

IN THE NEWS

**Polls bode ill
for Sharon on vote**

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon could lose a Likud Party referendum on his Gaza withdrawal plan.

On Thursday, Israel's daily Yediot Achronot reported that 47 percent of Likud members polled oppose the plan and 39 support it; the rest were undecided.

**Lawmakers press
president on Syria**

Lawmakers are urging the Bush administration to toughen its stance against Syria.

"Many terrorist organizations are still operating openly in Syria," Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.) said Wednesday. "And after Israel took out Hamas' leadership in Gaza, we know that Hamas is now being guided from its office in Damascus."

Engel and others want the Bush administration to enforce sanctions passed four months ago in the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act.

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) is drafting a new bill, entitled the Syria and Lebanon Liberation Act.

The act would strengthen sanctions and give the White House less discretion in handling the issue.

**Jordan's Abdullah
is back to meet Bush**

King Abdullah II of Jordan is slated to meet with President Bush next week.

Abdullah canceled an April 21 meeting with Bush after the president recognized some Israeli claims to the West Bank, endorsed Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan and rejected the right of Palestinian refugees to return to Israel.

Jordanian and U.S. officials have since quietly negotiated the terms of Jordan's endorsement of the plan.

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WORLD REPORT

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Brian Hendler

HAPPY BIRTHDAY ISRAEL

Israelis celebrate Israel's 56th Independence Day in downtown Jerusalem on Monday.

On eve of E.U. expansion, Jews see mix of risk and opportunity

By RUTH ELLEN GRUBER

BUDAPEST (JTA) — On May 1, less than 15 years after the collapse of the Iron Curtain, the former Communist states of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are to become full-fledged members of the European Union, along with the island states of Cyprus and Malta.

The move marks the culmination of Europe's political and economic transformation.

It puts a formal end to the post-World War II paradigm of a Europe divided between East and West — and, at the same time, validates the emerging Jewish communities in the new member states as part of the European and Jewish mainstream.

"It's as if brothers who were out are coming home," said Mario Izcovich, director of pan-European programs for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

Like their non-Jewish fellow citizens, Jews in the new E.U. countries view the

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**JEW
IN
A NEW
EUROPE**

■ On eve of E.U. expansion, Jews see mixture of risk and opportunity

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union's enlargement with a mix of emotions ranging from eagerness to deep anxiety.

Younger Jews in particular are eager to take advantage of enhanced business, educational and other opportunities. Others hope enlargement will facilitate contact among Jewish communities.

Some Jews, however, fear they will be left behind by the changes. And many fear that "new" forms of anti-Semitism and unfavorable Israel policies in Western Europe may be exported to new member countries that to date have had policies supportive of Israel.

■ "E.U. enlargement will not directly affect the new member states' Jews, other than in the mainly positive way it will change the lives of the general population," Polish Jewish writer Konstanty Gebert told JTA. "In the long run, it will be instrumental in bringing all the continent's Jews together and helping them avail themselves of new opportunities, both through E.U. sponsorship of some community programs and through the implementation of E.U. laws.

But the main issue, he said, "is whether there exists a 'European Jewry' able to profit from the opportunity."

What might change, he said, "is the relatively more balanced approach that some new members, especially Poland, have taken on the Middle East conflict. As the E.U. attempts to integrate the foreign policies of its members, it can be expected that the newcomers will more closely toe

Brussels' line, which is markedly critical of Israel."

About 2 million Jews live in Europe, in national communities that range from about 100 people in Malta to 600,000 in France. European Jewry encompasses all walks of life, all social and economic brackets and all religious streams.

Altogether, fewer than 150,000 Jews live in the 10 new E.U. states. In East-Central Europe, the E.U. enlargement caps a period of extraordinary changes in a region where the Holocaust wiped out millions of Jews and Communist regimes made Jewish observance virtually taboo.

The end of the Cold War enabled a dramatic revival of Jewish life in post-Communist Europe. Synagogues, schools and other Jewish institutions were established and a wide range of Jewish cultural activities blossomed. International Jewish networks expanded to encompass Jews once cut off by the Iron Curtain.

■ Beginning in the mid-1990s, some Jewish strategists foresaw the emergence of a "European Jewish identity" that could make European Jewry a collective "third pillar" — or equal player — of world Jewry, alongside Israeli and North American Jewry.

Some Jews in Europe feel they are moving toward that goal, albeit slowly — and they see the E.U. enlargement as a key step in that direction.

"Perhaps we have not entirely created a European Jewish identity, but we are near to that feeling," said Fero Alexander, executive chairman of the Central Union of Jewish Communities in Slovakia, home to 3,000 to 4,000 Jews.

European Jews, he told JTA, have found their self-confidence, and that is "what I consider the most exciting achievement."

According to Gebert and others, however, the optimistic expectations of the 1990s largely have not been fulfilled, partly due to internal Jewish relations.

"The two main communities, in France and in the U.K., do not seem interested in reaching out to the remaining small fry," he said. "The large communities in Russia and Ukraine remain essentially dependent on American Jewish and Israeli support, both material and spiritual, and

the Hungarian community is as insular as ever."

"Representatives of smaller Diasporas meet more often in Jerusalem or Washington than in Paris or London — let alone Moscow, Budapest or Warsaw

— and mainly compete for the attention of the big Jewish organizations, instead of trying to coordinate their actions," he said. "E.U. enlargement will probably not change this."

In addition, a grim litany of global challenges has cast a shadow over European Jewish

development and made some Jews feel less secure on the continent than they did in the heady days of the 1990s.

These include a spike in anti-Semitic violence, world terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism and Holocaust revisionism. Fallout from the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the war in Iraq have added further cause for concern, as Jews are torn by left-right politics and anti-Semitism often has become mixed with anti-Americanism.

Widespread European criticism of Israel for its policies against the Palestinians has prompted warnings that a demonization of the Jewish state forms the basis of a new type of anti-Semitism.

"There is much to celebrate, but much to concern us," Cobi Benatoff, the ECJC's outgoing president, said recently.

"As the European map undergoes change, there has been an emergence of instability linked to global and local tensions such as racism, anti-Semitism, the threat of terrorism, immigration and unequal levels of development," he said. "This makes it all the more necessary to review the Jewish people's place as citizens with rights in this new Europe."

Observers tend to agree that European Jewry has yet to find a true political voice. Izcovich says that in a Europe whose borders are fading away, Jews must learn to think internationally in order to survive.

"We are the global people," he said. "We know about that for thousands of years."

Sharing and cooperation will be progressively more imperative, even for simple demographic reasons, he said.

"One of the main problems in the Jewish Europe is the issue of critical mass," he noted. "There are a lot of communities with fewer than 5,000 Jews." ■

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Specter wins primary but faces tough election

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Arlen Specter squeaked out victory in a bitter Pennsylvania primary, but his fight to remain the senior Jewish Republican in the U.S. Senate is hardly over.

A key question facing him is whether he can maintain his traditionally strong Jewish support against a formidable challenge from a Democratic congressman.

Specter, who has represented Pennsylvania in the Senate since 1981, narrowly defeated Rep. Pat Toomey in the Republican primary Tuesday, securing 51 percent of the vote.

Toomey, funded in large part by conservative organizations, challenged Specter's record as a moderate Republican in a race that was viewed by some as a battle for the core beliefs of the Republican Party. Specter received significant support from President Bush and Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.).

Santorum, like Toomey, is a bedrock conservative, and Bush is to the right of Specter on many issues. Still, the party establishment sees Specter as more able to help Bush win Pennsylvania in November.

Pennsylvania is likely to be closely fought, and the state's Jewish community could prove crucial in swinging the state.

Jews make up 2.3 percent of Pennsylvania voters, according to the 2002 American Jewish Yearbook. Jews tend to vote in larger numbers than others and contribute heavily to campaigns' financial coffers.

Specter's support for abortion rights and other domestic policy priorities of the Jewish community traditionally has won him crossover votes from Jewish Democrats and independents.

But in Rep. Joe Hoeffel (D-Pa.), Specter faces a pro-Israel lawmaker with a voting record and reputation likely to gain him traction in Jewish circles.

The race has implications beyond who represents Pennsylvania. Republicans are fighting to maintain their slim 51-49 majority in the Senate; and the Pennsylvania contest also could affect the presidential race, since voters drawn to the booths for a particular Senate candidate are considered likely to favor that party's candidate for president as well.

Norm Ornstein, an analyst with the conservative American Enterprise Institute, believes Specter has the advantage in the Jewish community.

"I don't have a reason to believe that Jewish voters will behave any different than in other Specter contests," Ornstein said. "He will do pretty well, despite the fact that they are mostly Democrats."

Specter's primary battle, which helped paint him as a moderate, might help him win crossover support, supporters in the Jewish community say.

"In the primary, Specter did nothing but reinforce himself as someone who can travel easily in all types of circles," said Ken Davis, a Republican lobbyist in Philadelphia.

Specter's seniority — he is in line to become chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee if the Republicans maintain their Senate majority — and his ability to bring money back home to Pennsylvania also make him appealing to state voters.

Specter backers suggest that Jewish support for the Bush administration's stance on Israel and the war on terrorism may make Jewish voters more inclined to back Republicans across the board.

Democrats say Hoeffel, a member of the Middle East panel of the House of Representatives' International Relations Committee, has strong pro-Israel credentials, and they believe his domestic policy positions will win Jewish support.

"Joe has a long, public history of being there on issues that are of interest to a lot of Jews," said Marcel Green, chairman of the Montgomery County Democratic Committee.

Green said the Pennsylvania race may be key to control of the Senate, and that even if Jewish voters like Specter, they may back Hoeffel to help Democrats re-

gain control of the Senate. "Sen. Specter certainly has had strength within the Jewish community, but he's never run against a Joe Hoeffel before," Green said.

Specter defeated Lynn Yeakel by only two percentage points in 1992, when he was known nationally for his strong questioning of Anita Hill, who testified against Clarence Thomas in his Senate confirmation hearings for the U.S. Supreme Court.

Yeakel had never sought political office before, and was criticized for serving on the board of a Presbyterian Church that, according to some Jews, had been a platform for anti-Israel

statements.

Hoeffel has faced off against a Jewish Republican before, defeating incumbent Rep. Jon Fox in 1998 after losing to him by fewer than 100 votes in 1996. Democrats estimate that Hoeffel received more than 60 percent of the Jewish vote in that race.

But this is a statewide race, and Republicans note that Hoeffel is not well known outside of his Philadelphia-area district, where he formerly served as Montgomery County commissioner.

Pennsylvania is considered a state to watch in the November presidential elections, and strong support for Sen. John Kerry, the presumptive Democratic nominee, could carry over to support for Hoeffel as well.

The seat Hoeffel is vacating in the House could be taken by a Jewish Democrat. Allyson Schwartz, a state senator, won a Democratic primary Tuesday to seek Hoeffel's seat in Pennsylvania's 13th Congressional District. She will run against Melissa Brown, a doctor who lost a close race against Hoeffel in 2002.

The race has implications beyond who represents Pennsylvania.

French minister: We want secure Israel

PARIS (JTA) — France will not compromise Israel's security, France's foreign minister told Jewish officials.

During a meeting last Friday with leaders of the CRIF umbrella organization of French Jews, Michel Barnier also described Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to pull out of the Gaza Strip as "useful and positive" on the condition

that it is "within the framework of the 'road map' to enable Israel and a Palestinian state to live together side by side."

Recently appointed foreign minister, Barnier, a former European Union commissioner, plans to visit Israel next month.

Though he condemned anti-Israel terrorism, Barnier called Israel's killing of Palestinian terrorist chiefs "executions." ■

Berlin conf. calls for monitoring anti-Semitism

By TOBY AXELROD

BERLIN (JTA) — An international conference on anti-Semitism failed to condemn its growth among Muslims in Europe, but participants nevertheless are hailing the gathering as a success.

A resolution passed at the end of the two-day conference Thursday declared “unambiguously that international developments or political issues, including those in Israel or elsewhere in the Middle East, never justify anti-Semitism.”

The mention of Israel in the final document acknowledged a major source of anti-Semitism in Europe today and was one of several distinguishing elements in the forum on new manifestations of the age-old scourge.

However, Arab states convinced members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which hosted the conference, to remove references from official documents linking criticism of Israel and Muslim anti-Semitism.

Our sense is that courageous statements at the conference “were few and far between,” said Shelley Klein, director of advocacy for Hadassah.

Still, at a time when public opinion in much of the world has turned sharply against Israel — resulting in a wave of attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions across Europe — a gathering intended to help the Jewish people “is a success in and of itself,” Klein said.

■

The conference, preceded by several other events in Berlin this week targeting anti-Semitism, was intended as a tougher follow-up to an initial OSCE conference last summer in Vienna.

Hosted by German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer and chaired by Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy, the program featured addresses by U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, German President Johannes Rau and Holocaust survivors Simone Veil and Elie Wiesel.

Several hundred participants, ranging from politicians to religious leaders to OSCE representatives, attended the conference at Germany's Foreign Ministry. Also present were representatives of Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Tunisia, which are “Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation” in the OSCE.

Observers said the high-level officials participating sent a signal to political



Bureau for Vigilance Against Anti-Semitism

At a march in Paris against the war in Iraq in March 2003, demonstrators carried signs with swastikas, Palestinian flags and messages like ‘Sharon, Bush murderers.’

leaders on the eve of European Union enlargement that all forms of discrimination are unacceptable.

“Had it not been done by Joschka Fischer in Germany, I believe the Jews would be making a mistake in calling for a stand-alone conference,” Israel Singer, chairman of the World Jewish Congress, told JTA. He said he had asked Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schussel to attend last year's conference in Vienna but was rebuffed.

Chief among many participants' concerns was growing international vilification of Israel and the spillover effect it has had in recent years on attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions in Europe.

A significant number of perpetrators have been young Muslims, particularly in France, but that point was hardly addressed directly at the conference.

■

“Today we confront the ugly reality that anti-Semitism is not just a fact of history, but a current event,” Powell told the gathering. He said that criticism of Israel was not necessarily anti-Semitic unless “Israel or its leaders are demonized or vilified, for example by the use of Nazi symbols and racist caricatures.”

The week of the conference, the Anti-Defamation League released a report showing a decline in anti-Semitic attacks in Europe from their peak two years ago, but a marked rise in anti-Israel sentiment.

The disparity between the drop in anti-Semitism and the rise in hostility toward Israel suggests that political intervention has helped Europeans separate their feelings about Jews from their views on Israel, said Abraham Foxman, the ADL's national director.

“It's open season on Israel, an open season of criticism at a level that is almost beyond reason and rationale,” he said.

Speakers offered numerous suggestions in workshops on topics such as anti-Semitism in the media; the role of governments and civil society in promoting tolerance; and diversity training and Holocaust education. Non-governmental organizations shared their materials and networked in the ministry's library.

Non-Jewish groups also attended the conference, including the Washington-based Leadership Conference on Civil Rights.

The conference “pushed anti-Semitism back on the agenda,” said Fahmia Huda, a Muslim who is head of the Faith Communities Office of Britain's Foreign Office. “Everyone has a duty to take part in the discussions and do whatever they can to combat it.”

While several concrete recommendations emerged from the conference — including a call for a coordinator to monitor anti-Semitic crimes across the continent — some observers said the mere convening of the event made it a success. ■

As E.U. expands, change on Israel policy unlikely

By PHILIP CARMEL

PARIS (JTA) — With the European Union often at odds with Jewish groups over its opposition to Israeli policy, hopes were raised last year when a number of key Eastern European countries defied most of their future E.U. partners to fall in line with the United States on Iraq.

That led Jewish leaders to believe that many of the new states would act as a counterbalance to current E.U. policy, which often is seen as highly critical of the Jewish state.

However, as 10 new countries enter the union May 1, some European Jewish leaders and Israeli officials are reassessing their more optimistic predictions.

"At the moment, we have to persuade 15 countries" to support European Jewish issues, "so it's not going to be easier to persuade 25," said Maram Stern of the World Jewish Congress' Brussels office.

That said, certain key countries in Eastern Europe have tended to be less critical of Israel. Anti-Israel rhetoric in the media, generally widespread in Western Europe, has been far less prevalent in the East.

But it's not clear if the Eastern European countries joining the union can influence their Western European partners to adopt more favorable positions toward Israel. In fact, things just as well could go the other way, said Lawrence Weinbaum, who analyzes trends in the former Eastern Bloc for the WJC.

"As they come more under the influence of other European countries in Brussels, they may move closer to traditional E.U. positions on Israel," Weinbaum said.

What might change, Polish Jewish writer Konstanty Gebert told JTA, "is the relatively more balanced approach that some new members, especially Poland, have taken on the Middle East conflict. As the E.U. attempts to integrate the foreign policies of its members, it can be expected that the newcomers will more closely toe Brussels' line, which is markedly critical of Israel."

The entry of 10 new countries into the union cements the process begun with the fall of the Communist bloc in the early 1990s and unites the economically weaker Eastern countries with the world's largest trading bloc.

Israeli diplomats in Europe said the new countries' entry won't produce a major

change in European policy toward Israel.

"There are sociological trends at work here," Haim Assraf, a senior official at Israel's E.U. Mission in Brussels, told JTA. "They recognize they're the new boys, so they'll look to integrate into the E.U. by following a consensus line."

In the short term, at least, that won't improve Israel's diplomatic position, Assraf said, because the consensus position would now be presented by a more powerful bloc of 25 states.

Much also will depend upon proposed amendments to a future E.U. constitution, particularly the abolition of individual states' veto over E.U. decisions, he said.

A change to majority voting likely would ensure backing for traditional E.U. foreign policy positions — which have been perceived by Israel's supporters and by Jewish groups in Europe as hostile to the Jewish state.

Most notably, the European Union has expressed fierce criticism of Israel's West Bank security barrier and its assassination of Palestinian terrorist leaders. Most recently, Europe gave a cool response to President Bush's support for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip.

European economic analysts note that it likely will take some time before the new states feel comfortable enough to take independent foreign policy positions.

In addition, many of the new states undoubtedly will be more concerned at first with improving their standards of living than in engaging in major foreign policy initiatives.

For example, the European Central Bank said last week that Poland — by far the largest of the 10 new states — may need 40 years to reach the economic development of current E.U. members. Even countries such as Hungary and the Czech Republic could need more than a decade to catch up.

Currently, all the new members run trade deficits, while most of their trade is with current E.U. member states.

While general policy still would be formulated by the European Commission

— the E.U.'s executive branch — the composition of the European Parliament, where

elections are scheduled for the middle of June, remains a problem for Israel's supporters in Europe.

The European Parliament has been the most problematic legislature for Israel among democratic states, Assraf said, adding that it was difficult to see how it would change with input from the new countries.

However, Serge Cwajgenbaum, the secretary-general of the European Jewish Congress, said he sees more positive signs from European Socialist parties in Eastern Europe, particularly in Hungary and Poland.

As the principal opposition bloc in the European Parliament, the Party of European Socialists has been at the center of much of the legislature's anti-Israel rhetoric.

But polls suggesting that the center-right bloc of European Democrats will increase its majority in the Parliament offer more promising signs for Israel.

"There are many paradoxes with the entry of the new countries. Some of them have a more balanced approach to Israel, but there are also some strong nationalist elements there," Cwajgenbaum said.

Weinbaum agreed, pointing out that anti-Semitic rhetoric was still strong in certain countries such as Hungary, while other states maintained certain ambiguities in relation to the Holocaust.

"We see countries where local populations had a direct hand in the Shoah deliberately attempting to whitewash the past," he said. "In the Baltic states, for example, the Jews are seen as having a hand in the Communist rule" of the former Soviet Union.

In fact, far-right groupings already are looking to form their own inter-European partnerships. Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of France's National Front, attended a recent nationalist rally in Budapest and last week helped kick-start the European election campaign of the neo-Nazi British National Party.

(JTA correspondent Ruth Ellen Gruber contributed to this story from Rome.)

Hopes that Eastern European countries will tilt the E.U. toward a pro-Israel policy appear to be overly optimistic.

After bombing, a tense time for Spain's Jews

By JEROME SOCOLOVSKY

MADRID (JTA) — Nicholson family members love getting out of Madrid on weekends, and often they round up other young families for the weekly kosher barbeque at Masada, a Jewish retreat in the mountains outside Spain's capital.

Masada, it turns out, was on a list of bombing targets police found in the hide-out of the Islamic terrorists suspected of blowing up four commuter trains in Madrid on March 11, killing 191 people.

So will the Nicholsons go back to Masada?

"Absolutely I would. You cannot let that sort of thing stop you from continuing with your life," Paul Nicholson said, several days after his wife Dalia gave birth to a baby boy, their second child.

After the train bombings, Spain's 35,000 Jews — like most other Spaniards — were outraged that Islamic terrorists had struck in the country. Videotapes and statements on behalf of Al-Qaida said the attacks were meant to punish Spain for supporting the United States in the Iraq war.

Most Jews already accepted the importance of stringent security measures for a small community in a country with a large and rapidly growing North African population, and a long history of anti-Semitism.

But at least this time, it seemed after the March 11 bombings, the Jewish community had been left out of the terrorist vendetta. Many Jews thus were taken aback when, a few weeks after the train attacks, the newspaper *El Mundo* published the terrorists' plans for further attacks — including a map showing Masada's precise location.

"Masada is pretty well off the beaten track," said Nicholson, a New Zealand-born business consultant. "For them to have been able to track it down, get information about it — you really wonder a bit about the security in Spain for Jews."

In addition to Masada, the suspected terrorists also had planned to blow up a suburban shopping mall and bullet trains.

None of these attacks took place thanks to a cell phone, found March 11 attached to an unexploded bomb as a makeshift detonator. Police used the phone to track the suspected leader of the train bombings — a Tunisian named Sarhane Ben Abdelmajid Fakhet — to an apartment in

Leganes, a southern suburb of Madrid.

When police tried to storm the building, Fakhet and a group of followers triggered an explosion, killing themselves and a policeman and ripping off the front of the apartment building.

Police believe several suspects remain at large, and the Jewish community is taking no chances.

Jacobo Israel Garzon, president of Madrid's Jewish community, said synagogues in the city are beefing up their own security, and Spanish law enforcement authorities have been asked for additional help.

Some people are staying away from Jewish activities, he said, but "those of us who are not afraid are more numerous."

In Barcelona, where another 8,000 Jews live, Yitzhak Levy's home is next door to that city's Masada.

"When I went last weekend there were only four families, when usually there are 20 or 30," said Levy, a spokesman for the community.

He says there has been no specific threat against Jewish institutions in Barcelona. Still, there is reason for caution: Investigators believe the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in New York and Washington were planned about an hour away, in the beach resort of Salou. In addition, many of the Al-Qaida suspects detained in connection with the Sept. 11 attacks lived in Catalonia, the northeastern Spanish region of which Barcelona is capital.

Levy says it's clear the Madrid train bombings, which came just three days before Spain's national elections, influenced the outcome. Yet he accepts the common analysis that many Spaniards voted for the Socialist government not because of its stance against the Iraq war but because they felt deceived by the conservative government of then-Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar.

Aznar's government first blamed the attack on the outlawed Basque separatist group ETA, despite increasing evidence of involvement by Islamic extremists. Aznar has said the government released new information pointing to Islamic radicals as soon as it became available, but many

Spaniards felt the government was trying to hide something, afraid its support for the Iraq war might backfire electorally.

"For many people, it was the last straw," Levy said. But, he concedes, "I've heard Jews say the winner of the Spanish elections was Osama Bin Laden."

On Sunday, a day after being sworn in, the new Socialist prime minister, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, announced that he would make good on a campaign promise to withdraw Spain's 1,400 troops from Iraq.

He previously had said he might reconsider if the United Nations were given control of Iraq as planned by June 30.

After his inauguration, however, Zapatero said it seemed clear the transition wouldn't happen, and he promised to bring Spanish soldiers home "as soon as possible." Opinion polls showed that around 70 percent of Spaniards agreed with the decision.

Many also are wondering if the previous government's focus on the Basque terrorist threat blinded it to the possibility of an attack by Islamic extremists, especially given Spain's pro-U.S. stances and its crackdown on the local Sept. 11 cell.

An investigative report in *El Mundo* claimed Spanish authorities had received warnings from the intelligence services of several countries, including the United States, Britain, France, Germany and Israel.

"On at least 10 occasions, Israeli intelligence agents had let their Spanish colleagues know" that "Islamic militants were preparing a major attack in Madrid," journalist Fernando Mugica wrote.

Madrid's Garzon said the rapidity with which Zapatero announced the pullout "gives the impression that we are submitting to the threats" of the terrorists.

"Most of my Spanish friends disagree with me," Nicholson said. "But one Spanish government made the decision to go in there, and for another Spanish government to come in and change that, all you're doing is answering the terrorists' request. Whether that was right or wrong doesn't really matter anymore."

Some Jews are saying the real winner in Spain's elections was Osama bin Laden.

FIRST PERSON

Prewar friends from Poland have a reunion

By DINA KRAFT

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The two men walk as one — in steady step, shoulder to shoulder, their words a torrent of Yiddish.

There is much to catch up on since the former neighbors and schoolmates last met.

That was more than 60 years ago, when the transports, fear and separations that characterized Jewish life during World War II reached their Polish hometown.

Allen Greenstein, 78, is from Los Angeles; Haim Fligelman, 82, lives in Tel Aviv.

The two old friends found each other again recently as they took their seats on a tour bus in Israel.

In their respective cities, they both attend Cafe Europa, a club for Holocaust survivors where members gather for concerts, lectures, conversation and coffee.

A group from the Los Angeles chapter recently toured Israel, and members met their Tel Aviv counterparts.

"We lived on the same street but have not seen each other since the war," a beaming Greenstein told JTA. "So it was quite a surprise to meet him on the bus."

■

The two grew up in Opatow, a Polish town with a large Jewish population before the war.

Once the war began, many of the town's Jewish youth, including both of them, were sent to work in munitions factories.

They both spent the final months of the war in Buchenwald.

Both lost family members. Greenstein was one of 12 children, but only he and three others survived the war.

Fligelman is a retired carpenter with 17 grandchildren.

"It helps relieve one's nerves," he said of his weekly visits to the Tel Aviv Cafe Europa.

Cafe Europa first began in Los Angeles as a project of the Jewish Federation of Los Angeles and later became the model for the club of the same name in Tel Aviv. Both are funded by the federation, which is a sister city with Tel Aviv. ■

With eye on Jewish unity, 'disco rabbi' wins Israel Prize

By URIEL HEILMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) — In a country wracked by religious-secular tension, it's not often that the country's establishment awards Israel's highest prize to a fervently Orthodox rabbi who has made a career of saving Jewish souls.

Then again, Yitzchak Dovid Grossman is not your average rabbi.

A sixth-generation Jerusalemite born to a prestigious Chasidic family, Grossman left his roots and his fervently Orthodox surroundings in 1968 for the discos, pubs and mean streets of one of Israel's most drug-infested, crime-ridden cities, Migdal Ha'emek in the Lower Galilee.

The thing was, Grossman never shaved his beard or sidecurls.

Instead, the people he met were changed by Grossman, who today presides over one of Israel's largest educational institutions for poor and at-risk youth, a wildly successful prisoner rehabilitation program and, as the city's chief rabbi, Migdal Ha'emek.

Now the recipient of the Israel Prize for lifetime achievement, which is awarded every year at a ceremony in Jerusalem on Israel's Independence Day, Grossman says he hopes to bridge the secular-religious divide in Israel.

"I want to use the Israel Prize to engage people, to connect with them and show we're one," Grossman, 57, told JTA.

Israeli Prime Minister "Ariel Sharon has his disengagement plan from the Palestinians; this is my engagement plan for the Jewish people," he says. ■

Grossman's maverick tactics have earned him a unique reputation. Early on, Grossman says, he decided that the best way to reach Jews was through love.

When he went to discos in Migdal Ha'emek, rather than chastising the youths there he engaged them in discussion and debate. Sometimes, before the evening was over, many of the young men had foregone their female dance partners for a simcha-dancing circle with Grossman.

The next step was to get the youths to

abandon their lives of drugs and crime, which by the late 1960s had turned Migdal Ha'emek into a dangerous place.

Grossman says he sought to influence the youths by embracing them.

What's important is "not only that he sees you want him to be religious, but that you want to help him generally," he says. ■

In 1969, an appreciative city named Grossman chief rabbi of Migdal Ha'emek, and then-Prime Minister Golda Meir attended his installation ceremony. At 23, he was the youngest chief rabbi in Israel.

Not long afterward, Grossman started an educational institution to help the youths he encountered. Called Migdal Ohr — Hebrew for Tower of Light — the Migdal Ha'emek school began with just 18 students.

Today, Migdal Ohr has 6,000 students from disadvantaged, immigrant and at-risk homes, 700 staff members and an annual budget of \$20

million — though it's suffering from a \$4 million deficit due to recent government cutbacks.

Graduates have gone on to become engineers, generals, doctors, lawyers, teachers, rabbis and Knesset members.

"I realized I needed to establish an institution where the kids could get the love they need," Grossman says.

In the early days, Migdal Ohr's dormitories were filled with the children of Sephardi immigrants from places like Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen — at the time among Israel's poorest immigrant communities.

"I am the person people turn to to save souls," Grossman says earnestly. "There is no such thing as a secular Jew to me. Every Jew has a soul and the will — the question is how you reach him."

Grossman says he wishes that more fervently Orthodox Israelis followed his lead in reaching out to secular Israelis. "The haredi public needs to get out more, to meet the secular more, and they need to show everything that's beautiful about religion to make the public aware," he says. "I think it can only bring blessings." ■

'I am the person people turn to to save souls.'

Yitzhak Grossman
Israel Prize winner

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Israeli law cited in U.S. terror case

A lawyer defending an accused terrorist's right to counsel before the U.S. Supreme Court cited Israeli law.

The Bush administration has declared U.S. citizen Jose Padilla an enemy combatant, citing his alleged ties to Islamic terrorist groups.

Jennifer Martinez, arguing on Padilla's behalf Wednesday, twice cited the right of such detainees to regular judicial review in Britain and Israel, "our democratic allies."

Martinez said, "In the United Kingdom and Israel, for example, people detained under preventive detentions schemes are entitled to access to counsel; they are entitled to prompt and periodic judicial review, under legislative standards, to determine whether those detentions can be continued."

U.S. to Brahimi: Enough already

U.S. officials said they disagreed with Lakhdar Brahimi, the U.N. envoy to Iraq who said Israeli policies were "poisoning" the Iraqi transition.

"We do definitely disagree with him," Richard Boucher, the State Department spokesman said Tuesday. "We think it's important to value the role that the United States has played in trying to get peace."

Previously, the administration had avoided directly criticizing Brahimi, considered the best hope for a smooth transition in Iraq. But the U.N. envoy's insistence on repeating his claim that U.S. support for Israeli policies is poisoning the transfer of power in Iraq may have provoked a tougher U.S. response.

The United States' ambassador to the United Nations, John Negroponte, who is slated to become the U.S. ambassador in Iraq, expressed surprise with Brahimi on Tuesday at Senate confirmation hearings for his new post.

"I would have thought that if he had to do it over again he might not have made those kinds of comments on the record," Negroponte said.

Satterfield to Jordan

President Bush nominated a top State Department official to be ambassador to Jordan.

Bush sent his nomination of David Satterfield, a deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, to the Senate on Wednesday. Satterfield, a career diplomat, staked out a position on Israel that at times was more critical than that of his colleagues, saying at one point that Israel's settlement policy threatened the Jewish state's democratic character.

Last month, he predicted that the United States would never recognize Israeli claims in the West Bank before the Palestinians had done so. "As a negotiating premise, it's something that's got to be agreed to by both sides," he said.

Soon afterward, Bush proved him wrong.

State Dept. issues new travel warning

The U.S. State Department updated its travel warning for Israel and the Palestinian territories.

The statement, issued Wednesday, reads, "Statements have been made by Hamas elements and other terrorist groups threatening revenge against U.S. interests following the killing of Hamas leaders in Gaza, which could include kidnappings, although we have no information that these threats will be carried out at this time."

It also noted that Hamas has vowed revenge against Israel as well. The State Department suggests American citizens leave Gaza immediately and defer travel to Gaza, the West Bank and Israel.

NORTH AMERICA

Army apologizes for killing

Israel apologized for killing a Palestinian academic during a counterterrorist raid.

Yasser Abu Leimun, who lectured on insurance administration at two West Bank universities, was shot dead in his home last week at Tallouza, outside Nablus, as Israeli troops battled Hamas gunmen nearby.

On Thursday, the Israeli army admitted that Leimun was killed by accident.

Police chief in the sights

A Palestinian police chief survived a bomb attack attributed to Gaza vigilantes.

A booby trap blew the door off Ghazi Al-Jabali's home in Gaza City just after he left early Thursday morning, causing damage but no casualties.

Jabali, chief of Palestinian police in the Gaza Strip, did not immediately comment.

Israeli security sources said the attack probably was the work of radicals opposed to Palestinian Authority rule.

Ejected Palestinian fugitive is captured

Israeli forces captured a Palestinian fugitive recently ejected from Yasser Arafat's headquarters.

Witnesses said Ali Barghouti and three other Palestinians were captured by troops in the West Bank city of Ramallah on Thursday. Barghouti was one of a dozen members of the Al-Aksa Brigade forced to leave Arafat's Ramallah compound last week amid fears of an impending Israeli raid to arrest the fugitives.

WORLD

Russian extremists rally

Members of a Russian far-right nationalist group demonstrated Wednesday in front of the Israeli Embassy in Moscow.

Organizers of the National Great-Power Party rally, which attracted some 60 participants, had a permit from local authorities for a demonstration advocating Palestinian rights.

The rally also included anti-Semitic slogans, but no violent incidents were reported. Some Jewish officials said they would try to have the party banned.

Reform convene in Brazil

The Reform movement opened a Latin American convention in Brazil on Thursday.

The conference in Sao Paulo will run through Sunday.

The gathering will focus on common challenges facing Reform and Conservative groups as they try to ensure that Judaism remains a relevant and attractive option for Jews in the 21st century.

The World Union for Progressive Judaism is promoting the event in cooperation with members of Reform and Conservative congregations from Brazil and neighboring countries.

From Rome to Jerusalem — on a bike

A British interfaith center is sponsoring a charity bike ride from the Vatican to Jerusalem's Western Wall.

The Pilgrimage on Wheels ride, planned for February-March 2005, will raise funds for the Centre for Jewish-Christian Relations at Cambridge University.

Registration materials soon will be available on the Internet at www.charitychallenge.com/rome-athens-jerusalem.