membership with El Al. She was the company’s one millionth frequent flyer, which entitled her to a bonus. The presentation was made to her by El Al CEO Eliezer Shkedi at a ceremony in his office.

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