



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ The House of Representatives moved to cut about \$1.5 billion from next year's foreign aid budget. Although Israel and Egypt's current aid levels would remain intact in the legislation making its way through Congress, pro-Israel Democrats warned the measure could jeopardize Israel's future aid. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee is supporting the legislation, which Clinton has threatened to veto.

■ A bomb was discovered and safely defused in Palestine Liberation Organization chairman Yasser Arafat's Gaza City office, Israel Television reported. Arafat's bodyguards denied the report, which they called "Israeli disinformation."

■ Egyptian presidential adviser Osama Al-Baz flew to Israel for meetings with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres. Baz's visit, coming one day after Israel reversed its controversial plan to confiscate Arab-owned land in eastern Jerusalem, was seen as a gesture to clear the air of tensions.

■ An Israeli soldier opened fire in a church courtyard in Jaffa, causing extensive damage, but no injuries. Israel asked its Christian Arab minority for "forgiveness, pardon and absolution" for the soldier's actions. [Page 3]

■ Germany's president took back a prestigious state award because the recipient turned out to be a former SS officer. The Federal Cross of Excellence was given in 1983 to a man known as Dr. Hans Schwerte. Schwerte had obtained medical equipment for medical experiments performed on inmates at the Dachau concentration camp. [Page 3]

■ An Italian Jewish basketball player was at the center of an anti-Semitic episode that shocked Italians and prompted an outpouring of support for the athlete. The player found anti-Semitic leaflets in a locker room before a game in the town of Pesaro. [Page 3]

■ More than 30 Israeli, Jordanian and American light aircraft flew from Jerusalem to Amman in a symbolic gesture intended to demonstrate goodwill between the two countries.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Arabs emerge as the victors amid fallout from land seizures

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 23 (JTA) — The only clear winners in this week's round of on-the-brink politics in Israel were the Knesset's two Arab parties.

Staring down a double disaster in the wake of a decision to expropriate Arab-owned land in eastern Jerusalem, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin managed to save both his government and the Middle East peace process.

Beyond the immediate relief, however, Rabin and his Cabinet ministers emerged weakened by the whole affair.

Likud, the main opposition party, also came out of the fray smarting, as its leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, faced recriminations from longtime rivals over his handling of the drama.

For nearly a month, Israel's plans to confiscate some 140 acres of mostly Arab-owned land to construct Jewish housing had drawn the ire of the Arab world as well as a number of Western countries.

Even the United States offered mild criticism of the confiscation plans, with officials saying they could not see how it would help further the regional peace process. But when the issue was brought to the U.N. Security Council last week, the United States used its first veto in five years to block a resolution calling on Israel to rescind its plans.

Not to be outmaneuvered, Arab leaders planned a summit of the Arab League for this weekend in Morocco, where they were planning to discuss putting the entire peace process on hold.

Amid the growing clamor of international criticism, however, it remained for two predominantly Arab parties in the Knesset to undo the confiscation plans.

On Monday, the five Knesset members of the Hadash Party and the Arab Democratic Party, introduced no-confidence motions in the Knesset.

The two parties, which are closely linked to Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization, found an unlikely ally in Likud.

Although supportive of the confiscation plans in principle, Likud saw the motions as a welcome opportunity to bring down the Rabin government.

After a dramatic day of behind-the-scenes jockeying between the Knesset factions Monday, Rabin and his ministers decided to outflank their opponents.

### Reversal tactic masterminded by Peres

The Cabinet put the confiscation decision on indefinite hold and set up a Cabinet committee — that well-tried instrument for burying awkward mistakes — to reconsider the confiscation plans.

The Rabin government's sharp reversal tactic was masterminded by Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who submitted it to a specially convened Cabinet meeting, barely two hours before the crucial no-confidence votes were to have been taken.

Bruised by the international outcry over the issue, the Cabinet ministers jumped at the opportunity to reverse the original decision. And the results of the ministers' turnabout were immediate:

- In the Knesset, the Hadash Party withdrew its no-confidence motion.

- The alliance between the Arab parties and Likud collapsed; a second motion, submitted by the Arab Democratic Party, was defeated by a huge majority.

- In Cairo, the Egyptian government announced that the Arab League summit would be canceled. And on Tuesday, in an effort to clear up tensions between the two countries, Egyptian presidential adviser Osama Al-Baz flew to Israel to meet with Israeli leaders.

- Relations between Israel and Jordan, which were ominously deteriorating because of the land confiscation plans, improved instantly as talks on various practical aspects of the peace treaty between the two countries surged forward.

Despite the immediate successes, however, Rabin's government was

weakened by the whole affair. And the question remains how the prime minister's actions will play with the Israeli public.

"How Rabin folded" was the red-letter headline in Israel's largest circulation daily, Yediot Achronot, on Tuesday.

Indeed, some political pundits are predicting that even though it managed to weather this storm, the Rabin government's days are numbered and it may not be able to complete its term. Elections are scheduled for November 1996.

Rabin also worried how his actions would play with the Clinton administration, which backed Israel all the way to the United Nations only to find that its closest ally would pull a surprising flip-flop.

"How am I going to look Clinton in the eye?" the prime minister was heard remarking.

While the United States had "taken the heat" for Israel in the Security Council last week, the Israeli government itself — or so it seemed — had folded under pressure from its domestic opposition.

But the Likud opposition emerged from the drama in little better shape, with some questioning Netanyahu's marriage of convenience with the two Arab-dominated parties.

Labor and Likud, meanwhile, launched into a bitter verbal battle over which of them was to blame for the halting of the government's building plans in Jerusalem.

Peres, speaking from the Knesset podium Monday, termed what had happened "a scandal," insisting that the Likud was to blame.

"We didn't cave in to the Arab parties," he shouted. "We caved in to the Likud."

Peres said the government had now "torn the mask off" the hypocrisy of the Likud's longstanding criticism of the so-called "blocking bloc" — the Knesset majority that comprises both coalition parties, Labor and Meretz, and the two pro-PLO Arab parties.

Despite Peres' vehemence, political sources said the government could have squeaked by with a victory in Monday's vote.

According to these sources, Labor's leaders were well aware of the numbers, but Rabin and Peres deliberately hyped the parliamentary crisis in order to climb down from the controversial land decision that had threatened the entire peace process.

#### Recriminations within Likud

Going on the attack on behalf of Likud, Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert said he was "ashamed of this government," which he described as "a government of cowards."

In their public pronouncements, Olmert and his colleagues insisted that Rabin had surrendered to the PLO and its allies within the Knesset.

But within Likud, recriminations flew between Netanyahu and other party figures over the wisdom of Netanyahu's parliamentary tactics.

Men such as Moshe Nissim, David Levy and Ariel Sharon were to be heard complaining Tuesday that the outcome — Rabin's revocation of the confiscation plans — could and should have been foreseen.

Netanyahu's aides, in turn, accused his party critics of attacking him with the wisdom of hindsight. They suggested that some of these attacks were an effort to settle other scores with the party leader.

Meanwhile, the political fallout continues. Likud has introduced a new no-confidence motion — this one over the government's decision to freeze the Jerusalem land confiscations.

The debate is scheduled for Monday, but the

government has little to fear since the two Arab parties this time can be counted on to line up behind the government and once again ensure the coalition a safe majority.

For their part, the two Arab parties are celebrating their success.

This week's events represent a political high point for them. Now the question will be whether the numerous squabbling factions that make up political opinion among Israel's 800,000 Arab voters can get their act together before the next election.

If they can agree on a single list, embracing both nationalist and religious sentiment, Arab voters could emerge from that election wielding more parliamentary strength than ever. □

#### Dole adviser's slur incenses Jewish groups and politicians

By Steven M. Zeitchik

NEW YORK, May 23 (JTA) — A senior political adviser's slur against two Jewish congressmen has provoked a strong response from Jewish organizations and politicians.

In a comment reminiscent of Jesse Jackson's 1988 notorious "Hymietown" remark, Ed Rollins, a senior political adviser to presidential hopeful Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.), put his foot in his mouth at a California dinner last week.

Speaking at a campaign fund-raising roast for California Assembly Speaker Willie Brown, a possible San Francisco mayoral candidate, Rollins said Brown's true desire was to be mayor of Los Angeles.

If elected, Rollins said, Brown "could show those two Hymie boys, Berman and Waxman, who were always trying to make Willie feel inferior for not being Jewish."

Rollins was referring to California Reps. Howard Berman and Henry Waxman, both Democrats.

Rollins later sounded a conciliatory note, saying in letters to Berman and Waxman that his "lack of sensitivity is totally inexcusable" and that "there is no justification or excuse" for his remarks.

But, he added, the context was humorous and the comments were made with "great irreverence and attempt at humor."

Jewish groups have reacted strongly to the slurs, particularly to Rollins' justification that they were made in jest.

"While you did apologize for your lack of sensitivity in the recent incident, you indicated that your statement 'was not intended to be offensive.' But we have to ask you: In what context would you find the term 'Hymie boys' inoffensive?" wrote Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, in a letter to Rollins.

The American Jewish Congress also criticized Rollins, and implicated Dole, who has stood by Rollins, in the process. "This kind of ethnic insult has no place in American society, in the political process or in your campaign," Phil Baum, AJC executive director, wrote in a letter to Dole.

The Dole campaign has apologized for Rollins' comments, saying in a May 19 statement, "Ed Rollins made a totally inexcusable remark."

"We hope this apology does something to heal the hurt his words have caused," the campaign said, adding that Rollins would continue in his role as a volunteer adviser.

Jewish politicians were also outraged by the remarks. "Ed Rollins has once again shown a complete lack of judgment and sensitivity," said Rep. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.). □

## Germany takes back award; laureate concealed Nazi past

By Gil Sedan

BONN, May 23 (JTA) — For the first time in postwar Germany, the country's president has taken back a prestigious state award — because the laureate turned out to be a former SS officer.

The Federal Cross of Excellence, one of the highest awards in Germany, was given in 1983 to a man known as Dr. Hans Schwerte, chancellor of a North Rhine-Westphalia university, for his contributions to German studies.

But Schwerte will now have to return the award because he hid his Nazi past.

Schwerte, 85, was born Hans Ernst Schneider in the former German city of Königsberg, now the Russian city of Kaliningrad. He had served as an SS officer during World War II, when, among other things, he obtained medical equipment for medical experiments performed on human beings at the Dachau concentration camp.

He eventually became a member of the general staff of the German SS, serving under Heinrich Himmler.

When the war ended, Schneider posed as a soldier who had been released from a British prisoner of war camp.

He adopted the name of Schwerte and began his academic career.

Along with the German honor, he was given accolades in Belgium, where he was named a member of the Officers Order of the Belgium Crown.

He was a popular lecturer among his students and had a leftist-liberal reputation. As head of the faculty of Germanic Studies, he founded a chair for Jewish-German literature.

"Do I have to repeat time and again that I feel incredibly co-guilty for the fate of the Jews?" he said in a recent interview with the German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel*.

He might have lived out his years in quiet retirement had it not been for anonymous letters that reached the university and the media, charging that he had adopted a false identity.

The university authorities made inquiries, but could come up with nothing.

It remained for a Dutch Television reporter to unveil his true identity, naming him as one of the SS officers in Holland who was responsible for "new order and supervision," terms used for the police work of the SS against the local population in countries overrun by the Nazis.

### 'Ordering equipment was part of duties'

Interviewed recently, Schneider admitted that he might have ordered medical equipment for Dachau, but said it was nothing more than a part of his regular duties.

Schneider insisted in the interview that he had not committed any war crimes during his service and that he had disguised his identity "only as a matter of protecting his family."

As a result, the man who was once a darling of the scientific community has now been disgraced.

President Roman Herzog announced last week that his Federal Cross of Excellence would be revoked, and Anke Brunn, minister of science, may also revoke his professorship.

During his interview with *Der Spiegel*, Schneider questioned why his postwar accomplishments had to be overshadowed by his wartime actions.

"I have rehabilitated myself in an orderly way," he said. "Was all of that a lie?" □

## Anti-Semitism finds its way to Italian basketball courts

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, May 23 (JTA) — An Italian Jewish basketball player last week was at the center of an anti-Semitic episode that shocked Italians and prompted an outpouring of support and solidarity for the athlete.

Piero Coen, 32, who plays for the professional basketball club SICC Basket in the town of Jesi, found anti-Semitic leaflets in the locker room before a match in the Adriatic resort town of Pesaro against the local team, Comeca Montecchio.

One leaflet read, "Don't forget your son's in the oven or he'll burn." Others read, "Dirty Jew." Coen has a 4-year-old child. Coen said he had to use earplugs during the match to block out the anti-Semitic chants and taunts of a group of Comeca Montecchio supporters.

The Comeca Montecchio team condemned the incident as "racist and absurd." The Italian basketball federation, terming the affair deplorable, said it had opened an investigation. "We are all at fault," federation officials said. "Adversary does not mean enemy."

Late last week, in a show of support for Coen, about 200 Roman Jews went en masse to Jesi in a hired coach and in a caravan of private cars.

The demonstration, which included the Jews' presence at a rematch in Jesi, was organized by an informal Roman Jewish group that has taken responsibility for defending Italian Jews from anti-Semitism.

Of the show of support at the rematch, Vittorio Pavoncello, one of the action's organizers, said it was "an act of solidarity for Piero Coen, who, among other things, is a member of the Italian Maccabi basketball team."

At least one national newspaper described the action Saturday night as a "blitz" and reported violent incidents between the Jews and some onlookers in the stands. Pavoncello denied that clashes broke out between the Jews and people in the stands, though he said one or two punches were thrown.

Local people also demonstrated solidarity. The Jesi team gave out T-shirts they had printed showing a Star of David that read, "Jesi is with you. Thanks, Piero." □

## Soldier opens fire in Jaffa church

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, May 23 (JTA) — An Israeli soldier opened fire in a church courtyard Monday in Jaffa, resulting in extensive damage, but no injuries.

Israel has asked its Christian Arab minority for "forgiveness, pardon and absolution" for the soldier's actions.

The soldier entered the courtyard on Yefet Street and began firing wildly from his M-16 assault rifle and throwing concussion grenades, according to media reports.

A nun and other women who were inside the Franciscan church fled.

The soldier, Koren Haniel, 21, then barricaded himself inside the church, it was reported.

Large numbers of security forces arrived at the site, and Haniel was taken into custody. His motive was not immediately known.

But when onlookers gathered outside the church, clashes between police and angry Arab residents broke out. One police officer was hurt and a police car was set on fire, a police spokesman said.

Jaffa youths threw rocks at police late Tuesday as hundreds of local residents attended a vigil near the church.

Jaffa, near Tel Aviv, has a population of Jews, Christians and Muslims. □

## Israeli ambassador denies efforts to muzzle opposition

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, May 23 (JTA) — As he urges patience with the pace of the Middle East peace process, Itamar Rabinovich, Israel's ambassador to the United States, has denied charges that he and his staff are trying to muzzle American Jewish opponents of his country's policies.

Reviewing the situation on the ground one year after the signing of the accords in Cairo, which set the stage for Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho, Rabinovich described the broad results as "mixed, but satisfactory."

Although the performance and attitude of Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat leave much to be desired, "given the terrible conditions in Gaza, he is not doing such a bad job," Rabinovich said in an interview during a visit here last week.

"You have to judge this according to Middle Eastern standards," he added. "Gaza is not Belgium and it's not Sweden."

The ambassador is currently facing several hot-button issues on the American political scene, with profound implications for Israel. They come amid some reports that he is exerting heavy-handed pressure to prevent public discussion on these issues.

One is a move in some congressional quarters, supported by such organizations as the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, to hold a full-scale debate on whether the United States should commit itself to stationing troops on the Golan as part of an Israel-Syria peace agreement.

Alleged pressure tactics by the Israeli Embassy to stifle such debate and deny a platform to opponents of stationing troops were recently reported in The Jerusalem Post, but are strongly denied by Rabinovich.

Such allegations, the ambassador said, "reflect the frustration of two or three individuals, representing very small groups, who have tried to obstruct Israeli policy."

As head of the Israeli team negotiating with the Syrians, Rabinovich said, "I can assure you that we are at least months away from any settlement, and I am not at all certain that we will get one."

However, any settlement should include provisions for a multinational monitoring force, and "we would prefer, underline prefer, that the United States be part of such a security force," he added.

### 'Distractions are not helpful'

Obviously annoyed by the article in The Jerusalem Post, Rabinovich said that when "we have to be distracted from the very difficult negotiations with Syria to respond to such speculations, it is not very helpful."

Similarly, on another hot-button issue, the question of whether Arafat's Palestinian Authority is complying with the terms of its accord with Israel, "we do not need to be outflanked by individuals who think they know better than we do what is good for us," the ambassador said.

The debate has arisen as Congress prepares to consider renewal of legislation that would authorize continued U.S. aid to the Palestinians.

Even stronger emotions have been engendered by the recently introduced legislation to move the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem by 1999, with groundbreaking to take place in 1996.

The Clinton administration, and dovish groups in Israel and the United States, argue that passage of the bill at this time would elicit such intense Arab reaction as to lead to a likely breakdown of the peace process. □

## Australian non-Jewish pupils back peace process, says report

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia, May 23 (JTA) — Non-Jewish students on Australia's university campuses are generally supportive of the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, according to a recent survey.

Of the 700 non-Jewish students interviewed, 59 percent were either supportive or strongly supportive of the process, while 21 percent had a negative or strongly negative attitude.

The survey, conducted by the Australasian Union of Jewish Students and the Australian Institute of Jewish Affairs, also showed that only 5 percent of respondents "strongly" agreed with the proposition that the process would bring peace. Fully 32 percent simply agreed with the proposition and 35 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

When asked about support for Israel or the Arab world in the event of a conflict between the two, 61 percent refused to align themselves with either cause, 27 percent supported Israel and 12 percent supported the Arab world, the report said.

Benjy Rutland, one of the university Jewish student leaders, said the survey reflected a sense of indifference among students. "Students today are apathetic towards anything not related to the Australian economy," he said.

Bill Rubinstein, the research consultant for the survey, said it provided evidence of "continuing strong basic support for Israel on campus." □

## AIDS Task Force tells Knesset of future push for legislation

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, May 23 (JTA) — Members of Israel's AIDS Task Force visited the Knesset on Monday, as part of the observance of International AIDS Mobilization Day.

They distributed red ribbons — which symbolize solidarity with victims of the disease — to Knesset members and held a meeting with a Knesset committee on AIDS to discuss the problems of those afflicted with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

Task force members said they would push for legislation ensuring equal rights and treatment for AIDS and HIV sufferers.

"All over the world, people are not dying so quickly of AIDS. They are living eight, nine, 10 years," Shosh Newman, one of the leaders of the task force, told Israel Television. "During this time, they want the rights of the rest of society, and it should not be any other way."

Since 1981, 327 cases of AIDS were contracted in Israel. Of those, 245 people died of the fatal disease. Sixteen of them left the country. Some 1,300 people have tested positive for HIV in Israel. □

## Children honor Oklahoma's young victims

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, May 23 (JTA) — Kindergartners in Jerusalem held a memorial ceremony last week for the children killed in last month's Oklahoma City bombing.

Bearing U.S. and Israeli flags, they planted an almond tree outside the Na'amat day care center May 18.

The U.S. ambassador to Israel, Martin Indyk, was at the ceremony. "Some looked to the Middle East for the perpetrators of this vile, cowardly act," he said. "Instead of finding culprits in the Middle East, however, we were deeply grateful to be overwhelmed by an outpouring of sympathy and support from this part of the world." □