

AJC Making a Difference

hopeful about the prospect of a multiracial democracy and anxious over some of the possible political and economic consequences of sweeping change. Meetings with leading South African political figures, scholars, and journalists convinced the AJC delegation that considerable progress had been made in dismantling the apartheid system, but that the country's economic distress might make it difficult to produce enough employment to satisfy the needs of the long-suppressed blacks. This raised the question of whether enough change had occurred to warrant an easing of economic sanctions against South Africa.

Responding to the human tragedy resulting from Serbia's continuing war against Bosnia, the AJC became the first Jewish organization to urge the President to invoke the emergency provisions of the Refugee Act and admit at least 25,000 refugees from the former Yugoslavia into the United States. "We realize," the AJC declared, "that with the current budget constraints and worldwide ethnic tensions, this crisis occurs at a difficult time. But we simply cannot ignore its reality. We must respond to our highest value, the saving of human life."

Poland remains a major focus of AJC's work. Rabbi A. James Rudin, director of interreligious affairs, was one of ten members of the U.S. delegation to a seminar on tolerance held in Warsaw and organized by the 52-nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. And the AJC has appointed Dr. Stanislaw Krajewski, a mathematics professor at the University of Warsaw, as its consultant in Poland. ■

■ Years of persistent effort by the AJC's Pacific Rim Institute and others to convince Japan to end its cooperation with the Arab economic boycott of Israel have finally paid off. On December 3, 1992, Mr. Michio Watanabe became the first foreign minister of Japan to meet with an American Jewish delegation when he told an AJC group led by Board of Governors Chairman Robert Rifkind and Executive Vice President David Harris that his government had urged the Arab states to drop the boycott, and had advised leading Japanese companies to cease cooperation with it. This was the first official announcement of this Japanese policy.

■ While Arab states continue to introduce anti-Israel resolutions at the UN, Israeli diplomats have noticed a marked change: some of the resolutions have been withdrawn because the Arabs knew they could not win; some have had their wording softened because they could not pass in their original form; and even the anti-Israel measures that have passed were not backed by the overwhelming majorities of previous years. This change in the UN atmosphere did not happen by accident, and AJC has played its part. Over the past three months, the AJC has met with representatives of almost 40 states and with the president of the General Assembly urging an end to Israel-bashing at the UN.

■ On November 10, 1992, when the advisory board of the AJC's Mirowitz Center for Central and Eastern European Affairs met with the Hungarian foreign minister in Budapest, it registered grave concern about the anti-Semitic diatribes of Istvan Csurka, a vice

president of the ruling MDF party. Within a few weeks, Prime Minister Jozsef Antall denounced his "stupid and foolish" rhetoric, the Hungarian Catholic Church issued a statement strongly condemning anti-Semitism, and the MDF restructured its party leadership so as to deprive Csurka of his title of vice president.

■ Aware of the need to sensitize Israeli diplomats stationed in the U.S. to the pluralistic nature of American society, and cognizant of the AJC's record of pioneering achievement in intergroup relations, Israel's consul general in Chicago arranged for the AJC office in that city, the AJC's Institute for American Pluralism, and its Department of Interreligious Affairs to set up two day-long sessions this past December for 25 Israeli diplomats stationed in the U.S., plus several more who flew in from Israel. One session dealt with how to interpret Israel to the different Christian denominations; the other acquainted them with America's diverse ethnic tapestry. The Israeli participants responded enthusiastically, saying that the effectiveness of their advocacy for Israel had been immeasurably enhanced, and that these training sessions ought to be continued.

New Appointment in AJC Israel Office

Bonnie Boxer, who previously served as deputy spokeswoman in charge of contact with the foreign press for the city of Jerusalem and its mayor, Teddy Kollek, has been named director of public affairs in the AJC Israel Office. The American-born Ms. Boxer has lived in Israel for the last 12 years. ■