

**NEWS AT A GLANCE**

■ **Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he expects that his government's policies on the religious status quo will disappoint those who want to see American "norms and patterns" in Israel.** Netanyahu, who recently formed a government that includes three Orthodox political parties, was speaking at a briefing for Jewish journalists in New York at the end of his six-day visit to the United States.

■ **A new plan surfaced to consolidate the United Jewish Appeal with the Council of Jewish Federations with two chief executives, as well as a board and an executive committee having 50 percent representation from each group.** The proposal replaces a now-defunct plan to merge UJA, CJF and the United Israel Appeal.

■ **A Sabbath fire completely destroyed the Steinsaltz Yeshiva in Moscow.** The yeshiva served as a training ground for religious leaders and teachers who became community leaders throughout the former Soviet Union. [Page 3]

■ **United Torah Judaism, a coalition partner in the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, called for the removal of Jerusalem's police chief.** The party's demand came after police clashed with fervently Orthodox Jews protesting a court ruling that blocked a government order to close a Jerusalem street for Shabbat. [Page 2]

■ **The Persian Gulf state of Qatar canceled plans to open a trade office in Israel, a sign that Arab states are reconsidering forging economic ties with Israel under the Likud's Benjamin Netanyahu, according to media reports.** Earlier this year, Qatar and Oman signed agreements to exchange trade missions with the Jewish state, stopping short of full diplomatic ties.

■ **Israeli security forces arrested 50 members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine suspected of involvement in recent shooting attacks against Israelis.** As part of a crackdown on militant groups, Israeli security forces have already detained another 50 members of the Popular Front along with some 300 activists from Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

**FOCUS ON ISSUES****Polish restitution plan falls short of Jewish expectations***By Alissa Kaplan*

NEW YORK (JTA) — When the president of Poland spoke here last week before America's top Jewish leaders about restitution of Jewish property, his country's plan was expected to follow the touted model recently set by Hungary.

Aleksander Kwasniewski assured Jewish leaders at the July 10 meeting that the Polish Parliament would vote Sept. 1 on the second draft of a law on the return of Jewish communal property confiscated in wartime Poland. But the 41-year-old president disappointed those who had expected Poland to leave the door open on the restitution of private property.

Kwasniewski made his remarks before a joint gathering of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the World Jewish Restitution Organization.

Hungary's plan, announced earlier this month, has been called a breakthrough and a model for other countries in the region.

The Hungarian plan, which established a foundation to manage Jewish-owned communal property, does not specifically address the return of private property. But lawmakers in Budapest are now hammering out legislation to address the issue, said Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress.

Between 80,000 and 130,000 Jews now reside in Hungary. Some 800,000 lived in Hungary before the war broke out.

The Polish president said at last week's meeting that for a variety of political, economic, social and psychological reasons, the return of private property that had been confiscated would be difficult.

Some 3.5 million Jews called Poland home before the Holocaust. Today, between 3,500 and 30,000 Jews live there.

**'Victims of a tragic past'**

Kwasniewski said he empathized with those who lost their property — his family's house in Vilnius, Lithuania, had been seized during World War II — but he asked the Jewish community to understand that after 50 years, it would be hard to take property away from people only to give it back to those who had no intention of making a permanent return to Poland.

He also said Jews and Poles were "both victims of a tragic past."

Immediately after the meeting, Israel Singer, WJRO chairman and WJC secretary general, looked surprised by the Polish leader's remarks.

Singer had said in an interview before the meeting that he was hopeful that Kwasniewski would announce a restitution plan that did not exclude private property.

Steinberg of the WJC said, "The meeting lends hope for an improvement in relations, which we all want. It also shows the pitfalls that lie ahead."

Singer said he hoped that the president "would walk the extra mile as Hungary did."

Singer stressed the importance of the involvement of the world Jewish community, the local Jewish community and the government in reaching a restitution plan.

"The solution has to fit the problem," he said.

At the joint meeting, Kwasniewski also spoke about Auschwitz, where a controversy surrounds a developer's ongoing efforts to construct a shopping mall near the death camp.

The president said the site should be remembered as "a place of martyrdom of the Jewish people."

Construction of the shopping complex had been stopped, he said.

Poland wants to divide the area around Auschwitz into two zones, he said, adding that about 50,000 Polish citizens live near the Nazi death complex.

"The City of the Living" would encompass the town and its citizens and "The City of the Dead" would be dedicated to memorials of the camps and surrounding areas, Kwasniewski said.

Before Kwasniewski came to New York, he met with President

Clinton in Washington, primarily to discuss when Poland might join NATO.

Kwasniewski became Poland's leader late last year, unseating Lech Walesa.

Walesa's presidency had been marred by anti-Semitic or apparently anti-Semitic blunders, including not mentioning Jews in a speech marking the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. □

### United Torah Judaism urges Jerusalem's top cop to resign

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A religious party in Israel's governing coalition has demanded the resignation of Jerusalem's top police official in the wake of violent weekend clashes here between police and fervently Orthodox Jews.

Public Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani met Sunday with Knesset member Avraham Ravitz to discuss Saturday's violence.

Ravitz, a member of the fervently Orthodox United Torah Judaism bloc, a coalition partner in the recently formed government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, called the police action a "pogrom."

Some 5,000 fervently Orthodox Jews demonstrated Saturday in the area of Jerusalem's Bar Ilan Street to protest an order of the High Court of Justice that temporarily prevented the closure of the main thoroughfare on the Sabbath.

Bar Ilan Street, which runs through fervently Orthodox neighborhoods, has become a flashpoint in the increasingly bitter confrontation between religious and secular Jews over what each side views as representing nothing less than the future character of the Jewish state.

Orthodox Jews, arguing for government support of religious law, want Bar Ilan and other streets closed to traffic on the Sabbath.

Secular Israelis, seeking a clear division between religion and the state, argue that the street is a main thoroughfare and must remain open at all times.

After winning an unprecedented 23 seats in the 120-member Knesset in Israel's recent national elections, the three religious parties called for stricter enforcement of Sabbath observance.

Transportation Minister Yitzhak Levy, himself an Orthodox Jew and member of the National Religious Party, signed an order last week banning traffic on Bar Ilan Street, and on its continuation, Yirmiyahu, for most of the Sabbath and on religious holidays.

But last Friday, the High Court, ruling on a petition by left-wing legislators who cited religious coercion, canceled Levy's order.

The court gave the government 15 days to explain why the roads should not remain open.

Netanyahu and Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert, who were visiting the United States last week, were reportedly surprised by Levy's decision to close the street.

On Saturday, religious demonstrators threw rocks and garbage at police and at a passing convoy of cars driven by supporters of the Meretz Party who had launched a counterdemonstration to keep the street open.

The crowds reportedly beat undercover police officers who had disguised themselves as fervently Orthodox Jews.

Some protesters called the police Nazis. Others shouted "Shabbos, Shabbos" from rooftops and balconies.

Security forces used water cannons to disperse the crowds. Mounted police reportedly clubbed demonstrators to prevent them from blocking the street.

"They were hitting innocent people on the head

with sticks, and breaking into people's homes," Ravitz reportedly said of police efforts to stop the rioting. "This is not how things are done in a democracy."

Ravitz, charging that police had used unnecessary force to disperse the protesters, demanded that Jerusalem Police Chief Aryeh Amit be removed from his job.

"He does not understand the delicate relations between religious and secular populations of the city," Ravitz told Israel Radio. "We've seen this in previous demonstrations. He can go to the Negev, but he should not be here."

During his meeting with Ravitz, Kahalani promised that any complaints against police actions would be investigated. But he added that he had full confidence in Jerusalem police officers and that their duty was to enforce the law against violations. □

### IDF chief claims Hezbollah violates terms of cease-fire

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Israel Defense Force chief of staff has accused the fundamentalist Hezbollah movement of violating the recent U.S.-brokered cease-fire agreement in southern Lebanon.

Lt. Gen. Amnon Shahak's accusation came as representatives from the five nations that will monitor the cease-fire approved long-stalled arrangements for the functioning and operation of the monitoring group.

In remarks broadcast Sunday, Shahak said Hezbollah was still mounting attacks from civilian areas on positions of the IDF and the allied South Lebanon Army.

The cease-fire agreement, reached April 27, brought an end to 16 days of cross-border fighting between Israel and Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon.

The agreement barred both sides from launching attacks on or from civilian areas, but did not halt fighting within the southern Lebanon security zone itself.

The agreement also called for the establishment of a five-nation monitoring group.

But in repeated meetings, the group failed to reach an agreement on how it would function, until this weekend, when the United States, Israel, France, Syria and Lebanon successfully concluded their discussions.

U.S. State Department officials said the monitoring group could begin operating within two weeks and would likely be based in the southern Lebanese border town of Nakoura. The group is expected to have its headquarters in Cyprus, where it will operate 24 hours a day to receive complaints of cease-fire violations.

U.S. and Israeli officials initially wanted the group to have political and economic responsibilities.

But Syria and Lebanon wanted to focus purely on military issues. Their stance ultimately prevailed. □

### Rothschild heir found dead in hotel

By Lee Yanowitch

PARIS (JTA) — Amschel Rothschild, heir apparent to the British merchant bank N.M. Rothschild & Sons, has hanged himself in a Paris hotel room.

Rothschild, 41, chairman of Rothschild Asset Management, was found by a maid last week in the luxury Bristol Hotel, where he was staying during a business trip. Police later confirmed that Rothschild took his own life.

His death leaves open the question of who will succeed his cousin Sir Evelyn de Rothschild as head of the Rothschild banking dynasty.

He is survived by his wife, Anita, and three children. The Rothschilds shrouded his death in secrecy, withholding news of the suicide for several days. □

## Steinsaltz Yeshiva in Moscow destroyed by fire on Sabbath

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — A Moscow yeshiva, one of the city's leading Jewish facilities, was completely destroyed last Friday night by a fire that was believed to have been caused by an electrical short circuit.

"It's a tragic day for Russian Jews," said Moscow Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt.

The Jewish community "has lost the biggest open Judaica library" in the former Soviet Union, he added.

The Mekor Chayim, or Source of Life, Yeshiva was known as the Steinsaltz Yeshiva after its head, Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, the Talmudic scholar and translator who has served as Russia's spiritual leader since 1995.

After the Jewish community faced 70 years of persecution under Communist rule, the yeshiva was the first official Jewish institution to open in the former Soviet Union during the period of openness instituted by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

During the past three years, the yeshiva served as a training ground for religious leaders and teachers who became community leaders throughout the former Soviet Union after studying there.

The 1-story wooden house located in the western Moscow neighborhood of Kuntsevo caught fire last Friday night while dozens of people were praying in the yeshiva's synagogue. No one was injured, but the building was burnt to the ground.

"I'm sure the fire was not caused by arson," said Chayim Feigenberg, executive director of the Institute for Jewish Studies, which was headquartered in the yeshiva.

Yevgeny Katz, 34, who attended services on the night of the fire, said congregants tried to put out the fire, but "it was spreading so fast that some 30 minutes later almost nothing was left."

Worshippers managed to save a Torah scroll and some books from destruction, but the fire devoured most of the yeshiva's 5,000-volume Judaica library.

Goldschmidt said he would like to make every effort to reconstruct the library, which had consisted of volumes donated from abroad as well as books presented by Jews who were leaving Russia in the late 1980s.

### Wet and scorched books

Along with the educational facility and extensive library, the yeshiva served as home for publishing activities that included a monthly magazine for teachers at Jewish schools.

On Sunday, 12 participants of a religious seminar for leaders from Russia's provinces held their Hebrew classes in the open air, next to the scene of the fire. The staff took advantage of this week's record-breaking high temperatures, which hovered around 90 degrees, to spread wet and scorched books out on the grass.

"We'll see if any of them can be restored," said Inna Levyant, 60, a secretary in the yeshiva.

"It's very hard to accept that we've lost this first 'Jewish place' in Moscow," said David Safronov, 28, a coordinator of leadership seminars in the yeshiva's Institute for Jewish Studies. Safronov, a professional saxophone player who graduated from the yeshiva three years ago, recalled the first Jewish gatherings there during the late 1980s and early 1990s. "Then a Passover seder would attract 200 to 300 Jews who had been yearning for such events during the 70-year winter," he said, referring to the period of persecution of Soviet Jewry.

The building, built some 30 years ago, formerly served as the Moscow mayor's guest house.

Feigenberg, the yeshiva's administrator, said he

hoped that Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, a longtime Jewish sympathizer, would help find another home for the yeshiva.

In the meantime, Goldschmidt has proposed moving the yeshiva to Moscow's Great Synagogue. □

## Argentine minister resigns after anti-Semitic past bared

By Sergio Kiernan

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — Argentine Justice Minister Rodolfo Barra has resigned in the wake of revelations about his past membership in a violent anti-Semitic group.

Barra, who oversaw the investigations of the unsolved bombings of the Israeli Embassy in 1992 and the Jewish community headquarters in 1994, was replaced after he resigned July 10 by Deputy Justice Minister Elias Jassan, who is Jewish.

Barra belonged to the right-wing group UNES when he was a high school student, according to a recent story by the local weekly magazine Noticias.

UNES was a youth group affiliated with Tacuara, an organization responsible for hundreds of anti-Semitic actions, including attacks against synagogues, a violent riot in the Jewish neighborhood here and the murder of Alberto Alterman, a Jewish lawyer.

Barra, in a recent letter to the Argentine Jewish umbrella organization DAIA, admitted belonging to UNES.

But he denied that he was a Nazi or a racist.

"I was a nationalist and an anti-Zionist, because I was told all Jews were Communists and I was adamantly anti-Communist," Barra wrote in the letter.

After he wrote the letter, Noticias charged that he graduated to the extremist group Patria Grande.

In 1974, when he was 27, he worked at the University of Buenos Aires for Argentina's most notorious fascist, Alberto Ottalagano. Then-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?"

Barra's case created deep concern and division among Argentine Jews.

DAIA's answer to the minister's letter was cautious, lauding his repudiation of Nazi ideology and racism.

But several Jewish groups were harsher and called for his resignation.

Some DAIA members tried to defend Barra's recent record, which includes facilitating the extradition of former Nazi Erich Priebke to Italy, where he is on trial.

Before Barra's resignation was announced, several Jewish organizations and rabbis were planning a demonstration this week to call for his replacement.

The government confirmed the resignation July 10. President Carlos Menem refused to comment on the minister he once called "a personal friend and close ally." Barra had also served in the Menem government as a legal consultant and as a Supreme Court justice.

Barra resigned when he felt that "the pressure is unstoppable," sources said. The minister offered to resign July 7 during a private conversation with Menem, sources said. But the president asked him at the time to "hold on to the post for a few more days."

On July 10, the president of DAIA, Ruben Beraja, met with Interior Minister Carlos Vladimiro Corach, who is Jewish, and informed him that "Argentine Jews are not comfortable with a former Nazi in the Cabinet."

Sources said Corach withdrew his support from Barra, a move that sealed the minister's fate.

Menem accepted Barra's resignation later that day and promoted Jassan to head the Justice Ministry. □

## Senate rematch in Minnesota draws national Jewish interest

By Shawn Cohen

Washington Jewish Week

WASHINGTON (JTA) — To sway Minnesota voters, national Republicans already are running attack advertisements against a man they view as enemy No. 1 in this year's Senate campaigns: Democratic incumbent Paul Wellstone, depicted as one of the most liberal and passionate defenders of the welfare state.

Promising a return of "conservative common sense" to the federal government, Rudy Boschwitz, the likely GOP challenger, hopes to recapture the seat he lost to Wellstone in 1990.

The two men have virtually nothing in common except that both happen to be Jewish — in a state with a tiny Jewish minority.

The race is attracting national attention because public opinion polls show the candidates running neck and neck. And the organized Jewish community is watching closely because the candidates hold different ideologies.

"This race is one of the top priorities for our party and for the Jewish community," said Matthew Brooks, executive director of the National Jewish Coalition, a Republican outreach group. "I think we have an excellent chance in this race to have a Democratic turnover."

With about 35,000 Jews living in a state of 4.2 million, both Wellstone and Boschwitz are making an effort to reach out to Jewish constituents statewide as well as nationally. In seeking the GOP nomination, Boschwitz sent a fund-raising letter to Jewish backers detailing his longtime support for Israel.

In the letter, Boschwitz said that perhaps his greatest joy on Capitol Hill was being a "shadchan," or Jewish matchmaker. As a legislator, Boschwitz helped sponsor social mixers on holidays such as Chanukah and Purim at which single Jewish men and women could meet.

Not to be outdone, Wellstone is distributing a fund-raising appeal written by Jewish colleagues in the Senate. Sens. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) and Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) and retired Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio) wrote: "Paul's parents instilled in him the Jewish ethic of pursuing knowledge and the Jewish zeal for justice."

### 'Brought up as non-Jews'

The Wellstone campaign is also reminding voters of an issue that backfired on Boschwitz in 1990, when the Republican faulted Wellstone for marrying a non-Jew. The Boschwitz campaign then distributed a letter declaring that "Paul Wellstone has no connection whatsoever with the Jewish community or our communal life. His children were brought up as non-Jews."

Denouncing any effort to rehash that controversy, John Lerner, a Boschwitz campaign staffer, said Wellstone's people "are trying to make something where nothing exists. We have not done anything in this campaign to question Wellstone's Jewishness."

Recent polls show Boschwitz and Wellstone in a dead heat. According to a survey last month by St. Paul Pioneer Press and KARE-11 TV News in Minnesota, Wellstone has a 2 percent lead over Boschwitz — a margin within the sampling error.

However, before facing Wellstone, Boschwitz must first defeat Bert McKasy in the Republican primary in September. Polls show Boschwitz holding a commanding 53 percent to McKasy's 12 percent. McKasy is a hard-line conservative who lost to Rod Grams in the 1994 Republican senatorial nomination. Grams went on to win the general election.

Seizing on Wellstone's apparent vulnerability, national Republicans — led by Sen. Alfonse D'Amato of New York, chairman of the Republican Senatorial Committee — have already spent more than \$100,000 on state television and radio ads attacking the incumbent senator.

So far, Boschwitz has raised \$2 million, compared with \$3 million by Wellstone.

Jewish political groups and activists apparently have been split over whom to back. Wellstone has the support of such Jewish notables as Monte Friedkin, David Steiner, Larry Weinberg and Harriet Zimmerman, all current or former senior officers at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. Friedkin is national chairman of the National Jewish Democratic Council. Boschwitz is being backed by Max Fisher, a prominent Jewish Republican, Robert Asher, an AIPAC board member, and Les Wexner, owner of The Limited companies.

While most Jews traditionally vote Democratic — a plus for Wellstone, who is pro-choice on abortion and supports judicial rulings upholding the separation of church and state — Boschwitz has made inroads in the organized Jewish community. As a senator, Boschwitz was involved heavily in issues affecting Israel. Due to Boschwitz's knowledge and advice on these issues, several colleagues called him "the Senate rabbi."

Elected in 1978 and serving two terms, Boschwitz was chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Near East subcommittee, which handles Israel.

After leaving office, he was appointed in 1991 by President George Bush to be chief U.S. negotiator for the evacuation of Ethiopian Jews during Operation Solomon. Boschwitz traveled to Addis Ababa to negotiate arrangements for the airlift to Israel.

### 'Votes the right way'

"He was one of the best leaders on these issues that we ever had in office," said Charles Brooks, executive director of National PAC, the largest pro-Israel political action committee.

However, National PAC plans to contribute to both campaigns, Brooks said, because "we can't turn our back on people who have been good for Israel and on Jewish issues. Wellstone doesn't have the historic ties to the Jewish community, but he votes the right way."

Washington PAC, the second largest pro-Israel PAC, is backing Boschwitz. "He has compiled a much longer and more activist record than his opponent on issues related to Israel," said Morris Amitay, treasurer of Washington PAC.

During the early 1990s, Boschwitz served as president of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, where Amitay serves as vice chairman.

Not surprisingly, the Boschwitz and Wellstone campaigns are attempting to label each other as extremists — Wellstone as a bleeding-heart liberal beholden to special interest groups, according to Boschwitz's campaign; Boschwitz as a rubber stamp for the Christian Coalition and its views on abortion and "family values," according to Wellstone's people.

Steve Silberfarb, NJDC deputy executive director, said the Jewish community would tend toward Wellstone because he is a Democrat and because Jewish activists traditionally back incumbents. "If the loyalty argument is to hold, being loyal to those in office who have basically met the needs of the Jewish community, then most of the important Jewish support should go to Wellstone," he said.

Brooks countered: "With Boschwitz, seniority picks up where he left off in 1990. With Republicans in power in the Senate, that's much more valuable than having Wellstone, who is still low on seniority and in the minority party." □