



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Federal and local authorities are searching for a motive behind a threatening package received at the headquarters of B'nai B'rith International in Washington. A "biological" substance along with a threatening letter brought FBI, local police and the Centers for Disease Control rushing to the scene. [Page 1]

■ U.S. House Republicans moved to give states enough federal funds to prevent an Aug. 22 cutoff of welfare benefits to elderly and disabled legal immigrants. The \$125 million package would delay such a cutoff until Sept. 30, the end of the U.S. fiscal year.

■ An Israeli was stabbed by an Arab assailant in a park near Jerusalem's Cinematheque. The Israeli sustained light to moderate injuries.

■ The U.N. General Assembly convened a special session to discuss Israeli construction in Jerusalem. Arab states are calling for countries to cut ties with Israeli companies that invest in Jewish settlements.

■ Israel's Reform Movement is petitioning the High Court of Justice to recognize the conversions of at least two infants who were adopted abroad by Israelis and converted by the movement's rabbinical court in London. Uri Regev, director of the movement's Israel Religious Action Center, said that until last May's elections, the Interior Ministry routinely registered such children as Jewish.

■ Israeli Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein rejected charges that ethnic and religious bias played a role in his decision to indict Knesset member Aryeh Deri in connection with the Bar-On affair. Supporters of Deri, leader of the fervently Orthodox Shas Party, held a mass rally at which they charged that an anti-Sephardi bias had led to his indictment. [Page 3]

## 'Threatening' package stills work at B'nai B'rith headquarters

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Federal investigators are trying to determine the sender and contents of an envelope delivered to the international headquarters of B'nai B'rith here that prompted authorities to seal the building for hours with more than 100 people inside.

Hazardous material experts arrived at the scene to remove the envelope, which contained a note characterized as "suspicious and threatening," according to B'nai B'rith President Tommy Baer.

The letter was anti-Jewish, but the threats were not specific, knowledgeable sources said. They said a preliminary reading led them to believe it could be the work of a domestic right-wing political group.

But speculation about the source of the threat ran the gamut.

According to one low-level police official on the scene who had not seen the letter, it said: The only "good Jew is an Orthodox Jew." That could not be confirmed.

Baer said no one from B'nai B'rith had seen the letter.

Investigators also were likely to take into account the fact that B'nai B'rith is a prominent player in international anti-terrorism.

It also was recently singled out for attack by French extremist Jean-Marie Le Pen. The leader of the right-wing National Front alleged that French President Jacques Chirac is controlled by Jewish organizations, especially the B'nai B'rith. That prompted the organization to hold a news conference in Washington where it blasted Le Pen, who later denied having made the remarks.

While no one mentioned it, it also was impossible to ignore the fact that the incident occurred in the midst of Passover, the holiday associated with the blood libel, the ancient allegation that Jews murder non-Jews, especially Christians, to obtain blood for holiday rituals.

Baer and other principals were reluctant to draw conclusions prematurely.

"It is impossible for me to speculate if this is the cruelest of hoaxes or something to be genuinely concerned about," Baer said.

Said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, "We're in contact with the federal authorities to ascertain what exactly happened and the nature of the threat.

"Should it turn out to be of a serious nature, we will develop an approach to alert and sensitize Jewish institutions to protect" themselves.

At this point, said Foxman, "it would be unwise and improper to speculate as to the source of the package."

## B'nai B'rith employees decontaminated

Detailing the day's events from his office in Richmond, Va., Baer said a mail clerk noticed "red liquid" oozing out of the envelope, which was found in the mail room Thursday morning.

The mail clerk notified security who, in turn, called the police, said Baer.

The police arrived shortly before noon and sealed the building with employees inside and cordoned off the nearby streets, which quickly became clogged with emergency personnel and reporters.

They also decontaminated two B'nai B'rith personnel who had come into direct contact with the material, hosing them down in their undergarments with a solution of water and chlorine.

A third employee was taken to an area hospital for an unrelated health emergency.

Twelve emergency personnel were also decontaminated and held at the scene.

The FBI did not immediately issue an alert for stepped-up security at other Jewish organizations in Washington. But it plans to ask all local law-enforcement officials to keep their eyes open for similar threats, sources said.

The B'nai B'rith headquarters maintains unusually tight security, at least partly a reaction to a terrorist incident 20 years ago.

In March 1977, 12 Black Muslim extremists seized the B'nai B'rith building and two other buildings not affiliated with Jewish organizations. Of

Because of the Passover holiday, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published April 29 and 30.

134 hostages held overall, 107 were held in the B'nai B'rith building. The siege ended after 39 hours.

Though Jewish hostages were not singled out, anti-Semitic epithets were hurled frequently at the group.

In this week's incident, officials began to evacuate the building at about 3:30 p.m., planning to decontaminate everyone and send them to hospitals to be checked, according to Baer and the police. But about 30 minutes later, they reversed course, telling people who work in the building to return and that they would be "quarantined" until the contents of the substance could be determined.

The substance was removed from the scene about 3:30 p.m. and taken in a motorcade to be tested at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md.

The envelope contained a reference to the scientific name for anthrax, but was misspelled, according to unconfirmed police reports at the scene. Anthrax is an infection usually afflicting cattle and sheep.

Officials said they ruled out anthrax as the substance in the envelope. They said as soon as they identified the substance, they would decide what to do with the people stuck inside the building.

The B'nai B'rith building also houses the offices of the Council of Jewish Federations, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

As the quarantine went into its seventh hour early Thursday evening, the director of CJF's Washington office, Diana Aviv, said by telephone, "People are nervous and a little anxious, but calm."

The mood inside took a light turn as she joked about growing hunger pangs of people who had missed lunch and were about to miss dinner, "As in only the Jewish tradition, when in trouble, look for food." □

*(JTA staff writer Cynthia Mann in New York contributed to this report.)*

## **FOCUS ON ISSUES**

### **Online and active: Jews use Internet to promote causes**

*By Daniel Kurtzman*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Chris Kantrowitz was surfing the World Wide Web one day when he came across an Internet site in London dealing with Palestinian issues.

The 22-year-old college senior struck up an e-mail correspondence with the Web master, a Palestinian student who, not unlike himself, held passionate views about the Middle East.

"Our opinions are based very much on emotion and rooted in our own traditions," says Kantrowitz, who attends the University of Oregon at Eugene. "But what we've begun to learn through each other is the history of our peoples, the histories of the land, and the way each of us perceives it."

His experience is just one of the many ways Jewish activists are using the Internet to make connections, effect change and bring the Jewish and non-Jewish world together.

This month, at the annual policy conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby, Online enthusiasts and Jewish information junkies stopped off at AIPAC's "Cyber Cafe" to check out the latest techniques and technology for getting plugged into the world of Jewish cyber activism.

Whether using mass e-mailings urging college administrators and faculty to start up Jewish studies programs or appealing to members of Congress to support a strong U.S.-Israel relationship, Jewish activists are finding the Internet an increasingly indispensable tool.

"Online activism is self-motivating because it's something you can do from the comfort of your own home,

and you can be very effective and prolific," Kantrowitz says.

Other examples of Jewish use of the Internet include college students developing Web pages to counter Holocaust revisionists and a small Russian Jewish community reaching out to the world through a Web site in an effort to save its synagogue.

At the AIPAC conference, one elderly Holocaust survivor was reunited with a fellow survivor whom she hadn't spoken to in 50 years after she sat down at a computer on a whim, wondering if she might be able to locate him. Through a simple search, Helen Glatt of Potomac, Md., was able to find a Web page containing a story written by her friend's son, charting his father's path through nine concentration camps.

### **Internet changes face of lobbying**

The Internet is also changing the face of pro-Israel lobbying.

"The key to successful lobbying is to provide information," says Howard Kohr, executive director of AIPAC. "Information is power," he adds. "If we can inform our constituency who then turn around and talk to members of Congress," then we will have "achieved our goals. That's why we're using the technology."

For many Jewish Internet navigators, the Online world offers a vital means of establishing links with other Jews.

"For us, communication is key," says Steven Berkowitz, 18, a freshman at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. "Being out in Oklahoma, which isn't exactly the center of Jewish life, you really need e-mail to be able to get connected to other pro-Israel activists."

One of the most popular hangouts for Jewish cyber-goers is the Jewish Community Online site on America Online (keyword: Jewish). The site features a variety of discussion groups, links to Jewish news sources and live chats on topical Jewish issues.

"I meet people in the 'JComm' every day that teach me something new," says Sue Levine, a message board supervisor for Jewish Community Online who works out of her home in Cherry Hill, N.J.

"It's very non-threatening," she says.

Whereas "in a synagogue you might be afraid to ask the rabbi something because he'll think you're dumb," she adds, the anonymity of JComm "gives you a little more freedom to ask questions."

Sahar Oz, a 20-year-old junior at Penn State University, sees the Internet as an invaluable "educational tool" that "gets a lot of people around my age interested and active." His personal Web page features links to such sites as "Free Ron Arad," the missing Israeli pilot, and AIPAC's Cyber-Center for Pro-Israel Activism ([www.aipac.org](http://www.aipac.org)).

But it isn't just young Jews who are wired these days.

Shari Rosen, 68, and her husband Herbert, 73, are junkies through and through, spending hours each day clicking between Web sites for the Jerusalem Post ([www.jpost.com](http://www.jpost.com)), the Jewish Telegraphic Agency ([www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org)), AIPAC — "anything Jewish," Shari Rosen says, adding that they're now on their third computer.

The Highland Park, Ill., couple have been politically active for years but have no fond memories of the olden days when they used to send letters to members of Congress through "snail mail."

"Now it's easier," Rosen says. "Everything is more accessible." When they go to visit their children in Israel or head out to Palm Springs, Calif., a laptop becomes a requisite appendage. "I can't imagine life without it," she says. "We're hooked." □

**Attorney general rejects claims that bias entered Bar-On affair***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein has rejected charges that ethnic or religious bias played a role in his decision to indict Aryeh Deri in connection with the Bar-On affair.

Rubinstein's statement on Thursday marked his first public remarks since announcing his decision to indict the Shas leader for allegedly seeking the January appointment of Roni Bar-On as attorney general in exchange for a plea bargain in his own ongoing corruption trial.

In their announcement Sunday, Rubinstein and State Attorney Edna Arbel did not indict Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Justice Minister Tzachi Hanegbi or other top officials, citing lack of sufficient evidence.

Supporters of Deri, who heads the fervently Orthodox Shas Party, held a mass rally Wednesday at which they charged that an anti-Sephardi bias had led to his indictment.

The backbone of Shas support comes from religious Jews of Sephardi background.

At the rally in Jerusalem, Deri accused the "Zionist establishment" of trying to subvert Sephardi culture.

Similar remarks were heard by other speakers at the rally, despite President Ezer Weizman's appeal to Shas not to blame the indictments on "the ethnic card."

On Thursday, Rubinstein said the evidence presented by police had provided the sole basis for his recommendations.

Rubinstein's remarks came in the wake of reports this week that in their final deliberations, he and Arbel had ignored three senior prosecutors who believed that there was sufficient evidence to indict Netanyahu and Hanegbi.

According to Israeli media reports, the three prosecutors outlined their view in a detailed 15-page internal document that said there was sufficient evidence to show that Netanyahu appointed Bar-On exclusively or mostly due to pressure from Deri.

Deri's lawyer said this week that the three had also written that if indictments were not recommended against Netanyahu and Hanegbi, then none should be recommended against Deri, since such a move would appear questionable.

Rubinstein and Arbel have refused to release the internal document, which several groups have demanded in order to back up petitions they submitted to the High Court of Justice seeking to overturn the attorney general's decision not to indict Netanyahu and Hanegbi.

**Calls for removal of Hanegbi**

Bar-On won Cabinet approval Jan. 10, but stepped down two days later amid growing charges in political and legal spheres that he lacked the experience to hold Israel's top legal post.

Two weeks later, the Cabinet unanimously approved Rubinstein to serve as Israel's attorney general.

Meanwhile, the political storm swirling around Netanyahu over the Bar-On affair appears for the most part to have subsided, with his government no longer facing the imminent threat of collapse.

Yisrael Ba'Aliyah and the Third Way parties each announced Monday that they would remain in the coalition as long as measures were taken to ensure good government.

Coalition partners have been pressing for the removal of Hanegbi from the justice portfolio, saying that Rubinstein and Arbel had found grave improprieties in Hanegbi's handling of Bar-On's nomination and appointment.

Responding to demands by coalition partners that Netanyahu change the way his government functions, the prime minister announced this week that he was naming Finance Minister Dan Meridor of Likud and Trade Minister Natan Sharansky of Yisrael Ba'Aliyah to head a senior ministerial committee on civil servant appointments. □

**Egyptian trial of Israeli Druse on charges of spying opens***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The trial of an Israeli citizen on charges of spying opened this week in Cairo.

The Egyptian attorney for Azam Azam, a 35-year-old Israeli Druse from the Galilee, said the charge sheet only mentioned economic espionage, which carries a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison.

Other spying charges could carry a sentence of life imprisonment.

When Egyptian authorities arrested Azam in Cairo six months ago, they alleged that he worked for Israeli intelligence and had passed on state secrets.

Azam, the chief mechanic at an Israeli textile firm in Cairo, has been in a Cairo jail since his arrest.

During Thursday's hearing, Azam denied all the allegations against him.

The court session adjourned shortly after, because the lawyer for an alleged Egyptian accomplice failed to turn up. The trial will resume next month.

Members of Azam's family and Israel's consul general in Cairo were among those present in the courtroom.

The Israeli Embassy in Cairo issued a statement demanding Azam's release. Israel has repeatedly denied all allegations against Azam. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, during a joint news conference in March with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said he could not intervene in the matter, which he said must be dealt with by the Egyptian judicial system. □

**High Court backs Ethiopian olim in controversy over Israel Prize***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's High Court of Justice has asked Education Minister Zevulun Hammer to cancel a decision to award the Israel Prize for journalism to a columnist who wrote a controversial article about Ethiopian immigrants.

The court also asked Hammer to clarify whether the Israel Prize committee would have reconsidered its decision had it known about the article written by Ma'ariv columnist Shmuel Shnitzer, who was recently censured for it by the Journalist Association's ethics committee.

The court directive came in response to a petition from Labor Knesset member Adisu Massala, who said an August 1994 column by Shnitzer was racist and that he should not receive the prize.

In his article, Shnitzer referred to Ethiopians who immigrated to Israel as "thousands of apostates carrying dangerous diseases."

Shnitzer's column was written in response to an article in the Ha'aretz newspaper that reported on the high incidence of tuberculosis among Ethiopian immigrants.

It also followed a request by the Ethiopian community to block the broadcast of a television news story on the high incidence of AIDS in the community.

President Ezer Weizman met with Shnitzer earlier this month and urged him to apologize to the Ethiopian community.

Shnitzer has refused to retract his remarks. □

**Russian Jewish banker held on suspicion of embezzlement***By Lev Krichevsky*

MOSCOW (JTA) — The head of a large Russian bank who is also a prominent member of the country's Jewish community has been detained in Moscow on suspicion of embezzling more than \$120 million.

Arkady Angelevich, who heads Moscow's Montazhspetsbank and is a member of the presidium of the Russian Jewish Congress, has been held in prison since last week. Under Russian law, Angelevich can be held for 30 days without being formally charged.

The Association of Russian Banks called earlier this week for Angelevich's release, calling the preliminary charges brought against him "unjustified."

Among the letter's signatories were members of the RJC presidium as well as several leading bankers.

During a search of Angelevich's apartment, officials with the Interior Ministry allegedly found incriminating documents, \$55,000 in cash and \$1 million worth of jewels.

Angelevich was arrested on the way to the airport, where he was planning to leave for Israel, according to news reports. But a source close to Angelevich said he was detained as he was on his way to a routine business meeting.

The Montazhspetsbank is among several banks authorized to handle Russian federal funds.

One banking analyst was quoted anonymously as saying that Angelevich's bank was "in fierce competition" with Moscow City Hall and the Bank of Moscow.

"Someone helped put Angelevich in the situation he is in now," the source said. □

**Russian Jewish cemetery vandalized***By Lev Krichevsky*

MOSCOW (JTA) — Vandals have desecrated 10 headstones at a Jewish cemetery in Rybinsk, a city of 250,000 located northeast of Moscow.

Each of the desecrated headstones was daubed with a swastika, a skull and crossbones and the word "Jude," German for "Jew."

It was unclear when the act of vandalism occurred because there are few visitors to the cemetery in winter, when the graves are covered with snow. The desecrated graves were discovered after a recent thaw.

The Russian Jewish community called on local authorities and the federal public prosecutor to investigate the case.

Rybinsk is located in the Yaroslavl region, whose governor voiced his commitment to counter anti-Semitism after last April's bombing of the Jewish community center in the city of Yaroslavl. The person responsible for the bombing, which caused no injuries but seriously damaged the center, was apprehended shortly after the governor took control of the investigation. He was sentenced to three years in prison earlier this year. □

**Argentine Jews skeptical about Nazi-looted gold probe***By Sergio Kiernan*

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — Local Jewish leaders are reacting with skepticism to an Argentine government decision to create an independent commission to investigate claims that looted Nazi gold was secretly transferred to the country during and after World War II.

The announcement to form the panel was made last week by Interior Minister Carlos Corach, who said that

Argentine President Carlos Menem "will invite relevant figures from Argentina and abroad" to join the commission, which will have a year to deliver its findings.

According to American researchers, Argentine banks figured prominently in a Nazi-sponsored scheme to launder money and smuggle looted gold into Argentina during the war years.

In a recently declassified memo dated April 1945, the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires estimated at the time that Nazi assets in the country were worth more than \$1 billion.

Last year, Argentina's central bank turned over five volumes of financial records to the local office of the Simon Wiesenthal Center. But, according to Jewish researchers, that was the last time the government cooperated in their efforts to probe Argentina's wartime past.

Three months ago, Sergio Widder, the Latin American representative of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, asked that Argentine officials track information about 334 Nazi officials and businessmen who may have transferred Nazi gold to local banks during and after the war.

After placing what he described as "endless calls," Widder was granted an interview this week with government officials, who gave him a list of the banks operating in Argentina during the 1940s.

In an interview, Widder described this list as "perfectly useless information."

Widder added that he remained skeptical about what the newly formed commission would find.

By contrast, Ruben Beraja, the president of the Argentine Jewish umbrella organization DAIA, voiced his support for the commission. Beraja said in an interview that he had been invited to join in the commission and that he was "considering the idea."

A source within the Jewish community was as skeptical as Widder, saying that "no miracles should be expected."

"The only way to find the truth is to investigate private banks, and no commission can do that. Anyway, banks are not requested to save records dating back more than ten years." □

**South African Jews to fund Johannesburg police station***By Anna Cox*

JOHANNESBURG (JTA) — Escalating crime in Johannesburg has led residents of two mainly Jewish neighborhoods to establish and fund their own police station.

Residents of the northeastern suburbs of Glenhazel and Sandringham are raising funds to rent a building and to purchase vehicles, furniture and equipment.

The annual cost of the station is estimated at some \$100,000 to \$200,000.

Residents of the two suburbs have complained that many of the police working in their areas were poorly trained and did not speak or understand English well.

"There is a lack of discipline among some of the police, there are many untrained and illiterate policemen manning the station and conditions for our reservists are not ideal," said Gerald Leissner, of the Greater Glenhazel Home Owners Association.

The homeowners association has decided to divert funds currently being paid to private security companies to the new community-funded police station.

Although it will be under the control of the South African Police Service, the new station will be staffed mainly by police reservists and civilians.

Of 200 police reservists recruited last year in the Sandringham police district, all but one were Jewish. □