

**ISRAELI GOVERNMENT CRISIS WORSENS
AS SHAS LEADER SUBMITS RESIGNATION**

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, May 9 (JTA) -- The political crisis in Israel's governing coalition escalated Sunday, when the head of the fervently Orthodox Shas party resigned from the Cabinet, in an apparent ploy to oust the leader of the dovish Meretz bloc from her post as education minister.

Under the law, Interior Minister Arye Deri's resignation does not go into effect for 48 hours, giving Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin two days to shore up his teetering coalition, ostensibly by giving Education Minister Shulamit Aloni a different portfolio.

Rabin also must face a Knesset no-confidence motion Monday, introduced by right-wing parties unhappy with the government's handling of the peace process.

The coalition crisis erupted last week when the Shas party warned Rabin it would pull its six Knesset members out of the government because the outspoken Aloni had crossed the line once too often in her verbal attacks against religion.

Shas believes Aloni's many controversial statements have demonstrated a demeaning and insulting attitude toward religion and Judaism, and should be cause enough for her dismissal.

What touched off the party's anger at Aloni this time around was her criticism of Rabin for being "fatalistic" by reciting the Shema Yisrael prayer at an anniversary commemoration last month for the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Meretz Ministers Balk

If Shas does quit, the governing coalition would survive, but only by the thinnest possible margin. The move would make Rabin uncomfortably dependent on the Arab parties to maintain his majority in the 120-seat Knesset.

Shas wagered that Rabin would cede to its wishes rather than be put in that vulnerable position and thereby jeopardize the Middle East peace process.

Rabin met with Aloni on Sunday and was believed to have discussed alternative ministerial posts for her.

The ministers in Aloni's Meretz bloc, who also met with Rabin on Sunday, emphatically rejected a ministerial shuffle that would remove Aloni from her post, though this was not believed to be the party's final posture.

The party has chastised Rabin for giving in to Shas' ultimatum and called on other parties to make sacrifices for the peace process.

Despite Shas maneuverings over Aloni, the party has not threatened to vote against the government in Monday's no-confidence votes in the Knesset. Rabin scheduled a meeting with Deri late Sunday to persuade him to support the government during Monday's debate.

While many observers expected the government to weather this crisis, Tourism Minister Uzi Baram of the Labor Party warned Sunday evening that the situation was more serious than Labor ministers had originally thought.

He said he was no longer sure Rabin would be able to save the coalition in the 48 hours he had before Deri's resignation took effect.

**GAY SYNAGOGUE HOLDS SEPARATE EVENT
AFTER EXCLUSION FROM ISRAEL DAY PARADE**

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, May 9 (JTA) -- What may be New York's most divisive Salute to Israel parade ever took place Sunday with two opposing sides both able to celebrate victories, albeit separately.

Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, the gay and lesbian synagogue expelled from the annual parade late last week, managed to attract Mayor David Dinkins, New York Gov. Mario Cuomo and Israeli Consul General Colette Avital to an alternative Salute to Israel gathering it co-sponsored with the Reform movement.

And the 11th-hour expulsion of the congregation enabled thousands of students from Orthodox schools that had threatened to boycott the parade take advantage of the perfect May weather to march up Fifth Avenue bearing banners and posters featuring fish, birds, zebras, strawberries and vegetables, in keeping with this year's environmental theme.

The congregation's expulsion also healed, at least for now, tensions within the Orthodox community. Few parents had appeared supportive of the decision by several Orthodox rabbinical groups to bar participation in the parade with the gay and lesbian congregation.

The apparent loser in the brouhaha, which attracted the interest of all of the city's major newspapers, was the parade organizer, the American Zionist Youth Foundation. In its drawn-out, ultimately unsuccessful efforts to broker a compromise between Beth Simchat Torah and the Orthodox community, AZYF not only offended the former but ensured less-than-full participation from the latter.

"We've always had a much larger contingent, but people made other plans. It's Mother's Day and Lag B'Omer," explained Froma Posner, principal of the Hebrew Academy of Suffolk County.

Her school had been "in and out again a number of times," most recently withdrawing early last week and then finally re-entering after the May 6 expulsion of the gay congregation.

Not only was it unable to muster more than 60 percent of its usual numbers, but the school could not manage at the last minute to print up the T-shirts traditionally worn by marchers.

'Most Painful Decision' Ever

Don Adelman, AZYF's executive director, described rescinding Beth Simchat Torah's invitation as "the most painful decision we ever made."

But he said he had to weigh the 22,000 Orthodox students whose schools were threatening a boycott against the relatively few who planned to march under a joint banner of Beth Simchat Torah and ARZA, the Association of Reform Zionists of America.

The joint banner had been part of a compromise worked out by AZYF, in the hope that it would convince the Orthodox that a gay congregation was not actually participating but was only being supported by ARZA.

That agreement was violated, Adelman charged, by the congregation's refusal to adhere to a ban on public discussion of it. The day before, The New York Times had run a flattering

profile of the congregation's religious leader, Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum, which referred in one sentence to the compromise.

The article, Adelman said, made it clear that Beth Simchat Torah was using the parade "as a platform."

Kleinbaum insists she abided by the agreement not to discuss the wording of the banner and that she was never asked to withhold any other information.

Regardless of the actual terms of the agreement, the Times interview clearly infuriated the Orthodox. And it therefore provided an opening for resolving a crisis that had led at least 24 of 40 Orthodox day schools to plan on boycotting the parade.

Said Rabbi Israel Miller, senior vice president of Yeshiva University and a member of the AZYF executive committee: "The story in The New York Times was the straw that broke the camel's back. When it reached what we felt was very blatant breach of what had been agreed to, it was no longer possible to go along with it."

Until the article appeared, Yeshiva University's affiliated high schools had been among the 16 schools leaning toward participating in the parade. But the school had been coming under increasing pressure from within its own ranks, with its Talmud faculty ruling that participation would be against traditional Jewish law.

'We Have Not Been Silenced'

Yet many of the Orthodox spectators could not see why it was more problematic to march with a gay synagogue than with an avowedly secular youth group such as Hashomer Hatzair, which marched between contingents from Yeshiva University and the Bnei Akiva youth group.

At the parade, the views of Dennis Duban seemed typical: "I would have no objections if (Beth Simchat Torah) marched. What's most important is that all Jews stick together, even if you don't agree with what they stand for."

Those who did voice their objections tended to take a stance similar to Jason Schwartz, a Yeshiva University student who said, "We have to salute Israel; it's nothing more than that. It shouldn't be a platform for anybody to promote their agendas."

Agendas were in evidence, however, despite the absence of Beth Simchat Torah.

The right-wing Betar youth group, affiliated with Israel's opposition Likud party, shouted, "Not one inch," referring to giving up land.

Spectators from the left-wing New Jewish Agenda held signs saying "End the occupation: Two people, two states."

And a small group of demonstrators from a group calling itself Jewish Young Gays and Lesbians shouted, "Hey hey, ho ho, homophobia's got to go." One held aloft a placard saying, "I served in the Israeli army. Why can't I march in this parade?"

The gay congregation's exclusion from the parade was deplored by a number of Jewish organizations, including the Anti-Defamation League, the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot, and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

While members of the congregation were angered by their exclusion, they seemed encouraged by the show of support.

"Today is a victory for CBST, making clear that, though we have been excluded, we have not been silenced," said Rabbi Kleinbaum.

HORDING OF WEAPONS BY SETTLERS IS SOURCE OF CONCERN FOR CABINET By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 9 (JTA) -- Israeli authorities and dovish politicians have expressed growing concern that Jewish settlers in the administered territories and on the Golan Heights have begun to hoard firearms, in preparation for armed resistance to a future diplomatic settlement requiring their evacuation.

The issue came up at the weekly Cabinet meeting Sunday, during which the ministers discussed the atmosphere among settlers in the territories, who are becoming increasingly concerned about concessions Israel may make in the peace negotiations with the Arab states and Palestinians.

The ministers were told that the Shin Bet domestic security service is keeping "a close watch" over "troublemakers" among the settlers.

Commerce and Industry Minister Micha Harish said the Cabinet was in agreement that the authorities should spare no effort to thwart any "attempt to disrupt the democratic process."

Harish referred to a recent television report that included interviews with settlers who said they would resist their evacuation by force. The report depicted armed settlers patrolling Arab villages in militia-style operations.

Harish quoted Benny Katzover, who heads the Samaria regional council in the West Bank, as saying that settlers would disrupt the Knesset's work by lying on roads leading to the legislature.

Police Minister Moshe Shahal said he had discussed the issue with Attorney General Yosef Harish.

Preventing A 'Monster'

Knesset member Dedi Zucker of the left-wing Meretz bloc, who chairs the Knesset Law Committee, said he would invite the attorney general, as well as the advocate general and representatives of the security forces, to testify on how to prevent the "development of a monster which is a menace to the democratic regime."

Another Meretz Knesset member, Deputy Housing Minister Ran Cohen, demanded that the authorities "detain all those involved in erecting an army of political hooligans."

He called for an investigation into why the intelligence forces had not prevented the development of armed Jewish patrols.

But right-wing politicians played down the issue, saying that the settlers who said they would resist any political settlement calling for territorial compromise were a "loud minority."

Deputy Defense Minister Mordechai Gur also minimized the phenomenon, saying that by and large, the Jewish population in the territories had shown maturity and used their arms for personal protection only.

He pledged the authorities would guarantee the safety of the settlers, "as long as they are there -- and they are there."

Gur was asked about the army's decision to confiscate the personal rifle of Gershon Messika, a resident of the West Bank settlement of Elon Moreh, who reportedly was identified as one of the settlers who took part in the armed patrols of Arab villages.

Gur said that although the army had confiscated a number of arms from settlers who were active in such militias, the government had no plans to disarm settlers in general.

ATROCITIES IN BOSNIA ARE CONTINUING, FOREIGN MINISTER WARNS JEWISH GROUP

By Deborah Kalb
States News Service

WASHINGTON, May 9 (JTA) -- Atrocities in Bosnia-Herzegovina are continuing despite mounting international pressure on the Serbs to abandon their assault on Moslem enclaves, a top Bosnian official warned American Jews in an address here last week.

"Baby skulls against the wall -- that is not over," Bosnian Foreign Minister Haris Silajdzic remarked grimly in an address to the 87th annual meeting of the American Jewish Committee here.

"Forty thousand people, 8,000 of them children, are crying for help, but the world pretends not to know," he said.

Referring to the Clinton administration's review of possible military action, he said he hoped America would "do the right thing. And I hope that this country will be proud of it."

Silajdzic, who addressed some 800 Jews here May 6, shortly after the self-styled parliament of Bosnian Serbs rejected a United Nations-brokered peace plan, thanked AJCommittee for all it had done to raise public consciousness about the "ethnic cleansing" campaign being perpetrated mainly by Serbs against Moslems in his country.

AJCommittee, like a number of other Jewish groups, has been active in calling for a stronger U.S. response to the crisis in Bosnia.

"Let me thank the American Jewish Committee, all those who helped us, our deepest sincere gratitude from the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina to all of you," Silajdzic told the overflow crowd to a huge round of applause.

Silajdzic's address was just one of several emotional speeches at the AJCommittee banquet dinner. Other speakers included U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno and Jan Karski, a naturalized American citizen born in Poland who was active in the anti-Nazi underground in World War II.

Must 'Speak Out And Protect Others'

Some in the Jewish community have likened the "ethnic cleansing" campaign against Bosnian Moslems to some of the atrocities that took place during the Nazi Holocaust, and both Reno and Karski discussed the Holocaust in their speeches.

Reno, who is of Danish descent, recalled her participation in a recent commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the rescue of Danish Jews.

She said one lesson she had learned was to "never, ever take freedom for granted. Always be vigilant."

At the commemoration, she said, she sat next to a man, now in his 80s, who had been active in the resistance effort against the Germans.

"Each person can be a hero in the fight for freedom," Reno said. "Each of us can speak out and protect others, and we must."

The attorney general also reflected on the tragic denouement of the siege against the Branch Davidians cult in Waco, Texas. It was "a day that I will never forget," she said.

She spoke of the flood of supportive mail she received after taking responsibility for the events in Waco, saying it was "one of the most overwhelming experiences anyone can have."

Karski received the American Liberties Medallion from AJCommittee in honor of his "lifetime of service in the cause of human freedom," and, in a moving speech to the gathering, told of his experiences in the Polish resistance.

ETHIOPIAN PREMIER VISITS ISRAEL, LAUNCHING NEW PHASE IN RELATIONS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 9 (JTA) -- In the midst of a coalition crisis that threatened to weaken his government, Prime Yitzhak Rabin took time out Sunday to welcome Ethiopian Prime Minister Timirat Laynie to Israel, at an official ceremony in the Rose Garden overlooking the Knesset.

Israel attaches particular importance to the four-day visit, which is the first by a ranking Ethiopian official since the government of dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam was toppled by insurgent forces in May 1991.

As Foreign Minister Shimon Peres put it when he greeted his counterpart at the airport Saturday, Laynie is "the most significant Ethiopian visitor since the queen of Sheba."

Peres said the visit could help reconfigure the situation along the Red Sea coast, where Israel has good ties with both Egypt and the breakaway Ethiopian province of Eritrea.

A key item on the agenda of the visit this week was expected to be the delicate and unresolved issue of the emigration of the Falash Mora, Ethiopian gentiles who say their ancestors were forced to convert from Judaism.

Thousands of Falash Mora, some of whom have relatives in Israel, are seeking to immigrate here. Israel does not recognize them as Jews, but has said it would allow those with immediate family in Israel to come on a humanitarian basis.

Ethiopian officials have in the past vowed that they would not let the Falash Mora emigrate, saying it could lead to an exodus of "tens of thousands" of citizens.

But the Ethiopian foreign minister was expected to announce this week that his country would allow the emigration of Falash Mora with immediate family members in Israel.

Ups And Downs In Relations

One hitch could be a statement allegedly made by former Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy, who was quoted as saying that the Falash Mora were being murdered in Ethiopia because of their Jewish roots.

Haim Divon, Israel's ambassador to Addis Ababa, was said to have sent a cable to the Foreign Ministry saying that the Ethiopian authorities were "furious" over the remark.

The visit is seen as a reflection of Ethiopia's desire to open a new page in relations with Israel.

Those relations have had their ups and downs. Ethiopia was once the spearhead of Israel's presence in black Africa. But that changed in 1973, when the country severed relations in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, along with most of the rest of Africa.

After the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974, Israel developed strong ties to the socialist Mengistu government, to which it reportedly provided arms and military expertise. Full diplomatic relations were restored in 1989.

Two years later, Israel reportedly paid the Mengistu government some \$40 million in exchange for the emigration of over 14,000 Jews in the Operation Solomon airlift of May 1991.

The resistance movements that toppled the Mengistu regime that same month initially adopted an anti-Israel stance. But relations have since improved with both the government in Addis Ababa and the rebels who came to power in Eritrea.

FIRE BRIGADES HAD NOTHING TO FEAR: FESTIVAL OF BONFIRES WAS NO THREAT

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, May 9 (JTA) -- Lag B'Omer, the traditional festival marking the 33rd day of the seven-week Omer period between Pesach and Shavuot, was not the nightmare anticipated by fire brigades throughout Israel this year.

Unanticipated rains in the mountains and less severe winds than expected throughout the country kept the feared brushfires at bay. And vigilant firefighters averted any fire emergencies.

The fire brigades had been on maximum alert since Saturday night, in anticipation of many fires they feared they would have to contend with, lit by sparks from thousands of bonfires kindled by youngsters during picnics.

The firefighters had been particularly attentive to possible trouble because tens of thousands of students were idled by a teachers strike and therefore free to roam the countryside and possibly start fires in vacant lots and building sites.

Record piles of timber, in fact, were abundant everywhere. But the fierce Sharav wind from the East forecast by the meteorological service failed to be as severe as predicted, and the timber was not as dry as had been feared.

Indeed, fewer fires than usual got out of hand, and there were few related emergencies.

But the bonfires, and the holiday festivities, had one marked consequence. They upended teachers' plans for a one-day hiatus in their ongoing strike.

The Teachers Association had decided to order its members back to the classrooms for Sunday only, despite the fact that Lag B'Omer is known as the Students Holiday. (The holiday's origin is the cessation of a severe plague that decimated the students of first-century Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai.)

Heavy Rains Dampen Observances

The planned one-day return had been decided to comply with a Labor Court injunction last year which ordered teachers to give back to the Education Ministry a day's work lost in a previous strike.

Nevertheless, large numbers of students failed to show up for classes Sunday, many of them having overslept after a sleepless night around the bonfires. And others who did show up did so bleary-eyed straight from the blazes, with eyes reddened by smoke.

Meanwhile, heavy rain in the mountains dampened the usually vibrant and mystic religious observances of the 33rd day of the Omer. Police reported that far fewer than an anticipated quarter of a million observant Jews gathered at the tomb of Rabbi Bar-Yochai in Galilee because of a deluge at the mountaintop tomb.

But the inclement weather did not deter barren women from praying for children at the tomb.

The unexpected and unpredicted rain was also a dampener for many of the weddings arranged for Saturday night and Sunday. Lag B'Omer is the only day in the seven-week Omer period on which marriages can be solemnized by halachah, or traditional Jewish law.

Observant Jews also do not cut their hair during the 50-day Omer period except for on Lag B'Omer. And so hundreds of 3-year-old boys had their first haircuts and first trimming of "payot" (earlocks) with the clippings collected by their proud fathers for safekeeping by their mothers.

MOTHER OF RYAN WHITE DEDICATES AN AIDS MEMORIAL FOREST IN ISRAEL

By Michele Chabin

LAHAV, Israel, May 9 (JTA) -- Ryan White, the American teen-ager whose courageous battle against AIDS -- and the prejudice surrounding it -- changed the way society perceives people with the disease, was remembered Sunday during the emotional dedication of the AIDS Memorial Forest here in the northern Negev.

White, a hemophiliac, contracted the virus that causes AIDS at age 12 through a tainted blood-clotting agent.

The forest, which will be planted and maintained by the Jewish National Fund, is slated to contain 10,000 trees, 5,000 of which have already been donated.

White's mother, Jeanne, who traveled to Israel in order to dedicate the forest, planted the first tree in her son's memory. Fighting back tears, she planted a year-old sapling, a pine with a dozen slender branches.

She told the small gathering of friends and American AIDS activists at the ceremony that "trees are a symbol of life. I hope that for the parents, relatives and friends of people who have died of AIDS, planting a tree in this forest will serve as a way for them to express their loss and pain."

The ceremony ended with a "healing circle" in which the participants held hands and read out the names of loved ones who had died of AIDS.

"I'm a Methodist and very spiritual, and my faith has helped me through the worst times," Jeanne White said afterward. "It's a special feeling to be in the Holy Land."

"It's also Mother's Day," she noted, "and I feel especially close to Ryan today. I miss him very much today."

'A Step In The Right Direction'

Ryan and his family were thrust into the limelight in 1985, when the junior high school he was attending in his hometown of Kokomo, Ind., barred him from attending classes on the grounds that he might pass the disease on to others. After months of legal battles, he won the right to attend school.

Despite the victory, the Whites were shunned in their own neighborhood. They were forced to leave their home after their neighbors' growing hostility culminated in a gunshot fired through their living room window.

The family moved to Cicero, Ind., where Ryan was welcomed at Hamilton Heights High School in nearby Arcadia. He died of AIDS-related complications on April 8, 1990.

The new forest, which is only the second such project to honor victims of AIDS, was inspired by a 15-acre grove established in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park five years ago, according to Isabelle Wade, chairperson of the AIDS Memorial Grove there.

"Though thousands of miles away, these two places are now linked," she said. "Planting a living forest is like making a prayer for the future -- a future without HIV and AIDS."

"I'm very pleased that the JNF decided to establish this forest," Serge Dajches, chairman of the Israel AIDS Task Force, said in a telephone interview following the dedication.

"Fighting for recognition and funding is an uphill battle," Dajches said, "and this forest is a step in the right direction."