

IN THE NEWS
Israel begins to lift blockade

Israel began lifting its blockade on Lebanon.

At 6 p.m. Thursday, the air force and navy began leaving areas that were used to control access to Lebanese airports and seaports.

They were replaced by international peacekeepers.

A statement from Israel's Prime Minister's Office said it could take up to a day to end the blockade completely.

Rabbi convicted as Internet predator

A U.S. rabbi caught in a television sting focused on Internet predators was convicted.

A judge on Wednesday found David Kaye guilty of traveling for sex with what he thought was a 13-year-old boy he met on the Internet.

The "boy" actually was a man working for a group that exposes Internet predators, and the meeting was filmed and aired on "Dateline NBC."

Kaye resigned his position as vice president of programs for the Rockville, Md.-based Panim: The Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values days before the "Dateline" episode aired in August 2005.

Woman takes top justice slot

Israel appointed its first female Supreme Court president.

Justice Dorit Beinisch formally took over Thursday from President Aharon Barak.

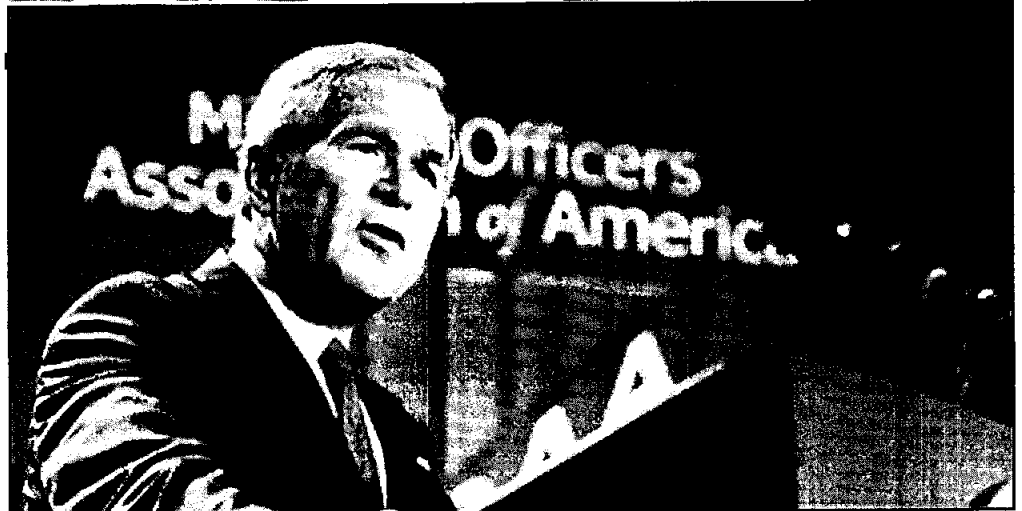
She will begin her new duties next week.

Beinisch, 64, has served in the Supreme Court for more than a decade.

Prior to that she was Israel's state attorney, and distinguished herself in several high-profile battles with the security services over secrecy and human-rights issues.

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WORLD REPORT



Kimberlee Hewitt/White House

President Bush speaks about the global war on terror Sept. 5 in Washington.

In pre-election session, Congress focuses on homeland security issue

By **RON KAMPEAS**

WASHINGTON (JTA) — In its last session before crucial midterm elections, Congress is expected to generate much heat — but little light — on issues of concern to U.S. Jews.

Much of the legislative rush in the 19 working days between Labor Day and the early October return home to campaign will be consumed with posturing ahead of elections that could change the leadership in one or both houses.

There will be last-minute efforts to outlaw assistance to the Palestinian Authority and enhance Iran's isolation, as well as initiatives to control the flow of reconstruction aid to Lebanon.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee is lined up behind those initiatives, AIPAC spokeswoman Jennifer Cannata said.

"AIPAC is pursuing a robust fall agenda that includes action to impede Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, further isolate the terrorist-led Palestinian Authority and support

the full implementation of the U.N. cease-fire agreement in Lebanon," she said.

Domestically, Congress is deadlocked on immigration reform and appropriations for homeland security.

Insiders say the outlook for all these initiatives is dim — and their sponsors know it. The idea is to get the rhetoric in place in time for the final blitz of campaign ads.

The key issue will be who is better placed to protect Americans.

"It's all about national security," a senior Democratic aide said, reviewing the schedule.

Democrats plan to make an issue out of what they say is thin protection at the nation's ports and the assignment of homeland security funding, which they say lopsidedly favors interior states that vote Republican.

Republicans will try to regain their traditional lead on security issues, saying Democrats are likelier to appease terrorists.

"Five years after our nation was attacked, the terrorist danger remains," President

Continued on page 2

■ AIPAC will back efforts to limit aid to the P.A. and enhance Iran's isolation

Continued from page 1

Bush said Tuesday in the second of a series of speeches he is giving on terrorism. The White House hopes the speeches will bolster the Republicans' precarious chance of keeping both Houses.

One substantive light amid the rhetorical din on homeland security is movement on \$25 million allocated annually for non-profits.

Most of the 2005 funds were allocated to Jewish groups seeking protection at synagogues, schools and community centers. Until this summer, the Homeland Security Department had held up allocation of the 2006 funds, saying it preferred to save them for actual instead of potential threats.

Following meetings among Jewish lobbyists, department officials and the staff of the relevant Senate appropriations subcommittee, however, officials now say they expect the department to disburse the 2006 funds and both houses of Congress to agree to appropriate \$25 million for 2007.

"We have had very productive conversations with the Department of Homeland Security," said William Daroff, vice president for public policy of the United Jewish Communities, the federations umbrella that, together with the Orthodox Union, has led lobbying for the funds.

"We are in a pretty upbeat position with legislative and administration support. Now it's a matter of getting through the endgame."

Republicans will once again consider new measures to stymie illegal immigra-

tion, something that Jewish groups that deal with immigration have opposed.

On the foreign front, Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), chairwoman of the U.S. House of Representatives' subcommittee on the Middle East, is sponsoring two bills that are high on the pro-Israel lobby's agenda.

Ros-Lehtinen's Iran Freedom Act would broaden punitive and criminal sanctions against Iran to include third parties overseas that deal with the Islamic republic, and the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act would cut off the Palestinian Authority until its Hamas government is removed and the authority commits to far-reaching anti-terrorism steps.

Neither act is expected to pass this session, principally because of administration opposition to stringent provisions in both bills that inhibit the president's prerogative to execute foreign policy. In both cases, the Senate — traditionally friendlier to administration prerogatives — is holding up the tougher elements of the bill.

A pro-Israel lobbyist who favors both bills says passage is not the only measure of their effectiveness. Ros-Lehtinen's bills got overwhelming support in the House, the lobbyist said, strengthening Bush's hand in dealing with the Palestinians and Iran.

As a result, the lobbyist said, isolating Iran and containing its nuclear program has evolved since last year from a U.S.-Israel issue to an international issue. The U.N. Security Council is set to consider sanctions against Iran now that the Islamic republic has rejected calls to stop enriching uranium, which most countries believe is for nuclear weapons, despite Iranian denials.

"The community has been effective at pushing Iran to the forefront," the lobbyist said. "The administration has the backing it needs to move forward at the United Nations."

Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) threatened over the summer break to use his prerogative as ranking member of the House International Relations Committee to put a hold on any funds headed for Lebanon unless that country allows international troops to patrol its border with Syria.

Such a deployment would hinder weapons running to Hezbollah but is unlikely to happen, even though it was written into the U.N. Security Council resolution that ended the 34-day war between Israel and Hezbollah this summer.

Syria has said it would view the presence of foreign soldiers on its border as a hostile act.

Lantos is unlikely to press the issue further, insiders said, because of the administration's determination to get assistance to Lebanon at a time when Hezbollah is already on the ground currying favor by handing out cash from its Iranian backers.

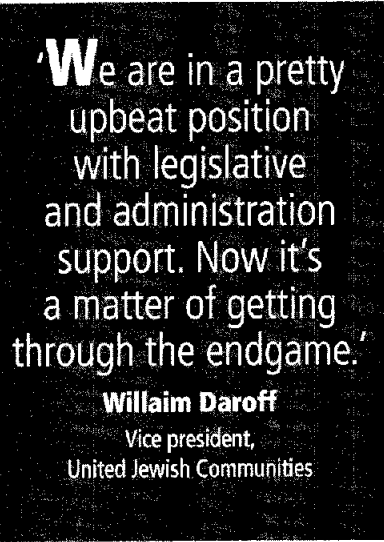
Israel has called for the swift disbursement of Western funds to counter Hezbollah's pork-barrel politicking.

The defense appropriations bill — and the \$2.5 billion that goes to Israel — might also be a temporary victim of the posturing over homeland security, insiders said.

If that happens, Congress will rush through the appropriations in December, when it meets for a final lame-duck session.

Here too, however, the aftermath of the Lebanon war may play a role. Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), who is Jewish and known for her unstinting support of Israel, has quietly introduced an amendment to the defense appropriations bill mandating that any funds for cluster bombs must come with guarantees that the weapons will not be used in areas populated by civilians.

The amendment does not name a country, but it clearly addresses human-rights group reports that Israel used the U.S.-made weapons in civilian areas in Lebanon, a charge Israel has vigorously denied.



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In shift since war, JAFI aids Israeli Arabs

By DINA KRAFT

MAJDAL KRUM, Israel (JTA) — Light streams through the new two-story community center in this northern Arab and Druse village that until recently stood empty.

Funds from the Jewish Agency for Israel helped fill the rooms with chairs and tables and outfitted a computer lab. The donation is part of a shift in agency policy to begin assisting not only Israel's Jewish population but, to some degree, its Arab citizens as well.

"We will continue to be with you," JAFI's chairman, Zeev Bielski, said on a recent visit to the neighboring village of Deir el-Asad. "We will bring more Jewish donations... There have been years of neglect of Israeli citizens who are no different from any other citizens."

Bielski was referring to the discrepancy in government funds and infrastructure provided for Israel's Arab minority as compared to the Jewish majority.

The shift in JAFI policy began on the first day of Israel's war this summer with Hezbollah. If Hezbollah's Katyusha rockets weren't discriminating between Arab and Jewish victims, Bielski announced, neither would the Jewish Agency make distinctions in distributing assistance.

During the war, most of the agency's focus in the community was on bringing Arab, Druse and other non-Jewish children to the safety of camps in the center of Israel.

The agency also helped fund a week of activities and field trips for children during the last week of summer vacation, part of an effort to give kids a feeling of normalcy after weeks living in bomb shelters or being shuttered inside their homes.

Since the war ended, the agency has been investing in equipping community centers, several of which had lacked basic furniture and supplies. Officials say they also plan to help in longer-term projects such as coexistence gatherings for youth in mixed cities such as Haifa and Acre.

Historically, the Jewish Agency has focused its efforts only on Israel's Jewish population.

The agency was founded in the 1920s, during the British Mandate, to represent the Jewish population in Palestine and

its interests. At the time it focused on Jewish immigration, the purchase of land from local Arabs and setting the policies of the Zionist movement.

Since 1948, the agency has been charged with overseeing immigration to Israel, promoting Jewish and Zionist education worldwide and building ties with Diaspora communities.

The subject of the Jewish Agency and its Zionist ethos is a sensitive topic for Israel's Arab citizens. Historically the agency was involved in determining where new Jewish towns and villages would be built, and many Arabs claim that such decisions came at their expense.

Most recently, with Israel having uprooted thousands of settlers from the Gaza Strip last year and aiming for a far larger withdrawal from the West Bank, JAFI has been involved in efforts to develop the Galilee and the Negev, both home to major Arab population centers. Some Arabs fear the planned additional Jewish development in their regions might infringe on their land rights.

Not everyone welcomes the agency's overtures. At the community center in Majdal Krum, a JAFI plaque was hung inside because of fears that it might be stolen or defaced if left outside.

At a gathering in the center's auditorium, Mayor Ahmed Dabah thanked JAFI for its support.

"This is what should be happening. All of Israel's citizens need to feel that we are treated the same way, and then the tensions will disappear," he said.

Not every one in the Jewish Agency is pleased with the idea that money raised by Diaspora Jews will go to Israel's non-

Jewish communities.

"I think the Jewish Agency — in contrast to the Israeli government, which is obligated to all of its citizens — has a job to focus on the Jewish citizens of Israel," said Danny Dannon, chairman of World Likud and a member of the agency's board of governors. "If I were a Jew in Boca Raton, Fla., and gave \$100 to my local federation, I would want to know it was helping the Jewish enterprise in Israel."

In an interview with JTA, Bielski said the agency is determined to reduce the social gaps in Israeli society. Israel's Arab population, which makes up nearly 20 percent of the country, is among the worst-off socioeconomic groups.

Faris Sarhan, an unemployed 31-year-old cook who has been volunteering for months at the Majdal Krum center, said he welcomed JAFI's involvement.

"It was really difficult getting by without any equipment," he said.

Sarhan hopes that one day soon he'll be paid for the meals he provides to the center and the work he does with youth — but so far there are no salaries for center staff.

"Without donations, we have no funds coming in," said Kadah Malwa, 21, who also works at the center without a salary.

Sammy Bahar, JAFI's director for northern Israel, said he sees the agency's work in minority communities as something that's just beginning to take form.

"We need to deal with things with a lot of sensitivity. It's a different type of work here," he said while standing at the entrance to Deir el-Asad. "We're entering a long and interesting process that I hope will help change things." ■

'I think the Jewish Agency — in contrast to the Israeli government, which is obligated to all of its citizens — has a job to focus on the Jewish citizens of Israel. If I were a Jew in Boca Raton, Fla., and gave \$100 to my local federation, I would want to know it was helping the Jewish enterprise in Israel.'

Danny Dannon
Chairman, World Likud

Jews and 9/11 — the lie that won't die

By RICHARD GREENBERG

NEW YORK (JTA) — The terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, are synonymous with wanton destruction. But they also produced an offshoot that seems virtually indestructible.

In addition to causing massive loss of life, the attacks spawned a host of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories that implicated the Jews and Israel in the bloodshed.

As it turns out, those canards were not fleeting expressions of paranoid fantasy that dissipated once they were debunked. On the contrary, nearly five years later, the various “Jews-did-it” scenarios emanating from the wreckage of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon have proven resilient.

“If anything, they’re flourishing,” says Chip Berlet, senior analyst at Political Research Associates, a liberal think tank based in Somerville, Mass.

“The idea that Jews were somehow involved in 9/11 has now become a permanent feature in the conspiracy pantheon, like the JFK assassination and the Oklahoma City bombing,” says Mark Pitcavage, director of fact-finding for the Anti-Defamation League.

The phenomenon might seem baffling,

if not disturbing, but its practical impact is unclear.

The Internet is the chief incubator and disseminator of apocryphal 9/11 story lines, and cyberspace remains awash with chatter purporting to link the Jews with America’s worst terrorist attacks, according to Pitcavage.

But the same message, he added, is being spread through books, pamphlets, videos and speakers.

The purveyors are an eclectic aggregation that spans the geopolitical spectrum. They include neo-Nazis and other white supremacists in the United States and elsewhere; anti-government zealots; young anti-war activists; Holocaust deniers; Lyndon LaRouche supporters; New-Age ideologues; propagandists and journalists within the Arab and Muslim world; and assorted devotees of the early-20th-century forgery, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” which purports to document a Jewish plan to dominate the world.

Efforts to connect the Jews with 9/11, however, are not limited to fringe groups talking with one another. Contributors to Wikipedia, the popular and influential online encyclopedia, have tried repeatedly to insert anti-Jewish 9/11 theories into Wikipedia’s pages and represent them as

fact or at least plausible versions of reality, according to Berlet.

The insertions — which represent one of countless pieces of potentially suspect information submitted to Wikipedia almost daily — have been promptly excised by the encyclopedia’s volunteer editors, says Berlet, himself a Wikipedia editor, “but it requires constant attention.”

It’s impossible to determine how many viewers have seen the postings before they were removed from the Wikipedia Web site, which has a daily viewership of roughly 30 million, according to a company spokesman.

The 9/11 assaults triggered an almost immediate outpouring of conspiracist conjecture, in part because of the bizarre, almost implausible nature of the attacks, according to Michael Barkun, a professor of political science at Syracuse University who has studied extremist movements and their philosophies.

“These events cried out for some sort of explanation,” Barkun says. “This was a golden opportunity for conspiracy theorists to introduce their theories to a broader audience. The thing to remember about conspiracy theories is that they are profoundly psychologically comforting. They give sense and meaning to the world. Nothing is arbitrary or accidental or coincidental.”

Not all of the explanatory hypotheses stemming from 9/11 implicate Jews. Some still accuse the United States government, for example, of being aware of the attacks and doing nothing to stop them in order to justify military intervention in the Muslim world.

But anti-Semitic finger-pointing soon came to dominate the revisionist view of 9/11, according to a report issued in 2003 by the ADL. These accusations brought “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion” into the 21st century, updating a familiar theme: that Jews are inherently evil and have a ‘master plan’ to rule the world,” says the report, which profiles the 9/11 conspiracists’ cast of suspected plotters and other scapegoats.

They include:

- The Mossad, Israel’s intelligence agency, which is accused of orchestrating and carrying out the attacks to advance the Jewish state’s geopolitical agenda. “This perverse respect for the Mossad,” the ADL report says, “derives in part from anti-Semitic notions that only Jews

9/11,
FIVE
YEARS
LATER



Robert A. Cumins

A plume of smoke rises from where the World Trade Center’s twin towers stood, on Sept. 11, 2001, as seen from New Jersey.

are sufficiently cunning, resourceful, and wicked to have carried out the attacks and blamed them on their enemies.”

• A “spy ring” consisting of young Israelis claiming to be art students. They purportedly had been tracking the 9/11 hijackers but did nothing to stop them.

• Jewish businessmen, including owners of the World Trade Center, who plotted to destroy the structures to collect insurance money, thus perpetuating the “myth of the greedy Jew,” the ADL report says.

• “Four thousand Israelis” who allegedly worked at the World Trade Center but were warned by Israeli intelligence operatives to stay home on 9/11. One of the most widely accepted 9/11 myths, some sources say it was initiated by Hezbollah’s Al-Manar television network.

These assertions have been either laughed off as preposterous — or have been investigated and discredited. The “spy ring” story, for example, may have emanated from a disclosure that a number of young Israelis who violated their visas had been deported from the United States. Subsequent reports intimating that the deportees had been engaged in sinister, clandestine activities were examined by The Washington Post, among others, and found to be “nothing more than an urban myth,” according to the ADL report.

But the fact that conspiracy theories have been disproven is largely irrelevant to the theories’ adherents, according to Barkun. The reason, he says, is that die-hard conspiracy-mongers are united by their embrace of what he calls “rejected knowledge.”

“These people are profoundly distrustful of authority. It seems absurd to the rest of us, but in the mirror world that conspiracy theorists live, anything that is rejected by mainstream institutions must therefore be true,” Barkun says.

A conspiracy-tinged view of world events seems to be gaining traction in America and elsewhere, according to Lou Manza, chairman of the psychology department at Lebanon Valley College in Annville, Pa. As evidence of this trend, he cites polls indicating that suspect theories

of all kinds have gained popularity over the past 10 to 15 years.

Among the possible explanations for this emerging worldview: In today’s information-bloated environment, the conviction that all-powerful forces control global events makes life easier for believers by obviating the need to think critically about complex issues.

“Our environment today is not conducive to a critical-thinking approach, especially with the instant access we have to so much information,” Manza says. “If it’s on the Internet and the graphics are good, it must be true.”

But why does it necessarily follow that the Jews in particular were the unseen hand behind America’s most infamous terrorist attack? Because they had something to gain from 9/11, according to conspiracists, who contend that military retaliation against Arabs was its own reward for the Jews and Israel.

Asked why the Jews were implicated in the attacks, Barkun says, “You might as well ask, ‘Why does anti-Semitism exist?’ Unfortunately, the concept is deeply rooted in Western culture. And like a lot of conspiracy theories, it’s a closed system of ideas that is structured so that it’s impossible to disprove.”

In a sense, the extremist explanations for 9/11 are merely an update of conspiracy theories that have been evolving ever

since the Crusades, according to conservative columnist and analyst Daniel Pipes, director of the Middle East Forum, who has written two books examining conspiracy theories.

Virtually every major conspiracy theory hatched over the past 900 years has featured one of two key elements, Pipes says. One is “secret societies,” such as the Trilateral Commission — an influential coalition of influential private citizens — as well as suspected government cabals; the other is the Jews.

Anti-Semitic 9/11 scenarios have stay-



An office in an adjoining building shows the devastation wreaked by the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, on Sept. 16, 2001.

Andrea Booher/FEMA

Our environment today is not conducive to a critical-thinking approach... If it's on the Internet and the graphics are good, it must be true.

Lou Manza

Psychology department,
Lebanon Valley College

ing power, but it’s unclear how widely they’re embraced. In the West, according to Pipes and others, 9/11-related Judeophobia seems to have a limited constituency among both ordinary people and those in positions of power and influence.

No American office-holder, for example, has tried to score political points by blaming the Jews for 9/11 — though recently defeated Rep. Cynthia McKinney (D-Ga.) made a name for herself by repeatedly taking anti-Israel stands and alleging that the federal government was complicit in the 9/11 attacks.

All told, the Western strain of 9/11 revisionism seems dominated by conspiracy buffs rather than bona fide anti-Semites who pose a real danger to Jews, according to Pipes.

Berlet takes a less benign view.

“Any form of conspiracy theory is toxic to the democratic process,” he says. “How can you reach compromise with those ‘evil people’ who bombed the World Trade Center? That sort of thinking could flare up in hard times and affect policy.”

Overtly anti-Semitic conspiracy theories stemming from 9/11 appear to be more widely accepted and tenacious in the Arab and Muslim world than in the West.

“The implications in the Middle East are quite profound,” Pipes says. “It’s one more brick in the edifice of fear and loathing of Israel and the Jews.”

Nothing to 'Fear' but postwar Poland

By DINAH A. SPRITZER

PRAGUE (JTA) — For anyone interested in European and Jewish history, "Fear" is essential reading, documenting the monstrously anti-Semitic environment to which Polish Jews returned, and then fled, after World War II.

The historical text from Polish historian Jan Gross — who achieved fame several years ago with "Neighbors," his account of the Jedwabne pogrom — is as gripping as a thriller and has won accolades from newspapers such as The New York Times and The Baltimore Sun.

With detailed accounts of collective and individual attacks against Jews, Gross' main achievement is to show the depth of hostility toward Jews at every level of postwar Polish society, from the Catholic Church and the police to doctors, factory workers, peasants and the Communist party.

■
A testimony by survivor Ida Gerstman to the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw is one of dozens in the book that chills the blood:

"I noticed on the train that I was being observed. One of the women pointed at me: 'This is a filthy kike, throw her under the train!' Another said: 'We'll turn her over to the police at the next station, let them shoot her.'

"When we reached the next station, women grabbed me by the feet and by the head and pulled me onto the tracks to throw me under the train. I begged them to spare my life, but they said I was Jewish and so I must die. Children started to throw stones at me.

"I begged a railwayman to shoot me because I could not suffer any longer, but he answered; 'You would like to die an easy death; slowly, you can suffer for a little longer.'"

There are traumatic accounts by witnesses, victims and even perpetrators of various pogroms. Jews are beaten, stabbed, robbed and killed as their abusers unleash a tirade of anti-Semitic epithets.

There are observations by Polish politicians and foreign ambassadors who say clearly, in their letters to top government leaders and even clergy, that the prob-

lem of anti-Semitism is dangerous and pervasive.

The 308-page book's epicenter is a portrayal of the Kielce pogrom, which Gross argues "could have happened anywhere in Poland, and at any time during this period."

The hours of wanton murdering in Kielce, triggered by a false accusation of ritual murder, left

42 Jews dead and

twice as

many wounded.

In contrast to "Neighbors," which shocked Poland with its revelations of the 1941 Jedwabne pogrom, in "Fear" Gross uses material that for the most part is already known.

But telling the Jews' story against the background of the creeping Communist takeover of Poland and the lawlessness that befell Poland at

this time, Gross proves, as he told JTA in a phone interview, "there was very little sympathy for the Jews who returned to Poland after the war, and very much a feeling going the other way."

His secondary aim, and hence the name of the book, is to explain why Poles behaved so horribly toward victims of genocide and unspeakable cruelty.

"Until someone offers an alternative explanation, we must consider that it was ordinary Poles' widespread collusion with the Nazi-driven extermination of the Jews which alone could produce such callousness," writes Gross, a native of Poland who is a history professor at Princeton University.

■
Gross is an engaging and meticulous historian, a writer on par with great storytellers like George Orwell, but he is not a sociologist.

Thus it's hard to know if his view that the brutal Nazi occupation of Poland,

near starvation in the country and Nazi pressure to treat Jews as subhumans merely were contributing factors to the Polish postwar psyche, as Gross estimates, or their key determinants.

Also, the relationship between prewar and postwar anti-Semitism is not explored in depth, and Gross' attempt to prove that Jews were not responsible for communism seems out of place, since

what determines people's actions is what they believe, not what's true.

If Gross' psychoanalysis of Poles leaves doubts, it doesn't matter. "Fear" is a masterful depiction of a gruesome postwar phenomenon.

A Polish-language version of the book will come out after Gross finishes translating it in the spring — though discussions on the book's significance already have begun among historians and others.

■
For proponents of Polish-Jewish reconciliation, the book raises the worrying specter that presenting Poland, even 60 years ago, as a country rife with anti-Semitism could leave a bad

taste in everyone's mouth.

Told that the book could make people wonder how much of that anti-Semitism is still around, Gross says "Fear" is "not a picture of Poland today."

Poland's chief rabbi, Michael Schudrich, expressed concern about the book being used to tar all Poles with the same brush.

"What percentage of the general population did this represent?" he asks. "Every city had its horrible people. But were they 90 percent of the population, were they 9 percent or 0.9 percent? How do we know that?"

There is no doubt Polish historians will debate whether Gross' views of the proportionality of anti-Semitism in post-World War II Poland are accurate or inflated.

Meanwhile, any country worthy of a democracy shouldn't be afraid to peer into its closets. Let the debate begin and let no Pole fear "Fear." ■

ARTS
&
CULTURE

'Until someone offers an alternative explanation, we must consider that it was ordinary Poles' widespread collusion with the Nazi-driven extermination of the Jews which alone could produce such callousness.'

Jan Gross

Author, 'Fear'

ARTS & CULTURE

Film documents intermarriage

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — When Holocaust survivor Leah Welbel learns that her American granddaughter is about to marry a Christian, she cries out, “When this happened in my old hometown, my family used to sit shiva. Here they expect me to open my arms. I can’t do it.”

Welbel’s agony in the documentary “Out of Faith” is rooted in the memory of her 33 months at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The film follows three generations of the Welbel family’s conflicts over intermarriage. It is rich in the human drama of family relationships and sharpened by the Holocaust experience, while tracing the trajectory of the American arc from immigration to assimilation.

Leah, deported from her Slovak hometown at age 16 and in her mid-70s when the film was made, is the indomitable Jewish matriarch. Voluble, feisty, humorous and a born survivor, she has established a home, first in Israel and then in Skokie, Ill.

She has taught herself the intricacies of the stock market and prospered, she labors over her gastronomic specialty, potato sandwiches, and she hasn’t spoken to her grandson Danny in six years, after he married a non-Jew.

Now her granddaughter Cheryl has announced that she will marry Matt, a Christian, and Leah tries a different tack. If she pushes Cheryl hard enough, Leah figures, maybe the new bride can persuade Matt to convert to Judaism.

Though raised in an Orthodox home, Leah is not particularly observant.

But by allowing her grandchildren to marry non-Jews, she insists, “I feel like a traitor,” adding, “we’re finishing the job Hitler started. We’ll become extinct like the Mayas.”

Leah’s son Michael also married a Christian, but his wife, Betty, converted to Judaism. Not an unmixed blessing, Michael observes, since “she became more Jewish than we are. We had to reel her back in.”

A friend has a different attitude. “If I didn’t let my son marry a Catholic, I would have lost a son,” she says. ■

Shawn Green vs. Hank Greenberg

By MARTIN ABRAMOWITZ

BOSTON (JTA) — If Jews had pantheons, Shawn Green, the premier Jewish baseball player of the last quarter-century, would be right up there in the baseball wing, a notch below Hank Greenberg and Sandy Koufax.

It would be hard to overstate the significance of Greenberg and Koufax in the history of American Jewish life.

That two of the best ballplayers of their generations could be Jewish — and that they could, 30 years apart, gently but proudly assert their Jewish identity by declining to play on Yom Kippur — was

incredibly important for the self-confidence of American Jews of the 1930s and 1960s.

A few years ago, Green split the difference on Yom Kippur, skipping one game scheduled on the holiday, while playing in the other.

But if the question of Shawn Green’s religious observance seems less fateful to this generation, the reason lies partly in the changes in American Jewry, and partly because Green, who recently was traded from the Arizona Diamondbacks to the New York Mets, is not Hank Greenberg.

At many levels, there simply is no comparison between the two players.

Greenberg was a consistently awesome slugger and a more successful overall batter than Green. His career slugging percentage of .605 is still among the top 10 in the history of the game, while Green went into the 2006 season at a respectable .505.

Green career batting average of about .283 is solid, but pales next to Greenberg’s .313 career average.

We also need to remember that Greenberg played for only nine and a half seasons, missing virtually all of 1936 with an injury and virtually all of 1941, all of 1942-1944 and half of 1945 because of military service.

Green, on the other hand, is in his 12th full season, having gone into this year with almost 1,000 more career at-bats than Greenberg. So it’s no wonder that Green’s cumulative statistics, as distinct from his averages, are rivaling Hank’s.

Still, the fact remains that Green’s cumulative stats are impressive, and if

he stays healthy Green is likely to become the all-time Jewish major league leader in home runs and base hits. He also has an outside chance of overtaking Greenberg in runs batted in.

Consider the following data, as of Aug. 27:

- Green’s 314 home runs leave him 17 shy of Greenberg’s 331. At his current pace — he has 11 so far this season — Green would pass Greenberg during the first half of the 2008 season.

- Green’s 1,847 career hits — Greenberg had 1,628 — leaves him within a three-year reach of Buddy Myer’s total of 2,131. A second baseman for the Washington Senators,

Myer, who also was Jewish, was a contemporary of Greenberg.

- Greenberg’s total of 1,276 career RBIs would be more of a stretch for Green, who heads toward September with 1,012.

Green’s power numbers have been declining for the past few years, even as his batting average has remained relatively steady. Nonetheless, five more years at an average of 60 RBIs per year would take him past Greenberg at age 39.

However many productive seasons may lie ahead of Green, we can be sure of two things:

- He’ll be remembered as the premier Jewish major leaguer of his time, but Green won’t follow Greenberg, Koufax and Lou Boudreau to become the fourth Jewish major leaguer in the Hall of Fame.

- Perhaps as long as baseball records are kept, Green will be remembered as the player who had the most productive nine-inning-game performance in the history of baseball: On May 23, 2002, Green electrified the baseball world by slugging four homers, a double and a single in a game for the Los Angeles Dodgers against Milwaukee.

But will he or won’t he overtake Greenberg and Myer to become the all-time Jewish career leader in homers, RBIs and hits? And will he or won’t he achieve his final stats while wearing a Mets uniform?

And at this time in U.S. Jewish life, aren’t those questions at least as interesting as whether he plays on Yom Kippur? ■ *Martin Abramowitz produces Jewish baseball cards and lectures on Jews in baseball as president of Jewish Major Leaguers Inc.*

At many levels,
there simply is no
comparison between
the two players.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

West Bank terrorist killed

Israeli special forces killed a top Palestinian terrorist in the West Bank.

The gunman, leader of the Al-Aksa Brigades in the town of Kabatiya, died Thursday during an exchange of fire with Israeli commandos who had surrounded his hideout.

Several of his comrades were believed to have been with him and may also have sustained injuries, security sources said.

Palestinians don't want Blair visit

Leading Palestinians called on Tony Blair not to visit the West Bank because of his strong support for Israel.

In an advertisement this week in the Al-Ayyam newspaper, hundreds of leading Palestinians called the British prime minister "persona non grata in our country."

Blair is scheduled to meet with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah on Sunday during his trip to the region.

No representatives of Abbas' Fatah Party or of Hamas signed the letter in the ad, Ha'aretz reported.

Broad Israeli government seen

A senior Israeli Cabinet minister called for expanding the governing coalition.

Interior Minister Roni Bar-On, a confidant of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, said Thursday that the specter of a nuclear-armed Iran warranted bringing a broad range of political factions into the government.

"I would be happy to see all the Zionist parties in the government," Bar-On said during a speech at Bar-Ilan University. "A government without a strong coalition foundation will not withstand the Iranian threat."

The remark spurred speculation that Olmert, whose Kadima Party is increasingly at odds with its coalition partner Labor in the wake of the Lebanon war, may try to enlist other factions.

Iran unveils warplane

Iran unveiled a locally made warplane. Iranian television this week broadcast footage of the new Sa'aga, or Lightning, fighter jet in action.

Foreign analysts said the aircraft closely resembled the U.S.-produced F-18, and that it may have been constructed using parts cannibalized from F-4 jets Washington supplied to Iran before the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The Lightning may have been unveiled as part of Tehran's efforts to discourage a possible Israeli or U.S. pre-emptive strike on its nuclear facilities.

Experts in Israel said the tactical and strategic threats posed by the warplane could not be gauged in the absence of independent data on its capabilities.

Tannenbaum discusses ordeal

An Israeli businessman who spent more than three years in Hezbollah captivity gave his first interview about the ordeal.

Israel's Channel 10 television was scheduled Thursday to screen its exclusive interview with Elhanan Tannenbaum, who was seized by Hezbollah agents while on a business trip to the United Arab Emirates in October 2000 and then smuggled to Beirut.

He was released as part of a prisoner swap between the Lebanese militia and Israel in January 2004.

"The most traumatic thing about it is that you are deprived of any contact with the outside world," Tannenbaum said of the experi-

ence, in a preview Channel 10 screened earlier this week. "You don't see people, you don't get any sunlight and you spend most of your time in the dungeon."

Tannenbaum said he kept track of time by trying to discern whether the meals he was fed were breakfast, lunch or dinner.

He also said his captors repeatedly moved him to different locations, presumably to prevent his detection by Israeli agents.

Israel defends arms policy

Israel's military reportedly defended its right to use weapons that some human rights groups have described as illegal.

The military's judge advocate general recently issued a memorandum to Israeli diplomatic missions abroad empowering them to rebut allegations that illegal heavy ordnance has been used in the Lebanon war and against Palestinian terrorists, Ma'ariv reported Thursday.

"International law does not impose an absolute and all-inclusive ban on the use of these cluster bombs or white-phosphorus bombs," the newspaper quoted the memorandum as saying.

According to the report, the judge advocate general also noted that 56 other countries, including the United States, Britain and Russia, have similar weapons in their arsenals. Military representatives declined comment.

NORTH AMERICA

AJCommittee supporter dies

David Hirschhorn, a philanthropist and longtime supporter of the American Jewish Committee, died Tuesday at age 88.

Hirschhorn was a major backer of the AJCommittee's support for human rights around the world through the Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights.

WORLD

Israeli firms at Polish exhibit

Sixteen Israeli defense firms inaugurated an Israel pavilion at a defense industry exhibition in Poland.

The Israeli defense delegation held a special ceremony Tuesday at the 14th International Defense Industry Exhibition MSPO in Kielce.

The city was the site of Europe's largest post-World War II pogrom, where 46 Jews were murdered.

Polish Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski attended the opening of the Israeli pavilion, which featured intelligence and other systems used in Israel's recent war with Hezbollah.

Court: Polish political ad not hate

A Polish court found that a televised political ad didn't ignite racial hatred.

The 2003 commercial, produced by Leszek Bubel, a publisher of numerous anti-Semitic tracts, sought to convince Polish viewers to vote against joining the European Union.

The commercial starts with a voice-over: "They want Poland to go and vote in a referendum."

Subsequently a bearded man in a black hat and a black coat says: "Before the war, 30 percent of all the buildings belonged to us. Currently, Poland does not allow us to get those buildings back. We believe that the situation will change once Poland enters the E.U. We'll be able to get our property back. That's why we'll be voting for the E.U. on the seventh and eighth of June."

The court said the commercial was part of Bubel's right to free speech.

Bubel faces several trials over anti-Jewish materials he has published.