

World Jewish news

Behind the headlines

After earthquake, Jewish groups help locals in El Salvador

By PETER EPHROSS

LA PAPA LOTA, El Salvador (JTA) - David Rodriguez stands near the remains of his family's house in the impoverished Salvadoran countryside. The simple adobe structure has been reduced to rubble, one of tens of thousands of homes destroyed by the January 13 earthquake that claimed more than 700 lives. Now Rodriguez's wife and five children sleep in a tent provided by a local development organization, and he sleeps underneath a plastic shelter.

The only bright spot in the story is that the quake happened at 11:30 in the morning, when the family was not inside the house. "If it were at night," says Rodriguez, 35, "we would have died."



Yaron Lief, right, director of operations for the Israeli aid organization Latet, gives supplies to a victim of last month's earthquake in El Salvador. Credit: Latet.

Several weeks after the earthquake ravaged this beleaguered Central American country - devastated by civil war in the 1980s and hard hit by other natural disasters, including 1998's Hurricane Mitch - residents once again are attempting to rebuild their lives. El

Salvador's tiny Jewish community was unaffected by the earthquake, but U.S. Jewish organizations and one Israeli group, active in long-term economic development projects around the globe, have responded to the tragedy.

Jewish groups in-

volved in the relief effort here - and also in India, where a January 26 earthquake killed at least 15,000 people - say their efforts stem from a desire to become "global citizens."

It doesn't matter the politics or the religion or if Israel has relations" with a country, says Yaron Lief, director of operations for Latet, a private Israeli humanitarian organization. "We will get there quickly. There are citizens of the world who need help." Those involved say

the projects stem from what they see as the Jewish obligation to help the less fortunate, and from the fact that Jews are increasingly prosperous.

Latet - from the Hebrew word "to give" - provides immediate relief to disaster victims, while other Jewish organizations provide longer-term aid.

Formed in 1994 in reaction to the civil war in Rwanda, the U.S.-based Jewish Coalition for Disaster Relief, which receives support from up to 45 groups, has responded to crises in places ranging from Kosovo to Ethiopia.

The coalition provides support for what its organizers call "intermediate-phase projects," mainly channeling money to local organizations to help improve health

care and vocational training and to promote peace.

"We're not there pulling bodies out," says Laina Richter, the deputy director of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's International Development Program which coordinates the coalition.

The coalition is currently collecting money for victims of both the India and El Salvador earthquakes. The American Jewish World Service, one of the most active partners in the coalition, works for even longer-term goals.

The 15-year-old group has spent nearly \$300,000 U.S. on aid projects in El Salvador - including \$100,000 U.S. since the earthquake - over the past five years.

World Jewish news

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

Jewish divorce film airs in Britain
LONDON (JTA) - Campaigners for Jewish women whose husbands will not grant them a religious divorce have welcomed a BBC documentary on the subject. Broadcast on February 5, "Everyman: Chained Wives" examines the issue of agunot, Hebrew for "chained women."

Goussinsky barred from Israel trip
MOSCOW (JTA) - Spanish judges rejected a request by a Russian media mogul and Jewish leader to travel to Israel to vote in the February 6 election for prime minister. The judges said February 5 they feared Russian Jewish Congress President Vladimir Goussinsky, who is being held under house arrest pending a decision on whether to extradite him to Russia to face fraud charges, would attempt to flee justice.

Survivors: Keep Papon jailed
PARIS (JTA) - Some 200 Holocaust survivors and members of Jewish groups gathered outside a Paris prison to demand that a Nazi collaborator remain behind bars. The February 4 demonstration came amid debate in France over whether Maurice Papon, 90, should be freed because of his age and poor health. Papon is serving a 10-year sentence after he was found guilty of helping deport some 1,500 Jews to Nazi death camps during World War II.

Group to locate child escapees
NEW YORK (JTA) - A nonprofit organization is trying to locate approximately 1,000 people sent as children to U.S. foster families to save them from the Nazis. One Thousand Children Inc. plans to organize a first reunion and produce scholarly papers, a documentary and a Web site.

Lithuanian alliance criticized
MOSCOW (JTA) - A Lithuanian newspaper urged the government to take action against what it said is an emerging alliance among pro-fascist and pro-Communist radicals who openly instigate ethnic hatred, according to the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews. The alliance's declarations against Jews and Lithuania's integration into NATO should be investigated, said the editorial.

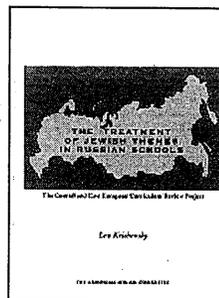
Study: Russian schools open up, but don't teach much about Jews

By LEV GORODETSKY

MOSCOW (JTA) - Russian textbooks devote an increased amount of time to human rights but contain only sparse and splintered accounts about Jews, according to a just-released study conducted by the American Jewish Committee. The books often "ignore the multicultural character of Russia past and present,"

the study notes, and "references to Jews and Judaism are usually fragmentary." The release of the report, the fifth in a series of studies on Jewish themes in schools in the former Soviet bloc, comes as an AJ Committee delegation arrived in Russia to discuss the study with Russian officials and to lobby for curriculum reform in Russian schools. Previous AJ Committee reports dealt with Jewish themes in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary.

During the Soviet era, Jews rarely were mentioned in school textbooks, except in pas-



Cover of the American Jewish Committee's report, "The Treatment of Jewish Themes in Russian Schools".

the Jews, and many now portray Israel in a more balanced light.

One textbook for use in high schools refers to the "death camps" where the Nazis killed 11 million people. "Jews and Slavs above all." Another makes reference to the 1942 Wannsee Conference, where the Nazis approved the "Final Solution," and calls the Warsaw Ghetto uprising "one of the first acts of European resistance." The same book details Israel's victory in the 1967 Six-Day War and the Jewish state's economic success, and shows a photo of the 1993 handshake between Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat on the White House lawn. But the books rarely use the

words "Zionism," which many Russians still interpret negatively, and "Holocaust."

References to Jews and Judaism are not as positive in a widely used textbook on world history, which accuses Jews of establishing a "moral double standard" because the "main idea of Judaism is the idea of their status as the chosen people over all others." Jewish themes - including anti-Jewish pogroms - receive little mention in many textbooks on 19th- and 20th-century Russian history. In several textbooks,

Judaism is not listed as one of Russia's religions. The contributions of Russian Muslims also receive short shrift in the textbooks. "Overall, the report is positive, especially if you compare it with the olden days," Lev Krichevsky, the author of the report, told JTA.

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Rabbi Weisberg received his Rabbinical training in the Lakewood Talmudic Academy and in the Mir Yeshiva in Jerusalem. He went on to study Chassidut and Jewish Mysticism in Tomchei Temimim Lubavitch (770).

Weisberg served as a pulpit Rabbi in the suburbs of Toronto for several years. Currently he is the director of Machon Bnos Menachem Seminary, (a post secondary young women's institute for advanced Torah study), and a senior lecturer at the Chabad Yeshiva, and Girl's High School in Toronto.

Under special instruction from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Weisberg edited and prepared dozens of the Rebbe's Talmudic essays. Most of these have been published in various distinguished Torah journals.

Rabbi Weisberg lectures widely on a variety of Judaic subjects.

SYNAGOGUE SERVICE TIMES

BETH ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE
Friday, February 16, services 7:30 a.m. & 5:00 p.m. Saturday, February 17, services 9:30 a.m. Mincha following Kiddush. Sunday, February 18, Tallit & Tefillin, 9:30 a.m. Monday, February 19-Thursday, February 22, services 7:30 a.m. & 7:00 p.m.

BNAY ABRAHAM SYNAGOGUE
Friday, February 16 - morning service at 7:30 a.m., evening service at 5:15 p.m., candle lighting at 5:31 p.m. Saturday, February 17 - morning service at 9:00 a.m., evening service at 5:15 p.m. Shabbat ends at 6:31 p.m. Sunday, February 18 - morning service at 9:00 a.m., evening service at 5:40 p.m. Monday, February 19-Thursday, February 22 - morning service at 7:30 a.m., evening service at 5:40 p.m.

CHAVURAT TEFILA SYNAGOGUE
Friday, February 16, Candle lighting: 5:31 p.m. Mincha/kabbalat Shabbat: 5:20 p.m. Shacharis Saturday: 9:30 a.m. Shabbat ends: 6:31 p.m.

CHEVRA MISHNAYES SYNAGOGUE
700 Jefferson Avenue Daily morning service (Monday to Friday): 7:30 a.m. Sundays and statutory holidays, morning service, 8:00 a.m. Friday, February 16 (Shevat 23), Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbas, 5:30 p.m. Saturday, February 17 (Shevat 24), morning service, 9:30 a.m., Parshas Yisro; Mevorchim Hachodesh Adar (Blessing the month of Adar); Kiddush and words from the Torah at the conclusion of Musaf. Mincha service, after 12:00 noon. Traditional Orthodox services are conducted, and everyone is welcome.

CONGREGATION SHAAREY ZEDEK
561 Wellington Crescent. Daily morning service (Monday-Friday): 7:30 a.m. Daily evening service (Monday-Friday): 6:00 p.m. Sunday & statutory holiday mornings: 9:15 a.m. Shabbat morning service: 9:15 a.m., evening service: 6:00 p.m. Shabbat morning: Leamer's minyan (ages 8-13) 10:30 to noon. Junior Congregation (younger children) 10:30 to noon. Family Minyan (young children & parents) 10:30. Prairie Ruach Minyan - worship for the mind, body, heart & soul - starting November 10 at 8 p.m., and continuing the 2nd Friday of each month.

HERZLIA-ADAS YESHURON CONGREGATION
Service schedule for week of February 17-23, Parshat Yitro. Candle lighting February 16 at 5:31 p.m. Mincha: 5:30 p.m. Saturday, February 17: Shabbat morning service at 9:00 a.m. Mincha at 5:00 p.m. Followed by Maariv/Havdallah. Shabbat ends at 6:32 p.m. Junior Congregation 3-5 years, 6-8 years. NCSY Youth Minyan (for ages 9-18) begins 9:15 a.m. promptly. Sunday Shacharit services at 9:00 a.m. Daily shacharit services: 7:00 a.m. Mincha/maariv services: 5:00 p.m.

ROSH PINA CONGREGATION
Friday, February 16, sundown 5:49 p.m., candle lighting at 5:31 p.m., morning service at 7:30 a.m., evening service at 5:25 p.m. Saturday, February 17, sundown 5:51 p.m., morning service at 9:00 a.m., evening service at 5:15 p.m. Shabbat ends at 6:33 p.m. Sunday, February 18, sundown 5:53 p.m., morning service at 9:00 a.m., evening service at 5:50 p.m. Monday, February 19-Thursday, February 22, sundown 5:53 p.m., morning service at 7:30 a.m., evening service at 5:50 p.m.

TALMUD TORAH - BETH JACOB SYNAGOGUE
Located at 1525 Main Street. Candle lighting time for Friday, February 16 at 5:31 p.m. Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat at 5:30 p.m. Saturday morning service at 9:15 a.m. Sedra of the week - Yitro. Mevorchim Hachodesh. Mincha service at 5:30 p.m. Shabbat ends at 6:31 p.m. Sunday shacharit service at 9:00 a.m. Daily shacharit service (Monday to Friday) at 7:30 a.m. Daily Mincha/Maariv services at 5:45 p.m. Rosh Chodesh Adar - Friday, February 23 and Saturday, February 24. Traditional Orthodox services are conducted, and everyone is invited to attend.

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