

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Leaders of the Reform and Conservative movements requested a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to protest expected legislation in the Knesset that would delegitimize non-Orthodox conversions.** Their request comes as many American Jews worry that the legislation, if adopted, would create a wide rift between Israel and Diaspora Jewry. Orthodox groups, however, welcomed the anticipated legislation.

■ **British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind urged Israeli and Palestinian negotiators to reach an accord on the redeployment of Israeli forces in Hebron.** After visiting the West Bank town, Rifkind described Jewish settlements in the territories as "illegal" and said they should be dismantled. [Page 4]

■ **Ariel Sharon, Israel's minister of national infrastructure, said he and other officials from his ministry would boycott next week's regional economic summit in Cairo to protest recent attacks on the Israeli government by Egyptian politicians and media.**

■ **Hundreds of thousands of Israelis attended a memorial concert Saturday night in the Tel Aviv square where Yitzhak Rabin was shot one year ago.** In addition to musical performances and an address by Rabin's wife, Leah, a memorial was unveiled at the site where Yigal Amir shot Rabin as he was leaving a Nov. 4, 1995, peace rally.

■ **Natan Sharansky, Israel's trade and industry minister, urged the government to prepare the public for war with Syria.** The former Soviet dissident told the Israeli daily Ha'aretz that he believed that recent Syrian threats and troop movements were serious.

■ **Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld said former French Cabinet Minister Maurice Papon should surrender his passport and be placed under police surveillance in case he plans to leave the country to avoid trial for crimes against humanity.** An appeals court last month ordered Papon, 86, to stand trial for sending Jews in wartime France to Nazi death camps.

FOCUS ON ISSUES**Christian-Jewish gathering unlocks new understandings**

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

STAMFORD, Conn. (JTA) — Down in North Carolina, in the valleys between Blue Ridge Mountains where most folks don't know any Jews, "Jews have horns, don't you know," said Leo Hoffman, a Conservative rabbi who retired to the area years ago.

For each of the last 16 years, Hoffman has organized a seminar at a local retreat center for the region's religious leaders. He brings about 115 members of the Christian and Jewish clergy together from the Carolinas, West Virginia, Virginia and Georgia.

At the center, they study and pray together — themes over the years have ranged from parables and Psalms to Judaism and Christianity in the first century — and in the process, come to know each other.

The seminar has had a definite impact in an area where Jewish communities are small and many people "just don't know any Jews," Hoffman said.

"In order for them to get to know us, we had to bring them together with us. Fifteen years ago you heard anti-Jewish things being preached from church pulpits that aren't being preached today," he said.

Hoffman related his story during a break between sessions of the 15th National Workshop on Christian-Jewish Relations, held last week at the Sheraton Hotel here.

The biennial convention brought together more than 1,000 clergy, seminary students and church and synagogue members.

They represented a dozen Jewish and Christian denominations and 20 different seminaries, and came from nine countries, according to Deborah Goldberg, the conference executive.

About one-third of the participants were Jewish and included people connected with each of the four Jewish denominations, though there were more from the liberal movements than the Orthodox.

The rest of the delegates spanned a vast range of religious practice and belief.

In attendance were Brother William Martyn, a representative of the Vatican; several members of the Sisters of Sion, a Catholic order devoted to bettering Jewish-Catholic relations; the Rev. Cecil Murray, the pastor of Los Angeles' oldest black congregation, the 9,000-member First African Methodist Episcopal Church; seminarians from Oral Roberts University, an evangelical institution in Tulsa, Okla.; and Imam Talil Eid, who is the religious director of the Islamic Center of New England, in Quincy, Mass.

'World series of interfaith dialogue'

Among the Jews who spoke were: Rabbi Leon Klenicki, director of interfaith affairs at the Anti-Defamation League; Julius Lester, who teaches Judaic studies at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst; Rabbi A. James Rudin, director of interreligious affairs at the American Jewish Committee; and Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Reform movement's Religious Action Center.

"This is the world series of interfaith dialogue," quipped Eugene Fisher, who is in charge of Catholic-Jewish relations for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and was chairman of the workshop's planning committee.

The workshop's theme was "Seeking God: The Challenge of Being Religious in America."

A plenary session was devoted to exploring "Authenticity Without Demonization" by speakers including leading Protestant theologian Mary Boys and Rabbi Neil Gillman, chairman of the philosophy department at the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary.

It is that theme which made the gathering particularly relevant, said Rabbi Robert Lennick, spiritual leader of Connecticut's Greenwich Reform Synagogue, who served as the workshop's convener.

"The workshop is a tremendous counterpoint to the demonization and polarization of the other side that we see in this political season," he said.

"The conference is also an opportunity for Jews and Christians to

look at the old patterns of their response to each other and see what needs to be altered," he said.

The mix of leading theologians with pulpit rabbis, priests and ministers, and with interested lay people, allowed for a cross-fertilization of ideas rarely found in other settings.

Participants broke into small groups to study Romans 9-11, the passage from the Christian Bible that addresses God's election of Israel and instructs believers in Jesus to help non-believers be saved.

The groups also studied Leviticus 25, the section of Torah that deals with the concept of the sabbatical year, a time when agriculture is halted for a year after six of planting and reaping, and the jubilee year, which came after every seventh sabbatical year and required the emancipation of Hebrew slaves and the return of property to its original owners.

But the twist was that the rabbis were instructed to teach the Christian text, and the Christian clergy were required to teach the Jewish passage.

Things learned at the workshop "let us translate discussions here into good practical programs we can use" in our own congregations and dialogue groups, said Fran Dorf, who was one of about 200 area residents who worked as volunteers to get the workshop off the ground.

David Arnow, a psychologist and activist in progressive Jewish causes, has been involved with a dialogue group of Catholics, Protestants and Jews in Scarsdale, N.Y., for the past six years.

He said the group came together as the Israeli government was stepping up the construction of new Jewish settlements in the West Bank, which some politically progressive Jews and Protestants alike felt was wrong.

"Christians in Scarsdale were getting uncomfortable because they didn't know how to talk about Israel without being perceived as anti-Semitic," said Arnow.

"An alliance built quickly with Jews who had the same critique and were called self-hating and subversive by other Jews," Arnow said, speaking during a panel about local dialogue groups.

'Amazing thing for a Jew to see'

Together they studied each other's religious texts and histories, and traveled together to Israel.

Arnow said he has gained much from knowing Christians in their personal religious struggles. "To see Christians seriously troubled by the long anti-Semitic streak in their history is an amazing thing for a Jew to see," he said.

The workshop that took place here last week is not sponsored by any one group or organization. Different communities bid for the right to host the convention, just as they do for the Olympics.

The city that wins raises the funding and plans the gathering.

Stamford's Council of Churches and Synagogues, an organization of 103 area congregations and social service agencies, was the chief organizer this year.

Noach Shapiro, who is studying at the JTS to become a Conservative rabbi and is the rabbinic intern at the National Center for Jewish Healing, attended the workshop for the first time and said that he found it "nourishing."

Being in dialogue with Christians "is clarifying for my own perspective," he said.

Discussing theology and relationships with people of other faiths "clarifies my relationship to my own tradition, which lets me act in my own world in a clearer, more effective way.

"And if your goal is to be in the world and interact with it, this is very helpful," he said. □

Southern Baptist evangelism sparks religious leaders' debate

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — Fireworks exploded at a normally sedate convention of religious leaders when Southern Baptists sparred with Jews and other Christians over a recent Southern Baptist Convention resolution singling out Jews for evangelism.

The 15th National Workshop on Christian-Jewish Relations, held last week in Stamford, Conn., was the first time that a senior representative of the Southern Baptist Convention met with Jews to discuss the resolution.

Adopted in June by the country's largest Protestant denomination, the resolution has sparked widespread outrage among Jews and some Christians.

In an interview after the workshop, Philip Roberts, the director of the Southern Baptist Convention's Interfaith Witness Department, charged the Jewish community with "reverse anti-Semitism" for refusing to dialogue with Jews who have converted to belief in Jesus, but who still call themselves Jews.

A panel discussion on Jewish evangelism of Jews was expected to last no more than an hour.

Passionate and angry debate

Instead, a passionate and angry debate raged from 9 p.m. until nearly midnight Oct. 29 as Roberts defended the resolution by saying that Baptists evangelize Jews "out of love." Many in the room were angered by Roberts' attempt to include on the panel a man who was born a Jew, converted to Christianity, is a member of the Southern Baptist Convention and actively tries to convert Jews.

Rabbi Leon Klenicki, director of interfaith affairs for the Anti-Defamation League and a member of the national planning committee for the national workshop, said the workshop's policy does not allow missionaries of any sort to participate in the biannual event.

"Jews for Jesus have tried to come many times before to present their case, saying that they are the fulfillment of the workshop, which we, both Christians and Jews, do not believe." Trying to evangelize people "is not part of the Jewish-Christian dialogue," he added.

The Jewish participant in the three-person panel, Rabbi A. James Rudin, director of interreligious affairs at the American Jewish Committee, said the night was "tumultuous." Eugene Fisher, who directs Jewish dialogue for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, was the Catholic panel member. "There was fury, just fury out there by both Christians and Jews" at the position taken by the Southern Baptist leader, said Rudin.

The Christians rendered "an even sharper critique" of the Southern Baptist position than the Jews did, which was "heartening and validating," Rudin said.

"From the floor these people — pastors, educators and laity — really spoke out sharply against what they consider a misreading of Christianity," he said.

But none of the arguments against his theology and his strategy made a dent in the beliefs of the Southern Baptist Convention leader.

"It was good for the Jewish people there to vent some of their anger and great for me to be able to respond and say that if we really do believe that Jesus is the way to truth and light we have as much right to share it as others do to reject it," Roberts said in the interview.

Roberts said the Jewish community's refusal to meet with so-called Messianic Jews is "intolerant."

"We sit down with people we consider heretics all the time, like Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, people who actively proselytize Baptists and say that they are the true Christian Church," Roberts said. □

Jewish Agency's 1997 budget shows signs of fiscal stability

By Cynthia Mann

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Jewish Agency for Israel's fiscal crisis appears to have been alleviated after the passage of the 1997 budget by the agency's Board of Governors.

The board, meeting in Jerusalem last week, approved a 1997 operating budget of \$400 million. It projects an income that will exceed expenditures for the first time in years, triggering optimism that the agency has stabilized.

The budget crisis "cast a pall over the last Board of Governors meetings" in June, said Dr. Conrad Giles, an agency board member and president-designate of the Council of Jewish Federations.

In contrast, "there is a renewed sense of optimism and a feeling we're on the right track," he said.

The agency is the primary recipient in Israel of funds raised by the joint annual campaign of the United Jewish Appeal and federations.

Strapped by yawning deficits caused in part by several years of declining allocations from flat campaigns, the agency is entering the second year of a five-year fiscal reform and recovery program that calls for \$500 million in cumulative savings.

The budget passed last week reflects the second year of cuts totaling \$110 million. More than half of the cuts came from a government agreement made a year ago to take over the bulk of the Youth Aliyah program, the network of residential villages for immigrant youth.

Agency sources said a key factor in the healthy projections for 1997 was concluding some outstanding parts of that agreement that freed up \$42 million which now can go toward immigrant absorption programs.

One program being expanded for prospective immigrants is called Selah, which provides education and training for 17- to 20-year-olds from the former Soviet Union. It had been providing pre-university academic training for 400 youths and will expand to provide vocational and technical training and serve 900 participants.

Some of the savings for the agency came from last week's agreement by the government to keep its responsibility and funding for half of the Student Authority. This authority pays for higher education for immigrants and is jointly funded by the Jewish Agency.

Last year, the government had said it would transfer its half of the responsibility for the authority to the agency in exchange for taking over Youth Aliyah.

"The supporters of the Jewish Agency in the Diaspora feel they're beginning to make a difference," said Charles "Corky" Goodman, chairman of the agency's Board of Governors.

"We've stabilized the Jewish Agency, we're finishing the budgetary cutting and can now begin to address a brighter future for the Jewish people in Israel and the Diaspora." □

Israeli security placed on alert amid warnings of terror attack

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli officials this week placed the country's security forces on high alert after receiving warnings that Islamic militants were planning an attack on a bus or shopping mall.

The warnings prompted police to set up roadblocks throughout the country. At Jerusalem's main shopping mall, border police inspected cars and a dog was used to find explosives.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday rebuffed criticisms that the beefed-up security was disrupting life in many cities. "I gave a simple order: The safety of life comes before the quality of life," he said.

Israeli security officials said the planned attacks were linked to the anniversary of the 1995 assassination of Islamic Jihad leader Dr. Fathi Shakaki.

Shakaki was shot in the head five times Oct. 26, 1995, in Malta. Islamic Jihad officials hold Israel responsible for the slaying and have vowed revenge. Israel declined to comment on whether it was behind the shooting.

Israeli security officials said this week that a car bomb might already have been smuggled into Israel and that terrorists could be waiting for a green light to carry out an attack.

Jibril Rajoub, head of Palestinian security forces in the West Bank, claimed that militant groups were not planning any terror attacks at this time out of fear that it would delay a long-postponed Israeli troop redeployment in the West Bank town of Hebron. □

Israeli general suspended for meeting with opposition

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu this week defended his decision to suspend an army general from the peace negotiations with the Palestinians because he held talks with opposition leaders without the government's knowledge.

The Defense Ministry last Friday suspended Maj. Gen. Oren Shahor as head of the Israeli team that was negotiating civilian issues with the Palestinians pending the completion of an investigation into his actions.

On Sunday, the premier responded to those criticizing the suspension, saying that he had authorized the decision because Shahor had failed to notify the government of his meetings with Labor Party officials.

"We are talking about an officer who was making contacts with the heads of parties secretly," Netanyahu said.

The suspension came after the Israeli daily Ma'ariv last week published photographs of Shahor, the coordinator of activities in the territories, leaving the home of Labor leader and former Prime Minister Shimon Peres. Ma'ariv said Shahor had also held recent meetings with Labor Knesset member Yossi Beilin, who served as minister without portfolio in the previous Peres-led government.

The decision to suspend Shahor drew an outcry from the opposition.

Shahor said he would investigate the legality of the move. □

Jordan, Israel to open Red Sea consulates

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — In an effort to promote tourism and facilitate trade, the Hashemite kingdom and the Jewish state plan to open consulates in the Red Sea towns of Eilat, Israel, and Aqaba, Jordan, respectively.

The decision was made by joint committees formed under the 1994 peace treaty between the two nations.

A spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Amman said additional measures were being considered, including free, one-day visas for tourists.

Meanwhile, Israeli President Ezer Weizman plans to travel this week to Amman to meet with King Hussein.

The visit was to have taken place earlier, but it was postponed at the request of Weizman, who at the time thought that the talks between Israel and the Palestinians were on the verge of a conclusion. □

British minister visits Hebron, urges Israeli-Palestinian accord*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind this week urged Israeli and Palestinian negotiators to reach an agreement for the redeployment of Israeli troops in the West Bank town of Hebron.

Rifkind, who paid a one-day visit to Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas Sunday, called on the two sides to negotiate "in an inspired way that recognizes the great prizes to be won."

"I would not want to hide from you the grave concern felt by the United Kingdom and elsewhere in the international community at the way the peace process has faltered in recent months," he said.

His visit came after Israeli and Palestinian negotiators failed during four weeks of intensive discussions to reach a Hebron accord.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday that no target date had been set for concluding the Hebron agreement. He was responding to reports quoting U.S. diplomatic sources that the two sides had set a target date of Nov. 12.

Rifkind's trip to the Middle East came two weeks after French President Jacques Chirac visited the region, angering Israeli and American officials with his pro-Arab remarks and his calls for greater European involvement in the peace process.

Rifkind was careful not to criticize Chirac's visit, but he said that British diplomats were "even-handed."

Although he expressed his interest in helping the sides bridge their differences, the British foreign secretary said Europe should only have a mediating role in the process if it would prove productive.

Netanyahu and Foreign Minister David Levy asked Rifkind to convey to Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat the danger of delaying the negotiations.

"As far as we are concerned, the negotiations could have been concluded two weeks ago," Netanyahu said at a news conference.

In between his talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders, Rifkind squeezed in a visit to Hebron to review the situation there.

After his visit there, Rifkind described Jewish settlements in the territories as "illegal" and said they should be dismantled.

Meanwhile, tensions remained high in Hebron, where Jewish settlers have threatened to resist an Israeli troop pullback.

A Palestinian house in Hebron caught fire Sunday, and residents of the house accused Jewish settlers from the nearby Jewish settlement of Kiryat Arba of throwing a firebomb through one of the windows.

Police were investigating the incident.

During Rifkind's visit, a stone was thrown at a vehicle transporting journalists, cracking the windshield. No one was injured.

Talks on Hebron between Israel and the Palestinians slowed last week after Arafat left for a weeklong European tour and U.S. Special Middle East Coordinator Dennis Ross returned to Washington. Ross was expected to return to the region later this week. □

Israel cites violations by Palestinian Authority

NEW YORK (JTA) — For months, Israel has charged that the Palestinian Authority was not living up to the terms of the self-rule accords.

When he came to power earlier this year, Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he was going to be less lenient than the previous Labor government and was going to hold the Palestinians accountable for upholding their end of the bargain.

This week, the Israeli government released a list of 10 of what it said were the Palestinian Authority's most "egregious" violations of the accords:

- Opening fire on Israeli forces and civilians — a reference to the three days of violence in late September, when Palestinian police fired on Israeli soldiers.
- Failure to confiscate illegal arms and disband militias, including Hamas, Fatah and Islamic Jihad.
- Failure to extradite 19 suspected terrorists to Israel.
- Incitement to violence against Israel. The Israeli government charged that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has repeatedly called for holy wars, offered praise for slain terrorist Yehiya Ayash and has encouraged violent acts against Israelis.
- Failure to change those portions of the Palestine Liberation Organization covenant that call for the destruction of Israel.
- Continued operation of Palestinian Authority offices in Jerusalem.
- Recruitment of terrorists to serve in the Palestinian police.
- Exceeding the agreed-upon limits on the number of Palestinian police in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Israeli government cited reports that the Palestinian Authority has deployed more than 50,000 security forces — more than double the total permitted under the self-rule accords.
- Repeated abuses of human rights and the rule of law.
- Ongoing conduct of foreign relations, despite the accords' explicit statement that the PLO was to conduct relations on behalf of the Palestinian Authority. □

Jerusalemite accused of throwing tea*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A Jerusalem man has been charged with deliberately throwing a cup of hot tea in the face of Labor Knesset member Yael Dayan recently in Hebron.

The incident occurred when Dayan, who suffered burns on her face and chest, arrived at the Tomb of the Patriarchs with other members of the Knesset committee on the status of women.

The man, Yisrael Lederman, maintains that he was pushed from behind and did not deliberately throw the hot tea. He also accused the police of suppressing evidence that supports his claim.

Police requested that Lederman be detained. He was previously convicted of murdering an Arab person from eastern Jerusalem, and was granted early release from prison after serving four years of a 20-year sentence. □

Officer demoted for Rabin letters

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli military court has demoted an officer for sending threatening letters to Yitzhak Rabin before the prime minister was assassinated.

Daniel Bevis, 37, who had been a major, was made a lieutenant.

The court rejected the prosecution's request that he be demoted to a private and sentenced to a jail term. Bevis was convicted a week ago on three counts of unbecoming conduct.

According to reports, Bevis sent letters to Rabin in 1994, calling him "a rag" who "will pay for this." □