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Year Book

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# Preface

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**R**ECONSTRUCTIONISM is “the only religious party in Jewish life whose origins are entirely American and whose leading personalities view Judaism from the perspective of the exclusively American Jewish experience,” and an understanding of Reconstructionism is basic to an understanding of American Judaism and American Jews. Such is the thesis of Charles S. Liebman’s “Reconstructionism in American Jewish Life,” which examines Reconstructionism’s history, institutions, programs, professional and lay constituency, and ideology. Though the ideas, beliefs, and attitudes of Reconstructionism have many followers and tend to coincide with those of American Jews generally, Reconstructionism has failed as an organized movement. Professor Liebman discusses the reasons for this failure in the past, and the possible future of Reconstructionism in America.

The losses to the Jewish community caused by the increasing incidence of intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews is appraised by Arnold Schwartz in “Intermarriage in the United States.” Examining a variety of studies and surveys, he finds a rise of some magnitude and consequence, encouraged by powerful influences within and outside the Jewish community.

Soviet antisemitism continues as a focus of attention not only because the protest movement in the West is growing, but also because some Jewish voices are being raised in the Soviet Union itself. Two articles in the volume deal with the problem: in “Antisemitism as a Policy Tool in the Soviet Bloc” Maurice Friedberg discusses the political use of antisemitism in Russia, from Stalin to the present, and in the Soviet satellites, and Ronald I. Rubin’s “Soviet Jewish Problem at the United Nations” sees the fate of Soviet Jewry as a problem going beyond conventional human-rights considerations. At the UN it is one of the many ideological and political contests between the superpowers.

Rabbi Gerald Engel’s “North American Settlers in Israel” summarizes his study of American and Canadian permanent settlers in Israel—their background; what moves them to leave America for Israel; why they choose to remain in Israel, and why, in their view, some return to America.

Several articles in the Review of the Year will be of special interest to our readers:

In "Intergroup Relations and Tensions in the United States," Earl Raab discusses the general mood, economic gains, and basic discontents of the black community, together with civil-rights legislation and administration policy. The section on the Jews stresses their uneasiness about what some regard as the interrelation between polarization, extremism, and political antisemitism. In a separate article on New York City, Steven E. Frieder deals with the mayoralty election and the Jewish vote, the effect of demands for open admission and black-studies programs on campus tensions, school decentralization, friction between Jews and Negroes, and the Jewish Defense League.

The response of the organized Jewish community to these and other issues is listed by Geraldine Rosenfield in the annual reference section, introduced in the 1969 YEAR BOOK.

This year's bibliographical essay, prepared by Menahem H. Schmelzer, librarian of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, reviews "Jewish Scholarship in the United States: Selections from the Literature, 1967-1969."

We wish to thank Mrs. Shirley Spitzer, for technical assistance and preparation of the directories, necrology, and index; Harry Alderman, director of the Blaustein Library, his staff, and Mrs. Lotte Zajac, for their aid in providing reference material. Rabbi Naftoli Richter prepared the calendars, and Mrs. Toni Levi read proof.

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