

**ARGENTINA BACKS DOWN ON IRANIANS,
SAYS ATTACK ON JEWS MAY NOT BE SOLVED**

BUENOS AIRES, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- Argentina's Supreme Court has decided not to bring action against four Iranian diplomats who were accused of playing key roles in the July 18 bombing of the Jewish headquarters building here.

With the latest development, government officials here are now saying the case may never be solved.

In reaching the decision Thursday, the court agreed with the opinion of the country's attorney general, Angel Aguero Iturbe, who two days earlier said there was insufficient evidence to press charges against the diplomats.

Members of the court voted that, given the scant evidence, the case should be handed back to Judge Juan Jose Galeano, who has been spearheading the investigation into the bombing that killed 99 people and left more than 200 wounded.

Earlier this month, Galeano issued arrest warrants for the four Iranians, all of whom reportedly worked at the Iranian Embassy in Buenos Aires.

Galeano based the warrants solely on the testimony of an Iranian refugee, Monousheh Moatamer, who is currently in Caracas, Venezuela, under the protection of the U.N. high commissioner for refugees.

Moatamer has been variously described as a former secretary in Iran's Ministry of Culture and as a high official in the Iranian secret service. He reportedly fled Teheran a month ago.

When Galeano issued his report earlier this month, the findings were criticized as lacking concrete evidence by Ruben Beraja, president of the DAIA, the Jewish communal umbrella organization whose offices were among those destroyed in the bomb blast.

A Major Diplomatic Blunder

Compounding what is being perceived as a major diplomatic blunder, Argentine President Carlos Menem on Aug. 10 called for the expulsion of Iran's ambassador to Argentina, and there was even talk of severing ties with Iran altogether.

Argentina withdrew its ambassador to Iran shortly after the July 18 blast.

Israeli and American officials have blamed the Iranian-backed Hezbollah movement for the latest bombing, but Iran has flatly denied any involvement.

Another Lebanon-based group, known as the Supporters of God, has taken responsibility for the terrorist attack. Little is known about the group, but it is believed to be closely associated with Hezbollah.

In 1992, a bomb attack on the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires killed 29 people. Argentine officials never succeeded in finding those responsible for that attack.

Meanwhile, security remains tight at Jewish and Israeli sites here in the wake of warnings from Israeli and other intelligence sources that they had information that another bomb attack was likely.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:**A CRISIS IN JEWISH EDUCATION:****ISRAEL -- YES, ISRAEL -- TAKES STOCK**

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- As a student, Dikla Shahar used to love learning Bible and Jewish history in the public schools she attended.

But the 21-year-old Jerusalemite remembers feeling that too few classes were offered and those that were available taught Judaism in a superficial manner.

But all that could change. In a move that some might consider a revolutionary new approach to teaching Judaism to Israeli youth, a government-appointed committee is recommending that students in public secular schools learn more about Judaism and its progressive, humanistic values.

At stake, say members of the committee and other experts, is the Jewish identity of non-Orthodox Israelis, who make up the overwhelming majority in the Jewish state.

She may not be an expert, but Shahar, too, strongly believes that Jewish knowledge is essential for Israeli youth.

"The children must be given more. They don't know anything," said Shahar, who describes her family as non-religious.

"If we don't pay attention to it, if we forget, we will be lost. We won't be a people anymore," she said.

How Jewish identity among Israeli youth is shaped, say the experts, has wide repercussions for the future of Israel-Diaspora relations.

"If there is no change, the Jewish community in Israel will remain with no knowledge of and commitment to the Jewish people and to Jewish continuity," said Muky Tsur, an educator, former head of the United Kibbutz Movement and member of the committee.

Menachem Revivi, director general of the United Israel Office of the United Jewish Appeal, believes that "more Israelis should be concerned that we're bringing up youngsters who have no understanding of what it means to be Jewish."

Not only is too little Jewish knowledge imparted to Israeli students, say those involved in the issue, but what is taught is too narrowly focused.

'Jewish Identity Is Very Narrow'

"For students who come out of the current system, Judaism and Jewish identity is very narrow," said Allon Gal, director of the Center for the Study of North American Jewry at Ben-Gurion University.

"It is often built on negative factors such as anti-Semitism, the Holocaust and Israel's wars, rather than on positive factors, such as a pluralistic, ever-developing culture," he said.

The committee, headed by Haifa University Rector Aliza Shenhar, was appointed in 1991 by former Education Minister Zevulun Hammer to investigate the declining interest in Jewish studies in the public secular schools.

Of the 35,000 high school pupils who took

the matriculation exam in Bible studies last year, fewer than 3 percent chose to study beyond the mandatory two units which were required for the test, according to Shenhar.

The committee report called the decline of interest in Judaism in the classroom a partial reflection of changes in the values of Israeli society in general.

It cited the decline of ideology, the growth of materialism, the explosion of technology and specialization, the politicization of religion and the polarization between the religious and secular populations.

The committee recommended additional hours of required study of Jewish subjects. But it put most of its emphasis on teaching these subjects in a new, innovative and interdisciplinary fashion and dramatically revising teacher training.

It also called for pluralism to be a central focus of Jewish studies. While the report does not refer to the Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist movements by name, it calls for the teaching of the different streams and movements within world Jewry.

The report also criticized the secular schools for abdicating responsibility for Jewish education to the Orthodox. Teachers from Orthodox yeshivot, it pointed out, are often brought into the non-religious schools to teach Bible or Jewish history from an Orthodox viewpoint.

This, Shenhar observed, is a product of political pressures and creates an "estrangement" and a dislike of Jewish studies among the non-Orthodox students.

The result is a paltry number of non-Orthodox students in Jewish studies in higher education and a dearth of non-Orthodox Jewish studies teachers.

'Judaism Belongs To The Entire Nation'

The committee's recommendations, which apply to the first through twelfth grades, were warmly endorsed by Education Minister Amnon Rubinstein, who lashed out at the Orthodox monopoly over Jewish education.

"Judaism is too important to be left only in the hands of the Orthodox," he said at a recent news conference unveiling the committee report. "It belongs to the entire nation."

After these remarks were publicized, the committee was criticized for its apparent anti-Orthodox bias.

But Dalia Goren, the ministry's liaison to the committee, said there was never an intention to blame or attack the Orthodox for the current problems.

Rather, she said, the message is that "the non-Orthodox should take responsibility for the education of their children."

The committee included Orthodox members, all of whom signed the final recommendations.

Avi Ravitzky, a professor of Jewish studies at Hebrew University, served on the committee and describes himself as a modern Orthodox Jew who believes deeply in pluralistic Jewish education.

"Jewish studies is not the domain of the Orthodox," he said. "It's the domain of all, and the general society must prepare (Jewish studies) teachers. If only the Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox have knowledge of the Jewish texts, it will be a catastrophe for general society."

"I want Israeli poets to be familiar with Jewish texts," Ravitsky added. "It doesn't matter if they are religious or not."

Ravitsky also said he applauds plans to teach alternate streams of Judaism.

"I believe modern Orthodox Judaism is more authentic, but I want students to be exposed to all Jewish creativity," he said.

Still, the recommendations drew fire from the fervently Orthodox political establishment, despite the fact they have no bearing on the state-run schools for the Orthodox.

Moshe Maiya, a member of Knesset from the Shas Party and the former deputy education minister under Shulamit Aloni, was reported to have said that Reform is not Judaism and that Shas would not rejoin the Labor-led coalition if the ministry begins teaching Conservative and Reform Judaism in the secular schools.

New Curricula Are Being Mapped Out

Despite the opposition, the report is not expected to become a political football. According to Goren, it is already on its way toward implementation by the ministry.

Strategies to put the main recommendations into effect are to be submitted to Rubinstein in October, said Goren. The minister also plans to appoint an independent board to ensure that implementation remains faithful to the committee's policies, she said.

At the same time, new curricula for teacher training are being mapped out, while some of the principal recommendations are already being carried out as experiments in some schools, Goren said.

The non-Orthodox movements in Israel have applauded the recommendations. They represent a "potential revolution in the way Jewish studies are perceived and taught," said Rabbi Uri Regev, director of the Reform Movement's Israel Religious Action Center.

"Today, the disciplines are chopped up and unrelated, not enabling the student to see the dynamic trend and continuity" of the tradition, Regev said. "Bible is taught as literature and grammar and not as a national value system and ethical treasure."

Regev hailed the centrality of pluralism and the call for teaching about contemporary streams of Judaism in the report, a subject not now required, much to Regev's frustration.

"It is inconceivable and unacceptable that Israeli students will know more about the French revolution than about contemporary Jewry," he said.

Gal, of Ben Gurion University, echoed Regev, bemoaning the fact that students currently can pass the matriculation exam "while knowing nothing about American Jewry."

"It is traditional in the schools to ignore North American Jewry or to mention it in a narrow way," he said.

Gal said that in 1992 he submitted a lengthy memo to the Shenhar committee calling on its members to make it mandatory for students to study world Jewry in the same way it is mandatory to learn about the Holocaust.

"They should know not only about the 6 million who perished but also about the millions of Jews living and thriving in the Diaspora," he said.

MINNESOTA GOVERNOR APOLOGIZES FOR CONTROVERSIAL REMARK ON HITLER

By Adam H. Katz-Stone
The American Jewish World

MINNEAPOLIS (JTA) -- Minnesota Governor Arne Carlson has apologized for comments he made likening his opponent's success to the rise of Adolf Hitler.

Carlson told the American Jewish World, in an interview published Aug. 5, that while challenger Allen Quist represents only "a narrow sliver" of Minnesota Republicans, history has shown how "a narrow sliver has the ability to take over an entire system."

"That clearly is how Hitler started out," Carlson said.

Though Carlson is himself a Republican, Quist -- a member of an extremely conservative Lutheran synod -- is the party's endorsed candidate for governor.

Carlson has alienated many in his party with his support for abortion and gay rights, while Quist has drawn media attention for suggesting that men are "genetically predisposed" to be heads of households.

In the newspaper interview, Carlson warned Jews that Quist will try "to use the instruments of government to intrude into every aspect of people's lives" and that if Quist is elected, "people who are non-Christian will not be a part" of state government.

Quist hotly rejected the governor's comments in the local media. After the Associated Press picked up on the story, and The New York Times reprinted Carlson's comments, the state's Republican Party chair, Chris Georgacas, chastised the governor for setting off a "firestorm" of controversy.

In his written apology, Carlson said his comment about Hitler had been meant only as a historical analogy, and not as a personal comparison.

Responding to the Carlson analogy, a Quist campaign spokesperson retorted, "What is an analogy, if not a comparison?"

MANDELA: VICTORY OF DEMOCRACY IS ANNE FRANK'S VICTORY AS WELL

By Suzanne Belling

JOHANNESBURG, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- Appearing recently at the opening here of an exhibition about the life of Anne Frank, South African President Nelson Mandela described the young girl whose diary is still being read a half century after it was written as a heroine in the fight against racism.

"The victory of the democratic forces in South Africa is a contribution to this worldwide effort to rid humanity of the evil of racism. It is Anne Frank's victory. It is an achievement of humanity as a whole," Mandela said to a standing ovation at the opening ceremonies.

Earlier this month, the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam presented Mandela with the 1994 Anne Frank Medal for his contributions toward advancing democratic practices in South Africa.

The medal honors the memory of the Jewish teen-ager who hid from the Nazis before being captured and deported to the Buchenwald concentration camp.

The Anne Frank exhibit is being shown here in conjunction with another exhibition, "Apartheid and Resistance," which depicts the horrors of apartheid and includes photographs of Mandela and his African National Congress comrades during the struggle against apartheid.

ADL CONCLUDES SOUTH AFRICAN MISSION ENCOURAGED BY 'MIRACLE OF TRANSITION'

By Suzanne Belling

JOHANNESBURG, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- Leaders of the Anti-Defamation League returned this week from a visit here, bearing witness to "the miracle" of the country's post-apartheid society.

"We are now witnessing the miracle of transition and when we see the prevalent good will, we view South Africa as a model for resolving conflicts and disputes around the world," ADL's national director, Abraham Foxman, said at a news conference before the group's departure.

At the invitation of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, a 27-member ADL delegation visited South Africa on a 10-day fact-finding and solidarity mission.

Foxman said there had been a "great deal of interest and anxiety" among his colleagues regarding the future of South Africa as it made the transition from apartheid to a multiracial democracy.

However, following meetings with government officials, including President Nelson Mandela, Foxman said, "We feel reassured that there is no problem with anti-Semitism in any institutionalized form."

The delegation also met with Deputy Executive President F.W. de Klerk and several Cabinet ministers, including Defense Minister Joe Modise, whose remarks in July comparing Israeli policies toward Palestinians with the old apartheid regime had generated concern in Jewish circles here.

Modise assured the delegation that he was as opposed to all forms of racism and anti-Semitism as was his deputy minister, Ronnie Kasrils, who is Jewish, Foxman said.

STOLEN JUDAICA COLLECTION RETURNED

By Agnes Bohm

BUDAPEST, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- Little over eight months after it disappeared, a valuable collection of Judaica stolen from the Budapest Jewish Museum has been returned.

With tight security measures in place, the treasures were returned late Wednesday evening from Romania, where they were found in late June.

The collection, valued at some \$200 million, consists of more than 180 pieces collected since 1916, including gold and silver religious objects, paintings and carpets.

Two suspects in the case, Romanian citizens identified as Emilian Stefan and Nicolae Chirita, were arrested in Vienna and Frankfurt, respectively, and Hungarian authorities are currently seeking their extradition.

Local reports indicate there may have been additional people involved in the robbery.

According to Hungary's police chief, Gen. Ion Pitulescu, the Mossad, Israel's secret service, helped Hungarian and Romanian police track down the collection.

EUROPE DESIGNATES MILLIONS IN AID TO REHABILITATE RELEASED PALESTINIANS
By Joseph Kopel

BRUSSELS, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- The European Commission, the executive body of the European Union, has decided to earmark some \$12.3 million in aid for the rehabilitation of Palestinian prisoners who were freed by the Israeli authorities as part of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian peace initiative.

The commission's aid program, intended to extend over two years, is aimed at improving the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank enclave of Jericho, both of which fell under Palestinian self-rule in mid-May.

The aid is designed to help the former prisoners secure jobs through a series of training programs and subsidies to potential employers.

According to officials with the Brussels-based European Commission, 77 percent of the former prisoners are between 20 and 39 years old.

The E.U. had pledged a five-year financial aid package of some \$600 million to help the Palestinian economy after Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization signed their historic self-rule accord last September in Washington.

The E.U. this week also allocated some \$2.4 million in additional humanitarian aid for the population of Iraq.

The aid package, which will take the form of basic foodstuffs, is aimed at easing the effects of the embargo on Iraq that was imposed by the United Nations in the wake of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

TALKS RESUME ON HUNGARIAN RESTITUTION AS CZECH OFFICIALS OFFER COMPENSATION
By Agnes Bohm

BUDAPEST, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- Israel Singer, executive committee chairman of the World Jewish Restitution Organization, met this week with the new Hungarian political leadership about the return of communal Jewish properties confiscated during and after World War II.

Singer, who is also secretary-general of the World Jewish Congress, said that his meeting with Hungarian Prime Minister Gyula Horn on Wednesday was "constructive," but disclosed no additional details.

The restitution organization held talks on the subject with the previous Hungarian government, but the inconclusive negotiations were suspended.

The current round of talks is the first being held with the new socialist-liberal government that took power in July.

In the Czech Republic, meanwhile, the Cabinet reportedly agreed Wednesday to offer a token compensation to Czechs who were held in concentration camps during the German occupation of what was then Czechoslovakia from 1938-1945.

"The government stressed its belief in the urgency of redressing historical unlawfulness," Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus told reporters.

Victims of the Nazi persecutions, or their surviving spouses, will receive a one-time payment of \$82 for every month spent in a concentration camp. Children of the victims will not be entitled to the payments.

BOOK ABOUT JEWISH WARTIME TRAITOR GETS MUCH BALLYHOO BEFORE PUBLICATION
By Henriette Boas

AMSTERDAM, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- A soon-to-be-published book about a Dutch Jewish woman who betrayed scores of fellow Jews to the Nazi Gestapo during World War II is receiving considerable advance publicity here.

Ans van Dijk, who was executed for her crimes, had originally worked in the underground against the German occupiers, but following her arrest, helped the Gestapo.

Van Dijk won the confidence of many Jews by promising to provide them with hiding places. Instead, she turned them over to the Gestapo, who deported them.

Van Dijk was the only Dutch woman and is believed to be the only Jew executed after the war for treason. She was hanged on Jan. 14, 1948 at the age of 43.

The book is written by Koos Groen, who has authored a previous book about Dutch traitors.

Groen said that others who betrayed even more people were not executed for their crimes.

Only 39 death sentences for war crimes were carried out in Holland after the World War II. Other war criminals were given life sentences which were later commuted to 20 years and even further reduced.

Groen, who is not Jewish, believes that van Dijk was given the maximum punishment because she was a lesbian and because she was physically unattractive. He also believes that a certain amount of anti-Semitism was at play, with authorities anxious at the time to let it be known that there had been Jews who were traitors as well.

EL AL TO FLY TO HONG KONG

TEL AVIV, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- El Al Airlines will open a new charter route to Hong Kong starting in October as the result of an agreement signed with several Far East air carriers.

Under the new arrangement, passengers from Tel Aviv can book flights on El Al to Hong Kong. From there, they will be able to take flights aboard various Far Eastern airlines at sharply discounted prices to such destinations as Japan, Singapore, the Philippines and Taiwan.

The more than 13-hour flight between Tel Aviv and Hong Kong, aboard Boeing 767 planes, will have a refueling stop in Bombay.

Group fare tickets to and from Hong Kong will cost \$1,149 in October and drop to \$1,049 in November. Fares will cost between \$1,388 and \$1,599 for the additional destinations aboard the other participating airlines.

JEWISH CLUB OPENS IN LODZ

LODZ, Poland, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- Commemorating the 50th anniversary of the brutal liquidation of the Lodz ghetto, Jewish officials opened a Jewish youth club here this week.

Rabbi Michael Schudrich, an American who is the director in Poland of the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, was instrumental in opening this club.

The club's opening garnered significant media attention, including coverage on Polish television.