



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **The United Nations General Assembly postponed further discussion until next week on a controversial resolution that would elevate the status of the Palestinians at the United Nations. The Arab-sponsored resolution, which would give the Palestinians state status without voting rights, had prompted days of behind-the-scenes diplomatic maneuvering.**

■ **The Tripartite Gold Commission knowingly distributed between 50 and 60 tons of Holocaust victims' personal gold to European countries after World War II, according to a document released by the World Jewish Congress at the London conference on Nazi gold. The commission was mandated to return only gold looted from central banks.**

■ **Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan will be allowed to visit Israel as part of his three-month international tour, according to Israel's Foreign Ministry. But Farrakhan will not be received by any Israeli official unless he apologizes for his anti-Semitic remarks. [Page 3]**

■ **A general strike involving 700,000 workers paralyzed Israel, shutting down Ben-Gurion Airport as well as banks and other services. [Page 2]**

■ **Germany launched a trial of a man accused of participating in the murder of Jews in a Ukrainian village during World War II. The trial of Ernst Hering, 75, could be one of the last war crimes trials in Germany. [Page 4]**

■ **A Holocaust survivor's archive is scheduled to be auctioned Friday by Sotheby's of London. Edith Hahn's personal letters, photographs and records during the war are being auctioned off because she is in financial need.**

■ **Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai presented his proposal for a further redeployment from the West Bank to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other senior Cabinet ministers. Meanwhile, settlement leaders were reportedly trying to persuade National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon to revise the map he prepared for final-status talks with the Palestinians.**

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Clinton pressure on Israel draws muted Jewish response

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu apparently had had enough of the crescendo of American criticisms.

In uncharacteristically blunt and equally undiplomatic language, Netanyahu lambasted President Clinton for engaging in "unbecoming" conduct for not scheduling a meeting with him.

"The entire Jewish state feels humiliated if such action is directed against us," he said in a CNN interview last week.

But as Netanyahu broke his silence to lash out at Clinton, the American Jewish community continues to meet the chilled U.S.-Israel relations with comparative silence.

The muted Jewish response can be explained as much by what is seen as the president's positive record on Israel as it can by a growing dissatisfaction in the American Jewish community over the stalled peace process.

Except for some criticism of Clinton for blaming Israel for the United States' inability to hold the Gulf War coalition together in the latest crisis with Iraq, Jewish groups for the most part have adopted a wait-and-see attitude and are giving Clinton room to work.

Clinton is clearly counting on his reservoir of good will in the Jewish community as he pursues an aggressive effort to prod the Israeli government to take a bold step in negotiations with the Palestinians.

"The administration is testing the waters on pressure," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

In addition to withholding a meeting with Netanyahu until there is progress in the peace talks, Clinton administration officials have threatened to go public by the end of December with their differences with Israeli policy unless progress is made.

State Department officials said the United States would publicly call on Israel to cede West Bank territory to create a "viable Palestinian entity" and to halt all settlement construction.

Amid such efforts, Jewish organizations are clearly pre-occupied with how to respond.

A conference call among Jewish groups last week was followed Monday night by a two-hour night meeting of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

### 'We'll know it when we see it'

The discussion included a plea from Dore Gold, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, who called on the conference to express solidarity with the Israeli government.

But the umbrella group, which is seen as the organized Jewish community's main liaison with the administration, decided to send a letter to Clinton that would not explicitly criticize the president's pressure on Israel.

While some right-of-center groups like the Zionist Organization of America and the Orthodox Union urged the Conference of Presidents to speak out against Clinton's shift in strategy, many participants in the Monday meeting said a consensus emerged that Clinton has not crossed "the line."

A conference leader told the group that knowing when pressure has become too much is like the judicial argument of defining pornography — "We'll know it when we see it," a source said.

The letter to Clinton, whose wording sparked debate among conference members and was expected to be finalized later this week, was likely to call for strong U.S.-Israel relations and reciprocity in the Israeli and Palestinian commitments to the peace process.

Some Jewish officials said the decision not to directly criticize the president was due in part to Clinton's record on Israel during his past five years in office.

"There remains a pretty strong faith in this administration, but faith does not mean blind support," said David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee.

"The starting point is different than the Bush-Baker years," when the Jewish community was quick to attack the White House, Harris said, referring

to the Jewish community's strong reaction to the Bush administration's policies toward Israel.

At that time, Bush, angered by the Israelis' settlement policies, delayed loan guarantees to the Jewish state.

Most believe that Clinton, regardless of policy differences with Israel, would not withhold economic, military or intelligence support — moves certain to draw the wrath of most Jewish organizations.

Many Jewish officials who support the Oslo peace process said privately that Netanyahu's failure to move the peace process forward has led to an erosion of support for him. In fact, some said they support Clinton's efforts to push Netanyahu.

Reform Jewish leaders tried to paint the Jewish community's response as an outgrowth of the battle over religious pluralism in Israel.

The decision to give Clinton some leeway is "an example of the lack of confidence that much of American Jewry and its establishment has with this prime minister and his government's policies," said Rabbi Ammiel Hirsch, executive director of the Association of Reform Zionists of America.

But opponents of the Oslo peace process argue that the Clinton administration should be strongly criticized. "We would be derelict in our duty if we do not condemn Clinton," said Morton Klein, president of the ZOA.

Klein blamed the decision to withhold criticism on "the fact that much of the leadership is not acutely aware of [Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser] Arafat's behavior and the great dangers facing Israel."

In addition, Klein said, "Because the vast majority of the Jewish community is Democratic, they are much more reluctant to confront a Democratic president."

Klein found an unusual ally when the usually left-leaning American Jewish Congress called Clinton's unilateral pressure on Netanyahu "bad tactics and bad strategy."

"It may well be that Israel's response to the peace process has been inadequate," the AJCongress said in a statement last week, but "there has to be more to U.S. diplomacy than mere insistence that Israel yield territory and stop settlements."

B'nai B'rith planned to send its own letter expressing disappointment over Clinton's "undue pressure" on Israel.

For its part, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby, believes that "the pressure school is counterproductive."

The administration "may be losing sight that there cannot be real progress in the peace process without close relations with Israel," said an AIPAC official.

"Having said that, we do not believe that we are in a deep crisis," the AIPAC official said, adding that it would be wrong to "overstate the chasm." □

## General strike paralyzes Israel, shuts down airports and banks

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A nationwide strike involving some 700,000 workers nearly shut Israel down on Wednesday.

The strike, which ground Israel's economy to a near halt, affected the nation's airports, banks, rail services, hospitals, government offices and state-owned industries.

The strike was called by the Histadrut labor federation to protest privatization plans and unresolved wage and pension disputes.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the action a "political strike," telling reporters in the Knesset that he had no idea why Histadrut called it.

After several hours of consultations, Israel's national labor court ordered the workers back to their jobs Wednesday evening, but Histadrut leaders said they had not decided whether to honor the ruling.

Histadrut's anger over ongoing disagreements with Finance Minister Ya'acov Ne'eman were further fueled this week when Ne'eman, referring to union activists, said, "We don't need enemies from outside."

"We have among us bombs," he added, "home-made, exploding bombs."

Ne'eman apologized Wednesday, saying his remarks had been misunderstood.

But the apology was rejected by Histadrut Chairman Amir Peretz, and the federation's communications division issued stickers reading, "I'm a bomb made by Ne'eman."

At issue are pension and wage agreements reached by Histadrut with the previous Labor government two weeks before last year's national elections.

Ne'eman has argued that the agreements have no legal standing and were a last-bid attempt by the previous government to woo voters.

Histadrut officials have countered that Ne'eman's predecessor, Likud Knesset member Dan Meridor, honored the agreement.

The Histadrut workers are also angry about privatization plans that the government is accelerating.

The unions are demanding that they should be consulted before state-owned companies are sold off.

The last general strike in September lasted only a few hours before the labor court issued temporary back-to-work orders. □

## El Al shifts policy on pilots, allowing women under its wings

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's national airline has decided to bring female pilots under its wings.

Responding to court complaints filed against it, El Al this week dropped its requirement that its pilots come out of Israel's air force, which until recently excluded women.

The complaints were brought by Orit Katzir, a pilot with 10 years flying experience who was rejected by El Al as a candidate because she had not served in Israel's air force.

An attorney for Katzir welcomed the move as a major achievement for equal rights in the workplace. However, she noted that her client's future with El Al was still unclear.

"It's definitely an important achievement and will enable [women] to fly in El Al. We still don't know what the indications are in Katzir's case," Hadas Tagari of the Israel Association for Civil Rights told Israel Radio.

Katzir's attorneys had argued that El Al policy was discriminatory, as the Israel air force had only recently opened its flight school to women as a result of a court order.

The decision follows a ground-breaking 1995 ruling by Israel's High Court of Justice that women be allowed into the air force's pilot-training program.

In the end, the woman who challenged the air force's policy, South African-born Alice Miller, was unable to take the training course after she failed the qualifying exam. But her court battle opened the way for other female candidates.

El Al said in a statement this week that its next pilot training course, in March, would be open to all interested candidates with pilot licenses, including those who had not been trained in the air force. □

## In bid to put out Likud fires, Netanyahu offers a referendum

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is busy putting out fires.

In the latest bid to smooth over differences among Likud Party members after last month's stormy party convention, Netanyahu asked the party secretariat to prepare a referendum in January on whether primaries should be held to determine the party's slate of Knesset candidates in the next elections.

The outcome of the poll among the 212,000 registered Likud members will be presented to the Likud Central Committee, which will make a final decision on how to fill the slate of party leaders.

Netanyahu promised the referendum last month amid an uproar among party rebels over a vote at the party convention in which participants voted to cancel the primaries and return selection of the Likud leadership to the party's Central Committee.

Senior Likud ministers and Knesset members claimed the move would return the Likud to the days of back-room dealing and party patronage.

They accused the former director-general of the Prime Minister's Office, Avigdor Lieberman, of being behind the initiative to cancel the primaries and said Lieberman engineered the move to head off any challenges to Netanyahu by giving the reins of influence to the Central Committee, currently filled by Netanyahu supporters.

In the midst of the controversy, Lieberman resigned Nov. 23 from his post as director-general, saying he wanted to pursue business interests.

But it was widely believed that he intended to devote his time to girding support for Netanyahu within Likud, an activity he was officially prevented from doing because of his position as a civil servant.

Despite Lieberman's resignation, ill will remained.

Last week, Science Minister Michael Eitan resigned from a committee created to consider the complaints of improper proceedings at the party convention.

Eitan — who had been one of the more vocal senior Likud members who accused Lieberman of stirring up the current party turmoil and demanded his resignation — cited challenges to his membership on the committee as his reason for leaving.

The rest of the inquiry committee followed Eitan's suit, quitting when the panel convened for its first meeting.

Netanyahu this week asked the Likud's Party court to appoint a committee to look into the complaints. □

## Two panels, two opinions: Reports on Mossad come due

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Two panels examining Israel's recent bungled assassination attempt on a Hamas leader in Jordan in September are emerging with two different opinions.

A Knesset panel probing the failed September Mossad operation found serious flaws in the way the mission was handled, but held no individuals personally responsible.

Its conclusion sharply contrasts with a separate commission of inquiry appointed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, which is expected to issue its preliminary findings soon.

The government commission, which is headed by Yosef Chekhanover, was reportedly planning to send letters of warning to members of Mossad whom the commission

members believe may have been negligent in performing their duties.

In Israel, such letters suggest that individuals targeted by a probe retain legal counsel, since they may soon have charges brought against them.

The Mossad operation, in which two Israeli agents were detained by Jordanian authorities after trying to assassinate Hamas political leader Khaled Mashaal sharply strained Israeli-Jordanian relations, bringing them to a near crisis point.

Jordan's King Hussein, Israel's closest Arab ally, was furious at Israel's attempt to carry out an assassination on Jordanian soil.

Amid dire warnings from Hussein of repercussions if Mashaal died, an Israeli physician was dispatched to Jordan immediately after the attack to administer an antidote to the hospitalized Hamas official.

In an attempt to contain the diplomatic fallout, a high-level delegation of Israel officials flew on Sept. 28 to Jordan to meet with Hussein.

Hussein and Netanyahu recently met in London and apparently smoothed over any lingering anger.

The agents were freed after Israel agreed to release dozens of Palestinian prisoners, including Hamas co-founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin.

Netanyahu drew strong criticism for the bungled affair, including from within his own government.

Foreign Minister David Levy, who appeared before the Chekhanover commission this week, said that he was not briefed on the operation before it took place, and would have opposed it had he known.

Opposition members lashed out at Netanyahu for jeopardizing relations with Jordan, Israel's most amicable peace partner.

But only one opposition legislator on the six-member Knesset panel probing the Mossad operation, Meretz Party leader Yossi Sarid, called for individual Mossad officials to be held personally responsible for the affair.

Labor leader Ehud Barak explained Tuesday why he voted along with the other members of the Knesset subcommittee not to single out individuals.

"We found a lot of things that should be corrected," Barak told Israel Radio.

"But for reasons we cannot explain now, we found it might not be appropriate to take personal steps against individuals." □

## Israel will not bar Farrakhan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The leader of the Nation of Islam will not be prevented from entering Israel should he decide to visit the Jewish state on his upcoming trip.

But no state official will meet the Rev. Louis Farrakhan unless he apologizes for his anti-Semitic remarks and denial of the Holocaust, the Foreign Ministry decided Tuesday.

The ministry said that since Farrakhan was a U.S. citizen, he could enter Israel for a private visit.

The Israeli Embassy in Washington forwarded the decision to Farrakhan's office in Chicago.

Farrakhan notified the embassy Monday that he planned to visit Israel in January as part of a three-month international tour.

Farrakhan, who has often sparked controversy with his anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist rhetoric, announced Sunday that he wants to advance the Middle East peace process.

He said during an interview on CNN that he hoped to visit Israel during an upcoming 52-nation tour that is scheduled to include Syria, Iraq, Libya and Cuba. □

## **Trial of suspected war criminal hinges on Ukrainian's testimony**

*By Deidre Berger*

FRANKFURT (JTA) — Germany has launched what may be one of its last trials of suspected war criminals.

The trial revolves around the 1942 murders of 65 Jews — including about 20 children — by a Nazi paramilitary unit in a Ukrainian village.

Ernst Hering, 75, stands charged with sealing off the village of Israelowka during the roundups and standing guard while others carried out the executions.

Although he is not accused of shooting any of the victims, prosecutors say he was aware that the goal of the roundups was to kill Jews.

Hering, who is being tried in juvenile court in Cologne because he was 19 at the time of the incident, admitted last week at the start of his trial that he was in Israelowka during the roundups of the adults, but claims he can barely remember the events.

Fifty years after the Nuremberg Trials, when dozens of leading Nazi officials, doctors and judges were convicted, Hering's trial could be one of the last such trials in Germany because of the difficulty finding witnesses from so many years ago.

It comes after decades of German prosecution of Nazi war criminals.

German authorities are continuing to investigate some 4,000 suspects, according to officials.

Willie Dressen, director of the federal office charged with investigating war crimes, said that despite the problems, he remains undeterred.

"People must be held accountable for their acts," he said. "We owe it to the victims to continue investigating."

The chief witness in the Hering case, who still lives in Ukraine, has refused to come to Germany to testify. The judges are expected to travel to Ukraine in January for a deposition.

Without the testimony of this witness, there is little chance of convicting Hering, according to Klaus Schacht, director of the office in the German state of North Rhine Westphalia that is responsible for investigating Nazi war crimes.

No judgment is expected in the case until early next year.

The defendant has displayed little emotion in court, except for a comment to the judge that he still has "stomach pains" from the horrible event.

Hering worked as a farmhand and stockroom worker after the war. He was arrested in May 1995 at his home in Leverkusen, in western Germany.

### **Tip comes from Australians**

A tip about Hering came from Australian prosecutors, who were investigating a case involving the murder of the Jews of Israelowka and enlisted the help of their German counterparts.

In the course of taking depositions from former residents of the town, German prosecutors realized that Hering, a possible participant in the murders, lived in Leverkusen. He was later freed pending his trial.

German responsibility for war crimes trials came gradually during the 1950s. The Allies had taken charge immediately after the war, conducting the Nuremberg Trials from 1945-1949.

West Germany conducted more than 100,000 investigations into war crimes, resulting in about 6,500 convictions. Many of the other cases involved suspects who died or vanished.

The most important German trials were conducted during the 1960s and early 1970s, according to Dressen.

Those cases dealt with the extermination camps and the activities of the Einsatzgruppen, the mobile killing squads in Eastern Europe.

Ongoing investigations mostly involve lower-level officials and alleged accessories to war crimes.

Some of the more recent probes were launched as a result of information in the archives of the former East German secret police, which became available after German unification in 1990. □

## **Lithuania may charge Jews for crimes against humanity**

*By Lev Krichevsky*

MOSCOW (JTA) — A top Lithuanian official has hinted that he may investigate Jews suspected of genocide.

The prosecutor general of the Baltic nation pledged last week that his office would create a new department to probe cases of genocide and crimes against humanity committed during World War II.

But he alarmed local Jewish leaders when he said the office would not only study the massacres of Jews committed by both Germans and Lithuanians during the war, but also crimes committed by Jews against Lithuanians when the country was under Soviet control.

"Of course, there were Jews who suffered from Lithuanians. But there were also just the opposite cases, and we all know that," Kazys Pednycia said.

Simonas Alperavicius, chairman of the Jewish community of Lithuania, described the prosecutor general's logic as "absolutely false," adding that it was "non-ethical" and "historically wrong."

"If we are to follow his logic, Jews were killing Lithuanians exactly the way Lithuanians were killing Jews," Alperavicius said in a telephone interview from the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius.

Alperavicius admitted that there were high-profile Jews serving with the Soviet secret police during and after World War II, but said they were acting as Soviet officials, not as Jews. The presence of Jews in the Soviet secret police has prompted many Lithuanians to share the sentiments expressed by the prosecutor general.

Soon after Lithuania gained its independence from the Soviet Union six years ago, nationalism flourished along with a desire to settle historical accounts for the 50 years of Soviet occupation.

As part of that process, Jews were often scapegoated. One particularly convenient accusation was that Jews had collaborated with the communists, especially during the 1940-1941 Soviet campaign to exile thousands of locals to Siberia.

While the wave of nationalism has diminished during the past few years, the accusation continues to serve as a thinly veiled justification for the collaboration of local residents with the Nazis.

During the Nazi occupation of Lithuania from 1941-1944, approximately 94 percent of Lithuania's prewar Jewish community of 240,000 died in the Holocaust.

Historians say ordinary Lithuanians helped with the killings.

Jewish officials continue to question Lithuania's willingness to move against suspected war criminals living in the country, charging that the country's officials are reluctant to make the move because it would dredge up the issue of local collaboration with the Nazis during the war.

Last week, 30 members of the U.S. Congress sent a letter to Lithuanian President Algirdas Brazauskas urging him to stand by his 1995 pledge to put suspected war criminals on trial. □