

IN THE NEWS

**Judge delays
outpost evacuation**

An Israeli Supreme Court judge imposed a 10-day delay on the evacuation of illegal West Bank outposts.

Mishael Cheshin's order Thursday came in response to a request from Israeli settlers to delay the evacuation of the nine outposts ordered removed.

The Defense Ministry had said the outposts could be evacuated forcibly by Thursday evening if residents did not leave voluntarily.

**Israel's Yad Vashem
confirms Kerry losses**

Yad Vashem confirmed that a great-aunt and great-uncle of Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) died in the Holocaust.

The Austrian genealogist who last year uncovered the Jewish roots of Kerry, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, revealed last week that Kerry's Jewish grandmother, born Ida Loewe, lost a brother and a sister to the Nazis.

On Thursday, Israel's Holocaust memorial, Yad Vashem, confirmed the finding, saying Jenny Loewe died in Treblinka and Otto Loewe died in Theresienstadt.

Kerry learned that his grandparents were Jewish after the genealogist, hired by the Boston Globe, uncovered this fact.

**Turkey quenches
some of Israel's thirst**

Israel signed an agreement to get water from Turkey.

Under the agreement, signed Thursday, Israel will import 50 million cubic meters of water per year from Turkey for a 20-year period. The amount would constitute 3 percent of Israel's drinking-water consumption.

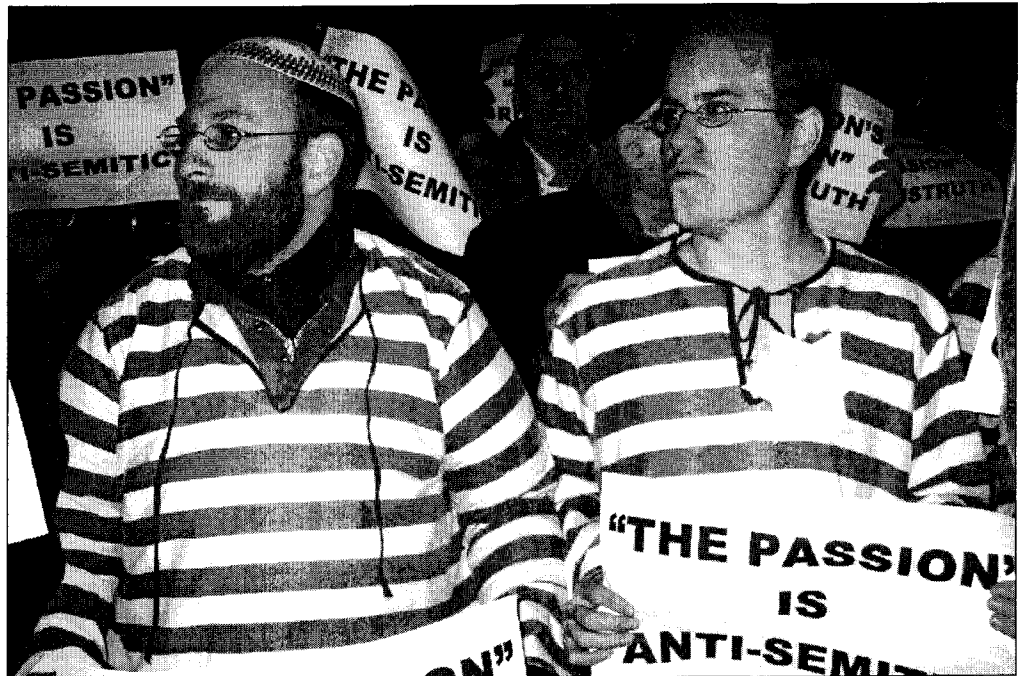
Finding sources of water in the parched Middle East has long been a source of concern, with some experts predicting that water disputes could prompt the next great Middle East war.

■ **MORE NEWS, Pg. 8**



WORLD REPORT

PUBLISHED WEEKDAYS BY JTA—THE GLOBAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE • WWW.JTA.ORG



Rachel Pomerance

IMPASSIONED PROTEST

Some reactions to the 'The Passion of the Christ' became the focus of criticism, as when these Jewish protesters donned concentration-camp uniforms to make their point. **Stories, Pg. 3,6.**

New Phalcon sale to India shows Israel emerging as an arms trader

By **LESLIE SUSSER**

JERUSALEM (JTA) — To every black cloud, they say, there is a silver lining.

Under constant threat from terrorists and hostile neighbors, Israel has become an expert in security — and that expertise is generating big profits.

Israel has been one of the world's big arms sellers for more than a decade, yet it really joined the major leagues this week when the government approved the \$1.1 bil-

lion sale of the Phalcon command-and-control radar system to India.

Israel's annual sales of weaponry total more than \$3 billion. Figures released by the Defense Ministry on Sunday show that with about 10 percent to 14 percent of the world market, Israel is the fifth-largest exporter of weapons systems after the United States, the European Union, Russia and Japan.

Aside from moral issues raised by arms sales, there are some practical problems of

Continued on page 2

**NEWS
ANALYSIS**

■ *Phalcon sale to India shows growth of Israel's international arms deals*

Continued from page 1

Realpolitik. For one, the sales sometimes bring Israel into direct conflict with its closest ally, the United States, which has its own geopolitical interests — as well as a domestic arms industry that it wants to protect from competition.

For another, selling Israeli know-how to other countries means some of it could wind up in enemy hands, neutralizing key advantages Israel might need in a future battlefield.

On Sunday, the government gave the go-ahead for what will be Israel's single biggest export deal to date: the sale of three Phalcon airborne early-warning systems to India for \$1.1 billion.

Though the Phalcon does not have any American components and was developed entirely by Israel, the Israelis sought and received American permission for the sale last August.

That followed Israel's embarrassing cancellation of a similar deal with China in July 2000 after strenuous American objections. Washington argued then that giving the Chinese such sophisticated systems could make things far more difficult for the United States in any future air battle with mainland China over Taiwan.

Israeli officials claimed that the American objection had more to do with a desire to keep Israel out of the competition for lucrative early-warning system contracts.

The Americans only approved the India deal after they were convinced that it would not destabilize relations between India and Pakistan.

In 2003, Israel signed contracts for weapons sales amounting to \$3 billion. The target this year is more than \$4 billion.

Israel leads the world in a number of systems, including unmanned aerial vehicles, or UAVs, small spotter planes that fly over territory and send back data on troop and other movements, a sophisticated system for analyzing air battles, and electronic systems for fighter planes.

A partial list of current sales gives an idea of the scope of the Israeli operation. Israel sells UAVs to South Korea; the Phalcon, electronics, a sophisticated radar system, UAVs and missiles to India; anti-tank missiles to Poland; UAVs to Finland, Belgium, France and Switzerland; the system for analyzing air battles to Finland and Holland; a system for pinpointing fighter plane targets to Spain and Greece; and night-vision systems to Denmark.

Israel has upgraded tanks and fighter planes for Turkey; has sold naval systems to Australia; and has sold armor for personnel carriers, UAVs, fighter-pilot sights and the system for pinpointing fighter plane targets to the United States.

Paradoxically, Israel's big advantage over other countries is its dire security situation, which turns the country into a laboratory for arms development. Israel has to keep developing new weapons to survive. Often, because of the conflict with the Palestinians, the systems are tested and proven in battle conditions.

Some critics question the morality of such sales, saying they hardly fulfill the vision that Theodor Herzl, the father of the Zionist movement, would have hoped for — though he probably also wouldn't have expected to find Israel still under existential threat 55 years after its founding.

Spokesmen for Israel's military industry often justify the sales by arguing that if Israel didn't provide weapons to various countries, someone else would.

Moreover, they say, arms sales are not necessarily immoral; they sometimes can prevent wars by deterring would-be aggressors.

The Israeli sales, however, can strain U.S.-Israel relations.

In addition to the tension over the Chinese Phalcon sale, there have been other cases of the United States stifling Israeli initiatives: Washington put pressure on Britain not to buy Israeli "Spike" anti-tank missiles and to purchase American "Javelin" missiles instead.

The United States also forced Israel to accept American-made radar in the state-of-the-art, F-16I fighter bombers Israel recently received from the United States — rather than the Israeli Elta system that Israeli officials consider

to be better.

Israeli officials recognize that the more weapons they sell, the greater the risk that Israeli systems could fall into Arab hands. If that happened, the systems could be dismantled and analyzed, and crucial battlefield advantages could be nullified.

Officials already fear that some military technology they shared with the United States has reached the Egyptian army, which is supplied by the United States — and such snafus could happen on a wider scale if Israel sells weapons to less trustworthy clients.

Israel could increase its already large share of the world weapons market if projected sales of the Arrow anti-missile system are allowed to go ahead.

India is one of several countries that has expressed interest. The United States, which funded much of the Arrow's development, so far has blocked any sale, arguing that the Arrow could destabilize India-Pakistan relations by tilting the balance of power too strongly in India's favor.

Some U.S. Congressmen have suggested that the United States deploy the Arrow until its own anti-missile defense system is operational, but so far Washington has not shown any interest in buying Arrows from Israel.

Israeli officials say Israel gladly would forego the billions of dollars it earns in arms sales if peace with the Arabs could be achieved and military development could be de-emphasized.

Until that happens, however, the by-product of Israel's defense needs is likely to be a thriving defense industry, conducting an ever-growing export trade. ■

(Leslie Susser is the diplomatic correspondent for the Jerusalem Report.)

Israel's dire security situation turns the country into a laboratory for arms development.

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JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
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Use of Holocaust garb seen as 'distasteful'

By URIEL HEILMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) — When a few Jews in New York decided last week to dress up in concentration camp uniforms to protest the screening of "The Passion of the Christ," they were hoping to make a point.

They also upset a lot of Jews.

The group — activists from Amcha-The Coalition for Jewish Concerns — argued that Mel Gibson's controversial film, which many say blames the Jews for Jesus' death, could inspire the type of anti-Semitism that led to the Holocaust.

But many Jews, including Holocaust survivors, found that message — and the way the protesters sought to convey it — objectionable.

Aryeh Leifert, 25, an Orthodox rabbinical student, said he was incensed when he saw the yarmulke-clad protesters outside a theater on Manhattan's Upper West Side wearing the striped suits and yellow stars of concentration camp inmates. The protest took place the day the movie opened, on Feb. 25, Ash Wednesday.

"It was totally out of place and an embarrassment," Leifert said. "I think their priorities were slightly out of whack. You have to be very careful when you use Holocaust imagery. Jews don't automatically get a free pass."

Roman Kent, chairman of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, said, "I do not want to have the lowest common denominator applied to the Holocaust."

Though he did not see the protesters himself, Kent said that "the image of the Holocaust should stand by itself, because it was a unique experience in the history of mankind. By using it in these instances, we are diminishing the role of what really happened."

Even the national director of the Anti-Defamation League, Abraham Foxman, who has been one of the most outspoken Jewish critics of "The Passion," said the protesters went too far.

"I find that distasteful, and I find that inappropriate," said Foxman, who is himself a survivor. "The only ones who have a right to wear concentration camp uniforms are survivors. Anybody else, I think, abuses it."

Amcha officials defended their use of the uniforms to protest the Gibson film.

"We want people to realize the seriousness of the dangers that this movie might lead to," said Amcha's vice president, Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld, who was among those donning the Holocaust-era garb. "Yes, this movie can inspire the type of anti-Semitism that led to the Holocaust."

He said the group rented the death-camp outfits from a costume store. He and the four or five others wearing the uniforms — there were about two dozen Amcha protesters in all — affixed the Holocaust-era yellow stars themselves.

"This is not something we take lightly. We have the highest respect for the victims of the Holocaust and the survivors of the Holocaust," Herzfeld said. "We are so concerned about this movie — we want people to be concerned."

Amcha officials said they received a deluge of hate mail after the demonstration. They turned over the correspondence, mostly in the form of anonymous e-mails, to police investigators.

"Whine, whine, whine. Is that all you Jews can do?" one e-mailer wrote. "I'm going to see 'Passion' five times and buy extra popcorn. All the attention you Christ hating whiners have brought to 'Passion' is going to make it one of the biggest revenue producing movies of all time."

"Whine some more for me, I love to hear your incessant whining," the letter-writer continued. "At least you're real good at something."

Other e-mails were more explicit and profanity-laden, one calling Amcha's president, Rabbi Avi Weiss, a "filthy kike" who deserves "whatever comes to you in way of punishment for your crimes against humanity and Christians."

Weiss said the letters show the dangers inherent in the passions Gibson's movie has stirred.

The Gibson movie "casts the Jews as the killers of Jesus," Weiss said. "It is that lie that inspired not only the murder of millions of Jews throughout the centuries, but it's that lie which planted the seed for the Shoah itself, and why we decided to wear those uniforms."

Weiss said the uniforms were intend-

ed to dramatize the issue and provoke a response.

"I take responsibility for this. It was my concept," he said. "When you're outside, it is street theater. You're going for the point of tension."

Some survivors said the use of the uniforms was not only inappropriate, but could trigger unwanted emotions and painful memories for victims of Nazism.

"There are some people that were in camps and they have automatic stress disorders, and anything that reminds them of anti-Semitism sets them off," said Leo Rechter, general secretary of the National Association of Jewish Child Holocaust Survivors.

New Jersey psychologist Irit Felsen, a trauma expert who specializes in treating Holocaust survivors and their families, said the sight of concentration camp uniforms on a Manhattan street might trigger a traumatic response in a Holocaust survivor — but that wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing.

"I think it's all judged by the meaning given to it," Felsen said. "There's no question about the fact that it can be a traumatic reminder, but so are many things. So is 'Schindler's List,'" she said, referring to Steven Spielberg's famous Holocaust movie.

"The question is not how to protect survivors necessarily from arousal; the question is whether it's in the service of a meaningful purpose," she said.

Weiss insisted that it was.

"Much of my life I've spent on Shoah memory, and 1,500 years of Christian anti-Semitism planted the seed for the Shoah," Weiss said.

"I know that the Shoah did not occur in a vacuum. It occurred because of Christian anti-Semitism."

Rechter disagreed that the demonstration outside the movie served its intended purpose.

"There is no dearth of anti-Semitic films."

"By giving it publicity and complaining about it, it only made the public become more aware of it, and many attended out of curiosity," he said. "I think it was helping Mel Gibson's cause rather than our cause."

'Whine, whine, whine. Is that all you Jews can do?'

Anonymous e-mailer

Belarus Jews: Challenges under dictatorship

By MICHAEL J. JORDAN

MINSK, Belarus (JTA) — The crammed bookshelves in Yakov Basin's personal library form an unusual collection, a rogue's gallery of all the anti-Semitic, conspiracy-fueling publications that Basin has plucked from Belarussian bookstores

FIRST IN A SERIES

during the past decade. He pulls one from the shelf to illustrate his point: "War According to Laws of Meanness." Its thesis of "Jewish crimes" — aspiring to global domination, for example — mirrors the notorious forgery "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion." Basin describes how on Nov. 29, 2000, Belarussian legislator Sergei Kostian distributed copies of the war book to colleagues on the floor of Parliament.

Basin, a Jewish leader and human rights activist, took the publisher to court. But the state-controlled judiciary in this ex-Soviet republic deemed the book "scientific" and "academic literature" and therefore not subject to charges of inciting ethnic hatred. Some 30,000 copies were published.

Such acts anger and frustrate some of Belarus' estimated 70,000 Jews.

But others, after decades of Soviet-era anti-Semitic policies, are resigned to a certain level of anti-Jewish provocations.

Jews are relieved that the country's au-

thoritarian ruler, Alexander Lukashenko, hasn't adopted any of the anti-Semitic policies of the past or personally made any anti-Jewish pronouncements, Basin says. But, he adds, Lukashenko also "has done nothing for us."

Lukashenko sends mixed signals to the Jewish community. He attended the unveiling of a major Holocaust memorial in Belarus' capital, Minsk, in July 2000. And after a Minsk synagogue was firebombed that December, he was quoted as saying, "We won't let anyone harm our Jews."

But the list of what's not being done is long, says Basin. Vandals of Jewish cemeteries and institutions are never prosecuted. Anti-Jewish screeds like "Laws of Meanness" proliferate unimpeded.

Scores of Jewish synagogues confiscated by the Communists and properties pilfered by the Nazis have not been returned. No national Holocaust remembrance day has been established in a land that saw some 800,000 Jews killed during World War II.

"We would have expected some attempts to correct their mistakes of the past, but nothing like this has happened," says Basin, who also heads the Reform movement in Belarus.

While many of the negative developments for the Jews are acts of omission, there are negative acts of commission as well.

A new law on religion recognizes Judaism as a traditional religion, but renders the Russian Orthodox Church supreme and blurs church-state divisions. The Education Ministry has stripped the country's lone Jewish university of autonomy and threatened it with closure.

Jewish remains from a 300-year-old cemetery in the city of Grodno were dug up last summer so a local soccer stadium could expand. A cemetery controversy also festers in Mogilev, where Christians are being buried alongside Jewish tombstones in an old Jewish cemetery.

While it may seem unfair to blame Lukashenko for this state of affairs, he, more than any European leader, enjoys the ability to act single-handedly — and thus bears ultimate responsibility.

After all, he is what many describe as "Europe's last dictator."

Lukashenko reigns unfettered over a nation of 10 million. Police patrol seemingly every street corner in Minsk. Residents watch their words on the phone for fear of wiretapping. Several key opposition leaders and independent journalists have disappeared without a trace.

So absolute is Lukashenko's power

that as of last May, no individual in Belarus may carry the title "president" — not the head of a company, an organization or an institution. Why? Because Belarus has one — and only one — president: Lukashenko.

Save for Basin and a few others, Belarussian Jews — the third-largest Jewish community in the former Soviet Union, behind those in neighboring Russia and Ukraine — are loath to criticize Lukashenko. After seven decades of Soviet dictatorship, with long memories of dark times and uncertainty of what may come in the future, Jews here have learned to toe the line.

Many of them are elderly, and they struggle economically, like the vast majority of Belarussians, though the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee assists them with welfare programs and health care.

Meanwhile, long-suppressed Jewish life has rebounded and is flourishing — also supported by the JDC. But after generations of subservience and fear, Jewish reticence on political matters is a difficult and even risky cycle to break.

That's why Jewish leaders here are so upset with Israel. A series of events converged recently to leave Belarussian Jewry without the local help of its most influential ally; the Israeli government closed its Minsk embassy in July.

Israel also shuttered 12 other diplomatic missions around the world in across-the-board budget cuts due to Israel's sagging economy.

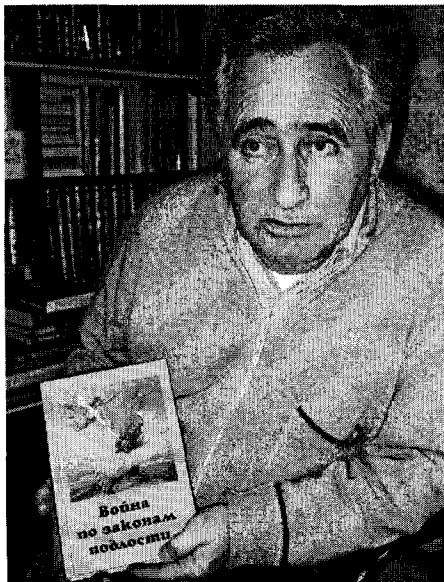
However Belarus is unlike the other countries where embassies were shut, Jewish leaders here note. It is square in the historic Pale of Settlement, was ravaged by the Holocaust and boasts tens of

'Democracy is not our business.'

Sender Uritskiy

Chief rabbi of Belarus

FROM
MINSK
TO PINSK



Michael J. Jordan

Yakov Basin holds a copy of an anti-Semitic book distributed in Belarus' parliament.

thousands of Jews in a region undergoing the instability wrought by communism's collapse.

Moreover, with Belarus isolated from the West, Lukashenko is deepening relations with the Islamic world. For several years, Belarus reportedly supplied arms and technical expertise to countries like Syria and Iran.

A Palestinian mission to Minsk opened a year ago. Growing numbers of Arab students are said to be studying in the country, some of whom were active in the pro-Saddam Hussein, anti-Israeli demonstrations in Minsk last year.

After the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003, media reported that several top Iraqi officials were found with Belarussian passports issued in Damascus.

And this past December, Belarus state television was filled with stories about Lukashenko's visit with Syrian leader Bashar Assad, touting a new deal for tractors sales to Syria.

Belarus Jews had looked to diplomats at their Israeli Embassy as defenders of Jewish interests, advocates who could approach top Belarussian officials on equal, diplomatic footing.

Nowadays, the Israeli Embassy in Moscow handles relations with Belarus. But that pales to an in-country presence, says Leonid Levin, an architect and chairman of the secular umbrella group known as the Union of Belarussian Jewish Public Associations and Communities.

"If there are any anti-Semitic acts, the embassy was the first place we went to for support," says Levin from the bowels of his huge, subterranean architectural studio in Minsk. "But without them here, there's a feeling of nakedness."

Levin says he's in regular contact with Israeli officials in Jerusalem, exhorting them to reopen the embassy.

"We tell them: This is your mistake, you haven't thought this through," says Levin. "The Belarussian Jewish community has great roots here and strong connections to Israel. We now live in a difficult situation, and they've left us to face it alone."

An Israeli official says the decision was entirely economic. He noted that Israeli diplomatic missions remain in 93 countries.

"The closures were solely related to economic factors and have no political or diplomatic ramifications," says Ido Aharoni, a spokesman for the Israeli Consulate in New York. "It's definitely a hard decision to close an embassy, and not



Michael J. Jordan

Belarus Jews have argued with government officials over the preservation of many Jewish cemeteries, like this one in Mir.

something that's taken lightly."

But Israel's Foreign Ministry declined to address Levin's criticisms.

As for the new law on religion, it's unclear what, if any, long-term repercussions may arise for Belarus' Jews.

The bill allows the restitution of houses of worship confiscated during the Soviet era but with a caveat: as long as they are not currently used as cultural or sports facilities. Many are. Since 1989, only four of 105 synagogues in Belarus have been returned to the community, Basin says.

The new law also adds reams of bureaucratic red tape to the registration of religious groups, the sanctioning of activities, and the importation of religious books and materials.

Nevertheless, the chief rabbi of Belarus says he has no qualms with any aspect of Lukashenko's rule.

"Democracy is not our business," says Rabbi Sender Uritsky in his spartan office a floor above his shul, Synagogue Beth Israel. "I don't care what kind of government structure they have here, only that there are normal conditions for Jews to live their Jewish lives."

The situation with the Jewish university has upset many, however.

The International Institute for the Humanities opened in 1999 "to give a Jewish education to those who want it," according to its current director, Zelik Pinkhasik.

Supported by the JDC and others, the

500-student institution has developed strong academic ties with Hebrew University in Jerusalem and several schools in the United States and Western Europe.

But now the university has lost its independence.

The trouble, some say, is Lukashenko's predilection for rejecting all things independent and Western. And now because of Israel's diplomatic snub, the institute seems to have landed in the president's doghouse.

"It's because the school is Jewish — we've gone over all the possibilities, and we can't think of any other reason," Pinkhasik says. "It's just very sad. Normally when they take such actions, they come up with some grounds for it. But in our case, there hasn't been any explanation."

The institute now is becoming part of the government-controlled Belarus State University, despite protests from 150 top academics.

Russian-produced print and electronic media are freely accessible in Belarus, so Basin frets over the potential for anti-Semitic hate speech stoking Belarussian society.

"From the rise of Russian chauvinism, a great wave may flow into Belarus," he warns.

However, Basin says, Jews ultimately are leaving Belarus because of the dismal economic situation, not due to the political climate.

Tears and anger: Viewers react to 'The Passion'

By JTA STAFF

NEW YORK (JTA) — In parts of the United States, "The Passion of the Christ" is the biggest thing since the Beatles.

Churches are bringing enough congregants to sell out theaters and some moviegoers are weeping during Mel Gibson's controversial film about the death of Jesus.

"It wasn't sugarcoated at all," said Jonathan Swiger, wiping away tears after seeing "The Passion" in Cincinnati. Gibson, he said, "did it perfect — and it's about time somebody did it."

Jennifer Tufaro had a similar experience in Los Angeles.

"The whole movie I was, like, shaking," Tufaro said. "I'm still disturbed by it. I'm not very religious right now, but as a child growing up I was, so I learned all the stories. And seeing it was a whole different experience."

Whether or not the two-hour, bloody portrayal of Jesus' final days is accurate is in the eye of the beholder, but Gibson's film certainly proved its financial clout in its first week at the box office: The movie took in \$117.5 million through the weekend. The amount was the second highest five-day total for a film that opened on a Wednesday.

"People spoke; they wanted it," Bruce Davey, one of the film's producers, told *The New York Times*.

Around the country, some Jews and non-Jews alike found fault with Gibson's work.

"I hated the movie," said Tillie Tice, a member of Myers Park Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C. "It frightened me to death."

Many Jewish viewers were disgusted not only by the violence depicted but by the active role that Jews in the film play in Jesus' crucifixion. Jewish high priests are shown in "The Passion" as forcing an ambivalent Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, into nailing Jesus to the cross.

In one scene, Pilate offers Jews a choice between releasing Jesus and releasing convicted murderer Barrabas. The Jews choose freedom for Barrabas.

"It was worse than I expected," said Marcia Kushner of Lincoln, Neb. "For those Christians who find this movie spiritually uplifting and inspiring and plan to use it as a teaching tool, I hope they feel

obligated to also teach that hatred of Jews must not be a result of this depiction."

"I fear it will do the Jews great harm, particularly in Europe and the Arab world," she added.

For many Christian viewers, that reaction simply misses the point.

"If they're going to sit here and point fingers at a movie for their behavior, I think that's pretty sad, and that's totally missing the message of the movie," Cincinnati resident Jill Puryear said.

Olivia Gonzalez, who saw the film in a Tucson, Ariz., theater, agreed. The Jews were "just the people there at the time. It could have been anyone," she said.

The differences in the way the movie is being seen reflects differences in religious backgrounds — but it also may reflect changes among American Catholics since the 1965 Second Vatican Council absolved Jews of deicide, or responsibility for killing Jesus.

"Non-Jews genuinely don't see the anti-Semitism," said Rabbi Mark Levin of Congregation Beth Torah in Overland Park, Kan. "That means that the deicide charge really does not register with them, and perhaps it is not really a part of their culture. I think they are seeing how, in their view, they killed the Christ."

Gibson is a member of a fundamentalist Christian sect that does not accept the Second Vatican Council's decision.

"Mel Gibson is not an anti-Semite, but he is using the Jews as a club in inter-Christian debate," said Rabbi Lewis Eron of southern New Jersey.

In the Dallas area, businessman Arch Bonnema bought out 20 screenings and handed out 6,000 free tickets. In Florida, church buses pulled up outside one cinema.

"All non-believers should see this," said Dorothy McRae of Winter Park. "It's very true to Scriptures."

Father Jon R. Donahue, a professor of New Testament studies at St. Mary's Seminary and University, disagreed, as he told an interfaith group in Baltimore after

seeing the film.

"I want to protest against the inaccurate historical portrayal given in the film," said the scholar, whose doctoral research compared the four New Testament Gospels. The Gospels served as the basis for Gibson's film.

"The portrayal of the Jewish high priests is a travesty, and I think the historical structure of the film is really a travesty and really portrays Jewish people of that time in a horrible light," Donahue said. "It contains many things that are not in any gospel at all, and there's nothing about Jesus's

concern for the poor, with the outcast in Palestine at that time. It's simply, 'I'm saved by the blood of Christ.'"

In New York, activists with the Jewish group Amcha showed up outside a Manhattan theater, some clad in striped outfits meant to evoke concentration-camp uniforms.

Many have worried about the effects the film might have on interfaith relations, but some religious leaders saw the film as a way to bring members of different faiths together.

Such efforts appear to have had only mixed success. In New Jersey, Eron said Jews and Christians who met afterward to discuss the movie saw two different films. In Charlotte, N.C., where more than 300 people went to Temple Beth El to discuss the movie, many embraced interfaith dialogue.

Sheila Ennis, the education minister of Myers Park Baptist Church in Charlotte, said it was time to move on. "I'm not even going to think about the movie again. I don't want to give Mel Gibson any more of my energy," she said. "My energy will now go to building bridges."

(*The Charlotte Jewish News*, the *American Israelite in Cincinnati*, the *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle*, the *Jewish Press of Omaha, Neb.*, the *Arizona Jewish Post*, the *Jewish Community Voice in Cherry Hill, N.J.*, the *Texas Jewish Post*, the *Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles* and the *Baltimore Jewish Times* contributed to this report.)

I'm not even going to think about the movie again. I don't want to give Mel Gibson any more of my energy.

Sheila Ennis

Myers Park Baptist Church

COMMUNITY

TRANSITIONS

■ Mark Wilf was appointed national chair of the 2005 UJA Federation Campaign of United Jewish Communities, effective July.

■ David Mallach, assistant executive vice president of the United Jewish Communities of Metrowest, in New Jersey, was named managing director of the UJA-Federation of New York's Commission on the Jewish People.

■ Ronny Douek and Susie Gelman were named co-chairs of United Jewish Communities Israel.

■ U.S. Ambassador Arthur Schechter was elected national chairman of the National Jewish Democratic Council.

■ Peter Rzepka was elected national president of Bar-Ilan University's American Board of Trustees.

■ Shale Stiller will succeed Bernard Siegel as president and chief executive officer of the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation in February 2005.

■ Murray Tenenbaum was named director of government relations for the Zionist Organization of America.

■ Daniel Mandel was named associate director of the Middle East Forum.

HONORS

■ Rep. Bob Filner (D-Calif.) was awarded the Jewish War Veterans' Medal of Merit for his efforts on behalf of veterans.

■ Philanthropists Helen and Martin Kimmel were honored by the American Committee for the Weizmann Institute of Science for their contributions.

■ Author Meir Shalev received the Jewish National Fund's Shimon Ben-Shemesh Foundation prize for his writings about Israel.

■ The Jewish Education Service of North America honored 12 individuals and foundations with the 2004 JESNA Vision Award. Recipients included: the Avi Chai Foundation; the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies; Susan Crown and Barbara Goodman Manilow; Edith and Henry Everett; Harold Grinspoon; Caroline and Joseph Gruss; Ellie, Mark and Simha Lainer; Laura Lauder; the Mandel Foundation; Lynn Schusterman; Abigail and Leslie Wexner; and Shelley and Bruce Whizin.

Public money for shul safety?

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

BOSTON (JTA) — It soon could be a conundrum for American Jews: Should communities allow government money into synagogues in order to keep terrorists out?

Behind the scenes at this year's Jewish Council for Public Affairs plenum, officials were debating how to reconcile steadfast support by some Jewish groups for strict separation between church and state with the growing need for money to ease soaring post-Sept. 11 security costs.

Especially contentious is whether the money should go to synagogues and day schools.

Those involved say there is an understanding that it would be best not to announce a policy until there is agreement on the issue, given historic divisions in the organized Jewish community over church-state separation.

"We are working diligently to try and reach a consensus," said Charles Konigsberg, vice president for public policy at the United Jewish Communities, the umbrella group for North American federations.

UJC likely will look to the annual Homeland Security appropriations in Congress in the coming weeks for security assistance for non-profit organizations that are high-risk targets of terrorist attacks.

It is unclear yet how much money UJC lobbyists will seek.

U.S. Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), ranking minority member of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, may be a key ally on this issue, insiders say.

The project could put Jewish groups in partnership with hospitals, museums and the American Red Cross. Some have suggested that mosques may also get aid.

According to several sources, Jewish organizations are in almost complete agreement that seeking loan guarantees from the federal government for the security costs would not violate their perception of church-state separation, because no direct federal aid would go to the organizations.

However, some are specifically pushing for grants instead of or in addition

to the guarantees, which would be one of the first instances in which a majority of Jewish groups supported federal aid for religious institutions.

Some more liberal Jewish groups are not quite ready to make that leap.

They either are pushing for the Jewish community to focus on the loan guarantees or to set up a two-tier system that would propose aid to federation buildings and other community service centers, and loan guarantees to religious institutions.

"It's a really, really close church-state question," said one Jewish official involved in the discussions. "We've been so out there on church-state issues, but this is a different paradigm."

Others have countered that such a system would make synagogues and religious buildings second-class institutions.

Federal disaster aid and historical-preservation money in recent years have gone to all classes of Jewish institutions, although there apparently still is debate among Jews about whether

Jewish institutions should accept such funds.

The Bush administration has heavily touted faith-based initiatives and other venues to allow religious groups to seek federal dollars.

While the Orthodox community has embraced such proposals enthusiastically, most Jewish groups either have opposed them or been uncertain.

Those Jewish leaders who oppose faith-based initiatives are worried that this exception could set a precedent.

"The fact is, it is a change from historically where the community has been," said one Jewish organization official who asked not be identified.

"It will be much harder to resist funding going to purposes many of us would not support."

Even those who do not support seeking federal aid say they understand the rationale for the exemption from longstanding Jewish public policy. They are likely not to contest openly the majority's decision.

"There is not going to be a schism on this," one Jewish leader said. "They will either support this or step back." ■

The church-state issue and the need for synagogue security collide.

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Clinton wants Ashcroft to aid survivors

Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) is calling on the U.S. attorney general to aid Holocaust survivors who lost assets on the "Gold Train."

In a letter to John Ashcroft on Tuesday, Clinton said the Justice Department needed to expedite the process of returning items that had been taken from Hungarian Jews by the Nazis and were seized by U.S. forces in May 1945 on a train in Werfen, Austria.

"These survivors are elderly and many of them are in ill health," Clinton wrote. "I am alarmed by reports that the judge in this case has warned the United States Department of Justice that it is 'dragging its feet.'"

NATO assistance to Israel?

A U.S. senator wants NATO's commander to report on the feasibility of sending NATO troops to Israel.

Sen. John Warner (R-Va.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, told U.S. Gen. James Jones, the military commander of NATO, that he believes NATO could contribute to Middle East peace.

"This is a subject that you and I discuss regularly, Gen. Jones," Warner said Thursday, asking Jones to prepare a formal reply to be entered into the Senate record.

Israel traditionally has rejected the intervention of any outside force in the region.

'Passion' spurs book sales

"The Passion of the Christ" is spurring religious book sales.

Mel Gibson's controversial movie about the death of Jesus is increasing sales of religious volumes, including a companion book to the film and the historical novel "The Da Vinci Code," The Associated Press reported.

WORLD

Britain to aid Palestinian forces

Britain is willing to fund a unified Palestinian security force.

According to British diplomatic sources, London is ready to back a unified security command for the Palestinians once Israel follows through on its pledge to unilaterally withdraw from Palestinian areas.

However, the initiative would depend on the Palestinian Authority's ability to bring its disparate security forces under a central command — a key component of the "road map" peace plan. Operations would be centralized under Haj Ismail Jabar, the director of Palestinian national security.

Previous attempts to centralize the Palestinian security forces have foundered because of Yasser Arafat's unwillingness to relinquish control over them.

Pardon for smuggling Jews

A woman was pardoned for smuggling Jewish children into Switzerland during World War II. Aimee Stauffer-Stitelmann was pardoned under a new Swiss law. During the war, she was censured and jailed for 15 days for smuggling 15 children into Switzerland from Nazi-occupied France.

Europe's got its own ideas

France and Germany want to offer an alternative to President Bush's project for a greater Middle East.

In a joint document to be submitted to a European Union summit later this month, the two countries called on the European Union to "take into account the national sentiment and identity of each coun-

try" in the Middle East while "avoiding the trap of a global approach which ignores national characteristics and stigmatizes Islam as if it were incompatible with modernity."

The U.S. project calls for democratization and modernization of Muslim states stretching from Morocco to Afghanistan as a way to combat Islamic fundamentalism.

Meanwhile, Arab ministers meeting this week were unable to agree on an alternative to the U.S. plan

Britain offers conditional backing to pullout

Britain would support Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza as long as settlers are not relocated to the West Bank. British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw informed Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom of Britain's position in a meeting in London this week. Shalom also was informed that London is considering stationing international forces in the Gaza Strip and West Bank — a plan already rejected by Jerusalem.

MIDDLE EAST

Israeli assassination

An Israeli is suspected of trying to assassinate an Arab member of Knesset. Haifa District Court on Thursday lifted a gag order on the arrest of a local man, Eliran Golan, for the bombing last year of a car driven by Issam Mahoul, a lawmaker with the pro-Communist Hadash Party. Mahoul and his wife escaped unscathed. Golan, 22, is suspected of several other bomb attacks on Arab targets in Haifa, one of which injured a woman.

Gaza raid

Israeli troops on a tunnel-hunting mission killed a Gaza youth. Witnesses said the 14-year-old was killed and three other Palestinians were wounded on Thursday by troops that entered the Rafah refugee camp, where terrorists use tunnels to smuggle in arms from nearby Egypt. Hours earlier, a senior Rafah terrorist was killed by an explosion that ripped apart his home. Israeli officials said a bomb he was preparing may have detonated prematurely.

Memorial for Baruch Goldstein

Extremist settlers are commemorating a decade since the death of Baruch Goldstein.

On Purim 1994, Goldstein killed 29 Muslims during prayer services at Hebron's Tomb of the Patriarchs before being killed himself. Signs were posted in Jerusalem announcing the memorial in the settlement of Kiryat Arba.

Brothers in arms

Two Israeli Arab brothers are under arrest on suspicion of serving as liaisons between Hezbollah and Palestinian terrorists.

The Shin Bet said Thursday that the brothers, from the northern Israeli village of Arrabe, were arrested last month for receiving money and bomb-making instructions from an agent of the Lebanese militia.

Playboy OK'd

The Playboy Channel received permission to broadcast in Israel. Wednesday's decision by an 11-justice panel at Israel's High Court brought to an end three years of judicial debate over whether soft-core pornography should be allowed on Israeli cable stations.

"The Playboy Channel's content is relatively mild. This has also been the conclusion of 175 countries that allow the channel's broadcasts," the High Court said in rejecting a petition submitted by a rare coalition of feminists and Orthodox politicians.