

**NEWS AT A GLANCE**

■ **U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited a Czech cemetery and synagogue seeking information about relatives killed by the Nazis.** In February, The Washington Post revealed that Albright was of Jewish descent and that three of her grandparents had been killed by the Nazis.

■ **At least 10 Palestinians, including several journalists, were wounded in another day of clashes with Israeli troops in Hebron.** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned that the Palestinian Authority would pay a heavy price if the violence continued. [Page 3]

■ **A U.S. federal appeals court refused to deport several Palestinians accused of supporting terrorists.** The government unsuccessfully invoked the 1996 anti-terrorism law, which makes it a crime to support any organization that is deemed a terrorist group by the secretary of state.

■ **A painting looted from a Jewish collector by the Nazis was returned to the owner's heirs by the French government.** The artwork was one of nearly 2,000 works put on display by the government in hopes of returning them to their rightful owners.

■ **Sixty percent of the Swiss people now believe the country avoided involvement in World War II mainly because of its financial and business dealings with the Nazis,** according to a recent poll of 1,014 people conducted by a Swiss sociologist. Young people and the highly educated were particularly likely to hold this view.

■ **A decision by the Israeli Transportation Ministry to officially separate men and women on several bus routes in Bnei Brak — and possibly in Jerusalem — has inflamed many.** Women's activist groups and some legislators vowed to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court.

■ **Some 5,500 Jewish athletes from over 50 countries will compete in the 15th Maccabiah Games, which got under way this week in Israel.** A special ceremony marking the event was held Sunday night in Jerusalem.

**FOCUS ON ISSUES****Jews and Christian persecution: Good cause, but faulty legislation***By Daniel Kurtzman*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — As momentum builds in an increasingly popular crusade to fight religious persecution abroad, the Jewish community remains supportive of the effort, but hesitant to endorse new legislation directed at the problem.

During the past year and a half, church leaders have been seeking to model a campaign to end the persecution of Christians overseas along the lines of the Jewish community's successful efforts to free Soviet Jews in the 1970s and 1980s.

A steady campaign to heighten public awareness has transformed the issue of anti-Christian persecution from an abstract phenomenon to what is rapidly becoming a leading political cause.

Most of the abuses are occurring within militant Islamic countries and the few remaining Communist nations. In Pakistan, for example, law prohibits speaking or acting against the prophet Mohammed, and violations are punishable by death.

In Sudan, the Islamic government has bombed and burned Christian villages and taken Christian women and children as slaves. And in China, thousands of Roman Catholic and Protestant Chinese have been imprisoned for practicing their faith.

The effort initially was supported by a coalition of predominantly conservative Christian and Jewish social activists — led by Michael Horowitz, a Jewish scholar and senior fellow at the Hudson Institute. But it has since broadened to include mainstream Christian and Jewish groups.

Several lawmakers, including two Jewish senators — Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) and Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) — also have taken up the cause.

Specter, together with Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.) in the House, recently introduced legislation that seeks to put the force of sanctions behind the effort to combat religious persecution.

Jewish leaders, for their part, are actively pressing the issue. But most Jewish groups, along with a number of leading Christian groups, maintain serious reservations about the Specter-Wolf legislation.

**Bill may affect immigration policy**

They fear, among other things, that focusing only on religious persecution — and not on human rights abuses in general — may prove too narrow. They further worry that the legislation could adversely affect U.S. refugee and immigration policy for Jews and others.

Despite divisions among religious groups surrounding the issue, pressure has been percolating in recent months as church leaders have worked to bring national attention to what they see as a growing trend of anti-Christian persecution around the globe.

Responding to these concerns, the Clinton administration in November formed a State Department advisory committee of prominent religious leaders and scholars to help promote religious freedom. The panel includes two Jewish members, Rabbi Irving Greenberg of New York and Deborah Lipstadt, professor of religion at Emory University.

The committee is holding a series of fact-finding meetings and hopes to complete a report on worldwide religious persecution later this year.

The Specter and Wolf legislation, introduced in May in their respective houses, would create a White House office charged with monitoring religious persecution, while establishing various aid and economic sanctions to punish violators of religious liberty.

It would also ensure expedited asylum proceedings and priority consideration for victims of religious persecution seeking to immigrate to the United States.

In addition, the legislation would require that the United States consider a country's record on religious persecution when weighing admission to the World Trade Organization — a provision that takes direct aim at China, which is seeking membership.

Advocates hope that the Wolf-Specter legislation would provide a shot in the arm for their cause the way the 1974 Jackson-Vanik Amendment

did for the Soviet Jewry movement. That legislation linked U.S. trade policy to a country's emigration practices.

Jewish groups, while expressing support for the broader effort, have stopped short of endorsing the legislation.

While it could help in developing new tools to combat religious persecution, said Jess Hordes, Washington director of the Anti-Defamation League, as with all such legislation, "you have to examine individual provisions to determine how effective they are going to be."

The impact of the legislation on U.S. refugee and immigration policy remains unclear, and for that reason, Jewish activists say they are eyeing it warily.

The bill does not specify how the number of refugee slots would be affected, or where funding would come from to accommodate additional refugees.

"It could force out others who are being admitted now," said Richard Foltin, legislative director and counsel for the American Jewish Committee.

In addition, some Jewish observers are concerned that highlighting religious persecution — particularly by designating a new White House office to focus on the problem — could come at the expense of other victims of human rights abuses.

"We're also concerned about the persecution of people on the basis of political views and on the basis of ethnicity," said Diana Aviv, director of the Council of Jewish Federations' Washington Action Office.

Some Jewish observers also expressed concern that the sanctions in the legislation would prove ineffective unless they are tailored to address the unique conditions in various countries. Specter's office has indicated that he is willing to work with Jewish groups to address their concerns. Even advocates of the legislative initiative concede that it needs improvement.

"The Jewish organizations, by and large, are raising some very real and legitimate concerns with the Wolf-Specter legislation, and they have to be worked out," said Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, president of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, which has helped bring the issue to the fore.

Eckstein said the legislation's intent is simply "to get this on the map."

#### **'Total misreading of where the community is'**

Horowitz, who had a significant hand in writing the Wolf-Specter legislation, acknowledged in an interview that "there's a lot more talking that needs to be done."

But he insisted that the Specter-Wolf legislation remain the central framework and that Jewish leaders get on board.

"The Jewish community, one hopes, will move from a kind of lip service support to an active support," Horowitz said.

He added: "I think Jews, many of whom are rooted in a reflexive anti-Christian faith view, have got some hard readjusting and thinking to do, and I think that explains in some measure the ambivalence that some Jewish leaders are showing."

Hordes of ADL said that assessment amounts to a "total misreading of where the community is."

"Religious persecution impacts on all of us," Hordes said. "As a religious minority that has suffered over the centuries, we are very sensitive to this issue" and "we're committed to working to redress persecution where it exists."

Horowitz said he ultimately sees the larger effort to address anti-Christian persecution as a "church-based undertaking and not a classic Washington bucket-shop operation."

That is why church leaders are planning an interna-

tional day of prayer in November to heighten awareness of the issue and create momentum to help push the legislation into law. At the same time, advocates say they will be looking to President Clinton in coming months to use the bully pulpit to make the issue a national priority.

Jewish leaders, meanwhile, plan to continue sharing with their Christian counterparts lessons from the community's 30-year campaign on behalf of Soviet Jewry.

"We succeeded because we spoke with a unified voice," Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, recently said.

"It is true that we had different approaches and used different strategies within the community, but on the whole, the Jewish community made the compromises we had to make in order to speak publicly with a unified and forceful voice."

As the campaign progress, that may prove one of the most useful examples to follow. □

#### **Museum to glorify Nazism is goal of Dutch Nazi widow**

*By Tamarah Benima*

AMSTERDAM (JTA) — The woman known here as the "Black Widow" is planning to turn her villa in the Dutch town of Velp into a museum for the glorification of Nazism.

Florentine Rost van Tonningen-Heubel, 83, has the pillars outside her spacious home painted black and red, the colors of the Nazi flag. Large candles inside the home are decorated with swastikas.

The interior of her villa contains busts, photographs and portraits of Adolf Hitler and other top Nazi officials, including her late husband, Rost van Tonningen, a Dutch Nazi who committed suicide in 1945.

Nazism was a "system of honesty, reliability and ethics," she recently told Dutch journalist Jack Kooistra.

In 1992 Tonningen-Heubel created a foundation with the goal of turning the villa into a museum.

For the past five years, the foundation has been collecting photographs, books, magazines, pamphlets and other documents about Nazi leaders and their ideology.

Officials from the Amsterdam-based Anne Frank Foundation believe that the authorities will intervene if the museum is ever established, because propagating Nazism is prohibited under Dutch law.

But such considerations are not stopping the Black Widow from going ahead with her plans.

Tonningen-Heubel recently ran an appeal in *Der Freiwilige*, a German monthly magazine for former members of the SS, to donate memorabilia to her planned museum. Some of the \$250,000 needed to open the museum has already been raised, she told Kooistra, adding that she has received financial backing from sympathizers in Switzerland, France, Belgium and Canada. □

#### **Russian station beams to Israel**

*By Lev Krichevsky*

MOSCOW (JTA) — A Russian television channel has begun regular broadcasts to Israel, where it hopes to attract the Jewish state's large population of emigres from the former Soviet Union.

The independent NTV television station has an audience of 120 million across the former Soviet Union. It recently unveiled plans to expand its Russian-language broadcasts to Western Europe and the Middle East.

NTV is a part of Russia's leading media empire, Media MOST, which is headed by Vladimir Goussinsky, who also serves as president of the Russian Jewish Congress. □

**NEWS ANALYSIS****In the absence of negotiations, violence takes over Arab street***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — In the absence of talks, violence has taken over the Palestinian street.

The violence, which escalated again over the weekend, raises questions of how — and even whether — the two sides will be able to get past the rock throwing and rubber bullets and back to the table.

It has been four months since any substantive Israeli-Palestinian negotiations have taken place, and both sides are angry.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu blamed the ongoing tensions on the Palestinian Authority and warned that the Palestinian leadership would pay a heavy price if the violence continued to escalate.

Netanyahu, speaking during Sunday's weekly Cabinet meeting, blamed the crisis on the Palestinian realization that the current Israeli government was not going to follow in the footsteps of the previous Labor government.

"Until a year ago, the Palestinians enjoyed the best of all worlds. There was violence, and the previous government continued to give them assets," Netanyahu was quoted as saying.

"The current government stopped this policy," he said, adding: "We are ready to reach an agreement, but not at any price."

The premier's remarks came amid a weekend of unabated violence.

In the West Bank town of Hebron, site of repeated clashes between Israeli troops and Palestinian stone-throwers during the past several weeks, at least 19 Palestinians were wounded over the weekend.

There have been nearly daily disturbances in Hebron since fliers depicting the prophet Mohammed as a pig appeared in the town.

A Jerusalem woman has been detained on suspicion of distributing the fliers.

On Saturday and Sunday, demonstrators threw bombs and rocks at the Israeli troops, who responded with rubber bullets and tear gas.

Palestinian sources said the injured included Palestinian journalists covering the protests.

In an effort to quell the unrest, Israeli troops sealed off alleys between the Israeli- and Palestinian-controlled areas of the West Bank town.

Saturday's clashes reportedly broke out after a group of Jewish settlers, returning from Sabbath prayers, threw stones at Palestinian youths.

Disturbances were also reported Sunday at Rachel's Tomb near Bethlehem, where Palestinian rioters threw rocks and bottles at Israeli troops.

And in the West Bank town of Ramallah, Palestinians protesting Israel's settlement policy burned an Israeli flag Saturday in the presence of Ahmed Karia, the speaker of the Palestinian legislative council and a top Palestinian negotiator.

His presence at the flag-burning prompted an angry response from Israeli officials, who demanded that the Palestinian leadership condemn the incident.

The criticism was primarily directed at Karia, also known as Abu Alaa, for attending the rally.

Cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh told Israel Radio that if the peace talks with the Palestinians were to continue, the Palestinian Authority would have to distance itself from such acts.

"Abu Alaa marched at the head of a procession of demonstrators opposite whom an Israeli flag was burned.

He didn't try to protest, he didn't try to stop it," Naveh said.

Alaa dismissed the criticisms and denied reports that he had stepped on the burnt remnants of the flag.

"The burning of the flag during the demonstration was not planned," he said. "It came as a surprise to me."

Israeli-Palestinian negotiations have been stalled since mid-March, when Israel began construction of Har Homa, a Jewish neighborhood in southeastern Jerusalem.

Palestinian Authority official Nabil Sha'ath met last week with Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai in an effort to restart the talks, and the two may meet again soon.

The two sides have also held discussions regarding the opening of a Palestinian airport in the Gaza Strip and for creating a safe passage route for Palestinians traveling between the West Bank and Gaza. □

**Jewish Agency orders probe into 1950s confiscated passports***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The head of the Jewish Agency for Israel has ordered an investigation into reports that the agency confiscated the passports of thousands of North African immigrants who came to Israel during the 1950s in order to prevent them from leaving the country.

About 20,000 passports were taken from immigrants from Tunisia and Morocco in the late 1950s, when there was a mass immigration to Israel from Arab countries, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported last week.

The passports are still stored in agency archives, the paper said.

The report threatened to stir new tensions among Sephardi Jews, who have long charged that they suffered social and economic discrimination at the hands of the state's Ashkenazi establishment.

According to Ha'aretz, 90 percent of the passports in the agency archives belong to North African Jews and only about 10 percent to immigrants from Europe who came to Israel during the same period.

A Jewish Agency official said there were some 9,000 foreign passports in agency archives, and that the agency chairman, Avraham Burg, had ordered a probe into the matter.

As a result of the policy of confiscating passports, the Israeli identity cards of these citizens do not contain their day or month of birth. The Interior Ministry has refused to register their full date of birth unless the original passports or birth certificates are presented.

Jewish Agency official Yehiel Levy said the passports were stored in agency archives and that their owners occasionally came to the archives to try to locate the original documents so that they could get the full information about their date of birth included in their identity cards. □

**Israeli Arab considered for court***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The committee in charge of appointing judges is considering naming an Israeli Arab to Israel's Supreme Court.

If appointed, Abdel Rahman Zoabi of Nazareth would be the first Israeli Arab named to the high court.

The committee this week named Hebrew University legal researcher and Israel Prize laureate Yitzhak Engelrad to the Supreme Court. Engelrad will fill a position traditionally held by an Orthodox justice.

The committee is also considering the appointment of Yosef Goldberg, who now serves on the Tel Aviv District Court. □

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES**

**Public housing issue ignites new movement for Sephardim**

*By Gil Sedan*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — It seems to happen about once a decade.

A new group springs up, claiming to represent the aspirations of Israel's Sephardi Jews.

In the 1970s, the Black Panthers took to the streets in demonstrations protesting discrimination against the Sephardim. In the 1980s, the Orthodox Shas Party was formed, as Sephardi rabbis broke away from the Ashkenazi-led religious parties to form their own bloc.

The influential party holds 10 seats in the Knesset, and a pivotal position in the governing coalition at a time of renewed disenchantment among Sephardim over social and economic gaps.

Now there's Kedem, a non-religious group with a specific agenda — to give the 700,000 Sephardi Jews who live in public housing the opportunity to become home owners.

Kedem — the name is an acronym for Eastern Democratic Rainbow — came to the world on the heels of a recent government land reform.

Some 93 percent of the land in Israel is either owned by the state or by the Jewish National Fund. Until now, users of that land, whether private dwellers, businesses or large entrepreneurs such as kibbutzim, paid annual fees to the Israel Land Administration, the legal authority in charge of the land.

**'Social injustice has only been duplicated'**

A recent law allows for the rezoning of agricultural land into land that can be used for housing, business and industry. Under the new reform, kibbutzim and moshavim are entitled to financial compensation for the land they no longer use.

Some kibbutzim, such as Shfayim and Glil-Yam, have already made a fortune from the reform. One area that was used for kibbutz citrus orchards has turned into an American-style mall, with local branches of American chains such as Office Depot and Toys-R-Us.

Some people have been critical of the move.

"The money which came from the rezoning of agricultural land should have gone to a public fund, and not to specific sectors in the society," said Yossi Dahan, a university lecturer.

"With the privatization of rural land at Kibbutz Glil-Yam for example, each family has virtually received between \$1 million and \$1.5 million. Instead of using those funds to bridge social gaps, social injustice has only been duplicated and worsened."

And as far as Kedem is concerned, the privatization of public housing should have been the other side of the coin. Those living in public housing, largely Sephardim, should be entitled to become owners of the residences they rent from public housing companies.

According to Kedem, some 140,000 residences would be transferred to their present tenants. This is no gift, claimed Kedem, since these tenants have already paid "billions of dollars in rent for years."

The leaders of Kedem are not poor. They are, ironically enough, solid proof that one can become a success story in Israel, even if one — or one's parents — were born in Morocco, Iraq or Egypt.

Indeed, the founding ceremony of the new movement last month included a discussion with an academic air, and nothing of the militancy that characterized Sephardi social movements in the past.

The most noted social organization of Sephardi

Jews was the Black Panthers movement of the early 1970s. It purposely took its name from the American Black Panthers and led violent demonstrations in the streets.

After they had several clashes with the police, Prime Minister Golda Meir said at the time: "I don't like them, they are not nice," a statement that was considered to be an indication of the gaps between Ashkenazim and Sephardim.

Charlie Biton, one of the leaders of the Israeli Black Panthers — who later joined the Communist Party and became a member of Knesset — sees a direct link between the Black Panthers and Kedem. According to Biton, the new movement aims at solving the same problems; it just uses different techniques.

Officially, Kedem still boasts to be a purely social movement. "We are political, but we are no political party," Dudi Mahleb, 42, a member of the movement's secretariat, said in an interview.

Shlomo Wazana, 40, a teacher of cinematography, claims that the special combination of an educated leadership and an interest in improving the condition of society's lower classes could give Kedem a strong power base.

He attacks the left-leaning Meretz Party for representing a mostly Ashkenazi elite and says that Foreign Minister David Levy, the leading Sephardi politician, is a big disappointment.

"He should have taken the treasury, and help the Middle Eastern community change things, but he preferred the respectability of the Foreign Ministry."

"I voted Shas in the last elections," said Biton, "because I could not vote for any of the big parties. Kedem could give us all a new alternative." □

**French Catholics to apologize to Jews for Vichy collaboration**

*By Lee Yanowitch*

PARIS (JTA) — France's Roman Catholic Church is planning to apologize next month to the Jewish community for its collaboration with the country's wartime pro-Nazi Vichy regime.

The French church's decision to seek forgiveness from France's 700,000-strong Jewish community conforms with Pope John Paul II's 1994 call on all Catholic churches to acknowledge the evils of anti-Semitism and to engage in reconciliation with world Jewry.

Jean-Marie Lustiger, the archbishop of Paris, announced at a recent news conference that reconciliation ceremonies would be held during the pope's visit to Paris on Aug. 21-24. Lustiger was born Jewish but converted to Catholicism as a teen-ager during the war.

His mother, one of some 75,000 Jews deported from France, perished at Auschwitz.

There has been reluctance in France to acknowledge the church's support for Vichy leader Marshall Philippe Petain, who signed the anti-Semitic law in October 1940 that banned Jews from most professions.

Petaun later authorized the arrests and deportations of French Jews that were carried out mainly by French police, who turned the Jewish deportees over to the Nazis.

Henri Hajdenberg, president of CRIF, the umbrella group of secular French Jewish organizations, applauded the French church's decision.

"The French Catholic Church has made a recognition, and it's important because we have waited for this type of declaration for 10 years, especially on the relation between the teachings of Catholicism and anti-Semitism," said Hajdenberg.

The French Catholic Church will also apologize during next month's ceremonies for its past persecutions of French Protestants. □