

IN THE NEWS

British diplomats blast Blair on Israel

More than 50 former British diplomats blasted Tony Blair's Middle East policies as "doomed to failure." In a letter, the group condemned the British prime minister for endorsing Ariel Sharon's policies, which they called "one-sided and illegal and which will cost yet more Israeli and Palestinian blood."

The signatories also accused Blair of failing to influence President Bush on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the occupation of Iraq. Blair's office has not responded to the letter, which was released Monday.

Jews protest Brahimi at U.N.

About 25 Jewish activists demonstrated outside the United Nations on Tuesday to protest anti-Israel remarks by the U.N. special envoy for Iraq.

The protest was sponsored by Jewish Community Relations Council of New York after Lakhdar Brahimi called Israeli policy "the great poison in the region." The group held signs saying, "Brahimi: Israel is not your punching bag" and "Brahimi: Your views are poisonous."

The American Jewish Committee also issued a statement Tuesday saying Brahimi's conduct violated U.N. rules requiring officials to refrain from partisanship.

Rejecting the U.N. spokesman's defense that Brahimi spoke as a private individual, the executive director of the AJCommittee, David Harris, said, "Mr. Brahimi is a high-ranking U.N. official and, therefore, represents the world body whenever he speaks to media."

Two dead in Tulkarm

Israeli forces killed two Palestinian gunmen in the West Bank.

Military sources said the two men, armed with assault rifles, were shot after being spotted in the Tulkarm refugee camp Tuesday. Initial Palestinian reports said they were Hamas members.

WORLD REPORT

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Deal with Sharon on Gaza pullout may haunt Bush come November

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Like his "Mission Accomplished" landing aboard an aircraft carrier just after the successful U.S. invasion of Iraq, President Bush's triumphal appearance with Ariel Sharon two weeks ago eventually could haunt his electoral prospects.

The historic deal between the president and the Israeli prime minister traded Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and a small part of the West Bank for U.S. recognition of some Israeli claims to the West Bank and a rejection of any Palestinian refugee return to Israel.

It also cut the Palestinians out of the negotiating process for now — and that could leave the United States responsible for Gaza, a crowded, parched patch of land that successive British, Egyptian and Israeli rulers never truly mastered.

"One wonders whether Bush really appreciates what he is getting himself and the United States into," Martin Indyk, the Clinton administration's top Middle East official, wrote Sunday in an opinion piece in the Washington Post that concluded, "Welcome to Gaza, Mr. President."

In the meantime, Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass), the presumptive Democratic candidate, is able to exploit the non-incumbent's advantage: He can endorse the deal now and blame any subsequent failure on the incumbent president.

Kerry clearly understood the advantage when he praised Bush for the deal but — not even pausing to breathe — suggested that it was doomed to fail.

"What the president did in recognizing the issue of the 'right of return' and recognizing the issue of some of the settlements, really recognized the reality on the ground," Kerry told a gathering of newspaper editors last week.

"What I fault the administration for is that they haven't done enough to create the climate within the Arab world to advance an entity within the West Bank, within the Palestinian Authority, that is capable of delivering a peace."

Bush Administration spokesmen say the United States would assist the Palestinians in getting ready for self-rule, a commitment that would further stretch a diplomatic corps already working overtime in Iraq.

"The Palestinians have to step up to the plate and take responsibility there, have to take responsibility for preventing violence from that area, for running that area and for taking advantage of the opportunity of the Israelis pulling out of settlements," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Monday. "It's clear that we and others will assist them in doing that."

It isn't yet clear why the administration believes that the Palestinian Authority — an entity whose corruption and haplessness drove Bush to accept the Israeli prime minister's plan — will be any more capable of handling self-rule nine months from now, when Israel says it plans to leave.

Bush's acceptance of Sharon's conditions for withdrawal from the Gaza Strip was rooted for the most part in the president's profound disappointment with the Palestinians'

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NEWS ANALYSIS

Deal with Sharon on Gaza may end up haunting Bush in November

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performance during his term.

The Palestinian Authority's failure to track down terrorists in two cases — after a Jerusalem bus bombing last Aug. 19, and after an attack on a U.S. diplomatic convoy in the Gaza Strip last October — helped persuade Bush to accept Sharon's principal condition for pulling out of Gaza: Shut the Palestinians out of the process, for now.

In addition to Bush's conviction that something needed to be done, there also were clear electoral considerations to his agreement with Sharon.

Sharon snubbed Kerry while he was in the United States and said Bush was more committed to fighting terrorism than any other president had been.

Additionally, Bush aides persuaded Israel not to take substantial steps toward a withdrawal from the Palestinian-populated territories until after the U.S. election in November.

The thinking was that a delay would exploit the full electoral advantage of the deal: By November, Bush still could say he had unstuck a notoriously mired peace process, but wouldn't yet have to deal with its repercussions.

That could help — especially in the fight for Jewish votes in swing states — in what is likely to be a close election.

David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee, said that for all its risks, the agreement has positives that could help Bush, especially with American Jewish voters.

"He reinforces in a major way the special bond between Israel and the U.S. and, second, he tries to demonstrate movement on the ground," Harris said.

Still, there are signs that the buy-now, pay-later approach might have been premature: Already, there have been repercussions. In Iraq, the top U.N. envoy to the region, Lakhdar Brahimi — a man Bush is depending on for a smooth transition — said the agreement, and Israel's policies, were "poisoning" his work.

A perception that the agreement with Sharon worsened an already deteriorating situation in Iraq could offset whatever electoral gains Bush wins among Jewish voters.

The two closest U.S. allies in the region, Jordan and Egypt, are furious.

King Abdullah II of Jordan abruptly cut short a visit to the United States a day before he was to meet Bush, and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak — who had just met with Bush at the presidential ranch in Texas before the announcement — told Arab Americans he felt insulted by the deal.

But both countries are quietly negotiating favorable U.S. concessions for supporting the deal, and Abdullah will probably be back in May.

U.S. officials, led by Secretary of State Colin Powell, now claim that U.S. recognition of Israel's demands does not necessarily prejudice a negotiated outcome. Some commentators have noted that the U.S. commitments were vague enough to leave the Palestinians ample wiggle room in future negotiations.

"We are not prejudging any final status issues that have to be discussed between the parties," Powell said after his meeting Tuesday with the Qatari foreign minister, one of a succession of Arab dignitaries Powell and his deputy Richard Armitage have canvassed since the Bush-Sharon summit.

"All final status issues are to be mutually agreed upon by the parties," Powell said.

Such equivocations could intensify after a Likud party referendum on the deal Sunday.

"After May 2, it may emerge that Bush's letter and commitments to Sharon were really tactical and designed to help Sharon," said Joseph Alpher, a U.S.-Israel expert who runs bitterlemons.org, a Palestinian-Israeli opinion exchange.

"It's possible that we will see backtracking; we've already seen damage control," he said.

It also wasn't certain that the Likud would pass the deal.

"If Sharon loses the referendum, the whole disengagement is jeopardized," Harris said.

Whatever the plan's successes, it's too early to say whether it will swing a significant sector of the Jewish vote, pollster John Zogby said. Zogby noted the

'When push comes to shove, liberalism is going to trump with Jewish voters.'

John Zogby

Pollster

strong Jewish turnout at a pro-choice march this weekend that turned into an anti-Bush event.

"When push comes to shove, liberalism is going to trump with Jewish voters," said Zogby, whose polling consistently shows about 70 percent to 75 percent of Jews leaning Democratic.

And, he noted, "Israel isn't a factor because Kerry simply 'me too'd' " the Bush-Sharon deal.

Kerry repeated his promise of maximum commitment to Israel in an Israel Independence Day message Tuesday.

"The people of Israel should know that our pledge to a safe and secure Jewish state is unwavering," he said. "From this enduring friendship will always come the promise of never-ending support. Our commitment must be clear: We should never pressure Israel to compromise its security; never coerce it to negotiate for peace without a credible partner; and always work to provide the political and military support for Israel's fight against terror."

In fact, while Kerry and Bush might once have had fundamentally different approaches to Israeli-Palestinian negotiations — with Kerry advocating multilateral involvement and Bush championing a U.S.-led approach — either man's approach on Nov. 3 will be determined by one overwhelming factor: Iraq.

Just like Bush, "If Kerry wins, he's going to inherit a huge commitment in Iraq, and a major occupation," Alpher said. ■

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Students meet before anti-Semitism forum

By **TOBY AXELROD**

BERLIN (JTA) —Teasing is an unfortunate but inevitable part of growing up. But when fellow students at Olga Berlin's high school asked her tauntingly if anyone had ever thrown stones at her because she was Jewish, she didn't laugh it off.

Instead, Berlin, 18, moved to a different school in her hometown of Stuttgart.

Berlin described her experience at a gathering of students here two days before an international conference on anti-Semitism.

The student event, organized by the Jerusalem-based World Union of Jewish Students and held at the Jewish Museum of Berlin, brought together about 50 young Jews from 23 countries to share their frustrations and hopes about the anti-Semitism they face in their communities and educational institutions. The program was supported in part by the World Jewish Congress.

While they may not be threatened physically, students said they often felt uncomfortable with the kinds of questions they face. "When people hear I'm Jewish, they say, 'Oh, you are not Italian,'" said Gad Lazarov, 20, of Milan.

Sweden's Jewish community has seen

an increase in threatening phone calls, said Daniel Schatz, 24, of the Swedish Committee Against Anti-Semitism.

He said verbal attacks on Israel were modern expressions of traditional anti-Semitism, which "attacks the core of Jewish identity."

Aylin Varon, 26, of Istanbul, said the Jewish community there "is much more fearful" since the bombings of two Istanbul synagogues in November. "There is much more security. Some Jewish businesses have received threatening calls," she said.

But personally, Varon said, "I cannot say I have ever experienced anything overtly anti-Semitic."

Varon said she has strong friendships with both Muslim and Jews.

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Many students described facing anti-Israel views on campus and an intensifying anti-Semitic atmosphere in academia and media.

One person recalled the case of an editor of a major Lithuanian newspaper, who blamed Jews for the world's problems. Another told of a German professor who compared the Warsaw Ghetto uprising to Palestinian suicide bombings.

In Leeds, Britain, students said Palestinian students make sure there is a one-

sided portrayal of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Jewish students agreed that they have to be proactive in leading the fight against anti-Semitism, and that both the general public and Jewish students need to be better educated about Judaism.

They shared ideas and tactics. Among them were the creation of an intercultural summer camp in Ukraine, pro-Israel activities on the Leeds University campus and Jewish cultural events that were open to the public in the Czech Republic and Romania.

The students recommended working with local Israeli chambers of commerce to develop pro-Israel programs, and helping local media recognize anti-Semitic stereotypes and understand the difference between legitimate and unfair criticism of Israel.

"I think it's important to teach people not to be lazy, but to react," said Chananya Daniel, 20, of Amsterdam. "It's true that students are always doing more things, not just talking."

Daniel's words echoed those of Israel Singer, chairman of the World Jewish Congress, who told the students that they have an obligation "to take the most gross malefactors and expose them." ■

Jews relieved as supremacist is found guilty

By **CINDY SHER and MINDA BLOCK**
JUF NEWS

CHICAGO (JTA) —White supremacist leader Matthew Hale — whose rhetoric of "racial holy war" was tied to a deadly shooting spree directed at Jews and other minorities five years ago in Chicago — was found guilty Monday by a federal jury in Chicago for seeking the murder of a federal judge.

Hale, who had been the director of the former Illinois-based hate group World Church of the Creator, was found guilty on four of the five counts against him — one of solicitation for murder and three of obstruction of justice.

The jury's verdict, announced in the downtown Chicago courtroom of U.S. District Judge James Moody, came after three days of deliberations.

Hale had been charged twice with soliciting the murder of U.S. District Judge

Joan Humphrey Lefkow because she had ordered him to stop using the name World Church of the Creator, which had been trademarked by an Oregon-based religious group with no ties to Hale.

Though Lefkow is not Jewish, in an e-mail letter to his followers regarding the trademark case, Hale refers to Lefkow as the "judge with the Jew surname." Tapes played during the trial documented the hate-filled views that, prosecutors said, provided a context for Hale's intent to commit violence.

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"It is not surprising that a person possessed by the kinds of beliefs that Hale has actively promoted for years would ultimately act on them," according to Michael Kotzin, executive vice president of the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago.

The judge was never physically harmed. Kotzin applauded law enforcement and

prosecutors "for successfully taking action against Hale for the crimes which he did commit and for preventing the crimes which he was planning to commit."

Moody did not announce a sentencing date. Hale could receive a maximum of up to 50 years in prison. Hale will appeal the case, according to chief defense counsel Thomas Anthony Durkin.

In July 1999 one of Hale's followers, Benjamin Nathaniel Smith, went on a shooting rampage targeting minorities in the Chicago area.

He began the spree wounding six Jewish residents who were walking from synagogue on a Friday evening in a religious Jewish neighborhood in Chicago.

By the time law enforcement officials caught up with Smith two days later in Salem, Ill., Smith had injured nine people and shot to death two people.

Smith apparently shot himself to death after a short police chase. ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

Jews call for anti-Semitism monitor

Jewish groups are calling for the appointment of a coordinator to monitor anti-Semitism across Europe.

The day before the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's second conference on anti-Semitism opened in Berlin, participants in two pre-conference events Tuesday said a Europe-wide coordinator would help improve information gathering on anti-Semitic incidents.

"The goal is to play a more active role in the collecting, monitoring and analyzing of data on anti-Semitism and hate crimes," Rabbi Andrew Baker, the American Jewish Committee's director of international Jewish affairs, told JTA.

Europe to Libya: Sign up

The European Union wants Libya to join a future free-trade partnership of European and Mediterranean countries that includes Israel.

European Commission President Romano Prodi said Tuesday that he wants Libya "as soon as possible" to join the Barcelona process, which links European, North African and Middle Eastern countries in an association aimed at creating a free-trade zone by 2014.

Libya has been the only country in the region to have its membership withheld because of its refusal to share a table with Israeli representatives.

Libyan leader Muammar Gadhafi is visiting Belgium, where he is staying in a Bedouin tent in a chateau near Brussels accompanied by blue-clad, all-female bodyguards. It is the Libyan leader's first trip outside Africa or the Middle East in 15 years.

Jewish graves toppled in France

Several children are suspected of knocking over tombstones at a Jewish cemetery in eastern France.

Police on Monday began questioning the group of children, aged 8 to 16, after six stones were found lying on the ground at the cemetery in Horbourg-Wihr over the weekend.

A police spokesman said the motive likely was vandalism, since no anti-Semitic graffiti were found on the graves.

Rome to get Holocaust museum

A Holocaust museum is being built on the site of Benito Mussolini's former residence in Rome.

The museum will be built over a series of Jewish catacombs, city officials told Reuters. The museum will feature audiovisual material collected by Steven Spielberg's Shoah foundation as well as interactive displays recounting some of Rome's World War II tragedies, such as the Nazi massacre of 335 Italians, many of them Jews, in reprisal for Italian partisans' killing of 33 German soldiers.

NORTH AMERICA

Hillary is anti-anti-Semitism

Hillary Clinton pledged to introduce a Senate resolution condemning anti-Semitism.

In a letter to the World Jewish Congress that was read in Berlin, the Democratic senator from New York said she planned to introduce "a bipartisan resolution condemning anti-Semitism and those who would perpetuate it." Clinton also pledged to help the WJC's campaign to have the United Nations General Assembly pass a stand-alone resolution condemning anti-Semitism.

The WJC event in Berlin, held ahead of an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe conference on anti-Semitism, brought

together leading German politicians and heads of Jewish communities from around Europe.

College paper to apologize

A U.S. college newspaper is apologizing for a cartoon that depicted a Jew being knocked into an oven in an arcade game.

The editor of the Medium, a humor newspaper at New Jersey's Rutgers University, said the newspaper had failed in trying to convey the racist attitudes that led to the Holocaust, the Home News Tribune of Central New Jersey reported.

The April 21 front page of the Medium, a student-funded weekly, depicted a man throwing a ball at another man sitting on top of an oven. The caption reads, "Knock a Jew in the oven! Three throws for one dollar! Really! No, REALLY!"

Kerry marks Israel's Independence Day

Sen. John Kerry said the United States "should never pressure Israel to compromise its security."

In a statement honoring Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel's Independence Day, the Massachusetts senator and presumptive Democratic nominee for president said Israel should not be coerced into peace negotiations without a credible Palestinian partner. He also said the United States should work to help Israel's fight against terrorism.

Kerry called his support for Israel "unwavering" and said the United States' relationship with the Jewish state should be strengthened.

Money for Sudanese victims

The American Jewish World Service is collecting money for humanitarian relief in Sudan.

The Sudanese government reportedly has armed Arab Muslims who killed as many as 100,000 black Muslims in the past several months. The violence comes after a civil war in the country that has pitted Christians against Muslims during the past several years.

Money can be sent to the American Jewish World Service, 45 W. 36th St., 10th Fl., New York, N.Y. 10018.

Former UJC leader dies

Arthur Naporstek, former head of a department at the United Jewish Communities, died at 65.

Naporstek died Saturday of lung cancer complications. Naporstek headed the UJC's Israel and Overseas Pillar from 2001 to 2002.

An expert in urban redevelopment, Naporstek for a time was dean of the School of Applied Sciences at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland.

MIDDLE EAST

'Work accident' in Gaza

Two Gaza terrorists were killed when a rocket they were preparing apparently blew up prematurely.

The Al-Aksa Brigade, a terrorist wing of Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction, said Tuesday that at least one of the men killed outside the Muqatah refugee camp was a member of the group. According to locals, a four-member crew was trying to launch a rocket over the boundary with Israel when it exploded. Two men were also wounded.

Blessed be the vote

Signs were posted in Israel saying the deceased Lubavitcher rebbe would bless Likud Party members who vote against the Gaza withdrawal plan. The signs, which went up overnight Tuesday, were sponsored by the Committee for Saving the Nation and the Country, a Lubavitch group, the Jerusalem Post reported.

The Likud vote on the withdrawal is slated for May 2.