

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **The Israeli government decided to postpone negotiations on the release of Palestinian prisoners.** The move came one day after a deadly suicide bombing attack near Netanya that killed 19 Israelis. Thousands of people attended the funerals of the victims of the attack at Beit Lid Junction near Netanya. Despite calls to halt the peace process, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin vowed to continue on the "path of peace." Other officials urged the Palestinian Authority to fulfill its earlier commitments to crack down on terrorists.

■ **The Auschwitz Museum is installing a new system of plaques and markers at the Birkenau concentration camp** in an effort to make the tragedy of the concentration camp more accessible to visitors. The move comes as the 50th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp is being commemorated around the world. [Page 4]

■ **The Nazareth District Court sentenced a Palestinian to life in prison for the terrorist murder of Liat Gabai,** a 19-year-old soldier, in Afula last November. According to the charge sheet, Wahib Abu el-Rod, 26, went to Afula armed with an ax with the intent to kill a soldier. He attacked Gabai on the town's main street, striking her in the head and body. She was taken to the hospital in critical condition, where she later died of her wounds.

■ **A resident of the West Bank town of Jericho died during interrogation at the local offices of the Palestinian security service,** according to Palestinian sources. The sources said that Palestinian officials took him into custody on Jan. 16. Israel Radio reported that Hanan Ashrawi, who heads a leading Palestinian civil rights group, went to Jericho to investigate the incident.

■ **Fandi Hamoud Hatar Zahawoui, a Druse resident of the Golan Heights, has died at the age 115.** Zahawoui attributed his longevity to his diet. According to the Israeli daily Ma'ariv, Zahawoui ate grapes, onions, olive oil, honey, home-baked pita, figs and herbal tea — all of which he grew himself. Zahawoui was among the Israeli Arab delegation that visited Damascus last year.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Lobbying blitz in Congress forces issue of troops on Golan**

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, Jan. 23 (JTA) — When an activist opposed to stationing U.S. peacekeeping forces on the Golan Heights thrust his position paper at Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) at a recent reception here, the longtime pro-Israel lawmaker swatted the packet away.

"I know Israel better than you do and I will make my own decision," the irate senator said.

Mark Langfan of New York City, on the receiving end of Lautenberg's dressing down, went off to greet another legislator in the House reception room where the Coalition for a Secure U.S.-Israel Friendship had gathered last week.

The coalition includes organizations adamantly opposed to the peace process, including Americans for a Safe Israel and the Christians' Israel Public Action Campaign.

"I resent that I'm being pushed so hard," Lautenberg said in a brief interview immediately after the episode.

He accused Langfan and the reception's hosts of trying to use Congress as a "pawn" in domestic Israeli politics.

"As an American official, I can not and will not get involved in a domestic political dispute in Israel," Lautenberg said.

The exchange with Lautenberg capped off a frenzied week of lobbying on Capitol Hill by opponents of the peace talks with Syria.

These opponents say they plan to use congressional opposition to U.S. forces on the Golan as a way of toppling any future Israeli-Syrian accord that includes territorial concession.

Much to the dismay of Israeli officials and their allies here, the onslaught of activity also signaled that debate over this volatile issue has moved full force to Capitol Hill.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has made clear his desire for U.S. troops to monitor the Golan Heights if Israel returns all or part of the strategic plateau as part of a peace agreement with Syria.

Opponents of troops raise the stakes

During his last visit to Washington in November, the prime minister himself took to the halls of Congress to ask members to withhold judgment and debate on the issue until troops are actually requested by the parties involved.

But opponents of troops on the Golan have raised the stakes, bombarding members of Congress and their staffs.

The lawmakers are being asked to declare themselves opposed to sending American forces to the Golan and thereby pre-empting any possible deployment.

In response to the lobbying by opponents of troops on the Golan, mainstream Jewish organizations moved to send their own messages to counter the opposition forces.

An Israeli official here said the "victories by the opponents of peace" served as a "wake-up call" to Israel as well as to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and Jewish organizations committed to the peace process.

Until recently, Israeli officials and AIPAC lobbyists had quietly sought to persuade members of Congress that any debate or decision was premature until a formal request was made.

But the playing field changed dramatically last week when Frank Gaffney, director of the Center for Security Policy, secured an audience with the 11 freshmen senators or their aides to press for a debate and a congressional vote on sending troops to the Golan.

A staunch opponent of stationing U.S. soldiers on the Golan, Gaffney told Sens. Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.) and Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), the meeting's hosts, that he would present the pros and cons of the plan.

The invitation to the 11 senators also said representatives of the Jewish community would join the briefing.

But only Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organization of

America, joined the meeting to lobby against forces on the Golan.

The day after the Kyl-Inhoff meeting, more than 200 activists blanketed Capitol Hill, meeting with more than 150 members of Congress.

About two dozen lawmakers came to the reception at the end of the day and some two dozen others signed onto CIPAC's "America's Contract with Israel," calling for an immediate debate and vote on future U.S. commitment to Golan monitoring.

Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), chairman of the International Relations Committee, signed the eight-point contract.

Gilman, however, said he does not favor debate or hearings at this time.

According to a staff aide, Gilman interpreted the contract as calling for a debate and vote only after a formal proposal was submitted to Congress.

The aggressive lobbying efforts caught the Israelis, AIPAC and most American Jewish leaders off guard.

Fearing public declarations against troops — a position that many argue would derail already precarious peace talks with the Syrians — Israeli Ambassador Itamar Rabinovich led the charge to persuade the senators to keep an open mind and not rule out sending forces.

Pushing for equal time

Senior members of the Clinton administration's peace process team and mainstream Jewish organizational leaders joined the fray, pushing for equal time to present the benefits of U.S. involvement in monitoring a future peace between Israel and Syria.

In the end, the Israeli-American-Jewish team succeeded in securing a second briefing for the new senators as early as next week.

Dennis Ross, the State Department's Middle East coordinator, is scheduled to speak.

But the full court press to convey the opinion of most mainstream Jewish organizations was not without controversy.

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations sent a confidential letter to Kyl and Inhofe, declaring that the Conference "has not taken a position on the issue" of "positioning U.S. troops on the Golan."

The letter also said that "the majority of the organizations believe it is premature at this point when no agreement has, as yet, been reached."

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents, drew the ire of the ZOA, as well as other member organizations for not consulting its members before sending the letter, which was signed by Hoenlein and Lester Pollack, chairman of the Conference of Presidents.

Hoenlein, who in an interview had initially denied the existence of the letter, argued that the letter was appropriate, especially because it stated that a majority of its member organizations have not taken a position on the issue.

But not all the umbrella group's members are supporting Hoenlein's decision on the letter, even those who support its content.

"It would have been preferable and more appropriate to wait until discussing it with the President's Conference," said David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism.

"People might read into the letter more than was intended. On the other hand, the letter is true and accurate."

ZOA's Klein said that he was outraged by the letter.

"How dare they," he said. "This is undemocratic, unfair and not part of the mission of the conference. There has been no debate and no decision of this policy."

By the end of the week, after copies of the letter were leaked, Hoenlein faxed a notice to all his group's members, promising a discussion and debate of the issue.

Meanwhile, another umbrella organization, the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, joined the effort to influence lawmakers.

A memorandum obtained by JTA and sent to Community Relations Councils in states that have new senators called for a letter-writing campaign to support the Israeli government's position to delay debate.

At the NJCRAC plenum scheduled here for early February, the subject of U.S. forces on the Golan is expected to be debated and formulated as a resolution.

The public forum for discussion should help clarify the American Jewish community's official position on the issue, observers say.

In response to the NJCRAC memo, Arizona Jewish leaders fired off letters to Kyl, the meeting's chief sponsor, protesting the meeting and asking that he keep an open mind.

"There has been no request for U.S. troops to date and we feel that closing the door on this issue could disrupt the delicate and complex negotiating process," wrote Robert Ross, CRC chairman of the Jewish Federation of Greater Phoenix.

The big lobbying push comes as opponents of sending U.S. forces are on the verge of securing a major victory — congressional hearings.

The senior leadership in both parties and key committee chairmen have agreed not to take a public stand on the issue.

But key congressional committees have already decided to hold hearings on the Middle East.

Hank Brown (R-Colo.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, will convene the first hearing, which will "undoubtedly" include debate on the merits of stationing U.S. troops on the Golan, Capitol Hill sources say.

The issue already came up two weeks ago during House International Relations Committee hearings, when former Secretary of State James Baker urged members of Congress not to take sides in the debate on the Golan troops issue.

As the flurry of activity in the form of hearings and lobbying continues, many members of Congress remain confused on the issue.

As one freshman congressman said at the CIPAC reception last week, "I've never even known there was controversy about U.S. troops on the Golan Heights." □

Israeli frogman dies in training

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Jan. 23 (JTA) — An Israeli navy frogman drowned during a diving exercise last week.

The army said that the body of Staff Sgt. Ron Haim Kimche, 19, of Tel Aviv, washed ashore after the navy launched extensive search efforts.

The navy commander, Ami Ayalon, ordered an official investigation into the incident.

Kimche was the second Israeli soldier to be killed during a training exercise last week.

Earlier, an air force pilot died when two F-16 fighter planes collided during training maneuvers. The second pilot was slightly hurt.

The army last week released a report on training accidents for 1994. Twenty-five soldiers died in accidents last year, 11 of them in road accidents. □

New generation takes over leadership of Romanian Jewry

By Odette Cauffman Blumenfeld

IASI, Romania, Jan. 23 (JTA) — With the recent passing of Amalia Rosen, widow of Romania's longtime chief rabbi, a new generation of leaders is coming forward in this country.

Nicolae Cajal was introduced as the new president of the Federation of the Romanian Jewish Communities during a meeting last month of the Eastern Europe Area Committee of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

Only a day after Cajal assumed the new position, Rosen died, marking what many viewed as the end of an era.

Rosen, who had been in declining health for almost a year, was the only woman to have served as a member of the Executive Committee of the Federation of the Romanian Jewish Communities, a position she held for years.

Her major contributions were in the field of developing social assistance programs and in the revival of a genuine Jewish cultural life in Romania.

She died only months after her husband, Rabbi Moses Rosen, passed away. As chief rabbi of Romania from 1948 until his death, he wielded an extraordinary amount of influence within the country as a religious leader, while also serving as a frequent ambassador to the United States on behalf of Romania.

Rabbi Rosen enabled nearly the entire postwar Jewish community of Romania, about 400,000, to emigrate to Israel. This exodus was unique in communist Eastern Europe.

As Rabbi Rosen stated both in his speeches and in his memoirs, his wife was his "closest collaborator and constant adviser."

While her death marked the end of a remarkable period for Romanian Jewry, the installation of Cajal as president of Romania's Jewish community was seen as a new beginning.

'The right man at the right time'

Eugene Ribakoff, chairman of the federation's executive committee, described Cajal as "the right man at the right time and the right place."

In his inaugural remarks to federation members, Cajal spoke of the general situation in Romania, which he characterized as dominated by a high rate of inflation and a slow improvement in the economy.

As a result, Cajal said, prices for basic food products have become almost "prohibitive" for most Romanians.

Cajal gave a short description of the JDC's assistance program for the Romanian Jewish community, which he said helps some 2,500 families.

The JDC program, he said, provides some 1,200 meals-on-wheels daily and about 2,800 food parcels distributed several times a year. The agency also provides funds to support four nursing homes.

Cajal said that current medical and social assistance programs will be continued, improved and, if possible, diversified.

Noting that 65 percent of the 15,000 registered Jews in Romania are over 60 years of age, he described Romanian Jewry as "an old community, but not a senile one."

He called the JDC aid program an investment in the daily survival of a generation that witnessed the atrocities of World War II.

Regarding current anti-Semitism in Romania, Cajal

said he believed it was not a widespread phenomenon, although he acknowledged that some individuals were anti-Semitic.

Citing a recent attempt by some here to found a fascist party, he noted that the effort was rejected as non-constitutional by the country's courts.

Cajal said that he was determined to answer manifestations of anti-Semitism by promoting a policy of publicizing Jewish contributions to the development of Romania and to the progress of mankind as a whole.

He said this goal will be achieved by publishing articles and books, sponsoring lectures and opening a museum in which the works of Romanian Jewish artists will be displayed.

On the delicate issue of the restitution of Jewish properties confiscated during World War II, he suggested that the federation act with diplomacy and patience. □

As world recalls Auschwitz, new plaques help the visitor

By Ruth E. Gruber

OSWIECIM, Poland, Jan. 23 (JTA) — The Auschwitz Museum is installing a new system of plaques and markers at Birkenau in an effort to make the tragedy of the concentration camp more accessible to visitors.

The new system is designed both to provide detailed information about the death camp and to commemorate its victims.

Birkenau, also known as Auschwitz II, was the vast death camp two miles from the main Auschwitz camp. Jews across Europe were brought to Birkenau by rail in crowded cattle cars.

From there, selections were made regarding who should go immediately to the gas chambers and who should be put to forced labor.

Most of the Auschwitz murders occurred at Birkenau.

The liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp complex, where the Nazis slaughtered between 1.1 million and 1.5 million people between 1940 and 1945, is the focus of commemorations being held this week.

Since the fall of Poland's Communist regime five years ago, numerous changes have been implemented at Auschwitz-Birkenau in order to correct Communist-era disinformation, which had minimized the overwhelming Jewish character of Auschwitz victims.

The Birkenau camp encompasses some 350 acres. Unlike Auschwitz I, whose buildings were turned into exhibition halls for a memorial museum, Birkenau was left as it was when the Nazis fled in 1945.

Before fleeing, the Nazis blew up the crematoria and destroyed or partially destroyed almost all other buildings on the site.

Aside from ruins and barbed wire, Birkenau today consists of its main entry building, the rail line, a few structures and guard towers, and scores of skeletal chimneys marking the sites of destroyed barracks.

The new information markers at Birkenau consist of slabs of black granite in the size and shape of tombstones. They are set up in groups at numerous sites around the former camp.

Some of the markers are already in place, while others are still being prepared. Some will bear informational texts in several languages describing given places. Others will bear maps and plans of the camp and its buildings. Still others will bear etched photographs showing how Birkenau looked during its operation and at its liberation.

Other markers, in Polish, English, Hebrew and Yiddish, will mark places where human ashes still lie. □

Russian scholars believe Jewish studies provide key to renewal in their homeland

By Larry Yudelson

BOSTON (JTA) — In a small room in the Copley Plaza Hotel here, Ilya Dvorkin held forth in Russian-accented Hebrew on Nachman Krochmal.

Dvorkin, rector of the Petersburg Jewish University in St. Petersburg, broke little new ground in understanding the work of Krochmal, the 19th century Jewish philosopher and a father of modern Jewish studies.

But his central point was nonetheless revolutionary: The Jews of Russia are acting out Krochmal's belief that the Jewish people have within them the seeds for their own periodic renewal.

Dvorkin was here to participate in the recent gathering of the Association of Jewish Studies.

Like his American counterparts, he believes that academic Jewish studies hold the key to Jewish revival.

"What the United States has — synagogues and community — is dead in Russia. There is only one source for the Jewish community in Russia: schools and universities," he said.

At Dvorkin's Petersburg Jewish University, 300 students study Jewish history, Hebrew and other Semitic languages in both full-time and part-time programs, leading to a bachelor's degree.

The university also has a yeshiva-style beit midrash and Teacher's College program.

His is one of a handful of programs in the former Soviet Union that offer university-level Jewish studies.

At the Jewish University of Moscow, 200 students study philology, psychology and Near East history under a faculty of specialists recruited from other schools.

"They are specialists in their fields," said Michael Greenberg, president of the university. "They're trying to give Jewish knowledge to their students. But many are far from Jewish education. We're trying to teach our teachers Jewish subjects, to show them what Jewish subjects are," said Greenberg.

Greenberg, a former underground Jewish activist in Russia, now makes his home in the Israeli settlement of Efrat in the West Bank.

Jewish studies conference to be held in Moscow

This retooling of Russian academics to teach Jewish studies will be a main feature of an upcoming conference. In early February, 150 Russian academics with an interest in Judaic studies will gather in Moscow for a conference sponsored by the International Center for the Study of Jewish Civilization.

New York-based Touro College has also opened a Moscow affiliate, where more than 400 students study courses ranging from basic Judaism to advanced Talmud.

And at the Russian State University for the Humanities in Moscow, 49 students study in a program called Project Judaica. The program is sponsored by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

This program brings American and Israeli professors to Moscow to teach, and advanced students — currently 19 — to the United States or Israel for advanced studies.

Late last year, students from Project Judaica and the Moscow Jewish University formed the first Russian association of Jewish students in Jewish studies.

"Project Judaica has a relatively small enrollment, but it really prepares scholars and people who will teach Judaica on the college level," said Misha Krutikov, a scholar associated with the program now studying for his doctorate in Yiddish literature at JTS.

The Jewish universities, which offer bachelor degrees, "are basically community colleges and will train educators and social workers," he said.

Krutikov's career typifies the indirect route that brought Russian Jews into Jewish studies after the collapse of communism.

He had worked for nine years as a computer programmer after earning a degree in mathematics from Moscow State University. His interests led him to work at *Sovietische Heimland*, the Yiddish journal launched by the Soviet Writers' Union in 1961.

"The Russian Jewish population is highly talented, highly educated and used to a high level of culture. If they're interested in Jewish things, Jewish consciousness, we must provide them with Jewish culture on the same high level," said Jerry Hochbaum, executive vice president of the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture.

The American-based Memorial Foundation sponsors advanced studies for around 20 Russian Jewish academics, among them Dvorkin.

"You don't create institutions without people. Dvorkin is very dedicated. He built the Petersburg Jewish University with his own hands. What's important is to deepen his knowledge so he can be more effective," said Hochbaum.

"You can't have a Jewish community cultural infrastructure without having a cultural and intellectual leadership," he said.

Lawrence Schiffman, professor of Hebrew and Judaic studies at New York University, who taught in the program for a month last semester, had high praise for his students.

"They really do serious work," he said.

Was their academic research on the same level as their Israeli and American peers? "Even if not, they're still starting out," said Schiffman.

Much of the current academic Jewish research in Russia is devoted to primary research: unearthing and locating materials lost during the decades of Soviet rule.

These includes documents filed in archives and libraries when Jewish studies were illegal, and the remnants of Jewish communities destroyed by the Nazis and the Soviets.

Dmitriy Elyashevitch, associate professor and dean of research at the Petersburg Jewish University, impressed his American colleagues when he described some of his discoveries in Central Asian archives.

These include a Judeo-Persian/Russian dictionary, a volume previously unknown.

Dvorkin described the research among the vanished shtetls of the former Soviet Union as "contemporary archaeology." □

Sextuplets bring mazel tov at 21

By Suzanne Belling

JOHANNESBURG, Jan. 23 (JTA) — It was mazel tov six times over when the world's first surviving sextuplets — David, Jason, Grant, Emma, Nicci and Elizabeth Rosenkowitz — celebrated their 21st birthday this month.

"It's another milestone," the proud father, Colin Rosenkowitz, said in an interview. "May they all live, according to the Torah, to the allotted three score years and 10 — and with a bit of strength a further 10 — or till 120."

The sextuplets made the Guinness Book of Records with their birth, one month premature, by Caesarean section, on Jan. 11, 1974, at the Mowbray Maternity Hospital in Cape Town. Since then, the record has been equalled three times — once in Italy and twice in the United Kingdom. □