

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole shied away from criticizing President Clinton's Middle East policy in the presidential debate in Hartford. Last week, Dole accused Clinton of engaging in "photo-op diplomacy" by calling Israelis and Palestinians to the White House for an emergency summit. [Page 4]**

■ **Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat reportedly escaped death once again when two jeeps in his convoy collided, killing one Palestinian officer and wounding four others. Arafat, who was on his way to meet with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, was unhurt.**

■ **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he would propose moving to final-status negotiations with the Palestinians as soon as the two sides finalize details of the Hebron redeployment. His speech at the opening of the winter session of the 14th Knesset came as Israelis and Palestinians got down to detailed negotiations. [Page 3]**

■ **Israel continued to ease restrictions that were imposed on the West Bank and Gaza Strip after last month's violence. Internal closures on Tulkarm and Kalkilya were also lifted.**

■ **Palestinian security forces arrested an alleged suicide bomber who was believed to be on his way to Jerusalem to blow himself up on an Israeli bus, the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot reported.**

■ **The former coach of Israel's national ping pong team was accused of spying for the former Soviet Union. Israeli newspapers disclosed that Alexander Radelis has been detained for the past three months. [Page 3]**

■ **Scenes depicting a back-room abortion and a crematorium like the ones used by Nazis during the Holocaust were removed from a Halloween haunted house in Painesville, Ohio, after the Anti-Defamation League of Cleveland complained, according to a news report. But the haunted house's "Planet Hell" will still include depictions of a battered woman's funeral, a teen-ager's suicide and a grisly drunken-driving accident.**

FOCUS ON ISSUES**Doctor-assisted suicide stirs intense debate among Jews**

By Heather Camlot

NEW YORK (JTA) — When Margaret was suffering from terminal stomach cancer, she turned to her psychiatrist with a plea to help end her life.

"I want to choose the time of my death. I want you to help me," the woman in her late 40s told Dr. Samuel Klagsbrun.

"I decided to say yes, not knowing how, what, when," Klagsbrun told a recent symposium on doctor-assisted suicide convened by the American Jewish Committee.

A day later, Margaret's husband called Klagsbrun to tell him that she had died.

"I was so relieved. I was so glad it was out of my hands," said Klagsbrun, who is a principal player in a case to be heard by the U.S. Supreme Court, which opened its 1996-1997 term this week.

Although he did not have to go through with the act in that instance, Klagsbrun has become a leading advocate in the Jewish community of doctor-assisted suicide for the terminally ill.

It is a position vehemently opposed by many other Jewish doctors and medical ethicists who maintain that a doctor's first priority is to save a patient's life. Some opponents draw comparisons with Nazi practices during the Holocaust.

As the Supreme Court engages in the controversial issue of physician-assisted suicide, the debate within the Jewish community is likely to become more intense and passionate.

Until now, the national debate on doctors helping terminally ill patients die has focused mainly on Dr. Jack Kevorkian, the Michigan physician who has admitted to assisting in at least 30 suicides.

But the practice may be much more widespread.

A recent issue of the New England Journal of Medicine reported that one in five nurses working in an intensive care unit admitted to hastening the death of terminally ill patients. A recent USA Today poll showed that 75 percent of Americans support doctor-assisted suicides.

Regardless of public support, the American Medical Association reaffirmed in June its opposition to doctor-assisted suicide.

Fear of a slippery slope

The Supreme Court decided to address the issue when it accepted for review two lower court decisions favoring assisted suicide.

In April, the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New York struck down a 19th-century statute that made it illegal for physicians to help their patients die. Klagsbrun was one of the plaintiffs in the case.

A month earlier, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, in a similar case, banned a Washington state law. While 32 states still forbid the practice, fear of a slippery slope pervades in the Jewish community.

Once assisted suicide is deemed a constitutional right for the terminally ill, it would be "hard to confine it to that particular context," said David Zweibel, Agudath Israel's director of government affairs and general counsel. The fervently Orthodox group, which plans to file a friend-of-the-court brief in support of New York and Washington states, maintains that it is a "principle of Jewish law and ethics that a doctor's role is to provide healing, not to hasten death."

Klagsbrun, who also is chairman of pastoral psychiatry at the Jewish Theological Seminary, said he regrets that his position contravenes Jewish law, but maintains that doctors should be allowed to respond to suicide requests made by terminally ill patients.

Who decides which patients are terminally ill, whether medical technology has been exhausted before considering doctor-assisted suicide and whether the patient is competent when requesting assistance to die are questions that doctors and medical ethicists debate.

"For a lot of old people, the choice is between dying and living in a degraded environment, possibly for many years," said Daniel Wikler, a professor of medical ethics at the medical school at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Wikler said some elderly might feel obligated to die

in order not to be a burden on family and society. Without a long-term health care policy in the United States, he added, advances in medical technology may be overlooked for the more cost-effective assisted suicide.

Rabbi A. James Rudin, the AJCommittee's director of interreligious affairs, who opposes the act, sees a trend toward viewing assisted suicide not as a compassionate act, but rather as a business decision.

"As health costs continue to soar, insurance companies and hospitals will increasingly seek the most cost-efficient means of treating patients," he said. "The financial bottom line will always prefer assisted suicides over the more costly treatments for pain and depression."

In the New York case, the court ruled that patients could only be considered for doctor-assisted suicide when they are terminally ill. They must be mentally competent, request help themselves and take the medication on their own, the court said.

Klagsbrun stressed that the ruling was for those who no longer respond to pain medication. "We do our best to ease their suffering with pain management techniques," he said. "But there is a small number who can't respond and beg to die earlier. That population should not be abandoned as I believe it is now."

Klagsbrun has developed criteria in order to distinguish himself and other physicians from Kevorkian.

First, Klagsbrun said, he must know the patient and family intimately for a long period of time and he must know their values and their motives so as not to be "trapped into a hidden agenda."

Second, medical care must have been exhausted. If the patient is suffering from depression, the depression must be cured. Finally, the doctor has to suffer. "The doctor should be aggravated, full of doubt, concerned, because life deserves that," he said.

Many people, however, who might seek doctor-assisted suicide would not meet Klagsbrun's criteria, said Nancy Dubler, head of the bioethics department at the Montefiore Medical Center in New York, who also addressed the AJCommittee symposium.

"Heaven forbid one of us in this room needed access to a physician to end our lives, we could get it," she said. "We are all well-connected."

Dubler also asked whether anyone would help an elderly African American with a history of drug use whose family has abandoned him and who has AIDS.

"The answer is no," she said.

Nazi analogy cited

Rudin said he believes that the same people Dubler feels would have less access to doctor-assisted suicide would be the first to receive it because they are among the weakest in society.

"The legalization of assisted suicides, even for so-called compassionate reasons, reminds me of the brutal excesses of the Holocaust when the Nazi physicians carried out deadly experiments upon the Third Reich's 'surplus population': Jews, Gypsies, political prisoners, homosexuals, mental patients and others," he said at the symposium.

In 1939, Hitler allowed doctors to kill patients diagnosed as terminally ill. They began by putting to death the physically and mentally disabled. They then proceeded with the elderly, orphans, the insane, opponents of the Hitler regime, and Jews.

The Nazi analogy is used frequently by Jewish opponents of doctor-assisted suicide.

"Are we going to start killing people who just don't want to live anymore. Is that the next step?" said Dr. Mandell Ganchrow, president of the Orthodox Union and an associate clinical professor of surgery at the New York Medical College.

"People will be denied life because they have the potential to die. That's what the Nazis did. First they took the feeble, then they took those who could not work," he said.

"God gives human beings, physicians, the right to cure the diseases of their fellow man," said Ganchrow. "We do not have the ability to put an end to it. It comes under the commandment 'Thou shall not kill.'" □

U.S. Supreme Court docket has no church-state issues

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The Supreme Court began its term this week with a docket that for a second straight year does not include church-state issues, the traditional focus for most Jewish legal observers.

In what otherwise is shaping up to be a quiet term for the Jewish community, the court will decide by July whether states may prohibit doctors from helping terminally ill patients take their own lives.

Earlier this year, federal appeals courts in New York and Washington struck down laws in the two states prohibiting doctors from aiding patients who want to commit suicide. While the issue has generated considerable debate among Jewish doctors and medical ethicists, most Jewish groups have yet to take a position.

Another case Jewish legal observers will be watching closely deals with an amendment to the Arizona state constitution declaring English the state's official language. The amendment, approved in a referendum and later ruled unconstitutional by a federal appeals court, requires all government business to be done in English and prohibits government workers from speaking in any language but English.

The case was on the court's docket last year. At the time, the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Congress both signed a brief opposing the statute.

The issue has resonance for Jews who remember a time when the government provided help to Jewish immigrants who spoke only Yiddish.

"People have forgotten that in fact there was a fair amount of government bilingualism in the early part of the century," said Marc Stern, co-director of the legal department of AJCongress, adding that government agencies often provided Yiddish translators.

In another case with First Amendment implications held over from last term, the court will decide whether there are limits to the free speech guarantees of protesters at abortion clinics.

The Supreme Court will review a lower court order that forces protesters outside of abortion clinics in western New York to back off if clients ask to be left alone.

The AJCongress and the American Jewish Committee signed on to a brief last year in support of the court order and patients' rights. But Stern said, "There's a delicate balance here for the court as well as for the Jewish community: How do we not silence dissent at the same time as we protect vital rights?"

The court will also hear a case on the constitutionality of a congressional redistricting plan that reduced Georgia's black-dominated districts from three to one.

Last year, the Supreme Court issued two 5-4 rulings striking down race-based congressional districts as unconstitutional.

Most Jewish groups supported the principle behind the decisions, but stopped short of publicly applauding the court's actions out of fear of inflaming tensions between blacks and Jews. The justices "are very closely divided and they haven't set anything like a standard, so they're going to try once more," Stern said. □

Netanyahu defends policies as negotiators discuss Hebron*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has announced that he will propose a resumption of the final-status negotiations with the Palestinians as soon as the two sides finalize details of the Israel Defense Force redeployment from Hebron.

In an address peppered with heckling from opposition members, Netanyahu spoke Monday about the peace process during the opening of the 14th Knesset's winter session.

Netanyahu's address came as Israeli and Palestinian negotiators resumed talks after his meeting last week in Washington with Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat. The premier told legislators that he believed that there was a wide national consensus for the Likud-led government's positions regarding the implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords.

Netanyahu also spoke of the recent armed clashes in the territories, when Palestinian police joined stone-throwing protesters in confrontations with the IDF. Fifteen Israeli soldiers and 60 Palestinians died as a result of the Sept. 25-27 clashes.

"The most important lesson from the recent events is that the violations must stop," Netanyahu said. "There is only one option for peace. If the Palestinians are really interested in discussions at the negotiating table, they must abandon the options of incitement, violence and war."

The prime minister pointed an accusing finger at the previous Labor government for embarking on what he described as a misguided peace policy.

Taking the podium after Netanyahu, opposition leader and former Prime Minister Shimon Peres lashed into the Israeli premier.

'All you offer is one-sidedness'

"Listen to me, I speak from my experience," Peres said. "You talk about mutuality? But all you offer is one-sidedness. You demand that the [Palestinians] give you everything, but you won't give anything." The Labor Party leader accused Netanyahu of using the security issue as an excuse not to implement the Hebron redeployment.

Peres also accused Netanyahu of not conferring with security officials before opening a new entrance to a tunnel near the Temple Mount. The opening provided the spark that touched off last month's violent clashes.

"You didn't ask the IDF or the security establishment," Peres said. If there was nothing to be concerned about, he added, "why did you open it under cover of darkness? Why not call a news conference?" Peres said Netanyahu's actions had also cost the country goodwill in the international community, including the United States.

On Monday, Israeli and Palestinian officials began tackling the focal point of their negotiations, the Hebron redeployment, after a ceremonial first round of talks the evening before that were devoted mostly to procedural matters. At the Sunday session, the two sides agreed to form three subcommittees to deal with Hebron, security issues and economic issues.

The Hebron negotiations are expected to be particularly delicate, given the Israeli call for increased security for Hebron's 450 Jewish settlers and Palestinian demands that the two sides not renegotiate an already signed agreement. As the negotiations got under way, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher wrapped up a brief shuttle mission to the region, during which he met with Israeli and Palestinian leaders. Christopher said he believed that it was possible for Israel's security needs to be met within the framework of the existing accords.

"The United States places great emphasis on the statements of both the prime minister and foreign minister that they do not intend to modify or rescind the existing agreements, but move to implement them," he said at a joint news conference after talks with Foreign Minister David Levy. Levy told reporters that all the blockades Israel had imposed on West Bank towns after the violence would be lifted shortly.

Israel lifted Monday its blockades of Kalkilya and Tulkarm. Some 600 Palestinians also showed up for work at the reopened Erez industrial zone.

But Israeli security sources reportedly turned down a Palestinian request to renew joint patrols. The sources said the Palestinian Authority had not yet taken any steps against those of its police officers who had opened fire on Israeli forces. □

Qatar shelves opening of office in Tel Aviv*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Persian Gulf state of Qatar has decided to postpone opening its trade office in Tel Aviv because of what it sees as the hard-line political stance of the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

In an interview with the London-based Arab newspaper Al-Hayat, Qatari Foreign Minister Sheik Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani explained the decision, saying that Netanyahu "does not have a strategy for peace."

In April, Qatar and Oman became the first Gulf states to establish trade ties with Israel. The move, seen as a first step toward creating full diplomatic links with the Jewish state, came in the wake of the previous Labor government's accords with the Palestinians.

After Netanyahu took office in June, Arab leaders threatened to cool their ties with Israel if he did not implement the signed accords.

Syria this week called on Arab states to adopt a united position against Israel because of what it described as the Netanyahu government's intransigence in dealing with the Palestinians. □

Israel nets ex-ping pong coach on charges of spying for Soviets*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The former coach of Israel's national ping pong team has been charged with spying for the former Soviet Union.

Alexander Radelis immigrated to Israel from the Soviet Union in 1979 after being drafted and trained by the KGB, according to a report on Israel's Channel Two Television.

For eight years, Radelis passed information about the Israel Defense Force to the Soviets by Morse code from his apartment in the Tel Aviv area, the report said. He was arrested three months ago and charged in Tel Aviv District Court, which last week allowed the case to be made public.

He received some \$4,100 from the former Soviet Union for the information he passed along, news reports said. Radelis, who prosecutors said had caused grave damage to Israel's security, confessed during interrogation.

Israeli experts believe that the information Radelis passed on helped fill in information the Soviets were collecting about Israel. But they were unsure how Radelis obtained sensitive information, because his position in the army engineering corps did not have a particularly high security clearance and he had no apparent links to high-placed individuals. □

Dole fails to challenge Clinton on Mideast summit

By Jonathan S. Tobin
Connecticut Jewish Ledger

HARTFORD (JTA) — Despite threats to the contrary, Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole declined to use the first presidential debate to challenge President Clinton on last week's Middle East peace summit.

At Sunday's one-on-one debate at The Bushnell Theater in Hartford, debate moderator Jim Lehrer asked Dole about his charge that last week's summit, which brought Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat and Jordan's King Hussein to Washington to put the peace process back on track after the recent flare-up of violence in the territories, was an example of what he had called Clinton's "photo-op" foreign policy.

While he criticized the "ad hoc" nature of the summit, Dole seemingly backed away from the charge that he had leveled just last week.

"Well, there were some good pictures, but does it fall in that category? I don't know. I want to be very serious," Dole said.

"The Mideast is very difficult, but it seemed to me, just as an observer, that, you know, before you'd call somebody to America, you'd have some notion what the end result might be. Now maybe it's better just to get together and sit down and talk. Maybe that was the purpose, and I know talks have started again today," said the Republican candidate.

Clinton replied with a strong defense of his strategy of support for the peace process and invoked the memory of slain Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

"We have a very consistent policy in the Middle East. It is to support the peace process, to support the security of Israel and to support those who are prepared to take risks for peace," he said.

'Trust has broken down'

"It is a very difficult environment. The feelings are very strong. There are extremists in all parts of the Middle East who want to kill that peace process.

"Prime Minister Rabin gave his life because someone in his own country literally hated him for trying to bring peace," the president said.

The president went on to defend his decision to call the summit on such short notice.

"I would like to have had a big organized summit. But those people were killing each other — rapidly: innocent Arab children, innocent Israeli people.

"They were dying; so much trust has broken down in the aftermath of the change of [Israel's] government. I felt that if I could just get the parties together to say, 'Let's stop the violence,' start talking, commit to the negotiations, that would be a plus," Clinton said.

In reply, Dole said he was "disappointed the president did not call for an unconditional end to the violence."

According to some Dole supporters in the Jewish community, Clinton's failure to make such a call was an indication that the president had tilted in the talks toward the Palestinians and away from Netanyahu.

After the debate, spokesmen for the Democrats in "spin alley" — where each party produced celebrities to tell the media that their candidate had "won" the debate — were quick to assert that Dole had backed off what they considered "inappropriate" criticism of the president's Middle East policy.

"Senator Dole backed away from his attack," said

Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), who is a longtime friend of the president.

"Something was accomplished at the summit. It was definitely more than a photo op," Lieberman said.

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, a former Democratic congressman from Kansas, blasted Dole for being "hypercritical" of the summit.

"Dole didn't have much to say, he backed away on that one," Glickman said, adding, "The president defused the issue. He acted responsibly on the Mideast."

The Democratic national chairman, Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.), defended the summit as "the right thing to do," and termed Dole's criticism "inappropriate."

Spinning from the other end of the spectrum was Sen. Connie Mack (R-Fla.), an ardent supporter of Israel.

"Dole didn't back down," said Mack. Calling it "dangerous" to bring Netanyahu and Arafat to Washington "without clear-cut planning," Mack said, "It could have been disastrous."

Republican National Chairman Haley Barbour minced no words in his assessment of the summit.

"It was a failure. The people can judge that for themselves from the results. The president shouldn't squander the prestige of the United States in that manner. Senator Dole was clearly right in his criticism."

Most mainstream American Jewish groups have praised Clinton for holding the summit.

But in the immediate aftermath of the debate, one group, which has been highly critical of what it believes has been Clinton's unwillingness to hold Arafat accountable for violating the peace accords, quickly issued a news release to denounce one of Clinton's comments.

Zionist Organization of America President Morton Klein denounced Clinton's claim that "innocent Arab children" were being killed by Israelis.

'Rocks and firebombs'

"Rioters throwing rocks and firebombs are not innocent children," Klein said.

The two candidates failed to differ significantly on another issue of importance to the Jewish community: the question of school choice or vouchers for parents to send their children to private and parochial schools.

Most national Jewish organizations have traditionally opposed vouchers on the grounds that it would break down the wall of separation between church and state that protects religious minorities. But some Conservative and Orthodox Jews have come out in favor of vouchers because it would help the Jewish day school movement.

In reply to a question about his proposal to eliminate the Department of Education, Dole said school choice was an important alternative to the current system.

He also chided the president and Vice President Al Gore for sending their children to private schools while opposing choice for low- and middle-income Americans.

In reply, Clinton said he, too, was for students "having more choices," including public school choice and charter schools. He also did not rule out support for the more controversial option of vouchers for private schools, saying, "It ought to be done at the local level or the state level." He added that he thought that it would be "wrong" to take money away from public schools, which serve a larger number of students than private schools.

Lieberman, an Orthodox Jew who is an outspoken advocate of vouchers for private and parochial schools, said he was "very encouraged" by the president's ambivalent stand on the issue. Another school choice supporter, John Engler, the Republican governor of Michigan, said Dole "ought to get a lot of credit" for raising the issue of school choice since it was a "philosophical position" that most Americans did not yet fully understand. □