

THE CHARLOTTE JEWISH NEWS

P.O. Box 13369, Charlotte, NC 28226

Published monthly by:

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
 Editor . . . Rita Mond
 Advertising Asst. Blanche Yarus
 Editorial Board Joel Goldman, Chair
 Phil Joffe, Sally Schrader, Marcia Simon,
 Dr. Selwyn Spangenthal, Barry Wohl, Barbara Ziegler

Copy deadline the 10th of each month

The C/JN does not assume responsibility for the quality or kashruth of any product or service advertised.

Publishing of a paid political advertisement does not constitute an endorsement of any candidate, political party or political position by this newspaper, the Federation or any employees.

Guest Editorial

A New Way of Giving

By Richard A. Klein

There is a growing trend in the way the Charlotte Jewish community gives money that could be beneficial in the short term. The move is on to increase charitable contributions by an annual percentage rate.

The percentages are usually pegged to the Federation's campaign goal. So contributors are often being asked individually or collectively to match the campaign's necessary annual increase.

Sound reasonable? On the surface, yes. But this methodology contradicts our historical way of contributing, and it sets a dangerous precedent for long-term community fundraising.

Our tradition is simple, straight-forward: Tithing — 10% of earnings. It's pure. It's direct. We're asked to contribute 10% of what we make.

The new way of giving encourages a sporting attitude, and a business-like approach. But charity isn't the same as a card game or a bet on the Super Bowl. It's also not the same as a capital campaign.

Charity is a matter of saving lives, rescuing people in need, feeding the hungry, helping the elderly. The principle of tzedakah is an act of righteousness. It's a holy deed not built on incremental giving. Its foundation is a minimum of our own annual income and benefits.

It's usually agreed among campaign leadership that the community "can't" ask the \$100 giver to go to \$500 right away; or the \$1,000 contributor to jump to \$5,000; or have a \$5,000 contribution move to \$20,000. The person being asked might just swoon from the surprise of it all.

In fact, we do a disservice by not educating ourselves and others that the real goal is meeting the standard of tithing. The 10% "tax" is as valid today as ever. It wasn't easy years ago to set aside 10% of a wheat field, and it's not simple in the modern world. We have kids in school, retirement funds, relatives to support and medical bills. We all have reasons not to tithe.

Our tradition tells us that tzedakah is to be high on our priority list. The concept of paying by percentages pegged to anything other than tithing postpones a holy obligation we've been asked to fulfill since the days of Abraham.

Moreover, what kind of message are we sending to future generations? While we may have the capacity to give the 10%, we present a new standard that says it's better to hold onto more for ourselves.

The Federation, our synagogues and institutions may never reach their ultimate potential or long-term goals by subscribing to anything other than tithing. The Reform movement has made some inroads by encouraging a fair-share method of dues payment based on gross income. The plan works in cities where congregational leadership leads the way and sets an example.

There will be those who may argue that tithing has no place in a world filled with so many obligations. But tithing is no more a relic of the past than observing the Sabbath, loving our neighbor as ourself or a belief in one God. It is a product of our past, but still very much a guidepost for our community's future.

**Deadline Dates: March — Feb. 5
 April — Mar. 10
 May — Apr. 6**

The PLO Aided Ceausescu — But Where Were the Headlines?

By Bertram Korn, Jr.

Yasser Arafat seems to have a soft spot for brutal dictators. Last year, he visited China and praised that country's leaders for the Tiannenmen Square massacre of pro-democracy students. Just a few weeks ago, Arafat's armed guard in Romania mounted a last-ditch effort to keep Nicolae Ceausescu in power.

The two episodes could have significant implications for U.S. foreign policy, in particular the U.S. dialogue with the PLO. But both were virtually ignored by the U.S. media. There were no condemning headlines, nor front-page photos of PLO squads gunning down Romanian demonstrators.

Arafat's praise of the Chinese massacre appeared in a telegram

he sent to the Chinese leaders, which was published in the Chinese Communist Party newspaper, *People's Daily*, on June 27, 1989. Arafat expressed his "extreme gratification that the friendly People's Republic of China has restored normal order after the recent incidents." The text of the letter was freely available to American newspaper editors. They simply chose to ignore it.

The PLO's role in the Romanian crisis was more intimate. According to Ion Pacepa, a former head of Romanian intelligence who defected to the U.S. some years ago, the PLO and the Libyans have been actively involved in training Ceausescu's secret police, and PLO terrorists have operated training camps used by Syrians, Libyans, Iraqis and Iranians, in addition to their

own members in the Carpathian foothills. Mirceas Stoica, a professor at Bucharest University who fled to Hungary when the fighting erupted, told reporters that Ceausescu had become so friendly with Arafat that the PLO chairman had loaned him "Arab terrorist troops as a security precaution, including Arafat's bodyguard of about fifty men." Ceausescu's close ties to the Arabs were so notorious that Romanian demonstrators calling for his resignation bore posters that mocked him by portraying him wearing an Arab headdress, with blood dripping from the corner of his mouth.

The early reports about the fighting in December made it clear that PLO terrorists were fighting alongside Ceausescu's men. As soon as the Romanian national radio station was in rebel hands, an appeal was issued for public support against the "Arab troops" aiding Ceausescu. Israel Radio reported that four PLO gunmen had been killed during the first battles. French TV reported that "Arab commandos" were shooting people at the Romanian-Hungarian border.

The American media, however, was suddenly skeptical. Youssef Ibrahim, the roving Middle East correspondent for the *New York Times*, suppressed the information about PLO terrorist training camps in Romania, and claimed that the PLO "maintained close ties to the Ceausescu Government because of its role as an intermediary between Israelis and Arabs." Ignoring the evidence of a PLO role in the fighting, Ibrahim declared that the PLO "ordered thousands of Palestinian students studying medicine in Romania to help care for the wounded and affirmed its support of the new rulers."

Alfonso Chardy, the Jerusalem correspondent for the *Knight-Ridder* chain of newspapers, was equally deceptive. Chardy reported that "Arab mercenaries" were said to have fought with Ceausescu, implying that they were individual, hired fighters, with no apparent connection to the PLO. Chardy characterized the information about the "mercenaries" as "startling reports," thereby casting doubt on their veracity. Chardy's brief, misleading mention of Ceausescu's Arab connection appeared in a twenty-nine paragraph story that sought to portray Israel's attempts to ransom Romanian Jews as helping to finance Ceausescu's repression. Ironically, Chardy quoted Ion Pacepa about the ransom issue — but did not bother to ask Pacepa about the PLO's role as Ceausescu's palace guard.

In this extraordinary journalistic sleight-of-hand, Israel's humanitarian effort to rescue Jews from captivity is depicted as assistance to a dictator, while the dictator's real allies, the PLO thugs who trained his secret police, are busily "tending to the wounded." This distortion is more than disturbing; it is outrageous.

Bertram Korn, Jr. is Executive Director of CAMERA, the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (Philadelphia).



This Chanukah Was a Time of Fear And Heroism for Jews of Panama

(JTA)

Following the U.S. invasion of Panama on Dec. 21, the Jews, a majority of whom are merchants, found their businesses mercilessly looted, down to the lighting fixtures and toilet facilities. They placed calls of desperation to U.S. Jews.

As dusk approached that Friday afternoon, when Jews should have been preparing to light menorahs, those living in the swank neighborhood of Punta de Patilla found themselves about to be assaulted in their homes. They quickly formed their own vigilante brigade.

Jews own a substantial share of major businesses in Panama. Guesses at how large a share range from "a conservative estimate of 70 percent" to "over 90 percent," according to three separate descriptions. The Jews have done well, and now they are wiped out, say those familiar with the community.

Jews living in the high-rises of Punta de Patilla knew even before the U.S. invasion that their neighborhood would be assaulted. Over radio telephones that business owners there keep to communicate with each other, they heard specific directions between members of Noriega's "Dignity Battalions" to assault the neighborhood.

They requested direct American assistance in their neighborhood, which is some 100 yards from the Vatican mission where Noriega has taken refuge. When it became apparent that adequate protection was not com-

ing, the Jews formed their own defense group and took to the streets.

On that Friday night, under the leadership of a Jewish retailer of ladies' clothes, the Jews went out, armed with Uzis and handguns, and pitifully little ammunition, and used cars and vans to cordon off the three streets that provide access to the area.

They stopped cars and asked for proof of registration, pulling out those who could not provide it. There were many car thefts by local brigands associated with Noriega. Despite accounts of fear and stress, the story is not one of anti-Semitism. Jews should be seen as Panamanians suffering from the effects of war and angry that the U.S. invasion plan did not include protection of civilians and streets to complement the military strategy. Although there was said to be some level of cooperation between Noriega and business leaders, many of whom are Jews, it is believed that few Jews voted for him in this year's presidential election, won by Guillermo Endara but invalidated by Noriega. Virtually all Panamanian Jews support the U.S. invasion, according to sources there.

About 70 percent of the some 4,000 Jews of Panama are Sephardic, most of whom are of Syrian origin, their families coming mainly from the city of Aleppo. Other Jews are of Egyptian, Greek or Portuguese origin, and there are a substantial number of Israelis there. One

See PANAMA'S next page