

AROUND THE WORLD

NEWS IN BRIEF

WEST BANK FENCE TO BE REROUTED

JERUSALEM - Israel's High Court of Justice has ordered a controversial section of the West Bank security fence rerouted.

A three-justice panel under High Court President Dorit Beinisch on Tuesday ordered the defence ministry to come up with a new plan for Bil'in, a Palestinian village currently slated to lose swathes of farmland to the fence.

Finding in favour of a petition filed two years ago by Palestinian activists, Beinisch wrote that the fence threatens to cause "significant hardship" to Bil'in residents and therefore should circumvent the village.

Bil'in has seen almost weekly clashes between pro-Palestinian protesters and Israeli security forces, becoming a focus of international opposition to the West Bank fence. (JTA)

Speaking of Which...

Lionel Slier

A PSYCHIATRIST received a postcard from a patient in Israel. "Having a wonderful time. Wish you were here to tell me why."

Moshe met Shlomo in the street. "Tell me Moshe, how is your family?"

Shlomo replied: "You know my no-goodnik son-in-law, you know that he was sentenced to five years in jail. Well, can you

believe it? He has been given eighteen months off for good behaviour."

Moshe: "Good behaviour hey? I always told you that you would get nachas from the boy."

Hymie said to Arnold: "Have you heard this one? Issy and Yankel were walking and..."

"Hang on, hang on," said Arnold. "Must it always be Jews in the jokes? Can't you tell me the same joke without Jews? Make it about Japanese."

"Yes, you are right" said Hymie, "So, there were these two Japanese walking and the

one turned to the other and said: 'I must tell you what happened at my son's bar-mitzvah!'"

Then there is the one about the man who read so much about the dangers of cigarette smoking that he gave up reading.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union a lot of new geographic names ending in "stan" have come to our knowledge. There was always Hindustan, Pakistan, Kurdistan, Afganistan. Now we have Uzbekistan, Khazakistan, Tatarstan, Yakutstan, Azerbaijanistan, Baskirstan, Kir-

gizstan and Bashortostan among others. But who knows, "Kannie verstaan?"

Jerry Steinfeld was introduced to the best man at a wedding. Afterwards he asked: "If he is the best man, why isn't the bride marrying him?"

It was just before Yom Kippur and the rabbi was demonstrating to a class of pre-school girls the meaning of the shofar. He asked: "What will you see in shul on Yom Kippur that you will not see at any other time of the year?"

One little girl piped up: "My mother."

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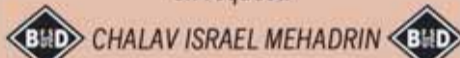
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3. Gidon Novick, Joint CEO Comair Limited – Marketing your business (Thursday 25 October)
4. Peter Finkelstein, MD Daisho Marketing & Sales – Achieving your sales target (Thursday 1 November)
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6. Dr Wolf Solomon, Clinical Psychologist – The psychology of business success (Thursday 15 November)

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Elder Jewish statesman Rav Kamenetsky, on our shores

RITA LEWIS

SOUTH AFRICAN Jewry was extremely privileged to be able to host Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetsky, world-renowned leader of world Jewry, said Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein adding that Rabbi Kamenetsky was in this country as the official speaker and guest at the Annual Rabbinical Conference which was held at Hunters Rest in the Magaliesburg last week.

The conference was recently renamed in memory of the popular late Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris and given his name. It is now known as The Annual Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris Rabbinical Conference. The date chosen for this year's conference fell on the actual Yahrzeit of the late chief rabbi.

Rabbi Kamenetsky (82) who was here with his wife Rebbetzen Temi Kamenetsky, is the co-rosh yeshiva of the Talmudical Yeshiva of Philadelphia - a position he has held for the past 50 years.

The conference, which was attended by some 70 rabbis, was the largest ever held in South Africa, said Rabbi Goldstein. Although this was a closed conference, it was reported that there were many powerful discussions held covering a variety of subjects relevant to the South African community. These included many modern-day challenges which were besetting so many of the community as well as current and diverse problems facing many individuals and families and how to find solutions to best deal with these.

There were also question and answer

sessions with Rabbi Kamenetsky where common issues were mulled over and input given.

Rabbi Goldstein who headed the conference, said: "This was a historical visit. Rabbi Kamenetsky is one of the greatest elder statesmen of rabbinical leadership in the world".

Although this was the rabbi's first visit to South Africa, it was not the first time he had met Rabbi Goldstein. After attending a conference in Florida, Rabbi Goldstein had specially gone to visit Rabbi Kamenetsky in Philadelphia.

Flowing from that meeting, the chief rabbi arranged for Rabbi Kamenetsky to visit South Africa as his guest.

Rabbi Kamenetsky exercises his leadership of Klal Yisroel through his role at the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah and serves on the rabbinical boards of many worldwide organisations, including Torah Schools for Israel, Torah Umesorah, the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation and the Association of Jewish Outreach Professionals (AJOP).

It was this Litvish background which made Rabbi Kamenetsky so very comfortable here with the local community - most of whom come from similar backgrounds. There was a great chavershaft and rapport between him and members of the rabbinate and community.

But it is not just his personable way with people that makes him so popular. His Torah wisdom and practical down to earth advice is sought by many people of all ages, around the world, on both personal and communal levels.

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The rabbi was a popular personality at every function he attended during his short visit to South Africa.

He himself was equally impressed by the local Jewish community. When speaking to people he often repeated that the community here was filled with "erliche Yiddin", friendly/pleasant Jews.

During his stay, the rabbi spent Shabbat in the Glenhazel area, davening/praying and speaking at various shuls around Glenhazel. He attracted huge turnouts on each occasion and venue.

On Saturday night a Melave Malka was

held for the entire community at the Capri Hotel. It was a huge success with over 375 people from different communities attending.

On Sunday morning a ladies only shiur was held at the Beis Hamedrash Keter Torah. Hundreds of women attended, with the shul being packed to capacity.

The rosh yeshiva comes from an illustrious family of well-known rabbis. His father was the renowned Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky and three of his sons, Rabbi Sholem, Rabbi Avrohom and Rabbi Dovid have followed in his footsteps and are all instructors of Talmud at various yeshivot.



Rebbetzen Temi Kamenetsky, Ha Gaon Ha Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky with Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein and his wife Gina.



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Lindsay Saker | All for One

Tandi Weinstein's case about 'those windows'

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPH BY RITA LEWIS

SOME PEOPLE have been known to hide the cracks in their walls by hanging pictures over them while others hide their high, sometimes old-fashioned pressed ceilings by creating false lower ones under them. Still more people hide ugly floors with carpets or Italian tiles but it has rarely been heard of for someone to think of hiding ugly windows with anything to beautify them.

For Tandi Weinstein, the thought of holding her son Shandon's upcoming barmitzvah in the Northcliff Shul - with what she considered to be its "really ugly windows" which overlooked the street - was an absolute anathema and she decided to take the matter into her own hands and do something about "those windows".

She realised that curtains would only hide them when they were drawn at night and so she set about finding some sort of alternative that would be suitable for a shul environment as well as being acceptable to the shul's rabbi, Rabbi Pesach Fishman, the shul committee, as well as to the members of the congregation.

Although not being an artist herself, nor having had any training in that field, she had done some stained glass work and had made a few Tiffany lamps and decided that something along those lines would be a suitable "window cover-up".

Bearing in mind that the windows are not exactly small, each one measuring 1,9 metres by 1,7, making them quite tall and difficult to reach towards the tops - and there are not just one, but 10 of them - so the thought of what to do and how to



Thandi Weinstein the designer and creator of the ten beautiful windows at the Northcliff Shul.

achieve an aesthetically pleasing result, must have been a daunting task.

Not so for Weinstein who for the next eight months - working 12 hours a day - single-handedly undertook the mammoth task of working out a suitable theme, and then drawing and creating a series of 10 different suitable scenes which could be used as false fronts to the windows and yet still let in the light during the day.

She said she had always loved Chagall's work and decided to base her designs for the shul's windows on his world-famous stained glass windows - but using a different medium.

She decided to use Shabbat, the eight Chagim, festivals of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Pesach, Shavuot, Succot, Simcha Torah and Chanukah as well as two Jerusalem scenes (one of old Jerusalem and one of the new) as the themes for each of the 10 windows.

Each window was divided into 16 separate grid-like sections which were first made up individually and then joined together with black cardboard strips to make up the entire scene or picture.

Using some 160 sheets of the black cardboard for the edging and joining and more than 350 sheets of different coloured cellophane paper, as well as black and white dustbin bags for the actual designs, she cut-out, overlaid and glued together the different shapes and outlines to make up the magnificent finished windows, with the one depicting Rosh Hashana on the front cover of this week's Rosh Hashanah issue of our paper.

She said although her daughter Shari did help at times, as well as one of her friends, she mostly cut out all the pieces herself. This was some undertaking, being very finicky and time consuming work - especially as she said she sometimes used up to seven sheets of different coloured cellophane together in order to get the required colour for a particular scene or object.

"But, as you can see for yourself, the end result was worth all the effort," she said.

AROUND THE WORLD

NEWS IN BRIEF

POLICE URGE HIRCHSON PROSECUTION

JERUSALEM - Israeli police want former Finance Minister Avraham Hirschson prosecuted for theft and fraud.

Hirschson quit the Cabinet in April after it emerged that he was being investigated on suspicion of embezzling funds from Nili, a non-profit trade union organisation he had headed. He denied wrongdoing.

Police investigators said on Sunday that they had passed to Attorney General Menachem Mazuz the results of their probe with a recommendation to press criminal charges. Mazuz is expected to meet Hirschson before deciding on whether a trial is warranted.

Hirschson had also been investigated on suspicion of siphoning funds from the March of the Living in the 1990s. Police said there was no evidence to back those allegations. (JTA)

TORONTO VANDALS UNDETERRED BY CLEANUPS

TORONTO - Vandals continue to spray-paint anti-Semitic slogans and other offensive graffiti in a Toronto neighbourhood despite cleanup efforts by volunteers.

The vandals have left threatening notes and thrown rocks through the windows of local residents who have removed the graffiti from garage doors and other spaces.

"Figuratively speaking, the perpetrators have said, 'Oh yeah?' and it's escalated, it's a war now," said Police Superintendent Paul Gottschalk, who has tripled police patrols in the east Toronto neighbourhood.

Gottschalk said the graffiti was likely not the work of gangs. He noted that two lanky teens were seen hanging around a school that was spray-painted.

"I'll bet you it's someone living right around the corner," he said. (JTA)

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Key Spirit Developments

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Auris - the next generation hatchback from Toyota

The Auris represents a new approach to the design of Toyota's "C" segment hatchback, which has traditionally been the RunX. For the first time Toyota has charged its progressive European design studio, ED2, with the design of its "C" segment challenger, one of the most important and competitive segments.



For this all-new model the designers adopted what they call an "inside-out" approach to maximise interior space and comfort as a priority before defining the exterior design of the vehicle. Throughout the design and introduction into production, Toyota has taken care to use materials and techniques that will reduce the impact that the Auris has on the environment throughout its lifecycle.

A fresh perspective

This new sporty model boasts new levels of quality, aesthetic styling, aerodynamic performance, comfort and convenience, and driving dynamics, as well as youthful appeal and features with exceptional interior space utility and comfort.

From first sight to the initial touch-and-feel experience, the Auris delivers a fresh perspective. These first experiences of the Auris are carried through to the driving experience with superb driving dynamics.

The new Auris offers South African buyers a choice of four latest generation, all aluminium engines from Toyota - three petrol and one diesel - with capacities ranging from 1,4 litres to 2 litres. In the design of these new generation engines, emphasis was placed on optimising fuel economy to ensure optimum rigidity of these components for reduced noise and vibration.

Toyota enters the volume passenger car market with a diesel engine for the first time



with the introduction of the new Auris.

Excellent fuel economy and low noise are significant attributes aside from the overall dynamic performance.

On the inside

The interior of the Auris is focused on creating a sporty and superior quality image.

The front seats have a body-hugging profile with firm shoulder support, a long seat cushion and excellent side support. A padded sports style three-spoke steering wheel provides a comfortable grip.

All Auris models are equipped with Toyota's hitech Optitron instrument system. The instrument panel is lit in amber with red pointers. A multi-function display is fitted to all derivatives and is featured in the main instrument display.

The introduction of a bridged console into the interior design allows for the gear shift lever to be placed in a more natural position where it comes easy to hand. The same applies to the hand brake.

Suspension and brakes

The all-new platform provides the mount for a newly developed front suspension layout. It provides excellent noise and vibration suppression and superior stability.

The position of the steering rack has been

optimised to limit bump-steer through the suspension stroke. The ratio and control of the newly developed, "Electric Power Steering" (EPS) has been finely tuned to match the suspension geometry. The EPS also contributes to fuel economy.

The rear suspension employs a highly effective and compact torsion beam layout for superior handling stability and ride comfort with the minimum intrusion into the boot area.

Large diameter wheels and tyres not only accentuate the sports styling of the Auris, but also allow room for large brake discs; high friction pads are specified for excellent pedal feel and minimum fade. Aluminium callipers with an integral handbrake are fitted at the rear for reduced maintenance.

An ABS anti-locking system provides stable braking control under all road conditions. The system includes "Electronic Brake Force Distribution" (EBD). "Brake Assist" ensures that maximum brake pressure is applied when the driver applies the brakes hard at high speed, typical of an emergency braking situation.

Low noise

A great deal of attention has been given to reducing the transmission of "NVH" (Noise, Vibration and Harshness) to the interior of the Auris. Similarly attention was given to the reduction in wind noise.

Choice of nine models

The new Auris provides a high level of practicality together with comfort, driving pleasure, high quality finish and generous equipment levels. This new 5-door hatch from Toyota is offered with a choice of four engines, each matched to a specific transmission specification for optimised efficiency, the option of diesel power - the first time for a Toyota in the volume passenger car market - and the option of Toyota's advanced M-MT transmission for those who prefer the convenience of an automatic shift transmission. Three specification grades are offered with the "RT" and "RS"

grades applicable to the 1,4 litre and 1,6 litre capacity derivatives and "RS" and "RX" offered together with 1,8 litre petrol and 2,0 litre diesel models. This provides a total of nine distinct models to choose from.

Air conditioning

All models are fitted with a newly developed ventilation and air-conditioning system - a manual system on the "RT" and "RS" grades and an automatic dual zone system on the "RX" grade. The system has been designed to work efficiently at low speeds.

Integrated audio system

The audio system is neatly integrated into the bridged centre console that defines the interior of the Auris. At the "RT" grade the audio system comprises a RDS radio/CD combination with six speakers. On the "RS" and "RX" grades, a RDS radio/CD combination with 6-CD changer and MP3 functionality is fitted.

Cabin storage

Multiple storage points are located around the interior of the Auris and together that provides 32 litres of space for the stowage of oddments.

Driver's smart entry and start

The Auris 1.8 RX and the Auris 2.0D-4D RX models are equipped with a "Smart Entry and Start" system. This detects the presence of the vehicle "key" within a range of about one metre from the vehicle and it enables automatic unlocking of the driver's door and engine start-up without inserting a key.

When the driver (carrying the key) touches the door handle, a sensor automatically releases the door locks. Once inside, the vehicle can be started by simply pressing the starter button on the dashboard.

All other models are equipped with remote central locking. A security function re-locks the doors within 30 seconds of them being unlocked, if the key is not inserted in the ignition lock.

OPINION AND ANALYSIS

FORUM FOR DIVERSE VIEWS

Jewish Report

It was the year that was...

THE YEAR 5767 was a mixed one. For Israel there were difficult events, such as the war against Hezbollah in Lebanon which revealed serious problems about Israel's preparedness for that type of war, and the realisation that the country was more vulnerable than had been believed, particularly regarding rocket attacks.

Its vulnerability to this has spurred enemies like Hamas and Hezbollah - and an increasingly dangerous Iran - to further enhance their capabilities for this mode of assault.

But in other respects it was a relatively good year for Israel. After the split between Hamas and Fatah, some new hope has emerged of progress towards a peace agreement with moderate Palestinians represented by president Mahmoud Abbas in the West Bank.

Hamas, of course, continues to try and block it, but has not yet succeeded. It is too soon to count any chickens, though - there have been countless instances in the past where promises of progress have come to naught or ushered in periods of extreme violence.

But in the midst of the uncertainty, we can be immensely gratified about the resilience of Israel's economy, which continues to boom. Even the Lebanon war did not significantly dent it, although tourism took a hard knock.

Money keeps pouring into Israel, showing a vote of deep confidence not only among Jews, but numerous other investors who are driven by purely commercial motives. But for their investments, the climate must be conducive.

Among world Jewry, reports from many countries are that anti-Semitism continues to rise, often in the guise of opposition to Israel's policies regarding the Palestinians. The Muslim world remains the main focus of this and often their blind hate of Israel verges on paranoia. But some Western countries - such as France - are also becoming uncomfortable for Jews.

In our local South African context, the government's sentiments are still clearly pro-Palestinian, but the formal policy continues to support a two-state solution. The full-page letter carried in this paper recently from ANC spokesman Smuts Nkonyama solidly affirmed this policy.

Diplomatic and trade relations with Israel remain reasonably healthy, especially away from the political posturing. At the recent SAJBD conference, Defence Minister Mosiuoa Lekota, while stressing that Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories must end, also emphasised in enthusiastic terms that Israel was South Africa's largest trading partner in the Middle East.

The South African Jewish community continues to be strong and highly organised. The phenomenal success of young Jewish entrepreneurs who have built dynamic new companies, such as those receiving awards at the recent Jewish Achievers banquet, and others who excel in other areas, is a positive sign for the community regarding both its Jewish and its South African identities.

In general, this country remains a friendly environment for Jews - more so than numerous other places with long-established Jewish communities. Our government is very sensitive to any overt displays of anti-Semitism, and relations between Muslims and Jews are relatively good, leaving aside the tensions around the Middle East.

As we all know, the fly in the ointment in our country is rampant crime, which affects all South Africans. Alan Paton's widow has declared publicly - and with genuine sadness - that she cannot take it anymore and is leaving the country.

If there is not progress on this issue, the long-term effects will be very severe. We cannot forever live behind barbed wire and ever-higher walls.

As we get further from the euphoric post-1994 years when Nelson Mandela was president, the question of where this country is headed and whether we will succeed in building a positive South African nationhood in the face of the gigantic problems of Aids and poverty, is increasingly causing anxiety.

Overall, however, there is a huge amount to be thankful for in our country, and we should be doing all we can to contribute and play a positive role in its development - as proudly Jews, proudly South Africans.

The Jewish Report, its directors, management and staff, wish all our readers and advertisers a hearty chag sameach and well over the Fast. We look forward to another interesting and fruitful year ahead in 5768.

A Rosh Hashanah miracle

NECHEMIA MEYERS
REHOVOT

IF LAST Rosh Hashanah you had asked the average Israeli whether Ehud Olmert would still be prime minister this Rosh Hashanah, the great majority would have said no. The less than successful Second Lebanese War, most people thought, would force him to leave the political arena.

But Mr Olmert still sits in the prime minister's chair, to which he is attached by some extraordinarily strong superglue.

The secret of his survival is due in large measure to his ability to convince his diverse coalition partners that the alternative, new elections, would be too dangerous for them both individually and collectively.

Moreover, the coalition partners are very considerate of one another. Even if the representative of one or another party does something outrageous, they avoid an overly critical reaction so as not to rock the boat.

We saw such a situation last week

when the spiritual head of Shas, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, had the audacity to suggest that soldiers killed in the Second Lebanese War had perished because they hadn't been sufficiently observant.

There was scarcely a response from the parties who are partners with Shas in the coalition. The only strong response came from the many modern Orthodox parents who lost sons in the conflict.

While the fact that Olmert has survived to this Rosh Hashanah is something of a miracle, his survival for another year will demand a far greater miracle. Prime Minister Olmert and Palestinian leader Abu Mazen, are now taking the first tentative steps towards fashioning a final status agreement. This will demand compromises that people in both Israel and the Palestinian areas will find it hard to accept.

Also of importance is the fact that both leaders are weak. Abu Mazen has lost the Gaza Strip and has tenuous control of the West Bank. And Olmert is even less popular here than George

W Bush is in the United States.

Perhaps the major explanation for Olmert's political survival is the lack of a plausible alternative.

Assuming that any agreement with the Palestinians will involve substantial Israeli concessions, it is hard to imagine any array of parties that would agree, for example, to evacuating almost all the West Bank and Golan Heights settlements, a withdrawal from East Jerusalem and the return of a token number of Arab refugees.

It would be easier to form a stand-pat, Likud-led coalition that would argue that an agreement safeguarding Israel's vital interests can't be achieved in present circumstances.

But there is yet another possibility. With the Iranian nuclear threat growing day by day, some kind of national unity government may emerge, based on the premise that this is not the time for politics as usual and that definitive solutions will have to be postponed for at least several years.

Such a government would presumably be led by a person enjoying near universal respect. It is hard to guess whether such a person can be found. But one thing for sure: It won't be Ehud Olmert.

British Zionists drop Ha'aretz columnist

DINAH A SPRITZER
PRAGUE

THE BRITISH Zionist Federation cancelled a London appearance by *Ha'aretz* columnist Danny Rubinstein the day after he called Israel an "apartheid state" at a United Nations conference on Palestinians.

Rubinstein, the Israeli newspaper's Arab affairs editor and a member of its editorial board, told an audience of some 350 that "today Israel is an apartheid state with different status for different communities", according to sources at the event, held at the European Parliament in Brussels.

He went on to say that Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Israel each had "a different status", according to a summary of his speech by a United Nations website.

Wall Street Journal columnist Daniel Schwammthal told JTA he was so shocked by what he heard that he later confirmed the comment with Rubinstein.

"I asked him if he really thought Israel was in a state of apartheid and he answered 'yes'," Schwammthal said.

Rubinstein also said "Hamas won the election of the international community and Israel cannot ignore that" and argued that the security fence Israel was building could not be justified, sources said.

The British Zionist Federation issued a statement last Friday saying it had read about Rubinstein's quotes in a JTA news report that Thursday and verified the comments with him the next day. According to the Zionist federation, the result was a "mutual decision" to cancel Rubinstein's event.

"Criticism of Israeli policy is acceptable," the Zionist federation's chairman, Andrew Balcombe, said in a statement. "However, by using the word 'apartheid' in a UN conference held at the European Parliament, Danny Rubinstein encourages the demonisation of Israel and the Jewish people. I believe he was naïve to attend the UN conference. Indeed his own newspaper *Ha'aretz* had earlier reported that Israeli and EU lawmakers had attacked the UN meeting for having a completely one-sided, anti-Israeli agenda."

The Zionist federation's conference, titled "Israel at 60", was held Friday to Sunday in London.

Rubinstein, who did not return a call seeking comment, made his remarks during a forum that pro-Israel non-



The British Zionist Federation cancelled a London appearance by *Ha'aretz* columnist Danny Rubinstein the day after he called Israel an "apartheid state".

governmental organisations such as B'nai B'rith, UN Watch and NGO Monitor described as Israel-bashing sessions run by the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

The pro-Israel groups say the UN committee has a long history of opposing Israeli interests.

Pro-Israel critics say the name of the UN conference, "International Conference of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestine Peace", was misleading, as solutions for peace were not on the agenda and only speakers with harsh words for Israel had been given an opportunity to present their views.

At this year's event, attendees gave an ovation to members of the Neturei Karta, the fervently Orthodox sect that vehemently opposes Israel's existence and participated in a highly publicised gathering of Holocaust deniers in Iran.

Observers said that during one workshop, Richard Kuper, spokesman of the London-based European Jews for a Just Peace, had argued that Israel supporters emphasised the conflict in Darfur to direct attention away from Israel's human rights violations. Several other speakers at the forum called for boycotts of Israel.

Seven members of the European Parliament published a letter to the *International Herald Tribune* last Friday saying that "despite the neutral-sounding title of its conference", it "has a proven record of anti-Israel bias, spreading propaganda that presents only the Palestinian narrative, including the delegitimisation of Israel - a UN member state".

Susanna Kokkonen, political director of the European Coalition for Israel, which represents five Christian organisations and works closely with members of the European Parliament who advocate Israeli interests, said the two-day conference last week had "an atmosphere that was thick with hate towards Israel".

"I was most shocked to hear an editor from *Ha'aretz* condemn Israel in a way that was worse than the Arab speakers," Kokkonen said.

Hillel Neuer, executive director of the Geneva-based UN Watch, an organisation with ties to the American Jewish Committee, said that by agreeing to speak at the conference, Rubinstein was lending it legitimacy.

"It's disturbing that a leading Israeli journalist is participating with a Soviet-era enterprise whose sole aim is to assault Israel morally, legally and financially," Neuer said. "But that he would full-throatedly join the jackals and call Israel 'an apartheid state' is an outrage."

"Though Rubinstein was officially presented by the UN as a member of the *Ha'aretz* editorial board, we trust that the newspaper does not condone the delegitimisation of Israel." (JTA)

Rubinstein unrepentant on 'apartheid' comment

JERUSALEM - In a speech to a Jewish group in London, *Ha'aretz* Arab affairs editor Danny Rubinstein stood behind his characterisation of Israel as an apartheid state.

Speaking to about 100 people at the New North London Synagogue on Monday evening, less than a week after he declared Israel was "an apartheid state" at a UN conference in Brussels, Rubinstein said "apartheid" was a political term he and his newspaper increasingly used and he was not sorry for invoking it, audience members reported him saying.

Rubinstein, who is on the *Ha'aretz* editorial board, said he saw no reason to adapt his analysis to varying audiences - even ones abroad that include anti-Zionists.

Ellen Goldberg, executive director of the New Israel Fund, which promotes democracy and human rights in Israel and sponsored Rubinstein's speech at the London synagogue, said the NIF did not endorse his viewpoint.

But, she added: "As an organisation dedicated to equality, freedom of speech and social justice, it cannot censor an expression of views from someone whose dedication to Israel's future and knowledge of current affairs are exceptional." (JTA)

OPINION AND ANALYSIS

FORUM FOR DIVERSE VIEWS

Olmert won't go the American way...

LESLIE SUSSER
JERUSALEM

UNDER PRESSURE from a key coalition partner, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has promised to pass legislation for a stronger and more stable government. But Israel will remain a parliamentary democracy and will not adopt the American-style presidential system some reformers have been advocating.

The general consensus in Israel is that the current system of proportional representation and large, unwieldy governing coalitions is not working. The proposed reforms are designed to promote stability, strengthen the executive and legislative branches, and reinforce the separation of powers but without abandoning the European-style parliamentary system.

The inherent instability of the Israeli body politic is underlined by the fact that the country has had no less than 31 governments in 59 years of statehood. The past eight years have seen six defence ministers, seven foreign ministers and eight finance ministers. The new system would make it more difficult to topple a sitting government in mid-term.

Well-intentioned efforts to refine the system in the past have come to naught because political will was lacking. This time, though, the prognosis for change looks good: There is a Knesset majority for many of the proposed reforms and, more importantly, Olmert knows his government will likely fall if he fails to push through the promised package.

The urgency for change gathered steam last week when Strategic Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman, leader of the hawkish Yisrael Beiteinu party, gave Olmert an ultimatum: Change the system or Yisrael Beiteinu will bolt the coalition, triggering a process that almost certainly will lead to a government collapse and early elections.

In a meeting at the prime minister's office last week, Lieberman argued that the Olmert administration had failed to make any lasting imprint on Israeli life, but if it strengthened the ailing system of government that would be an achievement of historic significance.

Lieberman for years has been advocating the introduction of a full-fledged presidential system along American lines. That was one of the main options considered by a special commission of experts established by former President Moshe Katsav in 2005 to analyse the failings of the Israeli system and recommend reforms.

In the end, however, a commission wary of radical change opted for a measured amendment of the current system rather than the adoption of something different and untried in Israel. The Knesset's Law, Constitution and Justice Committee, which has also been debating reform for years, concurred.

Both committees were influenced by the resounding failure of Israel's last electoral experiment: the direct election of the prime minister, which contrary to expectations led to a strengthening of the smaller parties.

The new reform package contains the following elements:

* After an election, the leader of the largest party automatically becomes prime minister. This will encourage vot-

ing for larger parties with realistic candidates for prime minister such as Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud, Ehud Barak's Labour or Olmert's Kadima. Secondly, since the prime minister would have been elected, wheeler-dealer smaller parties could not play one candidate against another in coalition negotiations.

* Introduction of the so-called "Norwegian Law" in which legislators appointed to the government automatically resign from the Knesset, making way for the next in line. This would promote stricter separation of powers and enable all 120 members of the Knesset to devote themselves fulltime to the business of the legislature.

* "Constructive no confidence". To unseat an incumbent prime minister, at least 66 Knesset members would have to vote against him or her and agree on a successor. This would make it much harder to topple a government in mid-term, since the chances of opposition members from left and right coalescing around the same alternative candidate are not high. It also would make it more difficult for coalition partners to hold a prime minister to ransom by threatening to bring him down.

As things stand, 61 Knesset members can unseat a prime minister without having to unite around a successor.

* Raising the threshold for election to the Knesset from two per cent to three per cent. This would eliminate very small parties or force them to merge with like-minded larger groupings.

* Passing the budget for the coming year by December 31 or face new elections. The thinking is that this would ensure that the budget is passed on time and eliminate the current three-month extension period.

The president's commission made another major recommendation: That the country be divided into 17 constituencies and that 60 of the Knesset members be elected in regional elections and 60 according to party slates. Now all 120 Knesset members are elected on party slates in a system of pure proportional representation.

This amendment also would have tended to strengthen the larger parties, as well as make the constituency-elected Knesset members directly accountable to their constituents.

The problem is that the proposal, which has been around since the mid-1950s, still does not have a Knesset majority. The smaller parties, fearing they stand to lose the most, are adamantly against any such change.

According to Knesset member Menachem Ben Sasson of Kadima, chairman of the law committee, he will not be able to muster a majority for any form of constituency elections and therefore it will not be part of the legislative package he is preparing.

Ironically the change in the system is being spurred by the very coalition pressures it seeks to eliminate. Olmert's coalition has 77 supporters in the Knesset, but if Lieberman pulls out his 11 Yisrael Beiteinu legislators, the right-tending, fervently Orthodox Shas is likely to withdraw its 11 as well - a move that almost certainly would spark new elections.

As for the hawkish Lieberman, he needs to show his voters why he has

remained in a coalition that is talking peace with the Palestinians on the basis of the 1967 borders.

High-profile amendments of the system making for stronger government would provide a convincing answer.

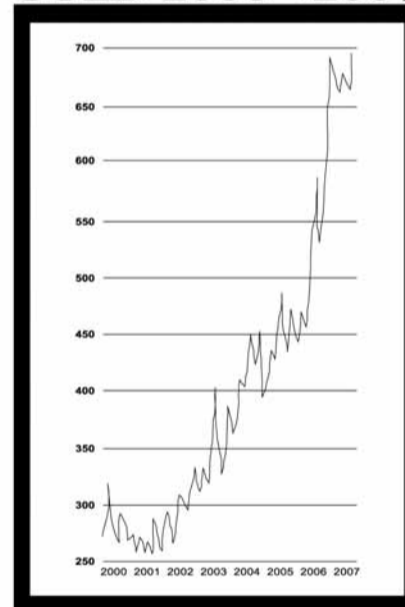
Ever since Lieberman joined the relatively dovish coalition, he has been losing support in a big way. The question he and Olmert will have to ask themselves, though, is whether the changes they are advocating will actually strengthen them in an election or play into the hands of key rivals such as Netanyahu, who might sweep to power on the coattails of a system favouring larger parties like the Likud and provide the new incumbent with a stronger power base from which to govern as he sees fit. (JTA)

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is being pressured to make Israel's government stronger and more stable, by reforming the political system. (Source: BPH IMAGES)



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OPINION AND ANALYSIS

FORUM FOR DIVERSE VIEWS

War and its perplexing legacy



BARBARIC YAWP

David Saks

WHAT REALLY happened at Cuito Cuinavale? Fought in late 1987 between South African and Unita forces against their Cuban and Fapla counterparts, it was certainly the culminating battle of the so-called "Border War", and indeed has been described as "Africa's largest land battle since the Second World War".

But who actually won it? All sides claimed victory, and shortly thereafter all Cuban, South African and other foreign troops left Angola to leave the local combatants to fight it out. The casualty ratio was heavily lopsided in favour of the South Africans, but the official "Struggle" verdict of the battle is that it represented a decisive defeat for the apartheid colonialist regime.

Since history, as we know, is written by the victors, that is the version that will be taught in our schools in the future, but that does not mean that objective military historians have to toe the politically correct party line. My own view is that Cuito Cuinavale was indeed a South African victory, albeit an indecisive one.

What the controversy demonstrates is how much liberation movements representing former colonised peoples feel the need to look back on military successes against their former oppressors. That is no doubt part of the reason why the ruling party in South Africa, and the Sub-Saharan African countries in general, cannot find it in themselves to distance themselves from Robert Mugabe's

Zimbabwe.

Mugabe's Zanu-PF movement is regarded as having militarily defeated the Ian Smith white minority regime, which gives it a special status in Africa that no amount of oppression and misrule seems able to shake. The privileged status of "war veterans" within that beleaguered country, despite the fact that they are all too often rapacious thugs, testifies to that mystique.

(The reality, as it happens, is that Zimbabwe's whites were able to keep the liberation movements at bay, but had to throw in the towel when white South Africa decided to stop supplying them with the wherewithal to do so).

The gap between illusion and reality, and how so often the former is able to trump the latter through slick propaganda campaigning, was particularly evident with regard to the Tet Offensive of 1968. In military terms, this was a massive defeat for the Viet Cong, whose attacks on American and South Vietnamese forces were bloodily repulsed at every turn, yet it proved to be a public relations coup second to none.

The very fact that the North Viet-

namese were able to mount a campaign of that scale brought home to the American public that the much-promised easy victory was not going to happen, which enormously boosted the anti-war lobby and paved the way to the US's ignominious withdrawal six years later.

Looking at the Middle East, one sees this same kind of historical revisionism, driven by the obsessive need weaker, more backward nations have to look back on military victories over their erstwhile tormentors, applying very much to the wars between Israel and its neighbours.

In cases where the Israeli victory was clear-cut - in 1948 and 1967, for example - foul play is claimed. And where it was not as clear-cut - ie with the 1973 Yom Kippur War and last year's war in Lebanon - then Israel's opponents shamelessly claim victory.

That 1973 can be depicted as an Arab victory is testimony to how incessant propaganda can bury even the most clear-cut of historical facts. Certainly, Egypt and Syria made significant gains in the early days of the war and had the hitherto seemingly invincible IDF very much on the back foot.

What happened subsequently, however, is that Israel counter-attacked, stopped the invaders in their tracks and was poised to deliver the coup de grace when the international community (which was headed, in this case, by the Soviet Union) suddenly decided that they had better intervene to "stop the senseless slaughter".

In some ways, in fact, the Yom Kippur War can be regarded as even more remarkable an Israeli victory than the celebrated Six Day War of the previous decade. This time, after all, it was Israel that was subjected to a devastating surprise attack, yet it was able to rally and decisively repulse its enemies on both fronts.

There is more reason to regard Lebanon in 2006 as having been, in some ways, an Israeli military setback, not because Israel lost but because, arguably, it didn't win. Hezbollah were given a severe mauling, certainly, but the anticipated knock-out blow never came and, in truth, the IDF looked distinctly ring-rusty at times.

Still, to call the war an Israeli defeat is absurd, and it was galling in the extreme to see Israel's enemies baying over their imaginary triumph.

Going back to the Border War, there is something odd about that whole episode in our history. Even when it was happening, few people seemed to know what was going on, and 20 years after its conclusion, it is as if it never happened at all, so seldom does one find references to it.

Many Jewish boys served on the border, and indeed, some never returned, yet how often does one find Jewish veterans speaking of their experiences? Do they participate in the activities of the SA Jewish Ex-Servicemen's League, for example? This is indeed an anomaly that is worth investigating.

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OPINION AND ANALYSIS

FORUM FOR DIVERSE VIEWS

Stop pressing for Israeli concessions

MOSHE YA'ALON
JERUSALEM

AFTER A few years of benign neglect, Israel is back on the itineraries of well-meaning foreign emissaries. Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair visited the country in July in his new role as special envoy of the Quartet of Middle East peacemakers. In August, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice arrived.

Each visit concluded with a news conference at which promises of progress were made. But before any lasting on-the-ground movement toward peace can be achieved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, foreign emissaries, as well as some Israelis, will have to shake off some long-disproved tenets of the conventional wisdom about the dispute.

Diplomats bring to Israel four main misconceptions. Primary among them is the idea that solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a prerequisite for stability in the Middle East.

The region is riven by clashes that have nothing to do with Israel. For instance, the Jewish state plays no role in the conflict between Shi'ites and Sunnis, between Persians and Arabs or between Arab nationalists and Arab Islamists.

The second misconception is that Israeli territorial concessions are the key to progress. The reality is that an ascendant jihadist Islam believes that it is leading the battle against Israel and the rest of the West. Given this dynamic, Israeli territorial or other concessions, simply fill the jihadists' sails, reinforcing their belief that Israel and the West are weak and can be

militarily defeated.

True, a majority of Israelis supported Israel's unilateral withdrawals from Lebanon in 2000 and from the Gaza Strip in 2005 in the belief that meeting Hezbollah and Palestinian territorial demands would nullify the cause of conflict between them.

We now know the results: The Hezbollah and Palestinian reactions - concerted terror wars, kidnapped Israeli soldiers, rockets fired at Israeli cities - made clear that the Mideast's central conflict is not territorial but ideological. And ideology cannot be defeated by concessions.

Emissaries also still believe that "the Occupation" blocks agreement between Israelis and Palestinians.

In the West, the term usually means the territories Israel conquered in the Six-Day War in 1967. If the problem between Israelis and Palestinians were just the 1967 territories, and the solution were dividing those lands between the two sides - as proposed most recently in 2000 by then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak - the conflict would have ended long ago.

Instead, the heart of the problem is that many Palestinians - Fatah and Hamas, in particular - and even some Israeli Arabs use "occupation" to refer to all Israel. They do not recognise the Jewish people's right to an independent state, a right affirmed again and again in the international arena.

Finally, the well-intentioned visiting diplomats believe that the Palestinians want - and have the ability - to establish a state that will live in peace alongside Israel. But they are not being clear-eyed.

The late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat established a thugocracy that never

improved the basic living conditions of his people. Indeed, Palestinian unemployment and poverty are worse today than they were before Arafat and his cronies assumed power in 1994.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas did not take responsibility for the welfare of Gazans, which in part led to Hamas' electoral victory in 2006. Now confined to the West Bank after Hamas kicked his Fatah organisation out of Gaza, Abbas has not moved to create a governmental structure.

A corollary of this fourth misconception is the belief that economic development can neutralise extreme nationalism and religious fanaticism, thus clearing the way toward peace and security.

David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, had a term for such believers: "naïve Zionists". Those who fit this description should demand that the Palestinians explain what they did with the \$7 billion in international aid they received over the years.

Seven billion reasons for economic progress - so why did Palestinian mobs destroy the Erez industrial zone, where Palestinians worked and ran businesses for decades, on the Gaza border? Why do they attack safe roads linking Gaza and the West Bank? Why is the Palestinian economy in shambles?

Shorn of these mistaken assumptions, the picture in the Middle East is disturbing indeed. No wonder emissaries hold on to them. So what to do?

For starters, Western governments and their emissaries must refrain from pressuring Israel for territorial or security conces-

sions, which at best produces only short-term gains and emboldens the Islamist terror groups.

Instead they should try to persuade the Palestinian leaders to commit to a long-term strategy premised on educational, political and economic reforms that would lead to the establishment of a civil society that cherishes life, not death; values human rights and freedom; and develops a middle class, not a corrupt, rich elite.

At the same time, these governments should set up an international fund that would offer Palestinian refugee families assistance on condition that their acceptance of the money would signify resolution of their refugee status.

Under no circumstances should emissaries attempt to open a dialogue with Hamas. For the sake of Palestinian society, Hamas and its ideology must be defeated.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not the most significant today; it's the battle between jihadist Islam and the West, of which Israel is merely one theatre. To defeat jihadist Islam, the West must overcome the regimes, organisations and ideologies that support and feed it. Hamas is foremost among them.

The emissaries who travel to Israel must draw on their rich diplomatic experiences, free themselves from misconceptions about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the petty politics that flows from them - especially the binds of political correctness - to lead us all toward freedom, security and peace. Anything else is mere meddling. (JTA)

Moshe Ya'alon is a fellow at the Adelson Institute for Strategic Studies at the Shalem Centre. He served as the 17th chief of staff of the Israel Defence Forces. This article first appeared in the Los Angeles Times.

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Authors explore a lost world

DANIEL SCHIFRIN
SAN FRANCISCO

AARON DAVIDMAN, artistic director of San Francisco's Travelling Jewish Theatre, recently wrote a short performance piece called *Letter to Uncle Morris*. In this reflection on contemporary Jewish identity, the character named Uncle Morris pokes fun at the title of Davidman's company.

"What kind of a name for a theatre is

that?" Uncle Morris asks. "We're not travelling anymore. We're not wandering. We have a homeland now."

For young American Jewish writers today, it doesn't seem quite that simple. For Davidman, a history of Jewish wandering forces us to see homelessness as something more metaphysical.

"It's quite a Jewish irony that although we have a homeland, we are still consumed with questions of identity," he explained.

Indeed, a look at some of the more accomplished and popular fiction by young Jewish writers today reveals an anxious churning of identity, much of it focused on recapturing something intangible that was lost in the fires of the Holocaust.

Many of these writers, including Dara Horn, whose novel *The World to Come* recently won the National Jewish Book Award for fiction, grew up in New York, a virtual Jewish homeland. Yet *The World to Come*, along with Horn's first novel, "In the Image", and recent books by Nathan Englander, Jonathan Safran Foer, Aaron Hamburger and others, send their protagonists back to Europe in search of some wisdom or sense of purpose that a secure, often Jewishly grounded upbringing in the United States has failed to provide.

In *The World to Come*, the main character, Benjamin Ziskind, a quiz-show writer who lives in present-day New York, is obsessed with a painting by Marc Chagall that connects him to the lost world of his European family. In a stunning example of the conflation of present and past, of Europe and America, and of history and personal identity, Ziskind quizzes himself in the manner of his TV show:

Two of his questions: "What acclaimed Russian writer, author of *Odessa Tales* and *Red Cavalry*, was executed in 1940 under false charges of treason? During which of the following incidents in the past year did Nina lie when she claimed that she loved me?"

A lost European Jewish writer; a failed romance: The two things are profoundly, if mysteriously, connected.

And in Foer's *Everything is Illuminated*, the author creates a protagonist named Jonathan Safran Foer who is desperately searching Ukraine for information about a key event in the life of his grandfather. The dislocations of the title character, and the brilliant language of its supporting cast, connect this young American Jew's malaise with the fate of his ancestor.

The fact that the main character shares a name with the author doesn't necessarily make "Everything is Illuminated" autobiographical. Yet the conflation of names comes to symbolise the deep personal investment our best writers in their 20s and 30s have made in trying to understand what exactly was left "over there". And what exactly has been lost.

These writers are not the first to reverse the normal flow of modern Jewish history from Europe to Israel or the New World, nor to demonstrate serious anxiety about the meaning of Jewish life unmoored from the European context that provided its modern texture.

Philip Roth explored this issue in his 1985 story *The Prague Orgy*, in which a Roth-like character travels to Prague in



search of a lost Jewish manuscript, and his 1993 novel *Operation Shylock*, in which a character named Philip Roth advises Israelis to engage in "Diasporism", and return "home" to Poland.

Cynthia Ozick also tackled the issue in her 1987 novella *The Messiah of Stockholm*, in which she displaces the anxiety about the future of American Jewish culture, lacking as it does European gravitas, to the neutral ground of Scandinavia.

For Roth and Ozick, arguably the most respected American Jewish writers still at work, this "anxiety of authenticity" is a minor theme. But for a new generation of writers it seems to be a major one in which a calm, prosperous America, brimming with freedom and religious opportunities lacks the texture and interest of prewar Europe.

Put another way, some essential element of Jewish life has vanished altogether in the smokestacks of Poland, in the process creating an army of six million ghosts haunting the imagination of writers who may be two generations removed from the event.

In his Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Angels in America*, Tony Kushner opens the curtain with an Eastern European rabbi eulogising a congregant who had immigrated to the Bronx. Speaking to the audience both within the play and in the theatre, the rabbi explains: "You can never make that crossing that she made, for such Great Voyages in this world do not anymore exist."

Perhaps they still do, even if the voyage is back to Europe, even if it's only on the page. (JTA)

(For more information on the National Jewish Book Award winners, visit www.jewishbookcouncil.org.)

Daniel Schifrin is the former director of literary programmes for the National Foundation for Jewish Culture.)

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