



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Rabbi Brian Lurie, executive vice president of the United Jewish Appeal, announced the appointment of Bernie Moscovitz to handle the day-to-day management of the UJA as chief operating officer for the next nine months. Lurie termed the appointment "a management addition." [Page 2]**

■ **Islamic terrorists in Lebanon fired Katyusha rockets at Israel for the second day in a row, causing light injuries and serious property damage. The attacks prompted Prime Minister Shimon Peres to call on Syria to restrain the Hezbollah movement. [Page 4]**

■ **House Speaker Newt Gingrich is prepared to offer a new job to Christina Jeffrey, the House historian he fired earlier this year for her statements about a Holocaust curriculum. In a letter to Jeffrey, Gingrich commended her for her "tenacity" and agreed to meet with her later this year.**

■ **Russian ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy said he would run in his country's presidential elections in June.**

■ **A Jewish businessman in Turkey was murdered by gunmen who opened fire on his car. An anonymous caller reportedly told Turkish security forces that the slaying of Nesim Malki was in retaliation for last month's shooting death in Malta of Dr. Fathi Shakaki, the leader of the fundamentalist Islamic Jihad movement.**

■ **Israeli police summoned Rabbi Nahum Rabinovich for questioning in connection with the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Rabinovich, of the community of Ma'aleh Adumim, is suspected of giving religious sanction for the assassination.**

■ **Israeli security forces shot and killed a Hamas fugitive in a village near the West Bank town of Hebron. Abdel Karim Masalmeh had been on Israel's wanted list for a year.**

■ **Israel and Mauritania signed a mutual recognition agreement, marking a first step toward the establishment of diplomatic ties. [Page 4]**

GOP presidential contenders woo Jewish voters — all at once

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — With their party's full weight behind them, candidates for the Republican presidential race have launched an all-out effort to woo Jewish voters into their ranks.

As the opening speaker at a GOP presidential forum sponsored by the National Jewish Coalition, the premier Republican Jewish group, Sen. Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) called on the United States to negotiate a "full-fledged comprehensive alliance" with Israel.

"It is time to go beyond the current level of cooperation between the United States and Israel," Dole told the 450 delegates gathered here Tuesday for the NJC's "Victory in '96" convention.

Seven of the Republican presidential candidates — all except Pat Buchanan — accepted the invitation to appear at the NJC event. Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), who was initially scheduled to appear, dropped out of the race last week.

Whether Jewish voters will flock to the Republican Party as its leaders hope will only be known on Election Day 1996.

But there is no question that the Republican Party is gearing up to seek out Jewish voters, who have traditionally supported the Democratic Party in overwhelming numbers.

"It's not acceptable for me as the chairman of the Republican Party for our candidate for president to get 19 percent of the Jewish vote," said Haley Barbour, chairman of the Republican National Committee. "We as a party must — and we as a party will — be more effective and more aggressive in advancing our message in the Jewish community."

Barbour set a goal of 40 percent Jewish support for the GOP presidential nominee in the 1996 election.

Dole's latest initiative aimed at strengthening the U.S.-Israel relationship follows his recent victory in ushering through Congress legislation that recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's capital and requires the U.S. Embassy in Israel to be moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Dole has been working to overcome an anti-Israel reputation that has plagued the Republican presidential frontrunner for almost a decade.

The reputation emerged in the 1980s, when he opposed moving the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and he proposed a cut in Israel's foreign aid.

In introducing the senator, one of Dole's chief Jewish backers praised Dole's record on Israel. "On our issues, Bob Dole's relationship with Israel borders on historic," said businessman and philanthropist Leslie Wexner.

Dole has been "steady and consistent in his support for Israel," Wexner added.

Some candidates rail against U.S. troops in Bosnia

In his 30-minute remarks, Dole said he believes that a formal treaty alliance would lead to "greater cooperation between the U.S. and Israel in Mideast defense planning," making the region safer for Israel, Arab states and American interests.

All the candidates mentioned Israel in their half-hour remarks, but they focused mostly on the dominant themes from their individual campaigns.

None of the candidates substantively addressed other issues of particular concern to the Jewish community, including school prayer and other church-state issues. They did, however, focus on domestic budget issues and foreign policy concerns, including the topical question of whether to send U.S. troops to enforce the Bosnia peace agreement.

The session convened the morning after President Clinton's Oval Office address that presented the case for sending troops.

Dole remained noncommittal but leaned toward supporting the Bosnia mission.

Dole said he told Clinton last night that he "made a good start" and "if you persuade the American people you can persuade the American Congress."

Other GOP candidates, however, railed against Clinton and his plan to send 20,000 U.S. forces to Bosnia. "Outside of our treaty obligations we

should not be prepared to fight in someone else's civil war," said Lamar Alexander, former Tennessee governor.

Alan Keyes, a longshot in the Republican race, criticized Clinton's plan and his pitch to American citizens to support it. "It didn't sound like a really good argument to me," he said.

Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Texas), Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), Rep. Robert Dornan (R-Calif.) and businessman Steven Forbes also addressed the delegates later in the day.

Gramm, who placed second to Dole in a recent Florida straw poll, said, "As a senator from Texas and a president of the United States, no one will be more committed to finding a [comprehensive Middle East] peace than I will be." Gramm devoted most of his speech to budget issues.

The one-day forum, celebrating the NJC's 10th anniversary, was scheduled to conclude Tuesday evening with an address by Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.). □

UJA adds management post, naming chief operating officer

By Cynthia Mann

NEW YORK (JTA) — The United Jewish Appeal is implementing a change at the top.

Rabbi Brian Lurie, the UJA's chief executive officer and executive vice president, has announced the appointment of Bernie Moscovitz to handle the day-to-day management of the UJA as chief operating officer and vice president for the next nine months.

The move is "a management addition that will strengthen the agency," Lurie said in a phone interview Tuesday.

Moscovitz had been the national marketing director.

Lurie said he would stay on at the UJA until September 1996, fulfilling the five-year term that he promised when he signed on as executive vice president.

He said he would continue to focus on issues relating to the changing Jewish Agency for Israel and the restructuring plan to merge Diaspora Jewry's central fundraising structures.

The new entity being worked out is expected to consolidate the UJA, the Council of Jewish Federations and the United Israel Appeal, which funnels campaign money to the Jewish Agency.

Moscovitz, in turn, will oversee the remainder of the 1996 annual campaign and the beginning of the 1997 campaign.

"We need somebody to manage the day-to-day affairs and focus on the annual campaign" said Lurie, who has been traveling extensively for his job.

Lurie said he plans to return to the San Francisco area, where his family is living, when he leaves the UJA, but he is not sure what he will do.

For now, he said, he is "concentrating on the huge job" ahead in the next nine months. □

(JTA editor Lisa Hostein contributed to this report.)

American Jewish groups join battle against conversion law

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Key American Jewish organizations have pledged their active support for a growing campaign by non-Orthodox and secular groups here against new legislation that would effectively bar official state recognition of Conservative and Reform conversions performed in Israel.

Some are threatening that the issue could turn into a repeat of the vitriolic "Who is a Jew" controversy that plagued Israeli-Diaspora relations half a decade ago.

The conversion issue, always politically sensitive in Israel, surfaced in its current form after a recent decision by the High Court of Justice that effectively opened the way to state recognition of Conservative and Reform conversions performed in Israel.

Orthodox leaders viewed the court decision as a blow to their control over major life-cycle events, including marriages, in the Jewish state.

Hillel Shuval, chairman of Hemdat, an Israeli lobbying group for religious freedom and pluralism, said in an interview this week that representatives of the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League and leaders of the Conservative and Reform movements will all seek meetings with Prime Minister Shimon Peres and other ministers to urge them not to go ahead with the legislation, which has been demanded by the Orthodox parties.

On Monday, Israeli representatives of these American Jewish movements, together with leaders of pro-pluralism Israeli movements, met at the Knesset with sympathetic members of the Labor, Meretz and Tsomet parties to form a coalition against the proposed legislation.

The Israeli groups opposed to the legislation include the Masorti movement, Israel's Conservative movement; the World Union of Progressive Judaism, with which the Reform movement is connected; Na'amat, the Histadrut's women's movement; the Israel Women's Network; the Association of Civil Rights in Israel; and Yisrael Hofshi, a new movement representing immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

Non-Orthodox conversions performed abroad are already recognized in Israel.

Another 'Who is a Jew' debate?

All the Orthodox parties immediately reacted to the court ruling with a demand that the Knesset pass legislation barring the recognition of non-Orthodox conversions. The Knesset has the prerogative to pass legislation overturning a court decision.

The Orthodox parties found themselves fighting an uphill battle when they stood in solid opposition to the coalition of Rabin's Labor Party and its secularist partner, Meretz. But the Nov. 4 assassination of Rabin and the subsequent political shifts have brought the Orthodox parties back into the very heart of coalition politics.

The Orthodox parties, mindful of the major Israeli-Diaspora crisis generated over an earlier version of the conversion question in 1989, claim that the current version is a purely internal Israeli matter, because it concerns conversions performed on Israeli soil.

In the 1989 episode, which exploded into the infamous "Who is a Jew" debate, the Orthodox parties sought — unsuccessfully — to enact legislation that in effect disqualified anyone who had been converted abroad by a non-Orthodox rabbi from immigrating to Israel under the Law of Return.

At that time, many American Jewish organizations successfully participated in an unprecedented lobbying effort to pressure both Labor and Likud to forgo the proposed legislation.

For their part, the American Jewish groups firmly reject the Orthodox attempt to draw a distinction between conversions performed abroad and those performed in Israel.

"To us — this is 'Who is a Jew' through the back door," said Shuval, who is flying to the United States this week as part of an Israeli delegation seeking to generate support for the pluralist position. □

Agudath Israel leader calls for dialogue as he lashes out

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

PARSIPPANY, N.J. (JTA) — Rabbi Yaacov Perlow, a prominent leader of Agudath Israel of America, has called for healing and dialogue between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Israelis.

But Perlow, addressing Agudah's 73rd national convention last week, coupled his call for dialogue with a lashing out at what he described as the "false ideology" of non-Orthodox Judaism.

His remarks came amid rising tensions among Jews both in Israel and the United States in the wake of the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Perlow, who heads the Novominsker yeshiva in Boro Park, Brooklyn, and is widely respected by Chasidic and non-Chasidic Orthodox Jews, is one of five members of the Council of Torah Sages, the religious leadership of Agudath Israel, an organization representing the interests of the fervently Orthodox.

Perlow, who formerly ran Breuer's yeshiva in the Washington Heights section of Manhattan, was the keynote speaker at the convention, held at the Parsippany, N.J., Hilton Hotel.

More than 3,000 constituents of Agudah gathered for the four-day event that began Thanksgiving Day.

The American holiday celebrating religious freedom was pointedly ignored by the assembly of haredi Jews gathered, who feel that it is "just too close to Christianity because it was Christians who first celebrated it," said Agudah spokesman Rabbi Avi Shafran.

In his address, Perlow spoke of his pain over the assassination of Rabin by an Orthodox Jew, terming it a "chillul haShem (desecration of God's name) of cosmic proportions, as is the subsequent wave of defamation and hatred against religious people."

He condemned confessed assassin Yigal Amir's claim that God instructed him to kill Rabin, and said the classification by some religious authorities in Israel of Rabin as a "rodef," or pursuer, was wrong.

Jewish law permits a Jew to kill another person only if his life is being directly threatened by such a person, a "rodef," he said.

"How can serious people, among them talmedei chachamim (wise students of Judaism) entertain such ideas?" said Perlow.

"The moral foundations of our family have been shaken" by the assassination, he said.

"There are times when inner peace is missing, when the very pillars of our holy community are shaken and under attack. I, for one, have no inner peace these days," Perlow told the Agudah constituents.

'Verbal stone-throwing'

Perlow also said he is worried about the breach between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews in Israel. "This is a serious problem," he said. "There is no relating between us in any way but for verbal stone-throwing. Our responses cannot be limited to ideological warfare."

Perlow prefaced his comments, however, with strong criticism of the non-Orthodox Jews campaigning for the government of Israel to recognize non-Orthodox forms of Judaism as legitimate. "The forces of the left are conducting a concerted drive to erase the fundamental features of our religion," said Perlow in his speech.

The Reform movement is spearheading "Operation Equality," whose goal is to get the Knesset to pass legislation that would allow non-Orthodox rabbis to officiate at weddings and other life-cycle events.

Now, only Orthodox rabbis are allowed to officiate.

A countercampaign is being mounted by the Agudath Israel World Organization and led by Agudath Israel of America President Rabbi Moshe Sherer. It is "a battle of light and darkness, a battle of Jacob and Esau for the soul of Eretz Yisrael," Perlow said. "The kulturkampf raging in Israel today is for the very soul of our people, which wants to cling to some remainder of tradition."

"Chilonim (nonobservant) in Israel and America are always ready to bash the religion. To them yeshivas train misfits, rabbis advocate terrorism and murder," he said, decrying those who make no distinctions between different segments of the Orthodox community.

He urged his listeners "to consider ways and means to engage" the non-Orthodox, "to convey our message and vision, to reach out to the entire family of Jews. "After all the fighting, we are one family of people," he said.

The Council of Torah Sages also published an ad last Friday on the op-ed page of The New York Times condemning Rabin's killing in unequivocal terms.

The confessed assassin's "shocking claim that his act was based on halachah (Jewish law)" is "erroneous — indeed a total distortion of fundamental Jewish values," it said. "The assassination should remind all Jews — no matter what their views on the Middle East peace process or any of the other policies of the current Israeli government — that inflammatory rhetoric and hateful invective often toxify the atmosphere," the ad said. □

Judge probing embassy blast in Argentina resigns from court

By Sergio Kiernan

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — Days after the Argentine Supreme Court refused to accept his resignation from the investigation of the March 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, Justice Ricardo Levene resigned from the court.

"We all regret the decision taken by Levene," said Justice Minister Rodolfo Barra, who described Levene as a "glory of Argentine justice." Barra told reporters Monday that the resignation would take effect Dec. 5.

According to observers, the resignation of Levene, who is not Jewish, was not related to the investigation of the embassy bombing.

In early November, Levene, 82, offered to step down from the embassy bombing case after Israeli Ambassador Itzhak Aviran and Ruben Beraja, the president of the Jewish umbrella organization DAIA, asked him to dismiss himself because of what they called the lack of any progress in the investigation.

Beraja at the time labeled the investigation "fossilized" and pointed at the "total lack of results," saying that there were "no arrests, no evidence gathered" in the attack that left 29 dead.

But last Friday, the Supreme Court refused to remove Levene from the case, calling his investigation "impeccable" and "within due process." Court members privately said they did not want to appear as having been "manipulated" by local and foreign pressures.

Under Argentine law, the Supreme Court investigates all cases involving foreign diplomats and embassies.

In addition to its criticism of the investigation into the embassy bombing, the Argentine Jewish community has likewise been sharply critical of the government's investigation of the July 18, 1994, bombing of the AMIA building, the Jewish community's headquarters here.

Only one person, Carlos Telleldin, has been charged in connection with the 1994 bombing, which left 87 dead and at least 300 wounded. He was accused of selling the van used in the attack. □

Peres holds Syria responsible for attacks on northern Israel

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Shimon Peres has called on Syria to restrain the Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah movement, which fired Katyusha rockets into northern Israel for two consecutive days this week.

Peres told reporters during a visit Tuesday to Kiryat Shmona — on Israel's northern border — that Syria, which controls parts of Lebanon in which Hezbollah operates, must take responsibility for the recent rocket attacks.

Referring to remarks made by Syria's foreign minister only a day before during a conference in Barcelona, Spain, Peres said the attacks stood in sharp contrast to the minister's hints at resuming peace negotiations, which have been stalled since June.

"We see a big contradiction between calling for peace and firing Katyushas," said Peres.

The United States condemned the attacks Tuesday and called on Syria to bring them to a halt.

The attacks are "clearly an effort to undermine the search of a peace in the Middle East," said State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns.

Burns said Secretary of State Warren Christopher had called Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa early Tuesday morning about the rocket attacks.

He added that the State Department had also been in touch with Israeli and Lebanese leaders, urging them to "do everything possible to calm the situation."

The State Department spokesman also said U.S. Middle East peace envoy Dennis Ross would visit the region next week in an effort to restart the stalled Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations.

Dozens of Katyushas rained down on the Galilee panhandle and Western Galilee on Tuesday, causing serious property damage and wounding six people lightly.

A medical official in Kiryat Shmona said four people were slightly wounded by shrapnel and that about 30 others were treated for shock.

One resident of a northern settlement told Israel Radio that his house had been battered repeatedly by Hezbollah Katyusha assaults in the past.

He complained that there was inadequate security for the settlement.

"There was no one to help us" when Tuesday's attack occurred, Ya'acov Mashiah said. "Only after the attacks do all the officers come in their nice, clean uniforms."

"People have got to open their eyes. This has got to be the 15th Katyusha that has hit us. My home is the most rocketed in all of Israel."

'Saw life go before my eyes'

Avraham Malka, a French tourist who arrived in Israel two days before the attacks, told Israel Radio that his car was totally destroyed by one of the rockets.

"I saw my life go before my eyes," he said. "I watched as scraps of shrapnel destroyed my car, only a few meters away."

The border remained on high alert Tuesday night, and northern residents were ordered to spend the night in underground shelters.

Tuesday's rocket attacks followed Monday's smaller-scale assault, in which the Israel Defense Force confirmed that one Katyusha fell inside the Israeli border, causing no damage or injury.

Israel responded to Tuesday's attack with artillery and air strikes on Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon.

Internal Security Minister Moshe Shahal called the

attacks a clear breach of the understandings reached with Hezbollah in July 1993, when Hezbollah's Katyusha assaults on northern Israel were met with intense Israeli bombardment of civilian areas in Lebanon.

Under an understanding brokered at the time by Christopher, both sides agreed to refrain from attacking civilian areas and to limit their hostilities to the southern Lebanon security zone.

Shahal said Israel might respond to this breach of the understanding "in such a way that Lebanese civilians who are sheltering Hezbollah will feel less secure than they do today."

His warnings were echoed throughout the day by other Israeli officials.

There was widespread speculation over what triggered the rocket attacks, the first since July, when a Katyusha rocket hit a resort in northern Israel.

A French chef at the resort was killed in that attack.

Three Hezbollah fighters were killed over the weekend in Israeli air strikes.

Israeli forces also demolished 10 abandoned houses in Lebanon that were believed to be launching sites for Hezbollah infiltration attempts into the southern Lebanon security zone.

On Tuesday, according to reports from Lebanon, a senior Hezbollah official was killed in an explosion the group blamed on Israel.

There was also speculation that the rocket attacks came as a response to recent indications of possible progress on the Israeli-Syrian peace track.

Hopes for progress increased as a result of an exchange Monday night between Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak and his Syrian counterpart, Sharaa, at the Euro-Mediterranean conference in Barcelona.

Expectations that the two would hold a face-to-face discussion at the sidelines of the conference were not borne out, but at the conference table Barak issued a direct call to Sharaa for Israel and Syria to make peace.

Sharaa's response did not include any new Syrian stances regarding conditions for making peace, but he addressed Barak directly in his remarks, which were devoid of polemics — a sign Barak later called encouraging. □

Mauritania takes first step toward relations with Israel

By Joseph Kopel

BARCELONA, Spain (JTA) — Israel and the West African nation of Mauritania have signed a mutual recognition agreement, marking a first step toward the establishment of diplomatic ties.

Under the agreement, Israel and Mauritania, a member of the Arab League, will set up interest sections in the Spanish embassies located in both countries.

The agreement was signed during the course of a two-day meeting held here this week at which the foreign ministers from 11 Mediterranean countries, including Israel, met with their counterparts from the 15-member European Union.

Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat also attended the conference, where he was reportedly treated as a head of state.

Libya was the only Mediterranean state not invited to the conference.

The two-day session, which focused on political and economic issues, concluded Tuesday with the issuing of a joint declaration calling for further political dialogue among all the states, increased E.U. assistance to its Mediterranean neighbors and cooperation to control illegal immigration, crime and drugs. □