

## Drugs, Middle East Connection

By Robert E. Segal

Now that the drug crisis in the U.S. has moved to the heart of the news, a daring expose of the magnitude of drug production and marketing in the Bekas Valley carries startling implications.

The American drug scene portraying such a grievous toll is familiar to millions. But the extent of the drug harvest helping to enrich Syria and Lebanon is late in impacting America.

One aspect of the Middle East connection, reported recently, is found in the release of a kidnapped American, Stephen John Donahue, apparently following payment of a \$400,000 ransom. Donahue and a British companion, Anthony Haden-Guest, were allowed to depart Syrian-occupied Eastern Lebanon where they reportedly had been held by drug dealers, but not for political activity. Rather, so the story goes, they were gathering material for a book about narcotics.

This incident leads one desiring to know more about the extensive Middle East entanglement with nefarious drugs to the findings of three French media people. One, Daniel Cattelain, a reporter, together with two photo experts ventured deep into the Bekas. Their guide, located in Baalbek, main training center for Islamic terrorists, carried papers identifying him as a Moslem member of Baalbek's home guard.

The four managed to move through 30 barriers. They dared and escaped capture by the Lebanese Army, Phalangist security forces, Amal Shiite militias, Druze guards, and even eagle-eyed Syrians.

Eventually, they were able to report coming upon President Assad's armored cars protecting the cultivation of hashish and upon drug buyers from Miami, Paris, and Amsterdam. The account of their expedition into the heartland of "this secret kingdom of drugs" leads to the conclusion that the vast, well-protected network of growers and sellers of drugs is enriching many exploiters and protectors of the traffic.

Significantly, one American Embassy investigator on the scene offers this conclusion. "The gold-mine based on drugs in Lebanon is what made it possible for the PLO to buy the most sophisticated weapons and for its leaders to conduct a luxurious life in fancy hotels all over the world."

The report that a part of this fabulous drug harvest reaches Miami rings alarm bells about the escalating American drug problem and our

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seeming inability to cope with it.

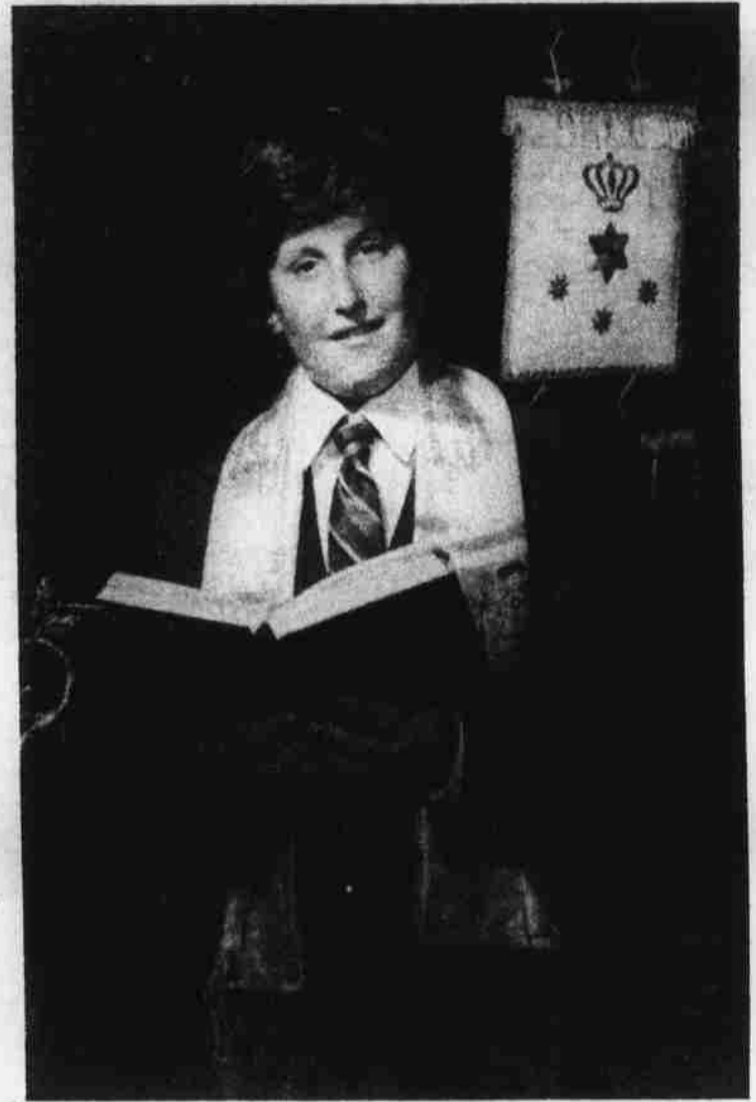
Who knows the true dimensions of the problem? One estimate indicates there are 30 million cocaine users and 500,000 heroin addicts in the U.S. Added is the possibility that the drug habit leads to the expenditure of \$110 billion annually. A key criticism is that our anti-drug agents are keen on rounding up drug cargos but not the leading smugglers.

There is now talk of spending millions more to break the back of the drug trade. But will our shrinking budget and our frightening deficit allow this?

One point is clear: the deaths of Leon Bias, University of Maryland basketball star, and Doug Rogers, Cleveland football star, have raised to a much higher decibel the cry for eradicating drug consumption among athletes, role models for America's youngsters.

With this development and with new fears growing from the extensive use of cocaine known as crack (with death's shadow hanging over the lamentable scene) this nation must not rest until the battle is won against the use of killer drugs from all sources, the Middle East included.

## Sean Levy Bar Mitzvah At Temple Beth Sholom



Photograph by Marvin

Sean Levy, son of Lillie and Moshe Levy, was called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah, recently. Dr. Louis M. Lederman, Rabbi, officiated. Hazzan Simon Bergman, Cantor, chanted the liturgy.



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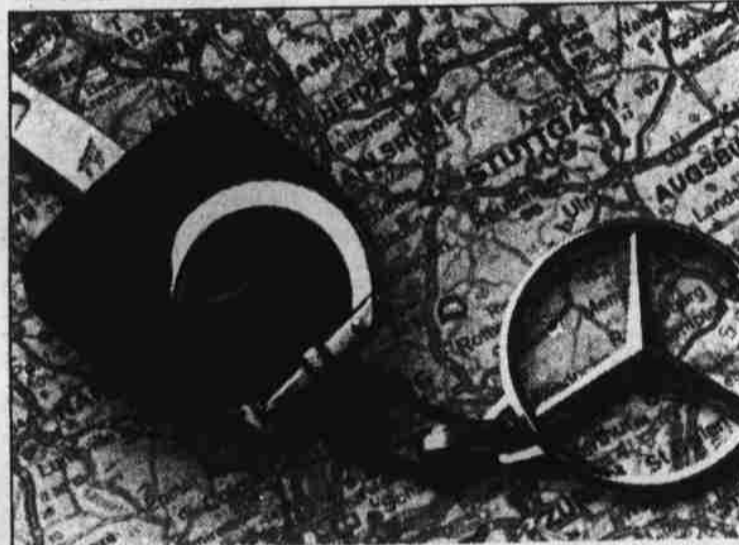
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