

IN THE NEWS
Record number attend the March of the Living

Some 18,000 marchers in Poland marked the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Nazi concentration camps. Many of the participants in Thursday's March of the Living wrapped themselves in Israeli flags.

Others carried the flags of some of the 60-plus nations represented as they walked the 1.8 miles from Auschwitz to Birkenau, where prisoners were gassed during World War II.

At Birkenau, marchers took part in what organizers described as the largest Holocaust memorial ceremony ever.

The ceremony included addresses by Polish Prime Minister Marek Belka, Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. "Remember those who were sacrificed and remember the murderers," Sharon said. "Remember the silence of the world."

Bush may waive aid restrictions

President Bush may waive restrictions on \$200 million authorized by Congress for spending on the Palestinians, the White House said.

Scott McClellan rejected reports that tough restrictions in an appropriations bill effectively bind Bush from directly funding the Palestinian Authority.

U.S. freezes Arab group's assets

The U.S. Treasury froze the assets of an Arab charity it says is a front group for Palestinian terrorists.

The Treasury Department ordered U.S. banks Wednesday to block assets belonging to the al-Ihsan, or Elehssan, Society, and forbade Americans from donating to the group.

The government says it is a front group for Islamic Jihad, which has carried out many terrorist attacks on Israelis.

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WORLD REPORT

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Sue Fishkoff

Participants in the Mother's Circle, an outreach program for non-Jewish women raising Jewish families in Atlanta pose for a photo with their husbands.

Non-Jewish mothers of Jewish children face some hard choices

By SUE FISHKOFF

PACIFIC GROVE, Calif. (JTA) — When Teresa McMahon, a Catholic, married Barry Fishman, a Conservative Jew, 11 years ago, they decided to raise their children as Jews.

"Barry wouldn't have it otherwise," McMahon says.

But McMahon had no intention of converting. Though she considers herself a "cultural Catholic," her heritage is important to her. It's why she kept her maiden name.

Still, she raises her girls, 8 and 6, as Jews, and the family belongs to Temple Beth Emeth, a Reform congregation in Ann Arbor, Mich. That, she says, was her husband's compromise.

McMahon's daughters know they and their father are Jewish, and they also know that their mother celebrates Easter and Christmas. They've never asked her to convert, but McMahon says that when she looks at the girls lighting Shabbat candles with their father, it tugs at her heart.

"I have Jewish girls, and I'm not a Jewish mother," she says. "How can I raise them to be Jewish women when I'm not that role model?"

That's the challenge confronting a rising number of intermarried households. Though the intermarriage rate continues to rise — 47 percent of new marriages involving Jews are intermarriages, according to the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-2001

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**FOCUS
ON
ISSUES**

■ *Non-Jewish mothers bring up Jewish children*

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— there is less pressure on non-Jewish spouses to convert, since most Reform and Reconstructionist and some Conservative congregations are finding ways to involve non-Jewish spouses in ritual life.

When it's the wife who is not Jewish, and does not plan to convert, mixed couples tend to flock to the Reform movement, which in 1982 accepted patrilineal descent as long as the children are raised Jewish. Reform and Reconstructionist Jews accept as Jewish a child who has at least one Jewish parent. The Orthodox and Conservative movements demand matrilineal descent — the child's mother must be Jewish.

"I do believe it's possible for non-Jewish parents to raise children with strong Jewish identities if the decision is made with a whole heart," says Kathy Kahn, outreach director for the Union for Reform Judaism.

But, she says, that takes concerted effort.

"Children are very good at reading mixed messages," she notes.

■
The Conservative movement puts out the welcome mat more conditionally.

Rabbi Moshe Edelman, head of the kiruv, or outreach, committee for the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, says that if the non-Jewish spouse does not convert, the children still should be brought into the fold as quickly as possible.

"We must nurture the conversion of that child even if Mommy is not Jewish," he says.

Conservative congregations differ on how far they'll reach out to non-Jewish mothers.

At Adas Israel Congregation in Washington, Rabbi Avis Miller insists that the woman take classes on Judaism, and "even if she still practices her religion, the home can't have a Christmas tree."

Miller, who chairs the Rabbinical Assembly's committee on outreach and conversion, says the challenge to create a Jewish home is much greater when it's the mother who isn't Jewish.

"With enough commitment by the Jewish father, it can work," she says. "I've seen it work. But I wouldn't make policy on the basis of anecdotal evidence."

■
Some non-Jewish mothers raising Jewish children continue to practice their own faith. Others do not, but either feel an emotional attachment to their family background or don't want to convert for spiritual or intellectual reasons.

Rena Mello of Cambridge, Mass., always felt that if she converted to her husband's Jewish faith it would have to be a decision she made on her own. But that was before she became a mother.

One day her 3-year-old son, who was going to a Jewish pre-school, told her he wanted her to be Jewish like him, his sister and his father. The child's plea took her aback.

"It made me stop and think," Mello wrote in an essay. "I was not expecting my child to set me on a path of profound postulating about my own choice."

But, she continued, "if becoming Jewish would make my kids happy and would bring me closer to feeling the connections they experience with Judaism, perhaps it is a road I should consider."

Many non-Jewish mothers say that if their local congregation isn't welcoming, they shy away from affiliation. Jenny Guttman, a practicing Catholic, went back and forth for years with her Jewish husband before agreeing in April 2002 to raise their three children unambiguously Jewish.

Support from her Reform congregation

in Oakland, Calif, she says, was "a big reason I gave in. People were so nice to me."

Since then, Guttman stopped taking the children to church with her. They go to Hebrew school "and we celebrate Shabbat with more gusto," she notes.

But her pride in her children's growing Jewish awareness is tempered by a certain sense of loss. Her Catholic friends

don't understand how she could give up so much, she says, and while she has Jewish friends to offer "all kinds of help" on the Jewish holidays, she is alone when it comes to practicing her own faith.

"I feel a little separate from my children and husband," she admits. "I know who I am, and they don't need me to change for them. But it's the hardest thing in my marriage."

Those intangible feelings of guilt, anger and loss can linger for years, even in the families most committed to raising children in one faith.

It's not enough to call yourself welcoming, Kahn says: The Jewish community should show gratitude to women who have given up the joy of transmitting their own heritage in order to raise their children as Jews.

Last Yom Kippur, Rabbi Janet Marder of Congregation Beth Am in Los Altos Hills, Calif., called all the non-Jewish parents up to the bimah and read them a special thank-you prayer. And in Atlanta, a program called the Mother's Circle offers programmatic support for non-Jewish women raising Jewish children.

But such examples are rare, Kahn admits.

"Women who are not Jewish and who raise their children as Jews are giving us the gift of generations," she says. "Often we worry a lot; we say, 'Don't have a Christmas tree,' and 'Make sure you don't have a crucifix in your house.'

"They give us this gift and we shake it to make sure it's OK," she continues. "We need to look the giver in the eye and say thank you." ■

'I do believe it's possible for non-Jewish parents to raise children with strong Jewish identities if the decision is made with a whole heart.'

Kathy Kahn

Union for Reform Judaism

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D.C. lobbyist in hot water over ethics issues

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA)—Jack Abramoff made a name for himself in the Washington political world as an insider with strong ties to Republican circles of power.

But within Washington's Jewish world, Abramoff cut an image as a lone ranger, someone who shunned the organized Jewish community and chose to create his own Jewish institutions to serve his needs. Several of them quickly failed.

That hasn't kept Abramoff, who is Orthodox, from turning to Judaism to explain allegations that he overcharged Indian tribes for lobbying services and used his ties to House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Texas) and other Republican lawmakers to advance his personal interests.

Abramoff is at the eye of a gathering ethical storm over allegations that a number of congressmen — most prominent among them DeLay — accepted gifts and favors from him.

In a New York Times interview, Abramoff was quoted comparing himself to the biblical character Jacob, saying that his involvement in the rough and tumble of lobbying — with his attendant use of shocking and abusive language, revealed in e-mails leaked to The Washington Post — was similar to the incident in which the biblical patriarch took on the identity of his brother, Esau.

In response to questions from JTA, a spokesman for Abramoff said his client had been misquoted in the Times' article and never compared himself to any biblical figure.

Few in the Jewish community are concerned that the scandal surrounding Abramoff will reflect poorly on the Jewish community and its ties with conservative Republicans.

"This is not a Jewish issue predominantly," one Jewish political insider said. "He doesn't have his yarmulke on when he's meeting with people."

Abramoff did, on his own, advocate for some Jewish issues, including Israel, in private conversations with lawmakers and political players, sources said.

Newsweek has reported that the FBI is investigating whether he funneled funds from the Capital Athletic Foundation, a charity he established to support sports programs for urban youth, to West

Bank settlers threatened by Palestinian terrorism.

Overall, however, Abramoff was seen as a Republican with pure conservative bona fides who did not specialize in Jewish issues or link his influence to Jewish or Israeli causes.

At a time when his influence was growing in Washington, Abramoff shunned offers to get involved with Jewish groups and lasted only five months on the board of directors of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington.

Ron Halber, the JCRC's executive director, said Abramoff complained about not having time to commit to the group. Halber believes the organization may have been too liberal for Abramoff's tastes.

"He was certainly known as an espouser of conservative causes," Halber said.

Instead, Abramoff became renowned as the owner and operator of Stacks and Archives, which were the only two kosher restaurants in the nation's capital before they closed last year. The Washington Jewish Community Center runs a kosher cafe.

"Stacks became almost like the unofficial lunchroom for Jewish Washington and its colleagues," said Rabbi Levi Shemtov, Washington director of American Friends of Lubavitch.

Opening the restaurants fit the Abramoff approach: He saw a personal need he had in Washington — kosher dining — and used his own money to make it happen. Diners said Abramoff routinely noted that he was taking a loss each month on the businesses, but boasted that he was using his wealth to serve the needs of his community and himself.

He did the same thing in 2002 when he opened the Eshkol Academy, a Jewish day school that grew out of the home schooling he provided for his own children and like-minded families in suburban Maryland.

"He felt people had to make too much of an extreme choice" between a thorough religious education and quality secular teaching, and he wanted an integrated program that stressed both, said Rabbi

David Lapin, who helped found and run the school.

Abramoff knew he would have to take a loss on the school for several years, but he was overwhelmed by the cost, Lapin said. He added that Abramoff didn't get help from the Jewish community.

The school closed in May 2004, two weeks before the end of the school year.

Thirteen former employees sued Abramoff, demanding nearly \$150,000 in back salary.

Lapin's association with Abramoff links

Abramoff's Jewish world to his political world.

The New York Times reported last week that Lapin, chief executive of Strategic Business Ethics in California, received a \$1.2 million contract from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, a U.S. territory in the Pacific and an Abramoff client.

The island's attorney general, Pal Brown, told the newspaper that the government had been unable to determine what Lapin did under his no-bid contract to promote ethics in government.

The contract reportedly included a trip to the island for DeLay.

Abramoff was lobbying in Washington to keep U.S. labor laws from applying in the Marianas, where Chinese workers are employed in the garment industry.

Abramoff's spokesman would not comment on his client's ties to Lapin.

As more is learned about Abramoff, it may become harder to separate the religious man from the political man.

Recent profiles noted that he became more religiously observant after seeing "Fiddler on the Roof" when he was 12, and that e-mails filled with expletives and derogatory terms for Native Americans still referenced God with a hyphen instead of the middle letter.

Abramoff says his current environment is reminiscent of a Jewish version of hell.

"In Judaism, it's one of the definitions of hell," he told The New York Times Magazine, "that you have to sit and watch the replay of everything you said and did with the people you know."

Jack Abramoff is in trouble, but it's not expected to have much effect on the Jewish community.

Holocaust museums shift their focus

By JORDANA ROTHSTEIN

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Holocaust is still being remembered — just not the way it used to be.

Sixty years after its end, an increasing number of cities have built architectural testimony to the Holocaust. Twenty-six cities in the United States and Canada now have Holocaust museums, and others have built monuments or established research foundations or educational centers.

Holocaust museums and memorials have shifted the nature of remembrance, moving away from the emphasis on testimony and defiance toward the teaching of tolerance and understanding, according to several Holocaust experts.

“Holocaust memorials always reflect their time. Every generation has to find its own reason for memorializing,” says James Young, a professor at the University of Massachusetts and the author of “The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning.”

Older museums marking the Holocaust, such as the original Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial, built in 1957, focused on telling the survivors’ stories and conveying a “sense of hope and gratitude,” Young says.

Newer memorials, such as the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington, which opened in 1993, often make a self-conscious attempt to universalize messages in an attempt to make them accessible to more people, he adds.

According to Michael Berenbaum, a Holocaust scholar and a consultant on the development of the Washington museum, visitors to the new museums, built roughly during the last decade, learn universal moral imperatives, such as “the importance of military ethics and of recognizing the humanity of the enemy even while undertaking action against them.”

The Holocaust memorials built from the 1980s to the mid-1990s, therefore, had a specific message, according to Berenbaum: “The whole world is against us, powerlessness invites victimization and thus the Jewish people must rely upon themselves and only themselves and assume adequate power to preserve themselves in the contemporary world.” Today, he says, this message “isn’t quite credible.”

In the 1980s and 1990s, the number of museums proliferated — motivated, scholars say, by a few different ideas.

All museums want to say the Holocaust “is a terrible thing,” says Deborah Lipstadt, professor of modern Jewish and Holocaust studies at Emory University and author of the recently published book “History On Trial: My Day in Court With David Irving.” If we

know about it, “we have a better chance of preventing this from happening again. We are ensuring the future,” she says.

As more museums were built, a growing discomfort over their proliferation began to be felt in some parts of the community. Berenbaum says that “the Jewish community was quite unhappy that resources it felt entitled to were going to be given to Holocaust education — they wanted money for Jewish education and donations to Israel.”

For this and other reasons, the rush to build

Holocaust museums has been “dwindling. Once one museum has been built, you don’t need another one in that city,” he says.

Young has noticed that new memorials, including the one in Washington, move beyond historical education, speaking to “the ultimate effects of bigotry and racism. There has been a self-conscious effort to open themselves up to more groups.”

North American memorials now experiment with attempts to educate people about the Holocaust and genocide without minimizing the Jewish nature of the tragedy.

As Young explains, “In an era of installation art, it makes sense for” Holocaust “memorials to be more abstract, and allow” for people to take away different messages from the same exhibit.

The architecture of museums and memorials has changed to accompany contemporary attitudes.

Berenbaum says that the original Yad Vashem provided the first “model of an integrated institution; a museum that tells the story of the Holocaust, a research institution and archive, and an educational institution that teaches teachers and students the history of the Holocaust, its meaning and application to the new generation.”

When it came to the Washington museum, planners tried take a slightly different tack.

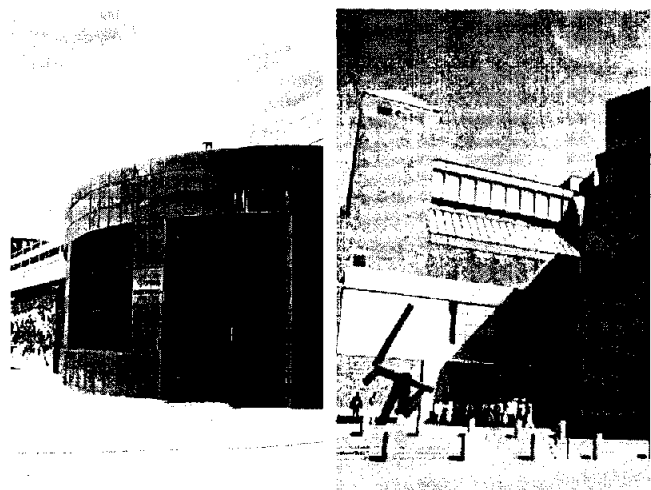
“There are corners that don’t quite meet — the building is not supposed to reassure you,” Young says. “It is constructed from brick and iron, a material reference to the Holocaust.”

Lipstadt is pleased by the diversity of the visitors to the Washington museum, which she helped plan. “I sit in the lobby and watch America pass by me,” she says. “Every part of the country comes — the vast majority of visitors are non-Jewish.”

She hopes this means that more people are getting an important message. “While it’s important to know what happened, building an identity as victims is not who Jews are. A whole world of Jewish identity is lost: We should teach people to be Jews in spite of the Holocaust, not because of it. We have to teach them the good stuff, too.” ■

‘Holocaust memorials always reflect their time. Every generation has to find its own reason for memorializing.’
Professor James Young
 University of Massachusetts

**YOM
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 FEATURE**



Yad Vashem/USHMM

Yad Vashem, left, was built in 1957 and educates about the Holocaust in a very different way than the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, which opened in 1993.

Russian Jewish World War II veterans feel pride

By SUE FISHKOFF

ROSTOV-ON-DON, Russia (JTA) — May 9 marks the 60th anniversary of V-Day, the date in 1945 when Nazi Germany capitulated.

Nowhere has it been as resolutely commemorated each year as in the former Soviet Union, which lost a staggering 25 million citizens during what is still called the Great Patriotic War.

Of approximately 11,000 World War II veterans still alive in the southern Russian capital of Rostov-on-Don today, 211 are Jewish.

Three of those Jewish soldiers marched in the great Victory Day parade in Moscow's Red Square on June 24, 1945.

One was 90-year-old Leonid Abelich Klevitsky, a tall, white-haired man of erect bearing who heads the city's Jewish war veterans association.

"It was the day before my 20th birthday," he told JTA in an interview conducted during last year's Victory Day celebration. "I'd been celebrating all night, and almost fell flat on my face in Red Square."

When Germany attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941, Klevitsky was a student in a prestigious military academy. He graduated in time to fight on the Ukrainian front and took part in the bombing of Berlin.

"I never understood my Judaism," he says of his upbringing. "I had a Marxist-Leninist education in the military academy. And only because I was Jewish, I got a 'D' instead of an 'A' because I corrected the teacher when he quoted Stalin wrong."

After a 25-year career in the army, in 1967 Klevitsky retired, and he and his wife moved back to Rostov. He became head of the city's Jewish war veterans association when it was founded six years ago.

Rostov-on-Don lies just over the border from Ukraine, right in the path of the 1941 Nazi onslaught. Few of the city's 20,000 Jews fled the advancing German forces. Rostov's Jews were urbanized, and many had studied in German universities.

Their diplomas didn't help them. On Aug. 11, 1942, the city's Jewish men were marched to a ravine outside the city and shot; the women, children and elderly were gassed in trucks, and their bodies buried in the same ravine, called Zmiyovskaya Balka, or the ravine of the snakes. Communists and Red Army soldiers also

were killed and buried there, along with their families.

Altogether, some 27,000 bodies lie in the grass-covered ravine, which has become the site of annual memorial ceremonies.

Some of Rostov's Jews, both men and women, escaped the massacre because they were serving in the Soviet Army.

The biggest day of the year for these veterans is the festive luncheon the city's Jewish community hosts for them every May. Last year's event, held May 7 in Rostov's historic synagogue, drew more than 100 aging veterans, all

wearing their medals with pride. "Everyone who can walk is here today," Klevitsky said. One of those who could not attend was his own wife, bedridden for three years.

"I love her so," he said.

The couple was married 53 years earlier in a civil ceremony. Now that Rostov has a Chabad rabbi, Klevitsky and his wife want to have a Jewish ceremony. But the rabbi told them they'd have to go to the mikvah, or ritual bath, Klevitsky said, adding defiantly, "I won't go."

He was in a buoyant mood all afternoon, displaying his veteran's ID card to anyone who showed the least interest. The feast was a typical Russian affair, with lengthy speeches by the heads of every relevant organization, as well as the requisite appearance by the city's deputy mayor. The vodka and champagne flowed, toasts were made, and there was cheek-to-cheek dancing to 1940s-era tunes.

But the lavish spread stood in ironic contrast to these honored war veterans' stark financial situation. Like elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, these men and women who labored all their lives for the Soviet state, expecting to be taken care of in their old age, are now penniless, scraping by on meager pensions, unable to pay for medical care, clothing or food.

According to figures from the Ameri-



Sue Fishkoff

Leonid Abelich Klevitsky, head of the Rostov-on-Don, Russia, Jewish war veterans association, marched in the V-Day parade in Red Square in June 1945.

'Everyone who can walk is here today.'

Leonid Klevitsky
World War II veteran

can Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which helps elderly Jews in the former Soviet Union through its Hesed welfare agencies, more than half of southern Russia's 66,000 Jews are older than 50. Twenty-five percent live below the poverty line. At the end of last year's Victory Day feast, some of those elderly poor were wrapping up cookies and bread rolls to take home to their empty cupboards.

The feast was basically paid for by the dozen local businessmen who make up the board of the city's Hesed and Chabad organizations.

Ilya Gorensteyn, a local bigwig who made his money in construction, was one of them. "I donated the bottled water, a guy who owns a fish plant gave the fish, the owner of a vodka plant gave the vodka," he said, pointing down the line of business leaders seated at the head table.

Gorensteyn said he knows of many other newly wealthy Jewish men in Rostov, but "unfortunately, not many of them are willing to give."

No breakthrough but warmth from Russia, Turkey

By LESLIE SUSSER

JERUSALEM (JTA) — On their recent groundbreaking visits to Jerusalem, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan both offered their countries' services as "honest brokers" in peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

Pundits suggested that neither leader was entirely sincere and primarily sought an international achievement to prop up his falling popularity at home. In any case, Israel and the United States are likely to continue to maintain an American monopoly on the nuts and bolts of Middle East peacemaking.

Still, analysts say, the talk of Turkish and especially Russian mediation could have a significant outcome. It could spur President Bush into appointing a high-ranking Middle Eastern peace envoy. A number of former U.S. officials, including a former ambassador to Israel, Martin Indyk, insist a dedicated envoy is vital if there is to be real progress on the Israeli-Palestinian track.

Though Israeli leaders tend to be dismissive of major Russian- or Turkish-sponsored mediation, they acknowledge that Israel has much to gain by nurturing ties with both countries, which could help meet Israel's long-term interests.

Israel has a major strategic interest in curbing Russian sales of arms and technology to potential enemies like Syria and Iran; it has a flourishing military relationship with Turkey; and in another major strategic departure, it wants to import natural gas from Russia through Turkey via a still-to-be-laid underwater gas pipeline.

Then, too, the more ties are strengthened, the greater the chances that Russia or Turkey will be allowed to play a mediating role in peace diplomacy.

In making his case for Russian mediation, Putin argued that it could serve as a counterweight to a U.S. Middle East policy that he described as destabilizing and risky. Bush's efforts to foment democracy in the Arab world could encourage such radical Islamicists as the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, possibly even sweeping them to power, Putin maintained.

Israel is worried by Russian steps to resume arms sales to such former Arab clients as Syria and the Palestinians. To win Israeli confidence, Putin promised that as long as he is president, Russia would do nothing to harm Israel.

Putin said he had intervened to cancel a deal brokered by the Russian military to sell long-range missiles to Syria "because they could have threatened Israel."

The Anti-Defamation League noted both positive and negative aspects of Putin's visit.

"At a time when efforts to depict Israel as an outlaw state continue in many circles," the ADL noted in an analysis, the image of a Kremlin leader appearing at the Western Wall "is one more powerful reversal of historic enmity and denial."

Yet the ADL noted that "there were troubling elements that cannot be obscured," such as Russia's surprise invitation to hold an international conference in Moscow on the Israeli-Palestinian

issue — the "mischief-making" idea was summarily shot down by Israel and the United States, but could resurface — and Russia's insistence on selling arms to Israel's enemies.

As for the Turks, Alon Liel, a former director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry who served as a diplomat in Ankara, says he's convinced they can play a construc-

tive role on both the Palestinian and Syrian tracks. Erdogan, a devout Muslim, says he knows Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas well and can be helpful.

For now, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon isn't interested in that kind of Turkish help. Instead, he suggested that Erdogan help the Palestinians rebuild their economy, especially in the fields of housing, water and tourism.

Where both Putin and Erdogan did make progress was on the issue of global terrorism. Sharon agreed to set up direct hotlines to Putin's and Erdogan's offices for the speedy exchange of intelligence information. Israel now has such arrangements only with the United States and Britain.

Sharon showed Putin that many of the weapons Israel intercepted in January 2002 on a weapons ship bound from Iran to the Palestinian Authority were made in Russia. Putin, who says anti-aircraft missiles Russia wants to sell to Syria couldn't possibly make their way into terrorists' hands, urged Sharon to inform him of any future seepage of Russian weapons to third parties so that he can deal with the offenders.

The main strategic issue in the talks with Putin was how to prevent Iran from producing a nuclear weapon. The Russians want to continue supplying Iran with nuclear technologies but say they don't want Iran to develop a nuclear weapon.

In an ideal world, Israel would like to see the United States as its main strategic partner, the European Union as its major trading partner, Russia as a truly neutral player and Turkey as a partner in a wider regional alliance. In a slow, accretive way, the visits of Putin and Erdogan may have helped bring those goals a little closer. ■

'At a time when efforts to depict Israel as an outlaw state continue in many circles,' this 'is one more powerful reversal of historic enmity and denial.'

Anti-Defamation League statement

NEWS ANALYSIS



Avi Ohayon/GPO/BP Images

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan shakes hands with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Holocaust survivor urges action in Darfur

By NESSE GODIN

SILVER SPRING, Md. (JTA) — Sixty-four years ago, my family and I were sent to the ghetto in Siauliai, Lithuania. Somehow, I lived through a concentration camp, four labor camps and a death march.

There is not a day that I don't think about the family and friends I lost in the Holocaust. But this year, as the world is commemorating the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II and the liberation of the concentration camps, my thoughts are not only about the horrors of Europe's past, but

also about Africa's present.

Today, I am also thinking about the people of Darfur, Sudan — chased from their homes, their belongings stolen, separated from their families and facing brutality and death every day. From experience, I know what this is like.

As we know, most of the world turned its back on Europe's Jews during the Holocaust. But I survived the

Nazis and their collaborators thanks to the help of Jewish women who gave me a small bite of bread when I was starving, kept me warm when I was freezing and picked me up when I fell.

When I promised these women that I would

never forget their courage, I promised myself to teach the world how hatred and indifference can cause terrible pain and suffering. I write this essay on behalf of those Jewish women who helped me and for all those dying in Darfur who need our help.

My heart goes out to these human beings who are being attacked because of who they are. It brings back awful memories of the attacks on the Jews during the Holocaust just because of who they were. Virtually every day, soldiers of the government of Sudan and its allied militias rape, burn villages and kill people of so-called "African" ethnic groups because of their identity.

Families that have done nothing wrong bear the weight of the violence. As someone who lived through the horrors of the Holocaust, and as a human being who believes we must never forget, I cannot remain silent.

Last year at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, I stood shoulder to shoulder with Amal Allagabo, of the Darfur community in exile, in a special observance bringing attention to the crisis in Darfur. Ms. Allagabo has lost touch with her family and fears that they could be scattered in refugee camps, lost in the desert or dead.

Time is of the essence. With each passing day more lives are lost. On March 17, college campuses across America observed a minute of silence for Darfur, hoping that their communities, the governments of the free world and the United Nations would hear their silence as a call to action.

Seven weeks later, innocent people continue to be killed. What must we do to keep reminding the world that genocide is

never acceptable?

As a survivor of the Holocaust, I have a special responsibility to Ms. Allagabo and to the people of Darfur. As United States citizens, as leaders in the world community and as human beings, we all have the obligation to speak out and end the genocide. We must inform our children, we must encourage action, and we must lead the world in halting these crimes against humanity.

When I lived in the ghetto, before I lost my family, a young woman came to our home with papers that would help us avoid deportation, but she was one short — mine. My mother pleaded with her to get the appropriate paperwork so that I could remain with my family.

Eventually the young woman chose to provide one more document so that I could stay in the ghetto. This young woman made a decision that saved my life.

One person can make a difference. Every time I speak about my experiences during the Holocaust, I also speak about Darfur.

Last summer, I addressed a group in front of the Sudanese embassy rallying to end the genocide. In January, for the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, I told the assembled diplomats at the United Nations why we must do something for the innocent people of Darfur.

In February, I spoke to a group of 400 students from 90 universities across America who had traveled to Washington to learn how they can help stop the genocide. They prove that some young people understand that we must act, and now we must get others to act, urgently.

I will continue to speak out because I survived genocide. I will not — cannot — remain silent during another genocide.

Six decades ago, the world was horrified. The world claimed that it had not known about the Holocaust.

It was not true then, nor is it true now about Darfur. When are we going to learn the lessons of the Holocaust? When are we going to recognize our individual and national responsibility to put an end to genocide?

When will we stop merely saying "never again" and start acting on "Not this time!" in Washington. ■

Nesse Godin, a Holocaust survivor, lives in Silver Spring, Md., and volunteers at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

OP-ED

COMMUNITY

TRANSITIONS

■ CLAL — the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership appointed Fern Hurst as chairwoman of the board.

■ David Lissy was named executive director and CEO of the Masorti Foundation for Conservative Judaism in Israel.

■ Seth Moskowitz was named executive director of the American Friends of the Israel Democracy Institute.

■ Rabbi Alvin Berkun was elected to the board of trustees of the National Interfaith Cable Coalition, which does business as Faith & Values Media.

■ Longtime JTA correspondent Milton Friedman died April 28 in Washington at 81.

HONORS

■ JTA board member Jonathan Sarna received the American Jewish Committee's Akiba Award.

■ Edith Everett received the Jewish Funders Network's annual Sidney Shapiro Tzedekah award. Everett accepted the award at the group's conference in Baltimore on behalf of her late husband, Henry, whom she called a role model for philanthropy.

■ The Jewish Women's Archive honored Rita Arditti, Diane Balsler, Idit Klein, Pamela Sussman Paternoster, Judith Wolf and Sue Wolf-Fordham as "Women Who Dared."

■ Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life honored Edgar Bronfman.

■ Ruth Messinger received the Women's Funding Network's Changing the Face of Philanthropy Award.

■ The Jewish Sports Hall of Fame honored Army 2nd Lt. Boyd Melson, gold-medal winner in the 69-kg. weight class at the 2004 World Military Boxing Championships, as the Marty Glickman Outstanding Jewish Scholastic Athlete of the Year.

■ American ORT gave awards to Esther Barrish, Rabbi Steven Balliban, Pearl Kemp and Natalie and Murray Katz.

'What must we do to keep reminding the world that genocide is never acceptable?'

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Iraq war compared to camp liberation

The chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial compared the liberation of death camps 60 years ago to the war in Iraq.

"We remember that the price of liberation is steep, its mantle heavy and its sacrifices real," Fred Zeidman, a prominent Jewish backer of President Bush, said at a commemoration Thursday in the Capitol Rotunda of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the death camps. "President Bush understands this only too well, and our nation is now courageously engaged in another battle for freedom."

Air Force harassment probed

The U.S. government launched an investigation into charges of religious proselytizing at the Air Force Academy.

The Pentagon is sending investigators to look into 55 complaints in which religious discrimination was alleged, including one in which a Jewish cadet allegedly was told the Holocaust was revenge for the death of Jesus.

Animal rights group apologizes

An animal-rights group apologized for an ad campaign comparing animals to Holocaust victims.

Ingrid Newkirk, president of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, sent a letter this week in which she apologized for the pain caused by the campaign.

"We hope those we upset will find it in their hearts to work toward the goal of a kinder world, regardless of species," she wrote.

U.S. welcomes Latin-Arab summit

The United States welcomed an Arab-Latin American summit next week.

"We welcome the dialogue between the people of these two important regions," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said on Thursday.

Israel and some U.S. Jewish groups are concerned that the summit, set for May 10-12 in Brasilia, Brazil, is an attempt to draw Latin American countries into a campaign to accelerate Palestinian statehood and isolate Israel in the international community.

Orthodox rabbis attend prayer event

Orthodox rabbis joined President Bush to mark the National Day of Prayer.

Rabbi Kenneth Auman, president of the Rabbinical Council of America, read Psalm 98 at the White House event Thursday.

"The National Day of Prayer is a day that we ask that our nation, our leaders and our people use the freedom we have been given wisely," Bush said. "And so we pray as Americans have always prayed — with confidence in God's purpose, with hope for the future, and with the humility to ask God's help to do what is right."

MIDDLE EAST

Panel eyes Egyptian border plan

Israeli lawmakers came out against a proposal to post Egyptian troops along the Egypt-Gaza border.

The Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee demanded Wednesday that the government bring any decision on Egyptian border deployment to the Parliament for approval, as it would effectively rescind a clause in the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement requiring that the Sinai desert be demilitarized.

The latest proposal is for Egypt to send 750 soldiers, as well as armored vehicles, to patrol the porous frontier and stop arms smuggling from Sinai to Palestinian terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

Conservative movement supports gay pride walk

The Conservative movement's rabbinic arm said it supports the right of gay men and lesbians to hold a pride march in Jerusalem this summer.

"We have called on our congregations to be welcoming to homosexuals and to treat them with dignity and integrate them into Jewish communal life," said Rabbi Perry Rank, president of the Rabbinical Assembly.

The movement's leaders in Israel, Rabbis Ehud Bandel and Andrew Sachs, also supported gay men's and lesbians' right to march in the parade, though they said their support was not an endorsement of the march itself.

Christians honored at Israeli Embassy

The Rev. Pat Robertson joined other Christian leaders at an annual event at the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

Robertson, founder and chairman of the Christian Broadcast Network, was the keynote speaker at the event, along with Israeli Ambassador Daniel Ayalon.

"The evangelical community is a bedrock of support for Israel in the United States," Ayalon said.

Robertson referred to Israel as an "island of democracy and civility in the midst of a sea of oppression."

Bracing for withdrawal

Forty-four Israeli border towns are expected to be vulnerable to Palestinian attacks after this summer's Gaza Strip withdrawal.

The Defense Ministry this week accorded the 44 towns and kibbutzim surrounding Gaza "confrontation-line" status, earmarking \$48 million for their protection.

Church leader in Jerusalem forced out

A Christian leader in Jerusalem was ousted amid charges that he allowed church land to be sold to Jews.

"We officially announce today the removal of Patriarch Irineos I," the Greek Orthodox Church in Jerusalem said in a statement.

"We hold him responsible for corruption (and) giving up church properties." Irineos, the powerful Greek Orthodox Church's highest authority in Israel, denied wrongdoing in the reported sale of several Jerusalem properties to foreign Jewish financiers believed to be connected to right-wing Israeli groups.

According to one report, the sale was conducted illicitly last year by an Irineos aide who then fled abroad.

Vandals strike in Israel on Holocaust day

Graffiti in Jerusalem likened Ariel Sharon to Hitler. The slogans "Sharon is following in Hitler's footsteps" and "Sharon, Hitler would have been proud of you" were found Thursday, along with swastikas, painted on the Central Zionist Archive and the access road to Yad Vashem, police said.

The culprits are believed to be right-wingers opposed to the looming Israeli withdrawals from the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank.

WORLD

France remembers the Holocaust

France marked Holocaust Remembrance Day.

A candle-lighting ceremony took place Wednesday in Paris at the site of the cycling stadium where nearly 13,000 Jews were rounded up on July 16-17, 1942, before being sent to a holding camp at Drancy and then to Auschwitz. Survivors and children read the names of the 75,000 Jews deported from France.