

WORLD BEAT

edited by Marta Garelik

Jews of Switzerland

(JTA) — Like Switzerland itself, for centuries a traditionally neutral haven while wars periodically ravaged the rest of Europe, no basic changes have taken place in the peaceful life of the Swiss Jewish community; nor has it grown much. One hundred years ago there were 20,000 Jews in Switzerland. Today there are 24,500.

They live mainly in the five major cities. They keep a low profile. Most are engaged in business. They stay away from public life.

But some of the concerns shared by Jews in many other parts of the world are beginning to intrude here. These include new manifestations of anti-Semitism, a somewhat ambiguous attitude toward Israel by the Swiss government, and the rising wave of intermarriage. This year mixed marriages accounted for 55.7 percent of all marriages entered into by Jews.

The signs of anti-Semitism follow a pattern familiar in neighboring countries: desecration of Jewish cemeteries; a swastika painted in an elevator in building housing the Israeli Consulate in Zurich; an Israeli dentist assaulted and wounded in Geneva.

Public Service for Convicts Saves Millions for Treasury

(Jerusalem Post) — A two-year-old law permitting the court to sentence persons convicted of certain crimes to do public service instead of sending them to prison has saved the Treasury many millions of shekels. Since the law was enacted in October 1979, more than 200 persons have done various stints for health, education and welfare agencies as gardeners, tutors for school-age children, attendants for chronically ill and aged persons, and the like — depending on the gravity of their offenses and their particular aptitudes.

AJC Condemns The Evangelical Right

(JTA) — The American Jewish Congress has issued a strong condemnation of the evangelical right for using religion as an instrument of political coercion and has pledged to oppose the movement on many of its domestic policies and practices.

"We are mindful," the resolution states, "that leaders and spokesmen for the evangelical right defend and support the State of Israel. We acknowledge this support, but this consideration is irrelevant to our assessment of their domestic programs. The damage done by their efforts to curtail domestic freedom is not made less by their views on Israel."

Rabbis Halt Prawns Scheme

HAIFA (Jerusalem Post) — The Chief Rabbinate's kashrut division has announced that "with the aid of heaven" it had prevented a scheme to use cooling ponds at the country's

seaside power stations for the breeding of prawns and shrimp.

The crustaceans are not kosher, and the rabbinate had sought the ban because it believed they might be sold within the country and not, as had been proposed, strictly exported.

The rabbinate apparently obtained the ban by convincing the Energy Ministry to issue orders to government-controlled Electric Corporation forbidding it from allowing its cooling basins to be used for the breeding of non-kosher fish.

The Jerusalem Post has learned that the rabbinate lately has been acting tough with the Electric Corporation, resulting for example, in a ban on the unloading of coal on the Sabbath at the new Hadera power station, which means tens of thousands of dollars in extra costs weekly.

The rabbinate has also imposed strict enforcement of the Saturday work rule in power-gird repairs, which is causing great inconvenience and losses to industry. In the past, the rabbinate closed its eyes to essential maintenance work on the grid in industrial areas on Saturdays. Now, however, the corporation is forced to do the work only on weekends, resulting in costly work stoppages in factories.

Fish-breeders have criticized the ban on use of the power station ponds, noting that freshwater prawns are being bred for export in the country's inland fish-ponds on an increasing scale.

They also noted that thousands of kilos of shrimp are smuggled into Israel by Egyptian fishermen working the Sinai coast. These shrimp are sold exclusively to Jewish buyers, mainly restaurants, and the Fisherman's Union for months has been calling on the authorities to stop this illegal flow of shrimp in the local market.

Saudi Arabia Has World's Highest Per Capita Spending for Defense Israel Is Second

(JTA) — Israel's per capita defense expenditures rose sharply this year and remain by far the highest in the world except for oil-rich Saudi Arabia. The sum spent for defense in 1981 was \$1,835 for every man, woman and child in the Jewish State, up from \$1,333 in 1980. The Saudis spent \$2,664 per capita. The U.S. in contrast, will spend only \$759 and Britain \$512 for each of their citizens.

Saudi Arabia's 1981 defense spending of \$27 billion is bigger than that of any country in Western Europe except Britain. Its increase alone since last year amounted to about \$7 billion, equal to Israel's entire 1981

defense spending.

Queen Dedicates Memorial to Rotterdam Jews

(JTA) — A memorial sculpture for the 10,000 Rotterdam Jews deported to Nazi death camps during World War II was unveiled by Queen Beatrix of The Netherlands in the garden of the Rotterdam city hall. The artist is Louky Metz, a woman of Jewish origin, who was commissioned to do the sculpture 15 years ago by a group of non-Jewish citizens of Rotterdam.

The prolonged delay between completion of the work and its dedication arose because originally it was to have been placed on the outer wall of the Rotterdam synagogue. It was, in fact, unveiled there but Orthodox members of the Jewish community objected because the sculpture depicted human bodies — the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — and the statue was removed.

Metz instituted legal proceedings which, after many years, ended in an agreement to locate the sculpture at a "neutral" site. Representatives of the Orthodox as well as the Liberal Jewish community attended the unveiling.

Knock-out Blow to El Al

(Jerusalem Post) — The public's reaction of shock at the government's decision — taken under the pressure of four ultra-Orthodox Knesset members out of 120 — to shut down El Al on Sabbaths and festivals was muted originally. At the time no one believed that such a knock-out blow would be delivered to Israel's national airline by the country's own elected administration.

El Al is slowly emerging, after a tremendous effort of reorganization, from the slump in its finances caused by OPEC's crippling hike in petroleum prices and the breakup of the IATA price cartel. It would have gone bankrupt had it, not been rescued by Treasury aid. But it did start to recover, from a deficit of almost \$100m. in 1979 to \$50m. last year and an expected \$30m. this year.

Wages were cut and a quarter of the personnel retired, in the hope that the company could be brought to pay its way. What the Israel Airline Pilots Association did not foresee is that all its sacrifices may conceivably have been in vain. The loss of income is predicted at \$50m. on top of existing deficits. El Al's staff advocate closing the airfield down altogether during the Sabbath, so that foreign airlines cannot take away their customers.

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My Family Went To Two Synagogues

By Saul Brenner

In the 1940's and early 1950's I grew up in the West Bronx. The West Bronx in those days was an area of second settlement for thousands of New York Jews. Most of the Jews were middle class, for the poorer Jews lived in the East Bronx. The Blacks and the Puerto Ricans had not yet moved to the West Bronx. Most of the non-Jews in the area were of Italian or Irish background.

There were numerous synagogues in the West Bronx including at least one Conservative and one Reform synagogue. My father went to two Orthodox shuls. Why did we go to two of them? The main reason is that my father could not make up his mind which of the two he preferred.

One of the two was the Concourse Center of Israel, the largest and most impressive synagogue in the Bronx. The synagogue building was large, somewhat bigger than Temple Israel. It was located on the Grand Concourse, the Fifth Avenue of the Bronx, a wide street with expensive apartment houses. The congregation hired the best people they could get. Its cantor was the world renowned Ben Zion Kapov-Kagen, whose voice can still be heard on many records. He was accompanied by a professional choir of good male voices, including one singer who was a regular night club performer. When the cantor and the choir sang, the auditorium of the synagogue was filled with people, many of whom did not come to daven, but rather to listen to the music. Many of the tunes sung by the choir are still in my memory forty years later. There were two rabbis in the Concourse Center during the period my family attended. One was Max Drob, a dignified older man who graduated from the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1911 and spoke English without a trace of a Yiddish or even a New York ac-

cent. When he retired he was replaced by a Rabbi Berman, a graduate of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who was a powerful speaker and an able teacher. My first class in gemorah was taught by this man. The synagogue also had an impressive gabbi, who read the Torah and on holidays wore a top hat. The gabbi seemed to be in charge of everything and was to be seen everywhere, while the rabbi and the cantor appeared to be only occasional actors. Not all the people who attended this synagogue were orthodox and we used to hear stories of congregation officers who drove their cars on the Sabbath and parked a block away from the synagogue.

Though my father enjoyed the music and the formality of the Concourse Center, he was attracted to a very different kind of shul as well. This was a Young Israel shul, which was located about a mile and a half from our home. My father was one of the early members of the Young Israel movement in Brooklyn and felt some loyalty to it. This Young Israel shul was on the top floor of a store front on one of the main commercial streets in the West Bronx. It neither had a professional cantor nor a professional gabbi. At times it did not even have a rabbi. Members of the congregation would perform these jobs. Often the cantor and the Torah reader were teenage boys. Teenage boys even delivered sermons of ten to fifteen minutes, composed by themselves, of course. I remember giving a talk to the congregation informing them that God's command to Abraham to go to the Promised Land was not only directed to him but that the congregants should also settle in Israel. This was the congregation where I celebrated my Bar Mitzvah. My father knew everyone in the shul and they were all Orthodox. No fancy officer parked his car a block away to attend this synagogue.

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