



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 76, No. 204

Monday, November 16, 1998

81st Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Ross: Implement the agreement

Yasser Arafat hinted that the Palestinians would not hesitate from using violence if the United States and Israel "delay us from praying at Al-Aksa," referring to the mosque in Jerusalem.

A spokesman for Israeli Prime Benjamin Netanyahu said the Palestinian leader's comments, which he made in a speech broadcast over the Voice of Palestine, were a "declaration of war on the peace process."

Arafat also warned Islamic terrorists that he would not tolerate any attacks, which he said would provide Israel with an excuse to back out of peace agreements. Meanwhile, U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross called on both Israel and the Palestinians to begin implementing the Wye peace accord the two sides signed last month. Ross' comments came after he met with Netanyahu and Arafat over the weekend.

Makashov crisis deepens

The lower house of the Russian Parliament rejected a resolution censuring a Communist lawmaker for anti-Semitic remarks he made at public rallies last month. But the Duma did adopt a resolution denouncing ethnic hatred that did not explicitly mention Gen. Albert Makashov. [Page 1]

Vandals attack in Czech town

Vandals spray-painted the words "Death to Jews" and Jewish stars hanging from gallows on headstones in a cemetery in an eastern Czech town late last week. A plaque marking the site of the town's former synagogue was also found covered in graffiti, as was a memorial to Jewish girls used as slave laborers during World War II. The vandalism came just days after a teen-age skinhead was arrested and charged with stabbing a Czech Jewish soldier in Prague. [Page 3]

School to open in Israel

The mayor of the southern Israeli town of Kiryat Gat joined leaders of Chicago's Jewish community in laying a cornerstone for what will be the first preschool center run by Conservative Jewry's Masorti movement in Israel. The Suzanne Crown Goodman Preschool is a project of the Continuum Program of the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago, the Israel Education Fund, the Masorti movement and the Jewish Agency for Israel, which is holding its annual assembly in Israel.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Communists remain defiant, refusing to censure lawmaker

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Concerns are escalating in Russia over the tolerance of anti-Semitism in the country's Parliament.

The Parliament's lower house, the Duma, overwhelmingly adopted last Friday a vaguely worded resolution condemning ethnic hatred. But the same body refused, for the second time this month, to explicitly criticize a Communist lawmaker for making anti-Semitic remarks.

The resolution adopted by the Communist-dominated Duma made no mention of Gen. Albert Makashov, the lawmaker who has been at the center of the festering controversy over anti-Semitism in Russia — a dispute that has pitted the Communist Party against leading Russian political figures and the media.

A leading Moscow daily said last Friday that recent developments have demonstrated that the Communist Party views Jews and journalists as their "main enemies."

"Instead of showing interest in the plight of freezing Russian regions," about the "hundreds of ruined banks and the poor state of the Russian economy," the Communist Party is constantly talking about the need to control the media and to limit the number of Jews in positions of power, said Nezavisimaya Gazeta, which is owned by the Jewish tycoon Boris Berezovsky. "Evidently, they view the free media and Jews as the last and only barriers to power."

The organized Jewish community here has generally maintained a low profile on the issue. Alexander Osovtsov, executive vice president of the Russian Jewish Congress, said the Communist Party is not willing to criticize the government of President Boris Yeltsin and — with an election campaign in view — has decided to target "spheres," that is to say, Jews, "better understood by marginal sectors" of society where they recruit most of their supporters.

Elections for Parliament are slated for late 1999 and for president in the summer of 2000.

Jewish and liberal lawmakers said they were disappointed by the resolution.

"The Duma is supposed to represent the nation. Instead it seems to be condoning Makashov and his open anti-Semitism," said Duma member Iosif Kobzon. He asked his legislative colleagues to shield him and other Jewish lawmakers from Makashov's supporters, who have been shouting anti-Semitic slogans while protesting outside the Parliament.

In Israel, where leaders of Jewish communities around the world gathered for the annual meeting of the Jewish Agency for Israel, the Duma resolution was a topic of intense concern. Avraham Burg, chairman of the Jewish Agency, called the Duma resolution a mockery.

An unrepentant Makashov, whose anti-Semitic statements at public rallies last month ignited the current controversy, has continued to make similar remarks. Last week he appeared on a television talk show and said Jews are "bloodsuckers," and in an interview with an Italian newspaper he said Jewish participation in government, business and mass media should be subject to a special quota corresponding to its proportion of the population.

There are no Jews in the current Russian Cabinet except for Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov who, according to some reports, is half-Jewish.

President Boris Yeltsin, who has criticized the Duma for not censuring Makashov,

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel closing gas mask centers

The Israeli army decided to begin closing gas mask distribution centers that were opened at the start of the latest crisis with Iraq.

Some 65 stations were opened last week to hand out and update civil defense kits in case Iraq bombed Israel.

Israeli army officials said the public appeared not to be affected by the tensions in the Persian Gulf, saying only some 26,000 people came to the centers.

U.S. to vouch for Palestinians

The United States will vouch that the Palestinians are fulfilling their commitments under the Wye agreement should a dispute on the matter evolve, according to a letter in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

The publication of the letter, reportedly given to Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat from U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, comes as Israel is scheduled to redeploy by Monday from 2 percent of West Bank land under its security control and 7.1 percent of territory under joint Israeli-Palestinian control, according to the agreement.

Israelis being tried in Cyprus

Two Israelis accused of spying in Cyprus made several telephone calls to an intelligence service in Tel Aviv just before they were arrested, according to testimony in a Cypriot court.

Israel has denied that the two men, who were arrested earlier this month, were working against Cyprus or on behalf of Turkey.

Israel closes theater

Israel closed down a Palestinian theater in eastern Jerusalem to prevent an election of the main wing of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The Oslo accords bar the Palestinians from conducting any political activity in the eastern part of the city.



Daily News Bulletin

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is now looking to law-enforcement agencies to take action.

Last Friday, the head of the Federal Security Service, Vladimir Putin, said he would recommend that Makashov be charged with calling for the overthrow of the government and for inciting ethnic strife.

The security chief's remarks came after Russia's Prosecutor General Yuri Skuratov announced that his agency had found evidence demonstrating that Makashov's statements had incited such strife.

But Skuratov did not clarify whether his office would ask the Duma to strip Makashov of parliamentary immunity, a move that is unlikely to win the support of the legislature.

Communist leaders, meanwhile, have issued several warnings about a possible backlash of anti-Semitism in response to the intense media coverage of the matter.

"Russia-haters are persistently trying to foist the so-called Jewish question upon us," the Communist Party's Central Committee said in a statement.

The statement shifted the blame for anti-Semitism in Russia to the Communists' critics by saying that the "servants of criminal capital are the main organizers and instigators of a new wave of anti-Semitism in Russia."

A full-page article published Nov. 12 in the leading Communist newspaper, *Sovietskaya Rossiya*, warned that "provocateurs will arrange a couple of Jewish pogroms, Jews will create self-defense groups" and the development will lead to bloody interethnic conflicts aimed at the disintegration of Russia.

In a further attempt to improve his party's image, Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov met last week with Israel's ambassador to Russia and told him that Makashov's views are not those of his party.

After the Nov. 12 meeting, Zvi Magen said that he was satisfied with its results and that he had advised Zyuganov to make his position widely known through the media.

But one recent development suggested that, in fact, the Communist leadership shares Makashov's viewpoint.

In a letter sent Nov. 11 to the government, Zyuganov and his allies in the Parliament demanded that state-run regulatory boards be set up to control Russia's television stations.

Zyuganov and other signatories accused three national stations of "cynically manipulating public opinion against the interests of the state" and complained about NTV's "pro-Israeli interpretation" of the events in the Middle East. NTV, Russia's biggest privately owned television channel, is a part of the media empire of Vladimir Goussinsky, who is also the president of the Russian Jewish Congress.

Yevgeny Kiselyov, an NTV anchor who is not Jewish, sarcastically recommended that the Communists take a vacation at the Dead Sea in Israel.

"There is a special clinic at the Dead Sea where you can get treated for anxiety, get your physical form back, recover your moral health. And at the same time you can get acquainted at last with some Jews and see what they are like and how they live there," the anchor was quoted as saying.

Meanwhile, a public opinion poll of Muscovites conducted last week reveals a mixed picture of Russians' attitude toward Jews and anti-Semitism.

According to the survey of 1,509 adult respondents, 51 percent oppose the anti-Semitic remarks Makashov made at a rally last month, while 15 percent approve of those statements.

Some 30 percent agree that Makashov should be brought to justice for those remarks and 29 percent disagree.

The survey suggests that anti-Semitic attitudes are more prominent when it comes to Jewish participation in the Russian government. Some 34 percent advocated limiting the number of Jews holding senior offices in Russia, 43 percent were against such limitations and 23 percent would not give a definite answer.

When asked how would they react if a Jew became Russian president, 21 percent said "positively" and 64 percent "negatively."

The survey, carried out by the All-Russian Center for Public Opinion Research, has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percent.

Most of the results of the survey are similar to the findings of a previous nationwide poll. □

JEWISH WORLD

Russian tycoon alleges plot

A leading Jewish tycoon in Russia accused a general in Russia's domestic security service of conspiring to kill him late last year. In a letter published in the Russian newspaper Kommersant Daily, Boris Berezovsky, who survived an assassination attempt in 1994, also said the Federal Security Service is covering up the plot. As a result of Berezovsky's letter, an investigation into the 1997 attempt has been reopened.

Germany mourns Jewish soldiers

A German Army official laid a wreath at the graves of Jewish soldiers killed during World War I as part of a nationwide day of commemoration in Germany for soldiers killed in action.

Wreaths were also laid at the Jewish cemetery in Berlin.

Meanwhile, police arrested 16 neo-Nazis between the ages of 15 and 24 who disrupted commemoration ceremonies at a cemetery in the eastern German town of Jena by waving Nazi flags.

Trials scheduled for January

A Lithuanian judge said the trial of a suspected Nazi war criminal would begin in January.

Kazys Gimzauskas, 90, was the deputy chief of the Lithuanian security police in Vilnius during World War II.

Gimzauskas, who denies he committed any crimes, says he is too ill to stand trial.

Meanwhile, the trial of a former concentration camp commander is scheduled to begin in Croatia in January, according to his lawyer.

But two witnesses in the trial of Dinko Sakic, who was extradited to Croatia from Argentina earlier this year, said they were too frightened for their safety, and mistrustful of the trial, to travel to the Croatian capital of Zagreb to testify.

Paper upheld on Anne Frank

A Dutch court ruled in favor of a newspaper that published newly discovered pages of Anne Frank's diary in August.

The Swiss-based Anne Frank Fund had charged that Het Parool had committed copyright infringement and should apologize for quoting the newly found pages.

Contest unveiled in Argentina

An international contest was opened for the design of a memorial square marking the former site of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires. The Hatikvah project will commemorate the March 17, 1992, bombing of the embassy, which left 29 dead and hundreds wounded.

London Jews criticize chief rabbi for attending Prince Charles' party

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — It's not easy being Britain's chief rabbi.

Jonathan Sacks is at the center of a communal controversy over his decision to attend a reception to mark the 50th birthday of Prince Charles last Friday evening.

Sacks, head of the mainstream Orthodox United Synagogues movement, made the 30-minute journey to Buckingham Palace on foot from the Marble Arch synagogue in London's West End.

He defended his decision on the grounds that it was established protocol for chief rabbis to accept direct royal invitations.

While conceding that "the importance of keeping Shabbat together with the family is fundamental," Sacks said, "We only make an exception [for the] expression of Jewish loyalty to the country and its head of state."

As chief rabbi, he always accepts "invitations from the queen on state occasions," adding that "Prince Charles has long been a friend of the Jewish community and recently showed his support by attending a service to mark Israel's 50th anniversary."

Just before the event, he said he would attend the palace reception only to "pay his respects" to the royal family and then leave to spend the rest of the Sabbath with his wife.

"Buckingham Palace has been marvelous in understanding the limitations," he said.

Concern that Sacks had accepted an invitation to attend the birthday party of the heir to the British throne on Shabbat was expressed in a stream of letters to the editor of the London Jewish Chronicle.

"I would never contemplate attending a function and leaving my wife on a Friday night," wrote Ronald Michaels. "I believe that we are taught to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy."

Sheila Goldsmith wrote: "If the chief rabbi finds it possible to attend Prince Charles's birthday party on a Friday night, how can one possibly expect one's children to accept that Friday night as Shabbat is sacrosanct?" □

Vandals hit Jewish cemetery in troubled eastern Czech town

By Richard Allen Greene

PRAGUE (JTA) — The Czech Republic has been hit with the second act of anti-Semitic violence in less than one week.

On the night of Nov. 11, headstones in a cemetery in the eastern Czech town of Trutnov were spray-painted with the words "Death to Jews" and with Jewish stars hanging from gallows.

A plaque marking the site of the town's former synagogue also was covered in graffiti, as was a memorial to Jewish girls used as slave laborers during World War II. Damages were estimated at \$8,000.

The Federation of Czech Jewish Communities does not believe any Jews are living in the economically depressed town.

The Czech government was quick to condemn the act. "State authorities will do everything in their power to catch the perpetrators," said Libor Roucek, a government spokesman.

The vandalism came just days after a teen-age skinhead was arrested and charged with stabbing a Czech Jewish soldier in Prague.

The executive secretary of the federation said he believed the Nov. 8 attack was the first anti-Semitic criminal act since the fall of communism in 1989.

"It's a very alarming incident," said Tomas Kraus.

The 17-year-old suspect was charged under the country's hate crimes laws with attempting racially motivated murder and promoting fascism.

The soldier, 22, was reported to be in stable condition in a Prague hospital. □

New museum exhibit explores creation of Jewish identity in U.S.

By Lisa Hostein

PHILADELPHIA (JTA) — Grappling with Jewish identity in America is not a late-20th-century invention. Long before there were continuity commissions and Israel Experience programs, Jews were wrestling with what it means to be an American and a Jew.

In fact, ever since Jews first set foot in the New World more than three centuries ago, they have sought to piece together the different strands of their identity. Those efforts resulted in many paths — from full assimilation, even conversion, to maintaining and later reclaiming Jewish traditions and rituals.

A new exhibit at the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia seeks to shed new light on the Jewish experience in America, illuminating the varied approaches to identity.

Jewish identity in America has never been “one thing,” says museum director Margo Bloom. “It depends on where you came from, who your grandparents were, whether you were Sephardi or Ashkenazi.”

Many people think that all Jews came to this country in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, landed at Ellis Island, lived on the Lower East Side of New York and spoke Yiddish, says Bloom. Not many remember that Jews “lived in the South, fought in the Civil War, went West.”

Through the stories of individuals, and artifacts from their lives, the multitude of experiences are laid out in “Creating American Jews,” which will serve as the museum’s new permanent exhibit.

Located in the historic section of Philadelphia just blocks from Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell, it is the country’s only museum dedicated primarily to American Jewish history.

While all immigrants to America forged new identities, for Jews it was the first time Jews had the freedom to choose how or even whether to remain Jewish.

As the introduction to the exhibit says: “In America, it was different. Everyone was a nomad, a traveler from somewhere else. The new land presented Jews with a dilemma: how to forge identities as ‘Americans’ and still remain Jews? Over time, the children and grandchildren of the early pioneers would discover that the openness of America posed endless possibilities challenging them to reinvent Jewish identity again and again.”

The exhibit divides three and a half centuries of Jewish life into categories, including “The New World,” “Pioneers,” “Immigrant Neighborhoods,” “Modern Communities” and “New Identities.”

The stories include that of Joseph Simon, who lived in Lancaster, Pa., in the mid-1700s. He carried a miniature Torah scroll and ark when his business took him places where no Jewish community existed.

The Civil War found Jews on both sides of the North-South divide. The exhibit shows a stark photograph of a Union soldier wearing his yarmulka. Another soldier, Myer Levy, wrote a letter to his parents from the battlefield near Deep Bottom, Va.

Some Jewish immigrants, like Charles Oilfield, who settled in Santa Fe, N.M., in 1865, achieved prominence through their business acumen. Oilfield, whose magnificent patent desk is

displayed in the exhibit, created one of the largest mercantile empires in the Southwest.

The exhibit, though beautifully mounted, seems over-ambitious and confusing in its effort to be all-inclusive. It jumps, for example, from the mid-19th century to the 1960s too quickly without adequately preparing the visitor for the transition.

Still, the message that there were and still are many ways to be Jewish, rings clear. For some, Jewish life centered around the synagogue, while for others Jewish identity was expressed through battling anti-Semitism, memories of the Holocaust, identification with Israel, or political activism on behalf of Israel, Soviet Jewry or the civil rights and feminist movements.

In 1975, Karen Mittelman, then a teen-ager, wrote a letter to the authors of “The Jewish Catalogue,” thanking them for sparking a new light in her Jewish quest. “Your book was for me a truly beautiful interpretation of Jewish laws and values,” Mittelman wrote to the editors of the book that epitomized the countercultural “hands-on” Judaism described in the catalog.

Mittelman, the curator of the Philadelphia exhibit, was surprised when one of the editors, Richard Siegel, unearthed her letter. Though Mittelman says it is embarrassing for her to read that letter now, she remembers that reading “The Jewish Catalogue” was a “real turning point in my life.”

Just as she was “swept up in that re-envisioning of American Judaism,” Mittelman says, “the sense of invention and remaking Judaism is what’s at the heart of this show. In every generation, Jews had to reinvent their place in America.”

Mittelman says that the current communal emphasis on Jewish identity influenced the museum’s decision to create this exhibit and it also influenced the discussion surrounding its development.

The hardest part, she says, was finding the right medium to speak to visitors to the show. The decision to go with personal stories and artifacts, rather than a lot of explanatory narrative, provides a “sense of connectedness,” Bloom says.

“These are the stories of everyday lives,” she says. “It makes people realize that if these people are part of American Jewish history, then I am, too.” □

Public radio to air short stories

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — A new series of Jewish short stories featuring the voices of Hollywood celebrities will soon air over the National Public Radio network.

Authors represented in the 18-hour series, which will begin in December, range from Yiddish masters Isaac Bashevis Singer and I.L. Peretz to modern novelists Cynthia Ozick and Philip Roth and younger writers such as Allegra Goodman.

Leonard Nimoy is the series narrator. Readers include Hollywood stars Ed Asner, Richard Dreyfuss, Elliott Gould, Julie Kavner and William Shatner.

Not all of the talent is Jewish. Charlton Heston of “The Ten Commandments” will again be the voice of Moses, but this time as Moses Herzog, Saul Bellow’s classic 20th-century Jewish intellectual.

The series will have an edgier and more contemporary tone than its popular 1995 predecessor, “Jewish Short Stories From Eastern Europe and Beyond,” says Sarah Spitz, spokeswoman for radio station KCRW in Los Angeles, which produced both programs. □