



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Israel granted citizenship to convicted American spy Jonathan Pollard. Pollard praised God and his supporters said they hoped that it would lead to his release from an American jail. [Page 3]

■ Incoming Prime Minister Shimon Peres named Ehud Barak to serve as foreign minister and Haim Ramon as interior minister in his new government. In an effort to reach out to religious Israelis, he named Rabbi Yehuda Amital of Alon Shvut as minister without portfolio.

■ Most Jewish groups declared support for President Clinton's call for peacekeeping troops in Bosnia. Only the Jewish War Veterans objected. [Page 4]

■ President Clinton invited Israeli leader Shimon Peres to visit early next month. Peres is also expected to attend an "apolitical" rally at Madison Square Garden being organized by the American Jewish community.

■ Jews in Italy vowed to file civil lawsuits against former SS Capt. Erich Priebke, who arrived in Italy after 18 months of fighting the extradition. [Page 4]

■ Two suspects arrested in the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin were released on \$1,000 bail each and placed under house arrest. A ninth suspect arrested in the case had his custody extended.

■ Israeli troops shot and killed a gunman who opened fire on an army patrol near Israel's northern border with Jordan. Israeli and Jordanian security forces coordinated the search for the gunman after he wounded an Israeli soldier.

■ A fourth suspect was apprehended in Albuquerque, N.M., and charged as part of a militia-style group's conspiracy to blow up targets that included the Anti-Defamation League offices in Houston.

AT THE G.A. [Part 2]

Will Rabin's assassination jolt the Israel-Diaspora relationship?

By Cynthia Mann

BOSTON (JTA) — The planners of last week's General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations found themselves scrambling at the last minute to change the elaborate program to mark the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

But the programmatic changes reflected only the most immediate and superficial impact of the assassination.

It was clear that the killing of Rabin, who had been scheduled to appear, jolted the Jewish communal leaders gathered here, both personally and collectively.

"I have been struggling to figure out why I feel so extraordinarily shaken," said Morton Mandel, a past president of the CJF, during one of the tributes to Rabin. "Jews are safer all over the world when Israel is safe and Yitzhak Rabin knew that," he said.

"When I came to UJA, I thought 'we are one' was a trite slogan, but at the core, it's true," Rabbi Brian Lurie, executive vice president of the United Jewish Appeal, said in an interview. "We are an extended family and I never felt it more clearly."

"Rabin brought us back to what's important, the fact that the Jewish people are united," he said. "We all suffered a loss."

Nevertheless, it was unclear whether the killing would inspire the conference's nearly 4,000 delegates to return home to reassess Israel's flagging importance in the Jewish communal world or catalyze soul-searching about the nature and expression of their ties to Israel.

Menachem Revivi, director of the United Israel Office in Jerusalem, said the turbulent events of recent weeks underscore that Jews "are at a turning point."

"There is a real question of whether we have two agendas or one," he said.

Redefining the agenda

"As we in Israel are going through soul-searching about conflicts among ourselves and our neighbors, this should [trigger] soul-searching in regard to the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora," he said.

The call comes as North American Jewry is painstakingly redefining its agenda, and Israel is the most vulnerable part of it.

"The killing has reaffirmed our emotional attachment" to Israel, but at the same time "it showed that the case hasn't been made" in recent years for Israel's needs as a budget priority, said Maynard Wishner, president of the CJF, the umbrella association for more than 180 local federations.

These federations, in concert with the UJA, raise more than \$700 million annually for local and overseas needs.

Highest on the federations' priority list now is energizing these annual campaigns, which have been flat in recent years, and preserving local social service programs threatened by unprecedented federal budget cuts.

What is happening in Washington with a Republican-controlled Congress "is challenging the very nature of the governmental system which has been the safety net for people in need for well over 50 years," said Nancy Kaufman, director of Boston's Jewish Community Relations Council.

Also at stake are educational programs aimed at nurturing Jewish continuity, the community's newest priority.

The debate over how much money can and will continue to be allocated to Israel in the face of these ever-pressing local needs is central for the architects of a major plan to merge the central fund-raising structures.

The new entity, it is hoped, will be more efficient and raise more money. It is expected to consolidate the CJF, the UJA and the United Israel Appeal, which funnels campaign money to the Jewish Agency for Israel. The Jewish Agency itself is struggling with its own fiscal crisis caused, in part, by declining Diaspora allocations.

The overseas portion of the annual UJA-federation campaign has declined in recent years from a high of about 60 percent to an average of 40 percent. The sticking point for negotiators, who worked behind closed doors

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at the G.A., is how to ensure that there will be a strong voice in the new body for advocates of Israel committed to a flow of fair and adequate funding.

For Jewish Agency Chairman Avraham Burg, getting federations to commit to a "floor" of funding to Israel is critical to his sign-off on the merger. He is using the allocations to call into question the stake Diaspora Jews have in Israel itself.

The UJA's Lurie believes that "the federation system better take notice [that] their preoccupation with domestic concerns is the wrong direction."

"Jewish needs are not just defined by your home community," he said. "It's a mistaken concept which goes against the nature of the Jewish people."

"We do have a problem," said the CJF's Wishner. "There has been in the atmosphere a sense of the lessening need and relevancy of organized Jewry's historic responsibilities to Israel over the past couple of years.

"This event has refocused our attention on Israel" and "presents an opportunity to try to restate where we are in terms of the role we can play and are needed to play over the next period," he said.

Clear attempts were made at the G.A. to show identification with Israel, though some came outside the framework of the conference. Brandeis University students sponsored a spirited rally in downtown's Copley Square to show support for the Arab-Israeli peace process and it drew scores of G.A. delegates.

Institute devoted to relationship

"I can't not be out here," said Michele Rosen, president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle. "Clearly we have to help the process forward and stand with the government of Israel."

And the CJF Board of Delegates approved an amendment strengthening a resolution in support of the peace process. The amendment states "in clear terms our unequivocal support for the government of Israel and the current peace process."

It also proclaimed unity with the Jews of Israel in the wake of the killing, and called for differences over the peace process not to "erode our commitment to the core unifying principle of klal Yisrael."

One of four parallel G.A. institutes was devoted to the Israel-Diaspora relationship and drew about 800 of the roughly 4,000 delegates.

But Israel was conspicuously absent at the institute on Jewish identity and continuity, which drew close to 1,000 people and focused on spirituality and culture.

In this track, "Israel was very marginal," said David Harman, director of the Jewish Agency's Joint Authority for Jewish-Zionist Education.

"In the last few years, American Jewry has been coming to grips with its own identity and asserting its independence from Israel. It is linked to Israel by all sorts of bonds but doesn't derive its Jewishness from Israel."

Indeed, many of the Israeli participants said they were surprised that Israel did not assume a higher profile on the overall agenda.

They said the assassination has torn their country's fabric apart and raises critical questions about Jewish peoplehood that they would have liked to have had addressed.

"The G.A. did a wonderful job in reflecting American Jews' dismay and sadness at the assassination of Rabin," said Avraham Infeld, director of the Jerusalem-based Melitz Centers for Jewish-Zionist Education.

"But I think it completely missed the point that what really happened in Israel was a result of a major battle in Jewish self-understanding and not an internal Israeli political issue."

The question of whether Israel "is a product of modern nationalism or is part of a Messianic process should have played a far greater role in the discussions and content," he said.

The call by Rabin and other Israeli leaders for closer partnership between Israel and the Diaspora had intensified in the weeks before the assassination, according to Shoshana Cardin, chair of the UIA.

There was "an understanding that there could be a major rift" between the two communities, as each turned inward to address their own concerns and as allocations to Israel were falling, Cardin said.

'The house is burning'

Sources said Rabin had been planning to address the dangers of the rift and the need for unity in his remarks to the G.A.

Instead his close aide and speech writer, Eitan Haber, underscored the drama of the moment.

"The house is burning," he told a G.A. plenary. "If the result of this tragedy is not a better understanding of one another, then we all betray the goals of the Jewish people and [Rabin's] legacy."

Haber said Rabin had underestimated the impact of some of his recent criticisms of Diaspora Jews for not contributing enough to the Israel partnership through the Jewish Agency and not being supportive enough of the peace process.

Rabin "wanted to send a message to the Jews of America" that their fate and the fate of Israelis "is linked forever," he said.

Israeli Finance Minister Avraham Shohat also delivered a powerful call urging North American Jews to express solidarity with Israel.

He drew the loudest applause when he said, "In the name of Yitzhak Rabin, I ask you to raise your voices in your communities and say, 'No to violence, yes to dialogue; no to bigotry, yes to tolerance; no to fanaticism, yes to pluralism; and yes, yes, yes to peace.'"

"These are the values for which Yitzhak Rabin lived and died," said Shohat, who was joined by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and other dignitaries in paying tribute to Rabin.

Israeli leader Shimon Peres spoke via satellite to the delegates.

Cardin said that even though this G.A. did not demonstrate "the overwhelming expression of unity with Israel" that she had seen at others, "there was a heightened interest in the Jewish Agency-federation partnership."

Indeed, there was an overflow crowd of hundreds at the forum on the partnership between the Jewish Agency and the federations, featuring Jewish Agency Chairman Burg, Cardin and others.

One fund-raiser from Boston's North Shore said at the forum that he is stymied in his work by the "enormous indifference" of donors to Israel, who consistently hear about Israel's economic successes.

"I bust my chops as much as I can and I can't sell Israel," he said. "We are two ships drifting in the opposite direction."

Although at a later news conference Burg seemed to dismiss the impact of federal funding on federation allocations overseas, at the partnership forum he said, "I know how difficult it is" for federations strapped by budget cuts and increased local demands.

Nonetheless he issued a warning: "If we don't have balanced responsibility people will be raising questions about the whole partnership.

"We are two sides of a coin. One side is mine, one side is yours. Without the two sides, there is no currency," he said. "Is this the time to sell your share?" □

'Baruch haShem,' says Pollard on becoming an Israeli citizen

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — "Baruch haShem, I'm no longer an orphan," said Jonathan Pollard when told this week that he had been granted Israeli citizenship.

Ten years to the day after Pollard was thrown off the Israeli Embassy grounds in Washington and arrested by American agents on charges of spying on the United States, the State of Israel has granted him citizenship.

"Jonathan has felt for a long time a sense of very real abandonment," said Rabbi Avi Weiss, Pollard's spiritual adviser, who spoke with Pollard Tuesday and relayed his response to the news.

The decision was also welcomed by those closest to Pollard as an important step on the road to his release from prison.

"We're overjoyed. This is the best news we've had in 10 years," said Esther Pollard, his wife, in a phone interview from her home in Toronto.

"We are very pleased. I hope it leads to freedom," Morris Pollard, his father, said from South Bend, Ind. "The only route to go for now is clemency."

Israeli leader Shimon Peres is expected to request that Pollard's life sentence be commuted when he is expected to meet with President Clinton in Washington on Dec. 11.

The same request was made by the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin during his last trip to the United States in October.

Clinton did not respond to Rabin's request at that time, and in March 1994 denied a similar request, as had his predecessor, George Bush, who turned down the clemency bid as one of his final acts as president.

The decision was announced by Israeli Interior Minister Ehud Barak on Tuesday, the same day that he was appointed foreign minister in Peres' new Cabinet.

Pollard's first parole hearing was scheduled for earlier this month but was rescheduled, at Pollard's own request, for January 1996.

'Absolutely ecstatic'

"There was a sense he wasn't going to get paroled, so there was a desire to put it off, hoping the president would act [and grant clemency] before the hearing," said a source close to Pollard.

Pollard, now 41, was an American civilian intelligence analyst for the U.S. Navy when he was arrested in November 1985 outside the Israeli Embassy.

He was arrested by FBI agents who had been monitoring Pollard and his first wife, Anne.

Pollard pleaded guilty to spying on behalf of Israel and in 1987 was sentenced to life. He is now incarcerated in a medium security federal prison in Butner, N.C.

Weiss said he is "absolutely ecstatic" that Pollard has been granted Israeli citizenship.

"The granting of citizenship sends a message to the U.S. government that Jonathan Pollard is very high on the Israeli agenda, and it's time for the president to free Jonathan and allow him to go home," said Weiss.

Israel has previously granted citizenship in absentia to people who wanted to immigrate to Israel but were prevented from doing so by their country of origin, including immigration activists and Prisoners of Zion in the former Soviet Union.

Israel initially denied the citizenship request submitted by Pollard's wife, Esther Pollard.

When she appealed to Israel's Supreme Court, which gave the government 30 days to show cause why his citizenship should be denied, the government relented.

Sources speculated that the Israeli government extended the citizenship because it wants to protect its own interests and avoid divulging secret information in open court.

Others, including communal leader and longtime Pollard advocate Seymour Reich, said the Israeli government thought that it would hurt the prisoner's chance for parole or commutation if forced to admit why it initially denied the request.

Pollard and Esther Pollard had submitted the citizenship request in the hope that it could increase his chances for early release.

Coincidentally, in a letter to Clinton and Peres this week, Esther Pollard urged continued efforts to secure Pollard's release.

She noted that Rabin had raised the matter with Clinton on three separate occasions and said that Israel now has a legal and moral responsibility to push for Pollard's release.

"Joining hands now and acting in unison to free Jonathan Pollard now, upon the 10th anniversary of his imprisonment, sends a message and strength to honor the memory of Yitzhak Rabin," she wrote.

"It would send a message of unity and strength to all nations, and the Jewish world at large," she said in an interview from her home. □

(JTA correspondent Naomi Segal in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

Specter ends bid for president amid tepid support, few funds

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Stung by lackluster fund raising and single-digit support from the electorate, Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) is ending his long-shot presidential bid.

Specter, the first Jew to make a serious run for the White House, never mobilized grass-roots support for his pro-choice, anti-religious right, fiscally conservative candidacy.

As the only Jew in the field of Republican presidential hopefuls, Specter had hoped to gain support of moderate Republicans, including Jews, as well as big Jewish donors.

But in the end, Specter did not get their money or their support.

Specter was scheduled to announce the official suspension of his presidential campaign in Philadelphia on Wednesday.

However, Specter intends to stay officially in the race until at least Jan. 1, in order to collect an estimated \$1.2 million in matching federal funds, according to knowledgeable sources.

Although Specter received support from some Jewish political action committees and donors such as Herbert Linsenberg, a longtime supporter who also serves as treasurer of the Republican group the National Jewish Coalition, many Jewish Republican powerhouses flocked to other candidates.

"Many Jews supported him, but gave him token support," said Linsenberg of Philadelphia. "Nobody wants to back a losing horse."

Specter's chances "were really slim from the get-go," Linsenberg said.

Specter campaign officials said retired Gen. Colin Powell's flirtation with seeking the nomination hurt their fund-raising efforts.

Officials added that the largest contributions came from Jews and abortion-rights activists — but mostly in small contributions. □

Jewish groups back call for U.S. troops in Bosnia

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — When President Clinton asks Congress to support sending 20,000 U.S. troops to enforce a peace agreement in Bosnia, he will have overwhelming support from the organized Jewish community.

“As Jews we have a special responsibility and cannot be absent from this next chapter,” said Hyman Bookbinder, a longtime Jewish communal activist who is a founding member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council’s Committee on Conscience. “If we ever meant the words ‘never again,’ we need to back the president.”

Clinton announced a settlement between the warring parties in the former Yugoslavia in an address Tuesday from the White House Rose Garden.

The settlement comes 3 1/2 years after the outbreak of war in the Balkans and 21 days after marathon negotiations in Dayton, Ohio, between leaders from Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia. “Now that the parties to the war have made a serious commitment to peace, we must help them to make it work,” Clinton said.

Throughout the fighting in Bosnia, many Jewish groups were outspoken about the need for some form of American intervention. The call became particularly urgent in the face of mounting evidence of genocide and ethnic cleansing, which many Jews found reminiscent of the Holocaust. That effort is now continuing among most — though not all — Jewish organizations.

“Given our strong urging that the administration move aggressively to stop the killing in Bosnia and build the framework for peace and that it use American force to accomplish those ends, a peacekeeping role fits into the definition of the appropriate role of the United States,” said Jason Isaacson, director of the American Jewish Committee’s Washington office.

‘A moral imperative’

Sending troops is “a moral imperative,” said Mike Klein, communications and policy director for the National Jewish Democratic Council.

“We believe that there will be strong support from the Jewish community for this initiative,” Klein said.

The NJDC plans to encourage congressional Democrats to support sending peacekeepers, he said.

Other Jewish groups endorsed peacekeeping troops, including the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council and the American Jewish Congress.

The Reform movement’s Union of American Hebrew Congregations is expected to endorse Clinton’s call at its annual convention next week.

At least one Jewish organization — the Jewish War Veterans — vehemently opposes sending troops to Bosnia. “Our mind has not changed. It is a dangerous proposition and we hope Congress will oppose it,” said Howard Metzger, the JWV’s national director for public relations.

Despite widespread support in the Jewish community, activists caution that Clinton must be clear about the mission for the U.S. troops, which would make up one-third of the 60,000 NATO forces in Bosnia. The mission must be “carefully defined, carefully explained and carefully limited to accomplishing the ends of assuring that this agreement is fulfilled and does not turn peacekeepers into peacemakers,” said AJCommittee’s Isaacson.

Clinton faces an uphill battle in his effort to sway Congress to support sending troops.

Both the House and Senate have consistently voted in recent months to oppose a U.S. deployment to Bosnia.

Congress has many legislative options now that the call for troops is official in the wake of this week’s

agreement. It can either endorse or oppose the move in a nonbinding resolution. If opponents outweigh supporters, activists expect another bill to emerge that would ban the Pentagon from spending funds on a Bosnia deployment.

Any such measure would face a certain presidential veto as well as stiff opposition in the Senate.

Clinton, however, has said he would work toward a bipartisan consensus to endorse the deployment.

“Without us, the hard-won peace would be lost, the war would resume, the slaughter of innocents would begin again and the conflict that already has claimed so many people could spread like poison,” the president said, adding, “We are at a decisive moment. The parties have chosen peace. America must choose peace as well.” □

Italian Jews vow lawsuits against extradited former Nazi

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — One day after admirers of Erich Priebke bid him a fond farewell in Argentina, members of the Italian Jewish community and victims organizations said that they would file suits against the extradited former SS captain.

“We are not asking for a vendetta, but for justice,” said Rome Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff.

After 18 months of legal wrangling, Priebke was extradited to Italy to stand trial for his involvement in the 1944 massacre of 335 Romans — including 75 Jews, several Roman Catholic priests and three teen-agers — at the Ardeatine Caves south of Rome.

The massacre, which was ordered in reprisal for the killing by partisans of 33 German soldiers, is regarded as the worst war crime committed on Italian soil.

Priebke, 82, was accompanied by a group of Italian Interpol agents and medical personnel when he departed Argentina on Monday for an 18-hour flight to a military airport outside Rome. Heavy security lined the route Tuesday as the former Nazi was whisked away from the airport in a police van to the Forte Boccea military prison.

A preliminary hearing before a military tribunal is set for Dec. 7, when it will be decided whether enough evidence exists to send Priebke to trial.

The trial itself is expected to begin in the spring.

“This is probably going to be the last of the war crimes trials” stemming from World War II, Shimon Samuels, European director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, said in an interview.

The Italian jet that brought Priebke to Rome — from his home in the Andean resort of Bariloche — took off from Argentina on the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Nuremberg war crimes trials.

Twelve high-ranking Nazis of 21 who appeared before the military tribunal were sentenced to death in those trials.

Priebke faces life imprisonment if convicted for the part he played in the wartime massacre in Italy.

Priebke was to have been tried after the war, but he escaped from a British-run prison camp in northeast Italy in 1946, and in 1948, made his way to Argentina.

In August 1946, he admitted to taking part in the massacre, as he did when interviewed by an American news team in Bariloche last year.

It was the ABC team that discovered the former Nazi living under his own name as a respected citizen of Bariloche.

On the day he departed from Argentina, local magazine Bariloche Today ran a cover story calling Priebke “our good neighbor.” □

(JTA correspondent Sergio Kiernan in Buenos Aires contributed to this report.)