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84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Survey: Jews fear anti-Semitism more than they do intermarriage

By Julie Wiener

Israel makes Palestinians an offer

Israel offered to withdraw troops from portions of the West Bank if the Palestinians agree to pursue terrorists.

As part of the anti-terror initiative, Israel offered to loosen its military grip on either Nablus or Jenin to give Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat an incentive to crack down in areas that Israel describes as hotbeds of terrorist activity.

The Palestinians "are complaining all the time that we are hindering their efforts to take action," an Israeli official told Reuters.

Ahmed Abed-Rahman, an Arafat aide, said the Israeli offer did not go far enough and called for Israel to lift its closure of all West Bank cities.

Canada freezes all Hamas assets

Canada is freezing the assets of all groups linked to Hamas.

Prior to Wednesday's announcement, Canada excluded Hamas charitable organizations from its list of terror groups. The distinction between Hamas charities and military operations has now been eradicated there.

Two sides discuss security

Israeli and Palestinian security officials met Wednesday night. The two sides discussed ways to rein in terrorists. In a further sign of a possible thaw, Palestinian officials said they have been in phone contact with Israel's Defense and Foreign Affairs ministries in an effort to reduce the violence.

In another development, Hamas officials said they are considering halting suicide attacks against Israeli targets.

Envoy denies anti-Israel slur

France's ambassador to Britain said he could not remember calling Israel "that shitty little country."

Daniel Bernard issued the denial through a spokesman Wednesday following reports that he had made the statement at a private dinner last week with Conrad Black, owner of the London Daily Telegraph.

Asked if Bernard would apologize, his spokesman said: "He has no intention of apologizing." Bernard, who became ambassador to Britain in 1998, was "extremely upset at being considered anti-Israel or, even worse, anti-Semitic," the spokesman added.

NEW YORK (JTA) — A decreasing number of American Jews views anti-Semitism as a "very serious problem" in the United States, but more continue to see anti-Semitism as a greater threat to Jewish life than intermarriage.

The findings are part of an annual opinion survey conducted by the American Jewish Committee. The survey has been conducted every year since 1997.

The study, with a margin of error of three percentage points, explores Jews' political and social attitudes about a range of issues.

Among the highlights on anti-Semitism:

- The number of Jews who view anti-Semitism as a "very serious problem" has declined to 26 percent from 32 percent last year and 40 percent in 1997. But 67 percent view it as "somewhat of a problem."

- Those who agree that "virtually all positions of influence in the United States are open to Jews" is growing, 59 percent, compared with 51 percent last year and in 1997.

- Only 7 percent of American Jews say anti-Semitism is "not a problem at all," a number consistent with previous findings.

- Thirty-nine percent of Jews surveyed continue to expect anti-Semitism to increase in the United States in the coming years. Slightly under half expect it to remain the same. Those numbers echo previous AJCommittee survey findings.

- Jews believe that Muslims, the religious right and Arabs are the American groups most likely to be anti-Semitic. Forty-four percent of Jews said most or many Muslims are anti-Semitic, while 46 percent said most or many religious right and 43 percent said most or many Arabs are anti-Semitic.

- Only 5 percent believe most or many Asians are anti-Semitic and 19 percent believe most or many blacks are anti-Semitic.

When it comes to Jewish identity, the percentage of Jews for whom being Jewish is "very important" is declining somewhat, 48 percent, down from 59 percent last year.

This was the first year the number had dropped — in the past four years, the number had increased from 55 percent to 59 percent.

Another 38 percent said being Jewish is "fairly important."

The survey also found with regard to Jewish identity:

- "Being part of the Jewish people" is ranked as the most important piece of Jewish identity for 40 percent of those surveyed; 20 percent chose a commitment to social justice. However, a growing number — 21 percent this year — say "something else" is the most important aspect, more than religious observance (14 percent) or support for Israel (5 percent).

- Although only 5 percent of Jews listed support for Israel as the most important aspect of their Jewish identity, 72 percent agreed with the statement that "caring about Israel is a very important part of my being a Jew" and 96 percent said they feel close to Israel.

- While there were few dramatic changes in the denominations with which Jews identified, "Just Jewish" — with 33 percent — has become the largest category, and the only one that is growing. Both Conservative and Reform have hovered around 30 percent for the past five years, while Orthodoxy has fluctuated between 7 and 10 percent. The number identifying as Orthodox was 7 percent this year.

Some Jewish sociologists are cautioning against reading too much into changes in the survey's findings this year, because they have fluctuated considerably from year to year. Gary Tobin, president of the San Francisco-based Institute for Jewish and

MIDEAST FOCUS

P.A. closes more Hamas offices

The Palestinian Authority closed six Hamas offices in the Gaza Strip, Israel Radio reported.

Since Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's address on Sunday calling for an end to attacks on Israel, 33 Hamas and Islamic Jihad offices have been closed in the Gaza Strip, as well as three offices in the West Bank city of Ramallah. In addition, Palestinian officials said Wednesday they had arrested 15 members of the P.A. security forces on suspicion of taking part in attacks on Israel.

Reward posted for Ze'evi killers

A \$25,000 reward was offered for information leading to the arrest of the killers of Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi.

The reward, posted Wednesday in the Israeli press, was offered by members of Ze'evi's own National Unity Party.

Law bars Rabin assassin pardon

The Knesset approved a law preventing Israel's president from pardoning anyone who murders a prime minister.

The legislation is known as the "Amir law," after Yigal Amir, who assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995. The law, which was made retroactive to include Amir, was passed Wednesday by a vote of 62 in favor, six against and eight abstentions.

Sonic booms rattle Tel Aviv

The commander of Israel's Air Force grounded an F-15 squadron. The punitive measure was taken after one of the planes broke the sound barrier over the Tel Aviv area during a training flight Tuesday.

Following the recent wave of terrorist attacks, a directive was issued banning military aircraft from sounding sonic booms over populated areas because the public might confuse them with bomb explosions.



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Community Research, said, "What's important is not so much what's going up or down by a few percent but the consistency of certain values."

According to Tobin, the survey has shown two major themes in the past five years when it comes to identity and anti-Semitism: Jews feel close to Israel and it's part of their identity, and "anti-Semitism is on the minds of American Jews."

"In these questions you see typical Jewish anxiety," he said.

David Singer, director of research for the AJCommittee, agreed.

"There's an interesting split between the perceptions within the Jewish community at large and the overwhelming consensus of scholarly opinion," Singer said.

"If you went to most scholars, they would say historically there has been a significant decline in anti-Semitism in the United States and Jews have entered the mainstream fully, but that is not the perception among American Jews at large."

Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, said American Jews consistently report in surveys that while they believe conditions for Jews are improving in the United States, they "do not feel it's secure."

"After Sept. 11 and after Durban, Jews feel more vulnerable than they felt in a long time," he said, referring to the United Nations racism conference earlier this year, where Israel was singled out as racist.

Indeed, a growing number of Jews see anti-Semitism as a greater threat than intermarriage.

Sixty-nine percent view anti-Semitism as the greater threat, whereas 27 percent view intermarriage as the greater threat. In 1997, 61 percent said anti-Semitism was the greater threat, while 32 percent saw intermarriage as the greater threat.

The numbers may indicate what appears to be a declining concern among rank and file Jews about intermarriage. Indeed, last year's AJCommittee survey found little opposition to intermarriage, with 78 percent of respondents saying rabbis should officiate at weddings between Jews and non-Jews. □

Painter who survived Holocaust has homecoming exhibit in Vilnius

By Adam B. Ellick

VILNIUS, Lithuania (JTA) — Lithuania is commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Holocaust by helping to fund an exhibit of paintings by Samuel Bak, a Lithuanian-born Holocaust survivor.

The show, housed in both the State Art Museum and the Gaon Jewish State Museum, features more than 100 of Bak's works from 1942-2001.

Bak, 68, now lives in Boston.

Boston's Pucker Gallery and the Jewish museum also backed the display.

A child prodigy raised in the Vilna Ghetto, Bak had his first exhibition at age 9, while the city was under Nazi occupation.

Two years later, his father and grandparents, like 94 percent of Lithuania's approximately 250,000 Jews, were murdered in a Vilnius suburb. Bak and his mother escaped to Poland and — after the war — Germany.

The three-month exhibit, "Returning Home," features recently discovered works from Bak's Vilnius childhood that he believes were hidden by a Jewish underground movement.

Bak learned that the paintings had survived only a few years ago.

The early works are displayed at the newly restored Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Vilnius.

The building, a prewar Yiddish theater left in ruins when the Communist regime fell in 1991, was unveiled Sept. 23 in front of Lithuania's prime minister. Bak's later works are in eight rooms in the State Art Museum.

"That fact that the authorities were willing to sponsor this is a sign that something is moving in the right direction, to deal with this horrendous past," Bak said during on a recent visit to Vilnius.

After the war Bak lived in Paris, Rome, Israel and New York. His paintings — which carry a theme of destruction — have appeared at the National German Museum, New York City's Jewish Museum and London's Barbican Center. □

JEWISH WORLD

Sixty years after 'Hitler's Olympics,' survivor carries Salt Lake City torch

By Sharon Samber

U.N. to hold emergency session

The U.N. General Assembly is planning to hold an emergency session Thursday on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. U.N. officials scheduled the session following a request from pro-Palestinian states.

The session comes after the United States vetoed a Palestinian-backed resolution Saturday in the U.N. Security Council.

The spokesman for Israel's mission to the United Nations, Ariel Milo, criticized the planned session: "It is most unfortunate that the General Assembly will be used as a platform by the Palestinian leadership to avoid fighting the terror groups in the Palestinian Authority-controlled territories, as is demanded of them by almost the entire international community."

Terror lauded at S. Africa rally

Muslims in Cape Town supported Palestinian terrorism during an anti-Israel rally. During last week's rally, the demonstrators marched to the U.S. Consulate and called on the United States to withdraw its support for Israel and stop its "political adventurism" in Afghanistan.

Marchers shouted "Death to Israel" and "Long Live Hamas." Three children were dressed as suicide bombers and held wooden machine guns that bore the word "Hezbollah."

Professor fired for terror links

A Florida professor alleged to have ties to terrorists was fired. Sami al-Arian had been on paid leave from the University of South Florida after the university reportedly received a barrage of telephone and e-mail threats.

Al-Arian, a tenured professor of computer science, has not been charged with any crime. But an institute he once headed was closed down and its assets were frozen in 1995 for alleged ties to Islamic Jihad.

Education center to open

Brandeis University is launching a center on Jewish education. The Mandel Supporting Foundations of Cleveland, which has funded a variety of Jewish education initiatives, has endowed a professorship and additional faculty positions for the Center for Studies in Jewish Education.

The center will train Jewish educators and sponsor research on education in a variety of settings, including day schools and congregational schools.

Swiss banks urged to keep paper

The Swiss Bankers Association urged its member banks to hold onto World War II-era documents for another 30 years. The recommendation to the 400 banks came after the Swiss government ordered the documents returned to banks.

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Martin Weiss was seven when the first torch run took place at a modern Olympic Games under Hitler's watchful eye in 1936.

Now, 56 years after his liberation from a concentration camp, Weiss will carry the Olympic torch in front of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum past cheering family members and friends.

The torch is on its way from Atlanta, through 46 states, to Salt Lake City, host of the 2002 Games. There are 11,500 torchbearers who are helping to bring the torch to the Games in February.

The Salt Lake Organizing Committee and relay sponsors chose the runners out of 210,000 nominations sent from around the country.

The Holocaust Museum's survivor affairs department asked the Olympic committee if a survivor could be a torchbearer. Museum officials then held a lottery, and Weiss won.

The experience is "very humbling" for the survivor, who says he is overwhelmed by the idea.

"It's a statement about America," Weiss said. "It's wonderful that a thing like this can happen."

In 1936 he heard about the Games from his father, who would go to town and bring back the day's news, and from his sister, who was the only girl from his rural village in Czechoslovakia who was away at college.

Eight years later, his father and sister were killed by the Nazis.

One of nine children, Weiss' life changed in 1939 when Hungarian troops occupied his village and began discriminating against Jews. Soon afterward, two of his brothers were sent to forced labor camps, and in 1944 his family was sent to the Munkacs Ghetto in Hungary.

From there, they were deported to Auschwitz, where nearly all of his family was sent to the gas chambers. Weiss and his father were sent to Mauthausen. Weiss was liberated from there in 1945.

The next year, he emigrated to the United States. He now lives near Washington.

Weiss, who will turn 73 in January, regularly walks on a treadmill and is planning to run the few blocks with the torch on Friday.

While running, his thoughts will be on the future and not on the past, he said. Weiss said he will be thinking about how the "new takes over for the old," and about progress in modern society. "I have faith in the young people in America," he said.

Weiss' outlook contrasts with the outlook for Jews in Germany in 1936.

The International Olympic Committee awarded the 1936 Games to Germany in 1932, a year before Hitler came to power. Hitler used the Games as a way to showcase the Nazis to the world.

He even took down anti-Semitic signs and displays around Germany to curry international favor and make Berlin look tolerant and welcoming. Some anti-Semitic publications temporarily ceased.

Hitler created the tradition, with torches taken from the site of the ancient Greek Olympic Games. After the Games were over, anti-Semitic activity resumed. Hardly a month after the Games ended, Sachsenhausen, a concentration camp that later housed Jews, opened near Berlin.

The Holocaust Museum sent an exhibit on the 1936 Olympics — or the "Nazi Olympics" — to Salt Lake City, the site of the 2002 Winter Olympics.

Many believe that had Western countries, particularly the United States, boycotted the 1936 Games, Hitler's rise would have been slowed and international resistance to Nazism could have been stronger.

Some have applied similar logic to China, arguing that the Olympics should not be held there until the country improves its human rights record.

Asked about the decision to hold the 2008 Olympics in China, Weiss said the country would probably do better by her citizens because of the scrutiny involved in hosting the Olympics.

"I'm all for it," he said. "Open a window and they have to change." □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Embattled Russian Jewish group hopes new head can kindle spark

By Lev Gorodetsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — The Russian Jewish Congress has a new leader — but whether he is the right man to invigorate the embattled organization is unclear.

Yevgeny Satanovsky, a businessman with a doctorate in Middle East politics, was elected president of the Russian Jewish Congress earlier this month. Satanovsky replaced Leonid Nevzlin, who recently was made a member of the upper house of Russia's Parliament. Satanovsky, 42, faces a tough task in trying to re-energize the RJC.

The group has lost its status as the driving force behind the Russian Jewish renaissance, according to most Russian watchers. In part it's because of a Kremlin-backed campaign that drove the RJC's founder, Vladimir Goussinsky, into exile earlier this year. In part, that's due to the fact that a competing group, the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia, has deeper pockets, more energy and stronger Kremlin ties.

Nevzlin, Goussinsky's successor, served for less than a year as RJC president before resigning. For many Jewish activists, including some RJC officials, the latest reshuffle came as a disappointing surprise.

"Nevzlin is quitting at a time of crisis. The RJC is at an impasse in some respects," said Vladimir Shapiro, a leading Jewish sociologist and a member of the group's governing council.

Some RJC officials say Nevzlin began to turn the organization around financially, but the annual budget approved earlier this month was \$4.7 million, 30 percent lower than 2000.

Critics say the RJC has lost focus — by contrast, the federation, which is closely associated with the Lubavitch movement, has the ear of the Kremlin and a finger on the pulse of Russian Jewry.

Nevzlin was elected to replace Goussinsky because he was seen as a person who could improve relations between the RJC and the Kremlin. Ties had suffered as the Kremlin pursued embezzlement charges against Goussinsky, a media mogul who had been harshly critical of Russia's war in Cockney.

Neither Satanovsky's personality nor his views are considered moderate. He is energetic, outspoken and even occasionally intemperate — which might explain the mixed reaction to his appointment among Jewish activists.

"Satanovsky, with his personal dislike of some Lubavitch leaders, will bring about, I am afraid, a total war between the RJC and the federation," said Mikhail Turovsky, a Jewish studies professor in Moscow.

The two groups have often locked horns during the past year in an internecine turf battle.

Satanovsky says he does not want to exacerbate the conflict between the RJC and the federation, but that Jewish groups should try to stay away from those in power — the opposite of the federation's strategy. Some insiders worry that Satanovsky's views will cause problems.

"His views on the Middle East problem, for example, are too right-extremist, which may damage RJC's relations with some public bodies in Russia, in Israel and with U.S. Jewry," said one RJC official who wished to remain anonymous.

But the representative of one U.S.-based group, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, welcomed the development.

"It is an excellent choice. No one is more dedicated to the rebuilding of Jewish life than Yevgeny Satanovsky," said the head of the JDC's Moscow office, Joel Golovensky. "He is truly a Renaissance man. He excels in business, in academia and in philanthropy."

Satanovsky says his goals are threefold — to rebuild the finances of the RJC, integrate the Russian Jewish community into world Jewry and become active in Israel. Even his detractors would admit he has several factors in his favor.

Long active in the Jewish community, Satanovsky knows the world of Russian Jewry from the inside — unlike Goussinsky and Nevzlin, who made huge fortunes during the regime of former President Boris Yeltsin and only later decided to become active in the Jewish community.

Satanovsky, who is married with two teen-aged children, became a Jewish activist in 1983 after reading underground lectures on Jewish history. "Jewish activities became part and parcel of my life. Jews and Israel are in fact the only things that really interest me," he told JTA.

Much of his firm's profits go to Jewish projects, he says. One project was a Jewish university in Moscow, another an institute for Israel and Middle East studies.

The situation in Israel also has become part of Satanovsky's life. He believes Israel should take a harder line toward the Palestinians. In fact, like many Russian Jews, he believes Israel should be prepared to launch an onslaught similar to the one Russia has carried out against Muslim separatists in Cockney.

But Satanovsky says he will be cautious in expressing such views in his new position.

After the election, Satanovsky announced he is quitting business to work full time at the RJC.

"One can disagree with some of his personal attitudes and aptitudes, but one thing is clear: He is a bright guy," said Tanya Levkova, an economist and Jewish activist in Moscow. "What is still more important, he is committed and motivated. And it is not going to be boring now in the RJC." □

Christ-killer charge taken from text

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — An Australian textbook containing a passage that blames the death of Jesus on the Jews is being reprinted with the offending passage rewritten.

The publisher, Pearson Education, distributed some 6,000 copies of "Studies of Society and the Environment" in 1999. It was subsequently used by many 11- and 12-year-olds in the country.

The social studies text covers topics such as history and geography. In a section dealing with Christianity, the book states that Jewish leaders convinced Roman Governor Pontius Pilate to crucify Jesus.

The B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation Commission in Australia brought the passage to the attention of the publisher after receiving complaints, according to Benseon Apple, the group's director of research and public affairs.

The passage reads: "His followers claimed Jesus was the Messiah. However, the Jewish leadership did not believe these claims. They convinced the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate that Jesus was a danger. Pilate did not agree, but allowed the Jewish leaders to crucify Christ."

The amended text describes Jesus as a Jew involved in teaching and healing who was crucified by Pontius Pilate. □