



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Vandalism threw a rock through a window and dislodged a mezuzah at a Conservative synagogue in a Tel Aviv suburb. The incident, which occurred on Yom Kippur, was the latest in a series of attacks on non-Orthodox institutions in the Jewish state. [Page 4]

■ About a thousand people in Paris protested a French judge's decision to free former Vichy official Maurice Papon during his trial. Papon, 87, is on trial for deporting more than 1,500 Jews during World War II. [Page 3]

■ The U.S. State Department criticized New York City's decision to bar from a bond offering one of the Swiss banks involved in the Nazi gold controversy. Undersecretary of State Stuart Eizenstat said the action taken against Union Bank of Switzerland would only "further inflame passions in Switzerland."

■ The son of two Holocaust victims is suing the Swiss government. The 67-year-old man is seeking nearly \$70,000 in damages from the Swiss government and an admission that it was culpable in his parents' death.

■ A convicted Nazi collaborator left Canada before authorities decided whether to deport him. Ladislaus Csizsik-Csatary, a former Hungarian policeman, is reported to be living in Europe.

■ An Israeli Arab girl received a heart transplanted from an Israeli Jewish boy. The boy was killed when he was hit by a car while riding a bicycle days before his ninth birthday. The girl was reportedly doing well.

■ Canada decided to return its ambassador to Israel. Canada withdrew David Berger after false Canadian passports were found on two Mossad agents who attempted to assassinate a Hamas leader in Jordan last month.

■ Clark University is set to become the first school in the United States offering a doctoral degree in Holocaust studies. The Worcester, Mass. school plans to begin offering courses next fall for the degree.

### A NEW YEAR DAWNS

## In Israel, waning peace process sparks new terror and isolation

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — It was not a good year for Israel.

On both the domestic and international fronts, a sense of regression back to the days before the Middle East peace process permeated the atmosphere.

Two developments highlight the disappointments:

• In the global arena, Israel found itself starkly isolated for the first time in several years. The U.N. General Assembly passed several resolutions condemning Israeli policies. Only the United States and tiny Micronesia voted with the Jewish state.

• At home, the specter of war — absent for years — returned to haunt the nation. Soldiers and civilians alike were taking seriously the army's talk of possible conflict with Israel's Arab neighbors. The Israel Defense Force even carried out a simulation of recapturing territories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip already transferred to Palestinian self-rule.

By year's end, the peace process had degenerated to the point where American officials were required to intervene to help revive the moribund negotiations.

U.S. intermediaries were even necessary to revive high-level meetings between Palestinian and Israeli security and intelligence officials.

Moreover, four years after the historic Sept. 13, 1993, Rabin-Arafat handshake, both sides were hinting that a new framework might be necessary if the peace process had any chance of succeeding.

The first significant deterioration in the peace process came just 10 days after the Jewish year began last September.

On the night after Yom Kippur 5757, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave the green light for the opening of a new entrance to an ancient tunnel near the Western Wall.

Muslims saw the decision as an assault on their religious rights on the Temple Mount, site of the Mosques of Omar and al-Aksa.

Their anger sparked a wave of violence that swept through the West Bank and Gaza Strip like a brush fire. Israel was stunned as Palestinian police turned their guns on Israeli soldiers, killing 15.

Dozens of Palestinians were killed and hundreds more were injured before the Palestinian Authority was able to rein in the rioters.

Some Israeli officials charged that Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat and his top aides had instigated the violence and could have controlled it if they wanted.

### Can the peace process be reversed?

The Israeli government insisted that opening the tunnel entrance was fully within Israel's sovereign rights — and in no way infringed upon Muslim rights on the Temple Mount.

But Netanyahu himself clearly was surprised by the intensity of the Palestinian reaction.

In the aftermath of that violence, a belief emerged that the peace process was not as irrevocable as had been thought.

The one ray of light for those who championed the Oslo process was the successful conclusion in January of the Hebron accord.

This complex agreement — representing the final Israeli pullback from the major Palestinian cities on the West Bank — had eluded the previous Labor-led government.

Netanyahu, who came to office in June 1996 as the head of a conservative-religious coalition, had declared himself committed to implementing the Oslo accords, even though he remained fundamentally critical of them.

The Hebron accord appeared to prove the sincerity of that commitment. Netanyahu rammed it through his Cabinet despite objections from the hard-liners, one of whom, Science Minister Ze'ev "Benny" Begin, resigned in protest.

The accord included a promise to move forward to the next phase of the peace process: three further redeployments from the rural areas of the

West Bank, to be concluded within 12 months. But within weeks of the transfer of 80 percent of Hebron to Palestinian self-rule, the landmark accord was in tatters.

Israel's decision to turn over 2 percent of the West Bank in the first of the further redeployments was vehemently rejected by the Palestinian Authority.

That pullback, which would also have included 7 percent of the land under mixed rule, was never implemented.

On the eve of the second scheduled further redeployment last month, Israel declared that no pullback would take place until the Palestinian Authority took concrete steps against terrorism.

Without such moves, the Netanyahu government maintained, the Oslo process might as well be considered dead.

Tensions have remained high in Hebron, where some 500 Jewish settlers reside in the 20 percent of the city still under Israeli control.

In March, the government gave the go-ahead for a large-scale building project at Har Homa, a barren area in southeastern Jerusalem.

The area had long been planned as a new Jewish suburb, but had been put on hold because of political considerations.

After that decision, to which Netanyahu has resolutely cleaved despite international condemnation, negotiations and security cooperation with the Palestinians virtually ceased for more than six months.

The crisis with the Palestinians intensified after a Hamas suicide bomber struck at a Tel Aviv cafe in March, killing three Israeli women.

It was the first terror bombing in Israel since Netanyahu's election on a platform that had promised "peace with security" and had sharply criticized the previous Labor government's handling of the peace process in the wake of a series of suicide bombing attacks in the heart of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

While those terror attacks took place during an active peace process, Palestinian militants proved several times this year that stalled negotiations were no deterrent to their violence.

On July 30, two suicide bombers struck simultaneously in Jerusalem's Mahane Yehuda market, killing 16 Israelis.

That attack set back U.S. efforts to bring about a resumption of Israeli-Palestinian talks.

Although security cooperation was partially resumed — the CIA began participating in meetings of senior Israeli and Palestinian intelligence officials — the trust that had been painstakingly built up between the security services has not been restored.

### **Arrests worsen tensions**

Israel's arrest of three Palestinian policemen in July on suspicion of planning an armed attack on a Jewish settlement further exacerbated the tensions.

Then, three weeks after the Mahane Yehuda terror attack, Arafat embraced leaders of Hamas and Islamic Jihad at a two-day "national unity" conference, at which he defiantly rejected Israel's demands for a crackdown on terrorism.

On Sept. 4, three suicide bombers struck in Jerusalem's Ben Yehuda pedestrian mall, killing five Israelis.

That attack did not deter U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright from making her first official visit to the Middle East.

But in her meetings with Israeli and Palestinian leaders, Albright found a peace process in tatters.

She warned that she would not return to the region

unless both sides took steps to restore confidence in the process.

Then, in a bizarre turn of events, a bungled Israeli attempt to assassinate a Hamas official in Jordan last month led to the first face-to-face meeting between Netanyahu and Arafat in eight months.

While the meeting seemed to give hope that the new year would begin on a more positive note, the summit also came after Israel's release of Sheik Ahmed Yassin, the founder and spiritual leader of Hamas.

His release, demanded by Jordan's King Hussein in exchange for two Mossad agents captured in Amman after the botched assassination attempt, brought a new player into Palestinian politics who in the new year could make a decisive impact — positive or negative — on the peace process.

The failed assassination also deteriorated relations between Israel and Jordan, the Jewish state's closest Arab ally.

The worsening relations between Israel and the Palestinians also spilled over to the rest of the Arab world.

Tensions with Egypt intensified, and Arab states in North Africa and the Persian Gulf moved to freeze their burgeoning relations with the Jewish state. It was unclear whether Israel would be invited to participate in the regional economic conference scheduled to take place in Qatar in November.

### **Violence intensifies in Lebanon**

Compounding this situation was an ongoing mini-war in southern Lebanon, where Israeli forces and Hezbollah fighters regularly exchanged deadly fire.

Tensions escalated in August after the Islamic fundamentalist group launched its heaviest Katyusha rocket attack on Israel in more than a year, sending Israelis in northern communities to bomb shelters. Israel's measured response and appeals for calm seemed to be aimed at avoiding a repeat of April 1996, when Israeli troops launched an operation intended to curtail Hezbollah rockets.

Dozens of Israeli soldiers who were involved in defending the security zone in southern Lebanon were killed during the year, either in clashes with Hezbollah gunmen or in tragic accidents.

Seventy-three soldiers died in February when two military helicopters en route to southern Lebanon collided over northern Israel.

In September, a botched commando raid in Lebanon left 12 elite Israeli soldiers dead.

These incidents sparked renewed debate regarding Israel's policy in Lebanon and calls from some quarters for a withdrawal.

As the year wore on, Netanyahu's handling of the peace process and, indeed, his governance in general, drew increasing criticism, even from his own Cabinet colleagues.

While many Israelis thought that the prime minister had not moved sufficiently to further advance the peace process, others thought he had betrayed their confidence and gone too far.

The most serious domestic crisis was the so-called Bar-On affair, which erupted in February and at one stage looked like it would topple the government.

A police inquiry recommended that the premier and other officials be indicted for illicitly conspiring to appoint a political crony to the post of attorney general.

In the end, Israel's attorney general and state prosecutor decided not to indict either Netanyahu or his justice minister, Tzachi Hanegbi.

The only senior politician to face trial will be Aryeh Deri, the Shas Party leader, who is already on trial for bribery. □

## Plaintiffs outraged as Papon sleeps in chateau during trial

By Lee Yanowitch

PARIS (JTA) — In a controversial decision that infuriated the families of Holocaust victims, a French court has decided to free Maurice Papon during his trial for crimes against humanity.

"This decision is an insult to the memory of the victims, to the grief of the civil plaintiffs and to the French people in general," said Arno Klarsfeld, one of 23 lawyers for the civil plaintiffs.

The decision means that Papon will not spend his nights in prison or in detention at a hospital during the proceedings.

It also means that even if Papon, who is 87 and underwent triple bypass surgery last year, is found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment, he may never serve time in jail because he would probably die before his appeals were exhausted.

Presiding Judge Jean-Louis Castagnede told the court last Friday that his decision was due to the defendant's "old age, the serious worsening of his health" and the more than two months the trial is expected to last.

In France, a defendant accused of serious crimes is normally kept in jail during trial.

Klarsfeld declared that he would boycott the rest of the trial.

"I have decided to leave this trial, where the accused faces no more than simple blame for consciously and deliberately sending Jewish children to the most atrocious fate," Klarsfeld told the judge before storming out of the courthouse.

Some of Klarsfeld's clients followed him out of the court.

Papon is accused of ordering the arrest and deportation of 1,560 Jews — including 223 children — between 1942 and 1944, when he served as the pro-Nazi Vichy regime's second-highest-ranking official in the Bordeaux region.

Almost all of the deportees died in the Auschwitz gas chambers.

### 'We trusted the French justice system'

Papon has denied the charges against him, saying that he used his position in the Resistance to save Jews. He reportedly joined the Resistance movement near the end of 1943.

After the liberation, Papon went on to an illustrious postwar career, serving as police chief of Paris between 1958 and 1967, then as budget minister in the French Cabinet during the 1970s.

The court's decision provoked anger among the families of deportees.

"I'm outraged, I don't understand," said Juliette Benzazon, a civil plaintiff who lost more than a dozen members of her family in Auschwitz.

"For 16 years, we trusted the French justice system."

Legal action against Papon began in 1981 after a newspaper article detailed his past.

But proceedings against him were repeatedly obstructed by French officials reluctant to see a trial dredge up embarrassing memories of France's collaboration with the Nazi occupiers.

Papon was rushed to a hospital Oct. 9, a day after the trial began in the southwest city of Bordeaux, after two medical experts who had examined him at the court's request recommended that he be detained in a hospital because of his heart condition.

Papon's lawyer, Jean-Marc Varaut, who had asked

the court at the start of the trial to release his client so he could have access to medical care, said Papon was taken to the hospital because he nearly had a heart attack. But the prosecution said it was merely part of the defense's strategy to win his release.

After the judge announced his decision last Friday, Papon was whisked away under tight security and taken to a four-star luxury hotel in a chateau in one of France's wine regions— 16 miles from the nearest hospital.

Pictures of the dapper former official in charge of Bordeaux's "Office for Jewish Questions" strolling leisurely through the chateau gardens were broadcast on television throughout the weekend, further infuriating the civil plaintiffs.

"Papon Wins the First Round," read the headlines in the left-wing daily Liberation.

Klarsfeld, the son of famed Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld, was not the only lawyer to say he was boycotting the proceedings.

Gerard Weltzer, a lawyer representing two families of the Bordeaux deportees, has also decided to stay away from the trial.

"The families are shocked and upset by what happened," Weltzer told French television.

Serge Klarsfeld, president of an association of children of Holocaust victims, some of whom are civil plaintiffs in the trial, organized a protest in Paris against the court's decision.

At Sunday's protest, which drew an estimated 1,000 demonstrators, 1,645 candles were lit in memory of the Jews deported from Bordeaux to Nazi death camps.

The ceremony was part of a rush of emotional remembrance of France's wartime occupation that has been sweeping the country in the days surrounding the trial.

The national soul-searching prompted some professional groups to apologize for their conduct during World War II.

Among those making apologies were France's principal SNPT police union, which sought forgiveness on the eve of the trial for the role of French policemen in arresting Jews for deportation.

"Hear our voices, Hebrew people. Those who committed the ignoble were not only a minority.

"For them, we beg forgiveness," said SNPT head Andre Lenfant at a ceremony last week attended by French Jewish leaders.

"The SNPT recognizes that French police officers were accomplices to the deportation of Jews during the occupation."

### Tribute at Sephardi synagogue

The statement came in the wake of a dramatic Sept. 30 apology from the French Roman Catholic Church for its silence during the persecution of Jews in Nazi-occupied France.

Last Friday, the French medical association followed suit, asking pardon for the treatment of Jews during the war — when the profession barred Jewish doctors from practicing medicine.

"History demands that we recognize that the basic values of our profession were flouted.

"We regret and disavow with gravity and humility the acts that were at the origin of the tragedy experienced by those of our colleagues and their families who were victims of barbarism," Bernard Glorion, head of the association, told a news conference.

And hours before the trial started, Bordeaux mayor and former Prime Minister Alain Juppe, wearing a white skullcap, joined hundreds of people in the city's Sephardi synagogue, one of the oldest in France, to pay tribute to the Jews deported from Bordeaux. □

## Conservative shul in Israel attacked during Yom Kippur

By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A Conservative synagogue in the Tel Aviv suburb of Kfar Saba was vandalized on Yom Kippur, according to officials at the synagogue.

Randy Tischler, a board member of the Hod Vettadar Congregation, said the incident occurred after about 500 worshipers attended Kol Nidre services last Friday night.

When they returned for services the following morning, congregation members discovered that vandals had thrown a fist-sized rock through the synagogue's glass door, shattering it, and that the synagogue's mezuzah had been torn off its doorpost.

Tischler said the incident, which police are investigating, was not the first case of vandalism against the synagogue. "Someone threw a rock through the shul's kitchen window on Rosh Hashanah, but we didn't report it," he said.

"We built the synagogue with our own funding, and since opening a year and a half ago, there have been lots of little incidents like people stealing our mailbox. We always chalked it up to petty vandalism and didn't go to the police."

He added that synagogue officials decided to contact the police because of similar incidents that have occurred in the Jerusalem area.

The decision was influenced, he said, by an Oct. 7 incident, when vandals painted swastikas and the words "Damned Wicked Ones" on the glass-enclosed billboard at the entrance to Jerusalem's Harel Reform synagogue.

Tischler also referred to an Aug. 31 firebombing of a nursery school operated by the Reform movement in Mevasseret Zion, a suburb of Jerusalem.

"There seems to be a pattern," he said. "To remain silent is probably counterproductive at this point."

Tischler added that vandalism will not thwart the synagogue's efforts to reach out to community members.

"We have about 150 families and are expanding all the time. Many of those who attended Kol Nidre services were in the shul for the first time.

"We will continue to reach out to the community no matter what" happens, he said. □

## Architecture of Polish church symbolizes evil of Nazi terror

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — The Italian Roman Catholic Church has dedicated a church in memory of Italian victims of the Nazis in Oswiecim, the southern Polish town near the former Nazi death camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The new church, which is located several miles from the former death camp, has not aroused any opposition from Jewish groups.

About 1,000 Italians and Poles attended the recent consecration ceremony for St. Joseph's parish church, a stark, modern structure whose architecture symbolizes the Nazi terror and makes reference to the former death camp nearby. Some 40,000 Italians were deported to Nazi death camps. About 8,000 Italian Jews were killed in the Holocaust.

The church's foundation stone comes from the "Wall of Death" at Auschwitz where the Nazis executed thousands of people. The church's facade is split, with a tall, white section on the left side and a bunker-like chapel reminiscent of the gas chambers and crematoria at Auschwitz-Birkenau on the right.

The split represents "the atrocious wound inflicted

on humanity" by the Nazi death camps, according to a statement issued last month by the Italian Bishops' Conference.

Inside, murals depict people — some of them wearing a Star of David — standing or rising toward the heavens.

Construction of the church began five years ago.

At the dedication ceremony, church leaders stressed the horrors of the Holocaust.

Cardinal Camillo Ruini, the head of the Italian Bishops' Conference, said there should be a special place in prayers for Jews since they were singled out for extermination and suffered the most under Nazi terror.

Polish Jewish representatives were invited to the ceremony, but a Jewish source in Warsaw said that as far as he knew, none of them attended because the ceremony was "right after Shabbat and Rosh Hashanah."

In the past, Jewish groups have protested Christian religious symbols, churches and other buildings, such as the Carmelite convent, in direct proximity to the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp.

The overwhelming majority of Auschwitz victims were Jews, and the camps are considered the largest Jewish cemetery in the world.

The new church, however, is several miles from the death camp.

"It's an internal church matter," Stanislaw Krajewski, Poland consultant for the American Jewish Committee, said by telephone from Warsaw.

A spokesman for the World Jewish Congress in New York was reported as saying that he, too, did not foresee any controversy over the church. □

## Latvian official targets Jews for aiding Soviet persecutors

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — A Latvian state prosecutor has accused Jews of helping to organize repression during the years of Soviet rule.

Uldis Strelis said recently that mass deportations of citizens from the Baltic nation were sanctioned by a state security official who was Jewish.

In a letter published in the nation's leading daily newspaper, Diena, or The Day, Strelis also presented a list of Jewish KGB officers who he maintains were responsible for persecuting Latvians.

Last month, Strelis announced that Latvia had found no evidence to support allegations against Konrad Kalejs, 84, a suspected Nazi war criminal now living in Australia.

Kalejs is alleged to have been a member of the mobile killing squad known as the Aja's Kommando, or Latvian Auxiliary Security Police, that collaborated with the Nazi SS during World War II.

Some Jewish officials in Latvia believe it was not a coincidence that the prosecutor's statement about Jewish involvement in the KGB came after his earlier statement about Kalejs.

"The two statements are clearly connected," said one Jewish official who asked that he remain anonymous.

After Latvia and other Baltic countries regained their independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, local Jews were accused of collaborating with the communist authorities during the 50 years of Soviet rule.

Jews were charged especially with having participated in the 1940-1941 campaign to exile tens of thousands of Baltic citizens to the east.

Such charges were sometimes used by Baltic nationalists as a veiled justification for the collaboration of the local population with the Nazis. □