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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Orient row may spark violence

Israeli officials served closure orders Monday on three Palestinian offices operating out of Orient House after the two sides failed to reach a compromise.

Officials on both sides had warned that closing the offices could prompt violent protests, and some observers have maintained that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is purposely seeking a confrontation to bolster his support in next week's elections.

But Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert, in a conference call with the New Israel Fund, said Israel should postpone the closure move until after the elections. [Page 4]

Chinese students protest in Israel

Some two dozen Chinese students studying in Israel held a rally Monday outside the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv to protest NATO's weekend bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade. The protesters, who shook their fists and chanted, "War Criminals," held up pictures of the Chinese victims of the bombing.

Poll: Barak maintains lead

Israeli Labor Party candidate Ehud Barak will get 45 percent of the vote next week to 37 percent for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, according to a poll released Monday by Channel Two Television.

In a June 1 runoff, the margin widens to 52 percent for Barak and 40 percent for Netanyahu, the poll of 2,000 Israelis found.

Meanwhile, a leader of the settler movement charged Monday that Barak plans to "ethnically cleanse" Jewish settlers from the West Bank and Gaza Strip if he is elected premier.

Pinchas Wallerstein's charge, contained in a message to Jewish settlers, was later condemned by Netanyahu, who called it "inappropriate." Wallerstein subsequently told Israel Radio that he did not mean ethnic cleansing in the sense of "murdering men and raping women," but stood by his initial comment.

Polish death camp law signed

Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski on Monday signed into law a bill that would set up protective zones around former Nazi death camps in Poland. The government now plans to remove hundreds of crosses that have been erected near the site of Auschwitz, according to a presidential spokesman.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Population survey will measure forms of Jewish identity, practice

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — Lighting Shabbat candles is a traditional symbol of Jewish identity. But watching a Jewish film festival?

Researchers working on the year 2000 National Jewish Population Survey are looking into unconventional Jewish activity — such as joining Jewish book clubs or attending museum exhibitions — alongside more standard measures of observance and affiliation to gauge what contributes to Americans' sense of Jewish identity.

This new line of questioning is the result of findings from the last nationwide Jewish population survey in 1990, which showed American Jews moving away from Jewish ritual and membership in synagogues and Jewish organizations.

"There are many forms of being Jewish," Alice Goldstein, a member of the new survey's advisory committee, said in a telephone interview.

"We didn't have a handle on that" in the 1990 survey.

The 2000 survey is being designed to build on the demographic information collected a decade ago — and then to probe deeper into the ways Jewish identity is formed and maintained in American society.

The 1990 survey, sponsored by the Council of Jewish Federations, sent shockwaves through the Jewish community with its report of a 52 percent Jewish intermarriage rate. As a result of that finding, the organized Jewish community refocused its agenda on examining and promoting Jewish continuity.

Organized by the United Jewish Communities — the new national entity formed by the merger of CJF, the United Jewish Appeal and the United Israel Appeal — next year's survey will canvas 5,000 households selected through hundreds of thousands of random phone calls. With twice the budget and a survey sample twice the size of 1990's, the 2000 survey is planned to be "the most comprehensive, socially graphic portrait ever done of the American Jewish community," said Jim Schwartz, director of the UJC's research department.

The \$4 million survey and subsequent studies are being funded largely by private donors, with local federations contributing about \$1.7 million.

As with the results of the 1990 survey, Schwartz said, the 2000 findings will be used to help determine communal needs, fund-raising strategies and funding allocations, and for follow-up research.

Next year's survey will be translated into Russian and Yiddish for better coverage of new immigrants and other communities that might otherwise be left out. The increased number of respondents will allow for more in-depth analyses of responses, particularly in the areas of Jewish education and philanthropic trends, organizers say.

Thus, in a current draft, questions on religious upbringing can be compared to current denominational affiliation and synagogue membership to help draw a "wonderful portrait of denominational mobility," Schwartz said.

A hearty section on charitable giving is now augmented with numerous questions about volunteerism for Jewish and secular causes. It may also ask whether respondents prefer giving to umbrella organizations, such as the United Way or Jewish federations, or to individual charities.

Next to questions about religious observance and theological beliefs are inquiries into Jewish cultural activities and spirituality: "Do you say any prayers in your own words?" "In the past year have you used the Internet or e-mail to learn about Jewish

MIDEAST FOCUS

Liberal party may get six seats

A small liberal party that calls for the exclusion of fervently Orthodox parties from the next government will get six of the 120 seats in the next Knesset, according to recent polls. The leader of the Shinui Party, media personality Yosef "Tommy" Lapid, hopes to become a partner in the next government in place of such fervently Orthodox parties as Shas and United Torah Judaism.

Money earmarked for settlements

An Israeli Knesset committee approved \$3.25 million for settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Monday's decision came in the wake of repeated U.S. criticism of Israeli settlement policy and one week before the Israeli elections.

In a separate development, the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu approved on Sunday a spending package for Jerusalem which includes subsidies to every Israeli couple that buys an apartment there.

Candidate may be charged

Israeli police recommended that criminal charges be brought against a controversial Russian-born candidate for Knesset and a former aide to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

An investigation into Avigdor Lieberman, head of the Israel, Our Home Party, was launched last month after a newspaper quoted him as describing police investigators as "anti-Semitic racists" whose place was "in jail, and not as wardens."

Sharon expects more settlers

Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon said last week that despite criticism, 20,000 more settlers will live in the West Bank by the end of the year. In an interview with The Associated Press, the former army general said the only way to make Israelis living in isolated areas feel secure is to hold the high ground.



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Caryn Rosen Adelman, *President*
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topics?" Whereas the 1990 survey asked respondents' levels of Jewish education and that of their children, this time around they will be asked to evaluate the quality of those programs. Respondents will also be asked about summer camp experiences and the frequency and quality of Israel trips, as well as the sponsoring organizations.

Sections dealing specifically with social activism and perceptions of anti-Semitism have been pared down to two questions each. Still, many questions will be repeated from 1990 so trends can be charted over the past decade.

Schwartz is compiling the questionnaire with the National Technical Advisory Council, a group of academicians, Jewish organizational leaders and federation professionals co-chaired by Professors Vivian Klaff of the University of Delaware and Frank Mott of Ohio State University.

The surveys, which are planned to take about one half-hour of phone time, will be conducted by the New York-based firm Audits and Surveys Worldwide during the first half of the year 2000. An initial summary report is expected out in mid-2001.

A draft of the survey questionnaire has been circulated for comment to leaders of Jewish organizations, religious denominations and local federations, so some refinements are expected.

So far, religious leaders are praising the UJC's efforts to request their input in shaping the questionnaire.

"That's something they did not do 10 years ago," said Rabbi Daniel Freedlander, the program director for the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations. He noted specific interest in the impact of Jewish preschool education, and in affiliation rates of interfaith couples and their openness to outreach from Jewish institutions.

The Orthodox Union's executive vice president, Rabbi Raphael Butler, said he appreciates the opportunity to clarify how surveyors will account for large Orthodox families and for populations who might hesitate in taking part in telephone polls.

Specifics yet to be determined include preliminary questions to determine which households will be included in the final survey.

Some observers questioned the sampling techniques that helped derive the 52 percent intermarriage rate found in the 1990 survey.

Schwartz said his team was still pondering how to deal with this question in the 2000 survey.

The intermarriage finding tended to overshadow several other significant results from 1990 that researchers and federations hope to revisit in the coming survey.

The last survey found "a clear drop" in the levels of organizational membership, volunteerism, synagogue membership and ritual observance "across the board," said Alice Goldstein.

As a member of the Rhode Island federation's education planning commission and a past president of the local Bureau of Jewish Education, she said she was "frankly more concerned with that than with intermarriage," which she views as a symptom of the larger trends.

The geographic distribution of Jewish populations is a "major area" for examination, said Sidney Goldstein, a professor of population studies and sociology at Brown University and the 1990 research team's co-chairman.

The Goldsteins co-authored one of five monographs that draw on the 1990 data, "Jews on the Move: Implications for Jewish Identity."

One of the most fruitful outcomes of the 1990 survey was its indication of philanthropic-giving patterns along generational lines. It found that American Jews who grew up during the war years tend to give to Jewish causes and to collective institutions, and that younger Jews are nearly twice as likely to give to secular organizations.

These findings forced a change in fund-raising approaches to younger generations of Jews, said Donald Kent, CJF's vice president for development and marketing.

The 1990 findings reverberated throughout UJA and CJF — American Jewry's most broad-based fund-raising and social service organizations — even before their merger into the UJC. They led to collaborations with synagogues and Jewish educators and to the creation of commissions on intermarriage and on continuity.

Significantly, one of the four "pillars" underlying the UJC's new programmatic mission is "Jewish Renaissance and Renewal," a direct outgrowth of the communal focus on Jewish continuity over the past decade. □

JEWISH WORLD

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Researcher wants to help groups make better use of Jewish survey

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — The results of the last national survey of the American Jewish population were widely distributed — but one researcher says they could have been more widely used.

Rabbi Hayim Herring, the director of identity and continuity at the Minneapolis Jewish Federation, has just completed a study of how Jewish federation professionals used the survey of American Jewish demographics and attitudes conducted by the Council of Jewish Federations in 1990.

He says there is a significant distinction between distribution and dissemination.

“In a nutshell,” Herring said, “distribution concentrates on getting the word out. Dissemination focuses on how to get the word used.”

Compared to the CJF’s first such national initiative in 1970, Herring says, “huge strides forward have been made with regard to getting the word out about the 1990 survey.”

“When it came to getting the word used, that’s where additional learning can clearly take place.”

With a new survey in the works for the year 2000, Herring is hoping his study will contribute to a more effective utilization of next year’s findings.

Herring conducted his research as part of his doctoral studies, working closely with the team of researchers preparing the upcoming survey.

The 2000 survey is being organized by the United Jewish Communities, the new national philanthropy formed through the union of CJF, the United Jewish Appeal and the United Israel Appeal.

For his study, Herring sent questionnaires to 561 federation professionals working in seven areas: campaign, continuity, endowment, human resource development, marketing, planning directors and executives.

He said his research made clear that the 1990 survey “played an important role” in getting people to rethink their conceptions of the American Jewish community.

The survey highlighted areas of communal concern, he said, and helped identify target populations — singles, interfaith families, adolescents — where new policies and programs were needed. His major findings include:

- 62 percent of respondents reported that the 1990 survey played a role in creating continuity task forces and commissions and in developing new continuity programs.
- 60 percent said the survey played a role in “increasing the amount of time spent” planning for future Jewish communal needs, and 59 percent reported that the survey affected the allocation of funds for local needs as opposed to overseas needs.
- 58 percent said it had contributed to the building of partnerships with synagogues; 45 percent were encouraged to do so with social service agencies.

Federation professionals reported that they need more support in using the data effectively. They asked for study guides, conferences and collaborations with professional researchers from outside of the federation world.

A much larger body of scholarly research is expected from the 2000 survey because part of the \$4 million budget has been set aside specifically for “back-end” publications, the UJC’s research director, Jim Schwartz, said in a telephone interview.

Current preparations bode well for other forms of follow-up, some corresponding to Herring’s recommendations.

For example, Schwartz said the survey team is already working with federation lay and professional leaders, and representatives of Jewish organizations, as well as academics and members of various UJC committees.

But he cautioned that the survey is still “very much a work in process.”

Herring, who is a member of the UJC’s professional advisory committee, praised the 1990 survey as “high-quality research that deserves to be better utilized.”

He said he hoped his recommendations would be taken into consideration, “because there’s still time to move forward, beyond the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, when it comes to 2000.” □

DNA may prove Jewish roots

A tribe in southern Africa may be of Jewish ancestry, according to research reported in The New York Times.

Genetic tests reveal that males in the Lemba tribe carry a DNA sequence that is distinctive to the Jewish priestly class of Kohanim.

The Lemba reportedly practice circumcision, keep one day a week holy and do not eat pork.

A scholar says he has discovered that the Lemba, who currently live in South Africa and Zimbabwe, emigrated there from a Yemeni village that was once the site of Jewish communities.

Christian group starts campaign

The Christian Coalition launched a radio ad campaign asserting that the deadly rampage last month at Columbine High School in Colorado proves the need for having prayer in schools.

In the ads, which aired in Iowa and New Hampshire and were timed to coincide with President Clinton’s summit on school violence Monday, the Christian Coalition’s executive director, Randy Tate, said, “It’s time for Congress to lift the ban on the expression of faith in our classrooms. Give our kids the opportunity to pray, and our teachers the freedom to discuss morality and decency.”

More anti-Semitism in Moscow

Dozens of anti-Semitic stickers were posted last week in several Moscow subway stations.

The stickers show the blue Star of David crossed out with red markings.

Meanwhile, a few dozen men clad in military-style black uniforms and bearing anti-Semitic banners walked in downtown Moscow on Sunday as part of a counterdemonstration to a rally that marked the Soviet Union’s defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II.

French Jews decry pressure

Threats and pressure tactics used by the World Jewish Congress against French banks are harming efforts to resolve Holocaust-era claims, the head of France’s Jewish community said.

During a trip to Washington last week, Henri Hajdenberg, who is president of an umbrella organization representing French Jews, warned American Jewish groups against calling for a boycott of French banks.

The WJC has threatened to block a pending merger of French banks and may also ask U.S. states and cities to refuse to buy letters of credit from the banks when a committee of U.S. public finance officers meets next month to examine how French banks are handling Holocaust issues.

Israeli-Palestinian tensions rise over order to close Orient House

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Palestinians' de facto headquarters in eastern Jerusalem has become the focal point of tensions that could lead to violence only days before Israel holds its elections.

Israel on Monday served closure orders on three Palestinian offices operating out of Orient House after the two sides failed to reach a compromise.

Officials on both sides had warned that closing the offices could prompt violent Palestinian protests. Some observers have maintained that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is purposely seeking a confrontation to bolster his support in next week's elections.

Since the closure order was first issued last week, demonstrators for and against the move have gathered daily outside the compound.

Israel ordered the closure of the three offices on the grounds that they were operating on behalf of the Palestinian Authority in violation of the Oslo accords.

Under Israeli law, the Palestinians have 24 hours to petition Israel's High Court of Justice to block the order from being carried out. Israeli left-wing groups were prepared to petition the court on the Palestinians' behalf, Israel Radio reported.

Should the court not accept the appeal, and the Palestinians fail to adhere to the closure orders, Israeli police would be sent to Orient House to carry them out — a move that Palestinian officials have warned could spark violence.

Israeli police were preparing for possible disturbances, according to Israeli Radio.

The move to issue the closure orders followed marathon negotiations between representatives from Israel's Public Security Ministry and an Orient House representative.

Both sides had expressed optimism earlier in the day that a compromise was within reach. But the talks reportedly broke down over the Palestinians' refusal to meet an Israeli demand to not only move the offices' activities outside of Jerusalem, but to physically close the offices as well.

The offices ordered closed were a geographic institute, an international desk and the office of Faisal Hussein, the Palestinian official in charge of Jerusalem.

The Israeli action was sharply criticized by Palestinian officials, who accused Netanyahu of trying to force a confrontation in order to take a tough stand on Jerusalem prior to next week's elections.

U.S. officials, concerned about the potential for violence, have been trying since last week to defuse the situation.

The U.S. consul general in Jerusalem has met with both sides in an effort to negotiate a compromise, and on Monday, before the closure order was issued, the U.S. State Department called on the two sides to work together to resolve the dispute.

"What's important to us is that both sides seek to resolve this issue peacefully and avoid a larger problem," said State Department spokesman James Rubin, who refused to weigh in on the substance of the dispute.

The closure order was issued after Israel's Inner Security Cabinet voted earlier in the day to enforce it. □

Parties offer casinos, marijuana as solutions for Israel's problems

By Avi Machlis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — If Reuven Zelinkovsky has his way, Israel will make a great leap toward regional peace if his Natural Law Party wins a Knesset seat in the May 17 election.

All it will take, he says, is 1,500 Israelis putting their heads together according to the principles of transcendental meditation, and all of the troubles that have plagued the Middle East for decades will disappear.

"We've seen that nothing else works, and that's why our slogan is, 'Politics are not enough for peace,' " says Zelinkovsky, a 55-year-old electronics engineer and retired lieutenant colonel in the Israeli army. "Meditation dissolves tension, and that is the source of all our problems."

Israel has always had its fair share of offbeat characters, but this year it seems they are all trying to get into the Knesset. Among a record 33 parties competing on May 17 are about a dozen obscure, single-issue parties such as Zelinkovsky's.

Their proliferation proves that Israel's new election system — designed to stabilize politics by reducing the power of smaller parties — has failed to deter small parties. In fact, new parties say the system, first used in 1996, offers them an incentive to run because citizens vote separately for a prime minister and a party. Therefore, they say, voters may feel they are not wasting their vote by backing a new, small party. In addition, the threshold for entry into the Knesset is only 1.5 percent, or about 52,000 votes.

Opinion polls show that none of the new parties will get in, except for the one headed by Penina Rosenblum, Israel's cosmetics queen, who is using her rags-to-riches story to attract down-and-out female voters. Polls predict her party will win two seats.

Other parties may not have a chance, but at least they are providing a bit of comic relief to Israelis as the lackluster five-month-long election campaign approaches the finishing line. If peace and security are not stirring up public debate and emotions, then these parties are doing their best to show Israel where they believe its real problems lie.

Ezra Tissoni, the leader of the Casino Party, promises that legalized gambling would generate \$7.5 billion in tourist revenues a year and create 300,000 jobs.

"Why should the Palestinians have a casino in Jericho and take money from the Jews?" he asks. "Wouldn't it be better to leave that money in Israel?"

With \$500,000 — winnings from his 30-year gambling career — Tissoni is convinced he will be in the next Knesset.

Tissoni's optimism may be a mirage, but for the Green Leaf Party, aiming high is an electoral asset.

Green Leaf, which wants to legalize marijuana, has created a stir with a video clip featuring psychedelic images and the Israeli national anthem pulsing to a trance beat. The party logo: an Israeli flag with a five-pointed cannabis plant replacing the Star of David.

Boaz Wachtel, a party leader and veteran substance abuse counselor, says that Israel ranks second out of 17 Western countries in hard drug abuse, and that legalizing cannabis can help solve the problem.

Green Leaf, he promises, will get into the Knesset. "If you translate the number of [pot] smokers into electoral power," says Wachtel, "we're going to be the Shas of the grass." □