

The Jewish Year

BY GEOFFREY WIGODER

High on this year's Jewish agenda has been the upsurge in anti-Semitic manifestations in various parts of the world. These have taken many forms but most striking and traumatic was the bomb outside the Paris synagogue in Rue Copernic in October, which took four lives. This followed a series of anti-Jewish outrages in France. The public was galvanized into a display of protest against resurgent anti-Semitism, which included a march of 200,000 demonstrators, among them M. Francois Mitterand, who later in the year became France's new President. The culprit for the Rue Copernic bombing has not been traced nor the organization responsible identified, but the event sent shock waves throughout the Jewish world.

The main area for anti-Semitic incidents has been Western Europe. With growing unemployment and economic and social pressures, small groups have turned on the traditional scapegoats, the Jews. The impact of the mass media has received its share of the blame for provoking the proliferation of such occurrences and some Jewish communities have been divided over the choice between publicizing the incidents in order to alert the public to the danger or playing them down on the theory that publicity leads to imitation. There was talk of link-ups among anti-Semitic groups in different countries and between them and Arab terrorist bodies.

It was stressed that those involved were tiny groups, not enjoying public backing. Major parties and bodies in all countries loudly condemned anti-Semitism, while anti-Semitic candidates standing for election were everywhere overwhelmingly defeated. This obviously did not eliminate the need for constant vigilance and relevant counteraction - especially in view of the increased militancy and the resort to violence and terrorism - but comparisons with the early 1930s heard from some quarters still appear greatly exaggerated.

The most obscene form of anti-Semitism is the attempt to play down or even deny the Holocaust. Here again only small numbers, led by a few pseudo-historians, are involved. When one of the proponents of this "revisionist" school of history, Professor Robert Faurisson, was brought to trial in France, he was condemned and punished. However, there has been an insidious growth in the ideas propagated and Faurisson's book even enjoyed an inexplicable preface by Noam Chomsky, the maverick Jewish linguistics genius, and received some endorsement from circles on both the extreme Right

and the extreme left. The influence at present is limited but if such lies continue to be disseminated, they could receive wider credence as the Holocaust recedes into history.

A widely publicized controversy blew up over allegations of official anti-Semitism in Argentina. The former Buenos Aires newspaper publisher, Jacobo Timerman - who had been a victim himself - held that Jews in custody as political prisoners were singled out for particularly vicious treatment; others maintained that Jews had not been arrested as Jews but as victims of a general anti-liberalism and that any special suffering while in custody emanated from the initiative of lower echelons and should not be seen as official policy. It is known that there are anti-Semitic groups close to the government but the Argentinian government has avoided anti-Semitic pressures and its attitude to the Jewish community has been correct and given no cause for complaint.

Anti-Semitism was also reported from Eastern Europe. Although Poland is almost Judenrein, a number of demonstrations in the framework of the unrest in the country developed into expressions of anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. Rumania also saw some anti-Jewish publications although these were in time official y disowned.

Israel's elections cast their shadow over Jews elsewhere with Diaspora Jewry as sharply divided over Israel's policies as Israelis. One issue that threatened to cause negative reactions in the Diaspora was the demand of religious parties for an exclusively Orthodox de-

finition of "Who is a Jew?" for purposes of Israeli law. Reform and Conservative Jews (who constitute the great majority of synagogue-affiliated Jews in the U.S. especially) served notice that they would deeply resent the implementation of such legislation.

Considerable concern was expressed during the year at the high proportion of Jews leaving the U.S.S.R. who did not go to Israel, as well as the number of Israelis settling elsewhere. The subjects were much discussed but little progress was made in coming up with effective proposals to check these processes.

A new fact in Jewish leadership was that of Edgar Bronfman, the North American industrialist and whiskey tycoon, who was elected president of the World Jewish Congress at its assembly, held in Jerusalem in January 1981. Controversy was aroused by the report, issued by one of its commissions, devoted to Israel - Diaspora relations. Attention, especially in Israel, centered largely on its critique of Israeli policies, its advocacy of the right of Jews in the Diaspora to give expression to their reservations concerning Israel's domestic and foreign policies and its

reservations about aliya.

As a retreat for the Jewish Agency's Board of Governors, held at Caesarea, the non-Zionist members of the Board tacitly accepted the validity of the Zionist Movement's "Jerusalem Program," adopted at the 1968 Zionist Congress as the ideological foundation of Zionism. This show of unity, it was felt, would contribute to the strengthening of the Zionist Movement.

TEL AVIV (WNS) -- The first four of 14 F-16s aircraft embargoed by the U.S. after Israel's raids on Iraq's nuclear reactor in June and a terrorist headquarters in Beirut in July, arrived in Israel. The other ten are to be flown to Israel as soon as modifications ordered by the U.S. Air Force and its manufacturers, already carried out on those delivered, are completed.

PARIS (WNS) -- President Mitterand conferred with Israel's Ambassador Meir Rosenne, the first top level contact since France's change of regime. Rosenne said after the meeting that it had been "friendly and warm" but refused to reveal details of the subjects discussed.

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