

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Jewish organizations condemned the welfare reform legislation signed by President Clinton.** Calling the bill "pernicious," the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society said the president had "potentially sentenced countless children, seniors, immigrants and poor people to lives of destitution and despair." Meanwhile, Clinton asked the Justice Department to explore loopholes in the welfare bill that would allow states to keep legal immigrants on the welfare rolls for a limited amount of time.

■ **Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat and Shimon Peres, Israel's opposition leader and former prime minister, met in the Gaza Strip.** The meeting was moved to Gaza after the Israeli government initially refused to let Arafat fly to Ramallah. [Page 2]

■ **American neo-Nazi Gary Lauck was convicted of illegally distributing hate propaganda in Germany and sentenced to four years in prison.** A Hamburg court found him guilty of inciting racial hatred and distributing propaganda of groups that violate the German Constitution. [Page 4]

■ **Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) brought a message of hope to Jews in St. Petersburg.** [Page 3]

■ **About 100 protesters scuffled with police before a shareholders' meeting of the successor to I.G. Farben, which worked thousands of slave laborers to death in Nazi Germany, according to a news report.** Company officials rejected demands that the company be liquidated and its capital of \$20 million be paid to slave laborers.

■ **Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak threatened to cancel a Middle East economic conference scheduled to take place in November in Cairo.** Mubarak said that unless Israel honors its commitments under the peace accords, the conference would be called off.

■ **The U.S. Treasury Department beefed up its efforts to stop contributions from American soil to countries that might use the money to fund terrorism.** The countries include Iran, Iraq, Libya and Syria.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Jewish settlers of mixed minds about Netanyahu government**

By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Yechezkel Missel, a resident of the West Bank settlement of Beit El, is still waiting for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to deliver on his campaign promises.

A technical writer who moved his family from Jerusalem to Beit El more than a year ago, he is anxious to see whether Netanyahu will redeploy Israeli troops from most of the West Bank town of Hebron, meet with Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat or permit the establishment of new settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Missel, an observant Jew, would also like to see the prime minister "put Judaism back into the Jewish state."

Although admittedly impatient to right what he perceives as "the wrongs" of the Rabin and Peres governments, Missel — unlike some of his fellow settlers — is willing to wait a while before passing judgment.

"People expect instantaneous change" whenever there is a new government elected, he says.

"But running a country like the U.S. or Israel is like driving a Mack truck, not a Porsche. It takes time to slow the momentum and to enact change."

While Missel is giving Netanyahu some breathing space, many other settlers are not.

Exactly one year ago, settlers were being dragged down from West Bank hillsides by Israel Defense Force soldiers sent by the Rabin government to prevent the demonstrators from staking new claims for expanded settlements.

A year later, with a Likud government in power, one might expect that the settlers would largely be happy with the change.

But according to the comments of many in the settler movement, the issue of Hebron has made their reactions to the new government more complex.

Settlers also have engaged in an internal dispute on whether to shift the focus of their advocacy efforts to addressing local municipal needs.

Fearing that Netanyahu intends to redeploy IDF troops in the disputed city — a move stipulated by the Interim Agreement — settler activists and their supporters are planning an intensive public campaign against the redeployment.

Exactly how the campaign will proceed is still being discussed.

According to settlement leaders, initial efforts will almost certainly include the distribution of bumper stickers stating, "Netanyahu is Good for the Jews — Withdrawal from Hebron is Bad for the Jews," as well as the circulation of a nationwide petition.

Despite media reports to the contrary, one leader said in an interview that demonstrations might be in the offing.

Settler leaders, who have met several times this summer to plan their strategy, say their upcoming campaign falls under the heading of "loyal opposition," not all-out war against the government.

Adopting tone of career diplomats

Flying high just after the elections, they now find themselves caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place.

Two months into the new administration, they had expected Netanyahu to take a tougher line with the Palestinians and to permit the establishment of new settlements.

At the same time, they do not want their actions or words to be construed as anti-government; the settlers themselves helped vote Netanyahu and his Likud Party into power.

The result: Settlers renowned for their outspokenness have suddenly adopted the tone of career diplomats.

"We don't think we should come out against the government, but we do have to work on Hebron's behalf in the streets," Ya'akov Novic, a leader of the activist group Mateh Ma'amatz, said in a radio interview this week.

"If we don't do this now, we might soon be compelled to engage in

anti-government activity, for lack of any other option," Novic said.

Rachel Klein, spokeswoman for the Municipality of Kiryat Arba, which adjoins Hebron, agrees.

"We may hold demonstrations all over the country, ones similar to the ones we held during the Labor government," she said.

"Unfortunately, this has to be done with this government as well."

Adopting a more conciliatory tone, Klein adds, "We have to give Netanyahu the benefit of the doubt that he will make the right decisions. Our job is to help him see what needs to be done in Hebron."

"This is not a personal campaign against him," she says, "simply an expression of our concern and worry."

Yehiel Leiter, spokesman for the Yesha Council, which represents settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, is equally cautious when grading the government's performance.

"Of course we would like Netanyahu to move with the same swiftness in building new housing that Labor moved in curtailing it.

"What's important to remember, though, is that although Netanyahu hasn't said he will build new communities, he hasn't said he won't, either.

"This is real progress over the previous government, which ruled out building entirely."

As impatient as they are for what they term "real progress," most settlers agree that Netanyahu's election victory has given them a great morale boost.

"Peres delegitimized us, demonized us, made us the scapegoats," says Leiter. "He made us the Jews of Israel."

In contrast, he says, "Netanyahu refers to us as pioneers, people who are committed to this country. That's all changed in the past two months.

"We hope that this change will not only be figurative, but substantive."

Rift among settler leaders

While the majority of settler leaders are intensifying their political activities after a post-election lull, several others say it is time to concentrate more on municipal affairs and less on politics.

To this end, the heads of seven towns and settlements in the territories last month threatened to walk out of the Yesha Council unless the body started paying more attention to the everyday problems that affect their communities.

Reports in the media also pointed to a rift between these seven leaders, most of whom are not religious, and the majority of Yesha board members, whose claim to a "Greater Israel" is based to a greater or lesser degree on Jewish Messianic beliefs.

According to Leiter, the tiff "had nothing to do with religion or messianism. All of us are people committed to a Jews' right to live in the Land of Israel."

"There was simply a difference of opinion on whether to concentrate on municipal or political matters. They have come back to the fold, more or less, since the prime minister refused to meet with them separately.

"They have no power base being out in left field," said Leiter.

Ariel Mayor Ron Nachman, one of the seven leaders, says the group never left the Yesha Council in the first place.

"What we did was form a subcommittee and told the other Yesha members that it's not enough to talk about the [security arrangements for the] grave of Yosef in Shechem.

"We need to talk about our own security problems, about education and industry," Nachman says.

Nachman believes that he speaks for the vast majority of settlers when he says, "We see reports on CNN, on the BBC, we watch the pictures on the screen and ask ourselves, 'Is this us?'"

"We don't recognize ourselves in these reports."

Instead of making up petitions and slogans, Nachman says, "what we have to do now is attract as many people as possible. We have to improve our communities so that more people will join us, and those who already live in places like Ariel will enjoy a better quality of life."

If it were up to him, Nachman says, Yesha and other settlers groups would abandon their high-profile tactics and get down to the nitty-gritty work of wooing Israelis in search of a better way of life.

"We need to build our communities, not with a lot of sound and noise, but with determined silence." □

Peres, Arafat discuss ways to protect peace agreements

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Former Prime Minister Shimon Peres met with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in the Gaza Strip on Thursday, after Israel temporarily barred Arafat from flying to the West Bank for the meeting.

Peres and Arafat originally were scheduled to meet in the West Bank town of Ramallah, but the location was changed after Israeli authorities refused to allow Arafat's helicopter flight to the West Bank, saying that his permit had not been approved by the proper authorities.

Amid accusations that the move was politically motivated and aimed to prevent the meeting, Israel granted approval for the flight about four hours after it was initially denied.

The prime minister's communications adviser, David Bar Ilan, denied that the government had flip-flopped on the issue.

He said the delay in issuing the permit had been caused by a technical misunderstanding, not political considerations.

Palestinian officials charged that the incident was an attempt to obstruct the peace process.

The speaker of the Palestinian legislative council, Ahmed Karia, called it a "flagrant violation" of the self-rule accords.

After meeting, Peres and Arafat told reporters that their discussions focused on ways to protect the peace process.

Peres said he had no desire to attack the Netanyahu government, but added, "I feel deeply obligated by every promise we made on behalf of the [previous Labor] government, on behalf of the Israeli people."

Earlier, Arafat canceled a meeting of the joint Israeli-Palestinian Civil Affairs Committee to protest the initial Israeli refusal to permit two of his helicopters to fly from Gaza to the West Bank.

Some Palestinian officials said the permit had been personally denied by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Netanyahu lashed out at Peres earlier this week, saying that the opposition leader was undermining the government by holding an unauthorized meeting with the Palestinian leader.

Labor Party officials countered that when he was leader of the opposition, Netanyahu had met with Jordan's King Hussein and with Morocco's King Hassan.

Peres is scheduled to fly next week to Morocco, on what he described as a "private visit." He is expected to meet with Hassan. □

Meeting will unite Christians opposed to missionizing of Jews

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — Alarm raced across much of the Jewish world when the Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution in June targeting Jews for conversion and hired a missionary to train Baptists to effectively proselytize Jews.

But Jews weren't the only people upset by the Southern Baptist Convention's steps. A significant number of Christians, including Southern Baptists, thought it was a mistake as well.

For the sake of demonstrating to Southern Baptist Convention leaders that not even all of their own members, let alone other Christians, agree with the focus on Jews, Rabbi A. James Rudin, director of interreligious affairs at the American Jewish Committee, is organizing a one-day consultation on the subject in October.

Some Christians have written letters to the editor and published opinion pieces in their local newspapers. Others, including some high-level Catholic and Protestant leaders, issued statements opposing the Southern Baptist move.

"An aggressive, direct effort to convert the Jewish people would break the bond of trust built up for over 30 years and recreate enmity between our 'elder brothers and sisters' and ourselves at the start of a new millennium, a millennium which should begin with hope for reconciliation," wrote the Catholic, Episcopal and Lutheran bishops of New York in a statement they jointly issued June 25.

'Not here for witnessing party'

Several Southern Baptist Convention ministers and theologians have also registered their opposition, Rudin said.

Rudin intends to bring together 20 to 25 representatives of Catholic and several mainline Protestant and evangelical churches, as well as members of the Southern Baptist Convention who, he said, "can articulate in a reasonable way that they're not here to have a witnessing party."

Those opposed to proselytizing the Jews believe that "it's theologically unnecessary to actively seek the conversion of Jews to be a Christian," Rudin said. "Their view is as legitimate theologically as the Southern Baptist Convention's. These people also need to be heard."

"They certainly offer their Christian message to the world, but don't feel they should single out Jews. Let the message be universal," he said.

Rudin said he had a strategic goal as well.

"The Jewish community shouldn't feel it's so alone out there. The strategic goal is to get other Christians to condemn" the Southern Baptist Convention measures, which is "in the long run as important, and maybe more important, than what Jews say," Rudin said.

There is also mounting evidence that even some mainstream Protestant and evangelical Christians who say they do not believe in targeting Jews for conversion are financially underwriting the efforts of those who do, making the work of missionaries such as Jews for Jesus possible, Rudin said.

Rudin wants to find out whether the Christian leaders with whom Jews have good working dialogues in any way support evangelism aimed at Jews.

"A lot of Christians say, 'I support it but don't want to get down in the dirt and do it myself,'" said Rudin.

"We need to smoke out Christians on this issue, force them to confront" their views toward evangelizing Jews. □

Sen. Lieberman projects hope in visiting St. Petersburg Jews

By Rachel Katz

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia (JTA) — Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) brought a message of self-esteem and hope when he visited the Russian Jewish community here this week.

"I am very impressed to see this synagogue and see that it has not only a past, but a present and a future," he said Wednesday, addressing members of the Jewish community in the city's Great Choral Synagogue.

"This is your opportunity to keep alive the spirit of the light of Judaism in St. Petersburg."

Lieberman, an Orthodox Jew who was first elected to the U.S. Senate in 1988, spoke about the role his Jewish identity played in his career.

Rather than holding him back, he said, his commitment to traditions helped him earn respect among his non-Jewish colleagues.

Lieberman visited what is known as Russia's second city as part of a delegation from the Washington-based Aspen Institute for a seminar on Russian-American-Ukrainian relations.

He visited the synagogue at the request of Rabbi Mendel Pewzner, a Lubavitch representative who serves as chief rabbi for the city's 110,000-strong Jewish community.

Touring the grandiose, Moorish-style synagogue built in 1893, the senator, accompanied by his wife, Hadassah, seemed to marvel at the synagogue's magnificence.

During the decades of Communist rule, the synagogue fell into disrepair, but it continued to attract crowds, particularly on Simchat Torah.

'Start to respect ourselves'

Lieberman's message struck a chord among many of the roughly 40 members of the local Jewish community who gathered to meet the senator.

"He said just what needed to be said," said Mark Grubarg, president of the St. Petersburg Jewish Community. "Others won't respect us until we start to respect ourselves."

"Here, it's sometimes difficult to convince people to consider themselves Jewish and be part of the community," Grubarg added.

In Russia, where Judaism is considered first and foremost one's nationality, being identified as Jewish has traditionally led to discrimination in education and the workplace.

Although restrictions on religious observance were officially lifted after the fall of communism, only now are Russian Jews beginning to discover what being Jewish can mean beyond an entry in one's passport.

Lieberman's audience raised questions regarding American support for Russian Jewry, now that the sense of crisis has eased.

"There's a sense that some of those problems have diminished" since the end of the Soviet era, Lieberman said.

But, he added, "the international Jewish community is obligated to make these Jews feel a part of the world community."

Mikhail Brodsky, a professor at the St. Petersburg University of Economics and Finance, said he was impressed with the senator's visit and voiced the belief that the international community would not forget Russia's Jews.

"Those people who want to help, find ways," he said. □

American neo-Nazi Lauck convicted in German court

NEW YORK (JTA) — American neo-Nazi Gary Lauck has been convicted of illegally distributing hate propaganda in Germany and sentenced to four years in prison.

The state court in Hamburg, Germany, found Lauck, 43, guilty Thursday of inciting racial hatred and distributing propaganda of organizations that violate the German Constitution.

Lauck heads the National Socialist German Workers' Party-Foreign Organization, a name derived from the official title of Adolf Hitler's party. Lauck has said his group is heir to the Nazi Party and that Hitler was "too humane."

After the verdict was announced, Lauck shouted, "The fight will go on!" According to news reports, he also yelled in German, "Neither the Communists nor the Nazis ever dared to kidnap an American citizen!"

The Anti-Defamation League hailed the conviction.

"While we are gratified that Gary Lauck of Lincoln, Neb., whom ADL dubbed the 'Farm Belt Führer' several years ago, will be spending the next four years in a German prison, we are disappointed that the court did not impose the five-year prison term demanded by the prosecution," said Abraham Foxman, ADL national director.

"Nevertheless, Lauck's conviction and sentencing puts all neo-Nazis around the world on notice that their anti-Semitic and racist hate propaganda will not be tolerated by a democratic Germany," Foxman added.

Lauck's lawyer pledged to appeal the case and said his client's actions were legal under U.S. constitutional guarantees of free speech.

But the pro-Hitler, anti-Jewish publications that deny that the Holocaust occurred are illegal in Germany.

Lauck was arrested on an international warrant from Germany when he attended a March 1995 neo-Nazi convention in Denmark. He was extradited in September to Germany on the basis of an obscure Danish law that bans racist statements.

The prison time he has served since March 1995 was deducted from his sentence. □

Dispute at Jewish hospital marks Quebec language feud

By *Bram D. Eisenthal*

MONTREAL (JTA) — A flare-up over the use of the French language at a local hospital has thrown into sharp relief a bitter ongoing battle about the future of Quebec.

The battle was left unresolved in October, when separatists narrowly lost a referendum to determine whether Quebec would remain a part of Canada.

Both before and after the referendum, the separatists, mostly French speakers, have left Jews and other ethnic groups in Quebec with the feeling that they are unwelcome.

The latest flare-up was sparked by an incident in July at the Sir Mortimer B. Davis Jewish General Hospital here.

A patient, Normand Lester, who is a television journalist for the French-language component of the CBC, Radio Canada, complained that nurse Paula Matthews refused to address him in French, even though he had previously been speaking with her in English. The nurse purportedly told him, "You know how to speak English. You spoke English before. This is an English hospital."

The flap became front-page news in the local French media, editorialists on both the English and French

sides have written profusely on the subject and radio talk-show lines have been ringing off the hook.

B'nai Brith Canada entered the fray, asking Radio Canada ombudsman Mario Cardinal to investigate whether Lester exploited his position as a journalist to create "a major controversy from an isolated incident."

The French Language Office, which monitors compliance with the province's bilingual regulations, subsequently said that the hospital was complying with every facet of the law.

Nonetheless, Gilles Rheume, vice president of the ultranationalist Quebec Sovereign Movement, called on supporters to hold a silent vigil last Friday outside the hospital.

Some 100 separatists joined the vigil, which took an anti-Semitic turn when some of the demonstrators gave a Nazi salute.

An 83-year-old woman, Anka Votcky, lunged at one young protester, screaming and spitting at him.

"We did everything for this country," said the Czechoslovakian-born Votcky, tears streaming down her face. "What do those punks do?"

The demonstrators then got into a shoving match with a group of about 50 anti-separatists who had also converged on the hospital.

Police intervened to separate the two sides. □

South Africa's chief rabbi lashes out at Jews who leave

By *Suzanne Belling*

JOHANNESBURG (JTA) — South Africa's chief rabbi has strongly criticized local Jews who choose to emigrate, saying that they are abdicating their moral obligations to family members they leave behind and to the South African Jewish community at large.

Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris also criticized Jewish professionals who had left the country after being educated at a great cost to the government.

Directing some of his ire at recent emigres to Canada and Australia, Harris told a conference of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies here Sunday, "I would like to impose a tax on them which could go towards maintaining the South African community."

He suggested an annual tax of \$250 on each emigre family. He also said South African Jews had a responsibility that went beyond the Jewish community.

"It is clearly a priority to look after our own Jewish community," he said, adding that Jews had a responsibility "as proud South Africans in a new democracy" to their country.

The chief rabbi also criticized Jews who were quick to look for signs of anti-Semitism in South Africa, but who were biased toward other races.

The Jewish community in South Africa had "tunnel vision," establishing its own upper-middle class to the exclusion of others, he said. □

Israeli flower-growers protest

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Hundreds of flower-growers demonstrated on a busy Tel Aviv corner this week to protest what they said was a government plan to cut subsidies in their industry.

The demonstrators passed out roses and sunflowers to pedestrians Tuesday and also threw flowers into the street. Representatives from the Agriculture Ministry met with the demonstrators and promised to act on their behalf.

The secretary of the Flowergrowers Association said the industry is responsible for some \$200 million in exports annually. □