

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a CNN interview with Larry King, reiterated his call for the United States to move its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The premier, who will be in the United States next week to meet with President Clinton, also said Jews had the right to live in any part of the West Bank and Jerusalem.**

■ **Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy threatened to resign from the government if Likud member Ariel Sharon was not made a Cabinet member before Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's departure for Washington next week. [Page 3]**

■ **Hungary signed a landmark agreement with Jewish groups for the restitution of property confiscated during World War II. The agreement, signed in Budapest, called for the formation of a foundation that would manage the Jewish properties and assets as well as use funds to help surviving Hungarian Jews.**

■ **The executive director of the American Jewish Committee will receive a visa to Russia after he was denied one, the U.S. State Department said. David Harris, who was to go this week to Russia for a conference on the status of Jews in the former Soviet Union, said he had no indication that the visa would be granted.**

■ **More than 600 people are taking action against El Al Israel Airlines and the Netherlands, demanding that they be provided with information on the cargo of the El Al plane that crashed in Amsterdam in October 1992. The lawyer representing the 600 said he wants the data because the chemicals that might have been on plane possibly affected the health of people in the crash area.**

■ **Germany's top court ruled that lower courts should decide whether prisoners in Hitler's slave labor camps could sue the government for compensation. [Page 2]**

REMINDER: The JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Friday, July 5.

Russian Jews ambivalent as nation votes for president

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — At a local polling station Wednesday, an elderly woman in her 70s was arguing with a war veteran about which presidential candidate to support.

"You won't live to see any changes. Why won't you let our grandchildren live a better life?" Galina Solomonovna, a Jewish woman who just cast her vote for Boris Yeltsin, said as she tried to convince a Communist Party supporter.

Mikhail Chlenov, president of Va'ad — the Russian Jewish Federation, said Jewish voters were as divided on the choice of a new president as the general community.

Some elderly Jews as well as many non-Jews of their age are backing the Communist Party leader, Gennady Zyuganov.

"I joined the Communist Party at the front not to betray it 50 years later," said a Jewish veteran of World War II from St. Petersburg.

But even supporters of Yeltsin showed up at polling stations in Moscow with some ambivalence.

Some were expressing hope that Yeltsin would win the runoff against Zyuganov.

They also voiced uncertainty about which direction the country would go, even if Yeltsin should win.

Some Jews interviewed at polling places in the Russian capital said they were now less optimistic about their future than during the first round of voting on June 16.

"I cast my vote for Yeltsin although today I feel more uncertainty about Russia's future if Yeltsin is re-elected than I did two weeks ago," said Mark Brailovsky, 55.

He referred to Yeltsin's newly appointed national security adviser, Alexander Lebed, who Tuesday called himself "a half-democrat" when speaking about visa regulations.

Lebed, who placed third in the first round of the presidential elections and subsequently joined Yeltsin's administration, recently stirred up controversy over his failure to mention Judaism as one of Russia's traditional religions.

Western religious sects represent "a direct threat to Russia's security," Lebed said in his address to supporters last week as he campaigned for Yeltsin.

"We have established traditional religions — Russian Orthodoxy, Islam and Buddhism," Lebed said.

He added that these religions should be allowed to develop and flourish.

Lebed's comments caused concern among Jewish and religious leaders in Russia.

'Comments probably an error'

"How could he have forgotten?" said the Rev. Peter Konovalchik, president of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the Russian Federation.

"But if he did mention Judaism, would that be enough?" he added, referring to the omission of any reference to Lutherans and other minority faith groups.

Konovalchik, who came to New York as part of a delegation of Russian religious leaders, was speaking at the Appeal of Conscience Foundation in New York.

Another member of the delegation, Archpriest Victor Petiliuchenko, deputy chairman of the external relations department of the Moscow Patriarchate, said Lebed's comments were "probably an error."

But he said Lebed was now a symbol of Yeltsin's power and that the statements were not "a great help."

Although Yeltsin had not been seen in public for more than a week before Wednesday's runoff, reportedly because of poor health, some Russian Jews believed that Lebed's remarks did not pose any threat to democracy.

"I don't see any tragedy in what is going on in the country," said

Savely Yudin, a 35-year old Moscow photographer. "I think Yeltsin will get 60 percent of the vote," he said.

Voter turnout for the runoff appeared to be generally lower than in the first round, when some 70 percent of the electorate voted.

Because Communist challenger Zyuganov's supporters are organized better than the nation's general populace, "less voters at the polling places today could make Zyuganov's victory easier," said Chlenov. □

(JTA intern Heather Camlot in New York contributed to this report.)

Security officials recommend easing closure on territories

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Top Israeli security officials have recommended significantly easing the 4-month-old closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The closure, imposed in February after the first of a series of suicide bombings, has prevented tens of thousands of Palestinian workers from reaching jobs in Israel and has cost the Palestinian economy more than \$300 million.

Top security officials, including Maj. Gen. Uzi Dayan, the head of the Israel Defense Force central command; Ami Ayalon, the head of the Shin Bet, Israel's domestic intelligence agency; and Maj. Gen. Oren Shahor, the coordinator of activities in the territories, have advocated easing the closure, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported Tuesday.

If the closure is eased, 50,000 to 70,000 Palestinians would be allowed entry permits, security sources said. Permits would only be given to workers who are older than 25, married and do not have a security violation record.

Likud Knesset member Gideon Ezra, a former deputy head of the Shin Bet, called this week for an easing of the closure.

"It is not good for either side," he said. "People want to go to work, and they should be allowed. These are the people we have to continue living with here."

He said the Palestinians should be allowed to take the jobs now being filled by foreign workers.

Since the closure took effect, about 100,000 foreign workers have entered Israel legally. Some 100,000 others have entered illegally.

Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai was reportedly inclined to adopt the recommendations of the security officials, even though he said he would not make any decision before discussing it with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Rehavam Ze'evi, leader of the right-wing Moledet Party, voiced opposition to easing the closure.

He said the measure was effective in preventing terrorist attacks and that it should not be eased because of international pressure "just to have a more comfortable atmosphere when the prime minister goes to Washington" next week. □

German court avoids deciding on WWII slave workers' claims

By Daniel Dagan

BONN (JTA) — Germany's top court would not decide this week whether prisoners in Hitler's slave labor camps could sue the government for compensation.

The court said the case should be considered by lower courts, but reportedly did not offer any guidelines.

The Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe handed down the ruling in April, though it was first published Tuesday.

The decision follows a case in which 22 plaintiffs, all of them Jewish, filed claims of up to \$14,500 each because they were forced by the Nazi SS to work at a munitions factory while interned from 1943 to 1945 at Auschwitz.

Some have said the ruling paves the way for surviving slave laborers to seek compensation in German courts.

But Saul Kagan, executive vice president of the Conference of Material Claims Against Germany, said, "Until the full text of the decision of the German Constitutional Court becomes available and is evaluated, it is not possible to determine whether this decision will be of practical significance for Holocaust survivors."

About 7 million slave laborers, many of them Jews, worked in Germany during World War II. In the past, individual companies have had to settle with victims of slave labor.

After the verdict, representatives of the victims urged the German Parliament to pass a law that would clearly recognize the slave laborers' claims. □

(JTA staff writer Alissa Kaplan in New York contributed to this report.)

Netanyahu house in spotlight after ejected nanny cries foul

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, dealing with quarreling ministers and striking public employees, had to confront a dispute this week in his own household.

Tanya Shaw, the Netanyahus' nanny, made headlines this week when she claimed that Sara Netanyahu, wife of the Israeli leader, had fired her because of a pot of burnt soup.

The Prime Minister's Office said the 21-year-old South African immigrant was fired because she was unstable and prone to violent outbursts.

In an interview with the Israeli daily Ma'ariv, Shaw said she had been playing with the couple's 5-year-old son, Yair, when Sara Netanyahu called her into the house.

"I knew she was angry about something," Shaw said. "She would use that tone when she was angry."

Shaw said Netanyahu screamed at her for burning soup and almost causing a fire.

An argument ensued, during which Netanyahu ordered Shaw out of the house, and called on security service bodyguards to kick her out.

A couple of hours later, she was allowed to go back in to get her belongings.

In interviews with the media, Shaw admitted that she and Netanyahu had clashed before in the six months she worked for the family.

She described Netanyahu as obsessed with cleanliness, making everyone wash their hands before touching the children and refusing to let the children play on the floor.

Shaw said she had not voted in the May 29 elections, in which her boss was elected prime minister, "because when I asked if I could come in late to vote, she said no."

Shaw's father was quoted as acknowledging that his daughter "had a big mouth, and would use it," but he added that "she also knows how to apologize."

Netanyahu, Israel's first directly elected prime minister, has been in the spotlight before because of his personal life.

In 1993, he went on television to admit that he had cheated on Sara, who is his third wife. □

NEWS ANALYSIS

Clash with Likud hard-liners may help Netanyahu's image

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Still mired in a politically sticky effort to find a place for Ariel Sharon in his Cabinet, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has run into conflict with another Likud hard-liner — Minister of Science Ze'ev "Benny" Begin.

Last Friday, the two men clashed at the weekly Cabinet meeting over diplomatic contacts with the Palestinian Authority.

While Begin has denied rumors that he intends to quit the government, political observers believe that the next altercation between the pragmatic premier and the rigidly right-wing Begin is not far off.

But observers say trouble with his hard-liners could be useful for Netanyahu in his international dealings.

It accentuates his own relative moderation in comparison to some of the other figures in his rightist-centrist-religious coalition.

In fact, some observers here believe that Netanyahu actively courted, and quickly trumpeted, the verbal showdown with Begin on the eve of his first visit to Washington as premier that is scheduled for next week.

Begin waited patiently as Netanyahu and his top defense aides briefed the ministers on a meeting between Dore Gold, the premier's foreign policy adviser, and Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat.

Then, suddenly, Begin launched into a 25-minute diatribe on the need, in his view, for the Israeli government to turn its back on the Palestine Liberation Organization — now the elected leadership of the Palestinian Authority — and, by extension, on the accords the Jewish state signed with the Palestinians during the past three years.

Netanyahu responded angrily.

"I don't have to listen to this," he was reported as saying.

The Cabinet secretary, Danny Naveh, told reporters that the prime minister had "firmly" rebutted Begin's criticism and had pointed out that Begin knew full well the government's policy position before he joined it.

Latest recalcitrant

That policy, articulated before and after the May 29 election, is to pursue peace negotiations with the Palestinian Authority.

Netanyahu has said he will "consider" meeting with Arafat himself "if the national security interest requires it."

After he confronted Netanyahu, Begin refused to comment publicly while sources close to him said he had known in advance that his sojourn in the Cabinet would be short-lived.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu was continuing to battle with several ministers who have been reluctant to cede portions of their portfolios for a new Ministry of National Infrastructure that would be run by Sharon, the veteran Likud hard-liner who was denied other Cabinet appointments.

The latest recalcitrant, according to Israeli media reports, was Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai of Likud, who has reportedly raised objections to the proposal that he relinquish control of the vast defense industrial complex to Sharon.

National Religious Party member Yitzhak Levy, who is the transportation and energy minister, was balking at giving up parts of his mandate to Sharon.

Nonetheless, both Mordechai and Levy insist that

they want to see Sharon take his rightful place at the Cabinet table beside them.

One of Sharon's allies in the Cabinet, Foreign Minister David Levy, threatened Wednesday to resign from the government if Sharon was not made a minister before Netanyahu departs for his U.S. visit next week.

Responding to Levy's threat, Netanyahu said he hoped that Sharon would soon join the government.

The prime minister added that it was unacceptable for ministers to demand that Sharon join the government, but refuse to give up part of their ministries for the infrastructure portfolio being created for him.

The problems Netanyahu has with Begin and Sharon are not inherently linked.

Nevertheless, there is more than coincidence that ties them together.

If Sharon eventually joins, and Begin does not resign, Netanyahu will find himself facing a powerful and articulate hard-line opposition within the Cabinet.

However, if Sharon does not agree to take the post that is being created for him, and Begin walks out, the prime minister will find himself facing the same potentially awkward opposition criticizing him from outside the Cabinet room.

Still, another scenario for the premier would be to end up with one of them in and the other out. The one on the outside would naturally serve as a focus of disgruntled Likud Party members while the one on the inside would make the atmosphere at the Cabinet meetings tense at best, explosive at worst.

Both Begin and Sharon have the kind of background and grass-roots support in the party that makes any high-handed treatment of them by the prime minister politically dangerous.

Ironically, Sharon and Begin loathe each other.

They are now involved as adversaries, in a court case over Sharon's behavior as minister of defense during the 1982 Lebanon War. Sharon has sued the newspaper Ha'aretz for libel for publishing that he misled the then-prime minister, Menachem Begin, over the course of the war.

Begin, who was one of the very few persons to maintain close contact with his father after Menachem Begin's sudden resignation in 1983 and subsequent retirement into seclusion, has submitted a sworn affidavit backing the newspaper's version. □

Hezbollah strikes in security zone

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A soldier of the Israel-allied South Lebanon Army was wounded Wednesday when a roadside charge went off near his patrol in the security zone.

The Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah group claimed responsibility for the attack.

The incident occurred as the Israel Defense Force engineering corps presented the media with its special unit of bomb-sniffing dogs that will head to southern Lebanon.

Brig. Gen. Eliezer Toledano said the dogs were effective in countering the widespread practice of laying roadside charges along southern Lebanon routes used by IDF and SLA forces.

The canines are taught to run ahead of an army patrol, smelling for any traces of explosive materials.

If the dogs sense any explosive material, they sit at the site until experts from the engineering corps are able to neutralize or detonate the charge.

"To date, none of the dogs have been injured in their duties," Toledano told Israel Radio. "To use the dogs is to save soldiers' lives." □

America's first lady shaken by horrors at Auschwitz camp

By Ruth E. Gruber

WARSAW (JTA) — America's first lady stared in horror at the grisly exhibitions in the museum, set up in the red brick barracks of the Auschwitz I camp.

There, she viewed mountains of human hair and stack after stack of eyeglasses, shoes, suitcases, children's clothing and artificial limbs.

Hillary Rodham Clinton was at the Auschwitz-Birkenau death complex, in the town of Oswiecim in southern Poland.

The first lady was in Poland as part of a seven-nation tour of Eastern and Central Europe.

Clinton, who was accompanied on Tuesday's visit by the Polish first lady, Jolanta Kwasniewski, saw the torture cells and the firing-squad wall and viewed photographs of the faces of those killed there.

At Birkenau, Clinton stood at the site where hundreds of thousands of Jews from across Europe arrived in cattle cars.

She saw where these Jews were "selected" by the Nazis for either hard labor or immediate death in the gas chambers.

She looked at the ruins of barracks and the rubble of the destroyed crematoria.

"This was cold, rational evil" that used "tools of technology and bureaucracy to exterminate millions of people in a deliberate effort at genocide and political conquest," Clinton said, visibly shaken.

"The lessons of this place should never be forgotten," she said.

"You can't even let up for a minute on your condemning of extremism and intolerance."

The first lady added, "You can't ever let anybody forget what human beings are capable of — and can't ever let anybody forget about places like this."

Clinton also condemned any attempt to deny or question the Nazi murder of 6 million Jews.

She stressed that lessons had to be learned from Auschwitz.

She deplored current manifestations of racism and intolerance, citing as examples the former Yugoslavia and the burning of predominately black churches in the United States.

'Difficult, emotional afternoon'

Also Tuesday, Clinton met with members of Poland's Jewish community.

At the end of the meeting with Jewish students, intellectuals, Holocaust survivors and lay and religious community leaders, Clinton said, "It was a difficult and emotional afternoon, and it is emotional to come here after being in Auschwitz and seeing [photographs there of] the faces of those who perished."

She added, "The best possible way I could end the day was to come here and see the faces of Jewish children when I arrived."

Clinton met with the Polish Jewish community representatives at the headquarters of the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation.

The foundation sponsors a Jewish kindergarten, a Jewish elementary school and other Jewish educational activities.

As the two first ladies arrived at the building, which is next door to Warsaw's one remaining synagogue, they were greeted by 15 children from the Jewish kindergarten. The group of children serenaded them with loud renditions of "Shalom Aleichem" and "Am Yisrael Chai."

Clinton then sat down for a discussion that began with a blessing by Poland's chief rabbi, Menachem Joskowicz, himself an Auschwitz survivor.

"I want to listen," Clinton said, asking each of the more than one dozen Jews at the meeting to describe his or her experiences as Jews living in the country that was the Nazis' main killing field.

Poland was home to 3.5 million Jews before the onset of World War II.

But today, only an estimated 10,000 Jews live there.

Particularly since the fall of communism, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Jews in Poland have tried to regain their Jewish identity.

Some of these Jews have only recently discovered that they are, indeed, Jewish.

As a result, many new Jewish organizations and activities have been founded.

"I found out six years ago from my mother that I am Jewish," student Uri Filipowicz told Clinton. "I took it normally, as if I had always known."

"But before that I hadn't known what it meant to be a Jew."

"In my family, the fact that my mother was Jewish was canceled out," he added.

"Obviously, I don't want to leave Poland, but I don't want the fact that I'm Jewish to be just another empty word."

"So I decided to learn as much as I could and make this my road."

Student Michal Chajm said, "I found out I was Jewish 10 years ago and it was a big shock."

"At first I tried to hide it. It was very hard, especially when I heard anti-Semitic jokes from my friends."

Jews of all generations described their challenges, which include lingering anti-Semitism.

They also stressed their commitment to form a real Jewish life in Poland.

"We are a very diverse community, a community undergoing [growing] pains," said Jewish writer Konstanty Gebert.

He added, "I would never have believed 10 years ago that today I would be complaining of lack of space for a Jewish school."

Michael Schudrich, the American rabbi who heads the Lauder Foundation in Poland, remarked on the first ladies' visit.

He said: "It was extremely important for the Jewish community of Poland — and especially for those Jews born after the war who are slowly coming to terms with their return to their Jewish identity and to the Jewish people — that both Mrs. Clinton and Mrs. Kwasniewski should take the time to meet, listen and learn about their concerns and dreams." □

Assassin petitions the court

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Yigal Amir, who is serving a life sentence for the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, has petitioned the High Court of Justice against his prison conditions.

He has said the Prison Authority is trying to drive him crazy.

Amir complained to the court that his mail was being withheld and that his meetings with his attorneys were being taped.

Amir asked that he be given back his prayer book and that a computer be installed in his cell.

The 25-year-old shot and killed Rabin at a Nov. 4 peace rally in Tel Aviv. □