



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Israel's High Court of Justice upheld Benjamin Netanyahu's election victory, rejecting a motion to include blank ballots in the final count, which would have meant that Netanyahu did not win the required 50 percent of the vote. [Page 2]**

■ **A bomb exploded outside the kosher Menorah Restaurant in Warsaw. No one was injured. The Polish Jewish community reportedly said that the attack had been carried out by nationalist elements in the country.**

■ **Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.) asked four U.S. attorneys to investigate Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan's tour of Africa and the Middle East. King has labeled Farrakhan's travels a "terror tour" and criticized what he called the Justice Department's reluctance to carry out a serious investigation.**

■ **French officials ordered the country's water ballet Olympic team to cancel its scheduled piece after Jewish groups protested its Holocaust theme. [Page 4]**

■ **France's education minister opened disciplinary proceedings against a teacher who asked her class to calculate the volume of carbon monoxide needed to kill Jews during the Holocaust. [Page 3]**

■ **The Anti-Defamation League filed a protest with the International Olympic Committee for designating as "Palestine" the Palestinian delegation to next month's games in Atlanta.**

■ **The leaders of Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinians urged the new Israeli government to continue the peace process and adhere to agreements that have already been signed. [Page 3]**

■ **Likud officials said they hoped to complete coalition negotiations and draw up the guidelines of the new government by the weekend. Knesset member Dan Meridor said the Likud Party could not accept demands by the religious parties that the religious status quo be returned to the level it was on the eve of 1992 elections.**

NEWS ANALYSIS

Official words of goodwill barely mask U.S. fears on Israel

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — President Clinton will heap praise on Israeli Prime Minister-elect Benjamin Netanyahu when he comes to the White House later this month.

Netanyahu will return the favor by pledging to work closely with the United States to pursue peace in the Middle East.

But the statements of goodwill coming from the White House and State Department have barely masked the anxiety about the future course of peacemaking in the Middle East.

When the time comes to sit down and hammer out strategies, the Clinton and Netanyahu administrations "most likely will find themselves 180 degrees apart," said a senior U.S. official who asked not to be identified.

Although it is still too early to know exactly how Netanyahu will proceed, both current and former U.S. diplomats agree that tensions are likely to flare as the new prime minister begins to face tough policy choices on issues such as withdrawal from Hebron, expansion of settlements and talks with Syria.

How quickly the first test will come in the U.S.-Israeli relationship is anyone's guess. Four years ago, when President Clinton took office in Washington and Yitzhak Rabin ascended to power in Jerusalem, U.S.-Israeli relations went from an all-time low to an all-time high.

Now, many veteran observers here expect a return to earlier days, when the United States pressured Israel to moderate its positions.

Whether the relationship will turn into an all-out brawl similar to the settlement uproar that dominated the U.S.-Israel relationship during the early 1990s is up to today's players.

Former U.S. officials in the Bush administration involved in that deteriorating relationship think it unlikely that it will get to that point.

"Netanyahu is not going to want a repeat of the situation when [Yitzhak] Shamir was prime minister," former Secretary of State James Baker said in a telephone interview from his office in Houston.

"There was so much tension" in the relationship that Shamir ultimately lost support among Israelis, said Baker, who worked with the prime minister-elect in the early 1990s, when Netanyahu served in key posts in the Shamir government.

Baker, who sparred with Netanyahu over at least one matter of policy during those years, orchestrated a hard-line policy that sought to withhold \$10 billion in U.S. loan guarantees to Israel unless Shamir, who was the Likud prime minister at the time, halted construction on new settlements in the West Bank.

The United States and Israel eventually settled on a policy under which the United States would deduct money spent on settlements from the loans. But that public split was seen as a decisive factor in Shamir's defeat in Israel in 1992 — and also contributed to overwhelming support for Clinton among Jews, who largely resented the Bush administration's approach.

'Tensions could resurface'

When Clinton came to power, public pressure on the Jewish state largely disappeared as the Labor-led Israeli government vigorously pursued the peace process without nudges from Washington. Throughout his term, Clinton threw his political weight behind Yitzhak Rabin and then Shimon Peres, unabashedly campaigning for the Labor candidate from afar.

Among the issues of most concern to U.S. officials are Likud's policies on Jewish settlements and talks with Syria.

Since the 1967 war, the United States has opposed Israeli settlements in the West Bank, arguing that they are an obstacle to peace.

"Should the new government embark on aggressive settlement activity, which is in contravention to long-standing U.S. policy, tensions could and probably would resurface," Baker said.

At the same time, Baker said, "there are going to be strong efforts by both governments to make sure the relationship remains very good."

"We are not going to see an adverse effect in terms of the U.S."

commitment to Israel's security, which is there notwithstanding other tensions in the relationship."

On the question of Syria, predictions were mixed. "Let's be honest, the peace talks with Syria are dead," a senior U.S. official said.

"The entire premise was land for peace," the official said. "This Israeli government does not believe in returning the Golan."

Baker agreed. "I said even before the election in Israel that the election of Netanyahu does not mean the end of the peace process, but does mean a real hiatus and deep freeze in the Syrian and Lebanese track," he said.

But his former deputy, Edward Djerejian, a former U.S. ambassador to Syria and Israel, still holds out hope for an Israeli-Syrian accord.

"It's an open question whether Likud would be able to be flexible on the northern border," Djerejian said.

Publicly at least, Clinton administration officials have adopted a wait-and-see attitude.

"I think we'll have to adapt our policy to the current situation," said Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

"I don't want to take any adamant positions here as they begin to form their government," Christopher said, clearly trying to give Netanyahu some wiggle room.

But architects of the peace process under the Bush administration said statements of goodwill could not mask deep policy divisions.

"The Bush administration was hard" on the Israelis, said Djerejian.

"The Bush administration played a very assertive role and it worked in the past. Maybe it's applicable, if not the best route in the future," said Djerejian, who also served as the assistant secretary of state for Near East affairs under Baker.

Although many are predicting renewed skirmishes, the key players are taking great pains to look past areas of disagreements.

In his victory speech Sunday, Netanyahu pledged to maintain warm relations with Washington.

"Relations with the United States and Israel are strong as a rock," Netanyahu said. "I am sure that they will continue in the coming four years."

Clinton called Netanyahu minutes after the official election results were announced to congratulate the Likud victor. On Saturday, he publicly congratulated him in his weekly radio address.

One Likud official said the relationship between the two leaders would be an important factor.

Comeback kids

Relationships "sometimes weigh more than disagreements over policy issues," Yoram Ettinger, former congressional liaison at the Israeli Embassy in Washington during the Shamir government, said, adding: "There is a good personal relationship" between them, dating back to when they first met during the 1992 U.S. primaries.

"Bill Clinton being the comeback kid does appreciate and respect Benjamin Netanyahu as the Israeli comeback kid," said Ettinger, rumored to be on the short list for a top diplomatic post in the United States.

The first test in the relationship could center on Hebron. The United States has made its intention clear that it expects Netanyahu to honor Israel's accord to withdraw the majority of its forces from the only Palestinian city still under Israeli control.

The Peres government said it would not move on the issue before turning power over to Netanyahu.

While Netanyahu campaigned on a platform opposed to withdrawal, he also pledged to honor Israel's previous accords. He has not yet indicated how his govern-

ment would reconcile the two seemingly contradictory positions.

But aides close to the prime minister are laying the groundwork for a delay in the move.

"It may become an issue," said Ettinger.

Another issue likely to be contentious is the question of U.S. financial support for the Palestinian Authority.

Most activists agree that Yasser Arafat's government would not have received more than \$200 million in U.S. aid were it not for the aggressive support of the Israeli government, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and American Jewish groups.

With the aid tied to Palestinian compliance with the peace accords with Israel, the United States largely took its cues from Jerusalem.

"Much of the U.S. attitude vis-a-vis the PLO's deliberate and systematic violations of its agreements has been driven by Israeli reaction," Ettinger said.

Hinting that the Likud government would look less favorably on aid to the Palestinians, Ettinger said, "Once there's a dialogue between Netanyahu and the U.S. administration, there is certain to be an impact on the U.S. perception of PLO attitudes."

Voicing the view of many Likud supporters in Israel and the United States, Ettinger remained optimistic about the future of U.S.-Israeli relations.

"Hebron, Jerusalem, settlements and Golan are not do-or-die issues on the agenda" of the United States, Ettinger said. □

High Court dismisses petitions challenging Netanyahu's victory

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's High Court of Justice has thrown out three petitions challenging Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu's election as prime minister.

The verdict came as the Central Election Committee declared his victory official.

The committee officially confirmed the results of the May 29 elections. The final figures were the same, if marginally more detailed, as those issued unofficially last Friday: Netanyahu won 1,501,023 votes, or 50.49 percent of those cast.

Outgoing Prime Minister Shimon Peres took 1,471,566, or 49.51 percent of the vote.

Earlier in the day, a five-justice panel considered three petitions submitted by private individuals asking that blank ballots cast in the elections for prime minister be counted as protest votes.

Some 148,681 ballots cast last week were invalidated by the Central Election Committee. Had they been added to those legally cast, the petitioners argued, neither candidate for prime minister would have won the 50 percent majority required by law, and a second round of voting would have to be called.

"We decided unanimously to reject the petitions," Chief Justice Aharon Barak said.

The justices said a blank ballot was not specifically recognized in the election law as valid.

At the same time, they said there was room for the next Knesset to set down specific procedures regarding the blank ballots.

The attorney general asked the court to throw out the petitions, saying that the elections committee had made clear in advertisements before the elections that blank ballots would be considered spoiled ballots. He said they were only in the polling booths in order for voters to write in the name of the candidate or party, if those slips were missing. □

Arabs call on Netanyahu to continue peace process

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Arab leaders this week called on Israel's prime minister-elect to continue the peace process and to honor the accords signed by the outgoing government.

Jordan's King Hussein hosted Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat at the Red Sea port of Aqaba on Wednesday to coordinate their positions in the wake of Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu's razor-thin victory in last week's elections.

In post-election declarations aimed at allaying Arab concerns, Netanyahu said he was committed to pursuing the peace process.

But statements the Likud leader made throughout the campaign indicated that his approach to negotiations would be different from the land-for-peace principles that formed the Labor government's basis of negotiations with Israel's Arab neighbors. During the campaign, Netanyahu voiced his staunch opposition to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, to an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights and to ceding any portion of Jerusalem to the Palestinians.

In remarks made in English at the Aqaba meeting, Arafat said he would "very soon" declare the formation of an independent Palestinian state with eastern Jerusalem as its capital. But Arafat aides later downplayed any implication that the declaration was imminent, adding that Arafat's imprecise English may have led to a misinterpretation of his remarks.

Israeli newspapers reported Wednesday that a close adviser to Netanyahu, Dore Gold, had made a private visit to the Jordanian capital of Amman on Sunday. The papers speculated that the visit was timed to precede the Aqaba summit and conveyed a message to senior Jordanian officials of Netanyahu's commitment to the peace process.

At a joint news conference after the summit, the three Arab leaders were cautiously optimistic. Mubarak said he "had a feeling" the Netanyahu government would honor the Israeli-Palestinian accords. Hussein said he did not think that the outcome of the elections was a referendum on the peace process, but rather an internal Israeli competition between "two different people for prime minister." Arafat said he was sure that "the agreements signed will be observed and will be implemented."

The Aqaba summit was part of a flurry of high-level Arab meetings convened to discuss the Israeli elections. On Monday, Mubarak met in Cairo with Syrian President Hafez Assad. The two are expected to meet with Saudi King Fahd this weekend in the Saudi capital of Riyadh.

In another development, Netanyahu phoned on Wednesday the Omani foreign minister, Yusef Ben Alawi, and stressed the importance of deepening Israeli-Omani relations, a spokesman for Netanyahu said. □

French teacher asks pupils to calculate killing of Jews

By Lee Yanowitch

PARIS (JTA) — A French high school teacher is facing disciplinary proceedings for giving her students a physics test in which she asked them to calculate the amount of carbon monoxide needed to kill Jews during the Holocaust.

"Hitler killed Jews by locking them in trucks with the exhaust pipe feeding fumes inside," the test question read. "With a truck volume of 50 cubic meters, what volume of carbon monoxide does it take to reach the fatal

ratio of 5 per 1000?" It added, "If the people take an average of 20 minutes to die, how much carbon monoxide did the engine produce per hour?"

The teacher, who is reportedly Jewish, told the principal of the College des Sept Mares near Versailles that she had been giving the exercise to students for several years and that her intention was to denounce the Holocaust and fight those who deny that it took place.

Radio Shalom, a Paris-based Jewish radio station, first reported the incident after the parents of a student told it about the test.

Education Minister Francois Bayrou told French radio that he had launched disciplinary proceedings, adding that the teacher, whose name has not been revealed, would be suspended pending action by a disciplinary board.

"There are facts we cannot speak of in a banal way which belong to the memory of humanity and which should be respected as sacred," Bayrou said. "It is intolerable to mention them in this way."

The teacher will have to present an explanation to the disciplinary board and could face either a transfer or a simple reprimand.

Pierre Aidenbaum, president of the International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism, asked Bayrou for an "exemplary sanction" against the teacher for offering "this trivialization of the horrible and unbearable to young adolescents to reflect upon." □

Poland orders police to halt construction of Auschwitz mall

By Alissa Kaplan

NEW YORK (JTA) — Poland has ordered the police to stop the renewed construction of a controversial mini-mall across the street from the Auschwitz death camp.

Both Jewish and Polish officials were "shocked" to learn this week that construction started up again on the project, said Israel Singer, secretary general of the World Jewish Congress.

Work on the mall reportedly was suspended a day after the order.

Singer, who reported the federal order, was meeting Monday in Washington with Marek Siwiec, secretary of the office of Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski, when both men learned that construction of the mall had resumed.

The mini-mall, which was to house a supermarket, a home and garden center and a fast-food restaurant, among other businesses, had drawn condemnation worldwide from groups ranging from Jewish organizations to the European Parliament. The developer, Janusz Marszalek, said in April that all work on the project was halted and that it would not be resumed.

Polish officials, including the president, had earlier denounced the project.

At the meeting Monday in Washington, Singer and Siwiec had been discussing restitution issues concerning Poland, said Singer, who is also the chairman of the executive of the World Jewish Restitution Organization.

Singer, who was back at his New York office Tuesday afternoon, said he had just received a telephone call from Siwiec, who read a statement to him from the president and the Polish Parliament on the shopping center.

In Washington, meanwhile, Rep. Dick Zimmer (R-N.J.) is expected to offer an amendment to the foreign aid bill putting Poland on notice that Congress opposes "all commercial construction at the site." The amendment, which is expected to be approved, also points out that Poland is due to receive about \$70 million in U.S. aid. □

(JTA correspondent Matthew Dorf in Washington contributed to this report.)

U.S. investigating reports of a new Syrian gas factory

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The United States is investigating reports that Syria has begun construction on a poison gas factory less than 350 miles from Jerusalem.

According to the German newsmagazine Stern, the facility in the northwestern city of Aleppo is similar to the massive underground Libyan plant in Tarhunah. The United States has threatened to destroy the Libyan plant if it is made operational.

"For Israel, such a project is a nightmare," Stern said of the plant. "Syria would not need any long-range missiles to fire poison gas into the Jewish state."

State Department spokesman Glyn Davies said Tuesday that the report "raises questions in our minds, and we'll be looking into it." He added that the United States had no previous indication that Syria has embarked on a program to build chemical weapons.

Stern reported that U.S. intelligence officials turned over information on the plant to the German government, believing that a German businessman might be assisting Syria in its construction. □

'Palestine' Olympics team sparks protests from ADL

By Anne Miller

WASHINGTON (JTA) — With the opening ceremonies for the Summer Olympics less than six weeks away, the controversy over an officially recognized team from "Palestine" has sparked protests.

A delegation of athletes from "Palestine," as the team is designated in the Atlanta Committee on the Olympic Games' official publications, is competing in the summer games.

The Anti-Defamation League has protested the choice of nomenclature to the International Olympic Committee. In a letter to the committee, ADL National Director Abraham Foxman said it would prefer that the delegation be referred to as "the Palestinian team" rather than as athletes "from Palestine."

"There is no State of Palestine," Foxman wrote. "We believe it is important that the proper terminology be used when referring to the Palestinian delegation."

Palestinians are allowed to participate in the Olympics under Article 33 of the Olympic Convention, which stipulates that "the term 'country' in the Olympic Convention means every country, state, territory or part of a territory." An Interim Agreement, signed in 1993 by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, dictates that neither group can attempt to change the current status of the West Bank and Gaza until negotiations on the two areas' permanent status are completed.

But Israel has already turned over portions of the West Bank and Gaza territories to Palestinian jurisdiction.

U.S. and Atlanta Olympic Committee officials were not available for comment. □

French Olympics team cancels ballet in wake of Jewish protest

By Lee Yanowitch

PARIS (JTA) — A water ballet that France's synchronized-swimming team was to perform at the Olympics in Atlanta next month has been canceled after Jewish groups protested its theme — the Holocaust.

The controversy broke out after the sports daily L'Equipe revealed that the water ballet would feature swimmers goose-stepping into the pool and mimicking the

arrival of Jews at Auschwitz. The performance was to be accompanied by German military marches, songs from the Jewish ghetto and the score from director Steven Spielberg's Holocaust epic, "Schindler's List."

The team's coach said the piece was intended to fight racism.

The French performance would not have been the first time that the Holocaust was used as a theme at a sports competition.

Renowned American figure skater Paul Wylie has performed in more than one exhibition a routine choreographed to the theme music of "Schindler's List."

There were no reported protests of Wylie's performances.

But upon learning of the planned water ballet, CRIF, the umbrella group of secular French Jewish organizations, complained to the French Swimming Federation.

Sports Minister Guy Drut immediately ordered the ballet withdrawn.

"We are pleased that this performance, which could have caused a scandal, has been canceled," said CRIF Director Haim Musikant. "We were shocked that someone could have tried to trivialize the Shoah through artistic expression."

Jean Kahn, president of the Consistoire, which oversees the religious needs of France's Jewish community, said using the Holocaust theme "without having consulted Jewish institutions beforehand was unthinking and frivolous."

Odile Petit, the team's coach, told L'Equipe that she and the swimmers knew that they could cause a controversy, but that they did not mean to shock or offend anyone. The Holocaust theme "conveys emotion," Petit said, adding, "Our sport is a sport of expression. Our message is an appeal to fight racism. If we had chosen to evoke a circus it would not have been controversial, but we wouldn't have been able to express ourselves so forcefully." □

Israeli court rejects claims of forced confession by Amir

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Tel Aviv District Court has rejected the claims of Hagai Amir, the brother of Yitzhak Rabin's convicted assassin, that investigators used psychological pressure to force a confession.

Amir, along with his brother Yigal Amir and friend Dror Adani, have been charged with conspiring to kill Rabin and planning attacks against Palestinians in the West Bank.

The three have pleaded innocent to the charges.

In March, the same court convicted Yigal Amir of shooting Rabin at a Nov. 4 peace rally. Amir is serving a life sentence in jail.

An attorney for Hagai Amir charged that investigators had threatened to blow up his parents' house, questioned him at 4 a.m. and kept him in isolation.

But the court Wednesday rejected any suggestion of impropriety.

According to the charge sheet, Hagai Amir amassed a large arsenal of weapons in his family's home, and crafted the hollow-point bullets with which his brother shot the prime minister.

Attorneys for both Hagai Amir and Adani said their clients did not know about Yigal Amir's intent to kill Rabin.

Yigal Amir was apprehended by police minutes after the shooting. His brother and Adani were arrested days later. □