

New Year Message

By PHILIP E. HOFFMAN

(PRES. AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE)

As Jews the world over prepare to mark the most solemn days of the Jewish calendar, each in his own way obeys the injunction to examine his conduct and to search for ways in which to improve his manner of dealing with his fellow man and with his God.

We have much to be thankful for in terms of what has happened during these past 12 months. In the Soviet Union, more Jews were able to leave the repressive atmosphere of that nation than at any other time in the 54 years since the Communist revolution. It is difficult if not impossible to fathom the motives of the Communist rulers in this easing of the barriers facing those Jews who wish to emigrate to Israel or elsewhere in order that they may be able to live freely as Jews. But it is reasonable to presume that the intensity of world opinion that has been focused on Soviet anti-Semitism through the efforts of the American Jewish Committee and others has helped bring this about. Lest we feel smug about these accomplishments, however, we must remember that thousands of our co-religionists are still subject to the harsh hostility of Soviet tyranny,

LAS VEGAS ISRAELITE

that they still face the most formidable barriers to leaving that country, that scores languish in prison, and that daily reports of harassment against Jews are mounting.

In the Middle East, we are relieved that an entire year has gone by during which a cease-fire has held on the Suez Canal. The history of Israel's relations with her Arab neighbors has been rife with so much conflict, that we are thankful indeed for this period of relative quiet. But this should not blind us to the fact that the entire Middle East area still seethes with unrest, a lasting peace with the Arab states remains as elusive as ever, and Jews in some Arab countries remain virtual second-class citizens. Yet we are hopeful that ultimately reason will prevail in the Middle East and that Arab and Jew will negotiate peace. And, together with the psalmist, we pray for the continued peace and unity of Jerusalem.

Here at home, we can take some comfort in the non-recurrence of widespread racial conflict in our cities, but this blessing seems to have come to us unearned because we have made no progress in dealing with the underlying problems. The burned-out slum areas of Newark and Detroit have not yet been rebuilt. The nation still deals fitfully, if at all, with the devastation wrought by poverty and disease, the gaping needs in housing and education, and the whole gamut of problems that drain the quality of life.

On our college campuses and in the other locales of our young people, the outward manifestations of the intense generational conflict of recent years have subsided, and young people, to some degree, appear to be focusing their energies on political and social reform from within. But these heartening developments go hand in hand with the overwhelming problems of drug abuse, the continued manifestations of senseless murder, mindless violence and the other major problems on which we have made only the barest beginning in our attempted solutions.

It is easy at times to become overwhelmed with despair when contemplating the all too many instances of man's inhumanity to his fellowman. But to lose hope altogether is to

give up on life itself.

Hope for a better life is the essence of our prayers at Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur as we reassert our faith in man's ability to change for the better. Throughout the coming year of 5732 may we do more--much more--for our fellow human beings who are denied the basic rights essential for a life of freedom and dignity. And let us resolve to serve with renewed devotion and dedication the cause of peace with freedom in all parts of the world.

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