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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Five shot at L.A.-area JCC

Five people were shot at the North Valley Jewish Community Center in Granada Hills near Los Angeles. Three of the victims are children, with one described by police as being in "very, very critical condition."

One teen-ager and an adult are reported in stable condition.

Police, who are searching for a male suspect, found 30 shell casings from an automatic weapon at the crime scene. [Page 1]

Barak predicts more terrorism

Israelis can expect further attacks "by radical groups that oppose the peace process," Prime Minister Ehud Barak predicted.

His comment came after a Palestinian twice drove his car Tuesday into a group of Israeli soldiers hitchhiking on a road some 30 miles west of Jerusalem before Israeli troops shot and killed him.

Twelve people suffered light to moderate injuries. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack. Palestinian officials criticized the soldiers who opened fire on the 22-year-old driver, saying they acted rashly.

Russian reshuffle worries Jews

Russian President Boris Yeltsin's latest reshuffling of his Cabinet could hinder the government's ability to crack down on anti-Semitism, according to Russian Jewish leaders.

"There is little ground for optimism when we call on the government to ensure stability, but there is no stability within the government itself," said Pavel Feldblum, the executive vice president of the Moscow Jewish Community. [Page 4]

Police close Temple Mount wall

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak said Tuesday that Islamic officials violated the law when they widened an opening in a wall of Jerusalem's Temple Mount compound earlier this week.

Barak praised the response of Israeli police, who before dawn on Tuesday sealed off a door-sized opening excavated at the Al-Aksa Mosque.

Barak's stance was viewed as a signal that he would take a tough line regarding the status quo in Jerusalem's Old City. Islamic officials denounced the police action, saying they have control over the site.

Gunman hurts 5 in Los Angeles JCC; Jewish sites nationwide look at security

JTA staff report

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Jewish institutions across America are re-evaluating their security in the wake of a shooting at a Los Angeles-area Jewish community center that left five injured, including a 5-year-old boy who is fighting for his life.

According to early reports, a gunman wielding a 9-millimeter automatic weapon burst into the lobby of the North Valley Jewish Community Center on Tuesday morning, fired 20 to 30 shots and wounded three children and two adults.

A 5-year-old boy was hit repeatedly, and his condition was described as "extremely critical."

Local hospital officials and police, who did not release the names of the shooting victims, said two 6-year-olds were in stable condition.

A 68-year-old woman, who was shot in the arm, and a 16-year-old girl, who was shot twice in the leg, were both in stable condition.

Police cordoned off the entire area adjoining the center in Granada Hills, a suburb of Los Angeles, and were reportedly looking for a balding, white male in his 40s wearing green clothes.

Police evacuated 22 children from the center and led them to the nearby Temple Beth Torah.

At the time of the shooting, two classes from the community center were touring the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Museum of Tolerance.

"Some of the mothers (of the children) have been calling frantically and our staff has assured them that the ones that are in the museum are OK," Rabbi Marvin Hier, the dean of the Wiesenthal Center, told the local CBS affiliate in Los Angeles.

Tuesday's shooting, which came shortly before 11 a.m., comes on the heels of two other attacks that shook the Jewish community.

On June 18, arsonists set fire to three northern California synagogues. Two weeks later, on July 2, a gunman near Chicago shot six Jews during a shooting spree aimed at minorities.

After Tuesday's attack, the Jewish Community Centers Association of North America immediately put out an action alert to the 275 centers, urging them to beef up security and contact their local law enforcement authorities, according to Robin Ballin, marketing director of the association.

"We had no reason to think that something like this could happen. We had no indications," said Jeff Rouss, executive director of the North Valley JCC. "We have stepped up security at our other sites," Rouss said.

He used the opportunity to call for gun control.

"As a Jew and as an American, as the director of the Jewish community center, this is an issue about safety in our society.

We must do something about guns. We must stop this. Let's protect our children. Let's let them be children," an emotional Rouss said.

In Washington, President Clinton told reporters at the White House, "This is another senseless act of gun violence."

Clinton added: "It calls on all of us not only to give our thoughts and prayers to the victims and families, but to intensify our resolve to make America a safer place."

All Jewish community centers receive a security manual from the association.

Following the Sacramento synagogue fires, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, an umbrella organization, issued a "security reminder" to its member agencies. "Tragic

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel to release Shoah memoirs

Israel's Justice Ministry said Tuesday it would release the memoirs Adolf Eichmann wrote while awaiting execution in Israel in 1962.

A ministry official said the 1,300 pages of handwritten notes would be released at the "earliest opportunity" and would include background and commentary.

Critics of the move have maintained that the memoirs would be misused by Holocaust deniers.

Levy calls on Syria to negotiate

Israel is ready to resume peace talks with Syria "at any time, at any level," Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy said Tuesday in Amman after meeting with Jordanian leaders.

He called on "both sides to act directly," without mediators.

Hamas official freed

Palestinian security forces released one of three Hamas officials they had detained over the weekend.

Ismail Abu Sanab told the Israeli daily Ha'aretz that Palestinian officials had arrested him for incitement against the self-rule government, a charge he denied.

Kibbutz prepares for eclipse

A kibbutz in the Golan Heights is preparing for an onslaught of visitors after it was described as the best place in Israel to view Wednesday's solar eclipse.

Officials at Kibbutz Merom Golan decided not to charge an entry fee for eclipse watchers, but members of the kibbutz bought special glasses to sell to spectators. From Israel's vantage point, 80 percent of the sun will be covered during the eclipse.

Amid warnings of the dangers of watching the eclipse without protection, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority declared Wednesday a holiday and urged the public to stay indoors.

events such as this one remind us of the need to adhere to routine, common sense security precautions following the attack," the memo said.

Many Jewish institutions were rethinking their security precautions following the attack.

But most attention was immediately focused on the victims.

Dr. Charles Deng, of the Providence Holy Cross Medical Center, told reporters that the 5-year-old boy was shot in the abdomen and leg.

Deng told reporters he does not know if the boy "will survive the next few hours, let alone the next few days."

The North Valley center is one of seven branches of the JCCs of Greater Los Angeles.

The injured students were enrolled in a summer day camp at the center, according to parents and police.

"It's terrifying that somebody would randomly pick on innocent children," the mother of a 7-year-old said in an interview with KTLA, another Los Angeles television station.

Los Angeles Fire Department Capt. Steve Ruda told reporters that the scene — "children with gunshot wounds" — was the "worst case" for firefighters, who were the first to arrive at the center.

Local television stations provided live footage of police evacuating about 22 children from the center.

Police officers, after putting their weapons away following a search of the JCC campus, led a chain of children holding hands across a six-lane road, followed by staff members carrying younger children.

After some children, smiling and looking carefree, refused to leave the curb without holding an adult's hand, additional police officers stepped in and formed another line of children.

Throughout the afternoon, the children were reunited with their parents at the nearby Temple Beth Torah.

U.S. Rep. Howard "Buck" McKeon (R-Calif.), whose district includes the JCC, said through a spokesman that he "deplores this kind of action, and our prayers are certainly with those involved."

In Washington, Vice President Al Gore, who said the White House was monitoring the situation very carefully, offered federal assistance with the investigation.

"There is still a great deal we don't know, except the fact that we've seen a neighborhood and a community shattered by violence," Gore said.

As police continued to search for the gunman, Jewish officials stressed that their institutions are safe.

"Generally people should feel safe," said Ballin of the JCC association.

"These random incidents happen everywhere."

Rabbi Larry Goldmark of the Southern California Board of Rabbis offered a prayer at a live, televised news conference.

"We pray that these innocent young children and men and women will recover, that God gives us strength and that God gives all of us throughout this world peace, especially peace within our hearts so that the senseless crimes that go on now literally day after day may end, and there truly would be peace all over. Amen," Goldmark said.

Many Los Angeles residents received worried calls from relatives in Israel and other countries, who had followed reports of the shooting on radio and television, sometimes even before local residents were aware of the situation.

Rabbi Michael Melchior, the Israeli minister for Diaspora relations and social affairs, condemned what he called an "abhorrent attack."

Melchior said he is very concerned at the recent upsurge in anti-Semitic violence in the United States and in other parts of the world.

He added that he plans to meet with world Jewish leaders in the near future to discuss the situation and solutions to the problem, such as education and information campaigns.

Melchior also spoke to Los Angeles community leaders by phone to offer Israeli government assistance to the community following the attack. □

(JTA Washington Bureau Chief Matthew Dorf and JTA correspondents Tom Tugend in Los Angeles and Avi Machlis in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)



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JEWISH WORLD

Insurers: No Holocaust pact yet

Officials at several European insurance firms denied Tuesday that they had reached agreement with representatives of Holocaust survivors for paying out policies dating back to World War II.

Their comments came in the wake of reports that they had agreed to pay out the policies at 10 times their original value.

WJC to lobby Chilean officials

The secretary-general of the World Jewish Congress plans to travel to Chile in an effort to head off an international neo-Nazi congress that is scheduled to be held there on April 20, the birthday of Hitler.

Vowing to "mobilize public opinion" against the South American nation if the congress is held, Israel Singer said Monday, "Chile has business, it has tourists, it is a democracy. It doesn't want to have public embarrassment."

Birthright Israel plans fall debut

A \$300 million initiative to give every Jew between the ages of 15 to 26 a first-time trip to Israel will launch this fall with trips for college students.

Birthright Israel will provide funds to cover round-trip air fare from designated cities and the first 10 days on an approved Israel program for Jewish youth.

Information is available at the Birthright Israel Web site (www.israelexperience.org) or at the toll-free number 888-99-ISRAEL.

Participation for high school students is scheduled to begin in 2001.

Greek synagogue to reopen

A synagogue on the Greek island of Crete is slated to reopen in September after undergoing extensive rebuilding.

The Etz Chaim Synagogue, located in the city of Chania, was destroyed by the Nazis along with the island's Jewish community.

The synagogue, originally a church, was given to the community in 1645.

Poland wants to extradite Jew

Poland asked Britain to extradite a communist-era prosecutor accused of fabricating charges to hang a World War II hero and imprison more than a dozen other people.

Helena Wolinska, who is Jewish, could be sentenced to up to 10 years in prison if convicted.

Wolinska, who is now a British citizen, left Poland after a 1968 anti-Semitic campaign organized by the Communist regime as part of an effort to consolidate its power.

Jewish, civil rights activists gather in D.C., but neo-Nazis are no-shows

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Neo-Nazis may have failed to show up for their much-ballyhooed rally here last weekend, but for counterdemonstrators who gathered here, it marked an opportunity to make a stand against anti-Semitism and racism.

Hundreds of people gathered at Lafayette Park near the White House and at the base of the Lincoln Memorial in protest of the planned march and rally by the white supremacist American Nationalist Party, which has called itself "the fastest-growing right-wing party in existence."

But minutes after folk singer Peter Yarrow led the crowd gathered at the Lincoln Memorial in a stirring, nostalgia-tinged rendition of "We Shall Overcome," it became clear all they would have to overcome was four members of the white supremacist group who showed up and promptly left.

Eleanor Holmes Norton, Washington's delegate to Congress, announced the news to the cheering throng of Jewish and civil rights activists, saying, "The difference between them and us is we showed up and they couldn't."

Across town, a separate, ad hoc coalition of community groups marched six blocks to Lafayette Park and held an anti-Nazi rally that quickly turned into a victory celebration after the neo-Nazi march was canceled.

"This is fabulous," said Bob Kunst, president of a Jewish group called Shalom International of Miami, which was prepared to meet the neo-Nazis head-on. "It was a multiple victory because there was no violence and we didn't avoid our responsibility by turning our back."

The counterdemonstrators who gathered at the Lincoln Memorial for what the American Jewish Committee, the NAACP and other organizing groups called a "respect rally" had no plans to try to confront the neo-Nazis.

"We may not dignify their hatred by confronting them physically, but let them not make a mistake. With every fiber of our being we confront everything they stand for by our presence here and our voices," Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism and a veteran of the civil rights protests of the 1960s, told the crowd.

"We were really pleased that we had the opportunity to bring a diverse community together to make a strong statement of support for pluralism and respect and democracy and tolerance," David Bernstein, regional director of the AJCommittee, said in an interview.

"Our event was in no way dependent on the neo-Nazis," he added. "We just wanted to make sure that whatever happened, a strong countermesssage was heard in the public domain."

The four neo-Nazis who showed up told police they called off the rally because they did not want their people hurt. It remained unclear whether Davis Wolfgang Hawke, the 20-year-old founder of the ANP who attends college in South Carolina, was among the four.

The ANP, previously known as the Knights of Freedom, has used its Web site to present itself as a rapidly growing organization even though it is operated out of Hawke's dorm room, according to the Anti-Defamation League.

Hawke's original name was Andrew Greenbaum, but he claims to have no Jewish bloodlines and says on his Web site that "my stepfather, Hyman Greenbaum (a one-quarter Jew) is incorrectly listed on my birth certificate."

He says that the "purpose of my life, and the reason for the existence of this party, is to take back what the liberals and the Jewish ruling elite have swindled from us — White America and its proud history."

After Washington police and the United States Park Service deployed nearly 2,000 police officers in riot gear in the downtown area to protect the marchers, officials said they would look into suing the neo-Nazi group for the estimated \$1 million it cost taxpayers. □

(Eric Fingerhut of the Washington Jewish Week contributed to this report.)

Russian government shake-up has Jewish community nervous

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin's latest Cabinet reshuffling could hinder the government's ability to crack down on anti-Semitism, according to Russian Jewish leaders.

"There is little ground for optimism when we call on the government to ensure stability but there is no stability with the government itself," said Pavel Feldblum, the executive vice president of the Moscow Jewish Community.

Feldblum's comments came after Yeltsin sacked his entire Cabinet, including Prime Minister Sergei Stepashin, in a surprise move Monday. Yeltsin replaced Stepashin, the fourth prime minister he has fired in the last 17 months, with security chief Vladimir Putin, a former KGB spy.

During a trip to Washington last month, Stepashin condemned anti-Semitism in Russia and vowed to "eradicate" it.

The news took leading politicians, experts and ordinary Russians by surprise. Last week, Moscow's leading newspapers speculated about an impending Cabinet reshuffle, but few expected the change would come so soon.

Like Stepashin, the 47-year-old Putin is a native of St. Petersburg. A former aide to St. Petersburg's liberal ex-Mayor Anatoly Sobchak, Putin has enjoyed a meteoric rise in the Kremlin.

Recently he has been the director of the Federal Security Service, the Russian domestic intelligence agency that is the successor to the Soviet-era KGB, as well as the secretary of Yeltsin's Security Council.

Putin, who has a reputation for being loyal and cautious, said Monday that he planned to retain key ministers from the outgoing government in his new Cabinet. He also vowed his administration would continue the Kremlin's current policies, including a commitment to economic reforms.

In his previous jobs, Putin became familiar with some of the issues that concern Russia's Jewish community. As the former head of the FSB, Security Council and a presidential commission to combat extremism, Putin dealt with the issues of anti-Semitism, neo-Nazism and racism in Russian society. But Putin has never made any direct public comments concerning anti-Semitism.

Putin has had several meetings with Jewish officials, according to Moscow's chief rabbi, Pinchas Goldschmidt. Last year Goldschmidt was among a group of Jewish leaders who met with Putin, then head of the FSB, to discuss security-related issues.

Putin was "sympathetic" to issues raised by the Jewish leaders in the meeting, said Mark Levin, executive director of the Washington-based National Conference on Soviet Jewry, who participated in the meeting.

But Levin and the Union of Council for Soviet Jews, another U.S.-based advocacy group for Jews in the former Soviet Union, expressed caution over the appointment.

Some Russians — Jews and non-Jews alike — oppose Putin's appointment because of his link to the KGB.

"Yeltsin's pick of Putin as prime minister and successor scares me," said Yelena Fradkis, 61, a Jewish teacher of economics at a Moscow university.

"I remember too well the fear me and my family had for the KGB."

As with most previous reshuffles, the reason for Yeltsin's latest decision remains unclear.

Some of Yeltsin's critics across the political spectrum accuse the Russian president of having lost his mind or of acting only in the interests of his own family and his close entourage.

Others say Yeltsin is trying to combat the growing popularity of a burgeoning political alliance between Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov and Former Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov. A bloc established by these two, along with other influential centrist politicians, stands a good chance of winning the majority in December's parliamentary elections, according to observers. Luzhkov, who has sharply criticized Yeltsin, is likely to run in the presidential elections scheduled for the summer of 2000 as well.

In a televised address to the nation, Yeltsin said he would like to see Putin as Russia's next president.

But according to a new poll, Putin enjoys little popularity among Russia's electorate. Ninety-two percent of 3,049 callers to a poll conducted Monday by the Echo Moskvy radio station said they would not vote for him if he ran for president.

Russia's lower house of parliament, is expected to approve Putin's appointment when it votes on the matter Aug 16. □

WWII refugee to sue Poland for property seized after war

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — A Nazi refugee who found sanctuary in Britain just before World War II says he will sue the Polish government for confiscating his family's property after the war.

Peter Koppenheim, 68, said his father and grandfather abandoned a thriving property business in Breslau when they fled from Nazi persecution in February 1939.

But Koppenheim's claim is not linked to his family's flight from the Nazis. Rather, he is targeting the Polish government for its postwar conduct when Breslau was transferred to Poland and renamed Wroclaw.

Koppenheim, who asserts that many Jewish properties were officially handed over to non-Jewish Poles, has accused the Polish government of pursuing a policy of "ethnic cleansing," which he says has been continuing for the past 54 years. Polish Jews who fled their homes allege that long after the end of World War II, those who attempted to reclaim their property were murdered, beaten, raped, tortured and forced to abandon their quest.

Koppenheim, who has joined 10 U.S. citizens in a legal action in New York, believes that by bringing a separate case in London, other British Jews whose property was confiscated by the Polish authorities will be encouraged to stake their claims.

The Polish government is contesting the action.

Koppenheim's multimillion-dollar claim relates to 11 properties in former German territory, now part of Poland, and includes the town mansion his family was forced to flee in 1939.

This property was destroyed by Soviet forces at the end of the war because it had been used by the Germans to snipe at the advancing Red Army.

This will be the first such action in a British court and, if successful, it is expected to trigger hundreds of other claims — and embarrass the Polish government at a time when it is striving to prove it is worthy of full membership in the European Union. □