



## IN THE NEWS

## Damascus dossier for foreign diplomats

Israel presented foreign diplomats with what it said was evidence of Syrian involvement in Palestinian terrorism.

Twenty ambassadors from the European Union and nations on the U.N. Security Council attended a closed-door briefing Monday by Israel's military intelligence chief, Maj. Gen. Aharon Ze'evi-Farkash, at the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem.

The ministry's director general, Ron Prozor, said proof was furnished of Syria's involvement in last Friday's suicide bombing in Tel Aviv, with a view to influencing any resolutions reached at this week's conference on Palestinian Authority reform in London.

"These are countries that understand that talk is not enough, and that we must enter a process whereby the terrorist infrastructure is finished off both in the territories and in the countries that sponsor it," Prozor told Israel Radio.

Syria has denied that it had any role in the attack.

## Ramon's diary pieced together

Forensic scientists restored part of the diary of the Israeli astronaut who died in the Columbia shuttle tragedy.

Eighteen pages handwritten in Hebrew by Col. Ilan Ramon were recovered, though some of them were in tatters or virtually illegible.

With the help of technology, Sharon Brown, an Israeli police document examiner, was able to piece together much of the diary.

The find includes four pages of Ramon's in-flight diary entries.

Ramon was one of seven Columbia crew members who died in the Feb. 1, 2003, crash.

## Jewish flavor subdued at the Academy Awards

Jewish talent didn't make the headlines at the Academy Awards, but found some consolation in the less glamorous categories. [Story, Pg. 3]

# WORLD REPORT

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## Surge of optimism in the Mideast also breathes life into Jewish left

By CHANAN TIGAY

**N**EW YORK (JTA) — At the height of the intifada, Daniel Sokatch made a series of appearances on National Public Radio to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

During these interviews, Sokatch, executive director of the Los Angeles-based Progressive Jewish Alliance, which promotes an agenda of social change and takes what he describes as a "center-left" tack on Mideast affairs, put forward his "triangle" theory of Israel's political future.

Israel today is a Jewish state, a democratic state and encompasses the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Sokatch recalls telling NPR. To survive, "Israel can choose any two points, but not all three."

In other words, if Israel wishes to remain both Jewish and democratic, it would have to shed settlements in Gaza and the West Bank, according to this argument.

The shows' producers don't put all callers on the air, "but they tell you afterwards, 'Fifteen people called to say you were crazy, one called to say right on,'" he says. "When I do these shows now, nobody calls up and says, 'How dare you say these things.'"

Leaders of the American Jewish left say that's because the period since the death of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat and the election of Mahmoud Abbas as his successor has seen renewed hope for an end to Israeli-Palestinian violence — a situation that has breathed new life into the once-moribund "peace camp."

"It's changing very dramatically because there's a growing recognition that there's a

leadership in Palestine that is open to non-violence, even if it doesn't yet have the military muscle to be able to depress the violent elements within their own community," says Rabbi Michael Lerner, editor of Tikkun magazine and founder of the Tikkun Community, which defines itself as a social-justice group.

"They clearly do have the desire to end violence and to build a peaceful resolution to this conflict and that has given a great deal of energy to people on the Jewish left," he says.

It also doesn't hurt, leaders from the left say, that Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who is considered the godfather of Israel's settler movement, is spearheading the move for Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and parts of the West Bank.

"You've had someone who's been the leader of the Israeli right wing recognize the validity of some of the arguments that Peace Now has been making for several years, and start to take action on the recognition of that validity," says Lewis Roth, assistant executive director of Americans for Peace Now. "There's a certain sense of inevitability in terms of some of the things we're talking about."

But not everyone thinks events have vindicated the peace camp's message — or that the left has learned from the failure of the Oslo peace process during the 1990s.

"I just find it astonishing that so many Jews are making the same mistakes as they did during Oslo," says Morton Klein, national president of the Zionist Organization of America. "Abbas is obligated under the 'road map' peace plan to dismantle and disarm the terrorists, to end all the incitement, to close

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BEHIND  
THE  
HEADLINES

## ■ Jewish left revives as optimism in Middle East surges

*Continued from page 1*

the bomb factories and to arrest the terrorists and keep them in prison. He's done almost none of these things."

Asked if Abbas is at least an improvement over Arafat, Klein says, "Is colon cancer better than pancreatic cancer? With colon cancer the average life span is five years, with pancreatic cancer it's five months. You still end up in the same place."

While the intifada raged in full force, with bombings and shootings seriously disrupting daily life in Israel, many in the Jewish community who had promoted a two-state solution along something approximating the pre-1967 boundaries found their message a tough sell, both in the Jewish community and in the larger left.

Many members of the Jewish peace camp were outraged by Palestinian terrorist attacks. But the situation made it more difficult for them to mobilize energy for their cause.

"The response was, 'It's so awful, I just don't want to think about it anymore,'" Lerner says.

In addition, leaders of the left say, some of those who opposed Israel's presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip found their attention turned elsewhere when the United States invaded Iraq.

Rabbi Brian Walt, a self-described "progressive Zionist," says American Jews don't respond to events in Israel in a vacuum.

"Progressive Zionists in the United States follow the lead of the Israeli peace movement, and the Israeli peace movement was very silent after the start of the

intifada," he says.

Walt is director of Rabbis for Human Rights, a group he says promotes justice and freedom but does not ally itself with particular peace plans.

Steve Masters, a Philadelphia attorney who serves as national chairman for advocacy and public policy at Brit Tzedek V'Shalom, another American group, says that as the intifada escalated, left-leaning views were shut out of certain venues.

"Our message was not as welcomed in certain places where it was more welcome before," he says. "Our message became more controversial."

At that point, Masters adds, if the American Jewish left wasn't exactly dead, "We certainly were contracted."

Lerner says his group took a financial hit because of its views on Israel.

"Some groups who have a progressive agenda on other questions have done their best to ignore the Israel question because they knew they'd have a better chance of getting into synagogues," he says. "We lost financial support and political support for continuing to insist that a progressive middle path was necessary that was both pro-Israel and pro-Palestine. Other parts of our agenda would have been taken more seriously, but morally we couldn't do that."

But over the last month and a half, leaders are saying, the American Jewish left is

seeing a resurgence.

Brit Tzedek V'Shalom held a conference in Manhattan in late February that drew close to 700 supporters of a negotiated peace agreement.

Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, Israel's former military chief of staff and a supporter of the "Geneva Accords," an unofficial peace plan, spoke along with Amjad Atallah, a top aide to former P.A. Information Minister Yasser Abbed Rabbo and

previously an adviser to Abbas. Both men received standing ovations.

"When you go out into the grass roots of the community, we're the dominant opinion," says Marcia Freedman, Brit Tzedek's president and a former Knesset member. But, she adds, "One major suicide bombing and everything can change."

Several days after Freedman spoke to JTA, a Palestinian bomber killed five Israelis at a Tel Aviv night club. It was the first suicide bombing in Israel in nearly four months, though many attempted attacks were foiled by Israeli security services.

When the bomb went off in Tel Aviv, Tamar Miller's first thought was that "the darker forces have resurfaced, but that their desperation is increasing because they know that peace is on the way."

But, says Miller, who attended the Brit Tzedek conference, "The best way to respond to the darker forces is to turn on the light — so no, I didn't despair." ■

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**Marcia Freedman**  
Brit Tzedek's president

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## Israel's own ticker tape

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Israeli government launched an electronic business newsletter.

"Business Briefs and Business Opportunities," launched by Israel's economic mission in the United States, will provide U.S. executives with news on the U.S.-Israel trade relationship and investment opportunities in the Jewish state.

The newsletter will publish a list of Israeli companies seeking U.S. partners.

The newsletter "provides a new avenue to encourage the expansion of Israel-U.S. business ties" and "facilitate matches between the Israeli and American business communities," said Zohar Peri, Israel's economic minister to North America.

Those wishing to subscribe to the newsletter should send their name, company name and e-mail address to [guykedem@emus.gov.il](mailto:guykedem@emus.gov.il). ■

# Jewish flavor at Oscars is subtle this year

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Jewish talent didn't make the headlines at Sunday evening's Academy Awards, but there was some consolation in the less-glamorous categories.

Tom Rosenberg briefly shared the spotlight with Clint Eastwood as one of the three producers of best picture "Million Dollar Baby," which also collected Oscars in the best director, actress and supporting actor categories.

Charlie Kaufman, the favorite, won the best original screenplay Oscar for "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind." After what he calls a "normal Jewish upbringing" on Long Island, Kaufman has become one of the hottest Hollywood writers, turning out scripts that tend to blur the line between fantasy and reality.

In the documentary feature category, often dominated by Holocaust-themed entries, the winner was "Born Into Brothels," a story about the children of Calcutta prostitutes. Sharing the award were director Zana Briski, whose Iraqi Jewish mother now lives in Israel, according to Jewhoo.com, and her Jewish co-producer, Ross Kauffman.

Jorge Drexler, whose parents immigrated to Uruguay from Europe, earned the best original song Oscar for "Al Otro Lado Del Río" from "The Motorcycle Diaries." Drexler, who reportedly lived in Israel for a time, now lives in Spain.

Mel Gibson's "The Passion" was nominated for its cinematography, makeup and original score, but failed to win a single Oscar.

Three Jewish veterans of the movie industry were honored by appreciative audiences.

Sidney Lumet, the director of such memorable films as "Twelve Angry Men," "Network" and the Jewish-themed "The Pawnbroker" and "Bye Bye Braverman," accepted a lifetime achievement award.

The son of Yiddish actors Baruch Lumet and Eugenia Wermus, Lumet, 80, made his stage debut as a five-year-old at New York's Yiddish Art Theatre.

Veteran film and television executive Roger Mayer received the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award for his work on behalf of film preservation and the motion picture retirement home.

British film veteran David Samuelson appeared via video to accept a technical

award for his invention, a revolutionary camera-mounting device.

Jewish hopes for an acting award rode on the best supporting actress category. Among the five finalists were Natalie Portman for "Closer" and Sophie Okonedo for "Hotel Rwanda."

Portman, born in Jerusalem and equally fluent in English and Hebrew, has just completed a semester at the Hebrew University and is now before the cameras in the Israeli film "Free Zone" by Amos Gitai.

Okonedo, a well-known British actress, is the daughter of a Jewish mother and a Nigerian father.

Both women were trumped by Cate Blanchett, who portrayed Katherine Hepburn in "The Aviator."

Among the last to appear on the stage at the Kodak Theater in Hollywood, showing up in the final moments of the broadcast, which ran slightly over three hours, were Dustin Hoffman and Barbra Streisand.

The two stars, who play a free-spirited Jewish couple in the comedy "Meet the Fockers," introduced the best picture nominees and winner in an oddly absent-minded and ditty shtick. ■

## University of Michigan gets \$20 million donation

By JOANNE PALMER

NEW YORK (JTA) — A \$20 million gift has given a gigantic boost to Jewish scholarship at the University of Michigan.

The vision of 14 scholars from every field of Jewish studies spending two semesters together in one building with no teaching obligations is so compelling to Samuel and Jean Frankel that the couple donated the money to bring it to life.

The Frankels, who created the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan's Ann Arbor campus nearly two decades ago, are now funding the Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies. The gift, according to university representatives, is the largest ever given to the university's College of Literature, Science and the Arts. It is also, they say, the largest ever given for Jewish studies at any university.

The director of the Frankel Institute, Todd Endelman, said the new research institute will look for scholars in a range of fields. Historians, scholars of literature and linguistics, theologians, philosophers, as well as specialists in Yiddish, Hebrew, Ladino, Aramaic, and other languages all will be welcome.

The institute will look mainly for established academics, but will welcome "a small number of post-doctoral students as well," said Endelman, who is also the university's William Haber Profes-

or of Modern Jewish History. "We want a mix of bright, promising young scholars and senior people in the field."

There will be a new theme each year drawn from among such potential topics as Jewish political behavior in periods of crisis, Jewish responses to catastrophe and Jewish-Christian relations over the centuries. "Those are the kinds of topics that are broad enough to bring people in from all disciplines and time periods," Endelman said.

Plans call for the institute to open in the fall of 2007.

Once the institute opens, "If a great Jewish historian wants to come from Tel Aviv and study, you'll suddenly see that the great historian can come," said Marshall Weinberg, a University of Michigan alumnus and JTA board member who has given a great deal of time and money to his alma mater.

"He will be under no obligation to teach — although of course he can if he wants to — or to do anything else," Weinberg said.

The scholars would mix with graduate students, both formally and casually, not only acting as role models but also passing on knowledge through conversation.

The Frankels, who live in suburban Detroit, both graduated from the University of Michigan, as did many of their family members. Their son Stuart and his wife, Maxine, donated \$10 million to the school in May to expand its art museum. ■

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### Terrorist attack stopped

A car said to be loaded with explosives ready for a terrorist attack in Israel was discovered in the West Bank.

Israeli officials believe the same Islamic Jihad cell responsible for last Friday's suicide bombing attack in Tel Aviv was behind the aborted attack as well.

The car was discovered south of the Palestinian city of Jenin.

### Abbas talks tough

Mahmoud Abbas said he would not tolerate terrorism from the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Palestinian Authority president spoke to a British newspaper Monday after a weekend suicide bombing in Tel Aviv killed five Israelis and before a London conference this week aimed at helping to reform the Palestinian Authority.

"We believe peace is possible now and we are ready to negotiate with Israel to reach a true and lasting peace," Abbas told the Independent. "As for the suicide bombing last Friday, such actions will not be tolerated by us as they are against the Palestinian interests."

Last Friday's attack on the Stage nightclub in Tel Aviv, which was claimed by Islamic Jihad, prompted Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to suspend confidence-building contacts with the Palestinians.

### 'Stage' toll rises

The death toll from Friday's suicide bombing in Tel Aviv reached five.

Odelia Hobera, 26, who was one of dozens of people hurt in the attack on the beachfront nightclub Stage, succumbed to her wounds Monday. Another 22 people remain hospitalized.

### Israel reaches out

An Israeli official appeared on a Palestinian Authority television panel.

Lior Ben-David, deputy director of the Arab desk at the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem, was a guest Monday on the Palestine Television political show "The Last Word."

Last week the broadcaster featured an interview with Israeli Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

The introduction of Israeli officials to Palestine Television came as part of its decision to stop airing anti-Israel incitement under a package of goodwill moves recently ordered by P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Saperstein chastises community leaders

The leader of the Reform movement's political arm chastised Jewish community leaders for suggesting that Reform congregations should accept federal homeland security aid.

Speaking at the Jewish Council for Public Affairs plenum Monday in Washington, Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism, said he is disappointed that community relations councils are telling Reform congregations that the money is available but not telling them that the Reform movement opposes the policy because it fears that the policy violates the separation of church and state.

"I would never give an end-run around you," Saperstein said. "Whenever pushed, we can avoid this by working together."

Tevi Troy, a Jewish former liaison to President Bush, said that while he admired Saperstein's "philosophical purity," he questioned

whether the Jewish community could afford not to accept needed homeland security money.

### Seminary's CFO resigns after three months

The Jewish Theological Seminary's chief financial officer resigned after a little more than three months on the job.

Richard Bengloff left the Conservative movement's flagship institution in New York City last Friday.

On Monday, officials announced that he would be replaced on an interim basis by Julie Anderson, who was brought in from outside the seminary.

Bengloff stepped down just four months after the resignation of JTS' controller, S. David Shapiro.

In December, news stories indicated that JTS was in debt and was selling off buildings and instituting a hiring freeze to cover loans.

But JTS denies it froze hires, and JTS' director of communications, Elise Dowell, said the institution's financial position "remains strong."

Dowell said Bengloff left to take a position in the entertainment industry, where he worked for two decades before coming to JTS.

## WORLD

### Settler wants Blair's help

A Gaza Strip settler asked British Prime Minister Tony Blair to help him resist evacuation.

Avi Farhan, a resident of Elei Sinai who has suggested he might stay on under Palestinian Authority rule after Israel withdraws from Gaza, told the Jerusalem Post on Monday that he had written to Blair for help.

"Mr. Blair, the fundamental basis of the human rights of every human being involves the right to live in his home, on his own private property," read the letter, which Farhan said he had written in the name of about 30 settlers opposed to evacuation. "We ask you to recognize our right to remain in our homes, the same way that you would recognize the right of Muslims to reside in their homes in Israel."

Blair is hosting a London conference beginning Tuesday to encourage Palestinian Authority reform.

There was no immediate response to the appeal by Farhan, who was among settlers evacuated from the Sinai town of Yamit in 1982 as part of Israel's peace accord with Egypt.

### Hungarian neo-Nazi convicted

A Hungarian neo-Nazi was found guilty of using a banned totalitarian symbol.

But the Budapest District Court decided last Friday to delay Diana Bacsf's sentence for two years, the Hungarian Telegraphic Agency reported.

Bacsf gained notoriety late last year as a result of her attempts to revive a Hungarian version of Nazism.

Bacsf and her accomplices plastered Budapest streets with controversial posters hailing Ferenc Szalasi, a Hungarian war criminal.

She was arrested in October and charged with using a banned totalitarian symbol, the arrow cross, a punishable offense in Hungary.

The court's decision means that Bacsf will not be jailed or fined unless she re-offends during her two years of probation.

### Bush honors Jewish partisan

President Bush recently honored a World War II-era Jewish partisan as a "champion of freedom."

Alexander Bachnar, commander of a Jewish partisan unit in Slovakia during the war, was one of 21 people honored by Bush last week in Slovakia, the Jerusalem Post reported.

Bachnar, now 86, was part of an uprising in the Novak labor camp in 1944.