

REPUBLICAN WINS IN U.S. ELECTIONS SEEN AS RETAINING SUPPORT OF ISRAEL

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Nov. 3 (JTA) -- Of the three Republicans who swept to victory in Tuesday's major elections, two are seen by the pro-Israel community as being supportive of Israel, while the views of the third are unclear.

And the three have varying views on abortion rights, another issue of concern to the Jewish community.

In this off-year election, Republicans were winners as voters in New Jersey and Virginia elected new governors Tuesday, and New York City voters chose a mayor.

In New Jersey, Republican Gov.-elect Christine Todd Whitman is viewed as friendly to Israel, as was Democratic incumbent James Florio, whom Whitman narrowly defeated.

In addition, Whitman, like Florio, favors abortion rights.

Most American Jews, with the exception of some in the Orthodox community, support a woman's right to choose to end a pregnancy.

By contrast, Virginia voters elected a more conservative Republican governor, George Allen, who is not seen as a supporter of abortion rights.

Allen defeated the Democratic incumbent attorney general, Mary Sue Terry, by a large margin, 58 to 41 percent.

Allen's position on Israel was not known.

Jewish Democrats were relieved this week that Virginia voters rejected the bid of Allen's running mate, Mike Farris, who has come under fire for his ties to the "religious right."

Farris, who has worked for the Moral Majority and other religious right groups, lost the race for lieutenant governor to Democratic incumbent Donald Beyer Jr.

Groups on the religious right back an agenda that includes support for school prayer and rejection of abortion rights and gay rights, positions opposed by the majority of the American Jewish community.

Jewish Republicans did not actively support Farris throughout the campaign, although they did support Allen.

Foreign Policy Taking A 'Back Seat'

In the hard-fought New York City mayoral race, Republican Rudolph Giuliani won a narrow victory over Democratic incumbent David Dinkins.

Giuliani is viewed as a supporter of Israel, but his views on abortion rights are less clear.

The mayor-elect has disclaimed reports that he holds anti-abortion views, but he is not seen as being firmly in the pro-choice camp.

Tuesday's dramatic Republican sweep has Jewish political activists pondering the election's message for the more crucial 1994 campaign season.

Jewish Democrats and Republicans reacted predictably to Tuesday's initial results.

While Republicans see their victories in the New Jersey and Virginia gubernatorial races and the New York City mayoral contest as a clear mandate against President Clinton's policies, Democrats are playing down the election results.

One Jewish Democratic activist said that

future battles over the North American Free Trade Agreement and health care reform are more crucial politically than Tuesday's election results.

"How those come out will tell us a lot more about the political health of the Clinton administration than these elections," said Hyman Bookbinder, the longtime former Washington representative for the American Jewish Committee.

Bookbinder now serves as chairman of the advisory council of the National Jewish Democratic Council, which promotes grass-roots Jewish Democratic political activity.

A Republican activist said Wednesday that the Republican victories, combined with other Republican wins earlier this year in such contests as the Los Angeles mayoral race, demonstrate that Jews, like other Americans, are concerned about taxes, crime and welfare reform.

Matt Brooks, executive director of the National Jewish Coalition, said Republicans will benefit from this focus within the Jewish community on domestic issues.

With the peace process moving along, issues relating to Israel and foreign aid will be "taking a back seat" to "pressing domestic issues," said Brooks, whose group promotes Jewish Republican political activity.

JEWISH VOTERS BACK GIULIANI

IN NEW YORK MAYORAL UPSET

By Stewart Ain

The New York Jewish Week

NEW YORK, Nov. 3 (JTA) -- Jewish voters are being credited with helping Rudolph Giuliani become the first Republican elected mayor of New York City since 1965, rallying behind him in larger numbers than virtually any other group in the city in the closest mayoral race in a century.

News media analyses of the exit polls showed that Giuliani received from 60 to 67 percent of the Jewish vote.

Exit polls conducted by Voter Research and Surveys found that only 4 percent of the voters questioned considered incumbent Mayor David Dinkins' handling of the Crown Heights riots to have been a major factor in their vote.

The riots in August 1991 occurred after a car driven by a Chasidic man accidentally struck and killed a 7-year-old black child, Gavin Cato. His death sparked four days of violence in the mixed Jewish and black enclave of Brooklyn.

During the riots, Yankel Rosenbaum, an Australian scholar, was knifed to death after a group chased him, yelling, "Kill the Jew." The man charged in his death was acquitted.

Among the findings of a state report on the riots was that Dinkins had been remiss in giving directions to the police to quell the disturbances.

The riots' impact on Jewish voters was not immediately available, but several observers expressed surprise that Crown Heights had not hurt Dinkins more.

Michael Miller, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, said such results "send a message to our friends in Crown Heights that New Yorkers as a whole factor in many elements in deciding who to vote for."

"Such things as crime, drugs, housing,

education and homelessness are the issues that decided this race," Miller said.

That became apparent during interviews with New Yorkers on Election Day on the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

City 'Needs A Tough Italian'

Arthur D'Lugoff, 69, said he and his wife, Avital, had considered Crown Heights but believed it did not outweigh Dinkins' "overall record."

Meryl Meites, 31, said she was voting for Giuliani because "I think New York needs a tough Italian. New York is deteriorating, crime is up. He (Dinkins) had four years to straighten out the city and he didn't seem to do it."

Exit polls found that two out of three voters believed that crime was the most important issue facing the city. Fully 55 percent of them said crime was worse than it was four years ago, and two-thirds of those voted for Giuliani.

Crime, competence and quality of life were major campaign themes for Giuliani, a former U.S. attorney for Manhattan.

Dinkins had stressed his ties to a Democratic president in the White House. And to counter a perception that crime in the city was up, he cited FBI figures that showed a drop in the seven major categories of crime. He also stressed that he had put more police on the streets.

During the campaign, Dinkins also sought to pull together the city's diverse populations to rebuild the coalition that helped him defeat Giuliani by just 2 percentage points in 1989, making him the city's first black mayor. But in the end, he was unable to overcome a relatively small erosion of support.

Miller said the Jewish community has had a "long-standing relationship with Rudy Giuliani. As U.S. attorney, he traveled to Israel with the JCRC. We've also maintained contact with the mayor-elect during his tenure as U.S. attorney and over the last four years."

He said the JCRC, the umbrella Jewish organization in the New York area, is "confident that the concerns of the Jewish community, in particular, will be given the highest level of attention."

On the Upper West Side, which is composed of largely liberal, younger and more assimilated Jews, Dinkins received 62 percent of the vote there this year, compared with 60 percent four years ago.

In contrast, Jews on the Lower East Side who are generally older, from union families and more religiously observant, increased their vote for Giuliani. Four years ago they gave him 72 percent of the vote; this year they gave him 81 percent.

Crown Heights Riots A Factor

Crown Heights appears to have been a factor in several fervently Orthodox communities. In both Crown Heights and the Williamsburg sections of Brooklyn, the vote for Giuliani more than doubled -- increasing from 45 percent in 1989 to a whopping 97 percent. In Williamsburg, the percentage of Jews who voted this year increased from 61.5 percent in 1989 to 74.3 percent.

In Borough Park, Giuliani received 97 percent of the vote, compared to 87 percent four years ago. The percentage of Jews who voted there dropped slightly from 79 percent to 75 percent.

Jews comprised 18 percent of the overall vote this year, compared to 17 percent in 1989.

The black vote remained constant at 28 percent.

About 1.7 million New Yorkers voted this year, a figure that was down by about 100,000 votes from 1989. And although it had been widely thought that the Crown Heights issue would have increased the percentage of Jewish voters, there was a slight drop in the number who actually went to the polls.

One analyst suggested that fewer Jews voted because Jews generally dislike negative campaigns.

This year's was among the ugliest, with the race card being injected by everyone from a policeman who said Hispanics should not vote for Herman Badillo, the Republican-Liberal candidate for city comptroller, because he married a Jew, to President Clinton, who suggested that some whites would not vote for Dinkins because he is black.

In becoming the 107th mayor of the city and the first challenger to unseat an incumbent mayor here since Fiorello LaGuardia did it in 1933, Giuliani, 49, immediately sought to reach out for the support of all New Yorkers. In his victory statement, he called for a "time of healing."

In a gracious concession speech, Dinkins, 66, asked all New Yorkers to "pray for our city and our next mayor." He said the city must not be divided and he called for his supporters to stand with Giuliani. "He needs our partnership; he has earned it."

A longtime Dinkins supporter and friend, Stuart Shoreinstein, observed that "the fact that the overall numbers didn't change certainly suggests that the mayor was not abandoned by the Jewish community and that the Jewish community did not feel the mayor abandoned them."

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM BILL CLEARS CONGRESS

WASHINGTON, Nov. 3 (JTA) -- A bill that would enhance religious freedom in America has cleared its final hurdle before being signed into law by President Clinton.

The House of Representatives on Wednesday approved the Senate version of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act by unanimous consent.

The bill, which is supported by a broad coalition of Jewish and other religious groups, would make it harder for the government to encroach on free exercise of religion.

After a tough lobbying battle, the Senate passed the bill last week. Earlier this year, the House had passed its own version, which differed only slightly.

The president, who supports the legislation, is expected to sign it soon.

PAY THE TICKET, OR LOSE THE AID

WASHINGTON, Nov. 3 (JTA) -- In a city long known for its large population of foreign diplomats, and for the equally large number of perks they enjoy, Congress has sent a startlingly different message to the embassies here: Pay up.

The District of Columbia can enforce its parking regulations because of a new federal law that says if diplomats don't pay their parking tickets, their countries will lose part of their U.S. foreign aid.

Israel became the first nation to even its account when it issued a check for \$62,870 this week to cover its diplomats' parking tickets.

U.S. aid to Israel is about \$3 billion a year.

A list issued by Congress shows that Russia owes the most in parking tickets: \$3.8 million.

ISRAELIS, JORDANIANS HOLD TALKS OUTSIDE THE TRADITIONAL FRAMEWORK

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Nov. 3 (JTA) -- In a clear demonstration that the format of the Washington-based Middle East talks is becoming more flexible, Israeli and Jordanian negotiators discussed banking issues at the State Department this week.

The discussions represented the first time one working group within an Arab-Israeli negotiating track had met here outside an officially scheduled round of talks.

The Middle East peace process, once strictly focused on the rounds of talks in Washington, is evolving to adapt to the momentous changes of the past two months, including the historic Israeli-Palestinian declaration of principles and a subsequent Israeli-Jordanian agreement.

Israel and its Arab negotiating partners last met for an official round of talks in early September.

The Israeli-Jordanian negotiating track, which both parties have categorized over the months as businesslike and professional, includes a working group covering banking issues.

This week's meetings, scheduled to run through Wednesday, focused on how Jordanian banks might operate in the West Bank in the wake of the Israeli-Palestinian accord.

Israeli, Jordanian and U.S. officials were playing down any suggestions this week that the banking meetings represented a possible new trend for the talks.

Jordanian Ambassador Fayez Tarawneh said in an interview Tuesday that this was "not a new way" of handling the talks.

Jordan had pledged to help the Palestinians, and because no bilateral round was scheduled, the parties went ahead with their meetings at this point, Tarawneh said.

Talks 'Entering A New Phase'

Israeli officials called this week's meetings "positive" and a "good precedent." But they cautioned against making too much of them as a possible departure from the Madrid framework governing the talks.

The United States, for its part, is defining the banking discussions as part of the Israeli-Jordanian negotiating track.

A State Department spokesman said Tuesday that the timing of this week's "technical discussions on banking" did not constitute a new trend.

In recent weeks, the focus has shifted from Washington to Egypt, where Israelis and Palestinians have been conducting negotiations.

The Madrid format has been variously criticized by virtually all parties involved, but its basic outlines have proved fairly durable so far.

In remarks at a luncheon Tuesday sponsored by the American Jewish Committee, Tarawneh noted that the Arab-Israeli talks are "entering a new phase." But he said he still thinks that "we did not depart very much from the Madrid format," at least "not yet."

Many aspects of the original Madrid format, which was devised two years ago, are still valid. These include the terms of reference, the comprehensive nature of the talks, and their bilateral and multilateral structures, Tarawneh said.

The talks involve bilateral rounds between Israel and Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the Palestinians; and multilateral regional talks on specific issues, including arms control and refugees.

RON ARAD ALIVE IN SYRIA, A PLO OFFICIAL CONTENTS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Nov. 3 (JTA) -- Longtime missing Israeli air force navigator Ron Arad is alive and being held in Syria, a senior intelligence official of the Palestine Liberation Organization contends.

The official also says that the bodies of three Israeli Defense Force soldiers missing since the 1982 Sultan Yacub battle of the Lebanon War are buried in a Damascus cemetery.

Sheffi Gabai, Arab affairs reporter for Ma'ariv, wrote in the Israeli daily's Wednesday edition that he was given the information by Col. Nezair Amar, head of military intelligence for the mainstream Fatah wing of the PLO.

Amar, who is a member of the PLO delegation to the autonomy implementation talks at Taba, gave the information during an interview at the Sinai meeting place this week.

According to Gabai, Amar said he had investigated the reports about Arad's fate and "can say with complete certainty that the Israeli air force navigator is alive and held in Syria."

He confirmed the information that Arad had been captured by forces of the Lebanese Shi'ite Amal militia during the Lebanon War and handed over to the pro-Iranian Hezbollah group. He said Hezbollah then handed Arad over to the Syrians.

Arad is the only one of seven Israel Defense Force personnel captured in Lebanon presumed to be alive. He was captured in Lebanon in 1986.

Over the years it has been reported that Arad was being held in Lebanon and Iran. Gabai quoted Amar as saying, "The Syrians tell journalists today that (Arad) is in the hands of the Iranians. But I don't think that is possible without their agreement."

Can Say It 'With Complete Certainty'

He quoted Amar as saying the three Israeli soldiers wounded and captured during the Sultan Yacub battle "were collected by members of the A-Saiqa Palestinian unit of the Syrian army" and "taken off to Damascus," apparently for some future bargaining process with Israel.

"But I later found that they had died of their wounds," the PLO official told Gabai.

Gabai said Amar was the chief assistant to the late Salah Khalaf, the PLO official who was assassinated by his own bodyguard.

Amar told the Israeli journalist that he started his investigations after a visit to Tunis by Yona Baumel, father of Zachariya Baumel, one of the three missing IDF soldiers, who had come to seek news of his son.

"I believe the information I received," Amar said.

But Yona Baumel claims that information he has obtained in years of investigations is at variance with the Amar report.

Ron Arad's wife, Tami, reacted to the Ma'ariv report by saying this latest information appears to corroborate that Damascus is the address for obtaining information to gain the release of her missing husband.

She said more should be done to press the Syrians for information.

Israeli officials have been wary of reports that various groups hold missing Israeli soldiers or their bodies.

In one prisoner exchange, terrorists returned four bodies, three of which were found to be those of Arabs.

NEWS ANALYSIS: DIFFERING SPINS ON SIGNIFICANCE OF LIKUD VICTORIES IN MAYORAL BIDS

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Nov. 3 (JTA) -- When the polls closed this week, the Likud party had good reason to celebrate with songs and champagne at its national headquarters.

Although Likud scored many important victories in Israel's countrywide municipal elections Tuesday, however, the implications of the local results for national political issues are not yet clear.

In the broadest view, it appears that the Labor Party's win in last year's national elections had no coattail effect on this week's municipal voting.

When it comes to viewing the results as a referendum on the government's peace initiatives with the Palestine Liberation Organization, the municipal vote probably will be the subject of lengthy debate.

Likud candidates will become the mayors of 22 of Israel's 44 largest towns. Labor candidates scored victories in only 10, while several other contests will be decided in runoff elections later this month.

There were individual ups and downs, with Labor ousting Likud incumbents in Netanya and Holon, and Likud defeating Labor incumbents in Bat Yam and Beit Shemesh.

In Tel Aviv, Knesset member Ronni Milo of Likud defeated Labor's Avigdor Kahalani.

The most dramatic victory, however, came in the capital. After serving nearly three decades as Jerusalem's mayor, Teddy Kollek ended a distinguished career when he was defeated Tuesday by Likud Knesset member Ehud Olmert.

In what was anything but a gentlemanly campaign, Olmert, 47, targeted the octogenarian Kollek as too old and tired to effectively serve another term in office.

Kollek, of the Labor-affiliated "One Jerusalem" faction, maintained that Olmert would bring a right-wing taint to the office that would adversely affect the future of this city.

Kollek's resounding defeat by some 15 percentage points was a definite blow to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who had personally campaigned for the incumbent mayor.

'No Difference Between Him And Me'

In addition, it was Rabin himself who had asked voters to view the Jerusalem election as a referendum on his peace initiatives with the PLO.

But Olmert's victory cannot be seen purely in right-left terms. His win also can be seen as the result of an 11th-hour deal he struck with the Orthodox parties.

Following discussions with Olmert, the United Torah Judaism Front candidate, Meir Porush, withdrew from the mayoral contest. Acting on the subsequent prompting of the religious bloc's leaders, 85 percent of the fervently religious voters in the capital voted for Olmert.

Kollek's campaign struggled desperately to persuade Palestinians living in eastern Jerusalem to vote. But tallies indicate that fewer than 7,000 Arabs turned out at the polls.

Kollek's campaign had been hoping that 20,000 Palestinians would turn out in the capital to support him.

A bitter Kollek blamed his defeat on the many non-Orthodox Jerusalemites who stayed at

home. Only 35 percent of those eligible showed up to vote. Secular Jews stayed home in droves, thwarting Kollek's re-election chances.

"Jerusalem is going to go now in the wrong direction," the 82-year-old mayor predicted. "I hope I'm wrong, but I fear I am not."

Labor activists and neutral observers wondered whether it had been wise to persuade Kollek to run instead of seeking a younger man.

Kollek himself enraged many of his longtime supporters by grooming, then dumping, a series of potential successors.

Rabin, in his post-election comments, noted that the peace negotiations would be that much more difficult with a Likudnik running Jerusalem.

Olmert, in turn, said, "There is no difference between him and me, if it is the policy of the prime minister not to relinquish any part of Jerusalem."

With the nastiness of the campaign behind him, he was more concerned with portraying himself as the conciliator.

After his victory, Olmert told his enthusiastic supporters that he was planning "to call for real reconciliation between Jews and Jews, Jews and Arabs."

"I will take care of the needs of the Arab population in a fair and just way," he promised.

Likud party Chairman Benjamin Netanyahu said after the vote that his party had recovered from its setback in last year's national elections.

Netanyahu, in remarks to reporters, predictably sought to invest local results in Jerusalem and elsewhere with national political significance.

"What would people have said," he asked rhetorically, "had it gone the other way?"

OLMERT TO KEEP RELIGIOUS STATUS QUO

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Nov. 3 (JTA) -- Despite his last-minute deal with Orthodox voters, the mayor-elect has vowed to maintain the status quo of religion in Jerusalem.

Ehud Olmert, whose victory Tuesday ended the 28-year career of Teddy Kollek, said bars, restaurants and cinemas that are currently open on Friday nights would remain open.

New entertainment spots would be permitted to open if they did not "disrupt the life of the neighborhood," he said.

In a city where tensions between religious groups simmer, the opening of commercial establishments on the Sabbath has been a sensitive issue, and there have been violent confrontations between observant and secular Jews on occasion.

At a news conference Wednesday, Olmert hastened to make clear that despite the deal he orchestrated with the city's fervently Orthodox Jews, which won him that community's votes, he would not give in to Orthodox demands in a way that would change city life "one iota."

He denied that there had been a "sellout," and stressed that he would have won without the Orthodox votes but with a slimmer margin.

Olmert said the Orthodox would become "major partners" in the city's coalition, describing the start of a "foundation for cooperation" for the next five years.

The needs of the religious "must be recognized within reasonable limits," he said.

Olmert also said he regretted that Kollek, who "played a historic role" in Jerusalem, had been forced out. "He deserved a more graceful retirement," Olmert said.