



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** told hundreds of Jewish leaders in New York that he reached an understanding with President Bill Clinton that decisions affecting Israeli security "must be made by the State of Israel and no one else." The Israeli leader said Clinton agreed with him that "no one will drive a wedge between Israel and the United States." Netanyahu spoke at a meeting sponsored by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

■ **Argentine Justice Minister Rodolfo Barra** resigned in the wake of recent revelations about his past membership in a violent anti-Semitic group. Barra, who was responsible for the investigations of the unsolved bombings of the Israeli Embassy in 1992 and the Jewish community headquarters in 1994, was replaced by vice minister Elias Jassan, who is Jewish.

■ **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office** announced that he will travel to Cairo and Amman after he returns from the United States. Meanwhile, Palestinian leaders reacted angrily to Netanyahu's address to Congress. [Page 2]

■ **Agudath Israel** took its case against homosexual marriages to the Senate Judiciary Committee, which held a hearing on a measure that moves toward banning gay marriages. The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism has testified in opposition to the measure.

■ **The attorney for former SS Capt. Erich Priebke** requested his release from prison pending the verdict in his war crimes trial. Velio Di Rezze said a Rome businessman had offered to house Priebke if he was released. [Page 3]

■ **Dozens of Palestinians** protesting the closure of the territories clashed with Israeli soldiers at an army road-block near the West Bank self-rule town of Tulkarm. The Palestinians, who lacked proper work permits, tried to break through the blockade and enter Israel.

■ **David Duke** officially announced that he would run for the U.S. Senate, pledging to fight to preserve America's white, Christian heritage.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Tensions linger in the Cabinet after Sharon joins government

By David Landau

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Ariel Sharon's inclusion as infrastructure minister in the Israeli Cabinet this week, just in time for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's trip to the United States, represented a major victory for Foreign Minister David Levy.

It was Levy's ultimatum, delivered before television cameras last week to a startled and embarrassed Netanyahu, that forced the prime minister to push the appointment through.

If Sharon were not made a minister before the premier left, Levy warned at a meeting of the coalition partners in the Knesset, he would resign from the Foreign Ministry, a move that would have left the coalition in shambles.

An earlier threat by Levy, on June 18, the day the coalition was sworn in, forced Netanyahu to pledge to the Knesset that he would set up a new ministry in order to provide Sharon with a portfolio commensurate with his standing and ambitions.

Levy's ultimatums persuaded Netanyahu to twist his ministers' arms hard enough to secure an impressive collection of powers from their various departments that together will make up the new Ministry of National Infrastructures.

After the Knesset approved Sharon's appointment in a 58-33 vote, with one abstention, the Likud hard-liner took his oath of office Monday evening, with Netanyahu already airborne for Washington.

But Levy's role as Sharon's facilitator, while plainly enhancing Levy's own status in the Cabinet, does not necessarily foreshadow an alliance between these two much-experienced Likud ministers.

To the contrary, some observers believe, hard decisions that will need to be taken on the peace process may well soon set Sharon and Levy at odds with each other as the members of the Netanyahu Cabinet begin marking out their positions on the hawk-dove axis.

These observers point to Sharon's longtime personal foe, Science Minister Ze'ev "Benny" Begin, as the former defense minister's natural ally on the hawkish right in future Cabinet debates.

Begin, son of the late Prime Minister Menachem Begin, has already clashed with Netanyahu's tactic of pursuing indirect contacts with Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority.

Those contacts are expected to be elevated shortly to the ministerial level with a meeting between Arafat and Levy.

Complex web of relationships

Sharon, for his part, persists in referring to Arafat as a mass murderer and unreconstructed terrorist.

He has called in the past for a thorough revision of the Hebron redeployment agreement, though more recently he made a point of stressing in media interviews that binding agreements undertaken by the previous government must be honored.

In the complex web of political and personal relationships that connect and divide Cabinet members in the new government, the pragmatic line personified by Levy will likely receive strong support from another of Sharon's longtime foes, Finance Minister Dan Meridor.

While a close personal friend of Begin's, Meridor is considered significantly more moderate than Begin on issues relating to the peace process with the Palestinians.

Meridor's seniority in the new administration was strongly entrenched this past week, after the close support he received from Netanyahu in marathon budget deliberations that ended Sunday with a decision to make a series of stiff cuts of some \$1.6 billion in the government's fiscal 1997 budget.

Beyond the pressure that Netanyahu has taken from Levy over the Sharon appointment, however, and beyond the predictions of future tensions within the Cabinet, the question that remained naggingly unanswered as Netanyahu arrived in Washington this week concerned his capacity to perform

well under pressure. While Netanyahu himself claims that the upshot of the hectic period of coalition-building has been favorable for his own Likud Party — which holds only 32 of the coalition's 66 Knesset seats — the Israeli public has watched bemusedly as their new leader found himself reacting to other, more seasoned politicians rather than shaping his government himself.

There was, for instance, his effort to keep Meridor out of a top job. Netanyahu had wanted the governor of the Bank of Israel, Jacob Frenkel, as his minister of finance — but he had to back off and name Meridor to the post in the face of a raucous outcry from within his own Likud Party.

Similarly, his determination to keep Sharon out of the top Cabinet slots — defense and finance — was only partially successful.

The newly created Infrastructure Ministry, with its vast areas of responsibility, will be one of the most powerful portfolios. Among the responsibilities handed over to Sharon will be to conduct the crucial negotiations over water rights under a permanent-status arrangement with the Palestinians, a particularly disturbing development in the view of the Palestinian negotiators.

It is the question of Netanyahu's ability to perform under pressure, rather than the details of the story itself, that has given Israelis cause to pause in the matter of what is called "Nannygate" — the news accounts this past week of the angry dismissal by Netanyahu's wife, Sara, of their children's nanny.

In particular, the assertions made by the Prime Minister's Office in a statement to the media that the nanny had been unbalanced, and that the Shin Bet security service had wanted to remove her, triggered serious misgivings throughout the political community.

The second assertion was flatly denied by Shin Bet sources. The first seems wholly unsustainable.

Do they reflect the prime minister's own overhasty reaction to the unflattering media accounts of his wife's behavior?

If so, they inevitably invoke memories of his tempestuous television appearance in 1993, when he volunteered that he had been having an adulterous affair and accused Levy and his supporters of plotting to black-mail him over it.

Israelis are still digesting the change of generation and of style that their new prime minister represents.

The Netanyahu family faults the media for prying, but behind the style of journalism being practiced by the Israeli media, there is a public longing to be reassured — to feel confident that the man elected to worry for the rest of Israel is up to the stresses of the job.

If Netanyahu's reactions to the recent high-profile lashings he has taken reflect his ability to face unpleasant pressures, then his various ministerial pressure groups — not to speak of governments abroad — are sure to submit him to further and frequent doses of it. □

Palestinians react angrily to Netanyahu's U.S. speech

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's address to a joint session of Congress has generated angry ripples across the Arab world.

"It seems to me that Mr. Netanyahu has made up his mind to go ahead with a declaration of war against the Palestinians," Faisal Hussein, the top Palestinian official in Jerusalem, told Army Radio on Thursday.

In his speech Wednesday, Netanyahu stated that Israel would move ahead with the peace process when Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat demonstrated that he could clamp down on terrorism.

Making no concessions to the Palestinians in a speech that reiterated the "peace with security" stance of his election campaign, he also declared that "there will never be a redivision of Jerusalem."

Hanan Ashrawi, recently named the Palestinian minister of higher education, called Netanyahu's remarks one of the "most dangerous speeches" ever delivered before Congress.

The Palestinian Council — the legislative body in the self-rule areas — met in a special session Thursday to discuss what Ahmed Karia, the council's speaker, described as the "unbearable Israeli violations" of the self-rule accords. Karia said the council would present recommendations to the Palestinian leadership during a meeting in the Gaza Strip over the weekend.

Arafat, for his part, offered only a brief reaction, telling reporters in Gaza that Jerusalem is "the capital of Palestine, forever."

In Syria, Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa called the Israeli leader's policies "irresponsible," warning that they would lead to a halt in the peace process.

He said Arab countries would soon begin coordinating their response to Netanyahu's remarks.

In Cairo, the Arab League secretariat said Netanyahu's speech before Congress only served to increase tension and violence in the region.

Netanyahu, meanwhile, was expected to travel to Egypt and Jordan next week in an effort to discuss his positions with the leaders of the two nations.

A senior Egyptian official was quoted as saying Thursday that Netanyahu would make a brief trip to Cairo for talks with President Hosni Mubarak and Foreign Minister Amre Moussa.

Jordanian Prime Minister Abdul Karim al-Kabariti told a news conference in Amman that the Israeli leader would visit next week.

In Jerusalem, Foreign Minister David Levy said Wednesday that he would meet with Arafat within two weeks, adding that Netanyahu might meet with the Palestinian leader even sooner.

In a separate development, Science Minister Ze'ev "Benny" Begin met Thursday with the Egyptian ambassador to Israel, Mohammed Basiouny, in Jerusalem.

Begin said after the meeting that the two had discussed the peace process, but he refused to elaborate.

He added that he was working on a plan to forge closer technological ties between the two countries. □

Rabin exhibit prompts protest

By Kathleen Knox

PRAGUE (JTA) — Anti-Semitic leaflets headlined "Against Zionism and Islamism" have been plastered on the streets of Brno, the Czech Republic's second largest city.

The leaflets protested a photographic exhibit that opened in Brno this week about the life of assassinated Israeli Premier Yitzhak Rabin.

The exhibit, called "Yitzhak Rabin 1922-1995," was criticized in the leaflets, which said it "confirms that the Jews play too big a role in Czech politics and culture," the Czech news agency CTK reported.

The leaflets were signed by a nationalist group calling itself the Patriotic Front.

Tomas Kraus, executive director of the Federation of Jewish Communities, played down the incident, saying the leaflets were written by a marginal group deserving little attention.

The exhibit moved to Brno from Prague, where Rabin's widow, Leah, attended its opening in May along with Czech President Vaclav Havel. □

New survey of American Jews shows support for Netanyahu

By Anne Miller

WASHINGTON (JTA) — On the eve of Benjamin Netanyahu's first visit here as Israeli prime minister, a newly released poll shows that American Jews support the Likud Party leader.

Although about 31 percent of American Jews say they would have cast their ballots for Netanyahu in May's election, some 62 percent now say they view him either "very" or "somewhat" favorably.

Nearly two-thirds of the 860 American Jews polled between July 2 and July 6 believe the new prime minister will continue to pursue peace, a process about 81 percent "strongly" or "somewhat" approve of as it was conducted by Netanyahu's predecessors, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin.

The poll was released this week by the Israel Policy Forum, an American group established in support of the peace process.

Almost all queried, 98 percent, believe in the importance of a strong relationship between the United States and Israel, and 82 percent believe Netanyahu will maintain good, if not excellent, relations with America.

The continuation of the peace process is important to a strong U.S.-Israel relationship, according to 95 percent of those polled.

Nearly two-thirds of those surveyed said they believe Netanyahu is sincere "when he says he wants to continue the peace process."

The poll also found that some 63 percent were "concerned to hear about the new influence of the religious parties in Israel," while 27 percent said they were "hopeful" about this development. Religious parties won 23 seats in the 120-seat Knesset in the May 29 elections.

Approximately 44 percent of those questioned identified themselves as Reform, 33 percent Conservative, 8 percent Orthodox and 14 percent as other categories, including Reconstructionist.

The poll, conducted for the Israel Policy Forum by Penn & Schoen Associates, has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percent. □

Court weighs Priebke's release from jail because of his health

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — An Italian military court has delayed ruling on a controversial defense request to release former SS Capt. Erich Priebke from prison and place him under house arrest pending the verdict in his war crimes trial.

At the same time, presiding Judge Agostino Quistelli rejected Thursday a bid by Jewish plaintiffs in the case to have the trial shifted to a civil court.

In an attempt to bring the trial to an end before the August summer holidays, he also ordered expanded, weekend court sessions to expedite the proceedings.

The Priebke trial reopened Wednesday after a three-week break during which a military appeals court rejected Prosecutor Antonino Intelisano's attempt to oust Quistelli and another of the three judges because of their alleged bias in favor of Priebke.

Priebke, who turns 83 at the end of July, is charged with involvement in Italy's worst Nazi World War II atrocity — the March 1944 mass execution of 335 men and boys in the Ardeatine Caves south of Rome. Some 75 of the massacre victims were Jews.

The massacre was ordered in reprisal for an Italian partisan attack that killed 33 German soldiers.

Priebke has been held in a Rome military prison since he was extradited from Argentina last November to stand trial. The trial itself began May 8.

At Wednesday's session, Priebke's lawyer touched off an angry shouting match in the courtroom by requesting that because of his age Priebke be released from jail pending the trial verdict.

Velio Di Rezze said a Rome businessman had offered to house Priebke if he was released. Italy does not have a bail system. "In Italy," he said, "there is no one held in preventive detention who is older than 70. There is only Priebke, who turns 83 on July 29."

Spectators in the courtroom, including friends and family of victims of the Ardeatine Caves massacre, erupted into a storm of protests and cries of "Shame, shame." Quistelli angrily threatened to clear the courtroom.

At the same trial session, Oreste Bisazza Terracini, the lawyer representing families of the Jewish victims, requested that the trial be shifted to a civil court because the SS was a political rather than military police body.

In his rulings Thursday, Quistelli said the court would decide on whether to grant Priebke house arrest within two weeks, after carrying out tests on Priebke's health. He flatly rejected Bisazza Terracini's request to shift the trial to a civil courtroom. □

Argentine judge claims police hid evidence in bombing probe

By Sergio Kiernan

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — The official in charge of the investigation into the July 18, 1994, bombing of the Jewish community headquarters here has leveled allegations against an Argentine police unit for withholding evidence.

Judge Juan Jose Galeano charged this week that members of the Constitutional Order Protection Unit of the Federal Police had "stolen and hid material evidence relevant to the investigation of the AMIA bombing."

Galeano asked his colleague Judge Maria Servini de Cubria to "investigate these charges and prosecute the parties involved."

The Argentine government has failed to find the terrorists responsible for the 1994 bombing of the Argentine Mutual Aid Association, or AMIA. The blast left 86 dead and 300 wounded.

The Constitutional Order Protection Unit, or POC, was created a few years ago to uncover conspiracies against Argentine democracy.

After the AMIA bombing, the POC was assigned to the case. □

The crimes allegedly carried out by members of the POC took place in October 1995, when police raided the house and offices of used car dealer Alejandro Monjo.

Monjo was allegedly involved in the sale of the white Renault van used as a car bomb in the AMIA attack.

Monjo, however, was allegedly tipped off about the raids and could only be captured after a week at large.

Police sources said at the time that Monjo, who was alleged to have bought police protection, had been warned beforehand by "friends and partners in the federal police force."

During the raids, judiciary officials impounded several boxes of files belonging to Monjo.

An unidentified official saw a "gold-plated key ring with the federal police shield engraved on one side and Monjo's name and a date on the other."

According to Galeano, the key ring and several impounded files never made it to his offices.

Galeano reportedly asked Servini to investigate this and other allegations of police misconduct during the AMIA investigation. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Yisrael Ba'Aliyah's success uplifts spirits of immigrants***By Michele Chabin*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — With seven of their own now sitting in the Knesset, many immigrants from the former Soviet Union are holding their heads a bit higher.

Dogged by feelings of alienation from mainstream Israeli society, on May 29 the immigrants took their grievances to the voting booths — and emerged stronger politically than ever before.

Seemingly as surprised as other Israelis to learn that Natan Sharansky's Yisrael Ba'Aliyah party had garnered seven seats in the 120-seat Knesset — most pollsters predicted the party would win three or four seats at most — the olim say they feel both vindicated and empowered.

The 400,000-strong Russian voting bloc, nearly half of whom supported Yisrael Ba'Aliyah, proved to themselves — and others — that they have the political clout to get things done.

"It's like we've been put on the map, as if we suddenly count," says a hairdresser who identified herself as Irina.

"With seven voices in the Knesset, and Bibi [Netanyahu] in power thanks in large part to Russian support, perhaps now we will be able to get affordable apartments and jobs in our profession."

This newfound feeling of empowerment is manifesting itself in subtle but important ways, according to Tanya Weinraub, a veteran immigrant who works with new olim.

Prior to the elections, Weinraub says, "Russian olim suffered not only from the difficulties associated with entering a new culture, but also with nasty stereotypes. We heard that Russians are mafiosos and prostitutes, that doctors aren't really doctors, that engineers aren't really engineers.

"They were made to feel that they weren't Israelis or even Jews. They were told they didn't belong."

'Israelis respect strength'

Although the stereotypes have not disappeared, she says, "since the elections, Israelis have begun to treat the olim with new respect.

"On the street, when an Israeli realizes that the person they're dealing with is Russian, he'll often say, 'Kol hakavod l'chem' — Good for you, you did it — and the olim cherish this new respect. Suddenly, they don't feel like second-class citizens."

More than anything, Weinraub says, "this past election was about respect. When the immigrants voted in seven [Knesset members], two of whom received Cabinet posts, they gained power, strength. Israelis respect strength and the people who command it."

Natan Sharansky was appointed minister of industry and trade and Yuli Edelstein, also of Yisrael Ba'Aliyah, was named absorption minister.

Just how much power Russian immigrants will be able to wield "is still unknown," according to Arnon Mantver, director general of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's office in Israel.

"It's still too early to judge, but one thing is certain: How the government proceeds, especially on budgetary matters, will greatly affect the most vulnerable part of the Israeli population.

"Although the majority of Russian olim are middle-class, 20 to 25 percent, many of them elderly or single parents, are on different levels of the lower class. Another 10 to 15 percent are pre-pension, aged 45 to 60,

and are suffering hardships because they can't find work in their fields."

According to a source in the Absorption Ministry, the expectations held by many immigrants are "somewhat unrealistic."

While the source acknowledged that the immigrants "have every right to want decent housing, employment, and a good education for their children, [Edelstein] can't find a solution if he doesn't have it."

"Much will depend on the budget cuts just announced by the government," the source adds, referring to the decision by the Cabinet earlier this week to slash some \$1.6 billion from Israel's 1997 budget.

The fact that their representatives in the government — including those Knesset members from the Likud, Labor and other parties who were voted into power with help from the Russians — may not be able or willing to solve their problems has not stopped the immigrants from expecting results.

"Before, the immigrants would come into our offices and ask for an apartment in the center of the country. The clerk would put their name on a long, long list, and usually they simply walked away dejected," notes the source. "Now they feel as if they have a leg inside and are acting more assertive."

This is not to say that Russian immigrants have suddenly become power hungry, stresses a computer programmer named Uri: "Israelis can be very assertive, even pushy, and in this society that's what works. While we would stand in line at the post office or bank, Israelis would push ahead and get serviced first.

"We're finally learning to act like Israelis, which isn't such a bad thing, is it?"

There are those immigrants, of course, who are unhappy with the election results and feel anything but empowered.

"Sure, it's nice to have compatriots in the Knesset, but they're accountable to Bibi Netanyahu and I for one did not vote for him or Yisrael Ba'Aliyah," says a Labor supporter named David, who declined to give his last name.

Like many immigrants, David is concerned that the three religious parties, which won 23 Knesset seats, will try to maintain sole Orthodox jurisdiction over marriage and divorce, and may even try to revise the Law of Return, which now enables immigrants with one Jewish grandparent or a Jewish spouse to immigrate to Israel.

"My wife isn't Jewish, so my children aren't Jewish according to Jewish law," he says. "What happens when they want to marry?"

"God forbid, if one of them died, they wouldn't be buried in a Jewish cemetery. We need to have civil marriage, divorce and burial in this country, and I don't think even Natan Sharansky has the power to enact it." □

Israeli court convicts Iranian hijacker*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Beersheba District Court has convicted an Iranian Air steward of hijacking a domestic airliner to Israel last fall.

The court reportedly found the Iranian guilty of air piracy. Sentencing was to be announced at a later date.

The steward surrendered to Israeli authorities and requested asylum after hijacking a domestic Iranian Air flight to an air base in southern Israel last September.

The crew and all 176 passengers returned to Tehran some 36 hours after landing in Israel.

The steward said he had commandeered the plane because of what he described as the "unbearable situation" in his homeland. □