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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Gingrich backs off embassy visit

U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) reaffirmed his support for moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv when he and a congressional delegation arrived in Israel over the weekend.

But Gingrich backed off from his vow to visit the site of the proposed embassy after he received a request from the White House and State Department to avoid the visit because of concern that it might spark Palestinian protests. [Page 3]

Israel celebrates Jerusalem Day

Israel staged its largest military parade in years to mark the capture of eastern Jerusalem during the 1967 Six-Day War. Palestinian and Jordanian officials condemned Sunday's Jerusalem Day ceremonies as a provocation, and scattered scuffles were reported in eastern Jerusalem between Palestinians and Israeli marchers. [Page 3]

Y.U. student found dead

The body of a Yeshiva University sophomore who was last seen at the Manhattan school on May 12 was found floating in the Hudson River.

New York police said there was no evidence of foul play or of suicide.

The family and friends of Joshua Bender had launched a large-scale search after he disappeared two days before a final exam.

Hungarian far-right wins seats

Hungary's far-right Hungarian Justice and Life Party won 14 seats in the country's second round of parliamentary elections, according to unofficial final results.

The party is led by Istvan Csurka, who has made numerous anti-Semitic speeches in the past. [Page 1]

Cabinet may reject U.S. plan

Deputy Israeli Premier Moshe Katzav said the entire Cabinet would reject an American proposal for Israel to make a further withdrawal from 13 percent of the West Bank to advance the peace process.

Katzav, who also serves as tourism minister, made the comment after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told the Cabinet on Sunday that Israel would continue to press the Palestinian Authority to live up to its commitments in already-signed accords.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Hungarian Jews watch warily as anti-Semites score at polls

By Michael J. Jordan

BUDAPEST (JTA) — Hungarians have voted for change — despite the uncertainties it will bring. And nowhere are the uncertainties more acute than within the country's Jewish community.

For Hungary's approximately 100,000 Jews, far more stunning than the ouster of the Socialist-led ruling coalition in Sunday's second round of parliamentary elections was the sudden re-emergence of the anti-Semitic far right.

As a result of the elections, a small fraction of the incoming Parliament — just 14 of 386 seats — will be controlled by the far-right Hungarian Justice and Life Party.

The party is led by Istvan Csurka, who has made numerous anti-Semitic speeches in the past. In 1993, he was kicked out of Hungary's first democratically elected government for being too extremist.

Hungary's Jews are believed to have backed the governing Socialists, whose austerity program strengthened the overall economy, but left many of the country's citizens facing a continued decline in their standard of living.

A widespread sense of betrayal over pocketbook issues played a large role in Sunday's voting. The Socialists, who won 134 seats, were defeated by the center-right Young Democrats, who won 148 seats and now must form a coalition government, likely with the right-wing Smallholders Party.

How the new coalition will respond to Csurka's inevitable anti-Jewish slurs will be a litmus test for Hungary's progress in democratization.

As for daily life in the capital of Budapest, it's too early to tell how the new government will affect the Jewish community.

While the Jewish Agency for Israel office in Budapest reported receiving more than a dozen calls inquiring about emigration during the past two weeks, Jewish leaders are cautioning the community not to overreact.

The Young Democrats' prime minister-elect, Viktor Orban, has vowed to follow through on an earlier agreement to provide monthly compensation payments to Hungary's approximately 20,000 Holocaust survivors.

And last week he visited Jewish officials to assure them he would not cooperate with Csurka, despite Csurka's pledge to support an Orban-led government.

But Jews are already bracing for parliamentary "zsidozas" — loosely translated as "talking about Jews." Parliamentary discussions of "Jewish issues" initiated by Csurka and his colleagues could embolden other anti-Semites to pipe up, creating tension between Jews and non-Jews.

"We're used to hearing someone say 'dirty Jew' in the street," said Zsuzsa Fritz, a teacher of Jewish education. "Now they'll be saying the same things in Parliament, only hidden in other expressions."

Indeed, Csurka has quickly made his presence felt.

Just one week ago, the once-respected playwright, in an interview on Hungarian Radio, alluded to Jewish favoritism in hiring in financial and media circles.

"The higher we look, the more it appears that origin is one of the aspects of selection," Csurka said. "This situation is no good, results in counter-selection, deteriorates the nation's mental state and does not encourage work. Nothing will come of Hungary."

He also repeated his charge that an agent of either the KGB or Mossad, Israel's

MIDEAST FOCUS

Netanyahu visits China

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrived in China with a delegation of some 100 officials and businessmen. In addition to meeting with Chinese President Jiang Zemin and Prime Minister Zhu Rongji, Netanyahu is slated to visit the Great Wall and the port city of Shanghai during his four-day visit.

France calls for conference

France said its call for a Middle East peace conference was not intended to undermine U.S. mediation of peace talks or a U.S. plan to break the deadlock.

French President Jacques Chirac and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak made the conference offer last week after meeting in Paris, but no details were given on when or where such a conference would be held. French officials indicated the proposed conference would exclude Israel, the Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese from the initial stages.

Hamas funders detained

Israeli police said they had detained four Palestinians from eastern Jerusalem and a deputy mayor of an Israeli Arab town on suspicion of involvement in an organization that channeled funds to Hamas.

Police said the money had been allegedly transferred from abroad to jailed Hamas activists and their families through the Beit Al-Jamal organization, which has offices in eastern Jerusalem, Ramallah and the Israeli Arab town of Umm el-Fahm.

Israel launches Lebanon strikes

Israeli warplanes launched five attacks on Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon on Sunday and Monday. The attacks took place days after Syrian officials visiting Washington told U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright that Damascus rejected an Israeli proposal to withdraw its troops from Lebanon, where Syria has thousands of troops.

foreign intelligence service, would be the next president of Hungarian Television.

Both remarks were immediately condemned by the current governing coalition partners, the Socialists and Free Democrats. Jewish leaders, true to form, kept quiet.

These officials, holdovers from the Communist era, seem unaware of the Catch-22 in which they're trapped: They believe that to denounce anti-Semitism publicly only encourages one's enemies and draws the spotlight onto a deeply assimilated community. Silence, on the other hand, may mean the unfettered spread of anti-Semitism.

Symptomatic of the desire to keep a low profile, one Jewish leader advised a reporter on the day after the voting, "You have to be careful not to cause us problems."

Even confronted with someone of Csurka's ilk, they prefer lobbying behind the scenes to speaking out against the Jewish community's avowed enemies.

"We have nothing to be afraid of. We are living in a democratic Europe," said Gusztav Zoltai, the executive director of the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities. "We are a religious community. Until now, we have not been involved in political struggles, and we want to avoid them in the future."

Some observers, though, are quick to note that during World War II, the silence of Jewish leaders was partly responsible for the destruction of three-quarters of Hungarian Jewry — some 600,000 victims.

In light of Csurka's success, many in the community are demanding that their leaders speak up against anti-Semitism.

"We have to take responsibility for being Jews," said Aniko Sagi, a 25-year-old bookkeeper. "If we don't, they'll feel they can push us more."

The Jewish community will certainly have fewer allies in Parliament to defend them.

Both the Socialists and their liberal Free Democrat coalition partners — each with a number of high-profile Jews — suffered serious setbacks in Sunday's vote. This despite having transformed Hungary into the frontrunner among all the formerly Communist countries of Central Europe to join NATO and the European Union.

But the coalition — and even most observers — underestimated how unpopular its austere economic policies had made it with the average Hungarian on the street.

In addition, a vast number of Hungarians simply refuse to forgive the Socialists — the heirs to the country's old Communist Party — for their past sins.

But Csurka's Hungarian Justice and Life Party did not just rely on the support of the poor and uneducated from the countryside who were victims of the hard transition to a free-market economy.

The party received its greatest support from voters in the affluent hills overlooking Budapest. That's where the pre-war aristocratic elite continue to live, say Hungarian Jews. They lent their support to Hungarian fascists during the war. Today, they and their children are nationalist, anti-West and anti-Semitic.

But Csurka is not the only worrisome politician for Hungarian Jews.

Jozsef Torgyan, leader of the Smallholders — a likely coalition partner in the new government — also has a number of supporters with anti-Semitic sympathies.

And though Torgyan distances himself from Csurka, he praises the Justice and Life Party's "intellectual base."

In what is expected to be a concerted effort by liberals and moderates to neutralize Csurka, no one will play a more pivotal role than Hungary's left-leaning media.

During Csurka's four years in the political wilderness, he was only heard through the newspaper he owns. Yet in their embrace of democracy over the past few years, the mainstream print and electronic media have adopted a policy under which each parliamentary faction is given space to air its reaction to government decisions.

Covering Csurka involves another Catch-22.

If members of the media stick a microphone in his face every day, say journalists, Csurka will get more exposure and presumably, more followers. If they ignore him, he'll cry conspiracy. It seems many media outlets will opt for the latter path, believing that much of what Csurka says straddles Hungarian statutes outlawing hate speech.

"He will never be on the front page, and we will not ask his opinions too often. But if he says something in the Parliament, of course we will report it," says Janos Desi, a Jew who heads the domestic news section of the daily newspaper Nepszava. "I'm not happy about it, but he is a member of Parliament and we have to recognize it." □



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JEWISH WORLD

Swiss gold report issued

Switzerland's central bank made no effort to ensure that it was not getting Holocaust victims' gold when it purchased \$280 million in gold from Nazi Germany, according to a report issued by an international panel of historians commissioned by the Swiss government to probe the country's wartime past.

The gold purchased from the Nazis, which would be worth more than \$2.5 billion at today's prices, included more than 260 pounds of gold looted by the Nazi S.S. from concentration camp victims, the Bergier Commission report said. The Swiss central bank has defended its wartime purchases of gold from the German Reichsbank as necessary for maintaining the country's economic stability.

California to help claimants

California's governor signed a law to help Holocaust victims or their heirs seeking proceeds from insurance policies purchased in Europe before and during World War II.

The law signed by Pete Wilson will enable qualifying plaintiffs to bring action in any superior court in California to recover their claims.

Senate approves sanctions

The U.S. Senate voted 90-4 to approve legislation that would sanction foreign companies or research institutes helping Iran develop ballistic missile technology. The vote came as Israeli Cabinet minister Natan Sharansky met with top Russian officials in Moscow to persuade them to curb military cooperation with Iran.

U.S., Argentina plan cooperation

The United States and Argentina agreed to share intelligence information in an effort to combat international terrorism.

The decision was announced after a meeting between Argentina's president, Carlos Menem, and visiting U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen. Argentina has been unable to find those responsible for two terrorist bombings of Jewish sites in Buenos Aires in 1992 and 1994, killing 115 people. Recent charges by Argentine officials that Tehran was involved in the bombings has resulted in the two countries' all but suspending their diplomatic contacts.

Kohl speaks at Brandeis

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl addressed the mostly Jewish student body at Brandeis University's graduation ceremonies.

Kohl said at the Waltham, Mass., ceremony that Germany's relationship with world Jewry would continue to be influenced by memories of the Holocaust, which he described as an "indelible part of the history of Germany."

Gingrich stirs controversy during visit to Jewish state

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich is stirring controversy in Israel.

Last week, before he departed for Israel, the Georgia Republican said he would visit the site of the future U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem, provoking criticism from Palestinian officials who said the visit would undermine their efforts to secure part of the city as the capital of a future Palestinian state.

On Monday, Gingrich tackled a different aspect of the peace process, saying the U.S. Congress would consider giving Israel \$1 billion in emergency aid to help cover the costs of a further Israeli redeployment in the West Bank.

"I think that on the basis of an emergency situation, I would certainly consider it. If we reach a peace agreement, most Americans would want to be supportive and helpful," Gingrich told the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Last week, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his Cabinet that he had asked the United States for the \$1 billion, which would be used to build bypass roads and finance the dismantling of army bases in the event of a redeployment.

The Clinton administration has been pressing Israel to accept its proposal for a further redeployment from 13 percent of the West Bank in order to break a nearly 15-month deadlock in negotiations with the Palestinians. While the Palestinian Authority has accepted the proposal, which also calls for security guarantees on its part, Israel has stated that the size of the redeployment is unacceptable.

Gingrich, who is visiting Israel as head of a Congressional delegation honoring the Jewish state on its 50th anniversary, said Monday that Washington should not try to put pressure on either Israel or the Palestinian Authority. "I think it's up to two neighbors to have a negotiation, with the United States as a friend and a facilitator. But I don't think we should be a third party. I think that would be a mistake," he told reporters.

Gingrich and other members of the congressional delegation have adopted the stance often reiterated by Netanyahu — that Israel alone should determine how its security needs would affect the extent of the redeployment. This has drawn the ire of Palestinian officials, who say the legislators have no place in the peace process and that their statements are only aimed at winning Jewish votes back home.

When he arrived in Israel over the weekend, Gingrich reaffirmed his support for moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv.

But he backed off from his earlier vow to visit the site of the proposed embassy after he received a request from the White House and State Department to avoid the visit because of concern that it might spark violent Palestinian protests.

On Monday, Gingrich toured Jerusalem with Mayor Ehud Olmert, driving by, but not stopping at, the proposed location for the American embassy.

A day earlier, Israel staged its largest military parade in years to mark the capture of eastern Jerusalem during the 1967 Six-Day War. Some 30,000 people took part in the annual Jerusalem Day commemorations, which also included memorial ceremonies for the soldiers who died during the capture of the city in 1967.

Netanyahu, speaking at a memorial ceremony for the fallen soldiers, reiterated that Israel would never give up sovereignty over eastern Jerusalem or the pre-1967 borders.

"Israel will never return to indefensible borders, with its back to the sea, and Jerusalem will never again be divided," he said.

Thousands of soldiers, veterans and military vehicles took part in the Jerusalem Day procession, which made its way from the walls of the Old City to a park near the Knesset. Thousands of Israelis participated, waving flags, dancing in the streets and filling the sidewalks to watch the colorful procession, made more elaborate this year in honor of Israel's jubilee.

The show of military prowess during the celebrations was condemned by Palestinian and Jordanian officials, who said the ceremonies were a provocation.

Scattered scuffles were reported in the Old City between Palestinians and Israeli marchers. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Israeli Arab's bid to buy land tests equality in Jewish state***By Gil Sedan*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A powerful legal team has lined up to block an Israeli Arab from purchasing property in a Jewish community — and Israel's highest court does not want to touch the case.

Leaders of Katzir, a small community in central Israel, maintain that they have the right to decide who can live there.

"We have turned down the applications of a number of Jews," Motti Bloch, the head of Katzir said in an interview.

In fact, an Arab attorney already is living in Katzir, though he had to fight hard to get there.

The current case involves Adel Ka'adan, who had appealed to the High Court of Justice three years ago, after his application to purchase a lot in Katzir was rejected.

"We took the case because we regard it as discrimination to prevent an Arab citizen of Israel from purchasing real estate," said Dan Yakir, an attorney with the Israeli Civil Rights Association, who is representing Ka'adan.

Opposing him is a legal team representing Katzir, the Israel Land Administration, the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Israeli Housing Ministry.

At stake is the basic question of an Israeli Arab citizen's civil rights — specifically, whether Jews and Arabs have equal opportunity to live where they desire.

Ka'adan, 42, wants to move his family from the Arab village of Baka al-Gharbiya and move several miles north — a 10 minute drive — to Katzir. He was willing to meet all the legal requirements, pay \$17,000 for the lot he was assigned after responding to a newspaper advertisement and start building his new home on a hilltop.

"I am not a provoker," Ka'adan said in an interview. "All I want is to improve my standard of living."

Since he interacts with Jews on a daily basis, Ka'adan never expected to encounter such resistance.

Ka'adan is a medical assistant at the Hillel Jaffe Hospital in Hadera, treating Arabs and Jews alike. He speaks Hebrew fluently, with hardly an accent.

"Just the other day one of my patients told me, 'You are so nice, are you really an Arab?'" he said.

Some 2,000 people live in Katzir, which was established in 1982, close to the Israeli Arab town of Umm el-Fahm, adjacent to the Green Line, Israel's pre-1967 border with the West Bank.

Katzir lies in the heart of Nahal Iron, an area between Hadera and Afula, predominantly populated with Arabs.

A highway that cuts through the area, known in Arabic as Wadi Ara, is a vital link between the north and the center of the country.

"These are state lands, which belong to all the citizens of Israel," Yakir said of Katzir.

But the legal situation is not that simple.

The lands of Katzir were originally owned by the state.

But the Israel Land Administration leased them to the Jewish Agency, which in turn subleased them to the residents of the Jewish community.

"There is no specific written ban on leasing land to Arabs," said Yossi Sturm, a spokesman for the Jewish Agency.

But the agency's policy is to deal only with Jews, he added. "The agency raises money from world Jewry for the benefit of Jewish immigrants and settlers."

In Ka'adan's view, subleasing the land through the Jewish Agency is "a trick to exclude Arabs" from the community.

If the Israel Land Administration had subleased the land, he added, "they would have had no standing in turning down my application."

Echoing his client, Yakir said "our grudge is not against the Jewish Agency."

Their main claim is against the land administration for leasing the land to the Jewish Agency.

The president of Israel's High Court of Justice, Aharon Barak, has described the case as "one of the most difficult and complex" he had ever come across.

But rather than rule on the case, the court appointed a private lawyer, Yoram Barsela, to try to reach a compromise. In the meantime, the court ordered Katzir to "freeze" one lot for Ka'adan. If an agreement is reached, the matter will be returned to the court for legal approval.

"With all due respect, the court is making its life too easy," said Ze'ev Segal, a law professor at Tel Aviv University. "Rather than adopting clear and courageous guidelines, it is hiding behind a possible compromise."

Negotiations are long and slow.

Barsela has convened the parties only once to discuss various compromise ideas.

One solution would be for Ka'adan to purchase a house directly from the Housing Ministry on a nearby hill that is considered part of Katzir.

The precedence for this solution was set by Tawfik Jabarin, an attorney from Umm el-Fahm who applied six years ago to live in Katzir.

"I wanted to prevent the 'Judaization' of Wadi Ara," Jabarin said in an interview. "I wanted to prove that I could live wherever I wanted."

Jabarin initially was turned down by Katzir, but when he threatened to appeal to the High Court, a solution was found by creating a transaction between Jabarin and the Housing Ministry — bypassing the problematic relationship with the Jewish Agency.

But that option is not likely unless Ka'adan agrees to give up his lot, which lies in the middle of Katzir, and accepts an alternative lot on the fringe of the community.

Despite the Katzir leadership's protestations that their opposition to Ka'adan does not amount to discrimination, it appears that the community would prefer that Arabs not move there.

"Jewish-Arab coexistence may work in large cities, but not in a newly-born small settlement which is still in the process of growth," said Bloch.

"Ka'adan wants to live within us, and we are suggesting that we should live side by side."

Jabarin, who has lived in Katzir for the past two and half years, is still bitter.

"People ask me how it is to live with the Jews," said Jabarin.

"I tell them that the Jews live with me, because this is Arab land." □