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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Leaders attend Hassan's funeral

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, President Clinton and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat were among some 30 world leaders who attended the funeral of Morocco's King Hassan II.

Hopes that Barak would meet with Hafez Assad during the funeral were dashed when the Syrian president announced at the last minute that he would not attend. [Page 1]

Bomb found in Moscow shul

Moscow police detonated a bomb found Sunday inside a synagogue in the Russian capital.

According to one security official, the bomb placed inside the Lubavitch movement's Bolshaya Bronnaya shul contained more than one pound of TNT. [Page 4]

Senate acts on hate crimes

The U.S. Senate approved legislation strengthening the federal hate crimes statute.

The measure, approved unanimously on July 22, would expand the categories of hate crimes that the federal government can prosecute to include those motivated by an intended victim's sexual orientation, gender or disability. [Page 3]

Group of Kosovars to leave Israel

A group of nearly 150 Kosovars taken in by Israel during the recent NATO bombing campaign of Yugoslavia is scheduled to return to their homes Monday on a special flight organized by the Jewish Agency for Israel.

The agency said 145 of the 217 refugees that came to Israel will be flown to the Macedonian capital of Skopje, where buses will transfer them to five cities in Kosovo.

Museum may have looted art

The Israel Museum is investigating claims that it has been displaying a painting looted by the Nazis.

James Snyder, the museum's director, said his institution learned of the troubled provenance of Camille Pissarro's "Boulevard Montmartre, Spring 1897" after receiving a letter earlier this month from an attorney representing the family of Max Silberberg, a Jewish businessman and art collector who died in the Holocaust.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Moroccan Israelis join their former countrymen in mourning King Hassan

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The death of Morocco's King Hassan II made tens of thousands of Israelis mourn for the man they consider "their" king — and homesick for the land their families left behind.

Young Israelis of Moroccan origin placed the Moroccan flag on top of their cars, while others displayed huge posters in their homes of the late king, who died last Friday of a heart attack at the age of 70.

The Moroccan Jewish community in Israel declared a seven-day period of mourning for the king.

While reaction from Israel's leadership was perhaps less dramatic, it was just as heartfelt — as a delegation led by Israeli President Ezer Weizman and Prime Minister Ehud Barak joined 30 world leaders, including President Clinton and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, in remembering a man who played a vital role in bridging the gap between the Jewish state and the Arab world.

In a condolence message, Weizman called Hassan a "true partner in the peace process."

Attending the funeral, Barak called Hassan a "great leader," adding that the late monarch was a "farsighted man, a friend to the governments of Israel in their voyage toward peace with the Arab people."

In Israel, Moroccan Jews have traditionally supported parties, such as Likud or Shas, that espouse hard-line policies toward the Arab countries.

This is partly to compensate for the fact that they feel "Ashkenazi Jews regard them as Jewish Arabs," according to Haim Shiran, 64, director of Inbal, a multiethnic center in Tel Aviv. He said anti-Arab political views were a kind of self-defense mechanism, a way to distinguish themselves from the Arabs.

But when it came to the king's death, the reaction of Israel's estimated 300,000 Moroccan Jews appeared similar to Morocco's Arab residents, many of whom consider the king to be a direct descendent of the Muslim prophet Mohammad.

"I know that it may sound ridiculous," said Shiran, "but when on Friday, I saw the Moroccan announcer on television announcing the death of the king, I broke out in tears."

Actor Ze'ev Revah added: "I feel as if I have lost a member of the family."

When Hassan took power in 1961 after the death of his father Mohammed V, he was an unknown quantity with a reputation as a playboy.

But ruling with a deft mixture of pro-Western democracy and traditional autocracy, he earned the respect of his people. He also survived several coup attempts, including one in which he reportedly pacified an attacker by reciting the opening verses of the Koran.

Hassan is being succeeded by his son Mohammed, 36.

Like his father was when he ascended the throne, Mohammed VI is an unknown quantity.

But most observers, citing the new monarch's knowledge of four languages and his degree from a French university, believe he will continue, and perhaps even accelerate, his father's pro-Western and pro-peace policies.

Mohammed V is widely credited with having saved Morocco's Jews from deportation during World War II, and Hassan continued the philo-Semitic policies of

MIDEAST FOCUS

Mobile homes dismantled

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak ordered the dismantling of five mobile homes set up at the West Bank settlement of Shvut Rachel.

The dismantling, which took place Saturday and Sunday, came in the wake of an understanding reached between Barak and settler leaders in which they pledged not to take unilateral steps establishing or removing settlements.

The Yesha Council, which represents settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, did not protest the removal of the mobile homes, saying the homes had been set up without their approval.

Sabbath traffic prompts clashes

Fervently Orthodox and secular Israelis clashed Saturday when some residents tried to drive their cars on a street near Jerusalem's Mea She'arim neighborhood.

The Jerusalem Municipality subsequently issued an order that Ethiopia Street be closed to Sabbath traffic.

Terrorists said trained in Iran

Hamas terrorists are receiving training in Iran, Israel's Shin Bet domestic security service said.

Shin Bet officials based their claim on statements that had been made by Hamas members they had interrogated.

Hamas officials denied the claim.

Diplomats hosted at Orient House

Palestinian officials last week hosted a group of European diplomats at their headquarters in eastern Jerusalem.

The move came after Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, in a conciliatory gesture toward Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, revoked an order that had been issued by the previous government shutting down Orient House.



Daily News Bulletin

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his father. Although there was an outbreak of anti-Jewish incidents following the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the Jewish community was generally safe under the protection of both Mohammed and Hassan, who proudly considered the Jews "Moroccans of Jewish origin."

When tens of thousands of Jews left Morocco in a massive aliyah that began after Morocco gained its independence in 1956 — and accelerated after Hassan II gained power — it was due as much to Zionism and a desire for economic opportunity as it was to a fear of anti-Semitism.

And as absorption difficulties mounted, Moroccan Jews missed the country of their birth even more.

"Even the death of your own premier you haven't mourned as deeply," Pinhas Suissa, 44, a building contractor from Jerusalem said to his friends.

He got a simple response: "Rabin was a prime minister, elected for only four years. The king was king for life."

Along with the recently deceased King Hussein of Jordan, Hassan was considered a moderate.

During his 38-year reign, he discreetly, and later openly, promoted ties with Israel at a time when most of the rest of the Arab world rejected such contact.

In the 1967 and 1973 wars, he contributed only a nominal number of troops to support the Arab world.

His mediation efforts, including secret meetings with Israeli intelligence officials and political leaders, helped pave the way for the 1978 Camp David accord between Israel and Egypt.

Hassan also played a role in preparing for the 1991 Madrid peace conference and welcomed Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in September 1993, making Morocco the first Arab nation outside of Egypt to officially welcome an Israeli leader. In 1994, Hassan hosted the first Middle East regional economic conference, which included Israel, in the Moroccan city of Casablanca.

Following the 1993 Oslo accords between Israel and the Palestinians, Israel was allowed to establish a consular office in Rabat, and an estimated 40,000 Israeli tourists visited Morocco in 1995 and 1996. But after the peace process stalled following the election of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, relations cooled considerably. Moroccan ministers were not allowed to meet with Israel's consul general in their offices.

But there were indications that relations were set to improve once again with the renewed optimism in the peace process spurred by Barak's election in May. Before Hassan's death last Friday, Morocco's trade office in Israel commemorated its move from Tel Aviv to new offices in an ornate replica of one of Hassan's palaces built in the southern port city of Ashdod.

Speculation before the funeral focused on the possibility of a meeting between Barak and Syrian President Hafez Assad.

But Assad did not attend the funeral, reportedly because of American efforts to set up such a meeting. Assad, who sent a deputy in his place, was slated to visit Morocco on Tuesday to pay his respects to Mohammed, according to Israeli press reports.

Separate meetings between Barak and Arafat and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak slated for Saturday evening and Sunday, respectively, were postponed because of Hassan's death and rescheduled for Tuesday evening and Thursday.

But even in death Hassan provided an opportunity for Israeli and Arab officials to meet — in this case, an unprecedented exchange between Barak, Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy and Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

Speaking in French, Bouteflika asked Levy whether Israel was serious about peace, to which the Moroccan-born minister responded affirmatively, adding that it was in Israel's interest to reach peace and that he and his fellow Cabinet members was ready to work hard to do so.

Turning to Barak, the Algerian president said his country was willing to help in any way it could.

Moroccan Israelis must have felt a surge of pride as they watched Levy, one of their own, talk to Bouteflika. □

(JTA correspondent Naomi Segal in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

JEWISH WORLD

Insurance settlement expected

A commission working to resolve claims against European insurers for blocking payments to Holocaust survivors expects to begin handling claims by the end of October.

Following talks last week in Washington, the commission's chairman, former U.S. Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, said the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims would also soon resolve the thorny issue of how much those claims are now worth. Some analysts put the total at between \$1 billion and \$4 billion.

AJCommittee aids Kosovars

The American Jewish Committee donated \$200,000 to the U.N. High Commission for Refugees for the reconstruction of some 20 schools in Kosovo.

The donation was drawn from the group's Kosovo Relief Fund, which has raised \$1.35 million to help Kosovar Albanians.

New negotiator welcomed

The leader of Germany's Jewish community welcomed the appointment of Otto Graf Lambsdorff as the country's new chief negotiator in talks on a fund to compensate Nazi-era slave laborers.

Ignatz Bubis, chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, described Lambsdorff, a former economics minister, as a competent and trusted figure.

The former lead negotiator, Bodo Hombach, recently resigned to run the European Union's reconstruction efforts in the Balkans.

Fund to pay Russian victims

Payments totaling \$1.05 million are scheduled to be made this week to Russian Holocaust survivors.

A total of 1,745 Jewish survivors and 890 non-Jewish survivors will each receive \$400 from a \$180 million fund that was established in 1997 by Switzerland's three largest banks to aid needy survivors worldwide.

Germany ups preservation funds

Germany approved increased funding during the next four years for the preservation of concentration camp memorials and Holocaust research centers around the country. The funding will rise from \$16 million next year to \$27 million by 2003, according to Culture Minister Michael Naumann.

JNF to remember crash victims

The Jewish National Fund is establishing a memorial forest in Israel to commemorate John F. Kennedy Jr., his wife and sister-in-law.

The move comes more than 30 years after the JNF set up a forest in memory of President Kennedy.

Jewish groups applaud Senate for approval of hate crimes bill

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The U.S. Senate's swift approval of legislation strengthening the federal hate crimes statute came as welcome — and somewhat unexpected — news to Jewish and civil rights activists.

The Senate last week approved the bill, which allows the federal government to prosecute hate crimes sparked by sexual orientation, gender and disability, without any public debate. Current federal law applies only to crimes motivated by race, color, religion or national origin.

Jewish activists have been urging Congress to enact the Hate Crimes Prevention Act since 1997.

A similar bill was defeated in the Senate last year amid opposition from conservatives, who argued that it designated special classes of citizens who were already protected under existing state laws against violence.

Recent high-profile hate crimes, however, generated new momentum for the measure.

"The tragic bias-motivated shootings over the July 4 weekend in Illinois and Indiana, the recent murder of a gay couple in California, and the arson attacks on synagogues on Sacramento in June are only the most recent examples of hate crimes," said the Anti-Defamation League in a statement, applauding the Senate's action.

Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, said the measure "is not simply feel-good legislation. It will make a real difference to Americans whose safety is continually threatened because of their identity.

"This is an important step in healing the wounds hate crimes have inflicted in our communities," he added.

The measure, sponsored by Sens. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) and Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), was approved on a voice vote and folded into a spending bill for the Justice Department and other agencies.

The Senate also approved a related bill sponsored by Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), which expands federal jurisdiction to hate crimes committed after crossing state lines. It also would give a boost to state and local law enforcement officials prosecuting hate crimes by allowing them federal aid.

The House of Representatives has yet to take action on the bill, although it has 182 co-sponsors and hearings are scheduled early next month.

President Clinton said he was "gratified" by the Senate's action and called on the House "to meet its responsibility in combating violence that is fueled by hate." □

Alleged Nazi guard to stay in Canada

TORONTO (JTA) — A Canadian judge has ruled that an 81-year-old British Columbia resident can stay in Canada despite allegations that he worked as a guard at a Nazi-run camp in Latvia from 1941 to 1943.

Lawyers for Eduards Podins contended that he was a grocer and had nothing to do with guarding prisoners at the camp near Valmiera, Latvia.

Podins was on the Nazi payroll as an auxiliary police officer, but the judge found that he had actually worked as a shopkeeper.

The judge also ruled earlier this month that since Podins was not asked about his wartime experience when he entered Canada from Britain in 1959, he cannot be accused of lying about his wartime record.

The judge further ruled that although inmates were subject to forced labor, beatings and at least one execution, the camp should be considered a prison camp and did not show the "systematic brutality" of a concentration camp.

B'nai Brith Canada swiftly condemned the ruling. "We are concerned that the judge seems to have imposed a higher standard of evidence for a Nazi war criminal than is currently required for ordinary immigrants and refugees," said the group's senior legal counsel, David Matas. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Bomb discovered in Moscow shul heightens security fears in Russia**

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — A rabbi's 12-year-old son has prevented a bomb from going off inside a Moscow synagogue.

The incident at the Bolshaya Bronnaya shul — in which no one was hurt — came less than two weeks after a Moscow Jewish leader was stabbed inside another synagogue in the Russian capital.

The incident is likely to exacerbate already-simmering anger within the Jewish community as promises for heightened security at Jewish sites continue to go unmet.

The son of Lubavitch Rabbi Itzhak Kogan discovered the bomb Sunday in the synagogue's main hall a few minutes before a ceremony for a young boy's first haircut was set to begin. The synagogue was packed with a large number of small children.

A bomb squad detonated the explosive nearby. The explosion shattered window panes at the shul and in neighboring buildings.

"It's a miracle that no one was hurt," Itzhak Kogan told JTA minutes after the bomb was detonated.

Dozens of Jews who were evacuated from the synagogue burst into applause when they heard the powerful explosion.

"It could have gone off when we were inside," said a young woman who was inside the shul when the bomb was found. "I still can't believe it. We could have been killed," she said.

According to a Federal Security Service agent, the bomb contained an equivalent of more than one pound of TNT.

In the wake of the July 13 stabbing of Leopold Kaimovsky at the Choral Synagogue, Russian authorities vowed to tighten up security measures at all Moscow synagogues that are guarded by private security agencies. These promises have yet to be fulfilled.

Jewish officials say they are not surprised because a similar failure to follow up on security promises occurred after bomb blasts near two Moscow synagogues in May.

In the meantime, Jewish communal leaders are busy upgrading security measures themselves at Jewish sites in Russia. The changes are evident at the Choral Synagogue, where visitors are now required to pass through an airport-style security system.

Jewish officials say they are preparing to introduce similar measures, which have become commonplace in many Moscow restaurants and office buildings, at most Jewish sites in Moscow and elsewhere in Russia.

Currently, only two Moscow synagogues have adequate security systems, while schools, offices of Jewish organizations and soup kitchens lack even basic measures.

Increased security, of course, translates into increased costs, and with this in mind, the Moscow community established this week a special foundation to raise funds in Russia and abroad to provide communal institutions with updated security.

Information about the Security Foundation of the Russian Jewish Community can be obtained in English on the Web at the following address: www.chat.ru/~jsfund

"We are witnessing a surge of anti-Semitism. This does not mean that people don't see a future here anymore. What we have to do now is to struggle for this future, to learn to protect ourselves," said Pavel Feldblum, the executive vice president of the newly created Moscow Jewish Community.

The community, formed recently by 40 prominent Jews, is seeking to unite the Jewish organizations that operate in Moscow.

The board of the Moscow community includes prominent businessmen, lawyers, Russia's former foreign minister, the coach of the national basketball team and a top-ranked police official.

One of the country's best-known entertainers was named president of the group.

Comedian Gennady Khazanov, known as "Russia's Bob Hope," said he understood only recently the importance of being personally involved in the Jewish community.

"You can give concerts here or abroad, yet there is a more meaningful way you can try to make a difference with your life," said Khazanov, 55.

Last week, after the synagogue stabbing, Khazanov made several television appearances as president of the community.

Sporting a white silk yarmulka — something he had rarely done before — the famous comedian focused public attention on the incident.

"When we started building the Russian Jewish Congress, many Jews who have weight in society tried to distance themselves from the community," said Vladimir Goussinsky, the president of the Russian Jewish Congress, the leading domestic underwriter of Jewish life. "That these people are joining us today is a positive sign."

Nor is Khazanov the only public figure who has been prompted by the stabbing incident to come out of the Jewish closet.

Former Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, who is partly Jewish, said the current surge of anti-Semitism has prompted him to join the recently created group.

As its first goal, the Moscow Jewish Community plans to raise and distribute \$800,000 for existing communal projects in the capital. "The overall goal of the new structure is to raise Jewish pride and Jewish self-consciousness" among non-affiliated Jews, said Moscow's chief rabbi, Pinchas Goldschmidt.

Goldschmidt said that when more prominent figures are not ashamed to publicly associate with the community, more Russian Jews will affirm their Jewish roots.

Meanwhile, reports in the mainstream Russian press this week are accelerating concerns about an even larger surge in anti-Semitism. Several newspapers criticized former Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin for saying that a battle between two of Russia's leading business tycoons was a struggle between "two Jews."

Commenting on an unprecedented media war between the ORT channel, controlled by Boris Berezovsky, and NTV, owned by Vladimir Goussinsky, Chernomyrdin told a news conference in Moscow, "It comes out that two Jews have clashed, and now the whole country has to watch this farce."

Many Jewish officials and ordinary Jews said they were shocked by the comment from Chernomyrdin, who had not previously made public anti-Semitic remarks.

In a front-page article, Russia's leading business daily Kommersant wrote that the remark was an indication of a looming "anti-Semitic epidemic" in advance of this December's parliamentary election.

In Washington, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry urged Russian Prime Minister Sergei Stepashin to speak out against the recent spate of anti-Semitic incidents when he visits the United States next week. □