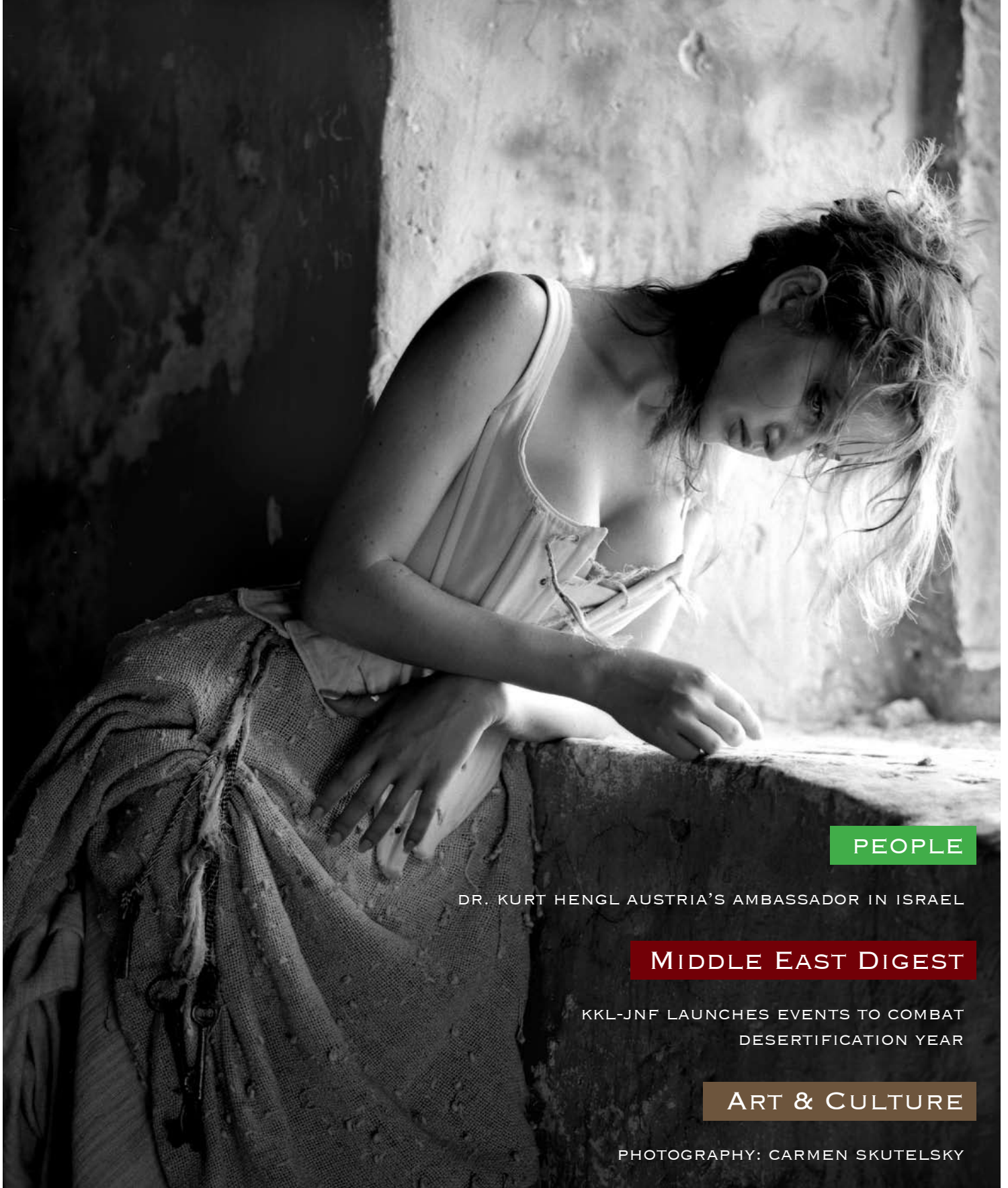




February - March 2006



PEOPLE

DR. KURT HENGL AUSTRIA'S AMBASSADOR IN ISRAEL

MIDDLE EAST DIGEST

KKL-JNF LAUNCHES EVENTS TO COMBAT
DESERTIFICATION YEAR

ART & CULTURE

PHOTOGRAPHY: CARMEN SKUTELSKY



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18:00 – 18:30 Opening by Guest and Moderator:

18:30 – 21:00 Panel :

Role OF WOMEN in developing of economic and technological changes

Panel:

The Media, Public Opinion and Politics in promoting of social changes

19:30 – 19:45 Break

19:45 – 22:00 Music show and Dinner

22:00 Draw (air ticket to Europe-USA, spa and others)

22:15 Ball - Dress :Black Tie

Julia Verdel
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And the Editorial Team



DR. KURT HENGL

AUSTRIA'S AMBASSADOR IN ISRAEL

BY NEIL SANDLER

"Ambassadors are politicians in a way, observing, assisting, protecting, meddling in politics, and Israeli policies are also shaped by foreign dialogue," in the words of Austrian ambassador to Israel Dr. Kurt Hengl, recently interviewed for this magazine.

Austria has assumed the Presidency of the Council of Europe for six months, led by Prime Minister Schüssel and Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik, the Ambassador assuming the Local Presidency of the EU in Israel. The Ambassador said FM Plassnik developed a sound relationship with Prime Minister Sharon and Cabinet Members when visiting last July and she will be a very balanced participant in any peace negotiations, with a clear view of Israeli concerns.

As of this writing, American and European diplomats arrive to encourage the Palestinian elections, universally saying the election is good for the region. Hamas is considered a terrorist organization, as restated by the EU and Quartet on Dec. 21 when they warned the Palestinians against including Hamas in a future government. Europe and the U.S. say assistance and money for the Palestinians will decrease or be jeopardized if Hamas members become government ministers. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the Austrian European Commissioner for Foreign Affairs of Euro-Med and the European New Neighborhood Policy, EU stated that it is responsible to the European and National Parliament, and European taxpayers' money should not flow to EU-declared terrorist organizations in or outside governments. Waldner signed an action plan for broader cooperation between Europe and the Palestinians, like the one signed between Europe and Israel with Foreign Minister Shalom.

Ambassadors are much closer here, because together as heads of Missions they talk not about trivial events but about important events the country is going through, such as the Gaza Disengagement, border crossings or East Jerusalem events. Ambassador Hengl spoke of the first-class Ambassadors

here, the U.S. Ambassador who has done so much work on Iraq democratization, or the Czech Ambassador who was Ambassador to Washington. Now in the Local EU Presidency he is responsible for coordinating the efforts of the other 25 countries plus accession candidates. He said Europe should speak with one voice, despite such varied opinions. After Israeli consideration, the EU was invited as monitor at the Rafah Gaza border crossing in a sign of more Israeli trust in Europe.



This year is also the 50th Anniversary of Israel-Austria diplomatic ties, with different festivities, especially cultural, some coinciding with the 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth 150th anniversary of Sigmund Freud's birth. There was a New Year's Ball in the Austrian Hospice in the Old City of Jerusalem to celebrate the Austrian EU Presidency and the Mozart anniversary.

The Ambassador reflected on the Israel-Austria relationship after such a rich Jewish-Austrian history and culture, followed by the terrible experience of the Holocaust, saying Austria cannot really compensate the Holocaust victims, only retribute the physical, through pensions, for example. There are Austrian volunteers working in Yad Vashem (Holocaust Museum) in Old-Age Homes, a

documentation center on Jewish-Austrian relations, and an Austrian teachers' training program at Yad Vashem.

Austria established diplomatic relations with Israel only one year after re-gaining independence in 1956, because Israel was important as a new country with a substantial element of people of Austrian origin, a *"daughter of Europe"*, as well as in trying to come to terms with the Holocaust. Now, after years of his relationship with Israel, the Ambassador has seen the country becoming more and more East Mediterranean.

The Ambassador is intrigued with the influence that Israel exerts on Europe and Austria. He knows his reports on Israel are being read by the highest echelons in Vienna. With Israel Austrian politics must examine its relationship towards Judaism and issues of anti-Semitism, the Nazi period and associated co-responsibility and Austrian-born Nazis. This examination became a crisis in Austria which exploded during the Waldheim (Ex-Wehrmacht Austrian President) Affair.

Israel remains a difficult market for Austrians, one factor being too fierce competition. Austria is one of the leading railroad-building countries, hoping to join one of the projects being built in Israel now. The Ambassador wants to see Austrian firms buying Israeli companies, not just shares. Just as Austria has great success in Eastern Europe, with banking, company acquisition and serving as a contact point of East-West, so Austria could be successful in Israel. The trade relationship is unsatisfying in all aspects, including import/export, but is improving. FM Shalom asked the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs why there is a massive Israeli investment in Poland and Hungary, but no Israeli company investing in Austria. It is a complicated matter, partly because of only a small Austrian immigrant community in Israel. There are Austrian banking groups, which invest heavily in Eastern Europe and are used by Israelis for investments

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in Eastern European hotels, shopping malls, etc. Austria wants Israeli industry investment in Austria, and vice-versa, the only large-scale Austrian investment being a Hadera paper mill. Austria has mostly small and medium-size industries, most big industry in Austria is owned by foreigners. There are about 140 million Euro exports into Israel and 85 million Euros going there, but many Israeli imports into Austria cannot be traced, going via Rotterdam or Ljubljana, in the EU imports are counted by entrance country, so part of the Israeli imports to Austria are not tabulated. Israel is one of 12 countries chosen by the Austrian Ministry of the Economy as a goal for increased efforts and activities, especially because in Research and Development and high-tech Israel is unique in the world. Austria and Israel industries compete strongly, but are also complementary, as there is a two-way flow of Research and Development and high technology know-how.

Ambassador Hengl has been more involved as a diplomat in Israel, as compared to his former postings, where he felt more like simply an observer, like when he went to a Jerusalem hospital ward to visit two rooms of victims, hospital visits to terror victims being a duty. Or, as an EU representative, he made a wreath-laying visit to a terror attack site in Hadera recently, seeing terrorism's aftermath. He sees Israel as a bastion of the Western lifestyle, and cannot withdraw himself from the sorrows, fears and hopes of the Israelis, and empathizes with them. He maintains a good number of friendships with Israeli citizens of Austrian origin or roots, as well as with intellectuals, MKs, and the Establishment. He has long been a loyal member of the Israeli Philharmonic, and sat next to Ariel Sharon, then Minister of Defense, some 12 years ago.

He was Austrian Embassy Press Attache in Israel from 1971-74, then going on to postings in Caracas, Lisbon and back to Vienna. During the Waldheim Affair Israel-Austrian relations deteriorated and Dr. Hengl was posted as Charge d'Affaires in 1989 to begin reconciliation. The Ministry people said Israelis disliked Austrians over Waldheim, and he and the Embassy staff were getting a hostile Israeli reception. He is very proud of his achievement in restoring normal relations. He was appointed Ambassador 1992-94, during a great period of relations, with tremendous cultural exchanges. After, he became Ambassador to Mexico. He returned as Ambassador in 2002, his family loved returning, his

daughter adores it here. Coming back the second time, Israel had changed a lot, with the Russian immigration, intifada and other tremendous changes. He had convinced the PM of Austria to send him as Ambassador instead of Charge d'Affaires to heal relations broken by the Haider (extremist party) Affair. He was here during the Yom Kippur War, Gulf War, Iraq invasion, taking shelter in air-raid drills. During the Yom Kippur War they sent their children to Austria, but he stayed here with his wife, taking air-raid shelter. During the Gulf War they had their shelter in the residence, bringing Embassy staff, but he left the shelter, watching the incoming scuds with binoculars. These events created a strong tie of sympathy, which does not mean he agrees with all Israeli government, army or settler actions, but tries to understand better what lies behind the reasons.

EU-Israel positive links are constantly strengthening and on a separate track from the focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

His older daughter, Laurence, was in Israel in kindergarten, learning Hebrew and singing about the heroic Israeli soldiers during the Yom Kippur War period. Because she spoke Hebrew, she could help his wife go shopping. His son Hugo was born here, in 1973, and now lives in France. Urania, his younger daughter, was born in 1978 in Caracas, spending her young teenage years in Israel, which she loved. She attended the French School in Jaffa and was good friends with the Spanish Ambassador's daughter. His wife is French, so the children had always gone to a French lycée.

His wife Jacqueline is a member of the Diplomatic Spouses Organization, engaged in charitable work and events to help Jewish or Jewish-Arab charitable causes. Living in Herzliyya Pituach, they do not feel the danger of living in Israel, but sense it around. Jacqueline was recently at a one-week seminar in the Austrian Pilgrims' Hospice in Jerusalem and attends Conferences on Christianity and Judaism at the Dominican University in Jerusalem. She is very interested in Palestinian-Israeli relations, often goes to

Palestinian villages, trying to understand their problems, as well as those of Israelis, living under the threat of terror. The Ambassador loves history, archaeology, Crusader archaeology, exploring Biblical sites, diving, and visits Eilat frequently. He attends the Israel Philharmonic, Opera and Cameri Theatre. The Ambassador is a Catholic, member of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, which helps the Latin Patriarch assist the Catholics and Christians of the Holy Land.. After the Second Vatican Council he came to understand the deep roots of Christianity in Judaism. Cardinal Schonbrun of Vienna, gave a talk at Hebrew University saying that if Christians believe the Old Testament is part of their belief, then they believe, want to believe, and must believe that this land was given by God to the Jews. If they do not believe this, they are not really Christians.

All his family love Jerusalem, where he goes every week, especially the Old City. He believes Israelis should go up to Jerusalem more often, Europeans are more Jerusalemites. The Austrian Pilgrim's Hospice in the Center of the Old City, Jerusalem, is an Austrian government property in Israel. He feels there should be some arrangement by which the Jews, Christians and Muslims can feel the spiritual Jerusalem as belonging to all.

He wishes Israel a stable government, the confidence of the majority, and the advancement to a peaceful solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict. He has had warm, personal interactions with both PM Sharon and acting PM Olmert. The Ambassador stresses that the EU-Israel positive links are constantly strengthening and on a separate track from the focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the EU action plan they have initiated 10 sub-committees, dealing with measures, standards, patents, licenses, maritime safety, internal markets, links, Israel could be like another Switzerland for Europe, a small country, a high-tech country, highly motivated, a Western democracy. His ambitions are to have a successful EU Presidency, to exchange Prime Ministerial and Presidential visits. The tourism to Israel from Austria is increasing, Austrian Christian pilgrims being extremely important. He points out that when Austrians and other Europeans come to visit Israel, they see a by and large peaceful country. Ambassador Hengl, a veteran in Israel, has another momentous year ahead of him. ■

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KKL-JNF Launches Events to Combat Desertification Year

Ambassadors' Forest Dedicated in the Negev

Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael-Jewish National Fund will be a key player in two international events that are to be held in Israel during 2006, which the United Nations has declared to be "*International Year of Deserts and Desertification*." The first event will be an international conference on combating desertification, which will be held in November 2006 at Sede Boqer and will be co-funded by the United Nations. Immediately afterwards, KKL-JNF will host an international conference on forestation in arid regions.

The two events were announced by Foreign Minister **Silvan Shalom** and KKL-JNF World Chairman, **Yehiel Leket**, in the course of a tour organized by KKL-JNF and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for dozens of ambassadors and chargés d'affaires in Israel. The high point of the day was the impressive dedication ceremony of the Ambassadors' Forest north of Beersheva and the planting of trees, by the ambassadors themselves.

Representatives of fifty countries of those that maintain diplomatic relations with Israel responded positively to

KKL-JNF's invitation and the request from Chief of Protocol at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, **Yitzhak Eldan**, and came to gain an impression of several of KKL-JNF's leading projects in the Negev. The tour began with a visit to the Nitzan site, where several families evicted from the Gaza District are now living. At Nitzan, the diplomats were given a comprehensive explanation about the enormous investment in creating the infrastructures for the temporary locality, and about the timetable for establishing the permanent housing. KKL-JNF Western Negev Region director, **Elisha Mizrahi**, responded to the diplomats' questions and added information from his own experience about the difficulties in adapting, that the evacuees from Gush Qatif had undergone and also about their daily life in temporary conditions.

In the greenhouses of Moshav Mavqi'im, which borders on Ashkelon's southern industrial zone, the ambassadors learned what KKL-JNF had done to make vast areas ready for greenhouses to replace those left behind in the Gaza Strip. The diplomats met with **Ronit Ballaban**, one of the most prominent

figures among the evacuees seeking to continue a productive lifestyle. "I simply didn't believe my eyes when I saw KKL-JNF's heavy machinery moving onto this difficult, hilly terrain, full of thorns, rocks, and channels. Three weeks before the evacuation, the site was ready for greenhouses and saplings that we brought from the Gaza Strip. Were it not for KKL-JNF, I wouldn't be here talking to you." Throughout the greenhouses, between the rows of myrtle slated for export, members of Bnei Akiva youth movement – who are among the hundreds of daily volunteers who arrive, worked with great energy.

From Mavqi'im, the diplomats moved on to one of the most important and largest environmental and quality-of-life projects: the Nahal Beersheva Park. Anyone unfamiliar with the stream that flows through the city of Beersheva in its past neglect - is unaware of the scale of the investment involved in removing piles of garbage, scrap metal, and the ravages of sewage. Rehabilitating the stream, created beauty which is today is hard to reconcile with its previous state. A herd of camels grazing along the

riverbed provoked general enthusiasm and triggered the clicking of cameras of representatives of European and South American countries unused to such sights in city centers.

The Montreal Oasis Park: The Barbara and Stanley Plotnick Family Park was developed with the help of Friends of KKL-JNF Canada and is now nearing completion in the heart of a eucalyptus grove that was, until a year ago, a desolate dump. At the park, the ambassadors heard from the regional director, **Avinoam Allon**, about the plans for the park and its contribution to the quality of life for Beersheva residents and for the city's economy.

With regard to the campaign combating desertification, the picture was completed by **Dr. Allon Tal**, a member of the KKL-JNF Board, and one of the high-ranking scientists involved in pushing back the desert. *"More life is affected in the world today by the process of desertification than any other environmental problem. In 2050, it is expected that only a third of the world's population will live in rural areas and the rest will leave in urban centers. Therefore, what is being done in Beersheva is extremely important. Our goal is to create a locality that is not only of historic interest, but also a pleasant and comfortable to live, with environmental stability."*

"I'm amazed and moved by what we are seeing today," said Mexican Chargé D'affaires **Hugo Villanueva**, during lunch in Beersheva. *"For me, this tour is of paramount importance at this time, because next year, the World Forum on Water Problems will be convening in Mexico and it seems obvious to me that because of its great experience, it is essential for Israel and KKL-JNF to be represented on the forum. This importance derives from the uniqueness of Israeli research on the one hand and the great similarity in the nature of the problems encountered in Israel in Mexico and*

in other parts of the world. What is important to us in Mexico is not necessarily official diplomatic ties, but rather the possibility of finding good partners with whom to study and exchange knowledge. Israel is a good partner of this kind."

Uruguay ambassador **Alfredo Cazes Alvarez** has already been in Israel for eighteen months: *"I have come to know KKL-JNF when presidents and ambassadors of my country planted trees here during their visits. I have been very positively impressed by what I've seen today. I was unaware of the scale and importance of KKL-JNF's development and environmental work. The more I tour the Negev, the more I understand the importance of trees in this area, precisely because I come from a green country."*

Chargé D'affaires at the German Embassy, **Peter Fisher**, has been in Israel for five months and is serving as acting ambassador. *"It's my first serious experience of KKL-JNF. I have already visited several of the forests planted by KKL-JNF throughout Israel over the years, but it is only when you go on a tour of this kind that you get the understanding of the enormous operations that this organization undertakes, in order to paint this country green, when it has such a low rainfall. I am delighted with Israel's great awakening in the field of environmental preservation. In Germany, the issue is already deeply implanted in us and the population is used to paying for environmental protection, through our electricity bills, for example."*

A few kilometers north of Beersheva, a platform adorned with the flags of dozens of nations awaited the participants on the tour for Diplomats. Visible in the background were low dams along Nahal Karkur, where a few dozens trees had been planted, in anticipation of the thousands that will follow. Foreign Minister **Silvan**



Uruguay ambassador Alfredo Cazes Alvarez



Dr. Kurt Hengl



Dr. Allon Tal



Slovakian ambassador Milan Dubcek



Former Minister Silvan Shalom, KKL-JNF World Chairman Yehiel Leket and the group's deacon, Cameroon's Ambassador, Etuindi Onsombe

The Ambassadors at Nir Am Reservoir



the country. Thank you for allowing us to belong to this venture."

After the speeches and the reciting of the planter's prayer, the diplomats went - with no small measure of emotion - to plant the saplings. Slovakian ambassador **Milan Dubcek**, son of the Czechoslovakian leader Alexander Dubcek, was moved: *"When you actually go and see, it not only provokes praise, but also the impulse to help. After two years, I am still surprised by the amount of green here in Israel, and my wife was simply astounded when she landed here for the first time. Personally I can only express delight at what I have experienced today, for the additional reason that in the past I worked for the Ministry of Forestry and Water Management in Slovakia and the subject is of great importance to me."*

Swiss deputy head of mission, **Andrej Motyl**, said a few words about imagination and reality in Israel: *"I come from a very green country, and before I arrived, it was hard to imagine how people lived here. However, having in the past served in both Iran and Iraq, I had learned one thing: people who live in the desert or on the edge of the desert, know how to survive and know how to utilize nature much more than those who live in environmental comfort. I simply admire Israel and its residents."* ■

Shalom, himself from the city of Beersheva, joined the diplomats for the dedication ceremony of the Ambassadors' Forest, which will henceforth be a center for planting and visits for all diplomats serving in Israel: *"For us, Israel is the foundation of our existence, and we have invited representatives from foreign countries to plant the first trees of the forest here. There is no time like the present for planting our future. When you plant a seed in this country, you are forever part of us, part of our efforts to make this ancient country bloom and to push back the desert,"* said the Foreign Minister.

KKL-JNF World Chairman, **Yehiel Leket**, welcomed the guests. *"The forest expresses a wish for peace and solidarity among nations and that has also been the aspiration of the Jewish people for thousands of years. We hope that every ambassador who serves in Israel will honor us by*

adding a tree to the forest with his or her own hands. I invite you to come back and visit this place in five years' time, so you can see the area become green. We are proud to be the largest green organization in Israel and one of the leaders of the battle against desertification."

The group's deacon, Cameroon's Ambassador, **Etuindi Onsombe** emotionally expressed the sense of partnership felt by the ambassadors and their solidarity with the State of Israel, which welcomed them warmly. He too, identified with the central effort to fight desertification and to push back the desert. *"Today we have seen a colossal undertaking, designed to provide living areas for many Israelis in the future. We are happy to be modest partners in the venture by planting the Ambassador's Forest, and hope that the subject of forestation will continue to expand and to produce better living conditions both for citizens of Israel and for all who visit*

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AGENDA OF EVENTS



Tel Aviv Jazz Festival, Einav Center, Participation Franz Koglmann Trio, Tel Aviv, 16 February 2006

Presentation Ruth Steiner, presents her new book „What I still wanted to ask you... - A Christian in search of her Jewish Identity“ Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Ramat Chen, 21 - 26 February 2006

Rites Institute for the Study of Rites and Zeremonies, Foundation of a branch in Jerusalem, 22 February 2006

Exhibition "Muslims in Austria", Austrian Hospice, Jerusalem, Opening: 4 March 2006

Symposium "Liminal Spaces", Austrian artists Peter Friedel and Anna Meyer Kalandia Checkpoint between Jerusalem and Ramallah, Israeli Centre for Digital Art Holon10 - 12 March 2006

Festive Performance "Der Rosenkavalier" (Richard Strauss), costumes and setting by Gottfried Helnwein, New Israeli Opera, Tel Aviv, 17 March 2006

International Documentary Festival DocAviv, 1-3 Austrian movies, Cinematheque Tel Aviv, 30 March - 8 April

11th Yad Vashem Seminar for Austrian Teachers, education at memorial sights and places of remembrance, Austrian Ministry of Education, 30 March to 12 April 2006

Publication Encyclopaedia "Austrian Righteous amongst the Nations" (English), Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Yad Vashem, April 2006

Austrian Day, Ben Gurion University, Beer Sheva, April 2006

Gala Performance Mozart's "Magic Flute" New Israeli Opera, Tel Aviv, 24 May 2006

Israel Festival, Participation from "The New Austrian Sound of Music", May 2006

11th International Student Film Festival, Tel Aviv University, participation Austrian film students, Tel Aviv, 3 - 10 June

Equinox concert, Austrian/Finnish/Israeli artists, Tel Aviv Fete de la Musique, 21 June 2006

12th Yad Vashem Seminar for Austrian teachers, Pedagogic Academy Linz, Austrian Ministry of Education 14 - 27 July 2006

Festival for Independent Electronic Music and Critical Media Art, Austrian DJs und performance artists, Jerusalem, August 2006

Austrian Dance Days, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, August 2006

"100% Art Festival", performances and art by handicapped people, Austrian Art brut exhibition, Performing Arts Centre, Tel Aviv, September 2006

Akko Fringe Theatre Festival, Austrian participation, Akko, end of September

Robert Stolz Gala Concert, Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, Jerusalem, 27 October 2006

Visit youth representatives from Tyrol, partner: Municipality of Jerusalem, October 2006

Academic Symposium "50 years diplomatic relations" Centre for Austrian Studies, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, November 2006

Contemporary Music Festival, participation "Spirit of Europe Orchestra" from Austria, Tel Aviv Museum, November 2006

Photo exhibition "50 years diplomatic relations", Time-Life photographer David Rubinger, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, December 2006

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“Israel is the world’s best source for gorgeous photographic models, making it indeed a land of miracles.”

The speaker was the world-famous photographer Carmel Skutelsky, whom I interviewed recently at a diplomatic reception. I was surprised that someone so well-known

I was not surprised that what has made Skutelsky so famous is his expertise in photographing nude female models.

However, Carmel Skutelsky is a man of many contrasts. He considers himself to be a sensitive and artistic soul, and yet he has pursued his other profession of security services, saying that criminologists must also be experts in many things. It is better, he feels, not to have a connection between what one does basically for bread and butter, and the creation of art. In this way no one pressures the artist, and he can maintain his artistic vision without monetary “pollution.”

At age 14, Skutelsky started his studies in a renowned photography school in Riga, Latvia. He says he is not



Carmel Skutelsky

BY NEIL SANDLER



internationally, is a relative unknown in the photographic world in Israel..

susceptible to outside influences, and that the secret of his success is that he does not “run with the herd.” As a non-conformist, he has always done whatever he wishes. And he takes advantage of the tremendous variety of background landscapes within a 1 or 2 hour drive from Tel Aviv.

Most models whose pictures are displayed anywhere are satisfied. But some of Carmel Skutelsky’s models have become famous internationally. He has membership in A.FIAP and E. IPAS, and has participated in more than 400 exhibitions around the world.

His mother jokes that he is “beyond

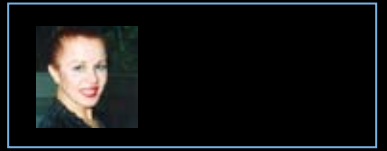
help” - obsessed with photographing beautiful women since the age of 14. He has won gold medals in Hungary, Japan, Czech Republic, and silver medals in Kodak International, and has had exhibitions in Prague, Riga and Seattle USA. He now feels “Israeli enough” and with a huge archive of negatives is ready for an exhibition. But the exhibition must be in Tel Aviv, not in any less prestigious venue.



Carmel Skutelsky also does extensive portrait work, loving the face as well as the body.

“If God exists, then beautiful women are the manifestation and proof of God’s existence on earth.”

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