



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

### NEWS ANALYSIS

#### **Jews and the Lincoln bedroom: A quandary of policy and access**

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Monte Friedkin found himself in quite a bind last year.

As chairman of the National Jewish Democratic Council, Friedkin suddenly found himself without a political star for a scheduled NJDC briefing when Leon Panetta, President Clinton's then-chief of staff, was forced to cancel after his boss called on him to mediate the baseball strike.

So Friedkin, a multimillion-dollar contributor to the Democratic Party, called the White House.

When Clinton overheard his chief public liaison talking on the phone about the problem, he took the receiver and agreed to serve as a "pinch hitter." Within an hour, two dozen NJDC leaders arrived at the White House for a presidential briefing.

"Did he do it because I raised money for him?" Friedkin said as he recalled the episode in an interview last week. "I don't know."

That is the same question being asked across the country as revelations continue to pour out of the White House about perks and benefits given to Clinton's big donors: Just what did they get for their money?

Jewish Democrats raised tens of millions of dollars for last year's election. Of the more than \$200 million raised overall, about one-quarter came from Jews, according to sources in the Democratic Party.

In exchange for their dollars, many of them got overnight stays at the White House. Of the 938 people who stayed during Clinton's first term, about one-third were Jewish, according to a Jewish Telegraphic Agency analysis of documents released by the White House. Others rode along with Clinton on Air Force One to events in the Middle East. Still others won seats at White House dinners.

But the issue goes far beyond the fact that many Jews are big donors — and not just to the Democratic Party. The emerging White House fundraising scandal points to the larger question about the need for campaign finance reform. And on this, many Jews find themselves in a quandary.

While many individual Jews find that the current campaign finance system breeds excess, the organized Jewish community has profited from it.

#### Money means access

Friedkin and political officials speak of two types of donors.

While some contribute to further a cause, such as the pro-Israel agenda, others are seeking policies or laws that would benefit them personally. In either case, the bottom line is that contributors are seeking to help elect individuals they believe would advance their agenda. For most Jewishly involved donors, the key aim is achieving access to promote issues of concern — from policies toward Israel to welfare reform.

In politics, money means access. And virtually all political activists agree that Jewish access at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue is disproportionate to the numbers. "I'm not here to pass judgment on whether the system smells bad," said a Jewish lobbyist in Washington who spoke on the condition of anonymity. "The fact is that we have access under this system far beyond our numbers."

"We get into the offices of members of Congress with no Jewish constituency. You don't think money plays a role in that?" this lobbyist said.

It is this type of success that has paralyzed much of the organized Jewish community as debate rages over campaign finance reform. When the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council tried to discuss the issue at its recent plenum here, delegates tabled the issue within minutes.

In fact, of the dozen Jewish groups represented in Washington, only the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism serves on a coalition of religious groups advocating reform. "It's a very dangerous and short-sighted view to sit back because the Jewish community has done OK under the current system," said Mark Pelavin, the center's associate director.

"We cannot expect morally just public policy decisions to emanate from a system overwhelmingly based on monetary interests," he said.

Steve Grossman, national chairman of the Democratic National

■ Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak criticized Israel for its decisions to build homes at Har Homa, to close four Palestinian offices in Jerusalem and to withdraw from less of the West Bank than the Palestinians had expected. Speaking at a joint news conference with President Clinton, Mubarak blamed Israel for the "fragile and vulnerable" state of the peace process.

■ The State Department dropped in its daily briefings all references to Har Homa in favor of its Arabic name, Jabal Abu Ghena'im. The move, seen as an attempt to lend credibility to Palestinian claims to the land, was labeled "disappointing" by the Anti-Defamation League.

■ Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat said peace talks with Israel were in a state of crisis as a result of Israel's decision on redeployment in the West Bank. [Page 3]

■ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrived in Russia for a three-day official visit, where Middle East peace developments and bilateral ties are expected to top the agenda. The Israeli premier is expected to urge Moscow not to transfer advanced military technologies to Iran and Syria.

■ The U.N. General Assembly is slated to debate Israel's plans to build Jewish housing in eastern Jerusalem. [Page 3]

■ An accused Nazi war criminal who was wounded two months ago in a shootout with police died at a Kansas City hospital. The U.S. Justice Department had sought to revoke the citizenship of Michael Kolnhofer, who was suspected of concealing his past as a guard at two concentration camps.

■ The U.S.-Israel Science and Technology Commission awarded \$5.3 million to an American-Israeli partnership to develop an advanced solar power plant and demonstrate its use for commercial purposes. The partnership includes McDonnell Douglas, the Israeli firms Ornat Industries and Rotem Industries, and the Weizmann Institute of Science, where the solar power plant will be erected and tested.

Committee, declined to comment specifically on the appropriate Jewish position, but echoed the need for reform.

"We need a bipartisan solution for a bipartisan problem," said Grossman, the longtime Jewish political activist who resigned as chairman of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby, to take the DNC post.

"The biggest risk we face is a lack of credibility for the entire political process among Americans from every constituency."

Meanwhile, other Jewish groups, still mulling over their position on the issue, are facing a barrage of pressure to stay on the sidelines from pro-Israel political action committees that favor the current system.

Although campaign finance reform legislation is now stalled in Congress, the proposals under consideration would ban political action committees, which have been one of the most effective ways of channeling money into congressional campaigns.

Meanwhile, the president's defenders remain steadfast.

Grossman, picking up on the president's own words, asked for proof that Clinton "compromised the public interest for the special interest."

Grossman, who contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Democrats, was one of the more than 900 people to stay at the White House.

One Democratic fund-raiser argued that Clinton did nothing different from his predecessors.

"We just did it better," said one fund-raiser who did acknowledge, however, that the breakdown in safeguards against foreign money was "unfortunate."

"We were called on to raise a record amount of money and we did it. We used the White House to our advantage: the stays, the coffees, the dinners. That's not illegal," he said on the condition that his name not be printed.

#### **'Something-for-something'**

The fund-raising mantra of "something-for-something" extends far beyond the reaches of politics. Money buys power and access in the private sector as well.

In the Jewish community, the size of one's contribution has long been a factor in determining one's position and status.

In a twist, Clinton himself was the prize for a handful of contributors to the United Jewish Appeal a few years ago.

After about 100 people joined to raise \$32 million for UJA, Clinton accompanied Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin at an elegant reception at the State Department.

"Fund raising is fund raising and one uses all the tools at one's command to raise funds," Richard Wexler, UJA national chairman, said without commenting on the appropriateness of Clinton's fund-raising activities.

But private fund raising is different, most agree.

In the public realm, elections and public policy are at stake, according to those advocating for reform.

"People are troubled by the impression that giving money amounts to a night in the Lincoln bedroom," Pelavin said. The "scandal isn't what's illegal, it's what's legal," said Pelavin.

But not all the visitors to the White House were there because of their contributions.

Some guests at Clinton's numerous coffees were prominent Jews, such as Leonard Fein and Rabbi Ammiel Hirsch, both officials with the Reform movement who were invited to discuss policy issues.

And last March, Rabbi Eugene Levy of Little

Rock, Ark., arrived at the White House for a one-night stay.

A longtime "friend-of-Bill" who was invited as such, Levy defended what he called Clinton's "right" to invite guests to the White House.

"It was done by previous presidents and should be done by future presidents," said Levy, who said he gave only a few hundred dollars a year.

When Levy spent the night, he stayed in a third-floor bedroom because the Lincoln bedroom was occupied by former Clinton counsel and Jewish activist David Ifshin and his family.

Clinton invited Ifshin to the White House after he was diagnosed with cancer. That night was the last time Clinton saw Ifshin before his funeral four weeks later.

"Clinton told the kids bedtime stories and was very emotional because he knew these kids would not have a father soon," Levy said, adding that Ifshin's stay "had nothing to do with politics. It had nothing to do with finances."

As the White House hunkers down for what undoubtedly will be a long spring, top officials have tried to maintain a sense of humor.

Last week, on the day that Vice President Al Gore faced a barrage of criticism for making solicitations from his office, he turned to Clinton as they waited in the Oval Office for the arrival of Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat.

Gore told the president that 20 years ago, he never thought that he, instead of Arafat, would be the object of public scorn. □

#### **Pope warns Israeli policy endangers peace process**

*By Ruth E. Gruber*

ROME (JTA) — Pope John Paul II has expressed concern that Israeli policy could "seriously harm" the Middle East peace process.

Israeli authorities, he said during his weekly Sunday address from his window overlooking St. Peter's Square, "have made grave decisions which have attracted the worried attention of the international community."

These "could seriously harm the peace process and the spirit of trust so necessary for its continuation," he said.

The pope did not mention any specific Israeli policy decisions, but he appeared to be referring to the recent Israeli decision to build a new Jewish neighborhood at Har Homa in southeastern Jerusalem.

Last week, during a private audience with a group of 26 American Christians and Jews who were visiting the Vatican to further interreligious dialogue, the pope reiterated his often-expressed hope to visit Jerusalem.

The group was led by Rabbi Richard Yellin, who now lives in Netanya, Israel. Until he made aliyah five years ago, he was the rabbi of congregation Mishkan Tefillah in Newton, Mass.

"During our audience, we asked God's blessing on the pope," Yellin said in an interview.

"I put my hands on his head and we said a prayer as he anticipates his trip to Jerusalem," he said. "The pope said he hoped to see me there."

In another development, the Vatican announced Monday that it would establish full diplomatic relations with Libya.

The Holy See and Libya, "wanting to develop mutual friendly relations, have decided by common agreement to stabilize their diplomatic relations at the level of apostolic nuncio by the Vatican and ambassador by Libya," a Vatican statement said. □

**Palestinian anger mounts over redeployment decision***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM(JTA) — Israel-Palestinian relations have reached a crisis, with Palestinian officials protesting the decision to transfer 9 percent of rural West Bank areas to the Palestinian Authority.

Mahmoud Abbas, who serves as second-in-command to Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat, threatened Monday to resign as chief negotiator because of the dispute with Israel.

On Sunday night, Abbas, better known as Abu-Mazen, conveyed Palestinian anger over the scope of the redeployment to Foreign Minister David Levy.

Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat accused Israel of violating their signed agreements.

Netanyahu, who left Monday for a three-day official visit to Russia, appeared unfazed by the Palestinian reaction. Netanyahu was quoted as saying that the Palestinians had finally realized that a new, nationalist government was in power in Israel.

A senior Israeli political source quoted by Israel Radio said that after last Friday's Cabinet decision, at least two efforts by Netanyahu to contact Arafat by telephone had been rebuffed. The source, on the premier's plane to Russia, was quoted as saying that in Netanyahu's absence, Levy had been instructed to continue efforts to resolve the crisis with the Palestinian leadership.

Israeli security forces were meanwhile ordered to be on alert for any violent Palestinian reaction.

Several hundred Palestinians, protesting construction of a new road near the West Bank settlement of Kiryat Arba, clashed Monday with Israeli security forces.

Witnesses said that at least 10 Palestinians were injured after Israeli forces beat back angry stone-throwers.

Within hours after the clash near the West Bank town of Hebron, Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai met with Palestinian Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo in an effort to defuse the tensions.

**'Crisis becoming worse'**

Rabbo told reporters after the meeting at a Tel Aviv hotel that the situation was rapidly deteriorating.

"There is a crisis, and the crisis is becoming worse and worse," he said.

Palestinian anger was already simmering over earlier Israeli decisions to build housing for Jews at Har Homa in southeastern Jerusalem and to issue closure orders for four Palestinian offices operating in eastern Jerusalem.

Tensions were further heightened by the Israeli government decision to transfer 9 percent of the West Bank to self-rule — a move that fell far below Palestinian expectations. In his meeting with Levy, Abu-Mazen had demanded that the Palestinians be consulted on the scope of the withdrawals.

The Hebron agreement stipulates that Israel will make three redeployments from the West Bank before mid-1998. But the accord does not detail the extent of the redeployments, which Israel and the United States say is up to the Jewish state alone to determine.

In addition to the Palestinian criticism, Netanyahu found himself facing a second battle from members of his own coalition.

Before leaving for Russia, the prime minister spent most of the day in meetings with hawkish coalition members, hoping to persuade them not to abandon his government.

Eight Knesset members have threatened to vote no-confidence in the government if Netanyahu does not change his policies.

Shaul Yahalom of the National Religious Party called Monday on his party to pull out of the government.

He also called for an early election and a new right-wing candidate for prime minister, but his proposal to the NRP caucus was rejected.

Netanyahu's contacts also appeared to be aimed at gauging support in the Knesset for a number of legislative initiatives to amend the current law relating to the direct election of the prime minister.

One such proposal, sponsored by Labor Knesset member Moshe Shahal, would require a simple Knesset majority of 61 of the 120 legislators to oust the prime minister without calling for new general elections.

Under existing law, the no-confidence vote of a simple parliamentary majority would result in new elections for both prime minister and for the Knesset. A majority of 80 Knesset members voting no-confidence would result in a new vote for prime minister, but no new parliamentary elections. □

**U.N. General Assembly next in line to debate Jerusalem neighborhood***By Cynthia Mann*

NEW YORK (JTA) — Not satisfied with the action of the U.N. Security Council on Israeli plans for Jewish housing in eastern Jerusalem, the Arabs have taken their case all the way to the General Assembly.

The U.N. General Assembly debate, slated to begin Wednesday, follows the U.S. veto last Friday of a Security Council resolution sharply critical of the initiative to build housing on Har Homa.

All other 14 members of the council supported the resolution, which characterized the proposed construction as "illegal" and called it "a major obstacle to peace."

At a news conference with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, President Clinton defended the U.S. decision, which has come under fire, especially from Arab nations. Clinton has criticized the construction. But he said the veto reflected "the consistent U.S. position that we could never achieve peace through U.N. Security Council resolutions."

He reiterated the oft-stated U.S. posture that the only way to resolve such sensitive disputes is between the two parties and said the resolution was an attempt to "pre-judge final-status" issues, which include the status of Jerusalem.

For his part, Mubarak said he was alarmed by Israeli actions which undermine the peace process.

The assembly debate reportedly was requested by the chairman of the U.N.'s Arab group, Qatari Ambassador Nasser bin Hamad al-Khalifa.

The Security Council resolution followed a two-day debate on the plan with several dozen speakers. The United States tried in vain to persuade the council to substitute a non-binding statement for the binding resolution.

While casting the veto, U.S. Ambassador Bill Richardson said the Israeli action "undermines the trust and confidence so badly needed in creating the appropriate environment for successful negotiations."

After the vote, the Israelis reiterated their long-standing position that "the Security Council is not the appropriate forum for discussions on outstanding issues between Israel and the Palestinians," said David Peleg, Israel's acting permanent representative to the United Nations. "The adoption of unbalanced positions by outside parties can only damage" the peace process.

Unlike Security Council resolutions, the decisions of the 185-member General Assembly are not binding. Nonetheless, the debate loomed as a political embarrassment both to Israel and the United States. □

**Israeli developer to close shopping mall on Sabbath***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — One of Israel's largest developers has caused a stir in the business community with its decision to close a new mall on the Sabbath.

The developer, Africa-Israel, is building a new shopping and entertainment center in Ramat Aviv, north of Tel Aviv.

Observers have linked the decision to the recent purchase of Africa-Israel by business leader Lev Levayev, an observant Jew.

The decision does not apply to other malls in which Africa-Israel has invested.

However, the decision took a number of businesses planning to take part in the new mall by surprise.

Israel Theaters, which plans to operate a movie theater in the Ramat Aviv mall, demanded that it be compensated by the developer for the projected lost weekend incomes.

Africa-Israel said in a statement this week that there was no contract with the theater operator about opening on the Sabbath.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported Monday that Africa-Israel had signed a contract with the McDonald's restaurant chain and had been paid in advance for three months rent.

A six-page addendum, attached to the standard contract, included a clause giving the landlord authority to determine business hours on Jewish holidays and the Sabbath.

The contract did not specify whether McDonald's, which has both kosher and non-kosher restaurants in Israel, would be required to sell kosher products in its branch in the new mall.

The dispute comes against the backdrop of stepped-up efforts by the Social Affairs and Labor Ministry, now under the control of the fervently Orthodox Shas, to enforce legislation prohibiting Jewish businesses from operating on the Sabbath. □

**Art gallery in northern Israel chided for opening on Sabbath***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The tug-of-war between secular and religious Israelis continued this week at an art gallery in northern Israel.

The gallery's owners, Amos and Alice Meroz, open their shop for business on the Sabbath — provoking the anger of a fervently Orthodox official in Zichron Ya'acov, located between Netanya and Haifa.

The official responded to what he views as a desecration of the Sabbath by parking a hearse in front of the gallery.

The gallery owners said this failed to dissuade shoppers, who inched past it.

The incident has underscored the ongoing battle between secular and religious Israelis.

"I should be free to decide what I want to do on this day," Alice Meroz told Israel Radio.

In recent years, a growing number of Israeli stores began opening for business on Saturday.

The fervently Orthodox Sephardi Shas Party, which controls the Social Welfare and Labor Ministry, has countered by stepping up the enforcement of laws against Jewish shops operating on the Sabbath.

The ministry regularly dispatches non-Jewish inspectors to slap fines on shopowners who violate the law.

The couple had bypassed the labor law by selling

their gallery to a Muslim friend every Friday for about \$3 and buying it back Saturday night.

Amos Meroz said he got the idea from the religious custom of selling all leavened products to non-Jews in the days before Passover, when Jews are forbidden to eat or own anything that contains leavening. □

**Second SS officer to face trial for role in 1944 Rome massacre***By Ruth E. Gruber*

ROME (JTA) — A military court has ordered former SS Maj. Karl Hass to stand trial April 14 for his role in Italy's worst World War II atrocity.

It remains to be seen whether Hass, 84, will be tried with former Nazi SS Capt. Erich Priebke, who faces a retrial for his complicity in the March 24, 1944, massacre of 335 men and boys at the Ardeatine Caves south of Rome. About 75 of the victims were Jews.

Both trials will be before military courts.

Judicial sources said the two men probably would be tried together.

In August, a military court found the 83-year-old Priebke guilty of involvement in the massacre. But the court freed him, ruling that he could not be punished because the statute of limitations had run out and because of other extenuating circumstances.

That verdict triggered protests by family members of the victims, who barricaded the courthouse for eight hours until Priebke was rearrested, pending an extradition request from Germany.

Three months later, the verdict was annulled by an appeals court, which ruled that the judges had been openly biased in Priebke's favor.

Priebke has admitted to killing two of the victims, but says he was following orders.

Hass, who was a prosecution witness at the first Priebke trial, tried to avoid testifying by jumping out of his hotel balcony, breaking his hip during the escape attempt.

He has been held under house arrest ever since in a private clinic near Rome. The military court set the trial date last Friday for Hass, who also was charged after he admitted taking part in the massacre during his testimony in the first Priebke trial.

In a related development, Italy's national pension office has revealed that Hass, who has lived in Italy for decades, receives state pensions from both Italy and Germany. The office confirmed Saturday that Hass draws nearly \$120 a month from Italy and about \$530 a month from Germany.

The pension office said in a statement that Hass's pension came from "10 years of contributions paid in for work carried out in Italy in the 1950s and 1960s."

Italy, it said, had no law against paying pensions to people accused of war crimes. □

**Netanyahu attends Rabin ceremony***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Members of the Rabin family joined Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, opposition leader Shimon Peres and other public figures at a cornerstone-laying ceremony held last week at the Yitzhak Rabin Center in Ramat Aviv, near Tel Aviv.

Netanyahu shook hands with Rabin's widow, Leah, who has accused the Likud leader of contributing to a violent political atmosphere that preceded her husband's assassination in November 1995.

Despite the prime minister's gesture, about a dozen people walked out in protest when Netanyahu rose to address the gathering. □