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JEWISH AFFAIRS

The outbreak of the "Yom Kippur War" in the Middle East and the decision of Austria's Jewish-born Chancellor Bruno Kreisky to close down the transit center at Schonau Castle near Vienna for Soviet Jewish emigrants were the two major developments that dominated dramatically this year's events of the Jewish community. These concerns over security and survival overshadowed the less commanding but nonetheless serious preoccupations with internal issues of continuity and quality of Jewish life.

MIDDLE EAST - The launching of a coordinated, massive attack by Egypt and Syria against Israel at 2:00 p.m. on the Day of Atonement, October 6, while virtually the entire Jewish nation was engaged in fasting and prayer, led to a widespread reaction in the world Jewish community of shock and outrage. The decision of the Israel government not to carry out a preventive strike against the Arab forces massed on the ceasefire lines at the Syrian Golan Heights and at the Suez Canal in a deliberate attempt to avoid the charge of aggression that would inevitably be raised against Israel, gave the Arab states the initiative and placed Israel initially at a serious military disadvantage.

As a result of the surprise Arab attack, Israel faced the prospect of a relatively long, gruelling war of attrition that would be costly in human lives, material, and economic dislocation. The Israel Government reported that it had suffered a loss of 656

casualties. Israeli casualties in the first two days of the war were equal to the total casualties suffered by Israel in the 1967 conflict - estimated at 750 dead, and about 3,000 wounded. Losses in military equipment, particularly in Phantom planes (replacement costs are \$6 million per plane) were also high, owing to the effectiveness of the Soviet ground-to-air missile systems that the Soviet Union had installed in Egypt and Syria. Israel Finance Minister Pinchas Sapir estimated that the first week of the war was costing Israel around \$2 billion, and a new compulsory loan was leveled on the Israeli people to help cover a portion of this financial burden.

Reacting to the unprovoked attack with anger and emotion, world Jewry and especially American Jews (whose 6 million population constitutes the largest Jewish community in the world) rallied to the support of an embattled Israel with spontaneous public demonstrations of solidarity and a vast outpouring of financial support and help. A flood of contributions, unequalled since the six-day war of 1967, resulted in the raising in the U.S. of more than \$100 million for the emergency drive of the United Jewish Appeal earmarked for non-military and for economic reconstruction in Israel. An estimated 10,000 American youths, between 18 and 24, volunteered to work in kibbutzim and other places to replace Israelis called up for military service. Blood banks were besieged by persons wanting to donate blood for the Israeli wounded.

Four hundred Jewish leaders from all parts of the United States

attended an emergency meeting of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations on October 9 in New York and heard Foreign Minister Abba Eban declare that the end of the fighting between Israel and Egypt and Syria "must be inseparably linked with the restoration of the previous ceasefire lines." The Jewish leaders wired U. S. Secretary of State Kissinger, urging U. S. "military, political, and moral support" for Israel and pledged their backing of the Nixon administration's efforts "to restore peace to the area and to bring the parties into negotiations toward a permanent, mutually agreed peace."

At a subsequent meeting in Washington the U. S. Jewish leadership cabled Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, saying, "We salute your courage. We embrace your hopes. We share your anguish and prayers as we say together with you, Am Yisrael (the people of Israel lives), and the people of Israel shall live."

SOVIET JEWRY - On Friday morning, September 28, the first day of the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashonah 5734, two young Arab terrorists boarded the Moscow-Vienna express train in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia, and firing machine guns, they seized as hostages three Soviet Jews on their way to Israel and an Austrian customs officer. The Arab terrorists - Mustafa Aouedin, 25, and Mahmoud Khaldi, 27 -- who identified themselves as members of the "Eagles commandeered a bus and drove to Vienna's Schzechat airport. Early Saturday morning, following night-long negotiations with Austrian

authorities, the two terrorists were provided with a light plane, piloted by two Austrians, and found sanctuary in Libya.

Before the two terrorists released their four hostages, Austria's Chancellor Bruno Kreisky announced in a radio broadcast after midnight that Austria would restrict transit facilities for Jewish emigrants and close down the transit center at Schonau Castle near Vienna. The castle has served as a refugee center run by the Jewish Agency for 70,000 Soviet Jews emigrating to Israel since February 1971.

Kreisky's decision sparked a heated political controversy in Austria, with the opposition People's party criticizing the Chancellor for having "capitulated to violence and renounced humanity." Israeli Premier Golda Meir made a personal appeal to Kreisky to reconsider his decision, but he refused her request. Kreisky promised to let individual immigrants with visas pass through Austria, but stated, "We can no longer offer them any facilities because to do so invites armed men from all sides on our territory." Transit on a private basis would cut down immigration to a minimum, and, as Austrian police indicated, security measures would be more difficult to effect than at Schonau Castle.

Kreisky's action triggered a storm of worldwide protests and threats of boycott. Despite the decision to give in to the demands

of the two terrorists -- which many political commentators feared would encourage more acts of terrorism and blackmail -- the arrival and departure of several hundred Soviet Jews emigrating to Israel through Austria continued quietly, but under heavy guard. Nevertheless, both Israeli and Jewish Agency officials began actively to explore alternative exit routes for Soviet Jews, including Rumania and Holland.

Austria's planned closing of the Schonau Castle heightened the importance of U. S. Congressional legislation - the Jackson bill in the Senate and the Mills-Vanik bill in the House -- that threatened to withhold Most Favored Nation status and credits from the Soviet Union unless it ceased harassing its intellectual dissidents (foremost among them non-Jewish physicist Andrei Sakharov and novelist Aleksand) and provided freer emigration for those of its 3 million Jewish citizens who wished to leave. Despite pleas from members of the Nixon administration for passage of the MFN section of the 1973 Trade Reform Act, the House Ways and Means Committee approved the act but without the MFN provision. The full House was scheduled to vote on the Mills-Vanik amendment, which is co-sponsored by 288 Congressmen, late in October, and the Senate will vote on the Jackson amendment early in 1974.

On June 18, Soviet Communist Party Secretary Leonid Brezhnev visited Washington, D.C. for his second summit conference with President Nixon in 13 months. Following a series of consultations,

including an unprecedented 90-minutes dialogue with 23 key members of the U. S. Congress, Brezhnev was reported to have advised the U. S. Government that the so-called "education tax" on Soviet Jews had been abolished for good and that Jewish emigration would be maintained at the level of 30-40,000 a year. The National Conference for Soviet Jewry, which spearheaded the drive for human rights for Russian Jewry, hailed that as a "landmark" achievement, and as further evidence that U. S. demands with the Soviet Union can be influential because of Russia's need for American wheat, trade, and technology.

NATIONAL ISSUES - The inauguration of President Nixon in January, following his landslide reelection in November, 1972, provided occasion for public discussion of his successful appeal to the group interests of ethnic, racial and religious bodies in the electorate. Post-election surveys disclosed that Jewish voters gave the Republican candidate an estimated 35 per cent, double the 1968 percentage (compared to a Roman Catholic vote which voted Republican by a margin of 53 to 46 per cent, and 54 per cent for labor-union families), thus representing the first time in the country's history that Jews and other bulwark elements of the traditional Democratic coalition voted Republican.

The Republican appeal was based on strong Jewish concerns about the security of Israel and the defense of the human rights of Soviet Jewry. Since Jews have become a relatively prosperous middle class community, the Republicans also found receptivity to

their more conservative economic views, their strong stand on law and order, and their opposition to quotas and support of affirmative action programs. Political decisions among Jewish voters, however, took place along class lines, with wealthier, upper-class Jews tending to vote for more liberal candidates in mayoral and gubernatorial elections, whereas a larger percentage of poorer, less-educated Jews voted for the conservative candidates, especially in areas of racial tension, such as, Canarsie, New York and Detroit, Flint, and Pontiac, Michigan.

While there was much public discussion about "the Jewish vote," it became misleading, for post-election data demonstrated that Senator George McGovern, the Democratic candidate received among Jewish voters a high percentage of votes. Had the rest of the electorate voted as the Jews did, McGovern would have been sent to the White House in a landslide majority larger than Nixon's.

The Watergate revelations were received with expressions of shock by such groups as the Central Conference of American Rabbis who deplored "gross immorality both in government and in the recent political campaign." Major Jewish religious and civic groups were also active in calling for an end to the bombing in Vietnam, and a number urged the granting of amnesty to Americans who refused military service because of objection to the war.

The American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith, the National Council of

Jewish Women were heavily involved in advocating support of a wide range of national social and political issues - including welfare reform, housing, consumer protection, health care, increased minimum wage, the elderly, school integration, women's rights, prison reform, and gun control. These groups also continued to press for "intensified efforts to increase job and schooling opportunities for minority groups," but strongly opposed "preferential quotas" in employment, university admissions, and government appointments.

