

**KNESSET ELECTS EZER WEIZMAN
AS ISRAEL'S SEVENTH PRESIDENT**
By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, March 24 (JTA) -- The election this week of Ezer Weizman to be Israel's seventh president is being seen here as a much-needed victory for the beleaguered Labor Party.

Weizman, 68, a national war hero and former defense minister known for his outspoken individualism, was elected by the Knesset on Wednesday in a 66-53 vote with one abstention.

But his victory over Likud Knesset member Dov Shilansky came only on a second ballot after an invalidated first ballot, in which more votes were cast than the number of Knesset members.

While Israel's presidency is a largely symbolic office, the victory is seen as important for the Labor Party, which has come under intense criticism for its inability to curb an unrelenting wave of Arab violence.

Although Weizman was favored to win, tension was injected into the race after the Knesset voted last week to lift the immunity of Deputy Religious Affairs Minister Raphael Pinhasi of the fervently Orthodox Shas party.

Shas party leaders had threatened to punish Labor for voting against Pinhasi by voting against Labor's presidential candidate.

Upon learning the outcome of the vote, Weizman said he called Shilansky "to congratulate him for the way he fought the battle, and he fought it to the bitter end."

The Likud also sent a message of congratulations to Weizman, a sharp contrast to the bitter denunciations it issued when Weizman's candidacy was announced in January.

At the time, Likud labeled Weizman as a "superdove" who was willing to see Israel take unacceptable risks for peace.

The president-elect said he did not want an elaborate celebration of victory because of "the situation in Israel today." He was referring to the wave of violence that has engulfed this country in recent weeks.

Weizman refused to comment on the peace process and other policy matters until he takes office in May.

Congratulations From Egypt

Born in Tel Aviv, Weizman was a fighter pilot for the British during World War II.

He then helped found the Israeli air force, flew against Egyptian forces in Israel's War for Independence and served as commander of the air force from 1958 to 1966.

Weizman later entered politics on the right of the political spectrum under Menachem Begin, the late Likud prime minister.

In 1977, Weizman managed Likud's election campaign and led Begin and his party to victory, ending Labor's 29-year reign. His reward was the post of defense minister, in which he played a major role in the peace process with Egypt.

Egypt's ambassador to Israel, Mohammed Basyouni, warmly congratulated Weizman on Wednesday, saying he is well-known as the "architect of the peace process between Egypt and Israel."

"I think he will also be helpful in achieving

a comprehensive peace in our area," Basyouni added.

But it was sharp differences with Begin over the peace process that prompted Weizman to resign from his post in 1980. He left the Likud and later formed the short-lived Yachad faction, which later merged with Labor.

Since his association with Begin, Weizman has moved decisively leftward politically.

Weizman has called for negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization, the establishment of a Palestinian state in the territories and the withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

In 1990, Weizman was accused by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir of having illegal contacts with the PLO. Shamir tried, without success, to oust him from the Cabinet.

In February 1992, Weizman announced he was quitting politics, saying, "I've come to the conclusion that I've reached a point in my political life where I've contributed what I can."

At the time, Weizman was said to be disillusioned with the Labor Party and still grieving over the death of his son, Shaul, in a car accident the year before. The death was considered a particular tragedy because Shaul had survived serious injuries in the 1969-1970 War of Attrition along the Suez Canal.

Weizman comes from one of the most illustrious Jewish families of the pre-state Palestinian yishuv. His uncle was the Zionist statesman Chaim Weizmann, who became Israel's first president.

**TURNOUT REPORTED TO BE HEAVY
IN VOTE FOR LIKUD PARTY CHIEF**
By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, March 24 (JTA) -- Benjamin Netanyahu, a former deputy foreign minister and ex-ambassador to the United Nations, appeared poised to beat out his rivals in voting Wednesday for the chairmanship of the Likud party.

Turnout was described as heavy as members of the right-of-center party went to polls all over the country in the first nationwide primary Likud has ever held to select a party leader.

The voting proceeded smoothly except in two instances in Tel Aviv, where supporters of Netanyahu clashed with those of his archrival, former Foreign Minister David Levy.

More than 215,000 party members were eligible to vote in the election for a leader to replace former Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who is retiring from politics. Final results were not expected until late Thursday.

In addition to Netanyahu and Levy, Knesset member Ze'ev "Benny" Begin and former Cabinet minister Moshe Katsav were competing in the race.

Polls taken shortly before the voting showed Netanyahu with between 45 and 60 percent of the vote. At least 40 percent is needed to secure a decisive victory and avoid a runoff next week.

The campaign had been marked by acrimony and personal attacks between Netanyahu and Levy.

Levy has said he would refuse to serve in the party's leadership if Netanyahu won the race. Netanyahu, for his part, said he would not tolerate divisive factions in the party if he won.

Despite their promise, police failed to publi-

size before the primaries the results of their investigation into the so-called "Bibi-gate" scandal, much to the chagrin of Levy.

The scandal centers on claims by Netanyahu, popularly known as "Bibi," that he was blackmailed by a "Likud higher-up" over an extramarital affair he admits having had. While Netanyahu never explicitly pointed the finger, it was clear that he blamed the blackmail incident on the Levy camp.

But the police investigation apparently has turned up nothing conclusive linking any such attempt to a Likud party member.

Levy charged the delay in releasing the findings was deliberate and motivated by the desire to protect Netanyahu.

He said the results of the investigation would show the story was full of "libel" and "lies" and would have dealt Netanyahu a fatal blow to his credibility.

NEWS ANALYSIS:

ARAB VIOLENCE POSING A CHALLENGE TO ISRAELI SECURITY AND DEMOCRACY By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 24 (JTA) -- Under the pressure of increasing violence against Israelis, the political divide that runs like a fault line through this society became, literally, a question of life and death for some this week.

The lives on the line, though, were not just Israelis, but also Palestinians, particularly those who have rampaged through the streets or broken into schools.

The right wing, dissatisfied with the government's response to the current wave of violence, has called for settlers to take the law into their own hands.

But the left, as well as the army and police, have warned the heavily armed population of settlers against using their weapons casually.

The ongoing dispute exploded into agonizing reality Tuesday when a West Bank settler shot dead a Palestinian whose hands and feet had been bound after he stabbed and lightly wounded another settler.

The settler said he acted after he saw that the Palestinian was concealing a grenade and feared he would use it.

Almost immediately, Israel's right flank and left flank lined up in defense and in opposition to the settler, who was arrested by police.

For the "left," a loose term meant to include those aligned with the present Labor-led government and much of the legal establishment, the current spate of Palestinian attacks poses a tough test for the democratic and judicial foundations of Israel.

For the "right," an equally loose term designating the opposition Likud party, its right-wing satellites and some of the religious parties, the key value in this struggle is the survival of the state itself.

Should Rule of Law Come Second?

The right maintains that the state's very survival is at stake and that, when combating Palestinian terrorism, the rule of law must take second place.

Rafael Eitan, leader of the right-wing Tsomet party, defended Tuesday's killing, setting forth the bald demand that knife-wielding attackers should not be taken alive.

According to the right, the message to the

Palestinians must be that Israel's deterrent strength has in no way been weakened or impaired by the series of attacks on soldiers and civilians in recent weeks.

Rightist leaders were quick to quote the rabbinic saying: "He who comes to kill you, rise up first and kill him."

But the left saw Tuesday's killing as an extralegal and extrajudicial murder. They argued that the Palestinian had been overcome and in effect arrested, but denied a trial, something granted by a democratic society to even the most heinous criminals in its midst.

Knesset member Dedi Zucker of the left-wing Meretz bloc said he supported the rabbinic adage of self-defense, but cautioned: "That does not mean that we become a criminal gang instead of a state."

A would-be killer can and should be killed, Zucker explained, so long as his attack is in progress.

But once the attacker has been overcome, then due process of the law swings into effect, said Zucker, chairman of the Knesset Law Committee.

The alternative would be the law of the lynch mob, he added.

Court Rules Against Shin Bet Agent

Coincidentally, minutes after the West Bank shooting, Israel's High Court of Justice delivered a decision relating to the killing of two terrorists in an incident seven years ago and upheld the principle that any Israeli who sought to get around the law was not to be tolerated.

The court ruled that Yossi Ginossar, a former official of the Shin Bet, Israel's domestic intelligence agency, could not be appointed director-general of the Ministry of Housing because of his involvement in the 1986 scandal in which two Palestinian terrorists in custody were killed by the Shin Bet.

The terrorists were among those who hijacked a bus from Tel Aviv to Ashkelon. After the bus was stopped, stormed and overpowered by the army, Shin Bet agents led away two surviving hijackers and beat them to death.

At first, security officials claimed the two had died when the army stormed the bus, but well-publicized photographs proved that claim to be false.

Ginossar, who was not present at the incident, led a complex and lengthy Shin Bet effort to mislead an official commission of inquiry and put the blame on a senior army officer.

The court held that Ginossar had "undermined the foundations of the judicial process" and of democratic society.

With the actions of the settler, the response from Knesset members and the court decision, Israelis were confronted this week with starkly different views about the moral essence of their state and society.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, seeking to rally and hearten a demoralized public, urged a return to the spirit of 1948, when the Jewish community of Palestine closed ranks and "became a fighting society" to win its independence and ward off the Arab threat.

Rabin called on teen-agers to learn self-defense and urged older people to volunteer for the Civil Guard.

Rabin's overall message to the nation was to defend itself with vigor -- but within the limits of the law.

**RECONSTRUCTIONIST RABBIS APPROVE
HOMOSEXUAL COMMITMENT CEREMONIES**

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, March 22 (JTA) -- The Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association has approved commitment ceremonies for gay and lesbian couples.

The right of rabbis to perform such ceremonies is one of seven policies and guidelines relating to homosexuality and Judaism that the 160-member association approved at its annual convention, held in Chicago earlier this month.

The other guidelines urge all people affiliated with the Reconstructionist community to educate themselves on issues relating to homosexuality and Judaism, to reach out to gay and lesbian Jews and to welcome them as full members in Reconstructionist organizations.

The guidelines also affirmed the Reconstructionist rabbis' commitment to "a full place for gay and lesbian members in the leadership of our movement organizations."

They urged groups affiliated with the movement to employ a policy of non-discrimination based on sexual orientation, and to be sensitive and inclusive in liturgy, ritual and biblical readings, as well as institutional pronouncements.

The 62 attendees also unanimously approved a position paper, "Homosexuality and Judaism: The Reconstructionist Position," which was approved by the movement's lay arm, the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot in January 1992.

Approval of the guidelines and official adoption of the paper relates to the fact that "Jewish holiness may be found in relationships between gays and lesbians, just as it can be found between heterosexual couples," said Rabbi Robert Gluck, executive director of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association.

"Just as sexual ethics are important to guide heterosexual couples, so too are they important between same-sex couples," he said.

"In Reconstructionist form," the paper "draws from Jewish tradition and attempts to relate to contemporary reality. It views the contemporary reality of real people as one of its starting points," said Gluck.

**GREECE NO LONGER REQUIRES
RELIGION ON IDENTITY CARD**

ATHENS, March 24 (JTA) -- Greek Jews, along with other religious minorities, will no longer be obliged to identify themselves by religion on national identity cards carried by all Greek citizens and residents, the Greek minister of the interior has announced.

Minister Yiannis Kefalogiannis made the statement in a meeting with World Jewish Congress delegates Monday.

WJC leaders emerged from the meeting and reported that Greek law was being changed in response to concerns expressed by the Jewish community.

WJC Secretary-General Israel Singer and Executive Director Elan Steinberg, in Athens for the first international consultation between Jewish representatives and the churches of Orthodox Christianity, met at length with Kefalogiannis.

They were accompanied by Nissim Mais, president of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece, the WJC affiliate here.

At issue was current Greek law regulating

national identity cards. Under legislation adopted more than a year ago, such cards included a listing of the holder's religious affiliation.

Greek Jews, along with Catholic and Moslem minorities in a country whose population is 95 percent Orthodox Christian, strenuously opposed mandatory religious identification as a blatant discriminatory measure posing a threat to national pluralism.

Jewish leaders noted that no other country in the European Community issued national identity cards with a listing of religious affiliation.

Kefalogiannis informed the WJC leaders that the government was immediately introducing legislation in Parliament that would abolish the mandatory listing of religious affiliation and instead leave the indication of religion as an optional item on identity cards.

Identification of religion will in the future be at the discretion of individual card holders.

"The new law will be adopted within the next two weeks," Kefalogiannis said.

WJC delegates "noted with appreciation the sensitive reaction to Jewish concerns expressed by Minister Kefalogiannis."

Mais, head of the Greek Jewish community, expressed his gratitude to the World Jewish Congress for pursuing this matter here and abroad in a spirit of "Jewish solidarity."

**BRAZIL'S FOREIGN MINISTER
MEETS WITH AMERICAN JEWS**
By Victoria Verlichak

BUENOS AIRES, March 21 (JTA) -- Brazil's Foreign Minister Fernando Henrique Cardozo told a visiting delegation of the American Jewish Committee that his aspiration is to be jointly honored by his country's Jewish and Arab communities.

The AJCommittee delegates met last week with Cardozo in Brasilia, the Brazilian capital, on the first leg of a South American tour that was also to include Argentina, Uruguay and Chile.

The Jewish group reviewed with the foreign minister Brazil's improving relationship with the Jewish state, noting, for example, an upswing in trade between the two countries.

The AJCommittee delegates remarked on a study showing a notable change for the better in Brazil's ties with Israel. Only a few years ago, Brazil had a record of frequent votes against Israel in the United Nations. This trend appears to be changing, the AJCommittee said.

The meeting with Cardozo was considered important in light of the fact that Brazil, which has a large Arab community, was known for trading arms for oil with several Arab countries.

Cardozo reminded the delegates how he had been honored by both Brazil's Arab and Jewish communities within a short time span and said: "My aspiration is to receive an homage from the two communities together."

The mission, led by Lawrence Thorpe, told Cardozo that it supported the government's initiative to sponsor a study of the first Jewish community on the South American continent, the early 16th-century community of Recife.

The AJCommittee's 20-member fact-finding mission visited three cities in Brazil, where about 150,000 Jews live among the general population of 150 million.

In addition to meeting with Cardozo, the AJC mission met with Israeli ambassador Shlomo Bine and U.S. ambassador Richard Melton.

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH LEADER GIVES NEW CREDENCE TO 'PROTOCOLS'

By Alexander Lesser

MOSCOW, March 21 (JTA) -- Metropolitan Johann of St. Petersburg, the second-highest-ranking clergyman in the Russian Orthodox Church, has once again stirred controversy by issuing new anti-Semitic statements.

The 62-year-old church figure has posed the question of whether the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" were authentic, referring to the infamous 19th-century tract that purported to expose a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world.

The "Protocols" were actually a fabrication written for the czarist secret police.

Johann raised the question in a lengthy article titled "The Struggle for Russia," published in late February in the notoriously anti-Semitic and hard-line communist paper *Sovietskaya Rossiya*.

In the article, Johann said a smart man will draw his own conclusions about the "Protocols," and he juxtaposed excerpts from the "Protocols" with dire descriptions of the state of Russia today.

Last October, Metropolitan Johann stirred controversy with another piece in *Sovietskaya Rossiya* that explained the killing of Jesus and the imposition of Communist rule in Russia as being part of a single conspiracy, implying it was Jewish-dominated.

After publication of that first piece, a spokesman for the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Alexei II, issued a statement disassociating the church from Johann's opinions.

At the time, a church source requesting anonymity said Metropolitan Johann was sick, but would not elaborate.

In the wake of this latest incident, Russian Jews were looking for a stronger statement this time.

Rabbi Adolf Shayevitch, recently elected chief rabbi of Russia and head of Moscow's Choral Synagogue, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency he has written to the patriarch asking him to look into the matter.

And Michael Chlenov, president of the Vaad, the largest Jewish umbrella group in the former Soviet Union, said he intended to raise the matter with Alexander Kazha, the Russian patriarch's liaison to the Jewish community.

TRIAL OF ACCUSED WAR CRIMINAL OPENS, AFTER THREE YEARS OF FITS AND STARTS

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia, March 24 (JTA) -- After three years of fits and starts that included an apparent suicide attempt and various legal challenges, the trial of accused war criminal Ivan Polyukhovich opened last week in Adelaide.

Confronting a jury for the first time on March 18, Polyukhovich, the first Australian charged under 1988 Nazi war crimes legislation, pleaded not guilty to two counts of committing war crimes in 1942 in Nazi-occupied Ukraine.

The case against Polyukhovich has been winnowed down considerably since charges were first brought against him in January 1990. The prosecution originally charged him with 24 counts of murder and participation in 850 other murders.

The case has been affected by the deaths of witnesses.

Last month, two of what were four remaining charges against him were dropped.

Polyukhovich, who has lived in Australia since 1949, had originally been slated to face two trials in the South Australian Supreme Court, the first of which was to have begun March 1.

The director of public prosecutions dropped the charges that would have been heard in the second trial, which alleged that Polyukhovich murdered two Jewish men and a Jewish woman in the Ukrainian village of Serniki.

The remaining charges against him pertain to one individual murder and knowing involvement in the murder of 850 other Jewish villagers.

In the trial's opening address, prosecuting attorney Greg James accused Polyukhovich of aiding and abetting, or wilful involvement in, the German occupation government's plan to "exterminate the Jews of Europe."

The prosecution must prove not only that Polyukhovich committed murder but that he did so as part of a general policy of genocide.

In June and July 1990, Australian authorities exhumed the remains of 407 females, 98 males and 48 bodies which could not be identified by gender, from a burial pit in a forest area outside Serniki.

James said 20 witnesses, former residents of the area, would be called to give evidence about Serniki and the murder of its Jewish population.

The trial is expected to last six weeks.

FRENCH COURT DISMISSES LAWSUIT BY LE PEN AGAINST JEWISH LEADER

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, March 24 (JTA) -- A French court has dismissed a lawsuit brought by the right-wing politician Jean-Marie Le Pen against Jean Kahn, head of CRIF, the umbrella organization representing French Jewry.

Le Pen had sued Kahn for slander after Kahn said that a speech delivered by Le Pen last August constituted "incitement to racial hatred."

Le Pen, whose anti-immigration National Front party garnered a dramatic 13 percent of the vote during nationwide parliamentary elections on Sunday, prompted Kahn's remarks because of a speech he made denouncing the Maastricht Treaty for a unified Europe.

"It is curious that the ones in favor of erasing the borders in Europe are the same who want safe and recognized borders for Israel," Le Pen said, speaking in his hometown of La Trinité Sur Mer in Brittany.

Pointing to "obscure forces and lobbies permanently warring against the nations," Le Pen lashed out against "the new world order led by a cosmopolitan and international oligarchy."

Le Pen concluded that Maastricht was part of an international plot.

Kahn criticized Le Pen for his use of anti-Semitic catch phrases. Kahn was backed in the slander suit by testimony from a leading French journalist and two well-known historians.

The witnesses said Le Pen was using an array of code words clearly understood by his followers, linking Israel and the Jews to the "cosmopolitan and international oligarchy" he denounced.

The Paris court, while stating that Kahn's statement against Le Pen was indeed slanderous, determined that Kahn was pursuing a totally legitimate aim by "strongly warning the public against those inspiring obnoxious attitudes."

The court then decided to dismiss the case.