

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Israeli soldiers shot dead a wanted Palestinian and two members of an elite Palestine Liberation Organization unit in a shootout on the border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip.** The two members of Force 17, a unit that provides bodyguards to PLO leader Yasser Arafat, were apparently trying to help the Palestinian infiltrate the Rafah border crossing.

■ **Jewish groups expressed mixed opinions about the U.S. Supreme Court latest ruling on affirmative action.** Some hailed the decision, saying it cast doubt on the future of racial classifications that cater to minorities. Others expressed disappointment. [Page 3]

■ **Israeli officials in Washington denied the existence of a letter from King Hussein to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin suggesting a shift in Jordan's position on Jerusalem.** The letter reportedly declared that "East Jerusalem is part of the Arab occupied territories and must be returned to Palestinian sovereignty."

■ **The president of the Zionist Organization of America secured a coveted meeting with the House of Representatives' freshman class to urge members to end American financial assistance to the Palestine Liberation Organization.** Rep. Jon Fox (R-Pa.) invited Morton Klein to speak at the session.

■ **The Simon Wiesenthal Center called on Polish President Lech Walesa to condemn remarks made by his parish priest that were critical of Jews.** The priest, Henryk Jankowski, said in Walesa's presence that the Polish people should not allow those who have a secret allegiance to Israel or Russia to remain in government. He also said the Star of David belongs with the swastika of Nazism and the Communist hammer and sickle.

■ **Norwegian Foreign Minister Bjorn Godal said his country had raised some \$80 million in aid for the Palestinian Authority.** Godal, speaking after meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres in Jerusalem, said progress in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations would spur foreign donor nations to provide additional aid.

CHANGING RELATIONS [Part 3]**A century after its inception, is Zionist movement still needed?**

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, June 14 (JTA) — Next week the World Zionist Organization will begin what may be its most fundamental debate since the question of accepting Uganda as a Jewish national home dominated its 6th Congress, in 1903.

With only two years until the centennial of the WZO's founding by Theodor Herzl, some in the organization see an opportunity to declare Zionism victorious and put an end to the organization's current incarnation.

When the WZO's Va'ad Hapoel, its governing body, begins its annual meeting Sunday, the question of the organization's future will top the agenda.

The most dramatic possible outcome of the restructuring process would involve the merger of the WZO into the Jewish Agency for Israel, effectively closing down the WZO as an independent organization.

According to the plan's advocates, this would turn the Jewish Agency into the arena for a broader, more authentic Israel-Diaspora relationship. In closing a chapter of Zionist history, this plan would also minimize the influence of American Zionist organizations within the community.

So it is not too surprising that the plan has generated strong opposition among some American Zionist leaders.

But Avraham Burg, head of the WZO, apparently favors the idea, saying he believes in "one people, one body."

Currently acting chairman of the WZO and the Jewish Agency, Burg is expected to be formally elected to the top post during this month's meetings of both bodies.

The WZO's clout is greatly diminished from the days when it negotiated with sultans and prime ministers to lay the groundwork for a Jewish state.

Today, much of the WZO's significance comes from its role as equal partner in the Jewish Agency, which spends more than \$400 million annually on bringing immigrants to Israel and resettling them and on other social services in Israel.

The Jewish Agency's money comes from the United Jewish Appeal and the Keren Hayesod. Since 1971, these two fund-raising bodies have held the other 50 percent share in the governance of the agency, which was originally founded by the WZO.

Restructuring debate raises profound questions

The WZO receives its budget of roughly \$30 million from an arrangement reached with the Jewish Agency. The WZO's mission is to promote aliyah and Zionist activities, primarily in Western countries.

Through the WZO, Diaspora Zionist activists and Israeli political parties are able to influence the central Jewish philanthropic enterprise. The WZO's role in the Jewish Agency has made it a central channel of the organized relationship between Israel and the Diaspora.

Consequently, the restructuring of the WZO could revolutionize Israel-Diaspora relations. Already, the debates about restructuring have raised several profound questions about Israel-Diaspora relations in the closing years of the 20th century:

- What does it mean to be a Zionist in the Diaspora?
- Is there a difference between being Zionist and pro-Israel?
- Can Jewish leadership be opened to circles beyond those of "major givers" to the UJA campaign?

Critics of the WZO have argued over the years that until Zionist leaders commit themselves to making aliyah, there is no difference between Zionists — that is, members of the WZO — and other pro-Israel Diaspora Jews, such as contributors to UJA.

Foremost of these critics historically was David Ben-Gurion, who led the Jewish community in pre-state Palestine as head of the Jewish Agency and the WZO.

On May 14, 1948, the Jewish Agency leadership became the leadership of the new State of Israel, Ben-Gurion became the head of the country's provisional government and — as far as Ben-Gurion was concerned

— the Zionist movement in the Diaspora became an anachronism.

Now the notion that there is no longer an ideological difference between the Diaspora Zionists of the WZO and the Diaspora “fund-raisers” of UJA appears to be moving to the fore.

“What makes me not a Zionist and him a Zionist?” is how Rabbi Brian Lurie, executive vice president of UJA, expressed it in a recent interview. The “him” he was referring to was Seymour Reich, president of the American Zionist Movement, the association of Zionist groups in the United States.

“I speak Hebrew better. I lived in Israel for two years. I have better credentials,” Lurie argued.

Replied Reich: “The difference is that Brian’s campaign raises its money based upon the emotional appeal of Israel and overseas needs, but the money is in effect diverted and does not go to Israel in the amounts that it should.”

“Our message is that Israel is central to our Jewish life, and if we’re concerned about Jewish life, we need that Israeli quotient,” said Reich.

Whatever the depth of the ideological divide between them, the fact is that the actual number of Israelis in the WZO — and the Jewish Agency — fails to reflect a world where half of all Jewish schoolchildren now live in Israel. Only 38 percent of WZO seats are assigned to the Israeli delegation.

In Burg’s vision, the new Jewish Agency would be half Israeli and half Diaspora, rather than half Zionist and half fund-raisers.

Burg seeks ‘declaration of principles’

Such a partnership of Israelis and Diaspora Jews would at best significantly minimize the participation of American Zionist groups, which would be unlikely to maintain their current influence in the Jewish Agency as part of a Diaspora delegation.

Burg’s vision was first articulated by Rabbi Richard Hirsch, chairman of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, the international umbrella body of Reform Judaism, and a member of the WZO Executive.

Hirsch, who has long supported reforming the WZO, now chairs a WZO committee looking into restructuring. But Hirsch’s plan is not supported by his committee, where the sentiment is that the WZO should not merge with the Jewish Agency, according to people familiar with its discussions.

But according to one WZO source, a position paper prepared by the committee “was not acceptable to Burg.” According to this source, all Burg wants to remain from the WZO is a small core devoted to “hagshama,” or Zionist fulfillment — in other words, promoting aliyah.

While the question of these conflicting visions will dominate this month’s WZO discussions, a concrete resolution is unlikely.

Burg’s goal for the process is for “a declaration of principles” to be issued this month, to be followed by a year of discussion culminating in a decision next June and the implementation of the new structure in 1997, the WZO’s 100th birthday. In the process, conflicting visions of Zionism will get their hearing.

Reich of the American Zionist Movement has complained that “key Israeli leaders” of the WZO “appear to have forgotten that Zionism is first and foremost a Diaspora movement.”

“Clearly there must be changes in the WZO structure. It’s outmoded, it’s rife with political fiefdoms,” Reich conceded.

“But the concern is that the Israelis may cut themselves off from the amcha, or grass roots, if they push

aside those who fervently supported the Zionist cause and the Zionist dream when it was not embraced by the community,” he said.

Another leader opposing WZO’s dissolution is Deborah Kaplan, president of Hadassah, Yhe Women’s Zionist Organization of America and the largest single American delegation to the WZO.

“I believe there is still a lot for Zionists to accomplish,” said Kaplan. “To push them into a small body where there is no room for them to flourish and grow would be a major loss.”

Advocates of the WZO have long pointed to the democratic nature of the organization as a major factor in its favor. Worldwide elections, last held in 1987, have enabled Diaspora Jews to have their ideologies represented within the WZO — and have enabled nascent Zionist groups, particularly the Reform and Conservative Zionist affiliates, to achieve prominence and influence within the WZO and the Jewish Agency.

But Hirsch, Burg and others are questioning whether the WZO structure can continue with only incremental change.

UJA, CJF also eye restructuring

Although Burg has not elaborated on the details of his vision, the plan drafted by Hirsch called for half of the Diaspora delegation to come from the fund-raising organizations and half of the Israeli delegation to come from political parties.

The remainder of the Diaspora delegation would come from Jewish communities, synagogue movements, Zionist organizations, and other international and national organizations.

Half of the Israeli delegation would include representatives of Israeli government ministries, local government, national organizations, universities, the settlement movements and the business community.

The one qualification Burg has made for the representation of the new body is that it be “fully democratic.”

In America, the Jewish Agency’s funders seem to see a major change in the WZO structure as inevitable.

A joint committee of the UJA and Council of Jewish Federations has been investigating restructuring themselves and other components of the central American Jewish fund-raising system. The first set of proposals prepared for the committee’s consideration did not mention the WZO, speaking in vaguer terms of “our Israel/overseas partners.”

The plans also spoke of eliminating the United Israel Appeal. As the conduit of UJA money to the Jewish Agency, the UIA is the only component of the central American UJA-federation fund-raising structure that has representation from the Zionist movement and the religious streams.

So far, however, the CJF-UJA restructuring group has yet to meet with the WZO restructuring committee.

“That’s disturbing,” said Karen Rubinstein, executive director of the American Zionist Movement.

Within the CJF-UJA restructuring task force, the question of how to ensure a continued broad representation of American Jewry within the Jewish Agency has emerged.

“Any structure would have to be representative of the broader American community the way the UIA is now,” said one member of the CJF-UJA committee, speaking on condition of anonymity.

CJF Executive Vice President Martin Kraar agrees. “Sitting around the table, whether it is here or whether it is there, should be as broad-based a group of segments of Israeli society as possible, and as broad-based a group of American Jewish society as possible,” he said. □

Affirmative action case elicits mixed reaction on thorny issue*By Jennifer Batog*

WASHINGTON, June 14 (JTA) — Already split over the contentious issue of affirmative action, Jewish groups have expressed mixed opinions about this week's Supreme Court ruling.

In a landmark decision that is certain to heighten debate over affirmative action policies, the court ruled that the government must hold such programs to strict standards when determining whether they discriminate against non-minorities.

The 5-4 decision in *Adarand vs. Peña* comes as members of Congress, states and the Clinton administration are re-examining the 25-year-old initiative.

Some Jewish groups hailed the decision, saying it cast doubt on the future of "set asides" and other racial classifications that cater to minorities.

Others expressed disappointment. Still others took a "wait-and-see" attitude, saying it was too soon to tell what the mandate would mean for affirmative action.

The case involves a white-owned subcontractor, Adarand Construction, which sued when the company lost a highway construction job to a minority contractor, Gonzales Construction, even though its bid was lower.

Congress requires the government to spend at least 10 percent of its money for highway projects on minority businesses. The contractor in the case, Mountain Gravel and Construction, of Colorado, received a \$10,000 bonus when it chose Gonzales as its subcontractor.

In the ruling issued Monday, the court said federal programs that classify people by race were presumably unconstitutional unless the government could prove "a compelling interest" to make those classifications.

Some say case just limits circumstances

Those programs must be "narrowly tailored" to show evident past discrimination, said Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, writing for the majority.

"All governmental action based on race should be subjected to detailed judicial inquiry to ensure that the personal right to equal protection of the laws has not been infringed," O'Connor wrote.

Chief Justice William Rehnquist and Justices Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas and Anthony Kennedy joined O'Connor in the majority decision, which sent the case back to the lower courts to review, using the new standard.

Justices John Paul Stevens, David Souter, Ruth Bader Ginsberg and Stephen Breyer dissented.

Because the new standard has yet to be applied, what specific programs will be affected is not clear, said Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

He said even though Jews are usually not considered disadvantaged minorities, some communities, such as the Chasidim and Jewish women, have benefited from affirmative action programs. Although the center has not taken a formal position on the ruling, Saperstein called it "disappointing."

"I see this as an affirmation of affirmative action, but a limitation of the circumstances where it is appropriate to apply it," he said, adding that he was "confident" that most programs could be tailored to meet the court's standards.

In contrast, the Anti-Defamation League welcomed the decision.

In a statement, ADL's national director, Abraham Foxman, and national chairman, David Strassler, said the court has finally recognized what ADL has been arguing

for nearly 20 years: that "government preferences or benefits based upon race, religious beliefs or ethnic origin are as threatening to the American ideal as the historic discriminatory practices used to justify those preferences."

The American Jewish Congress, which supports affirmative action in certain circumstances, said the court's decision echoed the group's position that affirmative action should "neither be routinely applied nor always forbidden." But AJCongress said it is "a mistake to think that this decision spells the doom of affirmative action."

The National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, which did not take an official stand on the ruling, agreed that the decision did not pound the first nail in affirmative action's coffin. "They didn't strike down" the program, said Karen Senter, co-director for domestic concerns at NJCRAC.

Last month, NJCRAC, an umbrella organization of 13 national agencies and 117 local community relations groups, reaffirmed an affirmative action policy the group first adopted in 1973. That policy supports affirmative action remedies to racial imbalance in both the government and private sector. But it opposes the use of quotas as "inconsistent with the principle of non-discrimination and the goal of equal opportunity."

Senter said she disagreed with those, such as ADL, who said the decision cast doubt on affirmative action's future.

Those who reached such a conclusion "are making a rash judgment," Senter said, calling such statements "wishful thinking" on the part of those who want to dismantle the programs. Senter said the case shows that people are looking at affirmative action programs to ensure they accomplish what they are supposed to.

For some, the court's ruling was not a surprise.

"It was clearly within the realm of expected possibilities," said Marc Stern, AJCongress's co-director of legal affairs. However, he said, the decision changes the landscape of the affirmative action debate, setting it against a legal background.

"Because the court imposed stricter standards on the use of race by government, it's going to legalize the debate," he said. What remains to be seen, he said, is whether government programs will be able to survive the court's tough guidelines. □

Holocaust memorial dedication puts end to long controversy*By Gil Sedan*

BONN, June 14 (JTA) — The inauguration of a controversial Holocaust memorial in the Steglitz district of Berlin has ended years of heated and often ugly debate.

The names of 1,723 Jewish residents of Steglitz who were murdered during the Holocaust are carved on a 30-foot by 12-foot mirrored wall. Architects Wolfgang Goeschel and Joachim von Rosenberg wanted viewers to see their own reflections while reading the names of the victims as a sort of visual soul-searching.

When approved in June 1992, the project met wide opposition because of its size. It was proposed that the memorial be about 36 feet long, which turned out to be too big for the taste of many, including the majority of the conservative-led council of the Steglitz district.

But Wolfgang Nagel, building senator of Berlin, persisted. He charged that the objections to the monument had caused worldwide damage to the reputation of the German capital. As a compromise, the wall was slightly reduced in size.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by former Berlin Jews who had immigrated to Israel and the United States. □

Glimmer of hope shines through to Sarajevo's Jews

By Steven M. Zeitchik

NEW YORK, June 14 (JTA) — As horror stories continue to emerge from Bosnia, the Jewish community there is clinging to a glimmer of hope.

"The sky is still blue and it's not as ugly as when you watch CNN," a leader of Sarajevo's Jewish community said in a phone interview this week.

Ja'akov Finci, the leader of the Bosnian Jewish humanitarian group La Benevolencija, said the Jewish community is on the priority list for electricity.

The higher priority allows the group to continue to serve the vital needs of the city's beleaguered population, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

"We had one of our best meals [today]," Finci said: white beans, white bread and tap water, which is considered a real luxury.

The meal, served almost daily to more than 300 people — including Jews, Serbs, Croats and Muslims — is a model of collective ventures to aid the embattled region. Catholic Relief Services supplied the flour for the bread, and the American Joint Jewish Distribution Committee provided the beans.

Finci said 80 tons of food, medicine and clothing — most of it provided by the Joint — are poised to enter the city. But because roads are mined, no traffic has been allowed to pass through.

'We have the best pharmacy in town'

But Finci remains optimistic. The supplies are not immediately critical, Finci said, estimating that there is enough to last another 45 days. Still, he added, "It's better to make sure it's all here."

Because of the dedication of international Jewish relief groups such as the Joint, the Jewish community continues to enjoy unique privileges, Finci said.

"Our pharmacy is still the best pharmacy in town," he said.

Non-Jewish Sarajevans are also reaping the benefits, as the idea that Jews are a "light unto the nations" takes on literal significance in this city of limited electricity.

"Non-Jews join the community to watch TV, because the Jewish community is one of the few places where you can find electricity and water, without talking about politics and everything," Finci said.

The usual tensions in Sarajevo seem to have eased, if only momentarily. "Today was absolutely calm; there wasn't one bullet or shell in Sarajevo," Finci said in the phone interview Wednesday.

And the community seems intent on carrying on a normal routine, even amid rumors of new offensives from the Bosnian Serbs. The Jewish Sunday school meets regularly, as about 40 children watch Jewish history videos and listen to lectures on Judaism, Finci said.

But there are still chilling reminders of the pervasiveness of the bloodshed. According to Finci, many of the dead are buried in a nearby soccer field.

The Joint has done its share to improve the dire situation. Although it has been operating in Sarajevo for about 40 years, the organization began intensive efforts in Bosnia in the early stages of the war.

In April 1992, with conditions in Bosnia steadily worsening, the Joint helped evacuate countless women and children from the area. Since then, the Joint has organized 10 more convoys of fleeing residents, both Jews and non-Jews.

Some 500 Jews have left the country since the war began, many of them going to Israel. Several hundred Jews

still remain, seemingly committed to share the same fate as their neighbors.

As the president of the community, Ivan Ceresnjes, is fond of saying, "Jews have lived in Sarajevo for 500 years, and we have the right to live here another 500."

Finci said there is a small group of Jews ready to leave, but it is too small around which to organize a convoy. □

France's National Front scores victory in municipal elections

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, June 14 (JTA) — France's Jewish community has reacted with dismay to the strong showing posted by the extreme right-wing National Front in this week's first round of municipal elections.

But Henri Hajdenberg, the recently elected president of CRIF, the umbrella body representing French Jewry, said the results were predictable, given France's economic and political scene.

"This was something highly foreseeable in a country ridden by unemployment and by political and economic scandals," he said. "You cannot open a daily paper without reading about yet another politician being indicted for financial wrongdoings.

"This paved the way for people like [Jean-Marie] Le Pen," Hajdenberg added, referring to the leader of the National Front.

Hajdenberg said fighting against the National Front is one of his top priorities. He said he has repeatedly asked political leaders "to exclude any alliance" with the extremist party.

Le Pen and his followers currently maintain an unabashed anti-immigrant platform, but in the past they have made no secret of their anti-Semitic leanings.

France holds elections every six years for city council members in municipal districts across the country. The council members have the responsibility for electing mayors; they also form part of the college that elects senators, who sit in France's upper house of Parliament.

Sunday's first round of municipal elections will be followed by a runoff vote June 18 in those cities where no candidate won a clear majority.

The National Front registered strong showings in working-class suburbs of Paris and Marseilles, in the industrial northern and eastern sectors of the country and along the Riviera.

The National Front did best in areas with high unemployment and large numbers of immigrants.

Before Sunday, the National Front did not have control of any of France's 36,664 town halls. The party had about 1,110 city council members — a number that may double, or possibly triple, after the runoff vote.

Sunday's voting came only one month after conservative Jacques Chirac was elected to the French presidency. In the April 23 first round of presidential elections, Le Pen stunned observers by winning 15 percent of the vote.

After Chirac's victory, members of the current center-right majority believed that voters would elect moderate right-wing mayors.

But that assumption proved largely wrong, with the center-right unable to win any major cities previously held by the left.

Le Pen made a triumphant televised statement Sunday in which he said the National Front was on its way toward becoming a permanent fixture in French politics.

"The National Front was recognized by all observers April 23 as a rapidly expanding movement," he said. "Tonight just confirms that." □