

JACKSON ACCEPTS FIRST-EVER INVITATION TO VISIT ISRAEL**By Deborah Kalb**
States News Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 10 (JTA) -- The Rev. Jesse Jackson has accepted his first-ever official invitation to visit Israel, according to Jackson and an Israeli Embassy official.

While no date has yet been set for the visit, it will probably take place sometime within the next year, both parties said.

The invitation was extended by Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin at a meeting with Jackson on Thursday evening in Washington that both sides termed positive.

Jackson last visited Israel in 1979, but on that occasion he requested the visit, after having been invited to the West Bank, Syria, and other parts of the Middle East.

"This is the first time I've ever been invited" to visit Israel, Jackson said in an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

The Israeli Embassy official, Avi Granot, counselor for church and ethnic affairs, who attended the meeting, said that Beilin invited the black leader to visit Israel to witness the changes that have taken place over the last 13 years.

The meeting, which Granot called "pleasant" and Jackson called "very beneficial," lasted an hour and a half, longer than expected.

The eight participants at the meeting, including Jackson and his aides, former Civil Rights Commissioner Mary Frances Berry, and Beilin and his aides, discussed the "situation in the Middle East," Granot said.

Deportations Not Discussed

The discussion did not include the issue of the Palestinian deportees, according to participants.

"We discussed the significance of keeping all parties at the bargaining table in the Middle East," Jackson said.

Participants also talked about "the need to build and broaden ties between blacks and Jews in this country as part of a basic social justice movement," Jackson said.

Other topics at the meeting included South Africa, the Holocaust, and Jackson's efforts to help Syrian Jews leave their country.

In recent months, Jackson has reached out to the Jewish community in an attempt to build closer ties, holding well-publicized meetings with Jewish groups.

Relations between Jackson and the Jewish community have been touchy for years, ever since Jackson referred to New York as "Hymietown" during his 1984 run for the presidency.

In a related event, Beilin met with officials of the Clinton transition team Thursday, including Samuel Berger, nominated to be Clinton's deputy national security adviser, and Leon Fuerth, a national security transition adviser.

The half-hour meeting included a brief appearance by Anthony Lake, nominated to be Clinton's national security adviser.

Termed "extremely positive" by a Clinton transition spokesman, the discussion focused on the status of the peace process.

The spokesman said the transition officials sought to "ensure we have Israel's best advice on how to completely engage the new administration on the peace process."

RED CROSS BALKS AT RETURNING NINE DEPORTEES TO ISRAEL**By Gil Sedan**

JERUSALEM, Jan. 10 (JTA) -- The International Committee of the Red Cross balked Sunday at flying back nine deportees to Israel from a tent camp in Lebanon, insisting that both Jerusalem and Beirut first build better accommodations for more than 400 Moslem fundamentalists stranded there.

But Israel continued to make gestures of conciliation as a U.N. envoy arrived over the weekend to underline a Dec. 18 Security Council resolution calling on Jerusalem to take back the deportees.

Red Cross refusal to fly back nine deportees that Israel said were expelled by mistake was the latest development in a standoff between Israel and Lebanon over responsibility for the Hamas and Islamic Jihad Moslem fundamentalists deported by Jerusalem over three weeks ago.

But the Red Cross was able to complete the original mission to which Israel had agreed last week.

On Saturday, a two-member Red Cross team, flying a U.N. helicopter, retrieved a 16-year-old boy, Bassam Sayouri, whose expulsion had been a case of mistaken identity, and a deportee suffering from a kidney ailment, who was transferred to a hospital in the Israeli-controlled security zone for treatment.

They flew over Israeli-held territory in southern Lebanon under what Jerusalem had described as a "one-time" easing in its policy of denying aid to the deportees through areas controlled by Israel.

But a second mission to retrieve the other deportees that Israel had agreed to accept was aborted Sunday when the Red Cross pressed its demand that Israel and Lebanon build a more permanent structure for the deportees.

A further softening on Israel's part was evident, however, when the Cabinet decided Sunday to drop a 60-day time limit on appeals to the military appeals board of their Dec. 17 expulsion. They now have no deadline for appeal.

Israel also suggested an alternative to Red Cross transport in bringing back the nine fundamentalists disqualified for deportation by earlier charges pending against them.

It said that cooperation with Lebanon could bring about their return the same way they came, through the Zembraya crossing in the security zone.

Gen. Antoine Lahad, commander of the Israeli-backed South Lebanese Army, said ailing deportees could be hospitalized at the Marjayoun hospital in the buffer zone.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin also said at the Cabinet session Sunday that he would "check with the Shin Bet" security service whether some longtime deportees -- expelled before the mass deportation of over 400 fundamentalist activists -- might be allowed to return.

Rabin's statement came in response to a question by Energy Minister Amnon Rubinstein, of the left-wing Meretz bloc, whose party rank and file has opposed leadership support of the deportations.

Another Cabinet dove, Tourism Minister Uzi Baram, of Labor, suggested Israel continue to extend humanitarian gestures to the deportees.

U.N. envoy Chinmaya Gharekhan met with Rabin on Sunday before flying to Lebanon and then on to New York to report on his mission to the Security Council.

Despite Israeli efforts to ease the atmosphere, a wide gap remains between Jerusalem and the United Nations over the issue of the deportees.

Gharekhan made clear his intention was to implement Security Council Resolution 799 and bring about the return of the deportees.

He told Foreign Minister Shimon Peres over the weekend that the United Nations wished to avoid a confrontation with Israel over the issue, but that he had not come merely to discuss humanitarian gestures toward the deportees.

Israel was still hoping for "a fair" report by the U.N. envoy which would lead to a moderately worded resolution at the Security Council.

Officials said a sharply worded statement could lead to "serious disruptions" in the peace process by making it difficult for the Arabs to return to peace negotiations, due to resume in Washington next month.

Israel received support for this position in New York on Friday, when the American ambassador to the United Nations, Edward Perkins, told his Israeli counterpart, Gad Yaacobi, that the criticism of Israel expressed in a Jan. 3 letter from U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali was "unhelpful and unnecessary."

An official with the Israeli U.N. mission said the Israelis were assured that America will act to avoid a Security Council resolution calling for sanctions on Israel. If such a resolution does come to a vote, said the official, the United States will veto it.

Meanwhile, tension continued in the territories over the weekend.

In one of the bloodiest rounds of killings recently, five Palestinians suspected of collaborating with Israel were assassinated by extremists in the Gaza Strip.

A general strike was also in effect in Gaza on Sunday, in solidarity with the deportees.

The 16-year-old who was returned to Israel received a warm welcome when he arrived early Sunday morning at his home in Hebron. His release was seen in the city as a victory for Hamas and residents expressed confidence that more deportees would return.

(Staff writer Larry Yudelson in New York contributed to this report.)

RABINOVICH TRIES TO DEFUSE CONTROVERSY OVER TAX PAYMENT

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Jan. 10 (JTA) -- Israel's ambassador-designate to the United States, Itamar Rabinovich, is trying to defuse controversy surrounding revelations that he recently paid an indemnity to tax authorities for money earned in the United States several years ago.

Rabinovich, a prominent academic and currently Israel's chief negotiator with Syria, issued a public statement over the weekend through his

tax lawyer emphasizing that he made the payment as a goodwill gesture, and was probably not even required to do so.

Reports of the indemnity surfaced in the Israeli press last week and were immediately seized upon by opposition members of the Knesset, who will most likely raise the issue in the plenary this week.

Rabinovich is negotiating with Syria on the basis of a willingness by the Rabin government to withdraw from parts of the Golan Heights in exchange for peace with Syria, a policy that has evoked ire among the ranks of the right wing.

In the statement, tax attorney Pinchas Rubin of Tel Aviv explained that two years ago Rabinovich closed a bank account he had held in the United States during a year's sabbatical that he spent there.

Rabinovich had transferred back to Israel the balance of \$26,000 left in the account.

Subsequently, in the wake of anonymous letters about him after he was appointed chief negotiator with Syria, Rabinovich approached the tax authorities, and reached a settlement with them in which he paid an indemnity of 39,400 shekels (\$14,460).

It was not clear from the attorney's statement what this sum of the indemnity related to, what the source of the tax obligation was, and how much tax Rabinovich paid in addition to the indemnity.

Rubin said he had advised Rabinovich that the question of whether he owed tax was moot under Israeli law, given that the income in question had originated abroad.

He said that were it not for Rabinovich's public appointment, he would have advised his client to ignore the anonymous letters.

Moreover, the attorney said, had Rabinovich sought Treasury approval to keep his account abroad, it would almost definitely have been granted.

"For this reason, too, I advised Rabinovich that he had no need to deal harshly with himself. Rabinovich heard my advice; but he did not take it," Rubin said.

Rabinovich instead instructed the attorney to negotiate a settlement with the tax authorities.

"I wish to point out, too, that the process of indemnity payment is anchored in statute law and is commonly applied in Israel and in other countries," Rubin wrote in the statement. "The application in this case was in no way exceptional."

Treasury officials questioned by the newspaper Ha'aretz disagreed on interpretation of the tax law, and maintained that the income was taxable.

But they tended to agree that Rabinovich could have kept the account abroad, had he applied for a permit to do so.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres publicly backed Rabinovich over the weekend, telling army radio the professor had "committed no crime."

Media commentators, including the editorial writer in Ha'aretz on Friday, called on the ambassador-designate to publish the full story and remove the cloud of uncertainty and suspicion that had descended on him as a result of the original press reports.

The statement by the attorney was an attempt to comply with the calls for disclosure, and to head off suspicion that the professor's deal with the authorities was secured thanks to intervention by the prime minister's office.

2 TOP SENATORS WARN SYRIA ABOUT HALT IN JEWISH TRAVEL

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Jan. 10 (JTA) -- Two prominent senators have warned Syria that its halt in issuing travel visas to its Jews, along with other recent policy moves, threatens closer U.S.-Syrian relations.

Sens. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) and Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), also cited as threats to bilateral ties Syria's recent refusal to meet with U.S. officials to discuss terrorism, the increase in terrorism from Syrian-controlled Lebanon and the continuing Syrian support of groups such as Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

The message was conveyed in a Dec. 22 letter to the Syrian ambassador to the United States, Walid al-Moualem.

So far, the senators have received no reply from Syria, according to an aide to Grassley.

Since Syria lifted the travel ban it had long imposed on its Jewish community, some 2,400 Jews have left the country, according to a statement by Syria's Chief Rabbi Ibrahim Hamra. He said another 1,450 remain. It is believed that about 1,000 of those wish to leave, as well.

At a news conference last week in Damascus, Hamra echoed the official Syrian position being given to American officials. He said that "administrative problems" have delayed exit permits for the Jews, but denied there had been a policy reversal.

Moualem had given a similar response recently to a letter from the Rev. Jesse Jackson expressing concern over the halt in visas.

The Syrian ambassador had stated that "the Syrian government's decision of April 1992 to allow Syrian Jews to travel still stands."

Activists Dispute Syrian Claim

This claim was disputed by the Council for the Rescue of Syrian Jews in New York.

"If, in fact, there has been no policy shift, then we anxiously await such evidence in a resumption of the granting of permits to travel," said Alice Harary, president of the council, in a statement. "To date, no such resumption has occurred."

The halt in visas began in late October, shortly before the U.S. presidential election.

Some observers say the Syrian moves reflect a desire by Syria to "sell the Jews twice," by extracting gains for their release from both the old and new American administrations.

Several other members of Congress have also written the Syrians on behalf of Syrian Jews. Through the State Department, the issue has been raised in both Damascus and in Washington.

But the Grassley-Kennedy letter stands out for invoking the full range of issues in the Syrian-U.S. relationship. The letter explicitly noted Syria's long-held desire to be removed from the U.S. terrorism list.

It is also noteworthy because the original Syrian decision to permit its Jews to travel came shortly after the dispatch of a letter circulated by Kennedy and signed by more than half the Senate calling for the release of Syria's Jews.

For now, the organized Jewish community is continuing to keep a low profile on the issue. Advocates for Syrian Jewry say they fear that too much pressure could force Syrian President Hafez Assad to formalize, the apparent policy shift.

EL AL BLAMES BOEING FOR AMSTERDAM CRASH

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 10 (JTA) -- An internal investigation by El Al into the crash of one of its Boeing 747 cargo jets in Amsterdam on Oct. 4 has laid full blame for the disaster on the plane's American manufacturer.

The report, published Sunday, recommends that the airline sue the Seattle-based Boeing Corp. for full damages. The decision noted a similar loss of an identical China Airline aircraft a year ago.

The commission, headed by Amos Tamir, said Boeing should be sued for the loss of the plane and for compensation for any insurance claims paid out to victims.

More than 40 people died when the plane, en route to Tel Aviv, slammed into apartment buildings in an Amsterdam suburb.

El Al said damages should be paid as well to the company for injuring its reputation, and for the cost of mounting a giant international public relations campaign to offset the adverse publicity caused by the crash.

In Amsterdam, the Dutch Aviation Board refused to comment on El Al's conclusion.

The investigation being conducted by the board will take several more months to complete, a board spokesman said.

Crew Is Cleared

But a representative of the lawyers for the crash victims said El Al's conclusion would enable them to file their claims with U.S. courts and thus receive more damages than they could through Israeli courts.

The commission cleared the plane's crew, all of whom perished, of any responsibility for the crash.

The crash was caused by the failure of the pins connecting the No. 3 engine to the right wing, which broke away, tearing away the No. 4 engine too, the report concluded.

The crew did everything in their power to prevent the crash, the investigators stressed.

Investigation into the aircraft's maintenance showed that no fault lay with ground maintenance engineers or mechanics.

In addition, the commission charged Boeing for its "slow and weak reaction," bordering "on negligence," to the earlier crash of the China Airlines plane.

Besides publishing its findings on the October crash, the commission published its report on the circumstances that enabled a stowaway to board an El Al plane bound for Nairobi, Kenya, last week.

The 27-year-old stowaway, David Solimon, who said he was a free-lance journalist investigating El Al security, gave himself up to the crew in midflight.

The commission recommended that the company official in charge of cabin crews should be transferred from his position because of a lack of discipline among cabin attendants regarding certain procedures.

The purser and the two flight attendants on board the Tel Aviv-Nairobi flight should be suspended pending completion of an inquiry to be held this week into their behavior, the report said.

(Contributing to this report was JTA correspondent Henriette Boas in Amsterdam.)

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:**PARADOX OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN AMERICA:
DISSONANCE IN PERCEPTION VS. REALITY****[Part 1 Of A Series]****By Debra Nussbaum Cohen**

NEW YORK, Jan. 10 (JTA) -- Anti-Semitism in America today constitutes something of a paradox.

The reality, experts say, is that Jews no longer face serious discrimination in American society -- not in the community, the workplace, politics or academia.

But American Jews are convinced more than ever that anti-Semitism remains a serious threat, although few have encountered any real bias themselves.

The organizations founded to combat anti-Semitism continue to attract funds and commission studies that seem to reinforce the community's sense of concern.

Why is there such dissonance between the reality and the perception?

And in this liminal time, as the Jewish community grapples with the immediate effects of assimilation and makes the transition from a community of immigrants to a community struggling to retain its religious and ethnic identity, critics wonder what price -- financial and psychological -- is being paid for a continued preoccupation with anti-Semitism.

To be sure, America is not now, and surely will never be completely rid of anti-Semites.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's first annual tally of bias crimes nationwide covered 1991 and showed that Jews were by far the most targeted religious group, accounting for about 17 percent of all bias incident victims, behind only African Americans and whites as an ethnic group.

And the Anti-Defamation League's 1991 Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents documented an 11 percent upswing in the number of anti-Jewish acts over the previous year.

There were 1,879 anti-Semitic incidents in 1991, by ADL's count.

But there has been little distinction made publicly between the type of wholesale discrimination against Jews that existed just a generation ago, and the more obvious, but less threatening, expressions of anti-Semitism that exist today.

Lumping Together Anti-Semitic Acts

The very lumping together of graffiti and epithets with occasional acts of violence in order to emphasize an upward trend in anti-Semitism may obscure the issue and raise undue alarm.

Even so, surveys show that the number of people who hold the attitudes which could lead them to commit acts of anti-Semitism is on a slow but consistent decline.

In fact, if anti-Semitism is measured by how secure Jews can feel in America, and how open America's economic, political and educational systems are to Jews, then even the bad news is not bad, say sociologists.

American Jews are "more secure today than they have ever been in this century, in this country, and perhaps in the history of the Diaspora," wrote anti-Semitism expert Earl Raab in a 1989 essay.

Of course, some private clubs continue to exclude Jews. David Duke, the Ku Klux Klan and other white racists continue to scapegoat Jews.

And a large handful of extremely visible black Afro-centric activists and scholars posit

that Jews are disproportionately responsible for their oppression.

But in the context of daily life in America, by any measure, Jews face far less discrimination today than existed only twenty years ago.

Only one generation ago, Jews were not permitted to buy houses in certain neighborhoods, to climb past a certain rung in the corporate hierarchy in many professions and firms, and were considered generally undesirable by other ethnic groups.

A generation before that, most colleges and professions were closed to Jews completely.

Widespread anti-Jewish discrimination, political anti-Semitism and the inability of the Jewish community to express itself on issues of concern to the body politic are simply no longer factors in American life, said Jerome Chanes, co-director of domestic concerns at the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council.

Security And Status Not Threatened

"This kind of anti-Semitism -- the kind that makes a difference in terms of the security and the status of American Jews -- has declined steadily and dramatically," he said.

Anti-Semitism has evolved into a bifurcated phenomenon; fewer Americans than ever before hold negative attitudes about Jews, but those who do have negative attitudes are more likely to express them in acts of anti-Semitic vandalism.

But this trend of bigots expressing themselves more freely with epithets and vandalism "has less to do with anti-Semitism than with the nature of conflicts in American society and inter-ethnic phenomena," said Chanes.

Still, poll after poll shows that American Jews say that anti-Semitism is bad and getting worse.

In a 1983 survey of American Jews conducted by the American Jewish Committee, about half the respondents said that anti-Semitism was a serious problem.

By 1988, the percentage of Jews who said it was a serious problem had jumped to 76 percent, and in the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, that figure rose again to 85 percent.

The contradiction was illuminated by a poll of rabbis in the early 1980s, according to Abraham Foxman, national director of the ADL.

Almost all the rabbis surveyed -- 95 percent -- said that anti-Semitism was a serious problem in America.

But when asked if it was a serious problem in their own communities, nearly all said no, the anti-Semitism was elsewhere.

And only one of 10 American Jews has personally experienced anti-Semitism within the last 10 years, said Raab, director of Brandeis University's Perlmutter Institute for Jewish Advocacy, in an interview.

Part of the paradox may lie with the organizations which commission surveys and present the findings in a light which justifies their own fund-raising needs, say some observers.

If anti-Semitism in the United States were measured only by the press releases and direct mail sent out by Jewish defense groups, it would appear that the very existence of American Jewry is being threatened by neo-Nazis, skinheads and closet anti-Semites waiting to set upon overly complacent Jews, say critics.

But defense organizations say they are not being alarmist, but are rather calling attention to issues that urgently need to be addressed.

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Activists Dispute Syrian Claim

This claim was disputed by the Council for the Rescue of Syrian Jews in New York.

"If, in fact, there has been no policy shift, then we anxiously await such evidence in a resumption of the granting of permits to travel," said Alice Harary, president of the council, in a statement. "To date, no such resumption has occurred."

The halt in visas began in late October, shortly before the U.S. presidential election.

Some observers say the Syrian moves reflect a desire by Syria to "sell the Jews twice," by extracting gains for their release from both the old and new American administrations.

Several other members of Congress have also written the Syrians on behalf of Syrian Jews. Through the State Department, the issue has been raised in both Damascus and in Washington.

But the Grassley-Kennedy letter stands out for invoking the full range of issues in the Syrian-U.S. relationship. The letter explicitly noted Syria's long-held desire to be removed from the U.S. terrorism list.

It is also noteworthy because the original Syrian decision to permit its Jews to travel came shortly after the dispatch of a letter circulated by Kennedy and signed by more than half the Senate calling for the release of Syria's Jews.

For now, the organized Jewish community is continuing to keep a low profile on the issue. Advocates for Syrian Jewry say they fear that too much pressure could force Syrian President Hafez Assad to formalize, the apparent policy shift.

**EL AL BLAMES BOEING
FOR AMSTERDAM CRASH**

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 10 (JTA) -- An internal investigation by El Al into the crash of one of its Boeing 747 cargo jets in Amsterdam on Oct. 4 has laid full blame for the disaster on the plane's American manufacturer.

The report, published Sunday, recommends that the airline sue the Seattle-based Boeing Corp. for full damages. The decision noted a similar loss of an identical China Airline aircraft a year ago.

The commission, headed by Amos Tamir, said Boeing should be sued for the loss of the plane and for compensation for any insurance claims paid out to victims.

More than 40 people died when the plane, en route to Tel Aviv, slammed into apartment buildings in an Amsterdam suburb.

El Al said damages should be paid as well to the company for injuring its reputation, and for the cost of mounting a giant international public relations campaign to offset the adverse publicity caused by the crash.

In Amsterdam, the Dutch Aviation Board refused to comment on El Al's conclusion.

The investigation being conducted by the board will take several more months to complete, a board spokesman said.

Crew Is Cleared

But a representative of the lawyers for the crash victims said El Al's conclusion would enable them to file their claims with U.S. courts and thus receive more damages than they could through Israeli courts.

The commission cleared the plane's crew, all of whom perished, of any responsibility for the crash.

The crash was caused by the failure of the pins connecting the No. 3 engine to the right wing, which broke away, tearing away the No. 4 engine too, the report concluded.

The crew did everything in their power to prevent the crash, the investigators stressed.

Investigation into the aircraft's maintenance showed that no fault lay with ground maintenance engineers or mechanics.

In addition, the commission charged Boeing for its "slow and weak reaction," bordering "on negligence," to the earlier crash of the China Airlines plane.

Besides publishing its findings on the October crash, the commission published its report on the circumstances that enabled a stowaway to board an El Al plane bound for Nairobi, Kenya, last week.

The 27-year-old stowaway, David Solimon, who said he was a free-lance journalist investigating El Al security, gave himself up to the crew in midflight.

The commission recommended that the company official in charge of cabin crews should be transferred from his position because of a lack of discipline among cabin attendants regarding certain procedures.

The purser and the two flight attendants on board the Tel Aviv-Nairobi flight should be suspended pending completion of an inquiry to be held this week into their behavior, the report said.

(Contributing to this report was JTA correspondent Henriette Boas in Amsterdam.)

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:**PARADOX OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN AMERICA:
DISSONANCE IN PERCEPTION VS. REALITY****[Part 1 Of A Series]****By Debra Nussbaum Cohen**

NEW YORK, Jan. 10 (JTA) -- Anti-Semitism in America today constitutes something of a paradox.

The reality, experts say, is that Jews no longer face serious discrimination in American society -- not in the community, the workplace, politics or academia.

But American Jews are convinced more than ever that anti-Semitism remains a serious threat, although few have encountered any real bias themselves.

The organizations founded to combat anti-Semitism continue to attract funds and commission studies that seem to reinforce the community's sense of concern.

Why is there such dissonance between the reality and the perception?

And in this liminal time, as the Jewish community grapples with the immediate effects of assimilation and makes the transition from a community of immigrants to a community struggling to retain its religious and ethnic identity, critics wonder what price -- financial and psychological -- is being paid for a continued preoccupation with anti-Semitism.

To be sure, America is not now, and surely will never be completely rid of anti-Semites.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's first annual tally of bias crimes nationwide covered 1991 and showed that Jews were by far the most targeted religious group, accounting for about 17 percent of all bias incident victims, behind only African Americans and whites as an ethnic group.

And the Anti-Defamation League's 1991 Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents documented an 11 percent upswing in the number of anti-Jewish acts over the previous year.

There were 1,879 anti-Semitic incidents in 1991, by ADL's count.

But there has been little distinction made publicly between the type of wholesale discrimination against Jews that existed just a generation ago, and the more obvious, but less threatening, expressions of anti-Semitism that exist today.

Lumping Together Anti-Semitic Acts

The very lumping together of graffiti and epithets with occasional acts of violence in order to emphasize an upward trend in anti-Semitism may obscure the issue and raise undue alarm.

Even so, surveys show that the number of people who hold the attitudes which could lead them to commit acts of anti-Semitism is on a slow but consistent decline.

In fact, if anti-Semitism is measured by how secure Jews can feel in America, and how open America's economic, political and educational systems are to Jews, then even the bad news is not bad, say sociologists.

American Jews are "more secure today than they have ever been in this century, in this country, and perhaps in the history of the Diaspora," wrote anti-Semitism expert Earl Raab in a 1989 essay.

Of course, some private clubs continue to exclude Jews. David Duke, the Ku Klux Klan and other white racists continue to scapegoat Jews.

And a large handful of extremely visible black Afro-centric activists and scholars posit

that Jews are disproportionately responsible for their oppression.

But in the context of daily life in America, by any measure, Jews face far less discrimination today than existed only twenty years ago.

Only one generation ago, Jews were not permitted to buy houses in certain neighborhoods, to climb past a certain rung in the corporate hierarchy in many professions and firms, and were considered generally undesirable by other ethnic groups.

A generation before that, most colleges and professions were closed to Jews completely.

Widespread anti-Jewish discrimination, political anti-Semitism and the inability of the Jewish community to express itself on issues of concern to the body politic are simply no longer factors in American life, said Jerome Chanes, co-director of domestic concerns at the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council.

Security And Status Not Threatened

"This kind of anti-Semitism -- the kind that makes a difference in terms of the security and the status of American Jews -- has declined steadily and dramatically," he said.

Anti-Semitism has evolved into a bifurcated phenomenon; fewer Americans than ever before hold negative attitudes about Jews, but those who do have negative attitudes are more likely to express them in acts of anti-Semitic vandalism.

But this trend of bigots expressing themselves more freely with epithets and vandalism "has less to do with anti-Semitism than with the nature of conflicts in American society and inter-ethnic phenomena," said Chanes.

Still, poll after poll shows that American Jews say that anti-Semitism is bad and getting worse.

In a 1983 survey of American Jews conducted by the American Jewish Committee, about half the respondents said that anti-Semitism was a serious problem.

By 1988, the percentage of Jews who said it was a serious problem had jumped to 76 percent, and in the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, that figure rose again to 85 percent.

The contradiction was illuminated by a poll of rabbis in the early 1980s, according to Abraham Foxman, national director of the ADL.

Almost all the rabbis surveyed -- 95 percent -- said that anti-Semitism was a serious problem in America.

But when asked if it was a serious problem in their own communities, nearly all said no, the anti-Semitism was elsewhere.

And only one of 10 American Jews has personally experienced anti-Semitism within the last 10 years, said Raab, director of Brandeis University's Perlmutter Institute for Jewish Advocacy, in an interview.

Part of the paradox may lie with the organizations which commission surveys and present the findings in a light which justifies their own fund-raising needs, say some observers.

If anti-Semitism in the United States were measured only by the press releases and direct mail sent out by Jewish defense groups, it would appear that the very existence of American Jewry is being threatened by neo-Nazis, skinheads and closet anti-Semites waiting to set upon overly complacent Jews, say critics.

But defense organizations say they are not being alarmist, but are rather calling attention to issues that urgently need to be addressed.