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83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

One of 'Iran 13' denies charges

A religion teacher is reportedly the first of the 13 Iranian Jews facing espionage charges to reject the accusations in court.

Farzad Kashi "denied all the charges, and his lawyer called for his release," a spokesman for the defense team was quoted as saying.

During Wednesday's closed-door proceedings, Kashi's brother, Faramarz, admitted to spying for the Jewish state, the sixth defendant to offer what many believe are forced confessions.

Six defendants have yet to appear in court.
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Austrian sanctions questioned

Six or seven of the European Union's 15 members want to rethink the sanctions imposed earlier this year on Austria, France's foreign minister told *The New York Times*.

Spain, Italy, Ireland and Denmark are among the nations reportedly thinking of lifting the sanctions, which were imposed because of the inclusion of the far-right Freedom Party in Austria's government.

The sanctions are fueling questions about whether the European Union was intruding into a member nation's internal affairs.

Museum urged to remove bust

The World Jewish Congress urged a German museum to remove a bust honoring a Nazi art dealer who traded in art looted from Jews.

The Augsburg Municipal Art Museum set up the bust of Karl Haberstock near the front entrance because he was one of its biggest donors.

The WJC also called on the museum to open its files so researchers can determine whether any of its holdings were looted during the war.

Museum officials later denied exhibiting looted art.

Bethlehem protest turns violent

Israeli soldiers fired at Palestinian stone-throwers during clashes in the West Bank town of Bethlehem.

Five Palestinians were lightly wounded during the protests, which have been held in Bethlehem the past week on behalf of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails.

Many of the prisoners are on a hunger strike.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

U.S. Jews happily eat kosher food in the land known for Peking Duck

By Miriam Widman

SHANGHAI (JTA) — Gus Axelrod and Stuart Magloff sit with their families together on a recent Sunday and eat lox and bagels.

It's hardly a remarkable event, except for its location: Shanghai.

China's bustling financial center, home to about 13 million, is also a temporary home to about 200 Jews. Most, like Axelrod and Magloff, are business people who came here for career opportunities.

"In China, a person can take on a bigger role with more responsibility at an earlier point in his career than he could in the United States," said Michael Goldman, a financial comptroller from Philadelphia who has lived in China for nine years.

Magloff, who is director of operations for Johnson & Johnson, wondered whether it would be possible to continue to raise his children Jewish in an environment that is as decidedly non-Jewish as China's. But Magloff's family, like other Jews here, is more observant in Shanghai than in the United States because being in a foreign environment gives them more reason to connect to something familiar, like the Jewish community.

Others find the lack of anti-Semitism quite refreshing.

"I find it easier to be Jewish here than in any other place we've ever lived," said Magloff's wife, Carol, who grew up in south Texas. "I killed Jesus. Me, personally, that's how I grew up."

The result of this newfound connection is a flurry of Jewish activities in Shanghai. There's a toddlers' group, a youth group, adult and Bar Mitzvah classes and informal get-togethers. A preschool is set to open next year.

The community got a big boost in 1998 with the arrival of Rabbi Shalom Greenberg. The 28-year-old Chabad rabbi was born in Israel and educated in New York.

The city's current Jewish community has no connection to Shanghai's Jewish past — except for one link.

Albert Sassoon, a New York-based clothing manufacturer now in Shanghai, is distantly related to the Iraqi Sassoon family prominent in Shanghai in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Sassoon, an Orthodox Jew, has generously contributed to the community and has even donated office space for the rabbi. Amid the rumble of sewing machines a few doors down, Greenberg can be heard correcting a Bar Mitzvah student on Hebrew pronunciation.

Members of Shanghai's Jewish community recognize some similarities between the two cultures.

"The desire for education, for learning, a degree of success, the family — all of these characteristics are common," said Axelrod.

But there are some things that are decidedly different.

"There's a restaurant here called Shu You. We call it the Shu You Zoo," said Carol Magloff.

"You walk in there and there are animals in cages," she said, adding that snakes, rabbits and dogs are among them. Diners choose what they want and it arrives — cooked — on their plates.

But if just plain eating can be tough for Westerners, eating kosher is a real challenge.

"It's not difficult. It's just expensive," said Greenberg, noting he pays \$6 a pound

MIDEAST FOCUS

Weizman collapses at ceremony

Israeli President Ezer Weizman collapsed from dehydration during an Independence Day ceremony at his residence. He soon recovered, according to his physician, who described the episode as "only a fleeting moment of dizziness."

Israel, Hezbollah trade attacks

Hezbollah gunmen attacked positions of the Israel Defense Force and its allied South Lebanon Army. The IDF and SLA retaliated with airstrikes and artillery shelling.

Teen knows her Bible

Beersheba teen-ager Sara Rachel Mahalo won the World Youth Bible Quiz held in Jerusalem.

Two other Israeli teens tied for second, while an American, Bracha Dinenfeld, placed third, Israel Radio said.

Israelis, Arabs to take on celebs

A joint Israeli-Palestinian soccer team is slated to go up against a celebrity team in Italy later this month, the Israeli daily Ma'ariv reported.

Though the Palestinian representation on the team has not yet been finalized, the paper said the Israeli players will include some of the shining stars on Israel's soccer scene. According to the paper, the opposing celebrity team will include actors Sean Connery and Roberto Benigni.

Israelis: 'They're loud, but not me'

A majority of Israelis think the typical Israeli is materialistic and loud, according to a poll published by the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot.

But only 20 percent of those surveyed believe they have those traits.

The poll also found that some 20 percent of the respondents, most of them young people, do not consider themselves Zionists.

for kosher chicken, including high import fees. Actually, things are easier now," he said.

When he first came to Shanghai two years ago, the rabbi had to travel to Hong Kong or the States for kosher products.

"People in the customs, they thought I'm nuts. When they asked me what is in the box and I said chicken, they couldn't believe me. Why would you bring a chicken to Shanghai? You know Shanghai is full of chickens."

But not kosher chickens — at least until recently.

Bruce Feuer, who is president of the Jewish Community of Shanghai, manages the development where the five-star Portman Ritz Carlton hotel is located.

Feuer, a Reform Jew from Atlanta, introduced the rabbi to the hotel's executive chef, Christopher Christie, a Protestant from Canada who is not as unlikely a kosher specialist as it may first appear.

"Growing up in Winnipeg, there was a very large Jewish community and we opened up a kosher kitchen because the demand was there," said Christie.

"And I spent a lot of time with the mashgiach," or kosher supervisor, "who was looking over the kitchen, and I asked a lot of questions and I just found it fascinating."

Christie has donated a section in one of his enormous commercial freezers for the rabbi's kosher meat, which he supplies with orders that take 10 days to arrive.

"You can't just decide, 'Oops. I'm missing a chicken. I'll go down to the butcher to buy one,'" the rabbi said.

Christie recently worked on the community's seder, attended by 130 guests and also organized what community members believe to be China's first postwar Bat Mitzvah.

There are other challenges as well — a key one involves the Chinese authorities. Shanghai had several places of worship during the 1930s and 1940s, when European refugees lived there.

But today, Jews pray mostly in an activity room in the Shanghai Centre, operated by Seacliff Ltd., of which Feuer is the general manager.

There is a synagogue in Shanghai — Ohel Rachel — but it looks more like a museum than a place of worship.

The synagogue was cleaned up before President Clinton's visit two years ago, but the Jewish community in Shanghai only has access to it on rare occasions.

Last year marked the first time the Jewish community was able to use it.

But the Chinese government opened it for only one day, so members could worship there on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, but not the second and not on Yom Kippur.

Ohel Rachel was opened again for a Chanukah party last year, but when Steve Fieldman, a lawyer and professor teaching in Shanghai, wanted his Bat Mitzvah-aged daughter and family to celebrate in the synagogue, he was turned down. Instead, the Bat Mitzvah was held at the Ritz.

"Dealing with the Chinese authorities on this issue is not a legal issue, it's a political issue," said Fieldman, a member of Temple Israel in Orlando, Fla.

He believes that the Chinese government does not want to be seen as favoring Jews. Judaism is not one of the five officially recognized religions, although the community has applied for official status.

Additionally, Beijing requires that only non-Chinese residents take part in the Jewish community's activities.

"As long as we are here for the Jewish people, that's fine," the rabbi said. "But as soon as we open our doors to the Chinese people, they will close our doors."

Still, the rabbi is optimistic. "We are working on getting the Ohel Rachel synagogue back. Now we are hoping that they will allow us to use it at least 20 times in the next year."

The Jewish community was given use of Ohel Rachel for the first night of Passover this year. A group of Auschwitz survivors attended the services, reminding congregants that although Shanghai showed compassion for Jews during the war, many were not as lucky.

Henry Levine, the Jewish U.S. consul general in Shanghai, has been very helpful to the community, members say. And most Jews in Shanghai understand that things take time in their temporary home.

"It is China. It's their country," said Axelrod. "They can set the rules, and we have to accommodate them. And I think we're doing a reasonably good job." □



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JEWISH WORLD

Gene study: Jews, Arabs linked

Jews and several Arab groups may have common ancestors, according to a new study of the Y chromosome.

A study published this week in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences also found that, despite thousands of years in the Diaspora, Israeli men are closer genetically to each other than to the non-Jewish group studied.

The percentage of variation between Jews and Palestinians was only 1 percent, as compared with a 5 percent difference between Jews and Europeans.

The groups closest genetically to the Israelis: Palestinians and Syrians, with Saudi Arabians, Lebanese and Druse next.

Elian comments spark criticism

Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) called on Sen. Bob Smith (R-N.H.) and New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani to apologize for their use of Holocaust imagery in their descriptions of the Elian Gonzales case.

Using Nazi imagery is shameful and irresponsible and trivializes the hardship of Holocaust survivors, Nadler said.

His comment came after Smith referred to the Wye plantation in eastern Maryland where Gonzales is staying as a "concentration camp," and Giuliani called the federal troops that took the boy from his relatives' Miami home "storm troopers."

An aide to Smith was later quoted as saying that the senator had meant to say "re-education camp."

Shoah documentary to air

Producers of a new documentary scheduled to air on U.S. television early next year claim it is the most comprehensive history of the Holocaust ever filmed.

A German television channel and the History Channel in the United States produced the six-part series "Holocaust," which draws on interviews with more than 500 victims and perpetrators of the Nazi genocide against the Jews.

Champion race walker dies at 83

Henry Laskau, a Jewish refugee from the Nazis who later became America's champion race walker, died Sunday in Florida at 83.

Laskau fled a German concentration camp in 1938 and worked for U.S. Army intelligence during World War II.

At 5 feet 8 inches and 138 pounds, he captured 42 national titles between 1947 and 1957 and was a member of the U.S. team at the 1948, 1952 and 1956 Olympics.

"He slowed down a little in the last few years," a friend was quoted as saying before his death. "But he still walks faster than you or I do."

Shanghai was refuge for Jews when they had nowhere to go

By Miriam Widman

SHANGHAI (JTA) — Shanghai has arguably the strongest connection to Judaism of any city in Asia.

In the mid-1800s, Sephardi Jews, mainly from Iraq, came here to pursue trade in textiles and opium. They had names like Sassoon and Kadouri and became wealthy, leaving their mark on the city.

"The Sephardic Jews did very well," said Tess Johnston, a historian from Charlottesville, Va., who remained in the city after retiring from her last foreign service posting at the U.S. Consulate here.

"Some of the major mansions of this town are from Sephardic Jews," she said.

But Shanghai is probably best known among Jews today as a haven for those trapped in Europe following Kristallnacht, the Nazi pogrom in Germany and Austria in November 1938.

"It was the only place you could go to without a visa," said Rita Gerson, who first fled to Sweden from her native Berlin in 1938 and left there at age 12 with a group of other girls for Shanghai in 1940. By that time, "all the other places were closed."

Shanghai remained open.

"Everyone thanks the Chinese for saving them, but technically that's not correct," said Johnston, from her comfortable, but cluttered living room.

In the 1930s, parts of Shanghai were run by a combination of the Americans, Europeans and the French, and the Japanese controlled other areas.

Still, Johnston notes, the Chinese could have kicked the Jews out — and it is a tribute to them that refugees were allowed to stay.

The number of European Jews who made it to Shanghai varies, according to sources, but there were probably somewhere between 20,000 and 30,000 Jewish refugees in the city during World War II.

In the beginning, Jews were not confined to one area, but in 1943, when the German Col. Josef Meisinger, known as the "Butcher of Warsaw," arrived, things changed. Meisinger "earned" his nickname for the horrible atrocities he committed as Gestapo chief in the Polish capital.

By 1943 the Japanese controlled all of Shanghai, and Meisinger insisted that the Japanese apply Hitler's "Final Solution" to the Jews in Shanghai as well. But the Japanese refused.

"Anti-Semitism is neither a Chinese nor a Japanese phenomenon," Johnston said. The Japanese "did not agree to kill the Jews because they had no basic anti-Semitism."

What Germany's allies did do was force the Jews into a ghetto, known as a "designated area" in Shanghai's Hongkou district, one of the city's poorest neighborhoods.

Even though conditions were harsh, Jewish life flourished. Refugees opened bakeries, cafes, night clubs, newspapers and journals and there were weddings by the score.

After the war, the refugees dispersed — many to the West Coast of the United States, others to Australia or Israel.

Today, little remains in Hongkou of its Jewish past — just a plaque in a neighborhood park in Chinese, English and Hebrew and the top floor of a former synagogue that serves as a museum. □

Miss Lebanon snubs Miss Israel

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Miss Lebanon is refusing to speak with Miss Israel during the Miss Universe contest being held on the island of Cyprus.

"I am an ambassador of my country, and I respect my government's decision not to have links with Israel," said Miss Lebanon, Norma Naoum. But Nirit Bakchi is not bothered by the snub.

"I just keep to girls I connect with," she said. □

First plea of not guilty entered by Iranian Jew

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — Six of the seven Iranian Jews who have gone before Iran's Revolutionary Court have "confessed" to spying for Israel.

The first plea of not guilty came Wednesday, as 31-year-old Farzad Kashi, a religion teacher, told the judge he did not pass sensitive material to the Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence agency.

Earlier in the day, Kashi's brother, Faramarz, 35, reportedly admitted he was guilty of such activities.

American advocates for the accused, however, remain adamant that the allegations against all 13 of the Iranian Jews on trial are unfounded.

They maintain that the hearings are a scripted political show trial. The hearings are slated to continue Monday.

That Farzad Kashi pleaded innocent was either part of the script or perhaps a small act of defiance, said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"It means Farzad didn't bend to the pressures being applied," said Hoenlein, who has closely monitored the hearings.

At the same time, advocates like Hoenlein have a new concern: that the string of admissions — two of which were broadcast on state television, along with pleas for forgiveness and leniency — may be provoking persecution of the community of 25,000 Jews.

There are signs that many Iranians are reacting negatively to the aired confessions.

Media reports from Iran state that Jews — even Jewish children — are now experiencing harassment on the streets, in the workplace and in the schools. There are reports of anti-Jewish graffiti and fears of an economic boycott of Jewish-owned shops.

One Jewish woman, the wife of one of the suspects, reportedly pleaded with photographers outside the courtroom to not take her photo. "I work at a health clinic, and I don't want any problems," she was quoted as saying. "I don't want people pointing fingers at me." □

Gore tells ADL hate crimes law would be 'unmistakable message'

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — It is "long past time for a national law" against hate crimes, Vice President Al Gore said this week, as he called on Congress to pass pending legislation now.

"We have to send an unmistakable message that if you commit a hate crime you will be punished," Gore said.

He made the comments Tuesday at an Anti-Defamation League conference — in effect, preaching to the choir because the ADL is at the forefront of the push for such legislation.

"Hate crimes are acts of violence — not just against a person, not just against individuals, but against our ideals," he told the group.

A recent shooting rampage in suburban Pittsburgh that killed

five people, including Anita Gordon, a 63-year-old Jewish woman, was the latest violent hate crime to grab national headlines. The gunman shot through the windows of two suburban Pittsburgh synagogues as well.

The incident prompted President Clinton last week to renew his call for a national hate crimes law.

"It is simply not true that we do not need national legislation" against hate crimes, Clinton said. "We do."

There is still time to pass hate crimes legislation this year, but the likelihood of the controversial legislation making its way through Congress during the few legislative days that remain is small.

There are several congressional bills pending that extend federal protection to crimes motivated by the gender, sexual orientation or disability of the victim. Some include the authorization of grants from the Justice Department to state and local programs designed to combat hate crimes committed by juveniles.

Some congressional Republicans oppose hate crimes legislation in part because they don't want to create special classes of victims. There is also concern that the federal government might overstep its bounds and interfere with state and local officials in their investigations of hate crimes.

Steven Denenberg of Omaha found Gore's unequivocal position on hate crimes legislation "very refreshing."

Nebraska has a state hate crimes law, but a national law is necessary because states don't always have the resources that the federal government has, Denenberg said. □

Belief in Jesus no longer needed for Australia employment program

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — Australia's third largest Christian denomination has issued an apology to the Jewish community and has vowed to change its policies.

The Uniting Church took the steps after it emerged that church officials give preferential treatment to Christians in a government-funded project to help unemployed Australians find jobs.

Last December, the Australian government announced that it would fund parochial organizations to administer programs that help the unemployed find jobs. The program is part of a government transfer of employment services to the private and community sector.

The major recipient of government funding was the Uniting Church, which was provided with tens of millions of dollars for the next three years.

In January, a spokesman for the mission, David McGovern, wrote an article in the Sydney Morning Herald in which he said that Christians made the best employees, implying that they would be given preferential treatment in the dissemination of services.

Further investigation by the Jewish community revealed that declaring a commitment to Jesus and attending Christian services during work hours were conditions of employment for those who administered government-funded projects for the general community.

In February, officials with the Executive Council of Australian Jewry met with church officials, after which the church apologized to the Jewish community and agreed to change its practices. □