

**ANTI-SEMITIC ATTACK ON ASSISI WOMAN
STUNS ITALY'S USUALLY SECURE COMMUNITY**

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, Aug. 18 (JTA) -- In one of the worst cases of anti-Semitic violence reported in Italy in decades, three youths this week slashed a Jewish woman in the face, tore off the Star of David around her neck and shouted anti-Semitic slogans at her.

The attack shocked Italians, particularly as it took place in Assisi, a site of religious pilgrimages that has hosted many initiatives aimed at peace and interreligious dialogue.

The attack took place Monday night against Myriam Geelmuyden, a Jewish writer from Norway, who has lived in Assisi for six years.

Geelmuyden told police that three men around the age of 20 seized her as she was returning home around 9 p.m. One slashed her face twice with a razor as she was held immobilized. They tore off the Star of David she wore on a chain around her neck, trampled on it and spat on it.

"Dirty Jew, go away from here," they reportedly shouted at her. "Next time we'll cut your throat."

Geelmuyden said the three did not appear to be skinheads. She said she doubted if they were local Assisi youths, but thought they may have come from a nearby town.

The attack came less than a week after Italy's labor minister, Clemente Mastella, blamed "the New York Jewish lobby" for the decline of the Italian lira.

Mastella, whose remarks triggered a firestorm of international criticism, met with Rome's chief rabbi, Elio Toaff, to try to calm Jewish fears.

'Distorted Words' Provoked 'Unjustified Row'

"In a long and friendly conversation," Mastella "clarified the sense of the words which, when distorted, provoked an unjustified row," the Labor Ministry said in a statement following the meeting on Thursday.

Mastella had apologized earlier for his comments, saying he had only attempted to calm international fears about Italy's right-wing governing coalition.

Toaff reportedly accepted the explanation, but voiced fears about increasing anti-Semitism in Italy.

The attack on Geelmuyden stunned local officials as well as members of Italy's Jewish community.

"It is a very serious episode that demonstrates how racial, ethnic and religious discrimination have, by now, reached heights that were unthinkable up until not long ago," said Giorgio Gomel, of the Martin Buber Jewish Association in Rome.

"Our communities have always had to deal with verbal violence, anti-Semitic graffiti, threatening letters, but we have never before come to this point," he said.

"Now there needs to be a strong, energetic

and immediate response by the authorities, otherwise I fear that someone will get it into his mind to repeat the operation," he said.

Assisi, best-known as the hometown of St. Francis, is a small town of 3,000 people in central Italy's Umbria region. During World War II, numerous Jews were saved by local people in homes, monasteries and convents.

The town is a major site of religious pilgrimages, prayer meetings, peace marches and other events fostering interfaith dialogue.

Fewer than 50 Jews live in Umbria, including foreigners like Geelmuyden.

"I am surprised and embittered," said Sandro Sermoneta, of the tiny Jewish community in Perugia, the Umbrian capital. "Here we have never had any problems. There are so few of us that we can hardly ever find a minyan to organize services.

"I don't believe that anti-Semitism can develop in our region," Sermoneta said. "But we will watch out."

**PUBLICITY OVER AIDS AMONG ETHIOPIANS
HAS FUELED BIAS, ACTIVISTS MAINTAIN**

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Aug. 18 (JTA) -- Recent publicity over the number of AIDS cases among new Ethiopian immigrants apparently has fueled discrimination and angered the Ethiopian community as well as public officials.

Israel Television recently aired a program focusing on the incidence of AIDS among the Ethiopians.

Of the country's 1,123 known AIDS carriers, 393 are Ethiopians, according to the Health Ministry.

But Ethiopian leaders, their advocates and government officials say the numbers are misleading and irresponsible.

First, all of the Ethiopian immigrants have been tested for AIDS while the general Israeli public has not, said Ra'anah Har-Zahav, an attorney representing the Ethiopians. This makes it impossible to draw a meaningful comparison between the incidence of the disease among Ethiopians and among the rest of the population, he said.

Second, the number of actual AIDS carriers among the general public is estimated to be at least twice the number of known carriers, said Har-Zahav. The Health Ministry said it employs no such estimate.

But the Ethiopian immigrants are the only group in Israel that is universally tested, a spokeswoman at the Health Ministry confirmed. The policy was adopted by the government in 1991 because "we knew they came from an area which has a very large risk of carrying this illness," said Yifat Ben-Hay, the ministry's spokeswoman.

At the same time, fewer than 0.7 percent of the Ethiopians are AIDS carriers, she noted.

Absorption Minister Yair Tsaban lashed out at what he called the irresponsibility of the media for reporting the story. He said it was wrong to

publish the report about a single ethnic group because it automatically stigmatizes its members and could generate racism, said a spokeswoman.

Tsaban said that while the public has a right to certain information, that right must be weighed against the damage it may cause, and in this case the harm outweighed the benefit.

"The Ethiopian absorption is a test of honor for Israeli society, and because of media competition, the absorption could be ruined," he said.

Two Ethiopian advocacy groups filed a petition with the High Court seeking an interim injunction against the Israel Television broadcast. They charged it would cause irreparable damage to the community's image.

Har-Zahav, who filed the petition on the groups' behalf, argued that even the previews for the program had resulted in instances of discrimination. Native Israelis had removed their children from a camp with Ethiopian children at their caravan site near Haifa while Ethiopian children were barred from a nearby beach, he said.

The court ruled that it would not stop the broadcast but that the community must be given the chance to respond on television. An Ethiopian representative appeared and spoke at length on the program, which aired last Friday.

The community also won the right to go on the air again shortly after schools reopen next month.

The Ethiopians want the opportunity to counter the damage they believe was done by the reports -- damage they fear will show up in the classroom, said Har-Zahav.

Meanwhile, Jewish Agency Acting Chairman Yechiel Leket issued a statement this week saying that Israel had absorbed tens of thousands of Ethiopian immigrants and "no massive occurrences of serious diseases" were ever found among them.

He pointed to the more than 5,000 Ethiopian teens who study and live in Youth Aliyah villages and said, "Special health problems of public consequence were never encountered there."

Uri Gordon, head of immigration and absorption for the agency, said the publicity does the Ethiopians an injustice because it is based on partial and faulty information.

The comprehensive medical examinations prove the number of people carrying the disease is "small and inconsequential," he said.

NO EXPLOSIVES FOUND AT L.A. SITE

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, Aug. 18 (JTA) -- The metal box detonated by police outside the Simon Wiesenthal Center this week was not an explosive device, according to the Los Angeles Police Department.

The metal box was discovered by private security guards shortly after noon on Wednesday, resting on the pedestal of a sculpture near the entrance to the Wiesenthal Center. At about the same time, police received an anonymous phone call that a bomb would explode at the center.

Police, the FBI and other law-enforcement personnel responded immediately, cordoning off a stretch of Pico Boulevard and ordering the evacuation of several hundred people working at the center or visiting the adjoining Museum of Tolerance, according to Gerald Margolis, director of

the center and museum. At about the same time, the University of Judaism received a bomb threat, prompting the evacuation of about 200 people. Two suspicious objects were found on the premises, but they turned out to be nothing serious.

GERMANY AXES JUDGES RESPONSIBLE FOR DEFENSE OF RIGHT-WING OFFICIAL

BONN, Aug. 18 (JTA) -- In the wake of international outrage, two judges who gave a lenient sentence to an extremist right-wing leader and subsequently appeared to defend him were this week removed from the bench.

The president of the state court in the southwestern German city of Mannheim issued a terse statement Monday saying Judges Reiner Orlet and Wolfgang Muller would step down immediately because of "long-term illness."

In June, the judges found Gunter Deckert, chairman of the right-wing National Democratic Party, guilty on charges of inciting racial hatred. The court sentenced him to a one-year suspended sentence.

Charges had initially been brought against Deckert after he served as translator at a rally in 1991 for Fred Leuchter, an American Holocaust denier.

In addition to translating comments made by Leuchter, Deckert said that he supported Leuchter's theories, including statements that the Holocaust never took place.

Publicly expressing Holocaust-denial views is a crime under German law.

Last week, the judges provoked a storm of outrage when they explained that the lenient sentence had been handed down because Deckert was a family man with no previous criminal record.

The court also praised the defendant as a "highly intelligent person" of "strong character."

During a special session Monday of all the judges assigned to the Mannheim court, Muller's and Orlet's associates distanced themselves from sections of the controversial ruling, saying it "created the impression that far-right ideology was being condoned."

The president of the court, Gunter Weber, sent a letter of apology to Mannheim's Jewish community.

The explanation of the ruling triggered a chain of angry reactions from all parts of the political spectrum here, and was joined by sharp criticisms from Jewish leaders in Germany and the United States.

PACKAGE STIRS ALARM AT IPO CONCERT

By Agnes Bohm

BUDAPEST, Aug. 18 (JTA) -- A suspicious suitcase that turned out to be harmless was found and detonated last weekend by Hungarian police at the site here where the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra was performing.

Although it turned out to be a false alarm, the security alert delayed the orchestra's arrival from Frankfurt for two hours, Hungarian Television reported.

Hungarian police have been on alert at Jewish and Israeli sites since bombs hit Jewish targets in Argentina, Panama and Britain last month.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:**FROM MEXICO CITY AND LONG ISLAND, TEEN-AGERS FIND SOLIDARITY IN ISRAEL**

By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM, Aug. 18 (JTA) -- If Israel-based programs bring Diaspora Jewish youths closer to their Jewish roots -- and most Jewish leaders believe they do -- then thousands of teens and young adults are returning home this summer with a stronger sense of Jewish identity.

More than 3,500 teens visiting Israel on various summer programs gathered in Jerusalem earlier this month to show their Jewish solidarity and to have a good time.

Sponsored by the youth division of the Jewish Agency/World Zionist Organization, the happening took place in Sachar Park, a vast, lush site near the entrance to the city.

After filling up on watermelon and corn-on-the-cob, the teens -- from the United States, Europe and South America -- sent thousands of supportive messages to the beleaguered Jewish community of Buenos Aires, where a terrorist bomb last month killed nearly 100 people.

An hour later, the teens marched through the streets of Jerusalem, proudly carrying banners proclaiming their affiliations with Young Judaea, Betar, B'nai Akiva and a dozen other youth groups.

Arriving at City Hall Plaza, they were greeted by Mayor Ehud Olmert and Jewish Agency officials, and then treated to a concert by David Broza, a popular Israeli singer.

Shlomo Gravetz, chairman of the agency's youth division, called the event "a way for the kids to express their identity with the Jewish people."

"The first such gathering took place last year, and they seemed to have a great time," he said. "For many, it was evidently the first time they had the feeling of being part of a whole, a member of the Jewish people."

'Security Issues Damaged Us'

The youth department had originally expected at least 8,000 Diaspora teens to visit Israel this year.

But it had to reduce its expectations after the Hebron massacre in February, when a West Bank settler opened fire on Palestinians praying in a Hebron mosque.

Following that incident, and other related terrorist attacks, some parents, especially in the United States, decided against sending their children to Israel.

"Security issues damaged us," Gravetz admitted. "In America, people subscribe to Israel summer programs from October to April."

"After Hebron and Afula, registration dropped considerably," he said, referring to the terrorist bombing of an Israeli bus in the central city of Afula, killing eight Israeli passengers.

Still, Gravetz said he expected 7,000 participants by the end of the year.

Referring to the link between Israel-based programs and Jewish identity, Gravetz said, "There is no doubt that once kids come to Israel, they are deeply influenced by what Israel has to offer."

"There is a special atmosphere here, and kids begin getting acquainted with Jewish heritage

and tradition, with their spiritual homeland. Evaluations have shown that once a teen visits Israel, he or she is more committed to being Jewish, and is more aware of the danger of intermarriage," he said.

Although the teens gathered in Sachar Park came from dozens of countries and a wide variety of religious and cultural backgrounds, their reactions to the "Israel experience" were surprisingly similar.

Asked whether the time they have spent in Israel has influenced their Jewish identity, the answer was a resounding "yes."

"It's been an incredible experience," said Dan Most, a 16-year-old from Long Island, New York. Most, who is on a "Teens See Israel" trip, said he was deeply moved by his first visit to the Western Wall.

"Thousands of people from different countries were praying together," he said.

"They didn't speak the same language, but they knew how to pray together. It made me feel like I belong somewhere, that they would accept me, a stranger, because I'm Jewish."

He said the trip has "put me more in touch with my Jewish side."

Asked if he considers intermarriage an option, he replied, "My parents don't want me to marry outside my religion, and I wouldn't give up being Jewish."

"But if I met a non-Jewish woman, I probably wouldn't give her up because of her religion. I want my children to be Jewish, though."

Joseph Mansur, 14, from Mexico City, said his visit to Israel "has definitely changed my life. It's changed the way I think about religion. In Mexico I don't put on tefillin very often, but here I do."

Still shaken by the recent terrorist attack in Argentina, Mansur said he often sees swastikas in the streets of Mexico City.

Yet, despite the anti-Semitism, he said he has no plans to make aliyah. "I like Israel, but not to live."

Sixteen-year-old Emma Reeves from Totteridge, England, agreed. "I like Israel, but I don't feel really strongly that this is my home and I should be here."

But, she added, "Israel has definitely strengthened my Jewish identity."

"We've visited sites and learned a lot of Jewish history I'd never heard before," she said, summing up the views of many of the teen-agers. "I'm having a good time."

FINALLY, SWISS CAN NOSH BAGELS

By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, Aug. 18 (JTA) -- For generations the Swiss lived without knowing the joys of the bagel.

Now, all that has changed thanks to the efforts of Morris Abram, the former U.S. ambassador to Geneva and a prominent former leader of American Jewish groups.

Abram, who has stayed on in Geneva as representative of the U.N. Watch, is producing a kosher bagel, hoping it will be a hit at least with the 6,000 members of the Jewish community.

The kosher bagel, dubbed by the Tribune de Geneve "Morris' bagel," is prepared under the supervision of Rabbi David Messas of Geneva.

YESHAYAHU LEIBOWITZ DIES IN SLEEP AT 91; SAGE WAS OPPOSED TO HOLDING TERRITORIES By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Aug. 18 (JTA) -- Israel's best-known and most controversial savant, Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz, died here Thursday at the age of 91.

Both mentally and physically fit until his last day, he died in his sleep and was laid to rest at the Har Hamenuhot Cemetery.

Leibowitz's fame as a philosopher, scientist and religious sage extended far and wide, mostly because of his vocal opposition to Israel's administration of the territories it acquired during the 1967 Six-Day War.

President Ezer Weizman led the outpouring of tributes for Leibowitz on Thursday, calling him "one of the greatest figures in Jewry in recent generations."

Weizman said that in addition to his many intellectual qualities, "all of us recognized Leibowitz's courage and moral integrity."

Controversial in his outspoken beliefs, Leibowitz last year turned down the prestigious Israel Prize awarded him for his life's work, after remarks he made ignited controversy and drew condemnation in the Knesset.

Leibowitz had been recommended for the prize by a government-appointed committee. In a series of media interviews following the announcement, the scholar compared undercover soldiers operating in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to fighters of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement.

When prominent voices, including Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's, rose up against awarding him the prize, he asked, "Why should I cause the prime minister this awkwardness?"

A member of an esteemed family, Leibowitz's sister, Nechama, a biblical scholar and fellow Hebrew University professor, won the Israel Prize for Education in 1957.

Born in 1903 in Riga, Latvia, Leibowitz received degrees in chemistry in Berlin and in medicine in Bern, Switzerland, at the same time that he was studying both general and Jewish philosophy.

Drew Crowds Of Students

He made aliyah in 1932 and began lecturing in chemistry four years later at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Since then -- and well beyond his official retirement age -- he continued teaching at the university, becoming one of its best-loved lecturers. He always drew crowds of students to his classes, which varied from science to humanities.

In his later years, Leibowitz's fame spread beyond academic circles, and beyond Jerusalem, due mainly to his outspoken political positions against the Israeli administration of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

He was one of the first public figures to speak out against Israel's role in the territories, and remained one of the country's most consistent and vehement critics of the policies of both Labor and Likud governments for more than a quarter of a century.

He urged soldiers to refuse to serve in the territories, going so far as to compare Israeli forces in the territories to Nazi troops.

Recently he became as vigorous in his praise of the Rabin government's peace policies as he had been critical of earlier governmental policies.

Leibowitz also gained much prominence, and much controversy, with his writings and lectures on religion. A strictly Orthodox Jew, his religious observance was founded on the stern foundations of halachah, or religious law.

Among the targets of Leibowitz's unbridled criticism in the religious realm were the late Lubavitcher rebbe, Menachem Schneerson, and Rabbi Eliezer Schach, the spiritual leader of the Shas Party, for what he saw as mixing politics with religion.

He held similar arguments with Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion.

COMMERCE DEPARTMENT NABS 3 COMPANIES IN ONGOING CRACKDOWN AGAINST BOYCOTT By Michael Shapiro

WASHINGTON, Aug. 18 (JTA) -- The Commerce Department this week handed down civil penalties to three companies for allegedly violating United States provisions dealing with the Arab boycott of Israel, according to John Despres, assistant secretary for export enforcement.

Although the three companies -- Chemical Bank of New York, Bank America International of San Francisco and Cedars Motors of Miami -- agreed to pay the civil penalties, they did not admit or deny the alleged violations, according to a Commerce Department statement.

The Commerce Department alleged that in 1988 and 1989, Manufacturers Hanover Trust Co., which merged with Chemical Bank in 1992, provided Saudi Arabia with information regarding an individual's business relationship with blacklisted companies and required another person to refuse to do business with blacklisted companies.

According to the Export Administration Act and Regulations, American individuals and companies are prohibited from giving information about their or any other companies' business relationship with or in a boycotted country or companies that are known or believed to be blacklisted.

In another case, the Commerce Department alleged that Chemical Bank gave information to Kuwait regarding business relationships with three U.S. companies.

The Commerce Department fined Chemical Bank a total of \$44,000 for its alleged activities.

Bank America International, as successor in interest to Security Pacific International, was fined \$18,000 for alleged anti-boycott violations committed by Security Pacific.

The Commerce Department alleged that Security Pacific implemented letters of credit that contained a condition restricting negotiation of the credit to banks permitted to transact business with Arab countries.

In the third case, Cedars Motors, a car dealership, was fined \$20,000 for allegedly failing to report -- on 10 occasions between October 1988 and August 1991 -- receipt of boycott-related requests.

The Commerce Department also alleged that Chemical Bank and Bank America International failed to report to the department their receipt of boycott-related requests, which is required under the Export Administration Act and Regulations.