

IN THE NEWS
Group: Pakistan accepts Israeli aid

Pakistan will accept Israeli aid to help in the recovery from Saturday's devastating earthquake.

The decision came in a telephone call Tuesday between Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf and Jack Rosen, chairman of the American Jewish Congress-Council for World Jewry, the AJCongress said in a news release.

Musharraf, who recently addressed U.S. Jewish groups at a New York event sponsored by the AJCongress, also said Pakistan would accept help from American Jewish groups, some of whom are collecting donations.

U.S. apologizes for 'Gold Train'

The United States released an apology for its role in the Hungarian "Gold Train" affair.

In 1945, U.S. troops confiscated a train full of Hungarian Jewish property looted by the Nazis.

No serious attempt ever was made to return the property to its rightful owners, and this year the U.S. government settled a class-action lawsuit by paying \$25 million, most of it to Hungarian Holocaust survivors in need, and by pledging an apology.

Jewish museum opens in Cleveland

A new Jewish museum opened in Cleveland.

More than 600 people attended Tuesday's opening of the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage, which featured actress Valerie Harper portraying the late Israeli leader Golda Meir and remarks by Rep. Stephanie Tubbs-Jones (D-Ohio).

The museum will feature exhibits on Jewish history and culture.

It was funded by the Maltz Family Foundation and the Cleveland Jewish Community Federation's Centennial Initiative.

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JTA's World Report will not be published Thursday or Friday of this week because of Yom Kippur.

WORLD REPORT

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PPO/BP Images

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, center, plants a Palestinian flag in the ground at the former Gaza Strip Jewish settlement of Elei Sinai on Sept. 12.

For Sharon, some perennial dilemmas in relations with Palestinian Authority

By **LESLIE SUSSER**

JERUSALEM (JTA) — After its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank, Israel is facing a number of acute dilemmas vis-a-vis the Palestinian Authority.

Should it enable the Palestinian Authority to acquire arms to fight Hamas in Gaza? Should it allow Hamas to participate in P.A. elections scheduled for January?

Which Palestinian prisoners should Israel release? Should it facilitate easy passage of people and goods to and from Gaza to encourage good neighborliness, or should it tighten border controls to prevent terrorism?

The answers to these questions depend to

a large extent on the government's overall strategic vision of future relations with the Palestinians. With the United States pressing both sides to make progress, circumstances are forcing the Sharon administration to come to grips with some fundamental issues.

For example, Israeli decision-makers are asking themselves whether they can trust the Palestinians with full independence or whether, for security reasons,

they need to impose limits on Palestinian freedom.

They also are asking whether they want an integrated economic future with the Palestinians or whether the Palestinians'

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NEWS ANALYSIS

■ *Top Israeli officials are divided over whether to arm the P.A. to crack down on Hamas*

Continued from page 1

economic orientation should be primarily toward the Arab world.

Some government critics argue that unless Israel shows more sensitivity to Palestinian needs, it might not have the luxury of thinking long term because it could find itself preoccupied with a new round of terrorism.

In preliminary talks aimed at setting up a meeting between Sharon and P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinians have been making five main demands: Israel should release Palestinian prisoners, allow Palestinian deportees to return, hand over more West Bank cities to Palestinian control, open border crossing points and stop military action against terrorists.

The Palestinian Authority wants to move quickly to show its constituents that it can bring results.

Worried about security, the Israelis are being more circumspect: So far they have agreed only to reactivate joint committees to consider the first four Palestinian demands. They also note that repeated goodwill gestures to meet nearly identical Palestinian demands in the past produced little in the way of results — or good will.

On the deeper strategic level, the Israeli defense establishment is divided over how much freedom of action Israel should allow the Palestinian Authority. The key question is whether or not Israel should authorize more weapons for the Palestinian Authority.

The head of the Shin Bet security

service, Yuval Diskin, argues that it's in Israel's interest for the Palestinian Authority to have access to arms to control Hamas. Diskin argues that strengthening the Palestinian Authority in the hopes that it will clamp down on terrorism is a chance worth taking — as long as Israel is in a position to monitor the amount and quality of weapons supplied.

However, others say the Palestinian Authority has no shortage of arms, but rather a shortage of will to use them. Israel repeatedly tried to strengthen P.A. forces throughout the Oslo years, only to find that P.A. guns were rarely if ever used against terrorists, and instead were turned on Israel when the intifada began.

Fearful that this will happen again, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz is only prepared to approve more ammunition.

Other officials go further than Diskin. They argue that Israel should not be concerned at all by weapons given to the Palestinian Authority. The stronger the Palestinian Authority, they say, the better — on the assumption that, no matter how much weaponry the Palestinians import, they won't be able to match Israel militarily.

The Israeli establishment also is divided over Hamas' participation in the elections. Israel's official position is that Hamas can't participate in elections as long as it has a military wing. In other words, to become a legitimate political party, Hamas must first disarm.

That position is supported by the United States and some E.U. countries. The counterargument is that participation would domesticate Hamas, and the fact of being part of Palestinian institutional life would imply Hamas' acceptance of the two-state solution to which Israel and the Palestinian Authority subscribe.

However, others see the example of Lebanon, where its ascension to the Lebanese Cabinet did not induce Hezbollah to give up its private army or moderate its radical anti-Israel agenda.

The issue with the most significant long-term ramifications is the question of border crossings. If Israel envisages long-term strategic separation from the Palestinians, then allowing the Palestinians

open borders to the Arab world makes sense. Yet security considerations, such as the need to counter weapons smuggling, dictate a measure of Israeli border control.

The same is true of the projected land link between the Gaza Strip and West Bank. Israeli advocates say the link would connect Gaza to the Arab world to the east. Others worry that the Palestinians will take advantage of the link to move arms and terrorists from Gaza to the West Bank, or even

to carry out attacks while crossing Israel.

On the Palestinian side, Abbas, disappointed at the slow pace of negotiations so far, hopes to convince the Israeli public that he can be trusted with a far greater degree of independence. His most direct appeal is likely to come during a mid-November conference in memory of assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, where Abbas will be one of the guest speakers.

Some Israeli critics accuse the government of a shortsighted and patronizing attitude toward the Palestinians that could lead to more fighting, before Israel is able to start instituting any of its long-term strategic goals.

Ha'aretz political analyst Aluf Benn writes that Sharon's people have forgotten "that successful wars end with magnanimity of victors, and that humiliating a defeated enemy only sows the seeds of the next war." In an editorial, Ha'aretz suggests that Israel must make gestures toward the Palestinians soon to convince the international community that it wants progress.

"Releasing Palestinian prisoners, opening sea and air ports, transferring considerable funds to the Palestinian Authority and equipping it with effective military tools to strengthen it are necessary to bolster the Palestinian partner," Ha'aretz writes. "Without these steps, Israel too will not be able to persuade the world that its intentions are sincere."

As they consider what short-term concessions to make, and how quickly to make them, Israeli decision-makers face a difficult strategic question: Can the Palestinian Authority be trusted with real power — or will it once again abuse any power it's given to fight Israel? ■

'Humiliating a defeated enemy only sows the seeds of the next war.'

Aluf Benn

Ha'aretz political analyst

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UJC picks GOP man for key D.C. role

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A Republican activist will lead Washington operations for the United Jewish Communities.

William Daroff, deputy executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition, was chosen by the Jewish federations' umbrella organization to serve as its vice president for public policy and director of the Washington Action Office.

He replaces Charles Konigsberg, who was let go in February.

The selection of a Republican operative reflects the reality of GOP control of the White House and both houses of Congress. It also comes as some major federation donors are strengthening their Republican ties.

Barry Swartz, UJC vice president, acknowledged that Daroff's contacts with key players were a key factor in considering him. Equally important was the fact that Daroff maintains ties to Democrats as well, despite his current partisan role.

"His ability to traverse both sides of the aisle, his relationships, his skill, acumen and accomplishments all contributed to the feeling he was the candidate," Swartz told JTA.

Daroff will need to work hard in the coming year to garner federal appropriations for Jewish groups in an economy squeezed by hurricane devastation in the Gulf Coast.

Jewish officials in Washington say Daroff, 36, has the community's respect. He joined RJC in 2000, starting as director of congressional relations. He is a former Energy Department staffer in the administration of the elder President Bush, and was an adviser to former Ohio Gov. George Voinovich, now a U.S. senator.

A Cleveland native, Daroff worked as an attorney in Ohio and was active in the state's Republican Party. But he said he would be able to forge ties with Democrats as well.

"I am someone who is very committed to Jewish communal issues, and I see myself working with all sorts of folks," Daroff said last Friday. "I don't see it as being a problem, but rather an opportunity to expand my horizons and work for the betterment of the cause."

Daroff said his focus would be on making UJC the central address for American Jewry in Washington. He plans to mirror the role Jewish federations play in metro-

politan areas, minimizing overlap in policy focus and event scheduling.

He also said he would like to resurrect regular meetings among key Jewish players in Washington.

"My idea is not for the UJC Washington office to be in supremacy, but like local federations, we will serve as a vehicle for coordination and cooperation," he said.

In recent years, UJC's Washington office has focused on appropriations for federations and other Jewish bodies. Federation-administered programs receive between \$5 billion and \$7 billion per year in federal and state grants, UJC officials said.

The Washington office was instrumental in obtaining funds for Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities — a program that helps elderly people stay longer in their communities — and for security upgrades for synagogues and other Jewish sites through the Homeland Security Department.

The organization largely has abandoned Jewish advocacy not directly related to getting federal dollars to local Jewish communities. Daroff said he believes it's important to return to public advocacy.

"I think the Washington office staff has done a great job in helping federations with earmarks and appropriations," he said. "But I also think UJC has an obligation to be a voice on public policy issues where it can make a difference."

Daroff acknowledged that it will be more difficult to garner federal appropriations in coming years, especially after the hurricanes. He stressed the importance of working creatively.

"It's often easy to look at how things have always been done and say 'lets do it again,'" he said. "In tough budgetary times, there are ways to look at the margins and create creative solutions."

Those include building stronger ties on Capitol Hill and stressing the role Jewish community groups play in providing assistance to those in need, he said.

He also said the UJC would be involved in long-term solutions for New Orleans and other places devastated by Katrina.

Daroff will enter unfamiliar territory at the UJC, occasionally having to speak out against the GOP on social policy issues such as Medicare and Medicaid funding — which he said would be a key issue — along with refugee and immigration concerns.

"I believe a social safety net is necessary, and it's the responsibility of the Jewish community and government to help those

who need help," Daroff said.

Jewish community officials have noted the influx of major Republican Jewish donors to the federation system in recent years. The donors are said to be pushing the UJC away from backing Democratic social programs, with some success.

Konigsberg, who served for just over a year; also had Republican ties: He had worked as an aide to Sens. Pete Domenici (R-N.M.) and Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) and in the Bush administration. But he also worked for Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.) and in the Clinton White House.

As much as 77 percent of Jews voted for Democratic presidential candidate Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) in last year's election, and Swartz said the UJC would maintain its ties with Democrats.

Swartz said Daroff's background, coming from a Jewish community job — albeit a partisan one — was a factor in his hiring, as was his reputation in Washington as a friendly, team player.

Swartz did not mention it, but in recent years the UJC's Washington office has suffered from difficult staff-management relations, and from relationships with other Jewish groups that at times have been tense.

"It was important to me to have someone who is a team person," Swartz said. "It's a strategic direction of UJC to partner with other Jewish organizations and institutions."

Daroff will have to tone down his public expressions of partisanship. He was known in Washington Jewish circles for wearing ties adorned with elephants, the GOP symbol, and his car had Bush/Cheney bumper stickers.

"I am very much looking forward to a bipartisan lifestyle," he said.

(JTA Washington Bureau Chief Ron Kampeas contributed to this report.)

Connections to leading Washington players are cited as a key factor in a UJC appointment.

BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES

In L.A., repentance program helps rehab criminals

By SUE FISHKOFF

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — The slightly built, 13-year-old Latino boy sitting in the Starbucks cafe near downtown Los Angeles doesn't know much about teshuvah, the Jewish notion of repentance.

But it lies at the heart of L.A.'s Jewish Community Justice Project, and it kept this scared kid with the tremulous smile from a likely stint in juvenile boot camp for throwing rocks at a police car.

Instead of coming before a judge, the boy was brought face to face with the policeman whose car he'd damaged, and in a two-hour meeting facilitated by two trained mediators, he had to tell the cop he was sorry.

Then he had to pledge to make restitution by working a set number of hours for his parents and a local gardening firm to pay \$200 for a new car window.

"I felt nervous in that room," the boy admitted. "I told him I was stupid, and not thinking about what I was doing at that moment. He was kind, he was a good person. He told me to thank my parents for raising me."

It was the first time the boy had worked for money, and his mother said he was tempted to keep the first \$50 he made.

"But I told him, 'You have to take care of your responsibilities first,'" she said.

The Jewish Community Justice Project is a partner of the Centinela Valley Juvenile Diversion Project, which has been running a victim-offender restitution program in Los Angeles since 1992.

Four years ago, the Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles funded this joint project between Centinela and two L.A.-based Jewish groups, the Progressive Jewish Alliance and Beit T'shuva, a Jewish recovery program.

According to the agreement, the Progressive Jewish Alliance trains volunteers to mediate in cases forwarded by local law enforcement and juvenile courts. There currently are almost 60 Jewish volunteer mediators.

"The alliance with PJA has been so exciting because they've recruited motivated, dedicated volunteers," says Centinela's executive director, Steve Goldsmith. "The religious component, the education of teshuvah, really keeps the people motivated."

The mediation project is based on the legal concept of restorative justice, according to which offenders must take personal responsibility for their crimes and make restitution directly to those they have offended.

Participants say it dovetails neatly with the talmudic notion of teshuvah, which specifies that one must seek forgiveness from those one has wronged before asking God's forgiveness, something Jews are meant to do every year between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

"Part of teshuvah is attending to what one did, and turning to the person who was hurt or offended, to see whether you can come back to an open relationship with that person and their family," says Rabbi Richard Levy, director of the School of Rabbinic Studies at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles.

Levy helped create the Jewish part of the curriculum — eight hours of Jewish text study on justice and forgiveness — for the volunteer training program.

Daniel Sokatch, director of the PJA, says he brought his organization into the program in 2002 when Los Angeles

became the nation's murder capital.

"We realized that most of the murders were in the 310 area code, home to most of the Jews who don't live in the Valley," Sokatch says, referring to the San Fernando Valley.

The most affected neighborhoods weren't those where many Jews live, Sokatch says, but "it's still our city, and in the words of Jeremiah, you must work for the welfare of the city where you live, and there find your

own well-being."

Murderers aren't eligible for mediation. Most of the cases that come to Centinela involve petty theft, vandalism, bullying and similar crimes.

One of the hardest parts of the program is making sure that appropriate cases are referred to them. There were 45,000 youths arrested last year in Los Angeles, Goldsmith says, yet Centinela received only 600 to 700 referrals.

To address that problem, Sokatch says, the next volunteer training program, in early 2006, will include a separate, less intensive track for volunteers who will learn how to shmooze intake cops, "visit them every week, bring donuts and coffee and review the docket with them," to ensure that fewer juvenile offenders slip through the cracks.

Keren Markuze, a documentary television writer, has mediated about a dozen cases since her training last year.

"Jewish law is very big on giving people chances," she says. "Let's do everything we can to make sure the punishment is appropriate, especially when we talk about children."

Jewish law also takes intention into consideration when looking at crime, Markuze notes. She describes one case she mediated, where a boy stole pants, a shirt and shoes from a department store.

During the mediation, the boy confessed in tears that his mother was laid off and couldn't afford to buy him a new school uniform, and he was tired of being humiliated by the other kids at school for his clothes.

"That's an issue of economic justice," Markuze proclaims. "Of course he had to learn that stealing is not a solution, but for him to end up in the conventional justice system would have been tragic." ■

'Jewish law is very big on giving people chances.'

Keren Markuze
Documentary TV writer

FOCUS
ON
ISSUES



Sue Fishkoff

Lisette Smith, of the juvenile mediation program of the Centinela Valley Juvenile Diversion Project, talks with a youth offender and his mother near Los Angeles.

Jews look outside synagogues for new rituals

By SUE FISHKOFF

BERKELEY, Calif. (JTA)—Sam Sontag's parents wanted him to have a bar mitzvah, but they aren't religious and felt it would be hypocritical to join a congregation.

Shalva Sorani is active in her Berkeley, Calif., congregation, but when she faced a mastectomy her friends wanted a female Jewish educator to lead their all-women healing circle.

These are some of the people served by Rachel Brodie and Julie Batz, founders and co-directors of The Ritualist, a Bay Area-based nonprofit that researches and supports independent Jewish life-cycle rituals — weddings, funerals, bar and bat mitzvahs — and other events held outside the framework of a synagogue.

It's a growing trend nationwide, Brodie says. A Jewish educator who holds a master's degree from the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary, Brodie says people began asking her to do their Jewish ceremonies almost a decade ago.

The phenomenon is especially prevalent in the San Francisco Bay Area, a region with particularly low affiliation rates. Just 22 percent of Bay Area Jewish households belong to synagogues, according to a recent survey. When these people want a Jewish ceremony to mark an important life-cycle event, Brodie and Batz say, they don't know where to go.

"There's so much going on in the Jewish community under the term 'outreach,' and this is an example of people who don't belong reaching out to the synagogue community," says Batz, a business consultant and shaliach tzibur, or service leader, for a local congregation. "It's a tremendous opportunity for us to say, 'we'd like you to have a really deep, meaningful Jewish experience.'"

But what this trend actually produces is up for debate, as some say it merely provides a one-time rabbi rather than strengthening the Jewish community.

In early 2004, Brodie and Batz secured a research grant from the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund. Batz says they were shocked to find more than 100 rabbis, cantors, Jewish educators and other ritual facilitators working actively in the East Bay alone, conducting traditional rituals as well as creating a whole host of new ones: mikvah ceremonies for rape victims; New Age healing circles with Jewish prayers;

a coming-of-age ritual for a boy who had just received his drivers' license.

But Brodie and Batz found no organization connecting the people who want these ceremonies with the professionals ready to help them.

As the two women built up their database of facilitators, and as more Jews heard of their work and started contacting them, they found themselves providing a personal referral service. They talk to the people who call and try to connect them with appropriate clergy or lay facilitators.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Some of the callers are young and haven't settled permanently in the area. Others haven't found a synagogue where they feel comfortable.

Some, says Batz, "are on the margins of the Jewish community," often because they're interracial or interfaith couples, or are gay or lesbian. They want to mark life-cycle events Jewishly, but don't feel comfortable in traditional congregations.

Later this fall Brodie and Batz hope to launch a Web site, with money from the Walter and Elise Haas Fund, "so if you're planning a Jewish wedding, you can go to one site to find liturgy, ritual ideas, a rabbi and a Jewish caterer," Batz says.

The Web site also will help clergy and lay facilitators share ideas and rituals, creating a virtual professional network.

Not everyone is pleased with the phenomenon.

Rabbi Danny Freeland, vice president of the Union for Reform Judaism, is concerned that in meeting the personal needs of individuals, groups like The Ritualist are ignoring the needs of the larger Jewish community, which needs Jews to affiliate with it.

"I see it very much as an extension of the 'rent-a-rabbi' phenomenon, dressed in different clothing," he says. "It's wonderful people doing this work, creating exciting new rituals, but I don't think it helps us build community, which is the second half of the equation."



Sue Fishkoff

Shalva Sorani turned to a female Jewish educator outside her congregation to lead her healing circle.

Brodie understands the ambivalence many rabbis and Jewish leaders feel about independent rituals and the people who lead them. There are charlatans out there, she admits. But this is different.

"We are most definitely not rent-a-rabbi," she insists. "These facilitators have enormous integrity, they don't just come for the ceremony. They take the time to mentor, often much more time than a congregational rabbi."

One of the facilitators Brodie refers people to is Reform Rabbi Bridget Wynne. A congregational rabbi for the past 11 years, Wynne says she tries to steer callers toward a suitable congregation, but usually they call because they've already decided not to be a member, she says.

Some belong to a congregation but their rabbi can't meet a particular need, such as an interfaith wedding or a funeral where there has been

'The message is, Even if you don't belong to a synagogue, we want to make sure you get what you need.'

Rabbi Bridget Wynne

a cremation.

"The message is, 'Even if you don't belong to a synagogue, we want to make sure you get what you need,'" she says.

Brodie says that while she and Batz don't try to push unaffiliated clients into joining a congregation, it often happens naturally.

But sometimes they don't want to affiliate, and Brodie says that doesn't mean they don't feel a strong Jewish identity.

"If you ask our clients, they say they're in the Jewish community," she says. ■

Dalia Rabin maintains her father's legacy

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Ten years after her father was felled by an assassin's bullet, Dalia Rabin is finally getting a little vindication.

She was happy to see that her country has matured in the past decade, and that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's own break with the settlement movement did not register the kind of rancor that culminated in Yitzhak Rabin's death on Nov. 4, 1995.

Her tone tinged with surprise, Rabin marveled at the smoothness of Israel's recent withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

"We were all surprised how smooth it went, relative to what was expected. It took Israeli society time, 10 years, to become ripe for such a move," Rabin told JTA recently in Washington, where she launched commemorations of her father's legacy that will culminate Nov. 12 at the educational center named for him in Tel Aviv.

"We proved that, after all, with the right leadership and with the consistency and the strong determination of Ariel Sharon," extremists "did not have the political support they did in 1995," she said.

The change is not simply a matter of edging toward political civility, Rabin said, but of coming around to her father's vision of Israel as a "normalizer" of Jews and a confident actor on the world stage.

"He thought that we already came to the point that we made peace with our neighbors, and now we have to define for

ourselves who we want to be," she said.

A decade later, she said, Sharon — once one of Rabin's fiercest political rivals — has come around to the same vision.

"Ariel Sharon finally decided when he took this position, the disengagement, that this is the only way, and he realized that this is the way to gain the support of the world," Rabin said. "After doing the disen-

gagement, Ariel Sharon came to the U.N. for the first time, he came from the feeling that the world is not against us anymore."

Still, Rabin sees much work ahead, and she aims to help effect change through her chairmanship of the Yitzhak Rabin Center for Israel Studies' educational wing.

"The most successful program right now is workshops within the army, border police and police. We have about 12,000 soldiers and policemen coming for one-day workshops in the center every year for the last three years," she said.

Her father's name still draws major-league attention. President Clinton, whose eloquent eulogy to Rabin still resonates in Israel, helped raise \$1.5 million for the Rabin Center at a Sept. 22 dinner in Washington, and will keynote the Nov. 12 event in Israel.

"In the last 10 years, hardly a day has gone by that I have not missed Yitzhak Rabin in a personal, aching way," Clinton said at the dinner. "The only thing we can do is to be more like him."

The Communications Workers of America also pitched in on a farewell request from its retiring president, Morton Bahr, who was close to the Rabins. A Rabin Center wing will be named for Bahr, who paid for the September dinner.

In 2003, the U.S. Congress appropriated \$5 million for the center.

Rabin said such support from U.S. institutions was appropriate,

given her father's closeness to the United States — he served as ambassador to Washington in the late 1960s and early 1970s — and given the Bush administration's current mission to spread democracy in the Middle East.

"I based my approach to the people on the Hill on my father being a very, very important pillar in creating the relationship between Israel

and the United States," she said.

Rabin, 55, seems to have found her niche in chairing the center. She seems relaxed, and in personal interviews she displays the same engaged, tempered curiosity that characterized her father in conversation. They also share a close physical resemblance, especially in her reserved half-smile.

Rabin spent much of the last decade in her own turbulent quest to find her place in her father's legacy. In 1999 she helped found the Center Party, imagined as Israel's salvation from the old Likud and Labor stalemate.

The party imploded in recriminations within a few years, and its six former Knesset representatives now barely speak to one another.

For a brief period Rabin was Israel's deputy defense minister — the first woman to hold the position — but quit after a year.

Eighteen months ago she made headlines when she was hospitalized for heart palpitations after learning that her father's assassin, Yigal Amir, hoped to marry. The prison services won't allow it, though Amir's request is snaking its way through the legal system.

Just pronouncing the name of the man serving a life sentence for killing her father still sends visible shivers down Rabin's spine. Speaking of Amir, she unleashes some of the fury her late mother, Leah, was famous for.

"This was a Jew, wearing a yarmulke, with Jewish ideology, deciding to put an end to a political process by killing a prime minister," she said, leaning forward in the hotel divan. "And unfortunately for a long time it seemed that he succeeded."

She paused.

"And he has a lot of supporters in Israeli society," she added. ■

'I based my approach to the people on the Hill on my father being a very, very important pillar' in U.S.-Israel relations.

Dalia Rabin



Communications Workers of America

At a Sept. 22 fund-raising dinner in Washington for the Yitzhak Rabin Center, are, from left, President Clinton; Florence Bahr; Communications Workers of America President Morton Bahr, holding images of the wing of the Rabin Center to be named for Bahr; CWA executive Barbara Easterling; and Dalia Rabin.

COMMUNITY

TRANSITIONS

- Avraham Infeld announced that he would step down as interim president of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life next August. Wayne Firestone was named Hillel's executive vice president.
- Karen Weissblatt resigned as executive director of the American Jewish Committee's Transatlantic Institute in Brussels.
- Deborah Auerbach-Deutsch was appointed communications director of B'nai B'rith International.
- Rabbi Moshe Krupka was appointed national executive director of the Orthodox Union; Betty Ehrenberg was appointed deputy to the executive vice president for community and strategic planning; Rabbi Daniel Korobkin was appointed West Coast director of community and synagogue services; Rabbi Steven Burg was appointed national director of the National Conference of Synagogue Youth; Rabbi Efraim Goldberg was named NCSY's West Coast regional director; and Rabbi David Felsenthal was named associate director of development for NCSY alumni.
- Ellen Hellman was named chair of the AMIT Israel Executive Committee.
- Christopher Wolf, chair of the Anti-Defamation League's Internet Task Force, was named chair of the International Network Against Cyber Hate.
- Joel Kushner was named director of the Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

HONORS

- David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee, received the Commanders Cross of Merit with Stars from the president of Poland, and the Legion of Honor from France.
- Kalman Sultanik, president of the World Jewish Congress and a JTA board member, received Poland's Commanders Cross of the Order of Service.
- Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski received the Anti-Defamation League's Distinguished Statesman Award and the American Jewish Committee's American Liberties Medallion.
- The American Jewish Committee honored the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in memory of two bishops' efforts to stop the deportation of Bulgarian Jews to Nazi death camps during World War II.
- Chess Olympian and Grandmaster Susan Polgar, Broadway actress and producer Jana Robbins and Nick Jr. Vice President Teri Weiss received Tree of Life awards from the Jewish National Fund.
- The Jewish Theological Seminary honored Time Warner Chairman and CEO Dick Parsons and his wife, Laura.

Friendship helps restore shul

By RUTH ELLEN GRUBER

TOKAJ, Hungary (JTA) — The big, new wooden mezuzah on the doorpost of the prayer house in Tokaj is decorated with a silver bunch of grapes.

That's only fitting, since Tokaj, 120 miles northeast of Budapest, is the heart of Hungary's most famous wine region, and for centuries Jews here were deeply involved in the wine trade.

Tokaj's Jewish community was all but wiped out in the Holocaust. Today only two or three Jews live in town, and only about a dozen live in the surrounding region.

Thanks to an encounter between two childhood friends, however, Tokaj now has a new spiritual infrastructure, designed to serve visiting Jews and enrich the lives of the few who remain.

The two friends are Lajos Lowy, 56, a shopkeeper who is one of the only Jews in Tokaj, and Tokaj-born Morton Berkovits, who runs a kosher-food business in Brooklyn.

Berkovits recently financed the complete restoration of the Tokaj prayer house, adding a kosher kitchen, dining and study rooms and a library, as well other facilities, to the fully refurbished prayer room.

At the same time, he led Lowy back to an observant Jewish life, encouraging him to keep the Sabbath and keep kosher. He serves as a mentor and even calls almost every day to study Torah with Lowy by telephone.

"There's a saying, 'Truth is stranger than fiction,' and that's what it's like," Berkovits told JTA by phone from Brooklyn.

Says Lowy, "I feel like I'm a new man. It's as if I am living a dream come true. Berkovits has become my family."

Lowy and Berkovits were friends as boys, and both studied with Berkovits' father, who served as the rabbi for the surviving Jewish community after World War II.

But the Berkovits family left for the United States after the Soviets put down the anti-Communist Hungarian uprising in 1956, and most other surviving Jews also moved away.

The Lowys remained in Tokaj, where Lowy's own father, a survivor of Auschwitz, conducted services in the prayer house until his death in 1981.

Lowy dedicated his spare time to preserving the memory of local Jews. A widower, he led a lonely life, with little possibility of practicing Judaism. But he documented Jewish cemeteries in the area, collected photographs and archival material on the destroyed community and tried to help Jewish visitors.

Lowy and Berkovits were in sporadic touch over the decades, but they renewed close contact about four years ago when Henry Fuchs — another boyhood friend who now teaches at the University of North Carolina — bought Lowy a ticket

to the United States so he could attend the bar mitzvah of Fuchs' son.

"It was a wonderful experience," Lowy recalled. "Henry had managed to recover a Torah from Tokaj that had been sent to Israel, and this was used at the bar mitzvah. A Torah that my father had read from — it was very moving just to hold it."

The renovated building — a simple, box-like structure built in 1928 next door to the main synagogue — opened in 2002. Since then, Berkovits said, Tokaj "is becoming a home away from home" for the hundreds of Jews who come to the region to mark the *yahrzeits* of rabbis buried in nearby towns.

"They know it's Orthodox and kosher and that they will be welcome," he said.

Last year, Berkovits, Lowy and other friends formed an association to organize the *yahrzeit* gatherings, facilitate prayer and monitor and restore Jewish cemeteries in the region.

Meanwhile, thanks to a grant from the European Union, Tokaj's main synagogue currently is under full restoration to become a concert hall that also will house a Holocaust Museum and a museum of local Jewish traditions, which will utilize some of the material Lowy collected over the years.

A kosher-food business owner from Brooklyn finances the restoration of a Hungarian Synagogue.

NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

Russian hate crackdown urged

A Russian Jewish group called on authorities to tackle racism in Russia.

The call by the Federation of Jewish Communities came after what appeared to be the latest in a series of xenophobic attacks, in which an 18-year-old Peruvian student was killed.

"Another murder of a foreign student in Voronezh has dispelled the last doubt about the existence in Russia of racist organizations," the federation said in a statement Tuesday, while urging police and local authorities to stop ignoring racial motivations behind this and similar attacks.

According to a report on xenophobia released in August by the Moscow Bureau for Human Rights, there were 44 racially motivated murders in Russia in 2004 and at least 10 such murders through June of this year.

MIDDLE EAST

Arrest over yeshiva student's murder

Israeli police arrested a Palestinian believed to have murdered a British yeshiva student in Jerusalem.

The 43-year-old Hebron man confessed to killing Shmuel Mett in August, calling it "revenge" for the desecration of a Jaffa mosque by an Israeli couple, police said Tuesday.

The suspect, who was taken into custody over the weekend, also faces charges of wounding a second yeshiva student in the Old City attack.

The man is believed to have ties to Hamas.

Palestinian prisoners could be freed

Israel is weighing a Palestinian Authority request to release prisoners, including terrorists.

A summit between Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas was delayed after the sides disagreed on how many prisoners should go free, but Israel's deputy prime minister, Shimon Peres, said Tuesday that the P.A.'s demand had not been rejected outright.

"This is not a closed issue. They did not receive 'no' answers on everything. I think there are things being considered — for example, how many prisoners to release, which prisoners, and according to which criteria," he told Israel Radio.

The Palestinian Authority presented Israel with a list of 20 prisoners who have spent more than 20 years in jail.

Also on the roster are Marwan Barghouti, a Palestinian militia leader, and Lebanese terrorist Samir Kuntar, both of them serving multiple life sentences for murder.

Israel has ruled out releasing prisoners who killed Israelis.

Another Mideast peace prize?

Shimon Peres believes Ariel Sharon and Mahmoud Abbas one day could win the Nobel Peace Prize. Despite the past five years of fighting and current lackluster efforts at rapprochement, Israel's sole surviving Nobel Peace laureate said Tuesday he still believed the Israeli prime minister and Palestinian Authority president could secure a diplomatic breakthrough.

Asked on Israel Radio if Sharon and Abbas might also win the Nobel, Peres said, "I very much hope that will happen. It is my wish not only that they win the prize, but that the reasons for the prize come about. We do not live for prizes, we live for peace. And everything that advances peace deserves encouragement, and a prize."

Peres, currently Israel's deputy prime minister, shared the Nobel Peace Prize with then-Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the late PLO chief Yasser Arafat in recognition of the Oslo peace accords.

Another former Israeli premier, Menachem Begin, won the prize along with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat for the 1979 Camp David accord.

Israeli phone company privatized

Israel's national phone company was privatized.

Israeli-American media baron Haim Saban and affiliated investors paid \$944 million Tuesday for a 30 percent stake in Bezek, with an option for another 10 percent, effectively completing a takeover of the formerly state-owned firm.

Bezek employees will enjoy profit-sharing and stock-option rights as part of the privatization, but dozens are expected to be laid off.

The takeover was announced in May, part of a privatization drive championed by then-Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Israeli Arabs meet U.N. rep

Israeli Arabs met with a U.N. human rights representative.

Hina Jilani, sent by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan to report on the situation in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, visited the office of the Arab Association for Human Rights in Nazareth this week.

Jilani heard complaints from several Israeli Arab lobbies regarding what they consider racial discrimination in the Jewish state.

According to the lobbyists, the Arab minority's options of staging protests in Israel are limited by security laws.

Israeli Arabs have vowed to increase international scrutiny of their situation since the Justice Ministry found last month that there was not enough evidence to press charges against police who shot 13 Arabs dead during pro-Palestinian riots in 2000.

NORTH AMERICA

Strategic dialogue resumes

Israel and the United States are resuming their strategic dialogue after a long hiatus.

The first new round of bilateral talks will begin next month, based on an agreement between Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom and the U.S. assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, David Welch, officials in Jerusalem said Tuesday.

The dialogue, seen as an important means of maintaining the Israeli-U.S. alliance, was suspended three years ago amid Pentagon anger at Israel's arms technology exports to China, Ha'aretz reported.

Dean takes tough stance on Hamas

Democratic Party Chairman Howard Dean told Jewish leaders that Hamas must disarm before it can participate in Palestinian elections. Dean spoke Tuesday to the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations about his trip to Israel last month.

Participants said Dean stressed the need for Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to take stronger action against terrorist groups, and praised the Israeli government for its recent Gaza Strip withdrawal.

Dean condemned church groups that participate in campaigns to divest from Israel and suggested he would get involved personally in combating them.

He also spoke out against Bush administration policy in Iraq, suggesting it has crippled the United States' ability to deal with Iran's nuclear-weapon threat, which he said poses a greater risk to Israel.