



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ A bomb disguised as a videocassette was sent to a French Jewish newspaper. The publisher of the Tribune Juive, who received the package, discovered the bomb before it exploded. It came hours before a bomb exploded on a Paris commuter train. [Page 2]

■ The U.N. General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted a resolution in support of the Middle East peace process. The vote, hailed by Israel, marked the measure's fourth consecutive year of passage. The General Assembly also adopted several resolutions critical of Israel that have become routine over the years, including one decrying Israel's exclusive sovereignty over Jerusalem and another its "occupation" of the Golan Heights.

■ Egypt decided to try an Israeli Arab charged with spying for Israeli intelligence. No trial date has been set in the case of Azam Azam, 35, who is from the Galilee.

■ A Palestinian detainee was fatally shot by a guard in a Palestinian jail where he had been held for almost two years without trial, the head of a Palestinian human rights group said. The death of Rashid Fityani, who a Palestinian official said was trying to escape, brings to 10 the number of Palestinian detainees killed by Yasser Arafat's security forces since the 1994 start of self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

■ A Greek court ordered the early release of a Palestinian man convicted of the 1982 bombing of an American jumbo jet that killed one person and wounded 15. Mohammed Rashid, 46, was set to be deported either to the Palestinian-controlled areas of the West Bank or the Gaza Strip.

■ Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem Shmuel Meir was killed in a car accident in Jerusalem. Meir belonged to the National Religious Party.

■ Israel's Knesset passed a preliminary reading of a bill calling for moving all foreign embassies in Israel to Jerusalem. The bill passed, despite opposition from Foreign Minister David Levy.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Campaign finance reform reveals rift among Jews

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — When Congress returns to work in January, the push to revamp the nation's campaign finance laws will illuminate a profound rift in the Jewish community.

The clamor for reform has already prompted contentious debate within the community about the nature of Jewish political influence and the role Jewish political giving plays in the political process.

In the wake of this year's presidential and congressional election campaigns — in which more than \$1.8 billion was raised — advocates of reform are hoping to seize on growing disenchantment with the current political money-raising system and push legislation through Congress early next year.

On one side of the issue in the Jewish world are political action committee officials and some activists who lobby Capitol Hill for pro-Israel and other Jewish interests. They see campaign finance reform as political poison that threatens to undermine the historical influence of American Jews in Washington.

These Jewish reform opponents assert that the Jewish community has long benefited from the current system, wielding influence that is disproportionate to its numbers.

On the other side of the debate sits most of the Jewish organizational world and many American Jews at large, among whom campaign finance reform appears to have clear support.

While recognizing that Jews have worked successfully within the current system to promote the community's interests, Jewish reform advocates point to what they see as an overriding need to clean up the system and restore faith in government.

"Those are principles that the Jewish community believes in and should be asserting no matter what the short-term implications might be," said Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism and one of the community's most outspoken proponents of reform.

But opponents counter that efforts to curb special interests will disproportionately harm Jewish interests. Jews, they say, have a vested interest in maintaining the current system, which they believe has afforded Jews a tremendous advantage over the years.

"Let's face it: We're less than 2 percent of the population. The way we've made ourselves become a force is that we've become much more active and sophisticated in utilizing all the legal aspects of the campaign process," said Chuck Brooks, executive director of National PAC, the largest of the more than 30 pro-Israel political action committees active in the 1996 election cycle.

"We've done it better than any other community," he added.

Jewish PACs distributed more than \$1.5 million

With so many interest groups competing to have their views heard on Capitol Hill, access to lawmakers remains the most important political asset. Campaign contributions, PAC officials and other opponents of reform stress, play a key role in acquiring and maintaining that access for the Jewish community.

"If you lessen the influence of money in politics, you lessen Jewish influence because Jews are so active and so generous," said Morris Amitay, a longtime Jewish activist and founder of the pro-Israel Washington PAC.

In this past election cycle, Jewish PACs distributed more than \$1.5 million to political candidates as of mid-September, the latest date for which figures are available.

In addition, Jewish donors gave an estimated \$100 million in other forms of political contributions.

Reform advocates say the notion that Jewish influence is dependent on Jewish giving misrepresents reality.

Contributions from pro-Israel PACs represent only a small percentage of total Jewish political giving, they say, and Jewish political giving

represents only a small part of Jewish political involvement.

Political fund raising "is one of the legs upon which Jewish access depends," said Phil Baum, executive director of the American Jewish Congress.

"Take away one of the legs, you're short that leg and the stool wobbles a bit," he said, but "it doesn't mean you're going to fall down."

Moreover, reform advocates say the focus on money overlooks the community's success over the years in persuading politicians and the American public to support Israel and other Jewish interests because it was the right thing to do.

"We ought to be proud of the success we have had over the years in persuading Congress, the administration and the American public that the pro-Israel position is the right position," said Hyman Bookbinder, a veteran Jewish activist and former director of the American Jewish Committee's Washington office.

Sen. Russell Feingold (D-Wis.), co-sponsor of legislation to overhaul the system, agrees.

"The Jewish community has benefited from being active in politics," said the Jewish senator, whose legislation would outlaw PACs completely and would impose voluntary limits on campaign spending.

"Part of that activism has involved participating in some fund raising, but I think that is only a small part of why the Jewish community has had success in Congress," said Feingold, whose bill, co-sponsored with Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), has the support of President Clinton.

Even among Jewish proponents of reform, support is not unconditional.

There has been a tendency among Jewish organizations to readily embrace anything that "parades under the banner of reform," said Baum, whose organization has not taken a position on campaign finance reform.

He argued that groups have to be "circumspect" and "careful" about which aspects of reform to support.

The debate over campaign finance reform, meanwhile, has at times taken on a caustic edge, with both sides accusing the other of staking out positions that endanger Jewish interests.

'Doing the whole community a disservice'

J.J. Goldberg, journalist and author of "Jewish Power: Inside the American Jewish Establishment," believes that Jewish PAC officials "are doing the whole community a disservice" by taking "the narrowest Jewish self-interest and pitting it against the interest of the rest of the world."

Jewish PAC officials, for their part, insist that the entire Jewish community — not just the pro-Israel PAC community — has a stake in the status quo.

"Congress recognizes the political power of the Jewish community — a lot of it through political donations and campaign assistance — and they associate it strongly with being pro-Israel," said Brooks of NATPAC.

"If that hook is taken away, it's going to have a significant effect on most pro-Israel organizations."

For now, however, Jewish reform advocates appear willing to risk diminished political influence. They say the community has more to gain by pursuing the common good than it does by tying itself to the pro-Israel PACs and a system that has engendered distrust and alienation.

"One of the reasons we've thrived in the last two generations is that we've been perceived as being part of the solution and not the problem," Goldberg said.

Bookbinder agreed that the Jewish community stands to benefit by siding with reformers and helping to clean up the system.

"What is in the public interest is in the Jewish

interest. That's our strength — that we can make these twin contentions," he said.

Whatever the result of reform efforts, most Jewish observers remain confident in the ability of the American Jewish community to use its energy and imagination to effectively assert its interests under a new system.

They point to the community's success in maintaining its influence after the last major reform legislation was enacted 22 years ago.

"We learned to adapt," Goldberg said. "We always do." □

France heightens security after Jewish paper targeted

By Lee Yanowitch

NEW YORK (JTA) — France has tightened security around Jewish institutions this week after a letter bomb was sent to a Jewish weekly newspaper.

Jean Kahn, head of the Consistoire, which tends to the religious needs of France's Jewish community, said the increased security measures came after the bomb, concealed in a videocassette, arrived in the offices of the Tribune Juive.

"The authorities have taken the necessary steps," he said in a phone interview from Paris.

Yves Deraï, the publisher of the paper, one of three leading Jewish publications in the capital, received the package Tuesday.

He discovered the bomb inside before it exploded, averting a potentially deadly disaster.

"In my morning mail was a brown envelope. Inside it was a white envelope marked 'Confidential.' I opened it and found a videocassette inside a cardboard case.

"I tried to pull the cassette out, but it was stuck, so I ripped the cardboard," Deraï said.

"That's what saved me. I saw a copper tube, a wire and a battery. If I had tugged harder on the cassette, I would have been dead," he said.

Later that day, during the evening rush hour, a bomb ripped through a Paris subway, killing two people and injuring 79 others.

No one has claimed responsibility for the subway attack or the bomb sent to the Jewish paper.

Police are investigating both incidents, but they did not say whether they thought Tuesday's bombs were connected.

The explosive device in the subway, a gas canister filled with nails, was similar to those used in a series of terror bombings in France last year that killed eight people and wounded 160.

The 1995 attacks were mounted by Algerian Islamic fundamentalists, who are locked in a bitter civil war with the military-backed government in Algiers, which is supported by Paris.

Among those attacks was a car bombing outside a Jewish school in Villeurbanne, a suburb of Lyon. Fourteen people were injured in the September 1995 blast, which occurred 10 minutes before classes were dismissed.

Deraï said he thought the package sent to the Tribune Juive could be the work of extreme rightists or the Algerians.

"I had received some anti-Semitic phone calls, but nothing that would alarm me or put me on guard," Deraï said.

He said the bomb "was for me," adding that it was not powerful enough to have hurt any of the 15 other people working in the newspaper's offices.

Police removed the videocassette from the Tribune's offices and defused it. □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD Romania's Jews encouraged by newly elected government

By Michael J. Jordan

BUDAPEST (JTA) — Pinched between their drive for justice and the specter of an anti-Semitic backlash, Romania's Jews are seeking to maintain their traditionally warm relations with the new government in Bucharest.

The change in power comes as leaders of the rapidly aging 14,000-member Romanian Jewish community are determined to recover properties seized by the wartime Fascists and then by the Communists.

They also hope to receive financial assistance for the country's approximate 1,000 Holocaust survivors and to receive political support to counter the country's active, anti-Semitic fringe.

They now appear to have a strong ally for their cause.

In a major swing away from its Communist past, Romania's voters swept the center-right alliance of President Emil Constantinescu into office last month.

As part of his campaign, Constantinescu, who was sworn in this week, had vowed to chart a course toward European integration with major democratic and economic reforms.

Among the preconditions for joining NATO and the European Union is a demonstrated regard for human rights, which includes restitution of communal properties that were confiscated from minorities and nationalized.

The recently deposed leftist government, led by former Communist Ion Iliescu, advanced the restitution process slowly amid counterpressures from the right.

"This new government wants to get into the E.U. and NATO, and you can't do this if you are chauvinistic and nationalist," said Romanian writer Janos Szasz, an ethnic Hungarian who is Jewish.

"It would be in their best interests to have good relations with all of Romania's ethnic minorities."

Largest postwar exodus

No one knows the importance of such relations better than Romania's Jewish community.

For the past half-century, the Jews have enjoyed the coziest relationship — some would say too cozy — with their government than perhaps any community in Central or Eastern Europe.

After the Holocaust, during which half of Romania's 800,000 Jews perished, the community's survival instinct led it to forge closer ties with the fledgling Communist regime.

It paid off under the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu: Some 320,000 Jews — many reportedly ransomed for about \$5,000 apiece — emigrated to Israel and elsewhere, mostly in the 1970s and 1980s. This marked the largest postwar exodus in Europe.

The Jewish community was also allowed to maintain kosher restaurants, Hebrew classes and a Jewish newspaper.

After Ceausescu's execution in December 1989, Romanian Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen kept relations running smoothly with Iliescu.

But today, as always, Jewish leaders here know they must tread carefully.

If they are too vocal or ask for what seems to be too much, it will provide more ammunition for extremists.

Throughout the recent presidential campaign, Romania's right-wing press assailed the government for alleged favoritism toward the Jewish community.

Even the respectable opposition press got into the act, alleging that U.S. Ambassador to Romania Alfred

Moses, who is Jewish, was working backroom deals with Iliescu on behalf of the Jewish community.

Now, as the Jewish community seeks restitution for communal properties, said Iulian Sorin, secretary of the Federation of Romanian Jewish Communities, it is nearly impossible to price the lost assets. During the Holocaust, 510 Jewish communities were wiped out.

The federation is now focusing its restitution efforts on 295 demolished synagogues and for expropriated assets that include 165 schools and 31 hospitals or nursing-care facilities.

But, Sorin points out, it would be best if the community did not act on its own.

"We, as a Jewish community, cannot act in a vacuum; we're in the same boat as the [ethnic] Hungarian, Greek and Turkish minorities," said Sorin, who also heads the Commission for Restitution of Communal Property, which represents Romania's 18 ethnic minorities.

"If we act with others, we have more power and can be more successful. But if we act alone, it could be the basis for a wave of anti-Semitism."

An equally powerful fear for the Jewish community is what might happen if the new government fails to revive the moribund economy and boost the quality of life.

Despite the tiny number of Jews, conspiracy theorists may blame future economic woes on the Jewish community, particularly on the returning Romanian Jewish emigres and on Israeli businesspeople, said Romania Chief Rabbi Yehezkel Mark, who replaced Rosen last year after Rosen's death in 1994.

"If the government succeeds, and the citizens of Romania are happier than before," Mark said, "there'll be no need for scapegoats." □

British Airways apologizes for ejecting Orthodox Jew

By Heather Camlot

NEW YORK (JTA) — British Airways has issued an apology for ejecting an Orthodox Jew from an airline lounge at London's Heathrow Airport.

"We are now satisfied with the action taken by British Airways," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, who had called on the airline to investigate the incident.

"The airline recognized there was a problem, reviewed its procedures and changed its rules to avoid a similar incident in the future," Foxman said.

Aaron Tyk, an assistant attorney general for New York state, went to the lounge last month to recite his morning prayers during a layover while traveling from Tel Aviv to New York. Tyk said an airline employee asked him to leave because the lounge was "only for Muslims."

At the time, the airline denied that its employee had made any reference to Tyk's religion or that the lounge was reserved for Muslims. The airline said the lounge was reserved for executive club members and for passengers traveling from North America, India and the Middle East, but that Israel was considered by the airline to be part of Europe.

After investigating the affair and meeting with Foxman, the airline's general manager in the United States, Barbara Cassani, said in a letter to the ADL leader that "any discrimination or bias is intolerable."

"To avoid any future misunderstandings," she wrote, "we have simplified our rules and clarified that the Oasis Lounge is available to all transferring passengers to and from the Middle East, including, of course, Israel."

In a separate letter to Tyk, Cassani said the employee involved in the incident had been "counseled" to prevent any recurrence. □

**Fervently Orthodox want
Tel Aviv to observe Sabbath***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Thousands of fervently Orthodox Jews converged this week on Israel's secular capital, Tel Aviv, demanding that the "city that never sleeps" turn the lights out on the Sabbath.

Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, as well as Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, spiritual leader of the fervently Orthodox Sephardi Shas Party, were among the religious leaders at Wednesday night's rally at the Tel Aviv fairgrounds.

The rally was organized by the fervently Orthodox Agudat Yisrael Party to demand the closure of Tel Aviv's numerous movie theaters, bars, cafes and other places of entertainment from sundown Friday until the end of the Sabbath. Organizers said that if the Sabbath is not observed in Tel Aviv, its observance could be further eroded in other Israeli communities.

Shortly before the rally, a group of activists from the secularist Meretz Party scuffled with participants and was removed from the site.

The demonstration came after a survey was published by the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot showing that 47.2 percent of Israelis feel that growing polarization between secular and religious Jews will ultimately lead to civil war.

Two-thirds of Israel's 4.6 million Jewish citizens define themselves as secular, while one-third call themselves observant. Some 500,000 Jews, about 10 percent of the Jewish population, are fervently Orthodox.

The fact that the rally was held in Tel Aviv reflected the greater influence religious parties have acquired since May's elections, which brought them large gains in the Knesset and positions in the governing coalition of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Until now, the battle between fervently Orthodox and secular groups over synagogue-state issues has focused on Jerusalem. Earlier this year, the two groups held often violent demonstrations over whether a main Jerusalem thoroughfare, Bar Ilan Street, should be open to traffic on the Sabbath or holidays. A public commission appointed to study the issue recently recommended that the street be closed when prayers are held on those days.

In another victory for religious interests, the High Court of Justice last week issued a ruling upholding a law banning the import of pork and other non-kosher food products. □

**Race for Labor Party chief
widens after Peres bows out***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The race for chairman of the Labor Party widened this week, after Knesset member Yossi Beilin announced his candidacy for the party's leadership.

The party is set to elect in early June a new leader who would run for the premiership in the next general election, expected in the year 2000.

Beilin, an architect of the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords, said Tuesday at a news conference that he decided to enter the race after former Prime Minister Shimon Peres announced last week that he would not seek another term as party leader. "I do not presently see someone who is leading the Labor party with the outlook of Peres, which is the correct synthesis of peace and security," said Beilin, who has been close to Peres for nearly two decades and served as a minister without portfolio in the previous Labor government.

Knesset member Ehud Barak, the leading candidate for party chairman, welcomed Beilin's entry into the race.

Barak, the former Israel Defense Force chief of staff who was foreign minister in the Peres government, stressed that the party should focus its efforts on choosing a candidate who will succeed in defeating the Likud in the next election.

The other announced candidate is Knesset member Efraim Sneh, a former health minister. □

**Israel's attorney general
announces plan to resign***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's attorney general has announced that he plans to step down effective Jan. 1.

When submitting his letter of resignation to Justice Minister Tzachi Hanegbi, Michael Ben-Yair gave no reason for his decision. Ben-Yair was appointed three years ago by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

In recent months, he came under criticism by some in the Netanyahu government who said his decisions were politically motivated and biased toward the former Labor government. Ben-Yair opposed the appointment of Ya'acov Ne'eman as justice minister in the Netanyahu government and subsequently recommended the criminal investigation under way against Ne'eman, who has since resigned.

News of Ben-Yair's decision prompted reaction from across the political spectrum.

Finance Minister Dan Meridor, a former Justice Minister, said he regretted Ben-Yair's decision to step down. "I think he was a good attorney general who withstood difficult conditions," Meridor told Israel Radio. "I hope we will find another attorney general who will be able to continue the tradition in Israel of attorneys general, whose most important role is to preserve the rule of law."

In Israel, the attorney general is not a member of the government and traditionally, his appointment is non-political.

The Labor Party suggested that Ben-Yair might have been pushed out of the position and requested an urgent Knesset discussion on the matter.

Meretz leader Yossi Sarid said the resignation was a blow to the stability of democracy in Israel.

Meanwhile, Likud faction leader Michael Eitan said Ben-Yair's politics leaned toward those who had appointed him. Eitan said an attorney general's views should be closer to the position of the current leadership. □

**Education Ministry finds youth
apathetic about Rabin murder***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A segment of Israeli youth is indifferent to the murder of Yitzhak Rabin and even feels solidarity with his assassin, a committee appointed by the Education Ministry said this week.

The committee was formed earlier this year after it was reported that three female students at a state religious high school in Kiryat Gat had formed a fan club for Yigal Amir, who assassinated Rabin at a November 1995 peace rally in Tel Aviv.

Issuing its report Tuesday, the committee said the three girls appeared to be good students who had demonstrated poor judgment. Committee members cited other cases in which teachers had justified the assassination.

The committee said admiration for Amir, who is serving a life sentence, was found primarily in the state religious schools. It attributed the sentiment to communities in which people felt oppressed in some political, social or economic sense. □