Series of Anti-Semitic Incidents Continues in Middlesex County, N.J.

By DENNIS HEVESI

Anti-Semitic incidents continue to plague Middlesex County, N.J., with more than 20 incidents reported in Middlesex County in 1989, three times the average for New Jersey's 21 counties, according to the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. Ten of those incidents occurred on the Rutgers campus.

In all, there were 20 anti-Semitic incidents reported in Middlesex County in 1989, three times the average for New Jersey's 21 counties, according to the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. Ten of those incidents occurred on the Rutgers campus. A dramatic of the recent events were these:

In September, swastikas, the S.S. insignia of the Nazi special police and epithets were scratched on a wall of the East Brunswick Jewish Center.

A month later, anonymous advertisements, like one stated: "The ovens are in the kitchen. Rope them up. I'm hungry and need a lampshade." appeared in the student newspaper at North Brunswick Township High School. During the Holocaust, the bodies of Jews were burned in ovens and, in some cases, their skin used to make lampshades.

In the past, four-foot-high swastikas were neatly painted on the public library, two banks and a bank in New Brunswick.

Two days later, a three-foot swastika was found on a private home in Carteret.

154 Incidents in the State

Middlesex, which curves west and south of Staten Island, has a population of 500,000. By comparison, New Jersey has about 11.7 million people in all and reported 154 incidents in 1989. And in New York State, which has a population of about 27.5 million, there were 328 incidents.

Mr. Mulvihill said the Anti-Defamation League's statistics "sound reasonable."

Still, as incessant as the incidents seem to be, Jeffrey Maas, the New Jersey regional director of the league, said he does not believe the Nazis "are on the rise" in Middlesex County.

He added, "I don't think Middlesex is any worse than Essex, Bergen or Atlantic Counties."

Two factors seem to highlight the problem in Middlesex. One is the presence of a county prosecutor, Alan A. Rockoff, who has placed a high priority on the reporting and prosecution of bias-related crimes. The other is the presence of Rutgers University, where a high percentage of the reported incidents took place.

Experts were at a loss to explain why Rutgers draws anti-Semitic activity. The assistant vice president for student affairs, William Burns, said, "We've been the target of certain kids in the community who are not college students, coming on campus." Four members of a so-called skinhead gang have been charged with desecrating the Hillel building and are awaiting trial.

But Rabbi Norman Weitzner, director of the Rutgers Hillel Foundation, said, "Those are not the ones going into the bathrooms and writing obscene statements about other people's faith or color."

Mr. Burns concurred, saying, "I don't mean to say there aren't people on campus, students or janitors or others involved in the incidents."

Dr. George Piecznik, a biochemistry professor who has been active in battling the problem at Rutgers, said, "There's a lot of administrative denial of the religious and racial prejudice on campus, and a fear and ignorance of how to address it." He added, "I know students who have no comprehension of what it is to be a Nazi."

Examining Attitudes

Mr. Burns insisted that the university is addressing the problem with "curricular reform, grant programs for students to create activities which they think raise the level of consciousness about these issues."

Rabbi Weitzner suggested that classes be canceled for several days and teach-ins on the problem be held.

In North Brunswick Township, where the anti-Semitic ads appeared in the school newspaper, residents say the community is examining its attitudes about bigotry. Even before the ads ran, a meeting had been planned to explore race and ethnic relations, and a day of workshops in human relations was held to sensitize school employees to the problem.

Harvey Paretzky, director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Middlesex, said discussions are under way toward creating a county human rights commission.

On Dec. 6, Gov. Jim Florio told a gathering in the Hillel center at Rutgers: "The ugly words and symbols are gone now, but the hurt remains. I would be nice to be able to say this was an incident, an aberration, in an otherwise happy world. But that isn't the case."

"If we just sit and watch, who will stand up for us when it is our turn to be the victim? And that time surely will come, if the seemingly isolated brush fires of hatred are allowed to burn unchecked."

The Memories Remain

Twelve days ago, Mayor John A. Lynch of New Brunswick stood on the steps of the defaced public library and said: "Men and women of good will must dedicate themselves to help assure human rights and human dignity for everyone, everywhere. And right here is a good place to start."

Charles Kornitzer, a 67-year-old resident of Edison Township, knows what happened after the first swastikas appeared on the walls of Budapest, well before the Nazis occupied Hungary in 1944.

Mr. Kornitzer was one of the few to survive the slave-labor battalions -- hundreds of people, starving, freezing, forced to dig trenches as the Russian tanks advanced, force-marched until they dropped from exhaustion, machine-shooted through the head on the spot. "I am convinced," he said, "that the majority of people do not understand the Holocaust."

"Every time there is another incident, Mr. Kornitzer feels a jolt of dread. "I shudder," he said, "what consequences those什么事情 things can lead to."

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