

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE REPORT REFUTES POMPIDOU

NEW YORK: Charges by French President Georges Pompidou and his staff regarding their visit to Chicago last February 28 -- that demonstrators were unruly and ill-mannered, and that the police were in complicity with them -- are unsupported by the facts, according to a detailed report released by the American Jewish Committee.

The report, authored by Milton Ellerin, a former FBI agent, and director of AJC's Trends Analyses Division, was based on information obtained from nineteen eyewitnesses to the event, plus examination of television films and news pictures.

Among the eyewitnesses were high Chicago Police Department officials who accompanied M. and Mme.

Pompidou when they entered and left the Palmer House, where the demonstration occurred, and a security officer who also accompanied them in and out. Other witnesses were city officials assigned to the demonstration, TV and radio reporters on the scene, and several youths who allegedly accosted the Pompidous as they left the hotel.

Chief among Mr. Ellerin's conclusions was that the unwitting offenders were not the demonstrators -- most of whom were Jewish, protesting France's decision to sell planes to Libya -- but rather the accompanying members of the press and security people.

"The evidence is clear that the demonstrators did not at any time jostle, strike,

assault, spit upon, threaten, or otherwise abuse the visiting French dignitaries," he stated.

He also declared that no evidence could be found to suggest that the Chicago Police Department conspired with the demonstration planners to embarrass or harass the Pompidou party.

After listing the precautions taken by the Police Department concerning traffic control and the Pompidous' security, the report dealt step-by-step with M. Pompidou's activities in Chicago and with the development of the demonstration outside the Palmer House.

In his comments on the conduct of the demonstrators as they assembled and afterwards Mr. Ellerin reported:

"It was a heterogeneous demonstration, predominantly Jewish, although nuns in habit were observed marching with the demonstrators.

"It is a matter of record that not one single demonstrator was arrested and no violence erupted despite the fact that one demonstrator was injured when struck by ice cubes dropped from a hotel window, and the release of a stench bomb by a counter-demonstrator."

In addition, he stated that "Palmer House management reported that in all their years of experience the demonstrations, the demonstration on the evening of February 28 was among the most orderly and peaceful on record."

At the time of the Pompidou arrival at the hotel, 519 policemen were in the demonstration area, the report stated. Quoting Deputy Police Superintendent James E. Rocheford, it noted that "security precautions around the Palmer House at

that moment were stronger than those provided for President Nixon when he visited Chicago approximately a month before."

As President Pompidou walked from his limousine to the hotel entrance, the report continued, "a number of additional security people and newsmen travelling behind the entourage ran up behind him in order to be a close hand, almost engulfing him. Some brushed against him...At no point did any of the demonstrators, still secure behind police lines, breach the cordon. At this point, a Chicago Police Department Sergeant stationed in the corridor, turning to a Chicago city official, shouted, 'My God, his own party is crushing him.'"

The report also disclosed that for a brief moment, Mme. Pompidou, who had alighted from her limousine a few seconds after her husband, was left standing "a quarter of the way from the curb to the doors by officials who, for reasons unexplained, went back to greet other arriving guests. For a few moments, Mme. Pompidou was left alone and appeared to be bewildered by the throng and/or the noise of the crowd. Noting Mme. Pompidou's predicament, a demonstration marshal positioned in the corridor walked back and partially escorted her to the door. She then entered the arcade without incident."

Shortly after the Pompidous' arrival in the Palmer House, the report stated, "Emil Mosbacher, Jr., the State Department Chief of Protocol, vigorously protested to (Illinois) Governor Ogilvie the lack of security afforded the Pompidous as they entered the hotel. He demanded that the Mayor of Chicago be notified that the Pompidous would not leave

the hotel until their security was guaranteed."

However, the report continued, although President and Mme. Pompidou were scheduled to attend a reception after dinner and to leave the hotel at 12:05 a.m., the French President, "without notifying the police, left the ballroom at approximately 11:00 p.m., accompanied by his own security men and the press. He did not go, as anticipated, to the scheduled reception, and the Police Department was thus not totally ready."

As a result, when the Pompidous reached the street floor of the hotel, the corridors had not been cleared. Here they ran into eight students, who shouted, "Shame, shame on you, Pompidou," the report

stated, adding: "at no time did the students make any movement that might be construed as a threatening gesture. At no time did any of the demonstrators move, physically touch or spit upon the departing Pompidous."

Mr. Ellerin cited reports in Chicago newspapers the following day, all of which remarked on the peacefulness of the demonstration. On succeeding days, he stated, when the angry charges of M. Pompidou had become known, one newspaper referred to "pettish reaction," and concluded that "it's difficult to understand his sensitivity to demonstrations in a democracy." Another paper declared that President Pompidou "blew his cool here in Chicago."

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