



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak telephoned 12 Arab leaders, asking them to attend a summit in Cairo to form a united front in peace negotiations with Israel.** The calls followed a meeting in Damascus in which leaders from Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia called on Israel to fulfill its commitments in the peace process, saying that any Israeli slowdown could trigger a fresh "cycle of violence." [Page 2]

■ **Argentina agreed to pay Iran a \$5.5 million fine for canceling a contract to provide the Islamic fundamentalist nation with nuclear technology.** Under pressure from the United States in 1992, the Argentine government stopped the shipment of uranium-refining equipment to Iran.

■ **One Israel Defense Force soldier and a member of the allied South Lebanon Army were wounded by a pair of roadside bombs in the southern Lebanon security zone.** Israel and the SLA fired on Hezbollah targets in retaliation.

■ **Israeli Prime Minister-elect Benjamin Netanyahu continued to negotiate with leaders of political parties that are potential coalition partners in an effort to form his government.** Meanwhile, the National Religious Party prepared a draft of policy guidelines that it hoped would be adopted by the other two religious parties, Shas and United Torah Judaism, in negotiations with the Likud leader.

■ **A key prosecution witness in the Rome trial of ex-Nazi Capt. Erich Priebke, accused of crimes in connection with the 1944 massacre of 335 civilians, injured himself in an attempt to escape testifying.** Former SS Maj. Karl Hass broke his pelvis and damaged his backbone when he jumped from a second-floor balcony of his Rome hotel. [Page 2]

■ **The outgoing Israeli government decided to buy eight armor-plated Cadillacs for ministers at the request of the Shin Bet, the Jewish state's domestic security service.** Both Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Prime Minister-elect Benjamin Netanyahu already travel in the armor-plated cars.

Jews in Russian hinterland fear effect of Communist win

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Although election-eve polls show President Boris Yeltsin leading, the Jews of Russia's provinces nonetheless say they fear the prospect of a Communist victory in Sunday's ballot.

"A Communist victory would have immediate consequences in all spheres of Russian life," says Alexander Sakov, leader of the 15,000-member Jewish community in Omsk, located in western Siberia.

Those consequences would include immediate restrictions on the activities of the Jewish community, he adds.

If Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov defeats Yeltsin, says Sakov, his followers would "certainly close down the [Jewish Agency for Israel] offices in Russia, especially in the provinces."

"Since an opportunity for Jews to leave will be narrowed, I wouldn't say Jewish emigration is likely to increase under the Communists," Sakov says.

Public opinion polls published Sunday show Yeltsin having a comfortable lead.

He is expected to garner 35 percent to 37 percent of the vote, while Zyuganov, according to the polls, would win 23 percent to 26 percent in a race that includes eight other presidential contenders.

If none of the candidates scores more than 50 percent of the vote Sunday, a runoff between the two leading vote-getters will be held July 7.

Despite the polling data, Russian Jews in the provinces, mirroring business and religious leaders in Moscow, are fearful of a Zyuganov victory and the adverse repercussions it would have on Jewish life.

The Communist candidate's thinly veiled appeals to anti-Semitism have gone a long way toward stoking those fears, as have Communist plans to roll back the economic reforms achieved under Yeltsin.

"What disturbs me most of all is the Communists' desire to redistribute property in Russian society," says Svetlana Danilova, leader of the Jewish community in Nalchik, located in the northern Caucasus.

Zyuganov has been courting the support of pensioners and others who were hurt most by Yeltsin's reformist social policies.

Those policies hit hard at the pocketbooks of many segments of the population and have come under intense criticism from Yeltsin's opponents during the campaign.

Danilova says the provision of social services has been an especially important and complicated issue in the northern Caucasus, which was strongly affected by the war in the nearby breakaway region of Chechnya.

Danilova, whose family settled in Nalchik more than 200 years ago, says that during the last five years some 8,000 Jews have left Nalchik.

"Most of those 4,000 Jews that live in Nalchik today are elderly and needy people," she says.

Economic hardships have driven some local Jewish families to the verge of extreme poverty, she adds.

"Today, our communal activities mostly depend on the sympathies of local authorities," she says, leaving the clear impression that a Zyuganov victory would do little to improve the conditions of local Jews.

'Jewish situation will worsen'

Susanna Turayeva, a leading figure in the 14,000-member Jewish community of Nizhny Novgorod, located in central Russia, agrees.

If Zyuganov wins, "the Jewish situation will worsen, at least on the local level," says Turayeva.

She added, "I'm very hopeful that Yeltsin will remain in office after June 16."

Turayeva, who serves as director of charity programs in her community, also fears that if the Communists regain power, Jewish communal activities would immediately be threatened.

She points to the case of the local Jewish charity center, which serves the needs of some 1,200 people with the assistance of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

"I can hardly imagine that the Communist regime would allow the

Joint to operate in Russia," she says. On a more personal note, she adds, "I'm afraid also that I would have no chance to visit my son in Israel." She says, "In the 1991 presidential elections, I voted for Yeltsin just because I liked him. Today I will do so because I'm in fear of physical destruction."

Mikhail Oshtrakh, a leader of the Jewish community in Yekaterinburg, a city in the Ural mountains that is Yeltsin's hometown, refuses to speculate about the election's outcome. But it is clear that he supports the city's favorite son. "I hope common sense will prevail over demagoguery," he says. □

Arabs warn of new violence if Israel alters peace process

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Arab leaders warned Prime Minister-elect Benjamin Netanyahu this week that tension and violence would ensue in the region if the new Israeli government deviates from the "principles of the peace process."

But Israeli officials said the Arab leaders were prejudging the new government before it was formed and that they were disregarding repeated statements Likud leader Netanyahu has made pledging his commitment to the process.

"It is unacceptable that the Arab leaders form an opinion and issue such a statement before the new government has even taken power," Israeli President Ezer Weizman said in remarks broadcast on Israel Radio.

After their weekend summit in Damascus, Syrian President Hafez Assad, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Abdullah issued a joint statement calling on Israel to withdraw from all occupied territories.

The three warned that any departure by Israel from the land-for-peace principles of the peace process pursued by the outgoing Labor government would be considered a threat to return the region to "tension and violence."

They also called on Turkey to re-evaluate the military pact it signed in February with Israel.

That agreement, which provided for joint maneuvers and Israeli training flights over Turkey, drew sharp criticism from several Muslim countries, including Egypt.

In another development, Syrian leader Assad met Sunday with the Qatari foreign minister and asked that the Persian Gulf state freeze the low-level economic ties it forged with Israel in April.

Mubarak phoned Arab leaders this week to invite them to a June 21-23 meeting in Cairo, where they would attempt to develop a unified stance regarding the new Israeli government.

Among those invited were representatives of the Palestinians, Jordan, the Gulf Arab states, North African states and Mauritania.

Netanyahu refused to comment on the weekend Arab summit.

Aides said that since his May 29 election victory, he has made clear his intent to continue the peace process with the Palestinians and Syria.

While he has yet to elaborate on his specific policy goals, Israeli media reported over the weekend that a draft of policy guidelines for the new government incorporated the hard-line positions Netanyahu presented before the elections: opposition to an independent Palestinian state and to a withdrawal from the Golan Heights in exchange for peace with Syria.

The people Netanyahu appoints to key Cabinet posts also will indicate which direction he intends to pursue in the peace process.

David Levy, the head of the Gesher Party, which merged with Likud in the Knesset race, was reported by Israel Television as the likely candidate for foreign minister, a position he held in the Likud government led by Yitzhak Shamir.

Likud Knesset member Yitzhak Mordechai, the recently retired head of the northern command who is the No. 2 person on the Likud Knesset list, was seen as the lead candidate for defense minister, Israel Television reported. □

Key witness in Priebe trial injures self in escape attempt

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — The war crimes trial of former SS Capt. Erich Priebe took a dramatic turn when a key prosecution witness, another former Nazi in his 80s, injured himself in an attempt to escape testifying.

Former SS Maj. Karl Hass, 84, broke his pelvis and damaged his backbone before dawn last Friday as he fell 15 feet from a second-floor balcony while trying to escape from his Rome hotel.

Police had been guarding the door of his hotel room.

Hass, who used a jacket to help lower himself to the ground, was due to testify for the prosecution in the Priebe trial later that morning.

Priebe, 82, is on trial before a Rome military court for his involvement in the March 24, 1944, Nazi mass execution of 335 civilians at the Ardeatine Caves, south of Rome. About 75 of the victims were Jewish.

The Nazis ordered the massacre in response to an Italian partisan attack the day before in which 33 German soldiers were killed.

Hass' attempted escape came about eight hours after he met with prosecutor Antonio Intelisano for a lengthy preliminary interrogation.

Hass came to Italy voluntarily as a witness, but he also is being investigated as a suspect in the massacre, court officials said. Hass has denied any part in the Ardeatine Caves massacre.

Hass, who will remain in a military hospital for about a month, will testify this week from his hospital bed, officials said.

"I found Hass to be in good shape, apart from the injuries. He said his decision to try to flee was provoked by heavy stress," Intelisano reportedly said after he visited Hass in the hospital. Intelisano added that "had Hass not wanted to testify, he could have gone straight home through the front door."

"There are no restrictions on his freedom," the prosecutor said.

Hass was involved with espionage and secret service operations during the war. He was on the staff of the German Embassy in Rome.

Hass was presumed dead for years, until depositions by Priebe indicated that he was living in Italy. Investigators located him in a small town near Milan, but he then fled to his daughter's home in Switzerland.

Intelisano convinced him to come to Rome to testify.

In newspaper interviews, Hass has accused Priebe of having a direct role in the massacre. He also linked him to the killing of an Italian union leader slain just before Allied troops entered Rome in June 1944.

Priebe's lawyer Velio Di Rezze has implied that Hass was protected by the Italian secret service after the war. "He tried to escape because he realized that he was digging his own grave," Di Rezze said. He said he had proof that Hass took part in the mass execution. □

Bibi's victory preordained? That's what the Torah said

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — The answers to life's questions can be found in Torah, say many Orthodox Jews, and if some Orthodox Israeli rabbis are right, then the Torah also predicted that Benjamin Netanyahu would best Shimon Peres to become Israel's new prime minister.

According to a bit of election-time lore rapidly making its way among the Internet's vast network of computer users, some Orthodox rabbis sat down shortly before the May 29 elections to employ a fortunetelling technique known as "Goral haGrah," which was attributed to the 18th-century Talmudic scholar known as the Vilna Gaon.

It involves randomly opening up a Bible, flipping a certain number of pages forward and a specific number of pages back, and repeating that process a number of times. Finally, the rabbi doing the actual fortunetelling puts his finger down on a random place on the page of Torah, and whatever line he is touching is said to predict the future.

In this case, the sentence was Genesis 42:36, which relates Ya'acov grieving for his children, saying "Yosef is not, Shimon is not, and bring Binyamin to me."

Orthodox interpreters say Yosef refers to Yossi Sarid, head of the Meretz Party, the Labor Party coalition member whose ardently anti-religious views are believed to have been partly responsible for the almost unanimous Orthodox support for Netanyahu.

Shimon and Binyamin, Netanyahu's Hebrew name, relate to the leaders of the Labor and Likud parties.

As is usually the case in biblical interpretation, however, the Hebrew wording of the sentence in question leaves a bit of a loophole.

The word "Tikachu," which is being interpreted as "bring" Binyamin, can also be read that Binyamin is being taken away, which is how the English wording in the Bible edited by J. H. Hertz translates it. □

Czech Republic, Israel pen pact on free trade

By Randi Druzin

PRAGUE (JTA) — The Czech Republic has signed a free-trade agreement with Israel, its first with a non-European country.

The agreement, signed May 20 by Michael Harish, Israeli minister of industry and trade, and Vladimir Dlouhy, his Czech counterpart, could enhance an already favorable trading relationship for the Czech Republic, which posted a \$4.4 million trade surplus with Israel last year.

The main aim of the agreement, which takes effect Jan. 1, is the gradual liberalization of trade between the two countries over a two-year period.

The accord calls for the two countries to annul import taxes on more than 95 percent of products previously traded, and on about 80 percent of products not already subject to trade.

This will result in the complete liberalization of trade in chemical products, pharmaceuticals, electrical products, medical equipment, minerals, leather, metal, transportation, paper and glass products, optical equipment, toys and sporting goods.

Import taxes on some products, such as school and office equipment, jewelry and shoes, will be lowered gradually and will be completely removed by Jan. 1, 1999. Other products will be protected until the year 2000.

As part of the agreement, the Czech Republic will offer Israel preferential treatment when importing flowers

and fruit in the winter, and Israel will grant the Czech Republic the same treatment when importing certain dairy products, margarine and beans.

The agreement comes in a era of particular diplomatic good feeling between Czechs and Israelis. Less than a week before the signing, Prague Castle became the first site outside Israel for a traveling photo exhibition honoring the life of assassinated Israeli leader Yitzhak Rabin.

For Israel, the agreement is the first such accord with a European country outside the European Union.

Total Czech-Israeli trade amounted to \$78.6 million last year, down 6.5 percent from the year before. Czech exports totaled \$41.5 million last year, down 24.3 percent from 1994; Israeli exports to the Czech Republic amounted to \$37.1 million, an increase of 26.3 percent over 1994.

Two days after signing the pact with the Czech Republic, Israel concluded a nearly identical agreement with Slovakia that will go into effect in January.

Now, Slovak products exported to Israel are subject to a 15 percent customs duty. Slovakia's total trade with Israel was \$26 million in 1995, with Slovakia posting a \$3.5 million trade surplus. □

Holocaust memorial vandalized

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — An Australian Jewish leader has called for tougher laws against those promoting racial hatred after graffiti was painted on a Holocaust memorial in the eastern city of Brisbane.

Laurie Rosenblum, president of the Queensland Jewish Board of Deputies, called for what she described as "European-style" penalties for racial crimes.

"Most people who engage in disseminating anti-Semitic material or Holocaust denial go straight to jail over there," Rosenblum said.

The graffiti, daubed in red paint, included the phrases "Six Million Lies in German Blood" and "House of Satan."

The attack took place in early June. The Austrian Consulate in Brisbane was also vandalized at that time.

The consulate was daubed with swastikas, "C-18," "White Man Fight Back" and the acronym "ZOG."

C-18 is a British-based neo-Nazi group.

ZOG, an acronym for Zionist Occupation Government, is a word frequently used by racist organizations. □

Moscow chief at synagogue opening

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Moscow Mayor Yuriy Luzhkov attended last week's inauguration of a new synagogue in the Russian capital.

The new Chabad Lubavitch synagogue in the Moscow neighborhood of Maryina Roscha was built on the site where the city's first Chasidic house of worship was situated since 1926. In late 1993, the wooden house was destroyed by fire.

In 1994, Luzhkov supported the plan to construct a new synagogue in the neighborhood that at one time was densely populated by Jews.

"The city authorities will never tolerate the slightest display of inequality or oppression toward the Jews," Luzhkov said at the June 4 opening ceremony.

Luzhkov, the closest political ally of President Boris Yeltsin, is seeking re-election. Russian presidential elections will be held June 16.

A source close to the Moscow city administration said the mayor did not want to ignore the Jewish electorate in light of the upcoming ballot. About 250,000 Jews live in Moscow. □

Gay activist views Israel as model for other countries

By Alan H. Feiler
Baltimore Jewish Times

BALTIMORE (JTA) — Liora Moriel carefully sipped a cup of steaming hot chocolate in the Student Union at the University of Maryland at College Park.

Wearing a wrinkled T-shirt and shorts, with her close-cropped, dark hair slightly mussed and a knapsack slung over her shoulder, the 47-year-old Moriel "kvetched" about a term paper and wondered aloud about her fate after leaving the academic milieu next year.

But lurking beneath this facade of a typical graduate student was the soul of a self-described revolutionary, whose mission in life is to fight for the rights of homosexuals, particularly in Israel.

"For a long time, I felt [being a lesbian] was nobody's business.

"The people close to me knew, and why should anyone else care?" said the Tel Aviv-born Moriel, who lives with her partner in Bethesda, Md., a suburb of Washington, D.C.

"But I realized it couldn't be private as long as it was deemed immoral, perverse, wrong," said Moriel, a leading gay and women's rights activist in Israel who is studying comparative literature and women's studies.

She also is a teaching assistant in the university's English department.

"It's incumbent upon people like me, who have nothing to lose and have been activists previously, to come out and publicly advocate the cause of the lesbian (lesbian-bisexual-gay) community," Moriel said.

"I think we've really been a light of Zion unto the nations, and one of the finest examples of how Israel can go in a progressive direction," she said.

"What we've accomplished I'd like to see other minorities accomplish."

'Not a dangerous pursuit'

From 1991 to 1993, Moriel served as spokeswoman and chairwoman of an Israeli gay rights group, the Society for the Protection of Personal Rights.

Her responsibilities included speaking to the Knesset and media about gay issues, as well as organizing rallies and conferences.

She also served as an officer at large for the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations.

In addition, Moriel has worked as a journalist, public relations specialist, educator, musician, actress, therapist for the disabled, and concert and symposium organizer.

Israeli society, despite the prevalence of Middle Eastern attitudes regarding sexuality and the precepts of halachah, or Jewish law, tends to be more accepting of homosexuals than American society, said Moriel, who grew up in Israel and Canada.

She said, "Being a lesbian in Israel is not a dangerous pursuit.

"What one does with their life is considered their business."

However, Moriel added that "in Israel, if you're Jewish, you're by definition human and part of the family. Here, people still struggle with the definition of 'American,' and gays and lesbians are not considered true Americans."

In the United States, there are more gay parades, bars and bookstores, "but it's a subculture where you feel alien," Moriel said.

"Israel's a Mediterranean country, so people are more physical.

"People, if they hug, aren't always thought of instantly as lovers."

Moriel said the decriminalization of homosexual acts eight years ago served as a watershed event for Israel's gay rights "revolution."

Israeli labor laws and army regulations have since been amended to prohibit discrimination of people because of sexual orientation, she said.

Israeli police officers now receive sensitivity training regarding gay rights and gay-bashing, Moriel said, and city mayors maintain an ongoing dialogue with gay activists to coordinate parades and events.

In addition, she said, Israel now has an unprecedented number of gay meeting places, nightclubs and theatrical productions.

"In Israel, the fundamental things are in place," Moriel said. Gay rights are an "irrevocable part of Israeli society."

For Moriel, the struggle to expand Israel's acceptance of homosexuals has been a personal matter.

Four years ago, she gained fame there by "taking the lesbian movement out of the closet" when she appeared on a popular Israeli television talk show with her partner and mother, "and publicly came out of the closet."

"It was very difficult for me," Moriel said. "I didn't want to go public this way."

But to her delight, she discovered that the response from Israeli society to her television appearance was overwhelmingly positive.

"When I've seen people on the street or in elevators over the past few years, people have said to me, 'Kol hakavod (way to go),' " Moriel said. "It really galvanized the movement. And people began to come out to their families, friends, co-workers and most importantly, themselves."

Unlike its American counterpart, the Israeli gay movement prefers to take a more low-key approach, Moriel said.

"The idea is not to say, 'We're queer, get used to it,' " she said.

"We say, 'We're your friends, family and we trust that our bond won't change.' "

Moriel criticizes the "more militant" American gay rights movement for being "not well-thought out, and there's been a lot of rethinking about it."

She added, "I think we got further in Israel by not being abrasive and acting as a mainstream advocacy group."

'Situation is reversed'

She reserves particular scorn for the American movement's emphasis on same-sex unions.

"I think this affects only a fraction of the lesbian movement," she said.

"Why agitate for gay marriage when marriage is an institution that's bad for most people who enter it? We're shooting ourselves in the foot."

Moriel, who plans to move back to the Jewish state next year after completing her degree, said the Israeli gay rights movement is now advocating legislation to provide for pension and social security benefits for gay couples.

Moriel said she hopes that other countries will emulate Israel's model for gay rights.

"Ten years ago, Israeli gays and lesbians came to the U.S. for a fuller life. Now, the situation is completely reversed," Moriel said.

"At a time when Israel is getting so much flak for its political activities, it's important to discuss some of the positive things happening there."

Gay rights in Israel "is one of the few lights in a dark picture." □