


IN THE NEWS
Rice to Middle East

Condoleezza Rice will visit the Middle East next month.

Rice, who has just been confirmed as Secretary of State, plans to visit the region Feb. 3-10.

Such a visit would be Rice's first in her new job. She also plans to attend a conference on assisting the Palestinians planned for early March in London, the State Department said.

She said during confirmation hearings last week that she would devote "enormous effort" to bringing about Israeli-Palestinian peace.

JCPA leader quits her post

Hannah Rosenthal, the executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, resigned.

Rosenthal had headed the umbrella group for federation-affiliated Jewish community relations councils across the United States.

In her resignation letter sent Thursday, she gave personal reasons for her decision.

Martin Raffel, JCPA's associate executive director, will serve as acting executive director.

Senate to praise Palestinians

The U.S. Senate is likely to pass a resolution next week commending the Palestinians for holding free and fair presidential elections.

The resolution, sponsored by the Senate majority and minority leaders, also describes the new Palestinian Authority president, Mahmoud Abbas, as a "credible leader," calls for increased aid to the Palestinians and calls on Israel and the Palestinians to abide by the provisions of the "road map" peace plan, which requires the Palestinians to stop terrorism and Israel to limit settlement building.

A similar resolution is circulating in the U.S. House of Representatives.

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WORLD REPORT

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Krzysztof Wojda

About 7,000 people gathered for ceremonies marking the 60th anniversary of Auschwitz's liberation in Oswiecim, Poland on Thursday.

Dignitaries and survivors remember at Auschwitz

By **TOBY AXELROD** and **CAROLYN SLUTSKY**

OSWIECIM, Poland (JTA) — The last time Trudy Spira was in Auschwitz, she was 12 years old. The day of liberation "is my second birthday — I was reborn on that day," said Spira, who came from Venezuela with her son Ernesto, 48, to show him the place that robbed her of her childhood.

Ziggy Shipper, 75, and his grandson Elliott Stern, 16, arrived together from London. "He will never forget till the day he dies that he came here with his grandfather," Shipper said.

Ted Lehman came from the United States, wearing the cap he was wearing when he was

liberated 60 years ago. "How does a 16-year-old boy explain that in one moment I was all of a sudden alone?" he asked.

Spira, Shipper and Lehman were among about 1,000 survivors of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp who returned Thursday for ceremonies marking the 60th anniversary of the camp's liberation, in what may be the last major ceremony to include significant numbers of survivors.

Close to 40 heads of state and foreign ministers attended, together with liberators of the camp from the former Soviet Army. Some 7,000 people attended the memorial — about the same number still imprisoned there when

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**60 YEARS
AFTER
LIBERATION**

■ *Survivors join dignitaries to mark liberation anniversary*

Continued from page 1

the Soviet army liberated the camp six decades ago.

Despite the presence of so many dignitaries, it was the survivors who took center stage Thursday.

Israeli President Moshe Katsav praised the survivors "for returning to life, for daring again to feel that you belong to the world, for finding the inner strength to again raise families, for again believing in man."

After he spoke, an unidentified woman took the microphone and spoke briefly. She was born in Poland, she said, and had been imprisoned in Auschwitz.

Taking off her jacket despite the frigid weather, she showed the number on her arm. The Nazis had taken away her name and given her a number, she said, and they had brought her to Auschwitz naked. But now she has her name back, she has a country and she has a president.

The ceremony ended with the singing of the El Malei Rachamim prayer.

Other speakers at Auschwitz included Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski; Russian President Vladimir Putin; and survivors Wladyslaw Bartoszewski of Poland, a Righteous Gentile; Simone Veil of France, president of the Foundation for the Memory of the Shoah; and the Jewish-born Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger of France, who read an address from Pope John Paul II.

Guests included U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney; French President Jacques Chirac, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi; Waldemar Dabrowski, Poland's minister of culture; and Avner Shalev,

chairman of the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem.

From Wednesday afternoon on, Krakow was full of formal and informal conversations, press conferences and receptions dedicated to the anniversary events. Education was a key theme at all events connected with the memorial.

Before the Auschwitz ceremony, an educational program for teachers on the Holocaust's lessons was launched in nearby Krakow at the "Let My People Live!" forum organized by the Polish Ministry of Culture, the European Jewish Congress and Yad Vashem, together with the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

"The fact that so many leaders of the world are gathered here today demonstrates the continued importance of keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive and offers the promise of a better tomorrow," said Moshe Kantor, chief organizer of the forum and chairman of the EJC's board of governors.

The morning forum included speeches by Cheney, Nobel laureate and Auschwitz survivor Elie Wiesel, World Jewish Congress governing board chairman Israel Singer and Israel's Ashkenazi chief rabbi, Yona Metzger.

The official ceremony at the camp began with the symbolic blast of a train's horn.

"May today our common cry sound from this place," Kwasniewski said, "the cry for a world without hatred and contempt, without racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, for a world in which the word 'human' will always ring with pride."

By many accounts, Poland has undergone a major transformation in its view of its role in the Holocaust since 1995, when survivors gathered for the 50th anniversary of Auschwitz's liberation. Today, Poles not only celebrate the heroism of citizens who risked their lives to rescue Jews but have begun to accept that some Poles participated in the killing — and that most Auschwitz victims were Jews.

Some 1.3 million people died in Aus-

chwitz, about 1 million of them Jews. In 1995, however, the Polish government was still so uncomfortable about stressing Jewish suffering at the camp that at first it barred a group recitation of the Kaddish, Rabbi Andrew Baker, director of international affairs for the American Jewish Committee, recalled at a dinner Wednesday.

This year, the program was organized by Jewish groups and included prayers. Moreover, Baker said, "Ten years ago, there was no Israeli president here."

Kwasniewski publicly apologized for the events at Jed-

wabne, Poland, where Poles helped Germans murder the local Jewish population. The story of Jedwabne was uncovered in 2001 and threw Poland into turmoil.

"Jedwabne opened up a very bad wound in Polish society with regard to their share in the murders," Yad Vashem's Shalev told JTA. "President Kwasniewski believes that coming to terms with the truth is an essential part of building a democratic society."

From the time they arrived in Krakow from points around the world, survivors were gripped with a fever of remembering something that most had tried hard to forget.

Not all were liberated here. Some were sent on death marches to other camps, where they worked as slaves until the end of the war. But all shared a profound need to return to Auschwitz — and then to walk out again.

"How is it possible that such a maddening system like this worked so well?" asked Mel Mermelstein, 78, who was sent on a death march from Auschwitz on Jan. 18, 1945. Standing in front of the former crematorium, his son David at his side, Mermelstein said, "The civilized world should come here and see what man can do to man."

People had asked her "how come I was willing to come to the place where my childhood was robbed," Trudy Spira said.

"I am coming of my own free will. I brought my son because before, no one had the chance to walk out of their own accord. And today we can." ■

The fact that so many leaders of the world are gathered here today demonstrates the continued importance of keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive.

Moshe Kantor
EJC chairman

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Top professional at umbrella group resigns

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — One of the top professionals of the American Jewish communal world has resigned.

Hannah Rosenthal, executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, announced her resignation to the JCPA board Wednesday afternoon.

Rosenthal, known for summoning fierce, unrelenting passion for crusades of social justice, cited personal reasons for leaving the umbrella group of federation-affiliated Jewish community relations councils across the country.

"I have decided to 'go home' to the Midwest — where my family lives, and to work with a different social change organization," she wrote in a Jan. 27 resignation letter to JCPA board members, directors of community relations councils and affiliated national agencies.

She was one of the few women at the helm of a major Jewish organization and will become executive director of the Chicago Foundation for Women, one of the largest foundations in the world supporting the rights and welfare of women and girls.

The announcement comes only weeks before the JCPA's annual plenum, its principal venue for policy debates and resolutions.

Rosenthal, who began her post in the fall of 2000, said she would leave after the plenum, slated to begin Feb. 26 in Washington.

The group's associate executive director, Martin Raffel, is slated to become acting executive director in March.

Despite Rosenthal's stated reasons for resigning, people close to her speculate that her liberal stance on social and economic policy issues may have contributed to her decision.

Rosenthal's Democratic politics are well known — she worked in the Clinton administration as the Midwest regional director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

She was vehemently opposed to President Bush's domestic agenda, and often was not shy about it.

She wears a necklace with a charm in the shape of a hanger, symbolizing her staunch support for women's reproductive rights.

The Forward, which ranked her in 2004 in its annual list of the 50 most influential Jews, said that as "the representative of 123 local Jewish community councils and

a dozen of the largest national groups, she leads what is perhaps the most broadly democratic Jewish organization, and she seems to take it as a mandate to speak for what many see as a silent Jewish majority."

The JCPA has butted heads over its agenda in recent years with some lay leaders at one of its major funders, the United Jewish Communities, the umbrella group for the federation movement.

It was widely known that a past UJC chair, James Tisch, had objected to some of the JCPA's focus on social welfare concerns, arguing that they fell outside

the realm of Jewish priorities. The flashpoints chiefly came in the area of JCPA's anti-poverty work and its opposition to Bush's tax cuts.

The New York Times wrote about the antagonism between Tisch and Rosenthal in November 2004. The Times reported that Tisch wrote what he termed a "vituperative" e-mail to Rosenthal.

"I believe that many of our donors would not be too pleased to see our communal dollars being spent advocating either for or against tax proposals," the e-mail said.

Neither Rosenthal nor Tisch could be reached for comment.

Like many JCPA activists, David Luchins, who for three decades has represented the Orthodox Union on the board of the JCPA, said he was crestfallen to learn of Rosenthal's resignation.

On hearing the news, he wrote her an e-mail, joking that he was giving up Jewish communal life and moving to Madagascar.

Others say that despite some of the

political differences, Rosenthal enhanced relations between the JCPA and the UJC.

"Hannah in fact had done a tremendous amount to grow and develop the relationship between JCPA and UJC over the past few years, especially in the area of Israel advocacy," said Michael Bohnen of Boston, chair of the JCPA.

John Ruskay, executive vice president and CEO of the UJA-Federation of New York, agreed.

"Hannah is a superb professional, and she's given great leadership to JCPA,"

he said, adding that when she told him her news, he asked "whether any of the noise and political issues had contributed" to her decision. "She said absolutely not, this was an opportunity of a lifetime and for a range of personal reasons she is eager to return home."

As for the JCPA's next move, Bohnen said, "we are going to be continuing in the same general direction, which is a focus on advocacy for Israel and Jews around the world and social justice here at home." ■

'Hannah in fact had done a tremendous amount to grow and develop the relationship between JCPA and UJC over the past few years, especially in the area of Israel advocacy.'

Michael Bohnen
JCPA chairman



David M. Baron/JCPA

Hannah Rosenthal, executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, opens the JCPA 2004 Plenum in Boston.

Gaza settlers wonder if they must leave 'paradise'

By DINA KRAFT

ELEI SINAI, Gaza Strip (JTA) — Talya Eluz walks into her cream-colored sunken living room and takes in the view of sloping sand dunes leading to the shimmering blue Mediterranean Sea and the electric fence that surrounds what she calls paradise.

"Look at it — it's like Malibu," Eluz says, holding her month-old baby daughter. "But people hear Elei Sinai and think of terrorists. They think we live war every day."

This "Garden of Eden," as Eluz and her neighbors like to call Elei Sinai, is a settlement in the northern Gaza Strip, founded in 1982 by a small group of families evacuated from the Sinai settlement of Yamit when it was destroyed under a peace treaty with Egypt.

The settlement's cul-de-sacs and palm tree-lined streets are quiet except when the thud of mortar shells, which fall almost daily, break the hush.

The quiet also belies the scene the same day at the Beit Lahiya refugee camp, whose rooftops and minarets are visible from Eluz's kitchen window: As Eluz, 36, serves coffee to visitors, seven Palestinians have been killed by an Israeli tank shell retaliating against terrorists firing mortars into Israel. Six of the dead are innocent youths from one family.

Twenty-three years after the first house was built in Elei Sinai, the talk is again of evacuation. The community is home to 85 families, mostly secular Israelis who do not

share the ideological and religious stands of settlers in the Gush Katif settlement bloc in the southern Gaza Strip.

But Elei Sinai residents are divided on how to respond to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip, a plan that would force them to leave their sprawling homes by the sea, the rose gardens they planted with care and the close-knit community they have forged.

Nobody wants to leave, residents say, but some have begun meeting with lawyers and government representatives to investigate the reparation packages they would receive should the day come when Israeli policemen and soldiers arrive to evacuate Elei Sinai and other Gaza settlements.

Eluz and her husband finished building their dream home — an airy, open-plan two-story house with floors of beige tile and hard wood and a hot tub off the master bedroom — just four months ago.

Eluz is a homemaker, and her husband works in events promotion for the Israeli branch of the Carlsberg brewing company. They moved here from the Tel Aviv suburb of Rishon le-Zion.

They couldn't afford to build a private home there, but they could afford one here, where a plot of land with a sea view cost them just \$13,000.

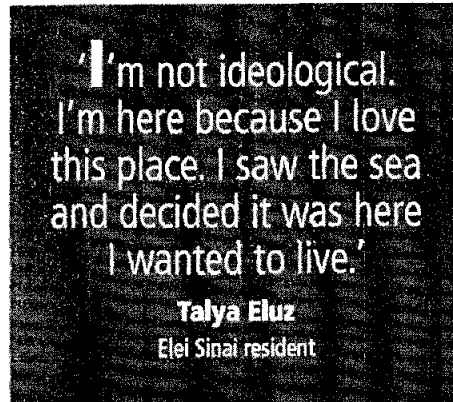
"I didn't know Gaza even really existed here. My husband said we were moving across the Green Line," Eluz says. "I'm not ideological. I'm here because I love this place. I saw the sea and decided it was here I wanted to live."

She can't bring herself to discuss the possibility of evacuation with her older children, aged 3 and 6. She can hardly

bear to think of it herself, she says.

Eluz and her husband are active in the "Committee for the Struggle of Elei Sinai," a group of residents determined to show the government they intend to stay.

"We are not going to react with violence, but we are doing what we must do quietly, with dialogue," she says. She presents a colored flyer produced by the group: Under the heading "Stop the Mistake," the flyer presents a few paragraphs of background on Elei Sinai's history and a map of the Gaza Strip and southern



Israel.

"I built this house with my own hands," Eluz says. "I won't chain myself to the house, but if I know the house will be given to Palestinians I will break down all the walls."

For Ofer Menashe, moving his family 10 miles from Ashkelon to Elei Sinai 13 years ago was a "simple economic calculation." In Ashkelon the family lived in a small house, whereas in Elei Sinai they built a sprawling home on a large plot of land — and didn't even have to take out a mortgage.

Now that Sharon's disengagement plan appears to be moving ahead, Menashe is willing to leave — for the right price.

Menashe recently contacted Shuvi, an Israeli grassroots organization whose name means "Come Back." The group is dedicated to an immediate withdrawal from Gaza.

"There are those who do not want to hear about anything, and there are those who think about the future and who want to leave, and that's me," says Menashe, 49, an electricity company employee and self-described left-winger who usually votes for Labor or Meretz.

When he moved to the Gaza Strip, he always knew there was the possibility that he and his family would have to leave one day.

"I think the Arabs need to be on their side and we need to be on our side," he says, sitting with his wife and teen-age daughter on couches in their plant-filled living room.

Several Elei Sinai residents met with the government to say they would agree

THE COSTS OF DISENGAGEMENT



Brian Hendler

Talya Eluz, left, Ravit Cohen and their children sit in Eluz's living room in her Elei Sinai home.

to evacuate their homes peacefully if they received land to rebuild their community in Nitzanim, an area of unspoiled seaside dunes between Ashdod and Ashkelon.

But the area is a nature reserve, and the government denied their request.

Menashe recently told a visiting delegation of Knesset members that if they want settlers to leave, they must help increase the reparation packages being offered.

"The reparation payments are insulting," he says, citing current government calculations that would give him \$180,000 for his home. It's worth almost three times that, he says, but he would be satisfied with a package worth between \$300,000 and \$400,000.

Menashe sits next to the family computer in the corner of the living room and logs on to the Internet site set up by the government's Disengagement Authority. There's a special page, marked by a calculator icon, where settlers can input details about their property and receive an estimate of how much they can expect to receive in reparations.

"The government is making a mistake," Menashe says as he scrolls through the site. "If the prices were right people would leave voluntarily. They would leave if they had the money to do so."

Menashe's wife, Ora, 44, agrees.

"We do not want to be evacuated, but if there is a decision we will go. We will not attack the police or the army, we are good citizens. But we want reparations," she says, lamenting the idea of starting over again with teen-agers to support.

"We thought this was it, we thought this was where we would spend the rest of our lives," she says wistfully.

Ofer Menashe, however, says he always

thought the family's stay in Gaza would be temporary.

"We will leave here at some point. If not now, then later with an agreement," he says. "I always knew Gaza would not stay with us."

Arik Harpaz leans back on the striped bedspread in the room that once belonged to his daughter, Liron.

He and his wife have not changed a thing since the night the 19-year-old was shot to death by Palestinian gunmen a few blocks away, at the edge of Elei Sinai. The white bookshelves still are crammed with novels, cassettes and notebooks. A white teddy bear stares down from the desk.

Photos of dark-haired Liron, with her pale skin and red lips, stare down from the walls.

The morning after Liron's death, Harpaz started looking through her notebooks. To his surprise, he found poem after poem — 140 in all. They have been published and some of them put to music by top Israeli singers, and they have been made into a CD.

Harpaz says he can't imagine leaving the home where Liron and her two sisters grew up — or the place where she died.

"The blood of Liron is soaked in this earth and they want to expel us from here — even without an agreement?" he asks, his voice trailing off. "This disengagement process is very hard for us."

On Oct. 2, 2001, during Sukkot, Liron had come home from the army with her new boyfriend. They had gone for a walk around the settlement when they were spotted by two teenaged Palestinians who opened fire, killing them both.

Harpaz, a volunteer ambulance driver, was among the first called to the scene.

For Harpaz and his family, who have lived in Elei Sinai for 11 years, life is divided into before and after "the disaster."

He is haunted by the idea that perhaps relatives of the Palestinians



Brian Hendler

With his eyes closed, Arik Harpaz listens to a song written by his daughter, Liron, who was murdered by Palestinian terrorists, as he sits on her bed in the Gaza Strip settlement of Elei Sinai.

who killed Liron will end up living in the Harpaz home if Israel withdraws from Gaza.

If an evacuation does take place, Harpaz, 49, who works in sales, says he would throw a Molotov cocktail and light the house on fire.

"The disengagement plan defies logic," he said. "The Palestinians see that their violence brings them victory," he says.

An energetic, wiry man with brown hair graying at the temples, who always wears a dog tag with Liron's name, Harpaz says he's not interested in discussing reparations with the government. He says he will refuse to sign any papers or deal with the Disengagement Authority.

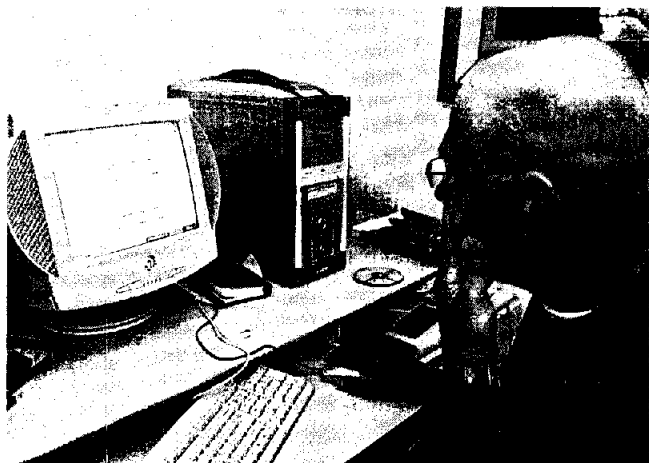
He describes himself as a political moderate and vows to oppose the disengagement plan peacefully.

"If they come to kick us out of our houses, we will invite them for tea and cake," he says.

He dismisses the idea of moving to the Galilee or Negev, areas the government is pushing for settler relocation.

Like most Jews in the Gaza settlements, Harpaz speaks lovingly about the community in which he lives. He differentiates himself and his neighbors from religious settlers in Gush Katif. The three settlements in the northern Gaza Strip are secular.

"Here we do not talk in terms of the Land of Israel," Harpaz says. "Here we treat the question of evacuation as a moral one. We think it is immoral to evacuate people from their homes. We think it is criminal."



Brian Hendler

Ofer Menashe looks at an Israeli government Web site that details how much money he will get when he leaves his house in the Gaza Strip.

P.A. laying ground for genocide against Jews?

By GIL SEDAN

JERUSALEM (JTA) — It's no secret that media in the Palestinian Authority, as in much of the Muslim world, present images of Jews that would not have been out of place in the most anti-Semitic of Nazi publications.

But are such images laying the groundwork for genocide?

Natan Sharansky, Israel's minister for Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs, called a news conference Tuesday to present a report by Palestinian Media Watch on anti-Semitism in the Palestinian Authority. The report charges that the P.A.'s religious, political and academic leaders promote "an ideology of virulent hatred of Jews and Israel that mandates the killing of Jews as a religious obligation."

While the revelations are not new, the report collects them systematically and argues that the Palestinians are following the Nazi pattern of portraying the Jews as subhuman creatures who are a danger to mankind — steps that may help create a mindset condoning the killing of such threatening figures.

"As in Nazi Germany, there is an entire 'culture of hatred' in Palestinian society today, from textbooks to crossword puzzles, from day camps to TV music videos," said Sharansky, who heads the government's struggle against anti-Semitism. "And calling for the murder of Jews, as Jews, is the end result."

Tuesday's news conference followed the Israeli government's release of its annual report on global anti-Semitism, timed to coincide with Israel's "National Day Against Anti-Semitism" on Thursday. This year the date also is the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, which is being marked as Holocaust Remembrance Day in Europe.

wicked, therefore he is dangerous to us and to the world, and therefore we need to fight

against him," Palestinian Media Watch director Itamar Marcus told JTA.

In the run-up to Palestinian Authority presidential elections Jan. 9, the eventual winner, Mahmoud Abbas, met with the head of the Palestine Broadcasting Authority and asked him to check all programs aired on P.A. television to

'As in Nazi Germany, there is an entire "culture of hatred" in Palestinian society today, from textbooks to crossword puzzles, from day camps to TV music videos.'

Natan Sharansky
Israel Cabinet Minister

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Palestinian Media Watch scrutinizes local media for anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli bias. Some Middle East experts are critical of the organization, charging that it distorts a situation that even without exaggeration is grave enough. But others defend its scholarship.

"Palestinian anti-Semitism has intensified in the past few years," Hebrew University professor Menahem Milson told JTA. "This is so because the media has become more sophisticated, particularly satellite TV and the Internet." Milson, a professor of Arabic literature, is the academic adviser for the Middle East Media Research Institute, which monitors Arabic-language media.

"In the past, when an anti-Semitic sheik

insulted Jews on a Friday sermon in the mosque," calling them descendants of pigs and apes or other degrading terms, "only those in the mosque heard him," Milson said. "But today the message passes on, sermons are aired on television, and are compiled in Web sites all over."

"We receive from Palestinian society three messages: The Jew is essentially

prevent the broadcast of inciting material.

Marcus conceded that nationalistic programming calling for violence against Israel has decreased somewhat, but said anti-Semitic rhetoric depicting the Jews as subhuman, dangerous creatures has even increased.

Palestinians said that wasn't the case.

"We oppose incitement. We don't believe incitement leads to anything. We are just covering events," Radwan Abu-Ayyash, director general of the Palestine Broadcasting Authority, told JTA. "We want to alert public attention to what's going on around us.

In fact, Palestinian media adjust to fit the mood on the street and the political directives coming from above. Thus, under the late P.A. President Yasser Arafat, strong incitement against the Jews was welcome. With Abbas in charge, the atmosphere seems to be changing.

Hebrew University's Milson is convinced that the best way to fight Arab and Muslim anti-Semitism is to expose it, because Arab opinion leaders are sensitive to criticism from the West.

Faced with strong criticism from the United States, Osama Al-Baz, a political adviser to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, wrote an article denouncing anti-Semitism. The Institute of Islamic Studies at Cairo's religious Al-Azhar University has recommended that Muslim preachers refrain from comparing Jews to pigs and apes.

"It is doubtful that either of these steps would have been taken were it not for the recent protests and criticism in the U.S. Congress and media," according to Milson. ■



Palestinian Media Watch

A cartoon in the Oct. 31, 2004, edition of Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, a Palestinian Authority newspaper, accuses Israel of attempting to kill Yasser Arafat.

ARTS & CULTURE

Israeli conductor makes U.S. debut at helm of 'Aida'

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Dan Ettinger, an Israeli making his American debut with the Los Angeles Opera in Verdi's "Aida," looks nothing like the popular image of a classical conductor.

Appearing considerably younger than his 33 years and standing a sturdy 6 feet 1 inch, Ettinger wears his hair short-cropped. His approach is casual, and he speaks of his work with the care of a skilled craftsman.

Dealing with an unfamiliar orchestra of more than 80 instrumentalists in "Aida," advertised as "the grandest of grand operas," is a major challenge, especially for a self-described "control freak" and "young pisher" — genteelly translated as a "young squirt."

The morning after opening night, Ettinger seemed fairly satisfied, though he said it takes three or four performances before a new opera production hits its peak.

Ettinger is descended from Romanian immigrants to Israel — his father and grandmother are Holocaust survivors—and he grew up in the Tel Aviv suburb of Holon. He was exposed to his parents' large classical and jazz collection early on, and showed an early interest in music.

He started his professional career as a baritone when he was 19. His favorite role was as Papageno in Mozart's "The Magic Flute." Nowadays, he no longer sings on stage, though when he rehearses "Aida" he sings along with all the parts.

Since 2003, Ettinger has been the resident director of the prestigious Berlin Staatsoper Unter den Linden, handpicked for the job by fellow Israeli Daniel Barenboim. Many of the leading musical figures in Berlin now, ironically, are Israelis, Ettinger said. This fall he will become music director and principal conductor of the Israel Symphony Orchestra in Rishon le-Zion.

After he finishes "Aida" Ettinger is off to Tokyo to conduct Mozart's "Cosi fan Tutte," but he will return to Los Angeles next year to lead the orchestra in Puccini's "Madame Butterfly." ■

Pogrom education pushed

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Thirteen-year-old Maurice Zekaria looked out through the curtained window of his house in central Baghdad and saw Iraqi men dragging two Jewish girls down the street by their hair.

He saw Iraqis attacking Jewish men with axes and hammers, and he saw heavy smoke rising from torched Jewish businesses and homes.

It was June 1, 1941 — Shavuot — and over the next 48 hours, Muslim rioters killed some 180 Jews and injured 240, raped Jewish women and burned and looted 586 Jewish stores and homes.

"That was the 'Farhud,'" said Zekaria, 76, a Los Angeles resident and founding CEO of a national chain of clothing stores.

The Farhud, an Arabic term for "violent dispossession," was put down by British troops after two days of rampaging by pro-Nazi Arabs.

But it marked the beginning of the end of the 2,600-year-old Iraqi Jewish community, just as Kristallnacht in 1938 signaled the upcoming destruction of German Jewry.

"Everybody has heard of Kristallnacht, but nobody has heard of Farhud," Zekaria said.

According to recent studies, almost 200,000 Sephardi Jews perished at the hands of the Nazis, mainly in Greece, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Pogroms in Arab countries — many orchestrated, as in the Farhud, by the exiled Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, a Hitler ally — added to the toll. ■

To remedy the gap in the historical record, a small group of American Sephardi leaders met with Holocaust historians last week to launch the Farhud Recognition Project.

The main catalyst in the effort has been investigative reporter and author Edwin Black, whose new book "Banking on Baghdad," published by John Wiley & Sons, surveys Iraq's stormy history, its oil politics and the fate of its Jewish community.

"We must recognize that Hitler wanted to kill not just the Jews of Central and

Eastern Europe, but all Jews everywhere," said Shelomo Alfassa, executive director of the Florida-based International Society for Sephardic Progress. ■

As a concrete step, Prof. Samuel Edelman announced that he will incorporate the Farhud and Sephardi experiences in teacher training and curriculum programs for California's mandatory high school classes on the Holocaust.

Edelman heads the state-supported Center for Excellence on the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide, Human Rights and Tolerance at California State University, Chico.

The L.A. Museum of the Holocaust is planning a traveling exhibit along the Farhud project lines, executive director Rachel Jagoda said.

Jose Nessim, founder of the Sephardic Educational and Cultural Center in Jerusalem, Buenos Aires and Los Angeles, pledged his support for the

project.

So did leaders of Kahal Joseph, a predominantly Iraqi Jewish congregation in Los Angeles, and the Washington-based Institute of Religion and Public Policy.

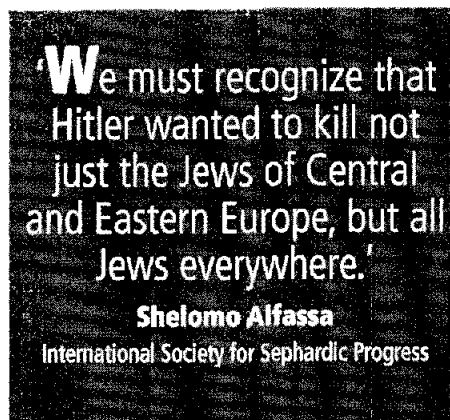
"We are not trying to change the focus of Holocaust studies, but to make them more inclusive," Black said.

He noted that it has taken a long time for the public to become aware of many Holocaust restitution issues or the collaboration of IBM and other U.S. industries with the Hitler regime.

"I believe that in five years, the Farhud will be an integral part of our discourse," Black said.

Alfassa urged interested organizations and individuals to petition their schools and universities to include the aims of the Farhud project in their teaching and research. ■

More information can be obtained from Shelomo Alfassa, International Society for Sephardic Progress, PO Box 621719, Oviedo Fla., 32762, (407) 496-1125, (407) 496-1125 or farhud@farhud.org. For more background, visit www.farhud.org or www.bankingonbaghdad.com.



NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Sharon satisfied with Abbas

Ariel Sharon praised Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen, for reining in violence.

"There is no doubt that Abu Mazen has begun to work," the Israeli prime minister told Yediot Aharonot on Thursday, referring to the Palestinian leader's cease-fire talks with terrorist groups in Gaza. "I am very satisfied with what I hear is happening on the Palestinian side, and I have a serious interest in advancing the peace process with him."

Accord way off

Israel does not seek a final peace accord with the Palestinian Authority at this time, Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom said.

"Taking a step toward a permanent-status agreement would be doomed to fail," Shalom told Army Radio on Thursday after consultations with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Washington. "There is a deep lack of trust between the sides, and therefore this trust has to be rebuilt, step by step."

Israel intends to hold Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to his preliminary obligations under a U.S.-led peace "road map," but he has been pushing for an immediate discussion of the plan's ultimate vision of Palestinian statehood in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Spat over land

Israel's attorney general stirred Zionist debate by ruling that Jewish National Fund land can be sold to Arabs.

Reports of Attorney General Menachem Mazuz's decision to rescind Jews-only sales at the JNF surfaced Thursday, prompting right-wing groups to vow new legislation enshrining the policy in law.

"This is a decision that completely clashes with the definition of the State of Israel as a Jewish country," said Zevulun Orlev of the National Religious Party.

But left-wing groups praised Mazuz in the name of pluralism.

"This decision makes the principle of equality a reality, and is thus praiseworthy," said Avshalom Vilan of the liberal Meretz Party.

Israel: Cohen's return would be 'serious'

Bashar Assad's return of the body of an Israeli spy would convince Israel that the Syrian president is ready for peace.

"If he would like to move toward peace, we are willing to do it," Silvan Shalom, the Israeli foreign minister, said Wednesday on CNN. "And he can start with one humanitarian step. Just return the body of Eli Cohen — he's an Israeli agent that was hanged there 40 years ago — it would be a very positive thing."

Syria has recently suggested Israel resume talks that would culminate in full peace in exchange for a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights, the strategic plateau Israel captured in 1967.

Shalom still wanted Syria to cut off terrorist groups, but returning the body of Cohen, hanged in 1965 after infiltrating Syria's highest echelons, "would convince us that he's serious about his willingness to move towards peace."

Survivors press lawsuit

Two survivors of a Hamas suicide bombing sued the Palestinian Authority.

The two Israelis, a man and a woman, were wounded in the June 2001 attack on the Dolphinarium nightclub in Tel Aviv, which killed 22 people.

They filed a \$16 million damages claim in Tel Aviv District Court on Thursday, accusing the Palestinian Authority of encouraging Hamas terrorism. Similar lawsuits in the past have paid out compensation from Palestinian Authority tax levies held by Israel.

NORTH AMERICA

Feith quits Pentagon

Douglas Feith, a top Jewish official at the Pentagon, is quitting. Feith, the undersecretary of state for policy planning, said Wednesday he would leave by summer.

Feith "earned the respect of civilian and military leaders across the government," Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said in a statement.

Critics said Feith ignored and massaged intelligence suggesting that an Iraq invasion ultimately would fail and mishandled postwar policy in that country.

Ghetto guard loses citizenship

The U.S. government revoked a man's citizenship because he concealed his service in a Nazi SS unit when he applied to enter the United States.

Vladas Zajackauskas served as a guard during the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943.

On his citizenship application, he said he had been working as a farmer in Lithuania until 1944.

The Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations and the U.S. Attorney's Office in Boston prosecuted the case against Zajackauskas, who is 89 and has been living in a suburb of Boston.

WORLD

Rabbi explains tsunami

International support for Israel's Gaza withdrawal plan caused the Southeast Asian tsunami, one of Israel's former Sephardi chief rabbis said.

In the latest issue of a pamphlet distributed to thousands of synagogues throughout Israel, Mordechai Eliyahu drew a parallel between last month's tragedy and a tractate of the Babylonian Talmud in which God causes an earthquake after the nations of the world fail to aid Israel, the Jerusalem Post reported.

Last rites for next-to-last Jew

One of Afghanistan's two known remaining Jews died. Yitzhak Levi succumbed to complications from diabetes in Kabul last week. He was 80.

His death leaves only one Jew in Afghanistan, Zebulun Simentov. Levi's family, which lives in Israel, is hoping to take his remains for burial in Israel.

After the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, Jewish groups offered to help Levi emigrate, but he refused. Most Afghan Jews left after the creation of Israel in 1948 or during subsequent unrest in their country.

Asteroid named for Auschwitz victim

An asteroid was named after a Czech Jewish boy who died in Auschwitz.

The International Astronomy Union named Asteroid No. 50413 after Peter Ginz.

In Theresienstadt during World War II, Ginz drew a picture of the earth as seen from the moon.

Ginz was sent to Theresienstadt in 1942 and died in Auschwitz in 1944.

Israeli astronaut Ilan Ramon took Ginz's drawing on the ill-fated Columbia space shuttle in 2003.