

IN THE NEWS

Tragedy leads to Russia-Israel ties

Russia's foreign minister praised Israeli support following the deadly attack by Chechen terrorists at a Russian school.

"We appreciate the very strong readiness of the Israeli people to help Russia at this hour and this will certainly strengthen the counterterrorist coalition these days," Sergei Lavrov said Monday.

Lavrov arrived in Israel for talks on the weekend shootout at the school in Beslan, Russia, that killed at least 320 people. Among issues on the agenda were possible Israeli counterterrorist training for Russian special forces and enhanced intelligence sharing.

Onward with the security barrier

Israel began work on the southern section of its West Bank security fence. Bulldozers leveled land Sunday at Sikka, a Palestinian village on the pre-1967 border, to prepare for the fence which is to go up later this month.

Sikka is just eight miles south of Hebron, two of whose inhabitants blew themselves up in the Israeli city of Beersheba last week, killing 16 people. But Israeli officials denied that the fence plan had been accelerated because of that terror attack.

Jerusalem Post gets new editor

David Horovitz, editor of the Jerusalem Report magazine, will become editor of the Jerusalem Post newspaper.

On Oct. 1, Horovitz will replace Bret Stephens as Post editor in chief, the Hollinger publishing conglomerate announced this week.

The handover comes amid an embezzlement scandal and top-echelon shakeup at Hollinger. Stephens is returning to his previous position at the Wall Street Journal's editorial board.

The managing editor of the Jerusalem Report, Sharon Ashley, will succeed Horovitz in the magazine's top job.

WORLD REPORT

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For AMIA victims' relatives, verdict is a disappointment, but no surprise

By FLORENCIA ARBISER

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — On July 18, 1994, Paola Czyzewski was at the AMIA Jewish community center when terrorists bombed it, killing the 21-year-old law student and 84 other people.

Ten years later, the Czyzewski family — like most of the victims' relatives — did not come to an Argentine federal courthouse Sept. 2 to hear that the only people accused so far in the attack — locals accused as accessories — had been acquitted.

"We had dinner at home. The atmosphere was tense," Luis Czyzewski, Paola's father, told JTA. "I received the news badly. We somehow expected a conviction."

The Argentine Jewish community was planning a demonstration against the acquittals for Wednesday in Buenos Aires. All of the local Jewish groups, some of which have been at odds over strategies to find those responsible for the attack, are sponsoring the rally.

Ten years after the worst terrorist attack in Argentina's history and the biggest anti-Semitic attack since World War II, no one has been brought to justice — and there isn't even any tangible proof about how the building was bombed.

The court record will be officially presented on Oct. 29. In some parts of it that were made available after the verdict was announced, the judges declared that a van was used to bomb the building, but the way the investigation was carried out made it impossible to find the defendants guilty.

The three federal court judges decided unanimously not only to let the defendants go free, but also to investigate politicians,

legislators, judges, prosecutors and lawyers for allegedly derailing the investigation.

Ruben Beraja, former leader of the Jewish community's DAIA political umbrella group, and DAIA's lawyer, Marta Nercellas, are among those to be investigated.

Former Argentine Vice President Carlos Alvarez, former Internal Affairs Minister Carlos Corach, investigative judge Juan Jose Galeano — who was in charge of the case for nine and a half years — and prosecutors, intelligence service leaders and legislators who formed a special commission to investigate the AMIA bombing and a previous 1992 attack on the Israeli Embassy also will be investigated.

Luis Czyzewski said he was surprised that the court "seemed to have forgotten former President Carlos Menem," whom many have accused of derailing the investigation to protect the state security services or even Iran. Menem has denied the accusations.

Members of the Jewish community were devastated by the acquittal. "This is the consecration of impunity. It's a judiciary regression. It's the evidence of impunity of state terrorism," said Laura Ginsberg, a member of a relatives' group called Apemia.

The president of AMIA, Abraham Kaul, left the courtroom by a side door to avoid the media. "The fact that a democratic country cannot find justice for such an attack is something of strong concern," Kaul told JTA.

"We feel very bad. We will study how to appeal the sentence," the DAIA's acting president, Jorge Kirszenbaum, told JTA.

Members of the DAIA appeared bitter to

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BEHIND THE HEADLINES

■ Members of the Argentine Jewish community are devastated by the acquittal

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learn that the group's lawyer will now be investigated.

Not all Jews saw the outcome similarly, however.

"I feel angry, but I think the verdict is fair. The whole process was so compromised," Adriana Reinfeld, a member of a group called Memoria Activa that has demonstrated in front of the courthouse every week for the past decade, told JTA.

In a court balcony, a dozen or so journalists shared files with relatives of four police officers who were among the defendants. Their happiness at the acquittal contrasted with the anguish showed by two Jewish grandmothers.

"I wouldn't be able to stand this if I hadn't taken sedative pills," Eugenia Szejer said.

After the verdict, former AMIA employee Enrique Lubinsky thanked AMIA's lawyer, Juan Jose Avila, for his efforts. It was seen as little solace.

Sergio Widder, the Latin American representative of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, said the verdict "is for Jews the confirmation of Argentine society's failure to find justice."

"The way the investigation was done

made it impossible to find the truth, and that's a shame for Argentina," he said.

To Baruj Zaidenknop, executive director of ORT Argentina, "the feeling is of absolute frustration. What confidence can we have in this country, in Argentine institutions? What are the guidelines for Argentine Jews?"

Eliahu Toker, a Jewish writer and poet, told JTA that the verdict is not in itself anti-Semitic but that "it affects Argentina, it shows the lack of justice, the muddy way things are done in this country."

President Nestor Kirchner's government had said before the verdict that it was ready to support investigations against former government and judiciary leaders to find the reasons for the investigation's failure. Government sources said Kirchner hoped such a step would improve his international image.

La Nacion newspaper posted an online quiz to find out if readers agreed with the sentence. By early Friday, nearly 73 per-

cent of respondents said they disagreed with the acquittal, and 88 percent believed justice would never be done.

On Sept. 2, Familiares de las Victims, another group of victims' relatives, decided it would attempt to take the case to an international court — though the group hasn't decided where.

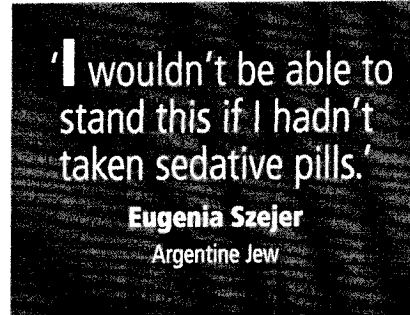
The Anti-Defamation League also issued a statement calling on the Argentine

government to fully investigate the attack and prosecute those responsible.

"We continue to be frustrated that the perpetrators of the heinous attack have not been brought to justice," the group said in a statement.

The American Jewish Committee, which hosted Kirchner at the group's annual dinner in May, also said the decision should prompt the Argentine government to redouble its efforts to do justice.

"The world is watching and waiting for justice to be served at last," the AJCommittee said in a statement. ■



Painting of Commandments baffles art maven

By RUTH E. GRUBER

ROME (JTA) — Ivan Ceresnjes has documented synagogues all over the

former Yugoslavia, but he's never come across anything like the strange painting in the former synagogue in Apatin, a small Serbian town near the Hungarian border.

"It is a kind of mystery," Ceresnjes, who works with the Center for Jewish Art at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, told JTA from Israel. "I am still searching for some reasonable explanation." ■

The painting in question is a neo-baroque mural on the ceiling of the former synagogue, a simple village structure built in 1885 for a Neolog congregation, the Hungarian version of Reform Judaism.

In it, dramatic cloud banks in the sky frame a depiction of the Ten Commandments. But the Hebrew lettering on the tablets is written backward, in mirror image.

Ceresnjes, an architect who was president of the Jewish community in Bosnia before making aliyah in 1996, called the mural unique.

No comparable example exists either in that part of Serbia or in neighboring

Hungary, he said, and no one knows why such an image was painted.

"It is the message of the painting that should be decoded," he said. "Three rabbis, all of them educated in Budapest, officiated consecutively in that Neolog congregation, and none of them seems to have been disturbed by the picture's central motif, a mirror image of the" commandments "positioned in such a way that we can assume that it was done deliberately."

Ceresnjes, who has documented synagogues and Jewish cemeteries in all the countries that comprised the former Yugoslavia, said nothing was known about the architect of the synagogue, the artist who painted the ceiling or the circumstances under which it was created.

However, the artist probably was local and presumably not Jewish, as there is no record of any Jewish painter in the area at that time, Ceresnjes said. He likely would have been guided by someone in preparing the mural, presumably the rabbi of the community, he said. ■



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Use of 'Israel' in Bush speech analyzed

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

TUESDAY

■ A colloquium against poverty in Argentina sponsored by the AMIA Jewish organization continues. The Inter American Development Bank and the Latin American Jewish Congress are also coordinating the forum, which has government support. Expect a huge crowd.

■ A new synagogue is dedicated in Astana, Kazakhstan. The president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev is expected to attend. Also, Nazarbayev and German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer will receive the Maimonides Award, a new prize to mark contributions in dialogue among different cultures, faiths and civilizations.

WEDNESDAY

■ The Argentine Jewish community is planning a demonstration against the acquittals in the AMIA bombing trial. The rally in Buenos Aires comes after five defendants were cleared last week of complicity in the July 1994 bombing at the AMIA Jewish center in the Argentine capital.

■ The New York Board of Rabbis will present the U.N. undersecretary general for communications and public information with gifts for the Jewish new year. The gifts are to thank Shashi Tharoor, who took the lead in coordinating the June 21 U.N. conference on anti-Semitism.

■ An exhibit marking the 350th anniversary of American Jewish history opens in New York City. The exhibit illustrates the lives of the Jews of Recife, Brazil, who later formed the first Jewish community in North America.

THURSDAY

■ The Israel on Campus Coalition convenes Jewish officials for the first-ever Israel on Campus Summit at the Kraft Center at the Columbia Barnard Hillel in New York City. The gathering underscores the priority Jewish organizations have placed on fostering a pro-Israel environment on North American college campuses.

■ The four-day annual conference of Reform Jewish movement in the former Soviet Union begins. Some 150 participants from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus are expected to attend, along with leaders of the World Union for Progressive Judaism.

■ An exhibit, "From Haven to Home: A Library of Congress Exhibition Marking 350 Years of Jewish Life in America," opens at the U.S. Library of Congress in Washington. The exhibit is up through Dec. 18.

SUNDAY

■ Congregation Shearith Israel in New York City holds a historic service in honor of its 350th anniversary. The service comes as activities marking 350 years of American Jewish history begin.

NEW YORK (JTA) — What's in a word? President Bush one-upped John Kerry by uttering the word "Israel" in his speech Sept. 2 accepting the Republican presidential nomination, but it's unclear whether the simple mention of the Jewish state will have any effect on Jewish voters.

"Palestinians will hear the message that democracy and reform are within their reach, and so is peace with our good friend Israel," Bush said to loud applause from delegates at Madison Square Garden in New York City.

Speculation was rampant for weeks that Bush would speak of Israel, largely because Sen. Kerry (D-Mass.) did not when he accepted the Democratic nomination in July.

There also was talk that Bush would speak about international anti-Semitism to catch the attention of undecided Jewish voters.

But in the end Bush said nothing more than Kerry's running mate, Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C.), did in his Boston convention speech, when Edwards suggested that a change of president would bring the world to America's side and ensure "a safe and secure Israel."

As the campaigns move toward the final stretch, each believes it has the stronger message to the Jewish community and anticipates making a thorough effort to reach an important voting bloc.

Republicans have been touting inroads into the Jewish community this election season, and the buzz at the Republican convention focused on how larger numbers of Jews are likely to back Bush for four more years. By making only a perfunctory reference to the Jewish state in his speech, some say, Bush may have missed an opportunity to woo Jewish voters.

Nonetheless, Republican Jews were gratified by Bush's comment, suggesting that the mere mention of Israel — in an address where every word is carefully considered — was important.

"The silence of John Kerry in his acceptance speech says a lot to the Jewish community," said Matt Brooks, execu-

tive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition. Brooks said presidential candidates' speeches are analyzed, while speeches by vice presidential candidates such as Edwards are less important.

Jewish Republicans said Bush's comments had to be seen in the larger framework of the convention, which included formal Jewish outreach events by the campaign, an appearance by Vice President Dick Cheney at an RJC event and significant comments about Israel and Jews in former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's convention speech.

Giuliani was the key conduit to the Jewish community, using his Aug. 30 speech to attack Kerry's record in the Middle East.

"In October of 2003 he told an Arab-American Institute in Detroit that a security barrier separating Israel from the Palestinian Territories was a 'barrier to peace,'" Giuliani said. "OK.

Then a few months later, he took exactly the opposite position. In an interview with the Jerusalem Post he said, 'Israel's security fence is a legitimate act of self-defense.'"

Giuliani also referred to the 1972 terrorist attack on Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics and the 1985 hijacking of the Achille Lauro cruise ship, in which a paralyzed Jewish American passenger was shot dead and thrown into the sea.

Democrats downplayed Bush's Israel reference. "It's window dressing," said Jay Footlik, the Kerry campaign's senior adviser on Middle East and Jewish affairs. "If I were the Republicans, I would be talking up Israel as well in an attempt to draw support from our community."

Footlik said he felt voters weren't counting who had said the word "Israel" more, but were taking a more sophisticated look at the candidates' policies.

Both sides say grass-roots efforts in key battleground states with significant Jewish populations — such as Florida, Ohio and Michigan — will be the focus for the rest of the campaign. Advertisements geared toward the Jewish community, and spending efforts from advocates for both candidates, are expected to start soon. ■

Rudolph Giuliani has played a key role in the Republican attack on Sen. John Kerry's stance on Israel.

NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

Moscow synagogue rededicated

Hundreds of people attended events over the weekend marking the inauguration of a renovated Moscow synagogue. Agudas Chasidei Chabad Synagogue, whose 19th-century building was returned to Jews in 1991, was completely restored in a multimillion-dollar renovation project.

In addition, the downtown Moscow synagogue inaugurated its brand-new multifunctional community center built next to the synagogue. The synagogue, which includes classrooms, a bookstore, a lecture hall, a mikvah and a restaurant, has been one of the prime centers of Jewish life in the Russian capital.

The shul also runs a kosher store and provides kosher food packages to hundreds of needy and elderly Jews every day. One of the facilities in the new building was dedicated to the memory of Tengiz Yakobashvili, a leading donor in the renovation project, who died in a plane crash two weeks ago that is being investigated as a possible terrorist attack.

German extremists fail to win seat

A right-wing extremist party failed to win a seat in weekend parliamentary elections in Germany. The extreme-right National Democratic Party, which had not run in the elections five years ago, won 4 percent of the vote, 1 percent shy of the minimum required to earn a seat in the state legislature of Saarland. The mainstream conservative party, the Christian Democratic Union, earned 47.5 percent of the vote. The ruling Social Democratic Party received 30.8 percent.

Italian Jews honor Russian victims of terror

Italian Jews are paying tribute to the hundreds of victims of recent terrorism in southern Russia. During ceremonies Sunday marking the annual European Day of Jewish Culture, community leaders mourned the dead and expressed solidarity with the survivors.

"In these times, lacerated by violence, culture is democracy's only defensive weapon," Amos Luzzatto, president of the umbrella Union of Italian Jewish Communities, said at the culture day's opening ceremony in Pisa, which included a moment of silence for the victims.

Jewish theater festival opens in Kiev

The European Day of Jewish Culture was marked in Kiev by the opening ceremony of a theater festival. The five-day Wandering Stars International Festival of Theater Art, which began Sunday, is sponsored by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the local Jewish community.

Professional and amateur theater troupes from Ukraine, Russia and Israel will participate in performances and exhibitions on the history of Jewish theater.

The festival is co-organized by Ukrainian Jewish groups, other Ukrainian groups and the Ukrainian government.

Claims Conference gets new rep in Germany

The Claims Conference has named a new representative to head its Germany office. Moshe Jahoda's appointment, announced Sept. 5, follows the death of Karl Brozik last month.

Since 1999, Jahoda, born in 1926 in Vienna, has been associate executive vice president and head of the Austrian office of the Conference for Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

The New York-based organization represents the interests of Holocaust survivors and their heirs around the world. Jahoda will divide his time among Germany, Austria and Israel.

French honor Spielberg

Jacques Chirac praised Steven Spielberg's work in preserving the memory of the Holocaust. The French president made his comments during a ceremony Sunday in which the American filmmaker received France's Legion of Honor.

Presenting Spielberg with the award at a ceremony in the Elysee Palace, Chirac said that thanks to Spielberg's work, "that which risked being lost with the gradual disappearance of witnesses to the darkest hours in the history of humanity could now be preserved."

Spielberg's Shoah Foundation has collected close to 40,000 Holocaust survivor accounts. Receiving the award, Spielberg praised Chirac for his efforts in combating anti-Semitism in France while warning that "we have to work very, very hard so that people glorify differences and not condemn them."

MIDDLE EAST

Terrorist's Israeli friend detained

The Israeli friend of a Palestinian terrorist leader was placed under administrative detention. Under the order signed by Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz on Sunday, Tali Fahima can be held for up to four months without charges. Fahima, a 29-year-old Israeli who befriended the leader of the Al-Aksa Brigade in the West Bank city of Jenin, was arrested last month in connection with a bombing by the group.

She denies complicity in terrorism but says Palestinians are right to resist occupation through force of arms. Fahima's supporters have accused the Shin Bet of a witch-hunt.

'Neighbor tactic' blasted

Israel's top judge urged security forces to stop using Palestinian non-combatants to help hunt for terrorists. Supreme Court President Aharon Barak said Sunday the "neighbor tactic," in which Israeli troops use Palestinian passersby to knock on the doors of fugitives' homes in a bid to prevent a shootout, is not always consensual and is therefore potentially illegal.

A final Supreme Court ruling on whether the tactic should be phased out is pending.

Israel declares war on debtors

Israel plans to eliminate bank overdrafts. Yoav Lehman, Israel's supervisor of banks, ordered all overdrawn accounts in the country frozen as of 2005.

Polls suggest that a third of Israelis are regularly in the red, a collective debt that worries economic planners.

Lehman's three-month advance notice is meant to give Israelis time to put their accounts in order, but analysts expect the deadline to be extended into mid-2005.

NORTH AMERICA

New money for blood center

U.S. donors are giving \$10 million to Israel's national blood center. The National Blood Services Center of Magen David Adom is responsible for collecting, processing, testing and distributing blood units and blood products throughout the country. Magen David Adom is the equivalent of a Red Cross society.

The donation by American Red Magen David for Israel will help fund the blood center's expansion plans.

The center currently collects over 270,000 blood units a year from volunteers. The proposed plans would nearly double the amount of testing and blood storage possible for Israel.