


IN THE NEWS
Olmert sees June summit

Israel's Ehud Olmert plans to meet with Mahmoud Abbas later this month.

The prime minister told Yediot Achronot on Thursday that he would like to hold his first summit with the Palestinian Authority president at the end of June.

Lawmakers want ban on Ahmadinejad

Seventy-five European lawmakers asked the European Union president to impose a travel ban on Iran's president.

The petition is aimed, in part, at preventing Mahmoud Ahmadinejad from traveling to next week's soccer World Cup in Germany, although Ahmadinejad's spokesman said earlier this week that he would not be traveling to the event.

"We do not wish the Iranian president to come to Europe for very clear reasons — his attacks on Israel, his denials concerning the Holocaust," Jana Hybaskova, a member of the European People's Party, told The Associated Press.

Legal action filed against Israeli

Legal proceedings against an Israeli Cabinet member got under way in a U.S. court. Hearings opened Wednesday in the class-action lawsuit filed by Palestinians against Avi Dichter, Israel's internal security minister.

The Center for Constitutional Rights, a New York-based group, presented oral arguments in a New York courtroom on behalf of survivors and families of those killed in an Israeli bomb attack on a Gaza City neighborhood in July 2002. Lawyers for Dichter also presented arguments, saying he is immune from prosecution as a foreign official.

As the head of the Shin Bet at the time, Dichter helped plan the attack, which killed Salah Shehada, a top Hamas terrorist.

Another 14 people, including children, were killed in the attack.

WORLD REPORT

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Brian Hendler

Draped in national flags, Israelis dance down a Jerusalem street during a Jerusalem Day parade, May 25. The celebrations marked the reunification of the city in the Six-Day War.

Jews greet U.S. overture to Iran with ambivalence and skepticism

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Did the Bush administration just hand Iran a carrot or a stick? Or did it get the shaft?

Those questions reverberated Wednesday through the corridors of Congress, think tanks and Jewish organizations after Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. secretary of state, announced a willingness to negotiate with Iran if it suspends the enrichment of uranium.

Rice described "two paths" for Iran's theocracy: Cooperation, which would reap benefits, or resistance, which would produce isolation.

The analysis was under way even before Rice shut off the microphones in Foggy Bottom. Was Rice emphasizing the incentive or the threat? Or was she handing the Islamic republic something for nothing in granting it

more time to fulfill its nuclear ambitions?

The answer for now, according to the Jewish groups most involved in the effort to tamp down Iran's nuclear ambitions: too soon to tell.

"It's all a matter of relative risk," said David Harris, the American Jewish Committee's executive director, who spent the day consulting with top administration officials on the policy. "There is no risk-free option available in seeking to end Iran's nuclear ambitions."

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby that has for more than a decade led the at-times lonely fight to focus attention on Iran's nuclear ambitions, would not comment.

Other Jewish groups were also mostly silent — reflecting an ambivalence about appeasing Israel's most dangerous foe while

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BEHIND THE HEADLINES

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wanting at the same time to neutralize Iran through diplomacy.

For its part, Israel immediately welcomed the initiative.

"Israel appreciates the steps and measures by the United States in continuing to lead the international coalition and in taking all necessary steps to prevent Iran from gaining nuclear capability," Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said in a statement.

Israel's concerns about Iran include its backing for terrorists in the Palestinian areas and in Lebanon, as well as Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's rejection of Israel's existence and his Holocaust denial.

Rice made it clear that those concerns are still on the table.

"We have many issues of concern with Iran that do not relate to the nuclear issue," Rice said, including "the terrorism that Iran continues to support in places like the Palestinian territories and, indeed, in Lebanon."

A top European diplomat confirmed to JTA that those issues would be paramount in any talks. President Bush called Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to brief him before the announcement, reports said.

Iran's initial response was not encouraging: the official Iranian news agency called the offer "propaganda."

Iran watchers were split. Patrick Clawson, deputy director for research at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said the Iranians understand that the Bush administration was serious about coupling

its incentives with threats.

"Iran is not likely to take an extended hand unless it thinks the other hand has a fist inside the glove," he said.

Michael Rubin, who specializes in Iran at the American Enterprise Institute, said the offer was a capitulation to the European Union, which is unwilling to make hard choices about Iran.

"We draw our red lines in crayon, and the Iranians no longer take us seriously," he said.

Rice said Iran must immediately suspend its enrichment-related activities, and cooperate with nuclear inspectors.

The resulting benefits "could include progressively greater economic cooperation," Rice said.

"The United States will actively support these benefits, both publicly and privately."

Rice said the United States would also "come to the table with our E.U. colleagues and meet with Iran's representatives."

In an appeal pitched to younger Iranians, she offered "increased contacts in education and cultural exchange, in sports and travel and trade and investment."

Should Iran continue to refuse cooperation, she said, "we and our European partners agree that path will lead to international isolation and progressively stronger political and economic sanctions."

Rice suggested that the agreement to stand together extended to Russia and China. Both nations have until now resisted sanctions, partly because of their extensive dealings with Iran. They are key because of their veto power on the U.N. Security Council, which could impede sanctions.

"You can be sure that our friends and our partners understand the importance of the step and the importance that the Iranians must now see of making a choice and making that choice clearly," Rice said.

Top administration officials told Jewish leaders that Iran made the promise of direct talks with the United States a condition of continuing the negotiations with Germany, Britain and France, known as the "E.U.-3."

"Senior U.S. officials with whom we spoke today say that they've heard various consistent reports that Iran wants to engage and seeks to negotiate," Harris of the AJCommittee told JTA. "While not overly optimistic, these officials believe that this approach just might work."

There was greater skepticism in Congress, where bills urging Iran's isolation have garnered overwhelming support.

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), whose bill isolating Iran passed overwhelmingly in April in the U.S. House of Representatives, said Rice's initiative would at least call Iran's bluff.

"Time after time, the regime in Tehran has defied the world's demands that it abandon its nuclear ambitions, even heralding its successful production of enriched uranium only a few months ago," she said in a statement.

Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.), the ranking member on the House's Middle East subcommittee,

said the administration was cornered by its failures in the Iraq war and by its tough rhetoric.

"It's crunch time," he told JTA. The war in Iraq, aimed at showing America's might, "didn't get the message across because of the way we mishandled everything. Iran saw the mess in Iraq and looked at this whole thing amused. Now, we have no backup plan."

Jewish officials were walking a fine line. On the one hand, the prospect of a nuclear theocracy that denies both Israel's existence and the Holocaust is clearly untenable.

On the other hand, American Jewish organizations — particularly the Reform movement — are catching up with popular American Jewish sentiment, reflected in national surveys, that the Iraq war has turned out to be a fiasco. That experience has sharpened a wariness of military options, and created openness to diplomacy.

"It is difficult not to be skeptical about the prospect of Iran living up to any agreement, but we feel that negotiations is a path worth exploring," Mark Pelavin, the associate director of the Reform's Religious Action Center, told JTA.

We draw our red lines in crayon, and the Iranians no longer take us seriously.

Michael Rubin

Analyst, American Enterprise Institute

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Israel honors Muslim journalist

By DINA KRAFT

HERZLIYA, Israel (JTA) — Why is Magdi Allam one of only a few prominent Muslims in Europe speaking out against Islamic extremism and the terrorism it breeds?

Walking across the tarmac to the helicopter that will take him on an aerial tour of Israel, Allam answers: "There's only one word. Fear."

The deputy editor of *Corriere Della Sera*, Italy's largest newspaper, Allam was assigned an armed security detail three years ago after Italian intelligence authorities uncovered death threats against him, allegedly from Hamas and other Islamic movements.

Since the terror attacks of 9/11, the Egyptian-born journalist has become one of his country's most outspoken voices against extremism. He has also not been shy about his support for Israel.

"Only if we stress Israel's right to exist, we shall stress everyone's right to live," Allam, 54, said in his May 21 speech accepting the prestigious Dan David Award for his work fostering understanding and tolerance between cultures.

He shared the \$1 million prize with three other journalists: Monica Gonzales of Chile, Adam Michnik of Poland and Goenawan Mohamad of Indonesia, all of whom risked their lives and careers to tell the stories of their countries.

He received a standing ovation from the audience when he proclaimed, "We are all Israelis" and "Am Yisrael Chai."

Allam, who arrived in Italy when he was 20, is nostalgic for the Cairo of his youth, which he describes as a multicultural, secular hub where Europeans, Jews and Egyptians lived together peacefully.

His first brush with intolerance came at age 15, when he was summoned by the Egyptian secret police because he had been dating a Jewish girl. He had not even realized she was Jewish at the time, he said, because the communities were so integrated.

But following the 1967 Six-Day War, everything changed, he told JTA.

Allam, with his youthful face and wiry frame, seems at first an unlikely figure to take on the forces of international terror-

ism. He says he speaks out for the good of everyone, including the European countries he worries are pandering to extremist elements by giving in on key social issues with their own growing Muslim communities. He dismisses arguments that terrorism, including Palestinian terrorist acts, are borne out of the desperation of the disempowered.

"Terrorism is not reactive, there is always a puppeteer" who uses terrorism as a means to wield power, he said. On his helicopter trip tracing the route of Israel's security fence through the center of the country to Jerusalem and then flying south toward the Gaza Strip, Allam looks out the window and takes in the view.

The helicopter tour, sponsored by The Israel Project, a non-profit group committed to Israel's security, was instructive, he said.

"It clarified for me the importance of security for the Jewish people," he said. "It explained the necessity of the security fence. It is now clear that the Israelis and Palestinians have failed to build a common ground of confidence so we need to have this separation."

This visit was Allam's fourth trip to Israel. His first was in 1988 during the first intifada. Looking out at the view over the northern edge of the Gaza Strip, he recalled being attacked there by Palestinian youths. He was on assign-

ment, traveling with other Italian journalists, when Palestinians began pelting their car with stones.

The helicopter landed briefly near the border with Gaza, where Allam and other journalists were shown areas where homemade rockets are being launched into Israel by Palestinian groups. He asked questions about the security arrangements — the fence that surrounds Gaza and the army guard towers positioned nearby. He said he would not be going to Gaza during this trip.

"It's dangerous for me to go there," he said, looking out at the hazy view of Gaza City in the distance.

Allam said he hopes to help encourage Western countries like Italy to rid themselves of the growth of fundamentalist Islamic elements. In his upcoming

book, he urges Italians to safeguard their own heritage and society.

"We have to eradicate the culture of death, intolerance and violence," he said. The struggle, he argues, is not Islam versus the West, but of barbarity against civilization.

Allam, who has an easygoing smile and relaxed manner, says he does not regret the positions he has taken, despite the personal risk.

"It's a price I accept. This is about life and freedom for everybody," he said, adding, "I'm fighting for Muslims, Christians and Jews. There is no such thing as good terrorism and bad terrorism. It's the same ideology of death and violence." ■

FOCUS
ON
ISSUES

'Terrorism is not
reactive, there is always
a puppeteer'
Magdi Allam
Journalist

Odessa Jews want construction halted

By VLADIMIR MATVEYEV

ODESSA, Ukraine (JTA) — A Ukrainian Jewish community is trying to stop construction in an area believed to be over the site of a wartime massacre.

The site is located on Lyusdorfskaya Street in the city of Odessa. In 1941, the Nazis killed and cremated more than 25,000 people, mainly Jews, in this area.

The area is marked by two memorials commemorating Jews and Soviet prisoners of war massacred by the Nazis. The

proposed construction site is located 300 yards from one of the memorials. The Odessa Association of Former Prisoners of Ghettos and Concentration Camps wants to stop the new construction because, according to some witnesses, killings took place close to the proposed construction, Roman Shvartz, the leader of the group, told JTA.

A spokesman for the mayor told JTA the site is far enough away from the memorial to make the construction acceptable. ■

Birthright hits magic number

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — Birthright Israel could do a heck of a lot worse than Stephanie Lowenthal as the 100,000th participant on the group's free, 10-day, identity-building trips to Israel.

The 26-year-old New Yorker is attractive, eloquent and poised — and, as was evident during a news conference Wednesday, she'll do well as Birthright's public face when the organization celebrates this milestone next week in Israel.

"Planning a trip to Israel has been something I've wanted to do my whole life, but it has not been feasible until now," said Lowenthal, who works in communications for the NASDAQ Stock Market.

She didn't grow up particularly observant, though she had a bat mitzvah and her family is "pretty Conservative," she said. Lowenthal hasn't served as a leader in any Jewish group and, significantly here, she's never been to Israel.

All of this, Birthright officials say, means Lowenthal's background is a fairly accurate representation of many of the program participants.

Had Lowenthal waited any longer to sign up, she would not have been able to secure a spot on a Birthright trip at all. That's because the trip is for Jews aged 18-26 — and Lowenthal just makes the cutoff.

And while she did end up finding a place on this month's trip — and an auspicious place to boot — thousands of other young Jewish adults today find themselves on Birthright's growing waiting list.

The waiting list, which Birthright officials say numbers around 30,000 people, is a testament to the program's popularity and success. But it's also indicative of the group's struggle to find sufficient funding for everyone who wants to go before it's too late.

"We have to get a lot bigger quicker if we hope to stem the tide" of declining Jewish identity in the Diaspora, said Michael Steinhardt, a founder and funder of the 6-year-old program.

According to a 2004 study by independent researchers at Brandeis University, Birthright, launched late in 1999 as a five-year pilot project, makes a profound impact on participants' Jewish identities. Many become active in their schools' Hillels when they return to campus. Some go into Jewish

professional life and between 4,000 and 5,000 of the participants from around the world now live in Israel, officials say.

Last year, in an effort to ensure its sustainability, broaden its base of financial support and accommodate the explosion in the number of Jewish young adults interested in taking part, Birthright founded the Birthright Israel Foundation.

About 14 months later, Birthright officials say that the foundation has made some significant strides forward — and still has a long way to go.

This is "not a time to pat ourselves on the shoulder," Steinhardt said.

The foundation changed the way Birthright raised money. In its first five years, the program relied on a relatively small number of donors making large gifts. Now the foundation has made an effort to draw in many more donors at lower levels, in addition to big gifts.

Between January and April of this year, the number of gifts to Birthright under \$50,000 was four times the number from the same period the previous year, adding up to somewhere in the mid-six figures, the foundation's president, Jay Golan, told JTA.

Since the fall, Golan said, the group has attracted three new donors at the \$1 million level and is anticipating others. Further, 12 of the original 14 philanthropists who backed the group are still on board (one of the original group has since died), though not necessarily at the original level.

In addition, the Israeli government has agreed to match outside donations one dollar for every two dollars up to a maximum of \$20 million from the government for next year.

And the Jewish Agency for Israel and the U.S. federation system each kicked in some \$5 million for this year's program.

This summer, Birthright will be taking 10,000 young Jewish adults on its trips and is aiming to do the same in the fall. Each group of 10,000 costs about \$24 million.

Susie Gelman, chairwoman of the Birthright Israel Foundation, said: "Birthright

FOCUS ON ISSUES



David Karp

Stephanie Lowenthal, the 100,000th Birthright Israel participant.

Israel is such a slam dunk success in the Jewish world. It's imperative on all of us to keep it going."

Birthright officials say they recognize that many of those who are applying — like Lowenthal — could be aged out if they are turned away.

Since Birthright cannot currently afford to take as many people as it would like on its trips, officials say, it also has not been able to organize a full-fledged alumni follow-up program, which the group sees as extremely important.

Nevertheless, the group ran about 150 alumni events in 2005 that attracted about 13,000 people.

"It's a dilemma, because where do you put the emphasis of the funding

— on the trip itself or on follow up?" said Marlene Post, secretary of the foundation's board.

"Though the trip in itself is fabulous... it's the follow up that really gives even greater meaning to the trip. It reinforces all the content that one gets on a 10-day trip."

For her part, Lowenthal said she hopes to engage in some follow up of her own upon her return.

"This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for me to reconnect with my Judaism, see and experience the things I learned about as a child, and share my journey with family and friends," she said.

This is 'not a time to pat ourselves on the shoulder.'

Michael Steinhardt

Founder and funder, Birthright Israel

Drug bust in Israel program wakes up U.S. Jews

By URIEL HEILMAN

JERUSALEM (JTA) — When three American teenagers on a study-abroad program in Israel were arrested on drug charges some two months ago, the incident created a major stir among parents, students and administrators from the students' school in the United States.

In the days and weeks that followed, after the three were released from police custody, more than a dozen students left the 11-week program at the Alexander Muss Institute for Israel Education. More than half of those who left were expelled because of their ties to the drug incident; others quit the program because they — or their parents — felt that the Muss Institute no longer embodied the atmosphere they had sought.

But the full implications of this spring's drug bust — involving the sale and possession of about 3.3 pounds of marijuana by students from the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School on Rockville, Md. — may not be apparent for years to come.

If the past is prologue, the fallout may affect everything from the way Jewish schools in Israel and the United States handle drug prevention, to enrollment levels in Israel study-abroad programs from the communities most affected by this scandal.

"It just was a big wake-up call," said Simcha Pearl, head of Atlanta's Weber School, which also had high-school students at the Muss Institute's program. No Weber students were implicated in the scandal, though one student chose to leave the program after the arrests.

"How do we beef up our education for the kids about the effects of engaging in illegal substances?" Pearl said. If there is a "silver lining" to the drug incident, Pearl said, it is that it "may have put the fear of God into these teens. Maybe they'll think twice about engaging in some of this stuff."

Educators in Israel involved in overseas study programs say drug scandals like the one at the Muss Institute could have a lingering effect on Israel programs for years to come, in part because of the fear it generated among parents and others.

One former staffer at the Zionist youth movement Habonim Dror said, for example, that a nearly decade-old drug scandal at the movement's Israel program still

has a significant impact.

"The effect was massive," said the former staffer, who requested anonymity.

"Everyone remembers the headline in the paper: 'Habonim Teenagers in Ecstasy Row.'" He added: "That, from a PR point of view, was very damaging, and the damage was felt throughout all of the activities of the organization for, some might say, even up to today."

The incident, the staffer explained, caused parents to lose faith in the institution. "There has to be a very strong element of trust between the parents and the organization responsible for that child, and a lot of that trust was lost."

That's why the Muss Institute dealt with the incident at the end of March so severely, said Chaim Fischgrund, headmaster of Muss, which is located in Hod Hasharon, north of Tel Aviv. The three students found to be selling the marijuana immediately were turned over to the police, and the others who were found to have used or bought the drugs were expelled.

"We have a zero-tolerance policy toward drugs and alcohol," Fischgrund said.

As a result of the scandal, the Weber School says it will conduct an extensive review of its drug policies this summer, and

even though Pearl said he was pleased with the Muss Institute's handling of the situation, he is asking Muss to review its drug policies as well.

"We're asking them to revisit their procedures, and we will revisit ours, so that we feel more in control from our side vis-a-vis our parents and our kids," Pearl said.

The Weber School is considering drug-testing students before they leave for the Israel program and while they are in Israel, upgrading drug education at the school in Atlanta and reviewing "interrogation" policies for students suspected of marijuana use, possession or sale.

Officials at the Charles E. Smith school, whose students are accused of being behind the marijuana sale at the Muss Institute, were unavailable for comment.

In the final analysis, several educators and substance-abuse experts say, parents would be naive to blame a drug bust on the particular program involved.

"I don't think it's the program's fault," said Sharon Almougy, head of the English-speaking division of the Institute for Youth Leaders from Abroad, which is run by the Jewish Agency for Israel. "There are cases of certain behaviors that went on before, and the kids perhaps think that they can go on in Israel as well."

FOCUS ON ISSUES



David Karp

Aliza Olmert, wife of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, visits an early childhood education center in New York, May 26. Olmert, who was in the United States accompanying her husband as he met with President Bush, told JTA that she is trying to determine her political and public role. 'I don't want to let it pass by without doing things really meaningful to me,' she said. The center Olmert visited — the Bloomingdale Family Program — serves preschoolers from low-income families. The center is part of the U.S. government's Head Start initiative. The visit was organized by the New York State Governor's Office and the World Jewish Congress, American section.

France and Israel make up with joint venture

By BRETT KLINE

PARIS (JTA) — After years of sometimes frosty relations, Israel and France have organized a foundation to promote cooperation.

The Fondation France-Israel is a direct result of the visit by then-Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to France in July 2005. After a joint decision by Sharon and French President Jacques Chirac, it was launched earlier last month during a series of conferences in Paris, meant to provide an official umbrella structure for cooperation in high-tech investment, research, industry, cinema and exchanges among young adults.

"This week of conferences is laying the groundwork for developing cooperation between France and Israel," said Diane Binder, managing director of the foundation, "and also for putting the spotlight on ongoing research and investment."

Binder said this may be the first time that French-Israeli cooperation is not going through France's 600,000-strong Jewish community, which already has an active connection with Israel.

"The foundation goes way beyond working with the Jewish community here in France," she said. "The bottom line is about changing the image of Israel for the French people.

"Most of the French have an image of Israel as an occupier. Without getting involved in the politics, there is a tremendous need to change that image."

Funding has come directly from the French and Israeli foreign ministries, city councils in both countries and a limited amount of private investment.

The first day of conferences focused on high-tech investment. Daniel Rouach, a management professor at the ESCP-EAP business school in Paris who organizes regular student exchanges with the Technion — Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa, noted that politics are catching up with investment realities.

"Major French groups such as Alcatel, Dassault and Veolia have begun investing in Israeli industries," he said, "and French business school graduates are doing training sessions in Israel on how to put together high-tech startups. This foundation is an indication that the politics between both countries are being normalized. Frankly, it was about time."

Israelvalley, a business Web site launched by Rouach, indicated that French exports to Israel in 2005 hit about \$1 billion, less than exports to Israel from the Netherlands, Switzerland and Turkey.

"This is a direct result of the strained politics between France and Israel," Rouach said.

At the height of the intifada, Chirac was shown on French television being jostled by Israeli soldiers in Jerusalem, and pushing them in turn. The soldiers were there to protect him from crowds of Palestinians in the Old City who, in fact, saw him as their protector.

During the waves of anti-Semitic attacks in and around Paris that accompanied the intifada, Sharon called France an anti-Semitic country and urged French Jews "to pack your bags and come to Israel." Some 3,000 French Jews immigrated to Israel in 2005, a record high since the early 1970s.

Even during the rough times, however, research and investment were ongoing.

For example, a major French-based European bank, BNP-Paribas, just opened its first branch office in Tel Aviv for private and business banking.

The bank's general manager in Tel Aviv, Charles Reisman, noted, "it's all in the timing. Israel's train is coming in. I think this foundation is recognition of that."

On a visit to Paris, Stanley Fischer, governor of the Bank Israel, said the foundation "is meant to improve the images of both countries. For the French Foreign Ministry, this is a big change."

The president of the foundation, Jacques Huntzinger, a former French ambassador to Israel, was pleased.

"We are recreating the networks that existed in the 1950s and '60s in research and business," he said. "There has been cooperation, but it has been quiet, without government backing. Now it is official."

There was little mention of politics at the conferences, and no one bothered to mention that it was France that helped Is-

rael build its nuclear plant outside Dimona in the Negev Desert in the 1950s and 1960s.

Jean-Claude Hirel, who is on the foundation's economic cooperation commission, said, "this is the first time since 1967 that the French Foreign Ministry has been involved like this. It is a real political change for France. As far as the effects on business and on people go, it will take time, but it is the right direction."

The film industry is one example of major cooperation. There were 14 Israeli-French co-productions in the past year, compared to five that Israel did with Germany, two with Canada and one with Australia. There were none with the United States.

"We cannot make films in

Israel without public money," said Katriel Shori, head of the Israel Film Fund, "and this foundation will strengthen our position."

The conference also featured a photo exhibit documenting 60 years of French-Israeli relations, open to the public until June 3 at the mayor's office of the 20th District.

The battle for public recognition is already an uphill one. The foundation assigned the communications work to a major public relations firm. The brochures were glossy, but aside from the Jewish press and radio in Paris, the mainstream press seemed uninterested.

Binder was disappointed but unfazed. She is already working on a June visit to Paris by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and the opening of a French cultural center in Tel Aviv in November.

Can the foundation ease some of the tension for Jews in France?

"I think that would happen if we can change Israel's image in the eyes of the French, including the French Maghrebi Arabs," said Binder, referring to Arabs of North African origin. "And perhaps one day we could work on dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. Not now, but one day. There is so much to do."

Most of the French have an image of Israel as an occupier. Without getting involved in the politics, there is a tremendous need to change that image.

Diane Binder

Managing director, Fondation France-Israel

COMMUNITY

TRANSITIONS

■ Richard H. Greenberg joined the staff of JTA as senior editor in charge of investigative and enterprise reporting projects. Greenberg comes to JTA from B'nai B'rith Magazine, where he was the editor for several years.

■ Alter Communications promoted Phil Jacobs to executive editor of Alter Jewish Media and Neil Rubin to editor of the Baltimore Jewish Times.

■ Norman Cohen was elected president of the American Committee for the Weizmann Institute of Science.

■ Leah Aharonov started her four-year term as president of the International Council of Jewish Women.

■ Sister Rose Thering, a nun who campaigned against anti-Semitism in the Catholic Church, died at 85.

■ Longtime Jewish community leader Jay Yoskowitz died. Yoskowitz, who was 59, suffered a fatal heart attack hours after burying both of his parents in New York. Yoskowitz, who was senior vice president at the American Technion Society when he died, served in top positions at the Council of Jewish Federations, United Israel Appeal, Jewish National Fund and B'nai B'rith, and at federations in Iowa, Connecticut and Texas.

HONORS

■ Australian Prime Minister John Howard was awarded B'nai B'rith International's Presidential Gold Medal at a ceremony at the Australian Embassy in Washington.

■ Nobel laureate Dr. Richard Axel was given a lifetime achievement award by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research at its annual dinner.

■ The Dan David Prize was awarded in a Tel Aviv ceremony to cellist Yo-Yo Ma for his Silk Road Project; journalists Magdi Allam, Monica Gonzalez, Adam Michnik and Goenawan Mohammed for commitment to press freedom and quality; and researchers John Mendelsohn and Joseph Schlessinger for breakthroughs in cancer therapy.

■ B'nai B'rith International gave Gustav Humber, president and CEO of Airbus, its award for international achievement at a Washington event.

■ Parnossahworks was recognized by the International Association of Jewish Vocational Services at the group's annual conference.

■ Bard College received a \$2 million gift to create an endowed chair in honor of faculty member and religion scholar Jacob Neusner.

■ Rock singer Bob Geldof was given a moral courage award from the Holocaust Museum Houston for his work organizing the Live Aid concert in 1985.

■ Tel Aviv University professor Ariella Friedman was honored as an outstanding feminist by the National Council of Jewish Women.

An Orthodox apprentice?

By STEVEN I. WEISS

NEW YORK (JTA) — Is Donald Trump good for the Jews? With his latest season of "The Apprentice" winding down, the answer seems to be "yes," as an Orthodox Jewish reality show candidate is one of the two finalists on the show.

Lee Bienstock, 23, would easily be the youngest apprentice hired by Trump if he wins in the live finale Monday. But he'll likely be best known for his religious observance during the course of the 16-week show.

Bienstock began the season with another Orthodox Jew in tow — New Jersey's Dan Brody. The two observed Rosh Hashanah together early in the season — missing the third episode's task — but only Bienstock stayed in the show long enough to observe Yom Kippur, missing another task.

While some of Bienstock's teammates wanted his religious observance to get him fired from the show, Trump would not have it. When Bienstock was brought back to "the boardroom" — where Trump announces who from a given episode is fired — after the Yom Kippur episode, Trump told the team leader "I think it's terrible that you brought Lee back" to the boardroom as a potential fire for having missed the task due to religious observances, and fired the team leader instead.

Other elements of Bienstock's religious observance didn't make it into the show. For instance, the availability of kosher food in a special mini-fridge, and any other religious practices maintained by Bienstock.

Now, with Bienstock one of only two contestants left, his family and friends are already celebrating. "They're having a hometown party for him during the show, during the live show, and it'll be at the firehouse," said his father, Mark Bienstock, in an interview with JTA. The Bienstocks' Long Island home has hosted weekly watching parties with an "open door" — through which sometimes hundreds of attendees have passed. "Apprentice" parties are a weekly affair at Cornell University, where

Bienstock graduated with a 4.0 two years ago and at the University of Pennsylvania, where his brother Daniel is a junior.

Bienstock grew up in the New York area, attending Orthodox schools until college. He graduated from the Hebrew

Academy of the Five Towns and Rockaway after spending his last two years of high school there, and was class president for much of his tenure at the Yeshiva of Flatbush from third

through 10th grades.

"He's always been an outgoing kid, and he likes to be involved in many things," said his father. In college, Bienstock served as an officer for Cornell's Hillel.

Bienstock's gregariousness and loyalty are the characteristics most cited by friends, and have been a consistent theme in his success on the show. Trump has

cited Bienstock's loyalty approvingly, and fired two of the final four candidates for their lack of loyalty.

Stories of praise from his friends often center around his willingness to literally go the extra mile for people.

"One of our

friends got stuck on the highway an hour outside of Cornell, so he just drove and picked her up and her stuff and drove her down to Washington," recalled friend Adam Enbar.

Bienstock's father recalled that when his son volunteered to teach math to inner-city public school students, he had each student read problems aloud. One student was reluctant to read. Eventually, Bienstock discovered that the student didn't know how to read, so "for the rest of the year, Lee spent time with him teaching him how to read, and he made great strides."

Whether or not Bienstock wins Monday night, he can already rely on some measure of success. Bienstock has been approached with numerous speaking opportunities from various commercial outlets and Jewish communal organizations, and his religious observances on national television won't soon be forgotten.

ARTS
&
CULTURE

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NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

New testimony wanted in AMIA bombing case

The former investigative judge in the case of the bombing of an Argentine Jewish center was called to testify.

Juan Jose Galeano was dismissed from the AMIA case after an investigative panel found that he had paid a \$400,000 bribe to a defendant to change his testimony.

Galeano is slated to testify June 15.

In addition to Galeano, former intelligence officials, former prosecutors and the former president of the Jewish umbrella group known as DAIA also were called to testify.

The July 1994 bombing at the center in Buenos Aires killed 85 people and injured hundreds.

Rabbi meets African president on Israel

A prominent U.S. rabbi met with Senegal's president to discuss Israel's relations with the Arab world and ways to implement a tentative peace accord in Darfur.

The private discussions between Rabbi Arthur Schneier, the president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, and Abdoulaye Wade took place earlier this week in Senegal.

Schneier was part of the U.N. Alliance of Civilizations High-Level Group, which visited Senegal with the aim of issuing recommendations to United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan on how to close the gap between Islam and the West.

While in Senegal, Schneier called on the United Nations to organize an international conference focused on the issue of textbooks that foment chauvinism and racial hatred.

Romania assailed over Holocaust prosecutions

The Simon Wiesenthal Center accused Romania of foot-dragging in the investigation of four suspected Nazi war criminals. The center's Jerusalem-based director, Efraim Zuroff, on Wednesday said he deplored the lack of progress in probes against four members of an 18-member list of suspects submitted to Romania.

"It would be a mockery of the memory of the victims of the Holocaust in Romania if those responsible for their deaths were not held accountable due to the failure of the Romanian judicial system to bring them to trial," Zuroff said in an open letter to Romanian prosecutors.

There was no immediate response from Bucharest. As many as 380,000 Jews were killed during the Holocaust by Romania, which was a German ally for much of World War II.

Chasidic Jews celebrate Shavuot in Ukraine

Fervently Orthodox Jews are celebrating Shavuot this week with a pilgrimage to a Ukrainian town considered to be the birthplace of Chasidism. About 1,000 Chasidim from different countries have arrived in Medzibezh, which contains the grave of the Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of Chasidic Judaism.

Chasidim have been coming to Medzibezh in significant numbers each year since Jewish pilgrimages to Ukraine were revived in 1988, after the Soviet Union loosened its restrictions on religious practice. Pilgrims also are expected to visit the Ukrainian towns of Berdichev, Nezhin and Gadyach, which are also considered holy sites for Chasidic Jews.

MIDDLE EAST

'Realignment' in one stage

Israel's unilateral West Bank withdrawal, if implemented, will take place in one stage, Ehud Olmert said. The prime minister told Yediot

Achronot on Thursday that he wanted his "realignment plan" to be over in one swoop, rather than in several stages, as some government officials have advised.

Last year's Gaza Strip withdrawal took place over two weeks. But questions have been raised about the possibility of a similar time frame in the West Bank, where seven or eight times as many settlers are earmarked for evacuation.

Olmert has said the plan, whereby Israel would leave some parts of the West Bank and annex others, could be scrapped if the Palestinian Authority embraces peace talks.

Israel jumps in global ranking

Israel moved up 22 places in a ranking of world economic competitiveness.

The list, compiled by the Swiss International Institute for Management Development, placed Israel 20th out of 61 countries this year, up from 42nd last year, Globes reported. Israel improved greatly in its rankings for openness to the global market and in its skilled manpower.

The United States tops the list.

NORTH AMERICA

CIA veteran blasts Israeli unilateralism

A former CIA director came out against Israel's unilateral withdrawal policy.

R. James Woolsey wrote in The Wall Street Journal's Web site opinionjournal.com this week that last year's Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, and the prospect of similar moves in the West Bank, bolster radical Islam.

"The approach Israel is preparing to take in the West Bank was tried in Gaza and has failed utterly," wrote Woolsey, who headed the CIA in the early 1990s.

"What does one say to a good ally who seems determined to reinforce failure? That the U.S. will pay for the undertaking?"

Woolsey said the Palestinians were not at this time serious about a two-state peace accord with Israel, and that this seriousness should be gauged by their readiness to offer Jewish settlers full and equal citizenship in a future Palestinian state.

Dancing for the record

A Jewish day school in Pennsylvania danced its way to what is believed to be a Guinness World Record.

Wednesday's Israeli dance marathon brought together 752 students, teachers and volunteers from the Perelman Jewish Day School in suburban Philadelphia for the world's largest dance class.

The event launched the school's 50th anniversary celebration, according to Caren Barnet, the school's associate director of development.

Outside authenticators were on hand to verify the record, which will be sent along with videotape to the Guinness World Records, she said.

Kosher Subway opens

Subway opened its first kosher outlet. The sandwich chain opened a meat outlet in the Cleveland Jewish Community center earlier this month.

Prices at the restaurant will be 10 percent to 15 percent above the national average to accommodate the price of kosher supervision, the JCC said.

The slightly modified slogan is "Eat Fresh, Eat Kosher." The franchisee is Ghazi Faddoul, a Lebanese Christian who opened the first Subway in Cleveland in 1986.