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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Shalom, pope

Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom praised the pope for speaking out against anti-Semitism. Shalom reportedly made the comments Thursday in a meeting with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican.

Shalom promised the pope that Israel would ensure that Christian pilgrims get access to Christian holy sites in Israel.

U.S. meets Egyptian

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell met with the head of Egypt's intelligence. Powell and Omar Suleiman met Wednesday to talk about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Thursday that Suleiman has been "very involved in trying to move progress down the 'road map,' progress towards ending violence and getting back to a situation of reduced tensions, where peace talks can proceed." Boucher said Powell raised human-rights issues in the country and possible movement toward democracy in Egypt.

Gaza violence ignites

Israeli troops on an operation against a Gaza Strip terrorist killed six Palestinians. Palestinian witnesses said a gunman and five bystanders died in battles amid Thursday's army incursion into Rafah.

Israeli military sources said at least three of the dead were combatants, and that troops succeeded in capturing an Islamic Jihad fugitive in the flashpoint town.

French Jews back yarmulke ban

Most French Jewish leaders are backing a recommendation to ban visible religious insignia in French state schools. Roger Cukierman, president of CRIF, an umbrella organization of French Jews, told JTA that the recommendation by a presidential commission represents "a body blow to Islamic fanaticism."

In its report to French President Jacques Chirac on Thursday, the Stasi Commission proposed that nonvisible items such as small crosses, Stars of David and miniature Korans be allowed. The commission also recommended that Yom Kippur and the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adhar should become holidays in all state schools, and that the two days could be taken as paid holidays.

New federation lobbyist in capital makes plans for securing federal aid

By Ron Kampeas

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The federation system's new lobbyist in Washington is setting his sights on modest goals.

That's because he has no other choice.

Charles Konigsberg, who last week started his new job as the United Jewish Communities' vice president of public policy, said that because there is more demand than ever for federal dollars, and those dollars are not as abundant as they used to be, federations have to focus on what can be done, not on what they wish could be done.

"The two goals of this office are to work closely with federations and the independent Jewish communities around the country to assess their needs and then to use the expertise we have here in this office to think strategically about how, within the constraints of the current federal budgetary situation, we can try to address those needs," Konigsberg said in an interview Tuesday at his Washington office.

"It's marrying the assessment of needs with the strategic possibilities."

Federation-administered programs receive between \$5 billion and \$7 billion per year in federal and state grants, UJC officials said.

Once a need is identified, Konigsberg's job is to work with federations to lobby members of Congress and advise them on how to approach state legislatures.

On Tuesday, after just a few days on the job, Konigsberg was still getting his bearings.

His office walls were bare and he chugged Diet Mountain Dew as he leafed through a stack of Encyclopedia Judaica volumes.

A lawyer by training, Konigsberg, 45, said his experience as a congressional staffer will help him identify federation programs most likely to get federal aid.

The UJC's involvement in developing the Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities program of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is a typical example of how the UJC gets federal funding.

A few years ago, the UJA-Federation of New York identified aging Jews who were not ready to leave their longtime homes but who increasingly were in need of services. The federation's solution: bring federal and state assistance to their communities.

Working through the UJC's Washington office, New York joined with about a dozen other federations to work out pilot programs tailored to each community's needs. The program has been so successful that it has attracted interest from non-Jewish aging groups, federation officials said.

"NORC was a new idea developed by federations who were really thinking strategically about how to increase assistance and develop approaches and ideas," Konigsberg said.

"This is especially important right now, when budget deficits are at an all-time high and the domestic discretionary budget is being squeezed and will be very slim for many years to come."

"In that kind of environment," he said, "it's extremely important to think strategically and smartly about how to partner with the federal government."

Konigsberg said he already is thinking ahead, identifying major pieces of legislation for 2004 that could prove useful to the federations.

Among them are a multiyear transportation bill and a set of Homeland Security bills.

The transportation bill presents opportunities for providing seniors with help

MIDEAST FOCUS

Hamas triumphs in elections

Hamas was the big winner in West Bank student government elections after a campaign touting terrorist attacks. In voting at Bir Zeit University in Ramallah, Hamas took 25 out of 51 seats; Fatah won 20.

In previous elections, Hamas earned a two-seat margin over Fatah, the party of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat. During the campaign, Fatah blew up models of Jewish settlements, and Hamas blew up models of Israeli buses.

At one debate, a Hamas candidate bragged about the number of "Zionists" killed by Hamas activists at Bir Zeit; his opponent boasted that Fatah had killed its share of Jews as well.

Arafat reformed?

Yasser Arafat said he recognizes Jewish historical ties to "Palestine." The purported recognition was contained in a wide-ranging statement issued to summarize talks the Palestinian Authority president held last week with Henry Siegman, a U.S. Jewish leader, *The New York Times* reported.

Arafat said he was willing to accept Israeli control over the Western Wall and Jewish Quarter of the Old City. "We accept this only because we recognize and respect the Jewish religion and the Jewish historical attachment to Palestine," he reportedly said.

Israeli officials called the statement deceptive, saying it merely recognized that Jerusalem holds significance for Jews.

Shalom, Mubarak

Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom met with Egypt's president. At Wednesday's meeting in Geneva, believed to be the first between such a high-level Israeli official and Hosni Mubarak since 2002, the two reportedly discussed efforts to arrange a meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei.

getting to their doctors, to community centers and to meet with friends. The UJC has taken the lead on senior transportation, Konigsberg said.

The Jewish community also is interested in how Homeland Security measures could help fund security for Jewish venues, he said, especially in light of attacks on Jewish targets abroad.

Konigsberg said such modest goals were better targets than the huge issues, like Medicare, where hundreds of organizations are vying for attention. He said he's canvassing Jewish communities for other needs and ideas.

At times Konigsberg's role will be reactive, said his assistant, Robyn Gershenoff Judelsohn.

"Congress comes out with something they want to work on or the administration comes out with a policy they want to see forwarded, and we have to do an analysis in this office to determine how in fact that is going to affect our federations," she said.

Like his predecessor, Diana Aviv, who left the post in June, Konigsberg said he is worried that the Jewish community too often is pegged to a single issue: Israel.

"It's unfortunate when the viewpoint is expressed that Jewish voters' allegiance is expressed on only one issue," he said. "Certainly, Israel is a major concern, but it is not the only concern."

He said, "Jewish community federations are living examples that we care about the elderly and newcomers to America and the poor and the sick and everyone in need."

Konigsberg has two decades of experience working the Capitol from both sides, as both a staffer and a lobbyist.

He started out working for Pete Domenici (R-N.M.) and Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) in the Senate.

In the 1990s, he went to work as general counsel on the staff of the late Sen. Daniel Moynihan (D-N.Y.).

Konigsberg's background will serve the Jewish community well, said Reva Price, the Washington lobbyist for the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the umbrella body for Jewish community relations councils.

"Their job is to focus like a laser on the programs that bring money into the federation system," Price said.

Price said that JCPA, which receives UJC funding, deals more with policy, and UJC with seeking federal funds.

"Our agendas on some of the domestic issues overlap, we try and coordinate so that we work together," she said.

A major lesson of his years on the Hill, Konigsberg said, is the need for various groups in a community to work on a single message.

"From the perspective of being on the Hill, if you have two or three or four different groups from the same community coming in with different viewpoints, you really want them to work it out before coming in with their requests," he said.

Konigsberg has also served in the executive branch, as an assistant director in the Clinton White House's Office of Management and Budget, and as a director in the Bush administration's Corporation for National and Community Service, which runs Senior Service Corps and AmeriCorps.

On the lobbying side, he was the executive director of the Parkinson's Action Network until last month.

In dealing with the administration, Konigsberg said it was key to show bipartisan solidarity within the community.

"When we meet with the administration, we generally bring to them a delegation composed of representatives of the Jewish community from both sides of the aisle," he said.

Konigsberg has been a high profile Jewish volunteer, helping to found the Capitol Hill Jewish Staff Forum, the first organization of Jewish staff members on Capitol Hill.

He has had leadership positions in the Association of Reform Zionists of America, the New Israel Fund and the American Jewish Committee, and he is a former vice president of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda, Md.

"To me, this is an absolutely ideal opportunity to combine my professional background and my Jewish community interests," he said. □

(JTA Washington correspondent Matthew E. Berger contributed to this report.)



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JEWISH WORLD

E.U., Syria to sign trade deal?

The European Union may sign a new trade deal with Syria that requires Damascus to crack down on terrorism. The 15-member bloc has held off signing a trade association deal with Syria since 1997, but a senior E.U. Commission official said Wednesday that it would now advise member states to sign the agreement by the end of the year, Diego de Ojeda said.

Syria would then join 12 other non-E.U. Mediterranean states, including Israel, that have special trade agreements with the European Union.

Shalom, De Villepin clash

Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom and his French counterpart clashed over Israel's security barrier.

Speaking Wednesday to about 500 invited guests at the annual dinner of the France-Israel Chamber of Commerce in Paris, Dominique De Villepin questioned whether the fence would increase Israel's security or "fan the flames of hatred between Israel and the Palestinians."

Shalom said that after scores of terrorist attacks against Israel over the last three years, the fence is both necessary and legitimate. "A barrier is always reversible, but human lives are irreversible," he said.

E.U. pressed on anti-Semitism

European Jewish leaders pressed the European Union to pledge to fight anti-Semitism.

The 15 E.U. member-states are scheduled to meet in Brussels on Friday. The call by the European Jewish Congress comes amid increasing attention to the recent rise in anti-Semitic incidents in Europe.

Where's the menorah?

A Christmas tree controversy erupted at Indiana University. The dean of the university's law school replaced a Christmas tree with two smaller trees and a sleigh after some students and professor Florence Roitman, a Jewish professor at I.U.'s law school, complained that the tree constituted a religious display.

The dean says the new display represents Indiana woods and has no religious meaning. But both Roitman and students who support a Christmas-tree display say the new display is not much of a change.

Suicide near Italian synagogue

A car explosion near an Italian synagogue Thursday was not believed to be a terrorist attack.

A Palestinian set himself on fire inside the car in the city of Modena at 4 a.m. Thursday. Investigators are pointing to the timing of the attack as evidence that the man did not intend to cause any injuries. Buildings in the area suffered minor damage.

Germans debate anti-Semitism in unique parliamentary session

By Toby Axelrod

BERLIN (JTA) — Seventy years ago, Germany was concerned with the "Jewish problem." Today, Germany is concerned with the country's anti-Semitism problem.

In a wide-ranging, two hour debate on anti-Semitism in Germany's parliament on Thursday, legislators agreed that the country must combat both anti-Semitism on society's fringes and antipathy toward Jews among Germans generally.

Their solution: education.

The debate, co-sponsored by all the major political parties, was prompted by the recent scandal over an anti-Semitic speech made by Parliament member Martin Hohmann, a member of the Christian Democratic Party.

In an Oct. 3 speech, Hohmann said Jews could be a "nation of perpetrators" because of the role some Jews played in the Russian Revolution. Hohmann since has been thrown out of the party.

At the debate, some lambasted Christian Democratic representatives for not coming down harder on Hohmann during the controversy.

Wolfgang Thierse, a member of the Social Democratic Party and the president of the Bundestag, Germany's parliament, said it is important for Germans to fight against anti-Semitism because of Germany's World War II history and because anti-Semitism "is undemocratic and damages basic human rights."

Legislator Norbert Lammert said the debate is necessary because "there still is anti-Semitism in Germany," though Germany actually has fewer problems with anti-Semitism than many other European countries.

Many others echoed that last point.

Jewish life in Germany is blooming, said Wolfgang Boetsch, noting the signing of an official agreement between Germany's government and the Central Council of Jews in Germany and the imminent construction of a new community center in Munich.

But "there is also another reality," Boetsch said. "The start of open anti-Semitism." "School classes must hear about Jewish culture and life," he said, "to support this new chapter with our fellow citizens of the Jewish faith."

Volker Beck of the Green Party noted that many Germans believe Jews are the primary beneficiaries of a compensation fund for victims of Nazi slave labor, when in fact 80 percent of the beneficiaries are not Jewish.

"Israel has become the collective Jew of the nations," noted legislator Gert Weisskirchen, referring to criticism of the Jewish state. While criticism of Israel is legitimate, he said, comparing Israel to the Nazi regime reawakens the "nightmare of anti-Semitism."

Weisskirchen called the demonizing of Israel "the most dangerous development," and said warning signs can be seen in places like Paris, where extremists promote hatred of Jews.

"These are the warning signs," he said of the extremism.

David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee, recently said those signs are not taken seriously enough and that with the exception of Germany, requests to persuade E.E. leaders to focus on anti-Semitism "had fallen on deaf ears."

At the end of the two-hour debate, legislators voted unanimously to condemn anti-Semitism. But some legislators were upset that the debate did not explicitly condemn Hohmann and his remarks.

A 27-year-old police officer from Ratzeburg who attended the parliamentary session with a group of fellow officers said the subject of anti-Semitism is often discussed among police "because sometimes we have to deal with right-wing extremists."

Another observer, Christian Cetoyefiz, a high school student, said the debate was "good, because it is important to look into the future and not always at the past."

Several speakers at the parliamentary session made note of the widespread lack of interest among young Germans in the history of the Holocaust. Some feel resentment about being reminded of the crimes of the past, they said.

"No one from my generation is guilty of the Holocaust," said Claudia Roth of the Green Party, "but we are responsible for the future." □

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Chabad's model of outreach gains favor with fervently Orthodox

By Uriel Heilman

NEW YORK (JTA)—Fervently Orthodox Jewish leaders see a call to arms in the results of the recent Jewish population survey: As American Jews' last greatest hope, they say, they cannot stand idly by while American Jewry disappears.

In a speech last week at a conference of Agudath Israel of America, Rabbi Avi Shafran, the group's director of public affairs, said fervently Orthodox Jews must set out on a "rescue mission" of American Jewry.

"We're the Zaka of North American Jewry," Shafran said, referring to the Israeli rescue organization that deals with victims of terrorist attacks. "The threats to Jewish souls are no less dangerous — in fact, they're more dangerous — than threats to Jewish bodies."

"We, our community, is the last chance for the American Jewish community," he said. "The question here is one of pikuach nefesh," or saving Jewish lives.

Shafran's call was both a recognition of the success fervently Orthodox Jews have had at preserving their own numbers and their failure in extending that influence to the American Jewish community at large.

The speech also was a sign that Chabad-Lubavitch's focus on outreach to non-Orthodox Jews is gaining currency among other fervently Orthodox Jews, or haredim.

"I think there's a lot to learn from Chabad, to be honest," Shafran told JTA in an interview after the conference, which was held in Stamford, Conn. "There are many Orthodox Jews that have complaints about aspects of the Chabad movement and some are valid ones. But the idea of active outreach that Chabad pioneered has, over recent decades, become very much part of the mainstream stance of mainstream Orthodox American Judaism."

Chabad says it welcomes other fervently Orthodox Jews taking up the mantle of outreach.

"By all means, it's a wonderful development," Chabad spokesman Zalman Shmotkin said. "It's just becoming increasingly evident how crucial it is for the Jewish people as a whole and each specific Jew to reach out to other Jews."

Agudah is not the only segment of the American Jewish community looking to Chabad as an outreach model. At last month's Reform convention in Minneapolis, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, said Reform Jews had a lot to learn from Chabad's example.

"It is hard for me to say this but I will say it nonetheless: We must follow the example of Chabad," Yoffie said. "I disagree with Chabad about practically everything and I am appalled by the messianic fervor that has flared up in their midst. But I envy the selflessness of their young men and women who fan out across the world to serve Jewish communities in distress."

Recently, nearly 2,000 Chabad outreach emissaries, or shlichim, came to Brooklyn from all over the world to talk about strategies for bringing non-Orthodox Jews closer to Orthodox religious observance. The movement has permanent representatives in more than 70 countries, including nations torn by violent conflict and places with almost no Jews or synagogues. In the United

States, Chabad has representatives in all but five of the 50 states, according to Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky, director of the International Conference of Chabad-Lubavitch Emissaries.

Rabbi Abraham Shemtov, chairman of Agudas Chasidei Chabad, the umbrella organization for Lubavitch, said outreach is becoming more common in fervently Orthodox neighborhoods.

"I would assume that it's definitely a recognition that Chabad's assessment of the situation was accurate," Shemtov said.

Nevertheless, he said, it's not so important who is doing outreach or who was doing it first, as long as it's done.

Shafran outlined his own vision for the future in his speech to the Agudah audience of about 1,000. He said he dreams of the day when there will be "Telzers in Topeka, Gerers in Green Bay, Mirers in Muskogee," a reference both to various fervently Orthodox sects identified by their cities of origin in Eastern Europe and to American cities with virtually no Orthodox Jews.

"We can do much more than we think," Shafran said, "being open to the existence of other Jews who are not like us."

Outreach presents a unique problem for fervently Orthodox Jews: How to reach out to the non-Orthodox without exposing oneself to the dangers and temptations of the secular world?

"The vast majority of the haredi community has been concerned about the strengthening of their own core group," Rela Mintz Geffen, president of Baltimore Hebrew University, told JTA. "It seems that they now have enough confidence in the strength of that group, and that that confidence has been reinforced by the NJPS findings in such a way that they can use it as a pretext to go public with a national outreach endeavor."

Geffen was referring to the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01, which counted 300,000 fewer Jews in the United States than the previous survey, in 1990.

The NJPS also found that 31 percent of the nation's 5.2 million Jews are wed to non-Jews, only 27 percent of the 4.3 million Jews identified as more "Jewishly connected" said they attend a religious service at least once a month, and only about half of the more connected group said being Jewish was very important.

At the same time, the survey showed that Orthodox Jews likely increased their number as a proportion of U.S. Jewry. The 1990 survey showed 16 percent of synagogue members as Orthodox, and the 2000-01 survey showed 21 percent of synagogue members as Orthodox, an NJPS project official said.

Scholars have cautioned, however, that the two surveys used different methods of counting and that comparisons therefore are suspect. But that hasn't stopped Shafran from citing the numbers as evidence of Orthodoxy's success in America.

The dichotomy of Orthodox growth amid general U.S. Jewish decline is well evident in the NJPS results, Shafran said.

He noted that while the Reform movement also has shown growth, Reform interpretation of Torah is a "mockery of the word halachah," or Jewish law.

Reform Judaism twists the Torah to mean "whatever society wants to embrace," Shafran said.

Yoffie, the Reform leader, told JTA that "the challenge for Judaism in the 21st century is how we reconcile our Jewish commitments with the benefits and temptations of the outside world." He said of Agudah, "Since they have apparently so much contempt for the practices and beliefs" of non-Orthodox Jews, "how exactly they're going to overcome that and teach Judaism as they understand it — that's a good question." □