



IN THE NEWS

British official praises Israel

Britain's foreign secretary, Jack Straw, praised Israel on Wednesday for agreeing to facilitate Palestinian elections.

Israel has voiced a willingness to coordinate an easing of its security clampdown on the West Bank and Gaza Strip ahead of a Jan. 9 election to choose a successor to the late Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon postponed meeting Straw until Thursday due to poor health.

Book: Schindler had little to do with lists

Oskar Schindler had little involvement in drawing up the lists of Jews that he eventually saved, a new book says.

At the time many of the lists were drawn up, Schindler was in jail for bribing SS commander Amon Goth, says David Crowe, author of the recently published "Oskar Schindler: The Untold Account of His Life, Wartime Activities and the True Story Behind the List."

Abbas too close to Yasser Arafat?

Israel criticized Palestinian Authority presidential candidate Mahmoud Abbas for insisting on a "right of return" for Palestinian refugees.

"We are very sorry about the last statements by Mahmoud Abbas about the necessity of Palestinians to keep the heritage of Arafat, which was involved with terrorism most of the time," Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom told reporters Wednesday.

He was referring to a parliamentary pledge by Abbas not to abandon the late Yasser Arafat's demand that millions of Palestinian refugees be allowed to resettle in lands now in Israel.

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WORLD REPORT

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Courtesy of Jewish Theological Seminary

Cmdr. Irving Elson, a rabbi and Jewish chaplain, serving in the Middle East.

For chaplain who served in Iraq, different calculus of peace and war

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — Military men typically take the measure of a battle in stark tallies of dead and injured men, miles between enemy positions, numbers of insurgent hold-outs and the like.

But Cmdr. Irving Elson — a Conservative rabbi who for the first eight months of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and again for the High Holidays this fall, was the only Jewish chaplain serving with Marines in Iraq — uses a different battle calculus.

For Elson, 44, an affable man who keeps his graying hair neatly buzzed to about the same length as his mustache, the battle count looks something like this: five days of

Rosh Hashanah. Six Passover seders in Baghdad. Seven Shabbat services in one night. Seventeen High Holiday services.

"In the military, especially in times of combat, you can't say, 'Well, Rosh Hashanah's today so today we're going to do Rosh Hashanah services,'" Elson told JTA earlier this month, just before addressing a group at Manhattan's Jewish Theological Seminary, where he was ordained in 1987.

"I did like five days of Rosh Hashanah. You're in one place for ma'ariv and shacharit," he said, using the Hebrew terms for the evening and morning prayer services, "and then you go

to the next place, and then you go to the next place, and then you go to the next place, and

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WAR
IN
IRAQ

■ *Serving with Marines in Iraq, a rabbi ministers to soldiers under fire*

Continued from page 1

Rosh Hashanah's over but, hey, you still have another eight or nine places to go to."

And that's not eight or nine safe, comfortable synagogues. Elson led Yom Kippur services in Iraq under mortar fire; tripped over an M-50 machine gun while carrying a small Torah at the Al Asad air base; and was forced to bury 100 copies of the Scroll of Esther in the Kuwaiti desert when the books wouldn't fit into his equipment-stuffed Humvee.

Still, he said, "These services were some of the most meaningful times in my life."

Of 40,000 troops with the Marine Expeditionary Force in Iraq, Elson said, about 400 are Jews, spanning the spectrum of religious engagement from secular to Orthodox.

Many of the Jews he guided in Iraq were combat soldiers, coming to grips with their own mortality, said Elson, a Navy Chaplain who served in Iraq with the 1st Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment.

"You're dealing with a very young population, 18- to 21-year-olds," he said. "Spiritually they're at real formative years. That's when they're on their own for the first time and they're getting to ask the big questions in life, and I get to be there as a rabbi saying, 'Hey, this is what Judaism has to offer.' It's a great job."

Military chaplaincy is a unique sort of rabbinate, said Rabbi Nathan Landman, deputy director of the JWB Jewish Chap-

lains Council, the primary agency that recruits and serves military chaplains.

"A rabbi in uniform has an opportunity to create a positive attitude toward Jews among those who have never encountered them before, on a large scale," he said.

Elson had just such an opportunity in Iraq.

Military chaplains do not carry weapons. Instead, they are assigned "chaplain's assistants," soldiers who shadow them constantly as bodyguards. Elson's assistant was a Southern Baptist.

"He said, 'I recognize you're one of God's Chosen People, and I'm going

to take care of you,'" Elson recalled. "And that he did."

Shortly after the war began, after securing the Ramallah oil field in Iraq, Elson's regiment fought its way through a gauntlet of Iraqi soldiers in the town of Nasariyah, taking heavy enemy fire and casualties.

When they finally emerged on the northern side of the city, they were ambushed by

units of Iraq's Special Republican Guards. An intense firefight erupted.

"It was there that, for the first of three times," the chaplain's assistant "literally covered me with his body and returned fire," Elson said. "He was awarded the Navy Marine Corps bronze star for his bravery that day.

"When this firefight was all over and we had the chance to comfort the wounded and take care of our dead, I sat in the Humvee almost in a daze," Elson said.

"I was scared and I was wet. It had rained and hailed all day and all night," he continued. "For 24 hours there was hail, there was rain, there was a sandstorm. I actually remember going to my battalion commander and saying, 'Look, we have the hail, the dust. If I see locusts I know we're in real trouble.'"

Elson was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal for his service in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

And he can now add one more figure to his unusual Iraqi battle mathematics: four months. That's the amount of time remaining until "his guys" are scheduled to come home. ■

Cmdr. Irving Elson was decorated for his service in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Anti-Semitism scares Argentine Jews

By FLORENCIA ARBISER

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — Argentine Jewish leaders are wondering whether a string of recent anti-Semitic incidents indicates a growing trend of Jew-hatred.

Abraham Kaul, president of the AMIA central Jewish institution, couldn't hide his concern at a recent meeting with Jewish media.

At dawn Nov. 14, swastikas and a picture of Hitler were found at the Jewish cemetery of Liniers. On Nov. 15, more graffiti — swastikas and threatening messages — had been added.

The messages included "Kristallnacht 08/11/38," a reference to the murderous pogrom that heralded the onset of the Nazis' most restrictive anti-Semitic policies; and "Movement Walther Darre," a reference to a former Nazi agriculture minister who was born in Argentina. The date reference in the graffiti is a bit off, however. The Kristallnacht attacks began on Nov. 9 of that year, not the day before.

The attack on the Liniers cemetery, located on the outskirts of Buenos Aires and

one of the oldest Jewish cemeteries in the country, followed three previous attacks there this year, in which bronze plaques were stolen.

"Are these signs of an escalation of anti-Semitic violence in the region?" Kaul asked. What worried him most was the fact that the incidents showed "something more than a soccer fan's ignorant anti-Semitic song. These demonstrations seem to be more learned."

At dawn on Nov. 15, a Hitler drawing and Nazi inscriptions were found on a bus belonging to the Maimonides Jewish school.

The DAIA, the Jewish community's political umbrella organization, met with federal police to demand an explanation for why a 24-hour police presence at the cemetery couldn't prevent such attacks, and what could be done differently in the future.

Authorities said police had been in the bathroom when the graffiti were painted.

Three other local Jewish institutions recently suffered bomb threats. There have been more than 100 incidents of anti-Semitic graffiti in Buenos Aires this year. ■

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Tensions, questions on Israel-Lebanon border

By GIL SEDAN

SHLOMI, Israel (JTA) — Not long ago, Jacky Ben-Muha, a popular baker in this northern Israeli border town, pointed to a crack in the bakery window and said, "You see, this is from the previous Katyusha rocket attack. We left it here as a reminder."

Ben-Muha got another unwelcome reminder just last week.

On Nov. 15, Katyushas fell near Shlomi for the first time since the deadly attack in August of 2003 that damaged Ben-Muha's shop and killed a 16-year-old boy.

This time the rockets landed in a remote field, injuring no one and causing no damage.

"No, we're not worried," Ben-Muha said. "What are we to say compared to the residents of Sderot, who were subject to daily Kassam rocket attacks?"

The southern Israeli town of Sderot has been subject to frequent rocket salvos from Palestinian terrorists in the Gaza Strip during the 4-year-old intifada.

Shlomi, a picturesque town in the foothills of the upper Galilee, hasn't been as hard-hit as Sderot, but the recent attack was a reminder that Shlomi's neighbors in Lebanon can escalate the situation along the border whenever they see fit.

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A previously unknown group calling itself "The Martyr Ghaleb Alawi" took responsibility for launching the rockets. Alawi was a member of the Lebanese terrorist group Hezbollah who was killed in a Beirut car bomb last July. Hezbollah blamed Israel for his death.

Hezbollah denied responsibility for the latest rocket attack, but it has initiated a string of recent provocations on Israel's northern front after a long period of quiet.

The rockets came a week after Hezbollah launched an unmanned aerial drone that successfully penetrated Israeli airspace and flew over the Galilee undetected for several minutes. The incursion embarrassed Israel's defense establishment and alarmed the nation, since the plane could have been used to carry out a terrorist attack.

In the past four and a half years, since Israel withdrew from its buffer zone in southern Lebanon, 13 Israeli soldiers and six civilians have been killed in attacks along the border, and 53 soldiers have been wounded.

Israel's initial reaction to the latest rocket salvo sounded tough, though it re-

flected a dispute between Israel's military and political echelons.

If the Lebanese government "do not put an end to it themselves, they will pay the price," said Israel's military chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon. "I couldn't care less if it's Hezbollah or not. Even if it's some ephemeral Palestinian organization that does the shooting — Lebanon is responsible."

But the government once again opted for a restrained reaction, clearly uninterested in further escalation. U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Jeffrey Feltman called on the Lebanese government to send army troops to replace Hezbollah guerrillas on the border with Israel. Lebanon has refused to do so.

The United Nations also called on Lebanon to do more to keep its territory from serving as a launching pad for attacks on Israel.

A Lebanese official reportedly called Katyusha rocket fire into Israel terrorism. Speaking Nov. 17 to the London-based A-Sharq Al-Awsat newspaper, Information Minister Eli Firzli said the army had set up roadblocks in southern Lebanon to prevent rockets from being fired across the border, and said that if Israel does respond militarily, Lebanon will blame the terrorist group that fired the rockets.

■
Not everyone took a conciliatory line, however. Omar Karami, Lebanon's new prime minister, called Israel the "aggressor" and insisted that not a day passes without an Israeli breach of Lebanon's regional waters and air space.

It's impossible to send the Lebanese army to the south "to guard Israel's borders," he said — though Lebanon is obligated to do just that under the same U.N. Security Council resolution that called on Israel to end its occupation of the former buffer zone.

Some Israeli sources link the latest escalation to a fear among Hezbollah and Iran that the Palestinians could reach a deal with Israel and halt terrorism.

Both feel threatened by the rise of Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, who is seeking to end the armed intifada after Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's death, a senior intelligence source said.

That would undercut the leverage

Iran and Hezbollah now possess in the territories, where they fund and organize much of the ongoing terrorist activity, the source said.

Others in Israel view the attack in the context of growing internal tension in Lebanon over the continued military presence of Syria.

Thousands of Lebanese students and activists defied government warnings and demonstrated Nov. 19 against Syria's domination of their country.

Large numbers of security forces watched but did not intervene as about 3,000 students converged on downtown Beirut,

shouting, "Syrians out!"

Ferzli, the information minister, said Lebanon "was looking forward to the day when Lebanon would be void of all armed men, whether brother or friend, even if Syria."

But some Israeli analysts didn't put much stock in Ferzli's statements.

"Because of Hezbollah's denial and the fact that no major organization had taken responsibility for the rocket attack, it was easy for the Lebanese authorities to distance themselves from the attacks," Kais Firo, a Middle East expert at Haifa University, told JTA. "But this by no means that the new premier Omar Karami is willing to take a real stand against Hezbollah."

"The status quo continues," Firo said. "And this means that Hezbollah continues to control the south."

He said Karami was too busy with the internal turmoil to take an independent position in the south. He "is running on a thin rope, particularly after the anti-Syrian demonstration over the weekend," Firo said.

For the time being, a tense quiet reigns along the border.

Ben-Muha believes Israel reacted to the provocation appropriately. When Shlomi's mayor, Gabi Na'aman, joined other mayors from "confrontation-line" communities in demanding a strong reaction to the attack, Ben-Muha — who also serves as opposition head in the local municipality — cautioned restraint.

"I say that one should not react. Thank God the Galilee prospers as it never has before. So let us restrain ourselves," he said, pulling another batch of bread from his oven. ■

Rockets land in northern Israel and the implications reverberate all the way to Beirut.

Survivors fete French town that saved them

By PHILIP CARMEL

PARIS (JTA) — When Ida Rozenberg-Apeloig received a book about the activities of the French Resistance in wartime France, her childhood memories of Chateaumeillant came flooding back.

Rozenberg-Apeloig was given the book by one of her son's friends in the summer of 2003 and soon recognized that many of the people cited in the work were associates of her father, fellow members of the resistance who were active in the Cher region of central France during the Nazi occupation.

The book, "Avant l'oublie, Resistance," or "Before We Forget, Resistance," led to the formation of a group of survivors who decided that the time had come to honor the village of Chateaumeillant, where more than 100 Jews lived throughout World War II.

"I wanted Chateaumeillant to be remembered as a town recognized for its righteous acts," she told JTA in an interview at her home in the Paris suburbs.

On Saturday, a plaque was placed on a village church to honor the actions of the town's residents during the war.

Rozenberg-Apeloig had hoped that such recognition would come from the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial, but she soon decided to organize a private initiative involving just the survivors and their families.

"We created a file with Yad Vashem but you can't make 2,000 medals," she said. "You'll always end up forgetting one family."

Her first task was to trace the author of the book. She was fortunate that although the writer had died some time ago, the book had been published by his son, now a legislator representing the Cher region in France's National Assembly.

The lawmaker, Jean-Claude Sandrier, helped with contacts and assisted Apeloig-Rozenberg in gaining access to the region's archives from the wartime period as well as opening up initial links with the Chateaumeillant local council.

Sandrier said there are many places in France like Chateaumeillant where individuals hid Jews, but that it was unusual that so many survived from one village.

"There were 2,000 people in Chateaumeillant and for five years, nobody denounced the Jews to the authorities," he

said. "It just needed one person and there would have been a massacre."

Still, Apeloig-Rozenberg had to find the survivors.

Her first attempt to find them came in an article written by her husband, Marcel Apeloig.

Some people came forward, but the organization received a major boost when another article appeared last month in the national weekly, *Marianne*.

Rose Di-Maria was one of those found by Rozenberg-Apeloig.

Her family, the Kreps, arrived later than most of the Jewish families in Chateaumeillant, choosing to leave Paris only after the mass round-ups in 1942.

Like most of the survivors, she does not recall a period on the run but rather a tranquil time.

"We went to school in Chateaumeillant and we even sang songs in praise of Petain, but when there were problems they warned us," she said, referring to Marshal Philippe Petain, France's wartime leader.

Di-Maria told JTA she didn't know how they were warned while she wondered after the war how they all had survived.

Unbeknownst to most of the Jews, Chateaumeillant was at the center of an active Resistance network in the Cher region, a French region a few miles north of Vichy, which housed Petain's collaborationist regime.

For most of the Jews though, four short French words spoken by a local police officer to the village baker were generally enough to save them.

The officer would simply tell the baker that there was going to be "gloomy work this evening," a coded message that meant a round-up was about to take place.

Then, when the Jewish women came to buy bread, the baker would pass on the information and they would hide in the fields that night.

Now, with almost 50 people involved in the project, the group has unveiled a plaque in Chateaumeillant to honor the people who saved their lives.

Rozenberg-Apeloig spent some five years in Chateaumeillant along with about 40 other Jewish families. Like almost all the Jews who passed by way of the village,

she survived the war.

As hundreds of thousands of refugees began to flee northern France in the wake of the German army advance in 1940, Chateaumeillant was among many French villages chosen to host the homeless populations.

The village took in around 500 refugees, including Belgians and many from the Paris region. At least 140 were Jews.

But while more than 70,000 French Jews were ultimately deported to the Nazi death camps, Chateaumeillant did not give up its Jews.

Instead, the town's 2,500 inhabitants took the Jews in, enrolled the Jewish children in the local school, and, by a mixture of passive and active resistance, blocked the German and French collaborationist officials from deporting the Jews.

Generally, the Jews in Chateaumeillant went about their daily lives, working in trades in the village rather than in agriculture to which they were less suited, Jeanne Cotineau, a Chateaumeillant resident who remembers the Jewish refugees, told JTA.

"They adapted quite quickly to life here, doing odd jobs. They were good tailors and furriers and there were those who knew how to work with leather," she said.

Cotineau, a teenager at the time, had the job of collecting milk from local farms and distributing rations to people in the village.

One of those was Rozenberg-Apeloig's family, who were granted extra rations because her brother had just been born.

At least five Jewish children were born in Chateaumeillant during the war years, a fact that was hidden from the authorities by the village doctor, Leon Guyot, and the mayor, Maurice Delaire.

Their activities and the assistance provided to Jewish families by the village meant that over the period between 1939 and 1944, only four young Jewish men were arrested — and later killed in Majdanek — while more than 140 Jews in Chateaumeillant survived the war.

In a ceremony attended by a small group of survivors and their families, the plaque was placed on a 12th-century church that dominates the village.

The plaque begins with a simple message: It says "Merci."

The words
'gloomy work this
evening' saved
Jews in a French
village.

Berlin shul gets new lease on life

By TOBY AXELROD

BERLIN (JTA) — It was a sight not seen in Berlin's Beit Zion synagogue in 66 years: Last week, for the first time since 1939, services were held in this tiny synagogue that the Nazis failed to destroy.

And this time, not one, but more than 25 rabbis were there.

It was the first time that the Conference of European Rabbis had held a meeting of its standing committee in Berlin. For many, the scene was emotional.

Here, where Nazis had ripped out the bimah, ark and eternal lamp, Moscow Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, wrapped in his prayer shawl, led a service together with Yitzchak Ehrenberg, chief rabbi of Berlin.

"It was a mystical experience," said a woman on the female side of the makeshift mechitza.

Such experiences may occur more frequently as of December 2005, when a new Talmud study center opens in this 95-year-old shul and the apartment building that surrounds it in former East Berlin.

"This is the most exciting project I have ever had the privilege to be involved with," said the CER's executive director, Rabbi Aba Dunner of London, surveying the roomful of rabbis and guests.

The Nazis "thought they got rid of us. And, three days after the anniversary of Kristallnacht, this place is filled with

Jews," he said, referring to the 1938 pogrom that heralded the intensification of the Nazi persecution of the Jews.

The center — which will have room for up to 100 students — is a project of the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation and local Jewish philanthropist Roman Skoblo, a doctor and real-estate dabbler who bought the property about two years ago, after a local grass-roots group campaigned to save it.

The project is an outgrowth of the Lauder foundation's Beit Midrash, which opened four years ago with nine students in a restored former Jewish school nearby. Today there are 28 full time students and another 80 regular attendees. A program for women opened in Frankfurt in 2001.

Rabbi Josh Spinner, vice president of the Lauder Foundation and head of the Beit Midrash of Berlin, said the new Talmud center will provide a traditional Jewish education for men and a "rabbi track" for those who choose it.

"This is a sign for the growth of Judaism, not only in Berlin," Skoblo said. "It contributes to the reactivation of something that was almost buried."

In a remarkable development, it now looks very likely that the Central Council of Jews in Germany, which has been loath

to support projects outside its umbrella, will help fund the new Talmud center. After a meeting Nov. 16 with the visiting Orthodox rabbis, the council's vice president, Charlotte Knobloch, and presidium member Nathan Kalmanowicz said they were confident they could win support from the rest of the board.

Kalmanowicz told JTA the board would meet to discuss the issue before the end of November.

Such support, Spinner said, "would be a recognition by the Central Council, which is a non-denominational, political body, that the way to solve spiritual problems is by supporting the learning of Torah and of institutions of Torah learning."

The spiritual problems are linked to the concrete: Sixty years ago, the question was how to rebuild basic Jewish infrastructure in post-Holocaust Europe. Today, particularly in Germany, the challenge is to meet the needs of a Jewish community whose membership has tripled since 1989 to 105,000 with the arrival of immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

Germany now has the third largest Jewish community in western Europe, after France, with 600,000, and England, with 300,000 — but Germany has fewer than 30 full-time rabbis for more than 80 synagogues.

Other problems — lack of affiliation, legal challenges to kashrut and the attraction that many Jews feel to non-traditional Jewish alternatives — were discussed by the rabbis in meetings in Berlin. The CER represents more than 200 traditional rabbis in Eastern and Western Europe.

Their main objective, Dunner said, was to urge the Central Council to support the new Talmud center as a potential source of Jewish educators and rabbis in Europe.

The Lauder school in Berlin is a good model on which to build, said George Ban, the Lauder Foundation's executive vice president.

"We are really proud of what we have accomplished in Germany," Ban told JTA.

It goes beyond education: "There are Jewish couples with children who met through this project," he said. "It is not just a vision, it is not just a miracle; maybe it is the only way to help" give traditional Judaism in Europe a boost. ■

A new Talmud center will open in a historic synagogue.



Toby Axelrod

Conference of European Rabbis members pose in front of Berlin's Rykestrasse Synagogue and Lauder Beit Midrash recently.

Jews in Ukraine split vote in election

By VLADIMIR MATVEYEV

KIEV, Ukraine (JTA) — Ukrainian Jews mirrored the rest of the country in this week's presidential elections — both in how they voted and in their strong reactions to the controversial results.

Many Jews, pleased with the status quo, backed Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, who was backed by the government in Sunday's runoff vote.

"I voted for stability in Ukrainian society," said Pyotr Rashkovsky, head of the Association of Jewish Communities of Small Towns of Ukraine, which unites Jewish groups in a dozen former shtetls in the central part of the country. "I know that most Jews in my region also supported Yanukovich."

But others echoed the sentiments of the estimated 100,000 to 200,000 Ukrainian voters who took to the streets of Kiev this week after Yanukovich was declared the winner over the liberal opposition candidate, Viktor Yushenko.

"After the total falsification of the results of the presidential elections, the people demand to announce Yushenko the next president," said Eduard Gurvitz, a Jewish member of Parliament and former mayor of Odessa who supported Yushenko.

The choice of the new president will certainly influence Ukraine's future for the

next five years and may prove crucial for Western and Russian strategic interests in Eastern Europe.

According to the Central Elections Commission, Yanukovich won about 49.4 percent of the vote and Yushenko received 46.7 percent.

Opposition leaders blamed election officials for manipulating the vote count and claimed Yushenko won. International observers said the vote failed to meet democratic standards.

"I believe this was a fair and unbiased count by the CEC," said Yakov Dov Bleich, the chief rabbi of Kiev and Ukraine. "But as far as I know, there was a number of violations at some polling stations" on the part of both candidates' representatives and observers, he said.

Many Jews are believed to have voted for Yushenko and generally followed the nationwide pattern with the younger, urban and better-educated voters favoring the opposition.

But with no valid data in existence, some observers believe probably as many, if not the majority, of Jews still backed Yanukovich — partly because they feared the rising Ukrainian nationalist sentiment.

Many Jews were afraid of speaking openly about their choice even after casting their vote, as were many Ukrainians.

ACROSS THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

Up to 40 percent of respondents refused to talk to those conducting exit polls, local media reported.

"People are afraid of the authorities," one Jewish voter in Kiev said. "And many Jews may have found themselves even in a more difficult situation knowing that many wealthy Jews sponsoring Jewish community programs support the authorities and particularly Yanukovich."

Indeed, some of the leading domestic sponsors of Jewish life in the region backed Yanukovich, reflecting the fact that many Jewish big business owners have played a prominent role in Ukraine's economy during the current regime.

Yushenko received moral support from the United States and some European Union capitals, while Yanukovich was backed by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

For many of Ukraine's Jews, estimated at between 250,000 and 500,000 persons, the election was a difficult choice between the liberal Yushenko, who in the past has allied himself with politicians openly expressing anti-Semitic views, and Yanukovich, who has displayed authoritarian traits but has promised stability, which appeals to Jews in a region where instability has historically led to anti-Semitism.

Although Ukrainian Jews divided their support between the leading candidates, there were many Jews who voted against both candidates — an option allowed under Ukrainian law.

"I voted against both candidates. I don't see a national leader with a good team today," said Arkady Monastyrsky, director general of the Jewish Foundation of Ukraine.

Some Jews said they believed Yanukovich would be better at fighting anti-Semitism and xenophobia — partly because of his past statements on Jews and Israel, and partly because of Yushenko's mixed record on Jewish issues.

Some observers said they feared the outcome of the vote could distance Ukraine from the West, which could prove problematic for issues of Jewish concern.

A possible international isolation of Ukraine "after this dirty election could lead to an alliance with the Arab countries, which would worsen the Ukrainian-Israeli ties," a longtime Jewish leader and former Communist dissident, Josef Zissels, predicted.

Bleich disagreed, saying he did not expect "many changes in Ukraine's foreign policy" and believed "Yanukovich will not change basic policy toward Israel." ■



Vladimir Matveyev

Jewish leaders Josef Zissels, left, and Eduard Gurvitz discuss the elections inside Yushenko's headquarters in Kiev on Sunday.

ARTS & CULTURE

Immigrants focus of British exhibit

By DANIELLA PELED

LONDON (JTA) — Successive waves of immigrants from Europe, Asia and the Caribbean have given modern Britain its own unique character.

Now, a new exhibit sets out to explore the relationships and shared experiences of the country's Jewish, black and Asian communities.

The exhibit, which opened at the Jewish Museum in London earlier this month, is the brainchild of the Jewish Council for Racial Equality, which is committed to fighting prejudice, and the Black Jewish Forum, a discussion group.

"There have been exhibitions looking at the history of black, Jewish and Asian immigration, but there hasn't been anything comparing their experiences before," says Vicky Joseph, the exhibition's project manager.

Aimed particularly at youngsters, "Connections: Hidden British Histories" highlights the importance of cooperation, mutual learning and support, and celebrates the music, comedy, food and language of the three communities.

"We anticipate that the project will be a valuable tool for combating the alarming increase in support" for extremist political parties, as well as "challenging young people's increasingly negative views of refugees and asylum seekers," says the council's director, Edie Friedman, pointing to a poll that showed almost 60 percent of 15- to 24-year-olds believe these groups do not make a positive contribution to the United Kingdom.

Jewish groups, she adds, have to be seen to play a key role in combating that trend.

To that end, the display features 24 colorful panels on black, Asian and Jewish history packed with pictures and personal testimonies.

Highlighting cities with histories of immigration, the exhibition investigates themes such as the fight against racism and histories of oppression, from slavery to the Holocaust.

Beginning next September, the exhibition will be available for schools, libraries and community centers to use for free. ■

Ex-Israel army chief dies

By DAN BARON

JERUSALEM (JTA) —Rafael Eitan died the way he lived, facing the storm alone.

After Eitan drowned Tuesday while braving winter squalls to inspect a pier he built off Ashdod port, friends and colleagues voiced no surprise at the fate of the 75-year-old former Israel Defense Forces chief of staff.

"He always said he wanted to die on the battlefield, so I guess, in a way, he got his wish," lawmaker Nehama Ronen told Army Radio.

Nicknamed "Raful" and rarely seen without his trademark kibbutz cap, Eitan was for many Israelis the image of the old sabra — always ready to match tough talk with action.

"His life's story is characterized by a warm and courageous bond to the land; he recognized that we have to fight in order to defend

the existence of the State of Israel," Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said in a statement.

But Eitan was forced to end his military career after he was reprimanded following the 1982 massacre by an Israeli-allied Christian militia of Palestinian refugees in the Sabra and Shatila camps outside Beirut.

Born in Moshav Tel Adashim in 1929, Eitan as a boy led reprisal raids against marauding Arabs. He joined the Palmach, a Jewish militia in pre-state Palestine, at age 16.

After Israel was born, he went on to serve in all its wars, leading the country's only deployment of troops by parachute, the 1956 operation against Egyptian forces in the Mitla Pass.

"He was a brave commander and a brave soldier," said Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, who served under Eitan and later became IDF chief of staff.

When he was chief of staff, Eitan put a premium on discipline, stamping out what he saw as the slovenliness that

had crept into the ranks in the 1970s, and insisting that troops wear berets at all times. He was widely admired for innovations that allowed the IDF to retain its technological superiority over Arab foes.

Like Sharon, who stepped down as defense minister following the Sabra and Shatila massacre, Eitan bounced back as a right-wing politician.

Having formed Tehiya and Tsomet, nationalist factions opposed to ceding any land captured in the 1967 Six-Day War in peace deals, Eitan joined the coalition governments of Yitzhak Shamir in 1988 and Benjamin Netanyahu in 1996.

He served as agriculture and environment minister, but caused diplomatic stirs with remarks such as the observation that an Israeli crackdown could reduce Palestinians waging the first intifada to the status of "drugged cockroaches in a

Eitan, rarely seen without a kibbutz cap, was for many Israelis the image of the sabra — always ready to match tough talk with action.

bottle."

"His slurs against the Palestinians as a collective were unacceptable, but nonetheless I extend condolences to his family," said Ahmed Tibi, an Israeli Arab lawmaker.

Eitan quit politics in 1999 after his party failed to win any Knesset seats in the general election, returning to work as an olive farmer, encouraging disadvantaged youths to gain professional experience during their military service and pursuing several construction projects, including the port at Ashdod.

"Raful never forgot his great love — the land and labor. Thus, to our sorrow, he met his end," Sharon said. "I lost a comrade-in-arms and a friend."

Eitan is survived by his wife, Ofra Meyerson, with whom he lived in Herzliya, and three daughters. His two sons died under tragic circumstances — one of illness at age 10, and the other in an accident while training as an Israel Air Force pilot.

Eitan was to be buried on Wednesday. ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

Mengele's diary surfaces

Pages from the diary of the notorious Nazi doctor Josef Mengele allegedly surfaced in the possession of Brazilian police.

In the papers, Mengele reveals he had a nervous habit of chewing on his own beard and swallowing his own hair, which resulted in a life-threatening blockage of his intestines.

Mengele defends his view of racial superiority and applauds apartheid, according to media reports. He also writes of financial difficulties and of the challenge of bringing his wife, Ruth, to Beirut for medical treatment.

The 13 pages, rediscovered in October, were among 85 documents to be published in the newspaper *Folha de Sao Paulo*.

The papers originally were taken in 1985 from the home of a friend of Mengele.

Mengele died in 1979 at the age of about 67, in a swimming accident in Sao Paulo.

Neo-Nazi won't testify

A German neo-Nazi leader charged with planning to attack a Jewish institution refused to testify in his trial.

Martin Wiese is charged with having masterminded a plan to attack the future Jewish community center of Munich on Nov. 9, 2003, the day its cornerstone was planted.

Wiese and 13 others were arrested in September 2003. The ceremony, which also marked the anniversary of Kristallnacht, went ahead as planned.

According to a report in the *Die Welt* newspaper, three others charged in the planned attack will testify in the trial, which began this week.

Righteous spy honored

A British spy who saved tens of thousands of German Jews from the Holocaust was honored.

The British Embassy in Berlin unveiled a plaque in honor of Frank Foley at a ceremony Wednesday attended by Holocaust survivors and their descendants.

In the early 1940s, Foley worked undercover as a German passport clerk and risked discovery by issuing emigration papers to tens of thousands of Jews.

He left Germany before the outbreak of World War II, served British intelligence elsewhere and died in obscurity in 1958.

"This guy is a shining light who has been kept on the sidelines," said Peter Weiss, whose mother was sheltered by Foley. "The honor he has received should have happened in his lifetime."

MIDDLE EAST

Peace through vacation

The Israeli and Palestinian Authority tourism ministers signed a cooperation agreement.

"Tourism can open the way for peace in the Middle East, and in this area we are here to assure the tourists, the visitors to this country, that they will feel at home when they are in the Holy Land," Mitri Abu Aita, P.A. minister of tourism and antiquities, told reporters Wednesday at a signing ceremony with his Israeli counterpart, Gideon Ezra.

The two agreed on a series of measures to assure safe and smooth passage of visitors to the Holy Land, and plan to hold joint publicity campaigns abroad.

"The economy is the most important thing for Israelis and Palestinians," Ezra said.

Canadian sentenced to Israeli jail

A Gaza-born Canadian citizen was sentenced to four years in an Israeli jail. An Israeli military court sentenced Jamal Akkal on Wednesday after he plead guilty to planning attacks on Israelis in North America, according to a report in *Ha'aretz*.

Prosecutors said Akkal planned to attack Israeli officials in the United States and bomb Jewish targets in North America.

Yeshiva students arrested

Four American yeshiva students were arrested on suspicion of attacking Arab youths in Jerusalem.

Israeli police said Wednesday the four were arrested overnight after a firebomb was tossed from the balcony of their apartment at a group of Arab youths in the Old City's Jewish Quarter.

The firebomb failed to explode, and the suspects deny involvement. They were to be remanded in Jerusalem Magistrate's Court.

Milking a boycott?

An Israeli settler group threatened to boycott one of Israel's major dairies.

The Yesha Council made the threat Wednesday after the CEO of Tnuva, Arik Reichman, called the Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip a "destructive messianic dream which has destroyed the economy as well as everything else in Israel," the *Jerusalem Post* reported.

The council called on Reichman to apologize for his remarks or face a boycott.

NORTH AMERICA

Pentagon to sell Jordan missiles

The Pentagon plans to sell Jordan 50 anti-aircraft missiles despite reported Israeli objections.

The Pentagon notified Congress on Tuesday of the planned sale of the missiles manufactured by Raytheon, for \$39 million.

Congress has 30 days to block the agreement, but that's unlikely. Israel's defense minister, Shaul Mofaz, reportedly had lobbied against the deal this summer, fearing it could spark an arms race between Israel and its Arab neighbors, though Israel is at peace with Jordan.

AJCongress defends court decision

The American Jewish Congress asked an appeals court to uphold a ruling keeping federally funded volunteers from teaching religion. The AmeriCorps Education Reward program pays the tuition of university students who complete volunteer programs.

A brief filed Monday by AJCongress in a Washington appeals court seeks to uphold a July district court decision, in the case of *AJCongress v. Corporation for National Service*, banning AmeriCorps from rewarding volunteers whose service is religious teaching.

"We won the first round on the argument that it was beyond dispute that the government cannot pay parochial school teachers to teach religion in their religious schools," AJCongress President Paul Miller said in a statement. "Apparently, what was plain to us and the judge is still unclear to the Corporation for National Service."

Reform seminary to be reformed

The Reform movement's seminary in Cincinnati is embarking on a \$17 million improvement project.

The project at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion's main campus will focus on remodeling the Klau Library, transforming a gymnasium into an auditorium and renovating dormitories, among other projects.

More than \$12 million has already been pledged for the projects.