



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Tens of thousands of Israelis attended a rally in support of religious Zionism at the same square where Yitzhak Rabin was slain after a Nov. 4 peace rally. National Religious Party leader Zevulun Hammer condemned the Rabin assassination, but said it should not be allowed to hurt the movement's principles.

■ The Israel Defense Force completed a peaceful withdrawal from the West Bank town of Kalkilya over the weekend. Meanwhile, an army inquiry placed blame on an IDF officer for the unruly pullback from Nablus last week. [Page 2]

■ Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky's Social Democrats scored a political victory in the country's national elections, winning 38.3 percent of the vote. Jorg Haider's far-right Freedom Party won 22.1 percent, a decline of 0.4 percent from the October 1994 elections.

■ An amateur photographer who videotaped the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin asked his lawyers to negotiate with Israeli television stations in an effort to sell the tape. The unidentified photographer gave police a copy of the tape days after the assassination.

■ The trial of Yigal Amir, the confessed assassin of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, will begin as planned Tuesday. The Tel Aviv District Court rejected a request from Amir's lawyer to postpone the trial's start.

■ An editorial in a newsletter for Jewish settlers called for a dialogue with the Palestinian Authority. Benny Katzover, a member of the council of Jewish settlements in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, rejected the idea, saying that Palestinian terrorists were preventing true dialogue. [Page 2]

■ In an effort to impede Iran's nuclear development, the Clinton administration and Congress are working to impose sanctions on foreign firms investing in Iran's energy sector. The Senate Banking Committee already approved a bill, and the House International Relations Committee is considering a similar measure.

## Israeli opposition voices concern about resuming Syria peace talks

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Word that Israel would soon return to the bargaining table with Syria has elicited a barrage of criticism from Israel's opposition parties.

Opposition leaders, charging that the government of Prime Minister Shimon Peres was rushing into the negotiations, submitted a series of no-confidence motions against the government.

Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu focused his criticism on the potential Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

During his visit last week to Washington, Peres reportedly signaled his willingness to cede the Golan Heights, captured by Israel during the 1967 Six-Day War, to Syria.

"We will certainly do all we can to prevent the government from carrying out its intention to hand over the Golan," Netanyahu told Israel Radio.

In another interview, Netanyahu said an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan could "open a future war."

Netanyahu rejected reports that both sides had agreed to return to the bargaining table without any preconditions.

"My information is that Mr. Peres has passed on to Syria a full Israeli willingness to accept Syrian sovereignty over the entire Golan Heights," he told Israel Radio.

Knesset member Eliezer Sandberg of the Tsomet Party called for early elections.

The leadership of the Golan Residents Council asked for an immediate meeting with Peres to discuss the latest developments.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher officially announced the resumption of Israeli-Syrian negotiations at a news conference with Peres on Saturday night in Jerusalem.

Christopher, who made the announcement after two days of talks in the Israeli and Syrian capitals, pledged that the United States would stand "shoulder to shoulder" with Israel as it seeks peace with Syria.

### 'A new beginning'

Peres told the gathering of reporters that Israel would move "as fast as we can" in the negotiations with Syria.

Peres described the talks, which were broken off six months ago in a dispute over future security arrangements on the Golan, as "a new beginning" in the long-fruitless discussions with Damascus.

Christopher reiterated the United States' commitment to the peace process, adding that if asked to do so, the United States would try to come up with proposals to help bridge differences between the two sides.

The announcement of the talks' resumption comes amid a widespread belief that Israel and Syria are closer than ever to reaching an agreement.

A senior U.S. official traveling with Christopher reportedly said the two sides were speaking with more openness and with a willingness to tackle a broader range of issues than before the Nov. 4 assassination of Yitzhak Rabin.

The talks are scheduled to begin Dec. 27 for three days at a site near Washington, recess for a week and then resume for another three days during the first week in January.

After that, Christopher told reporters, he will return to the Middle East in mid-January for another round of talks with Peres and Syrian President Hafez Assad.

Under a new framework for the talks, the negotiating teams were expected to address a number of issues simultaneously.

Israeli sources said the first round of talks would deal with procedural issues; working groups would begin more substantive work in the second round, tackling such issues as security arrangements, borders, water rights and economic cooperation.

Foreign Minister Ehud Barak, who met Sunday morning with Christopher, said the new format would prevent talks from breaking down over any single issue. "We are launching a very important and significant

process," Barak later told reporters. "It is a first step in a long journey."

The Israel team will reportedly include Israeli Ambassador Itamar Rabinovich, Foreign Ministry Director General Uri Savir, Gens. Uzi Dayan and Danny Yatom, and possibly Yoel Singer, Foreign Ministry legal adviser.

The Syrian team was expected to include the country's ambassador to the United States, Walid Muallem, along with other officials.

During his latest round of Middle East shuttle diplomacy — his eighth in the past two years — Christopher also met with Jordan's King Hussein and with Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat.

On Sunday, before returning to Washington, Christopher traveled to Cairo for a meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. □

## Kalkilya redeployment hailed as IDF assigns blame for Nablus

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As Israel Defense Force officials declared this weekend's redeployment from the West Bank town of Kalkilya a success, an army inquiry put some of the blame on a district commander for the unruly scenes that accompanied the army's pullback last week from Nablus.

The inquiry, led by Maj. Gen. Gabi Ofir, found that the commander in charge of the IDF forces in Nablus had made a mistake when he sent a group of female soldiers to the former military headquarters in Nablus to clean up the offices when the army withdrew, Israel Radio reported.

Word had gotten out that the Israeli redeployment had begun two days ahead of schedule, and crowds of Palestinians surged to the headquarters, surrounding the women and burning Israeli flags left at the scene.

The peaceful Israeli redeployment from Kalkilya on Saturday night came one day ahead of schedule, as Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization continued efforts to accelerate implementation of the accords signed in September for extending West Bank autonomy.

Hundreds of Kalkilya residents cheered as Israeli soldiers withdrew from the military headquarters in the West Bank town, the fourth of six Arab population centers slated to be transferred to Palestinian rule by the end of the year under the terms of the agreement.

During the past month, Israeli forces have withdrawn from Jenin, Tulkarm and Nablus.

Maj. Gen. Ilan Biran, commander of a region that includes the West Bank, said Israeli and Palestinian forces worked closely Saturday to ensure a smooth transition in Kalkilya.

With a population of some 75,000 Palestinians, Kalkilya closely borders the Israeli community of Kfar Saba.

Kfar Saba Mayor Yitzhak Wald, recognizing that criminal and terrorist incidents had resulted because of the proximity of Kalkilya, said he hoped that the redeployment would usher in a new era of hope.

"We have enough reasons to worry, [but] we are not afraid," he told Israel Radio. "We hope that we shall have a real peace between us and our neighbors."

Moshe Katan, mayor of the West Bank settlement of Alfe Menashe, also located near Kalkilya, sent a letter of congratulations to the mayor of Kalkilya on its first day of self-rule.

He wrote that he supported a dialogue with the Palestinian Authority, and ended the letter by writing in Arabic that close neighbors are better than faraway brothers.

Israeli troops are scheduled to withdraw from the West Bank towns of Ramallah and Bethlehem before the end of the month.

The redeployment from Bethlehem was expected to be delayed by a few days to allow for completion of a bypass road that would enable settlers to avoid driving through the Palestinian population center.

Meanwhile, in Nablus on Sunday, Palestinian police arrested more than 40 members of the Fatah Hawks, an armed group that fought against Israel during the intifada, or Palestinian uprising, and that has refused to lay down its arms.

The arrests were part of an effort to crack down on armed groups operating independently inside the city.

Palestinian police reportedly wounded two members of the Fatah Hawks in a shootout when they refused to surrender.

The group's leader in Nablus, Ahmed Tabouk, surrendered to Palestinian police later in the day, Palestinian sources said.

The PLO reportedly wants to try him in connection with rebelling against its leadership. □

## Yesha rejects call by settlers for dialogue with Palestinians

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A call from a settler-movement publication for dialogue between the settlers and the Palestinian Authority has been rejected by the main council of settler leaders.

"The Palestinian Authority is a fact," wrote Uri Elitsur, editor of Nekuda, which in Hebrew means "point."

"I propose talking to them directly," he wrote. "We have 1,000 issues to arrange with our new neighbors, and I suggest we start immediately."

Prime Minister Shimon Peres praised Elitsur for suggesting dialogue, but the Yesha Council, which represents settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, was less welcoming.

"The council opposes any contact with representatives of the Palestinian Authority," a spokesman said.

Israel is due to withdraw from two West Bank towns by the end of the year. It has already pulled back from the towns of Jenin, Tulkarm, Nablus and Kalkilya.

Jewish settlers have responded to the redeployments with apprehension, expressing concerns for their security. Under the terms of the agreement for extending autonomy in the West Bank, none of the settlements, home to some 130,000 Israelis, will be moved or dismantled.

The accord calls for a number of measures to ensure their security, including the building of bypass roads circumventing the Arab population centers.

"We don't want to move [the settlers] from where they are," Peres told Israel Radio. "The more they can establish different relations [with the Arabs], the better."

Peres also repeated the government stand that it would not compensate settlers who choose to leave the West Bank on their own. "It could become a business. They will settle, return, ask for compensation. We are not asking anyone to evacuate," he said. □

## New mother needs five cradles

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli woman gave birth to quintuplets last week at Misgav Ladach Hospital in Jerusalem.

The babies, three boys and two girls, ranged in weight from 31.5 ounces to 3.1 pounds. □

## Pope meets with Leah Rabin, discusses status of Jerusalem

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — Pope John Paul II received the widow of the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and her children last week in a private audience during which, she said, the pontiff appeared to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

Leah Rabin told reporters after the meeting Dec. 14 that the pope had referred to Jerusalem as having a double significance — as the capital of the three great monotheistic religions, and as the capital of Israel.

The reference to Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish state — though not an official recognition — would mark a sharp change in official Vatican policy, which does not recognize the city as Israel's capital.

Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls later attempted to downplay the significance of the remark.

At the meeting with Rabin and her two children, the pope referred to the late Israeli leader as a martyr for peace. He also repeated his intention to visit Jerusalem, but no date was mentioned.

The meeting with the pope came three years after Yitzhak Rabin visited the Vatican to gain the pope's moral backing for the peace process. That visit also paved the way for the establishment in June 1994 of formal diplomatic ties between Israel and the Vatican.

Leah Rabin's half-hour meeting with the pope came a day after she was the guest of honor at a concert at Rome's Opera House in memory of her husband.

The concert was attended by Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, Prime Minister Lamberto Dini, Rome Mayor Francesco Rutelli and top Italian political, business and cultural figures.

Rabin told the audience that the peace process would continue despite the activities of the opponents of peace.

In a program that included Beethoven's "Eroica" symphony and Bruch's "Kol Nidrei" solo for cello and orchestra, Israeli singer Noa sang two songs, including the "Song for Peace," which Yitzhak Rabin sang at a Nov. 4 peace rally in Tel Aviv just before he was assassinated.

During her visit, Leah Rabin also met with Rome's Jewish community in the city's main synagogue. □

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

## Bust of Greek Jewish officer unveiled at Athens War Museum

By Jean Cohen

ATHENS (JTA) — The bust of a Greek Jewish colonel who died during the 1940 Italian invasion of Greece has been unveiled at the War Museum here.

Col. Mordocheos Frizis was the first high-ranking Greek officer to die on the battlefield during the Italian invasion. The highly decorated colonel was killed by an Italian bomb Dec. 5, 1940.

Government officials, representatives of the Greek Jewish community and family members were among those at the Dec. 4 ceremony.

Many years ago, Frizis' statue was placed in a central square of Halkis, his birthplace.

The president of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece, Nissim Mais, said at the unveiling: "The bust of our co-religionist, the late Col. M. Frizis, which has been placed in the War Museum, together with the other war heroes, constitutes a monument of commemoration and honor for all the Greek Jewish soldiers."

Mais added: "We, the Jews of Greece, together

with our Christian compatriots, have fought side by side to defend Greece and to serve the ideal of liberty and national independence."

The Italian army attacked Oct. 28, 1940. The Germans invaded April 6, 1941.

Before the German invasion, 12,898 Jews served in the army; hundreds fell in battle. After the occupation, the country was split up.

The United Hellenic American Congress has established the "Mordocheos Frizis Award," an honor for American Jews who promote the strengthening of Greek-Jewish ties. □

## IDF women asked to try pilot class

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's air force has invited female soldiers to try out for its pilot-training course, officials informed a Knesset committee on the status of women.

The recent invitation comes in the wake of a High Court of Justice ruling last month that 23-year-old Alice Miller be allowed to take the qualifying exams for the course. The South African-born Miller began her legal battle to become a pilot two years ago.

Israeli air force officials argued that because of pregnancy and motherhood, women do not serve long enough in the air force to justify the investment in making them pilots.

The head of the force's human resources division said Miller had already passed most of the preliminary tests. But he told the committee that Miller had been advised to wait until April, when the air force hoped to open a pilot training course that would include other female candidates.

Brig. Gen. Yisraela Oron, chief of the army's women's corps, told the Israeli daily Ma'ariv that other combat units would soon be opened to women. □

## Riskin: Peres meeting 'encouraging'

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Shimon Peres recently met with Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, following through on his pledge to improve dialogue with Jewish settlers.

Riskin, who led a series of settler demonstrations during the summer, called the meeting an encouraging sign.

"I must say that until now, the prime minister has said the right things," he told Israel Radio. "We hope he will do the right things."

Riskin is a former New York rabbi who lives in the West Bank settlement of Efrat, where, during the summer, settlers tried to establish new neighborhoods on nearby hilltops that they said were part of land set aside for Jewish settlements.

Local Palestinians also claimed ownership of the lands.

When asked whether he thought that similar demonstrations would take place as implementation of the accord for extending West Bank autonomy continues, Riskin said settlers had reached the conclusion that the accord is a "reality."

"Now we have to make sure that the prime minister is doing everything possible to make sure we are comfortable," he added, referring to security arrangements that are scheduled to be put in place for the settlers after a planned Israeli troop redeployment from six West Bank towns.

The redeployment is slated to be completed before the end of the year. □

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

**Backers of Quebec separatism leave Jewish community uneasy**

By Bram D. Eisenthal

MONTREAL (JTA) — For many members of Quebec's Jewish community, it is getting increasingly difficult to sleep at night.

They are reeling, their future here in serious doubt, after a string of incidents and racist comments made by leading advocates of removing Quebec from the 128-year-old Canadian federation.

Further generating a sense of anxiety for the Jewish community — and for the broader population backing federalism — a new group of right-wing nationalists has been created to advance the separatist cause.

The separatists lost an Oct. 30 referendum on the issue by the slimmest of margins — some 50,000 votes out of an estimated 4.67 million ballots cast.

The organized Jewish community was heavily involved in the campaign against the separatist option.

But the campaign, marked by repeated slurs against the ethnic minorities in Quebec, left the Jewish community distinctly uneasy.

In one instance, Lucien Bouchard, the leader of the separatist Bloc Quebecois in Parliament, called on the province's white women to have more children in order to protect Quebec's culture. In another, Quebec Premier Jacques Parizeau, on the night he conceded the referendum victory to the federalists, blamed the loss suffered by his forces on money and "the ethnic vote."

A day later, Parizeau resigned, a move that will become effective early next year when a new leader of Quebec is chosen. That leader is expected to be Bouchard.

Despite expectations that Quebec would witness a period of racial healing after the vote, the referendum's aftermath has not proven to be the time of reconciliation for which many had hoped.

In the latest incident, Pierre Bourgault, a writer and former consultant to Parizeau, charged in an interview published Nov. 30 in the French-language daily *Journal de Montreal* that it is the province's Jewish, Greek and Italian communities who are racist, not the majority of French-speaking Quebecers.

**Extremely low morale**

Leaders of the three communities, representing 400,000 members, banded together several years ago to form a coalition with the goal of promoting national unity and of expressing their solidarity with the federalist cause.

The Jewish community is represented on the committee by the Canadian Jewish Congress, which soon reacted to Bourgault's statements.

"Pierre Bourgault's remarks on ethnic communities are reprehensible, intolerant and reflect a profound disregard for democratic values as well as the fundamental right of all Quebecers to freely express their political opinion," said Max Bernard, chairman of the Community Relations Committee of Canadian Jewish Congress, Quebec region.

Similar statements criticizing Bourgault and calling for greater social harmony were issued by the Hellenic Congress of Quebec and the National Congress of Italian Canadians.

Morale among those supporting the federalist cause has been extremely low in recent weeks. Many federalists feel that Bouchard's forthcoming assumption of power in Quebec will result in a victory for the separatists the next time a referendum is held — and that, it is widely believed here, will take place within the next two years.

Additional fears are being prompted by the recent entry of a group of right-wing nationalists into the separat-

ist camp. The group, the Quebec National Liberation Movement, is headed by Raymond Villeneuve, who, as leader of the Quebec Liberation Front in the 1960s, was convicted in a separatist bombing campaign.

In a newspaper interview earlier this month, Villeneuve said his new group would seek to ostracize the foes of separatism. He also said his group's goals include seeking a moratorium on immigration to Quebec, launching an "unrelenting struggle" against Canadian domination and against the "internal enemies" of Quebec, and the creation of an all-French school system.

Although the ruling Parti Quebecois refuses to sanction the group, which has renounced violence for the time being, this has done little to ease the fears of those who remember the 1970 October Crisis.

At that time — prompted by the liberation front's kidnapping of Quebec politician Pierre Laporte and British High Commissioner James Cross — then-Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau invoked the War Measures Act.

Martial law was declared, soldiers patrolled the streets of Montreal and hundreds of civilians were detained in prison without charge.

Laporte was later found strangled to death in the trunk of a car; Cross eventually was released unharmed.

The members of the liberation front responsible for the kidnapping were imprisoned. □

**Story on Jewish flight annoys South African education leader**

By Suzanne Belling

JOHANNESBURG (JTA) — A newspaper article here about end-of-the-school-year emigration that singled out the Jewish community has rankled the chairman of the South African Board of Jewish Education.

In the Sunday Independent, Jewish journalist Peta Krost recently wrote an article quoting "heartbroken" Jewish families fleeing from the crime-ridden northern suburbs of Johannesburg.

Many families who persevered during the apartheid era and during the unrest of a changed South Africa are now emigrating in the face of an increase in crime.

Chairman Jeff Bortz, however, did not like that the story singled out the Jewish community in its discussion of emigration trends. But, he did say that 77 pupils — from 36 families — who had attended the Jewish day schools at King David in Victory Park and Linksfield were leaving.

He added, "The board takes the view that the emigration trends at the King David Schools are symptomatic of a general trend in the white community in South Africa and is not limited to the Jewish community only."

"We view the regrettable increase in emigration as extremely unfortunate," he continued. "The thrust of education at our schools is to encourage our pupils to participate in all respects in advancing the welfare and development of South Africa."

He said students are encouraged to take part in bettering South Africa through classroom education and programs in the general community.

Most of the people interviewed for the story had fictitious names and had been victims of crimes such as carjackings and burglaries. One woman was quoted as saying, "I am leaving all our luxuries behind — just so I can live without security gates and alarms and my kids can be safe when they ride their bicycles outside."

Some Jews who have decided to stay in South Africa are determined to fight the crime. Jews actively take part in police reserves, for instance. People from all groups have joined community block and neighborhood watches, and mobile security stations are strategically situated on street corners throughout the northern suburbs. □