



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat to urge that the two sides reach an accord on the Israeli redeployment in Hebron. But chances for an agreement appeared dim before the premier travels to the United States on Wednesday. [Page 2]

■ Outgoing U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher is scheduled to meet with Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat in Egypt. Christopher will be in Cairo to attend the Middle East-North African regional economic summit that begins Tuesday.

■ Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said a soldier who has been missing since September was believed kidnapped. Sharon Edri, 19, was last seen at a medical clinic at an army base in central Israel. [Page 2]

■ Newly released British documents show that more people died in the Holocaust than previously believed, a history professor at American University said. The documents also reportedly show that British intelligence was fully aware of the widespread killing of Jews and others in western Russia at that time.

■ A British judge set two hearings to determine whether a refugee accused of killing Jews during World War II should face Britain's first war crimes trial. A jury will decide whether to try Szymon Serafinowicz, 85, in the killing of three Jews between 1941 and 1942.

■ Four houses and a shed on a golf course were daubed with swastikas and other anti-Semitic graffiti in the town of Mamaroneck, N.Y., a suburb north of New York City. Local police said the vandalism was related to similar incidents earlier this year in the adjacent village of Mamaroneck.

■ Charles Buerger, publisher of a chain of Jewish newspapers, died at the age of 58 after complications from heart surgery. His publications include the Baltimore Jewish Times, the Detroit Jewish News, the Atlanta Jewish Times and the West Palm Beach Jewish Times.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Christopher's exit heralds new era for Mideast diplomacy

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — As president, Bill Clinton decides the administration's policy toward Israel and the Middle East.

But it was Secretary of State Warren Christopher who anchored a pro-Israel team that many believe set a new standard by which future diplomats will be measured.

When Christopher leaves his post after President Clinton's inauguration Jan. 20, U.S. diplomacy in the Middle East will have a dramatically different face.

In addition to Christopher's resignation, announced last week just after Clinton was re-elected to his second term, White House officials expect a major reshuffling of the entire Middle East peace process team.

No secretary of state before him logged more travel miles, including 18 trips to the Middle East.

And as America's top diplomat, Christopher navigated U.S. policy through the treacherous waters of the Middle East peace process at a time of momentous change.

This is how the American Jewish community will best remember the outgoing secretary of state.

"History will remember Warren Christopher's efforts to help bring peace between Arabs and Israelis as nothing short of tireless," said Howard Kohr, executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby.

For Israel in particular, said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, "Warren Christopher is somebody who truly believes that the U.S.-Israel relationship is special."

Since Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization signed their historic agreement on the White House lawn three years ago, Christopher has spent more time trying to achieve what all secretaries of state before him could not: comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Although not fully successful, it was on his watch that significant progress was made, including Israeli accords with the Palestinians, Jordanians and others in the Mideast.

Along the way, his quest included many controversial steps:

- Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat won a coveted Oval Office meeting with Clinton on Christopher's recommendation.

- Clinton sat with Syrian President Hafez Assad in an attempt to win a peace treaty between Jerusalem and Damascus.

- World leaders gathered in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheik to condemn terrorism in the wake of a string of deadly suicide bombings in Israel. Some faulted the U.S.-initiated conference as "photo-op" diplomacy.

Attaining peace in the Middle East was so central to his goals that many believe that Christopher, 71, would have stayed in his post if Israel and Syria had been on course toward a peace accord.

But with Syrian negotiations stalemated and the Israeli-Palestinian talks stalled, Christopher decided to step down.

### 'Unrealistic about what could be accomplished'

Not all Jewish organizational officials are sad to see Christopher go.

"Christopher was a major disappointment," said Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organization of America.

"He, along with President Clinton, ignored Yasser Arafat's anti-peace behavior," Klein said, citing the Palestinian Authority leader's calls for "jihad, incitement of terrorists and failure to amend the PLO Covenant."

Others were critical of Christopher's approach to Israeli-Syrian peace talks. "This administration was unrealistic about what could be accomplished through their diplomacy with the Syrians," said Douglas Feith, deputy defense secretary during the Reagan administration.

"A sign of their excessively high expectations was the excessive high investment they were willing to make in the form of more than two dozen trips by Christopher to Damascus," said Feith, who has been a vocal critic

of the Clinton administration's foreign policy in the Middle East.

Fans of Christopher sought to deflect such criticism. "You cannot fault this administration for working every angle to put the peace process on firm footing against all challenges," said Jason Isaacson, director of the Washington office of the American Jewish Committee.

At the same time, Christopher has won praise for his vigorous defense of the U.S. foreign aid program, through which Israel receives more than \$3.1 billion a year.

While many praise Christopher for shepherding Middle East policy, some have taken him to task for not vigorously pursuing U.S. law that requires the State Department to begin plans to move the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

"This administration has again disrespected Congress' constitutional role in the making of U.S. national security policy," said Feith, who was instrumental in shaping the Jerusalem embassy bill. The legislation, passed by Congress in the fall of 1995, requires the administration to move the embassy by May 1999, but to begin planning for the move immediately.

Feith cited a report issued by the State Department last week that indicated that no plans were under way to build a new embassy. "The State Department's non-responsive reports on plans to build the embassy are obviously contemptuous," he said. The administration, in its report, however, said arrangements could be made to rent space for a new embassy in time for the deadline.

While rumors abounded over who would follow Christopher, Clinton was expected to name a replacement as early as this week.

Aside from Christopher's departure, White House officials expect a major reshuffling of the Middle East peace process team. "We're going to take a good hard look at reinvigorating the team," said a White House official who requested that his name not be used.

Martin Indyk, the U.S. ambassador to Israel, could return to the State Department to serve as assistant secretary of state for Near East Affairs after the expected retirement of Robert Pelletreau. And speculation is rife that Dennis Ross, special Middle East coordinator and a key player in the process over the past several years, will step down.

Shakeups on the president's National Security Council could also mean new faces for Middle East policymaking in the administration.

Perhaps Christopher's lasting legacy on the U.S.-Israel relationship is what Isaacson called his "defiant piece of diplomacy" in proving that "the United States can be a partner and ally with Israel, expressing its solidarity, and remain a broker in the region."

"The United States has not suffered by our unquestioning solidarity with Israel," he said. "The next secretary of state could take a lesson from that." □

## Accord on Hebron unlikely before Netanyahu visits U.S.

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Chances appeared dim that a regional economic conference in Cairo this week would serve as the setting for an Israeli-Palestinian accord on Hebron.

Earlier reports had suggested that a signing ceremony could take place at the gathering, which is expected to bring together some 2,000 business and political leaders from more than 80 countries. But Palestinian officials said the sides were unlikely to conclude the agreement for an Israeli troop redeployment in Hebron.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who tele-

phoned Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat Sunday night, had hoped to conclude an agreement by Wednesday, when he is scheduled to leave for the United States to address the Council of Jewish Federations General Assembly, Israel Radio reported.

Palestinians have balked at Israeli demands to modify the agreement made by the previous Labor government. Israel, meanwhile, has accused the Palestinians of dragging on the talks in an effort to gain more concessions.

In recent days, Dore Gold, Netanyahu's political adviser, and Yitzhak Molcho, an attorney who is close to the premier, have been meeting with Palestinian officials in an effort to break the impasse, Israel Radio reported. □

## Israeli Cabinet discusses moves against illegal workers

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has instructed the Ministerial Committee on Foreign Workers to step up efforts to locate people working illegally in Israel and begin the process of deporting them.

Addressing the issue during last Friday's Cabinet meeting, Netanyahu also directed Finance Minister Dan Meridor to make available all resources needed to facilitate the deportations.

According to labor officials, about 250,000 foreign workers are in Israel illegally. Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Eli Yishai and Public Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani briefed the Cabinet on the situation and requested additional funds to carry out the deportations.

Two weeks ago, the government allocated more than \$5 million for the deportation of 500 illegal foreign workers each month. The money was allocated to house temporarily the workers in tent camps before their deportation. But Yishai said the ministerial committee dealing with the issue of foreign workers was wary of housing them in tent camps because it might cause public protest.

Yishai said that in principle, 1,000 to 2,000 illegal foreign workers could be deported each month, but that would require a larger budget. □

## Security forces now believe missing soldier was kidnapped

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Security forces believe that a soldier who has been missing for two months was kidnapped.

Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said Monday that he believed that Sharon Edri, 19, was being held against his will.

Edri was last seen Sept. 11 at a medical clinic on an army base in central Israel, where he was given permission for a one-day leave. At the time, Edri's family said he had telephoned to say he was coming home, but then disappeared. Searches for him have failed to turn up any information.

"As long as we have no other evidence, from our point of view, Sharon Edri is being held against his will somewhere, and we are making every effort in order to find him," said Mordechai, who met with members of Edri's family Monday.

Police Commissioner Assaf Hefetz said police were still investigating all possible avenues.

"The police didn't exclude since the beginning any option and now we tend to give more weight or attention to the kidnapping option," said Hefetz. The Edri family also met Monday with President Ezer Weizman and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. □

# FOCUS ON ISSUES

## Schulweis calls on U.S. Jewry to launch proselytizing effort

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — A leading Conservative rabbi is challenging American Jews to embark on a mission to convert unaffiliated Christians to Judaism.

The time has come, says Rabbi Harold Schulweis, for Jews to emulate the missionary practice of their ancient forebears through "a national or international Jewish movement to educate, invite and embrace non-Jews into the fold."

The message is not new. Alexander Schindler, president emeritus of the Reform movement, advocated offering Judaism to unchurched Christians three years ago.

But this latest message has engendered renewed debate among Jewish and Christian theologians.

It also comes amid controversy over a Southern Baptist Convention resolution encouraging evangelizing of Jews.

In a recent sermon to his Valley Beth Shalom congregation in Encino, Calif., Schulweis highlighted some of his key arguments for conversionary outreach to unaffiliated gentiles.

Schulweis cited the attraction of Judaism as a world religion, its ancient tradition of proselytizing and the argument that conversion of non-Jewish spouses in mixed marriages is the surest guarantor of producing children and grandchildren with strong Jewish identities.

Many non-Jews "hunger for an authentic, moving and relevant faith," Schulweis said. "One would expect that a community that is so concerned with its own perpetuity would reach out actively to embrace these people, who quite seriously enjoy and are sustained by Jewish wisdom and faith."

Some Orthodox and Conservative rabbis took issue with Schulweis, saying that Jews must first focus on the indifferent and unaffiliated in their own ranks before trying to attract non-Jews.

### 'Discouragement required'

"Millions of Jews would respond to an aggressive outreach campaign, while proselytizing non-Jews would be seen as a sign of weakness," said Rabbi Raphael Butler, executive vice president of the Orthodox Union. "Why should anyone want to join a group that can't hold on to its own members?"

Noting that Ruth, the Moabitess, is often cited as one of the Bible's most famous converts, Butler responded dryly that Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, "didn't conduct a marketing campaign."

Rabbi Nachum Sauer, head of graduate Judaic studies at the Yeshiva of Los Angeles, said Jewish law requires that would-be converts be discouraged and "pushed away," rather than courted.

Sauer said Conservative and Reform leaders sought converts mainly to make up for former congregants lost to secularism.

Conservative Rabbi William Lebeau, dean of the Rabbinical School of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, termed an active conversion outreach a complicated issue, widely discussed in Conservative circles.

"We have to decide whether to use our limited resources and energy on reaching non-Jews, or within the Jewish community," including the intermarried, Lebeau said.

Lebeau said most Conservative leaders would favor meeting the religious and spiritual needs within the Jewish community first.

But Schulweis believes that the concept of Judaism

as a missionary faith is deeply rooted in Jewish tradition and theology.

The prophet Isaiah declared that God had "created and appointed you a covenant people, a light for the nations," and the Talmud states that "God exiled the Jews from their homeland for one reason: to increase the number of converts," he said.

Jews were extremely active and successful proselytizers throughout the Roman Empire, until such activities were made a capital crime and forcibly suppressed when Christianity became the state religion.

Among those supporting Schulweis is Rabbi David Wolpe, assistant to the chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

"As the originators of monotheism, we have a lot to say to the world," said Wolpe, whose latest book appropriately bears the title, "Why Be Jewish?"

"People increasingly see [conversionary outreach] as a worthy mission, especially when you see how much thoughtfulness and devotion has been brought to Judaism by those who have converted," he added.

Addressing the "lack of resources" argument, Wolpe said, "The more you expand the Jewish base, the more you expand the resources."

Conversions may have the biggest impact in mixed marriages. When a non-Jewish spouse does not convert, the couple's children are almost sure to marry non-Jews, assuring assimilation in a couple of generations, according to surveys.

In contrast, when the gentile spouse converts, those marriages score higher in almost every aspect of Jewish identity and religious practice than couples made up of two people who were born Jews, said Schulweis.

But Steven Bayme, director of the American Jewish Committee's Jewish communal affairs department, said he doubts that conversionary outreach will have any effect on communal demographics.

Only one of every 14 non-Jews in mixed marriages becomes a convert, said Bayme.

One reason for this phenomenon, he said, may be that mixed marriages, with both spouses retaining their original religions, are now so common and accepted that there is no pressure on either side to convert.

Schulweis, meanwhile, warned against seeking converts for the sake of replacing demographic losses.

### 'Endured for millennia'

"Those who come to us must not be seen as surrogates of our Holocaustal losses or as replacements for those who have left us. They must not be used as means to ends, but as ends in themselves," Schulweis said.

He is not too sanguine that this advice will be heeded.

"The conversionary movement will be successful, but for the wrong reasons," he said.

Ideally, he said, "Jewish mission means to act out our belief that we are not a parochial, sectarian, ethnic clan, but a people whose faith and wisdom have endured for four millennia."

Schulweis' proposal was welcomed by at least one Catholic leader.

If unaffiliated Christians can be reached by a Jewish outreach mission, "step right up and bring these people to God," said Eugene Fisher, the U.S. Catholic Church's point man for ecumenical affairs.

"There are 60 million Roman Catholics in the United States and 1 billion in the world," Fisher said.

"So the effect of losing some adherents is different for us than for the Jews. The story would be different, say, if in Israel they tried to convert Catholics, where they are a small minority." □

## Israel-Vatican accord noted for its gains, shortcomings

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The mutual diplomatic recognition reached by Israel and the Vatican nearly three years ago has been more valuable outside the borders of the Jewish state than inside, according to representatives of both governments.

The Fundamental Agreement Between the Holy See and the State of Israel was signed Dec. 30, 1993, and brought to a symbolic close centuries of Catholic animus toward Jews.

Although the Catholic Church's attitude toward Jews and Judaism changed dramatically after the Second Vatican Council ended in 1965, the Catholic state's posture toward Israel remained a negative one.

The Vatican, seat of the Catholic Church and an independent government as well, had de facto recognized the reality of the Jewish state, but it had refused to extend to Israel formal diplomatic recognition.

A luncheon and panel discussion held Nov. 7 at the Israeli Embassy here to mark the third anniversary of the new relationship with the Vatican featured three speakers: Shlomo Gur, one of the Israeli diplomats who negotiated the agreement with the Vatican; Father Drew Christiansen, a senior representative of the United States Catholic Conference; and Rabbi David Rosen, who participated in the 1993 talks as the Anti-Defamation League's co-liaison to the Vatican.

Achieving formal recognition from the Vatican was important to the State of Israel, but it was even more important to Jews outside Israel, particularly those in overwhelmingly Catholic countries, where the acknowledgement of Jewish legitimacy has helped curb lingering Catholic anti-Jewish sentiment, said Rosen, an Orthodox rabbi who also represents the ADL in Jerusalem.

### New model of deal-making

Vatican recognition has also bolstered Israel's standing in the international community.

"It has had great importance for our international relations, not just with neighboring countries, but with many other countries which look to the Vatican as an inspiration and to take the lead in things," said Gur, who now serves as the deputy chief of mission at the embassy here.

For both Israel and the Holy See, the negotiations created a new model of political deal-making, one that has been employed both in the Israel-Palestinian peace talks and in the Vatican's discussions with other Middle Eastern governments, said Gur and Christiansen.

The talks took two forms: the formal process and what Gur termed a "back channel" dialogue, which enabled him and a Catholic diplomat to engage each other creatively. "It was like we were in the kitchen, where we were totally informal, without any kind of record and with total deniability. The exchanges were very, very open," said Gur. Later, things would "move into the dining room, where things were considered, familiarized and accepted."

For all its value outside Israel, implementation of the accords remains a problem inside its borders, Christiansen said. He said few people even in the Israeli government know what the accord entails.

And even though the 15-article accord specifically names the right of the Catholic Church to carry out its charitable functions, that right is impeded when Israel closes its borders to Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza because of security concerns, he said.

In addition, Catholics who applied for a license to open a radio station in the Upper Galilee were turned

down, contravening the accord's provision that guarantees the church its own media, he said.

According to Rosen, the Vatican has accrued a little-known benefit from its accord with Israel.

With Israelis and Palestinians completely disagreeing on who will ultimately control Jerusalem, its fate remains something of a question mark to the international community.

No Islamic government would be able to guarantee non-Muslims, including Catholics, complete freedom of religious expression or permanent control over their own holy sites, Rosen said.

But the Vatican did win these assurances in the accord with Israel, creating a legal precedent for the church that could influence the future even if there is Muslim rule in part of Jerusalem, he said. □

## Klarsfeld wants Jewish assets to be part of apartment probe

By Lee Yanowitch

PARIS (JTA) — Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld has urged that money, jewels and other assets be included in an investigation into the seizure of Jewish-owned apartments during Germany's World War II occupation of France.

The Paris city council recently froze the sale of city-owned apartments after accusations surfaced in a just-released book that some of the dwellings, mainly in the medieval Marais district, long known as the Jewish quarter, might have been taken from Jews deported to Nazi concentration camps or who had fled persecution in France.

In her book, "Private Estate," author Brigitte Vital-Durand said the city of Paris owns 150 buildings in the Marais quarter, some of which had belonged to Jews.

French officials are delaying the apartment sales until a probe is conducted into the original ownership of the dwellings.

Klarsfeld, who is French, said only an official of the French administration who had access to state archives could conduct the probe because state institutions had put up barriers to such searches in the past. "The money Jews had on them when they arrived at the Drancy transit camp, as well as jewels and other valuables, were taken by the police and given to state-run institutions. The money was then sent to the Finance Ministry and was spent by the Treasury after the war," he said.

Drancy, near Paris, was an internment camp where Jews from the Paris region were taken before they were sent to Auschwitz.

Klarsfeld said the heirs of those murdered by the Nazis "were never reimbursed. The same applies to bank accounts, shares and other assets."

"Research must be done. It will show that part of the Jewish assets went into the public and private hands of those who were not Jews," he said.

He added that the probe should include apartments in other French cities as well.

Noting that President Jacques Chirac said last year in a public apology that France "owed an eternal debt" for its role in sending Jews to their deaths, Klarsfeld said: "The debt could be paid by research and by the value of assets being given to Jewish associations."

About 76,000 Jews, including 12,000 children, were arrested and deported from France to Nazi death camps between 1941 and 1944. Only about 2,500 survived.

In Italy and Belgium, if Jewish property could not be traced to an heir, it was sold and the proceeds were given to Jewish organizations.

A similar step was recently taken in Austria after Jewish-owned works of art that were looted by the Nazis were sold at an auction. □