

# 10 years of German Jews

tember 26, when Germans will go to the polls in order to elect a new chancellor and federal parliament.

This national election will be preceded by state-level elections in Berlin and other states, acting as an indication of the way the political winds are blowing in Germany. For German Jews, the most troubling development of 2020 was that, throughout the German-speaking world in fact, this was the year conspiracy theories flourished amidst the coronavirus pandemic.

Several of these, as the World Jewish Congress covered in a recent report, included "antisemitic sentiments and blamed Jews for various aspects of the disease."

The corona-sceptic, anti-vaxxer protests including those organized by the German Querdenker movement drew in members of existing extreme-right and neo-Nazi political parties like such as The Right, The III. Path, and the NPD and brought out antisemitic rhetoric and imagery that minimized and trivialized the Holocaust.

Corona-sceptic memes have compared mask wearers to Holocaust victims, and at the end of November, a



The founding members of the 321-2021 celebration

German anti-lockdown, anti-mask protestor in Kassel compared herself in the anti-Nazi resistance hero Sophie Scholl, prompting a security guard working the

protest to walk off the job.

German chancellor Angela Merkel is enjoying a kind of popularity unheard of for someone who has been in office

for 15 years.

Though she will not run for re-election in 2021, her party, the Christian Democratic Union, is well placed to

end up as the largest party come September.

But in the context of the coronavirus outbreak, the street protests, and the roll-out of the coronavirus vaccine due to take place in 2021, the rise of the corona-sceptic, anti-vaxxer movement will be a test for German democracy, civil society and its Jewish community.

Simone Rafael of the Antonio Amadeu Foundation in Berlin told the JC she is sceptical about whether a mainstream political party will try and pick up on the movement and attempt to harness its power in order to win votes.

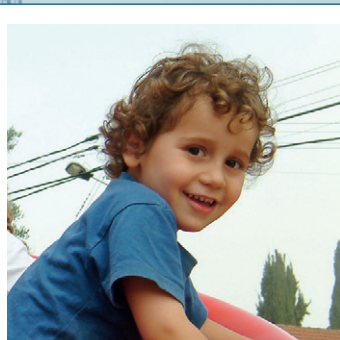
The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party has shown an interest in the corona-sceptic movement. Politicians belonging to the party have taken part in protests and compared coronavirus-related laws to Adolf Hitler's 1933 Enabling Act.

But the AfD "is deeply divided at the moment," Ms Rafael said. "Part of the AfD would very much like to be seen as the corona protest party, but if that part of the party gets its own way, then the AfD will have become an openly extreme right and anti-democratic party" and would lose voters as a result.

The corona-sceptic demonstrators in Germany are united in their antisemitism and hatred of democracy, Ms Rafael observed, and to that end they represent a challenge not to Germany democracy from within as participants but rather as wreckers from without, challenging and undermining the system itself.

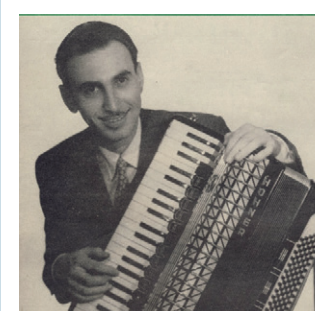
"To what extent [the corona-sceptic movement] will damage the forthcoming federal elections remains to be seen," Ms Rafael told the JC

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