



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ A homemade bomb ripped through a Moscow synagogue, seriously damaging the 3-story building but causing no injuries. The rabbi at the Lubavitch synagogue said the blast "was clearly an anti-Semitic attack." [Page 2]

■ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is expected to meet with Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat before Rosh Hashanah. The decision to meet comes on the eve of Netanyahu's scheduled visit to the United States next month and in the wake of an urgent appeal from Arafat to meet with Israeli President Ezer Weizman.

■ Vice President Al Gore rallied the Jewish Democratic faithful into action at a private meeting with about 25 top officials of the National Jewish Democratic Council. Gore was to speak to a gathering of more than 1,000 Jewish delegates, elected officials and observers attending the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

■ President Clinton called on religious institutions, including synagogues, to assist the federal government in employing welfare recipients. He made the proposal in an interview with the Washington Post on the eve of the Democratic Party's convention.

■ The synagogue arms of the Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist movements are working together and with a coalition of major Jewish groups to reach out to as many as 1 million American Jews not registered to vote. The Reform movement's Religious Action Center has prepared a blueprint — called "Get Out the Vote Program Plan and Action Manual" — for the voter registration campaign.

■ The first of 300 trailers to be used in Jewish settlements for educational purposes arrived in Ofra. Palestinians have denounced the move as a violation of the peace accords.

■ The Palestinian Authority closed three offices in eastern Jerusalem after Israel charged that their activities violated the peace accords. [Page 2]

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

With help of local authorities, Siberian Jews reassert identity

By Lev Krichevsky

KRASNOYARSK, Russia (JTA) — Far from the Russian capital of Moscow, some 6,000 Jews live in Krasnoyarsk, a Siberian city on the banks of the Yenisey, the world's fifth-longest river.

For much of its 200-year history, Krasnoyarsk was a destination for thousands of people exiled by Russian czars and by Stalin, and the local Jewish community can trace its own origins to some of those exiles.

The city's greatest expansion — the population today numbers 1 million — occurred during the past 50 years. This area boasts a wealth of resources, including gold and other metals, and cheap electric power.

Dozens of Jews were among the many Russians who came here after World War II, looking for job opportunities in this rapidly developing region.

"Our family legend has it that one of my ancestors was exiled to Siberia over 150 years ago after he saddled a donkey on the first day of Passover and tried to ride into a synagogue somewhere in Ukraine," said an elderly man visiting his wife's grave at the local Jewish cemetery.

The organized Jewish community in Krasnoyarsk was re-established seven years ago. In 1994, authorities granted the community a building that was turned into an Orthodox synagogue that can accommodate up to 60 worshippers.

Like elsewhere in Russia, religion does not play a significant role in the Krasnoyarsk Jewish community. Most Jews here see the synagogue as a community center where they can celebrate Jewish festivals or just see friends several times a year.

Yuriy Shavrin, a 23-year-old graduate of a medical school in Krasnoyarsk, said he comes to the synagogue on various occasions, but not to pray because he does not know how.

Krasnoyarsk has no rabbi or other religious leader who can reach out to the local community.

The synagogue is open only on the Sabbath and often there are fewer than the 10 men required for a minyan.

Still, the thirst for Jewish knowledge is evident among those who attend events frequently organized by the Society of Jewish Culture, the Hebrew Sunday school for children or the Jewish youth club.

A section at the Krasnoyarsk Central Public Library that holds a collection of books about Jews and Judaism is "one of the most frequented departments of our library that attract both Jewish and non-Jewish readers," said Leonid Berdnikov, the library's director.

The collection includes books donated a few years ago by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

Published anti-Jewish articles

Elsewhere in the city, a conscious effort has been made by local authorities to tell the history of Jews and other minorities who suffered persecution for generations.

The Society of Jewish Culture is one of 24 minority groups that share the premises of the Krasnoyarsk Minorities' Cultural Center, the former Vladimir Lenin Memorial Museum.

A few years ago, the Lenin exhibition was squeezed into a couple of rooms to make space for Jewish, Polish, German, Finnish, Korean, Greek, Estonian and other minorities' societies.

In contrast to these public institutions, local authorities have been reluctant to counteract the activities of several ultranationalist organizations, including Pamyat and Russian National Unity, whose local offices have, since the late 1980s, propagated anti-Semitism.

One recent exception, however, was the city administration's official warning in May to Krasnoyarskaya Gazeta, a local newspaper that regularly published anti-Jewish articles.

"These groups have never hindered our communal activities directly," said Isaak Kaufman, chairman of the Society of Jewish Culture.

But local anti-Semitism has been a factor sparking emigration.

Extremists usually express their anti-Semitic views in the local media,

Kaufman said, adding that sometimes, "this propaganda spurs our Jews to emigrate."

According to the Jewish Agency for Israel's office here, about 100 Krasnoyarsk Jews leave for Israel each year.

Many of them are teen-agers who go to study in the Jewish state.

Kaufman, whose 19-year-old son left Siberia a year ago, said he would leave for Israel by the end of this year.

This summer, dozens of Siberian Jewish teen-agers attended a youth camp organized by the Jewish Agency in Tomsk.

For Sasha Churakova, 12, it was her first trip outside of Krasnoyarsk. Now she knows some basic words in Hebrew and hopes to visit Israel. She says she can hardly believe that there are places with snowless winters.

Not all Jews in this remote Russian city wish to leave.

"Many Jews will never emigrate because of various reasons," said a 40-year-old woman who works with a local telephone company. "Some don't want to lose their jobs. Others prefer not to leave their aged relatives who wouldn't want to go. All my relatives are in Israel but I don't know whether I'll ever go there."

For those who stay, Russia's transformation to a market economy is producing new challenges.

Jews in this area traditionally have become doctors, university teachers, scientists and engineers.

But today, the business community is proving more attractive financially.

Kaufman, who was a mining engineer, opened his own bakery a few years ago. He bought equipment from Israel and today produces Middle Eastern-style pita, a type of bread unusual for Siberia.

"Many Jewish businessmen are interested in doing business with Israel," Kaufman said. As a result, one can buy Israeli chocolate or instant coffee in a grocery store in the heart of Siberia. □

Bomb mars Moscow synagogue; rabbi calls attack 'anti-Semitic'

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — A bomb blast ripped through a Moscow synagogue last week, causing no injuries but seriously damaging the 3-story building.

"This was clearly an anti-Semitic act," said Berel Lazar, the rabbi at the Lubavitch synagogue and the chairman of the Rabbinical Alliance of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The explosion, caused by a homemade bomb planted outside the synagogue, shattered windows in the building's southern facade and tore off sections of the roof.

The force of the blast knocked over Torah scrolls in the synagogue's ark. The scrolls were not damaged, members of the community said.

Windows of neighboring houses also broke.

"This is a terrible act of vandalism," said 72-year-old Vladimir Kutyn, who has lived near the synagogue since childhood.

Kutyn, a veteran who is not Jewish, also said, "I'm ashamed of the Russian people who let such things happen in our country. I fought side by side with many Jews against the Nazis."

The brick synagogue reopened in June, replacing a wooden one that burnt down in 1993 as a result of arson.

Moscow Mayor Yuriy Luzhkov, who attended the June opening of the synagogue, had said at the event, "The city authorities will never tolerate the slightest display of inequality or oppression toward the Jews."

Vladimir Porokhov, district police chief, said last

Friday that he was determined to capture those responsible for the bombing.

No one has been apprehended in connection with the bombing, Mark Levin, executive director of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, said in a telephone interview Sunday from Maryland.

Except for a guard, no one was inside the synagogue at the time of the Aug. 22 bombing, which occurred at night.

Lazar said people usually study in the synagogue at night, but that on the night of the bombing, many of those people were at a wedding in another part of the city.

The wedding was originally scheduled to take place at the synagogue, Levin said, adding, "Had the wedding not been moved, there would have been serious loss of human life."

"The bomb was strategically placed to do the maximum amount of damage," Levin said.

He said his organization plans to follow up with both U.S. and Russian government officials. Levin said that during the weekend, U.S. Ambassador to Russia Thomas Pickering visited the damaged synagogue.

The combination of the bombing and the arson fire "puts the Jewish community as a whole in Moscow on edge," Levin said.

Lazar said, "If our parents fought against communism, today we have to fight against hooliganism. The best way to fight it is to show that we are not intimidated by such acts. We will continue to build the Jewish community under any circumstances."

The blast came a day after construction began on a new Jewish community center, to be located next to the synagogue. The new center is the biggest project of its kind being carried out in Russia since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The synagogue, located in the Maryina Roscha section of Moscow, was first built in what used to be a Jewish neighborhood.

The wooden synagogue was constructed on the site where the city's first Chasidic house of worship was situated. In December 1993, the 70-year-old wooden synagogue was destroyed by an act of arson.

No one has been charged in connection with that crime. □

(JTA staff writer Alissa Kaplan in New York contributed to this report.)

Palestinian offices in Jerusalem close

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Palestinian Authority has closed down several offices operating in eastern Jerusalem in what Israel has maintained was a violation of the self-rule accords.

Palestinian officials said Sunday that these included the offices of geography and cartography and the offices of youth and sport. A statistics office was shut down by the authority last week.

Israel has been demanding the closures as a precondition to resuming talks on the redeployment of Israeli troops from most of the West Bank town of Hebron. The redeployment is called for under the Interim Agreement signed by Israel and the Palestinians in September, but the move, scheduled for late March, was postponed after a series of suicide bombings in Israel earlier this year.

Palestinian Authority official Nabil Shaath said there were no offices run by the authority operating in Jerusalem. He said Shimon Peres, who at the time was foreign minister, had given assurances that Palestinian institutions operating in eastern Jerusalem before the establishment of the self-rule government in 1994 would be allowed to remain open. □

U.S.-Israeli relations grow in science and technology

By Shawn Cohen

Washington Jewish Week

WASHINGTON (JTA) — In an effort to promote high-risk technology ventures in Israel and the United States, both governments are investing in a new program to jointly develop everything from higher density solar technologies to advanced medical cameras.

The U.S.-Israel Science and Technology Commission has awarded millions of dollars to American and Israeli research companies. By issuing direct matching grants, the government has spawned new partnerships between companies such as the U.S.-based General Electric and Israel's ISORAD Company.

On another front, the commission is working to identify and remove regulatory obstacles between the two countries and to set up an infrastructure to promote economic and technological collaboration. The commission hopes to promote trade by harmonizing government standards on food, cosmetics, energy and the environment.

"This presents a great opportunity for cooperation between Israeli and American companies, and between both governments," said Ohad Marani, minister of economic affairs for the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

The commission, a \$30 million program funded equally by the United States and Israel, was established in January 1994 by President Clinton and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

In his 1992 campaign for president, Clinton recommended the concept in speeches to Jewish groups. It was first proposed by Steven Spiegel, a political science professor at the University of California at Los Angeles, and Martin Indyk, then-executive director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and now the U.S. ambassador to Israel.

Rabin pledged \$5 million a year for three years.

The Clinton administration followed with an identical pledge, reassigning funds from various government agencies to pay for the commission, with half coming from the Department of Commerce. Because it does not require congressional authorization, the program so far has survived deep cuts in the Commerce Department budget.

Food and drug testing standards

Earlier this month in Washington, Israeli Minister of Industry and Trade Natan Sharansky and U.S. Secretary of Commerce Mickey Kantor co-chaired the commission's semiannual meeting at the Commerce Department. Commerce coordinates U.S. government efforts, which also involve the departments of Agriculture, Energy, Defense, and Health and Human Services as well as the Environmental Protection Agency. The commission is advised by a high-level panel drawn from the business, scientific and educational communities in both countries.

At the session, the commission discussed a series of projects designed to improve communication between government agencies. Members approved task force proposals for joint workshops between the Food and Drug Administration and Israeli Ministry of Health, as well as between the EPA and Israeli Ministry of the Environment; a project to assess regulations in the Israeli food industry; and a program to identify commercial uses for technologies no longer needed by the Israeli military.

Spiegel said one of the most promising areas for the program has been with food and drug testing standardization. The FDA is working with Israeli Health Ministry personnel to inform Israeli pharmaceutical companies about FDA rules and regulations, he said. Spiegel said the grant program is a good investment for both countries.

"Israelis are very proficient at developing innovative products, but are generally less effective at manufacturing and marketing, compared to their American counterparts," he wrote in the Near East Report, a publication of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

The joint projects awarded thus far include:

- A \$4 million grant to develop a compact "nuclear imaging camera" to create images that can determine the health of major organs and detect diseases such as cancer. The project was awarded to the U.S.-based GE Medical Systems and ISORAD of Israel.

James Colsher, manager of the project for GE Medical Systems, said, "We had been struggling with the idea of how to go forward with this project. We liked the idea but did not have the internal funding."

ISORAD told GE about the grant, and they presented a joint proposal to the commission.

"We each have our particular strengths," Colsher said, adding that GE Medical Systems' stress is "sales and worldwide distribution of products; ISORAD's experience is with building the detectors."

- AquaPharm Technologies Corp. and AquaFuture Inc., along with Israel's Ma'agan Michael Fish Breeding Center and Ardag Ltd., were granted \$3 million in matching funds to develop new products and technologies for efficient year-round production of farmed seafood.

Amos Goren, president of AquaPharm, said the partners are now six months into the four-year project, which he says only happened due to the government grant.

"Both countries have negative trade balances in fisheries products, and there is a growing demand for seafood," he said. "We're shortening the development cycle of this technology by accessing technology and expertise in Israel of sophisticated aquaculture producers."

"One of the complexities of this," Goren added, "is the challenge of coordinating the efforts of four entities in two countries. We're handling it well, setting up management and control systems."

- McDonnell Douglas is teaming up with Israel's Ormat, Rotem and Yeda, the Weizmann Institute's commercial development arm, to develop a higher-efficiency solar power system.

- Silicon Graphics is working with Israel's Elscint Ltd. to develop a more compact, low-cost, high-performance ultrasound system. This device is expected to increase the range of radiation-free sonographic procedures.

- FM Technologies and Israel's RAFAEL are developing and commercializing technology for ceramic-metal bonding to improve system performance of engines used in the automotive, aerospace and industrial sectors.

- Ralph Parsons Co. and the Israel Desalination Engineering Co. are developing seawater desalination technology that can be used worldwide.

These six projects were approved from dozens of proposals, said Lee Bailey, executive director for the program in the Department of Commerce. □

Victims of bus blast remembered

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The victims of a Jerusalem bus bombing were remembered last week at the site of the attack in Jerusalem's northern neighborhood of Ramat Eshkol.

Four people, excluding the suicide bomber, were killed in the Aug. 21, 1995, attack on Jerusalem's No. 26 bus. More than 100 were injured. Among those killed was an American, Joan Davenny, 47, a teacher at a Jewish school in Woodbridge, Conn.

Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack. □

THE DAYS OF AWE

Why synagogue attendance soars on three days each year

By Heather Camlot

NEW YORK (JTA) — Synagogues across the country fill to capacity, and many even overflow, on the two days of Rosh Hashanah and again on Yom Kippur.

What brings Jews, many of them infrequent worshippers, out in such enormous numbers on these three days each year?

Are the many who only attend synagogue on the High Holidays any less a part of the Jewish community than regular participants in Shabbat services?

Do Jews flock to synagogues on the holiest days of the Jewish calendar out of some deep sense of religious responsibility or do they merely desire to be together with others of the Jewish faith?

"The phenomenon has been around for many years," says Rabbi Lennard Thal, vice president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Some who attend synagogue only three days a year "may well be the children of those who went that often. Some may have had a bad experience but don't want to cut all ties."

Others may be secular Jews, in which case attending synagogue three times a year "represents progress," the Reform movement leader added.

For whatever reason some Jews attend synagogue solely on the High Holidays, calling them "three-day Jews" is a misnomer, says Lawrence Sternberg, associate director of the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University.

"It's only an accurate description of their communal religious worshiping behavior," he says. Those who attend synagogue only three days a year "may have other ways of expressing their Jewishness."

Attending synagogue may bring about "a sense of social inclusion by being there because your friends are there," says Sternberg.

To some Jewish communal observers, the pattern of synagogue attendance is only one factor in a person's identity.

A 1988 poll in the Los Angeles Times asked a random sample of Jews, "As a Jew, which of the following qualities do you consider most important to your Jewish identity?"

Some 54 percent answered social equality, 16 percent said support for Israel and 15 percent chose religious observance.

Society is 'open and accepting'

Sternberg maintains that even for those people who do attend synagogue often, the poll suggested that worship might not be their primary way of identifying with Judaism.

Still, they continue to attend High Holiday services in large numbers. Apart from religious responsibility or in-group behavior, the influences of a more accepting general society in the United States may also be a factor.

Television, for example, has played an important reinforcing role in celebrating the holidays, says Sternberg. Every year, newscasts mention the High Holidays and this shows that society is "open and accepting of Jews," he says.

Similarly, many public schools now close on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur so that students can attend services or religious youth groups, he adds.

Jerome Chanes, director of cultural services at the National Foundation of Jewish Culture, believes that the "three-day Jew" phenomenon is part of a larger issue, a debate between the assimilationists who assert that Jewish

life is "doomed" and the transformationists who feel that it is strong.

The transformationists maintain that "you can't say they have no identity, they go to Passover seders," Chanes said, while the assimilationists contend that "the overwhelming majority of Jews who attend a Passover seder don't know what it means."

Steve Bayme, director of Jewish communal affairs for the American Jewish Committee, who has long warned against assimilation, says infrequent synagogue attendance is not enough to uphold Judaism.

"Occasional ritualism is a part of civil Judaism of post-World War II," Bayme says. After the war, the symbols of the Holocaust and Israel could sustain Jewish life, even for the marginally religious.

But these symbols are "not powerful enough to sustain us into the next century," he adds. And the third symbol, ritual involvement, "is too occasional to make much of a difference."

Other communal observers strongly disagree.

Instead of "castigating" those who attend synagogue only on the High Holidays, congregants should welcome and explain the rituals, says Ron Wolfson of the Whizin Center of the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, who subscribes to the transformationist view of the Jewish community.

"It's still going to take a good deal of creative effort and planning to prompt them to explore within themselves and to become more deeply involved," Thal says of the infrequent synagogue-goers.

The cost of synagogue membership, the structure of the service, an individual's Hebrew skills and the location of some synagogues may need to be reconsidered as part of an effort to boost attendance throughout the year, says Wolfson.

"Many people do feel like alien visitors, who rarely know which book to pick up," Wolfson says.

Greeters at the doors, people who extend invitations to lunch, and visitors' guides explaining who is on the bimah and the contents of the service are a start, he said.

'Seeker services'

Classes about the holidays would also be useful because people need to be engaged in the holiday rituals, says Wolfson. "The whole month of Elul is supposed to be a preparation for the holidays."

Wolfson points out that the most frequently observed traditions during the Jewish year are family-based rituals such as a Passover seder, lighting Chanukah candles and fasting on Yom Kippur.

Sternberg favors "seeker services" or "learner's minyans" as ways to boost synagogue attendance among people who are not very familiar with the traditional services.

These are "not three hours of non-stop, in-your-face" prayers, Sternberg says. They elicit participation through music and singing, transliteration, explanation or invitations to other events.

Rabbi Jerome Epstein, executive vice president of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, suggests a way to make regular religious observance more relevant to the average person.

"Take the traditional messages from the Torah and the Talmud and demonstrate to people how those values can enhance their daily lives," Epstein says.

"One might think we are an increasingly secular society," says the Reform movement's Thal. "But more and more Jews who find their ways into the synagogue are on a spiritual quest. And we have as much responsibility to them" as to those who attend services regularly. □