



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Israeli and Palestinian negotiators reached agreement on all but two issues in their talks on Palestinian elections. The two sides have begun drafting an agreement on elections, but still have to agree on the size of the elected Palestinian council and whether Arab residents of eastern Jerusalem will be allowed to seek office.

■ Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Israel has proposed a four-year withdrawal period from the Golan Heights as part of an agreement with Syria. During a visit to New York and Washington, Peres met with U.N. officials and Clinton administration officials.

■ Foundations contributed nearly \$35 million to the UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York in 1992-1993, making the New York federation the third-largest recipient of foundation money in the country, according to a new survey. [Page 2]

■ The parole hearing of Jonathan Pollard was postponed until September, according to Pollard's wife, Esther. Pollard, convicted of spying for Israel, was sentenced to life in prison in 1987. Many Jewish organizations have lobbied for his parole.

■ Two Jewish Agency emissaries flew to earthquake-stricken Sakhalin Island to evaluate the state of the 1,500-member Jewish community there. The Jewish Agency has two local immigration coordinators on the island.

■ The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council confirmed Walter Reich as the new director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, according to Miles Lerman, chairman of the council. Reich, a Holocaust historian and psychiatrist, will assume his post June 8.

■ The election of a new president of CRIF marked the reunion of the political and religious organizations representing French Jewry. Henri Hajdenberg was elected to replace Jean Kahn as president of the umbrella body representing France's secular Jewish organizations. [Page 4]

NEWS ANALYSIS

What a difference a week makes: Talks with Syria mark turnaround

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 31 (JTA) — Perhaps only in the Middle East does the mood swing quite so fast.

A week ago, the region was plunged in the deepest despair, with the Israeli government intent on confiscating Arab land in eastern Jerusalem, the Arab states poised to hold an angry emergency summit over the matter, the various bilateral peace talks going nowhere and the entire peace process in imminent danger of demise.

But now everything is suddenly back on course — and galloping along with a velocity that has taken everyone outside the innermost policymaking circles by surprise.

Israel and the Palestinians are determined to meet their July 1 deadline for implementing the next phase of Palestinian self-rule. Israel and Jordan are speeding the implementation of their peace treaty. Trade with Egypt is flourishing.

And King Hassan II of Morocco is once again dropping hints that the Persian Gulf states are about to create diplomatic ties with Israel.

Perhaps most important, the Israeli-Syrian track is in high gear.

A dose of skepticism, or at least cool caution, is in order. This is, after all, the Middle East.

But Israel's political leadership is taking these latest turnabouts in the regional atmosphere with the utmost seriousness.

So, too, are the residents of the Golan Heights, who fear that their homes will be lost if and when Israel returns the area to Syria as part of an eventual peace deal.

For the first time in months, a Syrian-Israeli deal seems like an actual possibility.

Labor Party Knesset members, emerging from a briefing with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in the Knesset on Monday, said they felt a peace treaty with Syria was a realistic and not-too-distant possibility.

At the briefing, Rabin stressed that he was "not interested in any interim accord — only in a full peace treaty."

He also reaffirmed his oft-stated pledge that the treaty would be submitted to the nation in a plebiscite before "a single centimeter" of withdrawal on the Golan took place.

Washington, Jerusalem eager to play up good news

At the core of the rapid change of atmosphere is a procedural breakthrough reached last week between Israel and Syria.

The breakthrough was announced with evident gratification by the U.S. State Department, which also said talks between high-ranking military officers of the two sides would resume next month in Washington.

State Department officials, in another sign that progress is afoot, also announced that Secretary of State Warren Christopher is planning another round of regional shuttle diplomacy, which is being preceded this week by a similar trip by his top aide on Middle East affairs, Dennis Ross.

Both Washington and Jerusalem clearly were anxious to play up the good news as a way of playing down the embarrassment caused by last week's land confiscation episode.

In that drama, which both sides would undoubtedly like to forget, the United States used its veto power for the first time in five years at the U.N. Security Council in order to block a resolution calling on Israel to rescind its confiscation plans.

But within days, the Israeli government itself backed down from the original confiscation decision in the face of domestic and regional pressures.

Rabin, for his part, came dangerously close to losing his office in a Knesset no-confidence vote related to the planned land confiscations.

Only his last-minute agreement to freeze the confiscations persuaded the Arab parties in the Knesset that had introduced the no-confidence motions to relent from their determination to join with the rightist opposition in toppling him.

But there clearly seems to be more to the latest, favorable turn of

events than mere public relations hype. Even Syrian officialdom and media, notoriously grudging in their recognition of any movement forward, were this week starting to confirm that progress had been made, even though they continued to stress that all the concessions had come from the Israeli side.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa declared Monday that Israel had accepted Syria's demand for symmetrical security arrangements on either side of the post-withdrawal border. Israeli officials denied this.

What has changed, apparently, is Syria's previous insistence that Israel agree to symmetry as a condition for further detailed discussions of security arrangements.

There is also a new explicitness on the part of Israeli officials regarding their readiness to vacate the entire Golan Heights in the context of a peace-and-normalization accord.

Although this position has been evident for some months, it is now being spelled out by Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who spoke of the Golan as "Syrian land" over the weekend during a visit to Morocco.

The prime minister, though still refusing to "draw maps," has not contradicted Peres.

During a visit to the United States this week, Peres said Israel had proposed a four-year withdrawal period.

'Understandable concerns' of Golan residents

In his briefing at the Knesset on Monday, Rabin referred to the "understandable concerns" of the Golan settlers, but also pointedly cited the 1982 Sinai precedent, when Israel evacuated from the entire Sinai Peninsula as part of its peace deal with Egypt.

Rabin is stressing four separate but interrelated components of the evolving peace deal with Syria.

He does not spell out his government's detailed positions on any of the four components, but he stresses that Israel will not sign any agreement, submit anything to the nation in a plebiscite or begin any withdrawal, before all four are resolved to its satisfaction.

The four issues are:

- The border. Here, according to informed sources, Israel flatly rejects Syria's demand that it withdraw to the line of June 4, 1967, which was more westerly, at several key points, than the border established in the early 1920s. The difference between the two lines is about 7 square miles and includes important water sources.

- The withdrawal period. Rabin has spoken of a period of "three years, give or take," during which he will want to see the institution of normalized relations put in place before the Israel Defense Force undertakes its final pullback from the Golan. The Syrians are believed to be demanding that the withdrawal be completed within a few months.

- Normalization of ties. Syrian President Hafez Assad is reportedly now reconciled to the prospect of exchanging ambassadors, though it is not clear whether he agrees to this taking place before the final withdrawal, as Israel insists.

- Security arrangements. Israel remains adamant that with Syria on the Golan and the IDF back in the valley below after an Israeli withdrawal takes place, demilitarization and limitation-of-forces zones cannot be symmetrical. Israeli media reports say Rabin has dropped earlier demands for a scaling-down of the Syrian armed forces.

The Golan settlers and the Likud-led opposition, seeking to match the pace of diplomatic developments, are quickening their preparations for a massive public campaign against the projected withdrawal.

Residents of the region met with President Ezer Weizman over the weekend to help calm their fears.

Some of the settler leaders are confident that the Israeli public will side with the Golan residents in an eventual plebiscite.

But in the political community — and this includes some Likud members — the assessment is that if a treaty involving full normalization is drafted, most Israelis will be hard put to vote against it. □

New York federation ranks high among foundation grantees

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, May 31 (JTA) — Foundations contributed nearly \$35 million to the UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York in 1992-1993, making the New York federation the third-largest recipient of foundation money in the country, according to a new survey.

New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art headed the roster of non-profits receiving foundation money, according to the latest edition of "Who Gets Grants/Who Gives Grants," published by the Foundation Center. The Chronicle of Philanthropy has reported. Harvard University ranked second.

Explaining the New York federation's high ranking in the survey, Adam Kahan, chief operating officer for financial resources at UJA-Federation, said, "We invest a great deal of time and energy in outreach to foundations."

Kahan said the foundation money comes "in the context of the total financial resource development of UJA," referring to the full gamut of fund raising, including and beyond the annual campaign.

In 1993, UJA-Federation raised a total of \$207 million, of which \$139 million came from the regular campaign and Operation Exodus. The rest came from a capital campaign and other means of planned giving. Foundation grants were included in both figures.

Although no other Jewish groups made the list of top 100 foundation recipients, there were several groups that made top 10 lists arranged by categories.

The New Israel Fund, which funds grass-roots projects in Israel, ranked fourth among groups dealing with "international affairs." It received a total of \$2.7 million in grants.

Among civil rights groups, the American Jewish Committee ranked ninth, having received \$1.4 million.

Two Jewish groups ranked in the top 10 among religious organizations.

Machne Israel, the Brooklyn-based social service arm of the Lubavitch movement, received 18 foundation grants totaling \$2 million.

The Mesorah Heritage Foundation, which underwrites translations of the Torah and Talmud published by ArtScroll, received three grants totaling \$1.1 million.

Thirty of the top 50 non-profit organizations on the list are colleges or universities.

Barry Shrage, president of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Boston, said the success of the universities should be an example for federations. That success, he said, provides "a wonderful opportunity to make the case for Jewish cultural literacy and learning."

Shrage has strongly advocated that Jewish federations move beyond the annual campaign to aggressive competition for major donors.

Shrage said for Jewish institutions not to pursue foundation and endowment support with the vigor shown by universities, "what we're saying in essence is that we really have accepted the myth that our culture, our intellectual heritage, is inferior to the rest of Western civilization.

"And the truth is, we don't really believe it," he said. □

Debate over foreign aid produces unusual alliances

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, May 31 (JTA) — When congressional Republicans protected Israel's \$3 billion in foreign aid in a measure weaving its way through Capitol Hill, they expected the support of American Jews.

Instead, some Jewish organizations and members of Congress accused them of putting Israel in long-term danger and pushing America into a period of isolationism.

"This is not an Israel-friendly bill that over the long-term solidifies the [U.S.-Israel] relationship," said Howard Berman (D-Calif.) as he argued against the American Overseas Interests Act on the floor of the House of Representatives last week.

Cutting the United States' \$19.3 billion international assistance program by more than \$1.5 billion while protecting aid to the Middle East would make Israel's aid indefensible in future years, Berman charged.

"You cannot justify and maintain foreign assistance to Israel when you are slashing" foreign aid to everyone else, Berman said.

"The massive budget cuts are unwise and short-sighted," added Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.).

The debate over the current measure, which the House is scheduled to vote on next week, has produced some unusual alliances and pitted some usual allies against each other.

In the organized Jewish community, the pre-eminent pro-Israel lobby, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, stands virtually alone in actively supporting the bill. Other groups have expressed concern that the legislation slashes assistance to other countries.

Meanwhile, AIPAC finds itself at odds with staunchly pro-Israel Democratic lawmakers such as Berman and Ackerman.

Much of the debate has to do with politics.

Lawmakers agree to stay unified

As budget-cutting Republicans pressed for the foreign aid cuts, Democrats charged that they were left out of the process. Foreign aid has traditionally garnered bipartisan support, with the Jewish community its loudest advocate.

In addition to slashing foreign aid, the measure merges with the State Department three other agencies: the Agency for International Development, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and the U.S. Information Agency.

Now, Jewish Democratic lawmakers, who have often spearheaded support for foreign aid legislation among their colleagues, find themselves in the unusual position of opposing aid. Jewish Democrats were so concerned about the developments that Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) gathered the troops to discuss strategy.

The lawmakers agreed to stay unified in their opposition and to "ensure that a vote against the bill is not viewed as a vote against Israel," according to an aide of one of the lawmakers present at the meeting.

Jewish Democrats and black lawmakers have also banded together to oppose the bill.

Ever since signing the Camp David Accords, Israel and Egypt have been the largest recipients of U.S. foreign aid. Israel's annual \$3 billion and Egypt's \$2.1 billion now account for nearly 20 percent of the foreign aid budget.

The measure "includes everything we could want," an AIPAC official said, adding that the bill is "nothing but good for Israel."

In a letter sent to House members, AIPAC urged representatives to support the bill because it included

Israel's \$3 billion in military and economic aid as well as other provisions that would net the Jewish state millions. The legislation includes \$80 million in refugee assistance and other aid to Israel.

In an action alert to its member agencies, the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council called the bill "seriously flawed" because it is widely viewed as a "weakening of the U.S. commitment" to "provide strong leadership in international affairs."

The group, while welcoming the bill's support for Israel and Egypt, expressed "special concern" over the proposed cut in aid to sub-Saharan African nations and to Russia.

NJCRAC was unable to arrive at a consensus on whether to support the bill because of some groups' opposition to it in its present form, according to the NJCRAC alert.

Some, including the American Jewish Committee, have turned up the heat on members of Congress.

Fearing a new trend toward isolationism, the AJCommittee began an advertising campaign in national newspapers last week. "American leadership in world affairs is expensive. Until you consider the alternative," the headline blared. The full-page ad urges support for the foreign aid program in general.

Ackerman's arguments expressed similar concerns.

"This is a dangerous precedent which will leave the Middle East peace process hanging out, almost alone, vulnerable to future cuts when the peace process may require larger, rather than smaller, allocations in order to be implemented," he said of the measure last week.

"I am glad that this bill takes care of Israel this year," Ackerman said. "If it is the intent to take care of the few to the detriment of all others, I will not buy it. I will not be put in a position of being for myself alone."

Rep. Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.), the ranking minority member of the House International Relations Committee, led unanimous Democratic opposition to the measure in the committee.

Hamilton also raised the stakes for Jewish opposition to the bill, arguing that a provision tying aid to allowing humanitarian shipments could backfire against Israel. "If Israel decides for security reasons, for example, to stop a single [humanitarian] shipment to Gaza or Jericho, its aid would have to be cut off," Hamilton said.

Fearing defeat, House Republicans last week abruptly canceled a vote on the measure until after they return from Memorial Day recess next week. □

Baram steps down as interior minister

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, May 31 (JTA) — Uzi Baram stepped down as interior minister Tuesday.

Baram announced in mid-May that he would be stepping down from the position in order to spend more time with his wife, who is suffering from cancer.

Baram, who will continue to serve as tourism minister, was appointed interior minister three months ago. The post had been vacant since fall 1993, when former Interior Minister Aryeh Deri of the fervently religious Shas Party was indicted on charges of bribery, fraud and breach of public trust.

Deri also stepped down from the post of religious affairs, which has since been filled by Economic Minister Shimon Shetreet.

On his last day at the Interior Ministry, Baram earmarked \$1 million for paving new roads. Israel Television quoted him as saying that he was certain that the former Israel Defense Force chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Ehud Barak, would replace him at the Interior Ministry. □

French Jews elect leader as two communal arms unite

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, May 31 (JTA) — The election of a new president of CRIF has marked the reunion of the political and religious organizations representing French Jewry.

Henri Hajdenberg, 48, was elected May 21 to serve a three-year term as president of the Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions, known by its French acronym, CRIF.

Hajdenberg, a lawyer, defeated businessman Roger Pinto, 62, for the leadership of the umbrella body representing France's secular Jewish organizations.

Hajdenberg replaces Jean Kahn, 64, who served two consecutive terms, the maximum allowable under CRIF's bylaws.

Kahn continues to serve as president of the European Jewish Congress.

CRIF, which was founded in 1943, is a federation of 59 French Jewish organizations, ranging from the small Association of Jewish Painters and Sculptors to the United Jewish Social Fund, the leading charity organization of France's estimated 750,000 Jews.

The election marked the return to CRIF of the Consistoire Central, the body in charge of the religious needs of the community.

More than six years ago, Jean-Paul Elkann, then president of the Consistoire, decided to leave CRIF because Theo Klein, Kahn's predecessor at CRIF, had created the European Jewish Congress and affiliated CRIF with it.

Elkann had reasoned that because EJC was an affiliate of the World Jewish Congress, Jews in the United States would have a say about the affairs of the Jews of France.

After Kahn was elected president of the Consistoire a few months ago, he promised he would return it to CRIF. He accomplished this move just before the election of his successor.

After his election, Hajdenberg said in an interview that he had three priorities.

The first was to establish a "moral front" against extreme right-wing leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, whose anti-immigrant National Front won 15 percent of the vote in France's recent national elections.

"My second priority is to resensitize French Jews to the issues facing Israel," Hajdenberg said, noting that "things have changed" since Israel entered into the peace process with its Arab neighbors and that "our attitude toward Israel must change, too."

Hajdenberg set as his third priority helping France's young Jews preserve their Jewish identity in the face of pressures to assimilate. He described this task as "probably the toughest one" confronting him. □

Australian Jews welcome ruling against racist behavior

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia, May 31 (JTA) — The Jewish community of New South Wales, Australia's most populous state, has welcomed "a landmark legal decision" against racist behavior.

Ever since legislation outlawing racial vilification was introduced in 1989, the Jewish community has successfully used the law to elicit apologies as well as positive articles about Judaism in publications that have run Holocaust denial and other anti-Semitic literature.

But only recently did a complaint under the anti-racist law — formally known as the Anti-Discrimination Act — result in a fine.

A city council member in the New South Wales city of Wagga Wagga, Jim Eldridge, was ordered to apologize publicly to the Australian Aboriginal community for referring to them as "half-breeds" and "savages."

He was fined \$2,200 for his behavior, which included declaring "war with God's help" on the Wagga Wagga Aboriginal Action Group, which represents the community's native population.

The Jewish community saw the judgment made by the Equal Opportunity Tribunal as evidence that "in this state, racist behavior is unacceptable," Michael Marx, president of the Jewish Board of Deputies, said in an interview.

"The legislation contains ample provision to bring about conciliation and compromise, but in a case such as this, where the public figure was not prepared to conciliate, penalties are both fair and appropriate," Marx added. □

Burial workers delay funerals during strike for higher wages

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, May 31 (JTA) — Bereaved families in the Tel Aviv area were forced to delay the burial of their loved ones for several hours Tuesday, after members of the local Chevra Kadisha burial society went on strike seeking higher wages.

Some 25 funerals scheduled for the morning did not take place until the afternoon, because employees of the burial society demanded increases in wages similar to those granted to their colleagues in other parts of the country.

The workers were protesting wage cuts and proposed layoffs.

The moves were aimed at reducing a \$6 million deficit run up by the Tel Aviv burial society.

On Wednesday, Religious Affairs Minister Shimon Shetreet lashed out at what he termed the "scandalous" salaries paid to workers at the Tel Aviv burial society.

According to a report prepared by the ministry, the average salary paid to workers at the burial society during 1994 was some \$100,000 per year — about six times the average annual salary paid to Israelis in general.

"I have ordered quick action to reduce the salaries," Shetreet said.

In response, the burial workers called another work slowdown Wednesday. □

Banks to cut interest rates by 0.5%

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, May 31 (JTA) — The Bank of Israel cut interest rates by half a percent Monday, in response to positive results in its anti-inflation policy.

The new interest rate, scheduled to go into effect Thursday, will be 13.5 percent.

Following the Bank of Israel's lead, major banks announced that they, too, would cut commercial lending rates by half a percent.

The consumer index rose by 0.9 percent in April, the lowest for the month in more than two decades. Inflation for the first four months of 1995 stood at a cumulative 1.2 percent.

The Bank of Israel has cut interest by 3.5 percent since March.

It said it expected annual inflation to stay in the single digits.

Industrialists and Histadrut leaders criticized the cut, calling it too cautious to have any effect.

They called for a reduction of at least 1 percent in the interest rates. □