

**MINISTER'S REMARKS PRECIPITATE  
A CRISIS IN ISRAELI GOVERNMENT**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Sept. 27 (JTA) -- Israel's Labor-led government appears to have survived a coalition crisis triggered by remarks made by Education Minister Shulamit Aloni that outraged the fervently Orthodox Shas party.

At a reportedly "stern" meeting Sunday with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, the leader of the left-wing Meretz bloc and her two party Cabinet colleagues pledged to speak and act with greater discretion in future, in the interest of preserving a coalition government committed to pursuing peace with the Arabs.

But the crisis highlighted the essential fragility of the Labor-led government. And the opposition parties, despite their own internal conflicts, planned to maximize the government's embarrassment before allowing the "Aloni affair" to fade.

Another rigorously Orthodox party, the opposition United Torah Judaism bloc, which is composed of the Ashkenazic Agudat Yisrael and Degel HaTorah parties, plans to introduce a no-confidence motion in the Knesset.

The Likud and the National Religious Party are certain to support it or introduce similar motions of their own.

But they and two other right-wing opposition parties, Moledet and Tsomet, control only 53 votes in the 120-seat Knesset, compared to the 56 controlled by Labor and Meretz. The five Knesset members from Arab parties would likely support the government in a no-confidence vote, meaning it would survive such a challenge, even if Shas' six members voted the other way.

Nevertheless, the Labor government would not want to remain in a position where it had to rely on the votes of the Arab parties to remain in power.

**'Red-Faced With Rage'**

The uproar surrounding the education minister built up over a period of weeks, growing more raucous and intense each time the minister made a deliberately controversial statement on issues of Jewish doctrine or observance.

Matters reached a head when Aloni, within the space of three days, declared that:

\* Israel's non-Orthodox schoolchildren were being "force-fed" the biblical account of creation;

\* The text of the Yizkor prayer for the dead should be changed to omit references to God; and

\* Prime Minister Rabin would cede the entire Golan Heights to Syria in exchange for full peace.

The first two utterances prompted a call to Rabin from the spiritual leader of the Shas party, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, who told the premier that Shas would have to pull out of the coalition.

And the statement on the Golan reportedly left Rabin himself "red-faced with rage." His office announced Friday that Rabin would meet the three Meretz ministers Sunday to discuss Aloni's "continued functioning in the government."

This formulation naturally brought about a

drawing of the Meretz wagons around the beleaguered education minister. Meretz declared in an official statement Saturday night that "any diminution of Minister Aloni's status will mean the break-up of the coalition."

But Aloni's two Meretz colleagues, Energy Minister Amnon Rubinstein and Immigrant Absorption Minister Yair Tzaban, let it be known privately that they, along with the rest of the party, were deeply embarrassed over Aloni's statements.

Knesset member Haim Oron of Meretz's Mapam faction gave public voice to the widespread discontent within the party: "Some of what she said I don't agree with," he said. "Some I would never have said myself. And some I would not have said at this time."

At the meeting with Rabin on Sunday, Aloni herself termed the statement about the premier's position on the Golan "a mistaken utterance."

Regarding the statements on religion, all three ministers and the chairman of the Meretz Knesset faction, Yossi Sarid, made it clear to the prime minister there would not be a recurrence.

While insisting that Aloni not be depicted as "under threat," they pledged to show sensitivity toward the integrity of the coalition, which, as Sarid put it, is "the one we want to preserve."

**Aloni Apologizes To Rabbi**

Rabin, for his part, stopped short of issuing a formal warning to Aloni. He merely said, in his blunt style, that if the present situation continued, the coalition would be hard to keep intact.

The prime minister later phoned Interior Minister Arye Deri, the Shas political leader, and arranged to meet after Rosh Hashanah with Rabbi Yosef and the three other members of the Shas Council of Torah Sages.

Deri said the final word would rest with Yosef. He said the issue was "not one of coalition politics, but of the entire atmosphere in the country" regarding the "Jewish values of the state."

Aloni herself had made the key first move in mollifying Yosef. In a letter made public last Thursday, she both apologized for the furor she had caused and asked the Shas leader to help calm it down.

The education minister blamed much of the trouble on unfair reporting and on deliberate attempts by the opposition National Religious Party to stir up trouble between herself and Shas.

"I am sorry about the out-of-context reports which have led to misunderstandings and much embarrassment," the minister wrote to the rabbi.

"The press failed to report that I have given instructions that education programs be prepared for the state (secular) schools on the synagogue and its role in Jewish life," she said, enumerating several of her calls for religious instruction.

"I want to emphasize that all Israeli (Jewish) children, secular and religious alike, are Jews, and without a knowledge of Jewish heritage through the ages, we will remain an empty vessel," she wrote. "Therefore I favor expanding studies of Judaism and Jewish heritage."

Aloni at the same time made a plea for

flexibility when she referred to the rabbinic aphorism that there are "70 faces of the Torah," that is, many ways of interpreting it.

Aloni is due to spend the coming two weeks abroad, and her absence is expected to help bring calm to the coalition atmosphere. But political analysts say Rabin's chances of wooing United Torah Judaism into his government have been dealt a possibly mortal blow by the Aloni affair.

**U.S. ARMS PACKAGE FOR ISRAEL  
CALLED ROSH HASHANAH PRESENT  
By Hugh Orgel**

TEL AVIV, Sept. 27 (JTA) -- A U.S. decision to present Israel with 25 Apache and 10 Blackhawk assault helicopters, as well as 70 Patriot anti-missile missiles, is being described by the media here as the "best Rosh Hashanah present the U.S. could have given Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Israel."

The helicopters are being given to Israel to help offset the proposed sale of 72 advanced F-15 fighter jets to Saudi Arabia, which Israel has protested.

President Bush announced the sale Sept. 11, during a campaign stop in St. Louis, where the F-15 is made by the McDonnell Douglas Corp. But the president said the United States would ensure that the sale did not alter the strategic balance in the Middle East.

Announcement of the arms package for Israel was made Saturday by the White House, which said the helicopters were being provided to maintain Israel's "qualitative military edge."

At the same time, it was announced that the United States would "pre-position" a considerable amount of military equipment in Israel. It would be ready for use by U.S. armed forces but could also be drawn upon by the Israel Defense Force in the event of an emergency.

The total value of the equipment is put by the Israeli media at about \$700 million.

**U.S. AND ISRAEL REACH A DEAL  
ON INQUIRY INTO DOTAN SCANDAL  
By Hugh Orgel**

TEL AVIV, Sept. 27 (JTA) -- Israel and the United States reportedly have reached an understanding on Washington's demand that American officials be allowed to interview former Israeli air force Brig. Gen. Rami Dotan about a bribery scandal involving U.S. defense contractors.

For close to two years, Israel has refused U.S. requests to interview Dotan, who was imprisoned last year for skimming millions of dollars in U.S. military aid to Israel. He is serving a 13-year term.

The previous Likud administration refused to allow his questioning by U.S. officials, for fear he might divulge state secrets.

News reports said the Pentagon and the Justice Department had been urging Israel be declared in default of its aid and loan agreements because of its refusal to allow access to Dotan.

But a statement issued by the Israeli Embassy in Washington said that two days of discussions between the two governments last week were "constructive" and "produced a joint framework for further cooperation" in the investigation of the Dotan affair.

State Attorney Dorit Beinisch headed the three-member Israeli team at the talks. Details of the agreement were not announced.

**GROUP SUING COMMERCE DEPARTMENT  
TO GET PAPERS RELATING TO BOYCOTT  
By Kimberly C. Moore  
States News Service**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 27 (JTA) -- The American Jewish Congress is filing a lawsuit against the U.S. Commerce Department, charging that it is withholding documents pertaining to the alleged cooperation of Baxter International Inc. with the Arab League boycott against Israel.

Baxter, a multibillion-dollar hospital and health care company based in Illinois, is under criminal investigation by the U.S. Attorney's Office in Chicago on charges that it violated U.S. laws barring compliance with the boycott.

The charges stem from Baxter's activities in the late 1980s when it closed a plant in Israel and agreed to build a medical factory in Syria.

Although Baxter later scrapped its agreement with Syria, the U.S. Attorney's Office is investigating whether Baxter closed the Israeli plant in order to do business with Arab countries.

Beginning last February, AJCongress requested documents from the Commerce Department regarding Baxter's business affairs, a right guaranteed under the Freedom of Information Act.

"In May, AJCongress' final appeal within the Department of Commerce was denied, and so we were left with no alternative but to file suit in federal court to obtain these documents," said Will Maslow, AJCongress' general counsel and editor of its "Boycott Report" newsletter.

Maslow said he is particularly interested in a report prepared by Baxter's special counsel that investigated boycott charges against the firm.

Baxter spokesman Geoffrey Fenton said the lawsuit is something between the Commerce Department and AJCongress.

"We've continued to cooperate with the ongoing investigation," said Fenton. "But at the same time, Baxter continuously and strenuously denies any wrongdoing."

**ISRAEL'S POPULATION GREW 3 PERCENT  
By Hugh Orgel**

TEL AVIV, Sept. 27 (JTA) -- Israel's population grew by some 3 percent during the past Jewish year and now stands at 5.155 million, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics.

That is less than half the 6.3 percent growth rate of the previous year. The slower rate was attributed mainly to the decline in emigration from the republics of the former Soviet Union.

The bureau said that about 50 percent of the population rise was due to natural increase, with the other half due to net immigration.

Immigration during 5752 dropped to some 92,000, down from the peak of 235,000 recorded during the previous Jewish year. About 82 percent of the newcomers were from the Soviet successor states, with another 8 percent from Ethiopia.

The country's Jewish population, which now stands at 4.22 million, grew by 2.9 percent last year, compared to 6.7 percent in 5751 -- an increase of about 118,000 people. Some 60 percent of this rise was due to net immigration.

The current population is 81.9 percent Jewish, 13.9 percent Moslem, 2.4 percent Christian and 1.7 percent Druse.

**REMINDER: The JTA Daily News Bulletin will not be published Sept. 29 or 30.**

## JEWISH LEADERS EXPRESS DISGUST OVER ARSON AT SACHSENHAUSEN SITE

NEW YORK, Sept. 27 (JTA) -- Jewish organizational leaders have deplored the burning of a Holocaust memorial at the site of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in Germany.

The destruction late Friday of a barracks housing the memorial in the town of Oranienburg, north of Berlin, was a "shocking, sick and disgusting" act, said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League and a Holocaust survivor.

"This is the second time within a month that a Holocaust memorial has been attacked, and we call for a swift and thorough investigation," he said in a statement Sunday.

Benjamin Meed, president of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, said that "a nightmare is returning to Germany, but the government of Chancellor (Helmut) Kohl seems helpless to respond.

"It is time to sound the alarm, to wake up the responsible authorities and the forces of decency in today's Germany, so that prompt and vigorous action is taken."

Two weeks ago, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin visited the Sachsenhausen barracks, which also housed an exhibition on Nazi anti-Semitism.

In Jerusalem, Rabin issued a statement saying the apparent arson is "more proof how dangerous is the rising tide of neo-Nazis who are trying to wipe out the memory of the Holocaust and to hurt anything which is foreign to their sick racial conceptions."

The torching was described by Ignatz Bubis, the new chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, as "a vicious sacrilege."

## JEWISH LEADERS CRITICIZE BONN FOR ITS PLAN TO DEPORT GYPSIES

By David Kantor

BONN, Sept. 27 (JTA) -- The Jewish community here and overseas has criticized the German government's move to deport thousands of Gypsies back to Romania.

A community spokesman said the government should instead curb neo-Nazis who have attacked Gypsies and other foreigners seeking asylum in Germany.

Bonn and Bucharest last week signed an agreement allowing the deportation of Romanians, mostly Gypsies, living illegally in Germany. The German government has offered about \$20 million to help resettle returning deportees.

The Jewish community compared the government's move to the way it handled the right-wing attack on a refugee hostel in the eastern German town of Hoyerswerda, where it evacuated the foreigners instead of putting the attackers behind bars.

"You don't just expel people without studying their individual problems," the community statement said.

In New York, the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council called on Chancellor Helmut Kohl and the German leadership to "protect the rights of minorities and to counter extremist movements in Germany."

"Memory of the tragic past strengthens our belief that this kind of violence cannot be tolerated in any democratic society. It must be brought to an end with the rights of the victims

protected by German authorities," the umbrella group said.

A leader of Reform Judaism described the deportation move as evidence that the Kohl regime has "cravenly surrendered to the frenzy of the mob."

The decision is "clearly designed to appease the violent anti-foreigner movement that has swept over Germany in recent months," said Melvin Merians, chairman of the board of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the central body of Reform Judaism.

## NJCRC ADOPTS POLICY OPPOSING BIAS BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Sept. 27 (JTA) -- The National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council has adopted a policy statement opposing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Abstaining from the statement, approved Sept. 21 by NJCRAC's executive committee, was the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, one of 13 national agencies that are part of NJCRAC. Several of the 117 local community relations agencies abstained as well.

"Protection of homosexual rights has always been implicit in NJCRAC's broad policy on discrimination," said Jerome Chanes, the umbrella group's co-director for domestic concerns. "This is the first time that adoption of explicit language was on the formal agenda."

NJCRC's policy comes when the debate over lesbian and gay rights is assuming a high profile nationwide. At the Republican national convention in Houston, lesbian and gay rights were painted as being in opposition to "family values," an attitude that a measure on the ballot in Oregon would codify into law.

On the other hand, four days after NJCRAC adopted its policy, California Gov. Pete Wilson signed a law banning employment discrimination against homosexuals in his state. Other states with similar policies include Connecticut, Hawaii, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Vermont and Wisconsin.

The NJCRAC policy on sexual orientation discrimination has three parts.

The organization "opposes discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing, public accommodation and education."

It "supports legislation to bar discrimination in these areas."

And it also "supports the incorporation in such legislation of exemptions, that may already exist in other civil-rights laws, designed to protect the right of religious institutions to carry out their religious purposes."

Chanes explained that this third clause reflects the fact that when discussing gay rights, "you have a situation where opposition to discrimination comes into conflict with religious rights, and we felt it was imperative to resolve the conflict."

The result was that the Orthodox Union was able to abstain from the measure, rather than using its right to veto the statement.

Explaining its abstention, the Orthodox Union stated: "We are opposed to discrimination and vigilantism against any individual or group. The halacha (Jewish law), however, prohibits homosexual activity, and we cannot join in a statement that could be misinterpreted to imply otherwise."

**PROMINENT JEWS REFLECT ON ISSUES FACING COMMUNITY IN THE NEW YEAR**

NEW YORK (JTA) -- Rosh Hashanah this year falls squarely in the middle of a hotly contested U.S. presidential race, a Middle East peace process that is steadily building positive momentum, a global recession that seems to be without end and a crisis of continuity in the American Jewish community that is only beginning to be addressed.

With so many issues to consider during this time of reflection, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency has asked a randomly selected group of well-known American Jews to respond to the following question: What are the issues on which Jews should focus in the coming Jewish year?

JTA staff intern Lainie Blum-Cogan has compiled their responses, which appear in alphabetical order.

**ARTHUR HERTZBERG**

*Scholar, rabbi and professor of history at New York University*

Jewish learning is increasing in certain elite groups, but across the board it is decreasing, even in Israel. . . .

We have done enormously well in fighting for Israel and against anti-Semitism. We have enormous resources and devotion.

However, the result has been that intermarriage in the Jewish community has gone from one in 12 in the '50s to over half today.

We've got to get off this kick and get on to Jewish education and content because worrying about tsuris is not going to solve the problem. The Jewish community is evaporating, which proves that the means we're using are not sufficient for preserving the inner core of the Jewish community. . . .

The solution? Go study. This should be the priority.

**SUSANNAH HESCHEL**

*Jewish feminist scholar and professor of religion at Case Western Reserve University*

What comes to my mind immediately is moral courage. I am a professor and I have learned that my students don't have living moral heroes. They see politicians all around them who seem successful but are not moral leaders.

I guess I grew up in a different era, with people with moral courage around me who spoke out against injustice, who made such issues central in their lives.

**EDWARD KOCH**

*Former mayor of New York*

Jews should focus on the economy, like everybody else. Anti-Semitism flourishes when people become disappointed with the government because of a bad economy.

As always, the security of the State of Israel has to be on our minds.

**CYNTHIA OZICK**

*Author and essayist. Books include "The Shawl" and "Metaphor & Memory"*

I think that Israel is our primary focus, and not so much Israel but the political context surrounding Israel. Namely, I think we should

focus less on taking defensive postures and more on taking assertive postures and for the first time really . . . inserting into the American body politic some facts that are consistently overlooked about Arab political culture.

One of the most outrageous events last year among American feminists took place when the National Organization for Women invited (Palestinian spokeswoman) Hanan Ashrawi to speak. She was bashing Israel, as usual. Not one person at that convention, many of whom were Jews, asked her about the condition of women in Arab culture, . . . (or about) the absence of democracy and human rights in Arab countries.

**LETTY COTTIN POGREBIN**

*Founding editor of Ms. magazine and author most recently of "Deborah, Golda, and Me"*

I think the pressing issue for Jews internationally is to support the peace process with hearts, soul and letters to (Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak) Rabin and American government representatives. . . .

On the domestic scene, my first priority is to protect choice, and I think it should be a priority of the entire Jewish community and not just "the women's divisions" of Jewish organizations.

**A.M. ROSENTHAL**

*New York Times syndicated columnist and former executive editor of the Times*

American Jews should be focusing on exactly the same issues that American non-Jews should be focusing on: the health of the United States, who is going to lead us, the role and position of the U.S. in the world, what we want in our country and what we want of ourselves in our country.

As far as Israel is concerned, I think that those Americans interested in Israel, Jew and non-Jew, should watch the peace negotiations with hope and attention, but also realizing that this is not the time for euphoria and the key question of Israel's security is still central.

**LAWRENCE SMITH**

*Retiring Democratic congressman from Florida*

The single most important issue is how the issues that the American Jewish community are interested in are going to be handled in Washington. The American Jewish community is consistently tuned in to a set of important issues: human rights, freedom of choice, education issues, freedom of religion and social issues.

With the changes in Washington and the large turnover in Congress, I'm a little nervous about how some of those issues are going to be handled, Israel especially. . . .

**DR. RUTH WESTHEIMER**

*Sex therapist and radio and television personality, who fled the Nazis and fought in the Haganah*

American Jews should focus on the economic situation in the United States. Also we should try to find money to eradicate the dreadful disease of AIDS. Since we Jews are so good at raising money, we should concentrate on that too, as well as on the homeless problem. . . .

Everybody in this coming year should make a resolution to do something for somebody who is less privileged than us -- and to visit Israel!