

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Foreign Minister David Levy held a two-hour meeting in an effort to mend a much-publicized rift in their relationship. The Prime Minister's Office described the meeting as good, adding that the two had agreed on ways to cooperate. [Page 2]

■ Fervently Orthodox Jews demonstrated in Jerusalem to protest a court decision allowing Bar Ilan Street to remain open to traffic on the Sabbath. In contrast to recent similar demonstrations, there were no reports of arrests or injuries. [Page 3]

■ A Dole administration would press Syria to end its support of terrorist organizations by recalling the U.S. ambassador to Syria, House Speaker Newt Gingrich told a group of Republican Jews. [Page 3]

■ A newspaper in the former Soviet republic of Georgia blamed Jews for the country's economic ills. The publisher of the independent newspaper *Noah* called Jews "vampires," who have been "pumping money, gold, nerves, thoughts" out of Georgia.

■ Charges were filed against former SS Capt. Erich Priebke for the murder of Bruno Buozzi, an Italian anti-fascist resistance leader slain during World War II. Buozzi's family claimed that Priebke killed him and 13 other men in 1944, as the Germans were fleeing Rome. [Page 4]

■ Argentina will ask international experts to conduct a new study of the March 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires. President Carlos Menem ordered the new study after Israel criticized an earlier study commissioned by the Argentine Supreme Court that concluded a car bomb was not used.

■ Israeli and Palestinian officials for the first time went on a joint tour of a new airport being built in the southern Gaza Strip. The two sides remain far apart on issues surrounding the \$48 million project, with the question of who will be in charge of security topping their list of differences.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD**Steinsaltz teaches and learns during visit with Siberian Jews**

By Lev Krichevsky

KRASNOYARSK, Siberia (JTA) — In 1881, Abram Shalyt was exiled to Siberia from the town of Senno in what was then Byelorussia for making an attempt on the life of the local mayor.

More than a century later, his grandson, Semyon, came to the synagogue in his native Krasnoyarsk to see Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, who has served as the spiritual leader of Russian Jewry since 1995.

Shalyt, a 78-year-old retired doctor, looked excited. He had not seen a rabbi since childhood.

"Once a day, and two times on the Sabbath, I would take my grandfather to the synagogue," Shalyt recalled. "My grandfather lost his vision at hard labor, so I would go with him."

For Steinsaltz, his trip to Krasnoyarsk, located in central Siberia, was a first.

The trip, which took him to several Jewish communities in Siberia and the Russian Far East, was part of an ongoing effort to visit Jewish communities outside of Moscow.

But until now, he had never had the chance to visit such remote places as Yekaterinburg, located in the Ural Mountains, Omsk and Krasnoyarsk, located in Siberia, or Khabarovsk, in the Far East.

"I wanted to visit these remote communities," which, Steinsaltz said, "are neither very much alive nor dead."

He said he was surprised by the numbers of Jews in each of the communities he visited earlier this month.

"I didn't know that in a place like Khabarovsk there are an estimated 10,000 to 14,000 Jews," he said.

The three other towns Steinsaltz visited each have a Jewish population of from 6,000 to 15,000.

Organized by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the tour was made possible with the help of Ambassador Ronald Lauder, who has advanced Jewish communal projects in Eastern and Central Europe through the foundation that bears his name.

'Places where the plane could land'

Lauder provided a plane for the trip to the far-flung Jewish communities.

"The towns we visited had been chosen because of the level of activities in these communities and because those were the places where the plane could land," said Ralph Goldman, an honorary executive vice president with the JDC who, along with a small group of American Jewish leaders, accompanied Steinsaltz on the trip.

Wherever Steinsaltz went, his audiences deluged him with questions.

What does Judaism say about mixed marriages? Can a Jewish woman wear seductive clothes? What does the Jewish religion say about the Holocaust? Does the creation of the State of Israel mean that the Messiah will soon come?

Steinsaltz gave his lectures in Hebrew.

In Khabarovsk, a grandfather and a grandson who were in the audience listened attentively, quietly repeating words the rabbi spoke.

Because of his early training in the Talmud and his native Yiddish, the grandfather could understand snatches of the rabbi's lecture without benefit of a Russian translation.

His 11-year-old grandson explained that he understood parts of the lecture because he had just finished studying the first part of a Hebrew textbook.

Steinsaltz's name became familiar to Russian Jews in the late 1980s, when 70 years of state-sponsored religious persecution ended and Judaism was allowed to be studied openly.

Russian translations of books by Steinsaltz were among the first works on Judaism that appeared in the country in the new period of openness instituted by former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Steinsaltz said he hoped his visit would contribute toward a revival

of the sense of Jewish community. "The community here has lost its collective identity," Steinsaltz said, adding that it was his mission to help restore it.

The history of the Jews in Siberia and the Russian Far East is very different from that in other parts of Russia.

Most of the Siberian Jewish families could trace their roots to someone who had been sent into exile during the Czarist regime or as a result of the Stalinist purges that were first carried out in the 1930s.

Siberian Jews are "exiles from the exile," said Yechiel Poupko, a rabbi from Chicago who made the trip with Steinsaltz.

The grandparents of Isaak Kaufman were exiled to Siberia from Ukraine and Byelorussia in 1905.

"My grandfather and grandmother were both activists with the Bund, the Jewish socialist party. Here they met each other," said Kaufman, 60, who serves as chairman of the Society of Jewish Culture in Krasnoyarsk.

"Our ancestors' fate left its mark upon us, the Jews of Siberia," Kaufman said. "I think we are more open, more straightforward than other Russian Jews."

A member of the Steinsaltz family had also been exiled to Siberia at the turn of the century.

"He spent 20 years in Siberia, and I imagine he didn't have to pay for his ticket," Steinsaltz said.

Most members of the Jewish community in Khabarovsk, the biggest in the Russian Far East, moved there earlier this century after the failure of a Soviet plan to create a Jewish autonomous area in Birobidzhan, which is located 130 miles from Khabarovsk.

"We all are immigrants here," said Mark Miller, president of the Jewish Cultural Center in Khabarovsk.

For the Jews of Siberia, Steinsaltz believed there was at least one advantage to living some four to seven time zones east of Moscow.

"It seems that Siberia was more tolerant to Jews," he said. "Jews had better chances in Siberia. I can see here and there that people hold positions or have a power that goes beyond what they have in other places" in Russia.

Wherever he visited, Steinsaltz was received by local governmental officials.

"It was very important to us to see how the rabbi was received. The authorities, the general public and the press were taking our spiritual leader as the ambassador of the entire Jewish people," said Mark Arshinsky, a Jewish communal leader in Khabarovsk.

In every town he traveled to, local authorities provided police escorts for the rabbi; dozens of reporters and cameramen were also on hand, attempting to capture his stay in the provinces.

"After all, very few guests from abroad, not to mention Jewish leaders, visit our provincial town," said Alexey Karlin, an 18-year-old art student in Khabarovsk.

"I heard many people saying that Steinsaltz was the first rabbi they have ever seen in their life," said Arshinsky of Khabarovsk.

"Now they know that there are Jews who want to help us find our nearly lost Jewish identity." □

Netanyahu, Levy in accord on role of Foreign Ministry

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Foreign Minister David Levy have apparently managed to patch up their differences.

The two held a two-hour meeting Sunday in an effort to mend a rift in their relationship that was made public when Levy's aides complained that he was being left out of foreign policy decisions.

The Prime Minister's Office described Sunday's

meeting as good, adding that the two had agreed on ways to cooperate.

During their talks the two agreed to form a ministerial committee, headed by the premier and including the foreign and defense ministers, to formulate foreign and defense policy.

Levy and Netanyahu also agreed that the Foreign Ministry would maintain a special status in matters regarding the peace process.

In addition, they decided to appoint former Israel Defense Force chief of staff Dan Sharon to head the Israeli side of the steering committee for negotiations with the Palestinians.

The long-standing rivalry between Netanyahu and Levy resurfaced with a vengeance two weeks ago, following a series of what Levy considered slights to his position and that of his ministry.

These included political contacts carried out by the prime minister's diplomatic adviser, Dore Gold, without Levy's knowledge, and the failure of the Prime Minister's Office to brief the Foreign Ministry about contacts with foreign diplomats.

The final straw came when Netanyahu made his first official trip to Jordan this month as prime minister without being accompanied by Levy or any member of the Foreign Ministry staff.

To demonstrate his ire, Levy boycotted Cabinet meetings and sessions of a forum of senior ministers that dealt with security issues.

Levy returned to his office in Jerusalem on Sunday after making what was described as a personal trip to New York. Prior to his meeting with Netanyahu, Levy did not attend a meeting held earlier in the day at which members of the ministerial forum discussed a Defense Ministry proposal for an IDF redeployment in the West Bank town of Hebron.

During those talks, the ministers disagreed on the details of the plan, which calls for Israeli troops to remain in more of the Arab districts of Hebron than originally agreed to in the Interim Agreement signed last September in Washington.

The plan also calls for greater numbers of Israeli troops to remain in Hebron than originally envisioned.

During the meeting, Transport Minister Yitzhak Levy, of the National Religious Party, demanded that the plan also call for strengthening the Jewish population in Hebron, which currently numbers about 450. □

Tel Aviv subway construction begins

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Construction of a subway system aimed at easing growing traffic congestion in the Tel Aviv area has begun.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Transport Minister Yitzhak Levy and Tel Aviv Mayor Ronni Milo were among the officials attending Sunday's groundbreaking ceremony.

The project is in its initial stages, with four plans for subway lines in the greater Tel Aviv area still under consideration. The subway is expected to cost some \$2-3 billion and take close to 10 years to complete.

Milo said he believed the first line could be up and running in five years.

"In the meantime, we still face a big problem" with traffic, he told Israel Radio. "According to our projections, by the year 2005, we expect being in a traffic jam all over central Israel."

Israel's only existing subway is the Carmelit, in Haifa. It has one line that connects the lower and upper parts of the city. □

Gingrich: Dole would pressure Syria by calling back U.S. envoy

By Matthew Dorf

SAN DIEGO (JTA) — A Dole administration would recall the U.S. ambassador to Syria and launch a covert operation to seize two Libyans suspected of planting a bomb on Pan Am flight 103, according to Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.)

Whether fanciful campaign rhetoric or intended policy goals, Gingrich laid out before Republican Jews the GOP's plans to try to woo Jewish support at the polls, which has traditionally gone to Democratic candidates.

Gingrich spoke before a cheering crowd of Republican Jews gathered at the National Jewish Coalition's "Road to Victory" celebration Aug. 15 only moments before the Republican National Convention began its final session.

Focusing mainly on foreign policy, Gingrich sought to draw a contrast between the Clinton administration and how Bob Dole, the Republican nominee, would run the White House.

"We should say to Syria that there will be no ambassador," Gingrich said. "Instead we'll send a charges d'affaires" until Damascus stops its support of terrorist groups.

Several Palestinian and Islamic terrorist groups maintain offices in Damascus and Syria remains on the U.S. State Department's list of states sponsoring terrorism.

"We do not need Syria," he declared to shouts of "Newt, Newt, Newt" that filled the room where some 250 Jewish activists and convention delegates had gathered for a belated 88th birthday celebration for Max Fisher, the veteran Jewish communal leader from Detroit who heads Dole's finance committee.

Gingrich said the GOP will seek to convince American voters, Jews in particular, that the United States "must develop a missile defense system" along the lines of former President Reagan's "Star Wars" anti-missile program.

Gingrich said he fears that a rogue state, seeking to influence Israeli policies, might attempt to blackmail the United States with unconventional weapons in the not too distant future.

Without a sophisticated missile defense system, said Gingrich, the United States would be forced to choose between its own security and that of Israel.

"This country will not risk Detroit for Tel Aviv, Chicago for Jerusalem or New York for Haifa," he said.

Clinton has opposed a "Star Wars" type system, arguing that it would be obsolete before it could be deployed.

Wrath against Libya

Gingrich reserved some of his most focused wrath for Libya, which has refused to turn over two suspects in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland.

"If we can find the two terrorists we should send a team in and extract them," he said.

But if intelligence information cannot pinpoint their location, the United States should announce to Libya, "In 10 days we have the right to bomb any facility that we think they may be in."

In one slip of the tongue that caused some nervous laughs in the Westgate Hotel's posh ballroom, Gingrich, who has drawn the ire of much of the organized Jewish community over his immigrant policies, extended his threats to the "Sudanese government harboring refugees."

After a slight pause he corrected himself, "uh, terrorists."

On domestic issues, Gingrich revealed little specific strategy to court the Jewish vote.

But on one issue vigorously opposed by the organized Jewish community, Gingrich confirmed in a brief interview after his speech that he plans to bring the Religious Equality Amendment to the House floor for a vote in September.

The House leader maintained that the measure poses no threat to religious minorities.

"This is no threat to Jews," he said. "This is about religious equality, not school prayer," said Gingrich, predicting that the measure would not bring a return of prayer to America's classrooms.

However, other sponsors of the measure as well as activists on both sides of the issue say the measure would allow the return of school prayer.

The NJC distributed at the reception copies of its platform, which explicitly opposes school prayer.

At a reception earlier in the week, Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), who is Jewish, said he hopes Congress can find "better things to do with its time" than debate school prayer when they return from the August recess next month.

With only about 17 legislative days remaining in the 104th Congress, Gilman said "there should be a concerted effort to take up serious measures." □

Fervently Orthodox protest court ruling on Bar Ilan Street

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Thousands of fervently Orthodox Jews demonstrated over the weekend to protest a decision by Israel's High Court of Justice allowing a main thoroughfare in Jerusalem to remain open to traffic on the Sabbath.

Saturday's protests passed peacefully, and there were no major clashes with police, as had happened in previous demonstrations.

Two cars were damaged by rock-throwers, and some demonstrators overturned garbage cans and threw garbage and soiled diapers at police.

In a 6-1 decision last week, the high court barred the closure of Bar Ilan Street to Sabbath traffic and called for the formation of a committee to examine the issue.

The presence of Sabbath traffic on Bar Ilan, which cuts through fervently Orthodox neighborhoods in Jerusalem, has led to a series of often violent demonstrations in recent weeks.

It has become a hot-button issue on both sides of the religious divide, with fervently Orthodox Jews seeking laws that will respect the Sabbath and religious holidays. Secular Jews view such laws as an infringement on their freedom.

On Saturday, the street was closed to traffic for close to an hour, but not because of the crowd of demonstrators.

Police ordered the closure for the unexpected arrival of Public Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani, who rankled local police officials for not coordinating the visit ahead of time.

Kahalani said he made the visit to meet with members of the community in an effort to create tolerance among religious and secular Israelis alike.

Kahalani visited a synagogue and promised to look into the concerns of the fervently Orthodox community.

When he got into his car, some demonstrators asked him to wait a half hour until the Sabbath ended.

When the minister opted to drive off, demonstrators shouted, "Shabbos, Shabbos," as they do at other motorists driving on the Sabbath. □

Family of resistance leader files charges against Priebke

By Lee Yanowitch

PARIS (JTA) — The family of an Italian anti-fascist resistance leader slain during World War II has pressed charges against former SS Capt. Erich Priebke for his murder.

The family of Bruno Buozzi, a celebrated union leader who was shot dead along with 13 other men on June 4, 1944, as the Germans were fleeing Rome, filed the charges with Italy's civilian court on July 31, his son-in-law said in an interview.

An Italian military tribunal earlier this month found Priebke guilty of involvement in the March 24, 1944, massacre of 335 men and boys, 75 of them Jewish, at the Ardeatine Caves near Rome.

But the court said it could not sentence him because the statute of limitations had run out.

His release triggered a bitter outcry in Italy and abroad.

Buozzi's son-in-law, Gilles Martinet, 80, said the new accusations against Priebke were based on statements made by former SS Maj. Karl Hass in an interview in the Italian daily *Il Messaggero* in June.

According to Martinet, who is a former French ambassador to Italy, Hass told *Il Messaggero* that Priebke ordered the murder of Buozzi and 13 other resistance members.

They were shot in the back of the head in a clearing near the town of La Storta, about nine miles from Rome, after the truck in which the Nazis were transporting them broke down.

'How could we not take action?'

"When a former SS officer declares that (Priebke) ordered the massacre, how could we not take action?" said Martinet, who married one of Buozzi's daughters in 1938.

"We have asked a civil court for an investigation to ascertain whether Hass's statements are true," Martinet said.

If they are, Priebke "cannot take refuge behind the German command," as he did during his trial when he claimed he would have been shot if he had refused to take part in the Ardeatine Caves slaughter.

Hass is under house arrest in a Rome clinic where he is recovering from injuries suffered when he jumped from a hotel balcony in an attempt to avoid testifying at Priebke's trial.

Germany has requested Priebke's extradition, and the ex-Nazi is being held in a Rome prison pending Italy's decision.

Buozzi's assassination was mentioned during Priebke's trial but no evidence was produced.

Buozzi, a Socialist member of the Italian parliament, fled to France in 1926 to help organize the resistance in exile before returning to Italy. □

German public buys up book examining its role in Holocaust

By Daniel Dagan

BONN (JTA) — Did the German public at large willingly conspire to help Adolf Hitler carry out the Holocaust?

A book that answers this question in the affirmative — American Jewish author Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's "Hitler's Willing Executioners" — has sold out its first German edition of 40,000 copies in less than a week and has prompted a flurry of debate here.

In many bookstores across Germany, customers

have been confronted by television crews asking buyers of Goldhagen's book why they would purchase a work that is so unflattering toward the German people.

Some answered that they wanted to know what the outside world thought of them.

Others said they want to get a chance to develop their own opinions about the book, which has been the subject of much discussion in the German media.

For many Jews in Germany, the book's value lies in the fact that it tells non-Jewish Germans that the Holocaust did not begin in the gas chambers and was not perpetrated solely by SS officials who were in charge of the death camps.

They point to Goldhagen's suggestion that the persecution began in schools, at the workplace, in stores, at every street corner — that it was committed by millions of "simple" Germans from every walk of life.

A first wave of largely negative criticisms surfaced here and in the United States immediately after Goldhagen's book was published in America.

Many German commentators suggested at the time that Goldhagen was merely repeating the "collective guilt" thesis, which is seen here as very unfair and even dangerous.

Others criticized the research methods employed by the author.

With the German edition now hitting the market, a new, intensified wave of public debate is under way, with almost daily newspaper articles as well as radio and television commentaries.

The German weekly *Die Zeit* drew a lot of criticism for publishing excerpts of the book in advance of publication.

But other German publications soon picked up the story.

Another weekly newsmagazine, *Der Spiegel*, devoted a 20-page cover story to an in-depth look at Goldhagen's book.

Der Spiegel roundly attacked Goldhagen's thesis, finding it absurd that every German who lived during the Third Reich was intoxicated with anti-Semitism and was therefore guilty of complicity in genocide.

Some commentators here angrily suggested that Goldhagen's book was not even worth discussing, because it failed to satisfy even the lowest academic standards of research.

But Hans Mommsen, a leading German scholar of the Holocaust, did not agree.

"We have to discuss the issues raised by Goldhagen because they are on the minds of so many people, even though the author has clearly failed to prove his thesis scientifically," he said.

'Just another normal country'

Other scholars suggested that the book found such a fertile ground for debate because it came just a year after Germany and the world marked the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II.

For many here, this was an opportunity to put an end to what they viewed as an excessive occupation with the Holocaust.

For them, Goldhagen was just another annoying gadfly who was confronting the German people with the country's Nazi past.

Josef Joffe, a German Jewish journalist, while favoring a debate on the book, said it should be made clear that Goldhagen was completely wrong.

"If Germans were imbibing anti-Semitism from their earliest infancy," he said, how is it that "today's Germany is just another normal country among other nations?" □