



## IN THE NEWS

## Ariel Sharon watches the clock

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon pledged Israel would pull back from the Gaza Strip on schedule by the end of 2005.

At Israel's weekly Cabinet meeting Sunday, Sharon also warned government ministers against lukewarm support for the plan.

Also, the chief of Israel's military intelligence said that by approving the plan last week, the government had spurred a groundswell of international optimism.

## Vandalism, violence continue in France

A painting by Jewish children at a concentration camp in southern France was vandalized.

A historian visiting the camp at Rivesaltes, near the Spanish border, last Friday discovered that the painting, a depiction of country life produced by child inmates in 1942, had been hacked with a chisel.

Local officials and Jewish leaders gathered at the site on Saturday in a special ceremony of remembrance.

Meanwhile, an American yeshiva student was attacked and beaten near Paris last Friday. Ya'acov Flint was treated for light injuries after he was attacked outside a railway station in a Paris suburb.

## Pollard wins appeal to appeal

A U.S. appeals court is giving Jonathan Pollard a chance to appeal his life sentence.

An American Jew convicted for selling U.S. intelligence secrets to Israel, Pollard will be allowed to present his case to a three-judge panel later this year.

The panel will not decide whether Pollard's sentence was too harsh, but only if Pollard can take the next step in his legal fight. It also could grant a request from Pollard's lawyers to see partly classified documents used in his 1987 sentencing.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Israel's new envoy to Turkey tries to mend ties amid strains

By YIGAL SCHLEIFER

STANBUL (JTA) — “The Chinese say that if you want to curse someone, tell them to live in interesting times,” Israel's new ambassador to Turkey, Pinchas Avivi, says with a smile. “It seems like that curse has worked on me.”

The affable Avivi may be understating the case.

A 37-year veteran of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Avivi came to Turkey last October to take over what is considered one of Israel's most significant diplomatic postings.

Avivi had barely settled into his office when two Istanbul synagogues were hit by devastating, near-simultaneous suicide bombings. The synagogue attacks, which took place just six weeks after Avivi's arrival, killed six Istanbul Jews and injured dozens of others. They led to a flurry of visits to Turkey by Israeli officials as a sign of solidarity with Turkey's Jews.

In recent weeks, the challenges Avivi has faced have been diplomatic.

While Israel and Turkey have enjoyed warm ties since the early 1990s, evinced by increased military cooperation and deepening commercial ties, some strains have started to appear in the relationship.

Israel's recent military operations in the Gaza Strip were met with severe criticism by the Turkish government, with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan on several occasions referring to the actions as “state terror.” In an interview with Ha'aretz, Erdogan said Israel was treating the Palestinians the way Jews were treated 500 years ago in Spain, during the time of the Inquisition.

Last week, Turkey recalled its ambassador in Tel Aviv and its consul general in Jerusalem for one-day “consultations” in Ankara. Turkish and Israeli officials downplayed the significance of the move, but the timing of the recall raised the question of whether Ankara is trying to send a message to the Israeli government.

Avivi, a 14th-generation Jerusalemite who previously had been an ambassador to Columbia and Chile, has spent the last few weeks trying to dampen the diplomatic brush fires that have been ignited by the increasingly fiery rhetoric coming out of Ankara, particularly from Erdogan.

As part of that effort, Avivi has been meeting with lawmakers, government officials and members of the media.

“We've been trying to make clear to the Turks that we still support the ‘road map’ ” peace plan, Avivi said during a recent interview at the Israeli Embassy in Ankara. “We explained to them our thinking behind the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza.”

“I think at the professional level of the government offices, people understand Israel's position, and I think in the wider sense people in Turkey understand that the essence of the relationship is important for both countries,” he added. “I think both Israel and Turkey agree that we can argue about everything except the relationship itself, because that relationship is based on very deep, mutual interests that still haven't changed, even in these past weeks.”

Over the last decade, Turkey has emerged as a key strategic ally for Israel — and its

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BEHIND  
THE  
HEADLINES

## ■ Israel's new envoy to Turkey is trying to keep ties from fraying

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best friend in the Middle East. Israel and Turkey are the only democracies in the region, and both countries face a common threat from radical Islam.

The two countries have developed close military and strategic ties, and trade between Israel and Turkey has grown tenfold in the last decade, to \$1.2 billion last year from about \$120 million a decade ago.

That's partly why, Avivi says, he was surprised by the harshness of the criticism being directed at Israel by Erdogan.

"Criticism is legitimate between friends, but the wording was not appropriate," he said. "We are definitely getting a lot of reassuring messages, but there is concern that the damage that was done from what was said publicly is a wound that doesn't heal in a day, and we have to somehow take that into consideration."

The Turkish government currently is led by Erdogan's Justice and Development Party, known as AKP, which traces its roots to Turkey's political Islamist movement. Today, the party describes itself as socially conservative, rather than Islamist, but Erdogan's recent criticism of Israel had some wondering whether the AKP is beginning to show an ideological bias against Israel.

Avivi says he doesn't see ideology behind the government's recent actions and statements.

When the AKP first came into power almost two years ago, relations with Israel actually were improving. Avivi says he believes that the AKP government is not

interested in downgrading its relations with Israel.

"I think even this party recognizes the importance of the relationship with Israel, and we have a continuous dialogue with them," Avivi said, sipping Turkish coffee.

Avivi points out that in the midst of the controversy over Erdogan's criticism of the Israeli government, Yosef Paritzky, Israel's national infrastructure minister, came to Turkey to preside over the signing of an \$800 million deal for the construction of three power plants in Israel by a Turkish firm. The agreement was seen as a significant step in deepening the two countries' commercial ties and as a boost for Turkey's economy.

Avivi says the energy deal is a good indicator of the state of Israel-Turkey ties. While the alliance between the two countries started as a strategic one, it now has diversified to the point where it is less susceptible to shifting political winds, he said.

"It's important to emphasize that Israel made a very important decision to do all it can to deepen the civil aspect of our relations, because we believe that over time this will lead to truly deep connections," Avivi said. "These are connections that don't change with governments or with geopolitical considerations."

For example, Israel is bidding on some \$600 million in industrial and agricultural development projects connected with a large-scale irrigation scheme in Turkey's southeast.

Israel also is looking into the possibility of building a massive underwater pipeline that would carry natural gas, oil, water and electricity from Turkey to Israel, according to Avivi, creating a corridor that would link Israel to Europe's energy grid via Turkey.

For the time being, patching up the Turkey-Israel relationship tops Avivi's agenda.

"I wouldn't say that the relations right now are on calm waters," Avivi said. "That means we need to sit and figure out what's happening and how to deal with it. We are

definitely in a process today of thinking about it. When friends get such a severe criticism, you have to think about it."

Observers in Turkey say more diplomatic quarrels could be in the offing.

"I think the Palestinian issue was al-

ways a topic of debate between the two countries, but because of the peace process moving along, especially during the Clinton years, it did not come up," said Erdal Guven, a columnist with the Turkish daily Radikal. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel "Sharon has not made it easy for Prime Minister Erdogan to stay quiet.

It hasn't helped Turkey keep an equilibrium, a balance, vis-a-vis the Arab countries."

A senior member of the AKP said, "This government is no different from previous governments in its relationship with Israel. Turkey doesn't want to reconsider its relationship with Israel, but at the same time, recent attacks" on Palestinians "by the government of Israel makes the Turkish government's position a lot more difficult."

The Turkish government appears to be trying to flex some diplomatic muscle on the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

In addition to recalling its diplomats, Turkey also announced recently that it is appointing Vehbi Dincerler, a former education minister, to be a special coordinator for relations with the Palestinians. The Turkish Parliament also sent a team of observers to monitor the sentencing of Palestinian Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti, who was given a 165-year prison sentence last week by Tel Aviv District Court for his role in five Israeli deaths resulting from terrorist attacks.

"There's a two-track policy: strengthening relations with Israel, but also strengthening our ties with the Palestinians," said Sami Kohen, a columnist with the Turkish daily Milliyet. "It's a question now of showing more sympathy for the Palestinians. It's important for whoever is in office here to show that sympathy."

With all the diplomatic wrangling, it seems that only one thing is certain for Avivi: He will continue to live in interesting times.

**'Sharon has not made it easy' for Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan to stay quiet.**

**Erdal Guven**

Turkish newspaper columnist

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**THIS WEEK****MONDAY**

■ Israel's Bar-Ilan University opens a conference called "Russian-speaking Jewry in Global Perspective: Assimilation, Integration and Community Building."

**TUESDAY**

■ Congress' Helsinki Commission, charged with monitoring human rights in countries that signed a 1975 accord, convenes to discuss whether a similar commission could work in the Middle East. President Bush considered including a Helsinki model in his Middle East reform plan but balked under Arab pressure. The commission will hear testimony from Natan Sharansky, an Israeli Cabinet minister. The commission meets again Wednesday to hear testimony about anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe.

**WEDNESDAY**

■ The United Nations and China co-host a media seminar in Beijing on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Israeli and Palestinian policy-makers will attend, along with senior U.N. officials and journalists. Israel said it opposes the seminar because the seminar's agenda singles out the Jewish state for criticism. Israel protested and blocked similar seminars in recent months.

■ The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe opens a two-day conference in Paris on the relationship between hate crimes and racist and anti-Semitic propaganda on the Internet.

■ A Paris court rules on whether Maurice Papon is entitled to a re-trial. Papon was sentenced to 10 years in prison in 1998 for complicity in crimes against humanity for helping deport French Jews during World War II. He has made previous demands for re-trials, but if this court rules against him Papon's possibility of legal redress will be over. Papon, 93, was released from prison in 2002 for health reasons, but he could be sent back to jail if his health improves.

**FRIDAY**

■ The Jewish Agency for Israel kicks off four days of meetings in Jerusalem. The weekend assembly, marking the Jewish Agency's 75th year, will focus on "personalizing the Israel-Diaspora relationship" by bolstering personal involvement in Israel.

**SUNDAY**

■ Reform rabbis from around the world debate Israel's West Bank security barrier, the demolition of Palestinian homes, physician-assisted suicide and a proposed constitutional amendment banning gay marriage at the 2004 convention of the 1,800-member Central Conference of American Rabbis, in Toronto, through June 23.

■ Russian American Jews in Boston hold a rally for Israel. Thousands are expected.

# Courting Ukrainian Jews

By VLADIMIR MATVEYEV

KIEV, Ukraine (JTA) — Viktor Yuschenko, the front-runner in Ukraine's upcoming presidential elections, made no attempt to hide his motive for attending the founding congress of a Ukrainian Jewish group.

"I am sure that contacts with the Jewish community of Ukraine will help me win the presidential elections this year," Yuschenko, leader of the parliamentary faction called Our Ukraine, told JTA.

Yuschenko promised last month's conference of the United Jewish Community of Ukraine, held in Kiev, that if elected he will fight anti-Semitism.

The conference, attended by nearly 2,000 delegates and several Ukrainian politicians, made one thing clear: Ukraine's elections, scheduled for Oct. 31, will have a bearing on Ukrainian Jewish affairs.

According to recent opinion polls, Yuschenko, a moderate liberal, has the best chances of winning. His main competitor is the current prime minister, Victor Yanukovich.

Yanukovich has close ties to the incumbent president, Leonid Kuchma, who is completing his second five-year term and will not run for re-election.

Kuchma, who has maintained friendly ties with Ukraine's Jews, is a supporter of Vadim Rabinovich, who organized the May 18-19 congress. Some observers believe that Rabinovich, a Ukrainian-Israeli business magnate and president of the umbrella group the All-Ukrainian Jewish Congress, convened the conference in order to secure his own political future.

One attendee said that when Kuchma retires, Rabinovich and some other prominent Jewish business leaders might suffer a fate similar to the Russian Jewish tycoons who have been charged with crimes after falling out of political favor.

But other Jews said the main concern for Jews this election cycle is the uncertainty of a new president. Most believe that Ukraine's Jews, estimated at between 250,000 and 500,000 persons, have no reason to fear Kuchma's successor.

"Ukrainian Jews are not worried because both Yuschenko and Yanukovich have a positive attitude toward Ukrainian

Jewry," said Alexander Nayman, a community activist.

Nevertheless, some Jewish leaders are concerned that Yuschenko's political bloc, Our Ukraine, includes a number of politicians with a history of anti-Semitism.

While backroom talk about the general political situation was prevalent at the conference, the sessions themselves focused on ways to consolidate the Jewish community and ensure its progress. Among the topics discussed at the conference were the current state of anti-Semitism in Ukraine, issues of Jewish self-identification and the situation in Israel.

"Today we have a real congress of all Jews of Ukraine and it would be hard to imagine a more legitimate congress of Jews of Ukraine than this one," Rabinovich said at the May 18 opening.

A Jewish lawmaker and community leader agreed with him.

"This congress is a step toward overcoming the split which has appeared in the Jewish community of Ukraine in recent years," said Alexander Feldman, a

member of Parliament and president of the Jewish Foundation of Ukraine.

Despite these statements, the conference failed to attract leaders of some key Jewish organizations working in Ukraine — evidence of ongoing tension between Ukrainian Jewish groups.

Two of the community's umbrella groups, the Jewish Council and the Jewish Confederation of Ukraine, withdrew from the event's organizing committee two months before the conference.

Likewise, no leaders of the Ukrainian Va'ad, another umbrella group, and Chabad-Lubavitch, whose rabbis hold leadership positions in virtually every local community, were in attendance.

That puzzled some delegates who said it was hard to understand how the Jewish community would benefit from a conference that excluded some of the country's major Jewish players and instead appeared aimed merely to boost the political capital of its organizer, Rabinovich.

"This is a congress for Rabinovich. It is being used to enhance his political influence," said Alexandra Mestetzka, a participant from Lvov, a city in western Ukraine. ■

**Why did some of Ukraine's major Jewish groups skip the conference?**

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## NORTH AMERICA

### Kushner reads at Reagan funeral

Rabbi Harold Kushner participated in the funeral of former President Reagan last Friday.

The author of "When Bad Things Happen to Good People," Kushner read from the Book of Isaiah at Washington National Cathedral during the funeral of the nation's 40th president.

The funeral attracted all of the living U.S. presidents as well as countless past and present world leaders. Reagan died June 5 at age 93 after a long battle with Alzheimer's Disease.

### Saudi wins Net terror case

A Saudi student was cleared of charges that he raised money for Hamas on the Internet.

An Idaho jury on June 10 acquitted Sami Omar Hussayen of charges that he created and administered Islamic Web sites to raise money and recruit members for Islamic terrorists in Chechnya and Israel, The Washington Post reported.

A member of a prominent Saudi family and a doctoral candidate in computer science at the University of Idaho, Hussayen was the first person tried under a USA Patriot Act clause that prohibits providing "expert advice" to terrorists.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Abbas explains resignation

The former Palestinian Authority prime minister said he resigned because of threats to his life.

In a rare interview published this week in Newsweek, Mahmoud Abbas cited frustration with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and President Bush as reasons for quitting the post last September. "Sharon didn't give me anything. Secondly, I was attacked by my colleagues, and thirdly, Bush was reluctant to help," he told Newsweek.

Abbas also said he gave up trying to further the U.S.-backed "road map" for Israeli-Palestinian peace because he believed his promotion of the plan would result in his own assassination by a fellow Palestinian or "bloodshed within Fatah," P.A. President Yasser Arafat's political movement.

### Rabbis to oppose Gaza compensation plan

Hundreds of Israeli rabbis reportedly will issue an edict forbidding Israeli settlers to accept compensation for leaving their homes.

The rabbis are expected this week to sign a statement saying the plan violates Jewish law, Rabbi David Druckman of Kiryat Motzkin told Israel Army Radio.

The Israeli government reportedly is preparing a compensation plan for settlers in the Gaza Strip as part of its plan to disengage from the Palestinians.

### Female high fliers on El Al

El Al has female sky marshals. Israel's national airline recently began incorporating women into the ranks of undercover armed guards on its flights, Israel's daily Yediot Achronot reported Sunday.

"If a woman can fly an F-16, there is no reason to think a woman can't protect pilots and their passengers," a security official was quoted as saying in reference to the Israel Air Force's acceptance of female top guns. JTA's security sources confirmed the report.

El Al long has used sky marshals on its flights.

### Hamas vows more attacks

Terror attacks against Israel will continue even after it withdraws from the Gaza Strip, Hamas vowed.

"We will continue the struggle against Israel even after it pulls back," Mahmoud Al-Zahar, acting head of the Islamic terror group, said at a conference of Palestinian factions in Gaza City on Saturday.

But aides to Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei, who attended the meeting, were more upbeat, saying politics could sidetrack Hamas from its jihad against the Jewish state.

### Israeli killed by van

A Tel Aviv man was run down and killed by a van full of Palestinian workers fleeing police.

Gabi Hatzbani was killed when a van carrying 17 Palestinian workers rammed into him early Sunday. The Palestinians were trying to evade policemen who thought they could be terrorists. Hatzbani's brother was seriously hurt in the incident.

The Palestinians, several of whom did not have permits to be in Israel, were taken into custody.

## WORLD

### British Jew elected in far-right party

A British Jewish woman was recently elected to a local municipal council as a candidate for a far-right political party.

A mother of two, Patricia Richardson, was one of three British National Party candidates to win seats on the Epping Forest Council, east of London. Richardson has denied that the party is anti-Semitic and promotes Holocaust denial.

"I think that is way, way back in the past," she told a London Jewish newspaper during the campaign. Richardson says both her sons have been circumcised but retains few links with the Jewish community.

### Anne Frank remembered

Anne Frank was remembered Saturday, on what would have been her 75th birthday.

The Anne Frank House in Amsterdam is hosting a new exhibit of 70 photographs of the young Frank, who hid from the Nazis for 25 months until her family was discovered and whose diary after her death became a symbol of the Holocaust.

### Kindertransport bnei mitzvah

Eighteen former child refugees who escaped from the Nazis celebrated their Bar and Bat Mitzvahs in London.

The mother of one — 99-year-old Irma Faith, whose son Sigi, 76, was among the bnei mitzvah — told London's Jewish Chronicle that the event was "wonderful."

Otto Deutsch, also 76, said he had "at last achieved what I've always wanted." The special service at London's Stanmore Synagogue was arranged by the Kindertransport branch of the Association of Jewish Refugees.

### Historic wedding

The English city of Lincoln celebrated its first Jewish wedding in nearly 730 years.

The city's bishop was among the guests when Bernie and Diane Adler were married by Rabbi Amanda Golby of London.

Lincoln had a thriving Jewish community in the Middle Ages until Jews were accused of the murder of a Christian boy in 1255. About 100 Jews were rounded up and tried; 18 who requested all-Jewish juries were hanged on the spot. Most of the rest were ransomed by other English Jews, but the community never recovered.

The last known Jewish wedding in the city took place in 1275.

Jews were expelled from England in 1290 and did not return until the 17th century.