

**NEWS AT A GLANCE**

■ Jonathan Pollard publicly apologized for breaking the law when he spied for Israel. Speaking to Israeli media, he said he hopes his case will serve as "a cautionary tale for others." [Page 2]

■ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced he would not present any new proposals for withdrawal from the West Bank when he meets with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in Paris on Thursday. The decision came after Israel's Cabinet failed to reach a compromise for a new pullback proposal. [Page 4]

■ Sixteen people have died in Palestinian jails since the 1994 establishment of the Palestinian Authority, according to a Palestinian human rights group. "Unfortunately human rights is not on the P.A.'s agenda yet," said the director of the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group.

■ An Israeli intelligence officer accused of passing false information about Syria to his superiors pleaded not guilty to the charges against him. The proceedings against Yehuda Gil opened behind closed doors in Tel Aviv district court.

■ A Quebec Jewish tombstone manufacturer is being threatened with legal action because a Hebrew word on his storefront sign is the same size as the French words. Under a French language law, all commercial signs must be in French. A second language is permissible, but only if the French portion is in larger letters.

■ Sweden's central bank acquired gold from Nazi Germany that may have been looted. The findings of a bank-appointed commission have prompted discussion about whether Sweden has the moral obligation to pay restitution.

■ A Jewish woman is slated to become the new president of the South American country of Guyana. Janet Jagan, a Chicago native who was expected to win this week's elections, has said the discrimination she faced as a Jew in America influenced her desire to help Guyana's poor.

**FOCUS ON ISSUES****Zionist Congress will hail past as it looks to uncertain future**

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — Some 2,000 Jews from around the world will gather in Jerusalem next week to celebrate the successes of Zionism's first century — and to try to figure out where it's going in the next.

It is an open question for delegates to the 33rd Zionist Congress, slated for Dec. 23-26, 100 years after Theodor Herzl launched the first Zionist enterprise in Basel, Switzerland.

Although not officially on the congress' agenda, religious pluralism, a central focus of Israel-Diaspora relations during the past year, will not be far from anyone's mind.

The Reform movement, newly empowered by winning nearly half of the 145 delegate positions to the congress from the United States, says it will take advantage of having dozens of its members in Israel to advance its agenda.

It will distribute to congress attendees its recently adopted Zionist platform on the centrality of Israel.

It will also lobby members of the Israeli Knesset on religious pluralism.

The Zionist Congress comes at a time of transition for Israel-Diaspora relations and for Zionism itself, which in a century has brought about the creation of the Jewish state and the ingathering of Jews from around the world.

As the needs of a maturing State of Israel and the priorities of Diaspora Jews change, questions about the role each will have in the life of the other loom large for delegates to the congress.

The Zionist Congress is held every four to five years, bringing together Jews to make decisions that will affect the World Zionist Organization.

Part of what is at stake is the distribution of world Jewry's resources, since the WZO has joint authority over the \$400 million annual budget of its partner, the Jewish Agency for Israel.

At least half of that money is contributed by American Jews through the United Jewish Appeal.

The bulk of it is spent in Israel for the absorption and resettlement of immigrants.

Much of the rest is spent for Jewish-Zionist education around the world.

**Zionist establishment undergoing major reorganization**

The overwhelming majority of American Jews likely don't know and don't care about the congress — just 110,000 Jews voted in the U.S. election of delegates to the congress.

But for those who do, it is important.

"The congress is perhaps the most democratic institution there is" in Zionist life, said Karen Rubinstein, executive director of the American Zionist Movement, which ran the election.

"The congress is the chance for American Zionists to try and shape what the relationship between Zionists here and the State of Israel will be," she said.

The congress comes as the central apparatus of the Zionist establishment is undergoing a major reorganization, with the bulk of the WZO being folded into the Jewish Agency, and the agency itself is undergoing tremendous belt-tightening.

The move toward consolidation and depoliticization is a direct result of pressure from American Jews, who have been re-examining their relationship with the Jewish Agency.

At next week's gathering, 29 percent of the delegates will be from the United States, 33 percent from the rest of the Diaspora, and 38 percent are appointed by Israel's political parties.

Among the key issues to be decided:

• The election of chairman of the Jewish Agency and WZO. The congress is expected to seal a deal for Laborite Avraham Burg, the current

chairman, to hold the post for two more years and to be succeeded by Likud candidate Salai Meridor;

- The delegation of key portfolios within the Zionist establishment;

- What responsibilities the WZO will have in the Diaspora and how its representatives will present Israel and Zionism to Jews in Chicago, Ill., Chico, Calif., and Chattanooga, Tenn.

No one yet knows the answers to those questions, insiders say.

But it is certain that representatives of the Reform and Conservative movements will have far more power over how they are resolved than ever before.

They won the lion's share of votes in the recent Zionist Congress election in the United States.

The Association of Reform Zionists of America, the Reform movement's Zionist arm, won 70 delegate seats. Mercaz, the Conservative movement's Zionist arm, won 38. Since they are working jointly as an informal bloc, they wield more than two-thirds of the American Jewish delegation's vote.

The next-largest group of American delegates represents the Religious Zionist Movement, an alliance of Orthodox Zionists from Emunah, Amit and the Religious Zionists of America, which together won 16 seats at the upcoming congress.

The religious movements' victory represented a shift in power among American Zionists, who historically aligned themselves with Israeli political parties.

"The traditional thinking about Zionism in the United States has shifted from a political ideology to a religious ideology, and that reflects American Jews," said Rabbi Daniel Allen, executive vice chairman of the United Israel Appeal, which serves as a link between the UJA and the Jewish Agency.

He attributed the lack of interest in the Zionist Congress to the fact that "in the last 50 years, we have 'Zionized' the entire community," meaning that the congress is no longer the central vehicle for the expression of Zionism.

The Reform and Conservative movements are jousting for control of various WZO portfolios and budgets, just as their political predecessors in power did.

"We expect to assume control over major portfolios, departments of budgets of tens of millions of dollars," said a confident Rabbi Ammiel Hirsch, executive vice president of ARZA.

**'Primary vehicle advocating religious pluralism'**

Control of various departments and staffs also will enable them to ensure that their point of view on religious pluralism — that the State of Israel should recognize the authority of non-Orthodox Jewish clergy on conversions, marriages, divorces and burials — is promulgated by representatives of the Jewish state working all over the world.

Hirsch said his movement wants to work with the Conservatives to enable the Jewish Agency to become "the primary vehicle advocating religious pluralism" within Israel.

The Conservative movement's Mercaz is introducing a resolution to the congress that, if passed, will create a new Department for Jewish Unity, which would help advance tolerance among the movements and strengthen relationships between them and Israel, said Roy Clements.

Clements, president of Mercaz, said the resolution would also require the WZO to actively promote equality of legal status for all the Jewish denominations and oppose any Knesset legislation that would delegitimize one movement or another, he said.

Other delegates said they hoped that the tenden-

tious issue of pluralism would not prevent participants from working together.

"I would like to see the congress be a strong showing that we as Jews can all work together, no matter what our ideological and religious beliefs are," said Sondra Fisch, who will be attending as a delegate for Emunah, an Orthodox women's Zionist group.

Israel Friedman, executive vice president of the Religious Zionists of America, echoed that sentiment.

"All we want to do is avoid these discussions," he said, but warned that if the Reform and Conservative movements "force it on us, then we are there to address it." □

**Pollard issues public apology as Israeli official urges release**

*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Jonathan Pollard has publicly apologized for his actions for all the world to see.

"I am extremely sorry for what happened," Pollard said Wednesday in remarks broadcast on Israeli television.

"I don't believe that anybody who has experienced what I have experienced over the past 13 years could feel anything but profound sorrow and remorse," said the former U.S. Navy intelligence analyst who has been serving a life sentence since 1987 for spying for Israel.

"My motives may have been well and good, but they only served to explain why I did what I did," he said from his Butner, N.C., federal prison. "They certainly do not serve as an excuse for breaking the law. As far as Jonathan Pollard is concerned, I hope he will serve as a cautionary tale for others."

Members of the Israeli media were allowed into the prison to accompany Israel's communications minister, Limor Livnat, who visited Pollard on Wednesday.

Her visit comes several weeks after Absorption Minister Yuli Edelstein became the first Israeli minister to visit Pollard in jail.

Livnat gave Pollard a message from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expressing hope for his imminent release.

The message signaled a possible policy shift on the part of the Israeli government, which has indicated it would more actively campaign on his behalf.

Prior to her departure for the United States, Livnat said the Israeli government should more actively press for Pollard's freedom.

Earlier this month, the Knesset passed a motion calling for his release.

Netanyahu recently denied that he had abandoned Pollard's cause.

He said he had raised the matter three times in discussions with President Clinton.

Clinton rejected a clemency plea from Pollard in July 1996, citing the gravity of his crime, his lack of remorse and the damage he caused to American security.

In the past, Israeli leaders have disassociated themselves from Pollard, maintaining that he passed on information during the 1980s without official Israeli sanction.

Pollard has petitioned Israel's High Court of Justice to compel the government to recognize him as an agent who acted for the state.

In his televised comments, Pollard criticized Foreign Minister David Levy for failing to provide that recognition.

The Foreign Ministry responded that it was cooperating fully with government efforts to secure Pollard's freedom. □

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES**

**Intermovement group urges dialogue on pluralism issues**

*By Debra Nussbaum Cohen*

NEW YORK (JTA) — A group of prominent Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews has issued a public appeal encouraging the work of a committee in Israel charged with resolving the seemingly intractable conflict over religious pluralism.

The group of 18 rabbis, academics and lay leaders was brought together by Shvil HaZahav, an organization founded by modern Orthodox Rabbi Shmuel Goldin, of Englewood, N.J. Goldin's work initially focused on promoting pro-peace process attitudes in the Orthodox community.

He started the interdenominational group last January, when friction between liberal and Orthodox Jews in the United States began to explode amid the push for Israeli legislation to codify Orthodox control over conversions in Israel.

Participants in the dialogue group, which has been meeting quietly every several weeks, are affiliated with the centrist Orthodox-run Yeshiva University, the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary and the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, related denominational organizations and individual congregations.

They are urging that their model of interdenominational dialogue be replicated in other communities.

"There are some other communities that have contacted us, but their attempts are still pending," said Goldin, whose group means "golden path" in Hebrew.

"By going public and attempting to say that this is working for us, we hope to encourage it in other places," he said.

According to participant Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, "American Jews must move beyond their differences and engage their brothers and sisters in civil dialogue. Only then will we begin to develop a genuine understanding of each other."

**'There must be conversations all over the U.S.'**

Another participant, Anne Lapidus Lerner, vice chancellor at JTS, said, "Our dialogue has demonstrated that American Jews can engage in civil discussion with those who have different — frequently fundamentally different — religious points of view.

"To achieve mutual understanding, there must be conversations all over the United States just as we established here.

"So, too, must there be religious dialogue among Israelis" and "between American Jews and Israelis," she said.

In a related development, the Conservative movement this week issued a memorandum to its rabbis and other congregational leaders outlining its position on the current negotiations in Israel.

Those talks are being held by a committee led by Israeli Finance Minister Ya'acov Ne'eman, an Orthodox Jew, and include the participation of several Orthodox members as well as one representative each from the Reform and Conservative movements.

After several missed deadlines, the committee is now facing a Jan. 31 deadline to come up with a way to resolve the demands of the Conservative and Reform movements that the government of Israel recognize their rabbis' authority over matters of personal status such as marriage, divorce and conversion, while it conforms with Orthodox requirements that a traditional interpretation of

Jewish law not be violated in doing so. The Conservative movement statement was written by Rabbi Jerome Epstein, executive vice president of its congregational arm, and Rabbi Joel Meyers, executive director of its rabbinical organization.

They are urging their constituents to communicate their feelings to leaders of the Israeli government, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Ne'eman and Knesset members Natan Sharansky and Alexander Lubot-sky.

It also urges Conservative Jews to express their feelings about the progress, or lack thereof, on religious pluralism, to local Israeli consuls general, and to write op-ed essays for publication in their local newspapers.

The statement says that "while there are no guarantees" that the Ne'eman Committee will be able to develop proposals acceptable both to the Conservative and the Orthodox, "we are committed to working with this process through Jan. 31."

It also outlines the way the Conservative movement, known in Israel as Masorti, is working with the Reform movement.

Though the denominations are lumped together in the minds of many Israelis, there are significant differences, including the fact that the Reform movement permits its rabbis to officiate at intermarriages and same-sex unions, while the Conservative movement does not.

Because together the two movements represent approximately 85 percent of affiliated American Jews, the Conservative movement's leaders say that "it is by working together on this issue that we can most forcefully maintain our own identities while, at the same time, articulate our common demands for religious rights in Israel." □

**Judge orders deportation of former Nazi camp guard**

*By Mitchell Danow*

NEW YORK (JTA) — A Philadelphia man who served as a guard at the Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps has been ordered deported to his native Slovakia.

A federal immigration judge issued the deportation order Monday against Johann Breyer, 72, who admitted that he served in the Nazi SS at the two camps in Nazi-occupied Poland.

The United States will "seek to have Johann Breyer removed from this country as expeditiously as possible," said Eli Rosenbaum, director of the Justice Department's Nazi-hunting Office of Special Investigations.

Rosenbaum said that when Breyer was a guard at Auschwitz between May and September 1944, at least 500,000 people were killed by the Nazis, including some 100,000 children.

He added that guards like Breyer were an "integral part of the Nazi apparatus of mass persecution."

In granting the OSI's deportation request, the immigration judge ruled that Breyer's wartime service as an SS guard constituted membership in a movement hostile to the United States, which rendered him ineligible to immigrate to the United States.

Breyer, a retired tool and die maker, admitted in a sworn interview with OSI attorneys in 1991 that he was an SS guard at Buchenwald beginning in February 1943 and at Auschwitz starting in May 1944.

To date, 60 former Nazis have been stripped of their U.S. citizenship as a result of OSI investigations, and 48 have been deported, according to Rosenbaum's office.

Some 300 suspected war criminals remain under investigation. □

**Israeli Cabinet fails to agree on plan to present to Albright***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will be arriving essentially empty-handed when he meets with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on Thursday.

Netanyahu delayed his departure for Paris until Wednesday night in an unsuccessful bid to finalize Israel's positions on a further redeployment in the West Bank.

Hard-line ministers in his Cabinet blocked efforts by the more moderate Foreign Minister David Levy to let Netanyahu discuss specific proposals for the pullback with Albright. The proposals were to be based on a new map detailing Israel's vision of how its borders should look in a final-status agreement with the Palestinians.

But in several acrimonious Cabinet sessions this week, the ministers were unable to agree on what the new map should look like.

After a three-hour Cabinet meeting Wednesday, Netanyahu and National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon issued a joint statement saying that the prime minister would discuss with Albright only Israel's general interests in the permanent accord. They said he would outline them on an existing map based on the 1995 Interim Agreement, which sets forth the current West Bank status.

"It was our hope that the prime minister could present a map of Israel's security areas to the U.S. Secretary of State," David Bar-Illan, the prime minister's director of communications, told Israel Radio. But the ministers were "unable to reach a compromise" between maps presented by Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and a more hawkish vision presented by Sharon, he said.

The Clinton administration has been demanding that Israel come up with a "credible" proposal for withdrawal. But with hard-line coalition members threatening to bring down the government if Netanyahu started discussing the specifics of a redeployment with Albright, the prime minister was ultimately compelled to scale down the agenda.

The joint statement said the prime minister would stress that any redeployment would depend on Palestinian fulfillment of obligations under the peace accords.

Levy, who had warned that Netanyahu could not go empty-handed to the meeting with Albright, canceled plans to accompany the prime minister on the trip. □

**Pressure mounts on Swiss to reach global settlement***By Daniel Kurtzman*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Pressure is mounting against Swiss banks to reach a global settlement of all claims related to Switzerland's wartime financial dealings.

Until this week, Jewish groups were the primary players calling on the banks to reach a final settlement to resolve all Holocaust-era claims.

Such a settlement could involve a reported \$2 billion to \$3 billion.

But additional players entered the talks Sunday, when the United States began brokering discussions in Zurich in a presumed attempt to include a separate class-action lawsuit in the overall deal.

That lawsuit was brought in New York by Holocaust victims against the banks, which stand accused of refusing to pay out dormant bank accounts opened by Jews during the World War II era.

The banks have indicated a willingness to seek a constructive solution, but have insisted that a global settlement must resolve the issue once and for all, be

endorsed by the U.S. and Israeli governments and put an end to the class-action suit.

The Swiss government, however, has rebuffed a call by World Jewish Congress President Edgar Bronfman to participate in any global settlement.

Stuart Eizenstat, U.S. undersecretary of state for economic affairs, brought together the chief executives of Switzerland's three largest banks with attorneys representing plaintiffs in the class-action suit.

Eizenstat characterized the discussions as "exploratory," but declined to elaborate.

Israel Singer, general-secretary of the WJC, met separately with bank officials for the second time in as many weeks, but Jewish officials were also tightlipped about the details of the discussions currently underway.

One of the lead attorneys representing Holocaust survivors in the more than \$20 billion class-action lawsuit gave a boost to the prospect of a wider settlement this week by endorsing the WJC's idea of a lump-sum payment.

"There should be a global settlement because it provides closure for everybody, and I think we would all agree the Holocaust victims get the money," Edward Fagan, a New York attorney, told reporters in Zurich.

It was not clear, however, whether other attorneys involved in the lawsuit — or the class-action plaintiffs themselves — shared that view.

Some Holocaust survivors pressing claims have criticized WJC in the past for "not representing us."

Talk of a global settlement began in earnest this month after Bronfman said Switzerland needed to pay billions of dollars in order to bring closure to the entire range of material claims related to Switzerland's wartime activities, including the issue of dormant bank accounts and Swiss purchases of Nazi gold.

The next few months are expected to determine whether such a settlement can be reached.

**'90-day time bomb'**

Last week, public financial officials from across the United States agreed to wait until March 31, 1998, before imposing further sanctions against Swiss banks for what they view as foot-dragging in paying off Holocaust victims' claims.

"There's a 90-day time bomb ticking under the chairs of the Swiss banks," one source familiar with the situation said.

In another development that could increase pressure on the banks to settle quickly, the head of an independent panel auditing dormant bank accounts said this week that the process was going slower than he would like.

"I am as impatient and frustrated as other people, but this is the nature of the problem," Paul Volcker, former chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve, told a news conference.

He said two-thirds of the claims for the bank accounts filed so far have been confirmed as valid — 4,500 out of the 6,600. He said he did not know how many of the accounts belonged to people killed by the Nazis, but added that many of the names appeared to be Jewish.

Five claims have been settled, Volcker said, but he declined to specify their value.

In the past year, Swiss banks have published the names of nearly 16,000 accounts opened before World War II, many of which may have belonged to Holocaust victims. The combined value of those accounts is about \$54.4 million.

Volcker said experts attempting to resolve claims had encountered more difficulty than expected, and the target date for completing the task has been extended six months, to December 1998. □