



March - April 2005

WOMEN IN POWER POWER OF WOMEN

International Women's Day

MIDDLE EAST DIGEST

THE POLITICAL ADVANCE OF HAMAS

ACTIVITÉS DIPLOMATIQUES

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84 Hashmonaim St., Tel Aviv
P.O.Box 344, Givataim, 53102, Israel

708 Third Avenue, 24th Floor
New York, NY 10017, U.S.A.

Club Diplomatique de Geneva
P.O.Box 228, Geneva, Switzerland

Publisher The Diplomatic Club Ltd

General Manager Julia Vedel

Writers Barry Rubin
Anthony J. Dennis
Patricia de Hemricourt, Israel
Ira Moskowitz, Israel
Bernard Marks, Israel
Christopher Barder, UK
Ilan Berman, USA

Reporter Daniella Zilberberg

Advertising "Mimush projects"
Tel: 03-516.70.63
Fax: 03-516.70.64
bsisi@zahav.net.il

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Dear friends,

We are continuing to update and inform you of the social and diplomatic activities taking place during the year 2005 and anticipate your participation in the diplomatic events to come.

Furthermore, the Ball Room Dancing Studio is up and running, and has shown promising attendance during its first few months. We extend an invitation to everyone who is interested in learning and await your presence.

Moreover, those who are interested in playing unprofessional golf are invited to join the social golf tournaments held for recreation and social interaction.

Hoping the rest of the year continues to be prosperous and peaceful.

*Julia Vedel, General Manger,
and the Editorial Team*

THE POLITICAL ADVANCE OF HAMAS

An opinion by Jonathan Spyer



Significant gains in the last six months by the Hamas movement have raised the possibility of Islamist domination of the Palestinian national movement.

Hamas's growing popularity became apparent in the Palestinian municipal elections, held a short time after the death of Yasir Arafat. The West Bank municipal poll, which took place on December 23, 2004, saw the Islamist movement gaining control of around 9 out of 26 contested councils (since many candidates stood as independents, it is difficult to ascertain with precise accuracy the political balance of power in some municipalities). But it was the results of the Gaza municipal elections, held on January 27, 2005, which may be seen as the real electoral breakthrough for the Islamist movement, and which made its participation in the July PLC elections a near-certainty. Hamas trounced Fatah in these polls, gaining outright control of 7 out of 10 contested municipalities, and winning 75 of the 118 seats.

The results were seen as reflecting a Palestinian perception of the Hamas candidates as possessing greater personal integrity than those of Fatah.

Hamas, and the Muslim Brotherhood movement from which it emerged, have a long standing reputation as providers of social welfare for the population. By contrast, Fatah is widely perceived as corrupt, and its representatives as mainly concerned with personal ambition and enrichment. The strong showing led directly to the Hamas decision, announced on March 12, to participate in parliamentary elections in July. A second series of municipal elections is due to take place on April 28, and once again Hamas is expected to perform well.

In the meantime, buoyed by their successes, Hamas leaders have announced in principle their willingness to join the Fatah-dominated PLO. The PLO remains the body responsible for developing the overall strategy of Palestinian nationalism and for taking historic decisions affecting the Palestinians. Thus, if Hamas aspires to the leadership of Palestinian nationalism, entrance to this body at

some point is essential. In the past, however, Hamas preferred to raise impossible conditions as a response to invitations to join. This is now changing, as the movement begins to see the Palestinian leadership as a realistic goal.

Hamas's social activities and the perceived integrity of its candidates are not the only factors underlying its increased popularity. Polls indicate that a large majority of Palestinians believe that Israel's imminent unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank is a result of Palestinian terror activity. In this regard, the Hamas is the movement most credibly able to take credit for this.

There are no indications that Hamas has altered its fundamental commitment - as outlined in its covenant, for the destruction of Israel and its replacement by a single Islamic Waqf throughout the country. Rather, increased Hamas influence is likely to mean a hardening of Palestinian positions, not only in terms of a distant future goal, but also in terms of immediate stances taken. As prominent official Mahmoud al-Zahar put it recently, *"I can tell you that one of the main reasons for joining the PLO is to prevent it from conceding to Israel on paramount national issues."* He went on *"What is happening now... and what will go on for many years to come, is not a real political process. It is actually no more than public relations and crisis management; the Americans know it, the Zionists know it and even the PA knows it."*

Hamas is making the move to enhanced political activity for a number of reasons: to take advantage of its high level of grassroots support, in an international context of commitment to the growth of political processes in the Arab world. Also as a result of the difficulties of further terror activity, due to the successful Israeli campaign to disrupt the terrorist infrastructures of the movement and Palestinian fears

of Israeli reprisals for acts of terror. The movement is engaged in an international campaign to build up perceptions of its legitimacy. It hopes, particularly, to see its name removed from the EU list of terror organisations.

role for the movement greatly reduces chances of a permanent status accord between Israelis and Palestinians. At the same time, the movement's undoubted popularity, and high degree of legitimacy among broad sections



Sheikh Yassin's death did not weaken support for Hamas

Polls indicate that a large majority of Palestinians believe that Israel's imminent unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank is a result of Palestinian terror activity

Both the immediate strategy of Hamas - to prevent Palestinian concessions on such issues as the refugees, Jerusalem and recognition of Israel - and its long term goals, of an openly political nature, mean that an enhanced political

of the Palestinian public, represent Palestinian Islamism's 'coming of age.' Hamas is now de facto the 'official opposition' in Palestinian politics. The advance of Islamism as a result of the growth of a more representative politics in the Arab world reflects experience elsewhere. The contradiction between the movement's political ambitions, its ultra-hardline strategic goals and its determine to maintain an independent paramilitary capability is now one of the key questions facing Palestinian politics, and the broader diplomatic process.

Jonathan Spyer works as a researcher for the Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center

<http://gloria.idc.ac.il>

TEL-AVIV, ISRAEL, 9 MARCH 2005

Rachel Mayanja, Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women

“ On this International Women’s Day I invite you to imagine a world where power will be used to include, to lift up, to connect, to negotiate and seek solutions to build networks and to work together. Imagine a world where women would be empowered to take their rightful place beside men.

This new world calls for new types of leaders and a new political culture, and women are key to this.

I strongly believe that the future of this new world belongs to women. The power of the woman is that she has these innate capabilities to be the carrier of this new world as she gives life, raises children, cares for their future, heals, nurtures, communicates and cares. She builds bridges between communities and links across national, ethnic and religious divides. Women hold this new world in their history of being discriminated against, subjected to violence and social exclusion.

I am glad to see this new vision and new values taking root every day more firmly in the world, including in the Middle East. The trends for peace, development, democratization and gender equality are going hand in hand even in those countries where it would have been impossible a few years ago. Increasingly, women’s rights and well being are on the agendas of both governments and national parliaments.

We see a steady but slow growth in women’s representation in parliaments which now stands at 15.7 per cent worldwide. More countries are using quota systems in order to give women a necessary push towards political empowerment. Women’s political empowerment in the context of conflict prevention and peace-building is recognized as essential.

But the old world is not likely to go away by itself.

It is thus vital that the women join forces with likeminded men across religious and ethnic divides to make this new world happen, promote dialogue and understanding and protect human dignity. They must be vigilant against all ideologies based on hatred and exclusion, whenever and wherever they may appear.

The challenge is formidable but I am convinced that these women and men will succeed.

Israeli women who gave the world the first woman Prime Minister, Mrs. Golda Meir are rightly proud of their achievements. The national report of Israel on the status of women to Beijing+10, prepared by the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women demonstrates that in the past ten years much progress has been made. Yet, as in many other countries a lot remains to be done.

I would like to congratulate Israeli women on their achievements and call on you to continue with your activism and commitment to peace, development and gender equality.

In this fight, we cannot afford to fail as the future of our children, our communities and our nations is at stake.

My best wishes of success and happiness to all of you.



PROGRAMME

17:00 – 18:00 **Cocktail and Reception**

18:00 – 18:30 **Opening:**

Ms. Dorothy Awani - Businesswoman of the Year 2003 and 2004 of The State of Florida, USA. Member of the National Republican Congressional Committee Business Advisory Council.

Greetings: Ms. Rachel Mayanja, Assistant Secretary-general, Special Adviser on Gender Issues, Advancement of Women, OSAGI/DES, United Nations

18:30 – 19:30 **Lectures**

Scenes from the film : "Stage Beauty" Directed by Richard Eyre
Comments. Dr. Sylvie Fogiel-Bijaoui - Senior Lecturer in Political Sociology, Beit-Berl Academy and the New School of the Media Studies, Academic College of Management

Diplomatic Panel:

- Her Excellency Ms. Sally Bendersky - Ambassador of Chile to Israel
- Her Excellency Ms. Valeria Mariana Stoica - Ambassador of Romania to Israel

Women in Economy & Banking: (Tele-bridge)

Ms. Nancy Barry, CEO - Women’s World Bank, USA
Women in Politic
Ms. Jill Sinclair, Canada - Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

19:30 - 19:45 **Coffee Break**

19:45 – 21:00 **Lectures**

Arab Women in Public Life - Panel:

Ms. Zahira Kamil , Chairperson - The Organization for Palestinian Women in the Palestinian Authority.

Ms. Tali Dowek - Building Business Bridges Director, Center for Jewish Arab Economic Development

Women in Law

Ms. Margaret Curran - Minister for Parliamentary Business, UK requested to participate in a live telephone online questions and answers session on Reducing Crime, Counter Part to Israeli Supreme Court Justice Edna Arbel

Women in the Family

Ms. Judy Nir-Mozes Shalom - Wife of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Silvan Shalom, Israel

Women in Industry

Ms. Elaine Cohen - Director of Human Resources, Unilever, Israel

21:00 - 21:30 **Coffee Break**

21:30 -22:00 Performance - Bat - Dor dancing Group

22:00 -22:30 Price draw - Air ticket Europe - US, spa and more



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WOMEN IN POWER POWER OF WOMEN

International Women's Day

As accustomed to the growing tradition, The Diplomatic Club hosted this year's international woman's day on Wednesday, March 9, at the prestigious David Inter Continental hotel. The world renowned event, celebrated across the boundaries of culture and continent, has since 1908 brought together woman from diverse social, politically oriented and racial backgrounds in celebration of their fundamental strength and success, fusing an assortment of occupations, ideologies and social status.

Hovering over the entrance to the hall and encompassing the underlying theme of the evening, hung this year's title "*Woman in power, Power of woman*", which essentially says it all. And in congruence with the raised expectations the exclamation indeed suited the atmosphere.

After passing through the empowering threshold the guests were received by a deliciously elegant cocktail catering, and while waiters circulated trays of temptation, the amiable atmosphere enabled the participants to enjoy the informal part of the evening and set the mood for social mingling and friendly discourse, preceding the official address of some of the most important issues discussed today. As the guests satisfied their palates with a vast array of nibbles, the graceful dancers from Bat Dor Dance Company paraded tranquilly, pecking and lightening the atmosphere with their delightful outfits and poise.

Yehudit Plotnik, the Director of The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Woman, of the Prime Minister's Office was the governmental representative to attend, while diplomats and ambassadors, businesswomen,



politicians, researchers in the social and economical field came to celebrate the significant occasion. However despite the abundance of estrogen, the distinguished women were not alone in acknowledging the event and many men joined the board of supporters. As clarified by the first speaker, Ms. Yael Dayan feminism is not female limited, but rather a social stance advocated by both men and women.

Julia Verdel, the general manager of The Diplomatic Club Israel, initiated the official segment of the evening by welcoming the prominent guests and introducing the first speaker, the deputy to the Mayor of Tel Aviv-Jaffa. Ms. Yael Dayan drew the connection between feminism and equality, a union which is split in our country due to the lack of separation between state and religion. Such a difficult a situation serves as a central source for the lack of woman's rights in Israel. Moreover, her emphasis was based on the two inextricably linked priorities of feminism, peace and equality. Thus we need to concentrate our efforts on achieving peace, by withdrawing from

the occupied territories, and by so doing, achieve cross-boundary racial and gender equality.

Following Ms. Dayan's encouraging and optimistic words Julia returned to introduce the first performer of the evening's entertainment section, this year's Israeli representative at the Eurovision, Shiri Maymon. Shiri mounted the stage with a company of her very own Charlie's Angels trio, to accompany her vocal virtuosity and sang "The silence that remains", which will represent Israel at the Eurovision 2005. Subsequently, Ms. Dorothy Avni, Businesswoman of the year 2003 and 2004 in the state of Florida, read the message received by Coffi Anan, Secretary General of the United Nations (which can be accessed via the UN website) and a message from Ms. Rachel Mayanja, Assistant secretary-general, special advisor on Gender issues. Ms. Mayanja discussed the importance of likeminded men and women to unite in order to promote dialogue and understanding and most importantly to protect human dignity. The formidable challenge of creating a new world in which women and men are equal is a task not to be taken lightly, however she encouraged the advancements made in the political and social arena both in Israel specifically and in the rest of world, and urged for the continuation of activism and the commitment to peace and equality in the Middle East.

Garnished with coffee and cakes the guests returned to Dr. Sylvie Fogiel-Bijaoui, Senior Lecturer in Political Sociology Beit Berl, who screened a scene from the film "Something's Gotta Give". The quality of the screening sadly didn't match up to the content,

however it was easily forgotten as it continued, for the scene encapsulated one of the event's focus points in a conversation. Strong and successful woman unjustifiably suffer at the hand of social discrimination despite the fact that common expectations are breached by progressive social norms. Although they are self sufficient and model citizens, woman's social status remains substantially different from an equally accomplished man, both in salary and attitude. Dr. Fogiel-Bijaoui's interest didn't lie however in the obvious analysis, but rather in the ability woman have in actually discussing such issues openly. The feministic revolution, headed by women who managed to penetrate political cores, gradually dissolved dialogue taboos surrounding the delicate subject of equality between the sexes and symbolically lead to a situation where women are able to be both politically and astronomically active and vocal. In Israel the social norm shift began before the establishment of the state 1917-1947, and was reinforced and profoundly embedded further in common social conduct in the 70's, bringing women into prominent political positions.

A telephone link was established with Nancy Barry, president of Woman's World Banking. WWB is a global nonprofit organization that forefronts microfinance amongst poor women, and works to improve women's economic involvement and understanding. Despite Ms. Barry's absence she extended support and encouragement to the active participants and stated that the joint work of Israeli and Palestinian woman is the world's bridge to the future.



A cultural leap was taken as Her Excellency Ms. Sally Bendersky,

Ambassador of Chile to Israel, and spoke of the political development of the Chilean woman. Despite Chile being one of the world's most conservative countries, there are presently two presidential pre candidates that are woman, one of which, according to surveys, will probably be the next Chilean president. This development amongst Chilean woman in the political arena presents a manifestation of a profound cultural change and projects hope for a future of equality and respect.



Both Her Excellency Ms. Valerina Marian Stoica, ambassador of Romania to Israel, and

Ms. Jill Sinclair, Canada's special coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process gave interesting accounts of the changes in their countries, adding to the global overview of feministic development.

An insightful outline of women's political status in the Palestinian territories was provided by Ms. Nimala Kurdich, from the advisory council of the Palestinian media. Ms. Kurdich discussed the issues concerning the fact that educated woman should be more powerfully involved in active political leadership. In this upcoming era of change and transition in Palestine, women should not only be involved they should be at the forefront of leadership. Ms. Kurdich further stressed the need for funding for two major programs now being run by the PMDI (Palestinian media development institute), both of which focus on equipping the new leaders with the necessary tools for executing their vital jobs, thus improving the prospects of a successful evolution into the future of their new state.



Similarly Dr. Khuloud Khayyat Dajani, Ass professor in social medicine and health policy, strengthened Ms. Kurdich's words imploring the need for woman to be more politically and socially involved by having more access to the developing labor force and capital. Typically woman are excellent mediators, they are determined and educated, thus the role women play, both in the society and the political field, should be as active and substantial as their role in the family, generating a shift form the traditional image of Palestinian women to a productive and active agent. When such woman from the Israeli and the Palestinian sides work together a path towards peace for the future generations can finally be paved.

Tali Dowek, Building Bridges Director from the centre for Jewish Arab Economic Development, brought to light the growing achievements of Israeli Arab woman, many of which are supported, educated and eventually funded by the CJAED. However the raw figures and success stories weren't as expressive as the two individual tales of her two guest speakers. The already established and well-known business woman Ms. Rogette Hinawi, and representing the younger generation was Ms. Angelique Abboud: a graduate form the Building Business Bridges MBA program at Technion's Israel institute of technology.



Tackling yet another aspect feminism is transforming was Ms. Elaine Cohen, Director of Human Resources, Unilever Israel, who focused on what she defined as “real women”. The media is a provocative and shaping form of communication, often used to advertise a standard of conception regarding an ideal state of being in order to achieve happiness and success. However the average woman doesn’t measure up to the unrealistic image and therefore doesn’t identify. Unilever has thus taken on a marketing strategy that focuses on the “real woman”, who proves to be more inspiring than the glossy magazine images. This campaign proved to be one of the most successful they’ve ever done, a reinforcement to the notion that real women motivate other women to achieve their full potential and inner beauty.

The core idea that woman and men should work together, under an umbrella notion of peace and equality echoed in all the speakers’ speeches and transcended nationality, gender and class. An idea which manifested eclectically in a culminating performance by the marvelous Bat Dor Dance Company, a reminder that nothing can limit us, if there is a passion to succeed. And if I was witness to one thing that evening, such a passion was it.

On a different note, the air tickets advertised as the draw prize at the evening’s end, were withheld by American Airlines, an official sponsor of the event. Charges are being raised against them as they did not abide to the terms of agreement initially concluded with The Diplomatic Club. Apologies are extended for misleading the participants.

SHIRI MAIMON



SHIRI MAIMON was born in Haifa, and grew up in the neighboring town of Kiriyat Haim. In 1991, aged ten, Shiri had her first “professional” appearance on stage singing a popular song during that period in the annual children’s “Festigal”.

During her school years she was a member of Haifa’s youth group, appearing at a variety of different functions. While simultaneously, Shiri worked on developing her stage presence, developing her artistic and musical skills by taking up both guitar and keyboard lessons as well as jazz dancing.

In 2000 Shiri was called up for her mandatory National Service, and was recruited to the Air Force Entertainment Group, which traveled the length and breadth of the country entertaining the troops.

After her release from the army and spending a year gaining confidence and experience as an entertainer in a hotel in Eilat, Shiri auditioned in 2003 for “A Star Is Born”, Israel’s version of “Pop Idol”. After making it to the final level of the contest Shiri was voted into 2nd place and subsequently gained tremendous public popularity. Furthermore, she was one of the few artists to be signed to a recording contract with Helicon Records.

After Shiri’s tremendous talent was discovered and exhibited in the contest and television show “A Star Is Born”, Shiri was invited to join the team of presenters at “Exit”, a daily television show in which she interviews people and discusses subjects of interest to youth.

Moreover, Shiri participated in a lead role singing and acting in the children’s musical “Mamamia”.

She is currently working on her first album scheduled for release in the summer and will be representing Israel in the Eurovision 2005 song contest with her song “The Silence That Remains”.

BAT DOR DANCE GROUP

The Bat Dor Dance Company was founded in 1968 by the support of a

new immigrant, Baroness Batsheva de Rothschild, who brought along an interest in dance and a desire to contribute to the developing cultural life in Israel. Her right hand woman in the project was Jeannette Ordman, who she considered to be the one to tap into her vision and materialize her ideas. The consequence of this union was what now ranks amongst the best dance companies in the world: The Bat Dor Studios of Dance. The school focused on absorbing both dancers who had graduated from dance school and those who had not yet found a home for their talent and desire, and provided training in a vast array of dance techniques and styles and on highly professional levels. Therefore the dancers could vigorously respond to some of the world’s leading choreographers spanning ethnical and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, the Bat Dor Company has for the past 20 odd years encouraged and inspired Israeli choreographers to continue their work both in Israel and abroad and has been privileged to be the home for some of the leading choreographers in the world. Moreover, Bat Dor has established itself both in Israel and in highly acclaimed tours abroad as a company that could offer excitement and perfection in their performances. Therefore the Bat Dor Dance company has been able to hand pick leading dancers, many of which arrived in the 1992 Russian immigrant wave, and with Ordman’s guidance they have adjusted to the west modernism and dance methods. Furthermore, Bat Dor has invested significant resources in the training of highly talented immigrants, and frequently grants scholarships to the most promising performers. As the company expanded Bat Dor became a commended producer of talents and professions relating to performance arts. Musicians, directors, designers and physiotherapist were all educated and nurtured in the company’s womb, thus has birthed a generation in which the top professionals both in Israel and abroad have at one time received training at Bat Dor.

Music at the museum:

the 11th Arthur Rubinstein piano master competition

In

accordance with previous years the 11th Arthur Rubenstein international piano master competition was held at the Tel Aviv museum of Art, between March 28th and April 13th 2005.

Created by Jan J. Bistritzky in honor and in memory of the remarkable composer, the competition was inaugurated in 1973 and is held triennially.

The contest is committed to attaining a valid international forum where exceptional young talents have stage both to perform and demonstrate emotional and presentational maturity in their interpretations ranging from the pre-classical to the contemporary compositions.

Stage one consisted of 36 competitors and gradually the judges narrowed it down to 6 semi finalists, performing a chamber music stage and an orchestral stage, and finally the ultimate 3 finalists.

This years prize winners were 21 year old, Ukrainian born Alexander Gaurylyut who plucked the gold medal with Tchaikausky's piano Concerto no.1. Gaurylyuk has been living in Sydney since 1998 with his teacher and fellow students, and established the reputation during the competition for one who's at home within the music.



Second place was taken by Russian born Igor Levit, playing Brahms Concerto No. 1. Levit, now resides with his family in Germany and studies advanced music in Hanover. Korean Yeol Eum Son took third place with Rachmaninoff's Third concerto.

Similarly to previous years, the competitors were required to play an obligatory piece by an Israeli contemporary composer. This year the committee commissioned a piece from Josef Bardanashvilli, who composed "Fantasia". Born in 1948, Batumi Georgia, Bardanashvilli began his musical career at age 13 playing the trumpet. However since then he has established himself as a world renowned

composer, teacher and musician, composing for orchestras, theatre, films and his favorite, classical music. In 1995 he left Georgia and came to reside in close proximity to his beloved sea in Bat Yam, Israel. Bardanashvilli, despite the short period of time he's been here knows a perfect Hebrew, although he speaks fluently the universal language of music. He has tremendous faith in the increasing awareness of culture and music in Israel, comparing the development of the country to that of a human.

"When we are teenagers we all love The Beatles, Rock and Jazz music, music which strikes your nerves and superficial senses. However as we grow older we learn to appreciate the profound and philosophical textures classical music has to offer."



He believes "Israel is still growing up, but she will soon get there, it's just a matter of time. And once she does, undoubtedly

international

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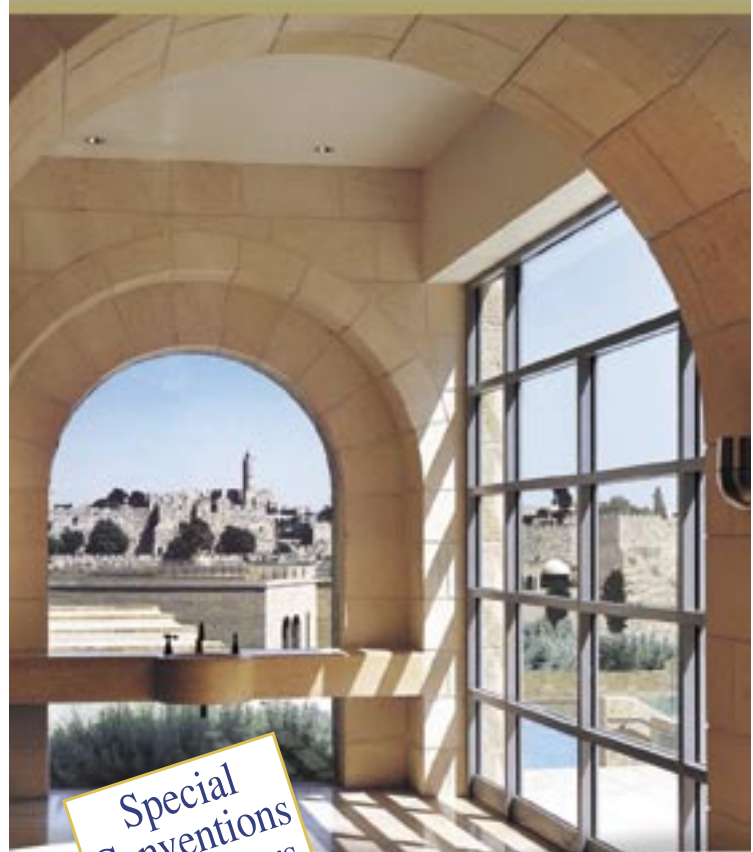
the music produced here will be globally appreciated."

Bardanashvili enjoyed listening to the young interpretations of his composition, combining influential touches ranging from Chopin and Bach to Jazz and even Tango, and is thrilled that the best players were those to eventually win. Furthermore, he encourages everyone to stop reading about culture in the newspapers, as there is no experience in that form of education and implores readers to become cultural attendees.

On that note, may the two genres support each other in creating a flourishing musical and cultural awareness in this adolescent country and hopefully soon we too will be of a ripe age.



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The chamber of commerce association launches the new house of commerce



Linn: The house is the home for the entire Israeli business sector which believes in a free market.

The chamber of commerce inaugurated yesterday her new dwelling at Hashmonaim street 84 (business address) for the first time since laying the foundations for the house of commerce in October 1956.

The repairs, which proceeded over 8 months, entirely renew the external façade of the building and project a fresh new spirit on the neighboring business environment, in one of the most highly developed and flourishing areas of center Tel Aviv.

The respectable rabbi Israel Lau (in the picture) honored the participants by placing the mezuzah, just several hours subsequent to his assignment as the head rabbi of Tel Aviv municipality.



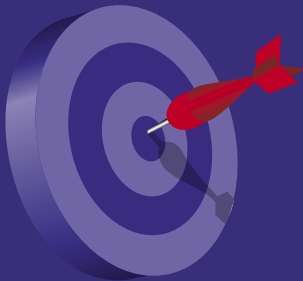
Amongst the participants : Ohad Marani, Arie Zayef, Amir Shani, Soli Sakal, M.K Maly Polishok, Izaak Istrick, Ruben Shlissel, Yosi Viliger, Eti Videbski and others.

According to Oriel Linn, president of the chamber of commerce association, "the repairs took place simultaneously and complimented the strategic shift the chamber has made over the last two years, recruiting over 1000 new members to join the currently existing associates. We've emphasized the improvement of quality and the expansion of variety of service offered to members." Furthermore: "we aspire to reach a state where the house for the chamber of commerce in Tel Aviv becomes a home for the entire Israeli business sector which believes in a free market."

The executing architect: Moshe Shtertser,
"Moshe Shtertser architecture and interior design"
The executing contractor: Eli Yanoshebsky.

For further details please contact the information department at 03-5631036


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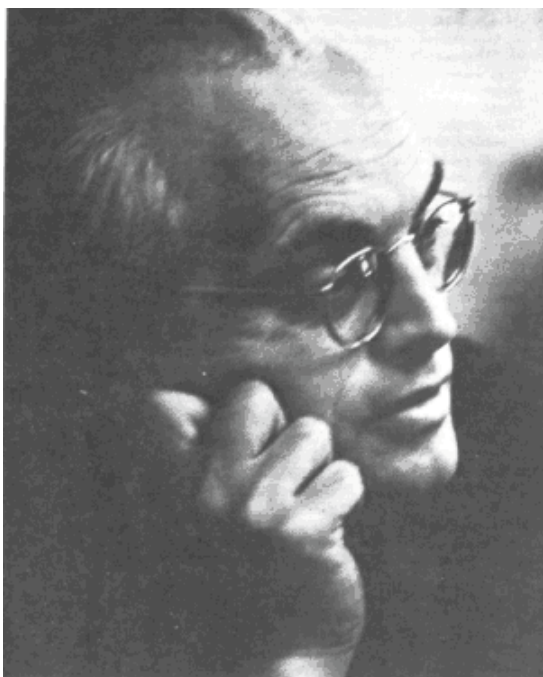
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Participation Form



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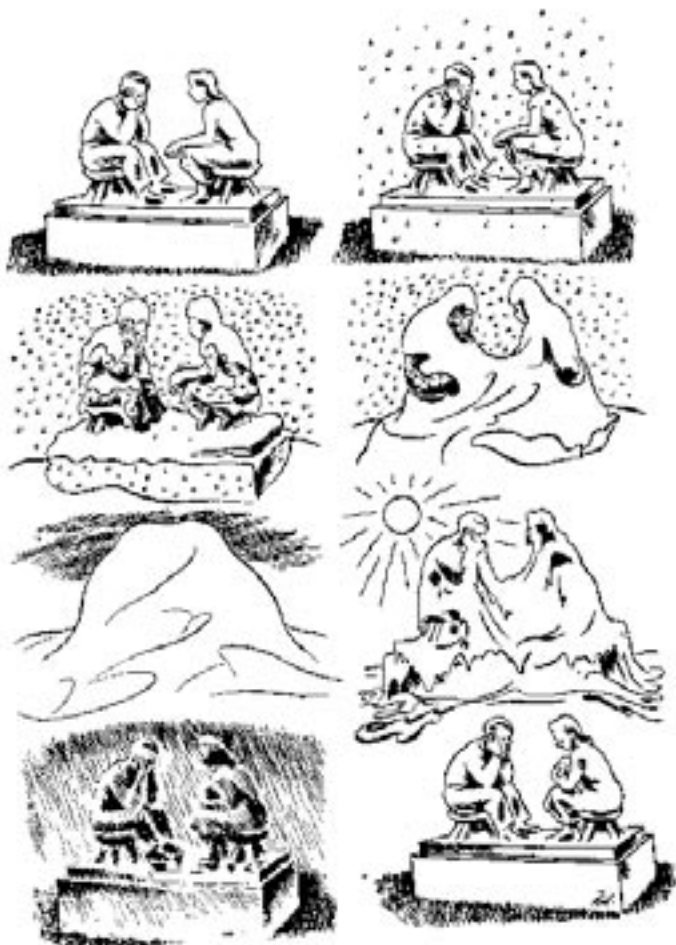
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