



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres met today in Washington with President Clinton and Secretary of State Warren Christopher. Among the issues on the agenda were Israel's stalled talks with Syria and its strategic relationship with the United States. [Page 2]

■ Prime Minister Shimon Peres' adviser on counterterrorism issued a warning to Israelis to be on the alert for terrorist attacks when traveling abroad. The World Jewish Congress responded to the warning by distributing an advisory to its members around the world.

■ Organizers of the Madison Square Garden rally for Israel attributed the exclusion of thousands of would-be attendees to extraordinary security measures. [Page 3]

■ Israeli troops completed their withdrawal from Nablus, the largest West Bank town, 48 hours ahead of schedule. A contingent of Palestinian security officers arrived in the West Bank town of Ramallah to begin preparations for assuming control of local affairs there.

■ Canadian Jews reacted with indignation to a federal judge in Quebec who said that during the Holocaust, Jews were put to death in gas chambers "without suffering." Jewish groups in Montreal called for the resignation of Superior Court Judge Jean Bienvenue. [Page 4]

■ Capitol Hill police are looking into a case of anti-Semitic vandalism after a Jewish congressional messenger found a swastika painted on the door of his dormitory. [Page 4]

■ A Jerusalem court sentenced Jewish settler leader Rabbi Moshe Levinger to six months in jail and a six-month suspended sentence for causing a violent disturbance in the Hebron market four years ago. [Page 3]

■ A tremor shook southern Israel and northeastern Egypt, but there were no reports of damages or injuries. The tremor, which measured 5.1 on the Richter scale, was centered in the Gulf of Aqaba. [Page 3]

## ON SUNDAY, THEY RALLIED [Part 3]

### Strong Orthodox showing answers pre-tribute concerns

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — Would they come or wouldn't they?

The extent of Orthodox participation in the memorial tribute to slain Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was uncertain in the days leading up to the Sunday event at Madison Square Garden here.

In the end, even though the Orthodox presence at the gathering was limited to those who would describe themselves as "modern" Orthodox, rather than the more fervently Orthodox, they were there in force.

By some estimates, Orthodox Jews comprised as many as one-third of the estimated 14,000 to 15,000 individuals who attended.

"There was an outpouring of interest" by the Orthodox community, Rabbi Raphael Butler, executive vice president of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, said in an interview after the rally.

The O.U., after a series of internal debates about participating in the event, did so as one of the program's co-sponsors.

Organizers feared that if the Orthodox community boycotted the event, it might be viewed too narrowly as a political event in support of the peace process. Many in the Orthodox community oppose the policies that Rabin developed and that his successor, Shimon Peres, intends to carry out.

David Gershov, an Orthodox attorney living on Manhattan's Upper West Side, said he knew many people who did not come because they thought that the rally was intended to support the Israeli government's policies. "I might not have come had it been billed as supporting the peace process rather than the pursuit of peace," he said. "I believe in the pursuit of peace and the pursuit of unity of the Jewish people."

Even members of several area Young Israel synagogues, whose parent organization, the National Council of Young Israel, had boycotted the event, attended.

Orthodox involvement was not limited to sitting in the audience, either. Boys and girls from two modern Orthodox schools in New York City — Ramaz and the Park East Day School — sang as part of a youth choir, which also included children from religiously liberal day schools.

There had been a strong wave of protest in the N.Y. area's Orthodox communities against the rally. Many criticized the fact that no one on the short list of speakers was from Israel's political opposition.

### Controversial decision at home

The widely read Jewish Press newspaper printed a prominent editorial headlined "All Jews Should Say NO To The Rally" in the issue published a few days before the gathering. "No Jew who cherishes democracy and freedom of expression should attend a rally that countenances the principle that 'unity' can be achieved by excluding all opposition," it read. It described the gathering as "the so-called 'unity' rally."

Orthodox men and women in the audience said the decision to attend the tribute was controversial in their home communities.

"There were very mixed feelings about the rally and some opposition because they didn't have [Likud leader Benjamin] Netanyahu come," said one young woman from the Flatbush section of Brooklyn, who is a freshman at Brooklyn College and asked that her name not be used.

Others made it clear that the Orthodox community is far from monolithic even when it comes to opposition to the current peace process.

"I'm Orthodox and I'm here," said Yael Ukeles, a computer programmer specializing in the design of multimedia applications. "Why does the media always focus on the protesters, on the negative?"

Several applauded the remarks by Peres, who said that "when you have two views you don't have to become two peoples."

"We expect the opposition with us to make the nation free and democratic, having many views and remaining together," he said.

"Peres had it right," said Steven Katz, an Orthodox Jew from Manhattan who works as a researcher at an investment banking firm.

"Before we can make peace with other people, we have to make peace between ourselves." □

## Peres and Clinton pledge new push for Syrian track

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Dismissed as a virtual lost cause before the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, Israeli-Syrian peace has moved squarely out of the wings and onto the diplomatic center stage.

In meetings with President Clinton during his first visit here since he took charge of Israel last month, Prime Minister Shimon Peres injected a new urgency into making peace with one of the Jewish state's northern neighbors.

"Together, we shall stay the cause and, with firm resolve, reach a destiny of lasting and a secure peace; a peace for the whole of the Middle East, Arabs and Jews, Jews and Arabs," Peres said at a joint news conference with Clinton after their meeting Monday.

"This was Yitzhak Rabin's quest; it is my commitment," Peres said.

For his part, Clinton pledged to stand behind Peres and Israel. "As Israel continues to take risks for a lasting and comprehensive peace, the United States will stand with you to minimize those risks and to ensure your success," he said.

Turning to Peres, Clinton added, "I pledge to you personally, Shimon, that I will be your partner in peace."

Although the two leaders refused to divulge details, one sign that there may be movement on the Israeli-Syrian track was Clinton's announcement that he was sending Secretary of State Warren Christopher to the region over the weekend.

Christopher plans to visit Damascus on Friday and Jerusalem on Saturday in an effort to restart the stalled talks.

Syrian President Hafez Assad abruptly broke off security talks last year.

Syria has demanded an Israeli commitment to withdraw from all of the Golan Heights before restarting negotiations. Israeli officials have asked for a specific definition of peace and security arrangements before making a commitment to territorial concessions.

Israel has, however, expressed willingness to embark on a phased withdrawal from the region.

Peres said he "would not exclude any method" to restart talks with Syria.

### 'Fundamental new reality'

Clinton was unable to persuade Peres to declare publicly to what extent Israel was willing to withdraw, according to U.S. officials.

Clinton also said he had spoken with Assad on Monday, adding, "President Assad told me he was committed to do his best to move the peace process forward."

"Very frankly, as sad as it is to say, I think the Syrian leader and the Syrian people now see the exceptional price that former Prime Minister Rabin and Prime Minister Peres have been willing to pay, in their quest for peace," Clinton said.

"The atmosphere is better than it was before. I think that is the fundamental new reality here," Clinton said.

Peres devoted much of his public comment to thanking Clinton for his remarks after the Rabin assassination. Clinton's farewell — "Shalom, chaver" — has become a slogan in Israel.

Talks between American and Israeli officials about a formal strategic alliance between Israel and the United States as an incentive for the Jewish state to trade the Golan for peace have reached no conclusion.

A senior American official said formalization of the relationship "is not being seriously explored."

Although Clinton and Peres dedicated the bulk of their one-hour meeting to discussing the peace process, they found time to formalize a plan for U.S.-Israeli space cooperation.

The United States will conduct Israeli experiments — having to do with making desert land arable — aboard both manned and unmanned space flights.

NASA will also begin training Israeli astronauts for an eventual mission to the planned U.S.-Russian space station, officials said.

An Israeli physician and amateur pilot, Eran Schenker, has reportedly already been chosen to participate in the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Also high on Peres' agenda is the fate of Jonathan Pollard, an American convicted of spying for Israel who is serving a life sentence for his crime.

Peres presented Clinton with a letter requesting clemency for Pollard.

Clinton was noncommittal with Peres on the Pollard issue and later told reporters, "If he requests executive clemency, I will, of course, review that request as I would anyone who requested it."

"But he has to make a request and it has to come through the ordinary channels before I can do that," Clinton said.

During his visit, Peres met with Christopher, Secretary of Defense William Perry and Gen. Colin Powell, the former chairman of the joint chiefs of staff. After meeting with congressional leaders Tuesday, Peres was scheduled to address a joint meeting of the House and Senate and then meet with hundreds of Jews expected here for the National Peace Process Advocacy Day.

### Doubts in Israel about Syrian peace

Meanwhile, as Peres held talks in Washington, there were stirrings from Cabinet ministers back home expressing doubt about reaching an agreement with Syria.

In a meeting with residents of the Golan, Rabbi Yehuda Amital, minister without portfolio, reportedly said he would not support a full pullback from the Golan.

The Israel Defense Force chief of staff, speaking to students in Haifa this week, said no technology is an equal substitute to the strategic value of the Golan in the threat of war.

"If at the end of the peace process there is a threat of war, then the Golan Heights has invaluable strategic value," Lt. Gen. Amnon Shahak said. "But the central question is what kind of peace is being discussed, and where is it possible to make concessions."

This view was echoed by Ehud Barak, Israel's new foreign minister and a former chief of staff, who spoke at a Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee meeting this week.

Asked whether he had softened his position on the Golan Heights since leaving the defense establishment and entering politics, Barak said the depth of a withdrawal would be determined relative to the quality of the peace.

The foreign minister said claims that he now supported a full withdrawal on the Golan were too simplistic and incorrect.

"From a purely military point of view, there could be such a demand to stay on part of the Golan Heights, but in a democracy, it is the political leadership that makes the decision," Barak told Israel Radio.

Meanwhile, Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu maintained that Israel could reach a peace agreement with Syria and keep the Golan. "Assad will adjust his expectations to what he thinks he can get from the current government," he told reporters. □

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

**Rally organizers list security as major cause for exclusions***By Alissa Kaplan*

NEW YORK (JTA) — A day after Sunday's rally to pay tribute to slain Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and to heal the rift in the Jewish community, questions remained about why thousands of people were unable to get into Madison Square Garden to attend the event.

Some of the confusion resulted from security issues, said Michael Miller, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, one of the rally's organizers.

Between 14,000 and 15,000 people attended the event, which was organized in about 10 days by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the United Jewish Appeal-Federation of New York, the State of Israel Bonds and the World Jewish Congress, as well as the NYJCRC.

The groups were deluged with complaints and questions Monday, seeking explanations for the confusion.

"We're sincerely regretful for the discomfort and pain that people experienced outside of the Garden," Miller said. "People traveled from far and from near and never made it inside."

Miller also said an advertisement would be published thanking people for their overwhelming support and apologizing to those not admitted.

Organizers said tickets were not distributed in advance because of the short time allowed in planning the event. As a result, people arriving from New York, New Jersey and beyond had to receive their tickets at the door.

Crowds remained outside in subfreezing temperatures, frustrated as to why they could not make their way inside the Garden.

Thousands more made it in, but only halfway through the program.

"At the last minute, we were told that security blocked off an additional 3,000 seats," Miller said.

He said that such last-minute security decisions could not be questioned.

Those seats were located behind the speakers' podium.

The New York Times reported Monday that anonymous threats had been made in advance of the rally — including one to the Associated Press claiming that four people would be killed during the ceremony.

**Cause for the 'crush'**

Miller said that another cause for the "crush" — and the delay — was the limited number of metal detectors, which were at a high setting for enhanced security.

"They were set off by nearly everyone who went through," he said.

Among those left out in the cold were Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president-elect of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and David Twersky, editor of the MetroWest Jewish News.

Julius Berman, a former chairman of the Conference of Presidents and an honorary president of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, was also among the frustrated.

Although he was on a VIP list, the VIP entrances were closed, and when he joined the masses, he was told to go home, he said, adding that his son and grandson were able to get inside the Garden.

"Although I would have preferred being inside, I was very pleased with the outpouring," Berman said.

He called the crowd outside a "sea of humanity in the frigid, frigid cold" that made his "cold feet very warm." □

**Canadian paying for defense of assassin, Israeli media say***By Gil Kezwer*

TORONTO (JTA) — A Canadian Jew is financing the legal defense of Yigal Amir, the confessed assassin of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Israeli media have reported.

Mabat, the nightly newscast on Israeli television, broadcast that a Canadian donor had given money for Amir's defense after contacting his family after the Nov. 4 shooting.

Subsequent reports named the benefactor as Sam "Sparky" Spodek, a Toronto businessman and a member of the Orthodox B'nai Torah Congregation in North York, a Toronto suburb.

Spodek reportedly splits his time between Toronto and Jerusalem, where he is involved in a business deal.

Amir, 25, was indicted last week on charges that included premeditated murder. His brother Hagai Amir and a friend were indicted on separate charges. It was also reported that Spodek would pay for Hagai Amir's defense.

One of Spodek's sons studied with Amir at a yeshiva, Israel Radio reported.

But the Canadian's family members said Spodek was ill and lacked the means to pay for lawyers for the brothers.

Manuel Prutschi, the executive director of the Canadian Jewish Congress Ontario region, questioned whether Spodek had the resources to pay the legal costs.

"From what we have been able to ascertain, the individual represents no one and we are surprised that any credibility is being ascribed to these fanciful claims," he said. "It is hard to conceive of anyone associating themselves with such an endeavor."

B'nai Brith Canada head Frank Dimant said he found the idea of bankrolling Yigal Amir "disgusting."

Amir's lawyer, Yonatan Ray Goldberg, refused to comment. The confessed assassin's trial is set to begin Dec. 19 in Tel Aviv. □

**Aftershocks shake southern Israel***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — For the second time in four days, a tremor shook southern Israel and northeastern Egypt this week, but there were no reports of damage or injuries.

Monday's tremor, measuring 5.1 on the Richter scale, struck at 3:30 a.m., and was centered in the Gulf of Aqaba. On Friday, a tremor measuring 4.9 on the Richter scale shook southern Israel. No damage or injuries was reported.

Officials at Israel's seismological institute said the tremors were part of a series of aftershocks following a powerful earthquake that hit the region Nov. 22, and caused 10 deaths and at least 69 injuries in the region. □

**Convicted settler gets jail term***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A Jerusalem court sentenced Jewish settler leader Rabbi Moshe Levinger this week to six months in jail and a six-month suspended sentence for causing a violent disturbance in the Hebron market four years ago.

Levinger was convicted of damaging Arab property and firing his gun in the market. He maintained that he had responded to Arab stonethrowers. The date for beginning the sentence, issued Monday, was put off until the end of the month to allow Levinger time to appeal it. □

## Eight House pages questioned in Capitol Hill swastika daubing

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Capitol Hill police have been looking into a case of anti-Semitic vandalism after a Jewish congressional messenger found a swastika painted on the door of his dormitory.

The House page, who is from New York, reported the incident to police Nov. 30, the morning after he and a group of pages had argued. The 17-year-old page, whose family asked that he not be identified, is sponsored by Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.).

Eight male pages have been questioned in the incident, according to Roll Call, a weekly political newspaper, which first reported the incident.

"We feel that the individual responsible should certainly be expelled from the page program and should face prosecution because it is a hate crime," a spokesman for Ackerman said.

The same morning, another page found a message on his door containing a crude anatomical reference, but no ethnic slurs.

The page program consists of 62 high-school juniors, who are appointed by members of Congress and who run errands and attend school on the Hill. The positions are highly coveted. □

## Quebec judge causes outrage, says gassed Jews did not suffer

By Bram D. Eisenthal

MONTREAL (JTA) — Canadian Jews have reacted with indignation to a federal judge in Quebec who said that during the Holocaust, Jews were put to death in gas chambers "without suffering."

Superior Court Judge Jean Bienvenue made the comments while sentencing a woman for second-degree murder. The 35-year-old woman was convicted of fatally slitting the throat of her estranged husband with a razor blade in July 1994.

"At Auschwitz-Birkenau, which I once visited in horror, even the Nazis did not eliminate millions of Jews in a painful and bloody manner; they died in gas chambers without suffering," the judge said, referring to the murder.

Jewish groups in Montreal called for the judge's resignation.

Reisa Teitelbaum, chairman of the Canadian Jewish Congress Quebec region, immediately called upon Bienvenue to retract his statements and apologize. "It is clear that Judge Bienvenue displays a serious lack of sensitivity in his thinking on this issue," Teitelbaum said. "To state that Jews who died in a Nazi concentration camp in Poland did so without suffering demonstrates the judge's grave misunderstanding of the reality of the Holocaust."

The League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada expressed its outrage. Chairman Allan Adel also called for Bienvenue's dismissal, adding that remarks such as the judge's fueled anti-Semitism.

Rabbi Reuben J. Poupko, president of the Rabbinical Council of Montreal, said that "invoking the Holocaust was wrong and an insult to those who perished in the Holocaust and to the survivors."

Montreal has one of the largest communities of survivors outside Israel.

Bienvenue said last Friday that the howls of indignation against him are "totally unwarranted."

Of the gas chamber comment, he said, "I still maintain there is no pain involved when gas drops on you from a shower nozzle. It's like people who end their days by poisoning themselves by turning on their car engine and

closing the garage door." He said it was much more painful for the man whose throat was slit, who took "three full minutes to bleed to death."

Studies have shown that those put to death during the Holocaust by Zyklon-B gas did not die painlessly. □

## French lawyer charges ministry with obstructing war crimes trial

By Lee Yanowitch

PARIS (JTA) — A lawyer representing 26 relatives of Jews deported from France during World War II has accused the French Justice Ministry of trying to prevent the trial of Maurice Papon, the last remaining French citizen indicted for crimes against humanity.

Papon, 84, who was an official with the collaborationist Vichy regime in wartime France, stands accused of sending nearly 1,700 Jews to Nazi concentration camps.

Lawyer Gerard Boulanger said in an interview that Justice Minister Jacques Toubon was using legal technicalities to try to have the charges against Papon thrown out.

"For 14 years, I've been fighting to bring him to justice. But no French government, whether on the right or the left, has had the desire to let this trial happen," said Boulanger, who is handling the case for free.

He said members of the upper echelons of the French government have deliberately had evidence in the case nullified on obscure technical grounds.

During World War II, Papon was a high-ranking member of the French administration in charge of the Bordeaux area in southwestern France.

He is accused of signing orders to arrest and deport 1,690 Jews — 223 of them children — from 1942 to 1944.

Papon has denied the charges against him, saying that he used his position in the Resistance to save Jews. Papon reportedly joined the Resistance movement near the end of 1943.

After the liberation, he went on to an illustrious postwar career, serving as police chief of Paris between 1958 and 1967, then as budget minister in the French Cabinet during the 1970s.

Jewish groups, lawyers and former Resistance members have long felt that successive French governments were obstructing the judicial process, hoping that Papon would die before a trial took place that would recall a period most French people would rather forget.

"Betting on the biological clock has been an element since the beginning of the Papon affair," Boulanger said. "It is very difficult to bring a senior civil servant to trial. We have to be very vigilant because they are trying to trip us up."

His remarks came on the 14th anniversary of the first suit filed against Papon for crimes against humanity.

The charges have been brought against Papon several times since then, the last being in May 1990. □

## Note to Readers

Two lines were inadvertently deleted from the last paragraph on page 1 of the Dec. 11 JTA Daily News Bulletin. That paragraph should read:

In an apparent effort to demonstrate the pluralistic nature of the event, the emcee at the rally went so far as to announce the names of three members of Likud, including Zalman Shoval, former Israeli ambassador to the United States. The problem was that none of the three was present. Reached at his hotel Sunday night, Shoval said he was invited to attend but not to speak. He refused the invitation.