

IN THE NEWS
Five killed in West Bank raids

Israeli special forces killed five Palestinians in the West Bank.

The targets of Thursday's predawn raids in and around Tulkarm were members of Islamic Jihad on Israel's wanted list.

Security sources said the fugitives had been involved in recent attacks and were planning to launch a suicide bombing in Israel.

The Palestinian Authority accused Israel of threatening a tenuous truce that has been in place for months.

Rocket fired into southern Israel

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip launched two rockets at Israel.

One of the rockets fired Thursday struck an open area near the Israeli border town of Sderot, causing no damage.

The other fell short, landing inside Gaza. It was the first salvo since Israel evacuated 21 Gaza settlements in the past week.

Security sources said the launches were believed to be a response to the killing of five Islamic Jihad members in the West Bank by Israeli troops earlier in the day.

Jews to highlight border conditions

Leaders of several American Jewish organizations will travel to the Arizona-Mexico border to highlight dangerous conditions there.

Monday's trip, which will include Christian leaders, is in support of comprehensive immigration reform legislation to improve border safety.

"This country's historic role as a safe haven for those coming to its shores is being seriously compromised," said David Elcott, director of interreligious affairs at the American Jewish Committee.

Leaders from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs also will be represented.

■ **MORE NEWS, Pg. 8**

WORLD REPORT

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



Brian Hendler

Tsvia Ohayon stands among her plants before they are removed from the southern Gaza settlement of Neveh Dekalim on Aug. 14.

After ex-Gaza family moves to Israel, memories of their garden remain fresh

By DINA KRAFT

NEVESH DEKALIM, Gaza Strip (JTA) — The movers came and hauled away the uprooted palm and pecan trees and flowering plants — all tucked in bags of soil and plastic pots and neatly lined in rows on the Ohayons' back patio.

Tsvia Ohayon decided that if she really did have to leave her home, she wouldn't go without the trees and plants that she planted, watered and watched grow during her 20 years in Neveh Dekalim, part of the Gush Katif settlement bloc.

"I told my husband that if the plants don't come with me, I won't have the energy to do this," Ohayon said while preparing the fami-

ly's final Shabbat meal in their home here.

Ohayon, her husband and three children said their goodbyes last week to the two-story white stucco house with a dark-wood balcony and garden dappled with shade from tangerine, lemon and olive trees. Until the movers came, the front porch was a solid wall of leafy green hanging plants and potted small trees and ferns.

The last-minute miracle that the Ohayons and other Gaza settlers prayed for never came — and by Sunday the Ohayons were in a guest house in the southern city of Ashkelon, along with dozens of other families from Neveh Dekalim.

"We are getting by," Ohayon said as she

Continued on page 2

THE
DISENGAGEMENT
SUMMER

■ *A woman who was evacuated from Gaza will miss her lush garden*

Continued from page 1

watched an orange sun set over the sea. "I can hear the waves lapping and it helps soothe my heart."

The families were meeting in groups and talking about the process of leaving their homes and starting anew.

"There are lots of tears, but we are processing this, which is what we need to do," she said.

Ohayon, a teacher, said she's not sure how she'll rebuild the feeling of community and connection she felt in Neveh Dekalim.

"What is here you don't find anywhere else," she said on one of her last days in Neveh Dekalim.

Her children were born in the settlement, where she and her husband created a home that extended beyond their plant-draped doorway.

The family plans to relocate to Nitzan sometime after the High Holidays, which fall this year in October. Nitzan is a new community along the coast, just north of Ashkelon, set up by the government for former settler families from Gaza.

For the first two years, families will live in small trailer homes while permanent houses are built nearby.

"I'd rather go somewhere small, so I can stay with my friends. It's what gives me strength," said Ohayon, a cheerful woman with dark, sparkling eyes who is quick to smile even during the stress of the withdrawal.

As she walked through her garden last week, she lamented that it was no longer

the masterpiece it had been. The dark wood pergola was in pieces, lying dissembled in a corner. There were gaping holes in the ground where avocado and almond trees once stood.

She gazed up at the towering palm tree she planted soon after arriving in Neveh Dekalim.

"It was just this high when I planted it," she said, raising her hand to the height of her hip.

She pointed out the rose bushes and grape vines, a tall ficus tree wrapped with vines. She would not be able to take everything.

"What I can take I will take," she said with a shrug.

Her husband, Yamin Ohayon, spent Aug. 16, the last day settlers could legally be in their homes, taking it apart. Power drill and screwdriver in hand, he began dissembling shelves and fixtures.

"It's hard to take apart everything you built in 20 years in two days," he said.

Yamin Ohayon owned a printing business in Neveh Dekalim. In the past few days, he also had dissembled his business equipment and planned to move it to Ashkelon.

Inside the house, Tsvia Ohayon wrapped the family seder plate in bubble wrap and checked off her color-coded "to do" list.

"So much work, it just does not end," she said, surrounded by boxes. "I hate this stress."

Shohan, the Ohayons' 13-year-old son, helped the family pack.

"It's sad that we need to pack up the house," he said.

His parents debated what to take with them and what to put in storage. Details had to be attended to.

Yamin Ohayon began taking magnets and notices off the refrigerator just minutes before it was taken away by movers.

Yamin and Tsvia Ohayon had decided it was time to get practical and begin packing, even if it was at the last minute. Their eldest son, a soldier home

on holiday because of the withdrawal, disagreed.

Later that night, a team of soldiers knocked on their door to inform them that they would have to leave before midnight if they were to leave legally.

The Ohayons saw little reason to talk at length with the soldiers. After a few terse words, they returned inside and continued packing.

"They're not guilty. I don't blame them," Tsvia Ohayon said. "I have a son the same age."

Several teenage girls had come to help the family pack their belongings.

Time was running short and Tsvia instructed them not to worry about how organized their packing was — just to put as many items into boxes as possible.

On Sunday, the family oriented itself to new surroundings at the guest house and tried to grasp that there would be no home to return back to: The bulldozers would be coming soon.

With army permission, Yamin Ohayon did make it back to the house to pack up a few last items — among them one of his wife's beloved plants.



Gaza synagogue plan challenged

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's chief rabbis came out against a plan to destroy synagogues in former Gaza Strip settlements.

The Chief Rabbinate issued a statement Thursday urging the government to abandon its plan to blow up the synagogues in Gaza settlements evacuated this month, and instead to pressure the Palestinian Authority to agree to safeguard them.

The rabbis, who also appealed to the Vatican and other foreign agencies to in-

tervene, argued that destroying the synagogues would put Jewish houses of worship abroad, which may no longer have congregations, at risk of being razed.

The rabbinical appeal ran counter to a High Court of Justice ruling that the synagogues can be destroyed.

The army said that it likely would relocate some of the smaller synagogues, but it was not clear what would befall larger edifices such as those in Neveh Dekalim, Ganei Tal and Kfar Darom.

JTA
WORLD
REPORT

Howard E. Friedman
President

Mark J. Joffe
Executive Editor and Publisher
Lisa Hostein
Editor

Michael S. Arnold
Managing Editor

Lenore A. Silverstein
Finance and Administration Director
Noa Artzi-Weill
Marketing Director

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.
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

Israeli institute hopes to boost Jewish genealogy

By BILL GLADSTONE

TORONTO (JTA) — A group of Jewish genealogists want to give the study of the Jewish past a brighter future.

The genealogists recently announced the formation of the International Institute of Jewish Genealogy, to be housed in the Jewish National and University Library of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Although still in an early stage of development, the institute's board expects the institute to become a major force in the world of Jewish genealogy within five years — a leading international research center that will work cooperatively with existing facilities like Texas' JewishGen, the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People and the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Israel, and the New York-based Center for Jewish History.

"We want to lift Jewish genealogy to new heights," said its founding director, Yosef Lamdan. "To put it into the general framework of Jewish studies at a university level."

A fellow of the Truman Institute at Hebrew University, Lamdan is an Oxford-trained historian, a seasoned genealogist and a career diplomat who retired last year as Israel's ambassador to the Vatican.

Many in the genealogical world readily embraced his idea for the institute, he said, and the staff at the National Library was also highly receptive.

"They were happy to welcome us, because they know they have collections of Jewish historical documents that really should be looked at again through the prism of Jewish genealogy."

Although there are now some 45 universities with departments of Jewish studies across North America, few if any have ever offered a course on Jewish genealogy, Lamdan noted.

He added that the International Institute might eventually produce graduates holding bachelor's or master's degrees in Jewish genealogy.

Lamdan said the group recently received a "significant grant" from an American benefactor that will allow the institute to operate by the end of 2005.

Even ahead of its formal opening, the institute has begun a project with researchers at the universities of Texas and Haifa involving the DNA of members of the Jewish tribe of Levi with pedigrees go-

ing back to Spain before the Inquisition.

One of the institute's first goals is to conduct a comprehensive global survey of all available Jewish genealogical resources.

It also intends to host scholarly conference, establish standards of genealogical evidence, locate new genealogical resources, and make them available to researchers.

The institute might help people who are conducting DNA research to find families with certain genetic profiles, Lamdan said.

Or it might index important collections like the Jewish National and University Library's Paul Jacobi papers, an underutilized compilation of some 400 German rabbinic family trees.

It would also bring certain important Jewish collections to Israel, if the opportunity arose. "Our purpose is to try and take an overview and tell genealogists where all the collections are, Lamdan said. "If we can also unearth collections that so far have not been found, so much the better. We'd be very happy if the institute could bring them in. Being situated in a library, we'd have a place to store them."

Institute researchers could clarify

common misconceptions about historic Jewish life.

For example, not all Jews in the Russian Pale of Settlement during czarist times were part of organized Jewish communities in cities or shtetls: At least half lived intensely Jewish lives in villages with no rabbis, synagogues, yeshivas, mikvahs, or kosher meat, for which they were dependent

upon neighboring towns.

Institute researchers hope to build on some of the work accomplished by the popular JewishGen Web site and other organizations that have already been tilling the fertile field of Jewish genealogy for more than a decade.

"Just as professional Jewish historians use the resources of the American Jewish Archives for their research, so also do we envision all those who are engaged in Jewish genealogy, at every level, availing themselves of the institute's research products and benefitting from its projects," said Sallyann Sack, the Maryland-based editor of the journal *Avotaynu* and one of more than a dozen founding members of the institute from at least seven countries.

'We want to lift Jewish genealogy to new heights.'

Yosef Lamdan

Director, International Institute of Jewish Genealogy



Courtesy of Yosef Lamdan

Yosef Lamdan, left, director of the International Institute of Jewish Genealogy, and Chanan Rapaport, a founder of the institute, hold a volume from the Paul Jacobi collection at the Jewish National and Hebrew University Library in Jerusalem.

In FSU, Reform and Chabad need rabbis

By SUE FISHKOFF

MOSCOW (JTA) — Despite their ideological differences, the Reform and Chabad movements in the former Soviet Union share a shortage of buildings and spiritual leaders to serve their growing communities.

"We have 12,000 Jews affiliated with us in Ukraine, but what we do not have in Kiev is a physical presence," says Rabbi Alexander Dukhovny, the leader of the Reform movement in Ukraine. "And we will be marginal until we have that."

While the presence of the fervently Orthodox group Chabad in the region is much larger than that of the Reform movement, both groups see synagogues and rabbis as ways to anchor their communal strength.

Rabbis and buildings are seen in the former Soviet Union by Jews, non-Jews and government officials as demonstrable proof of solidity, bestowing gravity on and garnering respect for the Jewish community just as priests and cathedrals do for the Russian Orthodox Church.

There are more tangible benefits as well, say local Jews. Donors are more eager to give to a congregation headed by a rabbi, local Jews are more attracted to their services and the perception of substantiality helps in the battle to recover historic Jewish property confiscated by the former Soviet state.

Jewish activists in the former Soviet Union say Chabad and Reform are the two main ideological choices in the region — there are no Conservative rabbis in the former Soviet Union, and just one part-time modern Orthodox rabbi, in Ukraine.

There also is Keroor, an umbrella group uniting non-Chabad Orthodox and some Reform rabbis and congregations, but it is not a separate movement with its own ideology. Keroor claims 70 non-Chabad Orthodox congregations and more than 27 rabbis throughout Russia, according to Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, chief rabbi of Moscow. Keroor also funds two rabbinic schools and four kollels, or yeshivas for married men, in Moscow.

When it comes to synagogues and rabbis, the competition between Chabad and Reform could not be more unequal.

The World Union for Progressive Judaism, the international body of Reform Judaism, budgeted \$1.6 million for its activities in the former Soviet Union last

year. There are six Reform rabbis serving 67 Reform congregations across the region, according to movement officials. The Reform movement owns seven synagogue buildings, none of them in major cities.

In contrast, Chabad spent \$70 million on its activities in the region and has 188 congregations, 221 rabbis, and 243 separate Jewish communities affiliated with the Chabad-controlled Federation of Jewish Communities of the Former Soviet Union and Baltic States, according to the federation's executive director, Avraham Berkowitz.

Chabad owns close to 200 synagogue buildings, including large historic synagogues returned by the government in St. Petersburg, Kiev and Minsk, and a spanking new multimillion-dollar Jewish Community Center in Moscow. And Chabad has announced plans to build another new center in Kiev.

Both movements say their infrastructure isn't growing fast enough to meet congregational needs.

"There's clear consensus that we need 18 to 20 rabbis, not the six we now have, because we have that number of cities with Jewish populations that warrant it," says Rabbi Joel Oseran, the Jerusalem-based associate director of the World Union.

Both movements are focusing efforts on training more native-born rabbis, who speak the language and who understand the local mentality.

"It's very hard to convince a foreign couple to move to a small Russian community," says Rabbi Berel Lazar, Chabad's Moscow-based chief rabbi.

Through the 1990s, Chabad emissaries arriving from Brooklyn or Jerusalem had their pick of the choice cities. But now that the movement has expanded so greatly, most new jobs are in small, isolated cities far from Moscow or Kiev — much less of a draw for foreigners, although some pioneers continue to make the move.

Lazar, who was born in Italy and studied in an American yeshiva as a teenager, says

that Jews in the former Soviet Union have outgrown their fascination with all things foreign.

"The mentality in Russia has changed," he says. "They want to understand much deeper, not just come to synagogue to sing and dance."

Three years ago, Chabad opened a kollel, or rabbinic training center, for Russian speakers in Moscow. Eight rabbis have already been ordained, six more are slated to be ordained next year and the numbers are expected to grow, according

to its director, Rabbi Yosi Marzel.

In contrast, the World Union has four rabbinic students from the former Soviet Union, all studying abroad in London or Berlin.

"We can't create a new institution in Moscow right now," says Oseran. "In the long run I hope it will happen, but for now we will seriously have to figure out how to get those 18 to 20 rabbis we need using existing institutions."

Due to funding difficulties, no new students from the former Soviet Union will be admitted to London's Leo Baeck College this fall, says Rabbi Jonathan Magonet, the college's outgoing principal.

The Women of Reform Judaism, a U.S.-based arm of the World Union, sends the college \$4,000 per student per year, and the rest of the \$25,000 annual tab has until now been picked up by individual British donors. But the donors are tired of footing the entire bill, Magonet says.

In fact, no new students from the former Soviet Union will begin Reform rabbinic training anywhere in the world this fall, movement officials say.

"We're not pushing the way we did five or 10 years ago," Oseran says. "We're not looking to open up in little villages."

The president of the World Union, Rabbi Uri Regev, says funding priorities for the former Soviet Union have been redirected toward a greater focus on youth activities. In the past three years the movement has created a network of 60 youth clubs, with more than 1,500 members, 900 of whom attend Reform summer camps.

'We're not pushing the way we did five or 10 years ago. We're not looking to open up in little villages.'

Rabbi Joel Oseran

Director, World Union for Progressive Judaism

ACROSS THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

Training rabbis for the former Soviet Union

By SUE FISHKOFF

MOSCOW (JTA) — Young Jews in the former Soviet Union are being trained by both the Chabad and Reform movements to become rabbis in a region where there is a shortage of Jewish spiritual leaders. Here are a few of their stories:

A Belarus native, Tanya Sakhnovich grew up with Holocaust survivor grandparents who whispered about their Judaism behind closed doors.

The 29-year-old admits that she was embarrassed as a young child when other children teased her because her father was Jewish. Indeed, Sakhnovich, whose mother is not Jewish, says that had a lot to do with her wanting to become a rabbi.

She says she wanted “to show young people that it’s fine to be Jewish, to be proud of it, like I am today.”

Sakhnovich had worked for almost a decade for the Progressive movement in Minsk, Belarus, and Moscow, and she studied at the movement’s Machon training institute for communal workers when she arrived in London last fall to begin her rabbinic studies.

She also spends her free time working at three jobs — teaching Hebrew school classes at two London congregations and tutoring privately — just to support herself, since part of her stipend ran out even before her arrival. She had to leave her 4-year-old son behind with her parents and husband, something she feels guilty about “every day,” she says.

When Mikhail Kapustin took up his pulpit in Kharkov, Ukraine, this summer, he became his country’s second Reform rabbi.

That doesn’t faze him. Kapustin’s father, an ex-boxer and Soviet naval officer, founded the Jewish community of Kerch, Ukraine, in 1997. He quickly molded it into the city’s Progressive congregation. The younger Kapustin, just a teenager, was at his side learning the ropes.

Whereas his father is more of a Jewish official, the younger Kapustin, 25, is a natural scholar and spiritual seeker. At 17, he spent the summer at both Reform and Chabad camps and wore tzitzit, or

prayer fringes, and davened daily for a time before deciding that Reform Judaism best fit his personality and beliefs.

Ovadia Isakov, 32, is poised to become the first post-Soviet rabbi in his native Dagestan, a largely Muslim republic in southeastern Russia.

Unlike the Ashkenazi Jews in most of the rest of Soviet Russia, the “mountain Jews” of Dagestan always maintained the trappings of Jewish life — bar mitzvahs, circumcisions and the major holidays. But Isakov says his family wasn’t part of the Jewish community.

For him, the move to Chabad was primarily an intellectual decision.

“I’d always thought that someday I’d take off a few years to study philosophy and the meaning of life, but after those two weeks I understood that only here could I get that knowledge,” Isakov says. “Something inside was guiding me.”

After two years of intensive study, Isakov spent a year in Israel at Chabad’s yeshiva for Russian speakers, then returned to Moscow to enter Chabad’s newly organized kollel, or yeshiva for married men. Although he won’t be ordained until 2006, he has already taken up his new pulpit at the Chabad-affiliated congregation in Derbent, Dagestan’s second largest city, home to 8,000 Jews.

Meanwhile, he still paints — all his work now has a Chasidic theme — and holds regular exhibitions at Jewish galleries and the Moscow Jewish Community Center.

Ella and Yossi Verzub are part of a small, but growing, group of young Jews who left the Soviet Union as children, moved to Israel, became observant and are now returning to their former homeland as Chabad emissaries.

Ella Verzub, 26, was born in St. Petersburg to refusenik parents who became observant during the eight years they waited for permission to immigrate to Israel.

She remembers attending underground Hebrew school as a young

child in rooms with all the blinds shut, while her parents surreptitiously studied Hebrew and Zionist history next door.

In Israel, her parents both worked for the Children of Chernobyl charity project at Kfar Chabad, so Ella grew up in a Lubavitch environment. She spent several summers as a counselor at Chabad camps in Ukraine and Russia,

before marrying a man with a similar life story who was as committed as she was to what would become their life’s work.

“I always knew I’d go on shlichus,” she says, using the Hebrew word for the

mission of a Chabad emissary.

“My parents kept us speaking Russian in the house. They said it was important for us to help those who came to Israel after us.”

Yossi Verzub’s parents left Ukraine for Israel in 1979, when he was 2 years old. Soon afterward his family became observant. Verzub studied in a Chabad school.

Ten years ago his older sister became a Chabad emissary in Moscow. Verzub followed in her footsteps, running Passover seders in the former Soviet Union as a student, then marrying Ella and moving with her to Kharkov, Ukraine’s second largest city, four years ago, as assistants to Rabbi Moshe Moskowitz, the city’s chief Chabad emissary.

Ella teaches in the Chabad school and is paid jointly by the Moskowitz family and the Israeli Ministry of Education. Yossi, who does not yet have rabbinic ordination, manages the yeshiva boys’ dorm and teaches in the girls’ seminary.

The Verzubs say the fact that they were born in the former Soviet Union was a major factor in their decision to move back to the region.

“There aren’t many Russian speakers doing this,” Yossi says. “It helps so much, and not just because of running activities. We can be an example to the local people. It’s not easy to be Sabbath-observant here, so when they see that someone can be born here and can choose to live this life, it’s very important.”

Some look to be Reform spiritual leaders. Others are attracted to Chabad.

ACROSS
THE FORMER
SOVIET UNION

In Mexico City, Trotsky museum draws tourists

By LARRY LUXNER

MEXICO CITY (JTA) — Fronting a busy highway yet hidden from view by a high concrete wall, the residence at 45 Viena St. looks like any other in the Mexico City suburb of Coyoacan, with its covered vines, Old World arches and red-brick construction.

Its last occupant is what sets this house apart from the others.

Leon Trotsky — founder of the Soviet Red Army, hero of the Russian Revolution — spent his last few years here after being sent into exile by Josef Stalin.

This week marks 65 years since the Aug. 21, 1940, murder of Trotsky, arguably the most famous Jew ever to live in Mexico. Yet the anniversary has been overshadowed by controversy over the bloodstained icepick used by one of Stalin's agents to kill Trotsky.

Ana Alicia Salas is the granddaughter of a secret policeman who probed Trotsky's death in Mexico City. She claims to have the alpine mountain-climbing axe used in the murder and wants to sell it to the Leon Trotsky Museum, located in the house where the Russian revolutionary lived and died.

The authenticity of what is sometimes called "history's most famous murder weapon" can only be verified by comparing any DNA found on the icepick to that of Trotsky's descendants. But Esteban Volkow, 82, who watched his famous grandfather die, says he'll agree to a blood test only if Salas donates the icepick to the museum.

Neither Volkow nor his daughter, noted Mexican poet Veronica Volkow, would speak

to JTA. Nor would another prominent great-granddaughter, Dr. Nora Volkow, who is the director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse in Bethesda, Md.

Yet much can be learned about Trotsky by visiting the museum dedicated to him.

Established in October 1990 by Derecho de Asilo y las Libertades Publicas, a nonprofit organization that helps foreign dissidents fight for political asylum in Mexico, the museum attracts 60,000 visitors a year. About half are Mexicans; the rest are mostly Americans and Europeans.

Entering the house from the backyard garden one passes Trotsky's kitchen, filled with ceramics from the Mexican state of Puebla, and his spartan bathroom, where his jackets still hang in the closet above his shoes.

Every artifact here, from the Indian bedspreads down to Trotsky's dictating machine, has been carefully restored.

Elsewhere, a badly deteriorated oil painting of Trotsky was rescued and restored, as was the huge wall map of Mexico that dominates the study.

There's also a photo of Trotsky taken in New York before the revolution, when he was working as a movie extra in Brooklyn for \$5 a day, in addition to writing articles for the Russian socialist newspaper *Novy Mir*.

The exhibits make no mention whatsoever of Trotsky's Jewish roots except for a passing reference to his birth name, Lev Davidovich Bronstein.

Trotsky wasn't a practicing Jew, and as a lifelong communist he had little use for religion. According to published sources, he was sent to a private Jewish school as a boy but changed his name during his teen years to Leon Trotsky, perhaps to avoid anti-Semitism.

In 1900, he and Aleksandra L'vovna Sokolovskaia were legally married by a rabbi, but the couple parted two years later. Trotsky later met a young exiled revolutionary, Natalia Ivanovna Sedova, who would remain his companion and partner for the rest of his life.

Writing in the leftist organ *Iskra* in 1904, Trotsky called Zionist visionary Theodor Herzl "a shameless adventurer" whose

movement was destined to collapse.

"Herzl promised Palestine, but he did not deliver it," he wrote. "It is impossible to keep Zionism alive by this kind of trickery. Zionism has exhausted its miserable contents ... Tens of intriguers and hundreds of simpletons may yet continue to support Herzl's adventures, but Zionism as a movement is already doomed to losing all rights to existence in the future."

Yet in a January 1917 interview with the Jewish Daily Forward shortly

after arriving in New York, the revolutionary expressed his regret over not knowing Yiddish and Hebrew fluently, writes Joseph Nedava, author of the 1972 book "Trotsky and the Jews."

Trotsky correctly predicted the destruction of European Jewry by the Nazis, though in July 1940 — only a month before his assassination — he harshly criticized what would eventually become the State of Israel, writing that "the attempt to solve the Jewish question through the migration of Jews to Palestine can be seen for what it is, a tragic mockery of the Jewish people."

After his falling out with Stalin, Trotsky fled his native Russia.

The Soviet government sentenced Trotsky to death in absentia, and the Mexican Communist Party began to plan ways to carry out the sentence.

On May 24, 1940, muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros and 20 devoted Marxists tried to kill Trotsky, but failed. Less than three months later, Ramon Mercader del Rio, a Spanish Stalinist posing as Belgian businessman Jacques Mornard, gained entry to Trotsky's house and sank the icepick into his skull as Trotsky read his newspaper.

Given Trotsky's rejection of religion, no Star of David graces his tombstone. Rather, it's the hammer and sickle — and the red flag of the Soviet Union — that towers over a peaceful garden of cactus shrubs, potted plants and tall trees where visitors come to pay their respects to the famous revolutionary.

Yet the flame of Yiddishkeit hasn't been entirely extinguished in the Trotsky family.

According to the museum, one of Trotsky's great-grandsons, David Akselrod, 43, is a rabbi living in Israel with his wife and three children. ■

**Trotsky called
Zionism a
movement
doomed to failure.**

**AROUND
THE JEWISH
WORLD**



Larry Luxner

Leon Trotsky's tombstone, engraved with Communist symbols, in Mexico City.

ARTS & CULTURE

Jazz pianist helped spark fusion craze

By HEATHER ROBINSON

NEW YORK (JTA) — The CD of “Bagels and Bongos” features an interview with 90-year-old pianist Irving Fields, who still plays six nights a week at a Manhattan nightclub.

The liner notes describe Fields’ life story as one “of cultural alchemy as much as cultural preservation.” Indeed, Fields’ story seems to reflect not only his strong Jewish identity but also his use of Jewishness and music as passports to the larger world — geographically, interpersonally and creatively.

“Music is universal,” Fields told JTA. “It goes through culture, religion, race and creed.”

Born Isadore Schwartz in 1915 on New York’s Lower East Side, he began to sing in a synagogue choir at age 10 with the legendary Yosele Rosenblatt, nicknamed the “Pavarotti of Jewish cantors.”

Shortly afterward, Schwartz performed in a Jewish musical called “The Galician Wedding” as a singer, actor and dancer.

“I was surrounded by wonderful Jewish music,” Fields recalled.

At 15, Schwartz began accompanying his older sister Peppy, a singer and radio talk show host who broadcast from the Lucerne Hotel on WKAT Radio in Miami. Peppy had modified her married name, Rosenfield, into Fields as a stage name, which Schwartz took as well.

When he was 17, Fields landed his first major gig playing piano aboard a cruise ship bound for Cuba, where he fell in love with Latin rhythms.

“Havana had the greatest orchestras, great Latin music,” he recalled. “I heard it and said, ‘Can I play with you?’ I played with their bands and I felt the music; they thought I was Cuban.”

After returning to the United States, Fields signed a recording contract with RCA Victor. For the next decade, he recorded Latin music under the Spanish name “Campos El Pianista.”

One day at the Sherry Biltmore Hotel in Boston, Fields experimented with mixing Jewish and Latin rhythms, and “Bagels and Bongos” was born. ■

CD explores Jewish-Latin music

By HEATHER ROBINSON

NEW YORK (JTA) — In 1959, when Irving Fields was playing piano at the Sherry Biltmore Hotel in Boston, two couples approached him with competing requests.

“One couple requested, ‘I Love You Much Too Much,’ a nice Jewish song,” Fields recalled, while the other couple insisted, “We wanna rumba.”

“So I blended them and played this traditional Jewish song as a rumba, and the crowd loved it,” Fields said.

Now 90, Fields is among a group of musicians whose music is being re-mastered and re-released by Reboot Stereophonic, a not-for-profit record label dedicated to mining and preserving

music from the Jewish past. Their first releases will be lost Jewish/Latino musical classics, including those by Fields.

“Bagels and Bongos,” an album of traditional Jewish tunes adapted to sultry Latin rhythms that sold more than 2 million copies worldwide when it was released in 1959, was re-released Tuesday. ■

In November, Reboot plans to follow with an anthology of Moog, or early synthesizer, experiments with Jewish religious music by electronica pioneer Gershon Kingsley. That will be followed in spring 2006 by salsa band leader Joe Quijano’s “Fiddler on the Roof Goes Latin,” a spirited, affectionate adaptation of the shtetl-themed musical.

By re-releasing Quijano’s work, Reboot Stereophonic will feature not only Jewish musicians who “went Latin” but a Puerto Rican musician who put a Latin touch on Jewish music. Quijano was among a cadre of Latino musicians who capitalized on what many recall as a “Latin craze” within the Jewish world — an enthusiasm for things Puerto Rican, Mexican, Brazilian, and Cuban — that paralleled a broader American fascination with Latin culture.

The songs will be released on CDs that will include interviews with the musicians and liner notes that tell stories of “hybrid identities, eclectic communities, racial dialogue and musical style,” according to Roger Bennett, Reboot Stereophonic’s co-founder.

Why focus on the Latin Jewish connection?

For starters, the music reflects an in-

teresting part of Jewish musical history in America. Reboot is preserving precious cultural artifacts, according to Josh Kun, adviser to the project and a professor of English at the University of California, Riverside, whose book, “Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America,” explores the racial politics of American music.

“To put out records that have been forgotten by history — wonderful recordings that speak to different eras in American Jewish life — that’s exciting,” Kun said.

The years stretching from the post-World War II 1940s through the early 1960s saw many efforts aimed at fusing the music of Jews and Latinos, Kun explained. Those were the days when Miami Beach was a pastel playland for

newly prosperous “all-American” Jews who liked to tango and cha cha cha under the stars, and when legendary bandmaster Tito Puente headlined in the grand ballroom of Grossinger’s resort in the Catskills. ■

Ads in the New York Post advertised Latin dance events for Jewish singles, Jewish couples danced to all-Latin music at the Palladium and many bar mitzvah boys insisted on Latin bands the way today’s bar mitzvah boys demand DJs and rap music.

Whimsical as it may sound, the project has a serious side. Reboot Stereophonic is an offshoot of Reboot, a larger philanthropic project aimed at nurturing affiliation among young Jewish adults.

Upon rediscovering these classics of Jewish/Latino fusion, “our first reaction was, ‘Why have we not heard this music and these stories before?’” Bennett said. “They raised so many questions about how Jewish identity can and can’t be changed, and they challenge the listener to think about ways to forge one’s own identity.”

Of course, it’s also about the music.

“The stuff is fun to listen to,” Kun said. Indeed, the songs on Fields’ “Bagels and Bongos” CD offer Latin incarnations of traditional Jewish songs like “Havah Nagilah,” re-imagined as “Havannah Negila” with a sexy, percussive beat; and “Bei Mir Bist Du Schon” set to a sultry mambo rhythm. ■

‘Bei Mir Bist Du Schon’ set to a sultry mambo rhythm.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Kfar Darom detainees freed

Israel freed scores of pro-settlement activists arrested during a violent Gaza Strip confrontation.

A Beersheba court released the 175 detainees, almost a quarter of them minors, on Thursday after they signed agreements not to take part in violent political protests.

The decision to free the detainees, who were arrested after holing up on the roof of a synagogue in the Kfar Darom settlement last week as part of protests against the Gaza withdrawal, ran counter to earlier police pledges to see them prosecuted to the fullest extent.

Several of the protesters were believed to have doused riot police with a chemical irritant as they stormed the synagogue to dislodge them.

Jackson praises Gaza withdrawal

The Rev. Jesse Jackson praised Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

Jackson called Daniel Ayalon, Israel's ambassador to the United States, on Thursday to say that after the Israeli withdrawal the onus is now on the Palestinians and the Arabs to take steps toward peace, and said he would use his credentials in the Arab world to convey the message, an Israeli official in Washington said.

In a statement from Jackson's Rainbow PUSH Coalition, the religious leader said Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon "had made a bold and painful step toward a long-term solution for common security and coexistence."

He added, "The moral burden now shifts to the Palestinians to make good on the promise of coexistence and security in the region."

Gaza graves to be moved

The Israeli army plans to transfer Jewish graves from the Gaza Strip next week.

The military rabbinate announced Thursday that the 48 bodies in the Gush Katif cemetery will be disinterred starting Sunday and moved to a cemetery inside Israel chosen by their next of kin.

The entire process is expected to take five days.

The army has also removed some 40 memorials erected in Gaza settlements to residents and soldiers slain by Palestinian terrorists.

Rather than reinstall these throughout Israel, the army plans to build a large new memorial for all the victims at a location to be determined.

Army to eye extremists

The Israeli army resolved to scrutinize extremists and potential terrorists among its conscripts.

An internal military query into the Aug. 4 killing by an army deserter of four Israeli Arabs concluded Thursday that authorities failed to respond properly to warnings by the soldier's family as well as an investigative reporter that he had become a right-wing extremist and was liable to resort to violence.

Under the panel's recommendations, which were accepted by the top brass, the armed forces will work more closely with the Shin Bet's Jewish Division, which monitors potential extremist threats.

The army also will empower training officers to profile conscripts believed to have extremist political views and report them to higher authorities.

WORLD

German Jews want state out of religion

A German Jewish leader asked Germany's Constitutional Court to prevent the state from mixing in religious matters.

Paul Spiegel, head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, made the request. At issue is a ruling last year from a court recognizing the rights of a liberal Jewish congregation in Halle to partake in state funding channeled through the Central Council.

Stefan Kramer, the Central Council's general secretary, said the ruling, delivered in November 2004, contradicts laws preventing courts or international organizations from deciding on distribution of state funding for a religious organization.

Spiegel said that the court's rulings amounted to an attack on the freedom of religion and religious groups' right to self-determination.

Reform leaders meet Schroeder

International leaders of Reform Jewry met with Germany's chancellor to promote Jewish pluralism in Germany.

In Wednesday's meeting, the first private meeting with leaders of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, Gerhard Schroeder expressed support for diversity in the Jewish community while making it clear that he did not want to get involved in internal Jewish matters, the World Union's president, Rabbi Uri Regev, told JTA.

In a news release, Schroeder stressed that the return of Reform Judaism to Germany was a "meaningful sign of trust in Germany and in German society," and applauded progress in integrating the Reform group into German Jewish life.

There has been tension between Reform Jewish leaders and the Central Council of German Jews over issues of pluralism.

There currently are 20 Progressive congregations in Germany, served by about seven rabbis or rabbinical students, according to Rabbi Walter Homolka, principal of the Abraham Geiger College in Potsdam, where 12 students currently are working toward Reform ordination.

Czechs to honor Holocaust victim

A street in Prague will be named after a Czech Holocaust victim.

The Prague City Council recently announced the honor for Petr Ginz, who died in Auschwitz at age 16.

One of Ginz's drawings, made in Czechoslovakia's Terezin transit camp, called "Moon Landscape," received international attention after a replica of it was taken by Israeli astronaut Col. Ilan Ramon on the ill-fated Columbia space shuttle in 2003.

Ginz was a budding writer and artist; between 1942 and 1944 he and his friends created the magazine *Vedem* for Terezin's prisoners.

NORTH AMERICA

Rabbi suspended after drug arrest

A rabbi in New York was suspended from his job after he was arrested for possession of marijuana.

Congregation Sons of Israel, located not far from New York City, suspended Steven Kane with pay for 30 days early Wednesday morning after Kane was arrested earlier this month for possession after police pulled him over for driving erratically, *The New York Times* reported.

Kane will be subject to random drug testing and will help develop a curriculum on drugs and alcohol for the congregation's Hebrew school.