

## Grand Old Man Of Jewish Scholarship Honored By Special Convocation Of European Scholars

An unusual event took place recently in the city of Trier, an ancient center of learning near the junction of Germany, Luxembourg, and France. The University of Trier called a rare convocation of scholars for the sole purpose of presenting an honorary doctorate to the distinguished Jewish academic, Dr. Solomon A. Birnbaum, now in his 95th year and still engaged in research.

Some 200 scholars, almost all of them non-Jewish, from different parts of Europe, assembled in the historic university hall to honor the grand old pioneer of Yiddish and other Jewish languages, and of the development of the Hebrew script. The ceremony was organized by Dr. Walter Roll, head of the University's Faculty of Humanities, himself a non-Jewish expert on early Yiddish; the University also has two other scholars of Yiddish on its staff.

In presenting the doctorate, Dr. Roll pointed out Dr. Birnbaum's unique contribution in laying the foundations for the scientific study of Yiddish some 70 years ago with his completion of the first systematic Yiddish Grammar in 1915 and his initiation of the world's first Yiddish chair, at Hamburg University in 1922. Dr. Roll pointed out that, despite the destruction of European Jewry, a whole new generation of Yiddish scholars had emerged to whom Dr. Birnbaum acted as a father figure.

Dr. Birnbaum delivered a learned address and received a ten-minute standing ovation. After the convocation, he traveled to England where he met with five of his newest great-grandchildren.

A native of pre-World War I Vienna, Dr. Birnbaum moved to Hamburg in 1922 and settled in England immediately after the rise of Hitler. The University of London created two positions for him, one in Hebrew Palaeography and Epigraphy and another in East European Jewish studies. In 1970 he joined two of his sons in Toronto, Canada.

Dr. Birnbaum's best-known works include Yiddish: A Survey and Grammar (University of Toronto Press) and The Hebrew Scripts (Brill, Leiden, Holland). His analyses of the script of the Dead Sea scrolls were a major factor in proving the origin of the scrolls in the late Second Temple period.

## South Africa Expels Israeli Journalist

JERUSALEM (WNS) — An Israeli newspaper correspondent has been ordered to leave South Africa within 48 hours, it was reported recently.

Dan Sagir who writes for Haaretz and also broadcasts on Galei Zahal, the Army radio station, said he was told by the South African authorities that he must be out of the

country within 48 hours. He said he was the third correspondent to be expelled since the South African government declared a state of emergency on June 12.

The Foreign Ministry here announced that it has instructed the Israel Ambassador in Pretoria to inquire into expulsion of Sagir. Sagir said he was informed that his visa and work permit would not be renewed. He said he thought he was targeted because of the warm relations between Israel and the Pretoria government which the latter does not want to strain. His coverage of events in South Africa was considered unwarrantedly critical by the authorities there.

Meanwhile, the situation of South

## Honored Guests



Elie Wiesel (right) chats with Cynthia Ozick at Bar-Ilan University's annual academic convocation in New York. Miss Ozick, noted author of novels and essays dealing with the Jewish condition, received the University's Joseph H. Lookstein Award for Meritorious Service to Jewish Communal Life. It was presented by Mr. Wiesel, the only other person to receive the award.

Africa's Jewish community has become the focus of top level discussions by Premier Shimon Peres and by the Jewish Agency Assembly currently holding its annual session in Jerusalem.

Peres called a meeting of senior ministers and Jewish leaders to consider measures to increase aliya by South African Jews. Only 250 have come to Israel so far this year.

The Jewish Agency Assembly is also concerned about the Jewish community as the situation deteriorates in South Africa and by indications that while Jews are leaving that country in increasing numbers, they are not settling in Israel. They

choose instead to immigrate to the United States, Australia, New Zealand and even neighboring Zimbabwe. Haim Aharon, chairman of the Jewish Agency's aliya department, told the Assembly that a special program has been undertaken to ease the absorption of South African olim by helping them find housing and business opportunities.

They require help, Aharon said, in light of the drastic depreciation of the South African Rand and South Africa's strict currency regulations. According to Aharon, the condition of South African Jewry is "the most urgent problem of any Jewish community in the Western world."

## West German Neo-Nazi Groups Have Total Membership of 22,500

BONN (WNS) — The Interior Ministry reported this week that neo-Nazi organizations in West Germany have a combined membership of about 22,500, that several of them are prone to violence and that extremists on the far right have one thing in common with extremists of the far left — anti-Americanism.

But while emphasizing that aspect, the Ministry made no mention of recent anti-Semitic manifestations involving members of

the main-stream political parties that were serious enough to prompt a full scale debate in the Bundestag and to state parliaments.

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