



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ The Argentine government announced that it would pay \$12 million in reparations to the Argentine Jewish community for the 1994 bombing of the AMIA building. Jews were divided over whether to accept the funds. [Page 2]

■ Aleksandras Lileikis, the former chief of the Nazi-sponsored Lithuanian security police, arrived in Lithuania. A federal court stripped Lileikis of his U.S. citizenship last month, bringing to an end a 15-year effort by the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations to have him denaturalized.

■ Benjamin Netanyahu moved into the Prime Minister's Office, officially taking over Israel's leadership. The new premier continued to try to find a role for Ariel Sharon in his government. [Page 3]

■ U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher is scheduled to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday in the Jewish state. Christopher is also planning to meet with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak as well as Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat during a 48-hour visit to the Middle East.

■ Bipartisan leadership in the U.S. House and Senate wrote to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, formally inviting him to address a joint meeting of Congress during his July visit to Washington.

■ Avigdor Kahalani, the new minister of public security for Israel, said he supported an Israeli troop redeployment in the West Bank town of Hebron. [Page 3]

■ Representatives from Israel, Lebanon, Syria, France and the United States met at the U.S. State Department for the first time since the Israeli elections. They are trying to hammer out details for an agreement to monitor the cease-fire in Lebanon.

■ The House of Representatives unanimously passed a measure that would punish overseas companies that invest in Iran's oil industries. [Page 3]

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Rulings on redistricting revive strains in black-Jewish relations

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — As the black community reeled in the wake of last week's Supreme Court rulings striking down race-based congressional districts as unconstitutional, Jewish leaders found themselves in a bind.

Their problem: how to weigh their support for the principle behind the ruling — that race should not be a predominant criterion in the electoral process — against concerns of inflaming tensions between blacks and Jews.

In a pair of 5-4 decisions, the Supreme Court struck down plans for one congressional district in North Carolina and three in Texas.

The high court ruled, as it did in weighing similar cases in 1993, that race played too great a role in drawing the boundaries of the so-called "majority-minority" districts.

As black leaders described the rulings in cataclysmic terms, most Jewish groups stepped cautiously around the issue of racial gerrymandering.

In one carefully worded statement, the American Jewish Congress said there is "much to commend" in the decisions, adding that there is a need to "devise political methods that do not induce the electorate to make its judgments along racial lines."

At the same time, the group stated that minorities are likely to see the rulings "as a sign that they are not welcome in the political process."

"Such alienation, if it takes hold, would have a corrosive effect on intergroup relations and, indeed, on the entirety of American democracy," the group also said.

Only the Anti-Defamation League came out strongly in favor of the rulings.

Most Jewish groups decided to steer clear of the issue.

Even the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, which has long supported black-Jewish relations and whose director, Rabbi David Saperstein, sits on the board of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, remained quiet.

But the highly contentious debate between blacks and Jews over race-based redistricting, like long-standing disagreements over affirmative action, has nonetheless become another irritant in relations between the two communities.

"I would have hoped that given the experience of Jews with anti-Semitism and their recognition of the significance of history, that they — the Jews who have opposed us on this issue — would have found their way to take another position," said Ted Shaw, associate director and counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund.

Black leaders say they do not want to single out Jewish groups for particular disagreements.

A historic alliance

But it is clear that the lack of Jewish support for the black community in this case is particularly troubling to some black leaders in light of the historic alliance between the two communities on civil rights matters.

"The differences on this particular issue don't help the alliance to the extent that the alliance still exists," Shaw said in an interview.

But he added, "I think it's a mistake to paint with too broad a brush and say there's indeed an uncrossable divide or this permanent rift between blacks and Jews."

The decision of the high court, meanwhile, probably will have a direct impact on the future racial makeup of Congress.

However, it is not clear whether the districts will be redrawn in time for the election in November.

After the 1990 census, states such as Texas and North Carolina carved out majority-black and majority-Hispanic districts to give minority voters greater electoral influence.

As a result, the number of blacks serving in Congress rose from 26 in 1990 to 39 in 1992 and to 41 in 1994.

Now, with blacks almost certain to lose seats as a result of the ruling,

discussion has turned to the extent to which black candidates can appeal to white voters.

Many Jews are troubled by the presumption that only a member of a certain race can represent constituents of that same race. They see it as antithetical to the goals of a society that should be blind to racial classifications.

They point to several instances of a majority of white voters electing black officials, such as Douglas Wilder as governor of Virginia, Carol Moseley-Braun as a senator from Illinois and Gary Franks and J.C. Watts as representatives from Connecticut and Oklahoma, respectively.

"In the long run, the principle of removing race will serve us all," said Abraham Foxman, ADL's national director.

Shaw of the NAACP doesn't see it that way.

"Race continues to be an important reality in this country and there are many who want to deny that and want to wish our way into color blindness, as if it has been achieved," he said.

Jews, Shaw added, might look at the issue of redistricting differently if they had not achieved their own electoral successes. He noted that while there are now 10 Jewish senators, only two blacks have served in the Senate this century.

Jews account for slightly more than 2 percent of the population, but hold about 6 percent of the seats in Congress. Blacks, by contrast, make up 12 percent of the U.S. population, but hold only 7 percent of the voting seats in Congress.

Shaw said he believes that Jews "are speaking from an experience in which they are included in the white majority, even though they have been victims of anti-Semitism."

The rulings on race-based redistricting are not expected to have an impact on Jewish voters or the election of Jewish lawmakers.

In contrast, one former Jewish congressman from New York, Rep. Stephen Solarz, lost his last race in 1992 when the composition of his district was altered to include a majority of Hispanic voters.

Despite the clear divide between blacks and Jews over redistricting, at least one observer said he did not see the rift adding any new dimensions to the relationship between the two communities.

Murray Friedman, the author of "What Went Wrong? The Creation and Collapse of the Black-Jewish Alliance," said the two groups have known about their disagreements on racially charged issues such as affirmative action and redistricting for quite some time.

The current fracture between the two communities over redistricting, Friedman added, "doesn't hold a candle to the acrimony that broke out in the '70s when the first affirmative action decisions were handed down."

In the interests of maintaining good relations, black and Jewish leaders say they will probably continue to agree to disagree on race-based redistricting, as they have on a number of contentious issues.

"We don't have to necessarily agree," said the ADL's Foxman, "but what we need is an understanding of where we come from." □

Argentine offer of reparations divides local Jewish community

By Sergio Kiernan

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — The Argentine government will pay \$12 million to the Argentine Jewish community as reparations for the July 18, 1994, bombing of the Argentine Mutual Aid Association.

News of the payment divided the Argentine Jewish

community, with some wanting to reject the government's offer.

"That's blood money," said a Jewish community official who wished to remain anonymous.

"We cannot take money from a government we criticize for the handling of the investigation of the bombing," the official said. "Taking even a dime would soil us. Also, it could be perceived as a sort of reverse discrimination: People are hurting all over, and Jews get a special treatment."

The bombing of the association, also known as AMIA, claimed 86 lives and left more than 300 wounded.

Argentine President Carlos Menem signed a decree last week ordering that the money be paid to AMIA in 12 monthly installments, starting in January 1997.

According to the decree, \$11 million is being given "toward the reconstruction of the AMIA building" and \$1 million "for the creation of a museum of the Holocaust."

Last year, the Argentine government donated a building in downtown Buenos Aires for the creation of a Holocaust museum.

The Jewish community here is still reeling from the bombing, which decimated the central Jewish community building.

Jewish officials here and abroad have been critical of the Argentine government's inability to solve the case. Several suspects have been arrested and later released for lack of evidence.

Argentina has also come under criticism for a similar inability to find those responsible for the 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy here.

That explosion left 29 dead and some 100 wounded.

Material consequence

While some in the community here want to turn down the government's offer, others are being more cautious, saying that an outright rejection of the payment would be insulting to the government.

Some in this camp have proposed that the community take the money and donate it to a non-Jewish hospital or charity.

A third group said Argentine Jews should take the money and use it to upgrade security in community sites and schools.

"Many Jews accepted money from the German government as reparations for Nazi persecution," said an official.

"Why not us? We could help those wounded in the attack that need special medical care and help the families of the victims."

The official pointed out that insurance for Jewish community building is at a premium as a consequence of the bombing.

"That is a material consequence of the bombing that money could repair," the official said.

Although the decree said the money should be used for the reconstruction of the AMIA building, community sources said the new, \$5.5 million building is almost all paid for.

The old building was reportedly insured for \$3 million and AMIA was able to raise a further \$1.6 million.

The Argentine government began looking into the idea of paying reparations to the Jewish community more than a year ago. The initiative reportedly came from Interior Minister Carlos Vladimiro Corach.

Government sources said negotiations with Jewish community officials "stalled" because the officials "would not say conclusively if they would take the money or not."

The government decided last week to make the offer public. □

House passes legislation to curb investment in Iran

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Aware that Iran cannot sponsor terrorism without money, Congress has taken steps to try to end European investment in the state's lucrative petroleum industry.

The House of Representatives unanimously passed a measure Wednesday, 415-0, that in effect imposes a U.S. government boycott on all overseas companies that invest in Iran's decaying oil fields and refineries.

The Senate was expected to follow suit as early as this week.

The measure was hailed by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee as "one of the most important pieces of legislation in years."

It would force foreign firms to choose between doing business with Iran or the United States.

Under the threat of the legislation, at least four European companies have backed away from planned deals with Iran worth more than a total of \$10 billion.

The measure also imposes sanctions on international firms selling oil technology to Libya.

President Clinton banned American firms from trading with Iran last year. White House officials said Clinton would sign the measure known as the Iran Foreign Oil Sanctions Act.

By cutting off money to Iran's energy industry, supporters of the bill hope that the cash squeeze will curtail the militant Islamic regime's support for terrorism.

"You need money to get the infrastructure to develop a nuclear weapon," an AIPAC official said. This measure goes a long way toward "depriving Iran with the resources necessary to obtain a nuclear weapon and continue support for terrorism."

Highlighting the importance of the bill, an AIPAC official said, "This is a vote which AIPAC will follow very closely." AIPAC does not formally rate members of Congress but maintains extensive records of how lawmakers vote on bills deemed to be pro-Israel, including foreign aid and arms sales.

Under the legislation, if a foreign company invests more than \$40 million annually in Iran's oil sector, the U.S. president must impose any two of six sanctions mandated by the legislation.

The leveling of such sanctions would amount to a de facto boycott. The sanctions include denying the firm U.S. government loans and credits, banning the company from bidding for U.S. government contracts, preventing the firm from receiving export licenses to ship goods to the United States and blocking loans from U.S. banks.

In addition, financial institutions could lose eligibility to receive U.S. government deposits and trade in debt instruments, including U.S. government bonds.

The president could waive the sanctions if he determines that it is in the national interest of the United States. □

Netanyahu assumes power still trying to include Sharon

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's new prime minister is still trying to make room for Ariel Sharon in his government.

Sharon, who prior to the elections brokered a deal with other right-wing parties and helped secure the Orthodox vote, is demanding a senior post in the Cabinet of Benjamin Netanyahu.

After a row with one of the religious parties in the

coalition over the Housing Ministry, it appeared that a new portfolio would be created especially for Sharon: infrastructure.

But new ministers who would have to give up some of their authorities for the creation of the portfolio are voicing opposition.

The struggle continued Wednesday as the government officially changed hands.

Netanyahu, 46, narrowly defeated Labor incumbent Shimon Peres in the May 29 elections, which marked the first time Israelis directly chose their prime minister.

At a changeover ceremony earlier in the day, Peres wished Netanyahu success in balancing the needs of the nation and the desires of the people. Netanyahu said he hoped the two could work together toward peace.

"Despite the differences between us, perhaps even deep differences, the thing that unites us is the thing that unites the entire country — and that's the desire to see the State of Israel marching forward to the 21st century assured of protection and achieving peace with our neighbors," the new prime minister said.

Netanyahu, heading his first Cabinet meeting later in the day, announced that he would form an American-style national security council.

The council will be headed by David Ivry, who has served as director general of the Defense Ministry.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu's foreign minister, David Levy, on Wednesday charged Arab states with unnecessarily creating tension over the Israeli elections.

Arab states viewed with dismay the new government's policy guidelines, which were published this week.

The guidelines assert Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, as well as opposition to a Palestinian state and the land-for-peace principle espoused by the former government.

Arab media described the guidelines as "a declaration of war, not peace," as last-minute preparations were being made for an Arab summit this weekend in Cairo to discuss the peace process and the outcome of the Israeli elections.

Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat, speaking in Beijing, called on the international community to ensure that the peace agreements it signed with Israel are implemented.

"This is no longer a bilateral issue," he said.

A first test

For his part, Levy said, "I expect to hear from this summit, which is due to take place in the coming days, a message of peace, a warm hand toward the State of Israel."

A first test of the new government will be whether it carries out a redeployment of Israeli army troops in the West Bank town of Hebron, as called for in the peace agreements between the Palestinians and Israel under the former government.

The redeployment, scheduled for March, was delayed by the previous government after a string of suicide bombings. A subsequent agreement would have rescheduled the redeployment for mid-June. With its population of some 450 Jewish settlers and 100,000 Palestinians, the town has been a flashpoint for violence.

Avigdor Kahalani, The Third Way leader and former Labor Party hawk who has joined the new government as minister of public security, said Wednesday that he favors carrying out the redeployment.

But Netanyahu himself has yet to make clear his intentions.

Danny Naveh, Cabinet secretary, told reporters at a briefing that Hebron had not been discussed by the ministers at the first meeting. □

NEWS ANALYSIS

Arab summit to project unity on pursuing peace with Israel

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The days leading up to this weekend's Arab summit in Cairo have been filled with historical irony.

In an interview last weekend with the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot, Egypt's Foreign Minister Amre Moussa cautioned Israel's new prime minister not to "say 'no' to territories, 'no' to negotiations over Jerusalem and 'no' to the Golan."

Moussa's remarks contrasted sharply with the outcome of the Arab summit in Sudan after the 1967 Six-Day War, when the Arab leaders proclaimed their "three nos" resolution — no negotiation with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no peace with Israel.

Nearly 30 years later, in the wake of Benjamin Netanyahu's election and the formation of a right-wing coalition, the tables have turned.

Arab leaders who once gathered for summits to proclaim military threats against Israel are now coming together, for the first Arab summit in six years, in the name of peace.

The Cairo summit was called out of fear that Israel's new government would depart from the land-for-peace principles that have been the basis of the peace process during the past several years.

Although Arab unity is an elusive concept, the Egyptian hosts hope that the summit will produce a unified stance on the peace process and the Netanyahu government.

Egypt and the Palestinians have the most to gain when Cairo brings together some 20 Arab leaders at the summit, slated for Friday to Sunday.

Indeed, no party to the summit is more nervous about the direction Netanyahu's government will pursue than the Palestinians.

The Palestinians at this point have the most to lose if the peace process breaks down.

They have sent desperate signals to Netanyahu that they want to talk business.

Netanyahu's foreign affairs adviser, Dore Gold, met with Yasser Arafat's second in command, Mahmoud Abbas, who is also known as Abu-Mazen, within days after the election.

Faisal Husseini, in charge of Jerusalem in Arafat's Cabinet, met last week with Ronnie Milo, the Likud mayor of Tel Aviv, to convey Palestinian desires to continue with the peace process.

Radiated pessimism

But a few days later, Arafat radiated pessimism. All his efforts to establish direct contact with Netanyahu have failed.

As a result, Arafat was coming to Cairo with a major question mark hanging over future relations with the new government in Israel.

His immediate concerns surround the redeployment of Israeli forces in Hebron and the resumption of the final status talks that opened in early May and were expected to continue after the Israeli elections.

Under the Israeli-Palestinian accords, the final phase of negotiations will determine the political status of the Palestinian self-rule areas, as well as the status of Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

In response to Netanyahu's intention to adopt a harder line toward the talks with the Palestinians than was pursued by the government of Shimon Peres, some voices

in the Arab world have called for the summit to urge an immediate cessation of any normalization of relations with Israel.

However, Arafat wants to keep all the options open.

The Palestinians are coming to Cairo with a more moderate approach, suggesting that the summit condition the continued normalization on progress in the peace process.

That the Palestinians were emerging as the standard bearers of moderation in advance of the summit was a direct result of the peace process.

Some Palestinians see the summit as an opportunity to return to the fold of Arab politics.

Ghassan al-Khatib, who is a political scientist at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank, said this week that the late Yitzhak Rabin's great achievement was splitting the Arab world through Israel's accords with the Palestinians.

The direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations effectively kept the broader Arab world away from the Palestinian question, he said.

The Palestinian press in eastern Jerusalem boasted this week that as a result of the self-rule accords, the Palestinians had detached themselves from the Arab world, but now Netanyahu's election was carrying them back home to the Arab fold.

Moreover, Egypt, which was the first Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel 17 years ago, has found itself virtually on the sidelines of the peace process over the past three years as Israel reached accords with the Palestinians and a peace treaty with Jordan.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, whose only visit to Israel was for the funeral of Yitzhak Rabin in November, has sought to reclaim Egypt's traditional role as leader of the Arab world.

Playing host to Arab leaders at this weekend's summit, Mubarak is back in the driver's seat.

With the peace process in apparent danger, at least in the eyes of Arab leaders, the prospects for Arab unity are rising.

But in this atmosphere of harmony, the Palestinians, along with Egypt, are the main winners.

In contrast, King Hussein of Jordan's fortunes have gone downhill.

Champion of appeasement

The man who was the champion of Jewish-Arab appeasement has lost two of his best friends. Rabin was the victim of political assassination and Peres was the political casualty of the Israeli voters.

Hussein, the veteran Arab survivor, has been left out in the Arab political cold.

Hussein would have liked to come to an Arab summit to boast about the dividends of peace with Israel.

But, with an ongoing economic crisis in Jordan and deep disenchantment among his people with the peace deal, he can hardly do so now.

Cairo could be Mubarak's finest hour.

He will signal Israel that he can unite the majority of the Arab world behind him on the issue of continuing the dialogue with the Jewish state.

Despite pre-summit rhetoric in some Arab quarters warning of violence if the peace process is stalled, Mubarak has no interest in returning to a belligerent Middle East.

But he will set a price for continued dialogue.

And the price will be pressing the Netanyahu government to enter the next phase of negotiations with the Palestinians in accordance with the agreements Israel already has signed. □