October 2 esday • October 28, 1997

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IERUSALEM (AP) — A contingent Reform and Conservative Jews, mostly



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se or to mot l give Orthodox Jews a monopoly he heart of **religious** matters in Israel. St him. The issue is political dynamite in spaper also ael and has put Netanyahu's gov-

is already iment on a collision course with it candidate terican Jewry, which is dominat-estern's Gan by Reform and Conservative Terry vements. American Jews are Tyrone Willong the most generous donors defensive Israel and provide crucial politi-

backing in Washington. layers say "I'm a second-class Jew in the hind their avish state," Rabbi Gerald Weider of st kind of wYork City said as he and some 20 nd here, the ler Reform leaders wandered the g coach Maesset halls, lobbying against a plan running balt effectively denies the non-Orhe nation;) dox a place on councils that overreligious services.

said he w. The legislation is to be presentsider leave Tuesday by religious parties in is season if tanyahu's coalition government. other bill opposed by Reform

make me tws, making non-Orthodox cong, if he was **Sions illegitimate**, is pending. Orthodox religious parties convould be will a third of Netanyahu's coalition e it takes the have vowed to topple the gov-

ernment unless the prime minister follows through on a promise to pass the legislation.

It is the climax of a longstanding dispute between the Orthodox stream of Judaism, which adheres to a rigid interpretation of Jewish law, and the more liberal Conservative and Reform movements, which want to adjust Judaism to modernity - allowing women rabbis, for example.

These movements have been waging a court battle to force the state to grant them greater recognition.

Several cases on conversion are scheduled to come before the Supreme Court, which is liberal and widely expected to rule in their favor. To head this off, the Orthodox have demanded immediate pas-sage of the conversion bill, which passed the first of two required readings in June.

American Jewish leaders — and many Israelis - are warning passage of the bill would bring about a historic split between Israel and the Jewish diaspora.

Rabbi Ammiel Hirsch, head of the Reform Zionist Association in New York, warned of "a catastrophic rift in the Jewish people" and said Netanyahu must choose between the "unity of his coalition and the unity of Judaism.

Netanyahu — who lived much of his life in the United States and has close ties to the U.S. Jewish community — appears sensitive to the dangers. In July, he set up a committee headed by Finance Minister Yaacov Neeman, bringing leaders from all the streams together in search of a compromise.

After arriving in Israel on Sunday, the American contingent met with Netanyahu, who asked them to allow time for Neeman's committee to reach a compromise. Neeman reportedly is proposing the establishment of a "conversion institute," where all the movements would work together but the Orthodox would have effective veto power.

On Monday, however, the leaders of the Reform movement announced they were rejecting the compromise and would forge ahead with the court cases.

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THE BATTALION ORLD

Netanychu adviser David Bar-Illan said the decision was aimed at toppling the Netanyahu government. "There is no doubt that they are doing it — since they are affiliated with the opposition - to bring down the government," he told the Associated Press.

Rabbi Ehud Bandel, a leader of the Conservative movement in Israel, called the accusations "paranoid and untrue.'

The dispute between Orthodox and the more liberal movements centers on the interpretation of Jewish law. The Orthodox argue only a rigid set of laws has enabled the Jewish people to survive.

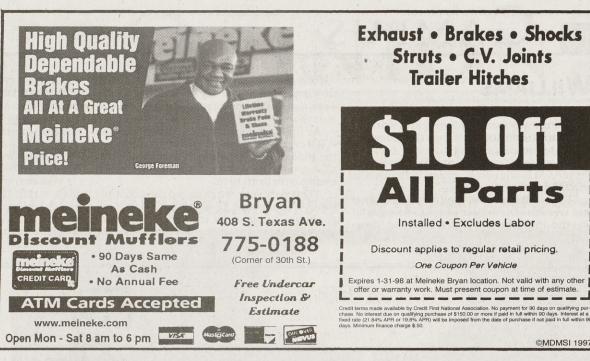
'Judaism was handed down to Moses and it was followed by our fathers for 2,000 years. Now they come along wanting to change everything," Aryeh Deri, a leading Orthodox lawmaker, said Monday.

In Israel, the state has ceded certain powers - primarily marriage and divorce - to an Orthodox rabbinate. Even though a majority of Israelis are secular, most are nonetheless married by Orthodox rabbis, and even if they attend services rarely, it is usually in an Orthodox synagogue.

The Reform and Conservative movements are allowed to practice in Israel, but marriages or conversions to Judaism carried out by their rabbis are not recognized by the state.

Abe Foxman, director of the Anti-Defamation League, called on Netanyahu to allow members of his Likud Party to vote of conscience on the conversion bill.

'Even though the law itself will do very little to change things, the fact is that it is perceived as Israelis not accepting diaspora Jews at a level of equality," Foxman, of New York City, said. "Psychologically, it is a very painful development.'



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SHANGHAI, China (AP) — For wood studios are in illustrates the about an American lawyer acthe process allywood studios keen on cracking ay out of atte China market, the Shanghai film dds said stival offered a good opportunity supplanted state controls, and the of Tibetan autonomy. e were 34 r deal-making. That is, until the nese government got involved. ll, but well Executives from Disney and r season, ²² my Pictures kept to the sidelines ayers, fans, China's largest film trade fair all want the pened Monday. MGM sent no rep-

pitfalls of doing business in China. Free market forces have not fully government has shown a willing-

cused of murder in China, stars Richard Gere, an open supporter

Beijing limits imports of foreign

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sentatives. The reticence, at least the part of some studios, is said 1 Gall have been motivated by Chinese vernment anger.

he weeke China's Ministry of Radio, Film erage a ²⁰ nd Television has ordered the stutes to avoid ios to limit their public activities in ing the lof fit of pique over three movies deory. The icting Beijing's harsh rule in Tibet erage for nd its arbitrary legal system, 2.0, but the state-run film indusnational sysaid on condition of anonymity. The images of Communist Parht's game oppression in Sony's Seven Years share in No 7 Tibet, MGM's Red Corner and

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ness to sacrifice economic gain for political goals.

The Chinese government has signaled to the studios, especially Disney, that the movies might harm their business interests in China.

A year ago, Chinese officials were said to have privately expressed their displeasure with Disney's plans to release Kundun — a film directed by Martin Scorsese that deals with the Dalai Lama, the exiled spiritual leader of Tibet. Concern arose in Hollywood Beijing would use Disney's expansion dreams to force the company to distance itself from the project.

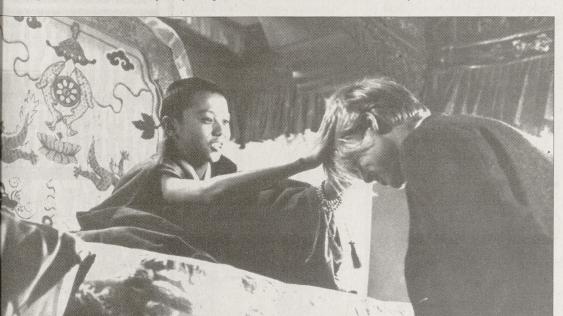
Beijing's view is the Dalai Lama wants to split Tibet from China, which annexed the Himalayan re-gion in 1951. China's Foreign Ministry has said any praise for the Dalai Lama "is counter to the facts."

Seven Years in Tibet, starring Brad Pitt, tells the story of an Austrian explorer's friendship with the young Dalai Lama. Red Corner, films to about one a month, and censors have not approved any by Disney or Sony for release this year. By contrast, 20th Century Fox has received approval for two releases.

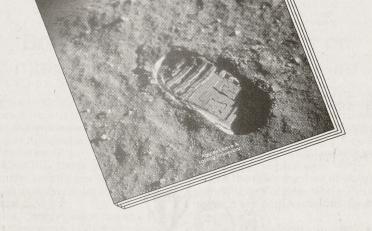
The Chinese film industry sources said the government's order, conveyed to studio representatives two weeks ago, demanded the companies withdraw from public activities for a period of time. It did not order any offices in China be closed or deals canceled, and it was unclear whether it specifically mentioned the Shanghai International Film Festival and its concurrent three-day film market.

A spokesman for the ministry, who identified himself only as Mr. Cao, refused to answer questions about the order.

The tiff between Beijing and Hollywood made the festival's official organizers uncomfortable. Chen Xiaomeng, director of the festival office, said the studios stayed away on their own accord.



ian mountaineer Heinrich Harrer (**Brad Pitt**) meets a young Dalai Lama (**Jamyang Wangchuk**) for the me in TriStar Pictures' Seven Years in Tibet. The film and others have angered the Chinese government to their negative portrayals of Chinese communist rule.



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