

## ISRAEL MAKES FINAL HOUSING CUTS, CANCELING ANOTHER 4,000 UNITS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, July 28 (JTA) -- The government made what it called its final housing cuts this week, announcing the cancelation of another 4,000 units, this time outside the administered territories.

According to the Finance Ministry, the new freeze brings up to 11,981 the number of housing units that will not be built, 5,364 of them in the territories.

According to these latest figures, 1,400 fewer units in the territories are being canceled than the government had announced in its initial decision last week.

The construction freeze is being presented as part of the government's declared policy to divert funds from the building industry to infrastructure projects within the Green Line, Israel's pre-1967 border that does not include the territories.

According to the Treasury, the building freeze will save the state some \$650 million for next year's budget. The Treasury intends to spend the funds to develop infrastructure, roads and industrial zones.

"This will be the real alternative to the building industry and the real alternative to create new jobs," said Finance Minister Avraham Shohat.

As a general rule, the government has not touched housing units already under construction. But Housing Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, saying the "finality" of this week's announcement, said Monday that an additional 2,000 units in the territories, still at the initial stages of construction, may be canceled if there is no further demand for housing there.

A sharp drop in demand for housing in the territories has been reported by real estate agents since the new Labor government took office. They said apartment prices have dropped by at least 10 percent.

Construction continues on some 8,200 housing units in the territories. Many of them have no prospective buyers.

According to the Treasury, the state will honor the previous government's commitments to building contractors.

This will involve buying some 24,000 housing units if they remain unsold by the end of this year. This will cost some \$40 million.

### ANALYSIS:

## ISRAEL LAUNCHES TRIAL BALLOON TO GAUGE SYRIAN MODERATION

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, July 28 (JTA) -- Israel launched a small but significant trial balloon this week, by issuing a pointedly favorable comment on the deliberations of Arab foreign ministers in Damascus last weekend.

For the first time, said Israeli high-level "political circles" in remarks leaked to the press, this important Arab forum had actually spelled out the words "peace agreements" as the goal of the peace process with Israel.

The Arab statesmen met in the Syrian capital in an effort to coordinate positions before the reopening of the Middle East peace talks, now scheduled for Washington in late August.

The choice of Damascus as venue was as important as the issues discussed, and the Israeli "political circles" played this up. "Until now," they said, "the Arabs have refrained from committing themselves to the attainment of peace agreements between Israel and its neighbors."

They also noted that the Arab ministers' statement contained many terms that were unacceptable to Israel. But -- and this was the kicker to the Israeli comment -- there was reason to hope "that this Arab readiness for peace agreements will find tangible manifestation in the forthcoming talks," the Israelis said.

The response was clearly approved at the highest levels of the new Israeli government. It represented, according to a well-placed source, part of a new approach: "Not to paint everything automatically black, but to give the other side some credit and see if that is justified."

The question of whether Syria is prepared for full peace with Israel has dogged the bilateral talks between the two countries ever since the negotiations began, after the Madrid Conference last October.

Each time the two teams met, the Syrians demanded a commitment by Israel to territorial withdrawal, and the Israelis demanded a prior commitment from Syria to full peace. The talks hardly progressed farther than that.

### Trial Balloon May Facilitate Negotiations

It is too early to tell whether the new Israeli trial balloon has removed this roadblock, enabling negotiators to get down to nuts and bolts when they reconvene.

The answer presumably depends on Syrian wisdom and moderation in recognizing the purpose of the Israeli move. The Syrians must not backslide from the ministers' statement of last weekend, as publicly interpreted by Israel.

The Israel-Syria question has taken on unexpectedly urgent significance in the wake of the diplomacy following Yitzhak Rabin's victory.

Both U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak spent a large part of their discussions with Rabin last week stressing to him that his "Palestinians-first" thesis might not hold water. To leave the Syrians out in the cold is to court the risk of their thwarting progress with the Palestinians too, Rabin was told.

Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres have plainly absorbed the message. Highly placed sources here speak of a "reassessment" currently in progress in the policy-making echelon in Jerusalem with regard to the priority of the Syrian negotiations in the overall peace equation.

Prime Minister Rabin toured southern Lebanon on Tuesday and noted, not for the first time, that the Syrians have it in their power to throttle Shi'ite anti-Israeli and anti-Christian terrorism in that region.

Rabin also emphasized that Israel had "learned the lessons of its limitations" and would not be seeking to interfere in forthcoming Lebanese elections.

## WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS MARKED BY POLITICS AND PATHOS

By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM, July 28 (JTA) -- When all is said and done, the 32nd World Zionist Congress will be remembered for two things: politics and pathos.

At Sunday night's gala kickoff, both were very much in evidence. Some 3,000 Jewish delegates, alternates and observers, including Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and President Chaim Herzog, enjoyed a moving salute to the Jewish Agency-World Zionist Organization and its accomplishments, particularly in the field of aliyah.

There were cheers when a huge video screen showed family reunions between Ethiopian immigrants and their loved ones already in Israel. There were tears when 10-year-old Blanca, whom the Jewish Agency had airlifted to Israel from war-torn Yugoslavia a few months ago, stood onstage and heard her father's far-away voice by live telephone hookup.

The audience watched, spellbound, as an El Al jet loaded with new immigrants touched down, live, at Ben-Gurion Airport. Thanks to some technical wizardry, members of the audience were able to talk to the passengers of flight 660, who were still standing on the tarmac.

"Welcome to Israel," Herzog's voice boomed out to Yuli, an immigrant from the former Soviet Union. "In a short time you will be settled, integrated, absorbed into Israel society. But it will take some time."

Looking a bit overwhelmed to be speaking to the president, Yuli mustered up some basic Hebrew and replied, "I'm very happy to be here together with my family. I am sure that everything will be fine."

### Down To Business

For the evening's finale, dozens of student delegates marched down the aisles carrying Israeli flags. When it was over, Shauna Kaufman, a 21-year-old student from Toronto, said she was "unbelievably excited" to be taking part in the congress.

"I'm only an alternate, but it's still rewarding to see such an international group of Jews in one room," she said.

By Monday, the delegates got down to business.

The Binyanei Ha'uma Convention Center, where the congress was convened, resembled the United Nations. In all, more than 700 delegates and 1,000 alternates and observers from 31 countries had come to make Zionist history.

Eastern Europe was represented for the first time in decades and the former Soviet republics sent delegates for the first time since 1917. Another first was the participation of student delegates from around the world.

The elections for the WZO chairmanship and the members of the Zionist Executive provided the day's main drama.

In a surprise move, the Likud faction caucus endorsed Knesset member Ronni Milo for the position of Jewish Agency treasurer, a slot given to the Likud under the coalition agreement. Ruby Rivlin, who served in the outgoing Knesset and was identified with former Foreign Minister David Levy's faction of the Likud, had been considered the odds-on favorite.

Milo's tenure in the treasurer's post, however, depends on the agreement of the Diaspora

fundraisers who are partners with the WZO in the Jewish Agency. Because the WZO chairman and treasurer also hold those posts for the Jewish Agency, their election must be ratified by an advise-and-consent committee of the United Israel Appeal and the Keren Hayesod.

Insiders say that when the committee meets in November, it may veto Milo unless he agrees to step down from the Knesset.

Following the vote, Milo, who heads the World Likud faction in the WZO, told the press, "I was very surprised by the outcome. The faction felt it was important to fill the treasury post as soon as possible and it started to put pressure on me." He added, "If Rivlin gets the American's consent, he can have the job in November."

The delegates also re-elected Simcha Dinitz for another four-year term as WZO chairman, but the proceedings did not go smoothly.

### Dinitz Considered A Shoo-in

Dinitz, who scored a 382-101 victory over his rival, Rabbi Richard Hirsch, had been considered a shoo-in. But the Reform Zionist movement went ahead and fielded its own candidate, Hirsch. With the support of the left-wing Ratz and Shinui blocs, the group was able to put Dinitz and his Labor bloc on the defensive.

Hirsch's campaign stemmed from the decision last year by all American Zionist organizations, except for the Association of Reform Zionists of America, that one-person, one-vote elections to determine the American delegation to the congress were unnecessary. Such elections were held in 1987 at a cost of over \$1 million. After months of acrimonious deliberations, the Zionist Supreme Court ruled that this year's American delegation should reflect the results of the 1987 balloting.

On the third floor of the convention center, representatives from both sides feverishly attempted to avert a public confrontation. The elections, which had been set for 10 a.m., were postponed until 4 p.m. to give the negotiating teams more time to reach a compromise.

Hirsch's people said he would withdraw his candidacy on one condition: Dinitz had to agree, in writing, to direct elections for the next congress. Dinitz refused, and the conflict went public.

At 4 o'clock, Hirsch officially declared his candidacy to boos and shouts from the audience.

### 'Politics As Usual'

He told the gathering, "The WZO must not merely represent the strength of the various political parties, but also the real strength of the various religious streams in the Diaspora. If there are no elections, what is the point of the consensus?"

When Dinitz's turn came, he took an indirect swipe at Hirsch's candidacy. He told the audience, "I am sorry. I had hoped we could spend the entire congress discussing pragmatic issues, ways to solve our problems."

In a more conciliatory tone, he said, "I hope the Reform movement will join the Zionist consensus. I propose that we set aside two Executive seats for the Reform movement, with the hope that they will join our wall-to-wall coalition."

Looking back at the first 24 hours of the congress, one American Jewish organizational leader said, "Sunday night was incredible. It was an event most of us will never forget."

And on Monday, she added with a shrug, "it was politics as usual."

## CHICAGO JEWS AND CATHOLICS ISSUE PUBLIC STATEMENT ON ABORTION

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, July 28 (JTA) -- In an unusual public statement, Jews and Catholics in Chicago have together addressed the topic of abortion, one of the most divisive issues debated in political and religious circles today.

The 21 Jewish and Catholic religious leaders who signed a joint statement about abortion treaded carefully around the contradictory positions held by Judaism and Catholicism, which differ fundamentally on the point at which "human life" begins and whether abortion is always wrong.

Instead, their statement addressed the often-vociferous tone of public debate on abortion.

They expressed concern about the way in which "the public debate on abortion has harmfully polarized our society," in their statement, made public July 24.

"Many parties to the public debate on abortion question the integrity and intent of their opponents," the statement read. "Not only is this behavior counterproductive but it is also profoundly unjust.

"We condemn the stereotyping of religious traditions and attacks upon the integrity of those who hold different views. Such vilification creates divisiveness between groups and makes it more difficult for our society to resolve this complex ethical dilemma.

"Moreover, it can easily lead to a cold, unthinking lack of compassion for the women who must grapple with this dilemma most immediately and inescapably. We call upon all to proceed with sensitivity and dignity in their public discourse and action on this subject," the statement said.

### Traditions Differ On Issue

The Jews and Catholics who signed the statement agreed that "neither tradition considers the voluntary termination of a pregnancy to be good but our traditions differ on whether that choice is always morally wrong."

They acknowledged that "the range of appropriate options and acceptable responses to real life dilemma is quite different in our two traditions."

And they urged "the public and private sectors of our society to implement programs which address the basic health care needs of women and children at risk. The debate over abortion should not interfere with this objective."

The statement's creation grew out of a dialogue which has been conducted by leaders of the two faith communities since the early 1980s, when it was founded by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago.

The Catholic-Jewish Scholars Dialogue, as it is known, is co-sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, the Chicago Board of Rabbis and the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Every two months, dialogue participants gather for scheduled meetings at the federation, which coordinates the effort, to discuss issues of mutual concern.

It is rare that they issue a statement. There have been only two others -- on the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz, in 1989, and on the proposed beatification of Spain's Queen Isabella, in 1991.

The statement on abortion was written after the topic was discussed at the group's spring

meeting and two further sessions. The group decided to issue a statement on this topic because the first meeting "was a profound session, and people were moved by the depth of the discussion," said Michael Kotzin, associate executive director and director of communications for the federation.

It was decided that "we could play a role by making a statement of concern about the tenor of the debate," he said.

Signers of the statement include: Rev. Daniel Montalbano, director of Catholic-Jewish relations at the Chicago archdiocese; Rev. John Pawlikowski, a professor of social ethics at the Chicago Theological Union; Rev. Michael Place, theology consultant to the cardinal; Rabbi Mordechai Simon, executive vice president of the Chicago Board of Rabbis, and Rabbi Louis Tuchman, the board's president; and Maynard Wishner, chair of the Chicago Jewish Community Relations Council.

There are about 250,000 Jews in the Chicago area, according to Kotzin, and 2.3 million Catholics within the archdiocese.

## JEWS PROTEST WASHINGTON MAYOR'S PRAISE OF NATION OF ISLAM LEADER

By Cynthia Mann

States News Service

WASHINGTON, July 28 (JTA) -- Representatives of Jewish groups met with Washington Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly to protest a proclamation she issued July 11 in honor of a national spokesman for the Nation of Islam.

One of the representatives present said Kelly made it clear she meant only to praise Dr. Abdul Alim Muhammed for his local work fighting AIDS and drug abuse and not to legitimate or encourage the anti-Semitic views he has trumpeted.

But the Jewish leaders conveyed to the mayor that it was "impossible to disconnect the good works of (Muhammed) from the darker aspects of his program and the Nation of Islam's program, which preach vilification of the Jews," said Jeffrey Weintraub, director of the Washington chapter of the American Jewish Committee.

Kelly issued the proclamation with little fanfare only days after it had been rejected by the City Council.

A subsequent editorial in the Washington Post called it "one of the most profoundly disappointing acts of her administration" that sent the wrong message to the city about prejudice and anti-Semitism.

The editorial included some of Muhammed's virulently anti-Jewish remarks.

But Kelly demonstrated at the Monday meeting that she "seems to put racial and inter-group harmony near the top of her agenda," said Weintraub.

He said the mayor pledged to "keep the doors open" to the Jewish groups and work more closely with them in the future.

Teri Gross, associate director of the regional office of the Anti-Defamation League, who was also present at the meeting, said the groups felt satisfied that there had been "a very candid and frank discussion."

She said the mayor pledged to devise a "mechanism" to redress the hurt caused by the proclamation and that this mechanism will be the most important test of the mayor's intentions.

Representatives of the American Jewish Congress and the area's Jewish Community Relations Council also attended the meeting.

## NOBLE LAUREATE SABIN DONATES FUNDS FOR WEIZMANN SOLAR ENERGY RESEARCH

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, July 28 (JTA) -- In a welcome reprise of a gift he gave last year, American Nobel laureate Albert Sabin has again bequeathed a large sum to the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot for solar energy research.

Sabin, a former president of the institute and renowned for developing the oral polio vaccine, donated \$120,000, which represents the proceeds of awards he recently received from Italian sources: the Abano Terme Quality of Life Prize and the Sanremo Laboratoria Farmaceutico CT Prize.

Last October, Sabin, a doctor, virologist and microbiologist, surprised Weizmann officials at their annual dinner in New York by presenting the institute with \$500,000 for solar energy research.

Sabin, who was president of the institute from 1970 to 1972, is an American Jew who was born in Bialystok, Russia, in 1906.

The Italian awards were given to Sabin in recognition of the many millions of people his vaccine saved from polio, a crippling and sometimes fatal illness. He was also cited for his efforts to provide a better quality of life for children in poor countries, and for being a "true benefactor of humanity."

Sabin stipulated that his donation to the Weizmann Institute be used specifically for the development of a commercially useful technology for converting the sun's energy into transportable and storable chemical energy.

Explaining what prompted him to fund solar energy, Sabin said, "I believe that the earliest possible development of a suitable technology for replacing the exhaustible, polluting fossil fuels by inexhaustible, clean solar energy is of the greatest importance to the whole world.

In a telephone conversation with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Sabin, who lives in Washington, said, "This is the biggest challenge for the ultimate, complete transformation from fossil fuels. It is important not only for the world at large but also for Israel and the Weizmann Institute itself."

(JTA staff writer Susan Birnbaum in New York contributed to this report.)

## ISRAELI EQUIPMENT SOLD TO SYRIA

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, July 28 (JTA) -- Irrigation equipment designed and produced in an Israeli kibbutz has been sold to Syria.

Amir Lahav, a spokesman for Kibbutz Dorot, near Sderot in the northern Negev, said the kibbutz had received an inquiry from a sales agent in Western Europe regarding possible sales to Syria.

Two deals were made, for a total of \$50,000, and the goods were shipped to Europe and presumably sent on to Syria. The kibbutz was paid in the currency of the middleman.

Lahav said it was not known whether the Syrian purchaser or users were aware of the provenance of the equipment. It was shipped without any Hebrew or other markings, including the logo of the kibbutz.

He said the kibbutz knew that its products had previously been sent indirectly to other Arab and Moslem countries.

## HARRY STARR, JEWISH STUDIES PIONEER, DEAD AT 92 AFTER LONG ILLNESS

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, July 28 (JTA) -- Harry Starr, a pioneer in Jewish studies at Harvard University and a lifelong supporter of Jewish scholarly pursuits, died July 25 in Gloversville, N.Y. He was 92 and had been in failing health for some time.

Along with his lifelong friend and colleague, Lucius Littauer, a U.S. congressman and patron of Jewish education, he helped found the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation in 1929.

The foundation provided money for Jewish studies programs at Harvard and other universities and helped fund scientific research and fiction writing, as well.

Jewish historians such as Salo Baron, Lucy Dawidowicz, Raphael Patai and Yehuda Bauer benefited from the foundation's sponsorship.

Starr served as secretary and then as president of the foundation from its founding until 1985, when he became chairman. He was honorary chairman at the time of his death.

Starr "was sort of the philanthropical father of Jewish studies in this country," said William Frost, the current president of the foundation.

In 1926, Starr was instrumental in creating the first endowed chair in Jewish studies at Harvard University, the Nathan Littauer Professorship of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy. It was the forerunner of this country's university-level Jewish studies programs.

He also organized an endowment for Hebrew books at the Harvard University Library, the first major endowment for Judaica library resources at an American university.

And he was involved in the creation of the Littauer School of Public Administration at Harvard, known since 1978 as the John F. Kennedy School of Government.

## Harvard Created Post In His Name

In 1978, Harvard created the Harry S. Starr Professorship in Jewish Studies.

Starr served as officer or board member of 22 organizations in the United States and Israel.

While a student at Harvard Law School in 1922, Starr led the fight against the creation of quotas for Jews at the university.

As president of the Harvard Menorah Society, Starr tackled a growing anti-Semitic undercurrent at Harvard sparked by an increasing Jewish presence on campus.

At a time when closed-door meetings were being called to discuss the issue, Starr wrote a highly charged essay for The Menorah Journal, a publication of the Jewish organization.

"The Jew cannot look upon himself as a problem," he wrote. "He is a full American, with the right to domicile not only on the soil but in the institutions arising from that soil."

Born in Vitebsk, Russia, Starr came to America at the age of 2 with his mother, who arrived to learn that her husband had just died. She ran a kosher butcher shop in the upstate New York town of Gloversville, where Starr first befriended Littauer.

In a 1985 interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Starr recalled growing up in Gloversville, a leather-tanning center that attracted immigrants "from Warsaw and Grenoble," a "crazy quilt of curious paradoxes -- radical workers, founders of the Workmen's Circle, future businessmen and kosher freethinkers."