



Jewish Books in Review

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15 East 26th St., New York, N.Y. 10010

Jews, Turks and Infidels. Morton Borden. The University of North Carolina Press, Box 2288, Chapel Hill, NC 27514. 1984. \$17.95

Reviewed By Jeffrey S. Gurock

Historians of American Jewish life have long written of the ease and speed with which Jews in this country gained their emancipation. Four basic freedoms — the right to settle, the right to worship publicly, the right to work without restrictions, and the right to vote — were largely attained, it has been argued, through inadvertence on the part of Gentile society, without discussion or debate.

That Jews, it has been claimed, were simply not a pressing social or political issue in the colonial and early national periods, is graphically illustrated by the fact that the great documents of American freedom ranging from the Declaration of Independence to the Bill of Rights make no reference to Jews. In America there was no need for an Emancipation Proclamation for Jews: their rights were implicitly gained and protected by the separation of church and state doctrine as expressed in various Articles of the Constitution.

This wide-spread silent toleration of the Jews, Morton

Borden's timely work pointedly argues, did not extend however to the fifth and most decisive freedom: the right to rule over Gentiles, or, as it is more commonly expressed, the right to hold public office. Here Borden shows that few states quickly or easily followed the Federal Constitution's lead in not requiring "a religious test...as a qualification to any office." Long into the 19th Century, states maintained legislation extant from colonial days which denied full citizenship to this or that group of dissenting Christians and, as the title of this book suggests, Jews, Turks and Infidels.

Borden recounts the oft-told tale of the long battle for the Maryland "Jew Bill." And he details the equally familiar saga of Jacob Henry, a Jew who eloquently argued for religious freedom as he took his seat in the North Carolina legislature without taking the Christian oath.

For Borden, the drive to keep Jews as second-class citizens emanated predominately from Christian religious and evangelical sources. Their legal campaign was part of a larger agenda to define the United States as a Christian Republic, not as a non-sectarian democracy. Their zealotry was expressed in attempts to change the Con-

stitution to acknowledge the divinity of Jesus Christ, in efforts on the foreign policy scene to project America as Christian, and in their largely successful defense of Sunday Blue Laws. Borden's work offers clear evidence that the "America is a Christian Nation" spokesmen of today have a long history of American intolerance to draw upon.

But has this legacy of prejudice in our country been a cause for grave Jewish concern? Borden's history suggests that although apostles of discord have had their say and have found their listeners within and without government, to date — with the exception of blue laws which in our own day have largely been repealed — measures proposed by evangelicals and residual law book liabilities have not measurably damaged Jewish life in America. Most probably, Jewish security in this area has been insured by the very presence of those more ephemeral infidel and Turk groups, a theme which this volume should have considered in greater detail but treats only peripherally.

Jeffrey S. Gurock is Associate Professor of American Jewish History at Yeshiva University.



Mayor Harvey Gantt talks with some of the 300 people who attended his Oneg Shabbat presentation on Israel at Temple Beth El. Looking on (L) is Allan Oxman, Interfaith chair of Federation Community Relations Committee which sponsored the Mayor's mission to Israel and the Oneg.

Wildacres Works Its Magic

(cont'd from page 1)

Rabbi Wilson 3) ADULT PROGRAMMING: Peggy Gartner and Abe Luski 4) ADMINISTRATION/COMPUTERIZATION: Shelton Gorelick 5) LIBRARY: Sally Schrader 6) PLANNING PROCESS: Bill Gorelick. Each task force will contain representatives from all the Institutions. The goal is to be able to present ideas and action plans to the Executive Committees and Boards of the Institutions by January 1, 1986.

As the retreat drew to a close, there was complete accord on one future plan — next year, and each year thereafter, a retreat at Wildacres should be held for as many as 100 of our community's leaders drawn from the Boards and Committees of our institutions and organizations. Plans are already under way to establish such a retreat at Wildacres.

The twenty-four attending this year were: Foundation Board Elected Members: Mark Bernstein, Herman Blumenthal, Alan Blumenthal, Abe Luski; Temple Beth El: Sally Schrader, Bill Griffenhagen and Rabbi and Mrs. Krantzler; Temple Israel: Bill Ashendorf and Rabbi Wilson; JCC: Miles Levine and Larry Gerber; Hebrew Academy: Peggy Gartner, Larry Widis and Eleanor Weinglass, Director; Temple Beth Shalom: John Burtoft; Federation: Ron Katz, Marvin Bienstock, Executive Director, and Adrienne Rosenberg, Director of Social Services.



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