

**JEWISH DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS BOTH PLEASED WITH PEROT'S PULLOUT**

By Cynthia Mann

States News Service

NEW YORK, July 16 (JTA) -- Jewish Democrats and Republicans alike are hoping that Ross Perot's dramatic withdrawal from the presidential contest will boost the fortunes of their parties' respective presidential candidates.

While each side claims that the Texas billionaire's supporters will now flock to their party, another outcome seems at least as likely: that Perot's backers will feel so betrayed that they will opt out of the campaign altogether.

The withdrawal clearly leaves Perot's Jewish support up for grabs. Polls have shown that Democratic nominee Bill Clinton has a solid majority of Jewish votes, and he has worked assiduously in recent weeks to shore up that support. The same surveys, meanwhile, have shown most Jewish Republicans ready to defect to Perot in November.

The Jewish vote had been considered pivotal in a three-way contest, but in the newly configured two-way race, it may decline in importance.

But President Bush, who called Perot's departure a "positive development," is still widely expected to try hard in the next four months to win back the Jews he lost to Perot over his hard-line policy on Israeli loan guarantees and his perceived insensitivity to Jews.

**'Shared Values' With Bush?**

"As it gets closer to the election, Jewish voters will become more aware of the positive achievement of the Bush administration with respect to Israel," said Cheryl Halpern, co-chairman of the National Jewish Coalition, a Republican group.

Halpern, who stressed she was speaking only for herself, expressed confidence that Perot supporters "will feel there are shared values between the Perot and Bush campaigns and feel comfortable moving over."

But Tom Smerling, head of a dovish Jewish group called Project Nishma, said he doubted such a migration would take place, noting the bitter public feuding between Perot and Bush.

"The animosity had reached such a pitch, it is hard to imagine Perot supporters returning to the Bush fold," he said.

Democratic Party Chairman Ron Brown told reporters shortly after the Perot announcement Thursday that his pullout will be a boon to the Clinton ticket.

The latest poll prior to the Perot bombshell already showed Clinton numbers were climbing, up to 45 percent, compared to 28 percent for Bush and 20 percent for Perot.

Brown said Clinton should win the hearts of Perot supporters because they want change, and Clinton is the only credible agent of change.

"Americans want change desperately," he said. "George Bush can't be the candidate of change. He is the epitome of the status quo."

The Democrats challenge, said Brown "is to motivate the (Perot) voters and inspire them to join our cause."

Though Perot refused to endorse Clinton, he

did claim in his announcement that the Democratic Party "has revitalized itself," a vote of confidence that may ultimately translate into new Clinton supporters.

But it is not clear whether his followers, many of whom are deeply disappointed, share that view.

**No Outlet For Alienation**

Joe Wouk, self-styled West Coast Jewish liaison to the Perot campaign, said he felt betrayed.

"It's a disaster for the country," he said. "I really don't know what to do next."

Rabbi A. James Rudin, national director of interreligious affairs at the American Jewish Committee, said he was worried about all of the alienation that had been channeled for the past few months into the Perot campaign.

"Now it doesn't have an outlet," he said, "and what I'm afraid of is that many of the declared Ross Perot voters, if they sit it out, will be a disservice to American democracy."

There will be a feeling, he said, "that he's just another politician who 'betrayed' us," said Rudin.

"We're not going to send his check back," AJCommittee spokesman David Saltman added half-jokingly. Saltman was referring to the recent \$100,000 contribution Perot made to the agency following an appearance last spring.

Steve Gutow, executive director of the National Jewish Democratic Council, expressed confidence that Perot's absence would be a boon for the Democratic ticket.

"Both Perot and Clinton represent change, and the vast majority want change," he said.

"My guess is that Bill Clinton will have the most overwhelming number of Jewish votes in history," he added.

Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, believes the situation is very fluid now.

He said a "great antipathy" prevails among Jews supporting Bush because of Middle East policies that are perceived to tilt against Israel.

"While Ross Perot was in the race, some of that manifested itself in support for Perot. It will be interesting to see if that support now goes to Clinton," he said.

**Bush Will Try To Recoup Losses**

Saperstein said Bush will try to recoup his lost Jewish support in the coming month with an anticipated visit by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and a new deal on loan guarantees.

"That gives Clinton a month before Rabin comes to try and (translate) that disappointment with Bush into support for him," said Saperstein. If Clinton "doesn't do that before the Rabin visit, Bush could capture a significant portion of that Perot support."

Jews have responded far less than other Americans to Perot's appeal as an outsider who dismissed the system as completely unworkable.

They have said Jews and other minorities must rely on the system, however flawed, for security and for safeguards from the tyranny of the majority.

And they have expressed mistrust of Perot's

reputedly autocratic style and personality, and his seeming naivete about ethnic minorities.

Perot's announcement therefore triggered some expressions of relief in the Jewish community.

"It's good for the Jews," said Michael Lerner, publisher of the left-wing intellectual journal *Tikkun* and a Clinton supporter. Despite the Texas billionaire's appeal to people with "legitimate dissatisfaction with America, Perot embodied a potentially fascistic mentality," Lerner said.

"He wants everything his way, or he doesn't want it at all," said Lerner. "He can't deal with gray, with anything that isn't black or white."

For those who are dissatisfied, said Lerner, "there's no place to go now. They'll have to line up behind Clinton. He's the one hope of getting Bush out of office."

Perot's decision shows this is a two-party country, said Rudin of AJCommittee, "which gives it great stability and continuity."

*(JTA staff writer Larry Yudelson contributed to this report.)*

## **ISRAEL SUSPENDS BUILDING STARTS, CANCELS 5,000 HOUSING CONTRACTS**

**By David Landau**

JERUSALEM, July 16 (JTA) -- The new Labor government has announced a two-week suspension of all building starts in Israel proper and the territories, while it reviews current housing policy.

The move is designed to facilitate the government's new approach to the building of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, without specifically singling out the settlements at this time.

In a related move, Housing Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer has issued orders that contracts on 5,000 housing starts due to have been signed in the coming days be voided. This despite the fact that these starts were approved by the previous government and that the infrastructure for them is already in place.

Jewish activists in the territories termed the move "a declaration of war" on the Jewish settlement movement.

The Council of Jewish Settlements in Judea, Samaria and Gaza issued a statement decrying the decision as a "gross violation of government norms of conduct and a surrender to ongoing pressure from the left and from the Palestinians."

Benny Katzover, head of the Samaria district council, said other settlement activity had also already fallen victim to the ministry's new policy.

He said caravans and mobile homes due to have been delivered this week had been effectively frozen, and that companies supplying them had been told to stand by and await orders from the government.

Ben-Eliezer was due to confer with Finance Minister Avraham Shohat at the week's end on the broader fiscal implications for the government of canceling building contracts in the territories.

In his Knesset appearance Monday, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin indicated that the government's policy of freezing the construction of "political settlements" would be less than total.

There would be necessary building to accommodate natural growth and the population's needs, he said, and the government would do "nothing illegal" by way of voiding contracts that were legally irrevocable.

## **PALESTINIANS AND IDF CONTINUE STANDOFF ON EVE OF BAKER VISIT**

**By Hugh Orgel**

TEL AVIV, July 16 (JTA) -- The tense standoff at A-Najah University in Nablus continued Thursday, with the Israel Defense Force maintaining a cordon around the campus to prevent students from leaving without interrogation and body search.

The army also turned back supplies of food and water sent to the beleaguered students.

The heated situation began Tuesday afternoon, during student elections on campus, when the IDF received information that armed Palestinians, wanted by security forces, were inside the campus.

It was the first test of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's government in the territories and comes on the eve of a visit here by U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, who is eager to push forward the Middle East peace talks.

The IDF was still declaring the university area a "closed military area," effectively barring journalists from entering to cover events there.

Israeli and foreign journalists have been forced to limit their coverage to bland statements by IDF spokespersons and emotional telephone reports from Nablus residents and from East Jerusalem Palestinian leader Faisal Husseini, who has set up "situation rooms" in Nablus and Jerusalem.

Israeli defense establishment officials say that between 1,000 and 1,500 students are inside the campus and include an estimated 10 or so wanted terrorists with firearms.

To complaints that the students are now running out of food, Israeli army spokespersons respond by saying: "They are all free to leave whenever they like. But they must first submit to interrogation for identification, and a search for weapons. Not all will necessarily be interrogated, but we will choose who to stop."

### **Rabin Expresses Regret**

Student spokespersons put the number of students on campus as about 4,000, and say they will not leave while the threat of search and interrogation hangs over them.

Husseini said the IDF blockade of the university could hardly be called a good start to what newly installed Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has promised will be accelerated and continuous peace talks.

Rabin himself implicitly criticized the previous Likud government and the military authorities for allowing the present situation to arise.

In a television interview Wednesday, Rabin said, "I am very sorry about the combination of circumstances. I did not decide to hold student council elections at A-Najah University. I do not know who determined this, or why," he said.

The new prime minister said that even as late as Wednesday morning, "I still did not know that such elections were being conducted. Whoever determined these elections should have been prepared for them. They should have examined those entering -- not those leaving."

Meanwhile, the IDF imposed a curfew on the Yibna refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, after escalation in factional fighting among Palestinians.

Some 1,000 supporters of the main Fatah branch of the Palestine Liberation Organization raided a mosque in the camp, where supporters of the Moslem fundamentalist group Hamas fired on the intruders.

**JEW'S BOO MITTERRAND AT WAR MEMORIAL BECAUSE OF FAILURE TO CONDEMN VICHY**

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, July 16 (JTA) -- French President Francois Mitterrand was booed by a small group of Jewish militants when he laid a wreath at the memorial marking the site of the Velodrome d'Hiver cycling racetrack, where thousands of Jews were rounded up 50 years ago by French police before being sent to concentration camps.

The protesters were said to be members of the Betar youth group, who were among the 3,000 people attending the ceremony here on Thursday evening.

The hecklers were apparently protesting the remarks made by Mitterrand earlier this week, when he refused to condemn the Vichy regime. In his traditional Bastille Day interview, Mitterrand said those responsible for the deportation of Jews from France during World War II "have already been tried."

"Don't ask this republic to account" for what was perpetrated by the wartime Vichy regime under Marshal Philippe Petain, Mitterrand said.

The more than 13,000 Jews rounded up at the "Vel d'Hiv" on July 16-17, 1942, were later handed over to the Nazis and deported to the extermination camps. Only a handful survived. None of the more than 4,000 deported children came back.

The issue remains heated here in France. Some 200 intellectuals, Jews and non-Jews, had asked Mitterrand to condemn Vichy's role in the Final Solution.

Heated debate followed the recent decision not to prosecute Paul Touvier, who was head of the Lyon collaborationist Militia responsible for the deaths of numerous Jews.

Mitterrand strongly differentiated between the French republics since the war and the Vichy regime. So did a Jewish government official.

Addressing the crowd at the memorial service, Robert Badinter, the Jewish child of a deportee who became a justice minister and is now president of the Constitutional Council -- the highest legal authority in France -- said the republic could not be held responsible for the crimes of the Vichy regime.

Many Wreaths And Many Tears

He chided the protesters for desecrating the memory of those who had died. "Be quiet or leave," he said to a round of applause.

In a separate event, the French Organization of Jewish Students held a mock trial of the Vichy regime in front of the Paris Court of Justice, asking the government and the entire French political echelons to finally acknowledge Vichy's role in the Final Solution.

The commemoration service brought piles of floral wreaths and many tears. They recalled that all in all, some 75,000 Jews were deported from France, of whom about 2,600 returned.

Mitterrand has said that as president, he cannot comment on the court's decision not to try Touvier. But he made clear he hoped it would be reversed next fall by the French supreme court.

The French courts have had similar approaches in the cases of other Vichy officials. The more time elapsed since the end of the war, the more lenient have been the courts' sentences.

Rene Bousquet, head of the Vichy police,

was deprived of his civil rights and, like Touvier, pardoned. He subsequently enjoyed a successful banking career and was reportedly on very good terms with Mitterrand until Mitterrand was elected president. None of those who were tried and condemned for collaboration and treason were ever judged for their part in the Final Solution. The handling of Jews by Vichy has always been minimized.

The court's decision in the Touvier case was apparently the straw that broke the camel's back. In short, it said the Vichy regime had no anti-Jewish policy, thus whitewashing the regime of Marshal Philippe Petain of any wrongdoing regarding the Jews.

Until 1983, French schoolbooks made no mention of the collaboration, including of the fact that the Vichy regime passed anti-Jewish laws even before the Nazi occupiers asked them to.

The attitude of successive French governments toward Vichy largely remains unchanged.

Gen. Charles de Gaulle, who led the French government in exile, was eager to rebuild postwar France while keeping the Communists at bay. He drew a veil over the era. "France resisted," de Gaulle maintained.

There are many in France who wish to reopen the books.

**SLOVAK LEADER DEPLORES ANTI-SEMITISM IN MEETING WITH JEWISH DELEGATION**

NEW YORK, July 16 (JTA) -- The prime minister of Slovakia, Vladimir Meciar, publicly condemned anti-Semitism in a meeting with World Jewish Congress leaders in Bratislava.

He also committed his newly formed government to adopt legislation in Parliament against racism and anti-Semitism and to provide for the protection of all minorities.

Following national elections last month in Czechoslovakia, the country appears headed for a breakup into two independent states. The impending independence of Slovakia has aroused Jewish concern in particular because of its only other experience with independence, when it operated as a Nazi puppet state during World War II.

The prime minister's comments are notable, because Slovakia has experienced a burst of anti-Semitic expression since Czechoslovakia became free of the Soviet Union at the end of 1989.

Ivan Gasparovic, chairman of the parliament, who also met with the Jewish leaders, said that during his recent term as Czechoslovakia's prosecutor general, he had encountered numerous manifestations of anti-Semitism. These included desecration of cemeteries and defamatory graffiti.

Meciar, who has been a leading advocate of independence, assured the Jewish leaders that the process of secession from Czechoslovakia would be peaceful.

He pledged that his public condemnation of anti-Semitism would be included in the charter of the new country's constitution.

The WJC leaders -- Leslie Keller, chairman of the WJC East European Commission, and Serge Cwajgenbaum, director of the WJC European branch -- also met with the president of the Jewish community of Slovakia, Juraj Reich. The WJC estimates the Jewish population of Slovakia to be some 3,000.

Meciar, who plans to meet with Reich in the coming weeks, asked the WJC delegation to inform the Israeli government of Slovakia's willingness to have an Israeli Embassy in Bratislava.

**AUSTRALIAN JEWS MEET WITH PREMIER  
IN ATTEMPT TO IMPROVE RELATIONSHIP**

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia, July 16 (JTA) -- After a first-ever meeting with Prime Minister Paul Keating, Jewish leaders have declared relations with the government to be on "an even keel," despite serious policy differences.

After months of squabbling over Australia's new pro-Arab tilt, a six-person delegation from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and the Zionist Federation of Australia met to discuss a range of issues with Keating, who assumed office last December.

The Jewish representatives told Keating that Australian encouragement of the Palestine Liberation Organization was damaging to the peace process and that Australia was no longer considered a committed supporter of Israel in international forums.

The prime minister responded by saying that the central principle of Australia's Middle East policy is Israel's right to exist behind secure and recognized boundaries.

These are "the principles, and it is principles that count," he said, and described the other Jewish concerns as "details" which in no way affect Australia's attitude toward the Jewish state.

The meeting with the prime minister came the day after Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans told a public meeting in Melbourne that he remained a firm friend of Israel but stood by his past criticisms, which, he said, had much to do with the attitude of the Shamir government toward the peace process.

The prime minister told his Jewish visitors he supports Evans and that they should have faith in "the government's common sense, of which we have much," regarding its dealings with the PLO.

**'Still Many Differences'**

Gerry Levy, acting president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, welcomed the reaffirmation of the principle but said that "there are still many differences of central importance between the Jewish community and the Australian government."

The meeting was the first step in rebuilding a damaged relationship, he said.

Zionist Federation President Mark Leibler was more upbeat, and told reporters at a press conference after the meeting that the Jewish community's relationship with the Australian government had been restored to its former position, although he said he disagreed with Keating's position on PLO contact.

During their meeting with the prime minister, the Jewish representatives also made an impassioned appeal to the government to act on its commitment to combat racism and anti-Semitism, including Holocaust revisionists and direct incitement to anti-Jewish violence.

Keating said that his government was still looking at a number of proposals for new changes in legislation.

The government's continued failure to approve an application by El Al for landing rights in Australia was also pursued by the delegation.

The Jewish representatives told Keating that there are no direct routes between Australia and Israel and that discriminatory obstacles have been placed in El Al's way.

World Jewish Congress co-chairman and co-

leader of the delegation, Isi Leibler, said that the Jewish community was far from satisfied with the position of the government, particularly as it related to the PLO and to Australia's stance in international forums.

He told the prime minister that the Jewish community is "sensitive and aware of Middle East policies and that this constituency must be considered in the development of our relationship with the Middle East."

**LATE REBBE'S BROTHER INSTALLED  
AS NEW REBBE FOR HOUSE OF GER**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, July 16 (JTA) -- In a surprise move, Rabbi Pinhas Menaheem Alter has become the new rebbe of the Hasidic house of Ger.

Rabbi Alter, 66, is the younger brother of the late rebbe, Simcha Bunim Alter, who died last week at the age of 95.

The Hasidim had expected the post to go to the late rebbe's only son, 52-year-old Rabbi Ya'acov. But the rebbe made no provision for a successor in his will, and Ya'acov resolutely refused to accept the position, deferring to his uncle.

The new rebbe was installed on Tuesday evening, hours after the shiva mourning period ended for his brother. Thousands of Hasidim from all over the country, and hundreds more from overseas, filed past the new rebbe for more than three hours and then joined the community in a festive prayer service.

Alter, a noted Talmud scholar, has served until now as dean of the flagship Gerer yeshiva, S'fat Emet in Jerusalem, and as chairman of the Agudat Yisrael party. In that capacity, he led the party, in 1977, into its long-lived alliance with the Likud -- an alliance which formed the basis of the right-religious governments that ruled Israel for 15 years.

The new rebbe has five children. A sixth, Arye, was killed in a road accident five years ago at the age of 27, leaving a young widow and son.

Ger is the largest Hasidic house in Israel, numbering some 4,000 registered families and an estimated total of close to 30,000 men, women and children. It has branches in the United States, Britain and Belgium.

But the sect had suffered through a frustrating period during the long years of the late rebbe's illness, when he was largely confined to his home and did not officiate at services or at the "tish," the festive Shabbat meals that are the heart of Hasidic life.

**FUNDS CUT FOR SURVIVORS' CHILDREN**

By Henriette Boas

AMSTERDAM, July 16 (JTA) -- The Dutch government has decided to stop state allowances to children of World War II survivors.

A delegation of Jewish social service professionals and representatives of mental health institutions met last week with the Dutch minister of welfare to protest the decision.

The stipends went to children born after 1945 to parents who were victims of the Nazis or the Japanese occupation of the former Dutch East Indies from 1942 to 1945.

The Dutch minister of social welfare, Hedy d'Ancona, while willing to pay for psychiatric assistance, is refusing to grant permanent payments as an income substitute.