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Jerusalem Hosts Mayors Conference On Governing Multiethnic City

By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A conference of mayors from around the world, including Mayor Richard Vinroot of Charlotte, began on a somber note when the host, Mayor Teddy Kollek, announced to his guests on the first day of discussions that an Arab terrorist had just stabbed five Jerusalem teenagers and a principal at a local high school.

Ironically, the weeklong conference's theme was titled "Challenges in Governing the Multiethnic City."

Kollek, who kicked off the conference, left after news of the attack broke and returned an hour later to the group of 23 visiting mayors.

"As you all know, it is difficult to live in a heterogeneous city. Like you, we are trying to find solutions to our problems," Kollek said.

"If ever there was a multiethnic city, it is Jerusalem, whose citizens represent the three great religions and many dozens of cultural and national backgrounds," the 82-year-old mayor said.

Of course, he added wryly, "Not all of these citizens want to live together, but when they realize they must, they learn to. And the learning process is assured by proper governing."

The key to coexistence, he said, "is to recognize the rights, as well as the diversity, of all residents."

The delegation of mayors approved a statement condemning the attack on the ORT John F. Kennedy vocational school in the Talpiot neighborhood of eastern Jerusalem.

The 13th annual Jerusalem conference, sponsored by the American Jewish Congress, the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the Hanns-Seidel Foundation, was made up of mayors from a variety of countries, including the United States, Hungary, Switzerland, Ethiopia, Germany and Russia.

Though the size and character of their respective cities vary widely, all of the officials have had to cope with ethnic tensions of one sort or another.

During a week of seminars, workshops and touring, they exchanged information and ideas with their counterparts from other cities.

Many of the guests lauded their host, Mayor Kollek.

"Every city suffers from ethnic problems," said Mayor William Althaus, from York, PA. "But no one works as hard as Teddy Kollek to defuse the tension.



The Hon. Richard Vinroot, Charlotte's mayor, shaking hands with Jerusalem's mayor, Teddy Kollek (L).

We've really learned a lot from him."

Of Jerusalem's 570,000 residents, Kollek noted, 72 percent are Jewish. The remainder are either Moslem or Christian.

Within the Jewish community, a large percentage are religious, but to varying degrees. There are also many secular Jewish residents.

There are some 40 Christian denominations here as well, each with its own clergy, dogmas and rituals. The Moslem population, though not as varied in sects, also strongly influences the city's flavor and culture.

The result, said Kollek, "is a mosaic, not a melting pot. The groups are separate, but equal. Any attempts to forcibly integrate the population would be futile.

"The Greeks won't integrate with the Armenians; the Catholics won't mix with the (Greek) Orthodox; the Jews won't mix with the Arabs. That does not preclude good neighborly relations, however."

To illustrate his point, Kollek referred to a nearby park, where Arab and Jewish children roller-skate on the same rink.

"The parents watch from the sidelines as the kids skate, and often they will strike up a conversation with one another. The same is true of religious and secular Jewish parents who stroll through the park on a warm evening. Brief encounters like these add to good will," Kollek said.

The mayors caught a glimpse of coexistence, Jerusalem style, during a visit to a health center in the Sheikh Jarrah quarter in East Jerusalem.

In his greeting to the group, Dr. Nafez Nubani stated: "This is not only a medical center but a symbol of humanitarianism. It is a bridge between the people living in this city."

The state-of-the-art complex treats both Arabs and Jews on a daily basis. Of the staff, 70 percent are Arab, 30 percent are Jewish.

When Mayor Richard Vinroot was at the Holocaust Memorial Service at Shalom Park, he was asked about his feelings about his visit to Israel. He stated, "My trip to Israel was very meaningful to me for two profound reasons: one, I saw the holy land, the birthplace of three of the world's prominent religions; and two, it provided an opportunity to talk with people directly involved in the complex problems that continue to threaten peace there and worldwide. I treasure the experience that trip provided me, and always will."

Other mayors interviewed in Israel gave their comments.

"I'm very impressed by the city's efforts to upgrade services in the Arab sector," said Mayor Kay Granger of Fort Worth, Texas.

"Forty percent of Fort Worth's population is minority, and they feel disenfranchised. The black community suffers from very high unemployment and high infant mortality. The Hispanics are underrepresented in the City Council. The visit here has given me tips on how to handle these problems," Granger said.

Mayor Emanuel Cleaver II of Kansas City, MO, is no stranger to racial and ethnic tensions. "I'm the first African American mayor in the city's history, and I was bombarded with threats when I was elected."

Cleaver, an ordained United Methodist minister who held both a New Testament and a Torah scroll during his swearing-in ceremony as mayor two years ago, called Jerusalem "a model of multicultural experience.

"Whenever I reflect on my city's problems, I look at what Teddy Kollek has accomplished in his city. I say to myself, if Jerusalem can get it together, then the rest of us can, too."

CJN editor Rita Mond contributed to this article.

Holocaust Commemoration Draws Large Crowd



Second generation of Holocaust survivors lighting memorial candles: (L to R) Darren Mond, Paul Hirschmann, Jered Mond, Susan Wexler.



Jackie Fishman, daughter of a Holocaust survivor and guest speaker, appeared before an audience of approximately 200. Photos/Gary Goodman

Shalom Y'all to Welcome Newcomers at Reception

The Shalom Y'all Committee is planning a special Newcomers' Reception on Tuesday, May 11 at 7:30 p.m. in the Luski Youth Activity Center at Shalom Park. The reception will include briefings, a tour of Shalom Park and the opportunity to meet with representatives from the various organizations and agencies in the Charlotte Jewish community. Jill Newman, chair, is enthusiastic with the efforts to reactivate the Shalom Y'all committee. Paula Musler, reception chair, says that invitations have been mailed to all newcomers and Jewish community representatives.



Jill Newman

Shalom Y'all committee members include Stacy Miller, Paula Musler, Joanne Bigel, Peter Levinson, Lois Benjamin and Debby Rosenberger. They have worked diligently on preparing an informative directory for newcomers. Greeters have been assigned to deliver the welcome baskets. Stacy Miller, greeter coordinator, coordinated a group of people interested in greeting newcomers to Char-

lotte. Joanne Bigel, basket coordinator, has seen that all baskets contain useful items for newcomers for their orientation into the community.

For further information, please call Pam Appelbaum, staff associate, at the Federation office, 366-5007, ext. 209. If you are a newcomer to Charlotte and have not yet been reached, please call the Federation office.

"Make a Difference — Be a Friend" pages 6-7