

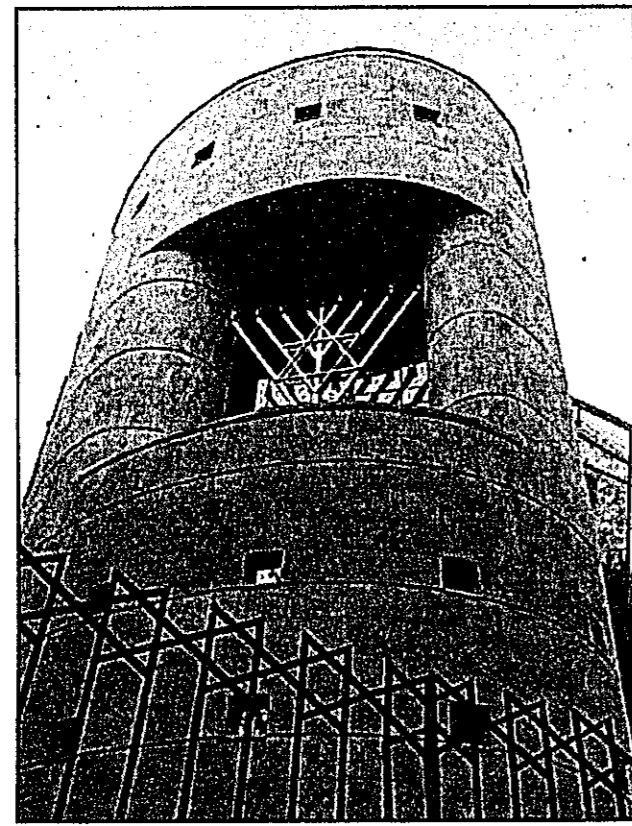
World Jewish news

Across the former Soviet Union

After attacks at Russian synagogues, Jews taking security into own hands

By LEV KRICHEVSKY
MOSCOW (JTA) - In the wake of two recent attacks on Russian synagogues, Jewish officials have announced initiatives aimed at increasing security at the country's Jewish institutions.

The initiatives come after two incidents two weeks ago: In one, an attacker left eight people wounded at a Moscow synagogue; in the other, a synagogue attack was prevented in the southern city of Rostov-on-Don. The incidents have raised the issue of who's responsible for security at Russian Jewish sites: While most Jewish groups are taking security into their own hands, at least one prominent Russian Jewish leader believes the government and police should take



Moscow's Bolshaya Bronnaya Synagogue, the site of a stabbing incident on January 11, 2006, that injured eight people. Credit: Andrey Yashin.

charge of the issue.

The Federation of Jewish Communities, Russia's largest Jewish organization in charge of most of the country's synagogues, has announced the launch of Magen David, a Jewish security fund. The group has called on its supporters in Russian and abroad to raise donations toward providing 24-hour security for its institutions and synagogues across Russia.

Last week, Berel Lazar, one of Russia's two chief rabbis and a federation leader, sent a letter to the heads of Russia's Jewish communities, asking them to take greater care to the security issues of their institutions including synagogues, schools and community centers. Currently, Russian Jewish institutions hire private companies to provide security; only a handful of synagogues can boast of more advanced security systems. Usually, most Jewish institutions have only unarmed security personnel at the doors, similar to what most public places - including supermarkets, restaurants or movie theaters - have in Russia.

Following the attacks two weeks ago, Lazar met with leaders of Russian law enforcement agencies, including Russian minister of internal affairs and the head of the Moscow police. According to the federation, the issue of "strengthening the state's role in providing for the safety of the Jewish community" was discussed in these meetings. In his letter to the Jewish community leaders, Lazar mentioned that police in most Western European countries provide round-the-clock patrolling of Jewish religious and community buildings.

But it remains unclear whether the Jewish community can count on police force or government funds in dealing with security matters.

Across the former Soviet Union

Expected donation to Jewish Agency would bolster group's work in ex-USSR

By LEV KRICHEVSKY
MOSCOW

(JTA) - A Russian Jewish financier is poised to give a \$50 million U.S. donation that may prove critical to the Jewish Agency for Israel's activities in the former Soviet Union.

The gift from Arcadi Gaydamak should help the agency, whose budget in the region has decreased over the last few years, to fund "Zionist education" projects in the region. According to the agreement, Gaydamak will receive a seat in the Jewish Agency assembly, a 500-member representative body of Jewish leaders, and will have broad powers in the Jewish Agency's activities in the former Soviet Union.

The 53-year-old billionaire, who divides his time between Moscow and Israel, told JTA that the agreement was almost finalized. "The issue has already been decided and we are expecting some legal matters to be concluded," Gaydamak said December 26.

The Jewish Agency was more cautious in evaluating the prospects for an agreement. The agency is "actively seeking partners" to help fund Zionist education projects in the former Soviet Union, Michael Jankelowitz, a Jerusalem-based spokesman for the Jewish Agency, told JTA. Jankelowitz confirmed that Gaydamak was one of those prospective partners, but added that "these discussions are continuing and are yet to be finalized."

The issue first came up in meetings between Gaydamak and the chairman of the Jewish Agency, Zeev Bielski, in October in Moscow. It was discussed again earlier last month in Jerusalem. The issue should be finalized by February, when the agency's board of governors is expected to adopt its final 2006 budget. The agency's budget has fallen over the past three years from \$350 million U.S. to \$290 million U.S.

Immigration to Israel from the former Soviet Union has decreased greatly in recent years, but still accounts for 40 per cent of all immigration to Israel. With North American federations, a source of at least half of the agency's budget, cutting their overall funding for overseas needs, the agency has been looking for funds.

Programs in the former Soviet Union not geared directly toward aliyah - including Jewish day schools and Sunday schools, camps and youth clubs - were among the programs hardest hit by the budget cuts. If the agency is unable to find additional sources, much of its operation in the former Soviet Union will be closed down, an agency source told JTA.



ARCADI GAYDAMAK: He's about to give the Jewish Agency \$50 million U.S. for Israel's activities in the former Soviet Union. Credit: Ilya Dolgopolsky.

Israeli news/Yiddish column

Focus on issues

Award-winning immigrant a force in environmental activism

By DINA KRAFT

LOD, Israel (JTA)

- High in an overcast sky, beneath a bank of clouds, Alon Tal is waving his hands and delivering a rapid-fire account of Israel's environmental history.

Tal is delivering this lecture in a conference room at the top of a former airport control tower - a fitting setting for a leading proponent of recycling in Israel. Captivated, his students, most of them



Charles Bronfman, right, awards environmentalist Alon Tal, center, with the Charles Bronfman Prize, January 10, 2006, in Jerusalem, as Jerusalem Mayor Uri Lupolianski looks on. Credit: Dina Guna.

government employees dealing with the environment, have their eyes fixed on him and a series of charts and lists documenting the battles to save Israel's forests, beaches, air and water.

Tal, 45, a powerhouse in environmental activism, is an American immigrant to Israel who was born Albert Rosenthal in North Carolina. He came to Israel determined to make a difference.

On January 10, he was awarded the Charles Bronfman Prize, a prize given to outstanding young Jewish humanitarians. Selected from dozens of nominees, the \$100,000 U.S. award went to Tal as an example, the prize founders said, of "an outstanding environmental visionary

night. To his surprise, he was greeted by a hall packed with 300 people. "And then I got it. The people of Israel really do care deeply about the health of their communities. They love this land of theirs. And when we learn to tap into that love, we really can move mountains."

Tal has moved his share of mountains. In 1990 he founded Adam Teva v'Din, the Israel Union for Environmental Defence. The group was the first environmental watchdog organization of its kind in Israel. It uses American-style legal advocacy to help protect Israel's environment, filing court petitions challenging the government's development policies that it says risk endangering the environment and public health.

The group focuses on issues of air pollution, safe drinking water, solid waste management and accessible open space. Their first victory was stopping sewage being dumped from Eilat into the Red Sea. One of their landmark court victories saw a \$10 million U.S. purification system installed in the Kishon River in northern Israel, after the group uncovered that nearby factories were pouring more sewage into the river than they had been reporting, making the river toxic.

ISRAELI NEWS BRIEFS

Ariel Sharon may have opened eyes

JERUSALEM (JTA) - Ariel Sharon, in a coma, may have opened his eyes. Aides and relatives said the Israeli prime minister briefly opened his eyes twice January 16 when a tape-recording of his grandson's voice was played. It was the most encouraging response since Sharon was placed in a coma as surgeons treated a massive stroke he suffered January 4. But doctors played down hopes of a speedy recovery, saying Sharon's eyelids may have simply been a reflex reaction.

Special Olympics held in Jerusalem

JERUSALEM (JTA) - Jerusalem hosted a local version of the Special Olympics for the first time. Mayor Uri Lupolianski on January 17 launched the winter games of the Special Olympics in Jerusalem, attending a gymnastics exhibition and a floor hockey match. The municipality was holding the games in association with the Israeli Special Olympics organization in various locations around Jerusalem. Some 1,000 athletes from all over Israel were expected to participate. A delegation from Greece, birthplace of the Olympics, also was to arrive. Competition were to be held in various fields, including swimming, soccer, basketball, judo, track and field, equestrian, bowling, gymnastics and more.

Olmert seeks peace

JERUSALEM (JTA) - Ehud Olmert said he would seek to restart peace talks with the Palestinians if elected Israeli prime minister. But Olmert, in his most wide-ranging policy statement since standing in for the ailing Ariel Sharon, demanded January 17 that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas crack down on terrorist groups as required by the "road map" peace plan. "I hope that I will be able to enter negotiations with him, for a permanent settlement between us and the Palestinians, on condition he upholds his commitments," Olmert told reporters. Opinion polls predict an easy win for Olmert, who is heading Sharon's Kadima Party, in the March 28 general elections. Talking tough on Iran's nuclear program, Olmert said, "Under no circumstances, and at no stage, can Israel allow for someone who has such malicious intent to possess weapons of mass destruction." But he declined to say whether this meant he would consider ordering a preemptive Israeli strike on Iran.

Hamas leader slain

JERUSALEM (JTA) - Israeli troops killed a senior Palestinian terrorist in the West Bank. The Hamas field commander, Tabet Salah a-Din, was shot dead in Tulkarm on January 17 after opening fire on soldiers who surrounded his hideout. The army said troops tried to arrest him, but were forced to resort to lethal measures when he resisted.

א ווינטיק-ווינקל
פֿון אָשֶׁר קרויט
A Windy Corner
by Osher Kraut



די רייז און געדאַנקען פֿון אַ ווינטפֿעגער רבי (המשד) (פֿאַרקוירט פֿון שמה) סימבאָליש רעפּרעזענטירן פֿון הרב וויצמאַנס בוך, "די רייז פֿון מיין מויל און די טראַכטונגען פֿון מיין האַרץ".

דעם אַנזאָג, אז אַ כּהן זאָל ניט מטמא ווערן פֿון אַ מת, טייטשט הרב וויצמאַן אויס אַלגעמיינע ייִדישקייט טאָר נישט זיין קאָנצענטרירט אַרום מתים-קולט - יאַרצייטן, קדיש-זאָגן, הזכרות - נאָר אויף דעם עכט-ייִדישן לעבנס שטייגער אַלע טעג פֿון אַ גאַנץ יאָר. גאָר הויך הייבט דער רבי אַרויס דעם ענין פֿון טאַלערנאָך און פֿאַרשטענדעניש פֿאַר פֿאַרשידענע מיינונגען און קולטורן. ווי דער רעגנבוין שליסט איין האַרמאָניש אַלערליי קאַלירן, אזוי קאָן די מענטשהייט באַרייכערט ווערן דורך פֿאַרשידענע לשונות און קולטורן, און אזוי ווי גאָט איז איינער, אזוי זיינען אַלע פֿעלקער איין משפּחה. אַריגינעל איז אויך הרב וויצמאַנס טייטש פֿון "צדיק ורע לו, רשע וטובֿ לו" דעם צדיק, שרייבט ער, איז שלעכט ווייל ער איז משתּוֹף מיט די ליידן פֿון אַנדערע, אָבער דעם רשע איז גוט, ווייל עס גייט אים נאָר ניט אָן. ער זאָרט נאָר פֿאַר זיך. דיאָס שלעכטס אין דער וועלט קומט פֿון דעם, וואָס מען וויל ניט הערן די הילפֿס-רופֿן פֿון די געליטענע און בעטלעטע. אזוי האָבן, בעת דער שואה די פֿעלקער אין אייראָפּע ניט געוואָלט הערן די געשרייען פֿון די פֿאַרפּיניקטע ייד.

הרב וויצמאַן טייטשט אויס אויף זיין אויפֿן דעם אונטערשייד פֿון אַ רואה, אַ פֿירזאָגער, און אַ נביא. דער פֿאַראויסזעער זאָגט פֿאַר די אומפֿאַרמינדלעכע צוקונפֿט, דער נביא אָבער רופֿט צו תּשובּה טאָן, כדי צו פֿאַרמינדן די אַנגעברייטע שטראָף. תּשובּה מיינט אָבער ניט אַפּלייגן די שולד אויף אַנדערע, נאָר זען די אייגענע פֿעלערן און זינד. דער סימבאָלישער באַטייט פֿון ברענגען אַ קרבן איז וואָס דער זינדער איז מקריב זיין פֿריערדיק ווערן, און קאָן, אַ באַפֿרייטער פֿון זינד, אַנהייבן אויף סיני.

דער מענטש דאַרף אַרבעטן אויף זיינע מידות: זיין אָפּגעהיטן פֿון לשון הרע, וואָס באַפֿלעקט אַלע דריי: דעם ריידער, דעם צוהערער און דעם באַרעדטן. ער דאַרף זיין ווי דוד המלך, אַ "יִפֿה-עינים", זען דאָס שיינע און גוטע אין אַנדערע, פֿאַרגינען יענעם און ניט פֿאַרלירן קיין צייט, דאָס טייַערסטע וואָס ער פֿאַרמאָגט, אויף איינצלקייטן.

די דאָזיקע געדאַנקען פֿון ייִדישער עטיק ווערן אויך אַרויסגעברענגט אין העברעיִשן טייל פֿון ספר. אָבער דאָ ווייזט דער מחבר אַרויס מער זיין בקיאות נישט בלויז אין תּנך נאָר אויך אין תּלמוד און די מדרשים. ער באַנוצט זיך אַפֿט מיט למדנישע חידושים און טייטשן אויפֿן סמך פֿון ראשי תיבות און גימטריות. אין אַלגעמיין איז הרב וויצמאַנס ספר אַן אוצר פֿון גייסטרייכע באַטראַכטונגען און אוניווערסאַלע אידעען.

The I.L. Peretz Folk School Endowment Trust is helping cover the cost of Osher Kraut's weekly Yiddish column, which appears on this page.

י. ל. פֿרץ
פּאָלס שול
שטיצונג פֿאַנד
שטיצט
פינאַנצירט
דעם ייִדישן
קאָלום פֿון
אָשֶׁר קרויט

Focus on issues

Gypsies, Jews fight whitewashing of WW II-era camp in Czech Republic

By DINAH SPRITZER

PRAGUE (JTA) - As Holocaust Memorial Day approaches this week, it is not only Jews who must confront those who wish to deny the horrors of the Holocaust. It was "just a labor camp" and "we didn't do it" are two of the mantras voiced at former Holocaust victims by the fringe nationalist party in the Czech Republic known for its xenophobic platform.

They are talking about Lety, the World War II Nazi concentration camp run exclusively by Czech guards where 300 Roma, mostly children, perished. Today, Roma, also called gypsies, are the main target of nationalist extremists and skinheads in the Czech Republic.

The Nationalists, a very small party with no parliamentary seats, outraged many in the country when it announced at the end of December that it would unveil a memorial at Lety that would say the camp was run by Germans and that those who died there did so of natural causes. After politicians and Roma groups protested, the Nationalists changed their strategy, and now plan to unveil a giant stone inscribed with "To the victims" on January 21.

The move hasn't gone over well with any public figure. Lety's mayor said he would like to have the stone removed but is not sure that he has the legal authority to do so.

Tomas Kraus, chairman of the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic, said he and

the Czech Council of Nazi Victims condemn the Nationalist memorial, which he said was clearly meant to provoke the Roma and gain attention for the party. "What the Nationalist Party does, and what others like them continue to do - just look at the Iranian president - is play with words. This concerns Jews very much," he said. Trying to diminish the Holocaust by calling a concentration camp a labor camp is the first step toward Holocaust denial, he added.

Katerina Jacques of the government's Human Rights Office agreed. "It must be analyzed whether" the National Party, in its original monument proposal "committed the crime of supporting and promoting fascism," Jacques said.

The myth that Lety was a German-run labor camp, created by the Communist authorities to instill patriotism and anti-German sentiment, has long been discredited, as was the illusion that Terezin, or Theresienstadt in German, was a camp used primarily to persecute Communists, not Jews, another idea propagated by the totalitarian regime.

The parallel is not lost on Jake Roth, a leader of the Prague Jewish community. "People who go around putting forth denial, lies that Roma were not persecuted or were persecuted for their own faults, these are the same arguments that get used against Jews," he said. "Any denial or false statements about our past have always led to evil things that hit the entire society."