



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Israel and Syria are unlikely to reach a peace agreement this year, Maj. Gen. Uri Saguy, head of the Israeli military's intelligence branch, told a Cabinet session devoted to the annual assessment of Israeli security issues. The briefing came hours after Israeli and Palestinian security officials came under fire in the Gaza Strip. Forces returned fire, killing one Palestinian. [Page 3]

■ Russian security agents arrested an ultranationalist politician after he made death threats against two liberal members of the Russian Parliament during a nationally broadcast television interview. Alexei Vedenkin, a leader of the Russian National Unity movement, said those who fail to join his movement "will go into gas ovens." The arrest came as President Boris Yeltsin announced plans to stop the growth of neo-fascism. [Page 2]

■ Russian ultranationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy visited Iraq to discuss the creation of a coalition between Orthodox Christians and Muslims to combat the West. In addition to meeting with Saddam Hussein, Zhirinovskiy signed an agreement of cooperation between his Liberal Democratic Party and Iraq's ruling Ba'ath Party. [Page 2]

■ South Africa's chief rabbi urged Jewish youth in Johannesburg to join volunteer police forces to help stem the tide of suburban violence. Speaking at a synagogue peace service, Rabbi Cyril Harris said action must be taken to reduce the escalating number of murders, hijackings and burglaries. [Page 4]

■ With no end in sight to the Bosnian war, Jewish communities throughout Europe are working to help Jewish and non-Jewish victims in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo. In Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands, Jewish societies are collecting funds and goods for La Benevolencija, the Sarajevo-based Jewish aid society. [Page 1]

■ The identity of the former head of Israel's domestic Shin Bet intelligence agency was made public. Ya'acov Perry, 51, left the top Shin Bet post, which he held for seven years. [Page 3]

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### As war rages in Bosnia, humanitarian efforts persist

By Edward Serotta

BERLIN, March 5 (JTA) — With no end in sight to the war, Jewish communities throughout Europe are banding together to help Jewish and non-Jewish victims in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo.

In Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands, Jewish societies have formed to raise funds and collect goods for La Benevolencija, the Sarajevo-based Jewish aid society.

Resurrected nearly three years ago as war erupted in Bosnia, La Benevolencija has earned a reputation as one of the most effective aid agencies operating in Bosnia.

Its programs help Croats, Muslims, Jews and Serbs alike.

Working in conjunction with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief, La Benevolencija operates three pharmacies, a post office, a soup kitchen, a medical clinic with a division for house calls, a food distribution center and a cultural program.

The JDC, which has been providing relief shipments to the besieged city of Sarajevo since the war began in 1992, recently convened a meeting in Paris of the various European aid societies in an effort to coordinate relief efforts for Sarajevo.

"What we want to do is get to know each other and channel Sarajevo's needs to the right people," Norman Tilles, JDC's international development chairman, told the gathering.

Jonathan Kolker, JDC's finance chairman, said it was critically important for the coalition of aid groups to "steer clear of politics, even the politics of our own governments regarding this war."

Because La Benevolencija has avoided entering the political arena, it has been allowed by all the warring factions to continue its operations, observers say.

During the Paris meeting, representatives of the British Fund informed the gathering about their ongoing relations with pharmaceutical companies and food distributors, many of whom have made large donations during the past 24 months.

### 'Finally, here's a way people can do something'

JDC officials, in turn, offered space at its Croatian warehouse and provided logistical information for getting food into Sarajevo.

Representatives of the various European aid chapters took to the podium to discuss their efforts.

The German chapter, which is known as Benevolencija Germany and is headquartered in Berlin, has only been in operation for a few months. But according to Michael Melzer, the chapter's representative, \$35,000 was collected in its first 120 days of existence.

"Finally, here's a way people can do something about the war in Bosnia. Not complain, not talk about the West's inaction, but actually do something," said Melzer, a German architect.

The Belgian representative, Joelle Baumerder, spoke of that chapter's success in getting donors to make monthly bank transfers: "We've found that people are more willing to make small donations regularly rather than a big sum all at once."

Haneke Jeldemblom, a Dutch member of Parliament, spoke with obvious pride about ongoing relief efforts in the Netherlands.

Her group, working in conjunction with the Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel chapter in Cambridge, Mass., was instrumental in securing a 10-ton truck from Mercedes-Benz to help deliver supplies to Sarajevo.

Because of the conditions in Bosnia, she said, the truck had to be repainted white, the color of all U.N. vehicles.

But a giant blue menorah was painted on the truck's side at the Mercedes factory, reflecting the fact that all the warring factions in Bosnia respect the humanitarian efforts of Sarajevo's Jewish community.

The costs for outfitting the truck with special accessories — including the installation of a hydraulic lift to the cargo gate, extra fuel tanks and a

radio communications set — were provided by the Belgian and French chapters, the Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel and JDC.

Last to address the gathering was Ivica Ceresnjes, president of the Sarajevo Jewish community.

Ceresnjes, who was recently decorated with France's prestigious Legion of Honor medal for his efforts, has led his ever-shrinking community through the last few difficult years. Although hundreds of Jews have left Sarajevo, mostly emigrating to Israel, an estimated 500 remain.

Ceresnjes said it was easier to carry out La Benevolencija's work in Sarajevo knowing how much help and support the group had from the outside world.

"It isn't just the money or the goods. It's the fact that you're working for us, and that means with us," he said.

Ceresnjes also spoke of La Benevolencija's next project — the building of a giant soup kitchen in the community center basement that will feed up to 1,000 people in Sarajevo daily.

Ceresnjes, an architect, immediately pulled out a set of plans for the new kitchen and discussed them with the audience, an act that may speak to his views on whether the war would soon end. □

## Preparing to mark end of war, Russia cracks down on extremism

By Lisa Glazer

MOSCOW, March 5 (JTA) — Taking an unusually quick step against extremist leaders, Russian security agents last week arrested an ultranationalist politician who made death threats against two liberal members of the Russian Parliament.

The arrest was seen as a reflection of the determination of Russian authorities to present a solid front against extremism and neo-fascism as the country prepares to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Allied victory against the Germans in World War II.

The arrest coincided with an announcement that President Boris Yeltsin plans to issue a decree on measures to control extremist activity and stop the growth of neo-fascism.

Alexei Vedenkin, a leader of the Russian National Unity movement, was seized March 2 by agents of the Federal Counterintelligence Service, a spokesman for the agency said.

In a nationally broadcast television interview last week, Vedenkin boasted of the mass repressions that would take place when his party came to power.

He said those who fail to join his movement "will go into gas ovens" and he would personally be prepared to execute Russia's outspoken human rights commissioner, Sergei Kovalyov, and Sergei Yushenkov, the head of the lower house of Parliament's Defense Committee.

Both Kovalyov and Yushenkov have been outspoken opponents of the ongoing Russian war against the breakaway republic of Chechnya.

A popular Russian Sunday news program, "Itogi," repeated the broadcast, with a commentator offering the assessment that the "Russian Nazis" had launched their election campaign.

The Prosecutor General's Office, which ordered Vedenkin's arrest, said he was charged with inciting ethnic hatred, threatening a person with murder, stealing documents and disclosing state secrets.

The latter charges relate to Vedenkin's on-air claim that the vast majority of his movement's followers are members of Russia's security services, formerly known as the KGB and renamed the Federal Counterintelligence Service. □

Vedenkin's claim prompted swift denials from security officials.

Meanwhile, as the country prepares to commemorate the end of World War II in May, a number of important exhibits linked to the anniversary have already opened.

In the Pushkin Museum of Fine Art in Moscow and at the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, exquisite art work seized from Germany by Soviet troops in World War II is on display for the first time in decades. The work had been secretly stored in the basements of the museums.

The so-called "trophy art" seized during World War II is at the center of an ownership dispute between Germany and Russia.

The issue is complicated by reports that some of the art work now being shown was seized from wealthy Jewish families who were the victims, not the perpetrators, of war.

Moscow's Tretyakov Gallery also recently opened an exhibition of World War II documents, including two secret supplements to the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement in which the Soviet Union agreed with Nazi Germany to divide Eastern Europe between the two countries. The supplements defined the boundaries of Poland and territories of interest to Russia and the Third Reich. They are considered significant because their existence was long denied by Russian authorities.

Among the 400 pieces on display are documents outlining plans by Adolf Hitler to invade Russia and data on the extermination of Jews, Communists and the "spiritually poor" in the Baltic republics; in the republic formerly known as Byelorussia; and in Russia itself.

In another exhibit, at the Central Museum of the Russian Army, more spoils of war as well as Nazi memorabilia are due to go on display this week.

Russian newspapers have reported that among the items to be presented will be uniforms that belonged to Hitler and his propaganda chief, Josef Goebbels. The uniforms were seized by Soviet troops in Berlin during the final days of the war.

Col. Vladimir Lukin, a senior museum official, was asked whether the display could become a shrine for neo-Nazis instead of providing an antidote to extremism.

He said he believed that most people would view the exhibit simply as a history lesson. □

## Saddam Hussein welcomes Russian ultranationalist to Iraq

By Lisa Glazer

MOSCOW, March 5 (JTA) — In a visit to Iraq last week, Russian ultranationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky met with President Saddam Hussein to discuss the creation of a coalition between Orthodox Christians and Muslims to combat the West.

"For three hours we discussed world and local problems very deeply" in addition to "relations between the Orthodox Russian community and the Muslim community," Zhirinovsky reportedly told the media.

Also during his trip, he signed an agreement of cooperation between his party, the Liberal Democratic Party, and Iraq's ruling Ba'ath Party. He was accompanied on his three-day trip by a 50-member delegation, including 20 Russian parliamentary deputies.

Zhirinovsky, widely seen as fascist and anti-Semitic, has his eye on the Russian presidency. His new book, "The Last Train Car North," describes some of his political views. In the prologue, he writes of his wish to send Russia's reformist politicians to Siberia.

In recent weeks, Zhirinovsky has been one of the few politicians who has publicly supported the government's controversial war in Chechnya. □

## Peace with Syria in 1995? It's unlikely, says IDF official

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, March 5 (JTA) — Israel and Syria are unlikely to reach a peace agreement this year, according to the head of the Israel Defense Force's intelligence branch.

Maj. Gen. Uri Saguy made the prediction during a six-hour Cabinet briefing Sunday devoted to the IDF's annual assessment of Israeli security issues.

Although Syria is maintaining its general commitment to pursue a peace accord, Syrian President Hafez Assad is demanding terms that Israel cannot accept, Saguy told the government ministers.

Syrian-Israeli negotiations have been stalled by Syrian demands that Israel agree to a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights before Syria spells out its terms for peace.

Saguy's assessment came as U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher was preparing to head to the region to help jump-start the stalled talks. Christopher is due to arrive in Israel on March 9.

In assessing Israel's overall security situation, Saguy said a low probability exists that Israel will be involved in a war this year.

Saguy devoted some of the briefing to Iran, which he said is still trying to build up its nuclear potential. He said the Islamic republic may be able to acquire a nuclear capability within three years if it is able to buy nuclear components abroad.

As for the Palestinians, Saguy and other intelligence officials told the Cabinet that Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat has been doing more to curb terrorism than in the past, but it is not enough.

The officials said Islamic fundamentalist terror is still a threat to Israelis.

### Security forces come under fire

Despite obstacles Israel and the Palestinians have encountered in their ongoing negotiations for extending Palestinian self-rule to the West Bank, the officials said Arafat has no better alternative but to continue with the peace process.

The issue of terror came to the fore again Saturday night, when Israeli and Palestinian security officials came under fire near the Jewish settlement of Netzarim in the Gaza Strip.

According to Israeli officials, the Israeli and Palestinian security teams were fired upon by unknown assailants from the cover of a nearby orchard.

Israeli and Palestinian forces returned the fire. Usama al-Borno, 41, a Palestinian school principal who was driving his car near the junction guarded by the two groups, was caught in the cross fire and killed.

Hundreds of Palestinians attended Borno's funeral Sunday amid threats from the Islamic Jihad that Israel would pay for his death. The militant fundamentalist group claimed responsibility in the past for a series of terror attacks against Israelis.

It is not clear whose bullets killed Borno. Israeli officials promised an investigation to clear up the confusion surrounding the shooting.

Meanwhile, Israel Television reported that Arafat had requested a meeting with Foreign Minister Shimon Peres this week to help set up a summit with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to discuss the state of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

The request comes in the wake of a warning by Peres that Israel could suspend the negotiations if Arafat does not crack down on terror.

"If he is too weak to do that, or lacks the will, why should we negotiate with him at all?" Peres said in an interview with the German weekly Der Spiegel.

Also, Rabin has decided to further ease the closure on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The closure was imposed after the Jan. 22 double suicide bombing near Netanya.

He authorized 3,000 more permits to be issued to married agricultural and industrial workers 30 and older.

This brings to 18,000 the number of permits issued, compared to 30,000 before the bombing, in which 21 Israelis were killed.

News reports also said Arafat has offered to act as a mediator between Israel and Iraq. Arafat, who met with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein last week, said Baghdad is interested in establishing peace with Israel. □

## Identity of ex-Shin Bet head revealed in Israeli newspapers

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, March 5 (JTA) — The identity of the former head of Israel's domestic Shin Bet intelligence agency was made public last week.

Ya'acov Perry, 51, a Tel Aviv native who grew up in Netanya, recently left the top Shin Bet post, which he held for seven years.

Israeli newspapers published photographs and laudatory articles on the man whose identity, according to policy, had been a closely guarded secret.

Perry recently was replaced by a man identified only as "K." The new head, whom Perry recommended as his successor, had served as Perry's deputy.

In 1966, Perry joined Shin Bet as an operative in the Arab department. He was appointed head of Shin Bet by then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

Perry took over Shin Bet during one of its most difficult periods, the period after the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising, or intifada, in December 1987.

During this period, the agency was embroiled in controversy about both confirmed and alleged cases of abuse during interrogations. A commission formed to investigate these reports established standards for the use of moderate physical pressure during questioning.

Perry also directed the agency's adjustment to the new realities of the self-rule accord signed by Israel and the Palestinians in September 1993.

In a personal letter to Perry, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin praised the outgoing head for his achievements and leadership skills in guiding Shin Bet through its challenges. Rabin also thanked Perry's corps of "anonymous soldiers." □

## Israel to attend trade fair once marred by terror attack

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, March 5 (JTA) — For the first time in nine years, Israel is to participate in an international trade fair in Cairo later this month.

About 40 Israeli firms are scheduled to attend.

The last time Israel attended the fair, in 1986, it was marred by tragedy.

Terrorists attacked a car of Israeli diplomats, and an Israeli Embassy staffer was killed, a spokesman for the embassy in Cairo said.

Israel planned to send a delegation to the fair last year, but canceled after the massacre at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron.

Some 40 countries are expected to take part in the gathering. □

## South African violence prompts the chief rabbi to offer solutions

By Suzanne Belling

JOHANNESBURG, March 5 (JTA) — South Africa's chief rabbi is urging Jewish youth here to join volunteer police forces to help stem the tide of suburban violence.

Speaking at a synagogue peace service last week, Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris said action must be taken to reduce the escalating number of murders, hijackings and burglaries.

Several of the victims of these recent crimes have been Jews.

Among the Jewish victims were Andrew Goldman, 19, shot dead during a car hijacking, and Lauren de Groen, 22, killed by robbers in a jewelry store.

There is "a great sense of unease at the almost total absence of law and order in this country" the chief rabbi said.

The rabbi urged that steps be taken immediately "to prevent the descent into total anarchy and disarray."

"Of all the evils to which society is prone, the most damning is violence," Harris added.

The rabbi said the government deployment of extra police should extend to the northern suburbs of Johannesburg, where the majority of Jews live.

"We are sick and fed up with the lack of authority in the districts in which we live," Harris said.

"We want visible policing of the streets in our areas."

The rabbi also stressed the need for action.

"I want young men to volunteer for the police reserve. We do have very many young Jewish police reservists and we need a lot more," he said.

He said the Community Service Organization, which is responsible for security in the Jewish community, would be working with the police to begin security training courses for volunteers.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies issued a statement at the service that offered condolences to the victims and their families and expressed "shock and horror" at the frequency of the incidents. □

## Italian historians ignite debate over Holocaust denial

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, March 5 (JTA) — A group of Italian historians has raised a potential intellectual furor by defending the right of Holocaust deniers and revisionists to publish their beliefs.

The free-speech defense came in a letter published last week in the Turin daily *La Stampa*. The letter was signed by 11 professors from universities across the country.

The letter was a response to the French government, which had barred the distribution of a book on World War II by German author Jürgen Graf on the grounds that it denied the existence of the Holocaust.

The writers of the letter indicated that they had not read the book in question, but that their concern was for the broader issue of free speech.

"What is certain is that the episode forms part of a very worrying tendency that for some time has been under way in Europe, that of resolving historiographic debates by judicial means," the letter said.

"We feel that in Europe as in Iran, in Germany as in Italy and France, historical research must be free of any chain, and must be guaranteed the most complete freedom of circulation of ideas." □

The letter continued: "We are appealing, therefore, to the scientific community to which we belong, but also to the political world and to the press, so that they react to this state of affairs, and put an end to a tendency that wherever it develops may put the freedom of speech, press and culture in European countries at risk."

The signatories to the letter made clear that they did not deny the Holocaust and that they condemn all forms of racism.

*La Stampa* last week devoted a lengthy article to the letter, calling it a "provocative protest."

The paper noted that the letter's signatories came from the left, right and center of the Italian political spectrum.

"The historians who signed the letter are challenging a taboo," the newspaper said.

"Until now, no one in the scientific or academic world and outside the extreme right has objected to the banning of 'negationist' texts, a ban codified in Germany and France by regulations that consider denial of the Holocaust a crime." □

## Australian neo-Nazis barrage meeting with slurs and threats

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia, March 5 (JTA) — Participants at a government-sponsored conference here on immigration and population trends were given a first-hand view of this country's neo-Nazis in action.

Right-wing extremists disrupted sessions at the Bureau of Immigration and Population Outlook Conference, hurling anti-Jewish and anti-Asian invectives at various speakers.

One of the sessions at the conference, held in Adelaide, was a debate on anti-racism legislation between a Jewish leader and an Arabic community activist.

When Isi Leibler, president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, delivered his paper on intolerance in Australia, the national leader of an extremist group disrupted the session.

The extremist then threatened Leibler with a prison sentence.

Michael Brander, head of the neo-Nazi National Action, shouted:

"We will continue to fight for the white European nature of Australia, we will fight for our country, we will never stop and, Isi Leibler, if you try to stop us, you will be in prison yourself."

During the debate, Leibler said "anti-vilification" laws, now in place in half of the Australian states, should be extended to cover all Australians.

"It will act as a guide to police and prosecutors to act more vigorously to pursue and punish perpetrators of racist acts that are nowadays too frequently dismissed as inconsequential," he said.

The day before, a session on Australian social cohesion was interrupted by Jack King. Last year, King led an anti-Semitic rally on behalf of Australians for Free Speech.

King said at the session that no "Jew or Asian" had ever made a "useful contribution to Australia."

The final session of the conference, a taped television debate on the merits of Australia's immigration policy, was delayed because of four rightists.

The four extremists, who protested "the worldwide Zionist conspiracy" and control of Australia's government, banks and media, were ejected from the conference.

After their removal, those protesters and 19 others held a rally against "the multicultural Labor Zionist government" based in Canberra. □