



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 78, No. 146

Thursday, August 3, 2000

83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Barak: U.S. to move embassy

The United States plans to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem by Jan. 20, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak said in a television interview.

U.S. officials said they had no information that a final decision had been made on the move.

Leader of Bobovers dies at 92

The leader widely credited with rebuilding the Bobover Chasidic community after it was almost annihilated in the Holocaust died Wednesday at the age of 92. Rabbi Shlomo Halberstam came to New York shortly after the war, building a vibrant movement in Brooklyn. [Page 3]

Israel's foreign minister resigns

David Levy resigned as Israel's foreign minister. Levy said he and Prime Minister Ehud Barak began to work in "different and strange ways" — a reference to Levy's exclusion from peace negotiations.

Barak dismissed talk of early elections, even after his foreign minister resigned and the Knesset began the process of dissolving itself.

Speaking after legislators gave preliminary approval to a bill calling for new elections, Barak said that in the coming three months of parliamentary recess, he would work to rebuild the coalition and pursue peace with the Palestinians. [Page 1]

Bush adviser backs Israeli 'quest'

Texas Gov. George W. Bush's chief foreign policy adviser included support for Israel when discussing the Republican presidential candidate's foreign policy goals.

Speaking at the Republican National Convention, Condoleezza Rice said a Bush administration would continue the "bipartisan tradition" of supporting "Israel's quest for enduring peace with its neighbors."

The founder and dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center was scheduled to discuss the importance of tolerance and combating hate in his remarks to the Republican National Convention on Wednesday evening.

The invitation to Marvin Hier to speak in Philadelphia for three-and-a-half minutes came after Republican presidential candidate Gov. George W. Bush and his wife, Laura, visited the center's Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles earlier this year.

NEWS ANALYSIS

As Barak's government crumbles, the only confident member is Barak

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Ehud Barak exuded his usual confidence this week, but even members of his own party are starting to wonder why.

In rapid succession this week, the premier saw his nominee for the nation's presidency lose out to a relative unknown, had his foreign minister resign in a public dispute over Barak's handling of the Camp David summit, and the Knesset gave preliminary approval to a bill to dissolve itself and hold early elections.

Barak could draw some solace that the Knesset was unable to muster the 61 votes to pass a no-confidence motion against him earlier this week.

But his opponents — and even some members of his coalition — are saying it is only a matter of time until Barak's government falls.

The political clock began ticking for Barak on Wednesday, with the start of a Knesset summer recess granting the beleaguered premier three months to try to get his governing coalition in order and make headway in peace talks with the Palestinians.

It got off to a discouraging start that same day, when David Levy resigned as foreign minister — a move that left Barak with only 13 ministers in his Cabinet. Two months ago, there were 23.

Just hours after Levy's resignation, the Knesset backed the bill dissolving itself. Given the recess, no further moves on the bill are expected until October or, more likely, November.

It must still pass three more votes before it becomes law and new elections are called.

Barak dismissed the vote, calling it "part of a movie we have been in."

"I do not yet see the Knesset really dispersing itself and going to elections," he said. "In a few weeks, the dust will settle."

Barak plans to spend that time rebuilding his coalition, which began splintering on the eve of the Camp David summit, when three coalition members — Shas, Yisrael Ba'Aliyah and the National Religious Party — bolted from his government.

But members of his government believe that Barak's options are limited. Even Haim Ramon, who is among the ministers closest to Barak, was quoted this week as saying that the premier is running out of combinations for a workable government.

Earlier in the week, the Knesset handed Barak a defeat that left many commentators believing it was a harbinger of more dire things to come for the premier.

On Monday, legislators elected Likud Party lawmaker Moshe Katsav president in a vote that was believed to be as much a stinging rebuke to Barak as it was to Katsav's opponent, former Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

Peres did not link the fate handed him during the secret Knesset ballot to the standing of Barak and his government among Israel's legislators.

Nor did he deduce that his own defeat means that Barak would not triumph in a national referendum on a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

Peres' old friend and political foe, Ariel Sharon, however, did link the defeat to the peace process.

Sharon, leader of the opposition Likud Party, claimed Tuesday that the majority that put Katsav into the president's residence is, in effect, the same majority in the Knesset that opposes Barak's peace moves.

This majority includes the rightist bloc and the religious bloc. It is the coalition that

MIDEAST FOCUS

Pardon sought for ex-Shas leader

A leader of the fervently Orthodox Shas Party called on Israel's new president to pardon former Shas leader Aryeh Deri, who was recently jailed for bribery and corruption.

Rabbi Yitzhak Kadourie made the plea in a series of blessings offered when Moshe Katsav visited his home. Katsav's upset victory over Prime Minister Shimon Peres in the presidential election earlier this week was partly due to support from Shas.

Lebanon sentences SLA members

A Lebanese military court sentenced 23 people Tuesday to prison terms ranging from three weeks to five years for collaboration or contact with Israel.

The defendants, the 19th group brought before the court since Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in May, were all members of the South Lebanon Army.

Trial date set for former minister

The trial of former Israeli Cabinet minister Yitzhak Mordechai is scheduled to begin in November. Mordechai is accused of sexually harassing and committing forced indecent acts on three women.

Turks purge fundamentalists

Turkey's army purged 43 officers, most of them for alleged Islamist sympathies, according to local newspaper reports. The army, which regards itself as a guardian of secularism, views Islamic fundamentalism as the greatest threat to the nation.

Singer's life to reach stage

Israel's Habima Theater plans to produce a drama based on the life of singer Ofra Haza, who died of AIDS in February.

The drama will be scripted by Haza's former manager, Bezalel Aloni, who said it would contain new insights and disclosures about her life and death. The production is scheduled to be staged in December.

Daily News Bulletin

Shoshana S. Cardin, *President*

Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*

Lisa Hostein, *Editor*

Howard Lovy, *Managing Editor*

Lenore A. Silverstein, *Business Manager*

JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
© JTA Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

former Prime Minister Menachem Begin first put together in 1977, when he brought his Likud Party to power for the first time.

His successor, Yitzhak Shamir, inherited the coalition and was able to preserve it for much of the following decade.

Former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin overturned the coalition, briefly but crucially, after the election of 1992, when he wooed the fervently Orthodox Shas Party into his Labor-Meretz government and went on to sign the Oslo Accords with the Palestinians.

The rightist-religious coalition came together again four years later to support Benjamin Netanyahu for the premiership.

Although Barak succeeded once again in creating Rabin's coalition when he won power last year, he has not succeeded in holding it together.

Peres's personal story — four decades of historic triumphs at home and abroad interspersed with frustrating electoral defeats — is the stuff of great literature.

But the fortunes of Barak's peace initiative, which still hangs in the balance despite the collapse of the Camp David summit, is the stuff of Israel's future.

Sharon says the Israeli people will follow their legislators and shore up the "national camp."

Sharon also says the electorate will spurn the concessions Barak made at Camp David, particularly his readiness to cede the strategic Jordan Valley and to transfer parts of Jerusalem to Palestinian sovereignty.

The ever-confident Barak — and with him the defeated but not silenced Peres — believe there is still room to hope that the Palestinians will accept U.S. bridging proposals on Jerusalem, and that if they do the people of Israel will do so as well.

Barak has the opinion polls to back him up. Over the weekend, a Gallup poll indicated that 66 percent of Israelis favor further negotiations with the Palestinians.

On the political right, people point to the huge disparity between the weekend opinion polls regarding the presidency and what in fact transpired in the Knesset on Monday.

The polls showed Peres favored by three times as many Israelis as Katsav. Yet Katsav won.

Perhaps, they say, the polls are also way off when it comes to the negotiations with the Palestinians.

Pollsters and left-of-center pundits, though, maintain that the "inaccuracy" of the polls in terms of who would win the presidential contest proves that the Knesset is way to the right of the public.

Hence its insistence on voting for Katsav even though Peres was the more popular candidate. And hence its determination, if it can, to bring Barak down before he can take a peace accord with Arafat to the people.

On Monday afternoon, in the aftermath of the dramatic presidential vote, Sharon's vaunted "national camp majority" failed to gel in a no-confidence motion against Barak. Only 50 members supported the motion, which needed 61 of the Knesset's 120 members to bring the premier and his government down.

But Sharon vowed that the summer recess would give the beleaguered Barak no peace.

"Our children and grandchildren can go on vacation," the Likud leader said. "But there'll be no holiday for us. We'll be here, day in and day out, attacking the prime minister."

Political observers say the crunch will come when the Knesset returns from its summer break, just after the High Holidays.

If Barak has gotten an accord with the Palestinians by then, there will be elections. If he has not, they say, there will still be elections.

The only question is when they will be held. Some politicians suggest the spring of 2001. Others say Barak will be unable to govern until then, that he will be unable to push through the state budget at year's end.

Either way, the present government's days seem numbered.

Pundits may long debate whether Peres' defeat was related to this situation, but all are agreed that the same Knesset that denied him the presidency is fast approaching the end of its term. □

JEWISH WORLD

Victim's family sues Syria

The family of an Israeli American killed in a 1996 Hamas bus bombing in Jerusalem sued Syria in a New York court.

The family of Ira Weinstein is seeking \$330 million in damages from Syria for allegedly providing support to Hamas at the time of the attack.

Lawmaker backs Palestine

A parade of U.S. lawmakers greeted Jewish Republicans at a Republican Jewish Coalition event at this week's convention in Philadelphia.

While most touted the accomplishments of the Republican Party and expressed support for the Jewish community and Israel, U.S. Rep. Tom Campbell (R-Calif.) told his audience, "The people of Palestine are entitled to their own country" and "Jerusalem can be the capital of Palestine and still be an undivided capital of Israel."

Arrest made in German bombing

German police arrested a man in connection with last week's explosion near a train station in Dusseldorf.

Police said the suspect did not appear to come from an extremist background.

Most of the people injured in the explosion were Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union, including a pregnant woman who lost her fetus.

In a related development, German politicians are debating whether a ban on a far-right party will help curb a recent tide of extremist violence.

A German minister proposed the ban, which soon drew the support of the nation's police union, saying the National Democratic Party promotes neo-Nazism and threatens German democracy.

Mogul inks newspaper deal

A Jewish mogul and humanitarian catapulted to the top of the Canadian media world by inking a \$3.5-billion deal to acquire 149 Canadian daily newspapers.

A supporter of human rights causes, Israel "Issy" Asper helped establish the Institute of Freedom and Democracy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

He also provides backing for a Holocaust and human rights studies program for Canadian high school students.

Vatican mounts Anne Frank show

The Vatican plans to host an exhibit commemorating Holocaust diarist Anne Frank.

The Aug. 10-Sept. 11 exhibit will display hundreds of photos dealing with racial persecution during the Nazi era and will include a collection of every printed edition of the Dutch teen-ager's diary.

OBITUARY

Rebbe who rebuilt Bobover group from ashes of Shoah dies at age 92

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — Mourners are remembering the longtime rebbe of the Bobover Chasidic group as an exceptional leader — one who rebuilt a community from the ashes of the Holocaust.

Rabbi Shlomo Halberstam died early Wednesday morning at a hospital in the Borough Park section of Brooklyn, the heavily Jewish neighborhood where the Bobovers are based and where he had built a world-renowned synagogue and yeshiva.

Halberstam, 92, was believed to have been the last remaining Chasidic rabbi to have survived the Holocaust. Born in Galicia, Halberstam arrived in the United States in 1946, indigent after his group was largely obliterated by the Nazis.

During World War II, Halberstam dressed up as a nun in order to rescue other Jews, hiding them in the false bottom of a coal truck. However, his wife and several children were killed in the Holocaust. Rabbi Naftali Halberstam, now 70, was the only child to survive the war and he will replace his father as rebbe.

Halberstam, who subsequently remarried and had additional children, is widely credited with rebuilding the Bobover community in the United States.

When Halberstam first arrived in New York, there were so few fervently Orthodox Jews in his Manhattan neighborhood that his son recalls being sent out into the street to look for a minyan.

The elder Halbertsam was known to greet newly arrived Holocaust survivors as their boats docked on the piers.

Later, he moved his community to Brooklyn.

"People needed a leader, someone who could help them restore their faith and optimism. He did that," said Abraham Biederman, an activist in the Borough Park community and a friend of the rebbe.

"He was energetic and had a regal bearing and extraordinary sense of class, but at the same time extraordinary warmth," added Biederman. "People really loved him."

Yitzhak, a Bobover Jew living in Borough Park who did not want his last name used, said Halberstam was "open to everyone — there was no such thing as a closed door."

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, got to know Halberstam in the 1970s, while heading the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater New York.

"He eschewed extremism," said Hoenlein. "To be in his presence you sensed not only his charisma but his nobility and his saintliness. He literally knew every single child in his yeshiva, and it has thousands of children."

An estimated 20,000 Bobover Jews live in Borough Park, and there are smaller communities in Monsey, N.Y., Montreal, Mexico City, Great Britain and Israel. Most Bobover Jews do not descend from the group's prewar Polish community, but were drawn to the sect through the rebbe's leadership.

In his 1993 book on fervently Orthodox Jews, Israeli journalist and JTA Jerusalem Bureau Chief David Landau described Halberstam as having a "warm, outgoing personality, a welcoming smile, a rare gift for storytelling and an inexhaustible fund of Chasidic tales that attracted people to his table for festive meals."

"He was an extremely engaging and warm personality," said Rabbi Bob Kaplan of the Jewish Community Relations Council, adding that there are other rabbis of Halberstam's age, but "not of his stature."

Followers of Halberstam will likely find the timing of his death — on Rosh Chodesh Av, the beginning of the nine days preceding Tisha B'Av — as religiously significant, said Kaplan.

The nine days preceding the holiday marking the destruction of the First and Second Temples are observed in the Orthodox community as a period of mourning in which people refrain from eating meat, shaving, listening to music and celebrating festive occasions. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Jews in GOP support party even as they disagree on issues***By Lisa Hostein*

PHILADELPHIA (JTA) — There is a reason that Republicans, when promoting their party to Jews, tend to dismiss their party's platform as irrelevant or focus on foreign policy rather than domestic issues.

As Robert Jubelirer, president pro tempore of the Pennsylvania state Senate and a delegate to the Republican National Convention here, put it this week: "I don't agree with everything in my platform."

Although some would suggest that blanket statement is true of nearly everyone — Republicans and Democrats alike — many Republican Jews express a clear discomfort with a number of domestic positions laid out in the party's platform, including support for a pro-life amendment to the Constitution and support for voluntary school prayer.

At the same time, some Republicans suggest that the influence of the religious right has waned in recent years, a direct result, they say, of Jews active in the party who have worked hard to quell that influence.

While the Republican National Convention was steeped in controversy eight years ago, influenced by Pat Buchanan and Pat Robertson, the tenor changed significantly four years ago. This time around, the Republican candidate, Texas Gov. George W. Bush, made it clear this year's party in Philadelphia was to be just that — four days of celebration showcasing the party's unity.

As part of that strategy, Bush also quelled any dissent over the platform, making it clear he didn't want a potentially bruising floor debate over the abortion issue to overshadow his message of unity and inclusivity.

Susan Cullman, head of the Republican Pro-Choice Coalition, expressed profound disappointment that her efforts to introduce language in the platform that welcomed a diversity of views on the issue failed.

When confronted with this by Cullman at a Jewish-sponsored event on Tuesday, Stephen Goldsmith, Bush's chief adviser on domestic issues, was visibly uncomfortable. "This is my least favorite question," the former mayor of Indianapolis said sheepishly.

Still Cullman and others who are pro-choice and for a strict separation of church and state, stand by their party. "The reason I'm Republican has nothing to do with choice issues," Cullman told JTA. "It has to do with government staying out of our life.

"Our party is a party of individual rights" and fiscal responsibility, which is "very compatible with Jewish thinking," she said, adding she want to see more Jews "join us to change the social issues."

Sheldon Kamins, a national co-chair of the Republican Jewish Coalition, said he, too, is pro-choice, but when it comes to church-state issues, he doesn't worry about the party's position.

"We shouldn't have policies that expunge existence of God from public life," he said, adding, "The Jewish community should feel confident enough" to have a reasonable and rational approach to religion in public life as long as it doesn't restrict or require a certain religion.

Among the key elements of interest to Jews in the platform are:

- Tolerance: "We denounce all who practice or promote racism, anti-Semitism, ethnic prejudice, and religious intolerance."
- School choice: "We support choice in education, not as an abstract theory, but as the surest way for families, especially low-income families, to free their youngsters from failing or dangerous schools."

- School prayer: "We will continue to work for the return of voluntary school prayer to our schools and will strongly enforce the Republican legislation that guarantees equal access to school facilities by student religious groups. We strongly support voluntary student-initiated prayer in school without governmental interference. We strongly disagree with the Supreme Court's recent ruling, backed by the current administration, against student-initiated prayer."

- Free exercise of religion: "While the Constitution guards against the establishment of state-sponsored religion, it also honors the free exercise of religion. We assert the right of religious leaders to speak out on public issues and will not allow the EEOC or any other arm of government to regulate or ban religious symbols from the workplace."

- Charitable choice: "When government funds privately operated social, welfare, or educational programs, it must not discriminate against faith-based organizations, whose record in providing services to those in need far exceeds that of the public sector. Their participation should be actively encouraged, and never conditioned upon the covering or removing of religious objects or symbols."

- Abortion: "We support a human life amendment to the Constitution, and we endorse legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment's protections apply to unborn children. Our purpose is to have legislative and judicial protection of that right against those who perform abortions. We oppose using public revenues for abortion and will not fund organizations which advocate it. We support the appointment of judges who respect traditional family values and the sanctity of innocent human life."

- Family matters: "We support the traditional definition of 'marriage' as the legal union of one man and one woman, and we believe that federal judges and bureaucrats should not force states to recognize other living arrangements as marriages. We do not believe sexual preference should be given special legal protection or standing in law."

- Gun control: "We defend the constitutional right to keep and bear arms, and we affirm the individual responsibility to safely use and store firearms. A Republican administration will vigorously enforce current gun laws, neglected by the Democrats, especially by prosecuting dangerous offenders identified as felons in instant background checks. Although we support background checks to ensure that guns do not fall into the hands of criminals, we oppose federal licensing of law-abiding gun owners and national gun registration as a violation of the Second Amendment and an invasion of privacy of honest citizens."

- Immigration: The platform says the next Republican administration will reorganize family unification preferences to give priority to spouses and children, rather than extended family members; and reform the Immigration and Naturalization Service by splitting its functions into two agencies, one focusing on enforcement and one exclusively devoted to service. □