



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ The U.S. Treasury Department denied Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan's request to receive more than \$1 billion in funds from Libya. In a letter to Farrakhan's legal representatives, the Treasury Department said it was turning down the request because of long-standing grievances with the Libyan regime and because U.S. law prohibits accepting it.

■ Israeli and Palestinian officials held a series of contacts aimed at easing escalating tensions. Meanwhile, Jerusalem police were on high alert to prevent disturbances at Friday prayers at the Temple Mount, following a call by Yasser Arafat for mass participation by Palestinians. [Page 3]

■ First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton addressed a gathering of Chicago Jewish communal leaders and delegates to the Democratic National Convention. The gathering was organized by the Chicago Jewish Community Host Committee, which was formed to welcome Jewish convention delegates. [Page 3]

■ Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, a founder of the Hamas movement, was transferred to a hospital in Israel from a prison infirmary. Yassin, who is 60 and suffering from a chronic illness, is serving a life sentence for planning terrorist attacks and kidnappings of Israeli soldiers.

■ Officials of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee will visit Albania to conduct a Rosh Hashanah program for the local community, which numbers about 61. The majority of the community, some 300 families, emigrated to Israel in 1991.

■ Former SS Capt. Erich Priebke received more than 600 letters of support since he was extradited to Italy to face war crimes charges. Priebke remains in a Rome prison awaiting a decision on a German request for extradition. [Page 2].

Because of the Labor Day holiday, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Sept. 2.

### ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

## Perot: still an enigma to the Jewish electorate

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Four years after Ross Perot ventured into the political fray, the Texas billionaire remains a largely unknown quantity on issues important to the American Jewish electorate.

Perot's Reform Party has yet to adopt a platform or elaborate on its "Principles of Reform," a one-page outline that calls for a balanced budget amendment, term limits for members of Congress, the creation of a new tax system, campaign finance and lobbying reform, and changes in government entitlement programs, but offers few specifics.

Beyond that, Perot himself has given little indication of the policies and positions he would advance as president.

"It's hard for him to have positions that are attractive to the Jewish community when he doesn't have positions," said Mark Mellman, who heads the Washington-based Mellman Group, a Democratic polling firm.

What Perot does have is a record of mixed messages relating to Jews and Jewish interests that many in the community are still trying to decipher.

And of new concern this time around is his recent embrace of the New Alliance Party, whose leadership is widely perceived as anti-Semitic.

In his first address to a Jewish audience after becoming a presidential candidate in 1992, Perot affirmed his support for Israel, saying that "you stand by your friends and it's just that simple."

Perot, however, opposed the Persian Gulf War — a position troubling to Jews who saw the war as important for both American interests and Israel's safety.

Some observers and activists continue to see Perot, as they did four years ago, as naive and unsophisticated in his understanding of Israel and the Middle East.

In 1992, James Zogby, president of the Arab-American Institute, was invited to Dallas to brief Perot on the Middle East. Instead, Zogby said in a recent interview with The New York Times, Perot talked for 45 minutes straight.

"I don't know those people," Zogby recalled Perot saying. "I know the Japanese. But I don't know the Arabs and the Jews. The Arabs, they've got money."

"The Jews, they know how to use it. You put them together, you've got business. And that's what I understand: business."

### An admirer of Ariel Sharon

Perot is also known to hold special admiration for Ariel Sharon, Israel's hard-line minister of infrastructure, whose tough style Perot respects, according to his friends.

He met with Sharon, along with other Israeli officials, during a visit to Israel in the late 1960s.

In 1987, Perot became the first recipient of the Raoul Wallenberg Award for a lifetime of public service embodying "the spirit, courage and dedication" of the Swedish diplomat who saved more than 100,000 Jews from the Nazis in World War II.

The award was given by the Raoul Wallenberg Committee of the United States and the American Committee for the Shaare Zedek Medical Center.

In particular, Perot was honored for the 1969 international campaign he organized for the release of American prisoners of war in Vietnam, as well as the 1979 rescue he orchestrated of two of his company's employees jailed in revolutionary Iran.

"The things he did were just incredible," Perot said of Wallenberg upon receiving the award.

"He had to go up against [Adolf] Eichmann," but "he had nothing but gall, bluff, brains, wits, creative ability," Perot said.

Jewish leaders from Perot's hometown of Dallas, meanwhile, were unable to recall specific instances of Perot reaching out to the local Jewish community.

Some, however, have pointed to Perot's close relationship with

Morton Meyerson, a Jew who has long been Perot's right-hand man.

Meyerson is the former president of Electronic Data Systems, Inc., the company Perot founded, and now heads Perot Systems.

Perot has frequently hailed him as "the great builder of my company."

In his recent speech accepting the nomination of the Reform Party he founded and has financed, Perot invoked Meyerson's family history — his grandfather had to flee Russia because he was Jewish — as a symbol of the opportunities available in the American melting-pot.

Meyerson could not be reached for comment.

Perot and Meyerson, however, both came under fire in 1992 when it was revealed that Perot's company fired an Orthodox Jew for wearing a beard in the early 1980s.

At the time, Perot and Meyerson said they had no knowledge of the case.

In another instance, an Orthodox Jewish woman was fired in 1985 from EDS after she failed to show up at work on Sukkot.

Both incidents were publicized during the 1992 campaign and roundly rebuked by Jewish officials.

In a 1992 interview about the beard incident with Peter Jennings on ABC television, Perot said, "In terms of your inference of discrimination, please don't lose sight of the fact that the great builder of EDS happened to be a Jew, Mort Meyerson."

However, when Perot's daughter was engaged to a Jewish man several years ago, that was a different story.

An anonymous source quoted in a 1992 article in the New Republic magazine recalled Perot saying in conversation: "You don't think that I'd let my daughter marry a Jew?"

#### **Little effort made to court Jewish vote**

Recently, Perot and his Reform Party have come under a barrage of criticism for working with supporters of the now-defunct New Alliance Party, a party best known for running Lenora Fulani for president in 1988 and 1992.

Fulani has described herself as "militantly anti-Zionist" and has publicly allied herself with Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan.

She once said black anti-Semitism could be attributed to "the very backward and reactionary role that many Jewish people have played, I think, under the guise and politics of Zionism."

"I do not believe it is insignificant that a slumlord is Jewish," she was quoted as saying on another occasion.

The New Alliance's founder, Fred Newman, has also reportedly voiced anti-Semitic views.

Newman, who was born Jewish, has been quoted as saying that Jews as a people have "sold their souls to the devil," by making themselves "the storm troopers of decadent capitalism against people of color the world over."

Throwing their full weight behind the Reform Party, Newman and Fulani have organized their followers to work for Perot by distributing literature and collecting the signatures needed to put him on the ballot in as many states as possible.

In a recent appearance with Newman and Fulani on Fulani's public-access talk show, Russell Verney, the Reform Party's national coordinator, toasted their "common interests, common goals," and thanked them for their efforts on behalf of the Reform Party.

Perot communications director Sharon Holman would not comment on how the campaign is reconciling Fulani's and Newman's anti-Semitic overtones, saying only, "We're an inclusive campaign."

The Perot campaign, meanwhile, has yet to make any significant efforts to reach out to Jewish voters.

Asked to cite reasons for Jews to back Perot over Clinton or Dole, Holman said, "We're talking about restoring trust in our government and we're talking about a sound fiscal policy."

"I think that message resonates with all Americans no matter what their nationality, religion or race."

Whether Jews will back the messenger is, of course, another question.

Perot's "isolationist orientation is frankly somewhat off-putting to a lot of Jews," said Mellman of the Mellman Group.

The Reform Party movement "is a grass-roots populism with an authoritarian demeanor, which probably scares more Jews than it attracts," said Ed Miller, research director of the Washington-based Polling Company, a conservative research center.

Current polls show Perot with less than 10 percent of the vote, well short of the 19 percent he captured in 1992.

Perot received 9 percent of the Jewish vote in 1992, while Clinton received 80 and Bush 11.

Still an enigma to most Jewish voters four years later, pollsters expect that Perot will garner even less Jewish support this time around. □

#### **Priebke supporters flood Nazi officer with fan mail**

*By Ruth E. Gruber*

ROME (JTA) — Former SS Capt. Erich Priebke has received more than 600 letters from well wishers in Italy and elsewhere since he was extradited here from Argentina last November to face war crimes charges.

On Aug. 1 a military court declared Priebke, 83, guilty of taking part in the World War II massacre of 335 Italian civilians, but said he could not be punished because a 30-year statute of limitations had run out.

Italian authorities re-arrested Priebke just eight hours after the verdict, however, and he remains in a Rome prison awaiting a decision on a German request for extradition.

The Aug. 30 issue of the Italian weekly Epoca published excerpts of what it said were 645 letters, telegrams and other correspondence received by Priebke from his extradition on Nov. 20 until the middle of August.

Epoca reproduced a hand-written note by Priebke dated Aug. 14, detailing the receipt of 592 letters, 32 telegrams and 21 packages.

Epoca stated that Priebke had "exchanged correspondence with friends and sympathizers in Italy, Germany, Austria, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Australia, France, Canada, USA, Spain and Switzerland."

The magazine also published the texts of seven letters, notes and postcards written to Priebke by Italians.

"Honor!!!" began one letter from a 15-year-old boy identified as Carlo G.

"You did your duty as a soldier and for your homeland. You were great and honest," he wrote.

"Your jailers have dirty consciences. They will never be happy. They should be ashamed."

Said a letter written by a man named Paolo on Aug. 4, "Mr. Priebke, I express to you my solidarity because of the unworthy treatment you have suffered, treatment that is unworthy of a country that considers itself the cradle of law.

"I hope that this pseudo-democracy run by former Stalinist terrorists and hypocritical sacristans can find a crumb of the seriousness of behavior that you have superbly demonstrated. Stay strong!" □

**ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL****First lady focuses on family before Jewish groups in Chicago**

By Matthew Dorf

CHICAGO (JTA) — Flanked by sets from Kern and Hammerstein's Showboat, Hillary Rodham Clinton this week took the presidential campaign directly to more than 1,000 area Jews and delegates in town for the Democratic National Convention.

The 10-month old run of the Mississippi River play here gave way to the first lady and the Chicago Jewish Community Host Committee for the largest gathering of local Jewish residents, officials and delegates this week.

As the crowd noshed on mini-bagels and rugelach, families, seniors, professionals and students flocked into the landmark Auditorium Theater for Clinton's only address to the Jewish community.

As Nina Ex, an 11-year-old Chicago native anxiously awaited the first lady's arrival, she summed up the importance of the campaign's focus on children.

"You can't just leave out children. Then there would be no grown-ups," said Ex, who begins the sixth grade next week at the Hawthorne Scholastic Academy, a city public school.

Clinton did not disappoint the many children in the crowd as she focused much of her 27-minute address on the "Families and Children First" agenda of her husband's campaign. Standing beside the flags of the United States and Israel, Clinton spoke from a site rich in both political and local Jewish history.

Republicans held their convention there in 1888.

And local Jews proudly point out that the two prominent architects who designed the theater were Jewish. In addition, Roosevelt University, affiliated with the site, was one of the first in the area to hire Jewish academics fleeing Europe at the turn of the century.

**Focuses on domestic issues**

In an address heavy on domestic policy, Clinton sounded the convention's theme of "optimism" and "confidence."

In remarks that departed from the first lady's standard stump speech, appearing instead to be tailored to the Jewish community, Clinton said, "We are all in this together."

"The real question is what do we, who remain healthy and fortunate, owe each other?" she asked.

"Do we have an obligation; are we or are we not our brothers' and sisters' keepers?"

"We have to stand up to intolerance whenever and wherever we find it," she added.

Planners moved the event from its originally planned site at the last minute to accommodate the overwhelming demand, officials said.

"When it came time for an appropriate welcome from the Jewish community, it took an auditorium," David Kahn, president of the American Jewish Congress and a Chicago attorney, said, playing on the theme of Clinton's highly publicized book, "It Takes a Village."

The speech struck a chord with Daniel Solow, a Chicago native who saw the first lady for the first time at the Thursday event.

"It's so important what she said about being willing to help place families in better situations where they can prosper more," Solow said.

The event took on a serious tone compared to many festive gatherings here this week.

Clinton received a warm welcome and was greeted with four standing ovations during her appearance but the traditional convention hoopla was absent.

"There was a shared tone that it was not a rally, but a serious speech," said Michael Kotzin, director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago. "We came to listen and she came to speak." □

**Israeli, Palestinian officials meet in effort to calm tension**

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli and Palestinian officials held a series of contacts Thursday aimed at easing the escalating tensions between the two sides.

A day after Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat accused Israel of declaring war on the Palestinians, he met with attorney Yitzhak Molcho, a confidant of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian sources said.

The prime minister's senior political adviser, Dore Gold, was also expected to meet Thursday night with Palestinian official Mahmoud Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen. Gold was in Paris earlier this week for talks with Egyptian and American officials on the peace process.

And in Jerusalem, a meeting took place between the heads of the Israeli-Palestinian steering committee, which oversees implementation of the self-rule agreements.

Former Israel Defense Force Chief of Staff Dan Shomron and Palestinian Interior Minister Saeb Erekat decided during their meeting to convene the committee regularly, beginning next week. It would be the first meeting of the committee since the Likud government came to power in June.

Our role "is to solve problems and to continue the peace process, to do this in a good spirit," Shomron told reporters. "We have the ability to advance all the issues that today are found at different levels of implementation."

While Erekat agreed that their talks had taken place in a good atmosphere, he stressed that the real test of progress would be implementation of agreements.

"The peace process will be judged not in accordance with press conferences given by us but through the implementation of the agreements on the ground," Erekat said.

While the meeting was scheduled before this week's incidents that led to increasing tensions between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, it quickly was viewed as an effort to ease the situation.

Tensions flared this week after Arafat condemned Israel's decision to expand the West Bank settlement of Kiryat Sefer, and the demolition of a Palestinian community center in eastern Jerusalem. The settlement building plans approved by Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai were frozen under the previous Labor government.

The Palestinian Authority views settlement expansion as a violation of the accords signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Israel said the building bulldozed in Jerusalem's Old City was constructed illegally with Palestinian Authority funds.

Palestinians, at Arafat's urging, staged a four-hour strike in eastern Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip on Thursday to protest these actions.

Arafat called on Palestinians to participate in mass prayers at Al Aksa mosque on the Temple Mount on Friday, despite the ongoing closure of the West Bank and Gaza. The closure, imposed in February after the first of a series of suicide bombings in Israel, was eased in recent weeks to allow some 35,000 Palestinians to get to work.

Israeli police were put on alert to prevent disturbances. Public Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani said security had been stepped up along the boundary with the territories and in Jerusalem to keep order. □

**THE DAYS OF AWE  
Israelis confront disruption  
in daily life during holidays**

*By Michele Chabin*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Although Rosh Hashanah does not begin until Sept. 13, Israel is already in the throes of “After the Holidays” syndrome.

This maddening phenomenon, which annually hits Jewish communities around the world between Rosh Hashanah and Simchat Torah, is felt most keenly in Israel, where the Jewish calendar dictates life, at least most of the time.

Whereas Jews in the Diaspora have to fit the Days of Awe into their secular work or school week, Israelis simply shut down their businesses and schools every time a holiday comes along.

In Israel, employees never have to beg for time off at holiday time, because all government offices and virtually all Jewish-owned businesses traditionally close shop. And because Jewish holidays begin at sundown, employers usually throw in this “pre-holiday” day for good measure.

Schools, which religiously open the last week of August or the beginning of September, despite the fact that it is hot enough to bake matzah in most classrooms, take a short Rosh Hashanah break just a couple of weeks later. This ritual is repeated on Yom Kippur, which precedes a weeklong break for the duration of Sukkot. Classes finally resume the day after Simchat Torah.

Rather than deal with this scheduling nightmare — this year’s holiday schedule does not bode well for courses meeting on Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays — the country’s universities start the fall semester after the holidays.

“In Israel, people take the Jewish calendar very seriously,” says Steven Cohen, a sociologist at the Hebrew University’s Melton Center for Jewish Education who immigrated to Israel from the United States. “The holidays mark a clear boundary between periods, between the old and new years.”

Unfortunately, Cohen says, “today we have a real conflict between our pre-industrial, agricultural past and our post-industrial society. Back in pre-industrial days, people didn’t have the same kind of work week. The 5 1/2-day work week is an invention of the industrialized world.”

The fact that the holiday period wreaks havoc with the work week “can be very frustrating,” says Mona Berdugo, an environmental planner in Jerusalem.

“Nothing gets done. It begins in August, when everyone goes away, and continues through Simchat Torah. Last year, when I sent out resumes in the summer, I was told I’d have to wait until after the holidays for a response.”

Berdugo, the mother of a toddler, says the holidays also create a child-care nightmare.

“My daughter’s [day care] is closed during Sukkot, not to mention the other holidays, and this off-again, on-again schedule makes it hard for kids to adjust.”

Becky Rowe, a Tel Aviv-based editor, says she and her husband cope with the holidays by visiting family in the United States.

“From a work standpoint, it’s not even worth being here,” she says. “August is bad enough because there’s very little child care and parents bring their kids to the office. No one can get any work done. So my husband and I decided to take advantage of the time off, when the weather in the States is good.”

While acknowledging that the holiday period is the worst possible time to order a new phone line or renovate

the kitchen, many Israelis actually savor the slower, gentler pace that characterizes holiday season.

“Sure it’s tough that the kids are off from school,” says an Orthodox father of five, “but the holidays allow me to take time off from work and be with the family. It’s hectic but worth the effort to spend time together.”

Rabbi Andrew Sacks, director of the Conservative Movement’s Rabbinical Assembly of Israel, sees the holiday period as a time of hope and renewal.

“Sure it’s a time that almost nothing gets done in the outside world, but the holidays offer rabbis the opportunity to touch and activate people in large numbers,” says Sacks, who also made aliyah from America.

“As a movement we will address key issues like religious pluralism and the slaughter on the roads, as well as the importance of organ transplants. We’ll be handing out donor cards to encourage people to donate organs.”

Although he does not minimize the frustrations associated with the “After the Holidays” syndrome, Sacks prefers to look on the bright side.

“Unlike the Diaspora, where most holidays are two days, and there’s usually a Shabbat thrown in, there are less days of ‘yom tov’ in Israel.”

As a result, he says, “last year I was incredibly energized by the holidays. Instead of being ‘holidayed-out,’ as I am in the States, I found myself spiritually recharged.” □

**Specter’s Israel-Syria shuttle fails**

*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) said this week his shuttle effort to restart Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations had failed to bridge the gaps between the two sides.

Specter returned to Israel Wednesday after talks in Damascus with President Hafez Assad and Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa.

Specter said he hoped the two sides would resume peace talks, but gave no indication that it would be soon.

“President Assad said he did not see hope for peace or realism for peace based on what Mr. Netanyahu has been saying,” the Jewish senator told reporters in Jerusalem on Thursday.

Syria has accused the Likud government of dropping the land-for-peace principle which guided negotiations until now. Syria demands the Golan Heights back in exchange for a peace accord.

While the previous government indicated a willingness to negotiate territorial concessions, Netanyahu has opposed an Israeli withdrawal and has offered to resume talks with no preconditions.

Negotiations with Syria were broken off by the previous Labor government in March, after Assad refused to condemn a series of suicide bombings in Israel. □

**Palestinians to allow Red Cross visits**

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Palestinian Authority has agreed to let International Red Cross officials visit prisoners in jails in the autonomous areas.

The decision follows reports of harsh treatment and torture of political prisoners in the jails.

Until now, Palestinian security forces have refused to allow the international humanitarian organization into the lockups.

Israel Radio quoted Palestinian Authority official Nabil Sha’ath as saying that under the agreement, which is to be signed next month, Red Cross officials would be allowed to visit the jails without intervention from security forces. □