



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu plans to address the Council of Jewish Federations' General Assembly on Nov. 16, according to his spokesman David Bar-Illan. Netanyahu is not expected to meet with President Clinton during his 12-hour stay.

■ Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy is expected to leave for Washington over the weekend for a new round of talks with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Palestinian Authority deputy Mahmoud Abbas. [Page 2]

■ Swiss banks released a list of an additional 14,000 dormant accounts that were opened during the World War II era. [Page 4]

■ Some 4,500 Reform Jews convened in Dallas for the 64th biennial of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Among the many issues slated to be addressed at the five-day conference is a resolution to urge Reform rabbis to officiate at interfaith marriages.

■ Israeli security officials identified the third Islamic militant they say was involved in a triple suicide bombing in Jerusalem's Ben Yehuda pedestrian mall last month. The 24-year-old university student from Nablus was identified from DNA testing.

■ Israel's High Court of Justice ordered senior security officials to meet with the wife of convicted spy Jonathan Pollard. The order came after she played for reporters a tape-recorded message in which her husband, the former U.S. Navy analyst convicted of spying for Israel, said the Jewish state could do more to work for his release from an American prison.

■ Arab demonstrators accosted Israel's minister for Arab affairs during a memorial for the 40-odd residents of the Arab village of Kfar Kassem who by Israeli border police 41 years ago. The demonstrators refused Moshe Katsav's offer of condolences, demanding an inquiry into the massacre and compensation for the families of the victims.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Political turmoil in Israel suggests a long winter ahead

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Predictions of "a long, hot winter" are fairly standard in Israel when the Knesset reconvenes after its prolonged summer and High Holiday recess.

But this week, the mudslinging and raucous debate were hotter than usual, setting the tone for the legislative session.

It was not only the stormy atmosphere in the Knesset chamber — including incessant heckling and Labor Party leader Ehud Barak's call for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to "leave us, resign, go your way" — that suggested a rocky road ahead.

The substance of Netanyahu's address, the reactions it elicited here and in Washington, a looming conflict within the coalition over the state budget, and a crisis with the Reform and Conservative movements in America all gave credence to the sound and fury of Monday's opening parliamentary proceedings.

Despite the looming political strife, no one should write Netanyahu out of power yet — not by any means. While there are many in Israel, including President Ezer Weizman, who are speculating about the possible collapse of the present coalition before the end of the year, seasoned commentators, even those profoundly critical of the prime minister's performance, are wary of predicting his imminent downfall.

They note with appreciation his proven staying powers. Through the various crises that have dogged his first 16 months in office, he has confounded his critics and emerged intact.

And even though his standing has sagged over the months — and, according to some polls, now lags behind Barak — there can be little doubt that a solid core of his voters in the 1996 election remain essentially satisfied with his premiership. His supporters are pleased that he has not handed back any more land to the Palestinians since the January signing of the Hebron agreement, which he could not avoid concluding.

Hard-liners pressure Netanyahu

But just to make sure he remembers where his support comes from, the so-called Greater Israel Lobby, a group of 17 hard-line Knesset members, urged Netanyahu this week not to agree to the "timeout" on settlement building urged by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

The legislators warned that if he wavered, they would refuse to support him in the vital budget debates and votes.

The Yesha Council, which represents settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, went one step further, warning that any weakening on the part of the government would lead them to break ground immediately on a new settlement.

In his Knesset speech Monday, the prime minister staunchly maintained that he does not intend to waver on the settlements issue.

His policy speech showered attacks on Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat for slacking off in the battle against terrorism. Netanyahu also made openly disparaging comments about the Oslo accords and the interim agreements on which they are based.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister David Levy — more moderate in foreign policy than Netanyahu — is restless about more than the stalled peace process.

The foreign minister and his mostly Sephardi supporters view the government's economic policy with severe misgivings and are seriously contemplating provoking a coalition crisis in the upcoming budget debates.

The Netanyahu government was expected to present the Knesset with a more than \$58 billion 1998 budget that contains massive cuts to social programs.

The cuts will affect Israel's poor, who form a large part of Netanyahu's — and Levy's — supporters.

Netanyahu's government could fall if the budget is not passed by the end of the year, and Netanyahu cannot feel safe until then.

Traditionally, budget debates are the small parties' field day, with the

Orthodox, immigrants and other special interest groups pressing their specific demands and threatening to withhold their support unless these demands are met.

In Levy's case — given his grievances about what he sees as Netanyahu's persistent ignoring of him in key policy deliberations — the budget debates could provide the last straw that takes his Geshar Party out of its alliance with Likud.

If Geshar does bolt the coalition over social issues, the Orthodox Shas Party, which also draws support from poorer Israelis, might also bolt, which would mean the end of Netanyahu's coalition.

Along with the budget and foreign policy issues, Netanyahu also faces a gathering storm over religious pluralism issues.

Netanyahu himself added a new side-drama to the issue with remarks he made last week to an elderly rabbi.

Those remarks — that left-wingers "have forgotten what it means to be Jewish" — were picked up by an open microphone and have provoked a political storm that Labor is striving to exploit to the fullest.

At the opening of Monday's Knesset session, opposition members waved placards reading, "Bibi Is Dividing the Country" and "I Am a Proud Jew."

Knesset ushers pulled the placards down on the orders of Speaker Dan Tichon, and Netanyahu later offered an apology "for the distorted interpretation of my remarks."

This drama served as an appropriate prelude for the more ominous rift with non-Orthodox Jews.

A crisis was averted Tuesday when non-Orthodox leaders agreed to withdraw petitions from the High Court of Justice seeking official recognition of their conversions and their right to sit on local religious councils.

In return, the Orthodox parties agreed to postpone legislative action on two bills dealing with the same issues.

As a result of their actions, a committee headed by Finance Minister Ya'acov Ne'eman will have three more months to try to forge a compromise among the Orthodox and non-Orthodox movements. Already, they have missed several deadlines.

While the situation has been defused, the crisis is far from over and has already sparked a serious strain between Netanyahu's government and large sections of American Jewry.

And it is happening just when his foreign policy differences with the Clinton administration seem to be coming to a head.

It is sure to be a long winter. □

Levy gets mandate for talks with Palestinians in Washington

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Oct. 29 (JTA) — In the wake of American pressure, Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy is expected to leave for Washington over the weekend for talks aimed at advancing the peace process.

His trip was planned Wednesday after the government gave him the green light to discuss all issues on the agenda with the Palestinians.

Levy is due to meet next week with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Mahmoud Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen, who is second-in-command to Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat.

The discussions were expected to have begun this week.

But Levy, who has complained about being left out of the decision-making on foreign policy issues, announced Sunday that he would delay his departure until he was given a clear mandate on what he could discuss.

The delay provoked a critical reaction from U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin, who said Monday that Washington "would like the internal deliberations to conclude" so that the talks can proceed "as soon as possible" — an unusual jab at Israel's policy-making processes.

Albright told reporters Tuesday that she had talked with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by telephone "about the necessity of moving this process forward," adding that Washington wanted "to proceed on a fairly rapid schedule."

Netanyahu convened key ministers comprising his Inner Security Cabinet on Wednesday to determine Israel's position in the negotiations.

A statement released after the six-hour meeting said Israel intended to continue its efforts to advance to the permanent-status negotiations — and that further discussions would be held on the conditions needed for this to occur. The statement also said that Israel would discuss the questions agreed upon during a recent meeting involving Albright, Levy and Abbas.

Observers said this meant that Levy was authorized to discuss issues that include further Israeli troop redeployments in the West Bank and a slowdown in settlement building.

At the same time, they noted that the mandate was limited — while Levy could discuss the idea of a slowdown, he could not necessarily go into specifics on its scope.

Palestinian officials were guarded in their responses to the Inner Cabinet decision.

Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said he was waiting to hear from Washington to know whether the Cabinet decision indeed authorized Levy to make any real concessions. □

Main Hebron street reopens after U.S.-financed renovation

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A main Hebron thoroughfare that has been a flash point for violence partially reopened this week amid complaints from both Jewish and Palestinian residents of the West Bank town.

Shuhada Street, which straddles Jewish and Arab neighborhoods, was closed for security reasons after the February 1994 massacre, when Dr. Baruch Goldstein killed 29 Palestinians worshipping at the Tomb of the Patriarchs. When it reopened Wednesday, Jewish settlers maintained that Palestinian traffic on the road so close to their homes endangered their safety.

Palestinians complained that the entire street should be open to Palestinian traffic.

As part of January's Hebron Agreement, in which Israeli troops pulled back from 80 percent of the town, the United States agreed to finance the refurbishing of the street, a project that carried a final price tag of \$2.5 million.

The road has been paved and sidewalks put up. Stores along the street have also gotten facelifts.

The street was mostly quiet Wednesday.

Groups of Jewish residents from Hebron and the nearby settlement of Kiryat Arba marched and held prayers. One Jewish youth was detained by police for assaulting a Palestinian during protests against the reopening of the street.

As part of the gradual reopening of the street, access is currently limited to Palestinian municipal and emergency vehicles bearing the appropriate identification.

Israeli soldiers check the authorization at a checkpoint at one end of the street. □

14 federations make list of top 400 charities in U.S.*By Debra Nussbaum Cohen*

NEW YORK (JTA) — Fourteen Jewish community federations have won places on a new list of the 400 largest charities in America.

But the top Jewish cause on the list in years past, the United Jewish Appeal, got knocked off this year's ranking by the Chronicle of Philanthropy.

The prestigious Chronicle, which published the list in its edition this week, decided to stop including UJA, since the money donated by individuals and funneled to the charity through their local federations was being counted twice. UJA was the sixth-largest charity on the Chronicle chart last year, and the fourth the year before.

The largest Jewish charity in America, ranking 29 among the Chronicle's top 400, is now the Jewish Communal Fund, a kind of sister philanthropy to the UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, which itself ranked 36th on the list.

The Jewish Communal Fund garnered private donations of \$160.4 million during the 1996 fiscal year.

Its donors are people who place their philanthropic money in the communal fund and then direct it to make contributions to their preferred charities, rather than writing individual checks to those charities themselves.

Communal funds, along with family foundations, are the fastest-growing Jewish charities, experts say.

In addition to New York, the other Jewish federations making the Chronicle's list this year were those in Chicago, which ranked 54 on the list; San Francisco, 101; Baltimore, 154; Philadelphia, 157; Boston, 177; Detroit, 186; Los Angeles, 189; Cleveland, 190; Milwaukee, 292; Miami, 325; Washington, 341; MetroWest, N.J., 358; and Atlanta, 361.

The federations whose ranking changed most significantly from last year were San Francisco, which moved up from 227; Baltimore, up from 249; and Philadelphia, up from 213. San Francisco now ranks as the third largest federation, up from eighth last year.

Other Jewish charities making the list were Yeshiva University, which ranked 138; Hadassah, 166; the Anti-Defamation League, 191; the Jewish National Fund, 275; and Brandeis University, 279.

Two American fund-raising offices for Israeli colleges made the top 400: the American Committee for the Weizmann Institute of Science, which ranked 196, and the American Society for Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, which ranked 202.

JTS singled out for impressive gains

The Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary of America was singled out as an institution that saw impressive gains in 1996.

Ranked as 220 on the list, JTS realized a 32 percent increase in donations in 1996. It raised \$32.6 million, including a \$7 million gift from a retired rabbi.

Darrell Friedman, president of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, was highlighted with his own sidebar in this week's edition of the Chronicle as someone who managed to increase his federation's income by 79 percent in 1996 and has doubled his agency's reserves in the 11 years he has run it.

New York's Jewish Communal Fund, which requires an initial deposit of \$10,000, has 1,300 individual donors with over \$400 million in assets there, the fund's executive vice president, Eric Stein, said in an interview.

Almost every Jewish federation has a communal fund component, but the New York federation is unique in that the Jewish Communal Fund is incorporated separately.

The Jewish Communal Fund issued donor-directed checks for just over \$65 million in fiscal 1996, its 25th anniversary year.

The largest recipient of those funds was the UJA-Federation of New York, which spawned the Jewish Communal Fund in 1972 and was itself the second highest-ranked Jewish group on the Chronicle's list.

The Jewish Communal Fund's net income for 1996 was about \$25 million, Stein said, earned by taking an administrative fee of .75 percent of the value of each contributor's portfolio at the fund. The value of the fund's contributions to other charities leaped to \$90 million for fiscal 1997, said Stein, though the donations dropped to \$103 million.

The fund's fiscal year runs July 1 to June 30.

In fiscal 1995, the fund had donations of about \$60 million and ranked only 69 on the Chronicle's list of 400. Donations nearly tripled the following year because of the hot stock market, said Stein. □

Clinton to ban weapons permits in response to decision by Israel*By Matthew Dorf*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Sparked by Israel's decision to export thousands of assault weapons to the United States, President Clinton has decided to ban future permits for similar sales.

But Clinton has not yet decided if he will revoke the permit for the government-owned Israel Military Industries to export Uzis and Galil guns for retail sale in the United States. In response to the pending executive directive, Israel's ambassador to the United States said no sales would take place for three months.

Confirming reports of Clinton's intentions, White House spokesman Mike McCurry said Tuesday, "We now are seeing manufacturers who are able in a sense to clone assault weapons and slip underneath" the 1994 assault weapons ban. "The president has been concerned about that," he said.

The Israeli company modified its guns just enough to escape that ban. It intends to sell to an American gun distributor for retail sale in the United States.

Clinton was expected to sign two directives on the issue as early as this week.

Israel's decision to export the guns to the United States infuriated Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), who, along with two-thirds of the Senate's Democrats, urged Clinton to use his presidential authority to limit foreign-made assault weapons from coming into the country. A similar letter from Rep. Walter Capps (D-Calif.), who died this week of a heart attack, has attracted 22 House members.

Feinstein had also urged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to cancel the sale. In a letter to Feinstein, Israeli Ambassador Eliahu Ben-Elissar said Israel would cancel the planned sale of weapons if such sales are banned by the United States or if other countries with similar sales pending opt to cancel them on their own.

Feinstein, who had attacked an earlier letter from Netanyahu defending the sale, called this week's response "a tentative step forward."

The U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms recently approved modified versions of the Uzi and Galil for import.

President Bush originally banned the import of the Israeli-made guns, along with other models, after five children were killed and 30 wounded in a California schoolyard by a similar weapon in 1989. Clinton's order could also affect at least a dozen other countries that have received similar permits to export their guns. □

Swiss banks release 14,000 names of dormant accounts*By Mitchell Danow*

NEW YORK (JTA) — Swiss banks have released the names of an additional 14,000 dormant accounts opened before the end of World War II.

Because of the large number of names — and complaints from account holders that their privacy was invaded when the banks published in July a list of some 1,800 dormant accounts — none of the names of the account holders will be published in newspapers.

Of the 14,000 accounts, about 3,700 belonged to non-Swiss citizens, but the banks provided no assurances that they belonged to Holocaust survivors. These names were posted on the Internet.

Those interested in accessing this list of accounts and obtaining an information kit can do so via the Internet at www.dormantaccounts.ch

Anyone with questions can call (800) 662-7708.

The remaining 10,000 or so accounts belonged to Swiss citizens.

Some of these citizens may have opened the accounts on behalf of Holocaust victims.

The bankers' association said this list includes only those accounts containing \$70 or more.

Information regarding accounts with Swiss names may be obtained directly from the Swiss banks or their overseas representatives.

The 3,700 accounts opened by non-Swiss citizens, worth a total of \$4.1 million, are more than twice the number of accounts published by the Swiss Bankers Association in July.

The average amount in these latest accounts is about \$1,100.

The Swiss banks said they would add accrued interest according to a formula to be devised by American economist Henry Kaufman.

By comparison, the July list of some 1,800 dormant accounts opened by non-Swiss citizens, published in major newspapers around the world and on the Internet, involved accounts estimated at the time to have a value of some \$42 million.

The accounts that were opened by Swiss citizens are valued at about \$8.3 million, bringing the total amount involved in all the accounts announced so far to about \$54.4 million.

The Swiss banks last year began their investigation of dormant accounts from World War II after being criticized by Jewish leaders for serving as the Nazis' bankers and for refusing to turn over accounts opened by Jews fleeing the Holocaust.

As the investigation proceeds, more accounts are being turned up by the Swiss banks, as their own recent disclosures have shown.

In testimony given last fall before a U.S. congressional panel, Swiss Bankers Association representatives said they could only locate 775 accounts worth about \$32 million.

Jewish groups have charged that Swiss banks are holding up to \$7 billion in assets deposited by Jews during the World War II era. □

Nazis or Communists? Belarus probes World War II-era murders*By Lev Krichevsky*

MOSCOW (JTA) — Belarus has reopened an investigation into a series of mass executions of the country's citizens during the World War II era.

The move came after a member of the original

investigative team was quoted as saying the results of that inquiry were falsified.

One official has suggested that Nazi units — not Stalin's secret police, known as the NKVD — were responsible for the murders of some 250,000 Belarussian citizens, including thousands of Jews, buried at Kuropaty, a mass grave on the outskirts of the capital of Minsk.

There is some question about the date of the grave, which was discovered only in recent years. Some believe that it was the site of mass executions in the 1930s, and that the NKVD was responsible. The decision to reopen the investigation was based on the possibility that the murders took place in the 1940s after the Nazi occupation.

The issue of whether the Nazis or Communists were responsible for the mass killings is of more than passing interest in the former Soviet republic. Belarus' president, Alexander Lukashenko, has made no secret of his affinity for the Soviet era.

The original investigation was conducted in 1988 and 1989, before the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The investigation was headed by archaeologist Zenon Pozniak, currently leader-in-exile of the opposition Belarussian Popular Front.

That panel concluded that Belarussian units associated with the NKVD were responsible for the mass killings.

Contributing to the controversy, a Russian television station recently aired charges that Pozniak's father was a Nazi collaborator — a charge denied by Pozniak, who says his father fought with the Red Army against the Nazis.

Human rights activists have criticized Lukashenko for his authoritarian ways, his treatment of the press and for the various restrictions he has placed on democratic reforms in his nation of 10 million.

But he remains highly popular among the country's population, including many of Belarus' 100,000 Jews.

Last week, some 1,000 people took part in a protest march in the Belarussian capital of Minsk to denounce legislation that would allow Belarussian officials to close any media outlet publishing materials the government believes threaten the country's national interests or defame its president.

Yakov Basin, a Jewish activist and editor of *Mezuzah*, a Minsk-based monthly newspaper of the Reform Jewish movement, said the Jewish press in Belarus was not specifically threatened by the legislation.

But he expressed concern that the legislation would enable the State Committee on the Press to shut down any publication or broadcast operation it wants.

Under previous legislation, this could have been done only through the courts.

There are four Jewish periodicals in Belarus, three of which are headquartered in Minsk. □

Russia to help Libya with nukes

MOSCOW (JTA) — On the heels of reports that Russia is helping Iran develop missile technology, Moscow appears to be ready to increase its dealings with Libya.

The Russian minister for emergency situations has announced that Russia is ready to start talks with Libya on overhauling one of its nuclear research centers.

A Russian news agency quoted unidentified Russian government sources as saying Moscow's cooperation with Libya has been "slowed down" by the international embargo against Muammar Gadhafi's state.

Those sources added that "no firm ground exists for the sanctions since Libya has denounced terrorism and is taking steps in compliance with the demands of the international community." □