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**SPECIAL
EDITION:**
PARIS TERROR

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Mishpacha

An Attack Waiting to Happen

FRANCE SEARCHES FOR
SOLUTIONS TO THWART
HOMEGROWN JIHADIS

By **Binyamin Rose**

PHOTOS: AFP/IMAGEBANK

Three Orthodox synagogues are situated within the immediate vicinity of the fashionable French bistro, La Belle Equipe, on Rue de Charonne, which runs southwest to the Bastille section in the city center.

On one stretch of this street, as many as 30 to 40% of the residents are shul-goers. During davening times on Shabbos, Rue de Charonne is full of Jewish passersby.

All of them were safe and sound last Friday night at 9:36 p.m., including Jean-Yves Camus, who had returned home to that very street earlier in the day from Stockholm.

It was exactly at 9:36 p.m. when the sixth of Friday night's nine deadly terrorist attacks occurred at La Belle Equipe. Gunmen sprayed rifle fire from a black vehicle at diners on the bistro's terrace, killing 19 and critically wounding nine others.

"I heard the ambulance sirens," said Camus, who is *Mishpacha's* longstanding Paris correspondent. "We had finished our Shabbos meal, and we knew something was wrong because there were so many sirens, but I thought maybe it was just a big car accident, so I didn't see any need to go out and check."

By Shabbos morning, however, the bad news had spread fast.





“ISIS and other Islamic radical groups are interested in bringing chaos to Europe. They would like to provoke some kind of civil war and religious crisis between Muslims and non-Muslims”

—Jean-Yves Camus



In a span of 33 minutes, three jihadist terror squads, with determination, know-how, and heavy weaponry, had slaughtered 129 people. Some 89 of them were murdered at the Bataclan concert hall long associated with Jewish causes and until recently owned by a Jewish family.

The attack was startling, in part, because it marked the first appearance of suicide bombers on the streets of Paris. It was also the deadliest set of foreign attacks on French soil since the end of the eight-year war between France and Algeria (1954 to 1962), in which Algeria won its independence from its colonial patron.

The murder spree began at 9:20 p.m. Friday night when a suicide bomber detonated an explosive belt at a soccer game between France and Germany with 80,000 people in the stands, including French president François Hollande. Security forces whisked him away to safety but shortly thereafter, he declared a state of emergency and closed France's borders.

Jewish worshippers that Shabbos morning were shocked, Camus says, even though such an atrocity was not unexpected.

“We all knew something like this would happen,” Camus says. “The intelligence community was very much aware that someday, we would experience a coordinated attack, targeting not just Jewish buildings but people at random.”

Camus noted that the ramped-up security French

authorities provided to Jewish institutions since this past January's attacks on the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine in Paris that killed 12, and the murder two days later of four Jewish shoppers at the kosher supermarket *Hypercacher*, probably served as a deterrent to the killers. “I presume that the terrorists knew there was protection at the synagogues and chose to hit places where the army is not present,” says Camus, who is an associate research fellow at the French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs (IRIS), and a member both of the European Consortium on Political Research and the Task Force on Anti-Semitism at the European Jewish Congress.

What does the state of emergency mean, practically, to everyday life in Paris?

“This means that all kinds of public demonstrations are prohibited and the police have exceptional powers to arrest and detain anyone who is a threat to national security. It's the first time that we've had a state of emergency since 1962, at the end of our war with Algeria.”

Did the authorities not learn the appropriate lessons from the *Charlie Hebdo* and *Hypercacher* attacks that something of this magnitude could happen again so quickly?

“The very big difference between the *Charlie Hebdo* and *Hypercacher* attacks and last Friday's

attacks is that Friday's targets were not selected because of their religion or ideology. This time, we had mass shootings whose victims were ‘ordinary citizens.’

“However, these were not random shootings, either. The targets were places of entertainment such as restaurants, bars, and a stadium, all of that being ‘haram’ to Islamists because of the decadence that represents to them. The neighborhoods where most of the shootings took place have become very popular nightspots for young professionals and middle-class people who embody the values that are rejected by Islam.

“The Bataclan nightclub [where 89 people were killed], by the way, was under Jewish ownership for years, and often hosted Jewish charity events and even rallies in support of Israel in times of hot situations, such as the start of the intifada and the 2006 war against Hezbollah.”

Was the timing of the attacks intended to coincide with any particular event in France?

“As a political commentator, I have noted in the press that I felt something on this scale could happen shortly before our 2017 presidential elections — that terrorists would try to stage a mass attack to influence the result.”

Are the Islamic radicals looking to come to power in France?

“They don't want to come to power. ISIS, and other Islamic radical groups, are interested in bringing chaos to Europe. They would like to

provoke some kind of civil war and religious crisis between Muslims and non-Muslims, where every Frenchman looks at every Muslim in the street as an enemy or a terrorist, so that ethnicity becomes the dividing line. Their best possibility of achieving that is if the extreme right-wing party led by Marine Le Pen comes to power. We have elections on December 6 for the regional assemblies. The extreme right is polling at about 20 to 30% of the seats in those assemblies and I think next month, they will win at least one major region in northern France.

Are the Islamists succeeding in provoking internal dissent among the French?

“No, there is a very strong feeling of national unity here since the January attacks that is still present today. I have never seen this country so unified. I have also received many messages from Muslim friends and colleagues and the overwhelming majority of my Muslim friends are horrified. The last thing they want is to be some kind of hostages of ISIS.”

What more can the government do that it hasn't done up until now?

“It's not a question of whether the government will be left-wing as it is now or right-wing. We simply need to invest more money in security and intelligence. They need more staff, especially more Arabic-speakers, so that they can track down every single person who is a threat to national security. There has been a great improvement in the last year, but we need more money and more people. And as



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anyone in Israel knows, you can never succeed in stopping 100% of the terror attacks.”

The Price of Freedom

To choke off terrorism at the pass, President Hollande announced a temporary closure of France’s borders, a move meant to stop any terrorists still on the loose from escaping.

At press time, police were just beginning to name the seven dead attackers who had blown themselves up with suicide bombs or who were eliminated by police. Their identities raise the specter of what France is up against.

At least one was native-born, to a Muslim family in a working-class suburb of Paris. Muslim immigrants, mainly from Morocco and Algeria, have been streaming into France for decades, and form an important part of France’s cheap labor force.

A second dead terrorist appears to be a Syrian who arrived last month among a group of refugees. France, along with many European countries, has swung its immigration gates wide open regardless of the consequences.

The *Los Angeles Times* reported that the terror plot was conceived and funded by a small Islamist extremist cell from the Brussels suburb of Molenbeek, which has been a center for radical Islamists for several years.

The ease of travel in the European Union, where 26 countries abolished passport and border controls, makes it extremely difficult to track the movement of people.

Tsilla Hershco, a professor who specializes in French-Muslim relations at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, experienced that firsthand on Europe’s high-speed train line, once on a trip from Paris to attend a 2014 NATO conference in Brussels and again this summer on a roundtrip excursion from France to Italy. “The trains were packed. I was stunned how everyone just put their baggage on the train and not one person’s luggage was inspected. Afterward, I watched debates about this on French television, and the consensus I heard was that inspections would be a violation of personal privacy. This has to be changed.”



Like many nations around the world, even when France suspects terrorist activity, authorities don’t always know what to look for or how to connect the dots.

Scott Stewart, vice president of tactical analysis at Stratfor Global Intelligence noted in his weekly security column that the Friday night attacks were perpetrated by a small number of radical jihadists in a large universe of Islamist radicals in France. For French authorities, he says, sorting through the universe of potential attackers to identify those who pose the greatest risk is a daunting challenge.

“It requires an incredible amount of resources to maintain live telephone taps on one target, much less 24/7 physical surveillance,” Stewart writes. “This means that security services need to use risk assessments to rank the potential threats and deploy their resources selectively against those threats deemed the most dangerous. This is especially true in a democratic country such as France, where there is rule of law and one cannot just conduct sweeps to arrest every known potential threat and then sort them out in prison.

“Many will criticize the French government for missing such obvious clues, but those who do have lost sight of the fact that hindsight can be far more acute than foresight.”

Knowing Right from Left

As Shabbos gave way to a new week, Paris Jews gathered for a memorial service Sunday night at the Great Synagogue of Paris as a mark of respect and to express their hope for the future. France's Chief Rabbi Haim Korsia encouraged the Jewish communities of France to participate in the three-day mourning period announced by President Hollande.

Jews throughout Europe expressed their solidarity with Parisians while keeping a wary eye on how the growing fear and suspicion of Europe's Muslim community will play itself out, and whether there will be any collateral damage to other minorities, including Jews.

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, president of the Conference of European Rabbis (CER), a group that represents Orthodox communities across the continent, says the CER has tried to address Islamic radicalism by encouraging the creation of an alternative religious Muslim leadership in Europe.

To accomplish that, the CER issued a "Manifesto on Extremism" a proposal that recommends all religious leaders in Europe undertake part of their training in the EU. The aim is to make it more difficult for foreign extremist bodies to influence European religious communities. A number of European governments have expressed interest in the proposal and one has already adopted it. "Austria has already implemented a law that all Islamic clergy has to be trained locally," Rabbi Goldschmidt said.

The CER's main role since its inception in 1956 has been to represent the interests of Judaism and the Jewish community of Europe to European institutions and to the governments of Europe.

In that respect, the CER is closely watching electoral races in France and throughout Europe, in which right-wing parties led by anti-Semites are vying for office.

While Hungary's right-wing leader, Viktor Orban, is — by contrast — supportive of Hungary's small Jewish community and is perhaps Europe's only political leader to fearlessly state publicly that he sees Muslims as a threat to Europe's Christian heritage, France's Marine Le Pen, head of the

National Front — France's third largest political party — raises alarm. Her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, is a Holocaust denier who once called the gas chambers a "detail" of World War II, and has been convicted of racism or anti-Semitism a half dozen times.

Marine, who now leads the National Front, has distanced herself from him — to the point where she even threw her father out of the party. She has also reached out to French Jews, organizing a kosher dinner where she could meet members of the Orthodox community. Through that effort, she achieved some success in winning over members of France's Sephardic community, many of whom grew up in Muslim countries. However, she still inspires more fear than confidence among Ashkenazic Jews whose family members suffered under France's Vichy government during World War II and who are alarmed at the statements of some members of the National Front, who long for the "good old days."

Asked if he was concerned about a far-right takeover in France, Rabbi Goldschmidt said: "If I were a normal terrified Parisian, I would say we need a strong leader. This is the second time in one year a major attack took place in Paris, so any concerned citizen would say, 'Okay, let's take a gamble, let's look for somebody else.' If you ask me today if the possibility of Marine Le Pen being the next president of France is high, I would say the answer is yes."

The question of whether a right-wing government in France is good or bad for the Jews may never become an issue. But the question of how to deal with France's growing and seething Muslim population is, and will be a concern for some time to come.

"France has a large population of Muslims who hate France and don't identify with it," Professor Hershco says. "It's going to take a lot of fundamental work, in society and in the educational system, to try to neutralize the inciters and radicals."

To accomplish this, the French government will have to take the next logical step, which is to call a spade a spade, he says.

"The problem in France is Islamic radicalism. They don't mention the word Islam so as not to stigmatize them, but this too will have to change." ●