

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Secretary of State Warren Christopher and members of Congress gave Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a standing ovation when he declared that "there will never be a rededication of Jerusalem."** In his address to a joint meeting of Congress, Netanyahu also pledged to wean Israel off U.S. economic aid. [Page 2]

■ **The president of Poland said his country would pass a law addressing the return of Jewish communal property to the international Jewish community.** Aleksander Kwasniewski, speaking before a meeting of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the World Jewish Restitution Organization, added that the return of private property would be a much more difficult problem to solve.

■ **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is scheduled to arrive Thursday in New York City from Washington, amid security that includes sealing off three floors of a hotel and shadowing his every move around New York from a police helicopter.**

■ **Dozens of Palestinian youths clashed with Israeli soldiers after Israel's prime minister failed to set a date to withdraw troops from most of the West Bank town of Hebron.** The violence came a day after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met President Clinton in Washington. [Page 2]

■ **Argentina's justice minister denied in a meeting with Argentine Jewish leaders that he was ever an anti-Semite or Nazi, but some remain unconvinced and want Rodolfo Barra to resign.** The minister's outreach to the country's Jewish community came after a magazine published articles exposing his past involvement with a notoriously violent anti-Semitic group. [Page 3]

■ **A Canadian author is uncovering the history of an underground pipeline that French Nazi collaborators and war criminals used to escape to French Canada after World War II.** Esther Delisle said her research revealed that the pipeline was operating as late as the early 1970's. [Page 3]

Reform Jewish leaders accuse chief rabbi of inciting violence

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — Israel's Sephardi chief rabbi made remarks this week that have been interpreted as calling for the murder of Reform Jews, sparking sharp responses from the leaders of the Reform movement and from a group of Orthodox Jews who support the peace process.

Rabbi Uri Regev, director of the Reform movement's Israel Religious Action Center, said that Rabbi Eliahu Bakshi Doron's sermon could be viewed by someone as license to kill Reform Jews much the same way the convicted assassin of Yitzhak Rabin cited justification in Jewish law for his violent act.

"People ask me whether I have my bullet proof vest on," said Regev. "And I say almost, but not yet."

Regev sent letters Tuesday to Israel's attorney general and the police department's chief investigator asking them for a criminal inquiry.

In Regev's view, the chief rabbi's words constitute incitement to murder.

He also wrote separate letters to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who serves as Israel's minister of religious affairs, and to Israel's Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Meir Lau, who also heads the chief rabbinic council, asking for Bakshi Doron to be removed as chief Sephardi rabbi and as head of the country's highest rabbinic court of appeals.

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, also called upon Netanyahu to repudiate Bakshi Doron's remarks.

"I don't know who out there is listening to the language saying there is full religious sanction for zealous acts, who out there is waiting to get such spiritual guidance and then will take action," said Regev.

In the meantime, Ma'ariv reported Wednesday that the office of the Chief Rabbinate issued a statement saying that Bakshi Doron's sermon had been misinterpreted.

In a sermon about the Torah portion of the week at Jerusalem's Tifereth Yerushalayim synagogue last Saturday night, Bakshi Doron compared the biblical figure Zimri to Reform Jews.

He praised Pinchas, the man who murdered Zimri for having sexual relations with a non-Jewish woman. According to the Torah passage Pinchas saved the Jewish people from being struck down by a plague as a result of his act.

Bakshi Doron described Zimri as "the first Reform Jew" and commended Pinchas' deed.

The Torah portion says Pinchas killed Zimri and his Midianite lover by running them through with a sword, thrusting the blade into "the woman through her belly."

'A need to go outside of the ordinary'

The Sephardi chief rabbi said during his sermon that killing is prohibited "without witnesses, without warning, without a Sanhedrin," the supreme religious court that cannot be convened in the absence of the Jewish temple standing in Jerusalem.

He went on to indicate that even so awful an act as murder could be considered meritorious if it spares the Jewish people from a greater harm.

"There is sometimes a plague in the Jewish people. It needs to be stopped," Bakshi Doron said, according to a translation of his sermon provided by Regev.

"There is a need to go outside of the ordinary and do a zealous act, but of course, this belongs only to zealous people.

"One needs to be careful — bloodshed, even if it is necessary at one time, is still bloodshed, but then the Torah comes and says Pinchas' reward was 'the covenant of an everlasting priesthood.'

"Why? Because Pinchas saved the Jewish people. The Torah says that Pinchas by killing an Israelite prince stopped the plague by his action, and for that he was rewarded with the covenant of peace," said the chief rabbi, according to Regev's translation.

Bakshi Doron's remarks come at a time of growing tension in Israel

between Orthodox and Reform leaders. Regev said that his office has been receiving "threatening phone calls and faxes that leave very little doubt of the senders' intentions."

The messages say " 'We will take care of you, you will die,' " he said.

"The police have taken it seriously and put a tracer on the phone, and have traced many of the calls to a yeshiva in Jerusalem," said Regev, though he declined to name the school as police try to ascertain who is actually placing the calls.

The head of Shvil Hazahav, an organization which represents Orthodox Jews who support the Middle East peace process, expressed concerns about Bakshi Doron's language as well.

"If what was reported to have been said by the rabbi is true, it could be viewed as incitement similar to those words which were reported to have precipitated the action by an extremist 'religious' Jew last November," said Rabbi Shmuel Goldin, chair of Shvil Hazahav, or The Golden Path.

At the same time, a spokesman for an organization representing the interests of fervently Orthodox Jews has accused Reform leaders of overreacting to the chief rabbi's remarks, and "basically making a mountain out of a molehill."

In a prepared statement, Rabbi Avi Shafran described the Reform movement's interpretation of Bakshi Doron's sermon as a "self-serving misreading."

"Rabbis Regev and Yoffie know full well that no responsible Orthodox rabbi condones violence of any sort against Reform leaders, and it is irresponsible for them to imply otherwise," Shafran said.

"What Rabbi Bakshi Doron was apparently trying to convey is the unfortunately proven danger to innocent Jews presented by movements claiming the mantle of 'Judaism' but rejective of the Jewish faith's very essence," Shafran added.

It is a danger, he said, "that has already resulted in a largely and tragically assimilated, fragmented and intermarried American Jewish community."

'Operation to save the life of a patient'

Bakshi Doron expanded on his remarks in an interview with Israel Radio on Tuesday morning.

In the interview, the chief rabbi compared the murder of Zimri to "an operation to save the life of a patient."

"This is described in the Torah. It is a fact, it is about extremist behavior, and the Torah praises that extremism," Bakshi Doron told Israel Radio.

According to a statement released by the Reform movement, "The inference is plain: Extreme actions and even violence are, in Rabbi Bakshi Doron's words, legitimate if their purpose is to save the Jewish people from the plague of Reform."

The chief rabbi has failed "to deny that the murder of Zimri, as described in the Bible, is a warrant for the murder of Reform Jews in our own time," the statement said.

When asked whether he thinks that the chief rabbi's remarks reflect a new level of polarization in religious and civil discourse in the Jewish state, the UAHC's vice president, Rabbi Lennard Thal, said "It is not necessarily indicative of any new development.

"I would like to think this is the idiosyncratic ranting of someone who is completely thoughtless," Thal added.

But, he said, "You have to take words spoken publicly seriously, and when they are spoken by Israel's chief rabbi all the more so." □

Clinton officials, Congress cheer for undivided Jerusalem

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Declaring "we want peace," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed enthusiastic members of the House and Senate, who gathered in a joint meeting Wednesday morning to hear the Israeli premier.

"It is time to demand a peace based on norms and standards; it is not enough to talk about peace in abstraction," Netanyahu said in an apparent swipe at his predecessor, Shimon Peres.

In a blunt message to the Palestinian Authority and Israel's Arab neighbors, Netanyahu said they "must make a strategic choice: Either follow the option of terror as an instrument of diplomacy or follow the option of peace. They cannot have it both ways."

Netanyahu has allies on Capitol Hill who share his view that the Palestine Liberation Organization has not fulfilled the obligations set forth in the accords it signed with Israel.

Members of Congress and President Clinton's Cabinet reserved their loudest applause during the speech for Netanyahu's comments about Jerusalem.

Ironically, Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Vice President Al Gore, who serves as president of the Senate, stood and applauded when Netanyahu declared that "there will never be a redivision of Jerusalem."

Christopher bitterly opposed Congress when it passed a law recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Clinton eventually allowed the measure to become law without his signature. The law calls for moving the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv to Jerusalem by 1999, but the administration has not yet certified that planning the move has begun as the law mandates.

Netanyahu's address to Congress came a day after he spent 2 1/2 hours in meetings at the White House.

After meeting with President Clinton, Netanyahu appeared to back away from a pre-election interview in which he said that within four to eight years, Israel should wean itself off the \$1.2 billion in annual economic aid from the United States.

At a joint news conference with Clinton, the Israeli prime minister extended the time frame to "the course of the coming 10 years." But in his speech before the House and Senate the next day, Netanyahu changed the time frame, saying, "In the next four years we will begin the long-term process of gradually reducing the level of your generous economic assistance." □

Arabs attack soldiers in Hebron

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Dozens of Palestinian youths clashed this week with Israeli troops in the West Bank town of Hebron, throwing bottles and rocks at the soldiers.

Wednesday's clashes were prompted by anger over Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's failure to set a date for an Israeli troop redeployment in Hebron during a meeting a day earlier in Washington with President Clinton.

The troops dispersed the protesters and ordered shops closed in the center of town.

Earlier, a pipe bomb was thrown at an army roadblock in the center of town. It did not detonate.

Leaflets have recently been distributed in Hebron calling on the town's approximately 100,000 Arab citizens to launch attacks against the 450 Jewish settlers living there. □

Argentine minister explains to Jews his anti-Semitic past

By Sergio Kiernan

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — Argentina's justice minister has reached out to the Jewish community for understanding in the wake of revelations that he belonged in his youth to a violent anti-Semitic group.

The local magazine Noticias reported last month that Rodolfo Barra belonged in the 1960s to the student branch of the nationalist group Tacuara, which was responsible for hundreds of anti-Semitic attacks, including the desecration of cemeteries and synagogues as well as the murder of a Jewish lawyer.

In a later story, Noticias reported that the minister's far-right activities went beyond his teen years.

According to the magazine, when Barra was 17 years old, he graduated to the "Patria Grande" group.

And in 1974, when he was 27, he worked at the University of Buenos Aires for Argentina's most notorious fascist, Alberto Ottalagano. Argentine leader Gen. Juan Peron made Ottalagano dean and president of the school.

Ottalagano wrote a book titled "Yes, I Am A Fascist, So What?"

Meeting with members of the executive council of the Argentine Jewish political organization DAIA on July 1, Barra explained that he belonged to anti-Semitic groups "because he thought all Jews were leftists, and he was against communism," sources said.

Barra also apparently told DAIA members that he "never was anti-Semitic or a Nazi."

The next day, Barra delivered a three-page letter to DAIA stating his ideas about discrimination.

The letter quoted papal encyclicals against anti-Semitism, sources said.

The council accepted Barra's explanations and on July 4 issued a cautious letter signed by Ruben Beraja, DAIA president, and Jose Kestelman, DAIA secretary general. "The allegations against Minister Barra deeply shocked the community we represent," the letter stated.

In the letter, DAIA did not comment on the minister's excuse, but took note of his "repudiation of Nazism and anti-Semitism."

It also said, "DAIA sees with grave concern that people who held such ideas could be named to high-ranking posts by a democratic government" and that "the minister's statements repudiating right-wing ideologies constitute a compromise."

Calls for Barra's resignation

Some DAIA members tried to defend Barra's recent record, which includes facilitating the extradition of former Nazi SS Capt. Erich Priebke to Italy, where he is now on trial. But others in the Jewish community have criticized him harshly.

Gilbert Levy, president of the Argentine Hebraic Society, said, "The post of justice minister calls for a clean record. Barra should quickly resign his post."

Reform Rabbi Daniel Goldman also called for the minister's resignation, saying, "I do not believe his excuses. I know some of his high-school colleagues, and they tell me Barra was a rabid anti-Semite."

The Simon Wiesenthal Center representative in Argentina, Sergio Widder, said in an interview that the center would publish an open letter to President Carlos Menem "expressing deep concern about the alleged Nazi sympathies of Minister Barra."

The center also wants Menem to "promptly open an investigation on Minister Barra's political activities, activities he kept a secret until they were exposed to the light by journalists."

As justice minister, Barra has been directly responsible for the investigation of the unsolved bombings in Buenos Aires of the Israeli Embassy in 1992 and of the Jewish community headquarters in 1994. □

Quebec author traces route of Nazis who fled to Canada

By Bill Gladstone

MONTREAL (JTA) — Four years after her controversial book "The Traitor and the Jew" uncovered anti-Semitic and Nazi-sympathizing elements in Depression-era Quebec, Esther Delisle is busy at work on her new book.

Delisle, who also is known as Quebec's "Nasty Girl" after the young woman in the German film who uncovered her town's past, is now writing about an underground pipeline that French Nazi collaborators and war criminals used to escape to French Canada after World War II.

"I can prove that certain people were part of the connection, but there are still pieces of the puzzle that are missing," Delisle said.

So far, her research has turned up more ex-Nazi collaborators from France than she initially suspected, including Count Jacques Duge de Bernonville, "a higher-ranking official than Klaus Barbie, the Butcher of Lyon."

From 1946 to 1951, Quebec church officials and politicians, including the mayor of Montreal, exerted pressure to keep de Bernonville in Quebec even as the federal government was trying to deport him, Delisle said. Delisle said that "99.9 percent of Quebec's intelligentsia at that time rallied around him." Eventually expelled from Canada, de Bernonville went to Brazil, where he was murdered in 1971.

Delisle also has uncovered evidence that Maurice Duplessis, the province's former autocratic premier, hired an ex-Nazi collaborator named Paul Richemont "to pull some dirty tricks in the Vatican."

Delisle is convinced that a Nazi underground operated in Quebec as late as 1972, when an escape route was apparently prepared for French Nazi collaborator Paul Touvier, who chose to stay in France, where he was convicted of war crimes in 1994. Delisle, a postdoctoral fellow in history at McGill University here, wrote "The Traitor and the Jew" as a dissertation.

The book exposes the nationalistic ideology of the province's revered right-wing historian-cleric-novelist, Abbe Lionel-Adolphe Groulx, whose supporters have long dismissed as marginal his anti-Semitic, anti-liberal diatribes. Like the Nazis with whom he sympathized, Groulx built up a racial ideology based on blood purity, tribal warfare and the concept of a superior race.

Still, he is regarded as a hero in Quebec. Streets, buildings and even a Montreal subway station have been named after him.

The book became a Canadian best seller, even though it fueled the resentment of many separatists in Quebec. Former Premier Jacques Parizeau and other prominent French-Canadian separatists have disparaged Delisle for giving outsiders a bad image of the province.

Ordinary citizens, too, have found unique means of expressing their displeasure at her choice of topic; a manager at one shopping mall was so disgruntled by Delisle's presence at a bookstore that he disconnected the electricity.

"I've been pushed and kicked around so much that now, if you really want to hurt me, you have to push me very hard," Delisle said of the public's response. "Otherwise, I just burst out laughing." □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD
Jews in former Soviet Union
assess direction of community

By Lev Krichevsky

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia (JTA) — Eight years after Jewish activists in the Soviet Union openly began their organizational efforts, communal leaders gathered here to assess ways to make life in the world's third largest Jewish community more meaningful.

Today, more than 2 million Jews are estimated to live in Russia and the other Soviet successor states, but the challenges confronting their survival as a community remain severe.

In an effort to overcome those challenges, some 150 delegates from Jewish communities across the former Soviet Union and from Israel, the United States and Western Europe gathered here last week to air their assessments of Russian Jewish life and to share ideas for charting the future.

The four-day conference, sponsored by the American Jewish Committee, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry and several European groups, brought together optimists as well as pessimists.

With the median age of the Russian Jewish community well past 50 and the rate of intermarriages exceeding 65 percent — and higher in the provinces — the pessimists had grounds for genuine concern.

Recent surveys indicate that only 5 percent to 10 percent of Russian Jews take part in communal life, with a somewhat higher participation in Ukraine.

"There is no community in Russia. The old community that was more like a ghetto has gone. A new one is not built yet," said Moscow activist Tankred Golenpolsky. "We have too many Jewish organizations and too few Jews in them."

Also far from optimistic was Yuriy Lozinsky of Tomsk, a city in eastern Siberia that confronts many of the problems typically found in the Russian hinterland.

Asserting that religion does not play an important role for most Russian Jews, Lozinsky said, "We have been torn from our roots and there is no hope we will be able to rediscover them."

"In the beginning of this century, there were three synagogues in Tomsk. Today, we have only one observant Jew out of the 3,000 that live in Tomsk. He is a 93-year-old man and he prays alone at home."

Lozinsky, 54, head of a Sunday school in Tomsk, said his generation of Jews might be the last in the provinces.

Other local leaders agreed with his dim prognosis, pointing to the lack of teachers and religious leaders in the provinces.

Russian Jews 'no longer mute'

But still others pointed to the strides forward made by the community since 1988, when the new openness encouraged by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev encouraged Jewish leaders to start creating organized Jewish life on Soviet soil.

"Russian Jews have not disappeared and they are no longer mute," said Mikhail Chlenov, president of the Va'ad, the Jewish Federation of Russia.

His opinion was shared by activists from communities located far from Moscow and St. Petersburg.

"In our city we have a real community," said Mark Arshinsky, leader of the 14,000-member Jewish community in Khabarovsk, located in the Russian Far East.

He said he believed that there is a future for Jews in Khabarovsk, but added that "it will depend on a complex of political, economic and even climatic condi-

tions, since many Jews are leaving Khabarovsk because of the severe climate."

In the five years since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, organized Jewish life here has developed along two separate paths — as religious communities and as charitable organizations.

Religious and lay leaders at the conference spoke of the importance of combining their efforts, something that has "not been achieved in practice yet," Chlenov said.

But some leaders felt that the two approaches could not be joined. "The synagogue cannot be a center of organized Jewish activities," said Zinovi Kogan, leader of Hineini, the Moscow-based Reform congregation.

Kogan, who also serves as director of Yad Ezra, a Jewish charitable organization, said that in many Russian communities, elderly and needy Jews make up more than half of the Jewish population. "In most places, welfare and charity should be the core of communal life," he said.

Some leaders said many Jews get involved in communal life only if they want to emigrate.

"There are lots of such examples," said Alexander Sakov, Jewish communal leader from Omsk, located in eastern Siberia.

Local communal leaders "in many cases see their role as only temporary before emigration," he said.

Victor Voronkov, a St. Petersburg sociologist, agreed.

"Jewish identity and communal involvement is becoming a strategic solution for most Russian Jews when they decide to emigrate," he said.

The question of what role foreign organizations can play in shaping Russian Jewish life was also discussed at the conference, but it emerged as an issue with no clear answer.

Among those on hand for the discussion were Andrew Baker, the AJCommittee's director of European Affairs, Nate Geller of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry and Martin Horwitz of the New York City-based Jewish Community Development Fund.

Unable to attend the conference was David Harris, AJCommittee's executive director, who was denied a visa by Russian authorities. "Much as I would like to believe that this experience was nothing more than a bureaucratic snafu, I cannot," Harris said last week.

The visa denial was but one of several recent events — including the suspension in April of the Jewish Agency for Israel's license to operate in Russia — that highlighted the question of what the Russian authorities' future attitude toward Jewish activities will be.

This may prove the most troubling challenge to face the community in the months and years ahead. □

Islamic militant's death probed

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Palestinian police continued to investigate last week's killing of a fugitive member of the Islamic Jihad who was found strangled in a house in El-Bireh, north of Jerusalem.

Salah Tuhaina, who escaped from prison earlier this year and is suspected of planning terror attacks on Israelis, probably was killed in a dispute by other members of the fundamentalist group Islamic Jihad, said Palestinian security officials in Ramallah. However, the Islamic Jihad distributed a leaflet blaming Israel and the Palestinian Authority for Tuhaina's death.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority reportedly released at least 20 Islamic militants detained in March after a wave of suicide bombings in Israel.

The prisoners belonged to the Hamas and Islamic Jihad fundamentalist groups. □