

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Israeli officials arrested dozens of Hamas activists in the West Bank and eastern Jerusalem. "The arrests foiled plans to carry out murderous attacks" against Israeli soldiers and civilians, according to a police statement.

■ United Messianic Jewish Outreach prepared to launch an evangelizing campaign in Chicago around Rosh Hashanah. The effort, involving billboards, mass mailings and radio, television and newspaper advertising, is emblematic of the growing movement of messianic Jews. [Page 3]

■ Palestinian officials refused to hand over to Israel two Hamas militants suspected of planning the Aug. 21 suicide bombing of a Jerusalem bus. The two were convicted and sentenced by a Palestinian military court in Jericho on charges of endangering the security of the Palestinian Authority and Israelis. [Page 2]

■ Israeli and Palestinian officials signed an agreement to expand Palestinian civilian authority in the West Bank. The agreement gives the Palestinian Authority administrative control over agriculture, postal services, insurance, gasoline, industry and commerce, labor, municipal affairs and statistics. [Page 2]

■ Family members identified the fourth victim of last week's Jerusalem bus bombing as Hannah Na'eh, 45, of Jerusalem. They identified her after pictures of the body were published in the Israeli media.

■ Israeli police arrested 13 members of Greenpeace who were protesting outside the Chinese and French embassies in Tel Aviv. Police said the group, which was protesting the decisions of France and China to conduct nuclear testing, had chained themselves to fences and scaffolding, and blocked entrances to the buildings.

■ Israeli police will use 15 bomb-sniffing dogs to find explosives in public places. The dogs were put on duty in Jerusalem and will soon begin working in Tel Aviv and at other sites across Israel. [Page 4]

FOCUS ON ISSUES**Reaching out to intermarrieds, UJA brings couples to Land of Israel***By Michele Chabin*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — After years of struggling with the issue of intermarriage, the United Jewish Appeal has begun to offer Israel Experience missions to interfaith couples.

The first mission, which traveled to Israel this month, offered a unique blend of Jewish and Christian sites and experiences.

Unlike other UJA missions, which concentrate on Jewish history and culture, the "intermarrieds" tour included visits to such Christian sites as the Mount of Beatitudes, Nazareth and Bethlehem, as well as places of Jewish interest.

A year in the planning, the tailor-made pilot trip attracted eight couples in their 20s and 30s. Few, if any, had ever visited Israel.

By all accounts, the decision to accommodate intermarried couples within the framework of the UJA represents a bold step for the fund-raising organization. Although the UJA has long accepted non-Jews wishing to tour Israel with their Jewish spouses, it has been loath to offer missions specifically for intermarried couples.

The reason: Such an action might have suggested that the UJA — and, by association, the Jewish community as a whole — was giving intermarriage its official stamp of approval, according to UJA officials.

'We want them in the community'

The decision to cater now to intermarried couples "was based on the high rate of assimilation and intermarriage in the Jewish community," UJA National Chairman Richard Pearlstone said in an interview.

"It seemed like the appropriate time to reach out, to help intermarried couples feel more comfortable in the Jewish community," he said. "This action says we want them in the community and this wasn't the message 10 years ago."

Although Pearlstone acknowledges that including such couples "does have fund-raising implications down the road, a more important goal is to help the couples enjoy Jewish values" so that they can bring them into their homes.

"Maybe we should have reached out earlier, but at least now we are trying to rectify the situation," he said.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the idea for the mission came from a Jewish mother worried about her intermarried son's future.

Sandy Lefkowitz, the mission's organizer, said she came up with the idea four years ago, when her son Mark married a Danish Christian named Caroline. "When Mark told us he was going to marry Caroline, my husband and I decided that we would in no way compromise our relationship with him," she said.

"At that time we made the decision to bring them to Israel, hoping it would re-establish Mark's identity with Israel and introduce Caroline to Israel in a low-key way."

Lefkowitz, a resident of Westport, Conn., had at first planned a private family trip. But then she approached officials at the UJA with the idea for a full-fledged mission. "There was a lot of support," she said, "but also a lot of resistance. Initially, the organization's Rabbinical Cabinet wasn't receptive to the idea because they thought it would condone intermarriage. It was an uphill battle."

As the trip got off the ground, Lefkowitz said, "there were many problems to overcome."

For example, because the UJA does not allow religious symbols in its brochures, the crosses on church pictures were airbrushed out, she said.

Another issue was the minimum donation the couples would be asked to give, which is customary for UJA missions.

"I argued that by setting a minimum amount, we would be preselecting the couples, something that went against the spirit of the mission."

Ultimately, the kinks were ironed out through compromise.

Once the 10-day mission was a "go," organizers in the United States

and Israel went to great lengths to ensure that it would balance Jewish and Christian concerns in a positive, noncoercive environment.

Choosing tour guides, for example, was an issue.

"If a tour guide isn't sensitive to the issues intermarried couples confront in their personal lives, and doesn't realize that just coming to Israel represents a major commitment between the spouses, missions like this couldn't be successful," Lefkowitz said.

Although many in the Jewish community might hope otherwise, in Lefkowitz's eyes, "this was not a mission to convert, but to teach both spouses to love the Land of Israel."

Indeed, none of the non-Jewish spouses interviewed at the end of the mission expressed a desire to convert to Judaism.

Nonetheless, there was no doubt that the participants were moved by their visit. And the UJA plans to organize similar missions in the future, according to a UJA spokeswoman.

Sitting in the lobby of a Jerusalem hotel just prior to a Friday night visit to the Western Wall, the participants praised the experience as "meaningful" and "non-judgmental."

"I've always wanted to visit Israel," said Rebecca Castro, 28, a Christian from San Diego.

"It's ironic, I wanted to come but my husband, Adam, didn't. His uncle paid for the whole trip, probably with the ulterior motive of getting Adam closer to his Jewish roots, and maybe to push me, too."

Raised as a Catholic, Castro said the trip "brought me closer to my belief in God, but not to my Christian roots.

"I found Israel gorgeous, one of the most beautiful places I've ever been to. It's peaceful and safe, something I didn't expect."

'110 percent positive'

"This was a very positive experience," agreed Castro's husband, Adam Rappaport. "I expected to be subjected to more lectures on the religious institutions here and on the longevity of the Jewish people."

Instead, he said, "I learned more about the nation — politically, economically, socially. It's been 110 percent positive."

For Dave Rispoli, a 32-year-old Catholic from Hollidaysburg, Pa., the reason for coming was simple.

"I wanted to understand my wife's heritage and religion," he said. "Our home has a Jewish orientation and I sometimes attend synagogue services."

"I found the trip educational and enlightening, but I wouldn't say it strengthened my Christian roots," he said, adding, "It didn't encourage me to be more religious, one way or the other."

Of the group's reception in Israel, 28-year-old Mark Lefkowitz, whose mother organized the mission, said, "We've been very lucky. Most people have addressed us as equal parties in a larger travel experience."

The only complaint, which was voiced by several of the non-Jewish spouses, involved what they termed a "condescending" lecture by a speaker in Safed.

"He addressed us not as intermarried couples but as Jews with partners," Lefkowitz said.

"He didn't make me feel welcome, so I just tuned out," said Lefkowitz's wife, Caroline Tobiasen.

Even so, Adam Rappaport said, "I'm glad we didn't come on a regular UJA mission. I feel more comfortable with other intermarried couples because we have issues in common, like peer pressures and family pressures.

"Jews married to other Jews don't share these concerns." □

Israel continues to demand extradition of Hamas convicts

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel is keeping the Palestinian self-rule enclave of Jericho sealed off from the rest of the West Bank, demanding that the Palestinian Authority hand over two Hamas militants suspected of planning last week's suicide bombing of a bus in Jerusalem.

Palestinian officials, however, refused to hand over the militants, saying that the two had been tried and sentenced in Jericho and would not be surrendered to Israeli authorities.

At the same time, some Israeli leaders expressed doubts that Israel had the legal justification to demand the extraditions.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres told reporters that Israeli authorities had investigated the matter and found that if the fugitives had committed their crimes on Israeli soil, then Israel could have demanded their extradition.

"But because their involvement was in Jericho, we cannot demand their extradition," Peres said.

The two Hamas militants — Abed Al-Majid Dudin and Rajid al-Khatib, both from the West Bank town of Hebron — were arrested by Palestinian security forces last week, and subsequently tried by a Palestinian military court. Dudin was sentenced Saturday to 12 years in jail; al-Khatib received a seven-year sentence.

While the Israeli government has maintained that the two had helped plan the Aug. 21 Jerusalem bus bombing, which claimed the lives of five people, including the suicide bomber, the Palestinian indictments against them did not directly link them to the bombing.

Instead, the two were charged with endangering the interests and security of the Palestinian people, the Palestinian Authority and the Israelis.

Dudin, 33, who had been wanted by Israel for several months, recently fled to Jericho, according to local news reports.

The demand for his and Khatib's return underscored Israeli concerns that Jericho and other Palestinian self-rule areas could become safe havens for terrorists fleeing Israeli security forces.

"We know that there are terrorists in Jericho, and others are seeking refuge there," said government spokesman Sheldon Schulman.

Israel extended the closure of Jericho to Sunday after it was imposed Aug. 23.

Cairo signing ceremony

Israel Television quoted political sources as saying that Jericho remained sealed off not because of the extradition request, but because a third terrorist suspected of involvement in the Jerusalem attack was believed to be there.

Despite the controversy over the extraditions, Israeli and Palestinian officials attended a signing ceremony in Cairo to hand over eight additional spheres of civilian authority in the West Bank to the Palestinians.

The 22-page agreement gives the Palestinians administrative control over the areas of agriculture, postal services, insurance, gasoline, industry and commerce, labor, municipal affairs and statistics.

Meanwhile, the fourth victim of the Jerusalem bus bombing was laid to rest after her body was identified last Friday. Family members of Hannah Na'eh, 45, of Jerusalem identified her after pictures of the body were published in the media last week. A divorced mother of three from a deeply religious family, she lost contact with them after ceasing to be observant. □

JEWS AND JESUS (Part 3)

Missionary group sets sights on Chicago's Jewish community

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — Zev Isaacs is spending \$300,000 to try to convince every Jew in Chicagoland that Jesus is the Messiah.

Isaacs is the executive director and founder of United Messianic Jewish Outreach, which is an evangelical organization based on the view of self-described Messianic Jews, who say that a Jew can believe in Jesus and still be Jewish.

It is a belief that contradicts the traditional and mainstream Jewish view that the Messiah has not yet come and that belief in Jesus makes someone a Christian, not a Jew.

The United Messianic Jewish Outreach grew out of Isaacs' newspaper, a semi-monthly called The Messianic Times, which he publishes from his former home base in Toronto.

He is in the process of moving to Chicago to get his new missionary base established and to launch a campaign in September that involves billboards and mass mailings as well as radio, television and newspaper advertising.

His goal is to "save" the more than quarter of a million Jews in the Chicago area by "reaching thousands of Jewish commuters daily," according to his promotional material.

In a recent fund-raising letter mailed out of his office in Skokie, Ill., Isaacs claims that he has already converted a person who works in the same office building as he does.

Isaacs' plan is to target 1,000 Jewish families in the Chicago area with intensive evangelizing starting at Rosh Hashanah.

Each family will be mailed a Messianic Jewish New Year card for Rosh Hashanah, a book on Yom Kippur and a cassette of Messianic Jewish music in time for Sukkot.

Then each family will be telephoned by Isaacs and his supporters, "sharing the Gospel, answering questions and offering to pray with them," according to a brochure.

In another fund-raising letter, Isaacs boasts of four full-time staff members who are getting the campaign off the ground.

Isaacs hopes to launch similar efforts in New York, Florida and California, according to the letter.

Mailed to every Chicago rabbi

The letter also touts that Isaac's organization was featured in a March 7 program on Trinity Broadcasting Network.

The network is owned by Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Coalition.

Isaacs declined requests for an interview until he "gets settled" in Chicago.

Chicago's Jewish establishment has not yet seen any signs of Isaacs' presence.

However, it is getting ready for Issacs' arrival.

"We haven't seen any sign yet of his presence in Chicago, and we have a lot of feelers out there," said Paula Harris, associate executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago.

The JCRC is working with all Chicago's mainstream Jewish organizations and school groups "to coordinate our response and have a unified approach," Harris said.

On Aug. 4, the JCRC and two rabbinical organiza-

tions mailed out a letter to every rabbi in Chicago connected with them, warning them of the expected arrival of Issacs.

The JCRC is also planning to advertise in the area's Russian-language newspapers and radio stations to alert the Russian emigre population, which most Messianic Jewish groups consider particularly receptive to their message, Harris said.

They have also notified Jewish social service agencies about Isaacs' plans, she said.

But at least one anti-missionary activist believes that what the JCRC is doing may not be enough.

Mark Powers, national director of the anti-missionary group Jews for Judaism, met with JCRC representatives and advised them to carry out preventive education by running seminars about the Messianics at area synagogues and senior citizens homes as well as at places for the Russian population.

"They'd rather wait until he does something," Powers said.

"I want to know why we're always playing catch-up."

"These groups are a real threat," said Powers, who is based in Baltimore.

"It's easier to prevent hundreds from going in" to the Messianic groups than "to get one out," he said.

But Chicago officials rejected the criticism.

"We feel we've been significantly out front on this," said Michael Kotzin, director of the JCRC and senior vice president of the Jewish United Fund.

After coordinating a response with a wide range of local Jewish groups as well as consulting with other communities with similar experiences, Kotzin said, "we are appropriately positioned to respond as we see the problem develop." □

Leader of Romanian Jewry takes office

By Alissa Kaplan

NEW YORK (JTA) — The new leader of Romania's Jewish community has officially taken office.

Rabbi Yehezkel Mark, 67, who was elected to the position May 28, succeeds the late Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen.

"His arrival gives content to the community's religious life," said Iulian Soren of Romania's Federation of Jewish Communities.

Mark comes to the position as Romania still tolerates anti-Semitism in politics and the media. Also, the return of Jewish property seized by the Communists remains an unresolved problem.

Some 15,000 Jews, many of whom are elderly, now live in Romania.

Mark will not formally have the title of chief rabbi, though his jurisdiction includes all the country's Jewish congregations.

A new chief rabbi is expected to be elected by the end of the year.

Mark will likely be one of the nominees.

Unlike Rosen, Mark will not be president of the country's Jewish federation, a function now held by a layman, Nicolae Cajal.

Mark, who was born in Bascesti-Roman, Romania, left in 1946 for Israel, where he fought in the 1948 War of Independence.

He led a South African congregation between 1970 and 1972.

Rosen, who died at 81 last year, enabled nearly the entire postwar Jewish community of Romania, about 400,000 people, to emigrate to Israel, a unique exodus in Communist Eastern Europe. □

Holocaust denier targets Internet discussion group

By Bill Gladstone

TORONTO (JTA) — What would you do if you received e-mail from a Holocaust denier?

This was the question confronting nearly 1,000 people last week after they received two essays that had been dispatched over the Internet by American Holocaust denier Greg Raven.

The recipients were all members of a cyberspace discussion group that includes Holocaust educators, writers, survivors and their families.

"Raven has sunk to a new level of degradation," said Kenneth McVay, 54, a resident of Vancouver Island who received the pseudoscholarly essays at his computer terminal. "In all my years of experience, I've never seen anything even approaching this sort of behavior."

McVay, who works full time to combat hatemongers on the Internet, called the distribution of the essays an "attack" that has put "a flood of Nazi propaganda into the mailboxes of Holocaust survivors and children of survivors."

Although Holocaust deniers have long used computer bulletin boards and the Internet to disseminate materials, "as far as I know, this is the first attack on folks who are doing genuine Holocaust work using the Internet," said Avi Hyman, a computer communications specialist for the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in Toronto.

Raven is editor of the quarterly journal of the Institute for Historical Review, an American Holocaust denial organization based in Orange County, Calif. Mark Weber, who heads the institute, wrote the essays sent unsolicited to the on-line Holocaust discussion group.

Although Raven did not break any laws, experts say, he probably violated the still-evolving ethical code concerning cyberspace etiquette.

'Akin to unwanted faxes'

But Rick Eaton, a researcher with the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center, downplayed the incident.

"It is akin to sending unwanted faxes," Eaton said.

Legislation to prevent Internet mailings such as Raven's "may come down the line, but it hasn't yet," said Eaton, citing as a reason the medium's relative newness.

Eaton noted that the essays sent by Raven over the Internet were "standard pamphlets they've had for years that were available on their Internet site."

Raven e-mailed these essays because he and his group were simply "looking to get attention," Eaton said.

But the attention Raven and his colleagues got from the e-mail recipients was anything but appreciative.

"This was a very insidious act and a betrayal of the principles on which the Internet is based," said Bernard Katz, head of library academic support at the University of Guelph, Ontario.

Katz, who lost almost 100 relatives in the Holocaust, said he "blew his lid" after receiving Raven's messages. "I was insulted because this came to me personally," he said. "It was like someone had given me an obscene phone call."

Katz also complained to the company providing Raven with on-line access, arguing that due to his unethical behavior, Raven had forfeited his right to use the Internet.

Despite their wrath, McVay and others argue that, under normal circumstances, the best response to Holocaust deniers is to counterbalance their propaganda with historically accurate information.

Working with a team of nearly 100 volunteers, McVay has assembled one of the world's most extensive electronic libraries about the Holocaust and fascism.

Dubbed the Nizkor Project, it has become a leading resource for educators, students and persons battling the white supremacy movement. According to McVay, who recently won the Order of British Columbia for his crusade against Internet hate, the Nizkor Project "demonstrates the power of education over censorship and repression." □

(JTA staff writer Mitchell Danow in New York contributed to this report.)

Danish high court upholds extradition of U.S. neo-Nazi

By Eli Kohen

COPENHAGEN (JTA) — The Danish Supreme Court last week upheld a German extradition request for American neo-Nazi Gary Lauck.

In Germany, Lauck, 41, faces charges of incitement, encouraging racial hatred, distributing illegal propaganda and Nazi symbols, and belonging to a criminal group. He has been a major supplier of anti-Semitic propaganda in Germany.

The Aug. 24 ruling upheld two lower court decisions ordering the extradition.

As Lauck left the Danish high court to return to jail, he said, "This is a Jewish state."

The Anti-Defamation League, who has dubbed Lauck "the Farm-Belt Fuhrer," praised the ruling. "We commend the Danish government for its pursuit of Lauck's extradition and for defending its decision through the appeal process," said David Strassler, ADL national chairman, and Abraham Foxman, ADL national director.

"We are confident that the German authorities will vigorously prosecute Lauck, whose inflammatory racist and anti-Jewish materials have been an essential component of the murderous German neo-Nazi movement."

Lauck, a native of Lincoln, Neb., was arrested in March by Danish authorities outside Copenhagen on a warrant from the prosecutor of Hamburg, Germany.

Lauck is accused of smuggling banned neo-Nazi literature into Germany for more than two decades, to be copied and distributed among neo-Nazi groups. He is the head of the National Socialist German Workers' Party-Foreign Organization, a name derived from the official title of Adolf Hitler's party. Lauck has said his group is heir to the Nazi party and that Hitler was "too humane."

The ADL officials also said, "It is entirely appropriate that Lauck should be tried in a German court for his longstanding efforts to destroy German democracy and restore the nightmare of the Third Reich." □

New unit to sniff out terror

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli police have added a new terror-fighting unit to their ranks — 15 bomb-sniffing dogs who will go to work to find explosives in public places.

The decision to establish a canine unit came in the wake of a recent wave of suicide bomb attacks launched inside Israel by militant Islamic groups opposed to the peace process.

The dogs took up their duties Sunday at Jerusalem's mall, at the Machaneh Yehuda market and at the central bus station. The dogs are due to begin work in Tel Aviv next week. They will later be stationed at other sites across the country.

The dogs and their handlers were trained in Virginia. Israeli police officials chose Labrador retrievers for the bomb-sniffing detail because of their nonthreatening presence and their ability to work in crowds of people, Israel Television reported. □