

This Chanukah, Cry Out For Soviet Jewish Freedom

By Robert E. Segal

When Konstantin M. Karchev, chairman of the Soviet government's curious Council of Religious Affairs, visited the Park East (Hebrew) Day School in Manhattan recently, he joined 30 Jewish children in Israeli dances and enjoyed the fun. Too bad he didn't linger for the Chanukah festivities; but that's wishing for the impossible.

Kharchev's host was Rabbi Arthur Schneier, president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, an international body. Kharchev made it known, perhaps between dances, that new Soviet legislation will make it possible for churches in his country to own property. Synagogues too, one dares to wonder?

Kharchev, a genial soul, offered a glimmer of hope. He said the Soviet Union might send rabbinical candidates over for training and ordination. Then what?

The plight of Soviet Jews is so grim that the Kharchev visit, with its tentative promise, becomes a performance in theatre of the absurd. What the Russians have done to Jews over the centuries -- even in a nation that spoke of liberation following the 1917 Revolution -- is one of the most tragic sagas of recorded history.

All the more reason to wish for a prolonged celebration of Chanukah, a festival marking a spiritual journey from ancient religious oppression to the triumphant achievement of religious freedom. Each year the warm regard of the significance of Chanukah by people of diverse creeds grows more evident.

To build on this welcome awakening in synagogues and churches alike, two suggestions are here advanced. One is to bring wide attention to Howard M. Sachar's masterful, comprehensive recording of the treatment of the "Jews of Protest" in Chapter XV of his book "Diaspora: An Inquiry Into the Contemporary Jewish World." The second recommendation is to remind all who will listen of the Bill of Particulars setting forth the Soviet Union's harsh treatment of its Jews, a treatment decidedly more outrageous than that imposed on any other one of its 130 nationalities, ethnic or religious groups.

Let the denials of religious, cultural, educational, economic and other rights suffered by Soviet Jewry be portrayed against Moscow's pledge to govern in accordance with Article XIII of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights -- rights to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state, freedom to leave any country (his own included).

Let the story be retold unendingly of the Soviet denial to Jews desiring to have traditional agencies operate in social and welfare fields. Tell of the suppression of Jewish literature, Jewish art, Jewish theatre. Expose Moscow's bogus claim that anti-Semitism is non-existent. Point to the severity of educational and economic discrimination. Cite government distribution of anti-Jewish books and articles.

Above all, especially in this season of Chanukah, cry out against the difficulty and danger Soviet Jews encounter as they seek only to immigrate to Israel, the United States and other lands holding promise of the precious gift of freedom.

Murder Of Long Island Yeshiva Student Remains Unsolved

NEW YORK (JTA) — The murder of 16-year-old yeshiva student Chaim Weiss in his dormitory room at the Torah High School of Long Beach on November 1 remains unsolved. But Jewish schools in the region are installing alarms and new locks and otherwise improving security.

The Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York, working with police departments in the metropolitan area, has arranged free security evaluation programs for the nearly 600 yeshivas and school programs under its aegis. Police officers are inspecting school buildings and facilities to detect

weak security points. Nassau County Police meanwhile continue to investigate the crime. According to Inspector Kenneth Carey, coordinator of the County's bias investigation unit, the murder of Weiss has not been determined to have had an anti-Semitic motive. Nevertheless, that is one of several possible motives being considered.

LETTERS

Mr. Michael Tell
Las Vegas Israelite
P.O. Box 14096
Las Vegas, Nevada 89114

Dear Mr. Tell:

Too often we have a tendency to "take things for granted" and too often forget to say a simple "thank you."

You have always been gracious about the publicity items submitted to you for publication, thus making the job of publicity chairman of an organization much easier.

I now want to take this opportunity to say "thank you" for the publicity you gave us concerning our recent B'nai B'rith fashion show and also for allowing us to have Marvin there to take pictures. There is no doubt in my mind that your assistance was very valuable in helping us make this a very successful affair. There are no words to adequately express our appreciation and gratitude for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Florence Ellison
B'nai B'rith Women
Publicity Chairman

P.S. Will you please extend my appreciation and thanks to Marvin as well. His cooperation is indeed beyond the call of duty.

BONN (JTA) — The government has announced that a Youth Attache will be appointed to the West German Embassy in Israel next year to further the friendship and understanding fostered over the years by exchange visits between young people of both countries. The post is unique in the German diplomatic service.

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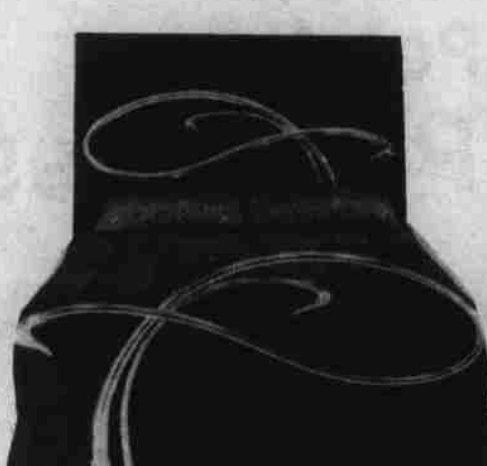



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