

Jewish Affluence in U.S. Is A Myth; Close To Million At Or Near Poverty Level

CHICAGO, June 10 (JTA)--The mythical affluence of American Jews is, to a surprising extent, a myth perpetuated in part by the Jewish community which until recently has been blind to the large areas of poverty among fellow Jews all over the country. That disclosure was made here by Mrs. Anne Wolfe, a sociologist and program consultant in the Intergroup Relations and Social Action department of the American Jewish Committee. In a paper entitled "The Invisible Jewish Poor" delivered at the annual dinner meeting of the AJC Committee's Chicago chapter, Mrs. Wolfe revealed that nearly one million American Jews live at or near the poverty level. Mrs. Wolfe gleaned her information from studies of numerous surveys and statistics compiled over several years by national, local and Jewish groups. "We find significant indication of the extent of poverty in the Jewish community from the National Opinion Research Survey on income related to religion" which, Mrs. Wolfe said, "ascertained that 15.3 percent of Jewish households had income under \$3,000 a year" compared to 15.6 percent of Catholic and 22.7 percent of Protestant households. "Fifteen percent of six million people is a large number," Mrs. Wolfe remarked, representing 700,000-750,000 people. She pointed out that if the figures for the "near poor"--those earning under \$4,500 a year--were added, the number of Jewish poor would be much greater, exceeding 900,000.

Thus, while surveys continue to find that the median income of American Jews on the whole is higher than the general national median income, there is more poverty among Jews per capita than among either Catholics or Protestants, Mrs. Wolfe's paper revealed. (The Bureau of Labor Statistics Lower Living Standard estimates that a family of four should have a minimum annual income of \$6,500. This is a national average.) Mrs. Wolfe noted that the problem of Jewish poverty was related to the lower death rate among Jews at younger ages and the lower birth rate among Jewish families which results in a larger number of elderly people in the Jewish population than in the general population. "The community studies reveal that something like 60 to 65 percent of Jews living in poverty are over 60 or 65 years of age," Mrs. Wolfe stated. The major problem facing the elderly poor is housing and deteriorating neighborhoods from which they are unable to escape and which increases their loneliness, isolation and emotional and physical insecurity. "But there are significant numbers of poor who are not old folk and I think it is important to explode the myth that the Jewish poor are the Jewish old," Mrs. Wolfe said. "This other group--30-35 percent of our poverty group--is made up of single, unrelated people or families, many with young children, some headed by one parent. There are Jewish families receiving Aid to Dependent Children (welfare)--a fact that is usually greeted with disbelief. In New York City alone, it is estimated...that one quarter of a million Jews subsist below a level of \$3,000 a year, and another 150,000 live at near poverty on income below \$4,500," Mrs. Wolfe said.

Poverty Hits Elderly, Orthodox and Hassidic, Foreign Born, Young Jews

She observed that a large proportion of the non-elderly Jewish poor in big cities are Orthodox and Hassidic Jews. "There are 80,000 Hassidic Jews in New York City and this group is the third largest poverty group in New York," Mrs. Wolfe said. Foreign born Jews also account for a large percentage of Jewish poverty. A Columbia University survey showed that 10 percent of the New York Jewish population earns \$3,000 a year or less but the figure for foreign born Jews is 15.7 percent, fairly similar to the Puerto Rican community where 16.3 percent are living under \$3,000 a year, according to Mrs. Wolfe. Her study embraced the Jewish poverty situation in other American cities, notably Miami and Los Angeles which are attractive to elderly people because of their mild climate, and Philadelphia. A study of the files of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services showed about 8,000 elderly Jews receiving public assistance and more than 10,000 eligible for old age assistance who, for a variety of reasons, did not apply Mrs. Wolfe reported. "These make up a figure of 18,306 indigent elderly living in households on incomes below \$4,000 a year," she said. "An interesting example of blind spots relates to wealthy Miami Beach. In an area of that community called South Beach, it was ascertained in 1969 that 40,000 people were clustered in an area of some 40 square blocks. Of these, 80 percent are over 65 and 85 percent are Jews. The average annual income is \$2,460; thousands are living on less than \$28 a week for rent and food," Mrs. Wolfe reported.

"In Philadelphia, a study conducted by the Jewish Employment and Vocational Service of that city reveals what some of us have long suspected--that we are like anybody else," Mrs. Wolfe said. The study covered a sample of Jewish men and women representing an active caseload of more than 700 persons. The age ranged from 17 to over 65 years, and about half of them were in their prime work period; in the ages between 21 and 50. One-third of the persons coming to the Vocational Service were older than 50; and 17 percent were under 20. About two-thirds of the persons coming for help with employment had incomes in the previous year below \$2,600 and one in six had an annual income of \$4,000 or more," Mrs. Wolfe reported. She added that "Limited education was found to be an important factor among poor Jews, half of the job seekers having less than 11 years of schooling, and one in five with less than an eighth grade education. Here too our blind spots operate," Mrs. Wolfe remarked. "Because of the high proportion of young Jews in college today, and our tradition as the 'People of the Book,' we tend to overlook the earlier generation that has a less impressive educational background," Mrs. Wolfe noted that the Hassidic community "has a built-in resistance to secular education, particularly at high school and college levels" and as a consequence few Hassidim have college degrees. This lack deprives them of the economic advantages which higher education normally brings.

Palatnik Trial Due Soon; Aleksandrovich Warned To Discontinue Calls To Wife

TEL AVIV, June 10 (JTA)--Immigrants arriving from the Soviet Union today reported that the trial of Roiza Palatnik, a 35-year-old librarian imprisoned in Odessa since last Dec. 1, would start during the second half of this month. Miss Palatnik was arrested after applying for an emigration visa and has been held incommunicado. The immigrants arriving today said that not even her closest relatives have been permitted to visit her. New arrivals from Riga reported that Soviet authorities were trying to intimidate Rubin Aleksandrovich whose daughter Ruth was one of the four Jews convicted of anti-Soviet activities at last month's Riga trial. They said Aleksandrovich was repeatedly summoned by the authorities who threatened to revoke his exit visa unless he urged his wife, Rivka, to "stop making outcries" abroad over Ruth's case. Mrs. Aleksandrovich has been in the United States and Canada for the past month trying to arouse public opinion on behalf of her daughter. The Aleksandrovich family, except for Ruth, was given exit visas in March. Mrs. Aleksandrovich and her 18-year-old son, Avigdor, went to Israel. Her husband elected to remain in Riga pending the outcome of the trial.

The Soviet authorities have warned Aleksandrovich not to continue telephone conversations with his wife who has called him frequently from the U.S. to inquire about Ruth's condition. The 23-year-old nurse is reportedly in ill health. She was sentenced to one year imprisonment for alleged anti-Soviet activities but the nine months' detention since her arrest has been deducted from her sentence. According to Jewish sources she has been removed from the Riga jail to a "stricter punishment" prison elsewhere. Today's arrivals from Riga reported a growing frequency of clashes between Jews in Riga and the general population. They said Jews riding on busses and trams are asked, "Why are you still here? Why don't you go to Israel?" The arrivals said such verbal clashes and insults are a daily occurrence. A group of families from Wilna was among today's arrivals. The Wilna Jews reported that the price of an exit visa was recently increased from \$990 to \$1,100.

S. African Jewish Press Says Donation To OAU Blunder; Israel Says Unna Made Error

JOHANNESBURG, June 10 (JTA)--South Africa's Jewish press continued today to reflect the distress felt by the Jewish community here over Israel's donation of \$2,800 in food and medical supplies to the Organization for African Unity. The incident has created a serious breach in the normally friendly relations between the South African and Israeli governments. Most Jewish weeklies endorsed the joint statement issued last Sunday by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the S.A. Zionist Federation which condemned the Israeli donation. The Israeli Ambassador said today the donation was made exclusively on humanitarian grounds in response to a United Nations appeal for aid to victims of natural disasters. Jewish newspapers here called the donation a "regrettable blunder." The Jewish Times noted however that "it becomes understandable that Israel may from time to time resort to actions which we in South Africa may find unpalatable." (In Jerusalem today, Foreign Ministry officials were trying to heal the breach which they now attribute to a "mistake" on the part of Israel's Consul General in Johannesburg, Yitzhak Unna. They claimed that without consulting Jerusalem for the "facts," Unna made statements which implied that Israel's donation was prompted by a desire to enhance its political relations with the African states. A Ministry official declined to say whether any action would be taken against Unna. He observed that Unna's statement conflicted with the official explanation in Jerusalem.)

Medical Report Shows High Hospitalization Rate For Children From Poor Families

JERUSALEM, June 10 (JTA)--A medical research team has found that 18 percent of children born in the West Jerusalem area are hospitalized at least once during their first year of life, a rate seven times higher than in areas of the United States and England where similar studies have been made. The findings, made public today, stated that of 40,000 infants examined, 7.4 percent were born with a defect, half of them serious, affecting the brain or spinal cord. The researchers found that the serious defects were concentrated in the Arab quarters of Beit Safafa and Abu Gosh and among Jewish immigrants from Asian countries. The team found that overall hospitalization rates for infants one year of age or under was influenced by social factors. In the poor neighborhoods of Katamon and Musrara the rate was 35 percent compared with only 0.15 percent in Rehavia, a middle class section. More than 40 percent of infants whose mothers never attended school were hospitalized but only eight percent of children whose mothers had post-primary education required hospitalization.

Burg: Russians Will Not Be Permitted To Cross Canal; Jerusalem Will Remain United

NEW YORK, June 10 (JTA)--Israeli Interior Minister Yosef Burg told an Israel Bond Organization dinner last night that "Israel under no circumstances will allow Russians to cross the Suez Canal, because we don't want Russians in our neighborhood just as you don't want Russians in your neighborhood." Dr. Burg, who represents the National Religious Party, also asserted that "never again will Jerusalem be a divided city, nor will Israel again be a seven-mile-wide state." He challenged the Arab attitude toward negotiations with Israel, asking: "If the Arabs are not ready to talk about peace, how can we believe they are ready to live in peace?" The Interior Minister said Israelis "pray for the day when we can live in peace without headlines." The Israel Bond dinner honored the fundraising efforts of Edward H. Sussman, general merchandise director of Crown Drugs. The event was attended by 400 persons.

Jews Urged To Speak Out Against Vietnam War Without Regard To Mideast Situation

WASHINGTON, June 10 (JTA)--Jews must speak out against the Vietnam war without regard to the situation in the Middle East, a Jewish women's leader stated here today. The speaker, Mrs. Thea Braiterman, is representing the Union of American Hebrew Congregations on the Jewish contingent of the Lobby for Americans, a moderate group of 100 gathered here this week to press for Senate adoption of the Hatfield-McGovern amendment to set a date for complete American withdrawal from Indochina. "Jews have been silent (about Vietnam) for too long," Mrs. Braiterman declared, out of "fear that United States support for Israel would diminish. We must stand up to the Nixon administration," she continued, citing "growing sentiment" among Americans for an end to U.S. involvement in Southeast Asian battles.

Christian Leaders Say Public Housing In Jerusalem Legitimate Effort At Renewal

NEW YORK, June 10 (JTA)--Twenty-four Christian leaders aligned as Christians Concerned for Israel declared today that "internationalization of the entire City of Jerusalem is no longer a viable solution to the problem of conserving the peace, security and sacred character of the city and its holy places." They added that "Since both Israel and Jordan are adamantly opposed to the plan, it is unworkable." Furthermore, they said, "the behavior of the government of Israel with respect to the holy places has been exemplary" and "has achieved the main purpose of internationalization, which is to provide protection and free access to the holy places for all." The signers of the statement, representing themselves, included Father Edward H. Flannery, Magr. John M. Oesterreicher and Sister Rose Thering of the Institute of Judaean-Christian Studies at Seton Hall University, South Orange, N.J.; Dr. A. Roy Eckhardt of Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pa., co-author of "Encounter With Israel," and Dr. Bernhard E. Olson of the National Conference of Christians and Jews here.

The 24 Christian leaders--Catholics, Protestants and Evangelicals--said they were "convinced" that the construction of public housing in Jerusalem "is a legitimate effort on the part of the Israeli government to effectuate a renewal of certain slum areas of the city, to rehouse in new apartments Arabs from these quarters, to provide living space for a Jewish population increased by immigration, and to reintroduce a Jewish presence into the Old City from which it had been forcibly barred after the war of 1948." The statement stressed that "the development plans are in no sense designed to oust the Arabs, nor to 'suffocate' the Christian and Muslim population," as has been charged "in the general press and church press." As for a solution other than internationalization, the Christian leaders recommended that it arise from "negotiations carried on at the peace table between Israel and Arab countries." In a separate statement the president of Christians Concerned for Israel, Prof. Franklin H. Littell of the Department of Religion at Temple University, Philadelphia, asserted that "a growing number of people of the churches is aware that our whole understanding of the relationship of the church to the Jewish people must be changed." He added, "After Auschwitz, there is no place for balcony-sitters on this issue."

Educator Says Jewish Establishment Is Not In Leadership Position

GROSSINGER, N.Y., June 10 (JTA)--"The present American Jewish Establishment...is not in a leadership position on any of the major issues," it was charged here by Dr. Judah J. Shapiro, author, historian and professor at the School for Jewish Communal Science of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, New York. Speaking at the four-day 73rd annual conference of the National Conference of Jewish Communal Service which ended yesterday, Dr. Shapiro declared that "In the last quarter century, it (the "Establishment") has been consistently wrong in its opposition to ideas and those who expounded them." It was wrong, he declared, on Zionism, on the State of Israel; on Soviet Jewry, on Jewish education and youth, and "it was wrong in its acceptance of what was supportable by the rich as the equivalence of a system of normative Judaism." Discussing "The American Jewish Establishment: Is It Doing Its Job?," the veteran educator observed that "there is really no necessarily pejorative connotation to the term 'Establishment,' nor to its companion term 'Bureaucracy.'" But, he said, "we should address ourselves not to the right of existence of an Establishment, but to a critical look at whether or not its effectiveness justifies its present incumbents." In that context, he continued, there is "the unassailable fact that one cannot ever ascertain what is real among the people from the Establishment and its activity or commitments." It is, he charged, not a leader, but "a reluctant follower and a yielder."

The National Conference adopted a resolution which welcomed "President Nixon's decision...to provide Israel with the military equipment needed to defend herself." But it cautioned the administration to "desist from a policy that would substitute international 'guarantees,' which failed in the past, for a real (negotiated) peace." The Conference deplored the "intolerable situation" of Jews in Arab countries, and urged the United States, Canada and the United Nations to help alleviate their plight. Another resolution recommended "immediate" American withdrawal from Vietnam. Domestically, the Conference called on the administration to reconsider cuts in "urgent" social and rehabilitation programs; scored increased wiretapping and other electronic "invasions of privacy"; charged that "continued efforts to equate dissent from government policy with disloyalty to our country (is) a disheartening throwback to the worst days of the (Joseph) McCarthy era"; backed "the full participation in our political system by 18-year-olds" and declared support for a minimum \$6,500 annual income for a family of four.

Industry, Government Leaders Call For Continued U.S.-Israel Friendship

NEW YORK, June 10 (JTA)--Industry and government leaders called last night for continued United States-Israel friendship during a gathering of some 1,000 members of the American-Israel Chamber of Commerce. Jacob Barmore, Israeli Minister at the United Nations, said the U.S. is "a great friend and sincere ally." Congressman Mario Biaggi, New York Democrat, said "we must make certain the United States remains a friend of Israel and that Israel is not victimized by the international game of politics." The businessmen, representing numerous international corporations, were attending the Chamber dinner honoring Samuel Neaman as the organization's Man of the Year. Neaman, chairman of the board and chief executive officer of the McCrory Corporation, was cited for his "significant contribution to the expansion" of American-Israeli trade. A native of Israel, Neaman built the Sheraton Tel Aviv Hotel. Samuel Gallant, executive director of the Chamber was also honored at the dinner for his "devoted loyal and effective services in the cause of American-Israel trade and understanding." Max Ratner of Cleveland, president of the Chamber, said "interchange and communication between peoples of the world will ultimately bring about a world of peace and justice for all." Barmore said that during the past ten months Israel has been "blessed with a feverish tempo of activity and productivity" such as it has "never had during its 23 years." He noted that Israel's exports had reached \$790 million. "Twenty three years ago it was \$50 million," he said.

