



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Avigdor Lieberman, director-general of the Israeli Prime Minister's Office, resigned.** His resignation comes after Likud Party members called for his dismissal when it was charged that he secretly videotaped party members at their recent convention. [Page 3]

■ **President Clinton sharply criticized Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during talks last Friday with former Prime Minister Shimon Peres, American officials were quoted as saying.** According to the sources, the president said his administration had lost faith in Netanyahu. In response, a senior aide to the prime minister said Israel has fulfilled all its obligations stemming from the Oslo accords.

■ **A Palestinian was killed in an explosion in the West Bank that military sources said could have occurred while he was preparing a bomb.** The incident was in an area under Israeli security control.

■ **Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to expand the number of Jews living in eastern Jerusalem.** He made the pledge after touring Jerusalem's Old City to review security arrangements after last week's murder of a yeshiva student. [Page 2]

■ **Greece unveiled a memorial to the nearly 50,000 residents of Salonika who died in the Holocaust.** Some 40 Holocaust survivors attended the ceremony. [Page 3]

■ **A bank vault in Brazil that is believed to contain looted Nazi gold and jewelry is expected to be opened this week.** Rabbi Henry Sobel, a member of a Brazilian commission searching for gold looted from Holocaust victims, said he hopes to discover the owners of the valuables.

■ **The city of Beverly Hills, Calif., has lost the latest battle over a menorah display in a public park.** A judge in a U.S. district court ruled that a Beverly Hills ordinance banning the display of a menorah for more than two consecutive days is unconstitutional.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Iraq's saber-rattling raises few eyebrows among Israelis

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — With the latest crisis involving Iraq at least temporarily defused, Israelis are sticking to their view that while Saddam Hussein is good at exposing his menacing teeth, he is more of a cat than a tiger.

Despite vivid memories of Scud missiles raining down on Israeli cities during the Persian Gulf War, the general assessment among experts this time around was that Israel would not have been involved in any potential military confrontation.

Indeed, the resolution of the crisis — Iraq has allowed the return of U.N. weapons inspectors, including the Americans whom Iraq had sought to bar — only reinforced the view that one should let sleeping Saddams lie, even if once in a while they wake up and growl.

"From Israel's point of view, the past five years had not been negative at all," said Res. Maj. Gen. Giora Rom, who served as the Israel Defense Force liaison officer to Operation Desert Storm, the United States-led international coalition that ousted Iraq from Kuwait in 1991.

Rom said that while an Israeli military plan was in the works at the time, "we were very lucky we did not have to test our ability."

Thanks to the U.N. supervision over the past years, he said, "the slowdown in the production of mass-destruction arms was much more effective than had Israel decided to opt for the military option."

But while the threat of immediate conflict between the United States and Iraq dissipated over the weekend, the latest showdown has revived the debate over potential successors to Saddam, the preparedness of Israeli cities for missile attacks and the possibility of Israel seeking a dialogue with Saddam.

Israeli academic and military experts generally agree that a familiar Saddam is better than unknown alternatives.

"Even the Americans have not decided to eliminate Saddam," said Ofra Banjo of Tel Aviv University's Dayan Center.

"They are playing a double game. They speak of Saddam as the ultimate menace, implying that his overthrow would solve problems, but actually they have no interest in eliminating him, because they are concerned of splitting Iraq."

Moreover, she added, there is no guarantee that a post-Saddam Iraq would be a stable country.

Columnist Tommy Lapid of Ma'ariv suggested that if Saddam is replaced, international supervision would be lifted, making the new ruler stronger — and potentially more dangerous — than Saddam.

### 'Saddam Hussein is the problem, not Iraq'

But some experts disagree, advocating the overthrow of Saddam.

"Saddam Hussein is the problem, not Iraq," said Ron Ben-Yishai, a military analyst for the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot.

While analysts and talk shows focused on the conflict with Iraq over the past few weeks, Israeli officials and citizens alike played down the possibility of Israeli involvement.

One exception was Ariel Sharon, the National Infrastructure minister, who warned that unlike six years ago, Israel would not sit idly by in the face of a missile attack.

During the Gulf War, the government of Yitzhak Shamir, under pressure from the Bush administration, held the Israeli military in check as dozens of Iraqi Scud missiles hit the Jewish state.

Washington was concerned at the time that any Israeli military action might weaken the international coalition, which included several Arab countries.

In the latest crisis, however, no Arab country lined up behind the American threats of a military strike.

Still, Israeli officials sought to reassure Israelis that they were not in danger.

"Israel's residents can continue living their lives normally and with

security," Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said last week as the efforts to defuse the crisis were progressing.

However, such statements did not completely calm the general public.

Thousands of anxious Israelis flocked to gas mask distribution centers. The Israel Defense Force reported a fivefold increase in the number of Israelis who were filing into the centers, spurred by concern that Iraq might launch missiles armed with chemical or biological warheads.

None of the Scud missiles launched during the Gulf War had unconventional warheads, but since that was unknown at the time, Israelis were instructed to don gas masks and flee to bomb shelters and sealed rooms each time Iraq launched a missile. The missiles caused extensive property damage and several indirect deaths.

As the latest conflict unfolded, Israel's deputy defense minister, Silvan Shalom, insisted that Israel's cities are well prepared for a possible missile attack.

But others were less certain. "Israel's cities are not prepared for such an attack," said Eli Landau, mayor of Herzliya.

Reuven Pedahzur, a military analyst for the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, said Israel's preparedness was not much better than six years ago, "with the marginal exception that the masks are somewhat better made."

As Israelis acknowledged Saddam's staying power, the latest crisis revived a debate over whether it would be worthwhile to establish a dialogue with Saddam.

"Instead of thinking how to eliminate Saddam, let's start thinking how we can talk to him," said Landau, who was one of the first Likud Party members to advocate a dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization, years before the Oslo accords.

But Banjo, of the Dayan Center, maintained that any suggestion of a dialogue is futile.

"There was no chance in the past, and even less so today, for a dialogue between Saddam Hussein and Israel," Banjo said, adding that Iraq continues to view Israel and the United States as its worst enemies.

## Netanyahu vows more Israelis will settle in eastern Jerusalem

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pledged to continue expanding the Jewish presence in eastern Jerusalem.

The premier made the statement Sunday after a visit to the site where a Jewish yeshiva student was gunned down and another seriously wounded last week in Jerusalem's Old City.

Gabriel Hirshberg, 26, was killed Nov. 19 by automatic gunfire as he was returning to his dormitory with another student, Binyamin Dell, 18, after studying late at the Ateret Cohanim Yeshiva in the Old City.

"We will honor the memory of Gabi by our settlements of Jerusalem and our development and building," Netanyahu said.

Israeli security officials suspect that Palestinian police may have been involved in the attack because Hirshberg and Dell were fired on with Kalashnikov rifles, which are carried by Palestinian police, the Israeli daily Ma'ariv reported.

Meanwhile, the director of the Ateret Cohanim Yeshiva, Mati Dan, said his group would respond to Hirshberg's murder by having 18 more Jewish families move into the Muslim Quarter before the end of the year.

On Sunday, some 20 yeshiva students began clearing and renovating one such building.

Dan denied reports that police had forcibly removed the students from the site, saying they left at his

directive.

The yeshiva is partially funded by American millionaire Dr. Irving Moskowitz, who has bought several homes from Arabs in eastern Jerusalem as part of a campaign to settle Jews there. Palestinian officials denounced Netanyahu's declaration about building in Jerusalem as a further provocation.

In further violence, an attacker stabbed a yeshiva student Saturday in the Muslim Quarter.

The student, who suffered minor wounds to his neck, told police he believed his attacker was a Palestinian.

Jerusalem was at the center of a dispute last week between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, which vowed to thwart plans by the self-rule government to carry out a census of Palestinians living in the eastern portion of the city.

The self-rule authority agreed in the Oslo accords not to conduct any activity in the eastern part of the capital. □

## Fortune survey ranks AIPAC No. 2 among interest groups

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A forthcoming edition of Fortune magazine ranks the American Israel Public Affairs Committee as the second-most-powerful interest group in Washington.

The magazine, which based its findings on a survey of Washington political players, said AIPAC — along with the Association of Trial Lawyers and the American Medical Association — owes its high ranking in part to its "substantial campaign contributions." But, it said, interest groups are valued more for "the votes they can deliver."

The pro-Israel lobby, which the magazine called "calculatedly quiet," has for years been successful in encouraging members of Congress and the administration to support U.S. foreign aid to Israel and other issues related to the U.S.-Israel relationship.

Contrary to the article in the Dec. 8 issue, AIPAC does not contribute money to political candidates.

However, in response to a lawsuit, the Federal Election Commission found in 1992 that AIPAC spent money in an effort to influence congressional elections. AIPAC maintains that the specific expenditures were permissible under campaign finance laws.

The U.S. Supreme Court will soon weigh in on that issue, with arguments scheduled for Jan. 14 in a case involving AIPAC's legal status.

Reacting to the Fortune ranking, a spokeswoman for AIPAC said, "If we are as successful as portrayed, it's due to the profound interest Americans have in ensuring the strong bonds between the U.S. and Israel, and their willingness to roll up their sleeves to do something about it."

The poll, which asked Washington policy wonks to rank the clout of 120 leading interest groups, was distributed to members of Congress, top congressional staffers, senior White House aides, top officers of lobbying organizations and professional lobbyists.

The American Association of Retired Persons received top ranking in the Fortune survey, which was conducted this fall by Democratic pollster Mark Mellman and Republican pollster Bill McInturff.

After AIPAC, the AFL-CIO, the National Federation of Independent Business and the Association of Trial Lawyers of America rounded out the top five.

The National Rifle Association, the Christian Coalition, the American Medical Association, the National Education Association and the National Right to Life Committee completed the list. □

**Greek Jewish Holocaust victims honored with Salonika memorial***By Mitchell Danow*

NEW YORK (JTA) — Greece has dedicated a memorial to a once-thriving community of Jews who perished in the Holocaust — a move that some said was aimed at repairing the country's ties with Israel.

In a moving ceremony Sunday in Salonika, Greek President Costis Stephanopoulos unveiled the monument dedicated to the approximately 50,000 Jews from the northern port city who were killed during the 1941-1945 Nazi occupation of Greece.

The 10-foot-tall menorah-shaped bronze monument — in which a group of people are depicted reaching heavenward from the flames of the death camps — was erected in a central square in Salonika where local Jews were rounded up before being deported to concentration camps.

Greek Holocaust survivors, three Greek ministers, a U.S. congressional delegation, Israeli representatives and Jewish communal officials from around the world attended the ceremony.

Israeli Health Minister Yehoshua Matza, referring to Salonika's large prewar Jewish population, told attendees, "it is no coincidence that the city" was known as the "Jerusalem of the Balkans."

A message from President Clinton was read at the dedication ceremony: "I commend the Greek government, the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece and the Jewish community of Salonika for their vision and dedication in erecting this powerful monument."

Greek government officials said the memorial would help ease a series of misunderstandings with Israel and put an end to accusations that Greece fostered anti-Semitism.

"It is an important event of historical memory, but also a settlement of misunderstandings" between Greece and the Jewish state, Culture Minister Evangelos Venizelos told reporters.

Greece, which has close relations with most Arab states, did not recognize Israel until the early 1990s and has been at odds with the Jewish state over a number of issues.

Most recently, Athens was upset by a defense agreement reached between Israel and Turkey.

Greece and Turkey have long been engaged in disputes over territorial rights in the Aegean Sea and over the divided island of Cyprus.

**Ancient Jewish presence**

Some Jewish leaders maintained that the monument was delayed for decades by successive governments in Athens and by the Greek Orthodox Church.

Last year, a Holocaust memorial was unveiled in the northwestern Greek city of Kastoria to commemorate local Jews who perished at Auschwitz.

The monument was erected at the place where the Nazis, on March 24, 1944, gathered Kastoria's 1,000 Jews for deportation to Auschwitz. Only 35 survived the Holocaust.

Jewish communities in Greece date back to the sixth century B.C.E.

Salonika's Jewish presence rose dramatically during the 15th century when a large number of Jews arrived from Spain to avoid the Inquisition.

At the start of the 20th century, there were some 75,000 Jews in Salonika — about half the city's population.

During the occupation of Greece, the Nazis destroyed nearly all of Salonika's Jewish sites.

Approximately 67,000 Greek Jews were exterminated by the Nazis.

Today, about 1,000 of the country's 5,000 Jews live in Salonika. □

**Senior Netanyahu aide resigns as premier confronts rebellion***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-hand man, Avigdor Lieberman, has resigned as director-general of the Prime Minister's Office.

A statement from the office said Netanyahu was saddened by Lieberman's decision to hand in his letter of resignation Sunday, adding that the premier regretted the departure of the person who had stood by him for many years.

But some senior Likud ministers welcomed the move, blaming Lieberman for recent upheavals in the party.

Commentators said Lieberman's departure could be viewed as further confirmation of Netanyahu's eroding control over his own party.

They noted that Netanyahu and Lieberman were parting over some differences of opinion.

But, they added, it was widely believed that Lieberman was leaving his post to bolster support for Netanyahu within Likud, an activity he was officially prevented from doing because of his position as a civil servant.

Lieberman's departure is believed to have been precipitated by Netanyahu's announcement last week that he had decided to put a referendum before all of the Likud's rank-and-file members on whether or not party primaries should be held to determine the slate of Knesset candidates in the next election.

Lieberman is widely believed to have been behind a Likud Party convention decision earlier this month to cancel the primaries, returning selection of Likud legislative candidates to the party's Central Committee — which is stacked with Netanyahu supporters.

The controversial decision was described as undemocratic by several Likud ministers, Knesset members and party officials.

It also sparked moves by party rebels to take control of the party and perhaps support a no-confidence vote against the government.

Netanyahu's announcement of a referendum, presumably a bid to appease those critics, apparently angered Lieberman, who was not consulted on the matter.

Lieberman, a controversial figure in the prime minister's office, has been caught up in some of the scandals that developed during Netanyahu's tenure.

Earlier this year, the attorney general and state attorney, citing a lack of sufficient evidence, closed an investigation into Lieberman's alleged role in connection with improprieties surrounding the short-lived January appointment of Jerusalem lawyer Roni Bar-On as attorney general.

Critics have accused Lieberman, a long-time Likud Party activist and an immigrant from the former Soviet Union, of using Bolshevik techniques to control the recent Likud convention.

Several senior Likud officials said Lieberman had been behind the videotaping at the convention of activists opposed to the initiative to cancel party primaries.

Science Minister Michael Eitan welcomed Lieberman's resignation: "This is the person who was responsible for perpetrating the awful crisis in the party." But some party activists criticized the move, complaining that Lieberman was being made a scapegoat. □

## Israeli adversaries on peace attempt to establish dialogue

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Recent acts of extremism in Israel have prompted two groups with opposing political ideologies to try to find common ground.

Last week's unlikely gathering brought together members of the Israeli peace group Dor Shalom, or Generation for Peace, with members of the conservative national religious camp.

The Nov. 18 meeting was called after Dor Shalom's Jerusalem offices were torched last month.

It also took place after right-wing Knesset members recently received death threats.

After their session at the peace group's offices, officials from both sides stressed the importance of halting extremism and incitement.

Yuval Rabin, the son of assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and a founder of Dor Shalom, joined with a member of the Knesset from the National Religious Party, Hanan Porat, in calling for more dialogue to bridge the political divide.

Rabin said the real test of whether discussions between the ideologically opposed groups are effective would come when final-status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians focus on the future of Jewish settlements.

Referring to fears that the peace process could provoke strife within Israeli society, Rabin told reporters, "I think our obligation is to hope for the best, but prepare for the worst."

When his father was struck down by a nationalist's bullet two years ago, Israel had recently committed to turning over portions of the West Bank to Palestinian control.

Rabin condemned the person who last week sent an anonymous death threat to Porat — with a bullet enclosed in the letter.

A similar letter was sent two weeks ago to Knesset member Benny Alon of the far-right Moledet Party.

"I want to make perfectly clear that this is exactly the opposite of what my father stood for," Rabin said. "Anyone thinks he is acting on behalf of Yitzhak Rabin's memory is grossly wrong."

Rabbi Menachem Froman, of the settlement of Tekoa, said the initiative for dialogue was endorsed by the leaders of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and that more meetings would take place.

"We are going to make a similar meeting very soon."

"I think that the whole Israeli society has something to learn from the murder that took place two years ago." □

## Czech government to establish guidelines for teaching religion

By Randi Druzin

PRAGUE (JTA) — Czech state schools will be receiving new guidelines on teaching religion, a move that comes in the wake of a teacher's anti-Semitic lecture to a high school class.

Earlier this month, 25 seniors at Prague's Na Prazacce High School sent a letter to Czech Chief Rabbi Karol Sidon asserting that their teacher, Vera Vesecka, said Jewish suffering, including the Holocaust, was a "just result of the role Jews played in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ."

The students charged that Vesecka, 70, who was lecturing on Christian ethics, said the only way Jews can

have a "fully meaningful existence" is to convert to Christianity.

Tomas Kraus, executive director of the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic, said one "can hear similar sentiments expressed during Mass at churches in towns outside Prague."

But Kraus said he was "surprised a person with these views was permitted to teach."

"It is not the fault of the teacher, but of the [educational] system."

Vesecka, a Seventh-Day Adventist who has been giving lectures on religion in Prague schools since 1990, called the students' letter "a lie."

"I love Jews," she said. "I do not want to harm anyone."

She said that in her 45-minute lecture she named Jesus as the only example of a perfect person and read a description of Jesus' trial to the class.

The passage has "the multitude" crying for Jesus to be crucified, but Vesecka said that does not mean Jews were responsible for Jesus' death.

She was quoted in a Czech newspaper, however, as saying that "If Jews want to be saved, they must accept that [Jesus] is the messiah."

The Czech chief rabbi described Vesecka's comments as "a typical example of medieval anti-Semitism."

After a Nov. 13 meeting between Sidon and Education Minister Jiri Grusa, the ministry announced that it would develop a "decree redefining conditions of religious lessons at state schools." □

## Jewish official played role in Netanyahu-Hussein meeting

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Last week's hastily arranged meeting in London between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and King Hussein of Jordan came about in an unusual way.

While driving to a doctor's appointment Nov. 13, Rabbi Marvin Hier, founder and dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, received a call on his cell phone from the Jordanian monarch, who was then in Washington.

Hussein told Hier that he was sending his personal aide to Los Angeles on an important mission.

The next morning the aide, Gen. Ali Shukri, arrived at the Wiesenthal Center carrying a message from the king.

It said Hussein wanted to restore his country's frayed relationship with Israel and could meet Netanyahu at Hussein's London home on Nov. 18.

According to Hier, Shukri stressed four points motivating the monarch:

- to re-establish high-level intelligence exchanges;
- to assess the outstanding issues of Palestinian airport and seaport facilities;
- to discuss a possible moratorium on Hamas terrorist activities; and
- to cement the personal relationship between Hussein and Netanyahu.

Hier said he immediately got in touch with Yoram Ben Ze'ev, Israel's consul general in Los Angeles, who conveyed the invitation directly to Netanyahu.

The details were finalized Nov. 17, when Hussein phoned Netanyahu as the prime minister was touring the Wiesenthal Center's Museum of Tolerance.

Hier said he and the king had established a warm personal relationship when the Jordanian monarch toured the Wiesenthal Center last year, and that the king had invited the rabbi to visit him at the Mayo Clinic during his recent illness. □