



Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Likud takes elections

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's Likud Party emerged victorious in Tuesday's elections, according to exit polls.

The Likud won between 33 and 35 seats in the 120-member Knesset, according to three polls conducted for Israeli TV stations. The Labor Party is expected to get between 18 seats, barely ahead of the Shinui Party, which is projected to win 15 to 17 seats, the polls said.

The fervently Orthodox Shas Party is expected to win between nine and 12 seats, while the far-right National Union bloc is expected to win seven to 10. [Pages 1, 3]

Report: Civilians suffer worst

During the past year, 436 Israelis were killed in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, compared with 198 in 2001.

Seventy-six percent of Israelis killed last year were civilians, according to the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot, citing data from the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya.

Among Palestinians, 45 percent of those killed were civilians and 55 percent were fighters, helping to disprove allegations that Israeli soldiers fire indiscriminately, the report said. Fifteen percent of the Palestinians killed last year were killed by other Palestinians in suicide attacks or in work accidents, the report said.

Cartoon negative on Sharon

The Israeli Embassy in London sent a letter of protest to the Independent after the newspaper ran a cartoon depicting Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon biting the flesh of a Palestinian baby.

In the cartoon — which appeared as Britain marked Holocaust Remembrance Day on Monday — Sharon says, "What's wrong? Have you never seen a politician kissing a baby?"

The embassy lambasted the newspaper for reviving the ancient blood libel against Jews. Embassy official Shuli Davidovich said the cartoon was reminiscent of images in the Nazi newspaper Der Sturmer.

In a letter to the Independent, she said she was shocked and horrified by the newspaper's action, which "failed to draw the line between legitimate criticism and anti-Semitism."

ISRAEL VOTES 2003

Sharon's triumphant re-election cements his comeback career

By Michael S. Arnold

NEW YORK (JTA) — Israeli politics have seen few transformations as remarkable as Ariel Sharon's.

A little more than four years ago, when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appointed Sharon as foreign minister, many Israelis were outraged that the man they considered the villain of the 1982 Lebanon War was to be Israel's face abroad.

When Sharon was appointed interim Likud leader after Netanyahu lost to Ehud Barak, few thought the septuagenarian would be more than a caretaker. Yet Sharon solidified his hold on the party and in February 2001 swept Barak out of office, capping a two-decade climb from ignominy to power.

Now the former bete noire of Israeli politics has become the first prime minister to win re-election since Menachem Begin in 1981.

Sharon's success is attributed to his personal qualities, his performance during his first term and, paradoxically, voters' despair over the state of the nation, something that rarely redounds to the incumbent's credit.

In 2001, running for election during the nascent Palestinian intifada, Sharon promised voters peace and security.

Two years later, Israel is further from peace, demonstrably less safe — and undergoing an economic meltdown.

Yet voters largely do not blame Sharon.

He inherited the intifada from Barak, and while both the ferocity of Palestinian terrorism and Israel's military response have increased markedly under Sharon, most Israelis do not see a realistic alternative.

It helps that Sharon is the last of the generation of the giants, warrior-statesmen like Yitzhak Rabin and Moshe Dayan whose history is synonymous with Israel's and who always have filled the breach at moments of crisis.

It is perhaps that aura that helped Sharon weather alleged vote-buying and financial scandals that cost Likud several Knesset seats in the election, but didn't sink Sharon's candidacy.

Then, too, in contrast to his predecessors, Sharon is a personable and avuncular figure, liked and respected even by his political foes.

Unlike Barak and Netanyahu, both considered brilliant but arrogant, Sharon has surprised Cabinet colleagues and military officials with his willingness to solicit advice and follow it.

For someone nicknamed "the bulldozer," Sharon proved flexible and deliberate during his first term.

He repeatedly rejected the hard-line proposals of his government's more hawkish members, effectively giving the Labor Party veto power over military decisions in order to preserve the national unity that he considered essential in time of war.

Much of the world accuses Sharon of brutality in his response to Palestinian terrorism, but many believe he moved rather slowly in intensifying Israel's military actions. Often he showed restraint — such as after the June 2001 bombing of Tel Aviv's Dolphinarium disco — when opponents expected Sharon to reveal his "true colors" as a warmonger.

In part, Sharon knew he would gain by being patient — intuiting, correctly, that if given another chance the Palestinians would supply another outrage, and the case for

MIDEAST FOCUS

Meretz leader may resign

The leader of the left-wing Meretz Party said he will resign if Tuesday's exit polls prove correct.

Yossi Sarid made the announcement after polls said Meretz, which has 10 seats in the current Knesset, falls to between five and eight seats.

Turnout lowest in Israel's history

Only 69 percent of Israel's eligible voters cast their ballots in Tuesday's elections, the lowest percentage in Israel's history.

Some 3.2 million of 4.7 eligible voters cast ballots, according to the Central Election Committee.

Israeli dies after long coma

An Israeli soldier died after being in a coma for almost 19 years. Sgt. Maj. Nadal Fero suffered massive injuries to his stomach in an April 1984 skirmish with Palestinian terrorists in the Gaza Strip, according to the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv*.

"The doctors didn't even think he would make it through one day, but he fought for almost 19 years, like a hero," his mother said after he died Sunday.

4 Palestinians killed in clashes

Four Palestinian gunmen were killed and two Israeli border police were lightly hurt during clashes Tuesday in Jenin. The clashes erupted when Israeli forces entered the West Bank city Tuesday morning and began carrying out searches and arrests.

3 killed in Gaza blast

Three Palestinians, including at least one Hamas member, were killed in a blast Monday night in Gaza City.

Israel said the blast was caused by a "work accident" when a homemade bomb exploded prematurely. Hamas claimed the explosion was caused by an Israeli helicopter strike.

Israeli retaliation would be even stronger. Sharon's patience also was born of his experience as defense minister two decades ago.

Accused of having engineered a "war of choice" in Lebanon, Sharon knew he had to painstakingly build public support before launching bold military actions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Sharon quickly accelerated Israel's policy of assassinating terrorists, and critics accused him of fanning the embers of war. But Sharon waited more than a year in office before ordering a large-scale invasion of the West Bank last April, an event that decisively transformed the intifada by throwing the Palestinians on the defensive.

And even after two years in office, Sharon has not ordered a similar large-scale invasion of the Gaza Strip, where fighting in densely populated areas likely would entail heavy civilian casualties.

He also has resisted numerous calls — and, reportedly, his own desire — to exile Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, fearing that it would antagonize the United States.

Beyond the remarkable degree of unity he maintained at home, the greatest accomplishment of Sharon's first term surely was the rapport he established with Washington, which has remained Israel's sole significant ally in an increasingly hostile international environment.

By his handling of the Karine-A arms smuggling affair and the trove of P.A. documents uncovered during Israeli raids in the West Bank, Sharon convinced President Bush of Arafat's personal role as a sponsor of terrorism.

That led to Bush's landmark June 24 speech, in which he effectively endorsed Sharon's position that peace with the Palestinians is not possible as long as Arafat remains in power — with all the policy implications that entails.

By promising Bush early in his term that he would not harm Arafat physically, Sharon set himself a daunting task: to effectively kill his long-time antagonist without actually doing so.

That leaves Sharon trying to calibrate the precise amount of military, economic and diplomatic pressure that will convince the world community, and the Palestinians themselves, that Arafat is detrimental to Palestinian welfare and must be replaced.

Paradoxically, however, Sharon's strength may prove to be his undoing. Critics say his refusal to budge in the face of Palestinian attacks masks an inability to envision a long-term solution to the crisis.

Sharon argues that the solution is not in Israel's hands — it can't make peace as long as the Palestinians don't accept Israel's existence, as many Israelis believe — but the public may eventually despair and choose a leader offering "peace now" or "separation now," or some other proposal that presents a semblance of hope in dark times.

Then, too, the anticipated U.S.-led war on Iraq may change the regional landscape to Sharon's disadvantage. Experience has shown that favors from the Arabs often are repaid in shekels — that is to say, in the form of U.S. pressure for Israeli concessions.

Postwar pressure on Israel to withdraw troops from the West Bank, or to begin dismantling West Bank and Gaza settlements, could expose fundamental faults in Sharon's entente with Washington.

In addition, Labor Party Chairman Amram Mitzna's vow not to enter a national unity government — assuming he honors it — places Sharon in a difficult spot.

While the decision probably cost Labor several seats in Tuesday's election, it also could leave Sharon with few options except a narrow right-wing government.

Given Sharon's reluctance to take extreme measures against the Palestinians, a right-wing coalition appears highly unstable, raising the specter of more elections in the not-too-distant future.

If that happens, even a survivor like Sharon may find that his time has run out. It's one thing to approach elections with the Labor Party fragmented and — having shared responsibility for government policy until a few months ago — unable to present a compelling alternative.

Another round of elections after Labor has gathered its bearings in the opposition — and the public has stewed in more terrorism and recession — could be another matter entirely. □



Daily News Bulletin

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JEWISH WORLD

U.S. pulling out Patriots

The United States plans to withdraw three Patriot anti-missile batteries from Israel at the conclusion of a joint military exercise.

A spokesman at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv said the Patriots would be withdrawn by Feb. 10, Reuters reported. Israeli security sources have said the batteries should remain in Israel as defense against possible Iraqi missile strikes in response to a U.S.-led attack on Baghdad.

Israel has made no formal request for the Patriots, the report said.

Reward ad blocked in Estonia

Estonian police blocked local newspapers from publishing an ad offering a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the conviction of Nazi war criminals.

Similar ads ran recently in Latvia and Lithuania as part of "Operation Last Chance," an effort sponsored by the Simon Wiesenthal Center to find and prosecute Nazi war criminals.

The ad that was supposed to run Tuesday in Estonia included copy that read, "During the Holocaust, Estonians murdered Jews in Estonia as well as in other countries," according to the center. Police officials maintain there is no "convincing evidence" that Estonians were ever convicted for the murder of Jews outside Estonia, and say the claims made by the center may violate the Estonian Constitution, the center added. The police decision is "totally outrageous," said the center's chief Nazi hunter, Efraim Zuroff.

Russian extremists rally

Russian Jewish leaders say a weekend demonstration by a far-right political party outside the offices of a Jewish organization is further reason to ban the party.

Sunday's demonstration by the NPDR is "proof that we are moving in the right direction" in efforts to have the party banned, said Valery Engel, the executive director of the World Congress of Russian Jewry, which unites Russian Jewish organizations in several countries. He said his group would send some of the photos taken during the demonstration to the country's chief prosecutor because the posters displayed at the rally insulted the Jewish community.

Exhibit of 'isolated Jews' to go up

A photo exhibit of isolated Jewish communities will go on display next month in New York.

The exhibit by Bryan Schwartz, who has contributed stories and photos to JTA, includes photos of Jewish communities in such countries as Peru, Zimbabwe and Afghanistan. The exhibit will run Feb. 6-May 1 at the Center for Jewish History.

ISRAEL VOTES 2003

Israelis go to polls, though many expect little change in their lives

By Matthew E. Gutman

TEL AVIV (JTA) — "Go vote," the ex-general commanded, looking straight into the cameras.

Voter apathy apparently was uppermost on Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's mind when he lumbered into a Jerusalem polling booth Tuesday at 8 a.m. sharp.

Brushing aside a barrage of questions from reporters, a bleary-eyed Sharon — waking Tuesday to what many pundits and Israelis called the most useless election in Israel's history — called "on all Israelis to exercise their right to vote."

As it turned out, he was echoing the title of the lead editorial in the mass circulation daily Yediot Achronot: "Go to the Polls."

The lack of excitement among the public was most evident in Jerusalem's Mahane Yehuda outdoor market.

The market is a perennial Likud bastion, but only a single poster bearing Sharon's grandfatherly visage was visible among its myriad stalls.

Nor, for that matter, were there posters of any of the other candidates.

Just the same, Israelis were not short of opinions.

"Only Likud, Likud only," shouted fishmonger Dudu Ohanyon, who maintained that the market vendors still love Sharon but are simply a bit "tired."

Examining a gasping fish flopping in a bin, Gabriel Levy, a wizened 57-year-old, said it was not Sharon or Likud per se that he wanted, "but security."

That sentiment pervaded the alleys of the once-bustling market, where pedestrian traffic — and business — has slowed to a crawl since it became a preferred target of Palestinian bombers.

Issues such as the intifada and the dismal economy are important, but interest is tepid, Levy said, "because we all know that we'll have to vote again in two years" — when the next government falls.

According to a poll in Yediot Achronot last Friday, 63 percent of Israelis expect another election within two years.

The prospect of little change in the security situation, the economy and on the diplomatic front will force early elections, according to the poll. Indeed, about 70 percent of Israelis believe the situation either will remain stagnant or deteriorate in the next two years, the poll said.

In the meantime, voters were inclined to stick with Sharon.

In the Jewish enclaves of Hebron, it was neither the Meretz Party, which calls for the immediate evacuation of settlements, nor even the Arab-led, Communist Hadash Party that earned the wrath of community leader David Wilder.

In any other country, Shinui "would be labeled anti-Semitic," said Wilder, who has spoken out against what he calls Shinui's hatred and intolerance toward the fervently Orthodox.

The appearance of such a party is disturbing, Wilder said, but "that they are receiving such widespread support is even more alarming."

Wilder was not the only one lashing out at Lapid, who has said he will not serve in a government with the Orthodox parties.

In the city of Bnei Brak, activists clogged intersections with banners supporting the fervently Orthodox Shas and United Torah Judaism parties.

Fliers reading "Lapid Hasin'ah" — Hebrew for "Torch of Hatred" — used a play on words to rail against Lapid's call for separation of religion and state.

However, in Tel Aviv's affluent suburb of Savyon — only a few miles but a world away from Bnei Brak — Shinui appeared to be the only game in town.

Shinui supporters were the only activists to be seen at the town's manicured traffic circles.

They handed out fliers and bumper stickers depicting Lapid pointing an index finger at the camera in a "We Want You" pose.

One middle-aged woman in Chanel sunglasses said she had considered casting a blank ballot, but feared "that this would be a vote for Shas. So I voted Shinui." □

Population study probe finds 'limitations,' but it will be released

By Joe Berkofsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — The much-heralded National Jewish Population Survey 2000-2001 will likely be released by mid-April despite "limitations," those behind the study said.

That prediction came after the United Jewish Communities, which bankrolled the \$6 million study, received the first report of an internal review it is conducting into the NJPS after pulling it because of missing data last November.

The UJC's sudden delay of the NJPS, on the eve of its annual General Assembly, stunned the Jewish community. It also stirred charges and rumors that the federation umbrella was hiding some troubling demographic trend, which the UJC has repeatedly denied.

Many were waiting to see how the latest study compared with the controversial 1990 NJPS, which counted 5.5 million Jews in the United States and said 52 percent of Jews who had married in the previous five years had married non-Jews. The latest NJPS, billed as an even-more comprehensive demographic picture, said initially that the population dropped 5 percent to 5.2 million, as women waited longer to have fewer children and the median age increased.

But after releasing those initial statistics, UJC delayed the release of the rest of the findings, which addressed a myriad of issues, including affiliation and identity. Those involved with the study indicated at the time that the population figures themselves may need to be re-evaluated in light of the missing data.

The chancellor of McGill University, Bernard Shapiro, who led the internal investigation into what went wrong with the NJPS, cited "limitations and qualifications" with the survey.

"It was immediately clear that a range of serious issues of conception, of data collection, and of analysis were present in the project," Shapiro wrote in his report to the UJC's board of trustees meeting in Miami on Monday.

UJC spokeswoman Gail Hyman and others on the NJPS team said the review has found that these problems can be overcome.

"There are a lot of little issues and problems with the study, but each of these can be fixed or addressed or assessed," said NJPS senior research consultant Steven Cohen, a professor at Hebrew University's Melton Centre.

Once Shapiro and a six-member team completes the review, Hyman said, the NJPS should be made public "in several months."

One member of the review team, also a key member of the advisory panel for NJPS, expected the study could be made public even sooner. "I hope the results will be out in the next six to eight weeks," said Vivien Klaff, a University of Delaware professor.

The Shapiro report largely blamed the NJPS research firm, Roper Audits & Surveys Worldwide, for losing the data and also revealed that a top NJPS researcher was removed from the project.

The review found several problems, including "small amounts" of missing data, "generally due to programming errors by RoperASW during the interview phase," Shapiro said.

NJPS researchers said the lost data concerned some of the 175,000 people the survey reached.

That missing data, which Klaff and others said could change the overall Jewish population figure by 1 percent at most, is being recalculated. A RoperASW spokeswoman, asked about the company's role in the missing information, would only say the firm is "cooperating" with the UJC.

"RoperASW is working closely with the UJC and we are confident the integrity of the study will be upheld," Malkie Bernheim said.

Other problem areas concerned the response rate for the study, which one source said was as low as 17 percent. Shapiro said the team was comparing the rate to other studies to provide "context" to the NJPS response rate.

The review team also delved into how many Jews who were called for the survey denied being Jews, Shapiro said, and the extent to which the survey may have undercounted geographic areas and some Jewish subgroups.

Shapiro said the review team was comparing the NJPS with other studies that have counted Jews in the West, and subgroups including Israelis, the fervently religious and immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

Gary Tobin, president of the Institute for Jewish and Community Research in San Francisco and a vocal critic of the NJPS regarding those areas, said the review shows his concerns have been heard.

"I think they are attempting to address the issues we raised," Tobin added. "Whether or not they do so remains to be seen."

In a demographic study released before the NJPS, Tobin found that there are 6.7 million Jews, and a total of 13.3 million Americans with some Jewish ties.

His study also found 1.68 million Jews in the Western states, while the NJPS found 1.14 million.

Meanwhile, one member of the NJPS advisory panel who opposed delaying the NJPS remains less than satisfied with the review so far.

Egon Mayer, academic director of the North American Jewish Data Bank at the City University of New York, said that while he welcomed the review, "it was never made clear what was the cause of so much consternation" surrounding the delay.

"If, at the end of this process, all we get is a seal of approval," then the members of the advisory panel who opposed the delay "deserve an apology" from Stephen Hoffman, UJC's president and chief executive officer.

But the UJC and Hoffman remain confident that "not to release the study at the G.A. was the right decision at the time — we just didn't want to be in a position of being rushed into releasing the information with which we didn't feel comfortable," Hyman said.

Meanwhile, Jim Schwartz, UJC's director of research, has been removed from the NJPS team.

Shapiro's report said Schwartz would now work full time developing the North American Jewish Data Bank and providing research to local communities. When he delayed releasing the NJPS results, Hoffman said Schwartz, at the least, knew of some of the problems for some time but waited to tell his UJC supervisors.

Schwartz could not be reached for comment. □

Academic forum opens in Moscow

MOSCOW (JTA) — An international forum of Jewish scholars opened in Moscow this week.

The 10th conference of Sefer, the Moscow Center for the University Teaching of Jewish Civilization, is bringing together dozens of scholars from the former Soviet Union, Israel, Europe and the United States.

The meeting includes presentations and 27 workshops devoted to Jewish history and culture. □