

JEWISH GROUPS WELCOME NOMINATION OF 1ST JEWISH WOMAN TO HIGH COURT

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, June 14 (JTA) -- Jewish groups have welcomed President Clinton's surprise nomination to the Supreme Court of federal appeals court Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who would be the first Jewish woman ever to serve on the nation's top court.

Ginsburg, who was appointed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit by former President Jimmy Carter in 1980, would be the first Jew to serve on the Supreme Court since Justice Abe Fortas resigned in 1969.

Because Ginsburg's name was less prominent in the media speculation leading up to Clinton's announcement Monday, Jewish groups said for the most part that they had only begun to study her judicial record and could not comment on the specifics of her past decisions.

Ginsburg, who would replace retiring Justice Byron White on the court, is regarded as a moderate.

In announcing her nomination, Clinton said Monday that she had "genuinely distinguished herself as one of our nation's best judges, progressive in outlook, wise in judgment, balanced and fair in her opinions."

He also said she would serve as a "force for consensus-building on the Supreme Court," as she has on the appeals court.

Ginsburg told the crowd assembled in the White House Rose Garden for Monday's announcement that her selection "contributes to the end of the days when women, at least half the talent pool in our society, appear in high places only as one-at-a-time performers."

If confirmed by the Senate Judiciary Committee, Ginsburg would join the first woman to serve on the court, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, appointed by Ronald Reagan in 1981.

"Many admirers of her work say that she is to the women's movement what former Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall was to the movement for the rights of African Americans," Clinton said.

Ginsburg has argued women's rights cases before the court, Clinton said, and won five out of six of them.

Impressive Legal Credentials

Overall, while pleased that the so-called "Jewish seat" on the court may be occupied once again -- for the first time in nearly a quarter of a century -- Jewish groups said they had not been actively lobbying for a Jewish justice.

Most officials from Jewish groups said recently that they would rather have a nominee with whom they were in philosophical agreement than someone who happened to be Jewish.

But the sense overall this week was one of pride that a Jewish woman with impressive credentials had been nominated.

Jewish leaders praised Ginsburg's previous work in academia and as a pioneer in women's rights issues.

"Judge Ginsburg's background as a law professor and work as founder of the Women's Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties

Union suggests that she is well-prepared for service on the Supreme Court," American Jewish Congress President Robert Lifton said in a statement Monday.

Lifton also noted that Ginsburg had been a member of AJCongress and had actively participated in the group's Commission on Law and Social Action in the late 1970s and early 1980s before being named to the bench.

"Judge Ginsburg has a breadth of experience and judicial temperament," said Warren Eisenberg, director of B'nai B'rith's International Council. "We welcome her direct experience in women's issues."

The National Jewish Democratic Council, a group promoting grass-roots Jewish Democratic political activity, also hailed Ginsburg's "impressive legal credentials."

Steve Gutow, the group's executive director, said in a statement Monday that Clinton "deserves a lot of credit for selecting an appointee whose reputation as an outstanding jurist -- not an ideologue -- has earned her this nomination."

While Ginsburg's views on the 1973 landmark abortion ruling in Roe vs. Wade have been viewed by some as controversial, some in the Jewish community said she is within the spectrum of pro-choice voices on the issue.

"Some of the criticism of her has been unfair," said Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

'Excellent' On Issues Of Concern

In remarks recently, Ginsburg had criticized the sweeping scope of the Roe vs. Wade decision, arguing that a narrower ruling would have been less controversial and would have allowed states to liberalize their abortion rules more effectively.

Saperstein said Ginsburg would be "excellent" on such issues as civil liberties, First Amendment rights, the right to privacy and church-state separation, issues that are important to much of the Jewish community.

As the president observed while introducing Ginsburg, she is viewed as a conciliator between more conservative and liberal judges.

"She is very well-respected by her fellow jurists, both the liberal and conservative," said Samuel Rabinove, legal director for the American Jewish Committee.

The tradition of a "Jewish seat" on the court started in 1916 with the appointment of Louis Brandeis and ended in 1969 with Fortas' resignation.

Other Jewish justices to serve on the court during that period were Benjamin Cardozo, Felix Frankfurter and Arthur Goldberg.

Clinton's nomination of Ginsburg came as something of a surprise, because speculation had been centering around Judge Stephen Breyer of Boston and Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt.

But Breyer, who is also Jewish, ran into trouble when it was discovered he had a problem with Social Security taxes for domestic help similar to the problem that derailed Kimba Wood's potential nomination for attorney general earlier this year. And Babbitt was considered difficult to replace at Interior.

Ginsburg, 60, has also served as a law professor at Columbia and Rutgers universities.

SETTLERS STEP UP P.R. CAMPAIGN AGAINST TERRITORIAL CONCESSION

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, June 14 (JTA) -- On the eve of the renewed peace talks in Washington, Jewish settlers from the administered territories and the Golan Heights have stepped up their public relations campaign against Israeli territorial concessions.

Gathering at the Rose Garden opposite the Knesset, protesters began what has been planned as a lengthy sit-in strike.

The demonstrators are against trading land for peace, a policy which Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's government appears to be embracing in the Middle East peace negotiations.

The protesters came fully equipped with camping facilities such as tents, sleeping bags and food, ready to stay there as long as necessary.

Each municipal council in the territories and the Golan sent its own delegation and set up its own hut to serve as the council's headquarters during the protest strike.

Each hut was fully equipped with telephone and fax lines.

The protesters placed a huge placard opposite the Prime Minister's Office with the slogan "Rabin has no mandate," understood to mean that Rabin has no mandate from the people to make territorial concessions.

ISRAELI CABINET APPROVES PLAN FOR TAX-FREE PRODUCTION ZONE

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, June 14 (JTA) -- Israel's Cabinet has approved a controversial plan to establish a tax-free production and export zone, located in either Galilee or the Negev.

All goods produced in the zone will be exported, and all goods arriving in Israel destined for the zone will be shipped there directly from the port of arrival.

Plants operating within the zone will be exempt from taxes for a period of 20 years. Imports will also be tax-exempt, as well as transactions within businesses inside the zone itself.

The 500-acre zone will be fenced off, with customs officials standing on guard to prevent smuggling out of the zone.

The Cabinet's decision must still be approved by the ministerial legislation committee and the Knesset.

A government statement said the Free Production and Export Zone was designed to create "a comfortable environment for investments and the shortening of bureaucratic procedures."

A council of representatives of the business sector and the government will be established to determine regulations for the operation of the zone.

Proponents of the project say it will encourage investors to initiate their own projects and take responsibility for all infrastructural expenses, with no costs for the government.

"It will be a free economy," said Ze'ev Golan, an economist with the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies who endorses the new project.

"People will come, will apply to invest, will get in one spot the permission to invest and all the different licenses that they need and will immediately begin to build their factory," he said.

ISRAEL'S HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE DROPS FOR FOURTH MONTH IN A ROW

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, June 14 (JTA) -- Israel's relatively high unemployment rate dropped by 9 percent in May, with 122,300 job-seekers registered at the national Employment Service, compared to 134,200 in April.

The figures were disclosed here Sunday by Labor and Social Affairs Minister Ora Namir.

With evident satisfaction, Namir noted that she took office in January promising that the job market would be her concern.

She said the results speak for themselves: The decline in job-seekers has held steady for the last four months in a row.

The drop stands in sharp contrast to the situation over a year ago, when from February 1991 to August 1992, the number of job-seekers rose from 121,800 to a record 153,000. From then, until the end of 1992, the number grew at a slower rate.

Namir attributed the turnaround to three factors: the continuing ban against allowing Palestinian workers from the territories to enter Israel proper; her creation of immediate jobs and other programs; and a toughened stance on the part of the Employment Service in regard to job-seekers.

Namir said the "immediate job program" had a ceiling of 3,500 jobs imposed by the Treasury, 3,300 provided by the Jewish National Fund and 200 by the Israel Antiquities Authority.

GROUP OF 129 FALASH MORA TO ARRIVE IN ISRAEL SOON

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, June 14 (JTA) -- Another group of 129 Falash Mora will arrive here from Ethiopia shortly, after being approved for immigration by senior officials of Israel's Interior Ministry who visited the capital of Addis Ababa earlier this month.

The delegation, led by David Efrati, head of the population registrar at the Interior Ministry, visited Ethiopia to implement the Israeli government's decision earlier this year to allow the immigration of some of the Falash Mora, Ethiopians whose ancestors converted from Judaism to Christianity.

Israel's Cabinet has decided that only those Falash Mora with certain relatives of their immediate family already in Israel will be given the right to make aliyah.

Some Falash Mora also are able to qualify as immigrants on the basis of the Law of Return by proving their own Jewishness or that of their parents or grandparents.

Other Falash Mora come here on the basis of the less-beneficial Law of Naturalization, which does not grant the newcomer the same privileges given to new immigrants under the Law of Return.

Some 33 of the new group of 129 immigrants will come under the Law of Return.

The group is scheduled to arrive here within a few weeks, according to Jewish Agency officials.

Representatives of the Falash Mora in Israel expressed disappointment with the small number of potential immigrants, saying they were but a "drop in a barrel" of those who want to come here.

JEWISH GROUPS CONGRATULATE CANADA'S FIRST WOMAN PREMIER

By Gil Kezwer

TORONTO, June 14 (JTA) -- Canadian Jewish groups have congratulated Kim Campbell, a 46-year-old lawyer from Vancouver, on her narrow election victory to head the Progressive Conservative Party, thereby becoming this country's first woman prime minister.

But she may also turn out to be Canada's shortest-term prime minister. Campbell is expected to face an uphill battle in federal elections this fall as she tries to overcome Canadians' current antipathy for her beleaguered party.

Campbell, who had served in the Cabinet as justice minister and currently holds the defense portfolio, won 53 percent of the vote at the Progressive Conservative Party convention on Sunday, beating out her rival, Environment Minister Jean Charest of Quebec.

Campbell is well-known to Jewish groups, who generally welcomed her victory. Jewish groups have been pleased with the policies of her party and predecessor, Brian Mulroney, who announced his retirement in February.

B'nai Brith Canada's executive vice president, Frank Dimant, who has closely aligned his organization with the Progressive Conservative Party, said, "We are confident that Kim Campbell will continue in the tradition of Brian Mulroney as it impacts on the agenda of the Canadian Jewish community."

"She is very au courant with our concerns in regard to Israel, the Mideast and combatting terrorism," he added.

Charles Zaionz, chairman of the Canadian Jewish Congress national executive, said: "We congratulate Kim Campbell on being chosen the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and Canada's prime minister.

"We are heartened by her stated positions on political inclusive and civil liberties. We look forward to meeting with her to discuss these issues in the near future."

Canadian Jews also noted Campbell's ties to the community.

"There's a certain amount of interest in Kim Campbell because her first husband was Jewish and because her two step-daughters are Jewish as well," said Howard Brown, a political columnist for the Toronto monthly Jewish Life.

Speaks A Little Yiddish

Campbell, who is twice divorced, married as her first husband Nathan Divinsky, a professor of mathematics at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. She once quipped that she spoke Yiddish, having picked up a few colorful Yiddish expressions.

Campbell only won over Charest in the second ballot of the tight leadership race.

For the first time ever, two Hasidim participated as official delegates: Jack Hartstein and A. Werzberger, respectively members of the Satmar and Vishnitz sects in Montreal's Outremont riding. Both voted for Charest.

Many here see Campbell as the voice of the baby-boomer generation, who publicly admitted to smoking marijuana in younger days and brought a fresh perspective to politics -- not unlike Bill Clinton south of the border.

For Canada's 316,000 Jews, Campbell's most pertinent statement came in May 1992, when she announced that the Justice Department had set a

22-month deadline for completing current investigations into Nazi war criminals living in Canada.

Appearing before the House of Commons Justice Committee, Campbell was asked why Ottawa had not taken action in any of the 45 high-priority cases cited in 1989 by Bill Hobson, then head of the Justice Department's war crimes unit.

Campbell responded that Hobson had been mistaken when he said 45 cases were under investigation and that charges would shortly be laid against a significant number of alleged Nazis in Canada. Since then one arrest has been made.

Declining to specify the number of current war crimes cases under investigation, she said the unit has been given more resources and a March 1994 deadline to complete as many as possible.

"We have a strong commitment within our department to get those investigations completed by that date," she said. "That is the target we have set for ourselves."

Brown observed that Canada's Jews, along with their fellow countrymen, would make their attitudes regarding Campbell clear during the general elections.

"She haschutzpah to have come through a tough leadership campaign," he said. "But I believe that they have a healthy skepticism owing to her ability to offend people with her strong language."

"Most Canadians haven't had a vote yet. Their interests will peak when they have a chance to pass their own judgment on the person they want to lead the country," Brown said.

"Israel has had Golda Meir, Pakistan Benazir Bhutto and Britain Margaret Thatcher. The question is, 'Can Kim Campbell capture the imagination and trust of Canadians?' I still believe she will not be able to overcome the legacy of Brian Mulroney and his unpopular economic program," he added.

ISRAEL TO PARTICIPATE IN SOWETO DAY, MARKING SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK STRUGGLE

By Larry Yudelson

UNITED NATIONS, June 14 (JTA) -- For the first time, Israel will participate in ceremonies to mark Soweto Day, the International Day of Solidarity with the Struggling People of South Africa.

The event, to be held Wednesday morning, is sponsored by the Special Committee Against Apartheid of the Trusteeship Council Chamber of the United Nations.

Israel has in the past stayed away from this commemoration, mindful that it was likely to come under disproportionate attack for its ties to South Africa.

The participation marks a sea change in Israel's profile and relationships within the United Nations and in particular its standing with other African nations.

For much of the 1970s and 1980s, Israel was closer diplomatically to South Africa than it was to the United Nations, and to most of its members.

Now the Jewish state has ties with a strong majority of U.N. member states and is no longer treated as a pariah state by the world body.

Explaining the Israeli decision to participate in Soweto Day, which was reached in consultation with the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem, U.N. Ambassador Gad Yaacobi noted the changed policies in South Africa, which promise to lead soon to democratic elections with the participation of the country's black majority.

MOSCOW'S MAIN SHUL ATTACKED BY STONE-THROWING VANDALS

By Kenneth Dancyger

NEW YORK, June 14 (JTA) -- Moscow's main synagogue was attacked by stone-throwing vandals this past weekend, who left behind broken windows and painted swastikas, the World Jewish Congress reported.

In a letter to WJC Secretary-General Israel Singer, Moscow Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt said the Moscow Choral Synagogue was attacked at about 3 p.m. Saturday by a gang of hooligans chanting anti-Semitic slogans.

The letter asked WJC President Edgar Bronfman to intervene with Russian authorities on behalf of the synagogue.

Although the police were called while the attack was in progress, they failed to arrive on the scene, according to Goldschmidt.

"We are concerned with the lack of concern from authorities, after we have repeatedly asked for a police post outside the main synagogue," Goldschmidt wrote in his letter.

"We would like to ask Mr. Edgar Bronfman to intercede on our behalf, to make sure that the security of the Jewish community will be taken seriously, such that insult should not be followed by injury."

Singer said his organization has contacted the Russian ambassador in Washington "to make clear that this situation is intolerable."

According to the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, a former Russian activist who lives in the United States but was in Moscow at the time of the incident witnessed the attack and confirmed that the synagogue was damaged.

The activist added that Goldschmidt's attempts to hold a news conference failed after reporters did not respond to his requests.

"We call upon the Moscow city police to launch an immediate investigation of the incident and provide the synagogue protection without delay," said Richard Wexler, chairman of NCSJ.

"And we urge both municipal officials and President (Boris) Yeltsin to publicly condemn this act of violence against a religious institution."

SPECTER UNDERGOES BRAIN SURGERY

By Lisa Mann

WASHINGTON, June 14 (JTA) -- Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) underwent 2½ hours of surgery this week at the University of Pennsylvania's hospital to remove a brain tumor.

"The operation went well and an apparent meningioma, which was 2 inches in diameter, was removed entirely," the senator's son Shanin said in a statement Monday.

The operation was performed Monday by Dr. Eugene Flamm, chairman of the hospital's division of neurosurgery, who reported that the tumor appeared benign. But a definitive diagnosis will not be reached for several days.

Specter, 63, who is one of 10 Jews in the Senate, serves on the Appropriations subcommittee on foreign operations, which makes decisions regarding foreign aid to Israel. He has been a leader in the fight against global terrorism.

Specter, who was first elected to the Senate in 1980, is also a member of the Judiciary Committee. During the committee's hearings on Clarence Thomas' nomination to the Supreme Court, he came under sharp criticism from women's groups for his questioning of witness Anita Hill.

BELZER REBBE RETURNS TO LVOV, TO GREETINGS BY UKRAINIAN BAND

By Jed Sunden

LVOV, Ukraine (JTA) -- Half a century after his father fled Nazi-occupied Europe and brought the Belz Hasidic dynasty to Jerusalem, Rabbi Issachar Dov Rokeach, the present-day Belzer rebbe, returned to Lvov with 350 of his followers.

Greeted at the airport by a Ukrainian military marching band playing "Shalom Aleichem," the rebbe and his entourage spent the day meeting with the local Jewish community in Lvov, a city that before the war had a large Belz population.

Until World War II, Belz was one of the largest and most influential Hasidic groups in Galicia and all of Eastern Europe. The dynasty founded at the beginning of the 19th century by Rabbi Sholem Rokeach of Belz expanded rapidly over the next century.

At the outbreak of World War II, Belz and Lvov fell under Soviet rule as a result of Poland's partition between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

In 1941, both cities were conquered by the invading German army and occupied by the Nazis for four years. The two cities were eventually reconquered by the Red Army and formally annexed to Ukraine after the war by the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin.

Though the Belzer rebbe was able to escape to Jerusalem, almost the entire Jewish population of the region was killed during the war.

The Jewish population of Lvov, which comprised 30 percent of the city before the war, was reduced to a few thousand.

After the war, the Belz dynasty rebuilt itself in Israel. Today, there are approximately 25,000 Belz Hasidim around the world, with major centers in Jerusalem, Brooklyn, Vienna and Antwerp.

Became Rebbe At Age 18

The present rebbe was born after the war and assumed leadership of the group in 1967, when he was 18 years old.

The main purpose of the rebbe's trip this month was to visit the graves of his relatives and other righteous Jews to invite them symbolically to the upcoming wedding of his only child, Aaron Mordechai Rokeach.

The wedding, scheduled for Aug. 3, will bring together the Belz dynasty and the Makever dynasty of Kfar Ata in Israel by the marriage of the children of the two rebbes.

Since the collapse of Soviet rule, the Jewish community of Lvov, renamed Lviv by the Ukrainians, has slowly been rebuilding.

Under Communist rule, every synagogue in the city was closed and all Jewish community property confiscated.

For the past three years, Rabbi Avraham Rosenthal, an Israeli-born member of the Karliner-Stolin Hasidic movement, has been the head of the religious community.

One synagogue, which had been used as a warehouse for four decades, was returned to the Jewish community by the local government.

Restored and rebuilt, the building again houses an active synagogue and yeshiva. Despite a small Jewish population of less than 10,000, the Lvov community is planning to open a Jewish day school in September, and its yeshiva has earned itself the reputation of being one of the best in the former Soviet Union.