

**GERMANY BANS NEO-NAZI GROUP;  
GERMAN JEWS LOOK TO ALIYAH****By David Kantor**

BONN, Nov. 29 (JTA) -- Amid mounting international outcry over neo-Nazi violence within its borders, Germany has taken its first dramatic step and announced a ban on a right-wing extremist group.

Shortly before the ban was announced Friday, police began a nationwide crackdown on leaders of the group, the National Front, one of a number of explicitly anti-Semitic organizations in Germany.

German Jews, who have spoken out against the outbreak of violence, have reported an increased interest in immigration to Israel.

Applications for aliyah have soared sixfold, according to the Frankfurt representative of the Jewish Agency.

Judith Zamir said her office handled more than 200 applications for immigration to Israel over the past four weeks, up from fewer than 30 in a typical month. She said they came predominantly from Jews ages 18 to 35.

Many Jews are also investigating a move to the United States or other countries, according to a German television report.

**Bubis Says No Reason For Jews To Leave**

But Ignatz Bubis, chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, said Jews had no reason to leave the country and only a small number were in fact doing so, according to news reports.

In moving against the National Front, police seized weapons and propaganda material from the homes of over 100 known activists in various parts of the country. The ban may be extended soon to another neo-Nazi group called the German Alternative, press reports said.

Bonn is also considering a move to strip neo-Nazis of the right to demonstrate, officials said. Government determination to demonstrate opposition to the tide of right-wing violence was reflected in a radio interview Sunday with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

Germany must do everything to put "the right-wing rabble" in "their place and hit these culprits with the full force of the law," said Kohl, whose government has been criticized for not cracking down on the neo-Nazis.

His admonition was backed up by a demonstration by 200,000 Germans in Hamburg, where right-wing arsonists last week killed three Turks in nearby Moelln.

The demonstration followed an attack by vandals on a Jewish memorial in Gottingen, in western Germany. Critics faulted police for releasing two young neo-Nazis, ages 23 and 21, after detaining them in connection with the attack.

Addressing the demonstration, author Gunther Grass charged the government with failure to protect foreigners in the country. He urged political parties to set aside the debate on curbing the influx of asylum-seekers and focus instead on protecting those who were there.

A high-profile government presence was provided by Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel, who

told Parliament last week that the latest wave of neo-Nazi attacks had a serious impact on Germany's world standing.

Labor Minister Norbert Blum and the Turkish envoy to Germany also took part in a memorial ceremony at the Al Aksa Mosque in Hamburg for the women and two girls killed in the firebombing at Moelln.

Blum said Germany rejected both the old and the new Nazis and was committed to democracy. He urged the Turkish community to refrain from responding to violence with violence, and instead try to strengthen ties with its German neighbors.

A 25-year-old man from Guddo in northern Germany is being held in connection with the attack, a police spokesman said. Michael Peters is said to be a leader of a neo-Nazi group responsible for attacks on asylum seekers and other foreigners in several towns in Germany, including Moelln.

**RABIN AND ARAFAT TRADE BLAME  
ON WHO STALLS PEACE PROCESS****By David Landau**

JERUSALEM, Nov. 29 (JTA) -- Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasir Arafat escalated their rhetorical war over the weekend, with the Israeli press as the battlefield.

On Friday, Israel's largest-circulation daily, Yediot Achronot, published a lengthy interview with Arafat, in which the Palestinian leader defended his role in the peace process. This was Arafat's first interview with a mainstream Israeli newspaper.

Rabin fired back on Sunday.

Addressing Israeli editors and journalists, the prime minister repeated his contention that Arafat constitutes "the major obstacle" in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, which are due to resume in Washington next week.

But Rabin discomfited his audience by drawing an analogy from Israeli history to explain why Palestinian autonomy in the administered territories would inevitably eclipse the PLO.

Arafat's organization, said Rabin, "would become like the World Zionist Organization," which had acted as the de facto Jewish government in Palestine prior to the creation of the State of Israel, but has since been a minor ideological and philanthropic appendage.

After eyebrows were raised and chairs self-consciously shifted among his Tel Aviv audience, Rabin added: "Lehavdil," the phrase used by religious Jews when emphasizing the difference between the sacred and the profane.

The premier sought by this analogy to explain why it was "readily understandable" that Arafat sought to block the talks on autonomy.

Later, he added by way of further explanation that Arafat would be as impotent regarding policy-making in the autonomous areas as the WZO became for policy-making in Israel once the sovereign Israeli government was established.

Rabin was speaking at the annual Editors Committee luncheon marking Nov. 29, the day in 1947 when the U.N. General Assembly voted to partition Palestine.

In a somber, almost ominous tone, Rabin castigated the present-day Palestinians for "not learning from history."

"Are they in danger of repeating their historic mistake" made when they rejected partition? Rabin asked. "Have they learned nothing?"

The premier devoted much of his address to economic issues, stressing his determination to sell government companies, most of which, he declared, are inefficiently run.

He spoke angrily of bureaucratic complexities holding up key road-building projects in the center of the country, thereby perpetuating a situation in which drivers spend hours each week wasting their time in traffic bottlenecks.

But his focus on Arafat and on the perilous state of the negotiations with the Palestinians -- as well as his instantly controversial analogy with the WZO -- served to draw attention to the intricate situation on the "Palestinian front" of the peace process.

Both the Palestinian negotiators and the PLO leadership are threatening to quit the talks unless Israel softens its stance, and are vociferously yearning for energetic American intervention after President-elect Clinton takes office Jan. 20.

Rabin, for his part, seldom lets a day go by without attacking Arafat for doing his best to thwart the chance of progress.

And now Arafat, in a radical departure, has given a lengthy interview, in his headquarters in Tunis, to two leading Israeli journalists with Yediot Achronot.

Plainly, the PLO chief's purpose is to reach out to the Israeli public and convince them that his role in the process is not only as a spoiler, despite Rabin's claims.

#### Making 'Peace With A Ghost'?

"Who is to meet with Rabin if not I?" Arafat asked rhetorically, in his two-hour, after-midnight conversation with Nahum Barnea and Semadar Peri.

"Does he intend to make peace with a ghost?"

The two reporters wrote that they found the PLO chairman intelligent, quick and charming -- quite unlike the distasteful cartoon figure often depicted in media here and elsewhere.

He was surrounded by advisers, including his wife Suha, who kept slipping him notes as to what they thought he should say and refrain from saying.

Barnea and Peri wrote that security surrounding Arafat's suburban Tunis villa was surprisingly light.

A police truck left after midnight, and relatively few PLO men could be seen guarding the villa.

During the early days of the Lebanon war, Arafat gave an interview in his Beirut bunker to Israeli journalist Uri Avneri, publisher of the left-wing Haolam Hazeh. However, this latest interview was printed in Israel's most widely circulated newspaper.

Barnea and Peri met with other top PLO officials during their visit to Tunis.

(A legal ban on all such meetings with PLO officials, even when there is no intent to harm state security, is expected to soon be lifted by the Knesset.)

"I am sad to say that Rabin seems to be going in the way of Shamir," Arafat declared in the interview.

"Nothing was achieved in the two rounds of

talks since he came to office. In fact, nothing has been achieved in all the 13 months since Madrid."

Continued Arafat: "Rabin, like Shamir, is trying to hide the sun with his finger. During the election in Israel, I watched as Rabin said to Shamir on TV, 'You are duping the public when you say you do not negotiate with the PLO.'

"But now Rabin is copying Shamir."

Arafat received powerful backing for this viewpoint in recent days, with French President Francois Mitterrand's statements, both in Jerusalem and in Amman, urging Israel to deal with the PLO.

Rabin, for his part, in a public statement Saturday night, publicly differed with Mitterrand.

The French statesman has a right to his opinion, said Rabin, but Israel does not share it.

"Nor, fortunately, does the U.S. Even Russia favors sticking to the framework determined by the letter of invitation to the Madrid conference," said the prime minister.

Arafat, asked for his view of Rabin, called the Israeli leader "intelligent; but he still thinks like a general, with brawn instead of brain."

The PLO chief said that Rabin "knows I am the leader who can lead the Palestinians to peace, but he persists in seeking someone else, who will lead them to surrender."

#### **NETUREI KARTA RABBI SAYS HE DISCUSSED MISSING ISRAELI SOLDIERS WITH IRANIANS** By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Nov. 29 (JTA) -- The self-proclaimed "foreign minister" of the anti-Zionist Neturei Karta sect said he has had contacts with Iranian officials over missing Israelis in Lebanon.

Rabbi Moshe Hirsh said he met with an Iranian diplomat in Washington at the request of the family of missing serviceman Yehuda Katz.

Katz and two others were reportedly captured during a battle with Syrian forces at Sultan Yakoub in June 1982.

His parents and the parents of Zachary Baumel and Zvi Feldman were in New York two weeks ago for a meeting with the secretary general of the United Nations in an effort to determine the fate of their sons.

Optimism about another missing Israeli serviceman was voiced by a top U.S. government official recently.

National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft told Jewish leaders in Washington there were indications that Israeli navigator Ron Arad, shot down over Lebanon in 1986, was alive.

Hirsh returned last week from the American capital, where he attended the peace talks as a member of the Palestinian advisory team, a position he or one of his aides has held since the Madrid peace talks were launched a year ago.

Hirsh told reporters he met with the Iranian diplomat at the Pakistani Embassy in Washington. He said he would continue contacts with Iran with a view to helping ascertain the fate of the missing soldiers.

The fervently Orthodox rabbi apparently traveled home by way of Tunis, where he said he addressed a Palestinian gathering celebrating the fourth anniversary of a proclamation of Palestinian independence by Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat.

He said his speech emphasized the prompt recognition accorded the Palestinian state four years ago as an alternative to what he called the Zionist conquest of the Holy Land.

# ISRAELI CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT WILL BEGIN TO ORDAIN WOMEN AS RABBIS

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Nov. 29 (JTA) -- The Masorti Movement, the Israeli branch of Conservative Judaism, has decided to ordain women as rabbis.

In taking this far-reaching decision, the Israeli movement and its Seminary for Judaic Studies in Jerusalem is following in the footsteps of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, which resolved to ordain women in 1983.

Orthodox Rabbi Shlomo Goren, a former Chief Rabbi of Israel, reacted contemptuously by suggesting that the Masorti movement was "taking its lead from the Anglican Church."

That church recently took a controversial and much-publicized decision to admit women into its clergy. Goren said the Masorti decision meant the movement was "distancing itself still more from the Torah, the Talmud and Jewish Orthodoxy."

The Israeli movement's decision will be formalized Dec. 14, at a meeting of the Jerusalem seminary's board of trustees.

Meanwhile, however, the first would-be woman rabbinical graduate, French-born Valerie Stessin, has been admitted to the fourth-year rabbinical class, and is scheduled to be ordained with her male classmates at the end of the current academic year.

Stessin, 28, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that she believed the decision to admit women would strengthen the Israeli movement, "since people will see that we are doing what we believe in."

## U.S. Decision Led To Defections

The U.S. decision led to a defection of several leading faculty members from JTS, among them Talmudic scholar David Weiss Halivni. This group and other rabbis have organized a Union for Traditional Judaism, which has been at odds with the mainstream Conservative Rabbinical Assembly ever since, and has launched its own rival theological seminary.

But well-placed sources at the top of the Masorti movement told JTA that no such split is likely here. They said that even rabbis uncomfortable with the ordination of women would not move to the UTJ, because on the whole, the Masorti movement in Israel is more traditional than American Conservative Judaism when it comes to halacha, or Jewish law.

This leaning was highlighted by the recent decision of the Masorti movement not to adopt the American position permitting worshippers to drive to synagogue on the Sabbath.

Stessin herself first came to religious observance through the Orthodox Bnei Akiva youth movement in France. As a student at the Hebrew University, she says, she began feeling dissatisfied with standard Orthodox attitudes.

She originally transferred to the Seminary to take a second degree in Jewish thought. "You can do a master's in Jewish thought at (Hebrew) University without ever having to pick up the Bible," she says wryly.

Having decided to go for the rabbinate, Stessin has begun doing practical work at a Conservative congregation in Beersheba, headed by American-ordained, Israeli-born Gila Dror.

In general, she believes in "an open sort of Judaism," she says. "The decision to ordain women represents the essential message of our

movement: to preserve and enhance the tradition, while at the same time developing it in accordance with the spirit of the times."

When the Jerusalem seminary board meets for its formal decision, it will have before it a number of halachic responsa, or legal rulings, prepared by members of the movement's halacha committee.

While five of the seven rabbis asked to express their positions came out in favor of ordaining women, they were divided on the ancillary question of whether to also overturn traditional restrictions on women serving on religious courts and as legal witnesses.

Two of the five recommended that the women ordainees be required to observe these halachic bans, which prohibit women from, among other functions, issuing religious divorces.

Three other rabbis supported ordaining women without attaching any limiting conditions. Two of them explicitly advocated sweeping new takanot, or halachic legislation, that would set aside the halachic disqualification of women as witnesses.

The two other rabbis asked to write a ruling recommended that the Israeli movement put off its decision for another generation.

## MINISTER'S ADDRESS TO REFORM JEWS DISPLEASES THEM AND ORTHODOX, TOO

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Nov. 29 (JTA) -- The minister in charge of religious affairs drew criticism this weekend for appearing before the 11th convention of Israel's Reform movement.

But the minister, Uzi Baram, disappointed his audience by saying that the quest by the non-Orthodox movements for official recognition is not high on his agenda.

He said the tension between the trends in Israel is relatively small, and it is therefore useless in his view for the government to wage a futile battle on the issue.

Baram's own situation highlights the Labor coalition's complex position on religious issues. Baram, a non-Orthodox Laborite who serves as Minister of Tourism, is temporarily holding the religious portfolio in the hope he can turn it over to one of the Orthodox parties that has yet to join the governing coalition.

Meanwhile, Baram is attempting to ameliorate problems with the religious councils and the religious courts, whose authority over marriage and divorce brings them in contact, and frequent conflict, with secular Israelis.

"The struggle on these issues is shared by Jews of all trends," Baram told the convention of the Movement for Progressive Judaism, as the Reform movement is known in Israel.

The movement's chairman, Yonatan Livni, expressed hope that Baram's appearance before the convention signaled official recognition.

But in response to questions from reporters, Baram later said that he would not take steps to grant the Reform movement official recognition.

To avoid desecrating the Sabbath, Baram took a one-hour walk from his residence in Jerusalem's Beit Hakerem neighborhood to Hebrew Union College, where the convention was held last Friday night.

The haredi, or fervently Orthodox, parties, such as Shas inside the coalition and United Torah Judaism in the opposition, reacted angrily to Baram's appearance at the Reform convention.

## **SOUTH AFRICA TELLS U.S. JEWS THAT TRANSITION WON'T BE ANTI-SEMITIC**

By Suzanne Belling

JOHANNESBURG, Nov. 29 (JTA) -- A group of American Jewish leaders received across-the-board reassurances of opposition to anti-Semitism from key players in South Africa's transition to racial democracy.

A fact-finding mission of the American Jewish Committee visiting here expressed optimism over the future of Jews in South Africa after they met with leaders of the governing National Party, the African National Congress, the Zulu Inkatha movement and the South African Communist Party.

Leaders across the political spectrum supported passage of a bill of rights protecting the rights of minorities, said Jason Isaacson, director of AJCommittee's Office of Government and International Affairs, and John Simon, vice president of the group's central New Jersey chapter.

Howard Friedman, a former AJCommittee president, headed the 11-member mission, which also visited the black township of Soweto.

There will also be continued ties with Israel, they were assured.

Members of the ANC youth league will visit Israel in February. But they will do so only after first stopping in Tunis, where the Palestine Liberation Organization is headquartered.

Isaacson and Simon spoke with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency before returning to the United States last week.

### **ANC Reaffirms Commitment To Jews**

They said they had not met with ANC leader Nelson Mandela, but said the ANC had reaffirmed "most of the assurances regarding the Jewish community (which Mandela) gave me in Washington in 1991," according to Isaacson.

Also taking part in talks were Ronnie Kasrils, a South African Jew who is a member of the ANC's national executive committee; Walter Sisulu, ANC deputy president; and other senior ANC officials.

The AJCommittee figures also received praise for the contributions of Jews to South Africa in all walks of life from Hendrik (Kobie) Coetsee, the country's minister of justice, and Deputy Foreign Minister Renier Schoeman.

An unplanned meeting with Zulu Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi took place at the Jan Smuts Airport in Johannesburg, where the Inkatha leader was returning from a visit to Toronto.

"He actually left his guard of honor to speak to us, recalling past meetings and apologizing for being out of the country during our meeting with other Inkatha officials," Simon said.

In his absence, the Jewish leaders met with director Gavin Woods and a member of the Inkatha Institute staff, John Bangu.

The AJCommittee leaders also met with Chris Hani, the secretary-general of the South African Communist Party. Hani voiced support for a mixed economy and multiparty state.

"They are getting away from old-style communism and have created a kind of indigenous animal," Isaacson reported.

The AJCommittee group visited Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban. They met with Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris and Mervyn Smith, national chairman of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, as well as with other communal leaders.

## **U.S. ENVOY TO SOUTH AFRICA STRESSES JEWISH COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE**

By Suzanne Belling

JOHANNESBURG, Nov. 29 (JTA) -- Washington's first Jewish ambassador to South Africa has underlined the Jewish commitment to social justice as he takes up his role in a country moving painfully toward democratic majority rule.

Princeton Lyman spoke of a historically based communal devotion to humanitarian endeavor when he addressed the annual conference of ORT South Africa here last weekend.

It marked the first appearance before a Jewish audience by the U.S. diplomat, who worked on refugee issues with American Jewish groups during his tenure as director of the bureau of refugee programs at the State Department.

Jewish Agency Board of Governors Chairman Mendel Kaplan and other communal leaders heard Lyman praise the role of ORT in offering technical training to Ethiopia in 1977, without distinction between Jew and non-Jew.

But in an indirect reference to strains that had developed between American Jews and blacks, he said such partnerships had their pitfalls.

"Such commitment from one community to another is not without its difficulties," he said.

"But it does not help to turn inward either. And it is not the lesson of our (Jewish) tradition."

He said Jewish communal attitudes contributed to the good will among all sectors in society that would make the difference in helping South Africa's struggle to dismantle apartheid and develop racial democracy. But American commitment was forthcoming, too.

U.S. President-elect Bill Clinton had already indicated a special commitment to South Africa once the political transition to democracy was irreversibly under way.

The ambassador said there were "extraordinary elements of hope" in the changes taking place in South Africa.

In an unusual twist, not only is the U.S. ambassador to South Africa Jewish, but his counterpart in Washington, South African Ambassador Harry Schwarz, is also Jewish.

## **COURT TO HEAR CASE AGAINST ANTI-SEMITIC**

By Josef Klansky

PRAGUE (JTA) -- A court in Bratislava has postponed until Dec. 16 hearings in the trial of a Slovak publisher of anti-Semitic literature.

Martin Alexander Savel, 47, is charged with spreading racial and ethnic hatred by publishing the notorious "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and other racist material under the imprint of his Agres publishing company.

The court adjourned hearings earlier this month because of the absence of several witnesses.

Savel, a lawyer, pleaded not guilty and said he was exercising his constitutional right to air his political views.

He also claimed a cultural mission for his right-wing extremist weekly Hlas Slovenska (The Voice of Slovakia) in which he has published anti-Semitic articles.

Agres also publishes the anti-Jewish weekly Politika in the Czech language for distribution in the Czech republic.

Czechoslovakia splits into Czech and Slovak states Jan. 1.