

IN THE NEWS
**Labor Party
pulls out of gov't**

Israel's Labor Party pulled out of the Israeli government.

Sunday's vote paves the way for early elections. [Story, Pg. 3]

**Reform Jews
blast Iraq war**

The Reform movement passed a resolution criticizing the handling of the Iraq war and seeking a partial troop withdrawal.

At its biennial in Houston last Friday, the Union for Reform Judaism became the first Jewish denomination to speak out against the war.

The resolution, launched at the request of several congregations, called for more transparency and a clear exit strategy, including a partial troop withdrawal after Iraq's parliamentary elections next month.

"This is not a just war," Vietnam veteran Michael Rankin of Arlington, Va., said. "Was it worth the billions of dollars it cost, when the world so desperately needs food and health care for the poorest of the poor?"

**Commission examines
campus anti-Semitism**

A federal commission resisted Jewish groups' call for governmental oversight of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic activity on college campuses.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights heard testimony last Friday from the American Jewish Congress, the Zionist Organization of America and the Institute for Jewish and Community Research on allegations that the atmosphere on many campuses has become oppressive, and in some cases threatening, for Jewish students.

Many commission members expressed discomfort with injecting government into campus life. "I am extremely nervous about administrative oversight in university campuses," said Abigail Thernstrom, the vice chairwoman.

However, commissioners acknowledged the problem and said they would consider an investigation.

WORLD REPORT

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Generation gap is the focus as federations look to the young

By RACHEL POMERANCE

TORONTO (JTA) — Marcella Kanfer Rolnick is the kind of young leader Jewish federations are dying to draw to their graying ranks.

Rolnick, 32, is the bright and eloquent daughter of parents steeped in Jewish federation life. Her father, Joe Kanfer, of Akron, Ohio, chaired the 2005 General Assembly, the United Jewish Communities' annual conference of federations, which ended Nov. 15 in Toronto. But at the same conference, his daughter felt the hair stand up on the back of her neck in conversations with several federation professionals.

"It was a 'we know better than you' attitude," she told JTA, saying the system tends to focus on sustaining itself rather than considering challenges and opportunities for the Jewish people.

If a daughter of the system is turned off by it, how can federations hope to attract her peers?

The subject of ensuring the participation of the next generation of Jews in their local federations — a long-standing concern of the federation system — was a theme at the recent G.A.

Rolnick in fact was given a platform, along with other young activists, at the closing plenary, which highlighted the issue. The centerpiece was a report by Democratic pollster Anna Greenberg, who found that the organized Jewish community is "somewhat out of touch" with young Jews.

Reiterating the findings of past studies, Greenberg, who conducted a survey of young Jews, told some 4,000 Jews in attendance that organized Jewry is only reaching a small

percentage of young Jews who are already identified.

Among 18- to 25-year olds, Judaism, while a source of pride, is "fairly low on their list of things that they think about," Greenberg said. These younger Jews have multiple identities and Jewish officials might do well to "stop thinking about them as being Jews," and reach them through other interests, mentioning that evangelical Christians offer "extreme skateboarding" at some of their forums.

The panel of young Jewish activists that followed Greenberg was moderated by Jennifer Meyerhoff of Baltimore. She called the closing plenary a "loud and reverberating wake-up call" to federations to make themselves relevant to the next generation.

Howard Rieger, UJC president and CEO, closed the G.A. by urging federation leaders to "relinquish some control" and give opportunities to young Jews.

But several young Jews in attendance said key obstacles block their participation: bureaucracy, the federation system's financial expectations of its activists and resistance to welcoming new ideas and to accepting young people into decision-making positions.

They called for a system of respectful collaboration that empowers them to fuel their own Jewish inspirations.

"You have to respect the \$18 donation as much as you respect and go after the \$5,000 donation," Aaron Bisman, founder of JDub records, a company that promotes Jewish music, said at the G.A.'s closing session.

At an earlier session, titled "Rebels With a Cause," Bisman and other young panelists

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■ At the G.A., younger and older Jews struggle to find common ground

Continued from page 1

urged their peers to create the institutions that reflect their interests.

"If what we do doesn't work for you, then you have to find something else or you have to start it," he said.

Indeed, that is the approach taken by many young Jews, who are passionate about Judaism but disappointed in the opportunities available or the time it would take to develop new programs through the system.

Rochelle Shoretz, executive director of Sharsheret, an organization for young women with breast cancer, formed her own group after she was diagnosed with breast cancer at 28 and found no outlet for Jews with the ailment.

"As a young person and as a sick person, I didn't have the luxury of time" to endure the processes required to form a new program through the federation, she said at the closing discussion.

Representatives of both generations say a healthy respect is lacking between them.

At the "Rebels With a Cause" session, Edward Spilka, president of Connecticut's United Jewish Federation of Greater Stamford, New Canaan and Darien, asked the panel: "Is there a way other than spiking my hair for me to authentically connect to you guys?"

Karen Lombart, a vice chair of the women's campaign of the United Jewish Federation of Tidewater in Virginia, said younger Jews should realize their knowledge is based on limited experience and that the older generation has learned

from the many innovations they themselves employed in younger year. At the same time, she said, the older generation should listen to today's youth.

Meanwhile, several federations are trying new ways to connect to this population.

The UJA-Federation of New York has increased its investment in its young leadership division, and reorganized its approach to offer specialized programs by interest and profession rather than a broad-based method, said John Ruskay, its executive vice president and CEO.

Steven Rakitt, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta, said Jewish federations need to reach out with a diverse, welcoming approach.

"It's not one size fits all," he said, suggesting that federations need to provide young Jews with fulfilling social, religious and business opportunities, for example.

But some fear another reality.

Barry Shrage, president of Boston's Combined Jewish Philanthropies, lamented

at the G.A. that thousands of young Jews were turned away from birthright Israel due to insufficient funds. The free trip to Israel for 18- to 26-year olds, financed by the federation system, philanthropists and the government of Israel, was trumpeted at the G.A. as one of the federation system's proudest accomplishments. Yet, the federation system has struggled to pony up sufficient funds for the program.

Since last winter, birthright has turned away more than 20,000 people, and has closed registration early for the last two sessions because they don't want to disappoint people, given the high level of interest, said Deborah Mohile, director of communications for birthright.

Rolnick says she supports the federation system because it offers a social safety net, but she added, "I have no intention in the future to give my time and my energy the way the current system is designed."

If it fails to embrace change and support young people, "we're going to go elsewhere." ■

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Aaron Bisman

JDub records founder

Female rabbi blazes trail in Belgium

By GIDON VAN EMDEN

BRUSSELS (JTA) — Floriane Chinsky is attracting a lot of attention as Belgium's first female rabbi — but she's happy for the attention.

"I am very happy there are positive and nice things being said in the media," the Paris-born Chinsky told JTA. "My appointment is a good thing, and at the same time it's strange. So because I am a woman, which in a way is a bad reason, I get to talk about good things."

Ordained in December 2004 at the Conservative movement's Machon Schechter in Jerusalem, Chinsky began as the rabbi at Beth Hillel, Brussels's Reform congregation, on Sept. 11.

"As a woman you cannot learn to be a rabbi in Paris," she said. "I had felt very close to Israel for a long time and I wanted to live there, so I said, 'Ya'allah' — Arabic for 'Let's go' — 'and I went to Israel to study.'"

The Conservative movement — or Masorti, as it's called in Belgium — is growing, but most Western European Jews define themselves as secular. That's particularly true in Brussels.

But Chinsky, 31, doesn't see that as an issue.

"The word 'religion' is not a Jewish word. I feel very much that Judaism is a civilization, not a religion," she says.

While other community leaders might disagree, they welcome Chinsky and plan to help her find a place in the community.

"I respect everyone who aims to safeguard our history and heritage and wants to transmit it to the next generation," said Philippe Markiewicz, chairman of the Coordinating Committee of Jewish Organizations in Belgium and a board member of the main Orthodox synagogue in Brussels. "Fewer and fewer Jews go to synagogue at all, and Rabbi Chinsky will attract people who would not otherwise attend services at all." ■

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Labor Party quits Israeli government

By DAN BARON

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli politics usually make for fine drama — and 2006 is shaping up to be no exception to that rule.

On Sunday, Israel's Labor Party voted to pull out of Ariel Sharon's coalition government.

Meanwhile, rumors were rife that Sharon would leave the Likud as early as Monday and form his own centrist party to run in elections that are expected to be held early next year.

The vote by Labor's Central Committee formalized the pledge by the new party leader, Amir Peretz, to split from the ruling Likud Party and hold the early elections.

Veteran trade union chief Peretz made clear in his speech that his race against Sharon would center on economic issues.

"You stood by as Bibi battered your supporters mercilessly, forcing the poor to root around in the garbage," Peretz said in his speech, referring to former Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Peretz also accused Sharon of neglecting the needs of immigrants.

The prime minister has agreed to Peretz's call for early elections, which are expected to take place in February

or March, rather than November 2006 as originally scheduled.

The next step for Labor is to have its ministers tender resignations from Sharon's Cabinet, which is expected to take effect by Wednesday.

At that point, the prime minister, lacking a parliamentary majority, is expected to ask President Moshe Katsav to declare the government dissolved and start the countdown to elections.

Noticeably absent from Sunday's session of the Labor Central Committee was Shimon Peres, whom Peretz ousted as party chief on Nov. 9. Channel Two television said Peres met with Sharon — fueling speculation that the two could partner up once more if the prime minister quits the Likud to form a new, more centrist party.

At the same time, Sharon, 77, appears set on embarking on a new political career.

Rifts in his ruling Likud Party have stirred speculation that the Israeli prime minister could bolt.

"Any day now, we're expecting him to split and start afresh," a Sharon confidant said Sunday.

The prime minister has declined comment, but makes little secret of his ire at a dozen Likud "rebels" who, angered over the recent Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, have frequently opposed him in Parliament.

The defeat of Peres, who has been serving as his vice premier, in a Labor Party primary earlier this month is another reason to break away.

"Sharon, as far as anyone call tell, decided long ago that he has no intention of drinking from the poisoned chalice prepared by those Likud colleagues who were meant to ride into the next Knesset on his coattails," wrote Yediot Achronot political correspondent Shimon Shiffer.

But history has not been kind to Israeli leaders who try to reinvent themselves through new political parties. Sharon is considered a founding father of the Likud, whose grass-roots supporters are partisan.

A recent poll predicted that, at the head of a new party, Sharon would run neck-and-neck with Peretz's Labor in the next elections, with each taking 28 seats in the Knesset. By contrast, if Sharon remains at the Likud helm, he is expected to easily beat Peretz, a trade

union leader popular with Israel's underclass but untested in foreign affairs.

Still, with almost half of the Likud faction chafing at the diplomatic course set by Sharon, and with party rival Netanyahu criticizing him over the Gaza withdrawal, a split from Likud would allow Sharon to capitalize on his popularity with the Israeli mainstream.

Ma'ariv reported that the prime minister already has a number of center-right politicians in mind for his new inner circle, including Dan Meridor, former Shin Bet chief Avi Dichter, Russian immigration expert Ya'acov Kedmi and the president of Ben-Gurion University, Avishai Braverman, who has long called for a civic revolution in Israel.

Peres is a likely option to again play a statesmanly second fiddle to Sharon.

Sharon could also be expected to take with him those Likudniks who agree with the party's shift, in recent years, from championing Jewish settlement in all of "Greater Israel" toward embracing territorial concessions as a means of achieving peace — or at least quiet — with the Palestinians.

Shiffer predicted that Sharon, if he breaks away, "will create a political mass-migration the likes of which the state has never known." ■

Elections are expected to be held before next April.

THIS WEEK

MONDAY

■ The Institute for Research: Middle East Policy, an anti-Israel think tank, hosts a briefing on Capitol Hill to discuss prospects for divesting from Israel and using the U.S. tax code to inhibit charitable giving to settler projects.

TUESDAY

■ The U.S. Institute of Peace, a U.S. government funded think tank, presents a plenum in Washington on its Task Force on the United Nations. Task force co-chairmen George Mitchell and Newt Gingrich will speak. Earlier reports by the task force recommended changes in how the United Nations treats Israel.

WEDNESDAY

■ The 40th anniversary of Nostra Aetate, the papal document that absolved Jewish responsibility for the death of Jesus, is commemorated in Brussels.

SUNDAY

■ More than 2,500 rabbis and communal leaders from around the world meet in New York for the International Conference of Chabad Lubavitch Emissaries.

'Temple' planned for Israeli park

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A biblical theme park planned for northern Israel will include a mock-up of the First Temple in Jerusalem.

The 75-foot-high reconstruction of the Jewish shrine will be among features in the "time travel" section of Bible World, expected to open in Kiryat Shmona by 2007.

The complex is expected to cost \$8 million and attract up to 400,000 visitors a year.

"The book of all books, the cradle of the Jewish people's culture, is ebbing from public awareness," the town's rabbi, Yigal Zipori, told Yediot Achronot on Thursday. "Therefore there is a need for this new park." ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Reform movement opposes Alito

The Reform movement voted to oppose the nomination of Judge Samuel Alito to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Union for Reform Judaism debated the merits of Alito's nomination Sunday at its biennial convention in Houston, questioning his views on reproductive rights and religious liberty.

"Judge Alito's elevation to the Supreme Court would threaten protection of the most fundamental rights which our movement supports," the resolution said. Several participants questioned opposing the nomination before Alito's confirmation hearings in January, but an amendment to postpone a formal position failed.

The URJ becomes the second major Jewish organization to oppose Alito, following the National Council of Jewish Women.

Soviet-era bill passes first hurdle

The Senate passed a bill to graduate out Ukraine from American restrictions, dating from the Soviet era, that linked trade to willingness to let Jews emigrate.

The Senate passed the vote on the 1974 Jackson-Vanik Amendment by unanimous consent on Saturday.

The bill, initiated by Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), now goes on to the House of Representatives.

Jewish groups, including NCSJ: Advocates on Behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States and Eurasia are part of a broad-based coalition that is pushing for the bill's passage.

Reform leader blasts religious right

The leader of the Reform Jewish movement blasted conservative religious leaders.

"What could be more bigoted than to claim that you have a monopoly on God?" Eric Yoffie, the president of the Union for Reform Judaism, said Saturday at the group's biennial in Houston.

Yoffie also blasted members of the religious right for their opposition to same-sex benefits for same-sex partners and their children.

Committee: Treat Israel fairly

A powerful congressional committee passed a resolution calling on the United Nations to treat Israel more fairly.

The resolution, initiated by Reps. Steven Rothman (D-N.J.) and Mark Kirk (R-Ill.), passed the U.S. House of Representatives' International Relations Committee on Nov. 16 and now goes to the full house.

It calls on U.N. members to "stop supporting resolutions that unfairly castigate Israel; and promote within the United Nations General Assembly more balanced and constructive approaches to resolving conflict in the Middle East."

House presses Saudis on textbooks

A congressional committee called on Saudi Arabia to reform its textbooks.

Textbooks that "foster intolerance, ignorance, and anti-Semitic, anti-American and anti-Western views" make students "prime recruiting targets of terrorists and other extremist groups," said the resolution that the U.S. House of Representatives' International Relations Committee referred to the full House on Nov. 16.

Rabbi talks to Muslim students

A prominent New York rabbi addressed students at a Muslim school.

Rabbi Marc Schneier, founder and president of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, spent two hours Nov. 17 speaking to a group of high-school students at the Razi School in Queens.

"There was a longing on the part of the Muslim high-school students to learn about Judaism," Schneier said. "They had a myriad of questions — they were very curious about women's rights within

Judaism, especially within Orthodox Judaism." Schneier said he framed the discussion with a nod to Jews' and Muslims' "common faith" as Abrahamic religions, as well as their "common fate."

Jewish history museum to grow

The National Museum of American Jewish History announced plans to relocate and expand.

The museum, based in Philadelphia, announced plans Nov. 17 to purchase a building on Independence Mall.

The new museum would be five times the size of the current one.

The museum hosts 50,000-65,000 visitors annually, but a new museum could bring in 250,000 visitors, museum officials said.

WORLD

Another AMIA judge replaced

Another judge was removed from the investigation of the bombing of a Jewish center in Argentina.

Last Friday, federal judge Claudio Bonadio was removed from the case of the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish center in Buenos Aires in which 85 people were killed.

According to the Justice Ministry's decision, Bonadio was removed for a "lack of impartiality," because before becoming judge he had worked with former Internal Affairs Minister Carlos Corach.

Since July 2005, the Justice Ministry has demanded that Corach be investigated for possibly covering up the AMIA attack while in the government of former Argentine President Carlos Menem.

Holocaust memorial vandalized

A Berlin memorial to Jewish Holocaust victims was defaced.

Yellow stars were painted on some of the memorial's 2,711 concrete panels, Ha'aretz reported.

The vandalism, discovered Nov. 17, took place despite the fact that the memorial is under constant surveillance.

A police spokesman said the vandalism could be linked to the daubing of yellow stars on other monuments and buildings in Berlin over the past month.

MIDDLE EAST

Israel may buy German subs

Germany has reportedly offered to sell Israel two new submarines at a reduced price.

The outgoing German government, after vacillating on the Dolphin submarine sale for several years, is offering them to the Jewish state at a reduced price of around \$1.17 billion, Der Spiegel and Focus magazines reported Saturday.

Israel, which has pressed Germany for a lower price — or even to donate the submarines — had no immediate comment.

Vanunu arrested again

Israeli nuclear whistle-blower Mordechai Vanunu was arrested for traveling to the West Bank.

Vanunu, who was released from prison last year but has been barred indefinitely from leaving Israel, was caught by border police last Friday while taking a bus from a Palestinian village toward Jerusalem. He denied wrongdoing.

"They don't want me to enjoy freedom," he told reporters en route to court.

Vanunu, 51, was released to home arrest Saturday while police weighed pressing charges.

The Defense Ministry says Vanunu, who was jailed for 18 years after discussing his work at Israel's Dimona reactor with a British newspaper in 1986, could spill more state secrets if allowed to leave the country.