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81st Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S. denies Israeli appeal

The U.S. State Department rejected an Israeli appeal not to go public with American proposals to revive the Middle East peace process.

Martin Indyk, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, conveyed the message to one of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's top advisers, Uzi Arad, during meetings in Washington, according to sources. Israeli Trade Minister Natan Sharansky heard the same message from other U.S. officials.

Netanyahu, meanwhile, told reporters that "only Israel" could decide what its security needs are — implying that the Clinton administration should not force any proposals on the Jewish state.

White House seeks increased aid

The Clinton administration proposed increasing U.S. aid to the Palestinians to \$100 million — an increase of \$25 million. Palestinian officials said they would spend the additional money to help pay for a Bethlehem 2000 celebration.

Republican members of Congress have vowed to block the move later this year when next year's foreign aid bill comes up for consideration in Congress.

Clinton rejects Pollard release

The White House rejected an appeal by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations to release Jonathan Pollard from jail.

Charles Ruff, counsel to the president, recounted a 1996 decision by the president that "based upon all the information before him, the president decided that the extraordinary remedy of executive clemency should not be used in this case."

In his own letter to the Conference of Presidents, Pollard, who is serving a life sentence for spying on the U.S. for Israel, called on the umbrella group to "immediately protest as disrespectful and unacceptable the government's use of a form letter response."

Gore to address conference

U.S. Vice President Al Gore is among the featured speakers slated for the annual Young Leadership Conference of the United Jewish Appeal.

The conference, set to begin Sunday in Washington, is expected to draw some 3,000 Jewish activists from around the country. The theme of this year's conference is "From Passion to Action."

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Poland tries to make amends for 1968 actions against Jews

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — When Lena Stanley-Clamp was 18 years old, she was denied entrance to university.

Her father, a civil engineer in Poland, was fired from his job without explanation. Within a few months, her entire family was stripped of its Polish citizenship and forced to leave the country.

They were just a few of the 20,000 Polish Jews forced to emigrate as a result of a vicious anti-Semitic campaign launched by Poland's Communist regime in March 1968.

"It was very painful," recalls Stanley-Clamp, who fled with her family first to Vienna and then to Belgium. She now lives in England.

"I had a totally secular upbringing, and we felt quite assimilated — more Polish than Jewish. Then to be confronted by this persecution. We had to give up our citizenship while we were still in Poland, and were given special travel documents in order to leave."

Polish authorities are now trying to make amends for the 1968 persecutions. The Polish government has announced it will restore Polish citizenship to Jews driven out in 1968 to those individuals who request it.

Within a week of this announcement a dozen or so applications came in, but it was unclear how many Jews would — or could — take advantage of the offer. Some countries where Polish Jews settled in 1968 do not allow dual citizenship.

For her part, Stanley-Clamp, who now lives in England, said she would not apply for citizenship.

"But this does not mean I do not care," she added. "In fact, I feel that since it was taken away illegally, it should be automatically restored."

Official state ceremonies, as well as Jewish-organized events, are being held to commemorate what are referred to in Poland simply as the "March events." Jews who fled in 1968 have been invited back to reunions in Poland and in Sweden — where many of the refugees found haven.

A plaque with an inscription commemorating "those who traveled out of Poland after March 1968 with one-way travel documents" has been unveiled at the Warsaw train station from which many refugees departed.

"We remember, and we are ashamed," President Aleksander Kwasniewski, himself an ex-Communist, said at a ceremony earlier this month.

"It is not they who abandoned Poland. Poland abandoned them."

"Today one thing must be said clearly: March 1968 was a shameful page in Polish history," Kwasniewski said.

Other symbolic events are taking place as Poles continue to try to define their post-Communist relations with Jews.

Hundreds of Poles protested Sunday the removal of a 26-foot-high cross that had stood near Auschwitz, which many Jews had said was offensive.

About 300,000 Polish Jews survived the Holocaust out of a prewar Jewish population of more than 3 million. Most survivors left in the late 1940s in the wake of postwar anti-Semitic violence.

But most of this year's focus has been on the tragic events of 30 years ago. The Jews driven out of Poland in 1968 were those who, after surviving the Holocaust in hiding, in concentration camps or in exile in the Soviet Union, chose to construct new

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel seeks Syrian support

Israel sent feelers to Damascus in recent days indicating that if Syria gives Lebanon the go-ahead to cooperate with Israel on a withdrawal of the Jewish state's troops from southern Lebanon, Israel would view this as a confidence-building measure for the Israeli-Syrian peace track, according to the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv*.

Meanwhile, the Lebanese foreign minister, Faris Bouez, was quoted as saying that the Lebanese government would assume security responsibilities for southern Lebanon once Israel withdrew its troops.

Rabbi killed in Mexico City

An Israeli rabbi was reported killed in Mexico City after being stabbed repeatedly.

Hassan Avraham, 48, of Bnei Brak, was in the Mexican capital on a fund-raising visit, according to Mexican officials.

The motive for the attack was apparently robbery, an official with the Israeli Embassy said, citing initial police findings.

Clinton, Hussein meet

President Clinton and Jordan's King Hussein discussed the Middle East peace process during a meeting at the White House.

Hussein also met with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and other senior U.S. officials to discuss a U.S. initiative aimed at reviving the deadlocked Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

Israel seeks property returned

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called on the Austrian chancellor to seek the return of property seized from Austrian Jews by the Nazis.

During his two-day visit to Israel, Viktor Klima said Austrians should acknowledge their share of responsibility for the Holocaust and promised to seek a solution to the property issue.

lives in Communist Poland. Professionals and intellectuals, they comprised much of Poland's elite.

Anti-Jewish sentiment started becoming part of official Polish Communist policy after the Six-Day War in 1967, when most Communist states broke relations with Israel. The situation exploded on March 8, 1968, when a Communist-inspired mob in Warsaw attacked anti-government student demonstrators.

The Polish government branded student demonstrators and their supporters "Zionist elements" who were mounting an "open attack" on the state.

Over the next few months, Jews were scapegoated as part of a power struggle within the Communist Party and a broader campaign against dissident intellectuals by a nationalist, Communist faction.

Amid an anti-Semitic propaganda campaign, thousands of Jews were purged from their jobs.

Stanley-Clamp, who today works for the Institute for Jewish Policy Research in London, says the experience was an emotional and physical watershed for her.

"Out of this negative and painful experience came good in the end," she said in an interview.

"It helped me, once in the West, find my Jewish identity. I still feel affinity to Polish culture, but after going from Poland to Belgium to England, I realize that one needs portable roots, and that the Jewish identity is stronger."

For the Jews who stayed in Poland, it was a turning point as well.

Some of the current leaders of the Polish Jewish community, which has seen a revival since the fall of communism, also trace their interest in Judaism and their desire to claim their Jewish identity from the sudden persecution they faced in 1968.

Jerzy Kichler, who was a student in 1968, now heads the association of Jewish religious congregations in the country. "In a way my world collapsed," he told a Polish interviewer. "Jewish existence is social. It is hard to be a Jew alone." □

European rabbis praise Vatican's Holocaust paper

By Richard Allen Greene

PRAGUE (JTA) — European rabbis have cautiously praised the Vatican's document of repentance for the Catholic Church's actions during the Holocaust.

The positive response by a committee representing the European Conference of Rabbis distances them from the many Jewish leaders in America and Israel who were critical of the Church's failure in the document released this week to condemn the wartime pope, Pius XII, by name.

"We recognize that they can't do that," said Rabbi Moshe Rose, director of the conference.

"While we must express our disappointment that the Vatican did not accept responsibility for the centuries of persecution of the Jewish people, we recognize the significance of this declaration as a first step in the right direction," said an official statement issued at the end of three days of meetings in the Czech capital.

"What the pope said is good, but it is only a beginning," said Rabbi Alain Goldmann, chief rabbi of Paris.

Rabbi Joseph Sitruk, chief rabbi of France, and Rabbi Ya'akov Dov Bleich, chief rabbi of Ukraine, echoed American Jewish leaders when they called for the Vatican to open its archives as a step toward Jewish-Catholic understanding.

The committee voted to bring the Vatican statement up for discussion at the May session of the full Conference of Rabbis.

Meanwhile, Rose also said that Reform and Conservative Jews hoping to increase religious pluralism in Israel should not look to the European Conference for support.

"We have a natural allegiance to the Chief Rabbinate," said Rose, a British-born rabbi based in Israel.

The conference, which was founded in 1957, includes rabbis from Britain, Greece, Russia, Ukraine, Italy, France, the Netherlands and Israel. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Ex-Nazi given house arrest

An Italian military court ordered a former Nazi convicted in Italy's worst wartime massacre to serve out his life sentence under house arrest.

Former SS Maj. Karl Hass was sentenced earlier this month for his part in the March 1944 massacre of 335 men and boys — about 75 of them Jews — at the Ardeatine Caves near Rome.

Also sentenced at the time was ex-SS Capt. Erich Priebke, who is also already serving his life sentence under house arrest.

Mass held for bombing victims

The Argentine Catholic Church held a memorial Mass for the 115 people killed in the March 17, 1992, bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires and the July 18, 1994, bombing of the city's Argentine Jewish Mutual Aid Association, known as AMIA.

The service, officiated by a bishop at a cathedral in a Buenos Aires suburb, was attended by Jews as well as Christians.

The Argentine government has been unable to solve either of the crimes.

French help sought

The Simon Wiesenthal Center asked the French government to cross-check its records of suspected war criminals with a list of French citizens receiving German war pensions.

Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Los Angeles-based center, said the French response would be a "litmus test" of its willingness to cooperate in tracking down suspected war criminals.

Athlete returns from hospital

A member of the Australian Maccabiah team returned home after being hospitalized since last July's bridge collapse at the opening ceremony of the Maccabiah Games in Israel.

Sasha Elterman, 16, underwent 22 operations and will be on medication for at least nine more months because of the injuries she received.

Four Australian athletes died as a result of the collapse and hundreds of other participants at the Games were injured in the disaster.

Lilith editor at White House

Susan Weidman Schneider, the editor of the Jewish feminist magazine Lilith, was one of 30 editors of women's magazines hosted at a White House conference.

The daylong seminar, which included a briefing by first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and touted "pro-women" initiatives, came against the backdrop of repeated allegations of sexual misconduct by the president.

Lithuania anxious for YIVO to return Jewish documents

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — A slew of documents chronicling Eastern European Jewish life — sent to an American Jewish institution from Lithuania for cataloging — is at the center of an international dispute.

In a recent Lithuanian newspaper article, archival officials in the Baltic nation charged that the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research does not want to return the documents, which were loaned from Lithuania's Central State Archives for arranging, preserving and microfilming beginning in February 1995.

YIVO officials say they just need more time to work on the documents, which were left behind, along with thousands of others, when the institution moved to New York from Vilnius in the face of the Nazi invasion at the beginning of World War II.

"They are very mistrustful of us," said YIVO's chief archivist, Marek Web.

The documents, which mostly highlight the lives of Polish and Lithuanian Jews, were flown from Vilnius to New York after nearly three years of negotiations between YIVO and Lithuanian archival officials.

The event, which was broadcast on CNN, was one of the few times since the immediate postwar years that a Jewish institution had been allowed access to some of its original collections from Eastern Europe.

An agreement signed between the two institutions called for YIVO, which was founded in 1925, to return the archives by the end of February 1998.

According to the article — which appeared in Lithuania's leading newspaper Lietuvos Rytas — only about a third of the archives has been returned, and these were sent back in poor condition.

YIVO officials refute both of these claims. They say that approximately half of the documents have been returned to Lithuania, and more will be shipped out next month.

The reason for the delay is that the amount of time necessary to complete the work was underestimated, and some of the archives require specialists who are difficult to find, according to YIVO's executive director, Tom Freudenheim. As for the condition of the documents, YIVO's head archivist said they arrived that way in New York.

"What we got here was indescribably bad. It was not just poor; it was unacceptable," said Web.

Freudenheim said Lithuanian President Algirdas Brazauskas verbally agreed to an extension when he was in New York in January.

He mentioned this agreement when he wrote to the director of Lithuania's Central State Archives on Feb. 11 asking for an extension. Lithuania's consul general in New York, Petras Anusas, who describes the conversations with YIVO as cordial, says that neither he nor the president have the authority to make such an agreement.

YIVO is currently waiting for a reply for the archives' director. □

(JTA correspondent Lev Krichevsky in Moscow contributed to this report.)

Judge rules against pork sales

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli court has ruled that shops cannot sell pork because Jews hate pigs.

"Over the course of history, pork has become a symbol of national repugnance for the Jewish people," an Israeli magistrates court judge wrote in the ruling, which upheld a ban on selling pork in Ashkelon. His decision made some 16 shops in the city guilty of violating a municipal by-law barring the sale of pork. All stores that sell pork in the city would now be criminally liable.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported Wednesday that the municipality has been fighting a battle for the past four years against the businesses in an attempt to enforce a 1956 city statute restricting the sale of pork.

Defense lawyer Alexander Shmerling said that "for a democratic country at the end of the 20th century to rule on what people can and cannot eat is intolerable."

Shmerling said he would appeal the ruling. □

NEWS ANALYSIS

Jewish woman wins primary, could be on way to Congress

By Joel Schatz
Chicago Jewish News

CHICAGO (JTA) — Being Jewish wasn't the issue. Being a woman may well have been.

When they finally scraped away the mud and counted the votes in Tuesday's primary, state Rep. Jan Schakowsky was the one left standing in Illinois' 9th Congressional District.

Not longtime Democratic Party and state Senate leader Howard Carroll, who some had seen as the likeliest successor to U.S. Rep. Sidney Yates. Not young J.B. Pritzker and all the money he was able to throw into his own campaign.

But Schakowsky — consumer activist, women's activist. And possibly the most liberal in a field of liberal Jews.

That now makes Schakowsky heir apparent — subject, of course, to an election in November — to what has been called a "Jewish seat" in Congress, representing a heavily Jewish district spanning the city's lakefront and Rogers Park neighborhoods, plus large parts of suburban Skokie, Evanston and Morton Grove.

The Chicago primary was the first of many races being watched closely by the Jewish community.

The seat has been held by retiring incumbent Yates for 48 of the last 50 years.

In a campaign noted for attack ads, negative mailings and huge spending — all three candidates paid for TV commercials seen by far more voters outside the district than in — Schakowsky's victory may have come down to her emphasis on, and appeal to, women.

"Her campaign, especially among women voters, was unstoppable," political analyst Paul Green, of Governor's State University, said late on election night. Her message was, "Don't you think it's time for a woman in Congress?" he said.

The only way she could have been defeated with that strategy, he said, would have been with a united opposition.

She drew strong support from many women's groups, including national organizations, and stood shoulder to shoulder in her ads with perhaps the state's most recognizable female political leader, former gubernatorial candidate Dawn Clark Netsch.

It was, Green said, "a very, very impressive performance."

Greg Hinz, political editor for Crain's Chicago Business, reached much the same conclusion.

"The gender thing is what made the difference," he said.

While Schakowsky was expected to do well in her suburban Evanston home base and along the city's liberal lakefront, Hinz said, long before election day, "her people told me not to underestimate her appeal to women on the west end of the district."

That west end is noticeably more conservative in its politics and social attitudes. And because Schakowsky had a natural constituency in the lakefront suburbs and wards, and Carroll had his own beachhead slightly more inland, Green viewed the western part of the district as the likely key to the race.

What apparently happened, he said — noting that he had not yet seen detailed vote breakdowns — was that Schakowsky did very well in the city as well as the suburbs, and Pritzker — who trailed the other candidates significantly — ran stronger than anticipated in the western section, hurting Carroll.

The low voter turnout, even lower than had been anticipated, was another factor, Green said. Longtime political observer and possible Republican candidate Joseph Morris saw Schakowsky's win in a different light. The strength of the victory — she earned roughly 45 percent of the vote in a three-way race — cannot simply be explained by her appeal to female voters, he said.

"I think it was a victory for high-definition politics," said Morris, the Midwest president of B'nai B'rith and a leader in Republican politics. Schakowsky was the best-defined candidate, in terms of issues, while Pritzker and Carroll were less crisp on issues and projected less of a sense of commitment.

Whether Democrat or Republican, liberal or conservative, clearly defined candidates were the victors in Tuesday's election, Morris said.

"This is a theme that ran through all the primaries across the state." The electorate, he said, seems to be saying it wants "someone who stands for something, [someone with] philosophical integrity." It's not possible, he said, for someone in the middle to project that image.

While Morris clearly does not share many of Schakowsky's views, he said he admires "the openness and directness of her policy stands and the way they hang together philosophically."

Since no one ran in the district's GOP primary, committeemen will meet soon to name a candidate to oppose Schakowsky.

Morris said there is no clear choice at this point, but he knows of three potential candidates who have been approached: Don Haider, a Northwestern University professor who ran against Harold Washington for mayor of Chicago in 1987; Joseph Walsh, who ran against Yates two years ago; and Morris himself.

Morris said that before he makes any decision, he wants to see whether there is a realistic plan of how Republicans would draw votes.

"There are built-in headwinds in the district against any Republican candidate," he said.

The Democratic primary campaign itself may have been as surprising to some as the outcome. In what clearly is one of the most liberal districts in the Midwest, voters were deluged with charges that one candidate or another was, in effect, soft on crime.

Carroll opposed fingerprint background checks of school employees, one Pritzker mailing declared. And against scenes of rescue workers picking through the debris of the Oklahoma City bombing, a Carroll commercial targeted Schakowsky's opposition to the death penalty, even in cases of terrorism.

Schakowsky's campaign "struck me as more positive," Hinz said. With Pritzker and Carroll, it was "almost like they were campaigning for sheriff," he said, adding: "I'm not sure people in the 9th Congressional District are looking for a cop."

What they may have been looking for, he said, is "a person who would take liberal but positive stances on issues." And in that respect, Schakowsky may be the closest of the three to Yates.

"He was an advocate as much as a doer," Hinz said of Yates. "Schakowsky's strength, and weakness, is that she is an advocate."

While Schakowsky has built her career on vocal advocacy of social issues, and sees that as having strong appeal to the Jewish community, Green noted that her views on Israel are less clear. It will be interesting, he said, to see how those emerge.

As for Schakowsky's political future, Green said that unless the next congressional district is redrawn, "she's in a very strong position." □