

## IN THE NEWS

## Potential pope favors Jewish presence in Israel

A potential successor to Pope John Paul II spoke out strongly in favor of the Jewish claim to Israel.

The archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Christoph Schoenborn, also rejected the notion that European Christian support for Israel stems from guilt over the Holocaust, the Jerusalem Post reported.

"Only once in human history did God take a country as an inheritance and give it to his chosen people," Schoenborn said March 30 in an address at Jerusalem's Hebrew University.

## Berger pleads guilty to mishandling documents

Sandy Berger, President Clinton's national security adviser, pleaded guilty last Friday to a misdemeanor for removing classified documents from the National Archives. He paid a \$10,000 fine and agreed to give up his top-level security clearance for three years.

In 2003, Berger, who is Jewish, removed and shredded documents related to his testimony to the Sept. 11 commission. He was an unpaid adviser to Sen. John Kerry's presidential campaign last year.

His testimony to the commission suggested that the Clinton team had warned President Bush during the transition between administrations about the dangers posed by Al-Qaida. It's not clear what documents Berger destroyed, but newspaper reports suggest they might have indicated that the Clinton administration didn't do all it could to pursue Al-Qaida.

## Israeli envoy dies of self-inflicted wound

Israel's ambassador to Ethiopia died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Doron Grossman, 49, died Sunday in a Jerusalem hospital. He was flown in from Addis Ababa last week in critical condition.

Political sources believe Grossman, who was discovered in his hotel room March 30 with a head wound, shot himself, distraught at having cancer.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Pope John Paul II witnessed Shoah, and emphasized ties with the Jews

By RUTH ELLEN GRUBER

**R**OME (JTA) — Though a staunch conservative on most Catholic issues, Pope John Paul II made bettering Jewish-Catholic relations a centerpiece of his policy and took revolutionary strides toward this goal during his more than 26-year reign. The pope repeatedly condemned anti-Semitism, commemorated the Holocaust many times, presided over the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel and met frequently with Jewish religious and lay leaders.

To be sure, lingering tensions and unresolved issues remained. But in general, most Jewish observers say the Polish-born pontiff, who died Saturday night at 84 after a long illness, will be remembered as the friendliest pope ever toward the Jews.

"Pope John Paul II was a man of peace, a friend of the Jewish people, who worked to bring about historic reconciliation between the peoples and to renew diplomatic ties between Israel and the Vatican at the end of 1993," Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told his Cabinet on Sunday.

"It is safe to say that more change for the better took place in his 27-year papacy than in the nearly 2,000 years before," the Anti-Defamation League noted in a tribute.

World Jewish Congress President Edgar Bronfman said that John Paul II "reached across millennial divides to promote mutual respect and understanding."

Rabbi Jack Bemporad was one of more than 100 rabbis and cantors who met with the pope in January. "No pope has done as much or cared as much about creating a brotherly relationship between Catholics and Jews as

Pope John Paul II," Bemporad, director of the Center for Interreligious Understanding in Secaucus, N.J., said at the time.

Karol Jozef Wojtyla, then the 58-year-old archbishop of Krakow, was elected to the papacy in October 1978. The first pope from Poland and the first non-Italian to sit on the papal throne in more than 450 years, he took the name John Paul II to honor his immediate predecessor, who died after only three weeks in office.

Wojtyla assumed the papacy just 13 years after the Vatican's historic *Nostra Aetate* declaration opened the way toward Jewish-Catholic dialogue. The declaration, issued in 1965 by the Second Vatican Council convened by Pope John XXIII, condemned anti-Semitism, and for the first time officially repudiated the age-old assertion that the "perfidious Jews" were collectively responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus.

John Paul's papacy built on this, and in Jewish terms it was marked by dramatic "firsts," starting with the pontiff's own personal history. Born in 1920 in the town of Wadowice, near Krakow, he was an eyewitness both to the Holocaust and to the oppressive and often anti-Semitic policies of communism.

Wojtyla grew up at a time when Poland was the heartland of European Jewry. The country's 3.5 million Jews represented 10 percent of Poland's overall population. Wadowice itself was more than 25 percent Jewish, and the future pope had Jewish friends, neighbors and classmates.

Half of the 6 million Jews murdered in the Shoah were Polish, including the future pope's friends and neighbors. Wojtyla himself worked in a Nazi slave labor camp and studied

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### BEHIND THE HEADLINES

## ■ Jews, Israel praise Pope John Paul II as they mourn his death

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for the priesthood in secret.

After World War II, the discovery of what had happened at Auschwitz, only a few miles from his hometown, marked Wojtyla for life.

As pope, John Paul referred to the 20th century as "the century of the Shoah," and it was highly symbolic that in 1979, on his first visit back to Poland after his election, he knelt in prayer at Auschwitz-Birkenau to commemorate the Jews killed there.

Throughout his reign, John Paul repeatedly recalled the Holocaust and condemned anti-Semitism as a sin against God and humanity. On his more than 100 trips around the globe, he sought to meet with Jewish leaders. He also issued unprecedented expressions of contrition for past Christian hostility and violence toward Jews.

The most dramatic of the pope's many meetings with Jews took place in April 1986, when he crossed the Tiber River to visit the Great Synagogue in Rome, becoming the first pope to visit a Jewish house of worship since Peter.

After embracing Rome's chief rabbi, the pope spoke of the "irrevocable covenant" between God and the Jews. With Judaism, he said, "we have a relationship that we do not have with any other religion. You are our dearly beloved brothers."

At the end of 1993 the pope took another unprecedented step, overseeing the formal establishment of full diplomatic relations between Israel and the Holy See, 45 years after the founding of the Jewish state.

"The pope has both understood what

Israel means to the Jewish people and thus the importance of the establishment of full relations between the Holy See and the State of Israel to which he lent his personal weight," Rabbi David Rosen, the American Jewish Committee's international director for interreligious affairs, has said.

The pope's historic visit to Israel in March 2000 marked a culmination of these policies. His visit was formulated as a pilgrimage to the Holy Land to mark the beginning of Christianity's third millennium, but it brimmed with significance for Jews as well.

He visited Yad Vashem, and at Jerusalem's Western Wall he bowed his head in prayer and slipped a typed, signed note into one of the cracks between the stones.

"We are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer, and asking your forgiveness, we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the People of the Covenant," the note said.

Since that historic visit, the world has been rocked by terrorism and war, and the eruption of the Palestinian intifada plunged the Middle East into violence. Also, what some observers call a "new anti-Semitism" linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has erupted in what the pope liked to call "Christian" Europe.

But several issues still dog Catholic-Jewish relations. These include differences over what can be called "historical memory" — for example, over the wartime role of Pope Pius XII, whom the Vatican wants to beatify but whom critics accuse of failing to speak out to save Jews during the Shoah.

There also is a continuing debate within the Catholic hierarchy about whether the church is responsible for anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, or whether responsibility rests with individuals. Outstanding differences on bilateral issues, as well as broader differences over Middle East politics, also have clouded relations with Israel and are the focus of protracted negotiations. These matters include taxes and the legal status of church institutions

as well as questions of visas and residency permits for Christian clergy in Israel.

Looming above all is the question of whether John Paul's proactive teachings about Jews will endure, and whether they will trickle down to the world's 1 billion Catholics.

During his audience with the rabbis and cantors in January, John Paul noted that 2005 marks the 40th anniversary of the Nostra Aetate declaration and urged "renewed commitment to increased understanding and cooperation."

But Jewish observers have expressed concern

that John Paul's successor may not have the same commitment.

"You're not going to get anybody with his sensitivity," Rabbi Joseph Ehrenkranz, director of the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Conn., said in January. "The fear is, whatever you've got done can be undone."

Rabbi A. James Rudin, the AJCommittee's senior adviser on interreligious affairs, also considers the perpetuation of John Paul's policies on Jews as "a major challenge for the post-John Paul II church."

"To have his church retreat from the gains John Paul II has achieved in building mutual respect and understanding between Catholics and Jews would represent a huge setback and an insult to this remarkable pope, who will be remembered in Jewish history as the greatest pontiff in the 2000-year history of Christianity," Rudin said.

Vatican officials say the pope's legacy should be safe, noting that the sea changes wrought by Nostra Aetate in 1965 and by Vatican documents and pronouncements issued throughout John Paul's papacy are enshrined as official church teaching.

"The whole Catholic Church stands for these changes, not only Pope John Paul II," the Rev. Norbert Hofmann, secretary for the Holy See's Commission for Religions Relations with the Jews, told JTA in 2003. But, he added, "it remains the task of the whole church to continue these efforts, and we must do everything so that the course will trickle down to all levels." ■

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**Rabbi Jack Bemporad**  
Center for Interreligious Understanding

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**THIS WEEK****MONDAY**

■ An exhibit about the Holocaust that has been on display at the U.N. headquarters in New York will move to the group's Geneva headquarters. The move, sponsored by Yad Vashem and the Israeli mission to the United Nations, will coincide with the six-week Commission on Human Rights meeting.

■ The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum screens "Imaginary Witnesses: Hollywood and the Holocaust," a documentary that chronicles Hollywood's slow response to the Holocaust despite — or because of — the large number of Jews in the industry.

■ Two Palestinians once imprisoned by Israel and their lawyer arrive in Washington for a three-day tour of area universities called "Palestinian Political Prisoners: The Invisible Side of the Occupation." SUSTAIN, short for Stop U.S. Tax-Funded Aid to Israel Now, is sponsoring the tour.

**TUESDAY**

■ The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly, the Conservative movement's rabbinic arm, meets Tuesday and Wednesday to present and review eight proposed responsa on the movement's approach to homosexuality. The committee has met several times over the past two years to consider the issue, and it seems unlikely that it will render a decision at the meeting.

**WEDNESDAY**

■ The Aspen Institute hosts a forum in Washington on the future of the Gaza Strip after Israel withdraws in July. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Israeli Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Mohammed Dahlan, the Palestinian Authority minister of civil affairs, will speak. On the agenda: a plan for the Israelis and Palestinians to coordinate the withdrawal.

■ Orthodox Union delegates from across the country convene in Washington for the group's annual advocacy day. Meetings are scheduled Wednesday and Thursday with senators and top White House officials.

■ The Helsinki commission convenes to consider Chabad's difficulties in retrieving precious books and documents from Russia. Witnesses include Ambassador Edward O'Donnell, the U.S. State Department's special envoy on Holocaust issues.

**SUNDAY**

■ The Jewish Council on Urban Affairs holds a two-day conference in Chicago aimed at energizing the social justice movement. The conference, "Justice Shall Dwell There: Strengthening the Jewish Commitment to Justice in Our Cities," will bring together representatives from Jewish organizations around the country.

■ Ameinu, formerly known as the Labor Zionist Alliance, launches former Shin Bet chief Ami Ayalon's U.S. speaking tour.

# U.S. think tank to study Gaza

By **RON KAMPEAS**

WASHINGTON (JTA) — At an impasse over how to coordinate Israel's planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank, Israel and the Palestinians have turned to an American think tank for a way out of a stalemate that could collapse the peace process.

Top Israeli, Palestinian and U.S. leaders were slated to convene this week in Washington at the Aspen Institute, a prominent think tank involved in leadership development in the developing world.

The purpose of the seminar ostensibly was to discuss investment prospects in the Palestinian areas after the withdrawal, which is slated to begin July 20. But the more urgent agenda, set to be addressed behind closed doors, was to come up with a plan for the withdrawal, according to sources connected with the program.

"There's a time constraint," said Markus Kostner, the West Bank and Gaza officer at the World Bank, which repeatedly has said that it's critical to begin planning early for the withdrawal. "There's not much time left to get ready."

Israeli and Palestinian officials reportedly have met several times in recent weeks, but mutual distrust has trumped the desire to come up with a solution and avert chaos.

As of last week, a critical first step — an Israeli handover to the Palestinians of detailed data on settlements that are to be evacuated — was yet to take place, Kostner said.

The forum slated for Wednesday at the Aspen Institute is called "Building Peace: Engaging U.S. Business in Making Gaza Work." The line-up includes Israeli Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who is in charge of the civil aspects of the withdrawal; Palestinian Authority official Mohammed Dahlan; and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

But the real work was expected to take place behind the scenes at sessions Monday and Tuesday that were to include Peres, Dahlan and other senior officials.

According to insiders, the president of

the Aspen Institute, Walter Isaacson, has been working for weeks to come up with a formula to implement all aspects of the handover.

The fact that the Israelis and the Palestinians are "outsourcing" such a plan to a private think tank — albeit one of the most influential in Washington, with a board overflowing with former statesmen — underscores the desperation on both sides as disengagement approaches.

Shaul Mofaz, the Israeli defense minister, who is handling military aspects of the withdrawal, said he had expressed concerns about many "open questions" about the withdrawal during meetings in Washington last week with top U.S. officials, including Rice and Vice President Dick Cheney.

A "dignified" pullout, Mofaz has said in his meetings, would avert chaos in Israel, according to a senior Israeli official.

Israelis are especially worried that a terrorist takeover of settler properties — a Hamas flag, say, flying over the settlement of Neveh Dekalim after the withdrawal — would be a propaganda bombshell that would ef-

fectively gut popular Israeli support for withdrawal.

There are other considerations as well. An orderly transition, including due compensation for settler properties, would make future pullouts more likely.

Palestinians also want to avert chaos. A rush of Palestinians staking claims to prime properties would make the equitable use of the properties impossible.

The Gush Katif bloc of settlements, for instance, sits atop the best aquifer in the Gaza Strip, crucial to the region's environmental and agricultural planning.

Palestinians are unhappy with Israel's pace in handing over West Bank cities to P.A. control, releasing Palestinian prisoners and easing congestion at West Bank checkpoints.

As of now, they say they're willing only to guarantee a nonviolent withdrawal, meaning no shots would be fired as the Israelis pull out, Israeli and Palestinian officials say.

**'There's a time constraint. There's not much time left to get ready.'**

**Markus Kostner**  
World Bank

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### MIDDLE EAST

#### Settler leader accepts defeat

An Israeli settler leader said Israeli rightists should accept the Gaza Strip withdrawal as a done deal.

"I don't believe it will be possible to stop the plan," Eliezer Hisdai, deputy chairman of the Yesha Council, told Ha'aretz on Sunday.

He told the daily that he remained opposed to the pending withdrawals from Gaza and the northern West Bank on ideological grounds, but felt that the threat of violent resistance by settlers was more pressing.

"We seem to have reached the point of no return," Hisdai said.

His colleagues in the Yesha Council denounced the interview; one of them accused him of being a government collaborator.

#### Mount Herzl hit again

Vandals defaced the graves of Yitzhak and Leah Rabin in Israel's most important cemetery.

The vandalism was the fourth such incident in the last several days, the Jerusalem Post reported. Police appointed a task force Sunday to catch the vandal who scrawled "murderous dog" on the tomb of Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli prime minister assassinated in 1995, in Mount Herzl Military Cemetery in Jerusalem.

In another attack assumed to be from the same hand, the name of Rabin's widow Leah was removed from her headstone. In a different section of Mount Herzl, vandals spray-painted Hebrew letters on the graves of fallen soldiers to form the phrase: "Hitler — the brain."

It was not clear if security cameras mounted in the cemetery captured the attacks on film.

#### Palestinian intelligence chief quits

The Palestinian Authority's intelligence chief resigned March 31, complaining of lawlessness in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In a letter to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, Tawfik Tirawi said he could not work under current conditions.

Tirawi was said to have complained that other security officials were not doing enough to impose law and order.

#### Clerics unite to oppose Jerusalem gay fest

Muslim, Jewish and Christian clerics in Jerusalem joined to try to stop a gay festival. The 10-day gay pride festival is to take place in Jerusalem August 18-28. One of its aims is to force conservatives to confront the reality of gay life.

Both of Israel's chief rabbis joined March 30 with Muslim and Christian clerics to call on the organizers to stop the festival.

### NORTH AMERICA

#### Judge: L.A. not liable for terror case

The families of two Israeli Americans killed by a terrorist at Los Angeles International Airport are not due any compensation from the City of Los Angeles.

Yaakov (Jacob) Aminov, 46, and Victoria Hen, 25, were standing at an El Al check-in counter when they were gunned down by Egyptian immigrant Hesham Mohamed Hadayet on July 4, 2002.

Hadayet was killed immediately after the shooting spree while wrestling with El Al security guard Arie Golan.

In dismissing the \$87.5 million multiple lawsuits against the city March 28, U.S. District Judge Alicemarie Stotler ruled that California law grants immunity to public agencies for failure to provide adequate police protection.

Attorney Richard Fine said the victims' families were "devastated and shocked," and he sharply criticized the judge and the city.

He promised to take the case to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

#### Bush fills policy slot

President Bush nominated a Jewish career diplomat as undersecretary of defense for policy.

Eric Edelman, currently ambassador to Turkey, will replace Douglas Feith, who announced his plans to retire this summer.

Feith, who also is Jewish, has been a lightning rod for criticism of the Iraq war. Bush is believed to be quietly purging his administration of the war's architects; he recently named Paul Wolfowitz, his Jewish deputy defense secretary, as World Bank president.

Edelman previously served as a national security adviser to Vice President Dick Cheney, and as ambassador to Finland.

#### Church group assails Israel on Jerusalem

The World Council of Churches called on Israel not to pre-empt final status talks on Jerusalem through the building of settlements and a security barrier.

In a letter posted on its Web site on March 31, the WCC said plans to add 3,500 homes to Ma'aleh Adumim, a West Bank settlement adjoining Jerusalem; continued construction of the security barrier inside Jerusalem; and alleged confiscation of Palestinian property and human rights abuses "adversely affect the status of Jerusalem."

The WCC, which in recent years has tilted against Israel in its assessments of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, brings together hundreds of denominations, though many don't endorse the council's Middle East policy.

#### School fires Nazi professor

A professor at a U.S. university who has links to a Nazi group was fired.

Fairleigh Dickinson University dismissed Jacques Pluss, saying he had missed too many days of class, but Pluss said he was fired because of his political beliefs and activities.

Pluss, who teaches Western civilization, admits he is a member of the National Socialist Movement and hosts a webcast called "White Viewpoint."

He is considering a lawsuit against the New Jersey university.

### WORLD

#### Indian tribe accepted as Jews

Israel's chief Sephardic rabbi recognized a community living along the India-Myanmar border as Jewish.

Shlomo Amar's ruling Wednesday sets the stage for the wholesale immigration to Israel of the 7,000-strong B'nei Menashe community, part of the larger Kuki-Chin-Mizo tribe.

The discovery in the 19th century of the tribe, which adheres to some Jewish traditions, attracted interest from Christian missionaries and Jewish communities.

Much of the tribe converted to Christianity but in recent decades some have returned to Judaism, forming the B'nei Menashe community.

Citing DNA evidence and certain customs, their supporters claim the B'nei Menashe are descended from the lost biblical tribe of Menashe. Some 800 members of the community have undergone formal conversions and moved to Israel in recent years.

The International Fellowship of Christians and Jews announced that it would fund the immigration to Israel of the entire community.

#### Neo-Nazis in Germany protested

Thousands of people protested in Munich against a neo-Nazi rally.

On Saturday, demonstrators threw tomatoes, eggs and bananas at the marchers, who were protected by hundreds of police, Reuters reported.

Police said 53 arrests were made.