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AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

*Preserving American Jewish History*

MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series E: General Alphabetical Files. 1960-1992

Box 87, Folder 1, Opinion poll [American Jewish Committee],  
1979.



YANKELOVICH,  
SKELLY AND  
WHITE, INC.

PUBLIC OPINION DIVISION

May 7, 1979

MEMORANDUM

TO: Gerri Rosenfield  
American Jewish Committee

FROM: Ruth Clark, Senior Vice President  
Yankelovich, Skelly, and White, Inc.

SUBJECT: Survey Results - April 1979

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This memorandum will sum up the major results of the series of questions asked for the American Jewish Committee in our April, 1979 quarterly readings on the mood of the country.

The survey was conducted by telephone, using central telephone lines (WATS), from April 8 to 11, 1979. The total sample was 1024 interviews with registered voters.

The responses to both the trend and new questions indicate the following:

... Slight improvement in the overall favorable

attitudes of the country towards American Jews in the period immediately following the signing of the peace treaty.

... Compared to the past, more men and women think it would be a good thing for the country to have a Jew as President. (59% in May, 1974; 66% now).\*

... The percentage of people who feel that American Jews have too much power in the country has steadily declined from 43% in 1975, to 35% in February, 1976 to 22% now.\* During this same period of time, no change has occurred in the numbers of those who feel that Zionist organizations have too much power.

... The American electorate continues to express strong support for Israel -- but clearly distinguishes between Egypt and the other Arab countries. If war broke out tomorrow between Israel and Egypt, 39% would support Israel, 14%, Egypt, 24% neither one and 25% not sure. On the other hand, if war broke out between Israel and the other Arab nations, 47% would support Israel, 11% the other Arab countries, 19% neither one and 23% not sure.

\* Repercentaged without not sures

... Overall, 29% feel more friendly towards Egypt than they used to feel, 20% feel more friendly towards Israel, and 12% feel more friendly towards American Jews.

Now for some of the details:

### Detailed Findings

#### 1. Attitudes Toward a Jew as President

Two out of three men and women (66%)\* feel that it would be good for the country to have a Jew as President. This compares with 59%\* who felt this way in May, 1974. There are, however, signs that a softening of attitudes about who should or should not be President has occurred during this same period -- with more people now also agreeing that it would be good for the country to have a business executive, a black, or a woman as President than felt this way previously. The one instance, in which this is not the case is with a priest.

\* Repercentaged without not sures

Effect on the Country if the  
Following Were President\*

	<u>May</u> <u>1974</u>	<u>April</u> <u>1979</u>
	%	%
<u>Would be good for the country:</u>		
A woman	60	72
A black	60	72
A business executive	59	70
a Jew ***	59	66
A college professor	**	49
A labor leader	**	36
An atheist	19	24
A priest	23	17

\* Based on those with an opinion

\*\* Not asked

\*\*\* Previously referred to as a member of the Jewish  
faith.

When the "Not Sures" are factored into the picture,  
the trend indicates a more sizable drop in the  
number of people who feel it would not be good for the  
country to have a Jew as President:

Acceptability of  
a Jew\* as President

	<u>May 1974</u>	<u>April 1979</u>
	%	%
Good for Country	43	45
Not Good	30	23
Not Sure	27	32

\* Previously referred to as a member of the Jewish faith

The most resistance to having a Jew as President can be found in the South (good 36%/not good 30%) and among conservatives (40% to 28%).

2. People With Too Much Power in the Country

One of the most noteworthy findings of the survey dealt with the question of groups in the country who are too powerful. Feelings that Jews have too much power have declined over the past few years, while similar feelings about oil companies and corporate power have remained consistent, and sentiments that the power of Arabs and organized labor have increase.

**Groups Which Have Too Much Power  
in the United States\***

	<u>February 1975</u>	<u>February 1976</u>	<u>April 1979</u>
	%	%	%
Oil Companies	86	89	88
Big business/corporations	83	86	84
Organized labor	66	72	75
Arab interests	46	54	68
Zionist organizations	37	38	37
Environmentalists	**	**	32
Black groups	**	**	28
Church interests	26	21	24
American Jews	43	35	22

\* Based on those with an opinion

\*\* Not asked

Again, when the not sures are included, the results are heightened with only 16% feeling that Jews have too much power compared to 37% in 1975.

FEELINGS ABOUT THE JEWS AND POWER

	<u>February 1975</u>	<u>April 1977</u>
	8	8
Too much power	37	16
Not too much power	49	57
Not sure	14	27

3. Support for Israel If War Broke Out

Trend data are not available on how the American electorate believe that they would react if war broke out in the Middle East, for in the past, the question was asked about support for Israel vis-a-vis the Arab countries. In this study, the question was asked separately for Egypt versus all other Arab countries. For reference purposes, the results in February 1976 indicated the following:

Would identify with the Arab nations	9%
Would identify with Israel	56%
Both the same (Vol.)	2%
Neither one	22%
Not sure	11%



The results to the questions this time were as follows:

WHERE PEOPLE'S SYMPATHIES WOULD LIE  
IF WAR BROKE OUT BETWEEN ISRAEL  
AND THE ARAB NATIONS

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Total With Not Sures' Repercentaged</u>
	%	%
<u>Between Israel and Egypt Would Sympathize With:</u>		
Israel	37	49
Egypt	14	19
Neither	24	32
Not Sure	25	-
<u>Between Israel and Other Arab Nations, Would Sympathize With:</u>		
Israel	47	61
Other Arab Nations	11	14
Neither	19	25
Not Sure	23	-

While the findings continue to indicate support for Israel, the large numbers who say neither one or not sure must be viewed with seriousness. To put it another way -- even if the war broke out between Israel and the Arab nations, excluding Egypt, 42% of the American electorate would still be up for grabs.

4. More Friendly Attitudes

The recent peace negotiations and settlement have increased the feeling of friendliness of the American electorate towards Egypt more than towards Israel -- or American Jews.

FEELINGS ABOUT EGYPT, ISRAEL, AND AMERICAN JEWS \*

	AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES		American Jews
	<u>Egypt</u>	<u>Israel</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Feel:</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
More friendly	32	22	13
Less friendly	5	8	2
Same	63	70	85

\* Based on those with an opinion.