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**ROMANIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY SAFE,
BUT SOME SOVIET JEWS ARE STRANDED**
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 25 (JTA) -- Romania's Jewish community appears to be unscathed by the popular uprising that ousted dictator Nicolae Ceausescu last week.

Romania's National Salvation Front said Monday that it had executed Ceausescu, his wife and son.

The front also claimed that 60,000 Romanians had been killed in the violence in that country. As street fighting continued in the major cities, local community leaders said no Jews were harmed, as far as they knew.

Israelis in Romania are also safe, according to reports Monday from the Israeli Embassy in Bucharest. They include diplomatic and Jewish Agency personnel, people on business, students, and radio and television technicians covering events for Israeli and foreign news organizations.

However, a group of about 50 Soviet Jewish emigres en route to Israel was stranded in Bucharest and put up at a hotel by the Israeli Embassy. The embassy has been in telephone and telex communication with the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem, to help the Israeli public get news of relatives in Romania.

In New York, similar reports about the situation of Jews and Israelis in Romania were received by the World Jewish Congress, which has been in contact with Jewish leaders in both Romania and Yugoslavia.

WJC learned Sunday that, because of the violent situation in the country, Chief Rabbi Moshe Rosen canceled his annual "Chanukiah" visit to various towns and villages where Jews live.

He had planned to visit the western city of Timisoara, but that was before troops loyal to Ceausescu massacred an estimated 4,500 men, women and children last week. More violence has since taken place there.

Israeli Doctors Standing By

A number of Israelis are attending medical and dental schools programs at the university there. But they were reported last week to be safe.

Ladislav Kadelburg, president of the Yugoslav Jewish community, spoke by telephone last Friday with the Jewish community leadership of Timisoara. He told the WJC that no Jews had been hurt in the uprising there.

Theo Blumenfeld, director of the Romanian Jewish community, who spoke by telephone to the WJC, also said no harm had befallen the Romanian Jewish community and that there had been no manifestations of anti-Semitism.

Blumenfeld asked that Jews participate in medical and humanitarian relief efforts for the country.

A team of Israeli doctors and operating room nurses, all Romanian-speaking, was standing by here Monday night, ready to fly to Bucharest with several tons of medical supplies as soon as the airport is reopened.

All international air flights were suspended last week. The Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported last

Friday that the Jewish Agency for Israel had begun rerouting flights carrying Soviet Jews to Israel by way of Hungary, rather than Romania. It said 175 arrived from Budapest last Thursday, and another group was due Friday.

Meanwhile, Israel's Foreign Ministry came under fire for issuing what its critics called a "tepid" statement on the spectacular developments in Romania.

The statement welcomed the "emergence of democracy in Romania" and wished "the Romanian people liberty and prosperity." It condemned "the massacres in Romania" and said Israel "mourns the thousands of people who have lost their lives."

Israeli Crews Used By NBC

The statement expressed Israel's hope to strengthen its ties with the Romanian people and leaders. But it did not, as critics thought it should, hail the downfall of the Ceausescu regime and recognize its successor.

Ministry officials explained that was not the practice of Israel's foreign policy with respect to new governments or regimes. They denied that Israel's once warm relations with Ceausescu confined the statement to generalities.

Romania was the only East bloc country that did not sever diplomatic relations with Israel at the time of the 1967 Six-Day War. Israel always credited Ceausescu for Romania's independent foreign policy in the Middle East.

The Israel Broadcasting Authority has been providing viewers here with extensive television newscasts and 24-hour live radio coverage of the events in Romania.

And at least one American television network has taken advantage of Israeli expertise by sending Israeli camera and sound crews into Romania.

NBC Jerusalem bureau chief Mike Seamans was quoted by the Jerusalem Post on Monday as saying that his Israeli crews were landed in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, and managed to slip across the border into Romania.

Other Israelis have been added to American TV news staffs in East Berlin, Prague and Panama. They seem to be valued because of their experience covering the intifada.

(JTA staff writer Susan Birnbaum in New York contributed to this report.)

**TUTU SPEAKS OF ISRAELI REPRESSION,
BUT HIS RHETORIC IS TAKEN IN STRIDE**
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 25 (JTA) -- Archbishop Desmond Tutu declined Monday to meet with a delegation of Ethiopian Jewish immigrants, who wanted to acquaint their fellow black African with the story of their aliyah.

It was the most awkward moment yet of the South African Nobel laureate's trip here, which began last Friday. Authorities feared the anti-apartheid activist's visit would exacerbate the unrest in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

But Tutu's denunciations of Israel's ties with the Pretoria government and his likening of its treatment of Palestinians to apartheid have largely been taken in stride.

Tutu, who is the Anglican archbishop of Cape Town, made clear where his sympathies lie, in interviews published before his arrival, including one last Thursday in the Hebrew daily Ha'aretz.

"What is happening in the West Bank and Gaza could, by just changing the names, describe what is happening in South Africa," the newspaper quoted Tutu as saying.

He made almost the identical statement early Monday morning, celebrating a Christmas mass in Beit Sahur, a Christian Arab village near Bethlehem.

Tutu, who is being hosted by the Anglican archbishop of Jerusalem, Samir Kafity, has spent virtually all of his time in Arab East Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Beit Sahur.

He has not asked for meetings with Israeli leaders, except for an appointment he has to call on the minister for religious affairs, Zevulun Hammer, before he leaves the country.

His message to the throngs of Palestinian Christians who came to hear him on Christmas Eve is that oppression is gradually being rolled back in his country, and "if it can happen in South Africa, it will happen here."

Tutu mentioned on that and other occasions his support for Israel's independence and security, alongside an independent Palestinian state.

"We support the struggle of Palestinian people for nationhood, but we say also to your brothers and sisters, the Jews have a right to their independent state as well," he told his audience in Beit Sahur.

In his Ha'aretz interview, Tutu claimed there are nuclear ties between Israel and South Africa and that Israel has supplied Pretoria with "techniques for putting down mass unrest."

HIGH COURT ORDERS COURT-MARTIAL OF OFFICER CHARGED WITH BRUTALITY By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Dec. 25 (JTA) -- The Israel Defense Force's reputation for maintaining humane standards in the face of extreme provocation by rioting Palestinians took a battering over the weekend.

The most severe blow came from the High Court of Justice, which, in a rare reversal of a decision by the army judge advocate general, implied that the military justice system was protecting a senior officer accused of ordering the brutal treatment of villagers in the West Bank.

Another ranking officer is about to be brought before a military court on similar charges, the army announced.

And finally, two pathologists announced that an autopsy they performed on a young Arab revealed that the deceased had received a fatal blow while under interrogation in a Gaza prison hospital.

The case of Col. Yehuda Meir, former commander of the Nablus region in the West Bank, is probably the most serious blot on the IDF's image.

The High Court ordered that Meir be put on trial for allegedly ordering his soldiers to literally break the bones of 20 Palestinian youths seized by the IDF in Beita and Huwara villages, near Nablus, on Jan. 21, 1988, about six weeks after the intifada started.

The army judge advocate general considered it sufficient at the time to bring Meir before a

disciplinary court, from which he emerged with a reprimand.

In order to ensure that he would not forfeit his full pension on retirement, the officer was sent on unpaid leave until his 40th birthday. He was also promoted.

'Deeds Disgust Every Man Of Culture'

The Israeli Civil Rights Association appealed the case to the High Court, which ordered this weekend that Col. Meir be tried by court-martial for issuing illegal orders.

The justices rejected the judge advocate general's excuse that he did not charge the colonel with illegal orders because in the early weeks of the intifada, "orders regarding the use of force were unclear."

"Can one talk about unclarity and vagueness when one gives an order to take people out of their homes, tie their hands and seal their mouths, beat them with bats to break their arms and legs?" asked Justice Moshe Bejski.

"Such deeds disgust every man of culture, and no vagueness or unclarity can cover them up," he added.

Until the High Court ruled on Sunday, Meir believed he could end his military career with nothing worse than a strong reprimand on his record.

Now he faces up to 20 years in prison, if he is convicted of issuing illegal orders.

The High Court's ruling could influence the case of another IDF colonel, whose trial on charges of mistreating Gaza Strip residents was announced Sunday.

Neither the officer's name nor the exact charges were disclosed.

Meanwhile, the results were announced of the autopsy performed on Khaled al-Sheik Ali, 27, who died last week in the interrogation ward used by the Shin Bet internal security service in Gaza Prison.

The verdict was that he died of "unnatural causes."

The post-mortem was performed by Dr. Yehuda Hiss, head of the government's Institute for Forensic Medicine, and Dr. Michael Baden, director of pathology for the New York State Police Department.

Baden was invited here by the Arab human rights group Al-Haq and the Boston-based Physicians for Human Rights group. Both doctors spoke to people involved in the interrogation. All denied that force was used.

Baden said the Arab died of internal bleeding caused by a blow from a blunt instrument. He said the actual cause of death was a tear in the mesentery, a membrane that connects the intestines to the dorsal wall of the abdominal cavity.

Hiss sent his report to the police, which is expected to launch a full-scale inquiry into Ali's death.

SHOMRON TO STAY AS IDF CHIEF By Hugh Orgel

JERUSALEM, Dec. 25 (JTA) -- The Cabinet, acting on the recommendation of Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, agreed Sunday to extend Gen. Dan Shomron's term as chief of staff of the Israel Defense Force for a fourth year.

The chief of staff is appointed to a three-year term. When he enters his third year, it is a custom to extend the appointment an additional year.

ONE YEAR LATER, MYSTERY REMAINS OVER EMBEZZLED REPARATIONS FUNDS

By David Kantor

WEST BERLIN, Dec. 25 (JTA) -- A yearlong investigation has been unsuccessful in locating 30 million marks -- now worth about \$17 million -- in reparations funds allegedly embezzled by the late Werner Nachmann, who was chairman of West Germany's Jewish community until his sudden death in January 1988.

A joint statement admitting the failure to account for the missing money was released last week by Heinz Galinski, Nachmann's successor, and Interior Minister Wolfgang Schauble.

The statement affirmed, however, that Nachmann was believed culpable and that there existed no evidence of wrongdoing by anyone else.

The money was provided to the special fund for reparations to Holocaust survivors by the Bonn Finance Ministry and administered by the Council of Jewish Communities of West Germany.

The funds that were missing were the interest accrued on the original reparations awards. The monies were channeled to the New York-based Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, which paid out sums to individual claimants.

The joint statement said the Claims Conference lost 18 million marks (some \$10 million) as a result of the embezzlement, and the Jewish community lost 12 million marks, or about \$7 million.

The community has decided to reimburse the Claims Conference in the amount of 4 million marks (\$2.3 million) which has been allocated for "administrative fees."

The statement blamed the losses on the "criminal behavior" of Nachmann and a "failure of controls." It said much of the money he stole went into his various companies and could not be traced.

Nachmann, a wealthy businessman with contacts at the highest political levels in Bonn, headed the Jewish community for 20 years before his death. He was said to be a personal friend of Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, both of whom appeared at his well-attended funeral.

BERLIN IS ALREADY BEING REUNITED, AND GERMAN JEWS ARE TAKING PART

By David Kantor

WEST BERLIN, Dec. 25 (JTA) -- Nowhere in this country can the observer feel the urge to reunite Germany more strongly than in Berlin, especially since the reopening last week of the Brandenburg Gate, the majestic arch that had symbolized the division of the city and of Europe for so many years.

The Jewish communities on both sides of the gate now feel and react as any Germans would.

Only two weeks ago, prominent members of the East Berlin Jewish community said they had no objections to reunification as long as the single Germany did not demand border changes in Eastern Europe.

Heinz Galinski, the outspoken chairman of the West German Jewish community, said in a radio interview this week that German Jews "have no reservations in principle against the reunification of Germany."

He added, however, that reunification is not an issue for the immediate future.

Israel's prime minister, Yitzhak Shamir, took

an entirely opposite view. He spoke against a reunited Germany in strong terms last month, warning that such a development could unleash anti-Semitic forces which might try again to destroy the Jews.

But rhetoric aside, the fact is that Berlin is being reunited day by day. The Jewish communities on both sides of the breached wall are part of the process that has brought together people from East and West and made unification in practical terms all but inevitable. According to inside sources, Jews from both communities stand to benefit from reunification.

Underused Property In East Berlin

The issue of returning Jewish property confiscated by the Nazis could be simpler. Much of that property is in the eastern part of the city, where the Jewish community officially numbers only 203. Under present circumstances, that tiny community has little need for so much space for either religious or administrative purposes.

The main synagogue in East Berlin remains closed, reportedly because it is too huge for the membership.

The chairman of the East German Jewish community, Sigmund Rotstein, and its secretary, Peter Fischer, attended a meeting in Frankfurt last week of the Central Council of Jews in West Germany. Both sides said they hoped such meetings would continue.

For more than 40 years, Berlin, deep inside the German Democratic Republic, was considered isolated and remote. But if the two Germanys are reunited, more Jews are expected to choose to live in Berlin.

If it became once again the capital of a reunited Germany, hundreds of Israeli diplomats, embassy staff, other employees and their families would move here from Bonn, further enlarging the Jewish community.

FILES ON NAZI WAR CRIMES TRIALS MADE AVAILABLE TO RESEARCHERS

By David Kantor

WEST BERLIN, Dec. 25 (JTA) -- Researchers and scholars will soon have access to files containing all of the decisions made by West German courts in the trials of Nazi war criminals, the West Berlin authorities announced Saturday.

The files were compiled by a Dutch institution called the Foundation for Scientific Research of Nazi Crimes.

They are expected to shed light on the evolution of West Germany's legal system, which had to adapt to political changes while handling the delicate task of meting out justice to Nazi criminals.

The records, in fact, trace a complicated history. Directly after World War II, Nazi criminals faced Allied courts, not German ones.

Shortly after the Federal Republic was founded 40 years ago, the Western Allies seemed to weary of bringing war criminals to justice. They began to concentrate instead on winning the hearts and minds and economic potential of West Germans for the cold war against the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites.

The prosecution of war criminals remained dormant until the late 1960s and 1970s, when the pressure of German opinion forced the state to take action. By that time, it was extremely difficult to find sufficient evidence to convict those war criminals who could still be found.

ISRAEL REFUSES LANDING RIGHTS AT BEN-GURION TO SOVIET PLANE

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 25 (JTA) -- Two Soviet cargo planes were refused landing rights Monday at Ben-Gurion Airport, depriving Soviet consumers of the 160 tons of Israeli fresh fruits and vegetables they were supposed to pick up.

According to a spokesman for the Israeli Agriculture Ministry, the landings were banned because Transport Minister Moshe Katsav is angry over the Soviet government's failure so far to approve a joint service agreement reached four weeks ago between El Al and Aeroflot, the Israeli and Soviet national airlines.

But Katsav's retaliation may have aroused the ire of his Cabinet colleague, Avraham Katz-Oz.

The agriculture minister returned from a visit to Moscow two weeks ago with a series of signed agreements, including one for the Soviet purchase of Israeli agricultural produce.

DINITZ NOW EXPECTS 250,000 SOVIETS TO MAKE ALIYAH IN NEXT FEW YEARS

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 25 (JTA) -- Simcha Dinitz now believes that up to a quarter million Soviet Jews will immigrate to Israel in the next three to four years.

Dinitz, who is chairman of the World Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency Executives, revised his estimate upward from 100,000, after visiting Moscow last week to attend the founding conference of the Congress of Jewish Organizations and Communities in the USSR.

After addressing the conference, he said he found a favorable atmosphere for aliyah. He told reporters here there would be 3,000 Soviet Jews arriving in December and 4,000 are expected in January.

He said Israel has sent out about 360,000 invitations, which Soviet Jews need to apply for exit permits from the Soviet authorities. They attest to family reunification being the reason for emigration.

NEW YORK PHILANTHROPIST FUNDS SOVIET IMMIGRANTS TO ISRAEL

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Dec. 25 (JTA) -- An American Jewish philanthropist has given the Israeli government a hand toward solving one of the most troublesome problems confronting Jewish immigrants arriving from the Soviet Union -- the lack of affordable housing.

Joseph Gruss, 86, a New York investment banker described as a billionaire, has established a \$20 million fund to provide qualified emigres with no-interest private mortgages.

He did it through the government and the Tefahot mortgage bank, according to Soviet Jewry activist Natan Sharansky, who has been named administrator of the fund.

Sharansky announced the Gruss project, to be named for the philanthropist's late wife, Caroline, at a news conference here Dec. 21. He said it would benefit some 3,000 Jewish families coming from the Soviet Union, but only if they come to Israel directly.

The fund was announced at the Moscow Soviet Jewry congress last week by Shmuel

Azarkh, an official of the Soviet Jewry Zionist Forum, to the cheers of the crowd. Azarkh is from Moscow and lives in Jerusalem.

So-called "dropouts" who tried their luck in other countries before coming to Israel would not be eligible, he stressed.

Sharansky, who heads the Soviet Jewry Zionist Forum, an association of Soviet immigrants in Israel, and is an outspoken critic of the Jewish Agency's and Absorption Ministry's handling of the new arrivals, explained how the mortgage fund will work.

Gruss' fund, and what the government and the Tefahot bank contribute, will allow an immigrant family to take out a mortgage of up to \$70,000.

There will be no interest. Principal will be payable in installments as low as \$150 a month.

The fund's headquarters will be in New York. Sharansky will head its Jerusalem branch.

Gruss is a well-known donor to Israeli causes. Two years ago, he set up a \$150 million fund for the benefit of Israel Defense Force veterans.

JEWISH RELIGIOUS LEADERS PRESENT LETTER OF CONCERNS TO PRESIDENT

NEW YORK, Dec. 25 (JTA) -- Jewish religious leaders took time during Chanukah festivities at the White House last week to inform President Bush of their concerns on foreign and domestic issues.

In a letter delivered to the president during a White House Chanukah celebration on Dec. 21, leaders of the Synagogue Council of America asked Bush to keep a close watch for a possible increase in anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, in the wake of glasnost, and to continue efforts for emigration reform in the Soviet Union.

They also said the Jewish religious community "stands ready" to work with the Bush administration on such domestic issues as homelessness, health care, the environment and prevention of drug abuse.

The letter was signed by SCA President Joel Zaiman, Executive Vice President Henry Michelman and Martin Barell, chairman of the organization's board of governors. The SCA is an umbrella body of the six major congregational and rabbinic organizations of American Jewry.

SCA representatives and other American Jewish leaders participated in the Chanukah celebration as guests of the White House at a party that had been intended for Jewish staffers in the Bush administration.

The event was held in a room in the Old Executive Office Building, instead of the White House proper, because the White House was extensively decked with Christmas decorations, and officials did not want to offend their Jewish guests.

But the Christmas ambience was more difficult to escape than administration officials originally thought. A Christmas tree that would have been difficult to move stood in the room where the Chanukah celebration was planned.

The Jewish visitors were asked by the officials if covering the tree during the ceremony would suffice, and they assented.

The president appeared at the event, despite a schedule scaled back because of his preoccupation with the U.S. invasion of Panama two days earlier. He spoke of the menorah as a "powerful symbol of faith and freedom."