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RABIN STARTS BUILDING COALITION, WITH HAREDI PARTIES READY TO TALK

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, June 28 (JTA) -- The process of building a governing coalition began in earnest Sunday, as Israeli President Chaim Herzog began legally mandated meetings with the 10 parties elected to the new Knesset.

The consultations, to determine which party has the best chance of forming a government, are this year a formality: Final election returns announced Friday show that Labor's Yitzhak Rabin and the parties to his left have a decisive bloc of 61 seats. That is enough to head off any right-wing coalition in the 120-member parliament.

The modified results reflect the counting of the soldiers' vote. They give Labor 44 seats, down one from the earlier estimates. Shas also lost a seat, by a mere 36 votes, bringing it down to six. The beneficiaries were Moledet and Tsomet, which each gained a seat, for a total of 3 and 8 respectively.

Herzog's meetings will continue Monday, and he is expected to formally summon Rabin on Tuesday. Rabin will then have three weeks to assemble a coalition, with the possibility of an extension.

But the chairman of Labor's parliamentary faction, Haim Ramon, said Sunday that the party hopes to present its coalition when the 13th Knesset convenes for its first session on July 13.

"All our prospective partners should take this into account," Ramon warned. He added that if the coalition was not as broad as Labor hoped, Rabin would present a narrower one.

His remarks were part of the public posturing being played out as counterpoint to the political bargaining now under way behind closed doors.

Rabin Has Several Options

Adding to the stakes in this year's coalition poker, and to uncertainty among political pundits, is that Rabin can in theory form a coalition in any of several ways.

In a move designed to set one prospective coalition member at ease, Labor Secretary-General Micha Harish told reporters that the Meretz bloc was expected to be Labor's natural partner.

Rumors had been circulating that the left-wing, anti-religious Meretz might be sidestepped to enable Labor to join with the ultra-Orthodox haredi parties, the right-wing and anti-religious Tsomet party, and even the right-wing National Religious Party.

Meanwhile, the Council of Sages of the haredi Shas party Sunday formally empowered the party's Knesset members to enter into negotiations, thereby following the initial, hesitant step already taken by the Council of Sages of the Agudat Yisrael faction of the United Torah Judaism party.

Rabbi Eliezer Schach, the 96-year-old spiritual head of the shrunken Degel HaTorah faction of United Torah Judaism, still reportedly harbors hopes of a Labor-haredi-rightist coalition, excluding the "anti-Torah" Meretz party. But Schach's influence has been greatly weakened as a result of the election.

CLINTON SAYS IF ELECTED PRESIDENT, HE'LL TRY TO REPAIR TIES TO ISRAEL

**By Cynthia Mann
States News Service**

WASHINGTON, June 28 (JTA) -- Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton is pledging that if elected president, he will repair the damage done to the U.S.-Israeli relationship, champion civil rights and restore Americans' faith in the political system.

In an exclusive interview last week with States News Service for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, the likely Democratic presidential nominee also said that while it was "a little late for a conversion," if President Bush decided now to provide Israel with loan guarantees for immigrant absorption, he would welcome it.

While some say issuing the guarantees now would be a cynical move by Bush to recapture badly eroded Jewish support he needs for the November election, Clinton does not see it that way.

"It is the right thing to do. I don't care what his motives are," he said.

Clinton said he had urged the administration since last December to approve the guarantees, which were first held up because of the Middle East peace talks and later made conditional on an Israeli freeze in the construction of settlements in the administered territories.

Despite numbers that show his campaign debt is high and his public ratings low, Clinton is confident the campaign has rallied in recent weeks with his decision to take his case directly to the people in a blitz of television talk shows.

He also seems to be benefiting from the bitter public feuding between Bush and undeclared independent candidate H. Ross Perot.

"They're spending more time investigating each other than they are investigating the problems of the country," he said. Meanwhile, "I released a plan to rebuild America."

Ready To Fight For Foreign Aid

The impassioned Arkansas governor said his biggest enemy in the battle before him is "the cynicism, skepticism and wariness of the American people that anyone who has ever held elected office can make this system work again."

The Jewish vote is taking on increased importance as the presidential race shapes up to be a close three-way contest.

Almost no polls have measured the Jewish vote in a statistically meaningful way, but pundits say Clinton enjoys a firm 60 percent of it and that the number is likely to rise. In states rich in electoral votes, such as New York and California, that support could be critical in November.

Democratic Party Chairman Ron Brown told JTA over the weekend that the party aims to win a bigger portion of the Jewish vote than the 70 percent it received in the 1988 contest.

After a speech to the National Association of Manufacturers on his recently launched economic blueprint, Clinton's voice had the trademark scratchiness and he seemed tired. But he was thoughtful, knowledgeable and articulate as he fielded a range of questions on the Jewish agenda.

On foreign aid, the governor vowed not to bow to a political climate that is increasingly

hostile to the idea of sending U.S. dollars abroad and to fight for continued assistance to Israel. He said the recent Israeli elections would help him make the case.

"My argument would be that, as having just been demonstrated by the elections, Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East and is committed to maintaining democracy," he said.

"Its people have voted to seriously continue to engage their neighbors in peace talks, and I think it is imperative for the United States to enable Israel to conduct those talks in the continued position of strength and security."

More Than An Honest Broker

Clinton decried moves afoot in Congress to showcase fiscal discipline by across-the-board cuts in already reduced foreign aid, with no exceptions for aid to Israel or other earmarked categories. He said it would send the wrong message at a sensitive time.

"I wouldn't cut aid to Israel at this point, not during these (peace) negotiations," he said.

"Just as I have opposed the Bush administration's continued and persistent attempts to only pressure Israel in these negotiations and to give the appearance that Israel somehow could be delivered to an Arab position, I would not favor an across-the-board cut now in foreign aid, which would affect Israel at the moment that we're waiting to see what the consequences of the election will be."

Asked how he would advance the peace process as president, Clinton said he would approve the loan guarantee package and then impress upon the Arabs the "historic opportunity" posed by the elections and the need for a "good-faith effort to go back to the negotiations and try to work out an agreement that all parties can live with."

"And I would pledge my best efforts, not only to be an honest broker in the process, but to ensure that the United States, working through the United Nations, can be a firm guarantor of whatever conditions are agreed to."

Clinton repeatedly has said that Israeli settlements in the territories are "a problem" for the peace talks, but should never have been linked to Israel's loan request.

"We didn't condition loan guarantees to Arab countries on ending the boycott or making other moves toward Israel to help make peace," he pointed out.

"Second, we had a commitment of some two decades' duration to help relocate Jewish immigrants from what was the Soviet Union, while we had a strict limit on how many of those immigrants we would accept into this country."

Opposes Bush Voucher Plan

Clinton said he would support a decision by Bush to give the loan guarantees to the new Israeli government. "I have not been shy about supporting him when I thought he was right," said Clinton. "If he does the right thing and he gets credit for it, that's fine with me."

He also said that "nothing would please me more than to have a post-Cold War foreign policy that was a genuine bipartisan one again."

As for domestic issues, Clinton, widely hailed for his education reform initiatives in Arkansas, is against the kind of school choice plan unveiled last week by Bush to give \$1,000 stipends so that parents can send their children to public or private schools, including parochial schools.

The plan was sharply attacked by the American Jewish Congress as "yet another assault on the wall of separation between church and state."

"I don't think we should have direct taxpayer subsidies to private schools," said Clinton. Too many public schools are underfunded, and diverting money to private schools would aggravate their problems, he said.

Providing competitive choice among public schools, he said, would provide the same incentive to improve schools. But it would not deal the blow to the public schools that vouchers would inflict.

Clinton also said that subsidies to religious schools may violate the constitutional call for the separation of church and state.

On another constitutional matter, the Arkansas governor urged that not too much be made of the Supreme Court's June 22 ruling striking down a St. Paul, Minn., hate crimes ordinance as unconstitutional.

While he said interpreting the ruling was "a tough call," Clinton said statutes need to be crafted more narrowly, "to guarantee and protect legitimate freedom of expression and draw the line right where that freedom of expression encroaches on other people's interests and legitimate security fears."

He said he would support federal anti-hate crimes legislation based on increasing penalties for activities already deemed criminal if the motives are found to be racial hatred or bias.

"I think this is a time of intense racial and ethnic division in America," he observed. "Our diversity ought to be a source of our strength instead of an instrument of our undoing."

'Bully Pulpit' Against Hatred

Discussing his strategy to combat racial strife, Clinton said that, as president, he would first appoint a staff and Cabinet "that look like America."

Second, he said he would unambiguously enforce civil rights laws, including hate crimes legislation. And third, he said he would use the "bully pulpit."

"If you have a record that is consistent with your pronouncements, then the power of the presidency to speak is an important power," he said.

The presidential contender said Bush has failed to exercise leadership in this arena. "He has difficulty because of the mixed messages he sends."

Clinton insisted his effort to forge racial harmony was well served by his remarks chiding the Rainbow Coalition for giving a platform to the inflammatory rap singer Sister Souljah.

Insiders say the remarks were carefully calculated to establish distance from the Rev. Jesse Jackson, a move that is expected to win Clinton support among Jewish voters who voted for Bush in 1988 but have been disaffected by his Israel policies.

Instead the remarks exploded into a prolonged controversy over Clinton's commitment to the Rainbow Coalition agenda and confrontation with Jackson.

"I still think I said the right thing," the candidate said. Souljah's "is not the kind of attitude that will permit us to do what we have to do" to build harmony.

Meanwhile, he denied any rapprochement with Jackson was being orchestrated to head off a confrontation at the party convention next month.

UPSURGE IN TERRORIST ATTACKS CONTINUES WITH TWO STABBINGS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, June 28 (JTA) -- Israeli authorities say they will step up counterterrorism measures in response to a renewed wave of Palestinian terrorism that has left three Israelis dead and two injured since last week's elections.

The latest incidents occurred over the weekend, when two Israelis were stabbed in separate attacks: one in Hebron and the other in the Jordan Valley settlement of Ro'i.

A Jewish resident of Hebron was slightly hurt in the attack. The resident of Ro'i suffered medium wounds.

Last Thursday, two Israelis were brutally stabbed by Arab assailants in their Gaza Strip meat-packing plant. And an Israel Defense Force soldier died the same day in a gun battle with Palestinians in the West Bank village of Arraba.

Security officials have not established a direct link between the new wave of terrorism and the recent elections.

They explained the latest upsurge by pointing out that stabbing attacks tend to come in waves.

Palestinian sources in the territories said that heads of the Palestinian community ordered activists to refrain from terrorist attacks in the 10 days prior to the elections, in order not to play into the hands of the Likud, as had happened in the previous elections.

Two days before the 1988 elections, a woman and her three children were burned to death in a firebombing of a bus near Jericho.

The incident in Hebron occurred Saturday morning, when a young Arab woman stabbed Hillel Horwitz, 32, as he came out of the Hadassah building following Sabbath prayers. Horwitz was hospitalized at the Hadassah Medical Center in Jerusalem, suffering light wounds.

The security forces conducted a wide search for the attacker, with no immediate results.

Following the stabbing, Jewish settlers rioted through the town, smashing the window shields of at least 10 cars owned by Arabs.

Later Saturday, an Arab worker stabbed his employer in the Ro'i settlement in the Jordan Valley, while they were packing grapes.

Avi Aglamaz, 30, was rushed by helicopter to the Hadassah Medical Center in Jerusalem, suffering serious wounds.

The victims of last week's attack in the Gaza Strip were identified as Moshe Bino, 49, of Ashkelon and Ami Salzman, 59, of Ness Ziona, co-managers of the Al Kuba meat-packing plant.

OUTCOME OF ISRAELI VOTE BOOSTS CHANCES OF WINNING GERMAN AID

By David Kantor

BONN, June 28 (JTA) -- The outcome of last week's elections in Israel has dramatically improved the chances of the German government giving serious consideration to Israel's request for German loans and direct financial assistance totaling 10 billion marks, according to officials in Bonn.

But they warned that the process would take at least a few months and would be dependent on a favorable response from the American administration to Israel's longstanding request for U.S. loan guarantees.

The officials, who spoke on condition of

anonymity, confirmed reports that Germany had been approached by Washington on the loan issue.

The reports suggested that the Americans had asked the Germans to refrain from responding to the Israeli request until President Bush makes a decision on the loan guarantees.

The Israeli request for German aid was originally submitted in March 1991 and was partly based on claims against the former East Germany.

Israeli officials have argued that the united Germany has a moral and political obligation to back commitments of the former Communist state. East Germany never compensated the Jewish victims and survivors of the Nazis.

Bonn, in preparing its response to the Israeli request, proposed at one point some financial assistance. But Israeli officials said the sum involved was much too low. The unresolved issue has strained German-Israeli relations and produced recriminations over leaks to the media.

EYEWITNESS IN AUSTRALIAN COURT PLACES WAR CRIMES SUSPECT AT SCENE OF MURDER

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia, June 28 (JTA) -- An eyewitness has placed a war crimes suspect at the scene of the mass murder of Jews in the Ukrainian village of Gnivan in 1942.

Mikhail Raykis, whose family was among the Jews murdered, testified at a hearing that will determine whether Ukrainian-born Mikolay Berezowsky, a longtime resident of Adelaide, South Australia, will stand trial under Australia's amended war crimes act.

Berezowsky is alleged to have been an officer in the Ukrainian police, known as the Schutzmannschaft, which carried out the Nazi policy of genocide.

Raykis, who was 11 at the time, said last week that he saw the accused and two other policemen beat a Jew already bloodied when he was handed over to them by Romanian authorities across the river.

He admitted under cross-examination that there are no other living witnesses to the episode.

Raykis, who came to Australia from Ukraine to testify, said the beating occurred a day after the 102 remaining Jews in Gnivan, mostly women and children, were forcibly marched to a mass grave in a nearby wood and murdered.

He said Berezowsky hurled loud abuse at the doomed villagers, calling them "parasites" and "prostitutes."

Raykis said his mother, three sisters and a brother were executed. He said he escaped by hiding behind a door when a soldier seized his family.

Last year, Raykis led Australian investigators to the gravesite where the remains of more than 100 victims were exhumed, 60 of them women and 25 children under age 9. They were killed by bullets in the head or bludgeoning which fractured their skulls.

Raykis also testified that he saw Berezowsky with two German soldiers stopping Jews who had escaped execution and preventing them from crossing the nearby river to safety.

Berezowsky is the second Australian resident charged under the statute which allows Australian courts to try war crimes suspects.

The first was Ivan Polyukhovich, who was ordered to stand trial in South Australia's Supreme Court July 6.

STUDY FINDS ONE-FIFTH OF U.S. JEWS ARE NOW REGISTERED TO VOTE

Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, June 28 (JTA) -- One in five American Jewish adults are not currently registered to vote, according to a new study commissioned by the Synagogue Council of America.

While that is far smaller than the 50 percent of the overall American voting-age population that is not registered, it proves that the perception of nearly unanimous Jewish participation in the political process is a fallacy.

It also means that a significant segment of the adult Jewish population is not exercising its right to vote, which could make a substantial difference in the way the interests of the Jewish community are represented in Congress and the administration.

But the reasons that Jews have historically been "politically hyper-active" are fading in importance as Jews assimilate into the American mainstream, according to the study.

The less cohesive community that exists today makes for fewer opportunities to reach and motivate the Jewish rank and file, explained demographer Steven M. Cohen, who conducted the study.

"Jewish immigrants and their children gloried in the chance to vote. Voting was, for many, something akin to a religious rite -- a sacred, meaningful and obligatory act," he said.

"Whatever can be said about the meaning of voting for today's Jews, it no longer has the magical, enchanted quality it once held for their parents and grandparents."

The study estimates that 870,000 of the 4.3 million American Jews of voting age are not currently registered to vote. Cohen based that figure on data contained in the 1990 National Jewish Population Study, conducted by the Council of Jewish Federations.

In that study of 2,000 households nationwide with at least one Jew, 86.7 percent of the respondents said that they were registered to vote.

Another 2.3 percent of the respondents said they were registered, but not in the state in which they live, which means that they either have to obtain an absentee ballot or travel to the jurisdiction in which they are registered.

A 'Swing Vote' In Pivotal States

Taking into consideration the fact that 7 percent of white Americans typically say they are registered when, in fact, they are not, Cohen estimates that a maximum of 79.7 percent of voting-age Jews are registered.

The estimate is a conservative one, said Cohen, and the exact number of unregistered adult Jews could be as high as 1 million.

"In other words, of the 1,000 who may be worshipping at a particular synagogue for the High Holy Days, at least 150 are not registered to vote at all," commented Rabbi Henry Michelman, executive vice president of the Synagogue Council.

"In addition, there may be another 100 who are registered but will be forced to cast an absentee ballot or return to where they last lived in order to enter the voting booth."

While Jews make up only a tiny fraction of the electorate, they hold greater influence at the voting booth than their numbers would suggest.

That is because 90 percent of all Jews live in 13 states, and those states have a combined total of 272 electoral votes, said Irving Silverman,

coordinator of the Synagogue Council's voter registration project.

Half of the electoral college's 540 votes, or 270, are needed to elect a president. "So in a sense, the Jewish vote can be seen as the swing vote in these states," he said.

Silverman also pointed out that of 51 members of Congress who are not running for reelection, 44 have been "notably supportive of Jewish causes."

"To those people saying that they are displeased with the candidates for president, we are saying that there are other election issues you should be concerned about, too."

The Synagogue Council voter registration project has set up a toll-free hotline to provide information and assistance on voter registration. The number is 800-927-7469.

Already-registered callers can volunteer to help others do the same.

The Synagogue Council, which represents Reform, Conservative and Orthodox Jews on domestic and interreligious matters of pan-denominational concern, also distributed a 28-page booklet to the 2,700 congregations it serves and more than 500 community relations councils and Jewish service organizations.

Through the booklet and the hotline, which gets 40 to 70 callers a week, hundreds of volunteers are organizing voter registration at their local congregations, senior citizen centers and nursing homes, said Silverman.

"If we are to restore the voting clout that we have always been expected to have, we have to go back to the days when we had 95 percent registered voters," he said.

Among the Synagogue Council report's other findings about Jewish patterns in registering to vote are these:

- * Most non-registered Jews are under age 35. Jews in their 20s are three times as likely as those in their 60s to be non-registered.

- * Among synagogue members, 15 percent are not registered. Among non-members, the figure reaches 23 percent.

- * Orthodox Jews are slightly more likely not to be registered than their Conservative and Reform counterparts. About 18 percent of Orthodox congregants are not registered, compared to about 14 percent for the other two movements.

2 FINED IN FRANCE FOR REVISIONISM

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, June 28 (JTA) -- A court in Nice has meted out stiff sentences to two men for publicly denying the reality of the Holocaust.

Fabrice Robert and Pierre Gauzer, both 21, were fined and will have their civil rights suspended for five years.

Last November, the two had pasted posters in Nice's colleges and universities saying, "The gas chambers are a hoax." They had also daubed walls with Nazi graffiti.

The police found in their apartment numerous posters of Hitler and Mussolini and various Nazi paraphernalia, including books.

Robert admitted being anti-Zionist and pro-Palestinian. The court fined him 10,000 francs (2,000 dollars). But his friend will have to pay double the amount.

The prosecutor asked the court to post the sentence on the doors of the colleges and universities where the two had put their posters, but the court denied that request.