

Canadian Jewish news

Harper links Holocaust with current threats to Israel

By DIANE KOVEN

OTTAWA – Learning the lessons of the Holocaust means not ignoring threats to Israel from Iran and the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority, Prime Minister Stephen Harper said at last month's Canadian Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony on Parliament Hill.

The prime minister urged Canadians to be vigilant, and to learn from the past never to turn a blind eye to signs of trouble.

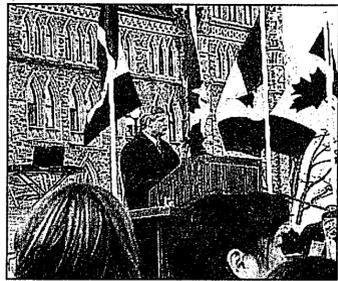
"We will not ignore them from Hamas and we will not ignore them from Iran," Harper said, referring to threats to Israel by Iranian President Mahmoud

Ahmadinejad and from the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority.

"Words are not enough. It is only in our vigilance and in our actions that we will honor those who died in places like Auschwitz and Dachau," he added.

"Our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims of perhaps the greatest crime of the 20th century. More than 60 years later, it is still difficult to believe a plan of such scale and such evil as the Holocaust was conceived and carried out – but it was."

Harper referred to a session in the House of Commons earlier in the day in which Holocaust



PRIME MINISTER HARPER addresses Yom Hashoah commemoration in Ottawa: "We will not ignore them from Hamas and we will not ignore them from Iran." Carolyn Blackman photo.

Memorial Day was discussed.

"Today we did a special thing that we don't do often in this place – all of us set aside our differences to listen to [MP and former justice minister] Irwin Cotler talk about the Holocaust... Whatever differences we have, we must never be afraid to stand together and speak out against the Holocaust."

Israel's ambassador to Canada, Alan Baker, described how Israelis live under a

constant shadow "that will never go away." He also asked people to try to imagine six million people as individuals, "each with a name, a life and a family."

"Imagine what a contribution those six million souls could have made to humanity had they not been gassed and incinerated... We call on you, Canada, the Canadian people, we call on the international community, we call on all humanity, not to let this happen again."

Interim Liberal Leader Bill Graham, Bloc Québécois Leader Gilles Duceppe and NDP Leader Jack Layton also addressed the event on behalf of their parties.

"I salute those who have produced these green ribbons for us to wear," said Layton, referring to ribbons provided by Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) for MPs and provincial legislators to show support for the people of Sudan's Darfur region, where hundreds of thousands of people have been killed or displaced, and where an Arab militia, the Janjaweed, has attacked ethnic black Africans, raped women and pillaged villages. The group is accused of widespread atrocities, with government support.

CJC distributed the ribbons to members of the House of Commons, Quebec's National Assembly and the legislatures of British Columbia and Ontario to wear on Yom Hashoah to draw a connection between the Holocaust and the current Darfur crisis.

The keynote address was given by Supreme Court Justice Rosalie Abella, who told the story of her own parents, Holocaust survivors who rebuilt their lives in this country.

"Canada is where they started all over again," Abella said. "None of [the survivors] will ever forget how lucky they were to be able to come to Canada, but neither will they forget why they came. Neither should we."

As their names were called by master of ceremonies Herb Gray, a former deputy prime minister and longtime MP, Holocaust survivors or their representatives were accompanied by representatives of the Canadian government as they laid wreaths at the Eternal Flame.

Hundreds of people, including many who had come from Montreal and Toronto for the ceremony, braved cold temperatures to honor the memories of those who died in the Shoah.

Many joined in reciting the communal kaddish together with Cantor Moshe Kraus, following his recitation of the prayer K'el Maleh Rachamim.

Cantor David Aptowitz sang "Zog Nit Keinmol", which was followed by the blowing of the shofar by Rabbi Charles Popky and Rabbi Arnold Fine. Cantor Pinchas Levinson led the singing of Hatikvah.

The ceremony concluded with the march of the colours by the Ottawa Jewish War Veterans.

The event was sponsored by Beit Halochem Canada, the Asper Foundation, B'nai Brith Canada, Canadian Hadassah-WIZO, the Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy (CJIA), Canadian Jewish Congress, the Israeli Embassy, Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies, the Jewish Federation of Ottawa, the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre, Temple Sinai Congregation, the Wierzbniaker Society and Zaglember Society of Toronto, with the support of the Canadian government and the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem.

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U.S. Jewish news

Dorothy, shmorothy: Kansas U. gets enthusiastic Yiddish scholar

By MARTIN ROSENBERG

LAWRENCE, Kan. (JTA) – As bullets whistled overhead and the smoke of the Battle of Black Jack wafted through the warm air 150 years ago this month, a terse conversation passed between two men fighting alongside abolitionist John Brown. "Nu, was meinen Sie jetzt?" (So, what do you think of this now?) August Bondi, who later recorded the conversation in his journals, asked in Yiddish. Theodore Weiner replied in Hebrew, "Sof odom moves." (The end of man is death.)

For Jonathan Boyarin, the exchange underscores the vitality and early presence of Yiddish in America. Boyarin, a cultural anthropologist and Yiddish scholar whose field is 20th century Jewish history, is translating a Yiddish book about the Kotsker rebbe written by noted scholar Abraham Joshua Heschel. Boyarin arrived at the University of Kansas last fall as a professor of modern Jewish studies, his first full-time academic position.

The professorship was created by a \$500,000 U.S. donation by a foundation set up by Kansas oilman Robert Beren. Paul Mirecki, chairman of the university's Religious Studies department, described Boyarin's post as "an interdisciplinary professorship that will expose many K.U. students to a variety of scholarly approaches to a major world religion." There are about a dozen Yiddish studies programs at North American universities.

Boyarin's task will be to broaden that beachhead: In addition to helping build up the Jewish studies program on campus, he's thinking of ways to bring Yiddish writers and scholars to campus for brief, intensive programs. He has studied the living cultural context in which Yiddish sparkled on the lips of Jews after they were wrenched by the Holocaust out of centuries-old communities in Eastern and Central Europe.

Boyarin, 49, grew up in a chicken-farming community in New Jersey and got his undergraduate degree in anthropology from Reed College in Portland, Ore. After college, he plunged into a rigorous Yiddish immersion program at Columbia University. Several weeks into the summer program, he had an epiphany while descending to the subway: He found himself speaking and thinking in Yiddish. "I was a little gentler toward myself speaking Yiddish. I felt the language coming out from inside me," he recalled.

He went on to earn a master's degree and a doctorate from the New School in anthropology. His doctoral research project took him to Paris for two years in the early 1980s, where he studied the secular Yiddish culture of former Eastern Europeans living there.

One of Boyarin's early academic works was *From A Ruined Garden – The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry*, which he co-authored. The book is a compilation of excerpts from yizker-bikher, or memorial books, crafted by former residents of hundreds of European villages and towns to remember and honor the lives and memories they left behind.



Yiddish scholar Jonathan Boyarin, professor of modern Jewish studies at the University of Kansas.

Focus on issues

Entering turbulent waters, U.S. Jews launch task force to aid Israeli Arabs

By RACHEL SILVERMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) – They live just a mile apart, but odds are Eldad Garfunkel and Kasim Abu Raya would not ordinarily have met. As a Jew and an Arab, both Israeli citizens, their paths seldom crossed. Such is life in Israel.

Then a new school opened in town, thanks to an Arab-Jewish coeducational organization called Hand in Hand. Teachers pledged to teach Arab and Jewish kids under the same roof, emphasizing values of coexistence and democratic engagement. Intrigued by the concept, Garfunkel and Raya took a chance and signed up their children.

Now, eight years later, the two men are in frequent contact. Raya's son has Jewish friends, sleep over during the holy month of Ramadan, Garfunkel's kid had a row of Arab students at his bar mitzvah, and both men claim a new understanding for those on "the other side."

A new task force on Israeli Arabs, founded by a broad coalition of American Jewish groups, hopes this type of exchange can become the norm rather than the exception in Israel. The coalition includes the Anti-Defamation League, Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, New Israel Fund, UJA-Federation of New York, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies and the Alfred and Hanna Fromm Fund.

It represents a major push on an issue that had been on the American Jewish community's list of priorities several years ago, but was then eclipsed by the intifada.

Leaders of the new Interagency Task Force on Israeli Arab Issues

told participants at a New York City symposium two weeks ago that they can no longer ignore the demographic realities of the Israeli Arab situation. According to data from Sikkuy – The Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality, Arabs, who make up roughly 20 per cent of Israel's population, have a poverty rate three times higher than that of Israel's Jewish population. They also face political, medical and educational inequities, the center said.

In addition to socioeconomic strain, Israeli Arabs face attitudinal biases on the part of their Jewish counterparts. Nearly 63 per cent of Israeli Jews say they view the Arab

population as a security threat, according to a report issued in March by the Israel-based Center for Combating Racism. The study also showed that 40 per cent of Israeli Jews believe the state should encourage Arabs to emigrate, and 34 per cent believe Arab culture is inferior to Jewish culture.

The hostility toward Israeli Arabs stems in part from a tendency for Israeli Jews to question the loyalty of their Arab neighbors, Sikkuy officials said.

"In Israeli Jewish minds, sometimes – oftentimes – Israeli Arabs are connected with Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and they are being blamed for what's going on there," said Shuli Dichter, co-executive director of Sikkuy.

"But they are a totally separate collective with a separate agenda and needs."

But recent history has shown that the issue is not so simple. Opinion polls show that Israeli Arabs increasingly are identifying as Palestinian rather than Israeli and – led by political leaders who often seem to go out of their way to provoke the Jewish majority – the community is seen as increasingly radical.

When the intifada began, Israeli Arabs staged massive riots in solidarity, and Israeli Arabs were involved in a number of terrorist attacks during the five-year uprising, using their freedom of movement as Israeli citizens to aid Palestinian suicide bombers.

Canadian Premiere Screening of Film

Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against The West

The Asper Foundation Lecture Series and Aish Winnipeg in association with the Winnipeg Zionist Initiative proudly present the Canadian premiere of the award-winning film *Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against The West* on May 29, 7:30 p.m. at the IMAX Theatre, Portage Place. From the same makers of the groundbreaking film *Relentless: The Struggle for Peace in Israel*, *Obsession* is a film that challenges the way people look at the world. Following the screening, Nonie Darwish, founder of Arabs for Israel and a featured speaker in the film, will address the audience and take questions.

Almost 70 years ago, Europe found itself at war with one of the most sinister figures in modern history: Adolf Hitler. At the end of World War II, over 50 million people were dead, and countless countries were both physically and economically devastated. Hitler's bloody struggle sought to forge the world anew, in the crucible of Nazi values. How could the West have overlooked the evil staring it in the face, for so long, before standing forcefully against it?

Today, we find ourselves confronted by a new enemy, also engaged in a violent struggle to transform our world. A new menace is threatening, with all the means at its disposal, to bow Western Civilization under the yoke of its values. That enemy is Radical Islam.

Obsession reveals an "insider's view" of the hatred the Radicals are teaching, their incitement of global jihad, and their goal of world domination. With the help of experts, including first-hand accounts from a former PLO terrorist and a Nazi youth commander, the film clearly shows that the threat is real. A

peaceful religion is being hijacked by a dangerous foe, who seeks to destroy the shared values we stand for. Other respected experts appearing in the film are Sir Martin Gilbert, Dr. Khaleel Mohammed, Professor Alan Dershowitz, John Loftus, Steven Emerson, Dr. Daniel Pipes and Khaled Abu Toameh.

Ms. Darwish is a powerful voice in support of Israel and women's rights in the Arab world. She has been featured on FOX News, CNN among others. Her remarkable story makes her voice that much more powerful. Her father was appointed by Gen. Gamal Abdel Nasser as the head of Egypt's military intelligence. In that capacity, he founded the Fedayeen terrorist operations against Israel. He was killed by the Israel Defence Forces in the first Israeli targeted assassination to prevent terrorism, making him a national hero in Egypt.

Obsession is now being screened worldwide and has received rave, critical reviews. Michael Medved, nationally syndicated radio host and film critic said, "Obsession is one of the most powerful, expertly crafted and undeniably important films I've seen this year. This courageous, utterly gripping expose deserves the attention of every American – and merits serious consideration for the Academy Award for Best Feature Length Documentary."

Obsession was awarded Best Feature Film at the 2005 Liberty Film Festival, Special Jury Award at the 2006 Houston International Film and Video Festival and was an Official Selection at the 2006 Newport Beach Film Festival.

To purchase tickets to this event and/or to get more information, please see the ad on page 2 in this issue of *The Jewish Post & News*.

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