

## IN THE NEWS

**Israel kills  
12 Gazans**

Israeli soldiers killed at least 12 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Witnesses said the casualties came Thursday as helicopter gunships fired missiles into crowds in Rafah, a refugee camp on Gaza's border with Egypt.

More than 30 Palestinians and 11 Israeli soldiers have been killed in Gaza this week.

On Tuesday, a land mine killed six Israeli soldiers in their armored vehicle in Zeitoun, and local Palestinian militias made off with body parts. Afterward, Israel sent troops to conduct house-to-house searches in an attempt to recover the remains.

**Sharon thanks  
Mubarak for help**

Ariel Sharon thanked Egypt for helping to secure the return of the remains of Israeli soldiers killed in Gaza.

Sharon's office said Thursday that the Israeli prime minister had telephoned Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to express thanks for the pressure Egypt's government applied on Palestinian terrorist groups to return the body parts.

The military has been scouring Gaza City since six soldiers were blown up there Tuesday, vowing to return all their remaining body parts for burial in Israel.

Five more soldiers were killed as part of the retrieval operation. The Palestinian Authority also urged the terrorists not to hold the remains for ransom.

**N.Y. Jews in Syria  
for spy's remains**

Some Syrian-born New York Jews are in Syria pressing for the release of the remains of Israeli spy Eli Cohen.

The delegation is expected to meet with Syrian President Bashar Assad during the trip.

Cohen was hanged in Syria in May 1965 after spying there for several years.

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# WORLD REPORT

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Steve Donisch

Some 8,000 Israel supporters attended the Chicago Walk With Israel demonstration this month.

## American Jews come to Israel's aid, but how deeply are they engaged?

By CARL SCHRAG

**C**HICAGO (JTA) — Jim Hiller was in a jovial mood on a recent Sunday.

"I've got a herd of picketers outside two of my stores," the 56-year-old Detroit grocery-store owner said.

The picketers were protesting Hiller's decision to feature Israeli products in his six-store chain. Rather than back down, Hiller seemed to take pleasure in taking a stand in what's become an increasingly public demonstration of his support for Israel.

Concerned about the economic price Israel had been paying since the start of the

Palestinian intifada in September 2000, Hiller began stocking Israeli produce, cheeses and canned goods in his store.

"You cannot imagine a person who would be less likely than me to do this," Hiller said while protesters handed out leaflets to shoppers. Until a few years ago, his main connection to Israel was what he calls a "perfunctory" annual gift to a local charity that supported the Jewish state.

Now he sells some 1,000 Israeli products to his mostly non-Jewish customers, and he's a hero in the Jewish community.

Across the country, many Jews have

*Continued on page 2*

**A CHANGING  
RELATIONSHIP?  
Part I**

## ■ U.S. Jews come to Israel's aid, but how deep is their engagement?

*Continued from page 1*

sought ways to show their support for Israel as the country's security and diplomatic situation has deteriorated since the peace process collapsed.

The outpouring has been dramatic, often coming from the least expected sources. In cyberspace, petitions, links to articles, dire warnings and heartfelt appeals have opened the door to a new world of involvement.

Many American Jews have rallied in more active ways, including letter writing, demonstrating and fund raising.

But how significant is this spate of activism and concern? Is the underlying relationship between American Jews and Israel actually changing, or are we witnessing a temporary upswing in the activity of a small, even shrinking, activist core?

John Carey, 39, a designer from San Francisco, said that until recently he was an apolitical person who "had no opinion on the subject" of Israel. But the self-described "typical Berkeley liberal" was jolted by the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, and he began to read authors such as Thomas Friedman, David Shipler and Leon Uris to understand what was happening. He also got hooked on *Commentary* magazine.

"All of a sudden, I was 'neo-con man,'" he said.

Lamenting Israel's poor public relations efforts, Carey began to design posters and bumper stickers to press Israel's cause. He worked with people at the University of California at Berkeley, at the

time a hotbed of anti-Israeli activity.

Now Carey's Blue Star PR has received hundreds of thousands of dollars in grant money to improve Israel's image. But Carey says he's bothered by a sense that too many other people have remained silent.

"The stuff that's out there has not worked," he said. "Am I the first person to think of this?"

Carey is just one example of this awakening. For some, the turning point was the October 2000 lynching of two Israeli army reservists in Ramallah. Others cite the spate of attacks in March 2002, including the Passover massacre of 30 Israelis who were sitting down to a Passover seder. Still others say that Sept. 11 prompted a new sense of connection with Israel.

Whatever the trigger, many American Jews have sought meaningful ways to stand up and be counted. Interviews with activists yield a crop of similar sentiments: People point to the lessons of history, including the Holocaust, and say they can't stand by silently.

Some see a clear link between the terrorism aimed at Israel and America's own war on terrorism.

Many people expressed their concern by writing checks to their local federations or other charities supporting Israel.

Jehuda Reinharz, president of Brandeis University, said that American Jews tend to claim to support Israel, but, for the most part, that's not backed up by an understanding of the country or the issues it faces.

"I would not want to guess how many American Jewish leaders really understand Israel," said Reinharz, who came to the United States from Israel in 1961. "How many can read or speak Hebrew?"

"Very few American Jews go to Israel," he went on. "Their knowledge is peripheral, and as time passes the young generation knows even less."

Steven Bayme, director of the American Jewish Committee's Dorothy and Julius Koppelman Institute for American Jewish-Israeli Relations, said assimilation has rendered many American Jews unconcerned with developments in the Jewish realm. "An awful number of Jews do not care," he said.

Only one in three American Jews has

ever visited Israel, Bayme noted, and far fewer actually can connect with Israelis in their own environment.

Among the committed core of pro-Israel American Jews, it's easy to get the sense that everybody is joining the cause. In day schools, synagogues, federations and other venues, sometimes it seems that everybody is talking about Israel, and most people are voicing similarly supportive messages.

But the picture is different when one looks beyond the central institutions of American Jewish life. Most Jews outside of those institutions and their constituencies aren't involved in pro-Israel activities today.

Hebrew University sociologist Steven M. Cohen conducted a survey in late 2002 that sought to measure American Jews' attachment to Israel.

Cohen found that one in 10 American Jews said they had become more involved with the Jewish state since the intifada began, while the number was one in five among the under-35 set. But Cohen determined that these shifts were statistically insignificant.

But those involved in pro-Israel advocacy have a different take.

Steven Nasatir, president of Chicago's Jewish United Fund, questioned Cohen's findings. "This does not reflect the people I'm talking to," he said.

In Chicago and across the country, he said, many Jews who could not be considered core activists have gotten involved in a wide range of pro-Israel advocacy efforts.

"There are real changes going on," agreed Daniel Rosove, a freshman at the University of Oregon who said pro-Israel activity on his campus boomed over the past year.

Esther Renzer, who is president of Stand With Us, a Los Angeles grass-roots group that advocates for Israel in the community and on college campuses, pointed to a higher level of involvement among L.A.'s Jewish community.

"Everyone will have a stronger Jewish identity because of this period," she said. ■

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Only one in three American Jews has ever visited Israel.

### JTA WORLD REPORT

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# Universities challenge Ford grant guidelines

By JOE BERKOFSKY

NEW YORK (JTA) — This year, the Harvard Divinity School is researching the “growing diversity of Islam in a democratic society.”

This \$348,000 project, funded by the Ford Foundation, is among dozens of projects totaling tens of millions of dollars that are stirring a growing debate. It pits Harvard and eight other elite schools against the prestigious Ford and Rockefeller foundations, who are major supporters of the academic world.

The debate erupted late last month when Columbia, Cornell, Harvard, MIT, Princeton, Stanford, Yale, and the Universities of Chicago and Pennsylvania sent the foundations a letter charging that new stipulations forcing grant recipients to agree not to promote bigotry, terrorism, violence or any nation's destruction threaten their First Amendment rights of protected academic speech.

Ford and Rockefeller are refusing to back down, and several Jewish groups and activists are applauding their stance.

“This is our language, these are our values, this is what we stand by and this is what we'll be using going forward,” Ford Foundation spokesman Alex Wilde said.

■  
Ford's new grant conditions were created after a JTA investigative series last October, “Funding Hate,” revealed that Ford was funding some Palestinian non-governmental organizations that promoted violence against Israel and helped foment anti-Israel agitation at the 2001 U.N. World Conference on Racism in Durban, South Africa.

After the JTA series ignited a political furor, the foundation pledged to scrutinize its grants and impose new guidelines.

The debate with the universities is the latest development in which foundations, facing new U.S. government regulations, struggle to figure out how to ensure that their dollars do not wind up in the hands of terrorist organizations.

In January, Ford told its recipients that they must pledge to “not promote or engage in violence, terrorism, bigotry or the destruction of any state” and must not funnel any Ford grant money to those who do.

Rockefeller used similar language in issuing its guidelines, saying that the language was a further step toward the commitment that its funds not be diverted

from charitable purposes.

But the schools are charging that the new conditions are “too vague” and would “regulate universities' behavior and speech beyond the scope of the grant — indeed, beyond the bounds of the universities.”

Provosts of the nine universities who signed the letters either declined to discuss their objections or did not return JTA's calls for comments.

Several university spokesmen said the letters, which were on Princeton stationery, did not arise out of fear that any specific event or program was at risk, but a general concern that the new language could limit speech on campus.

In a Wall Street Journal article last week, University of Chicago's provost, Richard Saller, said the new language left the foundations prey to pressure from “advocacy groups” who objected to activities such as a recent Palestinian film festival on campus.

On one level, the standoff amounted to a classic conflict between philanthropic ethics and freedom of speech, said one observer of the foundation sector.

“Academic institutions have every right to protect their status as defenders of free speech, and funders have every right to push back and say there are limits to discourse,” said Mark Charendoff, president of the Jewish Funders Network.

Foundations also must ensure that projects they support match their mission, otherwise they could lose their tax-exempt status, he added.

■  
Ford is the third largest U.S. foundation, with \$10.4 billion in assets. In fiscal year 2003, Ford awarded nearly \$35 million to higher education. The foundation no longer has ties to the Ford Motor Co.

Among the nine schools that co-signed the appeal, Harvard topped the list of recipients, with \$7 million in 2002 and 2003.

Rockefeller, with \$2.8 billion in assets, allocated \$15 million in 2003 grants to higher education and \$17 million in 2002.

Though no one could point to any specific foundation grant that seemed at risk because of the new wording, some Jewish activists said anti-Israel rhetoric remains so pervasive on U.S. campuses that the

grant debate could affect that mood.

“The ‘destruction of any state’ clause sure rings a bell — advocacy for the destruction of Israel is widespread in universities,” said Daniel Pipes, director of Campus Watch, which monitors Middle East studies programs and anti-Israel activities on campuses.

The new grant language could mean that any university recipient of foundation funds that hosts a Palestinian or Muslim student group that in some venue calls for Israel's

destruction could “no longer be eligible,” Pipes said.

The schools raised that very question in their letters to Ford and Rockefeller, asking whether the language applies to their administrations, all employees, or “to constituent parts, including student organizations.”

While foundations must monitor their grantees, and Israel supporters should be concerned about anti-Israel activity, the free-speech debate is a legitimate one, Charendoff said. “I question if it's in the public interest to narrow the parameters of public debate too narrowly,” he said.

Foundation officials said their new rules were meant not to limit speech, but to meet new government laws against the domestic funding or support of any organization supporting terrorism.

“We're committed to ensuring our funds are used for their intended charitable purposes, and that free speech is protected,” said Rockefeller Foundation spokesman Andre Oliver.

Meanwhile, U.S. Rep. Jerrold Nadler, (D-N.Y.), who in the aftermath of the JTA investigation helped broker talks on the funding issue last year among members of Congress, Jewish groups and the Ford Foundation, lauded the foundations' steps.

“Ford wants to make sure its money doesn't promote anti-Semitism and racism, and that's hard to discount,” he said.

Officials of the schools and the foundations were due to meet soon to discuss the new grant pacts, but Ford's Wilde said his group would not budge.

“We don't think this is about freedom of speech. This is about the values of the Ford Foundation and the responsible use of Ford Foundation funds,” Wilde said. ■

Colleges are worried that new grant regulations could limit free speech.

# Lebovitz is Bush's new point man on Jews

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Michael Lebovitz's wife, Lauren, watched the evening news from her home in Chattanooga, Tenn., and suddenly her husband's new volunteer work made sense.

On the screen was President Bush changing the landscape of U.S.-Israeli relations, endorsing Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and enunciating American support for some Israeli claims in the West Bank.

"My wife looked at me and said, 'That's why you're doing this,' " Lebovitz said. "And that's exactly right."

Lebovitz, 40, has become the key conduit between Bush's re-election campaign and the American Jewish community, which is a key constituency for the Republicans in several vital states, including Florida.

Driving him, he says, is a feeling that the Jewish community should show gratitude for President Bush's Israel policy by helping him win another four years in the White House.

"I have a very strong conviction that our community has a responsibility to thank this president for how he has supported us," Lebovitz said in an interview at the campaign's northern Virginia offices.

A real estate developer, Lebovitz has taken on the campaign task without pay, and he tries to downplay his role as a mediator between the Jewish world and the Bush campaign.

"I'm not the head of anything," he said. "I'm not in charge of anything."

In fact, he has no official title at the campaign; his business card reads only "Jewish Outreach."

The story of how Michael Lebovitz became Bush's go-to guy for the Jews starts, he says, at the Shabbat dinner table, where the third-generation Chattanooga resident saw his father engage in Jewish activism, rising to become vice chairman of the United Jewish Appeal.



Chattanooga Times Free Press

Michael Lebovitz, right, shakes hands with Vice President Dick Cheney.

"That part is definitely hereditary," he said. But Lebovitz combined his family's interest in the Jewish world with his own interest in politics.

In college at the University of Texas, Lebovitz volunteered at the 1984 Republican National Convention in Dallas. In 1996, when he served as a delegate at the convention, Lebovitz formed a friendship with his state's new Republican senator, Bill Frist.

A year later, Lebovitz and his wife took Frist to Israel on a trip sponsored by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

Lebovitz also has been active in Jewish circles, serving on AIPAC's executive committee and as national vice chairman of the United Jewish Communities umbrella organization of Jewish federations.

"He has a good feel for how his age peers will react to issues and challenges," said Stephen Hoffman, UJC's chief executive officer. Lebovitz serves as chairman of one of UJC's pillars, helping craft strategies for campaign and fund-raising efforts to UJC federations.

Still, many seemed surprised when Lebovitz was chosen to head up Bush's Jewish outreach, having assumed that someone with a longer list of contacts and experience in Washington would get the job. Rumors have spread throughout Washington that Lebovitz was placed in

the position to appease AIPAC or Frist.

But as Lebovitz and his supporters tell it, it was his quiet discussions with Bush campaign officials about the opportunities for gaining ground in the Jewish community, mixed with the logistical ability to take on the job as a volunteer, that won him the role.

Jeff Ballabon, a Bush fund-raiser in New York's Orthodox community, calls Lebovitz an "incredible mensch."

"Whatever people said at the beginning because they didn't know him, what has emerged over the last

year is that he is dedicated to the set of goals and priorities," Ballabon said.

Lebovitz's goal for the next six months is to improve on the 19 percent of the Jewish vote Bush received in 2000. In 1980, Ronald Reagan received the largest percentage of Jewish votes for a Republican, winning 39 percent against President Jimmy Carter.

"There is an opportunity in the Jewish community for more votes than last time," Lebovitz said. "There's not a number out there we have to reach."

The opportunity stems from Bush's outspoken support for Israel, Lebovitz says. Even before Bush's support last month for the Gaza withdrawal plan, many American Jews were touting Bush's defiant stances against terrorism and his designation of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat as persona non grata at the White House.

Sharon has called Bush the best American president Israel has ever seen.

Lebovitz says that may be enough to turn the tide in the traditionally Democratic voting bloc by convincing Jews that it's not about the candidate who agrees with them on most issues, but rather on the issues that matter most.

"You have to decide what's most important to you, and as an American Jew, Israel right now is the most important thing to me," he said. Bush, "from the day he came into office, has changed policy." ■

AMERICA  
DECIDES  
2004

# Call of duty lures Clinton man to Kerry team

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Jay Footlik scanned the Tel Aviv cafe, his regular shelter from the midday heat, and what he didn't see upset him.

He was almost alone. It was the spring of 2002, and those days most Israelis were staying behind closed doors, waiting for the next bomb.

Footlik ordered coffee and listened to the hourly news on the radio: President Bush wanted the Israeli army immediately to leave the West Bank towns where it was pursuing an aggressive campaign against Palestinian terrorists after a Passover suicide bombing killed 30 people.

What he didn't hear upset him even more: Where was Bush's plan to bring the parties back to peace talks?

"You can't say you care about the safety and security of Israelis and not be involved," Footlik said. "Israel is less secure when our country takes a step back. That's what Bush has done for four years."

The need to "be involved" spurred the former Clinton White House official to leave a relaxed existence shuttling back and forth between a beachside Tel Aviv apartment and U.S. speaking engagements, and into this year's political fray.

Footlik, 38, now is the top Jewish outreach person in the campaign of U.S. Sen.

John Kerry (D-Mass.), the presumptive Democratic nominee for president.

Coming back wasn't an easy choice for Footlik. His existence since 1999 — freelancing in Israel as a consultant to a number of peace-promoting groups, and speaking to Jewish federations in the United States — was a welcome change from his frenetic years campaigning for Clinton and then working as the White House's chief Jewish outreach official.

"What was going to be a one-year stay became four years," Footlik said during a recent interview, smiling at the memory. "It was hard to leave Israel."

He was on his way to assimilating into a happy Israeli existence. His wife, Grace Mozes, an Israeli model and actress, is part of an established Brazilian-Israeli family.

Yet it was his Israeli family and friends who urged Footlik to go back to Washington's rough-and-tumble world.

"Where are the Americans?" he recalled them asking as the situation in Israel worsened. "Across the political spectrum, Labor, Likud — everyone wanted to know. I was feeling the absence up close."

Footlik's chance to get involved again came a year ago, when he got a call from Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), history's first viable Jewish candidate for U.S. president.

"I thought it was historic, from a Jewish standpoint, and I would be working for a politician who inspired me," he said.

Lieberman said Footlik was a natural.

"He's the best in the business and a real class act," Lieberman told JTA.

Footlik agreed to act as Lieberman's liaison to the Jewish community until January 2004, when he was to return to Israel to plan for his February wedding. After that, Footlik had a job lined up with RSLB, a Washington-based company promoting Israel's high-tech sector in the United States.

But then the call came from the Kerry campaign.

Kerry's Jewish message had been fuzzy during the

primaries; he appeared to hedge on supporting Israel's West Bank security fence.

But when Footlik came on board, the changes were almost immediate. Kerry soon issued a statement unequivocally supporting Israel's security fence.

Footlik has a soft-spoken approach, a ready smile and an uncanny ability to read an interlocutor, some say.

He also has had an abiding interest in the Middle East since he studied political science at UCLA 20 years ago.

Footlik also gets kudos from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

"He was always very attuned to the concerns of the pro-Israel community," said Howard Kohr, AIPAC's executive director.

It was Footlik's White House career that finally afforded him his first chance to visit the Jewish state, in 1994, accompanying Clinton to the signing of the Jordan-Israel peace agreement.

"I couldn't sleep the night before, I was so excited," Footlik said.

Footlik was raised in Skokie, Ill., by a single mother. Her difficulties paying the bills and getting health care were what drew Footlik to Democratic politics. Footlik remembers wandering into a campaign office for Abner Mikva, a longtime Illinois Jewish representative, when he was 7 or 8 years old, and offering to stuff envelopes.

Other careers beckoned: He began acting in TV commercials at age 12 and headed to California when he was 17 to break into movies. He appears in a 1985 Michael J. Fox comedy, "Teen Wolf."

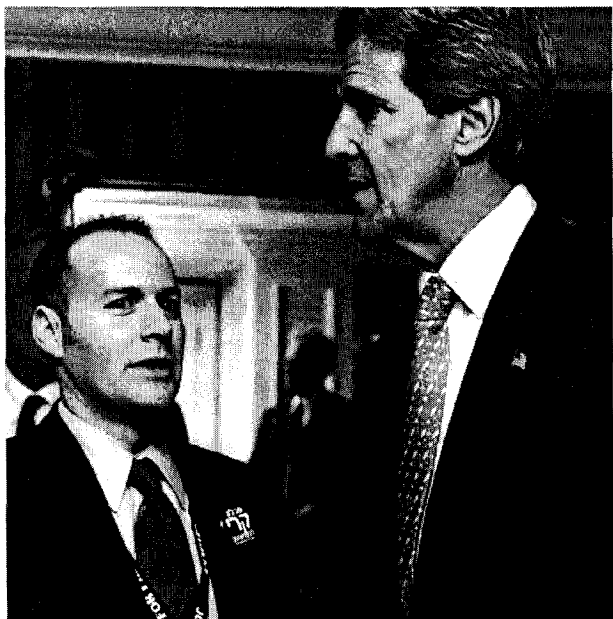
Footlik still maintains his Screen Actors' Guild membership.

His Hollywood good looks and law-school training serve Footlik well in Washington's political culture. He has a list of contacts that would make most Washington lobbyists envious.

Among his contacts is Michael Lebovitz, his counterpart in the Bush campaign, whom he knows from the speakers' circuit of the United Jewish Communities federation umbrella organization. They exchange friendly e-mails chiding each other about their respective candidates.

At Kerry campaign headquarters, Footlik gets warm greetings from all sides.

Footlik won't say what his post-election plans are, but a Kerry win in November could yield him a new job offer.



Sharon Farmer

Jay Footlik, left, senior adviser on Middle East and Jewish affairs for the Kerry presidential campaign, with the candidate in Washington this month.



# After hesitating, Bush slaps sanctions on Syria

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — President Bush has imposed sanctions on Syria, heeding the call of lawmakers and American Jews who wanted the Bush administration to get tougher on Syrian President Bashar Assad.

The president imposed several sanctions Tuesday, banning U.S. exports to Syria except for food and medicine, and banning all flights to and from Syria.

He also left in place several sanctions imposed by congressional legislation, including a ban of "dual-use" exports that could be used in manufacturing weapons of mass destruction and the freezing of assets of Syrian citizens linked to terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. "Despite many months of diplomatic efforts to convince the government of Syria to change its behavior, Syria has not taken significant, concrete steps to address the full range of U.S. concerns," Bush said in a letter to Congress on Tuesday.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan said Tuesday that the concerns included Syria's continued development of weapons of mass destruction, support for terrorism and failure to police its border with Iraq.

Lawmakers had been pressing the White House to impose sanctions for months, since the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act passed Congress last year. After Bush signed the bill last December, many believed he would impose the sanctions in March, but Bush waited until this week.

The Bush administration made numerous diplomatic efforts to curb Syria's links to terrorism, its attempts to obtain weapons of mass destruction and its continued control of Lebanon. Secretary of State Colin Powell traveled to Syria last year and was assured by Assad that Syria's behavior would change.

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), chairwoman of the U.S. House of Representatives' International Relations subcommittee on the Middle East, had been frustrated by the administration's delays but said Tuesday she believed the White House's patience showed it was trying to solve the issue diplomatically. "Waiting this amount of time shows he has done everything possible to send the diplomatic message," she said of the president. "It shows the president went the extra mile."

Ros-Lehtinen, who sponsored the Syria Accountability Act with Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), said it was a "great day."

"No one is saying sanctions is going to bring down the government," she told JTA. "We're saying it's important as a government to send a message that this is behavior that should be punished."

Engel issued a statement saying the ball now is in Damascus' court.

"It is my hope that by implementing the Syria Accountability Act, the United States government is sending a loud and clear message to the leaders of Syria that we will no longer turn a blind eye to their transgressions," he said.

The Syria bill was passed in part due to lobbying from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. The group is holding its annual convention in Washington next week, and members were likely to lobby lawmakers to put additional pressure on the Bush administration about Syria.

Many believed the ascent to power of the Western-educated Assad, and Syria's willingness to provide intelligence about terrorists associated with the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, meant the country was willing to change its ways.

Syria's foreign minister, Farouk al-Sharaa, said Tuesday that the Arab League condemned the U.S. sanctions and that Syria has worked with other Arab states to fight terrorism.

## Candidates vie to be France's king of the Jews

By PHILIP CARMEL

PARIS (JTA) — There may be only 164 eligible voters, but the campaign to head the CRIF umbrella organization of French Jews is attracting national media attention in France.

Just hours before nominations closed last month, CRIF President Roger Cukierman looked set to be re-elected unopposed for a second term. But all that changed when a surprise candidate submitted a nomination for Sunday's elections.

Serge Hajdenberg, founder and president of the Paris-based Jewish community radio station "Radio J," is a member of CRIF's National Council, which groups some 60 community organizations. Hajdenberg told JTA he decided to run when it became apparent no one else was going to challenge Cukierman.

"Roger Cukierman today is not capable

of dealing with the community's problems. We need someone who has the credibility to defend the community to the outside world," Hajdenberg said.

For his part, Cukierman maintains that under his leadership, CRIF has "passed the message and the government has taken it on board to tackle anti-Semitism."

The community "should keep the same pilot during this stormy period," he said in a recent interview on Jewish community radio.

CRIF's presidency has become a position of major importance, and generates almost daily media exposure. Moreover, with anti-Semitism a constant source of concern for Europe's largest Jewish community and with debate about Israel a perennial theme in the press, the unpaid president's job effectively is full-time.

Alain Jakubowicz, CRIF president in

the region around Lyon, France's second largest city, has been a strong critic of Cukierman, accusing him last year in the French press of running CRIF "like a second Israeli embassy."

But Jakubowicz, like many in CRIF's traditionally liberal-leaning leadership, is equally worried about Hajdenberg.

Hajdenberg's "Radio J" grew out of the "Jewish Renewal" movement he and his brother Henri formed in the 1970s as a challenge to the community establishment.

Henri Hajdenberg became more of a consensus-builder over the years — he served as CRIF president from 1995 to 2001 — but his older brother has remained outspoken, and with hawkish views on Israel.

That makes Hadjenberg's decision to run a surprising one, since Cukierman is perceived by many as one of the most right-wing presidents in CRIF's history. ■

## OBITUARY

# Comic Alan King was model for Seinfeld, Crystal

By PETER EPHROSS

**N**EW YORK (JTA) — Many young Americans know comedian Alan King's work — they just don't realize it.

The observational style of King, who died this week of lung cancer at age 76, was a model for younger comedians such as Billy Crystal and Jerry Seinfeld.

Crystal, a close friend, was one of those who paid tribute to King at his funeral Tuesday.

Rabbi Moshe Waldoks, co-editor of "The Big Book of Jewish Humor," said King was "someone who brought a sense of indignation about the travails of life."

King, who usually was seen with a cigar in his mouth, was among the first to lampoon the irritants of airline travel, as well as doctors' bills and traffic.

"That was considered kind of cutting edge in that period, where most people were just telling jokes about their mother-in-law," said Gerald Nachman, author of "Seriously Funny: The Rebel Comedians of the 1950s and 1960s," according to New York Newsday.

King adopted the comedic voice of someone hard to please, cantankerous and impatient. As the drama critic Kenneth Tynan once put it, "If a sawed-off shotgun could talk, it would sound like Alan King."

In comparison to his contemporaries, King was less raunchy than Lenny Bruce, less schmaltzy than Buddy Hackett and didn't talk in dialect like Sid Caesar, Waldoks observed. But like these others geniuses of American Jewish comedy, King was quick with the zingers.

In one of his better-known lines, King said, "As life's pleasures go, food is second only to sex. Except for salami and eggs. Now that's better than sex, but only if the salami is thickly sliced."

After performing for Queen Elizabeth II, he was introduced to the queen. When she asked, "How do you do, Mr. King?" he told audiences he replied, "How do you do, Mrs. Queen?" ■

# Environmentalists on wheels: Biking from Jerusalem to Eilat

By SUSAN KENNEDY

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A sandstorm was brewing, and the bicycles lay idle as the riders enjoyed a well-earned Shabbat rest.

The 96 cyclists had come to the Ramon Inn at Mitzpe Ramon, in Israel's Negev Desert, after a grueling three-day ride from Jerusalem, some of it off-road and much of it in searing heat.

Most of the riders had arrived in Israel from the United States only four days earlier. The purpose of the six-day, 300-mile ride from Jerusalem to Eilat, called the Arava Institute/Hazon Israel Environmental Ride, was to raise money for the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies.

The institute is based on Kibbutz Ketura in the southern Negev, where the group's members were to spend their last night. At the trip's final destination, the Eilat City Council scheduled its Earth Day celebrations to coincide with the cyclists' arrival on May 3.

For some participants, it was their first trip to Israel.

Jennifer Molinari, of Brooklyn, a diminutive detective with the New York City Police Department and a novice cyclist, recently had discovered her Jewish roots. She said she was encouraged to join the ride by her mentor and teacher, Aliza Avital, who was on the ride for the second year in a row. Avital brought her sister, too.

"I feel I've discovered a new family," Molinari said on the final night of the ride, as she read a poem describing her sore legs and soaring emotions.

For some, the ride offered the opportunity to express solidarity with Israel; for others, it was a chance to reacquire themselves with a country they had visited as teenagers.

Robert Fuhrer, from Chappaqua, N.Y., recently battled his cancer into remission and saw the ride as a chance to spend time with his childhood friend, Arthur Fried.

"I love him like a brother," Fuhrer said. "He made me who I am today."

At a Havdalah ceremony on a promontory overlooking the Ramon Crater, the world's largest natural crater, the two

friends stood arm in arm, lost in song and reflection.

Daniel Asher, a 28-year-old rider from Asheville, N.C., had been re-evaluating his career in high-tech when he decided to take part in the ride.

The ride spurred him to apply for the Arava Institute's master's program in environmental leadership.

"I want to do something to improve the world for future generations," he said.

Asher said he was inspired to study at the institute by a chat Saturday night by students at the institute — including Israeli Jews, Israeli Arabs, Jordanians, American Jews and a few Palestinians.

One student, Abdelraouf Darwish, a Jordanian government engineer based in Aqaba, chose the Arava Institute over an offer from a school in London.

"I believe in the common destiny of all peoples in the region," Darwish said. "The environment is not confined by borders, so

why should I be?"

Hadil, an Israeli Arab from Acre who completed her bachelor's degree at Haifa University, said the institute was the only genuinely tolerant educational establishment she had encountered in Israel.

"We talk about everything here," she said. "We might not agree, but at the end of the day we hug and are family."

The bicycle ride is one of a series of Jewish environmental bike rides established by Nigel Savage, an English-born investment banker who became a Jewish social entrepreneur.

Savage has used bicycles as a vehicle for environmental and Jewish education, raising funds and attracting an eclectic and enthusiastic following on three continents.

Savage started his group, Hazon — which means "vision" in Hebrew — four years ago. He had been studying Judaism at the Pardes Institute in Jerusalem and was thinking about what kind of contribution he could make to the broader Jewish community.

The child of a traditional Jewish family, "I didn't really discover planet Earth till I was 32," Savage said. ■

**'I didn't discover planet Earth till I was 32.'**

**Nigel Savage**

Jewish environmentalist

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## WORLD

### Anti-Semitism down, up in Germany

Anti-Semitic crimes in Germany are down, but physical attacks on Jews are up.

The German government announced Thursday that there were 1,300 anti-Semitic crimes in 2003, down 20 percent from the previous year.

But the number of violent attacks against Jews rose from 28 to 35, including 12 incidents in Berlin.

Statistics on extremism among foreigners, including Muslims, are to be released May 17.

### Hello, anyone home?

The head of French friends of Israel's Likud Party admitted staging anti-Semitic phone calls to himself.

Alex Moise received a two-month suspended sentence and a \$1,000 fine from a Paris court Thursday for giving a false statement and for wasting the court's time.

Moise filed a complaint in January claiming he had received anti-Semitic phone calls and threats but later admitted that he himself had made the calls.

Describing Moise as a "friend and a serious worker for the community," Sammy Ghazlan, president of the Bureau For Vigilance Against Anti-Semitism, told JTA he is "shocked that a community leader would do something like this in the current climate."

### Russian Jews make Forbes list

At least nine Jewish tycoons made a list of 36 Russian billionaires published by the Russian edition of Forbes magazine.

Heading the Forbes rankings, released this week, are three Jewish oil magnates, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Roman Abramovich and Viktor Vekselberg.

The wealth of Russia's 36 billionaires is \$110 billion.

The publication has drawn criticism from members of the business community for the methods it used in estimating the tycoons' wealth.

### Historian says torture OK

A German Jewish historian condoned the torture of suspected terrorists.

Michael Wolffsohn, historian with the German Bundeswehr University in Munich, called torture a legitimate tool in the war on terrorism.

A spokesperson for Germany's Ministry of Defense told the Netzeitung news agency that Wolffsohn may face legal and disciplinary measures.

### Djerba pilgrimage suffers

Attendance was its lowest in years at the annual Lag B'Omer pilgrimage to the Tunisian island of Djerba.

Only about 500 pilgrims, mostly French, gathered Saturday night at the Ghriba synagogue, which was the site of a 2002 Al-Qaida terrorist attack that killed 21 people.

The synagogue is the oldest Jewish house of worship in Africa and serves one of the world's oldest Jewish communities.

### Maimonides remembered

Maimonides is being commemorated at a Buenos Aires museum on the 800th anniversary of his death.

Until the end of May, the work of the Spanish Jewish philosopher, educator and scientist forms the axis of an art exhibit at the Museo Larreta.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Bereaved fathers: Fight on

Three bereaved Israeli fathers called for tougher military action against the Palestinians.

Baruch Ben-Yosef, Moshe Keinan and Zecharia Kommemi, all of whom lost sons in Israeli-Palestinian fighting, demonstrated Thursday in front of the Supreme Court in Jerusalem demanding that the military get tough on terrorist bases in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"These double standards are costing us in blood," the group said in a statement, alluding to their belief that Israel is limited in its response by human rights considerations.

The group is named Three Fathers, an answer to the Four Mothers lobby whose pressure helped bring about Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Reform wants 'morning after'

The Reform movement condemned the government's decision to keep the "morning after" pill from being sold over the counter.

The Food and Drug Administration announced last week that it would continue to classify the emergency abortion medication "Plan B" as a prescription drug, despite the recommendations of an FDA expert advisory panel to make it available over the counter.

"The FDA's decision to ignore its own advisory committee's recommendation and instead yield to pressure from groups opposed to women's reproductive freedom signals a dangerous intrusion of politics into science," said Rabbi Marla Feldman, director of the Reform movement's Commission on Social Action.

### You go, girl!

The Hadassah Foundation and Women's Sports Foundation will train female coaches to work in Jewish Community Centers across America.

Hadassah will provide more than \$41,000 in grants for the Women's Sports Foundation's GoGirlGo! program, which provides sports opportunities for adolescent girls.

The Women's Sports Foundation also is contributing more than \$22,000 for the program.

The grants go to 21 local JCCs across America to increase the number of female coaches and educate girls about the importance of athletics.

"We are proud to provide a vibrant future for girls by establishing cooperative ventures and supporting local and national organizations," said Barbara Dobkin, chairwoman of the Hadassah Foundation, whose mission is to improve the status and welfare of females in Israel and America.

### Only in America

Some subway-card dispensing machines in New York City now offer Yiddish.

MetroCard machines are offering Yiddish-language instructions at seven subway stops in Jewish neighborhoods in Brooklyn.

### Black-Jewish rocker making movie

Rock star Lenny Kravitz is making a semi-autobiographical feature film about his black-Jewish roots.

Kravitz, the son of a Jewish TV producer and actress Roxie Roker, told MTV.com he is making his cinematic debut in "Barbecues and Bar Mitzvahs," a dramatic comedy about a musician searching for love and happiness.

The film is about "growing up between two cultures," he said.