

Militant Jew, Paterson clash

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Mordechai Levy

On the bombing of a 61 year old man whose leg was amputated as a result: "The only thing I regret is that instead of losing his legs, he should have lost his life."

At a heavily guarded but sparsely attended appearance in Paterson yesterday, the leader of a militant Jewish group vowed to take the city to court for denying a permit to picket the home of Tscherim Soobzokov.

"Freedom of speech is given for everyone, not just the people the mayor likes," said Mordechai Levy, leader of the Manhattan-based Jewish Defense Organization (JDO). "We will bring him [the mayor] to his knees in court."

He said he will seek legal assistance from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of New Jersey. An ACLU spokesman said yesterday that he'd have to review the case before deciding on getting involved.

"If it does raise a constitutional issue, as it appears it might, we would attempt to provide legal representation," said Ed Martone, assistant director of the ACLU's Newark office.

Mayor Frank X. Graves Jr. said he ordered denial of the permit to "protect the health, welfare, and safety of the city's residents. The constitutional issue will have to be decided by the courts."

Soobzokov was injured when a bomb exploded on his front porch

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Thursday. He remained in critical condition last night at St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center. Surgeons amputated his right leg below the knee Thursday.

Levy, wearing a yarmulke and a tan, double-breasted suit, appeared in Paterson to apply for a parade permit for Sept. 22 at noon, when the JDO plans to hold a "Death to the Nazi" rally in front of Soobzokov's home. Levy officially was denied the permit by city Public Works Director Daniel F. Malatesta.

Levy was heavily guarded by police because officials feared his appearance might spark conflict between members of the Circassian community led by Soobzokov and the JDO. Levy has applauded the bombing, but said he had nothing to do with it.

"The only thing that I regret, even though we had no hand in this incident, is that instead of losing his legs he should have lost his life," Levy said.

Militant groups suspected

Levy said he has not been contacted by the FBI, but one federal agent said militant Jewish groups were suspect in the bombing.

Soobzokov, a Circassian leader in Passaic County, has been accused repeatedly of participating in massacres of Jews during World War II, but none of the accusers has been able to prove his case.

As Levy spoke in front of the municipal complex yesterday, more than a dozen uniformed officers loosely surrounded him and the gathering of approximately 40 people — mostly reporters, city workers, and curious pedestrians, sprinkled with plainclothes detectives.

Two outbursts caused the circle to be tightened.

Paterson Jewish leader Jacob Moskow approached Levy and loudly condemned him. Later, as Levy left the gathering, a woman shouted, "Go put your show on in Israel, not here in America!" She received scattered applause as she and Levy exchanged insults.

Shaking with anger

Moskow, his voice shaking with anger, approached Levy while the news conference was underway.

"I represent the Jewish community," Moskow, 79, said as he stood nose to nose with Levy, 23. "How the hell can you say, 'I'm glad this happened to this man'? This is a human being."

Levy yelled back, "And if Hitler had been assassinated in 1920, a lot more Jews would be alive today. You'd regret that, too."

"Horse manure," said Moskow, a former president of the Paterson YM-YWHA and a member of Tem-

ple Emmanuel in Paterson. Of Levy's plans to picket in Paterson, Moskow said:

"I resent this man's coming here. And if he brings in 10 people, I'll bring in 1,000 to resent what he's doing."

A handful of members of the Circassian community attended the press conference but did not speak.

'Here to stay'

Later, they gathered on the porch of Soobzokov's home at 704 14th Ave., where debris from the bombing still littered the front lawn. Movers helped pack the family possessions while family members and friends stood watch.

Aslan Soobzokov, the 28-year-old son of the injured man, said the goods would be put in storage while repairs are made to the wood-frame home where the family has lived since 1962.

Aslan said the family, which temporarily is staying with relatives, would not be driven from their home by the threat of further attacks. "We're here to stay," he said. "This is America; what is there to be afraid of?"

The pipe bomb that blew a large hole in the front porch and shattered most of the home's windows exploded about 4:30 a.m. Thursday. A passer-by had seen Soobzokov's car burning and told a neighbor, who went to Soobzokov's house. When Soobzokov went outside, the bomb exploded.

An FBI antiterrorism task force is heading the investigation into the bombing, assisted by state and Paterson police, the Passaic County Prosecutor's Office, and the federal Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms division.

Expresses confidence

A patrolman at Soobzokov's home said neighbors had expressed fears about the family's safety and the prospect of violence in their residential neighborhood on Paterson's Eastside. The round-the-clock police guard stationed outside the home is soon to be discontinued.

Aslan Soobzokov expressed confidence that community support would see them through the incident. "We have our people here," he said. "They'll take care of us."

Yahia Kazan, a family friend who attended Levy's news conference before returning to Soobzokov's home, said he had "full faith and confidence in our justice system. We hope the criminal will be brought to justice."

"We're not planning to take the laws in our own hands, but by law, if someone comes to kill you, you have the right to defend yourself."

In the past, community members have rallied to defend the family against protests by groups that persist in accusing Soobzokov of Nazi war crimes.

Yesterday, Levy warned Soobzokov's supporters against interfering with the planned protest. He said JDO members with gun permits will be on guard with concealed weapons.

"If they attack us in any way, God help them," Levy said. "We will defend ourselves."

Levy admitted he has been arrested and questioned about several incidents, including a letter bomb that was mailed to Soobzokov's home in 1979 but was detected before it could explode.

Levy said he can prove he wasn't near Soobzokov's house the morning the bomb exploded. He said that at the time of the bombing he was buying a newspaper in a New York City store that videotapes all customers. He said the store was held up recently and uses the video as a security measure.