

## IN THE NEWS

**U.S. may back Israeli sovereignty in W. Bank**

The United States is considering recognizing Israeli sovereignty in parts of the West Bank, a Bush administration official said.

The revelation came Thursday in a meeting between U.S. officials and Dov Weisglass, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's top legal adviser.

The official said some sort of recognition of Israeli sovereignty over three West Bank settlement blocs could be part of a withdrawal plan in which Israel would pull out of most of the West Bank. The Palestinians' failure to be viable peace partners led the Americans to reconsider their prior opposition to such recognition, the official said, adding, "In the current environment, anything is possible."

**U.N. blasts Israel**

The U.N. Commission on Human Rights blasted Israel's assassination of Hamas' leader.

The 53-member commission, which meets for six weeks each year in Geneva, voted 31-2 to condemn Israel for killing Sheik Ahmed Yassin on Monday.

The United States and Australia opposed Wednesday's vote, and 18 countries abstained.

Meanwhile, the U.N. Security Council was preparing to vote Thursday on a resolution condemning the assassination, which the United States was likely to veto.

**Amnesty denounces use of kids as bombers**

Amnesty International denounced the Palestinians' use of children to carry out bombings against Israelis.

The human-rights group issued the report Thursday after Israel captured a young would-be suicide bomber in the West Bank. "Using children to carry out or assist in armed attacks of any kind is an abomination. We call on the Palestinian leadership to publicly denounce these practices," the report said.

■ **MORE NEWS, Pg. 8**



# WORLD REPORT

PUBLISHED WEEKDAYS BY JTA—THE GLOBAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE • WWW.JTA.ORG



Israel Defense Forces

With Saddam gone, Israel may reduce its ground forces, like this Israeli tank in exercises in 2003.

## One year after Iraq war, results are mixed, and terrorism persists

By **LESLIE SUSSER**

**J**ERUSALEM (JTA) — When the United States launched its war on Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, Israeli planners were hoping for major strategic changes that would promote regional stability.

A year later, the results are mixed.

There have been some major strategic gains: potential nuclear threats from Iran and Libya have been reduced, the threat of Iraq and Syria joining forces in a land war on Israel's northeastern border has been removed, and on Israel's northern border, the Hezbollah terrorist group has been exercising newfound restraint.

But the hoped-for domino effect against

terrorism and its sponsors has not materialized. The terrorist threat to Israel actually has grown, and the chances of peace with the Palestinians appear increasingly remote.

Much will depend on whether the United States sees through the regime-change process and creates a stable democracy in Iraq or withdraws in disarray, leaving behind a trail of chaos and resentment.

Though no weapons of mass destruction have been found in Iraq, Israeli experts still maintain that Saddam had advanced chemical and biological weapons' programs.

If left alone, he would have obtained

*Continued on page 2*

**NEWS  
ANALYSIS**

## ■ One year after Iraq war, results are mixed as terrorism continues unabated

*Continued from page 1*

nuclear bombs sooner or later, they say.

Israeli strategists argue that the fact that such developments were pre-empted by the war is a major strategic boon not only for Israel, but for the Western world as a whole.

The most unexpected strategic gain for Israel was the domino effect on Libya's leader, Col. Muammar Gadhafi. Days after Saddam's capture by American forces in December, Gadhafi announced his readiness to dis-mantle his weapons of mass destruction programs.

Israeli officials believe Gadhafi is genuine and that Libya can be removed from Israel's "threat map."

They maintain that had Gadhafi developed a nuclear capability, Israel and the West would have had to invest huge resources in developing a suitable response.

■  
The same Israeli officials are far less sanguine about Iran's declared readiness to suspend its nuclear program. They believe the Iranians are playing for time. But they note that even if the Iranians go back on their promises, the war in Iraq has pushed back their nuclear timetable.

It also has created a framework for international monitoring of Iran's nuclear development. That is no small achievement, the Israeli officials say.

One of the Israeli military planners' greatest nightmares was the specter of massive Iraqi, Syrian and Jordanian tank forces rolling across the desert toward Israel's eastern border. This scenario was dubbed the "Eastern Front" problem, and it was one of the main reasons for Israel's huge tank build up, even after achieving peace with Egypt and Jordan.

**The Iraqi domino effect has not diminished Palestinian terrorism.**

The removal of Iraq from the equation makes the scenario totally unrealistic. Israel's military planners will be able to risk major cutbacks

in land forces and already are considering which units they can do without.

There also is a significant political dimension to the Eastern Front's disappearance. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon always had insisted on retaining the Jordan Valley, between the West Bank and Jordan, as an additional buffer against the Eastern Front.

That would have meant that any future Palestinian state would have had to settle for no more than 80 percent of the West Bank. Now that the Eastern Front no longer exists, Sharon can consider relinquishing the Jordan Valley and strengthening chances for a future territorial settlement with the Palestinians.

Saddam's elimination and the collapse of Eastern Front also has heightened Syria's weakness and isolation.

This already has led to overtures to Israel from Syria's President Bashar Assad, which Israel dismissed as insincere. But a weakened Syria may well make serious approaches for peace soon.

■  
In addition, with Israel and the United States believing that the best hope for long-term peace in the Middle East is the overthrow of autocratic regimes and the spread of democracy, they could not but take heart from unprecedented criticism of the Assad regime and recent Kurdish riots in Syria. One group of protesters said explicitly that they had been inspired by the overthrow of Saddam to challenge the sister Ba'athist regime in Damascus.

Another gain for Israel is the restraint currently being exercised on its volatile northern border by Hezbollah.

The group has been defined by the United States as a terrorist organization

on a par with Al-Qaida, and its members may fear that attacks on Israel could elicit massive Israeli retaliation — with the backing of the United States.

So Hezbollah, with Iranian aid, instead of sparking direct military exchanges with Israel, is clandestinely sending agents into the West Bank and Gaza Strip to help promote terrorism there.

■  
In perhaps the greatest disappointment to Israeli policy makers, the Iraqi domino effect has not impacted the level of Palestinian terrorism.

In a recent interview with Israel's daily Ma'ariv, retired Maj. Gen. Amos Gilad, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz's closest political adviser, declared that "the domino effect worked where it wasn't expected to, on Libya, and not where we hoped it would, on Arafat."

Ongoing Palestinian terrorism after the war in Iraq, and the sense that there was no one to talk to on the Palestinian side, led to Sharon's plan for unilateral disengagement from the Palestinians. The first step, outside of Israel's West Bank security barrier, is Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

But both Israel and the United States feared that as in Iraq, a power struggle would ensue between different local Palestinian factions.

To ensure that the secular Palestinian Authority and not the fundamentalist Hamas takes control of Gaza after the Israeli withdrawal, Israel has been targeting Hamas and its leaders.

Monday's assassination of Hamas spiritual and political leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin was part of this policy. Israeli military intelligence estimates that this will weaken Hamas and reduce terrorism in the long term.

Other analysts, however, warn that in assassinating a cleric, Israel may have opened a wider front with the Muslim world — precisely the kind of development the U.S.-led war in Iraq was meant to contain.

Whether terrorism against Israel declines will depend to some extent on the degree to which the United States manages to stabilize the situation in Iraq, Israeli analysts believe.

The struggle in Iraq between U.S. forces and terrorist opponents could have major consequences for Israel.

■  
(Leslie Susser is the diplomatic correspondent for the Jerusalem Report.)

### WORLD REPORT

**Howard E. Friedman**  
President

**Mark J. Joffe**  
Executive Editor and Publisher  
**Lisa Hostein**  
Editor

**Michael S. Arnold**  
Managing Editor

**Lenore A. Silverstein**  
Finance and Administration Director  
**Paula Simmonds**  
Marketing and Development Director

JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more 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](http://www.jta.org).  
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

# France's National Front doesn't gain — or lose

By PHIL CARMEL

PARIS (JTA) — France's far-right National Front failed to make the sweeping gains many had initially feared in mid-term regional elections this week, but its base of nearly one in six French voters remains as strong as ever.

With all results counted in France's 22 mainland regions from the first round of regional elections March 21, the National Front took around 15 percent of the national vote, slightly less than its candidate and leader Jean-Marie Le Pen achieved in presidential elections in 2002.

However, by attaining more than the 10 percent threshold in 18 regions, many of the Front's candidates qualified for second-round run-offs March 28 — a factor that is likely to result in increased Socialist Party control in many regions.

In the first test of voter opinion since the return of a center-right government in 2002 presidential elections, Jewish leaders had feared the worst as government unpopularity and expectations of low voter turnout appeared likely to galvanize the far right.

Government-supported candidates lost out, with strong gains for the leading opposition Socialist Party.

But Noel Mamère, a Parliament member from the Green Party, injected a tone of reserve into an otherwise victorious night for the left.

"We should look hard at this result," he said shortly after the results were announced. "France still has the strongest support for a far-right party of any country in the European Union."

Turnout actually increased by some 3 percent nationally, bucking the trend of recent elections, with some 61 percent of eligible voters casting ballots. Nevertheless, support for the National Front remained strong in its traditional bases in northeast and southeast France, with its candidates garnering more than 20 percent of the vote in some regions.

In particular, there was a strong showing for the front in the Nord Pas-de-Calais region, where it took second place.

In other regions, the party had to make do with either third or fourth place, most notably in Provence-Alpes Cote d'Azur, where it had hoped to top the poll and where Le Pen initially had intended to head the party list.

The region, which contains large Jewish communities in Marseille and Nice, saw National Front candidate Guy Macary barely forced into third place.

According to Jean-Yves Camus, a Jewish journalist and expert on France's far right, Macary's showing was indicative of the strong National Front base in the region that mobilized around a candidate who was largely unknown before the election.

"We are seeing here the confirmation of the strong roots of the National Front, which has consistently scored at these levels over the past 20 years," Camus said. "It's a worrying sign that even if we say it's stagnating at the same level, there is still a large bloc of people who are failing to be attracted to parties which support the values of the republic."

Martine Ouaknine, president of the Nice region CRIF Jewish umbrella organization, described the National Front vote in the region as "catastrophic."

"It's understandable that people want to sanction the government, but many people still don't understand the gravity of such a vote," Ouaknine told JTA.

While the result in the region in southern France could have been worse, the National Front did make gains in town council elections held there on the same day as the regional vote.

At a national level, CRIF's executive director, Haim Musicant, said "the National Front's ideology is still present — with or without Le Pen."

"It seems that whichever government is in power, there's a constant 15 percent who vote for the National Front. That's a worrying sign for political life in France," he said.

But Musicant pointed out that at least "one lesson had been learned" from the 2002 presidential elections, when low voter turnout coupled with increased support for fringe parties allowed Le Pen to take second place behind the incumbent president, Jacques Chirac.

Ahead of the regional elections, CRIF had taken the unprecedented step of calling on people to vote against candidates from far-left Trotskyist factions as well as the National Front.

In that respect, at least, the results

were pleasing for Jewish leaders.

"These results are very disappointing for the far left," Camus said, a reference to the joint Trotskyist list of Workers' Fight and the Communist Revolutionary League, which failed to break through the 10 percent barrier to qualify for the second round.

Moreover, since they garnered less than 5 percent in most parts of France, the Trotskyists would not have seats on most regional councils,

he said.

According to Camus, such results proved that "the National Front was still the principal threat" to Jews in France, despite a recent tendency in the community to concentrate on the strongly anti-Zionist message of the far left.

Another promising sign for the Jewish community was the absence of "a clear Muslim vote," Camus said. This was particularly manifested in a key region in the Paris suburbs where the Communist Party's decision to run a high-profile candidate of North African origin did not bring out a noticeable Muslim vote.

Yet there was no noticeable "Jewish vote" either. Claims of some Jewish community support for the National Front were not backed up by results in constituencies with large Jewish populations.

The Paris region slightly bucked the trend in the rest of France, where the center-right vote largely held up despite a strong first-place showing by the incumbent Socialist Party president, Jean-Paul Huchon.

The second-round election there promises to be close, with center-right candidate Jean-Francois Copé in a tight second-round battle with Huchon.

Copé, a government minister who is Jewish, already has made a play for National Front voters in the second round, claiming that if they maintain their votes for the front the result will be a victory for the Socialist candidate.

However, Jewish leaders feel no need to recommend support for any candidate, since the National Front looks highly unlikely to win the presidency of any region.

They therefore would not call on center-right or center-left candidates to pull out to maximize votes against the front in the second round.

The far right is still more of a threat to Jews than the far left.

# ADL audit finds no rise in anti-Semitism in U.S.

By JOE BERKOFSKY

NEW YORK (JTA) — Eva Mozes Kor survived Auschwitz and medical experiments by Dr. Josef Mengele only to see the modest Holocaust museum she founded in Indiana be destroyed by arsonists last fall.

Yet the people of Terre Haute rallied behind Kor, holding memorials and raising \$230,000 to help her rebuild.

Had the Germans similarly challenged Nazism, she says, "Hitler would not have been able to do what he did."

That still-unsolved arson may have been the most violent instance of anti-Semitism in the country last year, according to a new Anti-Defamation League audit. But some say the outpouring of support for Kor reveals a much more common, and unprecedented, American embrace of the Jews.

"Whatever anti-Semitism is out there, large-scale, serious political anti-Semitism simply does not exist anymore in American society," said Jerome Chanes, a professor of American Jewish sociology at Barnard and Stern colleges and an author of several books on anti-Semitism.

■  
Overt anti-Semitism may have become rare in America, but Jews still differ about how deeply anti-Jewish animus runs in the national psyche and whether a new global strain of anti-Semitism will crop up in America's heartland.

"We Jews can never afford complacency and can never afford to declare officially that anti-Semitism is no longer a threat — not today, not tomorrow," said David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee.

Just what the new audit reveals remains a matter of debate.

The ADL's national director, Abraham Foxman, cautions that the report is simply one "snapshot" among many that together form a broader picture. They include the ADL's most recent biennial survey, in 2002, which showed that 17 percent of Americans, or 35 million adults, hold "unquestionably anti-Semitic" views, reversing a decade-long decline.

"There is enough to be worried about," Foxman said.

According to the new ADL audit, there were 1,557 anti-Semitic incidents in 2003, down two from the year before and well below the high of 2,066 incidents reached in 1994. The ADL began tracking such

incidents in 1983.

Based on law-enforcement records and reports to the ADL, the annual audit categorizes anti-Semitic attacks as harassment — threats or physical assaults — or vandalism, including attacks on Jewish communal institutions, such as cemeteries and synagogues.

In 2003, 40 percent of the anti-Semitic incidents were categorized as vandalism, up 18 percent from the previous year, while harassment fell by 9 percent.

Continuing a trend, those states with the largest Jewish populations saw the most incidents, starting with New York.

The Indiana arson, which an FBI spokeswoman said remains under investigation, led the list of violent attacks, which included a Molotov cocktail hurled at a synagogue in Allentown, Penn.

Though even one attack is too many, there is a "chasm" between American Jews' perception of insecurity and the reality, says Jonathan Sarna, a Brandeis University social scientist and historian.

On one side of the divide are American Jewish fears of anti-Semitism. A 2003 American Jewish Committee survey found that 37 percent of Jews consider anti-Semitism a "very serious" problem; 60 percent find it "somewhat" problematic; and 39 percent believe anti-Semitism will rise again.

It's impossible to know precisely what flashpoints can ignite largely dormant anti-Semitism, Foxman said.

■  
On the opposite side of the perceptual divide are those Jewish social scientists and community professionals who insist that attention and resources should shift from combating anti-Semitism to concerns such as intermarriage and the need to promote Jewish education and identity-building.

They "see that non-Jews love Jews too much — so much that they'll assimilate them away," Sarna said.

Even those who follow anti-Semitism say milestones have been reached in recent years with the vice-presidential and presidential candidacies of Sen. Joseph



Mary Wright

Part of an Indiana Holocaust Museum destroyed by arson.

Lieberman (D-Conn.), an observant Jew; the presidential candidacy of Howard Dean, who has a Jewish wife and children; and the revelation of Jewish roots by presidential contenders Gen. Wesley Clark and Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.).

"History will record the elections of 2000 and 2004 as a watershed into what might be called the final stages of integration of Jews into American life," Harris said.

■  
Yet Harris and others maintain that the real concern lies in the fate of inter-group relations. American demographics are rapidly shifting, Harris noted, with the latest U.S. census predicting that 135 million immigrants from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East will arrive in the next half-century.

Given America's changing face, the ADL audit poses a challenge that many Jewish leaders have ignored, said Rabbi Marc Schneier, president of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding in New York.

"We've reached a point where the American Jewish community can no longer fight this battle alone," Schneier said.

Jack Wertheimer, provost of the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary of America, who has written on anti-Semitism, says the real question raised by the ADL survey is who is behind the attacks.

"Which groups seem to be most susceptible to anti-Semitic attitudes and behavior, and which are most resistant?" he said. "That speaks to the importance of making and keeping friends."

The AJCommittee is working to build

a “firewall” of intergroup ties based on mutual concerns about tolerance and pluralism, Harris said.

Likewise, Schneier's group recently opened an office in Washington to strengthen ties with African-American and Latino members of Congress.

In its 2002 survey, the ADL found the most anti-Semitism among blacks and Latinos, with 35 percent of each group “strongly” anti-Semitic. But Schneier said his group found in 2001 that 43 percent of African Americans described black-Jewish ties as “good” or “excellent” — and therefore ripe for cultivating, in his view.

The majority of anti-Semitic incidents that the ADL survey tracked were com-

mitted by white males, either neo-Nazis or skinheads, ADL spokeswoman Myrna Shinbaum said.

That was the pattern in southern California, where Lawrence Baron, a San Diego State University professor, said most anti-Semitic incidents in the past decade involved teenagers who had picked up on neo-Nazi hatred.

“Here the issue is Jewish continuity, not creating a threat that's not as large as people are portraying it,” Baron said.

Many agree, pointing to contemporary Europe as a benchmark of animus toward Jews. The rise in anti-Semitic violence in Europe, especially in France, underscores

how healthy America remains, they say.

But Phyllis Chesler, author of “The New Anti-Semitism,” sees the virus spreading here. So far, this new anti-Semitism, which often is linked to anti-Zionism, hasn't reached the mainstream public, she said. It has infected only an elite of liberal intellectuals, among them academics, feminists, and social-justice and anti-globalization activists.

Audits of attacks such as the ADL's miss this changing shape of anti-Semitism, she said.

“Today, the hatred of the Jewish nation is the new anti-Semitism,” she adds. “What's happening to Jews in Israel and Europe is coming here.” ■

## Report: Canadian anti-Semitism at highest levels in 20 years

By BILL GLADSTONE

TORONTO (JTA) — Just days after B'nai Brith Canada released a report documenting a steep rise in anti-Semitic incidents in Canada, a rash of anti-Semitic vandalism took place in the Toronto area.

Thirteen homes and cars were painted with swastikas and other racist messages early last week in a heavily Jewish neighborhood in the Toronto suburb of Thornhill, leaving residents upset and police scrambling to find witnesses to what they are classifying as a hate crime.

The report, released March 11 by B'nai Brith Canada, showed anti-Semitic activity across Canada at its highest levels in more than two decades. The group's Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents for 2003 documented 584 such incidents in 2003, twice as many as in 2001.

While 389 of the incidents were categorized as harassment, which rarely results in criminal investigations or charges, 180 incidents were classified as vandalism and 15 as violent, a category used only once since the audit began in 1983.

The audit “gives you cause for concern, because obviously something is wrong with the way Canadians are being educated about tolerance and multiculturalism and acceptance of differences,” said Nir Katzour, an Israeli-born lawyer practicing in Toronto. “It ultimately means that we require more defined and tougher laws out

there to counter hate-related incidents or crimes, and have more effective enforcement of these laws.”

Perhaps most alarming to Jewish officials is the steep rise of anti-Jewish activities observed on college campuses.

“There's a much higher number of students reporting problems than we've ever had before,” said B'nai Brith's president, Rochelle Wilner.

A spike in anti-Semitic activity occurred during the first four months of 2003, a period corresponding to the build-up, outbreak and aftermath of the Iraq War.

B'nai Brith operates an anti-hate hotline and also receives reports of hate

incidents through its network of regional offices across the country. Each reported incident is thoroughly documented and verified independently, if possible.

More than half of the recorded incidents occurred in Toronto, which is home to about half of the nation's roughly 360,000 Jews. Some 102 episodes were reported in the Montreal area, while 45 were centered in Ottawa and the surrounding area.

The rest were spread out from British Columbia, where an Arab paper published a virulently anti-Semitic article, to Nova Scotia, where the 103-year-old synagogue in Glace Bay was vandalized.

Twenty-three of the harassing incidents last year involved synagogues, 22 involved other communal buildings, 46

involved Jewish students on campus and 34 involved schoolchildren.

Mezuzahs were destroyed, Jewish tombstones were overturned, swastikas were painted, bricks were thrown through windows and Jewish sites were set ablaze.

Among the 15 reported acts of physical violence, a man was attacked with a hammer after leaving a Toronto synagogue and an elderly Jewish woman was assaulted in a Montreal park by two female teenagers appearing to be of Arab origin.

The Canadian public has apparently undergone a “process of desensitization” to such acts: the audit noted that behavior “once seen as offensive and unacceptable is now being viewed as less serious and even routine.”

Orthodox Jews, who often bear the brunt of harassment, were seen as the most likely to shrug it off, B'nai Brith observed.

The audit noted a “convergence between extremist left wing and right wingers, historical opponents who have found common ground in their antagonism toward Israel and Jews.”

It also suggested a link between the sharp rise of anti-Semitic activity and the increased numbers of “newcomers from Arab/Muslim lands” who “have been socialized in ways that promote hatred toward Jews.”

“The greatest threat to the security of the Jewish community is no longer the neo-Nazi groups as in the past, but rather the elements linked to international terrorist organizations,” Wilner said. ■

**More students  
than ever  
are reporting  
problems of  
anti-Semitism.**



# Photos revive debate over bombing Auschwitz

By RICHARD ALLEN GREENE

LONDON (JTA) — Could the Allies have stopped the Nazi death machine by bombing the concentration camps?

The 60-year-old debate has been reopened by Britain's recent move to make more than 5 million World War II aerial reconnaissance photos available online.

According to critics of the Allied failure to bomb the camps, the pictures show that the United States and Britain had the capability to conduct a bombing campaign.

"We now know that they were bombing five miles from Auschwitz," said Elan Steinberg, executive vice president of the World Jewish Congress.

During the war, the WJC asked both President Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to bomb the camps in order to stop the killing, Steinberg said.

Churchill and his foreign secretary, Anthony Eden, favored the plan, Steinberg said, "but they were overruled by the military."

"I would not go so far as to say it was blatant anti-Semitism" that kept the Allies from bombing the camps, Steinberg

said. "It was not an overt hatred, but an indifference to their plight — and the effect is the same."

William Rubinstein, a historian and the author of "The Myth of Rescue," said he understands the military position.

For one thing, he said, "it was logistically impossible to reach Auschwitz from any Allied-held landing field until late 1943 at the earliest. Tragically, the proposals for bombing Auschwitz were first made exactly at the time of the D-Day landing, the liberation of France and the assault on Germany."

"No one was realistically going to divert resources at that crucial time," Rubinstein said.

Even if they had been inclined to do so, there was no guarantee that bombing the camps would have been successful, he said.

"The actual likelihood of stopping the killing process at Auschwitz without killing a great many Jews and others in the process was, with the military technology and bombing accuracy at the time, not great," Rubinstein said.

"The WJC response is just another example of armchair hindsight, blam-

ing the Allies instead of the Nazis themselves," Rubinstein said.

But Steinberg said it's historians who are mistaken.

Steinberg said the fact that so many reconnaissance planes flew over the camps belies the argument that the Allies could not spare resources to bomb them.

But Allan Williams, who led the project of putting the photos online, said not only military but intelligence resources would have been required.

He said the sheer volume of material intelligence officers were dealing with — and the fact that each officer was looking only for one specific type of military target — made it unlikely they would have paid any attention to pictures of concentration camps.

Even so, Williams allowed, the very men who examined the photos as they were being produced during the war were still debating the question of what could have been done about the death camps.

"When I talk to the few intelligence officers who still survive, they're still discussing this," he said. "These debates will probably go on forever."

The RAF Aerial Reconnaissance Archive is online at [www.evidenceincamera.co.uk](http://www.evidenceincamera.co.uk). ■

## Lithuanian editor probed on incitement against gays, Jews

By TASSOS COULALOGLOU

VILNIUS, Lithuania (JTA) — Lithuanian prosecutors are investigating a local newspaper owner after a press commission found him guilty of instigating intolerance against Jews and gays.

Nearly three weeks after the publication of several controversial letters and an offensive cartoon in the Respublika newspaper, Lithuania's Journalists and Publishers Ethics Commission ruled last week against the paper's editor in chief and owner, Vitas Tomkus.

The group found Tomkus had violated the code of journalistic ethics and was guilty of "instigating Jewish and homosexual intolerance."

Lithuanian prosecutors now will start investigating Tomkus on suspicion of violating laws that prohibit "instigating against any nation, race, ethnicity, religion or any other group of people."

If found guilty, Tomkus could face up to two years in prison.

The probe is in response to a series of letters entitled "Who Rules the World?" which Tomkus published in the newspaper on Feb. 20. They included a cartoon of a Jew and a naked gay man holding up the globe, claiming that gays ruled the world while the Jewish mafia uses the Holocaust to cover up their crimes.

"Could any of us think that the members of the international mafia would start covering their dirty activities with the memory

of Holocaust victims?" Tomkus wrote as part of his letter-from-the-editor series.

"We should be especially careful with Americans, because America is ruled by Jews," he wrote in another article.

On March 9, the Lithuanian Jewish community addressed sent a letter to the International Federation of Journalists saying those behind the letter-writing campaign "shamelessly employ 'arguments' of Nazi propaganda, publish the most vulgar caricatures, mock the catastrophe that befell Lithuanian Jews during World War II and deny the possibility of coexistence between Lithuanians and Jews."

The Jewish community's letter also criticized the government for not taking action.

"Your voiced support is especially important to us, who live in the country where nearly all Jews were murdered during World War II," they wrote.

After the letters were published, there was an outcry from the council of Ethnic Minorities in Lithuania, the U.S. ambassador to Lithuania, and several prominent E.U. representatives.

That raised the pressure on Lithuanian officials to act swiftly and decisively.

"Such irresponsible actions, which should not be tolerated in any case, discredit our state and our nation," Prime Minister Algirdas Brazauskas said in an official statement on March 5. ■

## FIRST PERSON

## Doing seder my way

By JANE ULMAN

**E**NCINO, Calif. (JTA) — “A service? What do you mean there’s a service?” “How long?” “I’m hungry.”

From guests who arrived an hour late to guests who rushed us through the Haggadah, last year’s seder had me wishing the Israelites had never escaped slavery.

“Let all who are hungry come and eat,” we recite each year. But does this obligatory invitation extend to unruly relatives?

“I’m not working this hard to give a bad dinner party,” I told my husband, Larry, afterward. I was exhausted, exasperated and ready to resign from making seders.

“Why don’t you lead next year’s seder?” Larry suggested, a little too eager to relinquish his role. “Tell them there’s a new seder master in town.”

I decided to accept the role of seder master, and I set myself two objectives:

One, conduct a complete seder according to halachah, or Jewish law. That doesn’t mean word-for-word readings of every prayer in English, Hebrew and Aramaic.

Two, conduct a seder that will shock, awe and engage all participants.

“The shock will be when no one comes back next year,” one of my sons says.

■

Undaunted, I have developed a four-step plan:

One, I chose a new Haggadah, “My People Were Nomads,” by Peter Levitan.

On CD-ROM, it is comprehensive, and adaptable, marking core readings, optional readings and rituals, quotations and discussion questions, and various customs from Jewish communities around the world. It contains traditional, kabbalist, feminist, humanist, Zionist, New Age and secular perspectives. It also includes children’s games and music.

Two, I have asked my guests to arrive on time, participate, regroup after the meal without complaining and keep their frogs out of their water glasses.

Three, I have allocated assignments ahead of time and distributed them to the participants. My mother-in-law will be the song master.

Four, I am assigning seats.

We’ll see how it goes. At the end of the seder, after we recite in unison, “Next year in Jerusalem,” I hope I can add, “Next year in Encino.” ■

## In tiny Romanian town, glory of Jewish community is long past

By CAROLYN SLUTSKY

SATU MARE, Romania (JTA) — When the synagogue in Satu Mare was built in 1892, the Jewish community was so large that a second synagogue had to be built next door to accommodate the overflow.

Now, both of the adjacent synagogues stand empty. Dust collects in piles on the floors and feathers drift down from damaged roofs where birds sit in a row.

Yet beneath the decay, signs of refulgence shine through: The larger of the two shuls at one time was decorated with bright blue and yellow tiles, which are still visible, and in a small room off the main sanctuary there is a grimy ark that

contains a Torah scroll still used on many Friday nights by a few of the remaining elderly Jews.

Keys to the two historic buildings are kept in the desk of Nicolae Decsei, president of the Satu Mare Jewish community, which numbers about 90 Jews.

A compact man in his 60s, Decsei is among the youngest members of the community.

Though it’s clear he doesn’t have a tremendous crush of business or visitors to whom to attend, Decsei comes to the office most days, preferring that to “staying home and watching TV.”

Next to his office, a single room serves as a dining room for community meals and doubles as a classroom for local, non-Jewish Romanians who study Hebrew and plan to seek work in Israel.

Decsei remained here through multiple waves of migration spurred by anti-Semitic incidents after World War II.

Born to a non-Jewish Hungarian father and a Romanian Jewish mother who were active Communists, he grew up without a real sense of religion. He joined the Romanian army, where he was forced to attend Christian services.

Decsei came to Judaism after marrying a non-Jewish woman. His son Paul does not identify as Jewish.

As keeper of the Jewish community, Decsei is a minor celebrity in Satu Mare, a ramshackle town in northwestern

Romania near the Hungarian border. He claims he never encounters any negative consequences from being openly Jewish.

His status as a community leader affords him a certain cachet as he promotes the community about town. Recently, when a member of the Jewish community died of cancer, Decsei persuaded the paper to include a Jewish star in her obituary, similar to the crosses that frequently appear next to the names of deceased Catholics.

Some historic synagogues in Eastern Europe have been renovated with generous grants from charities that know a sizable local Jewish community can visit and utilize them, but the Satu Mare synagogues seem

to stand little chance of being restored.

According to Decsei, there are 123 Jewish cemeteries in Satu Mare County, and the biggest problem the community faces is maintaining them all.

Satu Mare is the ancestral home of Satmar Chasidim, now based in New York. Occasional visitors from Brooklyn and other Western communities come to find relatives’ graves or pass through Satu Mare on heritage trips of Eastern Europe.

As Decsei describes it, “they come in from Budapest, take a taxi right to the cemetery, pray for a while and then they go back to Budapest.”

If they get as far as the building behind the synagogue that houses Decsei’s office, some of the visitors slip a dollar or two into his hand.

Yet Decsei and the community remain positive. In June, a memorial plaque will be erected so that passersby will be aware of the two synagogues. A third decrepit synagogue stands a few blocks away, long abandoned.

Decsei says he looks forward to the June ceremony. Meanwhile, he’s hoping that other Jewish tourists will find their way to the community and will be able to donate some money toward its future.

Looking wistfully around one of the synagogues, Decsei whispers, “Sic transit gloria mundi” — “Thus passes the glory of the world.” ■

**Satu Mare is the ancestral home of Satmar Chasidim.**

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### More settlements slated for removal

Six West Bank settlements reportedly are slated for removal under Israel's plan to disengage from the Palestinians.

Ha'aretz reported Thursday that the Jewish settlements of Mevo Dotan and Hermesh had been added to the roster proposed this week in Washington by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's chief of staff, Dov Weisglass.

Previous versions of the plan listed Ganim, Kadim, Homesh and Sanur, as well as most of the Gaza Strip settlements.

Sources said Sharon could move against West Bank settlements before U.S. elections in November.

### Powell: fence not forever

Israel's security barrier is not permanent, Colin Powell said.

"It is mostly a fence and not a wall, and for that reason the Israelis don't believe — and I think this is with merit — that it is necessarily a defining feature that cannot be changed in the future as a result of negotiations between the two sides," the U.S. secretary of state told the Senate Appropriations Committee on Thursday. "A fence can be put up, a fence can be taken down."

Powell noted that Israel had acceded to U.S. demands for adjustments.

### Rabbis in the firing line

Security was beefed up around Israel's chief rabbis after intelligence was received that they could be targeted by Palestinian terrorists.

The chief Ashkenazi rabbi, Yona Metzger, and his Sephardi counterpart, Shlomo Amar, were assigned bodyguards and had their travel to Jewish settlements curtailed Thursday, security sources said.

The Shin Bet believes Palestinians could try to assassinate them to avenge the killing of Hamas founder Sheik Ahmed Yassin.

Also under guard are Rabbis Ovadia Yosef and Yitzhak Kadouri, the spiritual mentors of Shas, an influential Orthodox political party.

### Freeze on settlements?

Israel reportedly has frozen new settlement construction.

Noting that no building tenders had been issued for West Bank and Gaza Strip settlements since the beginning of the year, Israel's daily Ma'ariv quoted government sources on Thursday who said that settlement expansion was being halted. The Prime Minister's Office issued a denial, but according to Ma'ariv the decision was unofficial.

As recently as last year, the government issued tenders for thousands of new Israeli housing units in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

### Anti-Israel move defeated at U.N.

The United States blocked a U.N. Security Council resolution denouncing Israel's assassination of Hamas' leader.

The United States was alone in vetoing the resolution, which condemned the "most recent extrajudicial execution committed by Israel, the occupying Power, that killed Sheikh Ahmed Yassin."

Eleven countries voted for the resolution, with Germany, Britain and Romania abstaining.

### Would-be bomber's friends arrested

Israeli forces arrested two schoolmates of a young Palestinian would-be suicide bomber.

The army did not comment on Thursday's arrests in Nablus, but security sources said they came as part of efforts to determine which terrorist group dispatched Hussam Abdu on a suicide mission.

Abdu was intercepted and disarmed Wednesday at a checkpoint

outside the West Bank city in an incident televised internationally.

Israeli media said the boy told interrogators he had volunteered to carry out the attack after being promised that his family would be paid about \$20 and he would get to have sex with 72 virgins in heaven.

### Palestinian call for calm

A group of Palestinian intellectuals urged their countrymen not to resort to violence to avenge the killing of Hamas' founder.

"We are on the verge of exploding in pain at the gravity of the disaster," the 70 signatories, including Palestinian lawmaker Hanan Ashrawi and former Cabinet minister Yasser Abed Rabbo, said in an advertisement published Thursday in the Al-Ayyam newspaper. "But despite that, we urge our people to restrain anger and arise again in a peaceful, large-scale public uprising."

## WORLD

### Germany cracks down on neo-Nazi music

German police raided the homes of more than 300 people suspected of posting neo-Nazi music files on the Internet for others to download. The songs contained lyrics inciting racial hatred, the Federal Crime Office said in a statement.

The songs convey Nazi ideology and contain lyrics such as these from the group Tonstoerung: "Sharpen your long knives on the pavement; delve them into Jewish bodies."

### Lithuania gets chief rabbi

A Russian-born Orthodox rabbi was appointed chief rabbi of Lithuania. The nomination of Chaim Burshtein was backed by Lithuania's secular Jewish leadership, which rebelled earlier this year against attempts by Chabad-Lubavitch to install its own emissary in Lithuania, Rabbi Sholom Ber Krinsky, as chief rabbi.

For the past two years, Burshtein, 38, has been a low-profile rabbi in St. Petersburg affiliated with the Moscow-based Congress of Jewish Religious Organizations and Communities.

### Bar Mitzvah in Ghana

An Israeli boy in Ghana was due to have the first Bar Mitzvah in the country. The ceremony was due to take place this week in the capital city of Accra after Chabad-Lubavitch of Central Africa in Kinshasa, the Congo, dispatched a pair of rabbinic students and a Torah to help a family working there for an Israeli firm.

The boy, Bar Dahan, would become the first Bar Mitzvah in the African nation, a Chabad spokesman said.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Jewish leaders dedicate Torah

Jewish leaders dedicated a Torah at the U.S. Capitol that memorializes U.S. and Israeli victims of terrorism.

The Torah, which was being completed by a scribe at the Capitol, includes a breastplate memorializing victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and a cover with the names of nearly 1,000 Israeli victims of terrorism in the Palestinian intifada.

### Reconstructionists launch aging center

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College opened a center for aging.

"Hiddur: The Center for Aging and Judaism," which opened this week, is billed as the first such institution at any Jewish seminary.

The center will train seminarians, rabbis and cantors to work with seniors and care-givers, and will produce Jewish resources for seniors.