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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Far-right scores in Germany

The German People's Union scored the largest percentage of the vote won by a far-right party in any state election held in Germany since World War II.

The unexpected electoral strength of the party — which received 13% of the vote in the eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt — could pave the way for the success of a far-right party in upcoming national elections this fall. [Page 4]

Negotiations open in Washington

Swiss banks, the World Jewish Congress and lawyers representing Holocaust survivors opened negotiations in Washington to reach a settlement of World War II-era claims.

The talks, held under the auspices of the U.S. State Department, follow a pledge last month by Switzerland's three largest banks to negotiate such a settlement.

Uzi manufacturer abandons plans

An Israeli government-owned weapons manufacturer is abandoning plans to cooperate with an American company in manufacturing Uzis in the United States.

Israel Military Industries had reportedly discussed setting up a plant with O.F. Mossberg & Sons to produce modified assault weapons for sale as a way of sidestepping a Clinton administration ban on the import of such weapons.

"It is not worthwhile damaging relations with the U.S. for an Uzi," said Arik Shor, vice president of Israel Military Industries.

Ne'eman, Indyk confer

Israeli Finance Minister Ya'acov Ne'eman discussed his proposal to phase out American economic aid to Israel during a meeting with the U.S. assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, Martin Indyk.

Ne'eman's proposal calls for the \$1.2 billion in annual civilian aid to be cut during a 10-year period, with half of it transferred to U.S. military aid, which currently totals \$1.8 billion annually.

Their talks came as Indyk, along with U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross, continued their discussions with Israeli and Palestinian officials in an effort to advance the peace process.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

New population study prepares to take pulse of American Jewry

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — Nearly a decade ago, the news rocked the Jewish world: Slightly more than half of recently married Jews had wedded non-Jews.

That finding from the first comprehensive study of American Jewry in two decades singlehandedly prompted a sea change in the course the Jewish community had long charted.

The Jewish establishment began to focus more on the internal needs of the community than on overseas concerns, and a new term, now entrenched in the communal lexicon, was coined: continuity.

The 1990 National Jewish Population Study painted a portrait of a community that was rapidly assimilating and losing the particularistic sense of what it means to be Jewish. Now preparations for a new survey, the National Jewish Population Study 2000, are under way to provide a deeper understanding of how the American Jewish population is continuing to change.

"What we have from 1990 is a snapshot. What we will have with NJPS 2000 is a three-dimensional picture to give us a sense of the depth and variety" of Jewish experience in America today, said Jo Ann Abraham, spokeswoman for the Council of Jewish Federations, the organization undertaking the study.

The information gleaned from this study — at an estimated cost of \$3.6 million, collected from Jewish federations across the country and raised from private donors — will likely be used in a variety of ways. Among the issues to be studied are the geographic shifts in the Jewish population and the aging nature of the community — and the results will be compared to those found a decade ago.

Data from the last study have been used by advocates for a range of causes, from those fighting to make Jewish day schools more affordable to those with a pro-Orthodox stance in the debate over religious pluralism.

Jewish federations use information from both national and local population studies as they decide how to allocate the \$1.6 billion they raise collectively each year.

The Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland, for example, has conducted two local population studies in recent years — one in 1987 and one in 1996. Information from the national study has given the federation a basis for comparison to the larger Jewish population, said Ilene Gertman, the federation's director of social planning and research.

Findings from the local study, for instance, helped shape the way the entire Cleveland community addresses Jewish education.

Equipped with the information that 91 percent of the Jewish children between the ages of 6 and 17 were attending Hebrew school, the community decided to pour resources into strengthening the quality of congregational schools, Gertman said.

Research is still being done to determine how the last national Jewish population study was utilized.

Some 130 in-depth articles based on the 1990 findings were published in academic and general Jewish journals, including three book-length monographs, according to Jim Schwartz, who as CJF's director of research, is organizing the new study.

Organizers point to two new communal policy areas that emerged as a result of the 1990 findings: a new emphasis on Jewish identity issues and encouraging teen travel to Israel. "Every federation, every Jewish organization is talking about Jewish identity and

MIDEAST FOCUS

Events honor jubilee

President Clinton praised the relationship between the United States and Israel at a celebration of the Jewish state's 50th anniversary. At the event, which was held on the White House's South Lawn, Clinton also called on Israel's leaders to fulfill the dream of its first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion — the creation of a lasting peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

Meanwhile, the largest gathering of Jews ever recorded in London — some 20,000 — attended celebrations marking Israel's 50th anniversary. In addition to members of the Jewish community in London, a fleet of about 200 buses brought members of other smaller communities from throughout the country to participate in the festivities.

In Israel, the army saluted hundreds of volunteers from 37 countries who fought in the 1948 War of Independence. Some 450 volunteers returned to Israel to help celebrate the jubilee and to remember friends who fell in battle.

Five soldiers wounded in Lebanon

Five Israeli soldiers were wounded, one of them seriously, when members of Hezbollah detonated a roadside bomb in the western sector of the southern Lebanon security zone.

An Israeli officer was wounded by mortar fire in a separate skirmish.

Premier sent message via CIA

An Israeli official confirmed a newspaper report that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sent a message to President Clinton about the peace process through the Central Intelligence Agency.

But the official denied that the routing of the March letter was intended to bypass U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who has been outspoken in calling for compromise to advance the stalled peace process.

Jewish continuity," said Abraham. "That all came out of the study."

But some believe the research was underutilized. Although 20 book-length monographs had been slated, only three were published. A lack of funds precluded further work.

The analysis was "underfunded and the follow-up non-existent. The data has been just thrown out there," said Gary Tobin, director of Brandeis University's Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies.

But Schwartz disagrees. "There has never been a study of this quality and output," he said. "Could more have been done? Yes, with a better budget," he said, adding that three more monographs are scheduled.

This time around, he said, the budget includes money for research grants to encourage scholars to do the analysis. To those who question the need for another study so soon, Schwartz said, "The community is changing too rapidly."

"We need hard data to address major issues like Jewish education, outreach to intermarried, the role of the synagogue, how we relate to Israel, and human service priorities."

"We, the Jewish community, need a current, accurate portrait for policy and planning," he said.

"Decisions made without data are fraught with potential problems."

Some of the community's most influential demographers and sociologists are voicing concerns that given the outcome of the last survey, people will only be interested in the new intermarriage rate.

"My fear is that we'll do 'the intermarriage quiz show' again and leave it at that," said Tobin, who is not involved in the CJF study. "The focus on intermarriage has been really unfortunate. You can tell everyone is waiting to see what the new number is going to be."

Sidney Goldstein, co-chair of the research advisory committee for the study, disagrees. "The intermarriage question will remain a strong one, though it's not necessarily the most important."

"Understanding more fully now what happens to the children of intermarriage, who intermarries, what factors explain intermarriage and conversion will be more important" for the upcoming survey, said Goldstein, a professor of population studies and sociology at Brown University.

The CJF committee is in the process of asking various constituencies — lay leaders, federation professionals, researchers and others — what questions they would like to see asked in the upcoming survey.

It is also convening subcommittees of experts in each of three key areas: Jewish identity and continuity; Jewish philanthropy and volunteerism; and Jewish professionals.

Although nothing is set in stone, some new areas likely to be explored, according to Egon Mayer, a member of the survey's national technical advisory committee:

- how many American Jews are gay or lesbian;
- the number and location of Jews from the former Soviet Union, which will require using multilingual interviewers; and
- young Jews' feelings of connection to the Holocaust and to the State of Israel.

Goldstein believes that the new study should be "much more innovative in getting at the meaning of differences of Jewish identity."

"Should we continue to measure it in standard ways, like asking about lighting Shabbat candles and going to shul? Or are there other things, like interacting with other Jews, that better characterize people's Jewish behavior today, and finding out if that's really enough to really ensure continuity and survival?"

While some hope that the survey will explore new ground, many of the questions will be the same as a decade ago to ensure "research continuity," the ability to establish trends and comparisons, say those involved.

Schwartz said every question that is asked — whether it is about one's connection to Israel or family structure — will be useful to a broad spectrum of organizations and individuals.

For his part, Mayer believes that the 2000 survey will try "to satisfy every constituency that might have an interest in the information, which means that no constituency will get all the information it wants."

"That's both the beauty and the beast of this," he said. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Study: Terrorism fight hampered

The United States' ability to combat domestic terrorism is being undermined by the failure of various government agencies to share information, according to a major study obtained by *The Washington Post*.

The interagency study, commissioned by Attorney General Janet Reno following the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, cited major concerns with "increased activity by small cells of terrorists or individuals who are inspired by, but not affiliated with, terrorist groups, thus making them harder to identify and stop."

Russian Jews polled

More Russian Jews said they feel closer to Reform Judaism than to Orthodox Judaism and Chasidism combined, according to soon-to-be-published results of a poll in Russia.

Some 22 percent of Russian Jews said they felt closest to Reform Judaism, 4 percent of the respondents said that they felt themselves more comfortable with Chasidism, while about 2.5 percent of Jews said they believe Orthodoxy is closer to their beliefs.

The poll of 1,300 Jews was conducted by a group known as the Jewish Scientific Center, which is affiliated with the Russian Academy of Science. It has a margin of error of 3 percent.

Synagogue arsonist cleared

A Canadian court found that a cardiologist who set fire to two synagogues in Ontario is not criminally responsible because of a longstanding mental disorder.

Jonathan Bishinsky, 38, was briefly detained in February as the chief suspect behind a fire in a synagogue in Phoenix, Arizona, that caused thousands of dollars in damage. Upon his return home to the southern Ontario town of London, he set fire to two synagogue exteriors, causing about \$450 in damages.

Holocaust denier fined

A former French university professor was fined for again denying the Holocaust. Robert Faurisson, who has been sentenced previously on similar charges, was found guilty of "challenging the veracity of a crime against humanity."

Poll: More diversity sought

More than 70 percent of Americans polled believe there should be more racial, cultural and religious diversity throughout society. But a smaller percentage valued diversity in the places where they live, work and worship.

The poll of 1,000 adults was conducted earlier this month on behalf of the National Conference for Community and Justice, formerly the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

Getting down to the nitty-gritty as population study 2000 shapes up

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — Just how does one go about taking the pulse of the American Jewish community?

Organizers of the National Jewish Population Study 2000 are intensely involved in putting the pieces together as they seek to update the findings of a similar study from 1990 and also explore new areas.

With an estimated budget of \$3.6 million, demographer Jim Schwartz is heading the effort for the Council of Jewish Federations. He and several committees are in the process of figuring out the questions to be asked, the people to be involved and what to do with the data once it is collected.

One of the goals is to raise the size of the sample — from the 2,414 respondents in 1990 to 5,000 completed interviews this time around — to get as accurate a portrait of U.S. Jews as possible. Just which Jews around the country will be selected to be involved will be determined as part of a scientifically selected sampling.

Initial research for the new study will be conducted as part of what is known as an omnibus shared-cost survey run by a large market research firm.

This means that Americans reached through random-digit dialing who are answering questions ranging from the type of dog food they buy to the kind of car they drive will also be asked: "Are you Jewish?" and "Was anyone in your household born Jewish?"

Those who answer yes to either question will be contacted again by professional interviewers, who will screen them between April 1, 1999, and April 1, 2000, according to CJF's schedule. Respondents who pass that level of questioning will be contacted again for the real interview itself, which will likely take 20 to 25 minutes, and is slated to happen between April 1 and July 1, 2000.

That interview will plumb a range of aspects of the respondents' Jewish identity with questions that are still under discussion. But they are sure to include an assessment of whether they are Jewish by birth or conversion, single or married, married to a Jew or a non-Jew and in what faith, if any, their children are being raised.

Once the information is gathered, it is scheduled to be tabulated between July 1 and Oct. 1, 2000. A highlight report is slated to be written between October 2000 and March 2001, and issued on April 1, 2001. The CJF is planning an academic conference on the survey for Oct. 1, 2001, and is scheduling the publication of monographs and scholarly analyses of the data through January 2003. □

Uruguay officials probe outbreak of anti-Semitism

By Sergio Kiernan

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — Security officials in Uruguay are investigating a surge of neo-Nazi activities in the capital of Montevideo.

In the most recent incident, flyers bearing a portrait of Adolf Hitler were put up on walls throughout the capital's downtown area. Earlier this year, a Jewish-owned store was destroyed by Molotov cocktails. When firemen arrived at the scene, they found a large swastika painted over the store's entrance.

Last year, vandals burned down the Holocaust memorial in a park near the presidential residence in the capital.

Uruguayan authorities believe the portraits that recently appeared were part of plans to commemorate Hitler's birthday on April 30. Members of Tolerancia Si, an anti-racist group, said Uruguay faces a "systematic racist and anti-Jewish campaign."

The group is campaigning to have the government dedicate a city square to the memory of the 86 people killed in the July 18, 1994, bombing of the Jewish community center building in Buenos Aires.

Many of the flyers bearing Hitler's portraits were pasted over Tolerancia Si's posters calling for the memorial. Some 32,500 Jews live in Uruguay. □

NEWS ANALYSIS**Far-right party's success sounds alarms in Germany***By Deidre Berger*

BERLIN (JTA) — Alarm bells are sounding after a right-wing party scored an unexpectedly strong showing in a German state election.

Five months before German national elections, the German People's Union on Sunday scored the largest percentage of the vote won by a far-right party in any state election held in the country since World War II.

The unexpected electoral strength of the party — which received 13 percent of the vote in the eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt — could pave the way for the success of a far-right party in upcoming national elections this fall.

Experts on right-wing extremism estimate there is about a 15 percent right-wing voter potential in Germany, similar to that in other European countries such as France and Austria.

Right-wing parties in those countries are strongly represented at the state level and have become a force in national politics as well.

But until now, far-right parties in Germany have had little success capitalizing on the nationalist and racist sentiments that continue to fuel right-wing violence here.

Poor organization, a lack of charismatic leaders and political infighting have splintered the political strength of the leading right-wing parties.

But even if no such party can mobilize within the next five months, the necessary 5 percent of the vote needed to enter the federal Parliament, the success of the People's Union is causing shifts in the campaign focus of the major parties.

After Sunday's election, the Christian Social Union, which is a member of Bonn's ruling conservative coalition, called for more emphasis on law and order and on topics targeting the electorate's national identity in order to counter the voter drift toward the far right.

Political observers say the strong showing of the People's Union has further weakened the re-election chances of Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

Many area residents blame the Bonn government's economic policies for unemployment rates as high as 40 percent in some regions of eastern Germany.

As a result of this anger, Kohl's Christian Democratic Union captured just 22 percent of the vote in the state election, barely ahead of the Communist Party.

The opposition Social Democrats emerged victorious, with about 37 percent of the vote.

Gerhard Schroeder, the Social Democratic Party candidate for chancellor, has a substantial lead so far in national polls, and Sunday's vote is likely to increase pressure on the German chancellor to step aside after 16 years at the helm and make room for a younger candidate to represent his party in the upcoming elections.

The xenophobic campaign mounted by the People's Union was especially popular with younger Germans: Exit polls show it was the most popular party for voters under 30, capturing 27 percent of their votes.

Ignatz Bubis, chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, said he is alarmed that 32 percent of the voters between the ages of 18 and 24 backed the People's Union in Sunday's voting.

"Until now, it was a taboo," he said in an interview. "Many people said they could imagine voting for a right-wing party, but they did not.

"Now they have done it."

Bubis charges that the People's Union is the most racist and anti-Semitic of Germany's far-right parties.

Michel Friedman, deputy leader of the German Jewish community, said he did not think the party would gain enough support nationwide to enter the federal Parliament.

Just the same, he called their showing in the state election "horribly worrisome."

Israel's ambassador to Germany, Avi Primor, designated the People's Union as a party of people "who want to revive the ghosts of the past."

He warned the German people not to be indifferent to the electoral success of the far right. Otherwise, Primor said in a newspaper interview, a German problem could become a world problem.

The surprise showing of the People's Union in Saxony-Anhalt marks the first time since Germany's 1990 unification that a far right party has entered one of the five eastern German state parliaments.

Until this election, the People's Union had few members and no political significance in these five states.

During the campaign, the party distributed large amounts of literature.

The literature featured campaign slogans such as "Get Rid of Criminal Foreigners" and "German Money for German Tasks."

The party claims to have spent more than \$1.5 million for the campaign in Saxony-Anhalt.

If this amount is correct, it would be more than all the other parties combined.

The campaign was funded by party founder Gerhard Frey, who set up the People's Union in 1971.

After the success of the People's Union in Sunday's elections, German Television refused to interview Frey.

His brief appearance at the state Parliament in Magdeburg, the capital of Saxony-Anhalt, was accompanied by demonstrators yelling, "Nazis Get Out."

The Munich-based Frey — who says he is contemplating running in the fall national elections — is Germany's leading publisher of extreme right-wing publications.

Germany's Intelligence officials estimate a readership of several hundred thousand people for Frey's newspapers and magazines.

His personal fortune from his publishing empire and real estate investments is estimated at several hundred million dollars.

Although anti-Semitism did not play a role in the election campaign of the People's Union, it is a frequent topic in Frey's publications.

According to intelligence reports, articles he publishes contain phrases such as the "blackmailing Jews."

His publications also question German responsibility for the Holocaust and contain frequent attacks on Israel and the U.S. "Jewish lobby." □