



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ The Southern Baptist Convention overwhelmingly approved a resolution encouraging its 15.6 million members to evangelize Jews. At its annual convention in New Orleans, the largest Protestant denomination in the United States also appointed a full-time minister to reach out to the Jewish community.

■ The Anti-Defamation League launched a "Rebuild the Churches Fund" to distribute donations to the more than 30 predominantly black churches burned by arsonists in the past year. The announcement is scheduled to appear Friday in advertisements in major newspapers.

■ President Clinton said Israeli Prime Minister-elect Benjamin Netanyahu should be given "elbow room" to form his coalition and its policies. Clinton added that he is encouraged by Netanyahu's recent statements pledging to continue the peace process.

■ The spokesman for the Katzin municipality on the Golan Heights said the Likud Party pledged to build about 2,000 new housing units once Benjamin Netanyahu takes office as Israel's new prime minister.

■ President Clinton is expected to certify the Palestinian Authority as being in compliance with its accords. The formal act allows the Palestinians to receive U.S. aid and to have diplomatic contact with U.S. officials.

■ Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.) scheduled a Friday hearing on a measure that would force U.S. government agencies to publish all information in their possession on Kurt Waldheim, the former U.N. secretary-general and president of Austria who served as a Nazi during World War II. The measure, which faces many legislative hurdles, gained new prominence in light of Waldheim's just-published autobiography.

■ Jewish social service agencies expressed dismay over the defeat of a congressional measure that would have made it easier for people with mental illnesses to seek treatment. [Page 3]

NEWS ANALYSIS

'Free-lance' lobbying in Congress expected to continue under Likud

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — When Israel's Likud opposition failed to muster enough support in the Knesset to thwart Israel's accords with the Palestinians, the party sent some of its top officials to Capitol Hill.

Benjamin Netanyahu, then head of the Likud and now Israel's prime minister-elect, was among those seeking to recruit U.S. lawmakers to its cause — specifically to end aid to the Palestinians.

For their part, American Jewish groups sympathetic to that position had failed to convince the organized Jewish community to end its support for U.S. aid to the Palestinians.

So they, too, took their case directly to members of Congress, hoping to elicit support for measures that in effect would end aid to the nascent Palestinian Authority and, in some cases, the peace process itself.

The increasingly boisterous disagreements over Israeli policies silenced any lingering believers in the myth that the Jewish community leaves its differences at the steps of the Capitol.

For five years, the unified voice has continued to deteriorate, first with a bitter settlement dispute that began under the last Likud regime, and most recently over objections to the Labor-led peace process.

Now, with the imminent return of the Likud government to power in Israel, most Jewish activists expect that unity in the Jewish community will continue to erode.

Americans for Peace Now, the left-wing group whose positions had become mainstream under the Labor government, is pledging to be "vigorously active" on Capitol Hill "to ensure that Israel lives up to its commitments," said Gail Pressberg, the group's Washington director.

Already, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, once the sole voice for pro-Israel causes in Congress, and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations are trying to figure out a way to minimize dissent before it reaches the halls of government.

The pro-Israel lobby machine has acquired influence in the nation's capital rivaling that of the gun and tobacco industries.

Many attribute that historic strength to the fact that the community speaks on most issues with one voice.

Whether mere illusion or representative of American Jewry, that sense of unity hammered home to many lawmakers the importance of the pro-Israel agenda to their constituents and donors.

As increasing numbers of "free-lancers," as lobbyists outside AIPAC are frequently called, take to the halls of Congress, the very bedrock of the pro-Israel lobby's strength is at risk.

Aides to Jewish members of Congress and staffers for members immersed in Middle East issues say the feud in the Jewish community has not weakened support for the core issues on the pro-Israel agenda — foreign aid and the U.S.-Israel strategic relationship.

In fact, the House just approved this year's foreign aid bill. While the total foreign aid package continues to decline, the bill maintains the current level of \$3 billion in U.S. assistance to Israel.

Even among new members of Congress, there is largely support for foreign aid.

'Congress should not be a football field'

But the disunity over other issues has turned off many of these new lawmakers, particularly those with no Jewish constituencies.

"I've had a hard time distinguishing between the positions of all the groups," said one senior aide to a member of Congress from the Midwest.

"You're blowing your whole game if you pull from both sides. People here just move on to the next issue instead of getting to the bottom of the matter," said this Hill veteran of 19 years.

Many Jewish leaders agree that there is a problem.

"Congress should not be a football field for the Jewish community to play out its differences," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents. "If we start bombarding them with our

differences, they'll just walk away from the issues," Hoenlein said.

In an effort to counter those who see Congress as a wide-open ball field, Hoenlein has often adopted the role of referee. Hoenlein oversaw bitter dissent in 1991 when unity began to slip in the American Jewish community over the issue of \$10 billion in loan guarantees to help Israel resettle the influx of refugees from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia.

Americans for Peace Now went to Congress to urge opposition to the guarantees unless the Israeli government curbed its expansion of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The feud over lobbying against the policies of the Israeli government continued as Peace Now sought membership in the Conference of Presidents two years later.

One of the fiercest opponents to including Peace Now in the umbrella group was Morton Klein, who today heads the Zionist Organization of America and has been criticized for his individual lobbying on Capitol Hill.

Two years ago, Hoenlein was called on to play mediator in a dispute between the ZOA and AIPAC, when AIPAC formally protested Klein's lobbying activities and accused the ZOA leader of putting "the entire foreign aid bill in jeopardy."

Klein has spent much of his time on Capitol Hill lobbying against aid to the Palestinians and in favor of a congressional ban on the stationing of U.S. troops on the Golan Heights.

Opponents of an Israeli peace deal with Syria capitalized on the troops issue to try to scuttle any future peace settlement with Israel's northern neighbor.

Klein has vehemently defended his right to lobby against policies supported by the Conference of Presidents and the Israeli government.

Now, Klein vows to continue pushing against aid to the Palestinians, regardless of what position the new Likud government takes.

While in the opposition, Netanyahu opposed U.S. aid to the Palestinians, arguing that they were not entitled to the \$500 million in U.S. aid as long as they were not complying with their accords with Israel. He has not indicated what stance he will take as prime minister.

Klein now says, "Any organization has the right to go to Capitol Hill to present their case honestly."

'A single voice'

Hoenlein, meanwhile, said the rules for Jewish lobbying remain a "subject under discussion."

But, he added, he expects Jewish groups to coordinate their positions with AIPAC.

For its part, AIPAC is approaching the dilemma diplomatically.

"The more the community speaks with a single voice, the more influential we are," said Howard Kohr, AIPAC's new executive director. Kohr acknowledged that AIPAC, the only organization authorized by the organized Jewish community to represent the pro-Israel agenda, has its work cut out for it as the group strives to maintain its influence on Capitol Hill.

But he said the ensuing battles in the Jewish community for attention on Capitol Hill would not affect the most important issues on the pro-Israel agenda: foreign aid, maintaining Israel's qualitative military edge and improving on the U.S.-Israel strategic relationship.

Despite all the challenges to AIPAC from within the Jewish community, those most involved with the pro-Israel agenda in Congress say their respect for the organization should grow along with the increasing need to decipher the Jewish community's myriad positions.

"We hear from more and more people each year"

in the Jewish community, said a congressional aide who works on foreign policy issues. "Someone's got to help us sort it out."

Part of that sorting has involved Israeli politicians in the opposition coming to Washington to work against policies of the Israeli government.

And now that the tables are about to be turned, one could expect Labor minyans waiting in the wings to come to the U.S. capital to push their own agenda as Likud members did over the past four years.

It is too early to tell whether they will.

In any case, some on Capitol Hill, as an aide to a leading Jewish member of Congress put it, are "planning for a calendar full of Israeli and Jewish appointments." □

Netanyahu not intimidated by Arab threats against Israel

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister-elect Benjamin Netanyahu has declared that Arab threats would not affect how his government pursues the peace process.

"We are not impressed by various declarations of [Arab] leaders, nor do threats intimidate us. In fact, they have an opposite effect," Netanyahu said Thursday.

Netanyahu made his comments as Arab leaders planned to convene in Cairo next week to discuss the right-wing leader's election and its impact on the peace process. Several participants already have expressed concern that the incoming Israeli government would take steps hindering continuation of the peace process.

While Netanyahu has pledged to continue the peace process, in particular negotiations with the Palestinians, he has taken a more hard-line stand than the outgoing government of Shimon Peres. Netanyahu opposes the establishment of a Palestinian state and any withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

The top priority in any peace accords his government pursues will be security, Netanyahu said.

"The supreme test of any agreement we make, and any agreement that has been made, will be security," Netanyahu said Thursday, adding, "There will be no compromise on this issue."

Netanyahu made his remarks during a meeting with Uri and Yehudit Dassberg, the parents of Efrat Unger, who, together with her husband, was shot dead in a drive-by shooting Sunday in central Israel.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu said he still expects to present his government for Knesset approval next week.

As negotiations continued to form a coalition, Netanyahu's Likud Party and the National Religious Party, which won nine parliamentary seats in the elections, reportedly reached an agreement Thursday on ministerial appointments.

Under the Likud proposal, accepted by the NRP, the religious Zionist party would head up the Education Ministry, and the Transport and Energy portfolios, which are to be combined into one ministry, according to Israeli news reports. The Likud-NRP accord also called for rotating the Religious Affairs portfolio between the NRP and Shas, the fervently Orthodox Sephardi party, which won 10 Knesset seats.

Likud continued to negotiate with other potential coalition partners, including Tsomet, The Third Way and Yisrael Ba'Aliyah.

But Yisrael Ba'Aliyah leader Natan Sharansky was also reported to have rejected a Likud offer for the Industry and Trade portfolio, along with two deputy ministers in the Ministries of Absorption and Education. Sharansky was quoted as saying that he was committed to bringing social change, and could not do so with those appointments. □

Defeat on mental health clause lamented by Jewish providers

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Jewish agencies involved with mental health care are lamenting the defeat of a congressional measure that would have made it easier for people with mental illnesses to seek treatment.

The provision, which would have required insurance companies to provide the same coverage for mental illnesses that they provide for physical ailments, was dropped this week as part of a compromise between House and Senate Republicans on a popular health insurance bill.

Jewish mental health care providers, who treat thousands of people each year for mental ailments, had pushed hard for the mental health "parity" provision in hopes of expanding their clients' access to mental health services.

"We're very disappointed," said Bert Goldberg, executive vice president of the Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies, the umbrella group for the 145 Jewish family social service agencies throughout the United States and Canada. "It looked as though the tide was moving in the right direction," he said.

In practical terms, the defeat of the measure means that many of those in need of treatment for mental illnesses "will simply have to suffer in silence with their current problems, needs and disabilities and wait another couple of years to receive adequate attention with an adequate reimbursement system," said Martin Hochbaum, director of the American Jewish Congress' Commission on National Affairs.

Now, health insurers may impose arbitrary limits on visits to psychotherapists and hospital stays.

Mental health care advocates had been optimistic about passage of the provision after a bipartisan group of senators, led by Pete Domenici (R-N.M.) and Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.), succeeded in inserting it into the health care bill, which then passed the Senate in a surprising 100-0 vote.

But the legislation became increasingly bogged down in recent weeks by sharp disputes over whether to include medical savings accounts in the legislation.

As part of the compromise and in the face of cost concerns, House Republicans axed the mental health parity provision and instead inserted language calling for a study of the proposal.

'Difficult to pay bills'

Diana Aviv, director of the Council of Jewish Federations' Washington Action Office, dismissed the study as "a way of deferring commitment that ought to be made" to those in need of treatment for mental illnesses. A study, she added, will only confirm what is already known about problems accessing mental health care.

Jewish providers say they have been confronted by the problem for years. "Increasingly, we were hearing from clients that they were finding it difficult to meet their bills," Goldberg said.

Faced with prohibitive costs, those in need of treatment are left with little recourse. "It ends up that if the individual family can't pay for it, then the community has to pay and we just don't have the funds," Aviv said.

As the debate over parity for mental health care played out on Capitol Hill over the last several weeks, a new picture began to emerge of the pervasiveness of mental illness. A landmark study conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health found that about 22 percent of Americans suffer from some form of mental illness — whether it be anxiety, depression, severe cognitive impairment, antisocial personality, schizophrenia or hypochondria.

Although they have no statistics, Jewish mental health care providers say those numbers likely hold true for the Jewish community as well.

When prominent lawmakers such as Domenici and Wellstone, both of whom have close relatives who suffer from mental illness, began speaking out in the Senate about obstacles to treating such diseases, mental health care advocates hailed the attention as long overdue.

"The fact that it's on the agenda in a real serious way was very heartening, and I believe it will come up again," Goldberg said. "This is the beginning and we will prevail with time."

But ultimately, concerns about the costs of mandating parity were enough to scuttle the plan.

House Republicans worked to kill the Senate proposal when a Congressional Budget Office report estimated that as many as 800,000 Americans could lose their insurance if the government required equal coverage for mental and physical ailments.

Moreover, it said parity would cost employers an estimated \$11.6 billion in 1998 — a cost the report said would ultimately be carried by workers through higher premiums, reduced wages and coverage, or the elimination of all health coverage.

Meanwhile, the fate of the compromise health care bill, originally designed to make it easier for workers to maintain their health insurance if they change or lose their jobs, remains unclear. An eleventh-hour push to reach consensus before Bob Dole left the Senate for good on Tuesday produced a bill that Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), one of the bill's two main sponsors, called a "travesty" and promised to fight.

Final action was expected before the end of the month, and President Clinton has made it clear that he will veto the bill in its current form. □

24 Israelis to go for the gold

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Twenty-four Israeli athletes will go for the gold in July at the Summer Olympics in Atlanta.

Israel's Olympic Commission on Wednesday officially presented the team, which will include athletes in the categories of track and field, boxing, judo, wrestling, weight lifting, swimming, sharpshooting, fencing and sailing.

The Israeli team includes winners of silver and bronze medals in judo from the 1992 Summer Games in Barcelona, as well as medal winners from several world championships.

Ephraim Zinger, Israeli delegation director, praised the athletes' competitive ability, but refrained from making predictions. He said, "We hope all the athletes will be able to do their best, to reach their peak level at the right place and the right time." □

Former Mossad head distrusts Assad

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The former head of the Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence agency, said last week that he was not convinced that Syrian President Hafez Assad was serious about making peace with Israel.

"We still have to look for signs that President Assad really wants a genuine peace with the State of Israel," Shabtai Shavit said. "I am still not totally convinced that [Assad] has made the required change of direction to achieve a sincere and genuine peace."

Shavit served as head of the Mossad for seven years. His successor is Maj. Gen. Danny Yatom. □

U.S. clergy evaluate views of major Russian candidates*By Lev Krichevsky*

MOSCOW (JTA) — A group of leading American clergy, serving as international observers to Russia's presidential elections, has said all the major candidates whom they met in Moscow favor freedom of religion.

The delegation of religious leaders was in the former Soviet state to learn the personal — as well as the official — views of Russian presidential candidates on "religious freedom, freedom of conscience, their attitude toward religious minorities," said Rabbi Arthur Schneier of New York, the head of the group.

Schneier also is the president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, an organization that has sent observers to the Russian elections since the 1993 poll for the Parliament.

A number of populations around the world, including the Jewish community, are keeping a close eye on Sunday's elections.

Anywhere from 600,000 to 2 million Jews live in Russia, and some of the candidates have either expressed anti-Jewish sentiments or have ties to those who have.

The monitoring group did not meet with the rabidly anti-Semitic Vladimir Zhirinovskiy.

But one of the contenders with whom the delegation did meet was Communist Gennady Zyuganov, whose policy is militantly anti-Western and who would like to see a crackdown on minority rights and emigration.

Zyuganov told members of the delegation that if he wins, he would guarantee the religious freedom "of all traditional religions on Russian territory," raising the question of which religions would get that guarantee.

Schneier, however, was confident that it would be impossible even for the Communists to curtail the freedom of religion that now exists in Russia.

Schneier was on his 51st working visit to Russia since 1965.

He said that in recent years, a favorable attitude toward religion has prevailed among the country's leadership.

"Moscow city Mayor [Yuriy] Luzhkov helping to build a matzah factory or attending the dedication of a new synagogue — these are examples of politicians' attitude toward religious communities," he said.

Still, members of the ecumenical delegation admitted that the status of religious minorities in Russia will depend on the outcome of the election.

The ecumenical group also met with liberal economist Grigoriy Yavlinsky and Georgiy Satarov, the top aide for Russian President Boris Yeltsin, whom polls show as being in the lead.

Candidates court religious communities

Russian Jews have expressed fear about the possibility of Communist leader Zyuganov winning the election, even though he continues to trail in the polls.

"The election is propelled by the great sense of nationalism," Schneier said, adding that for the Communist Party "the ideology of communism has been replaced with nationalist fervor."

Addressing the fears expressed by some Russian Jews in recent months, Schneier said: "Heightened nationalism historically represents a certain amount of insecurity for any Jewish community wherever."

Schneier said all the candidates are courting religious communities, which constitute a significant part of the 100 million-person Russian electorate.

"Every candidate wants God on his side," the rabbi said.

Other members of the American interfaith delegation included Archbishop Theodore McCarrick of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Newark, the Rev. Leonid Kishkovskiy, the ecumenical officer of the Russian Orthodox Church in America, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, primate of the Armenian Church of America, and Robert Barry, former deputy assistant secretary of state. □

Some Russian olim eligible to vote*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Up to 50,000 Russian immigrants in Israel are eligible to cast ballots in Sunday's Russian national elections.

Former Soviet dissident Natan Sharansky, who now heads the Yisrael Ba'Aliyah Party, said he believed that most of the community would back incumbent Boris Yeltsin over his main rival, Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov.

"Of course, we don't wish for the Communists to come back to power," Sharansky said.

Sharansky, whose party won seven seats in the recent parliamentary elections in Israel, said Yisrael Ba'Aliyah would continue to work to encourage Jews to emigrate from the former Soviet Union to Israel.

"Not that life should be so bad for Jews in Russia they would want to leave," he said. "But I believe that all of the Jews there should live here."

More than 600,000 Jews have immigrated to Israel from the former Soviet Union since 1989. □

Sale of explosive may provide clue to 2 Argentina bombings*By Sergio Kiernan*

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — A Swiss court investigating an illegal sale of explosives may have found an important clue in two unresolved bombings in Argentina.

The Swiss are investigating a shipment of several tons of the high-power explosive Exogen, according to Spanish journalist Norberto Bermudez.

The firm Expal manufactures the explosive in Spain.

Most of the shipment in question was sent to Croatia, but a fraction was rerouted to Argentina shortly before the March 17, 1992, bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires.

Exogen may have been used in that attack, which left 29 dead and some 100 wounded.

Bermudez, who came to Buenos Aires to deliver a copy of the Swiss findings to the Argentine court investigating the case, said that "the Exogen passed customs at the city's Ezeiza Airport."

Also, Exogen may have been used in the July 18, 1994, bombing of the AMIA Jewish community center that left 86 dead and at least 300 wounded.

Authorities have not been able to determine exactly what type of explosives were used in the attacks.

According to the Swiss investigators, the explosives were sold by Syrian arms dealer Monzer al-Kassar.

Al-Kassar became a well-known figure in Argentina after the public learned that he had obtained Argentine citizenship papers and a passport in record time.

Al-Kassar was investigated by Spanish authorities on charges of having cooperated with the terrorists who hijacked the Achille Lauro cruise ship in 1985.

Apparently, al-Kassar told Spanish investigators that an aide of Argentine President Carlos Menem's accompanied him to get his passport "in person."

Al-Kassar was cleared of all charges in Spain but remains under investigation in Argentina. □