



# Daily News Bulletin

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82<sup>nd</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### FBI helps investigate break-in

The FBI is helping investigate what some are calling a Watergate-style break-in at the Washington offices of a leading American pollster who is advising Israeli prime ministerial candidate Ehud Barak. A Barak campaign official said the pollster's files on Israel's upcoming elections were "the main focus of the break-in." [Page 3]

### Minister tries to shrink councils

Israel's interior minister announced a plan to reduce the size of local religious councils. The move by Eli Suissa, a member of the fervently Orthodox Shas Party, was blasted by non-Orthodox leaders as a blatant attempt to keep Conservative and Reform representatives from serving on the councils.

Suissa announced the plan after a Knesset committee rejected a bill that would block the appointment of non-Orthodox representatives to the councils.

### Pollard backers to make case

Three prominent American Jewish figures who sought a meeting with President Clinton to make a clemency appeal for Jonathan Pollard are instead being offered a chance to make their case to a top Justice Department official.

As a result, Attorney General Janet Reno will postpone making her recommendations on the case of the former Navy intelligence analyst who is serving a life sentence for spying for Israel.

In a letter to Clinton, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wiesel, World Jewish Congress President Edgar Bronfman and Harvard law Professor Alan Dershowitz asked the president to "consider the redeeming quality of mercy" before issuing his decision.

### Argentine community in disarray

Elections for the leadership of Argentina's Jewish umbrella organization left the community in disarray. Lawyer Rogelio Cichowolsky was elected this week as the new president of the Delegation of Argentine Israelite Associations, or DAIA. [Page 4]

Because of the Martin Luther King Day holiday in the United States, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Jan. 18.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Israel grapples with free speech after death threat mars campaign

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As Israel plunges into an election campaign, the country is struggling to find the right balance between being a boisterous democracy and a society still traumatized by the 1995 assassination of Yitzhak Rabin.

Within days after campaigning began, a debate welled up over the acceptable limits of public discourse as Israelis react — sometimes with barely disguised rancor — to the candidates seeking their vote.

The issue came rushing to the fore last week after centrist candidate Amnon Lipkin-Shahak made a campaign stop at a market in Tel Aviv.

Considered a favorite to unseat Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu even before he announced his candidacy, the former army chief of staff found himself jostled and threatened as he made his way through the market. One heckler shouted, "The next bullet's for your head."

Further charging the political and psychological atmosphere was a crowd-winning gesture Netanyahu made last week at a political meeting near Haifa.

"Everyone here is Likud?" the premier asked. When the crowd roared an affirmative response, he removed a cumbersome bulletproof vest his bodyguards had urged him to wear.

The two incidents have touched the same raw nerve. In a nation where people are far from reserved in their passions, how safe are the country's political leaders, particularly during an already heated election campaign?

Shahak visited the open-air market one day after he declared his candidacy at a Tel Aviv news conference, where he called Netanyahu "a danger" to the nation.

When Shahak turned up at the market, a traditional pro-Likud stronghold, vendors and shoppers wasted little time in letting him know how that remark had played in their circles: Fruit, curses and upraised fists filled the air.

Shahak waded into the thick of it, and his handful of aides struggled to protect him.

Later, the local police complained that the neophyte politician had neglected to inform them in advance of his itinerary, leaving himself needlessly exposed to possible violence.

In the wake of that incident, Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein instructed police to take immediate action against anyone suspected of threatening a politician.

For his part, Shahak, who is campaigning on a platform of bringing unity to the Israeli people, said Israelis needed to relearn "to talk instead of shouting."

He did not withdraw his characterization of Netanyahu as dangerous, but explained that he had not meant, as some pundits understood, that the prime minister was toying with the idea of embarking on reckless military adventures as a way of wooing votes.

Instead, said Shahak, he was referring to Netanyahu's exploitation of the deepening fissures in Israeli society for his own short-term political survival — and this was the danger that must be removed.

After the marketplace furor, a group of vendors visited Shahak at his home on Sunday evening, television crews in tow, to express their regrets and extend an invitation for a more hospitable return visit to their place of business.

Previously brandishing their fists and hurling abuse, they now came bearing baskets of fruit and flowers.

Tel Aviv police meanwhile arrested Oded Gipps, a 31-year-old unemployed man

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Envoy tries to revive Wye

The Clinton administration's Middle East envoy held separate meetings with Israeli and Palestinian leaders in an effort to revive the Wye accord.

"I think it is essential that we find a way to get the agreement implemented," Ross said after the meetings.

Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will not visit Israel later this month when she travels to the Middle East for meetings in Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

Jerusalem does not view the decision to skip Israel as a snub, the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* reported. Last week, Albright rejected a request to meet in Washington with Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon.

### Israeli planes strike in Lebanon

Israeli jets attacked several Hezbollah positions in southern Lebanon.

The raids took place after Hezbollah gunmen fired mortars at Israeli positions in the region, according to an Israeli army statement.

### Israel to modernize armed forces

Israel will reduce and modernize its armed forces because of new threats in the region, said army chief Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz.

Mofaz said the changes would entail some risks, which he called reasonable and unavoidable. The changes will include reducing the number of army reserve units.

### Arabs slam West Bank razings

The Arab League described Israel's policy of demolishing Palestinian homes built without permits as worse than Nazi Germany's actions during World War II.

The 22-member league also said in a statement that the policy constitutes an obstacle to a "just and comprehensive peace" in the region.



## Daily News Bulletin

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who later attempted to convince a judge of his remorse for having told Shahak, "Today, you will die."

Gipps was released on bail and forbidden to attend any political meeting until June 6 — apart from rallies for Netanyahu.

The country at large seemed horrified at what happened at the market. Memories came flooding back of the ugly public demonstrations against Rabin in the weeks preceding his assassination.

Adding to the poignancy was the fact that Shahak is projecting himself as Rabin's designated heir — a self-declared role vigorously contested by the Labor Party leader, Ehud Barak, also a former army chief of staff and close Rabin confidant.

The debate regarding the boundaries of public discourse is particularly poignant during an election campaign, which is essentially an arena for argument — the essence of the democratic process.

Candidates choosing to make televised visits to open-air markets are deliberately courting vigorous expressions of support and dissent.

Are the police to be allowed to stifle free speech and free association, which are the mainstay of election campaigns in an open society?

Israeli commentators have discussed in the past the effect, both on the premier and on the public, of the thick cordons of security that are thrown around Netanyahu by the Shin Bet domestic security service at his every appearance.

Reservations over these measures — however understandable they are in the wake of the Rabin assassination — are naturally enhanced at election time, when candidates need to engage in personal, grass-roots campaigning.

Netanyahu's decision last week to remove his bulletproof vest enraged many on the left because of its implication — that the premier was in danger if anyone in the hall was not a Likud supporter.

But along with the rage, there was also sympathy with his predicament, which is shared to a lesser extent by Barak, who is also protected wherever he goes by stern and uncompromising Shin Bet officials.

Granted, Netanyahu sought to make political capital out of last week's appearance in Haifa — although some thought he did so tastelessly.

But the basic challenge to the workings of the normal political process remains unresolved.

Yet who can fault the Shin Bet? Not only has the agency's guard not been let down since the night of the Rabin assassination, it has been extended to cover a growing number of judges.

The president of the Supreme Court, Aharon Barak, is now accompanied everywhere by guards. Other Supreme Court justices are also protected, as is Jerusalem District Judge Vardi Zylar, who ruled last month that the draft exemption system for fervently Orthodox yeshiva students is unlawful.

Controversy around the courts has grown in recent years, particularly as some Orthodox critics charge that judges are far too secular in their rulings.

But the court's accusers do not come solely from the Orthodox sector.

Last week, Netanyahu's former top aide, Avigdor Lieberman, launched his new political party with a sweeping condemnation of the nation's "elitist" law enforcement system.

Lieberman, seeking support mainly from immigrants from the former Soviet Union, complained about Israel's becoming a "police state."

While Lieberman came under fire for indulging in dangerous populist rhetoric, some observers are alarmed by the increasing frequency with which judges find themselves threatened and harassed.

In November, a Haifa man was jailed for three years for physically attacking a local judge, Menachem Ne'eman.

The sentence was clearly aimed at halting the deteriorating standing of the courts among some parts of Israeli society.

Without doubt, both the candidates and the courts needs constant protection.

But at the same time, many observers worry that it is dangerously easy to let that need grow into an end unto itself. The real goal, they say, is democracy — and protection is only the means to ensure it. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Burglars snatch Labor Party files from Barak's Washington pollster

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Did opponents of Israeli Labor Party leader Ehud Barak stage a Watergate-style break-in at the Washington offices of a U.S. polling firm working on his campaign for prime minister?

The question gripped Israel this week after burglars snatched confidential files and petty cash from Greenberg Quinlan Research Inc. Stanley Greenberg, President Clinton's former pollster and a partner in the firm, was recently hired as an adviser to Barak, along with Democratic Party consultant James Carville.

The firm described it as "a sophisticated break-in of a suspicious nature."

District of Columbia Police and the FBI are investigating the incident, which occurred Monday night or Tuesday morning. Authorities and other sources said the burglars broke through an air conditioning vent on the roof of the Capitol Hill office, tore through the ceiling, dislodged an alarm system and then opened a door, possibly to let others inside.

Greenberg's firm provided no details about what was stolen, saying only that it appeared some of its international political work may have been targeted.

In Tel Aviv, a Labor Party spokeswoman said materials about Barak's election campaign were stolen. Tal Silberstein, who is managing Barak's campaign in the run-up to the May 17 elections, was quoted as saying the thieves "knew exactly what they wanted because the only file taken was the one dealing with the Israeli campaign." Another source said that political questionnaires were among the materials taken.

The incident was quickly dubbed in the Israeli media as "Israel's Watergate," and several Labor legislators immediately pointed to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as the likely culprit. David Bar-Illan, Netanyahu's spokesman, vehemently denied any connection between the prime minister and the break-in, calling any attempt to make such an allegation "an absolute obscenity."

The Likud Party issued a statement saying it hoped the thieves would be apprehended.

"We hope that the burglary has no connection to the Israeli election and that it's entirely coincidental," said Washington media consultant Steve Rabinowitz, who has also been advising Barak on his campaign.

"Of course if it turns out that there is a connection, we would view such a development with grave concern. It would be absolutely outrageous." □

### After more than 60 years, kibbutz sells land to members

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The kibbutz way of life is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain.

Witness the decision by Kibbutz Kfar Ruppin in northern Israel's Beit She'an Valley, which this week sold off its assets to its members. As a result, the kibbutz, founded in 1938, has been officially redesignated a moshav, an agricultural system in which members have individual ownership of their land.

The move is believed to mark the first time that a kibbutz has given up its official identity as a collective entity in order to continue to function.

With their socialist ideals of ownership and shared work, kibbutzim were once the romantic hallmark of life in Israel. But in recent years, kibbutzim have found it harder to keep members and compete financially in Israel's increasingly technological society.

Throughout Israel, kibbutzim have found it necessary to adopt new measures, including the introduction of competitive salaries, in order to offer members an attractive lifestyle.

The changeover to individual ownership was a necessity if the kibbutz hopes to survive, according to its general manager, Yoram Karim. □

### Russia blasts U.S. sanctions

Russia criticized the United States for imposing sanctions against three Russian scientific institutions accused of helping Iran build missiles and weapons of mass destruction.

Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov rejected the American accusation as "groundless" and said it could hurt bilateral ties.

Several Jewish groups hailed the U.S. action as an important step in countering the terrorist threat posed by Iran.

### U.S. citizenship fee to increase

The fee for filing a citizenship application is slated to increase from \$95 to \$225 on Friday.

Jewish groups have said the increase would put a financial burden on Jewish and non-Jewish applicants.

The increase comes as the Immigration and Naturalization Service struggles to reduce a backlog of 1.8 million people, including thousands of Jews from the former Soviet Union, who are waiting for their paperwork to be processed before they can become U.S. citizens.

### Former Swiss leader steps down

The former Swiss president who helped resolve the Nazi gold scandal announced he is stepping down as the nation's foreign minister.

"We defused the debate" over Switzerland's wartime dealings with the Nazis, Flavio Cotti said when he announced the move. He is stepping down to allow new candidates from his party run for office when the country holds elections in October, he said.

### New design sought for memorial

Opponents in Germany of plans to build a national Holocaust memorial in Berlin are calling for a third round of design competition for the controversial project.

Critics of the current large-scale design also want a different location than the site reserved for the monument south of the Brandenburg Gate. The objections to the current plan could cause additional delays to the project, which was first proposed a decade ago.

### Feature on Rhodes Jews to air

A documentary about a community of Jews in Los Angeles that emigrated from the Greek island of Rhodes will air soon on U.S. network television.

"Island of Roses: The Jews of Rhodes in Los Angeles" will be shown on ABC on Sunday. Meanwhile, "The Diary of a Terrorist: Mikdad," a documentary that traces how a Lebanese man became involved in terrorist activities, will air Friday on HBO.

## Argentine Jews in disarray after election, bank failure

By Sergio Kiernan

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — Far from forging a sense of unity, elections for the leadership of Argentina's Jewish umbrella organization have left the community in disarray.

The rift plaguing the 250,000-member Jewish community was exacerbated by a recent bank failure that has seriously jeopardized communal assets.

Lawyer Rogelio Cichowolsky was elected this week as the new president of the Delegation of Argentine Israelite Associations, or DAIA. But a sizable bloc of communal organizations that are represented under the group's umbrella contested the election and have effectively seceded from DAIA.

Cichowolsky served as secretary-general of DAIA for the past six years, when Ruben Beraja was president.

Beraja resigned the post late last year, after his Banco Mayo collapsed and was placed under the supervision of the country's central bank.

The bank's collapse triggered a deep financial crisis in the Argentine Jewish community. Banco Mayo had handled the deposits and assets for most of the country's major Jewish organizations.

Many Jewish schools, mutual aid associations and cemeteries had come to rely on Banco Mayo for loans and credit.

In past years, Beraja had been harshly criticized for his handling of relations with the Argentine government.

Critics said his close personal ties with President Carlos Menem were behind his reluctance to criticize the slow pace of the investigations into the 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires and the March 1994 bombing of the AMIA community center.

The government has failed to find those responsible for the bombings, which killed 115 people and left hundreds wounded.

Widely regarded as Beraja's right-hand man, Cichowolsky inherited some of that criticism this week.

After the vote was taken, several major organizations said they would not take their seats on DAIA's executive council.

The Hebraica Association, DAIA's largest constituent group, called Cichowolsky's election "irregular" and issued a statement supporting its own president, Gilbert Lewi, who quit the executive council to protest the vote.

Cichowolsky was elected under a system in which all organizations, regardless of size, have one vote.

As a result, Hebraica's 50,000 members have the same weight as a 50-member group.

Reacting to the growing rift, Cichowolsky suggested that the community proceed with "caution."

Charging that "some sectors in our community are using an unheard-of level of verbal violence," he said the current climate "puts at risk the social contract that made possible the institutions that are the pride of Argentine Jewry."

As a conciliatory gesture, Cichowolsky called for a meeting with the relatives of the bombings' victims, including the members of the group Memoria Activa, who were among the biggest critics of Beraja's presidency.

"I trust we'll overcome the present difficulties," he said. □

## Building in Arab neighborhood will begin soon, developer says

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Construction will soon begin at a controversial Jewish housing project in eastern Jerusalem, according to the Miami millionaire funding the development.

A major supporter of Jewish settlement in eastern Jerusalem and the West Bank, Dr. Irving Moskowitz also said he does not believe that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will intervene to halt construction.

Attempts by Moskowitz and his supporters to build Jewish homes in Jerusalem's mostly Arab neighborhood of Ras al-Amud have been a repeated source of strain between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Israeli construction plans for another contested site — Har Homa in southeastern Jerusalem — led the Palestinian Authority in March 1997 to halt negotiations with Israel. A subsequent Hamas terrorist attack further soured the atmosphere, and the talks were ultimately suspended for 18 months.

Moskowitz financed the excavation of a new entrance to an archaeological tunnel in Jerusalem's Old City. The opening of that entrance in September 1996 sparked three days of Palestinian rioting in which 15 Israelis and 61 Palestinians were killed.

During a tour Wednesday of the site where he plans to build 132 housing units, Moskowitz said he discussed the project during a meeting this week with Netanyahu.

"We have the permits to build, and he understands it. And he understands that the rule of law will determine the development — and that the rule of law applies to this property," Moskowitz told reporters.

Netanyahu will let the project go ahead, Moskowitz replied, "That's my understanding, very clearly."

Netanyahu halted the project in September 1997, in the face of pressure from the United States.

But faced with an upcoming election in which he needs the support of the right wing, Netanyahu may now be rethinking his position.

Moskowitz, who made his fortune owning hospitals and running a California bingo hall, came to Israel this week with a delegation of American Jewish businessmen in a bid to get Israel's fractious right wing to unify in advance of the elections.

In addition to Netanyahu, Moskowitz met with Knesset members Uzi Landau and Ze'ev "Benny" Begin, who have mounted challenges to Netanyahu.

Moskowitz did not state this week whether he intends to give financial backing to any prime ministerial candidate.

During his meeting with Netanyahu, Moskowitz reportedly protested the concessions Israel made to the Palestinian Authority in the Wye agreement signed last October. Netanyahu responded that it was the only way to avoid even greater concessions.

Moskowitz's status as a champion of Jewish settlements was affirmed when he visited Hebron on Wednesday. Children danced while settlers sang nationalist songs to welcome Moskowitz to the often volatile West Bank town.

During his visit, some of the settlers asked Moskowitz to help pay for renovations at the Tomb of the Patriarchs, the traditional burial site of the biblical patriarchs and matriarchs. □