

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Vice President Al Gore sounded the themes of the Clinton-Gore re-election campaign to Jewish delegates, elected officials and activists at a pre-Democratic Convention gathering in Chicago sponsored by the American Israel Political Affairs Committee and the National Jewish Democratic Council. Later, Jewish administration and elected officials launched their outreach campaign to the Jewish community at a luncheon for the Clinton-Gore Jewish Leadership Council. [Page 3]

■ The Appellate Division of the New York state Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the public school district of Kiryas Joel, which was created solely to benefit children of that New York Satmar Chasidic community.

■ Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy played down reports of Syrian troop movements, saying that Israel was monitoring the situation. Levy's remarks came after reports from Lebanon that Syrian tanks had moved to defensive positions along the Beirut-Damascus highway. [Page 2]

■ An Israeli court ordered the release of a Philadelphia-area resident and human rights activist who was arrested on suspicion of arson, incitement as well as contact with a foreign agent. [Page 2]

■ The Israeli Health and Agriculture ministries gave police the names of some 30 Tel Aviv restaurant owners suspected of forging kashrut and Health Ministry certificates and of using meat slaughtered illegally.

■ A Canadian federal court ruled that a deportation hearing for accused Nazi war criminal Josef Nemsila could continue. A Canadian official was wrong to rule that a 1910 law protecting immigrants who had been in Canada more than five years applied to Nemsila, the court said. [Page 3]

■ A district court judge in Czechoslovakia asked that the immunity of Josef Krejsa, a member of the Czech Parliament, be suspended. [Page 3]

NEWS ANALYSIS**Weizman offer to meet Arafat presses Netanyahu to do same**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — If Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu meets with Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat in the coming weeks, he will have been shamed into doing so by President Ezer Weizman.

Since Netanyahu formed his government in June, he has met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo and Jordan's King Hussein in Amman, but he has pointedly avoided meeting with Israel's Palestinian peace partner, saying that he would consider sitting down with Arafat only if it was deemed necessary for national security.

But the prime minister may no longer be able to avoid a meeting after Sunday's sudden — indeed unprecedented — intervention by Weizman. Concerned that the stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the snubbing of Arafat could undermine agreements already made, Weizman immediately responded affirmatively to a written request by Arafat for a meeting.

Weizman's move came days after former Premier Shimon Peres met with Arafat in Gaza to discuss the status of Israeli-Palestinian relations. Netanyahu sharply criticized Peres last week, accusing the Labor Party leader of interfering in the peace process.

However, after the president's intervention, aides to the prime minister said a Netanyahu-Arafat meeting is now likely to take place.

Although they would not say when it would be held, there was speculation here that the two might meet before Netanyahu's scheduled visit to the United States next month, just before Rosh Hashanah.

At the same time, aides to Weizman insisted that if a Netanyahu-Arafat meeting does not take place soon, the president would go ahead with his own plans to host Arafat at his private home in Caesarea.

Weizman's prodding comes amid growing international concern about the stalled Israeli-Palestinian talks.

Mubarak has threatened to cancel a regional economic summit scheduled for November in Cairo if there is no progress with the Palestinians. Israel, which has seen its ties to the Arab world expand since the self-rule accords were signed with the Palestinians in 1993, has a vested interest in the conference, the third in a series.

Among Palestinians, there is growing anxiety as they await decisions by the Netanyahu government regarding the long-delayed redeployment of Israeli troops from most of Hebron and the resumption of the final-status talks, which will address settlements, Jerusalem and Palestinian statehood.

While not yet making a final decision on Hebron, Netanyahu has indicated that the redeployment would be much less generous than the terms agreed to under the previous Peres government. Further, Netanyahu has shown no willingness to carry out another provision of the Interim Agreement — three more Israel Defense Force redeployments set to begin in September that would turn over additional West Bank territory to the Palestinians.

Generate dynamic of its own

In the eyes of Palestinians, Arafat, who regularly met with Israel's top leaders, including Peres and his predecessor, Yitzhak Rabin, is being treated with contempt by Netanyahu.

But despite his personal antipathy toward Arafat, Netanyahu may not be able to shrug off the president's initiative, given the widespread approval Weizman's intercession received, even within the premier's own Likud ranks.

Likud Knesset member Gideon Ezra, a former deputy head of the Shin Bet, Israel's domestic security service, urged Netanyahu to stop delaying and meet with Arafat immediately. Ezra was hopeful that a Netanyahu-Arafat meeting would generate a dynamic of its own that would bring Israel and the Palestinians back to the negotiating table.

Given the discord between Netanyahu and Arafat, there are attendant risks to forcing a summit. Observers here pointed out this week that even if the long-awaited meeting eventually does take place, it may result in even deeper friction between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority if their talks only confirm the growing divide between the two sides.

Weizman's dramatic intervention burst upon an Israeli public going

back to work Sunday morning after a late summer weekend.

The largest circulation newspaper, *Yedioth Achronot*, reported that Arafat, in a letter to Weizman, had voiced his concerns about the peace process and had asked to see him. Weizman, the paper added, proposed inviting the Palestinian leader to his seaside villa at Caesarea, and had informed Netanyahu accordingly.

Within hours of the paper hitting the streets, Netanyahu was at the president's official residence in Jerusalem and after more than an hour, the two men emerged to face a battery of reporters.

Plainly, they were determined to maintain a cordial facade. "We just like one another," Netanyahu declared, with Weizman nodding his agreement. But the prime minister became visibly stiffer as the president recounted in detail his correspondence with Arafat and explained why he was prepared to host him in Caesarea.

"As the first Palestinian leader in 100 years of conflict who has achieved important political success, as our neighbor who is alongside us and amongst us," Arafat's request for a meeting should be honored, Weizman said.

Such a meeting would be coordinated, of course, with the prime minister and the government, the president added. After all, there were logistical arrangements, such as Arafat's helicopter route, that require authorization.

Weizman denied that he had effectively presented the prime minister with an ultimatum. Threatening to meet with Arafat if Netanyahu continued to refuse to do so would have been "childish," Weizman said.

Nonetheless, the president could not dispel the impression that in essence he was pressuring the prime minister.

Netanyahu, for his part, reiterated his formula that he would meet with Arafat if the national interest required it.

Privately, government sources maintained that a series of high-level meetings between Israeli and Palestinian policy-makers was in fact under way.

Foreign Minister David Levy met with Arafat on July 23, and the prime minister's foreign affairs adviser, Dore Gold, has been meeting frequently with Arafat's deputy, Mahmoud Abbas, also known as Abu-Mazen.

And last week, Netanyahu appointed former IDF Chief of Staff Dan Sharon to head up the Israeli negotiations with the Palestinians. The premier indicated that those talks would resume shortly, but did not give a date.

These meetings would have naturally led, in time, to a Netanyahu-Arafat summit, according to the government sources.

But without the meeting the friction between Israel and the Palestinian Authority escalated, prompting Weizman to take his unorthodox action.

In Israel, the president is largely a ceremonial figure with no political role. His influence on politics, if he exerts any, derives from his own personality and from the moral prestige of his position as the head of state.

In Weizman's case, his intervention, designed to speed up the peace process, drew ironic comments from the left, alongside the broad support it generated throughout the political community.

Political figures in the Labor and Meretz parties believe that Weizman's response to the wave of suicide-bomb terror attacks in February and March was a contributing factor to Peres' defeat in the May election.

Weizman, mirroring widespread popular feeling after the bus bombings, demanded that the Labor-led government "slow down" the peace process in the wake of the terror wave. "Things cannot go on as though nothing has happened," the president said.

He was accused at the time by the left of unconventional interference in policy-making.

This week, however, there was no such accusation from the right. In fact, voices within the Likud explicitly welcomed Weizman's effort to force a meeting between Arafat and Netanyahu.

"There is no reason to delay," said Likud Knesset member Meir Sheerit. "We promised the voters a peace process," he said. "Let's get on with it." □

Israel playing down reports of Syrian troop movements

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel is playing down reports of Syrian troop movements in central Lebanon, saying that there is no reason to panic.

The Lebanese paper *An-Nahar* reported that during the weekend, Syrian vehicles, including tanks, were seen moving from the mountainous Metn region northeast of Beirut toward the Beirut-Damascus highway.

Sources described the redeployment as a defense move against an Israeli air attack.

In Jerusalem, Foreign Minister David Levy warned against misinterpreting the maneuvers. "Regarding these maneuvers, we are used to them, we are following them, and we must not get into a panic."

Syria has some 40,000 troops stationed in Lebanon.

In recent weeks, a number of media reports in Israel suggested that Damascus might be considering a military option in an effort to force a political solution.

During a visit last week to the security zone in southern Lebanon, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned of a painful Israeli retaliation if hostilities escalate there. He said Syria was interested in fighting an indirect war with Israel through Hezbollah.

But Levy on Monday reiterated Israel's interest in resuming peace talks with Syria. Speaking to reporters after meeting in Jerusalem with his Japanese counterpart, Levy said Israel was still waiting for an answer from Syria to Israel's proposal "to talk without preconditions." □

Israel releases U.S. resident accused of torching station

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli court has ordered the release from jail of a Philadelphia-area resident and human rights activist who was arrested on suspicion of arson, incitement and contact with a foreign agent.

Bashar Tarabieh, a Druse who now lives in the United States, was arrested earlier this month on suspicion of torching a police station in the Golan community of Mas'ada. He is also suspected of incitement and having contact with a foreign agent three years ago.

Tarabieh has maintained his innocence.

Tarabieh arrived in the area in mid-June and worked on a human rights project in the West Bank until mid-July, according to Israeli media. He then worked at his family's orchard on the Golan Heights, picking pears. He was arrested as he planned to leave the country.

Under a compromise proposed by the Acre Magistrates Court judge, Tarabieh was released Monday and agreed to spend the next two days in an area hotel. He agreed to be available to police for further questioning, and not to use the phone during that time.

Human Rights Watch, the U.S.-based group for which Tarabieh served as a consultant, said that during Tarabieh's detention at Jalameh prison near Haifa, he was tied up in painful positions and forced to sit for hours.

The group said he was denied regular meals. □

ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

Vice president seeks renewal amid holiday, political season

By Matthew Dorf

CHICAGO (JTA) — Sounding the predominant themes of the Clinton-Gore presidential campaign, Vice President Al Gore rallied the Democratic faithful at a reception for Jewish delegates, activists and elected officials gathered this week for the Democratic National Convention.

This election “represents a choice between moving forward or moving backward,” Gore said to rousing cheers from more than 1,200 people gathered at the Park West dance club for a reception Sunday afternoon sponsored by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and the National Jewish Democratic Council.

“This is about the future, and the record of the past shows that the blueprint of the future will work,” the vice president said.

Interspersing his remarks with repeated references to the upcoming High Holidays and the themes of renewal and redemption, Gore said: “This is not only a season of political choices; it is a season of faith and solemnity.”

The sound of the shofar, he said, will usher in a “new season of renewal and redemption, introspection and soul-searching.” The shofar sends a call for “not only renewal abroad, but also redemption in our own cities.”

Gore sought to draw sharp contrasts between Republican presidential nominee Bob Dole and President Clinton. Playing the role of head cheerleader for Jewish Democrats on the eve of their convention, Gore touted Clinton’s achievements: anti-terrorism legislation, gun control efforts, the minimum wage increase, health-care reform and a “robust economy.”

“Let’s turn to leadership with compassion,” Gore said, adding a quote from the Talmud: “If he performs one mitzvah, he has tipped the scales.”

“May this new year be a year of mitzvot for all of us,” he said, where the scales are tipped toward “peace with security, understanding and opportunity for all.”

In contrast to his address to Jewish Democrats at the 1992 convention, where Gore drew criticism for not mentioning Israel during his remarks, the vice president this week paid tribute to slain Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and pledged to work closely with current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

“Peace and security are indivisible,” he said, borrowing a line from Netanyahu’s campaign. “We seek this peace not only because it is the right thing to do, but because it is our solemn responsibility,” he said.

The Jewish-sponsored reception, which has become a tradition at both Republican and Democratic conventions, also paid tribute to the late Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown, who was killed in a plane crash earlier this year.

After Brown’s son Michael called for a moment of silence in memory of Brown and Rabin, the nascent Democratic activist rallied the crowd around what has become a theme of the gathering: “Imagine what it would be like with Bob Dole in the White House.”

The comment drew hissing and boos from the standing-room only crowd. □

Canadian court rules case against Nemsila can continue

By Bill Gladstone

TORONTO (JTA) — A Canadian federal court has ruled that a deportation hearing for accused Nazi war criminal Josef Nemsila could continue.

Justice James Jerome said last Friday that a

Canadian immigration official was wrong to rule that a 1910 law protecting immigrants who have been in Canada more than five years applied to Nemsila.

As a result of the immigration official’s decision, deportation proceedings against Nemsila had been halted last year.

Nemsila, 83, is accused of lying about his Nazi past when he came to Canada in 1950. Nemsila, a legal resident of Canada, was allegedly a district commander in the notorious Hlinka Guard in the Nazi vassal state of Slovakia. He also is accused of participating in the roundup of the country’s 100,000 Jews and in their deportation to Auschwitz and other death camps in Poland.

Ed Morgan, legal counsel for the Canadian Jewish Congress, said, “Essentially, the federal court has said that the five-year clock never started running because he entered through misrepresentation.” He added that the 1910 law was never “meant to protect people who have defrauded our immigration officials.”

David Matas, honorary senior legal counsel for B’nai Brith Canada, said the ruling by the Federal Court of Canada “is a welcome development after a series of procedural setbacks in prosecuting alleged Nazi war criminal Josef Nemsila.”

“B’nai Brith has always contended that Nemsila’s entry into Canada was based upon fraud and misrepresentation and was therefore unlawful,” Matas said.

Paul Vickery, the Canadian Justice Department’s director and general counsel for war crimes and crimes against humanity, said the decision last Friday gives the green light to a deportation hearing against another accused war criminal, Antanas Kenstavicius of Vancouver, British Columbia, who also allegedly lied to gain admission into Canada and who has never become a citizen.

Earlier this year, a Canadian federal judge ruled that no judicial interference existed in the case against Nemsila. □

Czech judge wants immunity suspended for parliamentarian

By Randi Druzin

PRAGUE (JTA) — A district court judge in Czechoslovakia has asked that the immunity of Josef Krejsa, who won a seat in the Czech Parliament, be suspended.

The move last week comes after legal proceedings against Krejsa, who is accused of assaulting people at a 1994 Czech-German commemoration at the Theresienstadt ghetto, were halted.

Krejsa, who won his Parliament seat in June, is a member of the far-right Association for the Republic-Republican Party of Czechoslovakia.

All Parliament members here have immunity. Police charged Krejsa with disorderly conduct after an incident that took place outside the walls of the town of Theresienstadt, which is called Terezin in Czech.

Between 1941 and 1945, Theresienstadt served as a ghetto, to which about 150,000 Jews were deported by the Nazis. Deportees were sent to various death camps in Europe until October 1942, when they began to be sent solely to Auschwitz.

Five of Krejsa’s companions have been found guilty of disorderly conduct and fined between \$75 and \$300 each. One of these men, Lubomir Votava, is now on trial here after being accused of assaulting a cameraman during a Republican Party rally in October 1994.

Jaroslav Svoboda, the district court judge who requested that Krejsa’s parliamentary immunity be waived, said the verdict in the Votava trial might have bearing on Krejsa’s case. □

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Poles begin to come to terms with history of anti-Semitism

By Ruth E. Gruber

WARSAW (JTA) — A ceremony in the southern Polish city of Kielce in July represented a major step in a painful process: the growing recognition by Poles of the extent that recent Polish history was marred by anti-Semitism.

The highly publicized ceremony commemorated the 50th anniversary of a postwar pogrom during which a Polish mob, inflamed by anti-Semitism, killed 42 Jewish Holocaust survivors.

The ceremony, which was attended by government officials, church and Jewish leaders, local dignitaries, Holocaust survivors from Kielce and their children, and ordinary townspeople, marked Poland's official atonement for the pogrom and request for forgiveness.

"Half a century after the tragic Kielce events, which have left a bloody imprint on Polish-Jewish relations, we owe ourselves words of truth and moral evaluation," Polish Prime Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz told the crowd.

"Deeply regretting everything that Poles have ever been guilty of against Jews and sincerely apologizing for it, we see the need to work towards true Polish-Jewish reconciliation and brotherhood, which we truly believe is possible in a world on the threshold of the third millennium," he said.

Cimoszewicz's words forcefully reiterated a groundbreaking statement issued in January by Poland's Foreign Minister Dariusz Rosati.

"We are ashamed that Poles were the ones who committed this crime," he said in a letter to the World Jewish Congress that called for Polish-Jewish reconciliation. "We would like to ask for your forgiveness."

Observers involved in Polish-Jewish relations regard these powerfully expressed official sentiments as a potential turning point in the difficult process of coming to terms with the past.

"In some ways, this process bears similarities to America's coming to terms with Vietnam," University of Wisconsin anthropologist Jack Kugelmas, who has written extensively on Polish-Jewish relations, said in an interview. "It is the recognition that one's own people can do horrible things, and the trauma of coming to terms with this fact."

'Symbol of suffering'

Krzysztof Sliwinski, who has served for a year in the unprecedented position of Polish ambassador to the Jewish Diaspora, said Poles "badly need a real turning point."

"In my eyes, Kielce is a symbol of all sorts of suffering which Jews in this country suffered from their fellow citizens," he said in an interview. For Sliwinski, the Kielce commemoration was "not just to remember the pogrom, but it is to remember those who turned in Jews during the war, and [other] deeds that were harmful."

He warned, however, that the sentiments expressed at the commemoration must not simply remain laudable political statements. "It has to be the expression of the feelings of an important part of the Polish people."

The Kielce pogrom — the worst episode in a wave of anti-Jewish violence after the war in which at least 1,000 returning Jewish survivors were killed — sealed the image widely held among Jews of Poles as anti-Semites.

Yet until recently, as the American Jewish Committee's Poland consultant Stanislaw Krajewski said, "Even among the large number of Poles who have only

positive attitudes toward Jews, only few [found] the courage to acknowledge anti-Semitism in recent Polish history, especially during World War II and the immediate postwar years."

"Poles think of themselves as victims, and only victims, first of Nazi Germany, then of Stalinist Russia," he said. "Only in recent years has there begun some public discussion about the victimization of Jews by Poles."

A survey carried out last year for the American Jewish Committee showed that Poles have a largely positive view of Polish behavior toward Jews during World War II and regard Poles and Jews as having suffered equally under the Nazis.

Asked who the main victims of the Nazis were, 28 percent of respondents said Jews, 26 percent said Poles and 28 percent said Poles and Jews together.

Some 49 percent of those surveyed said Poles "did enough" and 26 percent said they "did as much as they could under the circumstances" to help Jews during the war. More than two-thirds of the respondents said "many" Poles "participated in rescuing Jews" during the war and only 11 percent said "many" Poles "participated in the persecution of Jews" during the war.

"There is nothing wrong with Poles remembering history," Rabbi Andrew Baker, American Jewish Committee's director of European affairs, said when the survey was released.

"But the Polish sense of suffering can become a unique lens through which the unique situation of Jews during the war can be pushed aside. Poles will have to confront the unpleasant aspects of their own history."

One of the overriding reasons that Poles have only recently begun to confront these issues is the tight control — even taboo — placed on discussion of Jewish-related issues under the Communist regime.

"For several decades, systematic attempts were made to eliminate the Jews from Polish memory," emigre Polish Jewish intellectual Aleksander Smolar wrote in 1987.

"The Jews tended to disappear from Polish history, from the landscape itself, from guides for tourists and, as a particular group of victims, from official publications about the war," he wrote.

Accomplice to the horror

Although Polish behavior toward Jews began to be discussed informally in the 1980s, a 1987 article in the influential Catholic intellectual weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* provoked a fierce and open debate.

In the article, Jan Blonski suggested that Polish indifference and passivity in the face of the Holocaust in effect made Poles a sort of accomplice to the horror.

Discussion of Polish treatment of Jews during and after the war has grown increasingly wider in the 1990s since the fall of the Communists.

Specific issues triggered intense reaction.

A 1994 article in Poland's leading newspaper contending that at least a dozen Jews were killed by anti-Nazi Polish resistance fighters during the wartime Warsaw uprising caused particular fury.

"Most people simply could not believe that the saintly [resistance] fighters could have killed innocent Jews," Krajewski wrote. "[But] few of the letters in response to the article acknowledged that the controversy raises genuine moral problems, and that, for all of its greatness, the Warsaw uprising had a dark side to it, which, for the sake of truth, must be faced."

Still, he wrote in 1994, "In the wake of this public debate, no Pole can claim to be ignorant of anti-Semitic attitudes during World War II. And that very fact is a tribute to today's free Poland." □