TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Clashes continue in Hebron

Clashes broke out between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers in Hebron for the fifth straight day. At one checkpoint near the West Bank town, some 100 Palestinian youths threw stones at the soldiers, who responded with tear gas and rubber bullets. No injuries were reported in the incident, which occurred as Israel Radio reported that a closure imposed on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip would remain in effect through the holiday of Sukkot.

Poets slam Polish government

A group of prominent Polish intellectuals and an association of Polish war veterans criticized the Polish government for failing to take action that would end the crisis over the crosses erected by Catholic fundamentalists at the site of the Auschwitz death camp. Six eminent Polish intellectuals, including Nobel Prize-winning poets Czeslaw Milosz and Wislawa Szymborska, published an open letter to Polish Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek last week calling for government intervention to halt the crisis.

Albright set to arrive

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the Palestinians are not doing enough to curb violence by Muslim extremists. Netanyahu's comments came as Israeli and Palestinian officials met in Jerusalem two days before U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is scheduled to arrive in the region. Albright is hoping to prod the two parties closer to reaching a deal on a U.S. proposal to keep the peace process alive.

U.S. officials may expand work

The committee of U.S. public finance officials that helped pressure Swiss banks reach a $1.25 billion settlement with Holocaust survivors may monitor other European financial institutions that dealt in Holocaust-era assets. The committee's chairman, New York City Comptroller Alan Hevesi, said the group may begin monitoring other banks, insurance companies and businesses, according to the World Jewish Congress.

> Because of Sukkot, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Tuesday and Wednesday, Oct. 6 and 7.

REMEMBERING THE YOM KIPPUR WAR

U.S. Jews mobilized for Israel with prayers, money and lobbying

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — For many American Jews, news of the Yom Kippur War was delivered in a whisper.

"In shul, a man very dramatically walked up to the front" and spoke quietly to the rabbi, who "made the solemn announcement that Israel had been invaded," recalls Martin Raffel, the director for international concerns at the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, who was a law student in 1973.

But by the end of services that Saturday 25 years ago, as Jews gathered to break the fast, the alarm was blaring across the country and U.S. Jewry was mobilizing.

"Our first reaction was, 'We did it in '67 and we'll do it again in '73,' " says Rabbi Arnold Goodman, a Conservative rabbi in Atlanta who was on the pulpit in a Minneapolis synagogue when he heard the first reports of war. "By nightfall, it was very apparent that it wouldn't be the same."

The euphoria that had buoyed American Jews for six years after Israel's rapid victory in the 1967 Six-Day War evaporated into overwhelming apprehension as details of the Syrian and Egyptian surprise attack were confirmed by news reports, calls to national Jewish leaders and notification from Israeli consulates.

Concern for Israel's security, however, energized rather than paralyzed the American Jewish community, which sprang to action: raising funds, lobbying Congress and the White House and working to build widespread support among the general public for the beleaguered Jewish state.

Jews were united by the "fear that the only Jewish homeland we had was under attack," says Shoshana Cardin, a prominent national Jewish leader who was head of the Baltimore Jewish federation's women's division during that fateful period.

Communal cooperation at all levels was prompted by the shock of the surprise Arab military strike, the reports of unprecedented Israeli losses on the front lines and the belief that the U.S. government was withholding urgently needed military equipment.

"There was a groundswell of concern for Israel's future in a way I had never experienced before," recalls Rabbi Jeffrey Wohlberg, the spiritual leader of a conservative synagogue in Washington, who in 1973 was working in Harrisburg, Pa.

"It was across the board," says Cardin. "It did not break down to religious, political differences, Zionist or non-Zionist."

Swift activity began after Yom Kippur ended Saturday evening. An emergency session of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations was held in New York to discuss strategies for generating political and public support for Israel.

On Oct. 9 — as the Soviet Union began to send additional arms to Egypt and Syria — some 1,000 religious and communal leaders convened in Washington.

Before that meeting, a select group, including veteran Jewish leader and Republican Party activist Max Fisher, met with Conference of Presidents Chairman Jacob Stein. They decided to urge President Nixon to send aid to Israel, and Fisher hand-delivered a letter making that plea to the White House. Stein recalled recently how, later that day, Fisher came back to the rally "with a positive response from the president: 'Yes, we will replenish losses in aircraft and give aid to Israel.' "

On the local level, Jews were just as assertive.

Gathered in synagogues as they first heard the devastating news, Jews offered

appeals for divine assistance. Many rabbis improvised prayers and added special psalms to traditional Yom Kippur services.

"If we ever prayed with deep feeling, it was on that Yom Kippur," says Rabbi Steven Dworken, the executive vice president of the Orthodox movement's Rabbinical Council of America, who was leading a congregation in Portland, Maine, in 1973.

During the traditional appeals at memorial Yizkor services that afternoon, congregants across the country responded generously — and the giving continued throughout the three-week war.

The United Jewish Appeal raised nearly $668 million in the 1974 campaign, a $290 million increase over the year before, according to Michael Fischer, assistant vice president of UJA. Three-fourths of the funds, Fischer said, flowed in during the 30 days after the outbreak of war.

The national effort was mirrored at local federations and community relations councils. Within days of Yom Kippur, whole communities met in synagogue sanctuaries and Jewish community centers to organize letter-writing campaigns, phone-a-thons and blood drives. In some cases, people volunteered to go to Israel.

"Everyone was showing up," says Wohlberg, "even people who were not involved in the community."

Albert Chernin, vice chairman emeritus of the JCPA, describes the Philadelphia Jewish community's response to the crisis as fairly typical. The day after Yom Kippur, Chernin, then the executive director of the city's Jewish Community Relations Council, convened a meeting of his board of directors.

"Immediately afterwards, a mass rally was held in the heart of the city," he recalls. "Approximately 15,000 to 20,000 gathered," representing all of the main Jewish groups in Philadelphia.

Later that month, the Greater New York Conference on Soviet Jewry transformed its annual Simchat Torah rally into a show of support for Israel that drew 75,000 people outside city hall.

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents who was then the Soviet Jewry group's director, remembers how the Israeli statesman Abba Eban, addressing the crowd, "said he wished he could run for office in New York because the response was overwhelming."

The fallout from the Yom Kippur War moved national Jewish leaders to establish an intergroup body charged with presenting Israel's human face to all Americans and impressing upon them the importance of Israel in foreign policy.

The need to counter anti-Israel sentiment was prompted largely by the oil embargo imposed against the United States by Arab oil-producing countries as a response to Israel's successful counterattacks and Washington's decision to resupply the Israeli army.

Many in the American Jewish community saw in the embargo, which resulted in long lines at gas stations across the U.S., the seeds for growing anti-Semitism at home. The Arab nations, after all, had said Israeli actions were a catalyst for the embargo.

Those fears, which eventually proved unfounded, spurred the Council of Jewish Federations to enlist the JCPA's precursor, the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, to create media campaigns and communal outreach programs.

With a budget of over $1 million from the federations, NJCRAC's Israel Task Force developed projects ranging from TV ads to labor union mobilizations administered by groups like the Jewish Labor Committee and the American Jewish Committee.

Chernin, who became the executive vice chairman of NJCRAC in 1975, agrees with this assessment, adding, "It was a model in terms of agency cooperation. To this day, I would like to see it replicated in other aspects of community relations."

Hyman Bookbinder, the former longtime Washington representative of AJCommittee, looks back on the Yom Kippur War as "a turning point. It was a stunning reminder and warning to us that Israel's security was yet to be realized, and it still is. I hadn't realized it's been 25 years."   □

(JTA staff writer Debra Nussbaum Cohen contributed to this report.)

Pope beatifies controversial wartime Croatian archbishop

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — Pope John Paul II has beatified a controversial cardinal revered by Croatians as an anti-Communist martyr but reviled by others as a fascist collaborator.

The pope, on a two-day visit to Croatia, proclaimed Zagreb's World War II archbishop Alojzije Stepinac a "blessed" of the Roman Catholic Church — the step before sainthood — before an ecstatic crowd of 350,000 at a shrine near Zagreb on Saturday.

The ceremony consecrated Stepinac as a Croatian national symbol as well as a Catholic religious hero.

To illustrate the ceremony's national and religious purposes, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman joined the pope on the altar at the end of the mass to the strains of the country's national anthem.

"The newly beatified sums up, so to speak, the whole tragedy which befell the Croatian people and Europe in the course of this century marked by the three great evils of fascism, national socialism and communism," the pope told the crowd during the ceremony. "He is now in the joy of heaven, surrounded by all those who, like him, fought the good fight, purifying their faith in the crucible of suffering," he said.

The beatification took place despite protests by the Serbian government and a call by the Simon Wiesenthal Center to put it off "until after the completion of an exhaustive study of Stepinac's wartime record."

Croatian Jewish groups however, disassociated themselves from the protest.   □

REMEMBERING THE YOM KIPPUR WAR

Decision to resupply forces permanently shifted U.S. policy

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — With Egyptian and Syrian troops inflicting heavy loses on Israel's army and air force, a panicked Jewish state pleaded with the United States for help.

Just days after Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on the holiest day of the Jewish year, Israel urgently needed more tanks, planes and ammunition, its leaders argued.

But 25 years ago, at the height of the Yom Kippur War, the White House only responded that it would study the request.

Facing the worst battlefield losses in Israeli history, Prime Minister Golda Meir offered to leave her command post to fly to Washington to personally plead with President Nixon to resupply Israel.

That's when the promise came from the White House that helped Israel change the course of the October war and begin a process that forever altered relations between Jerusalem and Washington.

"The president has agreed — and let me repeat this formally — that all your aircraft and tank losses will be replaced," U.S. *Secretary of State Henry Kissinger told the Israelis on Oct. 9, 1973.*

The U.S. decision allayed some of Meir's fears and allowed Israel to send hundreds of additional tanks and planes into battle that were being saved in case of future losses.

But is was not just a concern about Israeli forces that moved the White House.

The Nixon administration weighed its moves during the war through the lens of the Cold War.

The Soviet Union had already begun a massive resupply operation to Egypt, and Nixon concluded that the United States could not sit and wait.

While much of the history of the war has focused on the delay of a U.S. airlift to Israel, the promise to resupply actually set in motion a shift in American policy that would solidify the U.S.-Israel relationship.

As a direct result of the war, the United States quadrupled its foreign aid to Israel and replaced France as Israel's largest arms supplier.

In fact, the doctrine of maintaining Israel's "qualitative edge" over its neighbors was born in the war's aftermath.

Israel's push for supplies both during and after the war led Kissinger, only half-jokingly, according to Moshe Dayan, Israel's defense minister during the war, to ask if the Israeli government had threatened to stop paying its ambassador's salary if he failed to raise the subject of arms fewer than 10 times a day.

Before the war Congress managed to pass annual loans to Israel in the $535 million range by a few votes.

But after the war, Israel began to receive about $2.1 billion a year, half in loans and half in grants.

Almost all of the money went to purchase American made military hardware.

Five years later Israel began to receive $3 billion in grants as a result of the Camp David accords, which led to the 1979 Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty.

But while the U.S. substantially increased its economic and military aid to Israel, the Jewish state actually became a less important ally of the United States, analysts say.

Diplomatic successes after the war pushed the Soviet Union away from the Middle East and Egypt closer to the United States.

"Israel lost its strategic importance to the United States as a bulwark against the Soviet Union," said Morris Amitay, who served as executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee beginning in 1974 during the crucial period after the war.

Because Kissinger wooed Egypt away from its alliance with the Soviet Union, the United States "did not need Israel as much as before."

Steven Spiegel, an expert in U.S.-Israel relations, said it was not until after the 1978 Camp David accords and the Islamic revolution in Iran a few months later that Washington once again began to view Israel as an "important strategic asset."

As Israel, a U.S. ally, met Syria and Egypt, Soviet client states, on the battlefield, policymakers in Washington and Moscow jockeyed for position.

For a few hours, Washington and Moscow both weighed the possibility of a direct confrontation between the superpowers. The United States put its forces on nuclear alert after the Soviet Union threatened to dispatch troops to defend Egypt.

When the threat ebbed, it became clear to the United States that Washington had to become directly involved in solving the Middle East conflict.

"The 1967 war changed the Middle East map but it was the 1973 war that was exceedingly important in changing American views that the U.S. had to be involved," said Spiegel, a professor at the University of California in Los Angeles.

"The Nixon administration believed, as a consequence of the war, that they had to have some breakthroughs" on the peace process because of the Soviet influence in the region and the crippling effects the Arab oil embargo, imposed near the end of the war, was having on the United States.

Shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East was born, as Kissinger began his famous trips between Arab capitals and Israel.

"The Yom Kippur War was a tragic corrective to the euphoria and even the triumphalism that followed the '67 war," said Henry Siegman, senior fellow and director of the U.S. Middle East project at the Council on Foreign Relations.

"The United States realized it can't be a bystander," Siegman added.

Even before the war ended, the United States began to prepare a major peace initiative.

The first meeting of Egyptian and Israeli military officials in 25 years took place at the now-historic Kilometer 101 marker in the Sinai Peninsula.

With Israel feeling more secure, the United States could embark on an ambitious Middle East peace process, Kissinger argued.

Disengagement agreements after the war led to direct peace talks that six years later culminated in the Camp David accords between Israel and Egypt. Israeli recognition in that treaty of the Palestinian cause eventually spurred the Oslo accords between Israel and the Palestinians that are the basis of the current peace process.

None of the agreements would have been possible without Israel's victory in the Yom Kippur War.   □

REMEMBERING THE YOM KIPPUR WAR
Israeli minister faced down Syrian tanks in fierce battle

By Avi Machlis

TEL AVIV (JTA) — There is only one picture on Avigdor Kahalani's desk in his Tel Aviv office: a photo from the 1973 Yom Kippur War of his tank crew looking frazzled and war-weary.

Kahalani, now Israel's public security minister, has lost the wild curly locks he had when the photo was taken.

But he still has the rounded dark face and youthful smile he had 25 years ago, when he led his tank battalion to a dramatic victory on the Golan Heights in one of the most famous battles of the war. For his role, Brig. Gen. Kahalani was awarded the Medal of Valor, Israel's highest military honor, and became one of Israel's best-known war heroes.

Twice a year, Kahalani — who spent a year hospitalized from injuries sustained in the 1967 Six-Day War — climbs to the ramparts perched above a valley in the Golan known as Emek Habacha, or the Valley of Tears, to comfort the families of his men who died in action. Each time, he relives the story of how, against all odds, his unit of about 30 tanks repelled Syrian forces more than 10 times larger who launched an attack to recapture the Golan Heights, conquered by Israel in 1967.

On the eve of Yom Kippur in 1973, he recalls in his Tel Aviv office, Israeli soldiers on the Golan were more prepared than their comrades in the Sinai, who were taken completely by surprise by the Egyptian assault across the Suez Canal.

Kahalani's unit, Battalion 77 — known as "Oz," or courage, from the Hebrew letters having the numerical equivalent of 77— was stationed on the Golan from the start of Rosh Hashanah.

At 10:00 a.m. on Oct. 6, 1973, a few hours before the Syrians and Egyptians launched simultaneous attacks on Israeli positions, Kahalani was told that war was imminent. He then ordered his troops to be ready in the turrets.

"I don't understand how the orders weren't given in the Sinai," he says, noting that some soldiers in Sinai outposts were playing soccer when the first shells struck.

Although they had been warned, Battalion 77 was nonetheless taken by surprise when the first Syrian jets struck.

After Israel's lightning victory in the Six-Day War, Kahalani and his comrades were sure that Israeli planes would destroy Syria's air force before it got off the ground.

Evening descended and Kahalani's tanks were positioned. But night fighting posed the biggest challenge: Syria's Russian-made tanks were equipped with infrared night-vision equipment that Israel's tanks lacked.

That night, Kahalani pulled out his infrared binoculars and found that his tank was illuminated with an infrared shine invisible to the naked eye. "I took the binoculars off and looked at the tank [and saw] darkness. I put the binoculars on again, and I saw the tank was illuminated."

He realized that a Syrian gunner had sighted him. "The only thing left for him to do was to press the trigger," he recalls.

Kahalani frantically ordered his driver to pull back. They were not hit, but they realized how vulnerable they were in the dark.

Later, Kahalani spotted a tank he thought was Israeli just 20 yards away, its taillight lit — a dangerous move in the dark.

Frustrated after trying to figure out who was risking exposing the battalion, Kahalani radioed a neighboring crew to shine a light. He then realized it was a confused Syrian tank.

"His cannon was facing the Syrians, and he was standing to my right as if I was his commander," he says, adding with characteristic understatement: "So I shot him and hit him."

Kahalani described such moments in his book, "Oz 77," translated into English as "The Heights of Courage," which gives a blow-by-blow account of the war. While overly technical at times, the book's stark realism conveys the thrills and fears of battle.

The morning after he destroyed the confused Syrian tank, Kahalani looked around and saw the burnt-out shells of Syrian tanks destroyed the night before. He ordered his tanks to advance 100 yards to the positions overlooking the Valley of Tears.

The serenity was quickly shattered and dust clouds formed as Syrian tanks and armored vehicles began rumbling into the valley in an attempt to climb up to the Israeli positions.

As a battalion commander, Kahalani faced a dual challenge, since he had to give orders to his units while at the same time commanding his own tank crew to fend off nearby threats.

Two days later, after what seemed like an endless string of battles, Battalion 77 was pushed to the brink.

"Everything was falling apart," he says, choking up for a split-second in the only show of emotion while he spoke recently in his Tel Aviv office. "It felt like we wouldn't be able to face them."

But they had no choice. As Kahalani's men tried to regain their previous positions overlooking the valley, Syrian tanks emerged again. Ammunition and fuel dwindled, casualties mounted and as Kahalani tried to come up with a plan, three Syrian tanks appeared at point-blank range. With Kahalani directing the turret, his gunner destroyed them, one after another.

To regain their positions, Kahalani had to motivate his weary-yet-wary men to cross an open field and expose themselves completely to enemy fire. After several failed attempts, Kahalani summoned a stoic calm to explain why they must roll forward, raising his voice only for the last word: "Move!"

They rolled forward and grabbed the strategic high ground just minutes before the Syrian forces did. A fierce, close-range battle broke out as Kahalani's tanks crushed the last remaining Syrian forces headed up the hill. With the positions they had secured, Battalion 77 could not be beaten.

At the very end, only four of Kahalani's tanks were fully functional. Kahalani's forces suffered 14 casualties, including 12 commanders, and dozens more had been wounded.

Kahalani's political views have been molded by his war experiences. The Third Way Party, which he founded after breaking away from the Labor Party before the 1996 elections, believes in pressing ahead with peace with the Palestinians.

But it is more hawkish on returning the Golan to Syria.

"The war was a traumatic experience. I have two sons who are tank commanders, and I don't want them to go through what I did," he says. "I also understand that I can't rule the Palestinian people."

"But I don't trust anyone in the world to defend me," he says.

Even if Syria is willing to make full peace with Israel to get back the Golan, Kahalani first wants to test that peace.

The minute Israel has full peace with Syria, a peace like Belgium has with France or Switzerland has with Germany, he adds, "That is a peace I'll be willing to give up land for."   □