

Editorials

The Syrian Record — Unchanged

The release of Lieutenant Robert O. Goodman, Jr. was good news which all Americans celebrated. His imprisonment in Syria was traumatic for his family and upsetting to the nation at large. Reverend Jesse Jackson deserves credit for helping to secure Goodman's release.

No credit, however, should extend to the Syrian regime, which not only lost nothing but gained much by allowing Lieutenant Goodman to go home. As the *New York Times* pointed out in its Jan. 4 editorial, the Syrians let Goodman out "because they want to encourage agitation in America for withdrawal of the Marines from Lebanon" and "because they want to make Lebanon safer for Syrian domination."

George Will, speaking on ABC's *Nightline* put it more graphically. The Syrians used the Goodman release "to stick a finger in the eye of the U.S. government...Second, Syria, which almost certainly was instrumental in the killing of 241 Americans with one truck bomb has gained a tremendous enhancement of its image..."

Let's hope Will is wrong on that second point. Americans should not be impressed by President Assad's transparent attempt to pull off a public relations coup. After all, Syria's abysmal record of human rights has in no way been altered by the Goodman release.

Syria, under President Assad, remains one of the most flagrant human rights violators on the planet. There was, of course, the murder of 241 American servicemen in Beirut. That followed years of Syrian attacks on its various foes (real or perceived) in Lebanon not to mention President Assad's just-concluded war on his former PLO allies in Tripoli.

There was also the 1982 Hamah massacre in which, according to *Amnesty International*, as many as 25,000 Syrians were killed because of their opposition to the Assad regime. Torture is also standard operating procedure in Syria — against critics of the regime, against Syrian Jews, and (in 1973-1974) against Israeli soldiers who fell into Syrian hands.

One could go on and on. But it isn't necessary. The Syrian record is no secret and cannot be obscured by the release of one prisoner, as welcome as that release is. Those who insist on ignoring that record do so either out of ignorance or cold calculation. Clearly, the nature of the Assad regime remains unchanged despite the wishful thinking engaged in by some media pundits and pro-Syrian apologists.

Assad's Coup

It is an inexplicable phenomenon. Jesse Jackson's successful mission to Damascus has produced an outpouring of media (and some Reagan Administration) good will toward the Hafez Assad regime. CBS television's top-rated *60 Minutes* devotes prime time to a pro-Syrian newsreel. *Newsweek* suggests that the United States has no choice but to play ball with the Syrians. An anonymous Administration spokesman says that Israel may have to pull out of Lebanon even if the Syrians do not. These are only a few of the dozens of items in the press and electronic media which indicate that President Assad's decision to free Lieutenant Robert O. Goodman, Jr. was a historic public relations coup.

The irony is, of course, that freeing Lieutenant Goodman cost the Syrians absolutely nothing. It was a risk-free move, one that would have caused little sensation if it were not mixed up with Presidential politics and the need of some journalists to turn complex foreign policy events into simple contests between the good guys and the bandits.

This is not to suggest that Goodman is not a hero. He is — and an attractive one. The Goodman family is the kind of American family in which we can all take pride. However, his ordeal and his response to it does not change the nature of the Syrian regime which let him go. The Assad regime remains a flagrant human rights violator and a close ally (and occasional tool) of the Soviet Union.

Nor has Syria changed its position regarding Lebanon's future. It refuses to end its occupation of that country (refusing even to recognize that it is an occupation). It demands that Lebanon abrogate the May 17 agreement with Israel and it continues its support of international terrorists.

On Jan. 9, David Ottaway reported in the *Washington Post* that Syria is using Lebanese and Iranian terrorists "to cow the Lebanese government into submission and chase out its Western allies." Ottaway writes that Baalbek in Syrian-occupied Lebanon is the staging area for "joint Iranian-Syrian covert terrorist activities..."

This is nothing new, although Ottaway's report gives new details on the extent of Syrian-Iranian cooperation. It is, however, additional evidence that Syria's "humanitarian" gesture obscured rather than illuminated the real nature of the Assad regime.

It is doubtful that many Americans are falling for the pro-Syrian public relations blitz. Most of the praise for the Syrians is coming from the usual suspects: commentators hostile to Israel and reporters who prefer sensational journalism to the serious analysis foreign policy stories require. Still, it does demonstrate once again that President Hafez Assad is not to be underestimated. He understands the American media and has shown that he can play it like a master.

(Editor's Note: Reprinted from Near East Report)

From My Desk . . .

In this year preceding the Jewish Community Center's move to its new facilities, the question of the "J"'s expanded role and function in the community emerges. Historically, the "J" was created in 1974 thanks to the generosity and vision of Amity Country Club members and others who recognized the need for a new broad based communal institution. Over the years the "J" has become a positive force in the community's effort to strengthen Jewish identity, while providing recreation and social activities for its members.

As the architectural plans for the new site are being finalized, it

is obvious that the recreational facilities and other physical amenities far surpass anything we have seen in the past. The center is projecting additional staff to help manage these facilities including a full time health and physical education director, a health club director, and aquatics personnel to provide the necessary supervision to ensure that our building and programs are utilized to the fullest. We are confident that with the help of the Board and our committees the athletic and recreational portion of the center program will offer something for everyone and will be implemented in a highly professional manner.



Marty Schneer
JCC Exec. Director

The more complex and important issue for the center remains its approach to dealing with a whole range of Jewish concerns facing the community, as well as how it functions in coordination with other Jewish institutions and groups. An outsider viewing the tremendous success Charlotte has had to reach this stage in our development might comment that the key apparently has been our ability to work together, negotiate and compromise for the greater good of Charlotte Jewry. At the risk of sounding redundant I would assert that our success depends on the willingness of diverse community groups to continue in this manner, establishing forums for the purpose of community planning and coordination. The Center is committed to this path and has undertaken a number of jointly sponsored activities and programs. For example we have worked closely with Temple Israel to field four youth basketball teams in a local parochial league and are reaching out to their Jr. Kadima group, including them in our Club 46 activities and membership. The Center's Children's Director provided invaluable program assistance to Temple Beth El during their recent youth convention. We have also worked with Federation's Social Service Department to develop a Family Life Education Series. In addition, the Center has taken the lead in organizing a community wide Israel Independence Day Celebration. We are still relatively few in numbers here in Charlotte and it is essential that we pool our resources and avoid duplication of service.

The Center is beginning to appreciate and formalize its role in maximizing Jewish educational effectiveness. We hope the impression that the "J" simply offers courses for adults and children will soon fade as the cultural and educational aspects of our program take on added significance. Events such as Jewish Book Fairs, Jewish Music Month Celebrations, lecture series, Family Shabbats and other programs emphasizing Jewish content demonstrate our commitment to the perpetuation of our Jewish heritage.

The Center is in a unique position to provide opportunities for various segments of our community to work together in an informal setting. Our potential for achieving a strengthened, unified Jewish community is limitless if we can maintain our autonomy while seeking coalitions that facilitate enhanced communication and the attainment of community goals.



Letters to the Editor

Sharing a Mitzvot

Editor's note: This letter was sent in to "share" with our community.

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Spatz,
It is my pleasure to formally acknowledge with many thanks receipt of the following prayer books which you presented to our Deputy-Director, Dr. Jonathan Joel when you visited The Jewish National Library in Jerusalem on Dec. 21:

- Mahzor, 1893/
Lemberg: W. Kobler, 1893, Part One.
- (Bound in burgundy-coloured velvet, with gilt ornamentation)

- Tefillot, Mourners' Prayers
- 1) Lemberg: S.W. Menkes, 1895
- 2) Wien: Appel & Co., 1933 (?)

We are delighted to be the recipients of these publications, especially since these particular editions were not as yet amongst our extensive holdings of Hebraica: they will be most welcome additions to our collections of rare and special books.

A presentation bookplate has been affixed, in your honor, to the "Mahzor", and enclosed herewith is a sample of the bookplate.

We wish to express our sincere appreciation to you for having contributed your treasured family heirloom - your grandmother's "Mahzor" - as well as the two little brochures.

With reiterated thanks for this fine gift, I am, on behalf of the Jewish National and University Library.

Yours truly
Roberta Markus

Advertising Pays

My ad in your classified section has certainly increased my business. I have several new clients already. It really pays to advertise. Many thanks.

— Hannah Miller

We encourage our readers' viewpoints. Letters should be submitted typewritten and double-spaced and signed. We reserve the right to edit.

THE CHARLOTTE JEWISH NEWS

Published monthly by:
Charlotte Jewish Federation
Foundation of Charlotte Jewish Community
Marvin Blenstock, Director

Jewish Community Center
Martin Schneer, Director

Charlotte Hebrew Academy
Eleanor Weinglass, Director

Editor.....Rita Mond

Advertising.....Blanche Yarus

Copy deadline the 10th of each month
P.O. Box 220188, Charlotte, N.C. 28222

The appearance of advertising in The News does not constitute a kashruth endorsement.