



Daily News Bulletin

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81st Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Premier addresses settlers

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attempted to reassure Jewish settlers that Israel stands firmly behind them despite the latest redeployment.

"I believe in the future of this place and am ready to make every investment," the premier said during a tour of West Bank settlements. "Those considering leaving should think twice."

Israel transfers civilian control

Israel transferred additional civilian responsibilities to the Palestinian Authority in an area near the West Bank town of Ramallah. The move comes as part of the further Israeli redeployment called for in the Wye accord. Under the redeployment, the Palestinians assume full control in some additional West Bank areas, and shared control with Israel in others.

ADL: Anti-Semitism decreasing

The Anti-Defamation League released the results of a national poll indicating that the number of Americans with strongly anti-Jewish views has dropped from 20 percent to 12 percent since 1992, when the agency last conducted a survey of anti-Semitism and prejudice in America.

The survey of American adults showed that African Americans are nearly four times more likely than white Americans to hold anti-Semitic views. [Page 4]

Lawmaker's murder condemned

The chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel denounced the recent murder of a liberal member of the Russian Parliament. Avraham Burg said he hoped the slaying of Galina Starovaitova was not "committed on political and anti-Semitic grounds." While the motive for her murder is not clear, Starovaitova recently led a campaign to censure a Communist lawmaker, Gen. Albert Makashov, for repeated anti-Semitic remarks.

Jewish students meet in Vienna

Jewish students from the various countries that made up the former Yugoslavia met in Vienna for what was called a "Special Gathering of Jewish Youth." The group of 40 students took part in workshops on youth activities, attended lectures and met with young Jews from Vienna. [Page 3]

Israeli Supreme Court ruling reignites battle over pluralism

By Avi Machlis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A landmark ruling by Israel's Supreme Court has touched off the latest battle over religious pluralism in the Jewish state.

Some Orthodox groups, seeing red, have launched a campaign against the ruling, which requires Reform and Conservative representatives to be installed on local religious councils in five cities.

On Sunday, spiritual leaders of the fervently Orthodox United Torah Judaism bloc instructed their four Knesset members to pull out of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's governing coalition if Reform and Conservative delegates take their seats on the councils. But, not yet ready to push matters to the brink, UTJ leaders said their move did not necessarily mean they would support a no-confidence motion to bring down the government.

If they withdraw, the right-of-center coalition would lose its Knesset majority, which is already shaky with a razor-thin, two-vote edge.

According to the decision by the group's Council of Sages, the inclusion on religious councils of Reform Jews, who "uproot and disgrace the Torah," would deal a severe blow to the provision of religious services in Israel.

"We feel bad that in a democratic society like Israel the court should force religious people to believe that the Jewish religion is pluralistic," said Rabbi Avraham Ravitz, a UTJ Knesset member.

"We don't believe that the Jewish religion is pluralistic," he added.

The local religious councils, supervised by the Religious Affairs Ministry, have exclusive jurisdiction over marriage, kashrut, burial and other religious matters for all Jews living in Israel. Members of each council are appointed by the local municipal council, the religious affairs minister and the local chief rabbi.

The councils are supposed to include delegates in proportion to the composition of political lists on local city councils. The secularist Meretz Party has supported the inclusion of representatives from Judaism's Conservative and Reform streams.

Like UTJ, other Orthodox groups were also stunned by the court's ruling, but they did not immediately threaten the government.

The National Religious Party, a more moderate Orthodox grouping, scheduled meetings this week to draw up a plan of action. In the coming weeks, the NRP and the fervently Orthodox, or haredi, parties may forge a united front to fight the decision.

The campaign comes in the wake of a Nov. 19 Supreme Court ruling requiring the Religious Affairs Ministry to immediately appoint Conservative and Reform members to the local religious councils in Jerusalem and Kiryat Tivon, a town in the Galilee, by Dec. 3. Earlier this month, the court issued a similar ruling for councils in Haifa, Tel Aviv and the southern desert town of Arad.

The rulings ended a nine-year struggle by representatives of the non-Orthodox streams in Israel to secure representation on the councils.

In the final court hearing, an Orthodox-dominated ministerial committee proposed appointing completely secular delegates to the councils — including an owner of a non-kosher restaurant that opens for business on the Sabbath — instead of Reform and Conservative representatives. They claimed the liberal representatives are not committed to advancing religious services.

Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein refused to back the government, saying the ministerial committee's position is indefensible. Spokespersons for the liberal streams

MIDEAST FOCUS

Ne'eman discusses aid

Israeli Finance Minister Ya'acov Ne'eman asked the United States for more than \$1 billion in aid to help pay for Israel's latest redeployment in the West Bank.

Ne'eman met with Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk and Undersecretary of State Stuart Eizenstat to ask for aid to relocate West Bank military bases, build bypass roads for Jewish settlers and beef up security for some settlements.

The request, which is weeks away from being formally presented, comes one week before a scheduled State Department donor's conference for the Palestinian Authority that is expected to draw dozens of foreign ministers and billions of dollars in pledges.

Cult members turn up in Israel

Some 60 members of a Christian cult who disappeared last month from Denver after their leader prophesied the destruction of the city have turned up in Israel.

Israeli police officials downplayed concerns that the group might attempt mass suicide.

Sources: Netanyahu invites Levy

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu invited his old political rival, David Levy, to return to the government as finance minister, according to sources in Levy's Geshet Party.

Levy resigned as foreign minister in January, citing differences with Netanyahu over the peace process and domestic social issues. Neither Levy nor Netanyahu would comment on the matter.

Israeli charged with murder

Israeli prosecutors charged a Jewish man with murdering an elderly Palestinian last month near a settlement in the West Bank.

The suspect, a 28-year-old yeshiva student, turned himself in a few days after the incident.

were more critical. "That in a nutshell expresses the tragedy of Orthodox life in Israel," said Rabbi Ehud Bandel, president of the Masorti movement, as the Conservative stream is known in Israel.

He is to be appointed to the Jerusalem religious council as a result of the court ruling.

"They preferred extreme, secular, anti-religious Jews — who have absolutely no interest in religious services — to an observant Conservative approach," Bandel said.

Despite the tough Orthodox rhetoric that followed the Supreme Court ruling, Bandel appealed to Orthodox groups to accept the decision.

"If we would only get the chance to sit together, we will very quickly realize that the things that unite us are much greater than the things that divide us," he said.

"I don't want to join the religious council in order to fight and argue," he added. "I want to work together with my Orthodox colleagues to promote religious services to the entire population of the capital — haredi, Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and secular."

The NRP, carefully choosing its words, implied it could accept a Conservative representative — but not a Reform delegate.

"Our position, of course, completely negates the inclusion of Reform [Jews] on the religious councils," said Zevulun Orlev, secretary-general of the NRP.

Orlev said he doubted that the NRP — which has nine Knesset members in the governing coalition — would create a coalition crisis, since this would probably not solve the problem.

He added that the NRP would discuss "constructive approaches," including new legislation, to prevent the inclusion of Reform and Conservative representatives on the councils.

But the religious parties will have difficulty mustering a Knesset majority among coalition members to pass any law whose aim is to bypass a Supreme Court ruling.

Meanwhile, Orthodox leaders are looking for some way to deal with the ruling.

Chief Sephardi Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron this week reiterated his proposal that the religious councils be eliminated altogether.

Employing similar thinking, UTJ's Ravitz said the haredi parties may try to have some of the councils' functions transferred to the Religious Affairs Ministry.

He had an additional suggestion: splitting the councils to create separate boards for the Orthodox and liberal streams.

"Other faiths like Muslims have their own religious councils," he said. "I'm sorry to say this because I believe Reformists are Jews, but if they want, let them have their own councils." □

Israel and Britain sign agreement

LONDON (JTA) — Israel has reaped a diplomatic benefit from last month's Wye accord.

Just hours after Israel began its further redeployment from the West Bank and released 250 Palestinian prisoners last Friday, Israel and Britain signed a security memorandum to cooperate in defense research.

Britain's ambassador to Israel said the memorandum resulted from the Oct. 23 signing of the Wye agreement at the White House.

The memorandum calls for enhanced joint-weapons research and facilitating information exchanges.

Two areas that are likely to benefit directly from the agreement are the fields of naval high-tech and pilotless surveillance drones.

Joint nuclear research is excluded from the pact.

This is the first such memorandum of understanding between Britain and a non-NATO member-state.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expressed his satisfaction at the signing of the memorandum in a call to Israel's ambassador to London and a senior British Defense Ministry official. He described the memorandum as a "positive development" that he hoped "will serve as a foundation for future relations." □



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JEWISH WORLD

Center criticizes Latvia

A leading Nazi-hunting group criticized the government in Riga for not addressing Latvian complicity in World War II crimes in a recent advertisement in the Israeli press.

But the Simon Wiesenthal Center applauded the mention of Jewish contributions to the Baltic nation's history in the ad, which commemorated the sixth anniversary of Latvia's independence.

Bush plans trip to Israel

Texas Gov. George Bush will travel to Israel on Friday for a weeklong trip sponsored by the National Jewish Coalition, a Republican group.

Bush, who is considering a run for president in 2000, is one of four Republican governors scheduled to make the trip. The visit will be Bush's first to Israel and is widely seen as an effort to head off Jewish opposition to his potential candidacy.

Russia leader defends Makashov

The controversial governor of a region in southern Russia said the furor over recent anti-Semitic remarks by a Communist politician has been blown out of proportion.

Nikolai Kondratenko, who himself has made several anti-Semitic comments about rival politicians, said the criticism of Gen. Albert Makashov shows a double standard because anti-Russian sentiment goes unpunished.

Court hears Sabbath case

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals heard arguments in a case brought by a Seventh-day Adventist against an employer who refused to accommodate her religious needs. Lisette Balint, a resident of Carson City, Nev., was offered a position with the city's sheriff's department, but the department refused to excuse her from working on the Sabbath.

A district court previously ruled against Balint, stating that accommodating her would constitute an "undue hardship" for the employer. Jewish groups filed friend-of-the-court briefs supporting her appeal.

Youth group members still Jews

Participation in an Orthodox youth group leads to more Jewish involvement during adulthood, according to a new study.

The study of alumni of the National Council of Synagogue Youth, which is affiliated with the Orthodox Union, found that the group's graduates, even alumni who weren't from Orthodox homes, were more likely to marry other Jews, more likely to attend synagogue and more likely to engage in Jewish study when compared to other Jews in their age group.

Youth from ex-Yugoslavia gather together in Vienna

By Edward Serotta

VIENNA (JTA) — With Austria currently holding the rotating presidency of the European Union, conferences here that draw people from several European nations are common.

But a gathering here last week was unique: All of the participants were Jewish teenagers and college students from the five republics of the former Yugoslavia.

The 40 participants — several of whom have not seen each other since war ripped their country apart in 1991 and 1992 — spent four days in the Austrian capital attending lectures, engaging in discussions and participating in workshops that were created by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and Vienna's Jewish Welcome Service.

Some came from towns with as few as one Jewish family.

Dejan Petrovic, from Belgrade, said, "You cannot imagine how lonely, how sad these young people have been recently. When we were all together, back before the breakup of Yugoslavia, our small communities were strong only because young people from Belgrade would just come and visit their friends in Zagreb or Sarajevo.

"We stayed strong because we had each other," said Petrovic. "Now, with war and the economic problems we all have, much of the spirit has been lost."

Indeed, students who are normally kept apart by political boundaries became inseparable.

Daniel Atijas, a medical student living in Serbia, which is part of present-day Yugoslavia, spent much of his time during the conference with 26-year-old Alan Rebic and 18-year-old Maja Jankovic, both of whom live inside predominantly Muslim Sarajevo.

As one teen-ager put it, "Just because there's an ex-Yugoslavia doesn't mean we have to be ex-friends."

The program was funded by the Austrian Federal Chancellor's Office, the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry for Environment, Youth and Family Affairs.

The students met with Environment Minister Martin Bartenstein and were hosted by Vienna Mayor Michael Haupl in the city's sumptuous City Hall.

They also met with their counterparts from Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic while hashing out ideas and trends in Central Europe with some of Austria's leading journalists.

At the same time, 100 Jewish adults living in the former Yugoslavia met in Slovenia for the first time since the war, said Yechiel Bar Chaim, JDC's country director for the former Yugoslavia.

In order to help strengthen the Jewish content of the program, Bar Chaim brought in Jewish educators from Budapest, Munich and Israel to lead seminars, some of which were in Serbo-Croatian, although several were in English.

"This is unbelievable," Sasha Cvetkovic, president of the Jewish youth club in Zagreb and a political science student, said. "We can learn how to help our communities and get to just be with each other, which we can't really do so easily anymore."

One of the biggest surprises of the conference was the session with Bartenstein. Although slated merely to give a few words of greeting, he turned his speech into a question-and-answer period — he asked the questions and the program's participants provided the answers.

Then he left the podium, plunged into the crowd and spent nearly an hour chatting with youths from Zagreb, Belgrade and Ljubljana.

"Perhaps this is the kind of program the minister might wish to help with on an ongoing basis," said a beaming Leon Zelman.

Zelman, a 74-year-old survivor of Auschwitz who heads the Jewish Welcome Service.

"This is a new generation of Austrians running this country, and these youngsters are also a new generation," he said. "It's a perfect match." □

Anti-Semitism in U.S. drops, but stays high among blacks

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — Americans' attitudes toward Jews are improving overall, but African Americans are nearly four times more likely than whites to hold anti-Jewish beliefs, a new survey has found.

A survey released Monday by the New York-based Anti-Defamation League indicates that the number of American adults with strongly anti-Jewish views has dropped from 20 percent to 12 percent since 1992, when the agency last conducted a study of such attitudes.

And the number of respondents who do not hold anti-Semitic views has increased from 39 percent in 1992 to a present majority of 53 percent.

The study measured only attitudes, rather than actual acts of anti-Semitic violence.

ADL National Director Abraham Foxman attributed the improvement in attitudes to education and advocacy by groups such as the ADL and the American Jewish Committee, though he said there was no "exact science of cause and effect."

He also credited mass communication with promoting "a greater openness of people interacting" and commended the efforts of political leaders who have spoken out against hate, including anti-Semitism.

The last reason, Foxman said, "here in the kishke of history, is good times. Americans are doing well, and when they're doing well, there is less of a need to scapegoat."

"When it comes to scapegoating, Jews are the top of the hit parade," he said.

The survey, conducted in October by the Boston firm of Marttila Communications/Kiley & Co., confirms trends over the last three decades in which the number of Americans in the "most anti-Semitic" segment of the population has dropped steadily.

Age and education were seen as the most important indicators of anti-Semitic attitudes, with those over the age of 65 and those with only a high school education more likely to harbor anti-Jewish sentiment.

But more African Americans at all educational levels were more likely to hold such views.

The ADL's survey of 999 Americans over the age of 18 was based on an "index of anti-Semitic belief" developed in 1964 by researchers at the University of California for the ADL's baseline study of American anti-Semitism and prejudice.

The index groups respondents in one of three categories of increasing anti-Jewish feeling, based on responses to 11 key questions concerning perceptions of American Jews with regard to business ethics and influence on Wall Street, Jewish loyalties and Jewish power.

Fewer Americans today answered that Jews have "too much control" on either Wall Street or the American news media.

But there was a slight increase, to 24 percent from 21 percent, in Americans who said that "the movie and television industries are pretty much run by Jewish executives."

A solid majority of respondents believe that "the people who run the TV networks and major movie studios do not share the moral and religious beliefs of most Americans" — but they did not "think the programming decisions of network executives are

influenced by the fact that they might be Jewish," according to the report.

The survey, whose margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3 percent, highlighted black-Jewish relations as an area of lingering concern, despite improvements.

It found that 34 percent of black Americans fall into the most anti-Semitic category, compared to just 9 percent for white Americans.

These results are down slightly from 1992.

Foxman pointed to the anti-Semitic rhetoric of African American leaders — such as the Nation of Islam's Louis Farrakhan and Million Youth March organizer Khalid Muhammad — as having fostered virulently anti-Semitic stereotyping among African Americans.

In addition to the original population sample, researchers surveyed 331 African Americans to increase the reliability of the results for that group.

Hugh Price, president of the National Urban League, said that despite the slow pace at which African Americans have relinquished their anti-Jewish beliefs, "the direction is one that I'm encouraged by."

He cited coalitions between black groups like the Urban League with Jewish defense agencies and other ethnic advocacy groups as one sign of improvement.

Price recommended greater exchanges at all levels, including Sunday school, "to build in understanding and tolerance from the youngest of ages."

And he urged work outside formal institutions so that greater openness is not a "force-fed item."

Foxman noted improved relations "on the ground," but called for a more "vigorous effort" in combating anti-Semitism among African Americans, "so it doesn't become a chronic disease."

Responding to those who would suggest that America is moving toward a time when anti-Semitism is largely eradicated and the ADL's work will be done, Foxman suggested that the trend may not last.

"We live in a society today that has a great deal more health, a greater longevity, but that doesn't mean that people have stopped taking out life insurance," he said. □

Israel maintains air advantage

LONDON (JTA) — Israel has maintained a decisive technological advantage in the air with the acquisition of its latest strike aircraft from the United States, according to the current issue of the London-based Jane's Defense Weekly.

The journal reports that the Israel Air Force has now taken delivery of more than half of the 25 Boeing F-15I jet fighters it ordered in 1994 and has already conducted more than 1,200 flights with the aircraft, which are now stationed at the Tel Nov base in central Israel.

The multibillion-dollar order, scheduled to be completed by mid-1999, gives Israel — for the first time — an all-weather, long-range, pre-emptive strike capability, the journal reported.

The acquisition also gives Israel "the most powerful long-range aircraft in the region," it said.

An Israeli defense official was quoted as saying that a decision on Israel's next aircraft purchase is not expected until early next year. □