

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Two prominent American Jewish leaders urged the release of Jonathan Pollard, who is serving a life sentence for spying for Israel.** After visiting the former Navy intelligence officer in federal prison in North Carolina, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, former president of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and Israel Singer, secretary general of the World Jewish Congress, said Pollard, who has served 10 years and is eligible for parole, "has more than paid for his transgression and deserves to be released from prison."

■ **Israeli and Palestinian negotiators said they expected to finalize an agreement next week on the Israeli redeployment from most of Hebron.** [Page 2]

■ **Israeli troops removed Jewish settlers from two homes they seized in the Arab market of Hebron to protest government plans to hand over most of the town to Palestinians.** In addition, three firebombs were thrown at Israel Defense Forces in the West Bank town, Israeli media reported. [Page 2]

■ **Israel's justice minister called on a group of right-wing rabbis, Rabbis for the Land of Israel, to rescind a Jewish legal ruling forbidding Israeli soldiers from carrying out a Hebron redeployment.** [Page 2]

■ **Michael Bruno, 64, one of Israel's top economists, died.** Bruno, who most recently served as vice president and chief economist for the World Bank, was a former governor of the Bank of Israel.

■ **A judge asked Italy's highest court to decide whether a military or civilian court should retry former Nazi SS Capt. Erich Priebke for his role in the 1944 Rome massacre of 335 civilians.** A retrial was ordered because of alleged bias by a military court judge. [Page 4]

■ **Two members of a Chasidic patrol group in Brooklyn, N.Y., were acquitted of major assault charges in the May attack of a black man.** But after a non-jury trial, the two men were convicted of a misdemeanor, third-degree attempted assault.

NEWS ANALYSIS**New voices express support for future Palestinian state**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As Israel and the Palestinian Authority moved closer this week to concluding an agreement on Hebron, new voices in the governing coalition spoke out in favor of Palestinian sovereignty.

These voices appeared to amplify ongoing efforts by some Likud Knesset members to form a national unity government.

A unity government, its proponents assert, would present a broad Israeli consensus in the final-status negotiations with the Palestinians.

The idea of a unity government appears to be gaining increasing support among some top Likud ministers who have become increasingly disenchanted with Benjamin Netanyahu's performance as premier.

But Ehud Barak, would-be successor to Shimon Peres as Labor Party leader, has strongly criticized his party members who have been talking with Likud Knesset members in search of common ground on the final-status issues. These issues include Jerusalem, Israeli settlements, Palestinian statehood and refugees.

The final-status talks are expected to begin in earnest after Israelis and Palestinians pen an accord that will turn over most of the West Bank town of Hebron to Palestinian self-rule. On the issue of Palestinian sovereignty, Israel's major political parties widely diverge. While Labor dropped its opposition to a Palestinian state before the May elections, the Likud remains adamant.

But this week's remarks on the subject by National Religious Party Knesset member Avraham Stern and Geshet Knesset member Yehuda Lankri, signaled possible erosion in the stance among Israeli conservatives.

Stern, a longtime leader of the NRP's religious kibbutz movement and a first-term Knesset member, said he would accept a Palestinian state if Israel were to retain "most of the settlements" under its sovereignty.

He added that he was ready to forgo "problematic settlements." Stern said he wanted his party, which is a member of the coalition, to be involved in shaping the peace settlement with the Palestinians. He warned that the NRP's current hard-line positions would force the party to the sidelines.

The NRP leadership reacted strongly to Stern's remarks. Knesset member Hanan Porat, the party's faction chairman, demanded that Stern relinquish his Knesset seat because he had not divulged these views to the voters before the May elections.

But Stern showed no sign of backing down. "The NRP platform is not Holy Writ. It can be changed," said Stern in response to Porat's statement.

Comments were personal views

Stern apparently was prompted to take his stance after David Bar-Illan, a senior adviser to Netanyahu, said in an interview with The Jerusalem Post that Israel could agree to a future Palestinian entity that would be something between an autonomy and a state.

Although Bar-Illan subsequently stated that what he had told the Post was his personal view and not the government's position, it was not far from Netanyahu's recent references to Andorra and Puerto Rico as possible models for a Palestinian entity.

The other coalition Knesset member embracing the idea of a state, Lankri, is the former Israeli ambassador to France and a close friend of Foreign Minister David Levy, who heads the Geshet Party that joined with Likud in the May elections.

"I believe a Palestinian state should come into being," Lankri told a group of Labor Party doves. "The idea of a Palestinian state provokes less and less fears and rejection in Israeli public opinion." Lankri said he is in "full support" of the Oslo accords, the Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements, and that Levy, too, backs their implementation.

Meanwhile, minister of infrastructure Ariel Sharon has deliberately raised the public profile of his ongoing consultations with Labor's Peres over the creation of a unity government. Sharon said in several recent interviews that the difficult state of the nation required broad consensus in government.

Labor and Likud must both be prepared to compromise, Sharon said. "Neither can get everything it would ideally want." Sharon denied media reports that his discussions with Peres envisaged a Cabinet, under Netanyahu, in which he would become defense minister and Peres would be foreign minister. "We have not gone into that subject at all," he said of his discussions with Peres.

On a parallel track, talks are continuing between teams of Likud and Labor Knesset members. These talks, led by Michael Eitan of Likud and Yossi Beilin of Labor, are intended to draft language on key policy issues that could form the basis for a joint platform.

Likud sources say the unity efforts are being encouraged by dissatisfaction among the party leadership with Netanyahu's performance as prime minister. Top ministers, including Finance Minister Dan Meridor, are said to be ready to forgo their portfolios in order to bring about a unity Cabinet.

The dissatisfaction is said to center on the premier's decision-making patterns, and especially on his poor relations with senior officials in the army and intelligence services.

In Labor, meanwhile, Barak flayed "those who are ready to crawl into the Netanyahu Cabinet."

Speaking to party activists in Tel Aviv, Barak, who served as foreign minister until the May election, argued that it was contradictory for Labor to blame the Netanyahu government for Israel's worsening international condition, and at the same time to seek admission into that government. Barak's remarks were seen as a swipe at Peres, the main Labor advocate of the unity scenario. □

Tensions high in Hebron as IDF redeployment nears

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Tensions remained high in Hebron as Israeli and Palestinian officials voiced optimism Thursday about concluding an agreement before year's end on redeploying Israeli forces from most of the West Bank town.

A firebomb was thrown Thursday at Beit Hadassah in the Jewish Quarter.

No one was injured and there was no damage.

The attack came one day after scuffles between Israeli border police and Jewish settlers, who had tried to take over four vacant buildings in the Arab market near the quarter.

Also Wednesday, three firebombs were thrown at Israeli Defense Force troops stationed in Hebron.

These incidents of violence occurred as Israel and the Palestinian Authority appeared, for the first time in more than three months of negotiations, near an agreement on Hebron.

U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross, who returned Thursday to Washington to brief President Clinton on the talks, said he expected an agreement to be signed shortly after he returns to the region early next week.

Ross' optimism came after what he called an "extremely productive" meeting Tuesday between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat.

Addressing Palestinian legislative council members Thursday in Ramallah, Arafat said he expected to sign a Hebron deal with Israel on Monday or Tuesday.

Arafat said the agreement, which will turn over most of Hebron to Palestinian self-rule, would not differ from the one signed with the previous Labor government.

The Peres government had postponed its implementation after a spate of suicide bombings in Israel earlier this year.

It was further delayed after the May election of Netanyahu, who sought additional security guarantees for the 450 Jewish settlers, who live among 130,000 Palestinians in Hebron.

The Palestinians, meanwhile, pressed for guarantees that other elements of the Israeli-Palestinian accords would be carried out by the Netanyahu government.

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators were continuing Thursday to discuss security aspects of a Hebron accord, including a buffer zone around the Jewish quarter in the city, and the arming of Palestinian police.

U.S. Ambassador Martin Indyk, who took part in the talks, told reporters that while the negotiations were making progress, he did not expect a signing until Ross returned.

The president has been following the talks closely, Indyk said, adding, "We hope we can reach an agreement soon after" he is briefed by Ross.

Netanyahu has said any deal would be brought to his Cabinet for approval.

In anticipation of a vote, the prime minister was busy meeting with coalition members to enlist their support.

At least six Cabinet members, including National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon, are opposed to the Hebron redeployment, according to the Israeli daily Ma'ariv.

In a related move, Tzachi Hanegbi, Israel's justice minister, called on a group of right-wing rabbis, Rabbis for the Land of Israel, to rescind a Jewish legal ruling forbidding Israeli soldiers from carrying out a Hebron redeployment. □

Ex-nanny sues Netanyahus

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A former nanny for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's two young sons is suing the prime minister and his wife for \$36,000 in back pay.

The South African-born Tanya Shaw, 21, said in a petition to the Jerusalem labor court that Netanyahu and his wife Sara had not paid her extra wages for overtime and for work on the Sabbath during her six months of employment.

A lawyer for Sara Netanyahu said the former employee had no right to make the claims under her contract and that the suit was being filed out of spite.

When she was dismissed in July, Shaw said in media interviews that Netanyahu had tossed her out on the street for burning a pot of soup. Shaw described her former employer as being obsessed with cleanliness. □

Strike disrupts Ben-Gurion Airport

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Hundreds of travelers were stranded at Israel's Ben-Gurion Airport on Thursday, after airport workers staged a strike.

All services for outgoing and incoming flights were suspended. Most travelers spent the hours wandering the duty-free shops and snack bars.

The airport strike was one of a series of actions planned by the Histadrut trade federation to protest proposed government budget cuts and privatization plans.

The Histadrut maintains that the government is reneging on wage agreements and has not included employees in plans for privatizing state companies.

Telephone, port and rail services were also disrupted by the strike.

Organizers said they were planning to hold strikes at hotels and banks next week. □

Grad student uncovers Jews who fought for Adolf Hitler

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Thousands of soldiers and officers of Jewish descent fought in Hitler's armies, with his full approval, while their relatives were transported to extermination camps.

In one instance, Hitler personally suspended his Nuremberg racial laws to designate a list of 77 high-ranking Wehrmacht officers of "mixed Jewish race or married to a Jew" as pure, German-blooded Aryans. The list included 15 generals.

These incredible tales were unearthed by Bryan Rigg, a 25-year-old Yale University graduate. Rigg has spent four years scouring German army records and interviewing more than 300 Jewish or partly Jewish people who fought under the swastika in World War II.

The Texas-born Rigg is now a graduate history student at Cambridge University in England, where he was interviewed by the London correspondent of the Los Angeles Times.

His research has impressed historians.

Jonathan Steinberg, a professor at Cambridge, said, "When I saw Bryan's archive, I couldn't believe it. He's like the sorcerer's apprentice, calling these sources up from the depths."

Rigg said he had documented the Jewish ancestry of 1,200 of Hitler's soldiers, among them two field marshals. Twenty of these men were awarded the Knight's Cross, Germany's highest military decoration.

One of the field marshals was Erhard Milch, deputy to Luftwaffe Chief and Gestapo founder Hermann Goering. Rumors of Milch's Jewishness — his father was Jewish — circulated widely in Germany in the 1930s.

In one of the famous anecdotes of the time, Goering falsified Milch's birth record and then said, "I decide who is a Jew and who is an Aryan."

Jewish soldier visited concentration camp

From his interviews, Rigg culled stories that defy belief. One was about a German officer, in full uniform, who visited the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in 1942 to see his Jewish father, one of the inmates.

Another story was about a Knight's Cross holder who, as a prisoner of war in England, was reunited with his Jewish father, who had earlier fled Germany.

Many of the veterans Rigg met indicated that they had hoped through their military service to save the lives of relatives classified as Jews. But in analyzing one group of 1,000 such soldiers, Rigg found that nearly 2,300 of their relatives were killed in the Holocaust.

Rigg's research also shed light on stories surrounding the rescue by German soldiers of the Lubavitcher rebbe of that time, who was trapped in Warsaw when war broke out in 1939.

Joseph Isaac Schneerson was spirited to safety after an appeal to Germany from the then-neutral United States. Tradition has it that Schneerson was rescued by a German Jew. Rigg has identified the man as a highly decorated professional soldier, Maj. Ernst Bloch, whose father was a Jew.

Rigg started his quest at Yale while digging into his own family's German roots. His first discovery was that his great-grandparents, who arrived in the United States as Protestants, had been born in Germany as Jews.

Next, he happened to see the film "Europa, Europa," the true story of a Jewish teen-ager who saved his life by posing as an ethnic German and serving in the Nazi army.

Afterward, Rigg struck up a conversation with an

elderly German Jew, who spoke about his own service in the Wehrmacht, and Rigg was hooked.

With hardly any financial resources, Rigg conducted his interviews by crisscrossing Germany, often by bicycle, carrying his clothes, computer and documents in a bulging knapsack.

He has 400 more interviews to go on his current checklist.

"The thing is, I don't give up," Rigg told the Los Angeles Times. "If I have to carry 60 pounds on my back, I do it. If I have to sleep in train stations, I do it. I do it to get to these people."

The initial reports on Rigg's findings in the British media have provoked debates among historians.

Most agree that while the fact that Jews served in the Wehrmacht has been known for some time, the story has never before been documented in such intimate detail.

There has also been criticism.

David Cesarani, a professor of modern European Jewish history at Southampton University, said it is fundamentally incorrect to describe the soldiers studied by Rigg as Jews. These soldiers "didn't think they were Jewish and wanted to prove they weren't Jewish by fighting for the Fuhrer," he said.

"Posthumously declaring them Jews is denying the way in which they defined themselves and conceding the way the Nazis defined them," he said. "It was their tragedy, but not the tragedy of the Jews." □

U.S. investigator gives Canada tapes of alleged war criminals

By Bram Eisenthal

MONTREAL (JTA) — An American private investigator has turned over to the Canadian government taped confessions of suspected Nazi war criminals living in Canada.

Steven Rambam secretly taped interviews with 58 former Nazis. Seven of them gave full confessions that they had murdered people, including children, during the Holocaust.

The 58 individuals were on lists provided to Rambam by the Simon Wiesenthal Center and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Working with two Israeli reporters, Rambam approached the 58 at their homes, and many readily admitted their involvement with groups that committed wartime atrocities.

"I don't think there's a single Nazi war criminal who's not sleeping soundly in Canada tonight," Rambam said. "The murderers feel so comfortable, so at home and so unafraid."

Rambam and his accomplices identified themselves as academics from a fictitious university in Central America. Their findings were first reported last month in The Jerusalem Post.

Voicing skepticism about possible actions Canada might take against the suspected war criminals, Rambam said last week that he would make public all the names of those he interviewed if the Canadian Justice Department did not make use of the information.

Rambam expressed dismay that senior government officials did not come to Montreal last week to accept the tapes, which were turned over to low-level police officials at a news conference held at the Canadian Jewish Congress. "No one will do anything for the Jews but the Jews," Rambam said.

But the head of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police War Crimes Unit said his group would examine the tapes closely. "We plan to analyze the tapes to see what they contain and will decide whether they might be used in our investigation," said Inspector Jean Dube. □

Top judges to decide on court for retrial of ex-Nazi Priebke

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — Italy's highest court, the Court of Cassation, has been asked whether a civilian or military court should handle the second trial of former Nazi SS Capt. Erich Priebke for his role in Italy's worst World War II atrocity.

A military court ruled in August that Priebke, 83, was guilty of participating in the March 1944 massacre of 335 civilians at the Ardeatine Caves, south of Rome.

But he was acquitted of other charges, and the court freed him because of a 30-year statute of limitations.

Priebke was immediately rearrested and jailed by civilian authorities.

The original verdict was later nullified.

A new trial was ordered because of alleged bias by a military court judge.

Earlier this month, a civilian prosecutor withdrew from the case, saying that he had no jurisdiction, leaving it uncertain whether Priebke's new trial would be before a civilian or military court.

On Tuesday, Rome preliminary investigating Judge Ciro Monsurro asked the Court of Cassation to decide.

Meanwhile, about 100 supporters of Priebke celebrated Mass Monday evening in his honor in a Rome church.

The Mass was celebrated "to turn a thought of solidarity to Erich Priebke, a victim of persecution" and in memory of all those persecuted "by the winners of the war." □

Orthodox community council may lose government funding

By Lawrence Cohler-Esses
New York Jewish Week

NEW YORK (JTA) — New York City is on the verge of shifting some of its major contracts with the troubled Council of Jewish Organizations of Boro Park to other Jewish communal agencies.

As a deepening federal probe of COJO led last week to formal corruption charges against a senior COJO official, top city and Jewish communal executives were holding talks this week on how to ensure uninterrupted social services to the heavily Orthodox Borough Park community in Brooklyn.

According to senior officials with local Jewish agencies, a decision is near that would take some \$800,000 in social service contracts from COJO, whose vast political influence is seen as paralyzed in the face of its crisis.

The Flatbush Council of Jewish Organizations appeared this week to have the inside track to take over the largest of the city contracts — a \$500,000 employment and job-training program from the Department of Employment.

New York state, which provides millions more to COJO, could also cut its funding of the agency.

The predicted funding loss would mark a stunning reversal for Brooklyn's largest, most politically influential Jewish community council.

Long perceived as the key to influencing the votes of tens of thousands of Jews in New York's most heavily Orthodox community, COJO has long parlayed its extensive clout into a plethora of city, state and federal contracts.

But formal corruption charges announced last week against COJO's director of operations, Paul Chernick, heralded the prospect of long-term turbulence for the Jewish agency.

The affidavit that federal authorities have submitted

in connection with Chernick's arrest made it clear that other top COJO officials are also under investigation for corruption.

Further, the affidavit indicated that N.Y. Assemblyman Dov Hikind (D-Borough Park), the Brooklyn Orthodox community's most prominent elected official, might also be implicated.

Although referred to in the affidavit only as "a public official," various details in the document and government investigators speaking privately make it clear that the official in question is Hikind.

Chernick was charged in a Brooklyn federal court with conspiring to steal \$660,000 in government funds that had been awarded to COJO for social services and economic development in Borough Park and other New York communities.

He now faces a maximum prison term of five years.

But federal attorneys indicated that the charges against him could be expanded once an indictment is secured.

While they have not been charged, Hikind; COJO's executive director, Rabbi Morris Shmidman; and COJO's deputy director, Rabbi Elimelech Naiman, were also cited in the affidavit as players in the alleged fund diversions.

In Borough Park and among Jewish communal officials, speculation was rife that Chernick was arrested first in the hope that he could be induced to cooperate in a case against Hikind and the others.

Several observers pointed out that of those cited in the case, Chernick, who lives in Greenwich Village, is the only non-Orthodox, non-Brooklyn resident.

As such, they speculated, he would not face the same pressures as others living in Brooklyn's tight-knit Orthodox community.

"There's no way Chernick is going to go to jail for Dov Hikind," said one Jewish communal official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Elisa Liang declined to comment when asked whether Chernick was cooperating in the investigation.

Chernick, 52, was released on a \$250,000 bond.

Assemblyman allegedly used funds

According to the affidavit, Chernick diverted \$660,000 in government funds granted to COJO to his own for-profit business via a complex route of other not-for-profit entities affiliated with COJO. This sum was part of some \$1.2 million in government funds that these not-for-profit COJO affiliates received from COJO.

The affidavit alleges that almost \$16,000 in these government funds were spent on Hikind's personal and business expenses.

The document cites checks from the charity, including some endorsed directly by Hikind, that went to cover, among other things, two hotel rooms in Paris for Hikind and his family and a trip to Israel.

The affidavit also alleges that Hikind used charity funds to pay for a \$3,000 computer, a sound system, \$1,900 toward the tuition costs of Hikind's niece at Yeshiva University and some \$4,000 to the Jerusalem Reclamation Project, where Hikind's wife was employed at the time as executive director.

Investigators indicated that the ongoing probe would reveal significantly greater amounts going to Hikind. "The mathematics will look a lot different at the end of this," said one law enforcement official.

Efforts to reach COJO officials were unsuccessful.

But Hikind told The New York Times, "When everything is said and done, it will be clear I did nothing wrong." □