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82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Castro OK'd Jewish emigration

Israeli officials confirmed reports that Cuban leader Fidel Castro allowed the secret immigration of Cuban Jews to Israel.

They confirmed that some 400 Cuban Jews arrived in Israel during the past year and are living in a Jewish Agency for Israel absorption center. The reports said Castro approved the emigration in hopes of securing the good graces of the Clinton administration.

Barak approves settlements

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak approved building 2,600 new apartments in West Bank settlements, his office said Monday. At the same time, Education Minister Yossi Sarid said the premier plans to dismantle seven of 42 settlement outposts set up on West Bank hilltops during the past year.

Virus linked to Iraqi bioterrorists

New York officials rejected a report that the city's recent outbreak of West Nile encephalitis may have been caused by Iraqi bioterrorists.

The comments came after *The New Yorker* magazine quoted CIA analysts as saying that an Iraqi defector had claimed in April that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was developing a strain of encephalitis for use as a biological weapon.

Jewish campus opens in Vienna

Austrian Chancellor Viktor Klima used the opening of a new Jewish school campus in Vienna to underscore his government's commitment to democracy in the face of the gains made by the far-right Freedom Party in last week's general elections.

Speaking at the opening of the \$8 million new campus of the Lauder Chabad school, Klima told diplomats, political figures and Jewish leaders, "Austria is a functioning democracy solidly based on European civil society and values such as freedom and human rights." [Page 4]

Iranian dissident living on kibbutz

An Iranian dissident who served six years in jail after seeking refuge in Israel is now living on a kibbutz in the Golan Heights, officials said Monday.

An Israeli court ordered Ali Hassan Izadakhavy released last month after demanding that he be freed since Israel had not found a country to accept him.

NEWS ANALYSIS

UJC's appointment of new triad prompts speculation, anticipation

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — The decision to appoint three professionals to the top tier of leadership at the United Jewish Communities is being presented as the perfect blend of vital experience, management skills and visionary inspiration.

But the appointments announced last week — of Stephen Solender as the UJC's president, Louise Frankel Stoll as chief operating officer and David Altshuler as the president of a new, independent foundation — also represent the latest growing pains in the development of the six-month-old organization being formed through the merger of the United Jewish Appeal, the Council of Jewish Federations and the United Israel Appeal. The merger is meant to give local Jewish community federations a majority voice in the way the funds they raise in annual campaigns — some \$760 million last year — are allocated for domestic and global Jewish needs.

Charles Bronfman, the UJC's board chairman, originally had articulated his desire to install as UJC president someone from outside the federation system — a visionary to inspire a cultural change at the new national organization.

But federation executives, particularly as the search wound down in recent weeks, pressed for the appointment of an insider — a knowledgeable community leader who understood the system, knew the players and could quickly acclimate to the position at the helm of a system that serves 189 Jewish federations and some 400 independent communities across North America.

The news of the appointments has generated much speculation and great anticipation. Federation executives from around the country said they were pleased with Solender's leadership posting and expressed cautious approval for the other two appointments. But the pervasive feeling was one of relief that the search was over, so that the UJC's real work could begin.

Significant issues related to the merger — including staffing at the national office in New York and the development of policy agendas — had been put on hold until the top position was filled permanently.

At a news conference announcing the appointments Oct. 5, Bronfman said the shift from his original vision of creating a completely new culture at the UJC grew out of his realization of the "real needs of the organization versus the supposed needs."

"At the end of the day, you say, This looks to us to be the best" outcome: "to have an insider, an insider/outsider and an outsider."

But in private conversations, some people closely associated with the UJC said the appointments were less a blending of interests than Bronfman's temporary acquiescence to the will of executives at the largest federations.

Solender, 61, has served for the last six months as the UJC's acting president, while simultaneously working as the executive vice president of UJA-Federation of New York, a post he has held for the past 13 years.

Known as a consummate Jewish communal professional — he has been called the "dean of federation executives" — Solender is not known primarily as a visionary.

Instead, he is praised for his ability to appoint and work with strong, capable personalities.

During his tenure in New York, he brought in several highly regarded chief operating officers, including Jeffrey Solomon, now a consultant to the UJC merger and the president of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, and John Ruskay,

MIDEAST FOCUS

Court asked to give teen 24 years

Israeli prosecutors asked a Tel Aviv court on Monday to sentence American teen-ager Samuel Sheinbein to 24 years in prison for the brutal murder two years ago of another Maryland teen.

The prosecutors' request was in line with a plea bargain they reached with Sheinbein's lawyers in August in which Sheinbein admitted to carrying out the murder. Sheinbein fled to Israel after the murder, claiming citizenship because his father was born in pre-state Palestine.

Sentencing is expected Oct. 24.

Mosque plan irks Christians

An Israeli proposal to build a mosque next to a major Christian holy site in Nazareth elicited sharp opposition Monday from Christian leaders.

Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah, the highest-ranking Roman Catholic official in Israel, asked the Israeli government for a "quick and just solution fitting to the special and unique nature of the holy town."

Yeshiva dean pleads guilty

The former head of a Jerusalem yeshiva pleaded guilty to charges he sexually molested 19 students between 1991 and 1997.

Prosecutors in the case of Rabbi Ze'ev Kapelovich, who led the Netivei Meir Yeshiva, have asked that he be sent to jail for three-and-a-half years.

The court is expected to announce its sentence next month.

Belly dancer loses appeal

An Israeli court rejected the appeal of a belly dancer in a case in which Egypt's ambassador to Israel was granted diplomatic immunity from charges that he raped her. But the court said the dancer could refile the lawsuit after Mohammed Basiouny leaves the diplomatic post.

who will replace Solender at the New York UJA-Federation.

Stoll and Altshuler were among the five final candidates already being considered for the job, according to sources involved in the process.

Members of the search committee saw the creation of a professional troika a "fantasy" opportunity to triple their leadership potency, according to Solomon.

Describing his new job, Solender said he would serve as president and chief executive officer, in charge of day-to-day management of the UJC's staff. He also said he would oversee the UJC's \$37 million annual budget and supervise the development of the UJC's four content areas, or "pillars": Jewish Renaissance and Renewal, Israel and Overseas, Human Services and Social Policy, and Financial Resource Development.

Solender's appointment takes effect immediately.

Stoll, as executive vice president and chief operating officer, will be responsible for strategic planning and implementing the organizational changes and fiscal planning required by the merger.

Those familiar with Stoll's professional history praise her managerial expertise — skills that got the attention of the Clinton administration, which hired her as assistant secretary for budget and programs and chief financial officer for the U.S. Department of Transportation, where she served from 1993 to 1997.

She has spent the last two years in Washington as a senior vice president for the Los Angeles-based engineering and consulting firm of Dames and Moore Group. She is scheduled to begin at the UJC on Dec. 1. Stoll made her reputation in the Jewish community as vocal advocate for Israel and activist on behalf of Soviet Jews.

At the same time, Stoll is known as an aggressive, sometimes divisive personality, whose opposition to the peace process and her dissatisfaction with the disbursement of funds for the resettling of Soviet emigres put her at odds with many other Jews in the Bay Area during the early 1990s, according to the Jewish Bulletin of Northern California.

Bronfman said last week that he had not asked Stoll about her politics, and the UJC leadership pointed to her professional credentials as the criteria for her appointment.

Speaking of Altshuler, Solender said he would help federations "obtain critically important funds" from mega-donors and corporations.

The foundation that Altshuler will run is envisioned as a new approach for reaching out to philanthropists to support programs that conform to the UJC's mission.

Altshuler, who is 50, began his career as an academic, launching the Judaic Studies program at George Washington University. In 1986, he became the founding director of New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage — A Living Memorial to the Holocaust.

Altshuler is slated to begin in his new job on Jan. 1.

Most leaders in the UJC system interviewed by JTA expressed enthusiasm for the appointment. But several insiders noted aspects of the process that seemed to indicate Bronfman's strong influence over the process. Chief among the issues cited was that Solender's chief operating officer was not of his choosing — although Solender reportedly met with Stoll and drafted her job description.

Another point noted by several system insiders was that the foundation, which has yet to be named, was originally envisioned as a semi-autonomous division of the UJC.

But the foundation was reconceived as an "independent entity," some suggested, in order to attract Altshuler to the position.

The foundation's connection to the UJC has yet to be defined, and its autonomous status has raised fears in some corners that it will develop outside of the federations' purview. The UJC will not divulge salaries for the three new professional leaders.

But Bronfman and Joel Tauber, chairman of the UJC's executive committee, said the appointment of three people rather than one would not impinge on cutting costs — one of the goals of the merger — because under the old UJA-CJF-UIA system each organization would have had a chief executive and a chief financial officer.

Prior to his recent appointment, Solender had said he planned to retire in the next two or three years. Rumors that Solender's current contract expires after two years suggest that Bronfman pushed through his preference to bring in outsiders.

That time frame would give the veteran federation executive time to "right the ship" of the UJC and help set its future course in terms of policy and agenda.

After Solender's anticipated retirement, either Stoll or Altshuler conceivably would be primed to take over the top post. Solomon called the speculation over the length of Solender's contract "inaccurate," but declined to elaborate. □

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JEWISH WORLD

Cameras sought at gravesites

A German Jewish leader called for video cameras to be installed at Jewish cemeteries in Germany.

The call by Andreas Nachama came after more than 100 graves were desecrated at a Jewish cemetery in Berlin last week and before the discovery over the weekend of a similar incident at a Jewish cemetery in southern Germany.

Florida subpoenas insurers

Florida issued subpoenas last Friday to 40 insurance companies that state officials say have not turned over records on unpaid Holocaust-era claims.

An estimated 15,000 survivors are believed to be living in Florida, and officials have played an active public role in efforts to settle what may be billions of dollars in survivors' insurance claims worldwide.

Jewish-themed plays get grants

The Kennedy Center for New American Plays awarded grants to two plays with Jewish themes.

"The Mad Dancers" is a contemporary retelling of a mystical Jewish tale. "See Under: Love" is based on the David Grossman novel about the child of a Holocaust survivor who discovers kindness in the world.

They were among six plays awarded a total of \$200,000.

Censorship charged in Bay Area

A book on a local history in northern California appears to be in jeopardy after a town's historical association asked the book's author to delete references to Jews, African Americans, the Irish and Italians.

The authors of the book on Menlo Park pulled the book rather than make the changes, which are being seen by local Jews as a way to "whitewash" the town's history.

Canada town retracts celebration

The mayor of a Canadian town rescinded a proclamation that this week would be European Heritage Week after complaints from a Jewish group and other organizations.

Walter Brown, the mayor of the New Brunswick city of Fredericton, backtracked after learning from the Atlantic Jewish Council that the phrase European Heritage Week is code for advocating white supremacy.

Heat defeats Maccabi Tel Aviv

The NBA's Miami Heat defeated Maccabi Tel Aviv by a score of 126-91.

Monday's basketball game was the first between an NBA team and an Israeli team in the Jewish state since Maccabi Tel Aviv defeated the Washington Bullets in 1978.

European Jewish council wants to be included in restitution talks

By Benjamin Smith

RIGA, Latvia (JTA) — Europe's Jewish communities want a voice in the restitution of Holocaust-era assets, the board of the European Council of Jewish Communities resolved at a meeting here.

The group's resolution came in an effort to reverse what it views as American and Israeli domination of the restitution process.

In particular, the council said it wants to participate in lawsuits and negotiations over slave labor, bank assets, insurance claims, and looted art and property.

The council, which along with the European Jewish Congress makes up the European Restitution Committee, voted Sunday to push for inclusion in the deliberations of such groups as the World Jewish Restitution Organization and the Conference of Jewish Material Claims Against Germany in matters dealing with "reparations, compensation and restitution" of Holocaust-era assets.

The council includes representatives from the major Western European states as well as from Russia, Ukraine and most other post-Soviet nations.

The group attempts to represent Europe's estimated 3 million Jews.

"They're not at the table where decisions are made," said the American Jewish Committee's European affairs director, Rabbi Andrew Baker, who acted as an adviser at the Riga conference.

Europeans are not represented on the Claims Conference, and only last year were allowed to join the WJRO, said Baker, who added that Jews from former Soviet states are particularly underrepresented.

"What we are asking for is not money," said the chairman of the council's board, Jacob Benatoff of Milan, Italy. "We think of the restitution as the restitution of historical truth and dignity."

Benatoff and other board members hope the resolutions will bring a strong European community to the table in a meeting with the WJRO in New York on Oct. 28.

European progress toward inclusion, which has only begun in recent years, stalled this summer with the death of Ignatz Bubis, the head of both the German Jewish community and the European Jewish Congress.

In New York, Elan Steinberg, the executive director of the World Jewish Congress, one of the groups that makes up the WJRO, said the October meeting proves that the council already has a voice in decisions taken by the WJRO.

Steinberg also downplayed the significance of the resolution, saying it "reflects dissatisfaction over the past and does not reflect conditions as they are today."

In their set of principles for the restitution process, the council's board on Sunday expressed hope that, whenever possible, assets will be returned to their owners.

But at the same time, they also staked their claim to heirless and unclaimed communal properties, which will be the object of competition between American, Israeli and European groups.

"The Shoah was the attempt to erase the Jewish communities from Europe," Benatoff said.

"And we are today the European Jewish communities which have rebuilt" what the Nazis attempted to destroy. □

(JTA foreign editor Mitchell Danow contributed to this report.)

Israel bars Christian group

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel has barred the entry of 26 Christians it suspects are members of an apocalyptic group.

Officials said Monday the Interior Ministry had previously denied the visa applications of the 26 Irish and Romanian visitors, who were deported when they tried to sail into Haifa.

Israel Radio said the group was believed to be linked with the Concerned Christians, a Denver-based apocalyptic group ejected from Israel in January. □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD**Austria pledges democracy at opening of Jewish school***By Ruth E. Gruber*

VIENNA (JTA) — Austrian leaders have used the opening of a new Jewish school campus here to pledge their commitment to democracy in the face of an international furor over far-right gains in last week's general election.

Chancellor Viktor Klima and President Thomas Klestil also urged foreign states and the media not to judge Austria solely on the electoral success of the anti-foreigner Freedom Party.

"Take this message with you," Klima told diplomats, political figures and Jewish leaders attending the opening Monday of the new, \$8 million campus of the Lauder Chabad school, funded by the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation and built on land donated by the city of Vienna.

"Austria is a functioning democracy, solidly based on European civil society and values such as freedom and human rights," Klima said.

The Freedom Party, led by populist firebrand Jorg Haider, notorious for having praised the Nazi regime in the past, captured more than 27 percent of the popular vote in Oct. 3 elections.

This — the best showing by the far right in Europe since the end of World War II — catapulted it at least provisionally into second place among Austria's political forces, just 14,000 votes ahead of the conservative Peoples Party.

The election results also drew an international storm of protest and warning.

Final results were expected to be announced Tuesday, after more than 200,000 absentee ballots are counted.

But Haider already has claimed he should have a role in the new government and predicted he would become chancellor within four years.

Klima noted that Haider's success had triggered "memories, sorrows and anxieties" internationally — in particular, an emotional dispute with Israel.

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy last week drew an angry response from Vienna by calling the election results "revolting" and saying Austria had become right wing.

He described the Freedom Party as neo-Nazi and threatened to reassess relations with Austria if Haider was included in a new Cabinet.

Meanwhile, the Jewish Agency for Israel is reporting "insecurity and anxiety" among the some 9,000 Austrian Jews and is sending an emissary to handle possible requests for immigration to Israel. According to the Jewish Agency, Ariel Musikant, the head of Austria's Jewish community, is expected to convene a general meeting Oct. 19 to discuss the implications of the election for the community.

Klima assured Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak during a phone call Saturday night that he will not include members of Haider's party in a coalition government.

However, Austria's interior minister, Karl Schloegl, left the door open for a coalition with the Freedom Party in an interview with the news magazine *Format* published Monday.

"In politics, nothing can be permanently shut out," Schloegl was quoted as saying.

"I am, however, skeptical that [Haider] personally is acceptable to us."

Austria was annexed to Hitler's Third Reich in 1938, and many Austrians supported the Nazis. The country's Jews were persecuted, and tens of thousands were deported and killed.

After the war, however, Austria was declared to have been the "first victim" of the Nazis, and — unlike Germany — it did not openly begin to confront its role in the Holocaust until the 1980s, when Kurt Waldheim was elected president despite evidence he had covered up his Nazi past.

Since then, Austria's leaders have formally owned up to the country's history on a number of occasions, but the issue remains highly sensitive.

Klima told the audience at the Lauder Chabad inauguration that Austria should not be judged on the basis of one politician or party.

He pledged that as chancellor he would do everything in his power so that students — such as the Russian Jewish immigrants who made up much of the school's student body — "will be able to go to school, grow up in peace and live here."

President Klestil stressed the same message during a ceremony at the Hofburg Palace in which he presented Lauder with the Grand Decoration of Honor in Gold for Services to the Republic of Austria.

"We Austrians, because of our history, have to be sensitive and vigilant as to all forms of intolerance, xenophobia and discrimination," he said.

"But we expect others, too, to be careful and fair in dealing with the facts and in their reporting in the media.

"As president of Austria, I will remain fully committed to what I have said on various occasions over the years, and especially in the Knesset during my visit to Israel in 1994, on the importance of remembering the lessons of the past," he said.

Austrian political figures, Jewish leaders and Lauder himself all stressed the importance of the school and its state-of-the-art new campus as a symbol both of the revival of Jewish life in Austria and of changes in Europe since the fall of communism.

"For me," said Klima, "Jewish life, culture and identity are closely and inseparably linked with the new Europe in the new century."

Lauder and other Jewish speakers in turn paid tribute to the role Austria and the city of Vienna played in the school project, sharply contrasting this policy against the anti-foreigner platform of the Freedom Party and the right.

Lauder referred to the completion of the new campus, which will accommodate 400 students, as the "fulfillment of a dream."

Lauder in fact founded his foundation, whose school programs today serve 7,500 students in 15 countries, in Vienna in 1987 after meeting Rabbi Jacob Biderman, who had founded a small Jewish kindergarten in Vienna in 1986 mainly for recent immigrants from the Soviet Union.

That meeting, Lauder said, "changed my life."

"What we are doing in Jewish education is essential not just for the renaissance of Jewish life in the region, but for the renaissance of life in this special part of Europe," he said.

The new Vienna campus was opened one day after a Lauder teacher-training school was opened in Berlin, and the day before the new campus of a Lauder school in Warsaw was scheduled to be inaugurated. □