

IN THE NEWS

**Top staffers
to leave AIPAC**

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee is negotiating severance packages with two top employees the FBI is investigating for allegedly mishandling classified information, JTA has learned.

The imminent departure of Steve Rosen, AIPAC's policy director, and Keith Weissman, its senior Iran analyst, suggests the pro-Israel powerhouse wants to distance itself from them. [Story, Pg. 6]

**Report: Arab Bank
linked to terrorism**

The Arab Bank worked as a front for Al-Qaida, Hamas and other terrorist groups, according to The Wall Street Journal.

The bank's New York branch was involved in the transfer of more than \$20 million to and from terrorists or terrorist groups, including Al-Qaida, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the Journal reported.

The Jordan-based bank recently agreed to suspend its American operations under pressure from American regulatory officials.

Several American and Israeli victims of terrorist attacks have filed lawsuits against the Arab Bank, accusing it of transferring funds to its branches in Palestinian areas for payouts to suicide bombers' families.

**More churches
threaten divestment**

The United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church are to announce that they are considering using economic sanctions against Israel.

Each church will make the announcement Thursday, according to David Elcott, U.S. director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee, which got the information from the churches.

"They are responding to overtures in their churches" from those who believe that the only barrier to Israeli-Palestinian peace is Israel's presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Elcott said.

The churches will be considering economic sanctions against Israel in the next few months, he said.

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WORLD REPORT

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Toby Axelrod

A menorah displayed by Chabad in front of Berlin's Brandenburg Gate during Chanukah 2004.

Chabad's growing presence inspires pride for some, tensions with others

By TOBY AXELROD

BERLIN (JTA) — One evening last December, as pedestrians strolled along the famous Unter den Linden in former East Berlin, the decorum was broken by the incongruous sound of Jewish pop music with a distinct Chasidic "oy-oy."

Facing the former dividing line between East and West was a towering menorah, standing just in front of the ultimate of German symbols, the Brandenburg Gate, its chunky columns illuminated by spotlights. A crowd had gathered for the

city's first-ever public Chanukah celebration, sponsored by Chabad-Lubavitch and the Jewish Community of Berlin.

A group of Ukrainian Jewish immigrants could barely contain their joy. Never before had they seen such a public Chanukah display, and they'd been here 22 years. "It's a miracle," said one.

"At first, I thought it was too much," said Berliner Hannah Schubert, 22. "And then, I felt — yes — pride. My forefathers left Berlin in 1939" to escape the Nazis. "I had to press tears from my eyes."

The scene repeated 1,843 times last

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**BATTLING FOR
EUROPE'S JEWS
PART 1**

■ Chabad inspires pride and fear as it grows in Europe

Continued from page 1

year in 559 different cities in 65 countries around the world — is laden with a symbolism that is particularly poignant in places where recent Jewish history has been filled with such tragedy. And the publicity surrounding these lightings only boosts Chabad's fast-rising star.

Across Europe an extraordinary success story is unfolding: The growth and expansion of the 200-year-old Chabad-Lubavitch movement, occurring alongside — and in some cases in competition with — the revival of the remnants of local pre-war Jewish communities.

While Chabad is still on the margins of the Jewish establishment in the United States, the group has become a big player in all the major countries of Europe. In some places, Chabad is well integrated into the Jewish mainstream: Chabad rabbis fill virtually all the pulpit positions in Holland, for example, and nearly half in England. In France, they run many Jewish schools.

In other countries, Chabad and the traditional Jewish communities are at loggerheads, fighting over major donors, holiday programming — and who is the chief rabbi.

How this relationship develops may determine the face of European Jewry in the 21st century. Will Chabad edge out the established centrist Orthodox organizations that have dominated the European Jewish landscape in recent decades?

The positions of Chabad and the established communities will also determine critical issues such as which groups get both government and private funding, which insti-

tutions survive and thrive to attract and serve Jewish souls, who represents Jewish interests to the political establishment, and in some countries, which groups receive property and funds as part of Holocaust restitution.

Chabad leaders say it's not about competition for Jews or influence. In Europe and around the world, Chabad reaches out to assimilated Jews looking to reconnect with their Jewish roots. Assertive emissaries attract both tourists and local Jews seeking a spiritual home.

"The real reason for Lubavitch success is the love, selflessness and extraordinary spiritual energy its philosophy holds for every single Jew," says Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky, the movement's chief spokesman and one of its administrative leaders in New York.

But for many in the established Jewish communities, the perceived competition poses a major problem. They see, in some cases, duplication of services instead of complementary activity.

"European Jewry cannot afford to have established communities and Chabad pitted against one another," says Serge Cwajgenbaum, secretary-general of the European Jewish Congress, a representative body of European Jewish leaders that is affiliated with the World Jewish Congress.

"It took us a long time, about 60 years after the Shoah, to rebuild Jewish communities and Jewish life in Europe, and to endanger the status quo, or to change the status quo, could affect Jewish life at large," he says.

While the growth of Chabad's Jewish schools and outreach centers in Europe poses a challenge to other Jewish institutions, its impact on individual Jews is just as tangible. For some, it can mean new educational options for their children. For others, it's an uncomfortable alternative that tries to draw Jews — as well as financial support — from their own synagogues or institutions.

One modern Orthodox father in Berlin said that even though Chabad isn't his way of life, he found that when he was searching for a Jewish education for his young child, the Chabad school was the only place where he could be assured of getting kosher food.

For others, the presence of Chabad causes them to reassess their Jewish affiliation, something they may not have done when there was only one Jewish community.

Sylvie Kajdi Frajman liked the Chabad Passover seder she and her family attended in Berlin last year, and was considering sending her twins to the Chabad preschool program. In the end, she opted for the

official community's day-care center, because she felt she'd have to affiliate with the Chabad congregation, and it "made me a little anxious," she confesses.

As Chabad grows, European Jews and non-Jews alike increasingly associate one kind of Jew with Judaism: not the acculturated, often non-observant Jew who makes up the bulk of Western and Central Europe's nearly one and a half million Jews, but the Chasidic Jew, which in today's Europe generally means Chabad.

"What appeals to many people is that the blacker the hat, the more 'pure' they are," says Diana Pinto, a Paris-based historian and former consultant to the Council of Europe who has written widely about contemporary Jewish identity in Europe. "Some think Chabad must really be the truth from which everyone else has deviated — which is ahistorical and not true."

But, she says, the movement's "kindness and open and embracing nature is what attracts people. Chabad manages to find a bed and warm place for every Jew."

The landscape of European Jewry today is very different from the devastation that existed at the end of World War II, when some 6 million out of an estimated 10 million Jews were killed. Few Jews who had escaped the Nazis returned to Europe after 1945.

Today, 15 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the scene has changed again. Particularly in Germany, the Jewish population has quadrupled with the mass immigration of former Soviet Jews.

Recognizing the opportunity, Chabad has grown in leaps and bounds on the European continent, including all the lands of the former Soviet Union, spreading its brand of Orthodox Judaism. Its success is due, observers say, to the movement's aggressive style of outreach and determination, for which established Jewish communities are no match.

Chabad, which emerged in the late 18th century in Belarus, began its return in earnest to Europe soon after the late Lubavitcher rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who had fled Nazi-occupied Warsaw for New York in 1941, assumed the leadership of the worldwide Chabad movement in 1951. He sent emissaries first to Italy, France, the Netherlands and England.

Austria and Switzerland followed in the early 1980s. In the late 1980s and 1990s, Germany, Scandinavia and the countries of the former Soviet bloc were added. In all of Europe today, Portugal and Luxembourg

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are among the very few countries that do not have permanent Chabad centers — yet.

In the four years after the rebbe's death in 1994, Chabad's outreach empire expanded at an annual rate of 27 percent. Today, there are 112 Chabad-Lubavitch centers in Europe, not counting those in the former Soviet Union, where Chabad's presence is largest of all. There, 104 Chabad centers exist, many of which house multiple institutions. Scores of separate Chabad schools also operate in Europe.

Chabad's expansion in Europe is not conducted according to any grand design, Chabad leaders say. Decisions about where to send new emissaries are made on a case-by-case basis. Germany today is the fastest growing area for Chabad, they say, because the tremendous influx of post-Soviet Jews convinced Chabad leaders that the existing Jewish community in Germany could not handle the strain.

Chabad leaders say their emissaries are "building Jewish communities." They say that when they move into a new town, their intention is to work in harmony with existing Jewish institutions. They point out that Schneerson always emphasized the importance of not duplicating existing Jewish services.

Other Jewish leaders, however, say Chabad tactics have changed. Today, instead of only bringing Judaism to places with little or no organized Jewish life, Chabad emissaries are deliberately moving into territory with established communities, and in some places, edging out existing Jewish institutions.

There is a consensus among many mainstream European Jewish leaders that each time Chabad expands its sphere of influence, as one rabbi put it, they "step on another set of toes."

As an example, critics point to the growing trend of Chabad emissaries seeking the title of chief rabbi, even in places where chief rabbis already exist. The group has succeeded in doing this in several former Soviet lands, most notably Russia and Ukraine.

In the past few years, conflict has broken out in some places where Chabad emissaries have sought the chief rabbi title. The most dramatic example is Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, where Chabad Rabbi Sholom Krinsky has been demanding that the Jewish community recognize him as chief rabbi and that it fire the new rabbi it had hired, Rabbi Chaim Burshtein. The fracas, which sometimes erupted into violence, spilled over last year into the larger Jewish and secular world, as Krinsky tried to draw in-

ternational Jewish organizations and even the European Parliament into the struggle.

Beyond competing for Jews, there is money and politics at stake. In many European countries, the organized Jewish community has an official relationship with the state and can be eligible for government funding, the level of which is determined by the number of registered Jews.

The opening of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union 15 years ago led to the institution of religious freedom and also opened doors to Western-based religious institutions. Chabad had maintained an underground network within the Soviet Union since the 1920s, but with the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 the movement began its big public push into the Eastern bloc, eager to win Jews back to Judaism and rebuild yiddishkeit in the lands that gave birth to Chasidism more than two centuries ago.

In order to achieve this, Chabad rabbis had to forge political connections.

In Russia, close ties between Chabad and Russian President Vladimir Putin give Chabad influence and help in building its network of federated communities. For his part, Putin gets a Jewish stamp of approval that plays well with western political leaders. The Russian Jewish businessmen who support Chabad feel they're doing a mitzvah and playing on the winning side of the political game as well.

There is a fierce territoriality, says Rabbi Aba Dunner, executive director of the Conference of European Rabbis.

Some observers fear that Chabad is planning to take the tactics that have succeeded so well in former Soviet lands west. Chabad supporters argue that political connections are necessary to anchor a Jewish community. They also say that by maintaining such high visibility, be it through public holiday celebrations or public gatherings with elected officials, Chabad promotes a positive message of Jewish pride rather than the Holocaust-centered identity associated with the established Jewish communities, and this has done wonders, they say, for the public image of European Jewry.

In contrast to Chabad leaders and emissaries, who are driven by the desire to spread their brand of Judaism across the globe, the established Jewish communities in Europe were mostly concerned with rebuilding on a local scale. First came the infrastructure: congregations, kashrut, schools, political connections. Then, as post-Holocaust generations came of age, Jewish art, music and literature began to take off, and non-Orthodox Judaism



Chabad.org

Chabad celebrates Sukkot with Jewish teens in Germany.

worked its way back into the mainstream.

A survey of European Jewish communities shows positive, negative and mixed relationships between Chabad and non-Chabad communities.

In Vienna, for example, relations soured when Chabad applied to the Austrian government for recognition as a separate religious entity in order to secure state funding for its educational programs. If the bid works, it will be the first time in Austrian history that a second Jewish community is officially recognized. A recent dispute in Prague led to the temporary closure of the Old-New Synagogue.

A prime example of cooperation is in the United Kingdom, where Chabad has long been integrated into the Jewish establishment. Thirty-five Chabad rabbis serve in non-Chabad pulpits of the United Synagogue, Britain's official network of Orthodox congregations. When those rabbis need guidance, they turn to the head of the United Synagogue, Britain's Orthodox Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks — not to Chabad headquarters in Brooklyn.

"We don't have the conflicts that are in other communities," confirms Henry Grunwald, head of the Board of Deputies of British Jewry.

Some observers call the worries about a Chabad takeover of Europe's Jewish communities overblown.

Nathan Kalmanowicz, head of religious affairs for the Central Council of Jews in Germany, doesn't see anything sinister in Chabad's success. "In Dresden, the liberal rabbi has services once a month with a few dozen people. Then comes a Chabadnik, builds his own Chabad house, holds services every Friday night with 200 to 300 people, coming out of a community of 600.

"I would like to be conquered in this way," he says. "They do not a good job but a very good job."

Chabad wields great influence in E.U.

By PHILIP CARMEL

BRUSSELS (JTA) — Across the street from the headquarters of the European Commission, in the very heart of the European Union, is the office of the Rabbinical Center of Europe. It looks like a war room: Stretched across one wall is a gigantic map of the European continent, stuck with hundreds of pins from Ireland to Kyrgyzstan. Each pin represents a Chabad rabbi affiliated with the center.

This is a map of Chabad-Lubavitch's sphere of influence in Europe. Sitting beneath it and surrounded by the flags of the E.U.'s 25 member states, Rabbi Menachem Margolin, the Rabbinical Center's secretary-general, is proud of what his group has achieved in its four years in Brussels.

"We have around 700 rabbis across Europe who look to us for spiritual and technical guidance," he says.

In a sense, there is a battle going on. For Chabad, it is a battle for the souls of lost Jews; its foot soldiers are the thousands of Chabad emissaries sent to spread yiddishkeit across the globe.

But for many Jewish organizations in Europe, it looks increasingly like a battle for control over Jewish communities and institutions.

Here, in the political capital of Europe, the activities of the Rabbinical Center have ramifications for Jewish political and communal interests throughout the continent. At a time when anti-Semitism and Israel's

image in Europe are occupying the international Jewish agenda, the battle for political recognition, influence — and public funding — has intensified.

"It's a great sadness that this duplication exists in a Europe of 25 states where for the first time ever Jews are protected under the law and can cast off their shackles," says Jonathan Joseph, president of the European Council of Jewish Communities. "It's such a pity that having come this far, we should dissipate our energies with factionalism."

The Chabad enterprise in Europe is coordinated through the Rabbinical Center in Brussels, acting either alone or through its affiliated organizations, most notably the European Jewish Community Center and a student organization, which maintain offices in the same building.

Although the struggle is described by others in the European Jewish community as one between themselves and Chabad, Margolin and his associates in Brussels say that the organizations they head are not Chabad institutions, though they are proud Lubavitchers themselves.

The words "Chabad" or "Lubavitch" do not appear on any doors in the building, nor are they used on the letterhead of the Rabbinical Center or the community center. In early 2004, the word "Chabad" was removed from the masthead of the center's Web site.

"I want to make it clear that the RCE is not a Chabad institution," says the center's director, Rabbi Moshe Garelik. "Chabad helped us at the beginning with things like the Web site, but some of our supporters would not feel comfortable with the RCE as a Chabad organization."

It is clear, however, that both the Rabbinical Center and the

European Jewish Community Center were created as Chabad institutions and are still so considered by Chabad headquarters in Brooklyn. The official Web site of Chabad-Lubavitch lists the Rabbinical Center as one of the movement's institutions in Brussels.

And Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky, the New York-based development director for Chabad's international emissary network, says Garelik was placed in Brussels by his organization.

Some Jewish organizations in Europe criticize the center's use of the acronym RCE, the same three letters, albeit in a different order, as those used by the continent's pre-existing Orthodox rabbinical group, the Conference of European Rabbis.

However, Margolin says that his group's choice of name reflects its pluralist approach. "In order to make sure there is no mistake about our willingness to help any and all we decided to indicate that in our name," he wrote in an email.

Other Jewish leaders feel there's more behind it, suggesting that Chabad wants to present themselves as the primary representative of the Jewish people.

"I'd want them to say that they are really Chabad in order not to mix up terms," says Rabbi Avraham Guigui, chief rabbi of Belgium's Consistoire, an umbrella organization.

The European Commission, the executive branch of the European Union, works on a political level only with the European Jewish Congress and the Conference of European Rabbis. Some Jewish leaders fear that the Rabbinical Center and the Chabad rabbis it represents are trying to change that, and to present themselves as the officially recognized Jewish community of Europe.

It's not just Jewish communal leaders who are concerned. Last year Ricardo Levi, then director of the Group of Policy Advisers to the president of the European Commission and the staffer who personally handled Jewish-related issues for the commission, suggested that the Conference of European Rabbis open a Brussels office in order to counteract the Rabbinical Center's influence among European

'We're young and we have the time and the energy. When you're young like us, you want to change the world.'
Rabbi Menachem Samama

BATTLING FOR EUROPE'S JEWS PART 2



Chabad.org

During a 2002 event at the European Parliament in Brussels, European officials look at a Rabbinical Center of Europe map showing European cities that have public menorah displays.

legislators and officials.

Levi's initiative came amid concern in the European Commission over the close ties between the Rabbinical Center and Russian President Vladimir Putin. E.U. officials have also said they are uncomfortable with the idea of European Jewish communities being represented in Brussels solely by a fervently Orthodox group.

Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky, the Brooklyn-based administrative head of the international Chabad-Lubavitch movement, says that Garelik's principal role "was and is to coordinate all the rabbis who are emissaries in West and Eastern Europe and bring them together in one coordinated group for all necessary rabbinic functions."

Because Garelik is in Brussels, however, Krinsky added, "he's also the liaison between the emissaries and the E.U. countries."

Margolin confirms that these are the two main functions of the Rabbinical Center, which he and Garelik direct.

In an e-mail statement to JTA, Margolin says the Rabbinical Center is in Brussels "in order to serve European Jewry's needs and to facilitate the numerous requests of rabbis and communities continent-wide." He added that the group tries to "work closely with European Union institutions on problem-solving and various aspects of advocacy."

To that end, the rabbinic group says it is involved in such activities as training and dispatching new rabbis; providing cantors, shochets and mohels to local communities; providing a Beit Din and rendering decisions on halachah, or Jewish law; and assisting with funerals, mikvahs and other ritual needs.

The Rabbinical Center's energetic appearance on the European scene comes at a time when the worldwide Chabad movement is going through its own internal turmoil. The checks and balances that the late Lubavitcher rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, personally exerted over his emissaries have largely dissipated in the decade since his death, leaving the playing field wide open to those emissaries who have the skills and drive to assert their own agendas.

A whole new cadre of young, savvy Chabad emissaries has come of age, men like Garelik and Rabbi Levi Matusof, director of the European Jewish Community Center, who move easily in political circles.

This generational change has led to a difference between the largely cordial relationships that the older, established Chabad rabbis maintained with the more mainstream and established European

Jewish Congress and the Conference of European Rabbis, and the readiness of some of the younger, newer rabbis to rock the communal boat.

Such is the case in Austria, where Chabad Rabbi Jacob Biderman is trying to secure government recognition of his own Jewish community alongside the pre-existing official Jewish community. If he succeeds, it will be the first time in Austrian history that two official Jewish communities exist.

These battles between the Rabbinical Center and mainstream Jewish organizations in Europe have become particularly acute during the past year. Most specifically, the center has a troubled relationship with the Conference of European Rabbis.

Margolin insists the Rabbinical Center doesn't want to ruffle feathers. "There are a number of rabbinic and communal organizations on the European continent," he says. "We strive to cooperate and maintain good relations with all of them."

One of those organizations the Rabbinical Council strives to cooperate with is the Federation of Jewish Communities of the Commonwealth of Independent States, a Moscow-centered umbrella group founded in 1988 under the leadership of Chabad's chief rabbi for Russia, Berel Lazar.

The federation is by far the dominant Jewish religious force in the former Soviet Union, recognized as the official voice of local Jewry by the heads of most countries in which it is active — most notably by Putin. And some senior European Jewish leaders fear Chabad is trying to do the same thing in Western Europe.

Early last year in Vienna, the Rabbinical Center honored former European Commission President Romano Prodi with a humanitarian award. The award came just weeks after the European Jewish Congress and its New York-based parent body, the World Jewish Congress, accused Prodi in London's Financial Times of not being tough enough on anti-Semitism.

The Rabbinical Center tries to boost the status of Chabad rabbis in various countries by bestowing honors on those countries' political leaders, but the opposite is



Chabad.org

European Commission President Romano Prodi confers with Rabbi Moshe Garelik, director of the Rabbinical Center of Europe, in Vienna in February 2004.

also true: The center pays back political leaders who support Chabad.

One of the first examples of this occurred before a key E.U.-Russia summit in Brussels in 2002, where Lazar praised Putin's relations with the Russian Jewish community at a meeting the Rabbinical Center arranged with Prodi at the European Commission.

Similarly, in December 2004, just days before the European Union prepared to debate possible candidacy status for Turkey, the Rabbinical Center held a key meeting with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Brussels, where they called for speeded-up candidacy for Turkish membership in the European Union.

Last December in Strasbourg, the European Jewish Community Center held its Chanukah candle-lighting ceremony in the European Parliament.

As dozens of European lawmakers and their assistants gathered in front of the menorah, Rabbi Shmuel Samama, director of Strasbourg's Chabad House, was introduced to the legislators by Matusof as "rabbi of the Strasbourg Jewish community."

No mention was made of the dozen or so other rabbis working today in Strasbourg, including the official chief rabbi of Bas Rhin, the French region in which Strasbourg is situated.

Watching alongside was the event's co-organizer and Samama's son, Rabbi Menachem Samama. He noted that today, much of the on-the-ground work with European political leaders is being done by young Chabad rabbis like himself.

"We're young and we have the time and the energy," Samama said. "When you're young like us, you want to change the world."

AIPAC staffers negotiate departures

By RON KAMPEAS and MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The American Israel Public Affairs Committee is negotiating severance packages with two top employees who are the target of an FBI investigation sparked by alleged mishandling of classified information, JTA has learned.

The imminent departure of Steve Rosen, AIPAC's policy director, and Keith Weissman, its senior Iran analyst, suggests that the pro-Israel powerhouse wants to distance itself from the two before its May 22 policy conference and Israel's historic pullout from the Gaza Strip this summer.

Still, observers say the departure of Rosen, who has shaped AIPAC policy for more than 20 years, would be a stunning blow for the pro-Israel lobby.

Two sources close to Rosen and Weissman said the staffers have been negotiating severance packages at least since last week. They have been on paid leave since January.

The negotiations could mean that AIPAC has lost the initial confidence it showed in the two men after the FBI raided AIPAC offices in August 2004 and then again in December. The searches came after the alleged leaking of classified documents by a Pentagon Iran specialist.

Since then, senior AIPAC staffers have testified before a federal grand jury convened by the office of Paul McNulty, the U.S. attorney for northern Virginia.

Pressed by JTA, lawyers for Rosen and Weissman issued the following statement Wednesday: "Steve Rosen and Keith Weissman have not violated any U.S. law or AIPAC policy. Contrary to press accounts, they have never solicited, received or passed on any classified documents. They carried out their job responsibilities solely to serve AIPAC's goal of strengthening the U.S.-Israel relationship."

It was the first on-the-record statement to come from the pair's lawyers, Abbe Lowell and John Nassikas; in the past, all such statements have come from AIPAC and its lawyers. It also was the first statement to suggest that Weissman and Rosen had been accused of violating AIPAC policy.

Weissman was not available immediately for comment. Rosen was reached but had no comment.

Patrick Dorton, a spokesman for AIPAC, would only repeat the "no comment" AIPAC has made since several staffers went before a grand jury in January: "AIPAC does not comment on personnel matters."

Weissman has worked at AIPAC for 12 years, but Rosen, 62, has been with the organization since 1982, when he was hired from the Rand Corporation, a think tank that often consults with the Pentagon.

He was hired after AIPAC's lobbying efforts failed to stop the U.S. from selling spy planes to Saudi Arabia; the opposition to the sale that AIPAC amassed on Capitol Hill dissipated once President Reagan launched his own lobbying effort in its favor.

The lesson, Rosen suggested time and again, was that the organization had to lobby the executive branch as well. That made some traditionalists nervous. Lobbying Congress was a time-honored practice in Washington, but lobbying other branches of government seemed unseemly.

Yet Rosen's model soon was replicated throughout Washington, and now it's routine for lobbyists of all stripes to target both the legislative and executive branches.

But it was Rosen's relationship with a nonlegislative branch of government that precipitated the current crisis.

Sources say the FBI moved against AIPAC after FBI agents observed Larry Franklin, a midlevel Iran analyst at the Pentagon, exchanging information with Rosen and Weissman at a restaurant in Arlington, Va., in 2003. It's not clear whether the FBI observers at the time were targeting Franklin or the AIPAC staffers.

However, several reports subsequently said that the FBI threatened Franklin with prosecution unless he mounted a sting against the two AIPAC staffers, giving them false information about an imminent threat to Israeli agents in Kurdistan.

Once Rosen and Weissman relayed that information to Israel, according to those

accounts, the FBI moved in, confiscating files from their offices in August and December. Franklin reportedly since has returned to work for the Pentagon, albeit in a nonsensitive post.

In December, several AIPAC officials received subpoenas: Howard Kohr, AIPAC's executive director; Richard Fishman, its managing director; Renee Rothstein, the communications director; and Raphael Danziger, the research director.

At first, AIPAC stood steadfastly

behind Rosen and Weissman, saying that "neither AIPAC nor any member of our staff has broken any law, nor has AIPAC or its employees ever received information they believed was secret or classified."

By February, when at least a few of the subpoenaed officials had given grand jury testimony, AIPAC had moved to terse "no comments."

Rosen arrived at AIPAC before many of his superiors. He was the consummate insider: in 1991 *The Washington Post* quoted AIPAC's then-executive director, Tom Dine, as describing Rosen "as the best bureaucratic infighter I ever met."

Rosen was a fierce, demanding boss, but one who earned steadfast loyalty from some staffers, even long after they left the organization.

"I still can't believe it," said one former staffer who spoke on condition of anonymity. "Understanding the kind of loyalty and respect people inside and outside the organization had for Steve, I can't believe it wouldn't be a mutually agreed-upon decision."

At AIPAC's staff briefings each Friday, no one commanded more attention than Rosen, who would confidently prognosticate developments in the Middle East, down to the minutest of details — and who often was proved right within weeks.

Sometimes that confidence grated. Yitzhak Rabin especially disliked Rosen, according to some who knew them both, which helped precipitate Rabin's stunning public break with AIPAC in 1993, when the Israeli prime minister said he preferred that Israel handle relations with the United States on its own. ■

'Steve Rosen and Keith Weissman have not violated any U.S. law or AIPAC policy.'

Abbe Lowell and John Nassikas

Attorneys

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

PASSOVER FEATURE

Stories about the Exodus and other immigrants

By JANE ULMAN

ENCINO, Calif. (JTA) — “Jews tell stories. That’s the most important thing we do. It tells us about our past,” my son Danny, 14, says.

And Passover is the quintessential story-telling holiday.

Four times (Exodus 12:26, 13:8 and 13:14 and Deuteronomy 6:20) the Torah commands us to tell our children the story of the Exodus. “And you shall explain to your child on that day, ‘It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went forth from Egypt,’” according to Exodus 13:8.

And four times during the seder we tell the story. We ask the Four Questions. We relate the story in ways each of the Four Sons understands. We recount the Ten Plagues and sing “Go Down Moses,” “The Frog Song” and “Dayeinu.” And we explain the three symbols of Passover: the lamb shank, the maror and the matzah.

For this story of the Israelites’ journey from slavery to redemption marks the defining event in the history of the Jewish people, uniting us as a nation and giving us the laws, hope and responsibility for creating a more just world. It serves as the core of our Jewish identity.

Even more, stories tell us who we are. They give us a sense of rootedness and of belonging. They give meaning and purpose to our existence.

Yes, we were slaves in Egypt. But we were also Eastern European Jews who fled to America and who drove trucks, opened grocery stores and lost our jobs. Who raised our first-generation children, as my father-in-law said, “as best we could,” and who worked toward building a better life.

And just as the story of the Exodus is embedded in our collective consciousness, so the stories of our parents and grandparents must be imprinted in our personal consciousness.

As August Boatwright, a character in Sue Kidd’s novel about race in the southern United States, “The Secret Life of Bees,” says, “Stories have to be told or they die, and when they die, we can’t remember who we are or why we’re here.” ■

Seders at Spaso House

By LINDA MOREL

MOSCOW (JTA) — Did you know that the United States’s ambassador to the Russian Federation is Jewish?

Alexander Vershbow, who is a career diplomat, and his wife, Lisa, arrived in Moscow in July 2001. The next spring, with the chill of winter still in the air, the Vershbows planned their first Passover in Russia.

“The idea to host a seder at our residence came naturally,” says Lisa Vershbow. The family has two sons; one was then in high school, the other in college.

“We have often invited family and friends to our home in Washington, so it wasn’t surprising that we’d want to do the same in Moscow.”

It’s always a challenge to prepare the many courses prescribed for a seder, but there were even more challenges involved in making the seder at Spaso House, the American ambassador’s official residence.

The residence has two full-time chefs, who prepare the foods for frequent receptions — often with as many as 300 guests, and for official breakfasts, lunches and dinners, often for 24 people per meal. The year’s biggest event, the Fourth of July reception, welcomes 1,500 people.

Every year, approximately 12,000 guests pass through Spaso House. Cooking is done in a restaurant-style kitchen in the basement, and the food is brought upstairs on a dumbwaiter.

“The Spaso House head chef is a delightful man, who has lived in Moscow for years,” says Vershbow.

Vershbow, too, is a good cook, who enjoys preparing food for her family. She came to Moscow equipped with her mother’s Passover recipes.

Though the residence’s head chef is skilled at preparing a variety of cuisines, he was unfamiliar with Passover fare.

“But he proved equal to the task, making marvelous charoset from my description alone,” Vershbow says.

“He roasted the shank bone and the egg

to beautiful perfection,” she continues. “He searched the Moscow open-air markets for whole horseradish root, and bought our matzas at the Jewish community center, since they are not sold in grocery stores here.”

Unfortunately the matza balls proved difficult to get right. As anyone who’s ever attempted them can confirm, matza balls can easily become cannon fodder.

In recent decades, many home cooks have avoided this potential catastrophe by relying on commercial mixes. Needless to say, these user-friendly mixes

are not a staple item in Russian markets. But Vershbow’s mother saved the day by toting six boxes of matza ball mix from Boston.

“During our first Passover, the chef, in his effort to create perfectly round spheres, over-handled the dough, producing some rather tough matza balls,” says Vershbow.

“The following year, I found that by describing them

as similar to French quenelles” — finely textured dumplings — “he produced the perfect consistency.” Light and airy, they practically floated above the soup, she says.

Every spring since they arrived in Moscow the Vershbows have hosted a seder in Spaso House’s state dining room. They’ve invited between 40 and 50 people each year. They set up four or five round tables, each seating 10 guests. Identical seder plates grace each table. At the beginning of the service, Lisa Vershbow lights the candles and recites the blessing from her table.

“A number of previous ambassadors have hosted seders here,” says Vershbow, whose husband is not the first Jew to serve as U.S. ambassador to Russia. But non-Jews have hosted seders at Spaso House, too. That began in the 1980s, when Russia was still part of the Soviet Union and U.S. ambassadors made a conscious effort to support Moscow’s Jewish community.

As she plans to recite “Next year in Jerusalem,” Vershbow hopes to celebrate Passover 2006 at home in Washington.

Believe it or not, she’s looking forward to doing all the cooking by herself. ■

PASSOVER
FEATURE

We have often invited family and friends to our home in Washington, so it wasn’t surprising that we’d want to do the same in Moscow.

Lisa Vershbow

Wife of U.S. ambassador to Russia

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

U.S., Russia to talk Gaza

The United States and Russia will discuss Israel's plans to withdraw from the Gaza Strip. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, on her way to Moscow to consult with her Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, noted that Russia is a member of the Quartet, the group driving the "road map" plan for Middle East peace.

"We expect to talk about a wide range of regional issues, most especially the Middle East, because, as you know, Russia is a member of the Quartet and the Quartet is now very actively getting ready for the Gaza withdrawal," Rice said Tuesday aboard her plane.

Rabbi backs withdrawal

An influential Israeli rabbi backed the planned withdrawals from the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank.

Rabbi Yitzhak Kadouri, a kabbalist particularly revered by Jews of Sephardic descent, said in an interview with the religious journal Family this week that Israel must give peace with the Palestinians a chance.

"If, in return for giving up something small, there is peace, then it is permissible to leave," Kadouri said, referring to the withdrawals. "Jews and Arabs must not live together."

WORLD

New pope wants interreligious dialogue

Benedict XVI stressed his desire for interfaith dialogue at his first mass since being elected pope.

"I address everybody, even those who follow other religions or who simply look for an answer to life's fundamental questions and still haven't found it," he said Wednesday, the Associated Press reported. "To all, I turn with simplicity and affection to ensure that the church wants to continue weaving an open and sincere dialogue with them, in the quest for the real good for man and society."

Ukrainians sign anti-Semitic letter

An anti-Semitic letter is being circulated among public figures in Ukraine.

The document, reportedly signed by as many as 100 public figures, including two lawmakers, calls on authorities and the Supreme Court to investigate the activities of Jewish organizations in Ukraine.

The letter accuses Jewish groups of undermining Ukraine's independence and destroying its national character.

The letter was sent to President Viktor Yushenko, Parliament speaker Vladimir Litvin and the chairman of the country's supreme court, the nationalist magazine Personal Plus reported this week.

The authors of the letter demand that the Ukrainian parliament hold a special hearing on the activities of Jewish organizations and that leaders of "organized Jewry" be stripped of state awards they received from former President Leonid Kuchma.

Experts believe the letter tries to replicate a document circulated in Russia earlier this year.

Ukrainian officials and Ukrainian Jewish organizations have not yet responded.

Putin won't budge on Syria arms sale

Vladimir Putin stood firm on Russia's planned sale of anti-aircraft missiles to Syria.

Speaking to Israel's Channel One television Wednesday, the Russian president said there was no change to the plan to sell shoulder-launched Strela missiles to Syrian President Bashar Assad, despite Israeli objections.

Putin played down Israel's concerns, saying the only impact the deal would have on the balance of power in the region would be that "Israeli jets will no longer be able to overfly Assad's palace."

Israel, backed by the United States, fears the missiles could reach Hezbollah in Lebanon or Palestinian terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip.

Jewish Agency exec fights for job

A top professional at the Jewish Agency for Israel is fighting for his job.

Mike Rosenberg, director general of the department of immigration and absorption, will argue that he should retain his position in a hearing Thursday before Sallai Meridor, chairman of the Jewish Agency's executive, and Carole Solomon, chairwoman of the Jewish Agency's board of governors.

Rosenberg, who has held his position for more than seven years, was told that his contract, which ends in June, would not be renewed because the Jewish Agency wants to inject fresh talent into its ranks, Jewish Agency officials told JTA.

The hearing is a grievance option provided by Israeli labor law.

Jews rally for MIAs

Jews rallied in cities around the world Wednesday to demand freedom for Capt. Ron Arad, the Israeli air force navigator who disappeared after his plane went down over Lebanon in 1986.

More than 200 people gathered across from the United Nations in New York City, holding placards with Arad's photograph and chanting "Bring him home."

The rally in New York was one of eight gatherings held to pressure Iran to release information on the whereabouts of Arad and four other Israeli soldiers missing in action — Zachary Baumel, Yehuda Katz, Zvi Feldman and Guy Hever.

NORTH AMERICA

Senators introduce Jerusalem law

U.S. senators introduced legislation calling Jerusalem the "undivided capital of Israel."

The bill, introduced Tuesday by a group of Republican senators, said Jerusalem should be recognized as Israel's capital, and that the U.S. Embassy in Israel should be moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, before the United States recognizes a Palestinian state.

The State Department traditionally has not identified Jerusalem as part of any nation in such official U.S. documents as passports, and Presidents Bush and Clinton have waived provisions that would move the embassy.

Congressman to lead outreach effort

U.S. Rep. Steve Israel (D-N.Y.) was chosen to lead a Jewish outreach effort for Democratic House candidates.

Israel announced Wednesday that he will chair the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee's Jewish Outreach Council, to help communicate a Democratic message to Jewish voters and political donors.

Religious harassment plagues military academy

The U.S. Air Force Academy is requiring all students and staff to take a religious tolerance class following allegations of religious harassment, including anti-Semitism.

There have been 55 complaints in which religious discrimination was alleged, including one in which a Jewish cadet was told the Holocaust was revenge for the death of Jesus, the Associated Press reported.