



CSJO NEWSLETTER

Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations

Spring-summer 2003

CSJO Conference, 2003

Meeting place moved to Philadelphia

Unwilling to be done in by the SARS scare, the CSJO has moved its annual conference from Toronto to Aracadia University near Philadelphia, the site of a recent conference. The meeting will take place on the weekend of May 25-May 28.

Although the World Health Organization has lifted its warning about Toronto, the executive committee decided that it could not again revert to the original Toronto site.

A number of people have stepped forward to help us through this emergency planning of the conference. Jon Shinefeld of the Philadelphia Children's Folkshul has agreed to act as our registrar. Please mail your registration forms (found on our web page at www.csjo.org) to

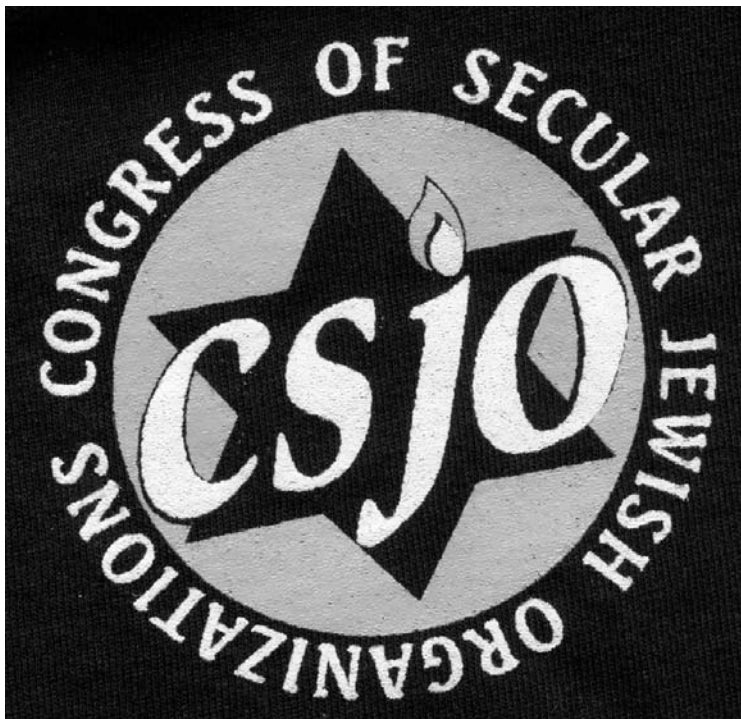
Jon Shinefeld
7311 Tabor Ave.
Philadelphia, PA 19111.

Carl Aley, who has served as registrar in the past, has offered to work with him. Fran Kleiner, who has extensive experience in Jewish music, has offered to plan our Saturday evening program.

Planners would like to have as many of the signed-up workshop leaders present their planned workshops. For the Teens and Young Adults, it is hoped that the original groups who have planned on doing workshops will still offer them.

In the usual pattern, there will be a light supper available at the Friday evening sign-in time, to be followed by a program and informal socializing. On Saturday and Sunday there will be a series of exciting workshops and keynote addresses.

There will be an informal meal on Sunday night, instead of the formal banquet, due to the short period of time of arrange-



ments. However, the Sunday night meal will still include the thank yous, and awards that we normally share. The annual Talent show will take place afterwards.

Monday morning, May 28 – breakfast and good-byes.

Some of the workshop leaders for our conference include the following: Bennett Muraskin of Northern New Jersey, who recently published *Humanist Readings in Jewish Folklore*; Bob Kleiner, past chair of the social action committee; Helene Tamarin, former principal of the Jewish Cultural Society in Ann Arbor; Peter Appelbaum, historian and social activist.

CSJO is an expert at putting together conferences. This will be no different. Hope to see you there.

CONFERENCE RATES

The rates are as follows for the full conference—(includes lodging):

Adult— Double Occupancy—\$235.00

Adult—Single Occupancy— \$280.00

Teen/Young Adult—\$200.00

For the day timers, who do not need lodging—Full conference— \$175.00



Philadelphia prepares to greet CSJO conference

YOM HASHOAH— HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE— APRIL 27

by Letta Shatz and Larry Schofer

On Sunday, April 27, the date set aside to remember the Holocaust (Yom Hashoah – Remembrance Day), the six local organizations which make up the Secular Humanist Jewish Community of Greater Philadelphia, presented a joint Remembrance Day observance.

Although all six organizations—the Sholom Aleichem Club, the Philadelphia Children’s Folkshul, the Folkshul Adult Community, Humanist Congregation Shir Shalom, the Workmen’s Circle, and the Philadelphia Secular Jewish Organization—are sponsoring the event and have participated in the planning, this year’s program was a departure from past observances. A large part of the energy, effort, and creativity for this observance came from the upper grades of the Folkshul and their teachers, who have been studying the Holocaust and responded to it through a variety of art forms.

Folkshul students respond

The program included individual Folkshul students reading short responses to the Holocaust that they themselves had written, often associated with a piece of art (shown on a screen), a song, a poem, or other item of creative activity. Adults from the various sponsoring organizations added their observations.

At one point people in the audience were asked to write down what the Holocaust meant to them, and some of these people read out their observations to the group. One Holocaust survivor in the audience felt compelled to comment how much he had been moved by the students’ presentations and by the comments from members of the audience.

A remembrance of the Holocaust raises many ongoing questions. How do we commemorate the ultimate horror of those years? As individuals? As humanists? As Secular Jews? To quote last year’s program: “The Jewish people and many others have said ‘Never Again.’ But where does ‘Never Again’ lead? It is a question all people who have suffered and replicated that cry have to answer. Does it mean never again to a particular people, or to

any people, or even individuals? ...Are there parallels with other people, or was this so horrible that it sets this people aside from all the rest of humankind?”

Sensitivity to the suffering of others

An answer given: “...All people, especially those who have suffered so mightily, must be more sensitive to the suffering of other people. They must work to make a world in which no one will ever have to suffer like that again.” Secular Humanist Jews remember the horrors, but we also remember the resistance, led by young Secular Jews. We remember the events of the Shoa in part so that we can learn from them and look to the future, so that we can strive for Tikkun Olam, the repair of the world. Holocaust Remembrance this year seems particularly fraught with meaning.”

News from the Affiliates

★ Bennett Muraskin (Jewish Secular Society of Northern New Jersey) has received a grant from the Puffin Foundation to subsidize the publication of his latest book, a compilation of many of Bennett’s essays on secular Jewish personalities.

Bennett has been writing these short biographies for several years for publication in the *CSJO Newsletter*, *Jewish Currents*, and *Canadian Jewish Outlook*. The essays focus on secular Jewish “heroes” who often are ignored by the mainstream Jewish world. If these people are not ignored, their connection to secular Jewishness is often overlooked.

Bennett is the author of *Humanist Readings in Jewish Folklore*, published by the International Institute, for Secular Humanistic Judaism, and the chief editor of the second edition of *Celebrating Jewish Holidays*, published by CSJO.

★ Michael Kleiner, graduate of the Philadelphia Folkshul, veteran of many CSJO conferences, professional publicist for the Sholom Aleichem Club, has won several awards in the field of public relations.

He recently was honored with the Communicator Awards Crystal Award of Excellence in the category of Writing/Feature Article (Print Media Competition), the most prestigious of their awards. About 12% of entrants received this honor.

Mike also won the Home-Based Business Advocate Award from the U.S. Small Business Administration for Eastern Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania and Region III.

Send your news to the CSJO Newsletter.

UJPO speaks out on war in Iraq

The course of events has made the following letter out of date, but it is reprinted here as a way of communicating to CSJO members the thinking of the United Jewish People’s Order, our largest Canadian affiliate.

The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada.
March 21, 2003

Dear Mr. Chrétien,

We support your forthright statement earlier this week in which you declared that Canada would not take part in the military actions against Iraq led by the United States and the United Kingdom because these were not sanctioned by the Security Council of the United Nations. Likewise, we welcome your sec-

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CONGRESS OF SECULAR JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

A non-profit organization

An affiliate of the North American Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews, a Constituent Organization of the International Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews

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The Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations - 2003

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To join the CSJO online discussion group on the Internet

1. Go to www.yahogroups.com
2. In the search box, type in, "CSJO."
3. The next window will give you two CSJO discussion groups to choose from: one is only for educators ("CSJO-EDU") and the other is the one you want to join ("CSJO"). Click on "CSJO."
4. Complete the form and hit the "Send" button on the bottom.

This discussion group is not moderated, but you will need to be cleared before being allowed to post material. Joan Kurtz, who monitors this group, will send you an email, asking you to identify who you are and with which group you are affiliated. If you are an associate member, just say so in your response and if you are a paid-up member, you will be approved as well.

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ond statement that such use of armed force to effect “regime change” was unacceptable to Canada as it would set a very dangerous precedent.

On the other hand, we found inconsistent with the above positions your declarations of yesterday that “It was the Americans’ privilege and right to make the decision [to wage war against Iraq] that they made”, and that “there is no use debating the reasons why some people think war is necessary and some people think it is not.” (*The Globe and Mail*, March 21.) These positions are being opposed by millions throughout the world, including Pope John Paul II (see *Le Devoir*, March 17) and by a significant majority of Canadian public opinion. We therefore think that it is high time that Canada should stand squarely on the principles you enunciated earlier, and forthrightly and independently oppose the present illegal war, as has done President Chirac of France. We also support both President Chirac’s opposition to any new Security Council resolution that would retroactively justify the current highly dangerous and catastrophic military actions against Iraq, and his insistence that the United Nations, not the U.S. and Britain, be in charge of humanitarian aid and recon-

Donations

General Fund

From Roberta Feinstein, OH:

In memory of the mother of David Abramowitz.

In memory of the father of Mark Sivakoff.

Gerry Revzin Scholarship Fund

Abby Brown, IL — “in honor of Gerry Revzin, who is a continuing inspiration to her friends and others who learn from her, about Secular Judaism and Yiddishkeit. In appreciation.”

struction once the war ends.

Similar steps on the part of Canada, including the withdrawal of our forces from the Persian Gulf area, as urged by NDP leader Jack Layton and the Bloc Québécois, will ensure that your political legacy will be one of peace and justice.

Sincerely yours,

David Abramowitz, Co-President; Dr. Ben Shek, Vice-President, National Board, United Jewish People’s Order

Publications Available

Order from Roberta Feinstein, executive director, 19657 Villa Dr. N., Southfield MI 48067. E-mail: csjo@csjo.org. All prices include shipping to North America. Most of these publishers give discounts for bulk orders. Add \$2.50 for shipping for the first item; \$1 each for each additional items. (Items \$5 and under, add \$1.25 for shipping.)

MUSIC

MAYN OYTSEER - MY TREASURE. Sherm Labovitz sings gems of Yiddish art and folk songs. Full-size booklet presents all texts of the 23 songs transliterated and translated; unusual liner notes. Published by Sholom Aleichem Club, 2002. \$15 for CD; \$10 for tape cassette.

KUMZITS! A FESTIVITY OF INSTANT JEWISH SONGS, edited by Pat Martz. \$21.95.

SINGALONG TAPE FOR HAGGADAH FOR A SECULAR CELEBRATION OF PESACH. \$7.95. Tape + Haggadah \$17.

A FIRE GLOWS, YIDDISH SONGS LIVE FROM THE MERMAID INN. Yiddish and traditional folk songs by Fran Kleiner (Philadelphia CSJO). \$15 CD; \$10 cassette.

ZINGEN FAR SHOLEM by the Sholem singers. Published by the Sholem Educational Institute of Los Angeles. Book and tape of mostly Yiddish favorite songs to learn and sing. \$8.00.

HOLIDAYS AND RITUALS

THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF HANUKA FOR KIDS (AND GROWNUPS TOO). By Hershl Hartman. Illustrations by Amy Goldman Koss. \$7.

L'SHANA TOVA CARDS - newly designed. \$15.00 per ten pack.

APPLES AND HONEY: MUSIC AND READINGS FOR A SECULAR HUMANISTIC OBSERVANCE OF THE JEWISH NEW YEAR FESTIVAL. Edited by Julie Gales and Pat Martz for CSJO. Explanations, songs with music, readings. \$23.50.

THE JEWISH NEW YEAR FESTIVAL: A GUIDE FOR THE REST OF US. By Hershl Hartman. 22 pp. \$5. [Some of this material is included in Apples and Honey.]

HAGGADAH FOR A SECULAR CELEBRATION OF PESACH. Sholom Aleichem Club of Philadelphia. Fifth edition. 62 pp. \$11. Tape (see above under MUSIC) plus Haggadah \$17.

SHOLEM FAMILY HAGADA. By the Sholem Community Organization, Los Angeles. 22 pp. \$5.

WE REJOICE IN OUR HERITAGE. HOME RITUALS FOR SECULAR AND HUMANISTIC JEWS. By Judith Seid. 45 pp. \$8.

FOLKLORE

HUMANIST READINGS IN JEWISH FOLKLORE. By Bennett Muraskin. \$20 (\$15 for CSJO members).

PHILOSOPHY

GOD-OPTIONAL JUDAISM by Judith Seid. \$19.95.

Fundraising for CSJO

CSJO relies on membership dues and donations to its various funds to promote programs of educational, cultural, and social activity.

· **The Gerry Revzin Scholarship Fund:** offered to those members who take courses in Jewish Studies. The scholarship is NOT limited to the International Institute of Secular Humanistic Judaism and may be used for Jewish studies abroad.

· **The Max Rosenfeld Publications Fund:** assists in publishing material on secular Jewishness prepared by our members.

· **The Harold Gales Community Development Fund:** supports staff activity for affiliate groups and potential affiliates in an attempt to encourage new membership.

· **The CSJO General Fund:** covers our administrative and general expenses.

Please send contributions to CSJO, 320 Claymore Blvd., Richmond Heights, OH 44143. Undesignated funds will be deposited into the General Fund. Your generous donations are appreciated and will be acknowledged in our quarterly newsletter.

The Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations is a non-profit organization as defined by section 501 (c) (3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.