

IN THE NEWS

**Yasser Arafat
dies in French hospital**

Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, an iconic figure who brought his people's plight to world attention but never made peace with the Jewish state, died Thursday morning in Paris at age 75.

Arafat had been hovering in a coma for most of the past week, suffering from an undisclosed blood disorder and with news of his condition tightly controlled.

Arafat's body will lie in state in Egypt and then be buried in Ramallah. [Story, Pgs. 4-5]

**Bush sends
condolences**

President Bush expressed his condolences to the Palestinian people on the death of Yasser Arafat.

"The death of Yasser Arafat is a significant moment in Palestinian history," Bush said in a statement posted on the White House Web site early Thursday, shortly after the death in Paris of the Palestinian Authority president.

"We express our condolences to the Palestinian people. For the Palestinian people, we hope that the future will bring peace and the fulfillment of their aspirations for an independent, democratic Palestine that is at peace with its neighbors."

Bush supported Israel's policy of isolating Arafat because of his ties to terrorism.

**State Dept. envoy
to attend funeral**

The Bush administration will send a State Department official to Yasser Arafat's funeral.

William Burns, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, will attend the funeral of the Palestinian Authority president, who died early Thursday.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) and other lawmakers have asked the Bush administration to refuse to send a delegation to the funeral.

■ **MORE NEWS, Pg. 8**



WORLD REPORT

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



Pool/BP Images

President Bush watches as Ariel Sharon, right, and Mahmoud Abbas shake hands during talks in Aqaba, Jordan, in June 2003.

With concessions and caution, Israel enters post-Arafat era

By LESLIE SUSSER

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As Israel enters the post-Arafat era, the government is considering a series of policy options: In the short term, easing conditions in the Palestinian territories to help a new leadership consolidate power and, in the longer term, restarting peace talks based on the "road map" plan.

But there also are contingency plans for a far more pessimistic scenario: the possibility that the new Palestinian leaders may fail to assert their authority and that the situation in

the West Bank and Gaza Strip could degenerate into chaos and internecine violence.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon laid down the general outlines of the new policy in a string of meetings last week with Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon and other senior defense establishment officials.

Sharon made two key decisions. Israel will do whatever it can from a distance to help Mahmoud Abbas, who seems to be emerging as the dominant figure in the new Palestinian leadership, to establish his

Continued on page 2

**NEWS
ANALYSIS**

■ *With longtime foe gone, Israel considers its options*

Continued from page 1

position, but at the same time it will prepare for chaos if the broad coalition Abbas is forming falls apart.

Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom highlighted the delicate nature of Israel's position with regard to the new Palestinian leaders.

"Any name we mention," he said, "will be stigmatized as a collaborator. But we expect whatever leadership that emerges to be more moderate and more responsible."

For the time being, Israeli hopes rest on Abbas. He has come out strongly against Palestinian terrorism and in favor of the political, economic and security reforms the Palestinians committed to under the internationally backed road map.

Proposed moves to help the new Palestinian leadership win popular backing can be divided into two areas — military and civilian. A Foreign Ministry paper urges the IDF to go into "defensive mode" and not launch pre-emptive strikes against terrorist organizations, and the defense establishment seems to be adopting the advice.

The IDF plans to cut offensive "seek-and-destroy" operations to a minimum and to focus on intercepting terrorists on their way to attack. The hope is that, if Palestinian factions also display moderation, it could reduce the level of violence in the territories, improve the quality of Palestinian life and so enhance Palestinian support for the new leadership.

Other planned moves are aimed directly at improving civilian life: for example, further easing restrictions on Palestinian move-

ment and encouraging economic activity.

Abbas has been trying to establish a broad coalition of all Palestinian factions, including the radical fundamentalist Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The key question is whether the radicals will agree to a ceasefire with Israel, or whether the coalition will break up over this or other conciliatory moves.

Israel is taking into account the possibility of open warfare between Palestinian factions, and might even target the radicals if that occurs.

If, however, Abbas is able to establish his position and makes progress toward a general ceasefire and reforms, Israel will consider reciprocal steps such as releasing prisoners.

There also would be an Israeli effort to coordinate the withdrawal from Gaza and part of the West Bank, as outlined in Sharon's unilateral disengagement plan, with the new Palestinian leadership.

If all goes smoothly, the next move would be to restart political negotiations based on the road map. This would jibe with European efforts to jump-start stalled peace talks, and get the new American administration to join them in playing a more active role.

"We may be starting to get out of the nightmare," one upbeat Foreign Ministry official, who insisted on anonymity, told JTA. "We have a historic" disengagement "plan in place, a new American administration and Arafat out of the picture. There is a huge opportunity here."

But some Israeli analysts who know the Palestinian scene well suggest that the government is being far too optimistic, and that Abbas won't have the clout to make the compromises necessary for peace.

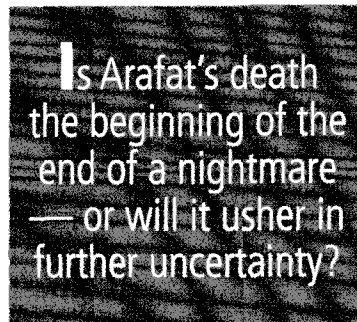
Menachem Klein, a specialist in Palestinian studies at Bar Ilan University, maintains that a relatively weak Abbas leadership will prove to be only a transitional episode, and that Israel soon will have to deal with a new generation of local Palestinian leaders who have far more grass-roots support — people like Tanzim leader Marwan Barghouti, who currently is in an Israeli jail on ter-

rorism charges.

"They are the people who led the previous intifada in the late 1980s, and they are behind the Tanzim today," he says, referring to the mainstream Fatah movement's terrorist militia. "They are not a bunch of collaborators."

In Klein's view, the young lions would make peace with Israel only on terms similar to those acceptable to Arafat. Though Arafat never spelled out his conditions for peace, they are believed to include Arab control over eastern Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, a full Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders and a "right of return" to Israel for millions of Palestinian refugees and their descendants, conditions no Israeli leader would accept.

"Otherwise they will say, 'we will fight on,'" Klein warns.



Where is Arafat's missing fortune?

By DAN BARON

JERUSALEM (JTA) — When Yasser Arafat is buried, he will take with him one of the enduring secrets of the Palestinian regime — the whereabouts of a missing fortune in ill-gotten public funds.

Ranked sixth on Forbes magazine's 2003 list of "the richest kings, queens and despots," with an estimated private coffer of at least \$300 million, Arafat never divulged his finances during decades as a terrorist chieftain and later as Palestinian Authority president.

U.S. accountants commissioned by the Palestinian Authority, where Finance Min-

ister Salem Fayyad has garnered global praise for instituting reform, found that part of Arafat's personal wealth was in a secret portfolio worth close to \$1 billion.

"The president is not known to have left a will, let alone all the details on where the money is kept," one Palestinian source told JTA. "So now it's a free-for-all on getting the bank information."

Yet Rashid has been adamant in defending Arafat's good name.

"If this money does exist, let the Israelis and Americans find it," he told Israel's Yediot Achronot newspaper. "It is impossible these days to hide those kind of sums anywhere in the world."

JTA WORLD REPORT

Howard E. Friedman
President

Mark J. Joffe
Executive Editor and Publisher

Lisa Hostein
Editor

Michael S. Arnold
Managing Editor

Lenore A. Silverstein
Finance and Administration Director

JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

A timeline of Yasser Arafat's life

By JTA STAFF

NEW YORK (JTA) — The following is a timeline of the life of Yasser Arafat:

- **1929** — Arafat is born to a family of merchants in Egypt (though he often claimed to have been born in Jerusalem);
- **1952-1956** — Attends Cairo University, where he joins the Islamist movement known as the Muslim Brotherhood. Also organizes the Union of Palestinian Students;
- **1956** — Arafat has said he fights in the Egyptian army during the Suez War, but some believe he is in Czechoslovakia, attending a Communist-sponsored student congress;
- **1957** — He leaves Egypt and, a year later, settles in Kuwait, where he works as an engineer;
- **Late 1950s** — Co-founds Fatah, a Palestinian political movement dedicated to armed struggle against Israel;
- **1964** — The PLO is founded at an Arab League summit. Fatah will soon become its central element;
- **1965** — Fatah carries out its first terrorist attack on Israel, an attempt to blow up the National Water Carrier;
- **1968** — Losses the PLO inflicts on Israeli soldiers at the battle of Karameh, in Jordan, and Arafat's daring escape from the battle on a motorcycle, add to his mystique and solidify his growing hold on the PLO;
- **1969** — Arafat is elected chairman of the PLO's Executive Committee;
- **1970** — PLO attempts to destabilize and ultimately take over Jordan prompt King Hussein to crack down on the PLO and

kick them out of the country. Thousands of Palestinians are killed in what comes to be known as "Black September." Arafat chooses Lebanon as his new base of operations.

• **1972** — Palestinian terrorists kill 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics. The attack and other terrorist actions, mainly airplane hijackings, put the Palestinian cause on the international stage;

• **1974** — Wearing a pistol, Arafat addresses the U.N. General Assembly. The assembly recognizes "the right of the Palestinian people to sovereignty and national independence" and gives the PLO observer status at the world organization;

• **1982** — Israeli forces drive Arafat from Beirut, forcing him to set up his base in Tunisia;

• **1987-1993** — Riots break out that grow into the first Palestinian intifada, or uprising. The fighting eventually claims the lives of an estimated 1,100 Palestinians and 150 Israelis;

• **1988** — Arafat says the PLO accepts U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, implies recognition of Israel and, at least formally, renounces terrorism. As a result, the United States opens a dialogue with the PLO;

• **1990** — The United States breaks off its dialogue with the PLO after Arafat refuses to condemn a terrorist attack carried out by a member group. Arafat's support for Saddam Hussein after he invades Kuwait, and during the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq the following year, leads Persian Gulf states to cut off their funding for the PLO;

• **1991** — Arafat marries his 28-year-old secretary, Suha Tawil. Born a Christian,

she converts to Islam;

• **1993** — Israel and the PLO agree on a framework for peace in what later are called the Oslo accords. The framework is signed on the White House lawn, where Arafat shakes hands with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin;

• **1994** — Arafat, along with Israeli leaders Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Arafat returns to the Gaza Strip after a 25-year exile;

• **1996** — Arafat is overwhelmingly elected president of the Palestinian Authority. Under heavy pressure, the PLO's Parliament-in-exile votes to revoke sections of the PLO charter calling for Israel's destruction, but never completes the process;

• **2000** — Arafat refuses a peace plan proposed by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak at the Camp David summit. Later that year, Palestinians begin a wave of terrorism that intensifies after a visit to Jerusalem's Temple Mount by Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon. This grows into what is called the second intifada, which is still ongoing;

• **2001** — Frustrated by Arafat's support for violence, Israel confines him to his compound in Ramallah, where he remains until October 2004.

• **2002** — The United States breaks with Arafat after he is found to have lied about P.A. involvement with a weapons ship arriving from Iran. President Bush later makes replacement of leaders "compromised by terrorism" — a clear nod to Arafat — a precondition for Palestinian statehood;

• **2004** — Arafat dies on Thursday, Nov. 11 in a Paris hospital. ■

Some Israelis feel pity, but most are glad Arafat's gone

By DINA KRAFT

TEL AVIV (JTA) — In Yasser Arafat's death, Palestinians lost a national symbol, and Israelis lost the face of the other side.

For so many years, Arafat — often shown grinning under his trademark kaffiyeh while overseeing the struggle against Israel — was the opponent Israelis somehow loved to hate. A post-Arafat landscape is a murky one, mixing hopes for renewed peace efforts with fears of Palestinian infighting and chaos.

Israelis and Palestinians rode out a week of uncertainty over Arafat's condition in a French hospital until the Palestinian Authority president's death was announced early Thursday. Now they are coming to terms with what his absence might mean.

Edna Bar-Or said she is not grieving for Arafat, but adds that his legacy is not as simple as many Israelis think.

"I'm not crying over his death," said Bar-Or, 54, surrounded by rows of freshly cleaned and pressed clothes at her dry cleaning shop. "But he cannot be dismissed simply as a terrorist."

"He was the one who worked to establish a Palestinian state and he was the one who shook hands on the idea of two states," she said. "He lived the revolution of the Palestinian people."

For Yoanna Shofel, Arafat was simply a dictator who missed his chance to make history.

Emerging from her morning workout at a Tel Aviv gym, Shofel said she holds out few hopes for peace even now that Arafat is dead.

"I don't think it will change anything," she said. "Until the Oslo peace accords he was a symbol, and he should have stepped aside then and there. Ever since he returned to Gaza and the West Bank he has only caused damage. It's too bad: He could have done something for his people." ■

Arafat: From pariah to partner and back

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — Yasser Arafat may be remembered as a revolutionary or a statesman, a peacemaker or an arch-terrorist, the man who put Palestinian aspirations on the international map or the man who most harmed them.

But among Jews, both Arafat's friends and detractors say the Palestinian Authority president — who died Thursday at age 75 — will be remembered as Public Enemy No. 1.

"He will go down as the largest mass murderer of Jews since Hitler," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. "His life was devoted more to killing Jews than to the welfare of his own people."

A Nobel Peace Prize winner who often issued formal condemnations of violence but never ceased using it, Arafat was snubbed by both Israel and the United States by the end of his life.

In the three years leading up to his death, the aging symbol of the Palestinians' national hopes found himself quarantined in his Ramallah compound by an Israeli government that viewed him as both "irrelevant" and as the ultimate obstacle to Mideast peace.

In contrast to the frequent White House invitations extended by President Clinton to Arafat, President Bush treated him as a pariah, never once asking him to Pennsylvania Avenue.



Brian Hendler

Former Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

Arafat's sidelining and virtual house arrest capped a raucous progression of more than three decades during which the mainstream Jewish community, both in Israel and the Diaspora, moved from revulsion at the terrorist revolutionary who addressed the United Nations with a pistol on his hip to cautious optimism about the putative peacemaker who shook the hand of a reluctant Yitzhak Rabin on the White House lawn to profound disappointment and resentment at the intransigent old man's inability to abandon terrorism as a political tool and end his people's conflict with Israel.

"History will judge him as never able to make the transition from revolutionary diaspora leader to a leader who is capable of governing with

accountability and transparency with respect to the rule of law and capable of negotiating," Aaron David Miller, president of the Seeds of Peace program and an adviser on Arab-Israeli negotiations to six U.S. secretaries of state, told JTA in a telephone interview.

But if Arafat was unable to change from terrorist to statesman, the mainstream Jewish community did undergo transitions in its attitude toward Arafat. The shifts, said Kenneth Jacobson, associate national director of the Anti-Defamation League, "reflected what was going on in Israel" at any given moment.

As long as Arafat refused to recognize Israel, dealing with him was seen by many Jews as taboo, Jacobson said. When Arafat accepted U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 in 1988, implying Palestinian recognition of Israel and at least formally renouncing terrorism, it appeared that some sort of rapprochement was in the offing.

But "the community as a whole didn't buy it," Jacobson said.

In 1993, the Oslo accords changed all that.

"I think Rabin's famous

reluctant handshake on the White House lawn typified the way the community felt," Jacobson said. "We didn't necessarily trust him, but this was an opportunity."

With that opportunity, Arafat's stature in segments of the Jewish world changed. When a group of American Jews met him in Stockholm in 1988, the encounter sparked an uproar. But after Oslo, meetings between Arafat and Jewish groups were not unusual.

He met with a group of past chairmen of the Presidents Conference and also with the American Jewish Committee, among other organizations. The Jewish Council for Public Affairs hosted him at a meeting of its board in New York City.

"For us, as supporters of the Oslo initiative, we felt that it was important to open a new chapter with the Palestinian leadership," said Martin Raffel, JCPA's associate executive director. "If Rabin could do it, our thinking was, there was no reason why the organized Jewish community shouldn't as well."

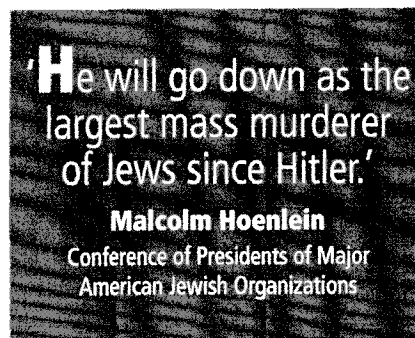
But skepticism quickly re-emerged, especially when Arafat refused to seriously confront Palestinian terrorists even during the peace process and continuously sent signals to the Arab and Muslim world that he did not take his commitments to Israel seriously.

The final break came in the summer of 2000, after Arafat refused the peace plan proposed by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak at the Camp David summit. When the second intifada erupted a few months later, Jacobson said, Jews felt the promise Arafat once seemed to offer had been squandered.

Two years later, Bush came to agree with the Israeli view that Arafat was not a credible peacemaker, and that the Palestinians would have to find other leaders not "compromised by terror" if they wanted a state.

According to Dennis Ross, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and a former U.S. Middle East peace envoy, Arafat "will go down historically as someone in whom hopes were placed — but they were misplaced."

"Yasser Arafat, ultimately, was a decision avoider, not a decision maker," Ross



— whose book, “The Missing Peace,” chronicles the Israeli-Palestinian peace process — told JTA. “He succeeded much more at being a symbol than being a leader.”

Jewish criticism of Arafat revolved principally around the contention that he was two-faced and opportunistic: recognizing Israel — and basking in the international recognition the move afforded him — but refusing to halt terrorism against Israelis; speaking about peace in English, but inciting Palestinians against Israel in Arabic.

“While he at different times said the right things, it didn’t matter,” said Menachem Rosensaft, a former national president of the Labor Zionist Alliance who took part in the 1988 Stockholm meeting with Arafat.

Ultimately Arafat “had neither the vision nor the courage to follow through and implement the steps necessary to create a true peace with Israel,” Rosensaft said. “He was never prepared to crack down on terrorists.”

Stephen P. Cohen, an Israel Policy Forum scholar and president of the Institute for Peace and Development in New York, said Arafat’s legacy will be two-fold.

“He was the first official leader of the Palestinian national movement who ever began to define the Palestinian political goal as negotiation with Israel and actually crossed that Rubicon,” Cohen said. However, “He continued the history of not being able to carry out an actual full-scale agreement with Israel.”

Muhammad Abd ar-Rauf al-Qudwah al-Husseini — Yasser is a nickname — was born in Cairo in 1929. He spent the majority of his youth in Egypt, though he lived with an uncle in Jerusalem between the ages of 5 and 9.

In the late 1950s Arafat founded the Fatah movement, dedicated to armed struggle against Israel. In 1964, the PLO was founded and Fatah soon became its core group. In 1969, Arafat was elected chairman of the PLO’s Executive Committee.

Throughout the 1970s, Palestinian terrorists carried out a series of audacious attacks against Israelis, including shootings, bombings and hijackings. In 1972, a group calling itself Black September, thought to be under the direct control of Arafat’s Fatah movement, killed 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic Games.

In 1974, PLO terrorists infiltrated Israel from Lebanon, taking students in a school hostage and eventually killing 26 people, including 21 children.

In 1993, following secret negotiations in Norway, Israel and the PLO signed the Oslo accords, establishing a framework for peace. The next year Arafat made his triumphant return to the Gaza Strip, and he, Rabin and Rabin’s foreign minister, Shimon Peres, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1996, Arafat was overwhelmingly elected president of the Palestinian Authority, which voted to revoke portions of the PLO’s charter that called for destroying Israel, though the revision process was never completed.

In 2000, to the chagrin of Oslo supporters, including an incensed Clinton — who had staked his legacy in large part on forging Israeli-Palestinian peace — Arafat refused what many said was an unprecedented peace proposal from Barak at Camp David.

Later in 2000 the second intifada erupted. Blaming Arafat for spiraling Palestinian violence, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon confined Arafat to his Ramallah headquarters in 2001. Arafat could leave the Palestinian territories, Sharon said, but might not be allowed back.

In the end, Arafat left the shattered building only once, briefly, to survey the results of a major Israeli incursion into the West Bank in 2002. Arafat did not leave again until October 2004, when he flew for medical treatment to France, where he ultimately died.

Miller, who said he last met with Arafat in Ramallah in October, says it misses the point to castigate Arafat for turning down Barak’s offer at Camp David. Instead, he said, Arafat’s “transgression” at the summit was his refusal to negotiate.

“There was no comprehensive deal on the table at Camp David that any Palestin-



Brian Hendler

Victims’ covered bodies are gathered at the scene of a Palestinian suicide bombing on a Jerusalem bus on June 18, 2002.

ian leader could have accepted,” Miller said. “But he could have made counterproposals. That is something that he will have to take responsibility for.”

Still, Camp David’s failure seemed to many Jews further proof that Arafat, as the late Israeli statesman Abba Eban famously quipped, “never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity.”

Edward Abington, a former U.S. consul general in Jerusalem who now is a Washington political adviser to the Palestinian Authority, said there was another side to the man with whom he shared a “warm friendship.”

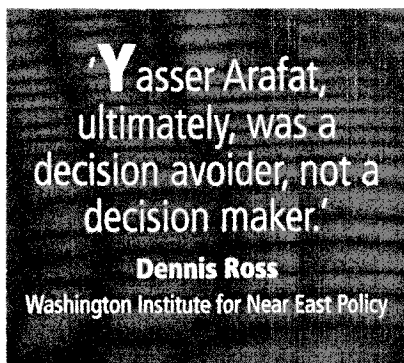
“I remember going to an orphanage in Gaza that he ran in 1996, and he invited me on the spur of the moment,” Abington told JTA. “It was filled with kids whose parents were killed” by the Israeli army or by Christian militiamen in Lebanon. “He basically was raising these kids.”

Ross, who said he spent more time with Arafat than “any non-Palestinian,” called him a maddening negotiating partner.

“As a negotiator, he simply wouldn’t reveal anything,” Ross said. “He had the tactic of saying nothing, hoping that the Israelis or we would move towards him.”

But in the end, Israelis and Jews worldwide, not to mention the American president, chose to move away from Arafat — and that, Siegman said, will be part of his legacy.

“Arafat,” he said, “will not be rehabilitated within the Jewish community by his death.”



Support for Bush on values scares some Jews

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — It's like one of those family fights that devolves into shouts of "You just don't get it."

Conservative Christians wonder if "blue-state" voters — those in states that went Democratic — get the values that drove them to the polls in unprecedented numbers to re-elect George W. Bush.

People who voted for John Kerry — among them, three quarters of the Jewish electorate — wonder if "red-state" voters who went Republican understand why those values make them nervous.

In election exit surveys conducted by the American Jewish Committee, Jews who voted for the Massachusetts senator on Nov. 2 consistently cited the Democrats' position on church-state separation. Now, President Bush's claim that he has a mandate from the 51 percent of voters who chose him has many Jewish officials worried.

They worry especially that a plurality of Bush voters — 22 percent — cited "moral values" as the primary reason for their votes. Such moral values include opposition to abortion rights, a greater role for religion in government and opposition to gay marriage.

"The message that the Christian right think the election is a success for them has caught people's attention," said Hannah Rosenthal, executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, an umbrella body for Jewish community relations councils nationwide. "Whether or not it really is a success, their proclamation that they have increased the power has caused a great deal of discomfort to the community."

Certainly, there has been no lack of preening by some Christian leaders.

"Christian Evangelicals Made the Major Difference in the 2004 Presidential Election" was the headline of a post-election release from the Christian Coalition, a massive lobby group that opposes gay marriage and abortion.

Rich Galen, a strategist for the Republicans, told the BBC this week that "red-state" Americans felt left out of the traditional power centers, and expressed

their frustration with their vote.

"When people say values, I think it is it is an uncomfortableness with what I like to call the Upper West Side of Manhattan and Hollywood being the arbiters of what is right and what is wrong," he said.

That triumphalism may presage a stronger push to bring Christianity into the public square, and many Jewish officials — especially those in the red states — are ready for a backlash.

"People are questioning where the line is," said Deborah Lauter, regional director for the Anti-Defamation League in Georgia. "There has been an increase in stealth evangelism. We're seeing it everywhere."

Lauter says that when she trades battle stories with other regional directors, the others deal primarily with anti-Israel activism, while much of her work has to do with stemming Christian influence.

Some recent examples in Georgia are evangelicals who distribute pamphlets in public schools, stickers that appear in school textbooks disclaiming evolutionary theory, and the curious case of a Jewish cheerleader singled out by her Christian coach at the University of Georgia.

An avid cheerleader since her early teens, Jaclyn Steele at first tried to avoid the references to Jesus in the locker room, and the prayer sessions at Marilou Braswell's house.

Eventually she was prompted to act by other cheerleaders who told her that failure to participate in the prayer sessions would probably keep her off the "A" team.

The family met with Braswell, but it didn't go well.

"She told us, 'Well, you know we live in the Bible Belt, what do you expect, this is the way I was raised,'" Bernath recalled. "She never got it."

Braswell eventually toned down the evangelism, but the university fired her after she singled out Steele at the beginning of



Eric Draper/White House

President Bush prays during a church service at the First Baptist Church of Glenarden in Landover, Md.

the school year in a prepared statement she read to cheerleaders about the controversy.

Braswell already has grass-roots organizations campaigning for her rehiring. A group called the Center for Reclaiming America has urged a letter-writing campaign.

That kind of reaction can be harmful for Jews, say some Jewish officials, who cite the evangelicals' friendliness on other matters — especially support for Israel.

"It is wrong and short-sighted of Israel and the Jewish community not to reach out to these people, even as they become more and more powerful," said Yechiel Eckstein, president of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, who fund-raises among evangelical Christians for Israeli and Jewish causes.

"When you have a president of the United States who is a born-again Christian, a speaker of the house who is a born-again Christian, and you have the Karl Rove strategy of bringing in evangelicals, you are dealing with a force," Eckstein told JTA.

Rove is President Bush's political adviser. Avi Shafran, director of public affairs for the fervently Orthodox Agudath Israel of America, said Orthodox Jews voted in similar patterns to Evangelical Christians because they were concerned by the same perceived government imbalance toward liberal policies on abortion and gay marriage.

"Moral concerns do not equate with Christian concerns," Shafran said. "Many of these concerns are shared with Jews, in the Orthodox community and beyond."

(JTA correspondent Yigal Schleifer contributed to this story from Istanbul.)



ARTS & CULTURE

Filmmakers hope movie rekindles interest in shtetl

By LEV KRICHEVSKY

MOSCOW (JTA) — Gregory Kemelman dips his grandson into the waters of the Atlantic Ocean off the Brighton Beach boardwalk in Brooklyn.

The next moment, the boy's head comes out of water in a completely different setting — a murky river near a small town in Ukraine.

Despite what its title suggests, "Judenfrei: A Shtetl Without Jews," is not a typical film about the Holocaust.

The 52-minute film, part feature, part documentary, tells the story of Brailov, a shtetl in central Ukraine.

In December 1942, the Nazis, helped by local collaborators, killed the remaining 2,500 Jews in the shtetl, leaving only one sign of the former Jewish presence in this once-lively Jewish town: a poster nailed at the village entrance reading "Brailov. Judenfrei."

But the filmmakers say their film is more than a requiem to a Jewish community destroyed in the Holocaust. The movie, full of scenes reconstructing the town's past, is devoted to the preservation of the history and spirit of shtetl life in Ukraine.

Since no Jews currently live in Brailov, filmmakers brought Jewish adults and kids from the neighboring communities of Vinnitsa and Shargorod to play in the scenes that reconstruct life in Brailov before and during the Holocaust.

The film documents how a once-prosperous and lively shtetl became a depressed Ukrainian village.

"With Jews gone, the village lost its spirit," says Michael Masterovoy, the film's director.

It took a former Jewish villager, Boris Khmel'nitski, to revive the memory and images of the lost Jewish presence — at least on videotape.

"This is my way of saying thank you to the place where I was born, and this is a way of responding with good to all the bad things that happened to Jews there," he said. ■

Rift in Prague Jewish community

By DINAH A. SPRITZER

PRAGUE (JTA) — What started as a promise to democratize Prague's Jewish Community has turned so sour that community members have voted to oust their chairman for the first time since World War II.

The dismissal of Prague's chief rabbi, turmoil at the country's only Jewish school and the passing of personal data to a company run by an alleged secret police agent under communism all contributed to tensions in the 1,600-member community.

Tomas Jelinek, who served as an economic advisor to former President Vaclav Havel, was elected to a second term as chairman last April. But his tenure has proven so contentious that his opponents organized to orchestrate his removal, which they claim they have achieved.

At the end of a nearly 10 hour community assembly on Sunday, 173 of 190 members still in attendance voted to immediately recall Jelinek and his three vice chairpersons. They also issued a vote of no-confidence in the 26-member community board, also known as the Parliament, on which Jelinek had a majority of supporters.

Another assembly has been called for Dec. 5, at which time a final vote of confidence will be held. If it goes against the board, it must resign and new elections will be held. But if more supporters of Jelinek and his team help turn the tide at the meeting, a legal dispute might ensue over the chairmanship.

"I do not accept the decision to remove me. According to the community bylaws, only the board can do that," Jelinek said.

Tomas Pasternak, a lawyer and community member who voted to remove Jelinek, said he can't imagine that community professionals will be eager "to remove Mr. Jelinek's keys and take away his cell phone, so it is unclear what happens now. I imagine that in the worst-case scenario, members of the community would take Mr. Jelinek to court if he refuses to step down."

If Jelinek galvanizes supporters for the Dec. 5 meeting, there is sure to be a showdown between the chairman and his opponents.

Jelinek says his opponents are angry that they have lost influence after controlling the community's political and economic interests since the early 1990s.

The three men most commonly referred to by Jelinek supporters as the "old guard" are Karol Sidon, whom Jelinek recently forced out as Prague's chief rabbi; Jirka Danicek, a former chairman of the community; and Leo Pavlat, director of Prague's Jewish Museum.

Pasternak agreed that some members might feel that a clique controlled the community for too long, before Jelinek started to make different decisions about how the community's large financial holdings should be deployed.

But, he said, "I think the real objection was Jelinek's abrasive style. In his second term he had a majority in the Parliament and started doing the things he wanted to do, without regard for the democratic process."

The latest controversy was over a database of community members with

addresses and some e-mail contacts that Jelinek this summer passed to a public relations firm, without the knowledge or approval of community members. One of the firm's principals is listed on two Web sites — including one from the country's Interior Ministry — as having been a secret police collaborator under the Communist regime.

"Can you imagine what it feels like for a Holocaust survivor, and a Jew persecuted under communism, to find out that his or her personal data has been passed on to such a person? It's outrageous," said Jake Roth, spokesman for the "Community for All" faction that sought Jelinek's removal.

Jelinek, for his part, told JTA he had signed a data-protection agreement with the agency and that the information would be used only within the community.

"I think it's no coincidence that this coup is going on during the forensic audit that I ordered," he said, suggesting that the previous administrative or financial errors of former community leaders might come to light.

Jelinek refused to give more details while the audit is ongoing. ■

'I do not accept the decision to remove me. According to the community bylaws, only the board can do that.'

Tomas Jelinek
Prague Jewish Community

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Israel: Barghouti to stay in jail

Palestinian militia leader Marwan Barghouti will not be released from jail despite Yasser Arafat's death, a top Israeli official said.

Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom made the comment Thursday amid speculation that Israel would release Barghouti as a goodwill gesture to the new Palestinian leadership.

"Barghouti was sentenced to life and he will be in prison for the rest of his life. He is a murderer who is responsible for murdering many Israelis," Shalom said, according to the Jerusalem Post.

Barghouti was tried and found guilty by a Tel Aviv District Court in June for the murder of five civilians and of involvement in terrorist attacks, and was sentenced to five consecutive life terms and an additional 40 years in prison.

Some Palestinians say Barghouti would be a natural successor to Arafat.

Vanunu arrested again

Israeli police arrested nuclear whistle-blower Mordechai Vanunu.

Vanunu, who recently was released after serving 18 years in jail for revealing Israeli nuclear secrets to a British newspaper, was arrested Thursday on suspicion he leaked more state secrets.

Terrorists: We'll fight on

Palestinian terrorists vowed to continue fighting after Yasser Arafat's death.

"The loss of the great leader will increase our determination and steadfastness to continue Jihad and resistance against the Zionist enemy until victory and liberation is achieved," Hamas said in statement Thursday after Arafat's death was announced.

The Al-Aksa Brigade, an armed group inside Arafat's Fatah faction, pledged to press ahead with attacks and said it was changing its name to the "Yasser Arafat Brigade."

In the Gaza Strip, at least three Palestinian gunmen were killed in a multi-pronged attack on the Netzarim settlement.

No tears in Israel

The Israeli government will shun Yasser Arafat's funeral. "I do not usually think we should send a representative to the funeral of somebody who killed thousands of our people," Justice Minister Yosef "Tommy" Lapid told CNN on Thursday, when asked if Israel would send an official delegation for Arafat's lying-in-state in Cairo or burial in Ramallah.

But Israeli Arab lawmakers are expected to pay their respects at the West Bank city, as are some 100 members of the far-left Israeli peace group Gush Shalom.

Israel to launch anti-Arafat campaign

Ariel Sharon said Israel will launch a propaganda campaign against deceased Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Wary that Arafat would be lauded around the world as a hero after his death, the Israeli prime minister said that Israel would launch a campaign aimed at publicizing Arafat's "murderous character," Ha'aretz reported.

NORTH AMERICA

Jewish groups weigh in on Arafat

Several U.S. Jewish groups said they hoped Yasser Arafat's death would be a chance to turn away from terrorism and toward peace.

In a statement from its top officials, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations said Arafat's death "opens

the opportunity for the emergence of a new leadership in the Palestinian Authority that could put an end to terrorism and renew the prospect of peaceful coexistence with the State of Israel."

The United Jewish Communities said it "urged the Palestinian people to demand and embrace a new leadership that unequivocally and unconditionally abandons terrorist acts."

The Anti-Defamation League's Abraham Foxman said the Palestinian Authority president's legacy "is one of terrorism and failed leadership."

Americans for Peace Now "extends its condolences to Yasser Arafat's family and to the Palestinian people in general," the group's president, Debra DeLee, said in a statement.

The American Jewish Committee said that "as a symbol of Palestinian political aspirations, Arafat was undeniably a figure of significance. But given an historic test" to make peace, "he failed utterly."

The American Jewish Congress "expressed its hope that the Palestinian people will look to the possibilities of the future rather than the failed policies of the past."

Madonna is Forward's 51st

Madonna was included in the annual list of the most influential Jews in America published by the Forward.

"This year's Forward 50 actually contains 51 entries, to make room for someone who is not Jewish but might well be the world's most famous practitioner of Judaism — the pop singer Madonna. To include her on a list of prominent Jews would have been false, but to leave her off would have been no less misleading," the national Jewish weekly wrote.

Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg topped the list.

Her "powers of reason and persuasion will be put to the test in the next four years as she prepares to defend the court's embattled liberal wing during President Bush's second term," the paper wrote.

Ginsburg was followed by Howard Kohr and Bernice Manocherian, executive director and president, respectively, of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee; American Jewish Congress President Jack Rosen; novelist Philip Roth; and late-night TV comic Jon Stewart.

Romanian Holocaust museum urged

A commission studying the Holocaust in Romania called on the country to establish a national Holocaust museum.

In its report presented Thursday to Romanian President Ion Iliescu, the commission, with Elie Wiesel as chairman, called on the country to end its rehabilitation of Nazi-era war criminals.

The commission was established after a Romanian government statement denying that the Holocaust took place on Romanian territory sparked an uproar.

Since that time, Romania marked its first Holocaust Remembrance Day on Oct. 12.

WORLD

E.U.: Arafat a historic leader

The European Union described Yasser Arafat as a historic leader.

In a statement Thursday from the E.U.'s Dutch presidency, Foreign Minister Bernard Bot said Arafat was "an historic leader and a democratically elected president, whose devotion and single-minded commitment to the Palestinian national cause throughout his life was never in doubt."

Although he has not lived to see the birth of a Palestinian state, we will work with the Palestinian authorities and the international community to contribute to realizing the aspirations of the Palestinian people."