



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 77, No. 122

Wednesday, June 30, 1999

82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Iranian detainees call families

The 13 Iranian Jews being held by Tehran on charges of espionage called their families Tuesday.

The news comes after reports that the prisoners received a delivery of kosher food last week.

Malcolm Hoenlein, the executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations said the "breakthrough news" was an indication that the prisoners were receiving rights "they should be entitled to," and may have come in response to advocates having "lowered the decibels" of public outcry on behalf of the prisoners.

Verdict on Kurd prompts security

Israel stepped up security at its European diplomatic missions after Kurdish separatist leader Abdullah Ocalan was sentenced to death in Turkey. But expected violent demonstrations by Ocalan's supporters failed to materialize.

In February, three Kurdish demonstrators were shot dead by guards when they tried to storm the Israeli Consulate in Berlin. The protesters had been angered by news reports, vehemently denied by Israel, that Israeli intelligence had helped Turkey arrest Ocalan in Kenya.

Jewish leader leaves Pristina

International Jewish representatives entered Kosovo for the first time since the NATO air war against Yugoslavia began and evacuated the leader of the Jewish community of Pristina and his family.

Chedar Prilincic, 61, his wife and mother were brought Tuesday to the Macedonian capital of Skopje by Vikto Mizrachi, president of the 186-member Jewish community of Macedonia. [Page 3]

Man refused Jewish burial

A Jewish cemetery in Toronto refused to bury a Jewish-born Canadian man who accepted Jesus some 40 years ago. Malvern Jacobs' son, Les, said his father remained a Jew even though he became a Christian minister. [Page 3]

Because of Independence Day in the U.S., the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, July 5.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Report urges greater funding to enhance Jewish day schools

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — In their strongest statement to date, Jewish communal leaders are urging greater national and local support for day schools.

A report released last Friday by the United Jewish Communities and its educational arm, the Jewish Education Service of North America, says, "No Jewish family that desires to send its child(ren) to a Jewish day school should be prevented from doing so due to financial reasons."

It calls on local federations to provide increased financial resources and other forms of assistance for all forms of Jewish education, "with special emphasis on support that helps to ensure day school viability and vitality."

Hailed by many as the most powerful antidote to the Jewish community's assimilation and intermarriage woes, day schools provide a Judaic and secular education for an estimated 212,000 children in North America, or about 40 percent of all children involved in some form of Jewish education. Once primarily the domain of the Orthodox — 660 of North America's 810 day schools are Orthodox — day schools have earned increasing support among liberal Jews in the past decade.

However, while demand for day schools is rapidly growing, these institutions face a host of financial challenges, and most function with far less money budgeted per pupil than is used in public schools. Some have large deficits, while others survive only by charging a tuition that low-income and middle-class families can't afford.

Many schools complain that financial constraints limit their ability to recruit qualified personnel or focus on improving the quality of their academic programs.

Most federations have increased their support for day schools in recent years and some are also creating sizeable endowments for them.

However, community allocations still comprise less than 10 percent of most day schools' budgets, according to a 1997 study commissioned by the Avi Chai Foundation, one of several large foundations that provide funding and advocacy for day schools.

The report urges federations to foster partnerships among foundations, individual philanthropists, educational organizations and the religious movements not only to increase funding for Jewish day schools, but to raise the quality of instruction and encourage more Jewish families to consider enrolling their children.

The report is the product of a national "blue-ribbon" task force created in late 1997 by the Council of Jewish Federations — which recently merged with the United Jewish Appeal to become the United Jewish Communities — and JESNA.

The task force was a response to a proposed resolution by the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago and the Chicago-based National Jewish Day School Scholarship Committee that each community "fulfill its commitment to Jewish day school education with dedication and resources consistent with its significant importance to the survival of the Jewish community."

Instead of voting on the resolution at the CJF's annual General Assembly that year, officials decided to form the task force.

The 39-person task force consisted of national federation leadership, representatives from day school advocacy groups and foundations.

The driving force behind the 1997 resolution, George Hanus of Chicago, participated in the task force and praised its report but expressed skepticism about its impact. Hanus, the founder of the National Jewish Day School Scholarship Committee,

MIDEAST FOCUS

'Peace Coalition' expected soon

Israeli Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak will announce his government on Friday, a Barak spokesman said.

In an effort to create what some of his aides are calling a "peace coalition," Barak held negotiations Tuesday with the Center Party, the predominantly Sephardi Shas Party and the fervently Orthodox United Torah Judaism bloc.

The secular Meretz Party said Tuesday it is waiting to see the final coalition agreement that may be reached between Barak and Shas.

Meanwhile, the fervently Orthodox United Torah Judaism bloc signed an agreement with Barak that calls for the creation of a committee to deal with draft exemptions for yeshiva students.

UTJ legislators will not hold any ministries in the Barak government, party officials said.

Panel slams Yasser Arafat

Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat wields far too much power in his self-rule government, which needs a complete overhaul to become more democratic, said a panel that includes U.S. and European representatives.

"We have made it clear that not to reform is not an option," said Henry Siegman, the project director of the panel, which was sponsored by the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations. In a report issued Monday, the panel charged, among other things, that the Palestinian judiciary is in disarray and the Palestinian legislative council is virtually powerless.

Court rules for Reform movement

Israel's High Court of Justice ordered the ministries of Education and Religious Affairs to pay the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College some \$2,800, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Ruling on two cases, the court said Monday the college did not receive appropriate funding.

said he does not think "we can rely on federations, which are having a hard enough time trying to define themselves," to dramatically improve the lot of day schools.

"If they can help us great, but we're not waiting for that," said Hanus, who is working to establish scholarship endowments for every day school, with the ultimate goal of schools' being able to offer free education to every Jewish child who wants one.

His group is trying to persuade all American Jews to bequeath 5 percent of their estates to day school endowments. But other members of the task force said they hoped the new report would have a significant impact.

"This is not a milquetoast report," said Jonathan Woocher, JESNA's executive vice president. "It wants leadership from federations in partnership with others to strengthen day schools, and at the same time it fits into a larger framework, recognizing that day schools together with other areas" will "power a Jewish renaissance."

Asked how the new report differed from previous community efforts, including a Continuity Commission that in 1996, after three years, came up with a list of suggested "pro-continuity" priorities but took no action, Woocher said that the latest effort has the endorsement and commitment of a diverse group of players.

He said that JESNA is already taking action: bringing philanthropists and federations together, ensuring that day schools are on the agenda at national federation meetings like the General Assembly and preparing to offer consultation services to communities looking to upgrade their schools.

Task force chairman Bennett Yanowitz of Cleveland said he hopes the report spurs federations to increase their efforts for day schools, gives day schools the impetus to develop endowments and encourages cooperation with private foundations.

"I hope day schools will feel there is increased recognition of their importance" as a result of the report, he said.

For their part, federation executives praised the report, while pointing out that they are already stepping up funding for day schools.

"It raises the right issues and makes the right recommendations," said John Fishel, executive vice president of the Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles. "The question is long term — what are the prospects for enhancing support for day school education while at the same time ensuring that we not undermine support for other critical areas."

Despite a flat campaign, Los Angeles recently added \$1 million a year in allocations to its day schools, mostly by scaling back allocations to Israel, he said.

He said he hoped the report gets the issues "out in the broader Jewish community so people believe its importance is worthy of their increasing their annual commitment to our campaign."

Steven Nasatir, president of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, which helped start the task force, said he was "very pleased" with the report and hoped it would inspire other federations to focus on day schools.

While his own federation's allocations for day schools have increased only modestly over the years — \$2.4 million to 14 day schools, compared to \$2 million five years ago — it is helping day schools set up their own endowment funds, providing loans and loan guarantees and has raised close to \$10 million in the past few years for day school capital campaigns.

"We've been pretty proactive in helping to put bread on the table for the day schools," said Nasatir.

Day school principals also said they hoped it would make a difference.

Rabbi Yisroel Rosenfeld of the Yeshiva Schools of Pittsburgh, a Lubavitch school recently named a "Blue Ribbon" school by the U.S. Department of Education, said more community funding is needed to tackle a close-to-\$1 million deficit.

"We have a policy that we don't turn down any Jewish child, regardless of ability to pay, but that puts us in a difficult situation financially," he said.

Federation allocations and grants — which have "come a long way" from the past — account for approximately one-sixth of Yeshiva Schools' budget, said Rosenfeld, but the constant scrambling for operational funds takes time and energy that could be better spent "making education better."

"If we had more money we could enhance our programs, get rid of the deficit, and the teachers could be paid on time," said Rosenfeld. □



Daily News Bulletin

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JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
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JEWISH WORLD

Pristina Jewish leader, family guided to safety in Macedonia

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — International Jewish representatives have entered Kosovo for the first time since the NATO air war against Yugoslavia began and have evacuated the leader of Pristina's Jewish community and his family.

Chedar Prlincivic, 61, his wife, Vidosava, and his 81-year-old mother, Bea Mandil, were brought Tuesday to the Macedonian capital of Skopje by Vikto Mizrachi, president of the 186-member Jewish community of Macedonia.

"They came out not to flee, but to have medical attention and rest for a few weeks until the situation in Pristina settles down," Yechiel Bar Chaim, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee representative for the former Yugoslavia, told JTA by telephone from Skopje.

Bar Chaim said Prlincivic and his family are in good health and spirits, but exhausted from the stress of the previous few months.

On Sunday, armed men visited their home in Pristina and ordered them to leave town. Prlincivic said the men were not members of the Kosovo Liberation Army, but appeared to have been rogue paramilitaries operating on their own.

He described the situation in Pristina as tense and unsettled.

Before the conflict this spring, some 40 Jews were known to have lived in the Kosovar capital.

Bar Chaim said only seven remained there now, including Prlincivic's son and his family. At least one family has made aliyah, and the others are believed to be staying with relatives elsewhere in Serbia. □

Cemetery refuses to allow burial of Jewish-born Christian minister

By Bill Gladstone

TORONTO (JTA) — Forty years after Malvern Jacobs spurned his Jewish roots by adopting a belief in Jesus as the Messiah, a hearse carrying the body of the 71-year-old Christian minister and a procession of 400 of his mourners were barred from entering a Toronto-area Jewish cemetery.

After waiting two hours outside the locked gates of Pardes Shalom, a large cemetery several miles north of Toronto, Jacobs' son told the procession to return to the funeral parlor.

"This should not happen to anyone," Les Jacobs said. "This is a violation of the freedom of rights. My father was born a Jew, he lived as a Jew and he will die as a Jew."

Both major rabbinical associations in Toronto — the Orthodox Va'ad Harabonim and the Toronto Board of Rabbis, which represents the Conservative and Reform movements — agreed with the decision to bar Jacobs' body from the cemetery.

Born to Jewish parents, Jacobs had been ordained a Christian minister. He devoted much time and energy to proselytizing and converting Jews to Christianity.

He was a dean of the Jewish studies program at the Canada Christian College, a pastor of the Japanese Gospel Church and a secretary of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of Canada. He was also a deacon of the Anglican Church of Canada.

"Someone who has publicly eschewed the tenets of Judaism and has made it his life's work to proselytize Jews to Christianity has placed himself outside of the Jewish community, and has thereby forfeited the right to be buried in a Jewish cemetery," said Keith Landy, chairman of the Ontario region of the Canadian Jewish Congress and spokesman for the two rabbinical associations.

"It's regrettable that this incident occurred," he said. "As far as we're concerned, Dr. Jacobs was a Christian and should have sought burial in a Christian cemetery."

The younger Jacobs, who has also been active in proselytizing Jews to Christianity, said he will pursue the matter in the courts. □

Swiss payments to arrive in 2000

Payments from a \$1.25 billion settlement reached last year with several Swiss banks will start reaching Holocaust survivors by the second half of 2000, according to the executive director of the World Jewish Congress.

Some details of the payout plan still need to be worked out by a U.S. District Court later this year, added Elan Steinberg.

Eligibility details are being spelled out this week in newspaper ads throughout the world, and applications must be submitted by Oct. 22.

Yeltsin: Communists broke law

Russian President Boris Yeltsin criticized his justice minister for not unearthing evidence that the Communist Party broke the law when some of its top officials launched anti-Semitic attacks last year on the nation's Jewish community.

Yeltsin said Tuesday that he had uncovered several legal violations by the Communists, adding that he was upset that Pavel Krashennikov had not filed charges against the party, according to Russia's Interfax news agency.

In another development, a Russian television program aired anti-Semitic slurs for a third time. In the latest case, "Russian House," a talk show that focuses on social and political issues, included comments by an "expert" that the Holocaust never took place.

An earlier show included comments that Jews are part of a conspiracy to dominate the world, and another included a call for kosher food to be sold only in separate stores.

Schools get national award

Four Jewish day schools were among the 266 elementary schools, 45 of them private, that the U.S. Department of Education has named 1998-99 Blue Ribbon Schools.

Tarbut v'Torah Community Day School in Irvine, Calif., Yeshiva Schools of Pittsburgh, Minneapolis Jewish Day School and the Katherine and Jacob Greenfield Hebrew Academy of Atlanta "excel in all areas of academic leadership, teaching and teacher development and school curriculum," says a press release issued by the U.S. Department of Education.

Camp head maintains innocence

A Croatian concentration camp commander denied that he had been responsible for the deaths of some 2,000 people when he headed the Jasenovac camp in 1944.

Dinko Sakic issued the "categorical" denial at the end of his three-day defense in a Croatian court and then refused to answer any questions.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Gay Jews recount dual struggle on anniversary of Stonewall Riots

By Howard Lovy

NEW YORK (JTA) — Thirty years ago this week, the Exodus began for gays and lesbians.

And because Jews are a people of stories, gay and lesbian Jews tell theirs this week with special bookmarks that open to the pages of their dual struggles.

Just as the story of the ancient Hebrews' deliverance from slavery has been retold over the generations as the defining moment of the Jewish people, so have the Stonewall Riots become the story of the deliverance of a people.

At B'nai Jeshurun, a synagogue on New York's Upper West Side last Friday evening, the story of gay liberation was retold in the form of its fourth annual "Stonewall Shabbat Seder," with its own Haggadah, rituals and symbols that mixed traditional Jewish prayer with poems, readings and the history of the gay struggle.

With the New York Police Department playing the role of Pharaoh's men, the rioters in Greenwich Village on June 27, 1969, were the Children of Israel, embarking on the long journey to the Promised Land.

On that June day, a police raid on the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar, escalated into violence, and became the official "coming out" party for gays and lesbians around the world.

Before Stonewall, much of the gay community lived as the crypto-Jews during the Inquisition — denying themselves public displays of who they are for fear of reprisals from the wider community.

"Were you out at the time of the riots?" one seder participant asked another.

"Before Stonewall, we were all living in the ghetto," he replied.

The Haggadah for the seder was compiled by Mark Horn, who heads B'nai Jeshurun's Gay and Lesbian Committee.

Like the traditional Passover Haggadah, it is a combination of prayer, history, debate, questions and symbols that tell the story of liberation.

Among the symbols on the Stonewall seder plate:

- Challah that is unashamedly uncovered, even during the prayer over the wine;
- A variety of fruit "because sometimes we are called the 'fruit' people. And while it is meant as an insult, tonight we take it as a blessing in disguise;"
- A bundle of sticks — the "faggot" — to commemorate gay men and lesbians throughout history who were burned at the stake;
- Bricks and stones to remember the "bricks of resistance thrown at the police the night of the Stonewall riot;"
- An empty cup: "We recall those who did not live to see this moment, and those who are unable to celebrate openly their identity and connection to God. We are angry with the spiritual emptiness that the overwhelming majority of Jewish institutions offer to queer Jews."

The Haggadah's narrative takes participants from Hitler's attempted genocide of homosexuals to the Exodus from the closet after Stonewall; from the martyrdom of Harvey Milk, a gay Jewish San Francisco city supervisor who was assassinated, to the holocaust of AIDS and the emergence of today's more organized

gay movement. Readings range from the biblical "Song of Songs" to Allen Ginsberg's "Howl."

Also throughout is the use of the word "queer," which Horn said is not a universally accepted term in the gay community. He compares it with the use of the word "Jew," which until this century was considered an epithet by the Jewish community.

"Hebrew" or "Israelite" were the preferred terms, until the Jewish people decided to take the word back as their own.

"I think it's important to look at what the culture defines as 'other' as queer," Horn said in an interview. "And how each of us, whether gay or straight or otherwise, is somehow in our lives seen as 'other.'"

"And it's a way to examine what we think of as queer to God, and how to bring that forward, into the light, a way to bring ourselves fully before our Creator."

Horn's Haggadah sees this mix of spirituality and gay pride as a way of "looking at our Jewish heritage through a queer lens and at our queer heritage through a Jewish lens. It means remembering the queers in the death camps and the Jews at the Stonewall Inn."

Seder participants talked about the dual discoveries of their Jewishness and sexual identities — describing how each form of identity defines them as "queer" to the rest of society, but makes them unique to themselves.

One by one, each man and woman at the tables talked of their lifelong feelings of detachment from the mainstream because of their sexual orientation and their Jewishness.

The seder openly addresses and debates how gay men and lesbians are seen as outcasts within Judaism, through the line from Leviticus that calls homosexuality an "abomination." Participants discussed the wounds the line opens for them, then they reinterpreted it.

"And here is a verse of my Torah. It is a small verse. For when I stood at Sinai I heard God call out, 'Love your neighbor as yourself. Share your bed, your heart, your life with him, that your days may be long on the face of the earth.' But no one wrote those words down when I heard them, all those years ago," the Haggadah says.

There are biblical prohibitions against a lot of things that are not always adhered to by everybody in the Jewish community, Horn said.

He believes the gay community is mirroring the larger society in a return to spirituality, but many gays still fear showing up at their local synagogue because they are not certain they would be welcome there. Slowly, however, more synagogues are welcoming and recognizing them and they are becoming part of the organized Jewish community, he added.

Participation by gays in Jewish religious life, Horn's Stonewall Haggadah says, makes the Jewish people whole. And it uses strong language to make the point.

"And so to the Jewish mullahs who would murder us, and the ostriches in the Jewish community who would ignore us and hope we go away, we say with all the thunder we can muster: When you condemn Queer Jews you keep Judaism in exile. You cannot be whole without us. And we will not be silent."

The seder ended with traditional prayers; then, with some chuckles and a few nods and winks, the participants launched into a simple melody — perhaps the traditional gay equivalent of "Next Year in Jerusalem."

It was a song popularized by Judy Garland, buried the night of the Stonewall Riots: "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." □