

IN THE NEWS

Abbas to succeed Arafat?

Former Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas is the leading candidate to succeed Yasser Arafat.

Under a transition law ratified Wednesday in Ramallah, the speaker of the Parliament, Rawhi Fattouh, is to become interim president if Arafat dies.

But elections would be held in 60 days in which Abbas, as deputy chief of Arafat's PLO, is expected to win.

Analysts anticipate Abbas will set up a triumvirate with Fattouh and the current Palestinian Authority prime minister, Ahmed Qurei.

Also known as Abu Mazen, Abbas is considered a moderate by Israeli and U.S. officials.

Ramallah burial of Arafat approved

Israel agreed to a Palestinian request to bury Yasser Arafat in Ramallah.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and top Cabinet members on Wednesday overruled military chiefs who said that burying the Palestinian Authority president in the West Bank would pose security risks to Israel.

Palestinians plan to bury Arafat — who is in a deep coma in a French hospital — at his Muqata headquarters in Ramallah, possibly after a state funeral in Cairo.

Egyptian officials offered to let Arafat lie in state in their capital but Palestinian officials have not yet responded.

During the Ramallah ceremony, Palestinian police would be responsible for security inside the city, while Israeli forces deploy outside.

Bush: We'll help Palestinians after Arafat

President Bush said the United States would help build Palestinian institutions in the post-Arafat era.

Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat is near death in Paris.

Bush, who considered Arafat an abettor of terrorism, described his removal from the scene as "an opening for peace."



WORLD REPORT

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As UJC prepares for annual G.A., eyes are on system's new president

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — Cleveland may be best known for its rock'n'roll museum and its unforgiving weather.

But those who know Cleveland also know it is a die-hard federation town, and in light of the local federation's centennial celebration, it's a fitting venue for the upcoming General Assembly of the United Jewish Communities, the North American federation system's umbrella organization.

The G.A., as it is called, is a time for federation professionals and volunteers to hobnob with colleagues and attend workshops and discussions reflecting the work of federations and their many partners — from boosting fund raising to serving the elderly and advocating for Israel on campus.

This year's conference, to be held Nov. 14-17, finds the federation system at a crossroads.

The UJC, formed five years ago from the merger of the Council of Jewish Federations, United Jewish Appeal and United Israel Appeal, is undergoing a transition after the recent accession of its third president, Howard Rieger, former president of the United Jewish Federation of Pittsburgh.

It also comes as the UJC prepares to review one of the main targets of critics of the system. That's the Overseas Needs Assessment and Distribution Committee, which determines allocations to the UJC's overseas partners — the Jewish Agency for Israel, which runs immigration and absorption in Israel; and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which runs relief and welfare for Jews abroad.

Comprised of a cross-section of federation leaders, the ONAD committee was meant to equip local federation leaders with a deeper understanding of overseas needs so they would help bolster the overseas agencies. But critics say the process has become fraught with politics, pitting the overseas partners against each other for a pool of funds that has not increased meaningfully.

Rieger has said he intends to shore up overseas funding. In an interview with JTA, he said ONAD's fate will be determined by a committee.

Meanwhile, federations are reporting an upswing in their annual fund-raising campaigns, but attendees still will look to the General Assembly for inspiration — specifically, for evidence as to whether Rieger can chart a vision for the federation system that

many say has yet to be clearly elucidated and put into practice.

"Right now is the real turning point," said Barry Shrage, president of Boston's Combined Jewish Philanthropies.

Echoing a common opinion, Shrage said that Stephen Hoffman, UJC's immediate past president who returned recently to his post as president of the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland, stabilized the organization. People now want to see how Rieger will build on that, Shrage said.

The UJC must decide whether it should be a driving force in the federation world or primarily a facilitative agency for constituent federations, Shrage said.

That question has dogged the UJC since its birth as it has tried to unite a group of independent-minded federations, many of which

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have distinct visions of their own.

But Rieger and many federation professionals argue that a coordinated system is greater than the sum of its parts.

One “can’t solve some of the problems facing the Jewish world sitting in your own community,” Rieger said. He cited the UJC’s Israel Emergency Campaign, which brought an extra \$360 million to Israel early in the Palestinian intifada.

Yet Rieger also emphasized the UJC’s facilitative purpose: His goal as president is to service federations, primarily by helping them raise funds to meet needs, he told JTA.

“It’s about saying, ‘Is there a ‘value added’ that can come at the national level?’ ” he said. “I think we need to align ourselves nationally and locally in terms of what are our objectives.”

In addition, the federation system must be relevant to attract the enormous financial resources of American Jewry, he said.

Rieger only recently took office, but many already have expressed support for his approach. Some say he is a more collaborative worker with lay leaders and staff than Hoffman was.

“I think he hit the ground running,” said UJC Vice Chairman Richard Wexler of Chicago. “He’s a quick study, and he wants to be focused on matters that will make UJC totally relevant to the federations.”

Against this backdrop, the General Assembly appears to be drawing its lowest number of attendants in at least six years.

UJC officials said more than 2,000 attendees are expected this year. Since 1998,

the number of participants has ranged from 3,250 to some 6,000 when it was held last year in Jerusalem, according to spokesman Glenn Rosenkrantz.

Still, the federation system hopes to reinvent itself with this G.A. under the theme “Imagine.” Key plenaries are devoted to leadership and professional development.

Jim Collins, author of the bestseller, “Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . And Others Don’t,” is a plenary speaker. So is Rosabeth Moss Kanter, a Harvard Business School professor who has advised corporations and governments on models of leadership and change.

The conference is as much an opportunity for receptions by various groups — ranging from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee to ORT, the Organization for Rehabilitation through Training — as it is for workshops.

Seminars address everything from gender equity to the feasibility of an Israeli constitution to security at Jewish institutions to Kabbalah.

There are discussions on outreach to gays and lesbians, the impact of the U.S. presidential election and, of course, best fund-raising practices.

The General Assembly comes as the federation system’s annual fund-raising campaign — which generates some \$830 million a year — is several percentage points ahead of last year.

Federation insiders cite a better economy and the lingering effects of the special Israel Emergency Campaign. In some cases, people continued to give money for the embattled Jewish state through their general gift; in other cases, the UJC’s message on the ongoing intifada has driven home the importance of a federation gift.

While the robust state of this year’s campaign indicates a healthy federation system, elements beyond fund raising have discouraged some federation leaders.

“I believe that the national system had a difficult time in defining itself the last few years, and that has translated” into the local lay leadership’s “sense of indifference,” said Gary Weinstein, executive vice president of

the Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas.

Weinstein says the UJC’s still unsettled identity makes it difficult for him to recruit lay leaders for national assignments, or draw top leaders to the General Assembly.

“Our lay leadership is kind of finding it ‘same old, same old,’ and fund raising continues to be the dominant force” in federation life, he said.

Others, like John Ruskay, executive vice president and CEO of the UJA-Federation of New York, say it’s difficult to generalize about the state of a system made up of so many components

and communities. Many local and overseas programs are vibrant, he said.

But “UJC remains a work in progress,” Ruskay said. “It continues to struggle with inflated expectations from a prolonged birthing.”

“We’re at a time in which local federations want to be more directly involved in determining national and international policy, and hence the challenge for UJC leadership to align all of the federations to maximize impact remains serious,” Ruskay said.

The UJC should act as a think tank, providing consulting support and facilitating partnerships, while it supports “an unparalleled system of agencies that can respond to challenges and opportunities in Argentina, in Ethiopia, in Israel, in the former Soviet Union, in extraordinary ways,” Ruskay said.

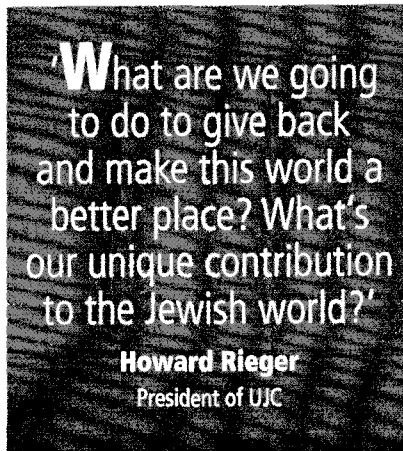
But Rieger’s key message comes down to making a difference.

“We have been really damn lucky. We ended up in a country at a time in history when we have more resources than we can ever dream about,” he said. “What are we going to do to give back and make this world a better place? What’s our unique contribution to the Jewish world?”

“We are on the road to finding our vision, our voice and our purpose,” he said.

Rieger will have to make that case crystal clear in his debut as president in Cleveland.

“There’s a level of doubt on the national level about a compelling vision, and people are coming to the G.A. to assess if the new leadership can answer those concerns,” said Yosef Abramowitz, CEO of Jewish Family & Life!, an online publisher of Jewish educational material.



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World Jewish Congress group official urged to quit

By TOBY AXELROD

BERLIN (JTA) — The European Jewish Congress is calling on a World Jewish Congress official to resign.

The demand for Isi Leibler's resignation came at a gathering of the group here on Sunday, six weeks after the WJC's senior vice president was asked to cease all activity on behalf of the organization.

The demand by the European Jewish Congress, which is affiliated with the World Jewish Congress, is the latest episode in a squabble that has afflicted the top WJC leadership. The WJC is best known in recent years for negotiating Holocaust restitution with Swiss banks.

Leibler got into hot water after an internal squabble at the WJC became public and turned ugly. Leibler charges that top officials at the organization tried to hide \$1.2 million in a Swiss bank account and that the Jewish Agency for Israel made an unusual \$1.5 million payment to the group. He also alleges that WJC officials refused to investigate the issue.

For their part, WJC officials, including the group's president, Edgar Bronfman, say the \$1.2 million was set aside for pension payments — including future payments to Israel Singer, chairman of the WJC's governing board, who receives an annual \$226,000 pension.

They say Leibler is orchestrating a campaign of disinformation in an attempt to seize power at the WJC.

The fight already has reverberated inside the organization. As a result of the squabble, Leibler was asked in September to cease all activities on behalf of the organization. A man believed to be Leibler's ally, Elan Steinberg, the WJC's executive vice president, left his post.

Bronfman, who was expected to step down next year after two and a half decades at the WJC's helm, announced in September that he was aborting his resignation plans and would run for another five-year term.

The controversial matter dominated the morning session of the EJC's annual meeting, which brought together representatives of Jewish communities in 25 countries, including several new members of the European Union.

For his part, Leibler told JTA that "it is a shame that the EJC has not been pre-

pared to listen to my views and has been willing to adopt a position listening only to one side."

In a telephone interview with JTA from Israel, Leibler said he would ask EJC leaders to "set up a meeting so I can talk to them," adding that "every single person who has expressed concern or asked for an independent audit has either been expelled, vilified or marginalized."

Where exactly the truth lies remains unclear, but this week's move by the European group appears to give Singer and his allies a boost.

In their statement, virtually all members of the EJC presidium demanded Leibler's resignation.

They accuse Leibler, who has criticized what he calls a lack of transparency in WJC financial affairs, of "initiating a media campaign that is damaging, not only to the World Jewish Congress but also to the Jewish people at large."

They stated that a certified audit of WJC finances presented by Stephen Herbits — a close Bronfman associate who was made the WJC's chief operating officer — showed that "there were no irregularities and that the \$1.2 million, about which the allegations were made,

always remained within the control of the World Jewish Congress."

The Swiss Jewish community has indicated it is not satisfied with the audit and has demanded a fuller investigation.

The European group gave its Swiss member, the Federation of Swiss Jewish Communities, two weeks to sign the statement or risk suspension from the EJC presidium. Spokesman Thomas Lyssy said the Swiss group still is considering the matter.

Singer told JTA that he was not surprised by the EJC's expression of support. Calling Leibler's recent statements "scandalous," he said that "as far as we are concerned, the subject is closed."

But Leibler maintains that his intentions are innocent. He says that his words echo those of Daniel Lack, a longtime legal adviser to the WJC Geneva office, who, according to the Swiss magazine Facts, warned Singer in a private memo last summer that an independent audit was necessary "to protect the WJC from all kinds of accusations of impropriety, embezzlement and money laundering."

Meanwhile, Herbits told Facts that the Geneva office of the WJC, which had been closed during the uproar, will be reopened with a new staff.



'Jewish card' played in Ukraine?

By VLADIMIR MATVEYEV

KIEV, Ukraine (JTA) — A Ukrainian Jewish lawmaker accused members of President Leonid Kuchma's administration of playing the "Jewish card" to discredit an opposition presidential candidate.

Yevgeny Chervonenko, who is a close aide to Viktor Yuschenko, the opposition candidate for president who finished second in the recent national vote and secured a slot in the Nov. 21 runoff, told JTA that Ukrainian authorities are investigating whether Chervonenko holds an Israeli passport.

The move is seen as an effort to discredit Yuschenko by casting aspersions on his

aide's supposed dual loyalties. Chervonenko, 44, vice president of the United Jewish Community of Ukraine, denies that he has an Israeli passport.

Kuchma's administration is supporting Viktor Yanukovich, the current prime minister, who won the first round of the election by a narrow margin.

Chervonenko recently said in the Ukrainian Parliament that while being a "citizen of Ukraine, I'm proud to be a Ukrainian Jew."

An administration official defended the government's actions. "We have the documents to prove Chervonenko's Israeli citizenship," Vasil Baziv said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Charities found liable in Hamas case

A federal judge found U.S. charities liable for damages in the Hamas terrorist shooting of a U.S. citizen, a decision that is the first of its kind.

On Wednesday, Judge Arlander Keys held the Texas-based Holy Land Foundation and another charity, the Islamic Association for Palestine, liable for the May 13, 1996 shooting of 17-year-old David Boim as he waited for a bus in the West Bank.

The charities, and a third individual named in the ruling, Mohammed Salah, were liable even if they had no direct involvement in the killing, the judge said, because they realized they were aiding an organization that used violence.

A previous lawsuit in Rhode Island targeted Hamas, but not its U.S. supporters.

Compensation hearings in the \$300 million suit begin in December.

Israel part of Moral Majority?

The Rev. Jerry Falwell cited support for Israel as he announced the establishment of a new right-wing Christian group.

Falwell said Tuesday that he wants to set up the Faith and Values Coalition, modeled after his Moral Majority.

Falwell launched the Moral Majority in 1979, and it became a powerful political force in the 1980s.

"At that time, God burdened my heart to mobilize religious conservatives around a pro-life, pro-family, strong national defense and pro-Israel platform, designed to return America to her Judeo-Christian heritage. And I distinctively feel that burden again," Falwell said Tuesday.

Falwell angered Jews several years ago when he said that a Jewish man alive today is probably the Antichrist.

He later said he meant only that the Antichrist must be Jewish because Jesus was a Jew.

Fowl play at kosher chicken plant

A strike at Montreal's only kosher chicken supplier has left the community short on chicken.

Some 100 employees at a Marvid kosher chicken plant have been striking for close to two months, demanding improved working conditions and better wages, according to The Canadian Jewish News.

In an unusual move, the community's kosher certification body last week allowed suppliers from outside Montreal — including Empire Kosher Poultry — to bring kosher chickens to the city.

The Vaad Ha'ir previously had forbidden importing kosher meats aside from its own.

Using your noodle

A nondairy kugel made with margarine instead of butter won a kugel-cooking contest in Ohio.

Marilyn Golden won the first Akron Kugel Cook-Off, held recently in Akron, Ohio.

Groden flavors the noodles and eggs with cinnamon and vanilla, sweetens them with sugar and bakes the kugel in a fluted Bundt pan.

Her kugel is crowned with a brown-sugar topping and pecans.

WORLD

Israel has new deputy at U.N.

Israel got a new No. 2 at the United Nations. Dani Carmon will begin work next week as Israel's deputy permanent representative at the United Nations.

Carmon replaces Arye Mekel, who became Israel's consul general in New York in August. A longtime diplomat, Carmon has worked for more than 20 years in the Foreign Ministry.

Kristallnacht marked in Berlin

Several hundred people gathered in Berlin to mark the 66th anniversary of Kristallnacht.

The meeting took place in the Jewish community center in the German capital, built on the site of a synagogue that was burned to the ground on Nov. 9-10, 1938, when marauding bands of Nazis and their sympathizers destroyed synagogues and shops belonging to Jews across Germany and Austria.

Speakers discussed the recent gains by right-wing extremist parties.

"I expect all politicians to make it clear that a vote for a right-wing extremist party is a vote against humanity," said Albert Meyer, president of the Jewish community of Berlin.

Belgium outlaws extremist party

A Belgian court outlawed one of Europe's largest far-right political parties.

The court on Tuesday upheld a lower court ruling that found the far-right Vlaams Blok party guilty of racism.

The charge, based on the party's platform calling for the repatriation of immigrants in Belgium, places the Vlaams Blok in breach of the country's Constitution.

A Flemish nationalist movement, the Blok received 24 percent of the vote in recent elections in Belgium's northern region of Flanders, and recent opinion polls show it to be the party with the widest support in the region, which contains a sizeable Jewish community in Antwerp.

The Blok is likely to be re-formed under a new name and with a new constitution that omits the illegal clauses.

E.U. awards Israeli-born scientist

An Israeli-born scientist was the only non-European awarded a top E.U. science prize.

Gadi Rothenberg, a scientist at the University of Amsterdam, was one of five recipients of the European Union's Marie Curie Prize for his work on discovering new catalysts and materials for sustainable development, the European Commission announced this week.

MIDDLE EAST

Iran admits drone help

Iran admitted supplying Hezbollah with spy drones.

The London-based newspaper A-Sharq al-Awsat quoted an Iranian Revolutionary Guard officer as saying the Lebanese militia received eight drones in August.

On Monday, Hezbollah sent one drone on a 10-minute sortie over northern Israel, worrying the top brass in Tel Aviv.

Beach attack foiled

Israeli forces killed a Palestinian man who tried to swim to a Gaza Strip settlement to commit a terrorist attack.

The Hamas man's body washed up on Dugit's shore Wednesday after he was spotted and shot by an Israeli gunboat.

The group said the swimmer had intended to storm the settlement and blow himself up.

Cleric: Keep Arafat on life support

A leading Palestinian Muslim cleric said Islamic law forbids cutting off Yasser Arafat's life-support machine.

"As long as there is heat and life in his body, one cannot cut off the machines. Sharia law forbids it," Tayssir Al-Tamimi, the head of Islamic courts in the Palestinian Authority, told reporters Wednesday outside the Paris hospital where Arafat remains in a deep coma.