

Hostage returns to freedom after 16 months

By SUSANNE M. SCHAFER
Associated Press Writer

CONCORD, N.H. — The Rev. Benjamin Weir is free after a 16-month kidnapping ordeal in Lebanon, but President Reagan said yesterday that he "will not be satisfied" until the six remaining American captives also are released.

Weir was released to U.S. authorities in Beirut on Saturday, but an announcement was withheld to determine whether the release of the other Americans might also be obtained.

"We were trying to keep it so quiet because we don't want to do anything that endangers the chances of the other six," Reagan said at the conclusion of a speech promoting his tax reform proposal.

But White House spokesman Edward Djerejian, briefing the press after Reagan's speech, said it became apparent Tuesday night that no more releases were "imminent."

Unconfirmed reports about Weir's release surfaced Sunday with an anonymous telephone call to the Reuters news agency. The Presbyterian Church said early Wednesday that Weir had been freed. Soon afterward, Reagan supplied the official confirmation that Weir was "back in America, safe with his family."

"I am happy for him and his family," the president said, "but I will not be satisfied and will not cease our efforts until all the hostages, the other six, are released."

Later, as he boarded Air Force One to return to Washington, Reagan held up six fingers and told reporters, "Six more to go."

Weir, 61, a Presbyterian minister, was kidnapped by terrorists May 8, 1984, in Beirut. Neither Reagan nor Djerejian offered any details about his release.

Djerejian said Weir was in Norfolk, Va., although a church official said later in the day that the minister and his family had left the city "but we don't know where they

are." Doctors described Weir as being "in good mental and physical condition," Djerejian added.

He said the United States had "absolutely" made no deal with the terrorists who had held Weir. "Our position on negotiating with terrorists is very clear," he said.

Asked if the United States had given up anything to win Weir's release, the spokesman said, "I'm not going to get into that."

Djerejian refused to answer questions on why only Weir had been freed.

But he said, "We have been in touch with a number of governments, and various contacts, including the Syrian government." Asked whether he would say the Syrians had been helpful in winning Weir's release, Djerejian said, "Not specifically, I can't say."

Reagan himself was asked upon returning to Washington whether Syria was involved in Weir's release. "I can't comment on that," the president said.

According to Djerejian, officials had hoped the release last week of the last Lebanese prisoners held at Israel's Atlit prison camp "would improve the atmosphere in the region." Following the release, he said, "We did enhance our efforts."

A State Department official, speaking only on condition of anonymity, said Weir told debriefers that he had been held in Lebanon during the entire length of his captivity. The official said Weir had not been tortured and that, "for someone who's gone through what he's gone through, he's in pretty good condition."

The official said Weir had been hospitalized for a medical checkup after his release.

The official declined to say whether Weir said he had been in contact with the other six American hostages.

Vice President George Bush has scheduled a meeting tomorrow with the families of the six remaining kidnapped Americans.



Benjamin Weir

Another White House spokesman, Peter Roussel, said the president told Weir the United States would continue its efforts until all the hostages are freed. Roussel said those efforts would include "prayer as well as diplomacy."

He quoted Reagan as telling the freed American, "You are an inspiration to the people of this country and to all who might find themselves in situations of similar adversity."

National security adviser Robert McFarlane, speaking at the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association

meeting in Colorado Springs, said the administration also withheld announcement of the release because Weir "deserves a normal family life."

Weir was kidnapped at 8:15 a.m. while walking in Moslem West Beirut with his wife. Three men jumped out of a white Peugeot 504, forced him into the car and drove off, police said at the time. They said the car had no license plates.

Weir, the oldest of the American kidnap victims, looked haggard and drawn in a photograph released to Beirut newspapers in June.

Six Americans still held in Lebanon

By LEE BYRD
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — So now they are six — a librarian, two educators, a priest, a journalist and a diplomat — Americans still held hostage in Lebanon but not quite so forgotten on the day that President Reagan shared his "little news note" about the release of the Rev. Benjamin Weir.

One of them, William Buckley, a political officer for the U.S. embassy in Beirut, has been captive since March 18, 1984, longer than Weir or any of the others seized by radical Shiite Moslems in hopes of bartering their lives in exchange for comrades imprisoned in Kuwait.

Buckley, 56, could lay claim to being the least discussed of the men called "The Forgotten Seven" by anguished families and friends who have sought for months, with mixed success, to overcome the calculated silence of the administration by stirring a constant drumbeat of public interest.

Buckley, a native of Medford, Mass., and a former librarian, Army captain and building contractor, is a bachelor and one of the State Department's own. While the wives and sons and brothers and daughters of the others have gone public to vent their sorrows, frustration and even their fury over the plight of their captive loved ones, Buckley has remained almost a footnote in the on-again, off-again drama.

Weir, released over the weekend under circumstances still not fully known, was kidnapped on May 8, 1984. He is the second of his group to be freed; Jeremy Levin, former Beirut bureau chief of the Cable

News Network, was kidnapped on March 7, 1984. He broke away from his captors on Feb. 13 this year in what he now believes may have been an escape they deliberately allowed.

Weir and Levin, like the still-imprisoned Buckley, had long surpassed the 444 days of captivity endured by Americans held hostage in Iran during the administration of Jimmy Carter.

Peter Kilburn, 60, a librarian at American University, disappeared in Beirut on Dec. 3, 1984, and the shadowy group called the Islamic Jihad later claimed responsibility. But subsequent communications and threats by the militants have not mentioned him and friends and officials fear for his condition. The university said he suffered "grave" ailments, including heart and artery disease.

Terry A. Anderson, 37, the chief Middle East correspondent for The Associated Press, was kidnapped by gunmen on March 16, 1985. His wife, Mikki, and 8-year-old daughter, Gabrielle, had left the city earlier because of concern for their safety. Anderson, a graduate of Iowa State University, worked at AP bureaus in Tokyo and Johannesburg before being assigned to Beirut.

The Rev. Lawrence Martin Jenco, 50, was seized on Jan. 8 this year. He is a Roman Catholic priest from Joliet, Ill., and directed the church's relief services in Lebanon, serving both Christians and Moslems. "He always said that if he were to die, he'd like to die as a missionary," according to brother John Jenco of Joliet.

Jenco's sister, Mae Mihelich, said yesterday that Weir's release means "We're going to fight harder."

Tax plan may not be ready

By JIM LUTHER
Associated Press Tax Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Congressional leaders agreed yesterday that they will not be able to deliver tax overhaul legislation to President Reagan's desk this year, as he wanted.

"I don't think it has any chance of getting through Congress this year," House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr., D-Mass., said after a private meeting with Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole, R-Kan., and other top leaders from both sides of the Capitol to discuss the legislative agenda for the remainder of the year.

Earlier in the day, Dole repeated to reporters his view that "I don't see how we can finish it this year."

The comments came as Reagan appealed for support of tax reform in a speech in Concord, N.H.

O'Neill emphasized that the House still plans to take up the measure this year.

"Are we trying to put it through the House? The answer is yes," O'Neill said. But, he added, "It's taken us this long and it'll take the Senate some time, too, I would imagine."

O'Neill said, "We've agreed that we're going to be out of here before Thanksgiving" for the year. That means there would be no time on the congressional calendar for passage of the tax measure.

Dole said that while the Senate would not act this year, he feels support will still be there at the beginning of next year — in effect, a delay of only a few months.

Reagan, however, has urged Congress to pass the tax legislation as a Christmas present to the nation.

The House Ways and Means Committee announced yesterday that its work on the proposed overhauling of the federal income tax system will be done behind closed doors.

Britain calls a halt to ousting Soviets

By DAVID MASON
Chief AP European Correspondent

LONDON — Britain called a halt yesterday to the exchange of diplomatic expulsions that began when the KGB's top agent in London defected. The end came after the Soviet Union ordered six more Britons out, making the score 31-31.

The Kremlin, in its first major diplomatic imbroglio since Mikhail S. Gorbachev assumed power Mar. 11, made the unusual decision to retaliate in equal numbers to Britain's expulsion of 25 alleged Soviet spies last Thursday and six more on Monday.

The Foreign Office said after Moscow completed the second round Wednesday that it would not evict any more Soviets, insisting that it had not backed down and that Britain had come out ahead.

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who is on an official visit to Egypt, said, "We have eliminated the core of their (the Soviet) subversive and intelligence operation in Britain, so we shall not respond further to their wholly unjustified expulsions. ... I shall try to draw a line under it."

In Moscow, the official news agency Tass said Ambassador Bryan Cartledge was summoned to the Foreign Ministry yesterday morning and told that the Soviet Union expected Britain to stop its "unfriendly actions."

Tass initially reported that "a number of" Britons were being expelled for "impermissible activities," and that the Soviet Union had resolutely protested their actions. A later dispatch told the Soviet public there were 62 Britons and Soviets involved. The cycle of ejections reduced the

number of British citizens in Moscow from 103 to 72 and the number of Soviets in London from 234 to 203.

Britain started the scrap by expelling 25 alleged Soviet agents last Thursday on information provided by Oleg A. Gordievski, 46, identified by the Foreign Office as the KGB station chief in Britain who defected recently and received political asylum. Gordievski is reported to have been a double agent for up to 15 years.

The Soviet Union responded on Saturday, ignoring London's warning not to retaliate and ordering an equal number of Britons out of Moscow.

On Monday, Thatcher's government expelled six more men it said were second-rank intelligence operatives, and the Kremlin matched that Wednesday by ejecting six more Britons.

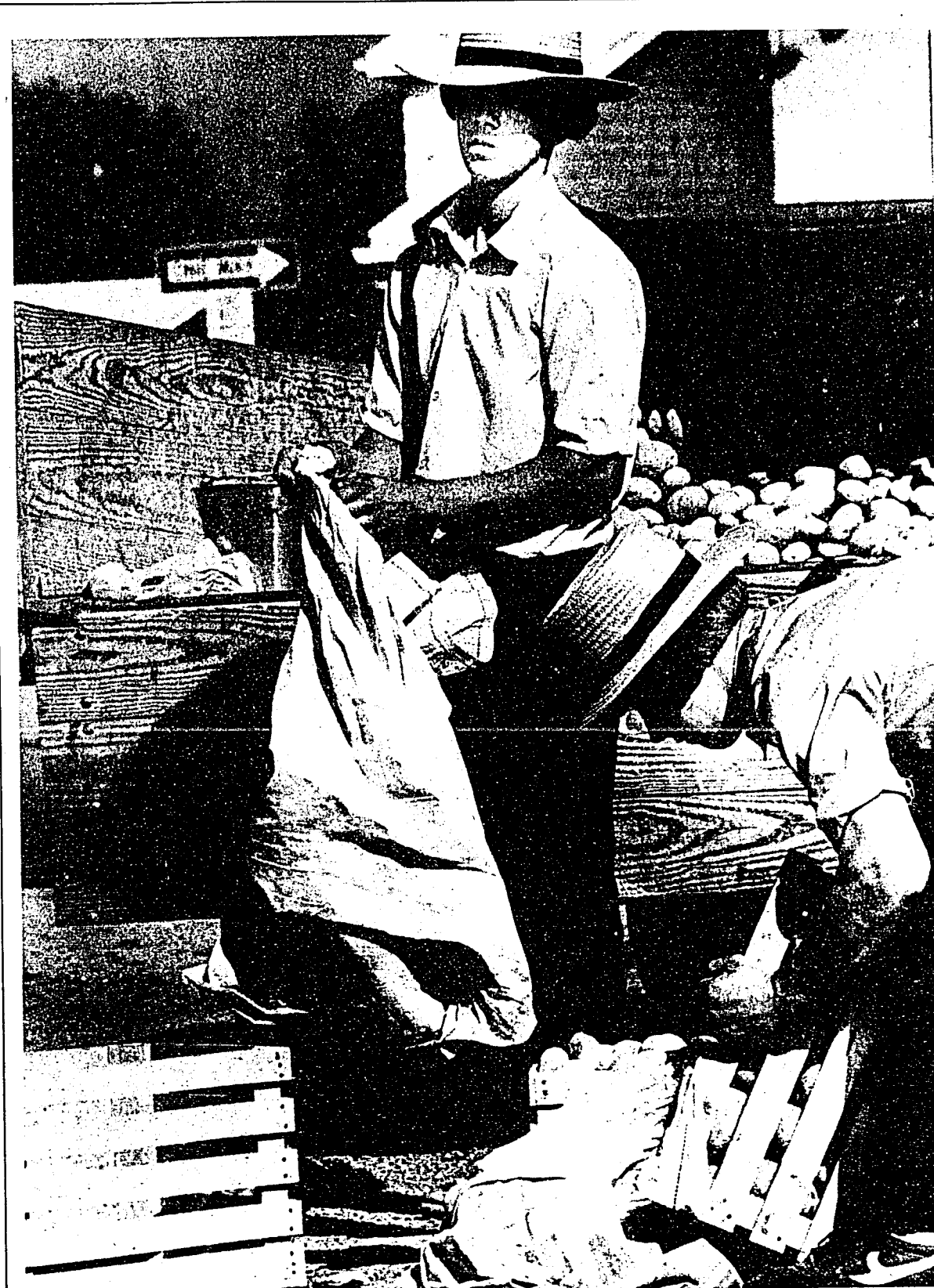
Those declared unwelcome by both sides were allowed three weeks to leave.

It was the biggest spy confrontation between Britain and the Soviet Union since 1971, when London kicked out 105 alleged Soviet spies. The Kremlin reacted mildly, expelling only 18 Britons, 10 of whom had already left the Soviet Union, and the matter ended there.

The only expulsions since were in a series of exchanges between 1981 and April of this year that cost the Soviets 12 alleged spies and Britain 8.

Sir Geoffrey Howe, Britain's foreign secretary, said yesterday in London: "The Soviet Union must bear the full responsibility for this lamentable episode. This severe setback to United Kingdom-Soviet relations was not of our choosing."

Both he and Thatcher expressed hope that relations would improve



Collegian Photo / Mary Calentano

Tater tots

Scenes such as this were common at the Amish market yesterday. In this particular photo, Alvin (standing) and Jonnah Peachey (crouching), of RD 1, Belleville, were caught in the camera's eye as they busily packed fresh potatoes.

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weather

Today, continued warm and quite sunny. High 81. Tonight, quite mild with patchy fog by morning. Low 52.....Heidi Sonen