



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ A Jerusalem taxi driver was murdered in a stabbing attack north of the capital. The terrorist attack came as Israeli and Palestinians reported minor progress in their negotiations on Palestinian elections. Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin said he did not believe the murder would have a negative impact on the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. [Page 4]

■ Vice President Al Gore will visit the Middle East in March to press for support for the peace process and for compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The visit, slated for March 18-25, includes planned stops in Jordan, Egypt, Israel and the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A previously scheduled trip for October was canceled when Gore severed his Achilles' tendon playing basketball.

■ Human Rights Watch issued a report describing alleged widespread abuses committed by the Palestinian Authority. In its 50-page report, the group documented cases of torture during interrogation, censorship and mass political arrests of supporters of Palestinian rejectionist groups. The report also charged that the Palestinian Authority did not base its activities on any legal system. The group said the lack of a legal structure was most evident in the treatment of Palestinians suspected of collaborating with Israel. [Page 4]

■ An Israeli army position in the central sector of the southern Lebanon security zone came under rocket fire from terrorists. No casualties or damages were reported. Israel Radio reported that the Israel Defense Force returned fire in the direction of the attack, which they believed came from just north of the security zone.

■ The Belgian Parliament enacted a law making it a criminal offense to disseminate Holocaust-denial literature. Under the new law, which will go into effect March 13, violators may be jailed for up to one year and fined about \$160. Prior to the new legislation, Belgium was one of the few Western European countries where the publication of revisionist books was not a punishable offense.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Reform movement looks ahead to new directions, new leaders

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Feb. 13 (JTA) — As the 21st century looms on the horizon, the Reform movement is reconsidering its mandate, its mission and its structure.

The nomination last week of Rabbi Eric Yoffie to be the next president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the movement's congregational arm, is viewed by Reform insiders as the promotion of someone who can take the movement in the new directions its baby-boomer constituents are demanding.

At the same time, Yoffie is said, in the words of one, to be "cut from the same cloth" ideologically as his predecessor, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, who is slated to retire in June 1996.

Schindler, who has been president since 1973, has led the union to adopt several controversial positions that break with traditional Jewish practice.

Yoffie will lead the agency that is the philosophical fountainhead of North American Judaism's largest movement.

Among Yoffie's key challenges, Reform movement leaders say, will be to confront the organization's financial problems and make the union more responsive to its estimated 1.3 million constituents in 858 congregations.

The task will also fall to him to articulate a new vision of Reform Judaism that many are seeking to replace the theology of social action which has long guided the movement.

At the same time that the movement is looking to new leadership, a UAHC committee is already in the process of examining its future.

Recommendations soon to be made for UAHC's redesign

In the works for the past 18 months, a committee known as Project 2000 is scheduled to present a series of recommendations to the union's board at a meeting in May.

Among the recommendations is one suggesting a redesign of the union's regional structure, personnel and delivery of services, said Jerome Somers, a Boston lay leader of the UAHC. He also is chairman of the Project 2000 and the union's treasurer.

At that meeting, the board also is expected to ratify Yoffie's nomination.

Yoffie now is one of two UAHC vice presidents and director of its Commission on Social Action.

Yoffie previously worked as a regional director of UAHC and also served as executive director of ARZA, the Association of Reform Zionists of America.

He declined to be interviewed.

His nomination comes as the union grapples with a Jewishly uneducated leadership, longtime movement leaders say.

"We need to have leadership standards so we know that Reform leaders have a minimum core of knowledge before they're in a leadership position," said Albert Vorspan, who was the union's senior vice president until his retirement in 1993.

"Those standards have not been demanded in the name of autonomy and freedom, and we've been too lax.

"To be a movement in the 21st century you have to ruffle feathers, and the Reform movement has to ruffle feathers within the movement," Vorspan said.

In addition to the steady increase in the number of synagogues affiliated with the movement — up from 773 in 1985 — the congregations' members are more diverse than they used to be.

Half of all new members of Reform temples have never been previously affiliated with the Reform movement, and one-quarter of new members are not Jewish, said Rabbi Daniel Frelander, the union's national director of programs.

The organization's bylaws mandate a balanced budget, so that even though the union has not been running a deficit, it has cut back substantially

on nearly all of its programs in order to be able to meet its \$13 million operating budget for 1995, said Somers.

"There's not a department that hasn't been impacted, where the belts haven't been tightened," said Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor, director of the union's interreligious affairs department and associate director of its social action commission.

"We're confronted with a generation of Jews who don't know how to give, who are not economically able to give the way our grandparents did, and that has made a tremendous impact on the synagogues and, ultimately, on the way we have to do business," he said.

Yoffie will step in against this backdrop.

Although as invested in social action and politics as Schindler, Yoffie is viewed as more cautious about the implications of policy recommendations.

Schindler, a noted orator, has been described by many within the movement as "a prophet" and "a visionary."

At the same time, Schindler has promoted many policies that were initially regarded as radical within the union, as well as divisive by leaders of other Jewish groups.

Among the most controversial of Schindler's legacies is the movement's adoption of patrilineal descent.

In 1983, the Reform movement broke from Jewish tradition by recognizing as Jewish someone born to a non-Jewish mother and a Jewish father, but who is raised as a Jew.

Judaism's other movements, with the exception of the Reconstructionists, hold to Judaism's traditional practice of defining a child's religion by his mother's.

Schindler also led the Reform movement to be the first to engage in active outreach to non-Jews married to Jews, and more recently has proposed that the non-Jewish parent be permitted significant ritual honors on the bimah during his or her child's bar or bat mitzvah.

A 'studied' man

Yoffie, in contrast, is "a studied" man for whom "nothing is off the cuff and there are no snap judgments," said Bretton-Granatoor.

"The movement desperately needs that kind of stuff right now. For many years we've had a lot of shooting from the hip, which served the movement well. But we sometimes shot first and aimed later," he said.

The next major item of a political nature on the Reform movement's agenda, say insiders, is to win official recognition by the State of Israel, where non-Orthodox rabbis are not permitted to perform marriages or conversions.

On issues such as this, Yoffie is "cut from the same cloth" as his predecessor, Vorspan said.

The effort to promote religious pluralism in Israel has prompted criticism from various Orthodox groups.

Reform representatives have advocated that umbrella organizations such as the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council and the American Zionist Movement adopt resolutions favoring religious pluralism in Israel.

The effort has already prompted Orthodox groups to threaten pulling out.

According to the head of a major Jewish organization who asked not to be identified, Yoffie "will finish the split between the Reform and Orthodox forever by pushing the envelope on religious pluralism in Israel."

"If they push it at every table, they will completely cut off every last vestige of discussion between the streams," this leader said.

Of Yoffie, this leader said: "I don't think he's out to unify the Jewish community, but is someone who will

stand very strongly by the principles of Reform Judaism as he sees them."

An American-born and raised Reform Jew, Yoffie, 47, is also described by some as a person who understands better than his German-born and Orthodox-raised predecessor the need among Reform Jews today for spiritual education.

Because Yoffie "is a product of this generation, he responds more viscerally to issues and will therefore perhaps be more attuned to what's needed now," said Rabbi Sanford Seltzer, director of the union's Commission on Religious Living.

The movement has traditionally focused on social action as the central expression of Jewish spirituality. Recently, its constituents have been looking for more religion and less social action.

"We lost sight of finding the religious mandate in what it was we've been doing," said Bretton-Granatoor. "In the '80s we supported any major liberal political proposition and then would search through the Bible for a tagline we could glue onto it to make it look like a Jewish cause.

"Now we realize we're in the business of religious action, not social action," he said.

Hungering for change

Even Vorspan, who was known as the movement's social action guru, agreed.

"Social action did eclipse many areas," he said. "The challenge of the next generation is to relate it to the rest of religious living."

For their part, the movement's constituents are clearly hungering for a change.

The union's most popular programs have become its five-day summer programs called "kallot," which are billed as retreats for spiritual renewal and text study, and its separate rabbinic aide program, which is an intensive summer study and liturgy program for congregants.

The movement has planned a second rabbinic aide program this year because the first one, in January, had a waiting list.

There will also be a third kallah this summer because the two that were held in past years were oversubscribed.

At the union's last biennial, held in San Francisco in 1993, Reform Jews jammed into overcrowded conference rooms to hear rabbis instruct them how to solidify their spiritual yearnings Jewishly and how to integrate that into their everyday lives.

One of the most popular sessions was addressed by Rabbi Peter Knobel, a congregational rabbi in Evanston, Ill., who recommended the most traditional of Jewish practices, such as dating letters according to the Hebrew calendar as well as the Gregorian.

Knobel, who is also leading a major project to develop new liturgy for the movement, was Yoffie's main competitor in the bid for the union's presidency.

"The real question for Reform Jews a generation or two ago was how could we become American and be Jewish.

"The question now is, 'Now that we have become American, how can we be Jewish?'" said Knobel.

Knobel said he was "disappointed" not to be nominated to the union's presidency.

There were four candidates on the short list being seriously considered by the 30-member search committee, according to UAHC officials.

Rabbis Daniel Syme, a UAHC vice president, and Lawrence Hoffman, a professor and liturgist at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, withdrew their names in mid-January. □

FOCUS ON ISSUES (Part 2)
Candidate sees a natural move from Knesset to Jewish Agency

By Uriel Masad

TEL AVIV, Feb. 13 (JTA) — It is midday and quiet at Avraham Burg's campaign headquarters.

A few people mill around the modest office in a kibbutz movement building in the heart of Tel Aviv. Charts of the country divided into voting blocs hang on the walls, next to hand-drawn calendars listing meetings, appointments and speaking engagements.

The pace picks up in the evening, when volunteers come in to call members of the Labor Party Central Committee, urging them to cast their vote for Burg.

This time, however, Labor Knesset member Burg is not running for a seat in the Israeli government.

This race is to become the new chairman of the Jewish Agency and World Zionist Organization. He is running against the Agency's acting chairman, Yehiel Leket.

The Labor Party Central Committee is scheduled to vote for its candidate for the new chairman Feb. 16.

Prior to that, however, representatives of the Agency's Board of Governors' "advise and consent" committee will meet Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to make their decision. The committee, which represents the Diaspora fund-raising component of the Jewish Agency's Diaspora-Zionist partnership, postponed making its decision last month after interviewing both candidates.

Without the endorsement of either or both candidates, the Central Committee will not vote. If that occurs, the election will most likely be postponed until summer, with Leket remaining as acting chairman.

On Monday, meanwhile, WZO leaders issued an "urgent appeal" to the "advise and consent" committee to approve both candidates.

It is WZO that elects the chairman of both bodies, subject to the advice and consent of the Diaspora leaders. Because of the Labor Party's majority in WZO, any candidate selected by the Labor Party will presumably get the nod from WZO.

Burg, who just turned 40, first came to prominence in 1982, as the founder and leader of the grass-roots protest movement against the war in Lebanon.

In 1984 he was named as adviser to Prime Minister Shimon Peres on Diaspora Affairs.

Burg is one of the Labor Party's strong young Knesset members, together with Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin and the new chairman of the Histadrut, Haim Ramon.

A rising star of the Labor Party

The group is strongly aligned with Peres, who is backing Burg in the current race. Leket, on the other hand, is being vigorously backed by Rabin.

As a rising star of the Labor Party, many Israelis have wondered why he would want to leave mainstream politics for the Jewish Agency.

"The Jewish Agency is as mainstream as anything I've ever done," Burg responds in an interview.

"Those who ask this question don't know me," he says, noting that his first public post was working on Diaspora affairs.

And as chairman of the Knesset's Education Committee, he says, he appointed a subcommittee on Jewish education in the Diaspora.

Burg outlines two central issues in his life: the struggle to make Israel a more pluralistic society and Israel-Diaspora relations.

"It comes from the home I grew up in. The notion

of collective responsibility for all the Jews was a cornerstone in my upbringing," he says.

Burg's father, Yosef, served in all of Israel's parliaments until his retirement in 1988. But unlike his father, who was a leader of the National Religious Party, the younger Burg found his home in the Labor Party.

"There can be no Jewish solidarity without a communication system between Israel and the Diaspora," Burg says.

"And the Jewish Agency is the central communication system, with a vast untapped potential. This is a delicate partnership between two different, yet equal societies.

"Israel is a political society, with state institutions; the Diaspora is a communal society, with voluntary institutions. It is a marriage of love, but not always of convenience," Burg says.

"Israel has made mistakes in its attitude toward the Diaspora," he continues. "Our treatment of the dialogue has been insulting. We politicized the WZO and the Agency.

"We kept sending third-grade and retired politicians to represent us in this dialogue; we politicized the partnership itself, which could have brought it to an explosion. All of this must change," he says.

Wants to lead the Agency to its centennial

Burg says he wants to lead the Jewish Agency to its centennial in 1997, with a different set of priorities — "ones that take into account all the Jewish people, and respond to their particular needs wherever they may live."

"I want to see a WZO and an Agency that are relevant to every Jew. As an Israeli partner, though, my responsibility starts here," he says.

"Once we have peace," says Burg, a longtime activist in the peace movement who says he has no doubt that peace will come, "several ticking time bombs will surface in Israel: the gap between rich and poor, state and religion, and relations between religious and secular Jews.

"But the central issue will be the Israeli-Jewish identity," he says. "Who are we, Israeli Jews, without an enemy to define us? What is our national Jewish uniqueness?"

Burg says he considers this an existential question, and a challenge to both Israel and the Diaspora.

He says the Agency's primary task is to bring Jews from distressed areas to Israel. Its secondary task, in his view, is to deal with the issue of Jewish identity, in Israel and abroad.

"Surveys show that 52 percent leave the fold of the Jewish community abroad [through intermarriage]. We must change this trend, and make enormous efforts to raise the percentage of affiliated Jews there and here.

"We must stop the supercilious attitude Israelis have toward the Diaspora. Instead we must import and internalize the values we find there and lack here, like communal responsibility and solidarity.

"We must learn from them religious tolerance toward the different in our midst. This is what I want from them. They must decide for themselves what they ask of us. We can't dictate it to them."

Burg says his first act as the new chairman of the Jewish Agency would be to establish a think tank that would draw a master plan for the Jewish people in the year 2050.

"We must plan two generations ahead," he says. "A Chinese proverb says that even a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. The Israeli addition says that it also ends with a single step.

"We must take the first and the last step, put them together, and work from there." □

Progress on talks reported despite latest fatal stabbing*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, Feb. 13 (JTA) — A Jerusalem taxi driver was murdered in a stabbing attack north of Jerusalem on Monday.

The murder, which police officials believe may have been the work of terrorists, took place on the same day that Israeli and Palestinian officials reported some progress in their negotiations.

Police began a search for the suspect after Rafi Cohen, 35, was found in his taxi near the Arab village of el-Zaimon on the highway between Jerusalem and the West Bank settlement of Ma'aleh Adumim.

Cohen, who had suffered stab wounds to the head, was evacuated in critical condition to Jerusalem's Shaare Zedek hospital where he later died.

Israeli security officials have been on alert in the wake of warnings that Palestinians may carry out terror attacks to mark the anniversary of last year's Hebron massacre, which falls this week in the Muslim calendar. During that attack, West Bank settler Baruch Goldstein opened fire at Muslim worshipers, killing 29 people.

A resident of Jerusalem, Cohen was married and the father of two.

The attack came a day after a regional summit was held in Washington in an attempt to get the peace process back on track.

Some progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace initiative was made Monday, when officials from the two sides held their first-ever meeting in the West Bank Jericho enclave to discuss Palestinian elections.

In talks led by Yoel Singer, the Foreign Ministry's legal adviser, and by Saeb Erekat, the Palestinian Authority official in charge of municipal matters, the two sides agreed to hold two separate elections in the territories — one for the president of the autonomy council and one for the council itself.

The two sides failed to reach agreement on whether supporters of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement will participate in the elections.

On Sunday, Mahmoud Zahar, a Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip, told the German newsmagazine Focus that Hamas will not take part in the elections because if Hamas wins, it will have to implement the Israel-PLO peace accord, which the group militantly opposes. □

Human rights group blasts Palestinians for broad abuses*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, Feb. 13 (JTA) — In the first detailed analysis of human rights under Palestinian self-rule, an American-based human rights group has issued a report alleging broad abuses committed by the Palestinian Authority.

"The worrisome state of human rights in the areas under Palestinian self-rule — where both the Palestinian Authority and Israel are responsible — is a grave danger for the chances of peace and stability in the region," according to Human Rights Watch.

The group documented cases of torture, censorship of the media and mass political arrests of supporters of Palestinian rejectionist groups.

The report charged that the Palestinian Authority, which controls the self-rule areas, did not base its activities on any legal system.

The report characterized some of the self-rule government's practices as "oppressive," and cited a lack of any effort to monitor human rights violations.

Human Rights Watch said the lack of a legal structure was most evident in the treatment of Palestinians suspected of collaborating with Israel. The report said many suspected collaborators were imprisoned for months at a time, without any indication of why they were detained.

Included in the report was testimony from family members and attorneys who said suspected collaborators were subject to torture during interrogation. In two instances, the report charged, suspected collaborators died from torture while undergoing interrogation.

Khaled al-Kidra, the Palestinian Authority's attorney general, rejected the allegations contained in the report. "The Palestinian Authority does not arrest people because of their political beliefs," he said. "I believe that one of the top priorities of the Palestinian Authority is law and order."

The human rights group also denounced terror attacks launched against Israelis, saying it "condemns violence by militant groups against members of any nationality, and calls on all governing bodies, including the Palestinian Authority, to prevent such attacks and punish those who carry them out."

The report also criticized the limitations on the Palestinian Authority, noting that it still lacks basic sovereign powers.

Israel still has significant influence over daily life in the two self-rule areas, controlling freedom of movement, economic life and access to economic resources, the report said.

The group described as unfair the closures imposed by Israel on Gaza and the West Bank, a move that prevents tens of thousands of Palestinians from working in Israel.

Human Rights Watch, a non-governmental institution established in 1978 to monitor human rights throughout the world, based its report on three visits to Gaza and Jericho. □

Ex-IDF chief to investigate death of Israeli Druse officer*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, Feb. 13 (JTA) — A former top Israeli military official has been appointed to investigate the circumstances surrounding the death of an Israeli Druse officer in the southern Lebanon security zone.

Maj. Kewaan Hamad was killed Dec. 19 during a clash with Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah gunmen in the western sector of the security zone.

A report last week in a Haifa newspaper alleged that Hamad was also hit by his own men during the clash and killed by Israeli fire when soldiers mistook him for a wounded Hezbollah gunman and conducted a "kill verification." A "kill verification" is verifying the death of an enemy in the battlefield, if necessary, by shooting the enemy at close range.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin denied that Israeli forces engage in such a practice.

The head of Northern Command, Maj. Gen. Amiram Levine, also denied the newspaper report.

Lt. Gen. Amnon Shahak, the Israel Defense Force chief of staff, appointed Moshe Levy, a former chief of staff, to investigate.

The story caused further controversy when it appeared that reports concerning the soldier's death may have been concealed from his family. Levine reportedly said, "There are problems with the Druse faith and the way they treat death, which is why not all details of Kewaan's death were given to his family."

Among the tenets of the Druse community is the belief in the afterlife and reincarnation. □