

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Sharon leaves for U.S.

Ariel Sharon was slated to leave Israel for an official visit to the United States.

Some observers believe President Bush will pressure the Israeli prime minister to change the security fence between Israel and the Palestinians, or halt construction work on the fence altogether.

However, Sharon told Likud Cabinet ministers on Sunday that Israel would not change its position regarding the fence.

### Islamists to be released

The Israeli Cabinet approved the release of 110 Hamas and Islamic Jihad prisoners.

The goodwill gesture toward the Palestinians was approved Sunday. Earlier this month, Israel OK'd the release of some 400 other Palestinian prisoners.

The Israeli government had initially refused to release Hamas and Islamic Jihad prisoners, but it has changed its mind following heavy American and Palestinian pressure.

An organization of terror victims appealed to the High Court of Justice not to allow the release of prisoners as long as the Palestinian Authority does not dismantle terrorist organizations.

Also, the Cabinet approved the easing of some restrictions on the Palestinians, including the removal of several checkpoints in the West Bank.

### Romania's president backtracks

Romania's president backtracked on remarks that downplayed the Holocaust. In a statement sent to The Associated Press, Ion Iliescu said he recognized the uniqueness of the Holocaust.

The statement came two days after Iliescu told the Israeli daily Ha'aretz that "the Holocaust was not unique to the Jewish population in Europe. Many others, including Poles, died in the same way."

He added Sunday: "I merely wanted to put the Holocaust, the most tragic event in the modern history of humanity, in the larger framework of Nazi totalitarian rule, which left millions of European citizens dead. The fact that Jews were the primary target of the criminal policies of Nazi Germany and its allies or satellites is a truth which cannot be doubted," he added.

Iliescu's father, a Communist, was sent to a concentration camp and died a year after his release.

## Argentine Jews must depend on outside help to survive financially

By Larry Luxner

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — Argentina may have a new president, but life is still a struggle for thousands of Jews in what was once South America's most prosperous nation.

### The Jews of Latin America Part of a Series

President Nestor Kirchner was inaugurated last May after his main rival, Carlos Menem — who governed Argentina from 1989 to 1999 — dropped out of a runoff election.

"Last year people were expecting riots and even the possibility of a civil war," said Rabbi Tzvi Grunblatt, director general of Chabad-Lubavitch Argentina. "People felt they didn't own anything. It was like the floor was moving underneath your feet. That's why nobody was spending a penny. They didn't see any future here. But today, there is optimism."

That optimism was buoyed in the last few weeks. Kirchner attended the ninth anniversary commemoration of the deadly bombing of the AMIA Jewish community center and announced that secret files related to the case would be released.

The economic situation is still tough.

Economists expect Argentina's GDP to grow by 3 percent to 4 percent this year, after shrinking nearly 11 percent in 2002 — the worst performance in a century.

Even so, an estimated 60 percent of the country's 36 million inhabitants, and 35 percent of the country's 200,000 Jews, live below the poverty line. Unemployment is well above 20 percent.

"I think the new president has the best of intentions and has a very good team, but he cannot make miracles," said Bernardo Kliksberg, an economist at the Washington-based Inter-American Development Bank who has been asked to advise Kirchner. "The suffering of Argentina's Jews will continue, and we very urgently need more help from the American Jewish community. Every day, there are new Jewish poor in Argentina."

Even for Jews who are not impoverished, the country's economic crisis has triggered changes — some subtle and some not so subtle — in their daily lives.

"As a precaution we never kept our money in Argentine banks, but in my practice the crisis affected us terribly," said Freddy Rosenmeyer, 71, a Buenos Aires dentist. "Our expenses jumped by 300 percent, but we couldn't increase fees for patients. We lost business because people couldn't afford dental care. I belong to a health insurance plan in which 50 percent of the patients were dropped because they couldn't pay their monthly premiums."

Rosenmeyer shares his practice with his wife Alicia, 62, who's also a dentist. In his spare time, he volunteers at the Asociacion Filantropica Israelita, a Jewish charity in nearby Belgrano.

"We've had to live much more modestly these days," he said. "For example, I drive a 10-year-old car and my wife's car is seven years old. Before, we used to change cars every two or three years. All my sons have economic difficulties, and my daughter Deborah is an architect, but she works as a secretary in my practice because nobody's building anything."

Despite the difficulties, Alicia Rosenmeyer said, "we've never really thought of leaving Argentina."

Neither has Norma Wilk, who manages a paint factory in suburban San Martin and

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Sharp rise in settlers

The Israeli settler population rose almost three times as fast as the overall Israeli population last year. The 5.7 percent increase in the settler population means that 220,200 Jews lived in the West Bank and Gaza Strip at the end of last year.

The larger growth in the West Bank and Gaza is due to a drop in immigration to Israel and to the move of fervently Orthodox families to the territories from Israel proper.

The total population in Israel at the end of 2002 was 6,631,000 — not including an estimated 200,000 foreign workers.

### Search continues for soldier

Police reported progress in the search for a missing Israeli soldier, but no details were released. Oleg Sheichat has been missing since July 21.

He was last seen near Nazareth. Police are concerned that Sheichat was kidnapped by Palestinian terrorists, but no organization has announced that it is holding him.

### Israeli attorney general quits

Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein announced that he would quit. The resignation of Rubinstein, who has served in the post for the past seven years, is effective Jan. 15, 2004. He has also served as judge at the Jerusalem District Court and as the Cabinet secretary.

### Tel Aviv is for lovers

Hundreds of Jewish singles will spend eight days seeking "Summer Love" in Tel Aviv. The late August program, sponsored by Israel's Tourism Ministry, J-Date, El Al and several Israeli tourism associations, will send Jewish singles to Israel to party in cafes, bars and discotheques. Participants also will take part in Tel Aviv's annual Love Parade on Aug. 29.



## Daily News Bulletin

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is married to Alfredo Wilk, an orthopedist. "A lot of our competition had loans and were importing things on credit, and they went into bankruptcy," she said. "But not much happened to us because I had a healthy business. That really saved me from all this mess."

Mario Ringler, president of the Marshall T. Mayer Latin American Rabbinical Seminary in Buenos Aires, said the current crisis began in 1998, as Menem's second term of office was winding down.

"He was trying to change the rules of the constitution to be elected for a third time. Everything was politicized and corrupted," said Ringler, a lawyer. "In 1999, when the Peronist Party lost the elections, things got out of control. Suddenly, from a level of 16 percent, unemployment skyrocketed to 22 to 24 percent. Argentina's whole financial structure collapsed."

The Jews were affected more than others, Ringler said.

"In the first place, most Jews were either economically active or lived from rents" on stores or apartments "that produced income," he said. "All found themselves with their properties but nobody to rent to, so they began selling their things. Many businesses closed, and about a third of Argentina's 200,000 Jews have passed below the poverty level. Now they're getting social assistance through special programs."

Grunblatt said his Lubavitch organization alone provides 8,000 of the poorest Jewish families in Buenos Aires with food, electricity and financial assistance.

"We have seven relief centers and four soup kitchens. We give out an average of 100 meals a day in each kitchen," he said. "Before the crisis, we had maybe 1,000 poor Jewish families. That's why if America stops helping us and Argentina doesn't have the funds, all these people will be in big trouble."

About 10,000 Jews have left Argentina since the crisis hit, Grunblatt said. About 6,000 moved to Israel, while the rest relocated to the United States or other countries.

The departure of so many Jews has made it nearly impossible to raise funds in the local Jewish community. In years past Chabad's budget was \$4 million, but only \$600,000 of that went to social relief; the rest was spent on educational activities and youth programs. This year, Grunblatt has a budget of nearly \$8 million; most of it will go to emergency relief.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee is extensively involved in relief efforts in the country. The JDC allocated \$15.7 million — raised mostly from American Jews — for programs over the past year.

Financial difficulties also have fueled an alarming increase in physical and sexual abuse of Jewish children by their parents. "We never dreamed we would have so many children here," said Karina Pincever, director of Ieladenu, a shelter for abused kids in the Buenos Aires neighborhood of Once, which is predominantly Jewish.

Pincever said Ieladenu began in 1999 with two children. By January 2002 the program had grown to 96.

Today it assists 200 children, with another 250 on the waiting list. All have suffered from family violence, sexual and emotional abuse, malnutrition, social isolation, deceased parents, psychiatric problems, delinquency, neglect or abandonment.

"All these kids are at risk," she told JTA.

"If they were orphans, they could be adopted. But they have their own parents and the law is different than in the United States," she said. "Because the crisis has destroyed the social fabric and the family structure, the same parents who used to take care of their children have begun to abuse them."

Pincever said caring for the children costs an average of \$252 per child per month. Of the 200 children benefiting from Ieladenu, 30 participate in the "Small Home Program," which offers a safe and supporting place to protect at-risk children.

"Our work is to save the family," Pincever said. "We have to cure the parents so we can return their children to them."

While Argentina's economic crisis has ruined thousands of lives, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, Grunblatt sees a silver lining.

"This crisis definitely got a lot of people who were already out of the community back into the community," the rabbi said. "Since December, we're having a brit milah almost once a week of grown children who were never circumcised. All these families are finally reconnecting to the community." □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Petition aims to free Pollard

Ariel Sharon is expected to hand President Bush a parliamentary petition calling for the freedom of Jonathan Pollard.

Some 112 Knesset members signed the petition regarding the former U.S. Navy officer serving a life sentence for spying for Israel.

"In these very days when the U.S. asks Israel for gestures toward the Palestinians and the release of prisoners, there is room for an American gesture. After more than 17 years in jail, Pollard should be freed," Likud Knesset member Michael Eitan said.

### Rabbis urge reburial of Iraqi Jews

Relatives of Iraqi Jews killed by Saddam Hussein's regime asked that the remains be reburied in Israel.

Relatives of the Iraqi Jews, many of whom were killed decades ago for alleged Zionist activities, asked the Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America in New York for help, the Jerusalem Post said.

### Iowa man faces Nazi past

U.S. officials want to revoke the citizenship of an Iowa man who guarded a Nazi concentration camp.

In a complaint filed July 24, the U.S. Department of Justice is trying to deport John Hansl, claiming he lied about his military history when he applied for a U.S. visa in 1955.

Hansl said U.S. officials knew about his past when they gave him the visa.

"I didn't think something like this could happen in a free America," said the retired Hansl, 78.

Hansl was born in Croatia of German descent and was drafted into the Waffen SS in 1943. He admits he served as a perimeter guard at Sachsenhausen, near Berlin.

He later was transferred to the front lines, where he was captured by the Allies, but allegedly was cleared by war crimes tribunals after the war.

### Scholar of Middle East dies

Nadav Safran, a scholar of the Middle East who was a longtime professor at Harvard, died July 5 at the age of 77.

Safran was the author of several books that are used in college courses, including "Israel: The Embattled Ally."

In 1986, Safran resigned from Harvard's Center for Middle East Studies after admitting to accepting grants from the CIA.

He remained a professor at the school until 2002, when he retired.

A native of Egypt, Safran moved to Palestine in 1946 and later fought in Israel's War of Independence.

He immigrated to the United States in 1950.

## ACROSS THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

### As it matures in Russia, klezmer begins to make the club scene

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA)—A video of a klezmer show changed Stanislav Raiko's career. "I just saw this one single show and realized that this was my music and I wanted to play it," recalled the Ukrainian-born violinist.

Raiko said he then began listening to old recordings of Eastern European Jewish folk music to help him master the genre. In the late 1990s, Raiko, a classically trained musician, started a group called the Kharkov Klezmer Band.

"It takes a real team to make this music — something I couldn't find in a classical orchestra," he said while sitting in the semi-darkness of a Moscow club minutes before going on stage to play.

Earlier this month, Raiko was among four dozen musicians and singers from across the former Soviet Union who took part in the seventh annual KlezFest in St. Petersburg.

The event, a brainchild of the St. Petersburg Jewish Community Center, included professional workshops, Yiddish classes and jam sessions, culminating in concerts in St. Petersburg, Moscow and Kishinev, Moldova.

Most music professionals in the field credit the KlezFest for the revival of klezmer in the former Soviet Union. Each year, the festival brings in a professional from the West to teach music skills — although some of the local musicians now have a decade of experience of playing Yiddish folk music.

"It's so nice that people can be that open about what makes their roots," said Alla, an 18-year-old Moscow student of architecture who attended the performance with some of her Jewish and non-Jewish classmates.

"I've noticed that this music easily speaks to all types of audiences. Perhaps the older folks make better listeners, but just anyone who has Jewish genes will start tapping one's foot when listening to this beautiful, open, simple and very danceable folk music," Alla said.

The Russian KlezFest has been so successful that a group of enthusiasts recently started a similar annual event in Ukraine. This year's KlezFest Ukraine is due to take place in late August in Kiev. The New York-based Jewish Community Development Fund in Russia and Ukraine supports both festivals.

"We are glad to greet you in this club filled with smoke," Yefim Cherniy, a Yiddish singer, who himself has just put a cigarette away, said to the artist-student crowd that packed the basement of the O.G.I. club. "We will now try to get through this smoke to you with our Jewish songs."

The downtown Moscow club is known as one of the prime spots in the Russian capital's club scene for avant-garde, jazz, folk and acoustic rock music.

But on a recent Friday night the club hosted a second concert in three weeks by Jewish musicians playing Yiddish folk music. A club manager said both shows sold as many tickets as a local rock artist with a solid following.

Many in the audience at the club came to see Psoy Korolenko, a popular member of the Moscow underground scene, whose own songs often weave in elements of Yiddish folklore. The singer has recently become interested in klezmer, and this year took part in his second KlezFest.

That night, the sturdy bearded performer who sported a baseball hat with the word "Brooklyn" on it sang a Chasidic song with unusual rhythmic interpretation.

Another concert highlight was a performance by Arkady Gendler, an 81-year-old Moldova-born Holocaust survivor. The Yiddish song enthusiast, who teaches Yiddish at a Ukrainian Jewish school, recently recorded a compact disc that was released by a California-based label.

Yevgeny Hazdan, a composer and KlezFest artistic director, says local Jewish communities benefit first from the klezmer revival, but that the klezmer movement has a broader goal.

"Among ourselves we joke that there are two Jewish things about St. Petersburg that most people know: the Choral Synagogue and KlezFest," he said. □

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

**Fate of French Muslim leader shows the fundamentalist hurdle***By Philip Carmel*

PARIS (JTA) — The credibility of the man seen as the moderate face of French Islam lay in tatters recently, more than three months after the creation of the new Council of French Muslims.

Dalil Boubakeur, a man who has eagerly sought to build bridges with the Jewish community and to present a liberal image of French Islam, came close to throwing in the towel late last month.

The rector of Paris' Grand Mosque, Boubakeur was hand-picked by Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy to lead the new council, a body set up to integrate French Muslims into society and, simultaneously, to marginalize the more fundamentalist currents in the community.

However, following stinging defeats at the hands of the Islamists the council was set up to reject, Boubakeur issued a short statement on June 27 that he was resigning as council president for "health reasons."

The statement set off alarm bells at the Interior Ministry. Sarkozy quickly telephoned Boubakeur and — with a little arm-twisting from Boubakeur's backers in Algeria — Boubakeur soon issued another statement "categorically denying any intention of resigning."

Regardless of Boubakeur's ultimate fate, the prospects for moderate French Islam do not appear promising. Boubakeur's links with the Jewish community have hurt him in a community radicalized by the Palestinian intifada and the U.S.-led war in Iraq.

In fact, the more open and tolerant Boubakeur has appeared toward French Jews, the more it has hurt him among his own constituents. A forceful voice against anti-Semitic attacks, Boubakeur recently published a book along with French Jewish leader Bernard Kanovitch calling for intercommunal dialogue and mutual respect.

Ironically, the elections that have empowered the fundamentalists were intended to do just the opposite.

France's large Muslim population — estimated at 3 million to 6 million strong — traditionally has lacked the official institutions of France's more established Catholic, Protestant and Jewish communities.

Moreover, without state support or recognition for Muslim places of worship, cemeteries and the like, the community has been forced to look elsewhere for sources of support. They generally have found it abroad, but not without political strings attached.

The French government traditionally has turned a blind eye to support for French Muslims from moderate North African states. In recent years, however, there has been a tendency for vast financial resources to reach the Muslim community from Persian Gulf states, particularly from Saudi Arabia, with its fundamentalist form of Islam.

Recent media reports have suggested that Sarkozy's intelligence reports named only a handful of mosques in the Paris region controlled by fundamentalists, mostly grouped around the Union of French Islamic Organizations, a group with close ties to the international — and radical — Muslim Brotherhood.

However, proof of how far those reports underestimated the fundamentalists' influence came in early June, when the union's leader, Lhaj Thami Breze, took the presidency of the Paris-Center region in the second round of elections for the Muslim council.

Boubakeur's Paris Mosque faction suffered other stinging defeats as well: The fundamentalist union took the presidencies in many French regions, including the key areas of Provence-Alpes Cote d'Azur and the eastern region of Alsace, both of which have large Jewish communities.

Following the elections, many political commentators suggested that it was just a question of time before Boubakeur would be forced to resign.

For his part, however, Boubakeur said the union's victories should rouse France. "French society has to wake up. Nobody is safe from the Islamists," Boubakeur said.

Such comments were directed not only at his fellow Muslims but, paradoxically, at Sarkozy, who chose to attend the union's conference in the northern suburbs of Paris shortly after it won the most seats in first-round elections to the council. Critics said Sarkozy's presence at the event gave the union much needed credibility.

The interior minister's project to integrate French Muslims also suffered several other blows. Disenchanted with the religious mission and the structure of the Muslim council, secular Muslims set up their own body, thereby mirroring the two main Jewish institutions in France — the religious-based Consistoire and the secular umbrella organization CRIF.

That further isolated Boubakeur, however, who now was the national head of a council with a majority of fundamentalists.

Next came the launch of what became known as the "May Appeal," a statement of support for the notion of a secular French republic. It was signed by some of the principal lay Muslim figures in France as well as certain moderate religious figures, such as Soheib Benschekh, the mufti of Marseille.

Also problematic was the highly publicized visit to the Grand Mosque by Israel's ambassador to France, Nissim Zvilli, to congratulate Boubakeur on his election as council president.

Asked whether Zvilli's public visit a day after Boubakeur's election had been a wise move, an official at the Israeli Embassy in Paris told JTA that Boubakeur, not Zvilli, had initiated the visit.

For Kanovitch, CRIF's representative to the Muslim community, Boubakeur's decision to welcome Zvilli was "very courageous, and showed that he was prepared to welcome everybody."

Kanovitch said the election results for the Muslim council were "not a surprise," since the vote came from mosques and therefore naturally favored candidates with "less liberal views."

Their lesson learned, Jewish leaders have been reluctant to comment either on the Muslim council elections or the fate of Boubakeur.

However, on one occasion they were left with little choice.

At an Elysee Palace reception marking the 60th anniversary of CRIF's founding, French President Jacques Chirac spent much of the time walking arm in arm with Boubakeur, French Chief Rabbi Joseph Sitruk and CRIF President Roger Cukierman. It was a public display of moderate French Islam that both Chirac and his interior minister have tried so hard to promote.

With Boubakeur isolated and the Muslim council packed with fundamentalists, however, hopes for moderation appear to be dashed. □