

PROSECUTORS LACK ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO PROVE NETANYAHU WAS BLACKMAILED
By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, June 3 (JTA) -- Israel's state attorney has found insufficient evidence to prosecute anyone on the charges made by Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu that he was blackmailed over an extramarital affair and that his telephone was illegally tapped.

In the middle of the Likud's primary campaign to elect the party's leadership, Netanyahu claimed an anonymous caller threatened his wife with exposing the affair unless he dropped out of the race.

Netanyahu unleashed an uproar in the party's ranks after he charged the call had been initiated by a Likud "higher-up," generally taken to be a reference to his archrival, former Foreign Minister David Levy.

According to the statement released by the Justice Ministry this week, the police found support for the claim that Netanyahu's campaign headquarters had been tapped, but not enough evidence to support a prosecution.

The police uncovered no evidence to back Netanyahu's allegation that his wife had been threatened or that his home phone had been bugged, however.

The police also concluded that most of the information given to them by Netanyahu, which came from a private investigator hired by the popular politician, lacked credibility.

The authorities said they were closing the investigation of the case.

Netanyahu issued a prepared statement after the Justice Ministry decision, saying the state's findings confirmed his "contention that criminal acts" were committed against him.

"It is regretful that despite the police department's intensive efforts, the investigators did not succeed in finding enough evidence to prosecute the perpetrators," his statement read.

For his part, Levy, in radio interviews after the news of the decision was made public, accused Netanyahu of stopping at nothing to deceive the public and to further his political objectives.

AFTER LULL IN ATTACKS ON ISRAELIS, PALESTINIANS STEPPING UP VIOLENCE
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, June 3 (JTA) -- After a long lull in Palestinian attacks against Israelis, which began after the Israeli army sealed off the administered territories from Israel proper, Palestinian militants have been stepping up the level of violence in recent days.

Shots were fired Monday night at a car driven by a Jewish couple in the southern Jerusalem neighborhood of Gilo. The shots missed, leaving no one hurt and causing no damage.

Police suspected the attackers came from the nearby West Bank town of Beit Jala, where a similar attack took place last month, slightly wounding a Russian immigrant. The army clamped a curfew on the Arab town, but no arrests were reported.

In another incident, at the el-Rom junction in northern Jerusalem, a Jewish guard at a private

security company shot to death Munir Abu-Nijma, an Arab resident of a nearby neighborhood.

The guard who fired the fatal shot said he was being attacked by Arabs and was in serious danger when he fired.

However, relatives of the dead man said the guard fired his shots during a argument between drivers over who had the right of way. Another Arab was slightly wounded in the incident.

Meanwhile, a key leader of the Jewish settlers in the territories warned this week of possible civil strife if the government orders settlers to evacuate the territories as a part of a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

Speaking at a symposium in Jerusalem, Benny Katzover, head of the Samaria regional council, said that in his view as many as 30 percent of the Jewish settlers could resort to arms if the "government does not weigh its moves sensibly."

Katzover's comments received a strong endorsement from Knesset member Gonen Segev of the right-wing Tsomet party.

Speaking during a visit of the right-wing parties to the West Bank city of Hebron, Segev said Jewish resistance to withdrawal from the territories would be much stronger than 30 percent of the population.

Environment Minister Yossi Sarid of the left-wing Meretz bloc said at the same symposium that he believes that once the peace agreements are formally signed, general elections should be held to endorse the accords.

He was confident that the agreements would win wide public support.

These comments were made as the town of Hebron was under curfew for the third consecutive day, following the weekend murder of soldier and yeshiva student Erez Shmuel, who was ambushed on his way to pray at the Tomb of the Patriarchs.

ISRAEL REBUTS AMNESTY CHARGES OF SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS BREACHES
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, June 3 (JTA) -- The Israeli army has rejected, in a detailed rebuttal, a recent Amnesty International report charging Israel with serious violations of human rights in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The Amnesty report claimed that more than 100 Palestinians have been shot dead by Israeli soldiers since December, more than 30 of them 16 years old or younger.

Amnesty said it believes "many of these killings are absolutely unjustifiable, and that some may amount to extrajudicial killings."

But the Israel Defense Force rebuttal points out that since the beginning of 1993, 10 Israeli civilians, six members of the security forces and 60 Arabs have been killed in the territories by Arab terrorists and gunmen.

The Palestinian militants who carried out these attacks were all armed and dangerous fugitives wanted by the security forces, the IDF said.

Armed Palestinians also killed six Israeli civilians and four members of the security forces within Israel proper, the IDF said.

The army also responded to Amnesty allega-

tions that its soldiers unnecessarily killed innocent bystanders or shot wanted fugitives when they could have been apprehended instead.

"Members of the security forces have often found themselves in life-threatening situations, and have been forced to open fire, in accordance with the IDF's rules of engagement," the army said.

The IDF said there was no basis whatsoever to Amnesty's claim that IDF soldiers opened fire indiscriminately.

"To the IDF's deep regret, during the course of dispersing violent disturbances and in clashes between security forces and rioters, some children and minors have suffered from measures taken to deal with rioters," the army statement added.

Investigating Misconduct Cases

The army also responded to charges that houses of innocent local residents were being destroyed as a form of collective punishment.

"The IDF categorically rejects Amnesty International's claim that one of the objectives of the IDF, if not its principal one, is to punish those who have allowed fugitives to take refuge in their homes," the military statement said.

The IDF denied Amnesty's allegation that the army then used explosives in order to cause extensive damage to these homes.

The army insisted actions taken by the IDF in pursuit of armed fugitives were based solely on military considerations and were recognized and sanctioned by international law.

"These actions are carried out for the sole purpose of apprehending fugitives. Under no circumstances are they designed to punish the owners of the homes where the terrorists have taken refuge," the army said.

The IDF also noted that in the event of damage to property, residents may apply to the Israeli Civil Administration for compensation.

The IDF said it was investigating cases where misconduct by soldiers may have occurred.

"If the investigation reveals that the personnel responsible have acted contrary to regulations, the military advocate general takes appropriate legal action against the individuals concerned," the statement said.

Regarding a specific list of incidents forwarded by Amnesty to the army, the IDF said: "Should it be found that any of its personnel acted improperly, they will be court-martialed."

CHILE TELLS WJC IT WON'T ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE PLO

NEW YORK, June 3 (JTA) -- Chile, which earlier this year authorized the opening of a Palestine Liberation Organization information office, has said it will not proceed to establish diplomatic relations with the PLO.

"I can assure you that Chilean foreign policy does not contemplate the establishment of diplomatic relations with the PLO," Chile's ambassador to Washington, Particio Silva, told the World Jewish Congress.

The WJC, at the urging of the Chilean Jewish community, had protested Chile's decision on Jan. 5 to approve the opening of an "office of representation" by the PLO -- namely the information office -- in Santiago, the national capital.

In authorizing the office, the Foreign Ministry stated at the time that "in this way, Chile's government satisfies the wishes of the citizens of Palestinian origin to have an office which will

undoubtedly serve as a nexus between them and the land of their ancestors."

Hussein Abdel Khalek, a PLO official named to head the office, told the media in Santiago that this was "a first step" that should be followed by giving the PLO "full recognition."

Responding to a letter of protest by Richard Mottman, a WJC member from Pennsylvania, Silva denied any intention of future diplomatic links with the PLO.

"While Chile is properly proud of its hospitality to foreigners, there is no representation in Chile which could be remotely considered an 'embassy' of the PLO," Silva wrote.

The WJC welcomed the assurances that Chile was not forging diplomatic links with the PLO, but said that the very presence of a PLO information office in Santiago remained deeply troubling to the Jews in Chile.

RABBI SCHACH LASHES OUT AT SHAS FOR REMAINING IN LABOR GOVERNMENT
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, June 3 (JTA) -- Rabbi Eliezer Schach, the aged Ashkenazic sage, has issued a blistering attack on the fervently Orthodox Sephardic Shas party for remaining in the Labor-led government coalition.

The 95-year-old Schach asserted that Shas had "removed itself from the community of the haredim," or fervently Orthodox, and was causing "the ruination of religion."

Schach's diatribe was circulated to all the Israeli media and prominently published here Thursday.

Schach, spiritual leader of the small Degel HaTorah party, opposes Shas' participation in the current government, citing, among other factors, the fact that the avowedly secular Meretz party is another member of the coalition.

Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, the spiritual leader of Shas, has called on his followers to resist responding to Schach's attack.

Schach refused this week to acknowledge that the recent removal of Meretz leader Shulamit Aloni as minister of education -- at Shas' insistence -- was an achievement for the Sephardic party.

Indeed, at a conference of the Agudat Yisrael party in Netanya, Schach asserted that the Cabinet reshuffle had made matters worse from the haredi perspective.

Division also exists within the Ashkenazic camp.

The Agudat Yisrael gathering, involving haredi leaders from Israel and abroad, ended in disappointment when it became clear that Degel HaTorah and Agudat Yisrael are not yet prepared to set aside their differences and reunite.

The two parties coexist within the United Torah Judaism Front as a single Knesset faction, but they retain their separate identities -- Degel having split off from Agudah in the 1980s.

Tensions mounted at the conference when Degel representatives took affront when the Agudah newspaper Hamodia did not refer to Schach as "maran," a term used in haredi parlance to designate the greatest rabbi.

Agudah's rabbinical leaders are the Hasidic rebbes of Gur and Vishnitz. While these two rabbis have thus far gone along with Schach in rejecting Labor's overtures to enter the coalition, they have not joined with the Lithuanian sage Schach in his ferocious attacks on Shas.

**ALIYAH FROM REPUBLICS UP SLIGHTLY,
BUT OFFICIAL WARNS THAT IT MAY DROP**
By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, June 3 (JTA) -- Immigration to Israel was up slightly in May, but a key Jewish Agency official is warning that aliyah will drop sharply if the Labor government does not change the way it absorbs immigrants.

Some 6,000 immigrants arrived in Israel last month, including 4,910 from the republics of the former Soviet Union. That was up from April, when 4,060 arrived from the republics, but below the 6,120 who came in March.

An additional 2,494 Jews from the republics arrived in the United States last month under the government's refugee program, according to the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society in New York.

All in all, immigration to Israel is running slightly ahead of where it was at this time last year. A total of 25,430 Jews arrived here from the former Soviet Union in the first five months of the year, compared to 23,440 who arrived in the same period last year, according to the National Conference on Soviet Jewry in New York.

But aliyah is still considerably lower than it was 1990 and 1991.

Uri Gordon, head of the Jewish Agency's immigration department, has come under sustained attack this year for the relative immigration slump and the difficulties the new arrivals are encountering in their efforts to integrate into Israeli society.

He lashed back last weekend in a lengthy interview published in a local Hebrew newspaper, Malabus, in which he laid the blame squarely at the feet of the Labor government. He said its exclusive emphasis on the peace process has led to virtual neglect of the immigrants' needs.

'Drastic' Government Action Needed

The Jewish Agency, he pointed out, is responsible for bringing the immigrants to Israel, while the government has the obligation to settle them, mainly by providing jobs and housing.

He said the Jewish Agency's mission is being jeopardized by the failure of the government to do its job. If "drastic action" is not taken to improve absorption, he warned, whatever momentum remains in the flow of immigrants will stop.

The immigrants from the former Soviet republics, Gordon said, are writing to their relatives and painting a bleak picture of Israel that discourages them from making a similar move.

The Labor Party, he charged, has failed to live up to its pledge to help the immigrants in return for their support in last June's elections.

A systematic jobs plan, for instance, should have been created in recognition of how critical jobs are to successful absorption, he argued. Instead, the government waited for the economy to absorb hundreds of thousands of immigrants, and spent its money on unemployment benefits.

Gordon also criticized the government for failing to educate and sensitize the Israeli public to the meaning of the massive aliyah. Without such education, he said, the public treats the immigrants as "enemies and competition for jobs and housing, instead of as a blessing that can help strengthen Israel."

Absorption Minister Yair Tsaban, responding in the newspaper piece to Gordon's charges, joined him in lamenting the low priority being assigned by the government to immigrant absorption and conceded he is waging a constant battle.

**SOUTH AFRICAN JEWS FACE HARD TIMES,
SAYS JEWISH ACTIVIST ON VISIT TO U.S.**
By Deborah Kalb
States News Service

WASHINGTON, June 3 (JTA) -- Jews in South Africa are facing a difficult decade as their country goes through the wrenching changes needed to push aside the remnants of the apartheid system and move toward democracy.

This sentiment was expressed by Helen Lieberman, a South African grass-roots activist who has spent decades combatting the effects of apartheid in her country.

In an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency on a visit here, Lieberman discussed the situation confronting South African Jews, as well as her own work in creating development projects for South Africa's black majority.

Lieberman is on a two-month tour of the United States sponsored by the American Jewish Committee and is actively involved in the South African Jewish community.

Currently, various factions in the constellation of South African political groups are participating in negotiations designed to shape a future non-racial South African democracy.

But the turmoil associated with the change, combined with the lingering economic effects of international sanctions slapped on South Africa by the United States and others in the 1980s, has resulted in waves of Jews and other South Africans leaving the country.

Although the sanctions are gradually being lifted as South Africa moves away from apartheid, Lieberman said Tuesday that "the next 10 years will be very difficult" for South African Jews.

"They're becoming an aging community," Lieberman said.

A Tiny Fraction Of Population

Many younger Jews have emigrated in recent years, leaving their elderly parents behind and settling in America, England or Australia.

While Lieberman pointed out that it is not only the Jewish community that is leaving South Africa, she acknowledged that Jews "have always been a mobile community.

"When things aren't good, they go elsewhere," she said.

Of South Africa's total population of about 40 million, Lieberman said, only about 80,000 to 100,000 are Jewish.

South African Jews have tended over the years to be more liberal than most white South Africans, supporting political parties on the more progressive side of the spectrum.

Longtime former member of Parliament Helen Suzman, who is Jewish, served for much of her career as the lone opposition member representing the Progressive Federal Party, a liberal alternative to the ruling National Party.

"Jewish people have been very strong in individual capacities" working against apartheid, Lieberman said.

She herself has served as such an example in her own work. Beginning with her own personal funds, and later raising money from the Jewish community, Lieberman has helped to create a network of social service projects designed to train workers and educate children in South Africa's sorely underdeveloped black townships.

The programs include old-age centers, day-care centers, job training programs for the disabled and education projects.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:
JEWS ARE SPLIT OVER L.A. MAYORAL RACE, WHICH MAY MARK NEW DIRECTION FOR CITY

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, June 3 (JTA) -- Next week's mayoral elections here could wind up being the most significant in two decades, and the Jewish vote is likely to play an important role in determining the outcome.

On June 8, Los Angeles voters will elect a successor to Mayor Tom Bradley, who has led America's second-largest city for the past 20 years. Bradley's retirement will also mark the formal end of an alliance between the black and liberal Jewish communities that first elected and then sustained the African American mayor during his long tenure.

When Bradley announced last year that he was finally stepping down, it seemed as if every second Angeleno decided to go after the job. In the April primary election, 24 candidates were listed on the ballot, an embarrassment of choices that left a Chicago Tribune headline writer to wonder, "Is This a Casting Call or L.A. Mayoral Race?"

When the dust cleared, the two top vote-getters, Richard Riordan and Michael Woo, qualified for the runoff. Left behind in third and fourth place respectively were the two top Jewish candidates, City Councilman Joel Wachs and State Assemblyman Richard Katz.

The contrasts between the surviving candidates could hardly be sharper and neither could the political divisions among Jewish voters.

Riordan, 61, was the only Republican among the 24 primary candidates, and although the mayor's post is officially non-partisan, nobody is buying that fiction.

A white Catholic, conservative lawyer, venture capitalist and multimillionaire, Riordan, who is making his first run for public office, has some of the outsider appeal of a Ross Perot, though he lacks the ex-presidential candidate's folksiness and ear for the pungent phrase.

Woo, 41, is a third-generation Chinese American, urban planner, city councilman and liberal Democrat, who has pitched his appeal to the same minority groups and voting blocs that supported Bradley.

Hard Times Bring Uncertain Voting

In normal times, there would be little doubt that Woo would win in this preponderantly Democratic city, and that he could count on a Jewish community that cast 88 percent of its vote for Bill Clinton last November.

Yet these are anything but normal times. As the Los Angeles Times recently put it, "Laid-back Lotus Land, inventor of the Good Life, capital of dreams, has hit upon hard times," with "riot, recession, real estate bust and racial tension."

In the primary campaign, Woo and Riordan largely ignored Jewish voters, assuming that Jews would back Wachs or Katz in any case. The assumption was only partially correct since Wachs and Katz together garnered only a fraction over half the Jewish vote.

The two surviving candidates are trying hard to remedy the earlier miscalculation, propelled by a number of considerations.

Woo and Riordan have both come to the realization that their neck-and-neck race will be determined by the undecided middle class, to which most Jews here belong. And they are

keenly aware that Jews, who cast 16 percent of all votes in the primary, are evenly split over whom to support.

As a result, there is hardly a Bar Mitzvah or Jewish testimonial dinner without one or both candidates in attendance. Last week alone, Woo and Riordan debated their platforms at five synagogues and other Jewish venues.

Put in simplest terms, most Jewish voters are torn between the social liberalism of Woo and the fiscal conservatism of Riordan.

The chief beneficiary of the split emotions has been Riordan, with a considerable number of lifelong Democrats announcing their support for the conservative Republican.

Chief among the defectors is Ed Sanders, senior presidential adviser during the Carter administration, ex-president of the Jewish Federation Council and arguably the single most respected figure in the Jewish community.

Sanders' support and that of others who are opting for the first time in their lives to vote for a Republican have given a certain aura of political correctness to the Riordan cause that would have been unthinkable even a year ago.

KOLLEK TO RUN FOR SEVENTH TERM

By Cyathia Mann

JERUSALEM, June 3 (JTA) -- Teddy Kollek, 82, who has served as mayor of this city for the last 27 years, has formally announced he will seek re-election for a seventh, record-breaking term.

Kollek, a Labor Party member, announced Wednesday he will once again run for mayor because he is better qualified than other prospective candidates and because he was being pressured to run by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Although there have been reports that Kollek had already reversed an earlier decision to retire from politics, Kollek called a news conference to make his candidacy official and also produced a certificate from his doctor declaring him to be in good health.

Kollek presumably felt compelled to give assurances about his health after being hospitalized for a number of days two weeks ago.

Despite chest pains and his admission to a cardiac unit, doctors said he had not suffered a heart attack and only experienced fatigue. He is reportedly now on heart medication, however.

The Likud party has scheduled runoff primaries for next week to produce a challenger to Kollek. Likud Knesset member Ehud Olmert is a leading candidate.

Meanwhile, recent telephone polls of Jerusalem residents reportedly showed that Kollek may not be in such a strong position to be re-elected.

Kollek said he would be putting Nachman Shai, a former army spokesman made popular during the Persian Gulf War as the voice of calm, into the No. 2 position on his party's list in the municipal elections.

Shai is currently director of Israel's state-run Channel 2.

Kollek, although endorsed by the Labor Party, has traditionally run at the head of his own formally independent party, One Jerusalem.

It is presumed by many that Kollek, if victorious, would step down and hand over the mayorship to the second person on his list.

For years, Kollek had groomed Amos Marmar-Haim as his successor, but the lackluster Marmar-Haim has apparently been dropped in favor of the more popular and charismatic Shai.