



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ A Katyusha rocket fired from Lebanon slammed into northern Israel. No injuries were reported. In addition, eight Israeli soldiers were wounded in two separate incidents in Lebanon. [Page 3]

■ A continuing deadlock in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations thwarted a scheduled meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat.

■ Vandals set fire to the home of the editor of the Jewish newspaper in Minsk, Belarus, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry reported. The attack, which included painting swastikas on the home, came against the backdrop of concerns over a rise in anti-Semitism in the former Soviet republic.

■ Secretary of State-designate Madeleine Albright refused to address questions about U.S. policy in the Middle East during her Senate confirmation hearings. She said that while she would become personally involved once installed in her new position, she did not think "it a very good time" to delve into specifics as Israeli-Palestinian negotiators are trying to break a deadlock over Hebron.

■ Agudath Israel of America filed a friend-of-the-court brief in the cases of physician-assisted suicide being heard by the Supreme Court. The brief argues that Jewish law prohibits a doctor from hastening a patient's death.

■ The Argentine Jewish community asked a federal judge to look into allegations that police officials have been involved in recent anti-Semitic incidents. [Page 2]

■ Allegations that Swiss banks plundered unclaimed wealth of Holocaust victims have thrown a small but persistent degree of uncertainty into Swiss financial markets, analysts said.

■ Gideon Patt, a former Israeli Cabinet minister, has officially taken over the helm of Israel Bonds, succeeding retired Maj. Gen. Nathan Sharony as the organization's new president.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### Program helps teens to view policy issues via Jewish prism

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — At a time of policy debate and political dealings in the nation's capital, Jewish teen-agers are discovering how to look at social and public policy concerns through the prism of Jewish values and teachings.

In the coming year, nearly 1,000 Jewish high school students from across the country will come to Washington to participate in a program called Panim el Panim — a four-day leadership seminar that gives students a "face to face" look at the Jewish public policy agenda and the political process.

Most are like Joel Nickerson, a 17-year-old high school senior from San Mateo, Calif.

Nickerson wanted to "learn how Jewish values are integrated into our government" and to discover new ways that, he said, he can "give back to my community."

Since it was launched in 1988 by the Washington Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values, nearly 4,000 students in 90 communities have participated in the Panim el Panim program.

Every year, as many as 100 Jewish high school students in grades 10 through 12 participate in each of about a dozen separate Panim el Panim seminars.

In addition, the program is now a component of a pilot Jewish Civics Initiative course in nine communities throughout the country.

The course also includes study of a Jewish civics curriculum and community service projects in the teens' home communities.

"Our goal is to have students see" the Jewish tradition as "a lot more compelling and relevant to the lives that they're engaged in," said Rabbi Sidney Schwarz, president of the Washington Institute.

The institute runs the civics program in conjunction with the Jewish Education Service of North America.

Schwarz said the course was developed as a way of providing continuity at home for the lessons learned in Washington.

"The fact that they're thinking about issues that are going to affect their community and their world and that they'll think about issues framed in Jewish ways is something that does not happen in their very paltry Hebrew school experience," he said.

Program coordinators see the course and the Washington experience as a means of strengthening Jewish identity and promoting Jewish affiliation at a pivotal developmental period for young Jews.

### Increased awareness and enthusiasm

An independent study commissioned by the Washington Institute in 1992 suggests that the Panim el Panim program has managed to achieve many of its goals.

It found that students who participated in the program were more likely to "recognize the link between Jewish perspectives and social and public policy, to have a deeper appreciation of the American Jewish community's role in American political life and world affairs, and to express a more intense commitment to social action."

At this year's first Panim el Panim conference here, there was abundant evidence of increased awareness and enthusiasm for Jewish involvement.

Some of the participants, such as Tayla Lazarow, a 17-year-old senior from San Diego, were surprised to learn of the level of Jewish engagement in the public affairs arena.

"I was amazed at how much power Jews have in politics," she said after hearing presentations from a representative of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and from President Clinton's liaison to the Jewish community.

"Even though we're 2 percent of the population, we double that number in terms of our voting," Nickerson said. "It makes me proud to be a Jew."

Schwarz said the program is geared in part toward teens who have a

"show-me attitude," questioning "why being Jewish is important."

"We accept that challenge," he said. "Nothing that the organized Jewish community does is going to change the fact that Jews ask that question."

Through their Washington experience and through civic engagement back home, program coordinators hope to provide Jewish teens with not one, but a variety of answers to that question.

"I want the kids to go away and see that a Jew who is doing cutting-edge social-justice work may be fulfilling their Judaism in a way that is just as valid as someone who is a very observant Jew," Schwarz said.

For 17-year-old Jessica Intrator, who is a senior from San Jose, Calif., the program has helped her understand that there are many ways to express Judaism and Jewish values.

"If I was speaking to a friend who was struggling with their Judaism," she said, "I would prefer to see them maybe exploring their values through service to other people, rather than sitting at home on Friday night and lighting candles, because Judaism's core principle is really to help others."

Community service and the principle of "tikkun olam," repairing the world, are a central emphasis of the Jewish Civics Initiative course and Panim el Panim.

The objective, program coordinators say, is to help students realize that they can fulfill a Jewish mandate and effect social and political change through involvement both inside and outside of the Jewish community.

To that end, the students who attended the Panim el Panim program this month participated in community service projects throughout Washington, D.C.

#### 'Obligation to try to make a difference'

Some volunteered at soup kitchens and homeless shelters.

Others traveled to an area school, where students explained Chanukah, and to a Vietnamese community center, where participants made flashcards for students learning English.

"I think that everyone has an obligation to try to make a difference if you can," said Diane Appel, 16, a junior from Baltimore.

"Helping in small ways like this — two hours of your time — is the least you can do."

Appel, who loves acting, says the program has inspired her to use her skills to perform community service work, perhaps teaching theater at a youth center for underprivileged kids.

"We want to use the talents we have to make a difference," she said.

Erica Schwartz, 16, a sophomore who attends high school in New Haven, said her experience in Washington has energized her to try to get her friends involved in community service projects back home.

"When you're all there together," she said, "it doesn't matter what you do."

This month's conference, which was typical of most of the Panim el Panim gatherings, also included lobbying sessions with various members of Congress, briefings with policy experts and Jewish activists and a dialogue with local African American students.

It also included a visit to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and the study of Jewish texts.

If the central idea behind the program is helping teens understand the relevance of Jewish values and teachings to the world around them, it is a realization that most of the participants appeared to be taking home with them.

"Judaism isn't just some Old World religion where the men go behind the mechitzah and they pray and you don't see any connection to it," Intrator of San Jose said, referring to the division in Orthodox synagogues between men and women.

"It's neat because you think, 'Oh, wow. Here Judaism is dealing with issues that I'm dealing with every day.'

"It has something to say on walking down the street and whether to give the poor man a dollar.

"It does deal with those issues. It's not just a bunch of far-off conceptual laws." □

### **Argentine Jews claim police behind anti-Semitic incidents**

*By Sergio Kiernan*

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — The Argentine Jewish community has asked a federal judge to look into allegations that police officials have been involved in recent major anti-Semitic incidents.

Ruben Beraja, president of the Argentine Jewish umbrella organization DAIA, said this week that community leaders suspect that police were involved in October's desecration of a cemetery near Buenos Aires and in November's failed bombing of the Ezrah Hospital in the capital.

In October, 100 graves were desecrated in the Jewish cemetery of La Tablada.

Scores of headstones were smashed or spray-painted with swastikas, and the vandals painted on a wall a large sign proclaiming, "The Holocaust is a Jewish Hoax."

Days after the incident, two men were arrested while painting anti-Semitic graffiti just outside the cemetery.

The arrests were hailed at first as proof of the government's resolve to curb racist acts, but suspicions were soon raised.

In a recent front-page story, the local newspaper Pagina 12 said that "the two arrested were police informers paid to take the rap."

According to the newspaper, the arrests "were a set-up by two policemen eager to earn a promotion."

The two policemen were later charged with perjury and arrested, Pagina 12 reported.

An irate Beraja said the Jewish community found out about the incident "only through the media."

The Argentine government "kept it a secret," he said.

"This incident breaks the trust we should have in our government.

"It is sickening to find out that policemen paid people to paint swastikas on a wall."

Beraja accused Argentine Interior Minister Carlos Corach, who is Jewish, "of not informing us."

"Only last week, we had a long meeting with him and he did not mention this incident," Beraja said.

Deputy Interior Minister Alberto Iribarne called Beraja's charges "unfair," adding that Corach "did not know about the incident.

"It involves Buenos Aires provincial policemen, not federal police," Iribarne added.

Iribarne also denied that there was police involvement in the failed bombing of the Ezrah Hospital.

According to Jewish officials, an anti-Semitic group that includes federal police officials was responsible for placing a bomb at the doorstep of the hospital in November.

The bomb did not explode and was removed by a police bomb squad. □

## Washington mayor's overture to Nation of Islam vexes Jews

By Michael Shapiro

Washington Jewish Week

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Citing the participation of the Nation of Islam in a scheduled "Day of Dialogue," the American Jewish Congress has pulled out of Washington Mayor Marion Barry's effort to discuss racial polarization in the District of Columbia.

Guila Franklin, the AJCongress' Washington representative, said the decision was made "based on the fact that this was a day of dialogue that included a group that does not accept Jewish people and does not have respect for Jewish people."

Franklin said the AJCongress is interested in helping Washington solve its problems, but she and her colleagues did not want to find themselves in a "difficult position" of talking to people who do not accept Jews.

Franklin said the difficult decision to withdraw from the discussion on race relations came after she learned that Abdul Arif Muhammad, the mid-Atlantic spokesman for Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, would be participating in planning the mayor's proposed Day of Dialogue.

The program is scheduled for Jan. 15 at the Washington Convention Center.

The Anti-Defamation League, which did not attend the two planning meetings regarding the dialogue, criticized the mayor for naming a Nation of Islam representative and said it also would not participate.

"We applaud efforts to fight intolerance and build coalitions to address the serious problems of polarization in our community," David Friedman, the director of the ADL's Washington regional office, said in a statement.

"However, selecting a representative of the Nation of Islam to serve on the convening committee for the Day of Dialogue undermines the credibility of this potentially important initiative.

"The Nation of Islam is part of the problem. Its leaders have fanned the flames of racial and religious intolerance by espousing racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia and racial separatism."

### 'Onus on Jewish community'

Friedman said in an interview that Barry's officials put the "onus on the Jewish community" by inviting the Nation of Islam to participate.

This is not the first time Barry's inclusion of the Nation of Islam has upset Jewish leaders.

In January 1995, the mayor combined his annual prayer breakfast with his inaugural breakfast.

Scheduled clergy speakers included Rabbi Jeffrey Wohlberg of Adas Israel Congregation, who was dismayed to find a Nation of Islam representative added to the dais at the last minute.

The Day of Dialogue is "the first in a series of initiatives to address the issues of polarization" in the District of Columbia, according to a statement from the mayor's office.

The stated goals of the dialogue are to discuss and develop solutions to combat racial polarization.

Karen Kalish, president of Operation Understanding, a Washington-based group that fosters cooperation between Jewish and black teen-agers, said the inclusion of a representative of the Nation of Islam would not stop her from participating in the dialogue.

The inclusion of the Nation of Islam "doesn't make a difference at all," said Kalish.

She is part of the Day of Dialogue planning committee.

"I want to eradicate racism. I'll do whatever it takes."

Cheryl Kravitz, executive director of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, who is also on the planning committee, agreed with Kalish. She said it is important for groups who are different from one another to engage in a dialogue. □

## Katyusha hits northern Israel after Israeli-Hezbollah clashes

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Regional tensions escalated this week after a Katyusha rocket was fired from Lebanon into northern Israel.

An Israeli army spokesman confirmed Wednesday's attack, adding that it had caused no injuries or property damage.

It was the second rocket attack on northern Israel since last April, when a U.S.-brokered cease-fire prohibited Israel and Iranian-supported Hezbollah gunmen from launching attacks on or from civilian locations.

A rocket attack in mid-December prompted Israel to file a complaint with the five-nation group monitoring the cease-fire.

No group has so far claimed responsibility for this week's rocket assault.

The attack came after a week of escalating fighting in the southern Lebanon security zone.

Earlier Wednesday, eight Israeli soldiers were injured in two separate incidents in Lebanon.

In the first incident, three soldiers were wounded after a roadside bomb exploded. The remaining soldiers were wounded in subsequent fighting that erupted between Israel and Hezbollah gunmen.

Israel has repeatedly blamed Syria, the main power broker in Lebanon, for giving the green light to Hezbollah attacks on Israeli targets. □

## Israeli firms dramatically increase global investments

NEW YORK (JTA) — International investments by Israeli firms increased by more than 60 percent during the first nine months of 1996, compared with the same period in 1995, according to the Israel Export Institute.

Israeli firms made \$860 million in foreign investments during that nine-month period in 1996. During that time in 1995, firms made \$535 million in international investments.

The purchase by Israeli firms of companies abroad — specifically in the pharmaceutical and software sectors — was primarily responsible for the increase.

Industrial firms carried out about two-thirds of the investments.

The largest sectors investing outside the Jewish state were chemicals, trade and service firms, and electronics.

Meanwhile, Israeli companies raised about \$2.1 billion of capital in foreign financial markets in 1996, according to the Israeli daily Ma'ariv. The firms raised \$1.9 billion through share offerings in the United States, \$930 million through bond offerings and \$45 million through share offerings in London.

In other economic news, the Israeli shekel Wednesday weakened slightly against the dollar, but rose against the basket of key foreign currencies after the rise of the dollar against the mark, dealers said.

Dealers attributed the shekel's recent strength, however, to an upsurge in foreign currency-linked borrowing by the Israeli business sector. □

## Battle looms over Torahs held in Lithuanian library

By Eric J. Greenberg  
New York Jewish Week

NEW YORK (JTA) — The statement by the head of Lithuania's National Library system that more than 300 "vanished" Vilna Torahs have been found will likely trigger an international battle over their ownership.

Vladas Bulavas, the director of the National Library, said the Torahs had not vanished at all, but since 1994 have been preserved in a special area of the National Library in Vilnius.

Vilnius was a central seat of Jewish learning before most of Lithuania's Jews were wiped out during the Holocaust.

Bulavas said in an interview last week that Lithuania intends to keep them, a position that likely will pit the government against American Jewish organizations that want the scrolls brought here.

"According to Lithuanian law, the heritage of the Lithuanian people kept in the National Library is the property of the Lithuanian state and cannot be moved from the state," he said.

"Our position is exactly the opposite," said Jerome Chanes, director of cultural services at the National Foundation for Jewish Culture.

Chanes is spearheading an effort by a recently formed coalition of American Jewish groups concerned with preserving thousands of Jewish texts, books and records from Vilnius.

Chanes said the coalition's position is that "where ownership of any of these materials, including Sifrei Torah and other scrolls, is established, those materials need to be returned to the rightful owners."

Chanes called it "very good news" that the Torahs are reportedly "secure and not deteriorating."

But he added, "Clearly the ownership question is a serious issue and needs to be resolved."

### Still stored in church

Bulavas responded to questions from The Jewish Week after the paper reported that nearly 100 deteriorating Torah scrolls apparently had vanished from a former Catholic church in Vilnius.

At the church, the Torahs had been lying uncovered and unfurled on steel cabinets.

The scrolls apparently were rescued during and after World War II along with thousands of Jewish books, records and other texts, which are still stored in the former church.

Allen Nadler, who is the director of research for the YIVO Institute, the Jewish cultural agency that was once headquartered in Vilnius, said in an interview that after he protested the conditions of the Torahs in 1990, they were removed and he was not allowed to see them again.

YIVO for years has been battling Lithuanian officials to return Jewish texts and records that belonged to the Jewish community of Vilnius.

But Bulavas disputed Nadler's claims.

Bulavas called the claims "completely false allegations on the National Library of Lithuania" that have "fueled unprecedented attack on Lithuanian Jewish heritage rescued during and after the Second World War in Lithuania."

Nadler disregarded what he called Bulavas' personal attacks as irrelevant.

Nadler pointed out that YIVO and the Lithuanian National Library officials have a long and stormy relationship.

However, Nadler insisted that the Torahs do not belong in a library and should be given to Jewish groups here or in Israel for distribution to synagogues and yeshivas.

"As far as I'm concerned they are being held hostage," Nadler said.

"The custodians of these objects are the Jewish people."

The National Library of Lithuania "is a research library and multiple copies of Torah scrolls have no research value because they are identical to the printed text," he said.

"They are sacred objects, just like [a] chalice in a church."

Further, Nadler argued that they are not part of Lithuanian culture.

"What the hell the Lithuanians think this has to do with them or their culture is beyond any sensible person's understanding," Nadler said.

"This is not about Lithuania," Nadler said. "It's about sacred Jewish objects being in an inappropriate place."

Nadler said Bulavas should understand what a powerful gesture of goodwill it would be to give these Torahs to a Jewish agency or Israel for placement in synagogues.

Bulavas said 370 Torahs and several fragments are in the National Library and 365 Torahs were moved from the former church to the library.

"Not a single Torah or its fragment was ever thrown out or vanished from the library," he said in a fax sent from Vilnius last week.

"All the Torahs are disinfected and protected from damage by putting them in special linen sacks."

Bulavas said among the scrolls are 48 Sifrei Torah, five Scrolls of Ruth, five Kohelet as well as 13 Esther scrolls.

He said they are accessible to the public, a critical point for many scholars and observers who have strived, some without success, to gain access to the Jewish texts being held by Lithuania.

"All the Torahs are catalogued and available to the readers at the Manuscripts Reading Room" of the library, Bulavas said.

Bulavas also said that only a few Torahs are marked with stamps of some former Jewish organizations or by "Torah Foundators," a term whose meaning was not clear.

Bulavas said the Torah scrolls were moved from the church to the library at the suggestion of the former Vilnius Rabbi Solomon Krinsky of Chabad Lubavitch of Lithuania.

But Nadler said Krinsky, a nephew of the head of Chabad, never had the title of chief rabbi of Vilnius, and never had an official position. □

### Wide gender gap in salaries

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The gap in salary between men and women in Israel is reportedly the largest in the Western world.

The gap was reported in a Knesset subcommittee studying the status of women in the Jewish state, according to the Hebrew daily Ma'ariv.

The subcommittee is urging the government to enforce two laws previously passed by the Knesset to address the gaps.

One of the laws calls for equal pay for men and women.

The other law requires more women to be appointed to civil servant positions. □