



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ The leader of the Jewish community in Ankara, Turkey, was wounded in a car-bomb attack apparently aimed directly at him. An unknown Islamic fundamentalist group claimed responsibility. [Page 2]

■ A Jewish high school student in Salt Lake City won a legal battle to keep religious songs out of her school's graduation ceremony. The student, a member of the school's choir class, had been ostracized by fellow students because of her fight. [Page 3]

■ President Clinton's veto of a \$16.4 billion spending cuts bill scored high marks among Jewish groups, although the move threw Jordan's debt relief back into legislative limbo. Congressional aides said the debt relief was likely to pass in another form. [Page 4]

■ Israeli government officials denied a newspaper report that Israeli and Syria have been holding secret meetings in Europe. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin told the Cabinet there was no basis to the report, which appeared this week in a London-based Arab-language newspaper.

■ German Chancellor Helmut Kohl pledged some \$7 million in immediate aid to the Palestinian self-rule government during a visit to the West Bank Jericho enclave. Earlier during Kohl's visit to the region, Israel and Germany pledged to strengthen their relations.

■ Disputes arose during multilateral talks held in Beersheba on the fate of Palestinians displaced by the 1967 Six-Day War. Delegates disagreed over the definition of a displaced person and over the total number of people displaced by the war. Israel put the figure at about 200,000, while Palestinian officials put the number at more than 1 million.

■ The Israeli government approved a new trade accord with the European Union. The agreement is expected to be signed next week when E.U. foreign ministers meet in Luxembourg. While the new accord will give Israel greater access to E.U. markets, Israeli officials are said to be dissatisfied with certain portions of the agreement. [Page 4]

NEWS ANALYSIS

Potential split in Likud could alter political scene

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, June 7 (JTA) — Knesset member David Levy's threat to break up the opposition Likud Party could dramatically reshape Israel's political landscape.

The Likud, Israel's leading right-of-center opposition party, is in the throes of a dramatic and damaging split, with Levy on the verge of announcing the creation of a breakaway party.

"We have been pushed out," was the former foreign minister's bitter comment Monday night, after the Likud Central Committee overwhelmingly endorsed party Chairman Benjamin Netanyahu's proposals for electing its candidates for the Knesset list in the 1996 elections.

Levy and his camp claimed that the chairman's proposals were specifically designed to maximize the Netanyahu camp's hold on the party and to squeeze out Levy supporters from winning Knesset seats in next year's national elections.

The accepted proposals call for the outright election of Knesset candidates in a Likud primary, as opposed to Levy's preference for a system that would guarantee a minimum number of slots for minorities.

Despite this week's angry words — the latest in Levy's ongoing battle with archrival Netanyahu — it remains unclear whether Levy will follow through and launch his own party. On June 18, much of that guesswork could be cleared up, when Levy is scheduled to lay out his detailed plans at a mass meeting for his followers from across the country.

If indeed Levy does secede from Likud, it is not clear what impact such a move would have on the outcome of the 1996 elections.

Netanyahu could lose to Rabin if Levy secedes

For the first time next year, Israelis will hold direct elections for prime minister.

And even though recent polls indicate that Netanyahu would defeat Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Labor in those elections, a survey released last Friday suggested that Netanyahu would lose to Rabin if Levy seceded from Likud.

But even if Levy does not call for a secession from Likud, he could decide to do nothing to help turn out the vote for Likud among his supporters, most of whom come from a Sephardi, working-class background and whose votes would be crucial to Netanyahu's victory.

This week's threats from Levy are not the first time he has played the game of brinkmanship with Netanyahu.

Similar complaints of exclusion from the Levy camp in the wake of Likud's internal elections in 1991 nearly resulted in a party split then.

Indeed, a leading political columnist, Hanna Kim of the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, dubbed the present rift a "late divorce," directly linking the earlier confrontation to the current hostilities.

Levy, preferring to keep his tactical plans close to his chest, stopped short of announcing his immediate secession from the party this week.

As a result, key Netanyahu supporters maintained that this left space for a eleventh-hour compromise.

But many observers predicted the die is cast: The split is a fact of political life, and what remains now is to see what sort of political strength Levy can gather around his projected new party.

Part of Levy's tactical problems have to do with his status in the current Knesset.

Because of the drubbing his camp took in Likud's 1991 internal elections, most of Levy's close lieutenants failed to make it into the current Knesset.

In fact, he can only count on one serving Knesset member, Dan Tichon, to break away with him from the present Likud faction.

But under Knesset rules, a breakaway faction needs the support of at least one-third of the members of the mother party in order to be entitled to state financing.

Levy's followers are especially strong on the municipal level. A

significant number of mayors, particularly of development towns in the Negev and Galilee, number themselves among his loyalists and would see themselves as leaders of a new party led by him.

Other possible allies include disgruntled Likud Liberals such as Moshe Nissim, who was also a senior minister in past Likud governments.

A new, Levy-led party would presumably adopt a rightist platform — though a more moderate one than the Likud's.

Levy has long been regarded as a voice of moderation within the Likud, and his record as a minister over the years reflects this assessment.

On the eve of the September 1982 massacre at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camp in Lebanon, for example, Levy was alone among the Cabinet ministers to urge that the Israel Defense Force take control of areas held by the Lebanese Christians, who were responsible for carrying out the massacre.

And in 1984, serving as part of a Likud-Labor unity government, Levy alone among the Likud ministers supported the then-Labor premier, Shimon Peres, and Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin in their plans to withdraw from Lebanon.

But Levy has had hawkish periods, too — as when, together with Ariel Sharon and Yitzhak Moda'i, he formed a hardline caucus in opposition to the then-Likud leader, Yitzhak Shamir.

Levy candidacy could force a runoff vote

Shamir, still a Knesset member although barely active, was present among the approximately 2,000 delegates at the Likud Central Committee Monday night. And he was visibly angered by the demonstrative shouting from Levy's supporters.

Shamir has repeatedly urged his successor at Likud's helm, Netanyahu, to force Levy out of the movement.

Shamir's position is based on an assessment that even though Levy has undeniable popularity, especially in the smaller towns and poorer suburbs, Likud voters will "get used to" his loss in the months ahead and will flock back to the mother party when the Knesset elections are held next year.

This view, which belittles the impact of a Levy secession, also holds that if Levy puts himself forward as a prime ministerial candidate, Netanyahu and Rabin will easily brush him aside.

But Levy stalwarts maintain that a Levy candidacy could force the two main contenders into a second round runoff, because under the new election law, to win on the first ballot a candidate needs to win at least 50 percent of the vote.

This leverage, they say, would give Levy's new party strength in pre- and post-election negotiations with both of the major blocs.

Both views, however, suffer from the same weakness: They attempt to forecast uncertain scenarios onto an electoral system that is itself new and untried.

Because Israel has never held direct elections for prime minister before, the relation between that vote and the simultaneous but separate vote for the Knesset lists is the subject of intense speculation.

It has prompted some second thoughts among both politicians and academics who originally advocated the reform.

For now, the imminent evolution of a new force in the center of Israeli politics will only contribute to the sense of speculation — and some confusion — that envelops Jerusalem as it winds up for a long and complex election campaign. □

Car-bomb attack wounds leader of Ankara community

By Steven M. Zeitchik

NEW YORK, June 7 (JTA) — In the latest terrorist incident against Jews worldwide, the leader of the Jewish community in Ankara, Turkey, has been wounded in a car-bomb attack.

Yuda Yurum, who has spent time as a visiting professor at Israel's Weizmann Institute of Science and heads the chemistry department at Hacettepe University, was wounded when his car exploded as he entered it Wednesday morning. He is recovering in a nearby hospital, having suffered minor injuries and singed hair.

A previously unheard of Islamic fundamentalist group, the Turkey Idealist Sharia Commandos' Army, has claimed responsibility for the bombing, according to the Anatolia news agency in Turkey. Turkish police have not detained any suspects.

An Israeli official who was in contact with members of the Ankara community said people there "were terrorized" as a result of the attack.

Turkish Jewish leaders, however, were quick to downplay the community's fears.

"We're quite upset about it, but such things happen all over the world. There is no sense of panic whatsoever," Hanri Yashova, vice president of the Turkish Jewish community, said in a phone interview from Ankara.

The Jewish community of Ankara includes about 200 Jews. It is significantly smaller than Istanbul's Jewish community, where the majority of Turkey's estimated 23,000 Jews live.

Attack comes against backdrop of threats

The attack against Yurum comes against a backdrop of threats he received last year after an Islamic fundamentalist newspaper, Zaman, harshly criticized him for his role as a Jewish leader. Yurum requested — and received — increased police protection after those threats, but has since withdrawn the request.

The attack also comes in the wake of an appeal from a Turkish prosecutor requesting the death penalty for the suspects convicted of attempting to kill Jak Kamhi, a prominent Turkish Jewish businessman. The criminals, who in 1993 fired rockets into Kamhi's car in Istanbul, have already been sentenced to 15 years in prison, but prosecutors this week asked a judge to upgrade the sentence.

The convicted assailants reportedly belong to an Islamic fundamentalist organization, but it is unclear whether there is any connection between the appeal and the car bombing in Ankara.

Islamic fundamentalists have been gaining significant political power in recent years. At the same time, the country has been victimized by a rash of Islamic fundamentalist violence.

In 1986, Palestinian terrorists burst into the Neve Shalom synagogue in Istanbul and murdered 22 Sabbath worshipers. In 1992, Ehud Saden, the security chief of the Israeli Embassy in Ankara, was killed in a car bombing.

According to Turkish state radio, the group that claimed responsibility for Wednesday's attack said it was carried out to protest the extradition of Turkish ultranationalist Isa Armagan from Germany.

Armagan, who reportedly has Islamic fundamentalist ties, was convicted in 1979 of murdering five leftist students in Turkey. He escaped to Germany in the 1980s and was extradited to Turkey last week, where he is being held by Turkish authorities.

Jewish groups have expressed concern over an emerging pattern of anti-Semitic violence in a country that has traditionally been regarded as a safe haven for Jews. □

Jewish student in Utah wins battle against religious songs

By Jennifer Batog

WASHINGTON, June 7 (JTA) — A Jewish high school student whom classmates called “Jew bitch” and “dirty Jew” for her fight against Christian lyrics in choir class has won a legal battle to keep religious songs out of her school’s graduation ceremony.

The U.S. Court of Appeals in Denver ruled this week that the West High School choir, in Salt Lake City, cannot sing two contemporary religious songs in its graduation program.

In its two-page decision issued Tuesday, just one day before the graduation, Judges Wade Brorby and David Ebel stopped the school’s a cappella choir class from singing “The Lord Bless You and Keep You” and “Friends” at the ceremony.

The case comes at a time when religion in schools is at the forefront of Jewish concerns, largely because of the Christian Coalition’s recently unveiled “Contract with the American Family.”

The contract outlines forthcoming legislation that would, in effect, permit student-led prayer in public schools and at graduation ceremonies.

Rachel Bauchman, a 16-year-old sophomore in a predominantly Mormon choir, had felt uncomfortable singing songs in class that praised “Jesus Christ our Savior” and “Jesus Christ our Lord,” her mother, Cheryl, said in a telephone interview from their Salt Lake City home Wednesday.

“She was very uncomfortable” with the fact that religious songs “were all the choir sang,” Cheryl Bauchman said.

The choir teacher, Richard Torgerson, is an official in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, more commonly known as the Mormon Church, according to the complaint filed in court.

“If there was more of a balance” in the choir’s choice of songs “she would have been OK,” Bauchman also said.

Bauchman said the family tried to work with school officials on the issue, but they “turned a deaf ear,” leaving them no alternative but to bring suit.

“They were violating Rachel’s constitutional rights, and there was no other way to go,” she said.

The family is happy with the case’s outcome.

“We’re very pleased that the court agreed with our position,” the mother said.

The choir, including Rachel, was scheduled to replace the disputed songs with non-religious ones at the graduation, which was set for Wednesday night.

Arguments that songs were aesthetic

The ruling also drew praise from the National Committee for Public Education and Religious Liberty. The coalition, which includes several Jewish organizations, assisted the Bauchmans in their legal challenge.

The appeals court “did the right thing,” said Lisa Thureau, the New York-based committee’s executive director.

“We think they saw the merits lay within our arguments and that it was time someone stood up and protected the rights of Rachel Bauchman,” she said.

The appeals court ruling overturned a June 2 decision by Utah U.S. District Court Judge J. Thomas Greene that would have allowed the songs at the graduation.

The lower court said banning the songs would be more damaging to graduates who would not hear them than to Bauchman’s constitutional rights.

Arguing that the songs were aesthetic, not religious, West High School officials had said Bauchman could be excused from the graduation performance. Her lawyers dismissed that option, saying it cheated Bauchman out of a school event and could affect her standing in the class, for which she receives credit and a letter grade.

In court documents, Bauchman’s lawyers disputed the school’s claim that the songs were not religious, calling “The Lord Bless You and Keep You” a “straightforward prayer” and quoting from “Friends.”

“Friends” includes the lines: “Friends are friends forever if the Lord’s the Lord of them” and “In the Father’s hands we know that a lifetime’s not too long to live as friends.”

Bauchman and her lawyers argued that the school’s graduation program violated a Supreme Court precedent set in a 1992 case, *Lee vs. Weisman*.

In that case, the court ruled that prayer at public school graduations violated the Constitution’s Establishment Clause, which provides for the separation of church and state and prohibits public schools from endorsing religion or forcing students to participate in religious activities.

Class sings at Mormon ceremonies

The current case, *Bauchman vs. West High School*, is the latest battle over religious lyrics that Bauchman has waged against her school.

The temporary restraining order is part of a larger complaint against the school alleging that the choir’s programs violate Bauchman’s constitutional rights, Thureau said.

She said the U.S. District Court would hold a trial to determine whether such religious songs can continue in the class. A trial date has not yet been set.

As a member of the school’s choir class, the 16-year-old has continually been put in the position of singing predominately religious songs at numerous programs, including a Christmas program, Thureau said.

In one incident, the class toured the country to sing at witnessing ceremonies for Mormons. The Jewish students in the class were not invited on the tour, according to Eric Bauchman, Rachel’s father.

There are two other Jewish students in the choir class, Cheryl Bauchman said, adding that they did not want to get involved in the fight because they were afraid of reprisals.

“It’s been hard on Rachel,” Cheryl Bauchman said. “But she does have support from her friends.”

Legal observers called the decision a victory for church-state separation. “It’s a victory of sorts and a reaffirmation that will reverberate throughout the 10th Circuit,” said Marc Stern, co-director of legal affairs at the American Jewish Congress.

The 10th circuit includes Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Kansas, Wyoming and Oklahoma.

Although the case breaks no new ground when it comes to the wall between church and state, Stern said, the appeals court’s quick reaction “makes it obvious” that the court was not interested in endorsing the idea that government can be used to promote religion.

The decision is “simply an application of well-settled principles,” he said.

AJCongress is a member of the National Committee for Public Education and Religious Liberty, as is the Anti-Defamation League, Hadassah, the National Council of Jewish Women, the New York chapter of the Jewish Labor Committee, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the New York Federation of Reform Synagogues, Women’s American ORT and the New York Metropolitan Region of United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. □

Jordan's debt relief again in limbo as Clinton vetoes bill

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, June 7 (JTA) — Debt relief for Jordan is once again in a state of legislative limbo.

When President Clinton returned a \$16.4 billion spending cuts bill to Congress on Wednesday, \$275 million slated to forgive Jordan's outstanding debts to the United States went with it.

"I cannot in good conscience sign a bill that cuts education to save pet congressional projects," President Clinton said in announcing his veto at a Rose Garden ceremony Wednesday.

"That is old politics, it is wrong," the president said.

Despite the setback for Jordan's debt relief, which has garnered widespread support in the Jewish community, Clinton scored high marks for his veto.

"The slashing of federal assistance to the poor and the near poor will injure or destroy programs that supply indispensable assistance to the most disadvantaged members of our society," said Flora Perskie, chair of the American Jewish Congress' Commission on National Affairs.

While "applauding" Clinton's veto, Perskie said the bill "unfortunately" includes "much needed and much deserved" debt relief for Jordan.

Perskie urged Congress to find an appropriate mechanism to "immediately provide [Jordan] with the financial assistance it so desperately requires."

Debt relief has had a rocky road

Jordan's \$275 million in debt relief, which would forgive its remaining \$490 million it owes the United States under the debt relief formula, has had a rocky road in Congress.

President Clinton promised the relief to King Hussein when the Jordanian leader made peace with Israel in October.

Republican leaders had initially opposed writing off the debt this year.

After pressure from the Clinton administration, Israeli officials and Jewish groups, Democrats and Republicans united to include the money in the so-called rescission bill.

In the end, debt relief fell victim to other Washington pressures when Clinton vetoed the bill.

Clinton has asked Congress to restore \$1.4 billion cuts to education, crime prevention, environment, housing and job training programs.

The additional spending would be offset by cuts in funding for federal construction projects and governmental travel.

The bill cut \$7 billion from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and slashed funds for nutrition programs for low-income children; eliminated energy assistance programs for families with low incomes; and ended the funding of summer youth employment programs.

Congressional leaders on both sides of the aisle have expressed support for Jordan's debt relief.

If the rescissions bill is not amended and passed by Congress, congressional aides say, the money would most likely be attached to an appropriations bill this summer or fall.

Congressional Republicans have said they do not have two-thirds of the members of the House and Senate necessary to override the president's veto.

Negotiations on a new bill are expected to begin later this month. □

Despite Israeli reservations, trade accord with E.U. expected

By Joseph Kopel

BRUSSELS, June 7 (JTA) — Despite Israeli dissatisfaction with some of its provisions, a new trade accord between Israel and the European Union is expected to be signed next week when E.U. foreign ministers meet in Luxembourg, according to E.U. officials.

Before the Luxembourg meeting, Israeli officials will hold a special meeting to approve the new accord.

The pact replaces a 1975 trade and cooperation agreement between Israel and what was then known as the Common Market.

Negotiations on an updated accord between Israel and the European Union began in January 1994, after E.U. leaders decided to "reward" Israel for signing the Palestinian self-rule accords with the Palestine Liberation Organization in September 1993.

According to sources within the European Union, the new accord will give Israel greater access to E.U. markets and will permit Israel to participate in European research and development projects.

In addition to the economic portions of the accord, the agreement will also create a formal framework for ongoing political dialogue between Israel and the European Union.

The accord has encountered opposition from Israel's agriculture and trade ministries, which are said to be unhappy with the benefits it offers.

The accord will give Israel observer status in the European Union's Science and Research Committee.

It will also allow Israel to present ideas for research and development projects to the committee.

However, Israel will have no voting rights within the committee.

In addition, Israeli trade officials have expressed dissatisfaction with the limited access granted to European markets under the new accord for Israel's agricultural exports.

During the negotiations, Israel requested full access for its farm exports.

But this was rejected by some countries in the European Union that were eager to protect their own agricultural markets.

Take-it-or-leave-it attitude

The European Union is Israel's main trading partner, but Israel has been eager to reduce its \$7.5 billion trade deficit with the 15-member bloc.

Despite Israeli reservations about the new accord, E.U. officials are adopting a sort of take-it-or-leave-it attitude.

"The European Executive Commission, which has negotiated the accord in the name of the 15 E.U. member states, has proposed to increase Israel's import quotas for its farm products, but it can't do more," a commission spokesman said this week.

"Our offer is definitive, and it's up to the Israeli government to decide."

Israel is not the only Mediterranean country negotiating accords with the European Union.

Tunisia signed an agreement last month. And negotiations are currently under way with Morocco and Egypt and talks are scheduled to begin soon with Jordan and Lebanon.

The new accords are part of a new policy adopted in December by E.U. officials.

The officials envisioned the creation of a free-trade zone within the next 12 years among countries throughout the Mediterranean basin, including Israel. □