

THE CHARLOTTE JEWISH NEWS

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Charlotte Jewish Federation . . . Michael L. Minkin, Director
 Foundation of Charlotte Jewish Community &
 Jewish Community Center . . . Barry Hantman, Director
 Lubavitch of N.C. . . . Rabbi Yossi Groner, Director
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Editorials

Iraq Attacks Israel: Accelerated Cash Payments Needed

As this is written, no one knows how long the Mideast War will continue and how many lives will be lost... Americans, our Allies, Israelis and Arabs. We all hope and pray that it will be over soon and that Operation Desert Storm will be victorious with minimal casualties.

The Israeli Government can not by itself shoulder the enormous burden of human services if, in addition, it is required to bear extraordinary security costs. Diaspora Jewry, therefore, must do much more to help with the costs of crucial humanitarian needs, some of which under normal circumstances are carried by the Government.

Both the defense needs and the aliyah of Soviet Jews combined put an unprecedented strain on Israel's resources. Israel's present situation together with a realistic appraisal of the capacity of UJA and the federations dictates that we transmit \$400 million (including the balance of Operation Exodus) in order to respond to the emergency: \$134 million was to be sent on Jan. 31; \$133 million on Feb. 28; and \$133 million on Mar. 31. Federations, in light of the emergency in Israel, must accelerate their 1991 Campaign and this must be their first priority.

Worsening conditions could severely restrict Israel's ability to meet its defense needs, the usual human needs and the extraordinary costs of absorbing the continuing flow of Soviet Jews, which may indeed expand due to recent developments in the USSR. An Emergency Campaign — Operation Exodus II — would be a relevant substitute for the Israel Emergency Fund used in prior years at similar times.

It is important, now more than ever, to accelerate payment of your 1991 General Campaign and Operation Exodus pledges. It is also imperative that pledges be increased to help in this emergency situation. We must help our brothers and sisters who are the target of a madman's aggression. Saddam Hussein must be stopped! He will be stopped! We must help Israel! We must keep those dollars pouring into Eretz Israel!

— Federation Campaign Leadership

When Will America Begin to Understand Arab Tribal Culture?

By Marc H. Tanenbaum
(JTA)

The media coverage of Saddam Hussein and the Persian Gulf crisis has been overwhelming, and for understandable reasons. But what is not understandable is how little insight and knowledge has been shed by the media — and our political leaders, for that matter — on the depth of the profound cultural conflict between the Arab-Islamic societies and the Western world.

Much of the speculation had to do with the psychology of Saddam Hussein. Is he a madman, a psychopath? That may well be a critical factor in explaining his astounding behavior throughout this conflict since his invasion of Kuwait.

But far more telling and useful for our understanding are such insights as contained in the important study, "The Closed Circle," by David Price-Jones.

The author, who has lived in Arab and Muslim countries, describes in anthropological detail the tribal character of Arab societies. He writes: "Failure threatens tribal identity. The response will be violent and immediate. Indeed, violence is an essential ingredient in the process of decision making."

On the culture of leadership, Price-Jones writes: "Ruthlessness and cruelty come into their own; ambition is a prerequisite for reward... Leadership itself acquires the characteristics of feuding, with implicit violence. Each aspirant to power-holding must make unmistakably clear his determination to win, if need be by eliminating those in his way."

However the present conflict in the Persian Gulf concludes, those Americans and Israelis who understand this quality of Arab tribal culture are very much on target in knowing that Saddam Hussein and his aggressive policies are not just passing phenomena.

The West, and Israel, are going to have their hands full for years to come as long as Saddam Hussein types swagger their tribal aggressiveness on the world scene.

Identity Submerged for 500 Years: Jews of Belmonte, Portugal Return to Jewish Fold

After 500 years of underground existence, the Jewish community of Belmonte, Portugal has been born once again.

One catalyst for the renaissance of this community that had lain dormant since the Spanish Inquisition is the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture. Since its formation in 1965 with reparations funds from the Government of West Germany, the Memorial Foundation has worked to revive scores of Jewish communities all but snuffed out by the Nazi regime.

But to bring back to life a long-forgotten Jewish community dating back half a millennium was an "unexpected and deeply gratifying event," according to Jack J. Spitzer, chairman of the Memorial Foundation's board of trustees.

Like countless Jews who underwent forced conversions at the hands of the Catholic Church in medieval Spain, the members of the Belmonte Jewish community, 200 miles north of Lisbon, were compelled to submerge their Jewishness in order to survive. Nonetheless, they managed to retain some degree of commitment to Judaism

throughout the intervening centuries by secretly conducting seders on Passover, lighting Shabbat candles and observing other rituals handed down by their ancestors.

Recently, the small community of 200 Jews began to express that commitment publicly and sought to reconnect themselves to their Jewish roots and to the international Jewish community.

Early in 1989, while visiting Lisbon, Dr. Jerry Hochbaum, executive vice president of the Memorial Foundation, met with the leadership of Belmonte Jewry and began the arduous process of helping them to return to the Jewish fold. Despite a host of difficulties, the community began to implement a program suggested by the Memorial Foundation that included training lay leaders and educating other professional personnel.

Last summer, with help from the Memorial Foundation and in cooperation with the European Council of Jewish Community Services, two of the brightest young members of the Belmonte Jewish community, Elias Nunes and Raquel Henriques, took part in the "Hagshamah,"

a training program in Israel for would-be Jewish communal workers. The program, Dr. Hochbaum noted, was aimed at deepening their Jewish knowledge and strengthening their leadership skills so they could begin to serve their community.

The two Belmonte residents also represented the newly-emerging Jewish community in meetings with Foreign Minister David Levy, Sephardic Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, members of the Knesset and other Israeli leaders. As a result of these meetings a *shaliach* (emissary) was dispatched by the Jewish Agency for Israel to Belmonte to help serve the community's needs.

Shlomo Pereira, professor of economics at the University of California, San Diego, who represents the interests of the Belmonte Jewish community in the U.S., said, "The training program in Israel helped Elias and Raquel acquire a substantial knowledge of Jewish culture and traditions and develop their innate leadership qualities in a relatively short period.

"All these contacts are helping further the cause of the Jewish community of Belmonte's return to mainstream Judaism."

Today, a community that had been submerged for 500 years is well on its way to formally rejoining the Jewish fold — a modern Jewish tale of disappearance and rebirth.

Justice Department Seeks Survivors

The U.S. Justice Department needs assistance in locating survivors of two subsections of the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria, in connection with a war-crimes case it is currently investigating.

The Department's Office of Special Investigations, the government agency responsible for prosecuting Nazi war criminals and collaborators, said it wants to locate persons who were imprisoned in Loibl-Pass from the summer of 1944 to May 1945, and in the subcamp known as Gusen I from June 1942 to August 1944.

The agency said that because there were a number of camps designated Gusen, it seeks to identify Gusen I by pointing out that it contained several Austrian and German manufacturing plants that employed slave labor, among them Deutsch Erd-und Steinwerke, Steyr-Daimler-Puch and Messerschmidt.

The World Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith are also asking those who can be of assistance to communicate with them.

Contact at ADL is Elliot Welles, director of the Nazi War Criminals Task Force, 823 U.N. Plaza, N.Y., N.Y. 10017. Contact at WJC is Bessy Pupko, World Jewish Congress, 501 Madison Avenue, N.Y., N.Y. 10022, or call (212) 755-5770. Or survivors may contact Betty Shave, senior trial attorney, Office of Special Investigations Criminal Division, U.S. Department of Justice, 1400 New York Avenue N.W., 11th floor, Bond Building, Washington, D.C. 20530.



The Lubavitcher Rebbe Strongly Rebukes False Interpretation and Doomsayers of Holocaust

"Heaven forbid to characterize the Holocaust as a punishment to the Jews for their sins," the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, declared impassionately in an address broadcast live worldwide.

"All who perished in the Holocaust, man, woman and child, were holy and pure. They died solely because they were Jews. Each and every one was a righteous martyr."

The Rebbe was addressing a crowd of approximately 3,000 people gathered at Lubavitch World Headquarters in New York, at the afternoon prayers. The occasion was the Tenth of Tevet, a day of fasting on which Jewish suffering is remembered.

The world renown leader denounced in even stronger terms the notion that further suffering might await the Jewish people as retribution for their sins.

"This suggestion is unconscionable," the Rebbe declared. "The future bodes only well for

the Jewish people; there will never be another Holocaust. There will be redemption and joy.

"The tragedy of the Holocaust," the Rebbe said, "is an unanswerable question. No human rationale whatsoever can explain such indescribable suffering. Indeed, G-d's words to his prophet that 'My thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' (Isaiah 55:8) is all that can be said.

"Any attempt to cast blame, for whatever reason, upon those who perished is shocking.

"We recite in our prayers that G-d will first redeem the Jewish people from all its afflictions. He will redeem them as they are, sins and all. And only after that will He redeem them from all their iniquities.

"No one may cast aspersion on, or sit in judgment of, the Jewish people, G-d's children. G-d loves them all wherever and however they are," the Rebbe concluded.

Thank You

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