



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ German authorities banned two neo-Nazi organizations, the Free Workers Party and the smaller, Hamburg-based National List. Although the Free Workers Party has only some 400 members, it is considered one of the most visible neo-Nazi organizations in Germany. In conjunction with the banning, police raided apartments and offices of party members throughout Germany. [Page 4]

■ Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's government survived a no-confidence motion raised amid continuing debate over the closure of the territories. Debate over the motion deteriorated into the trading of insults by Rabin and Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu. The closure issue also came up at Israeli-Palestinian talks on economic issues in Jericho. Meanwhile, Rabin said he plans to import thousands of foreign workers to Israel in a move aimed at entirely eliminating the need for Palestinian laborers. [Page 2]

■ Israeli authorities deported a member of the Palestinian police force to Jordan. Mohammed Jamil Issawi was arrested last month at the Erez checkpoint separating Israel from Gaza. He was suspected of being involved in the planning and execution of attacks against Israelis. Israeli officials had rejected a request by the Palestinian Authority that he be deported to Gaza or Jericho instead of Jordan.

■ Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin rejected a proposal by Peace Now calling for the dismantling of 26 of the smallest and most strategically problematic Israeli settlements in the West Bank. The proposal would have affected some 7,000 of the more than 100,000 settlers living in the West Bank. The group maintained that the settlements had to be evacuated in order for Palestinian self-rule to be extended to West Bank areas.

■ President Ezer Weizman reduced the jail terms of nine prisoners serving life sentences, including Yona Avrushmi, who was convicted of second-degree murder for the death of Emile Grunzweig. Grunzweig was killed when Avrushmi threw a grenade at Peace Now protesters, who were demonstrating outside the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem in 1982.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Jewish groups sound alarms amid budget amendment debate

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, Feb. 27 (JTA) — Balancing the federal budget with a constitutional amendment would slash Jewish social service programs, devastate America's poor and hamper the Middle East peace process, many Jewish activists argue.

Alarmed by the potential ramifications, activists here have been engaged in an all-out assault on the proposed balanced budget amendment before Congress.

"What's near and dear to many of our hearts as American Jews is at stake," said Reva Price, director of the B'nai B'rith Political Action Network.

Activists engaged with the new Congress in the debate over the balanced budget fear the amendment is only the tip of a dangerous iceberg that presages an overall mood intent on gutting programs to save federal money.

Proposals on Capitol Hill range from cutting foreign aid to Middle East states to slashing the Justice Department's Nazi hunting unit, the Office of Special Investigations.

The House of Representative passed the balanced budget amendment Jan. 26 by a vote of 300 to 132. The Senate is poised to vote on the measure Tuesday in a down-to-the-wire nail-biting atmosphere of uncertainty.

If the amendment's proponents gain the necessary two-thirds majority, or 67 votes, more senators would switch sides to avoid casting a politically dangerous vote against the amendment, activists predicted.

The amendment requires Congress and the president to balance the budget by the year 2002 or two years after the states ratify the amendment, whichever is later.

If the Senate passes the measure, 38 states would have to ratify the amendment.

The push to defeat the measure by the Jewish community was not without controversy.

AIPAC chastised for not opposing amendment

Some Jewish activists chastised the American Israel Public Affairs Committee for not entering the effort to oppose the amendment.

AIPAC, the pre-eminent pro-Israel lobbying organization, has remained on the sidelines during the balanced budget debate.

Washington insiders say AIPAC has sat this one out because the organization believes that the amendment would not affect its major issues of concern: aid to Israel and the peace process.

But other Jewish activists disagree, saying Israel will suffer if the amendment finds its way into the Constitution.

Linda Heller Kamm, co-president of Americans for Peace Now, said because the amendment would have "dire consequences for the nation's economy," it would affect the ability of the United States to aid the peace process.

It is "highly unlikely" that the funding which secured the Camp David Accords would have been available if the amendment were in place in 1979, Kamm wrote in a recent article.

As a result of the agreement between Israel and Egypt, the United States guaranteed Israel \$3 billion in annual aid and Egypt \$2.1 billion.

Kamm, who also served as a former counsel to the House Budget Committee, argued that despite Israel's strong relationship with the new Congress and the White House, "these connections may be of little avail when lawmakers are faced with the severe strictures of the balanced budget amendment."

One activist, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, called AIPAC's decision to abstain from the debate "naive."

"It is not possible that Israel, Egypt, the PLO and Jordan won't suffer if this amendment becomes law. It will become impossible to protect foreign aid," the activist said.

Another high-level official went further, saying AIPAC's absence is "not only naive but politically irresponsible." AIPAC officials, confirming

their decision not to get involved in the debate, refused to offer any other comment.

For their part, Jewish Republicans say a balanced budget amendment "will not derail the peace process," said Matthew Brooks, executive director of the Republican-aligned National Jewish Coalition.

Brooks said his group supports the amendment because "we have to rethink and reprioritize how our government spends money.

"Ultimately, there has to be some sacrifice," he said.

The Congressional Budget Office estimated that Congress would have to cut \$1.2 trillion to balance the budget by 2002.

Assuming that Social Security, defense spending and interest payments on the debt are removed from the cutting block, the federal government would have to look toward the other half of the budget to save.

Among the big ticket items likely to be targeted are Medicare, Medicaid and welfare as well as smaller programs, including foreign aid and housing subsidies.

Analysts across the political spectrum estimate that programs across the board would suffer at least a 25 percent cut.

In addition to acting out of concern for major cuts in programs, many Jewish organizations have fought the measure because of their opposition to meddling with the Constitution.

"The Constitution is a well-balanced and durable document that shouldn't be tampered with for short-term political gain," said Jason Isaacson, director of the American Jewish Committee's Washington office.

AJCommittee, like most Jewish organizations with a presence in Washington, sent letters to members of Congress arguing against the balanced budget amendment.

AJCommittee terms amendment 'a gimmick'

The amendment is a "gimmick" that will promote "the very opposite of sound economic policy," the AJCommittee letter to senators said.

Diana Aviv, director of the Washington office of the Council of Jewish Federations, said the question is not the principal of a balanced budget. She, like most Jewish activists, said the budget should be balanced.

"The issue is the length of time and the way you do it," Aviv said. "You don't balance the budget in such a Draconian way and enshrine it in the Constitution."

Aviv said she began fighting against the balanced budget amendment two years ago when Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.) proposed a measure that was ultimately defeated.

"This is not about Republicans or Democrats," Aviv said.

As evidence that the balanced budget amendment is just a precursor of things to come, Jewish groups point to other potentially alarming moves on Capitol Hill.

Various subcommittees on the House side have begun to pass rescissions to last year's budget in anticipation of offering a tax cut and funding for disaster relief.

Plans now under consideration would cut programs "that provide indispensable assistance to the most disadvantaged members of our society," David Kahn, president of the American Jewish Congress, wrote in a letter to House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) this week.

House appropriations subcommittees have proposed a number of cost-cutting measures, from slashing education programs for homeless youth, school lunch funds, energy assistance for the poor and low-income public housing for the poor and elderly.

These programs "should not be eliminated or destroyed in a frenzied drive-by shooting process that victimizes the poor," Kahn wrote.

A House subcommittee also proposed scaling back President Clinton's proposed \$285 million debt relief for Jordan.

Instead the committee proposed \$50 million, which would forgive about \$105 million in Jordanian debt. Clinton's request would have wiped out Jordan's remaining \$500 million in debt to the United States. □

Rabin survives no confidence as closure sparks new debate

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Feb. 27 (JTA) — The government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin withstood a no-confidence motion this week that centered on the closure of the territories.

The no-confidence motion was submitted Monday after Rabin's statements last week that he had agreed to lift the closure partially on the West Bank and Gaza Strip even though it posed a security threat to Israelis.

The motion was defeated by a vote of 59 to 48. The fervently religious Shas Party, formerly a member of the governing coalition, voted with the opposition.

In defense of his recent decision to gradually ease the closure, Rabin said long closures on the territories in 1993 had only generated more terrorist acts.

The latest closure was imposed following a Jan. 22 double suicide bombing near Netanya that killed 21 Israelis. The government recently eased the closure, allowing some 15,000 Palestinians from the territories to enter Israel.

Israeli authorities also temporarily suspended the closure last Friday, allowing West Bank Palestinians to attend special services at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The services marked the last Friday in the Islamic holy month of Ramadan.

The closure issue also came up Monday when Finance Minister Avraham Shohat met with Ahmed Karia, the Palestinian Authority official in charge of economic affairs, to discuss economic issues relating to the Palestinian self-rule accord.

At the meeting in the West Bank enclave of Jericho, the Palestinians emphasized the economic hardships the closure has created for Palestinians attempting to work in Israel. Karia called on Israel to issue more permits for Palestinian workers.

But at its weekly meeting Sunday, the Israeli Cabinet decided not to implement an additional easing of the closure.

Rabin said Sunday that he plans to import thousands of foreign workers to Israel in a move aimed at entirely eliminating the need for Palestinian laborers.

At Monday's meeting in Jericho, Israeli and Palestinian members of the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Economic Committee agreed in principle to create four industrial parks in Gaza and seven in the West Bank.

The United States is expected to provide financial support to build these areas, according to Israel Radio.

Karia rejected a proposal made the day before by Communications Minister Shulamit Aloni that Israel offer land in the Negev to the Palestinians in exchange for West Bank areas around Jerusalem, where Israeli settlements are being built. "Expanding the Gaza Strip should not be at the expense of other Palestinian land in the West Bank," Karia said.

Aloni, who had opposed a recent government decision to continue construction of settlements surrounding Jerusalem, said the Palestinians lack room. "It's sort of an exchange of lands," she said of her proposal.

Members of the Likud opposition called on the prime minister to fire Aloni for her remarks. □

**Despite the rhetoric,
Arab boycott persists***By Jennifer Batog*

WASHINGTON, Feb. 27 (JTA) — Despite promises to stop adhering to aspects of the Arab boycott of Israel, Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations have stepped up some of their boycott activity, according to the U.S. Commerce Department.

At the end of September, the Gulf Cooperation Council, including Saudi Arabia, vowed to stop complying with the secondary and tertiary boycotts of Israel.

The secondary boycott blacklists companies that do business in Israel. The tertiary boycott bars companies from doing business with other companies that do business in Israel.

From October to December, however, Saudi companies filed a total of 399 boycott-related requests of U.S. companies, compared to 365 the previous three months, according to figures released recently by the Commerce Department.

The five other Gulf council countries are Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman and Qatar.

Although overall activity among the Gulf countries declined in the most recent period, the number of boycott-related requests that most blatantly violate anti-boycott legislation increased.

These requests, known as prohibited requests, actually ask companies to do things that would violate the anti-boycott regulation, such as demanding that a company not use a blacklisted firm.

The Commerce Department's Office of Anti-Boycott Compliance issues a quarterly report to gauge what Arab countries are doing with respect to the boycott.

The Commerce Department said the figures were not surprising. "On the whole, performance has improved," said William Skidmore, director of the anti-boycott office.

'Slow and incomplete implementation'

"This is not reflected in the quarterly reports of the boycott requests, because as far as we can tell, the implementation of these policies has been slow and incomplete," he said.

Although the Arab countries have implemented new policies regarding the boycott, it is difficult and takes time to implement the practice among bureaucrats and business people, Skidmore said.

Skidmore said despite the boycott, it is still easier for American companies to do business with Arab nations than it was five years ago. He said that in contrast to the past, some Arab companies might now amend their requests, dropping specific demands and moving ahead with their business deals.

But anti-boycott activists expressed disappointment in the latest figures. "Now is the time for the Arabs to put their money where their mouth is," said U.S. Rep. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.).

"If they're serious about ending the boycott, their numbers have to go down," said Schumer, who co-chairs the Congressional Task Force to End the Arab Boycott.

Jess Hordes, Washington representative of the Anti-Defamation League, said, "There still is no clear, obvious downward trend."

Hordes and Schumer both said they thought that enough time has passed since the Gulf countries made their announcement to expect a change in requests.

Hordes acknowledged that policy changes take time, but he said it is still "reasonable" to expect a drop in boycott activity. "We should have begun to see changes," he said. □

**Jewish sermons in church?
A first for King's College***By Michele Chabin*

CAMBRIDGE, England, Feb. 27 (JTA) — For the first time in its 550-year history, Jewish themes are dominating the sermons at King's College Chapel, one of England's most important Anglican churches.

In an attempt to acquaint Christians with the Jewish roots of Christianity, the chapel has launched an eight-part series of Jewish-related sermons.

The sermons, which are attracting people of many different faiths to the magnificent 16th-century church, are being delivered by a number of Bible scholars, half of them Jewish.

Recent sermons, presented during regular Sunday morning services, have included "Judaism and Christianity: Sibling Rivalry" and "Shabbat, Symbols and Idolatry."

According to George Pattison, dean of the chapel, the sermons are an outgrowth of a yearlong research project on early Christianity conducted by members of Kings College.

"The project focused on the separation between church and synagogue," Pattison said. "In the course of the research, it was determined that this separation came much later, historically speaking, than was first thought."

Pattison, who initiated the series, said he was motivated by the "desire for dialogue."

For centuries, "the chapel has been designated as the college's spiritual center," he said, adding, "I wanted to explore what that means in a pluralistic society."

The chapel, Pattison thinks, is the perfect place for such an exploration. Although clearly a Christian institution, the chapel is also a leading tourist site and attracts a broad range of visitors from around the world.

'People are afraid of what they don't know'

Unlike many churches, which favor New Testament over Old Testament symbols, King's Chapel honors both traditions. Half of its exquisite stained-glass windows, commissioned by King Henry VIII, depict Joseph being cast into the pit, Jonah emerging from the whale's mouth and other Old Testament themes.

"It is important for Christians to learn more about our roots," said Hilary Pattison, the dean's wife.

Unfortunately, she added, "people are so afraid of what they don't know, even though it is beneficial to understand another set of beliefs."

"To understand the new," she said, "we must first understand the old."

George Pattison said that "while the overall response from worshipers has been very positive, one or two people have gotten angry." He cited one case: "A speaker told a story where God admitted to being wrong after a rabbi quoted scripture to Him. One of our visitors thought this was blasphemous."

Mary Lockwood, an elder of the United Reform Church, said she had no such reservations about the sermons. "The sermon is what attracted me here today, even though I'm not Anglican," she said.

That sermon, delivered by Melissa Lane, a Jewish lecturer at Kings College, stressed the importance of Shabbat in Judaism and the fact that even though Judaism and Christianity share many bonds, they ultimately are unique.

Standing outside the chapel after the service, Lockwood expressed satisfaction at the sermon's message.

"Dr. Lane noted that there are no exact counterparts between Judaism and Christianity, that a synagogue means one thing to Jews and that a church means another thing to Christians," Lockwood said. □

Retaliatory blockade of Lebanese ports expanded*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, Feb. 27 (JTA) — Israel has broadened a naval blockade of Lebanese ports, saying it comes in retaliation for Lebanon's harassment of residents living in the southern security zone.

The blockade — imposed two weeks ago on the Lebanese port cities of Tyre, Sidon and Damur — has prevented thousands of Lebanese fishermen from plying their trade.

On Monday, Israeli gunboats fired warning shots on three Lebanese fishing boats. No injuries were reported.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported that the Lebanese government recently adopted new measures regarding residents in the south of the country, the base of support for the South Lebanon Army, Israel's ally in the region.

The report said the measures, which make it harder for residents of the south to conduct trade with the rest of the country, were an effort to introduce hardships in the area and to cause a breakdown in relations between residents of the area and the SLA and the Israeli army.

Ha'aretz quoted one source as saying the blockade was an effort to pressure the Lebanese government to take harsher measures against the Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah movement, which has been receiving backing from Syria and Iran in its fight against Israeli and SLA forces.

Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri said the blockade was aimed at breaking Beirut's ties with Damascus. He told Lebanese television that this would not happen. Beirut reportedly is considering complaining to the U.N. Security Council about the blockade.

The expansion of the blockade comes just days after Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, speaking during a tour of the southern Lebanon security zone last week, said a peace deal with Lebanon could be reached within nine months if the government of Lebanon would be willing to enter negotiations with Israel.

The prime minister, who was accompanied during the Feb. 23 tour by eight other members of the Cabinet, also held talks with SLA commander Antoine Lahad. Rabin reiterated Israel's commitment to the SLA.

Rabin and the Cabinet ministers were told by military sources that Hezbollah has stepped up its activities and that it is better trained and armed than in the past. □

Two neo-Nazi groups banned as German police search homes*By Gil Sedan*

BONN, Feb. 27 (JTA) — German authorities outlawed two neo-Nazi organizations over the weekend and police launched a nationwide crackdown at the homes of party members.

In announcing the ban on the Free Workers Party and the smaller National List, the government circumvented a legal hurdle that had often prevented it from taking measures against neo-Nazi organizations in the past.

Although the Free Workers Party, known as the FAP, has only some 400 members, it is considered one of the strongest and most visible neo-Nazi organizations in Germany.

Its members have paraded in public wearing Nazi uniforms. And its leaders have called for the overthrow of the German government and the execution of all opponents.

The Hamburg-based National List has only about 30 members. It was banned by local city officials.

The FAP was banned by the federal government.

The FAP "disdains human rights, defames democratic institutions and stirs up xenophobia and anti-Semitism," Interior Minister Manfred Kanther said when announcing the ban.

Police moved swiftly over the weekend against neo-Nazis belonging to the FAP in nine federal states throughout Germany.

Some 50 apartments and offices of the FAP were searched, with police confiscating large quantities of fascist flags, propaganda, documents, emblems, uniforms and T-shirts.

The authorities also confiscated bank accounts, mobile phones and fax machines. Police also found a small number of weapons.

The federal government had in the past been unable to move against the FAP because it calls itself a political party, which under German law cannot be outlawed.

But authorities were able to circumvent the law by obtaining a ruling from the Constitutional Supreme Court in the southwestern city of Karlsruhe that the two groups were political organizations, not true political parties. □

Survey: Italy's youth ignorant of World War II and Holocaust*By Ruth E. Gruber*

ROME, Feb. 27 (JTA) — A new survey of Italy's young people shows them to be ignorant of recent history, including the Holocaust and Italy's World War II experience.

The Rome daily Il Messaggero, publishing the survey's findings last Friday, called the results "alarming," saying they indicated "a festival of ignorance."

The survey was carried out by the Italian Federation of Psychologists as part of recent initiatives aimed at fighting racism. About 1,000 young Italians between 16 and 24 were asked 30 questions relating to modern history, many of them concerning World War II and the Holocaust.

A total of 28 percent of the respondents thought that a "pogrom" was a Jewish holiday, according to results published in the Italian press. Nearly 12 percent thought it was a Jewish prayer. Only a little more than 4 percent knew what it really was — an organized, sometimes official persecution and massacre of a minority group — and nearly 56 percent did not reply.

More than 17 percent thought Kristallnacht was a nighttime military parade held by the Third Reich; nearly 14 percent thought it was the celebration of a political anniversary. Only 10 percent knew that it involved the mass persecution of Jews, and nearly 58 percent either did not know or did not respond.

Only a little more than 38 percent knew that there had been racist anti-Semitic laws in Italy during World War II. More than 24 percent said there had been no such laws, and the rest did not give an answer.

Fewer than 24 percent said they had a good knowledge of the history of Italy's wartime resistance movement.

About half of the young people said they would like to know more about history. They put the blame for their lack of knowledge on schools and mass communication.

Tullia Zevi, president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, along with other observers, put some of the fault on the Italian education system and on television programming. But they were also critical of the young people themselves.

"It is our battle. We have to do it: to transmit the knowledge and the memory of these things so that they don't happen again," Zevi told the press. □