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Dissent, 1977-1978.

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CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS OF MAJOR AMERICAN JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

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For Immediate Release

NEW YORK, June 17 -- The chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations today called on the Ford Administration and "all candidates for the Presidency" to adopt a Middle East strategy that would emphasize "the kind of peace which the Arab states must accept and the method by which agreement on that peace is to be reached."

At a news conference prior to his departure for meetings in Israel, Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler declared: "The debate on how best to reduce tensions in the Middle East has centered in recent months on the extent of territorial concessions that Israel must make.

"It is time that the makers of our country's Middle East policy -- and those who hope to make it -- recognize that if there is to be a just and lasting peace in the Middle East three essential conditions must be met:

"They are: (1) Economic and cultural relations -- the free movement of goods and people; (2) Diplomatic relations between Israel and her Arab neighbors; (3) Secure borders as the guarantee of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all the nations in the area."

Rabbi Schindler added that "American policy must be based on recognition that these goals can be reached only in direct negotiations between the parties -- not by any imposed settlement."

He continued: "Direct negotiations between the parties are not merely more conducive to the establishment of normal, friendly international relations; they are symbolic of that act of mutual recognition which is the essential pre-requisite

(MORE)

to a Middle East peace."

Rabbi Schindler said that "The focus of discussion must shift from the return of territories to the nature of peace, from a one-sided demand for Israeli concessions to the insistence that the Arab states take steps now -- not a generation from now -- to normalize their relations with the Jewish state and to make clear they have abandoned their refusal to accept Israel's sovereignty.

"We intend to make this approach known to the Presidential candidates of both major parties," the Presidents Conference leader declared.

Yehuda Hellman, executive director of the Presidents Conference, said both the Republican and Democratic nominees for the Presidency would make formal addresses to the Presidents Conference following their respective party conventions. He recalled that in 1972 Richard Nixon and George McGovern had accepted invitations from the Presidents Conference to speak.

On Jewish "Dissent"

On the question of "dissent" within the Jewish community, Rabbi Schindler disclosed details of a special meeting on the subject called by the Conference of Presidents Tuesday (June 15).

At that meeting Rabbi Eugene Borowitz of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion spoke in favor of a policy that would encourage dissent from and criticism of Israeli policies. Rabbi Fabian Schonfeld, former president of the Rabbinical Council of America, argued against that position. Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, president of the American Jewish Congress, summarized the arguments and expressed the consensus of the discussion that followed the opening presentations.

"The overwhelming opinion of the more than 100 representatives who attended," Rabbi Schindler said, "was to support free expression of the widest variety of views and opinions on Israel's policies -- provided that such views were voiced

within the Jewish community.

"American Jews have not only the right but the responsibility to express their views to their organizations so that these views may in turn be communicated to the government and people of Israel," Rabbi Schindler said in describing the consensus of the Presidents Conference meeting. "But when Jewish dissent 'goes public' -- that is, when criticism of Israel's policies is expressed in the daily press or in the halls of government," Rabbi Schindler said, "it was the near-unanimous opinion that the result is to give aid and comfort to the enemy and to weaken that Jewish unity which is essential for the security of the Jewish state, and, indeed, of the Jewish community of America."

Rabbi Schindler opened the news conference by deploring the "senseless murder" or the American ambassador to Lebanon, Francis E. Meloy, Jr., and his economic counselor, Robert O. Waring, yesterday.

"This act of blind violence is still another example of the Arab terror that decent people everywhere abhor, but that governments appear unwilling to eradicate," Rabbi Schindler said. He disclosed that he had sent a message of condolence to Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger to be transmitted to the families of the two murdered American diplomats.

Rabbi Schindler will attend several international Jewish gatherings in Israel, including the meeting of the World Conference of Jewish Organizations (COJO) in Jerusalem June 30 to July 2.

Report

FOR THE YEAR ENDING MARCH 31, 1977

CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS OF MAJOR AMERICAN JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

OFFICES: 515 PARK AVENUE, NEW YORK, N. Y. 10022 PLaza 2-1616

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AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

American Israel Public Affairs Committee	National Council of Young Israel
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American Mizrahi Women	National Jewish Community Relations
American Zionist Federation	Advisory Council
Anti-Defamation League	National Jewish Welfare Board
B'nai B'rith	North American Jewish Youth Council
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Jewish Labor Committee	United Synagogue of America
Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation	Women's American ORT
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This year, as in the past, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations enjoyed the cooperation, support and participation of all its 32 constituent members. Without them the achievements recorded in the following pages would not have been possible.

THE MIDDLE EAST

April 1, 1976—the first day of the year under review—found Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, chairman of the Conference of Presidents, addressing a press conference in Tel Aviv during his first visit to Israel as chairman of the Presidents Conference. Rabbi Schindler had received a written invitation from Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to come to Israel with Yehuda Hellman, executive director of the Presidents Conference, to discuss issues of mutual concern.

In his news conference, Rabbi Schindler spoke with a frankness that Israelis found unusual. Israel's world image was that of a nation without strong leadership because it had postponed dealing with basic problems, such as the Palestinians, Rabbi Schindler said. If Israel had policies which it was keeping under wraps for tactical reasons, that was all well and good; but if—as appeared more likely—there was no policy, the government should adopt one without delay. Rabbi Schindler also reaffirmed the unswerving support of American Jews for Israel and their unyielding determination to speak out in Israel's behalf and in support of the proposition that a strong and secure Israel—militarily, economically, and diplomatically—was essential to our own country's security.

It was a theme that was repeated often during the 12 months covered in this report, in conversations and meetings with heads of governments and Jewish community groups around the world and at home. What follows is a recapitulation of some of the key meetings (not covered elsewhere in this report) in which the Conference of Presidents took part and some of the other issues with which it dealt.

Shortly after his return from Israel, Rabbi Schindler addressed the 44th Annual Histadrut Third Seder in New York. "Israel is facing a trying year," Rabbi Schindler cautioned. "Tensions are bound to increase since American policy in the Middle East has been forged on the anvil of the Yom Kippur War." American efforts, he added, were being directed to bring the "moderate" Arab states under the aegis of the United States.

One month later the first of many critical moments that marked the period occurred: former Vice-President Spiro Agnew appeared on the nationally-televised NBC "Today" show to promote his new book and attack "Zionist influences in the U.S.," making charges of "Israeli imperialism" and "aggression." Reacting sharply, Rabbi Schindler said in a widely-publicized comment: "Spiro Agnew has disgraced himself once again with his despicable statement, so redolent of the venom and slander we have come to expect from the anti-Semitic lunatic fringe. . . . But if most Americans will disregard Mr. Agnew's statement, considering its content and its source, there is new encouragement and hope for those hate-mongers for whom 'Zionist' is a code word for 'Jew' and who must today be dancing with delight over the latest and most notorious recruit to their ranks." Despite the controversy he created, Mr. Agnew's novel did not reach the ranks of best sellerdom and was universally panned by the critics.

On May 18, a small Presidents Conference delegation traveled to Washington to meet with French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Jacques Kosciusko-Morizet, France's Ambassador to the United States. It was clear that the French President had invited the delegation as part of his effort to improve the French image in America and to overcome the legacy of the De Gaulle era, a legacy that had created for France a reputation for anti-Americanism. At the meeting, President Giscard d'Estaing, expressing high esteem for the French Jewish community, underlined with great pride his country's vote at the U.N. General Assembly the previous November opposing the "Zionism is racism" resolution.

Golda Meir, retired Prime Minister of Israel, was the guest speaker on June 1. During her 90-minute address, Mrs. Meir voiced concern over reports reaching Israel that American Jews were divided over Israel's policies and that there was talk of a possible split in the ranks of the Jewish community. The traditionally intimate ties between American Jewry and Israel called for free and frank discussions, but this was different from publicly-voiced attacks against Israeli policies, she said.

Mrs. Meir said her government's position was that while Israel would not relinquish its rights in the West Bank, it was prepared to make territorial concessions in return for real peace. The former Prime Minister asserted that American Jews had nothing to be defensive or apologetic about in terms of Israel's policies.

On August 24, Simcha Dinitz, Israel's Ambassador to the United States, outlined for the Presidents Conference the "five cardinal points" that Israel felt were necessary to achieve a Middle East settlement: (1) The Soviet Union should be kept out of the negotiating process, since it could jeopardize the realization of a just and lasting peace; (2) A strong Israel was a necessary precondition for free negotiations; (3) Some form of security margin was needed to protect Israel in the case of enemy attack; (4) No foreign guarantees were acceptable as a substitute for a negotiated settlement; (5) No peace could be imposed on the area.

On September 12, Yosef Almogi, chairman of the World Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency Executives, met with the Presidents Conference to discuss visits he had just completed to Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina. His analysis of the situation of the Jewish communities of those three countries was trenchant—and depressing. He was particularly pessimistic about the future of Argentine Jewry. Their only hope for the future, he felt, lay in increased aliyah to Israel.

That same month, Israeli Foreign Minister Yigal Allon, in New York to attend the 31st United Nations General Assembly, told the Conference of Presidents that Israel would reject any solution to the Middle East conflict imposed by "threats or pressure or reassessment." Citing the imposition of foreign pressure on Israel to withdraw from territories won in the fighting of 1948 and 1956, the Foreign Minister declared "we have had enough of it. There will be no territorial withdrawals by Israel without any political quid pro quo from the Arabs." And he said he expected "our friends in Washington—regardless of who is in the White House or who controls the Congress—to understand that any proposals to settle the Arab-Israel conflict must be made by the parties themselves and not by any outside power."

In response to a question about his article "Israel: Defensible Borders" in the October 1976 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Mr. Allon said his main purpose had been to underscore "to our friends as well as to our foes the importance of geography and topography to the defense of Israel. . . . The point was to stress that defensible borders are indispensable to Israel's security even in an age of the most sophisticated weapons of destruction." In Mr. Allon's judgment the development of advanced ground weaponry made strategic depth more important than ever. "I also sought to make clear that whatever international guarantees are offered to Israel in any settlement plan cannot be a substitute for defensible borders but only an addition to them," he concluded.

One month later, Ambassador Dinitz addressed the Conference of Presidents, this time to bring its members up-to-date on the crisis in Lebanon. "Israel's position," he said, "is a simple one. It is for the independence and integrity of Lebanon." The Israeli envoy gave additional details of Israel's "Good Fence" program under which medical aid and other assistance was being offered to Arab victims of the bloodletting in Lebanon.

Hard on the heels of the briefing by Ambassador Dinitz came a meeting that



Professor Zbigniew Brzezinski, advisor to Democratic Presidential candidate Jimmy Carter, describes his three-stage proposal for a Middle East settlement.

many in the Presidents Conference had been looking forward to with great interest—a talk by Columbia University Professor Zbigniew Brzezinski, foreign policy advisor to Jimmy Carter and a likely key figure in any Carter Administration.

In a 90-minute address and question and answer session, Professor Brzezinski amply lived up to his reputation for originality of approach, depth of understanding and clarity of expression, deeply impressing the Presidents Conference representatives present with his sensitive appreciation of American Jewry's commitment to the security of Israel.

Dr. Brzezinski began his presentation by outlining a three-stage program for a "comprehensive settlement" of the Middle East conflict and by explaining how his approach differed from that of Secretary Kissinger. While the Secretary sought "small steps toward an indeterminate future," his idea was to determine the shape of the future settlement and then take small steps toward it, including "fail-safe options" to build trust and protect both sides. According to Professor Brzezinski, the search for a "comprehensive settlement" in the Middle East was about to enter the first stage of what he saw as a three-stage process.

Stage one would be to "define the essential principles of the structure" on which to build that comprehensive settlement. Yigal Allon's article in *Foreign Affairs* was "one step" and should be responded to by the Arabs. The second stage, he said, was negotiations, including the matter of who participates in them. Stage three would be the implementation of the agreements arrived at through negotiations which would take a long time because they would require fail-safe devices for the purpose of aborting the process in case of violations of the agreement in substance or spirit. This stage would provide psychological security for Israel. There would be continuous testing and confidence-building devices built into the process. All of this would be in contrast to the "steps" taken over the last few years which have entailed tangible concessions in return for an indeterminate future.

Professor Brzezinski spoke at great length about America's "intimate" relationship with Israel—describing it as "organic" and "non-partisan" and even stronger as a fundamental moral commitment than as a strategic interest. It was illusory, he said, for the Arabs to expect U.S.-Israel relationships to be "even-handed" and he said he had told this to Arab leaders. The Israel-American relationship was intimate and would remain so because of a shared historical and spiritual legacy and by the presence of organized American Jewry; U.S.-Arab relations contain none of these components. Arab states, he noted, must understand that the U.S. will not abandon Israel because "to do so would be a betrayal of ourselves." At the same time, Dr. Brzezinski spoke of what he termed "mutual trust." He noted that a certain amount of damage had been done to American-Israeli relationships because of past practices of saying different things to different parties. He stressed that it was important to establish a practice of saying the same thing to all. Mutual trust also meant that friction and disagreements between friends were not only tolerable but expected; disagreement did not mean divorce. At the same time, he said, it was "unwise" for the U.S. to engage in pressure which imposes threats that may have "counterproductive" and "pernicious" effects on an intimate relationship.

While the intimate U.S.-Israel relationship was not necessarily a barrier to improved U.S.-Arab relations, Professor Brzezinski noted, Arab thinking about an eventual settlement was "retarded by the fragility of Arab leadership" and handicapped by a lack of unity and sophistication. Nevertheless, the Arabs must "come around to recognize Israel's legitimate and permanent place in the Middle East," he said. Observing that a "renaissance" was taking place in an Arab world in the process of revival and modernization, Professor Brzezinski said there was a real question as to whether this process would lead to Westernization or radicalization of the Arab world. Both the U.S. and Israel have a shared interest in preventing the radicalization of the Arab world, he noted.

It was an impressive performance—and no surprise to those Presidents Conference members who had heard his presentation and his thoughtful replies to a number of probing questions when Dr. Brzezinski was chosen by the newly-elected President Carter to serve as chairman of the National Security Council. In a telegram to Professor Brzezinski, Rabbi Schindler called the appointment "a richly merited tribute to your outstanding talents and abilities."

In response, Professor Brzezinski wrote to Rabbi Schindler:

"I wish to thank you most warmly for your congratulations on my appointment. You know of my interest and concern for the Jewish people here and abroad. I would appreciate your continued advice and support on these issues during the many difficult days which I know await me in the near future. With warmest regards and many thanks, (and, handwritten, "I hope we keep in touch!") Zbigniew Brzezinski."

Another appointment welcomed by the Presidents Conference was that of Cyrus R. Vance as Secretary of State. In a statement, Rabbi Schindler said he was "very much pleased" by the appointment of "a man of good judgment, a superb negotiator."

In an off-the-record meeting of the Conference of Presidents on December 8, Israeli Defense Minister Shimon Peres said he was optimistic that President-elect Carter would honor his commitments to help Israel. Israel was willing and ready to go to Geneva and prepared to make compromises for peace, Mr. Peres said, but would not sacrifice its essential interests for the sake of favorable headlines.

Later that month, Ambassador Simcha Dinitz returned to the Presidents Conference for another report on the Lebanese crisis and the political implications developing from it. The Israeli diplomat drew attention to both the positive and

negative aspects of those implications, asserting that while the P.L.O. had lost both prestige and maneuverability as a result of the major defeat it had sustained in the Lebanese fighting, ironically the P.L.O. seemed to be winning propaganda points abroad.

Shortly after President Carter's inauguration, Rabbi Schindler and Yehuda Hellman met with Stuart E. Eizenstat, President Carter's Assistant for Domestic Affairs, and Robert Lipshutz, the new White House Counsel.

One month later—on March 9, the evening of the Presidents Conference luncheon with Prime Minister Rabin—Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance met with a six-member Conference delegation.

That afternoon, President Carter had told a press conference that a Palestinian homeland was one of the major elements of a Middle East peace and that U.S. policy called for Israel's return to the pre-1967 borders with only insubstantial changes. At the same time, the President spelled out his definition of peace—a definition that coincided in large measure with Israel's own ideas of a final settlement. The Presidents Conference delegation pressed Secretary Vance on the question of a Palestinian homeland and Israeli withdrawals. In reply, the Secretary said that the United States regarded its major role in the Middle East as an "intermediary" rather than to work out the "ultimate details" of an Arab-Israel settlement.

Following the hour-long meeting, which had been joined also by Philip Habib, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, Rabbi Schindler reported that Secretary Vance had emphasized that part of President Carter's remarks earlier that day in which the President had stated: "Obviously, any agreement has to be between the parties concerned. We will act as an intermediary when our good offices will serve well. I am not trying to predispose our own nation's attitudes towards what might be the ultimate details of the agreement that can mean so much to world peace." Accompanying Rabbi Schindler to the meeting were Harold M. Jacobs, president of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America; Mrs. Charlotte Jacobson, chairman of the World Zionist Organization-American Section; Rabbi Stanley Rabinowitz, president of the Rabbinical Assembly; Elmer Winter, president of the American Jewish Committee; and Yehuda Hellman.

The final function held by the Presidents Conference during the year under review, on March 31, 1977, was a reception in honor of Moshe Kol, Israel's Minister of Tourism, co-sponsored by the World Zionist Organization-American Section, El Al Israel Airlines, and the Israel Government Tourist Office.

At the United Nations

The United Nations—scene of the infamous General Assembly resolution in November 1975 equating Zionism with racism—was the focus of intensive activity by the Conference of Presidents during the period under review.

In April 1976, Rabbi Schindler announced the appointment of David M. Blumberg, president of B'nai B'rith, as chairman of a U.N. Task Force that would serve as the major channel through which the Presidents Conference directed its efforts in this area. On April 29, the Presidents Conference met with Governor William W. Scranton, the newly-appointed U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., in what was described by both sides as a "most satisfactory" discussion. Governor Scranton made clear he had been most impressed by the uniformly high calibre of the questions posed to him; Conference leaders indicated they had been impressed by the U.N. Ambassador's knowledge of the subject, candor and forthrightness.



UN Ambassador William W. Scranton (left) listens to comments on his off-the-record briefing by Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler.

Shortly before the 31st General Assembly convened, the Presidents Conference U.N. Task Force met for an overview of the major issues on the Assembly's agenda and their implications for both Israel and the American Jewish community. One direct result of that meeting was that, on the eve of the High Holy Days, 85 letters were sent by the U.N. Task Force to 85 U.N. Ambassadors. Among them were 18 representatives of key nations that had voted for the anti-Zionism resolution, who were urged to "oppose vigorously all efforts that would, directly or indirectly, malign and assault the Jewish people;" 33 Ambassadors who had voted against that resolution, who were requested to similarly resist any similar efforts in the new U.N. session; and 34 Ambassadors who had either abstained or been absent for the vote, and who were reminded that "abstention or absence, when the issue is profoundly moral, only contributes to strengthening the forces of darkness."

In addition, meetings were held with six key Ambassadors who had either voted for or abstained on the anti-Zionist resolution and telegrams were sent to the U.N. Ambassadors of 37 Black African and Asian nations urging them not to link Zionism with apartheid and other forms of racial discrimination in the work of the U.N.'s Decade Against Racism.

On October 19, Chaim Herzog, Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations, and Ambassador Scranton addressed the Conference of Presidents at a meeting attended not only by its 32 constituent members but by the media as well. Governor Scranton said that if the Arabs tried to link Zionism to apartheid or to revive the Zionism-is-racism resolution in any other way or form, the United States was "determined" to fight against it because "it's wrong, absolutely wrong, and we will not allow it." He also stated that the United States would "strongly oppose" any new effort to adopt the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the so-called "Committee of Twenty." He recalled that the U.S. had already vetoed it in the Security Council.

Ambassador Herzog, speaking after Governor Scranton, charged that the United Nations Secretariat was being "Arabized" and that this trend threatened to make it a "world center of anti-Semitism." This "sinister development," he

said, posed threats both to Israel's interests and to those of the West. He also warned that if there was an attempt to link Israel to South Africa's racial policies by condemning Israel's trade with that nation (two-fifths of 1 per cent), he would "have no option" but to publicize a full and documented account of the extensive and far greater trade by other U.N. members, including Arabs and Africans, with South Africa's regime.

The Arab effort to capitalize on Israel's links to South Africa reached the General Assembly in one of a series of draft resolutions condemning apartheid on November 3. On November 8, the Assembly adopted the resolution, which condemned "the continuing and increasing collaboration by Israel with the South African racist regime" by a vote of 91-20 with 28 abstentions.

Nevertheless, at a meeting of the Presidents Conference the following day, Ambassador Herzog asserted that "Israel's counterattack in the U.N. has been successful." He expressed appreciation to the Conference's U.N. Task Force for their visits to various U.N. Missions to urge them to oppose anti-Israel resolutions. "It really did matter," the Ambassador said. "For example, we know that passages in Mexico's original statement on the matter were deleted after the Mexican Mission met with the Presidents Conference Task Force."

Among the 48 countries that either voted against or abstained in the anti-apartheid vote were a number of African and Third World nations. The Israeli envoy expressed gratification that increasing numbers of states were refusing to go along with anti-Israel resolutions in the General Assembly. A number of Latin American countries—including Mexico—switched their positions and abstained while Malawi and Fiji, in their statements, condemned the "hypocrisy" of singling out Israel. J.T.X. Muwamba, Malawi's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, accused those of his African colleagues who supported the resolution of "double-faced hypocrisy," noting that "all types of military hardware, from both East and West, can be found in South Africa."

Still another attack was launched against Israel on November 11. Led by Egypt, the Security Council censured Israel 14-0 for its settlements in the administered areas, calling them "illegal" and "an obstacle to peace." The Security Council's condemnation came in the form of a "consensus statement"—not a Resolution—and, as such, was supported by the United States, which advanced the argument that a "consensus statement" was not binding on any country. Neither the Presidents Conference nor other friends of Israel were mollified by the State Department "explanation" nor the fact that it was a "consensus" and not a "resolution." In a statement released after the vote, the Conference assailed Egypt for its efforts to "reassert its anti-Israel machismo," calling it "an ominous portent that casts a shadow over the prospect of any progress towards peace in the Middle East. That the United States should have joined in the Security Council statement attacking Israel," the Conference said, "is equally disturbing."

On November 22, Israel was restored to full membership in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization when the two-year old decision barring the Jewish State from UNESCO's European grouping was reversed. The "victory" was a pyrrhic one, for at the same time Israel's pariah status was reversed, the general conference of UNESCO also voted 61-5 (with 28 abstentions) to condemn Israel's educational and cultural policies in the administered areas, charging that Israel's actions amounted to "cultural assimilation."

Israel's supporters did, however, find a small silver lining in the role played in reversing the 1974 decision to bar Israel from UNESCO by the African nations, many of whom told the Arabs they would not support any proposals aimed at worsening Israel's position in UNESCO or prevent it from becoming a member of the European group.

UN

THE FARCE TURNS UGLY

Americans have long ago come to regard the debates in the General Assembly of the United Nations as a kind of theatre of the absurd in which the role of villain has been assigned to Israel. Fully 50 per cent of the Assembly's deliberations are spent attacking the Jewish state while vital issues of peace and economic development are ignored.

Within the past year, however, the UN burlesque has become sickening—and dangerous. Last November the General Assembly put the UN at the point of officially endorsing anti-Semitism when it branded Zionism as a form of racism. During its current session, the automatic majority in the General Assembly has intensified its campaign of slander and deceit—but with new attacks aimed at Israel's very survival.

Item: Israel is condemned for trading with South Africa. In fact, the Jewish state accounts for one-half of one per cent of South Africa's foreign trade—prompting the delegate of the African state of Malawi to accuse some of his Third World colleagues of "double-faced hypocrisy" for singling out Israel while ignoring South Africa's massive commercial and arms traffic with the rest of the world, including Arab and Communist states.

Item: UNESCO condemns Israel's educational policies in the West Bank and accuses Israel of "cultural assimilation." In fact, the curriculum, teachers and administrators in West Bank schools are all Jordanian. When the Arab states proposed an investigation by UNESCO, Israel agreed. The Arabs then reversed themselves and UNESCO voted to condemn Israel without an investigation.

Item: The United Nations General Assembly adopts a resolution calling on Israel to empty out the modern homes and apartments it built for the Arabs of Gaza and return them to the shums and hovels in which they were forced to live for nearly 20 years under Egyptian rule. In fact, the Arabs of Gaza are buying the homes Israel has built for them—buying them with earnings from jobs made possible by Israel's success in ending unemployment in the Gaza Strip.

90-16 TO DISMEMBER ISRAEL

Perhaps the most grotesque action taken by the General Assembly during its current session was Wednesday's 90 to 16 vote (with 30 abstentions) to adopt a report by the so-called "UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People."

That Committee is composed of 20 states, only four of which recognize Israel. Its deliberations were so influenced by the Palestine Liberation Organization (which took part in every meeting) that the Committee report turned out to be a restatement of the avowed purpose of the P.L.O.—"to purge the Zionist presence from Palestine" (Article 15 of the Palestine National Covenant) and to declare the establishment of Israel "null and void" (Article 19).

In ratifying this report, the General Assembly has moved ominously beyond the usual anti-Israel tirades to which Americans have become accustomed. We are confronted instead with a flagrant attempt by the UN majority to solve the Middle East conflict not by negotiations but by the dissolution of Israel.

In voting "no" on the resolution, the U.S. Ambassador to the UN, William Scranton, called it "unfair...futile...senseless...totally devoid of balance. This Assembly," he said, "should get on with its other work."

THE UN AS A THREAT TO PEACE

It is gratifying that most of the countries of the free world—a tiny minority at the UN—refused to go along with the General Assembly scheme. But it is profoundly disturbing that the international instrument created to secure world peace should be dominated by a Soviet-Arab axis that sees the UN only as a political weapon to serve national ambition and international anti-Semitism.

Today it is the UN itself that poses a grave threat to world peace. The irony of this sad truth will not be lost upon the citizens of America whose taxes help keep the UN in business.

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Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, Chairman
Conference of Presidents of Major
American Jewish Organizations
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The Conference of Presidents met again with Ambassador Herzog on November 24 to hear a report on U.N. efforts—expressed in an overwhelmingly-adopted U.N. resolution—that Israel halt refugee resettlement efforts in the Gaza Strip, return resettled Gaza refugees to their squalid refugee camps and evacuate all territory it had won in the Six Day War by June 1, 1977.

Each day the media reported new U.N. actions against Israel. The anti-Israel votes were so cynically motivated and predictably automatic as to constitute a kind of theatre of the absurd. Thus it was that the Conference of Presidents published a full-page advertisement in the New York Times of November 28, 1976, to protest the mockery that had been made of what was once man's brightest hope for peace.

"U.N.: THE FARCE TURNS UGLY" was the bold, black headline of the advertisement on the back page of the "Week in Review" section of the Times. In it, the Presidents Conference charged that the U.N. had become not only a "grave threat to world peace," but also a "burlesque" [that] "has become sickening—and dangerous." The advertisement listed a series of recent General Assembly actions "to solve the Middle East conflict not by negotiations but by the dissolution of Israel" and concluded by expressing gratification that "most of the countries of the free world—a tiny minority at the U.N.—refused to go along with the General Assembly." Appended to the ad was a coupon that hundreds of American friends of Israel mailed to Conference headquarters with contributions to support Presidents Conference efforts to bring to public attention the pernicious exploitation of the U.N. forum as a political weapon in the Arab campaign to destroy the Jewish State.

A few weeks later, President-elect Jimmy Carter announced that he had named Rep. Andrew Young (D.-Ga.), a former associate of the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Mr. Young was no stranger to the Conference of Presidents: he was one of the speakers at the Conference's National Emergency Leadership Conference on Peace in the Middle East in January 1970, while serving as executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. His appointment was hailed by Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, Conference chairman, who called him "a man of courage and intellect, of deep compassion and broad understanding." Calling Mr. Young's appointment "an outstanding choice," Rabbi Schindler said the civil rights leader would bring to his post "a close knowledge—based on his own leadership in the civil rights movement—of the contributions of American Jews to the struggle for racial justice in America and the aspirations of Israel's people to live in peace, in dignity and in security." Rabbi Schindler also noted that "as a member of Congress, Andrew Young has compiled a distinguished record as a warm friend, ardent supporter and eloquent advocate of American economic and political support of Israel. . . . He will be, I am certain, a magnificent U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations."

The General Assembly recessed in December and convened again in March to hear the maiden U.N. address by President Carter, followed by a reception given by U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim. There was shock and deep disappointment that the P.L.O., which enjoys observer status at the U.N., was invited to attend the reception. While the White House and the State Department said "no political significance" was to be attached to the presence of the P.L.O., they also requested that news photographers and cameras be banned from the reception where all those present were expected to be greeted individually by and shake hands with the President.

Concerned by the invitation to the P.L.O., Arthur J. Levine, acting chairman of the Conference of Presidents in the absence of Rabbi Schindler, sent a tele-

CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS OF MAJOR AMERICAN JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

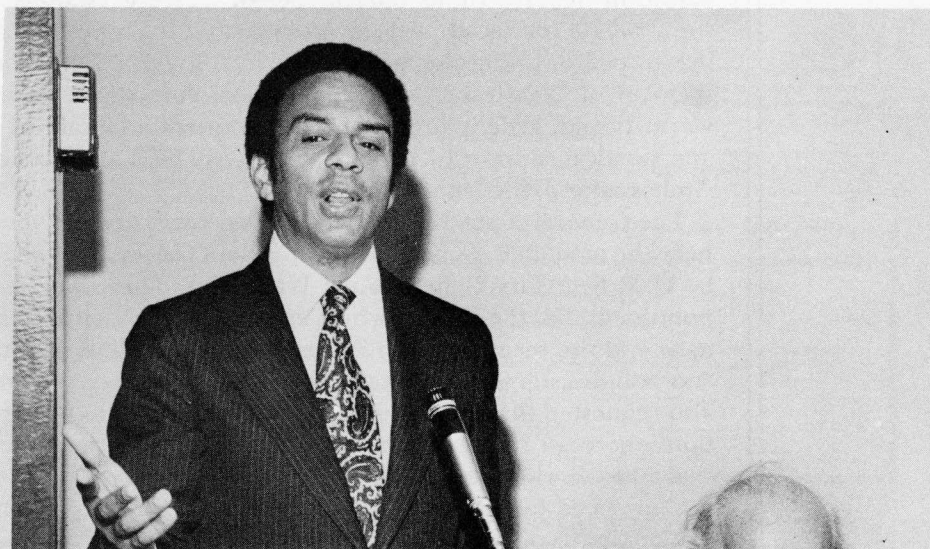
gram to President Carter on March 16 in which he recapitulated past terrorist acts on the part of the P.L.O. and called attention to the reaffirmation that very week by the Palestine National Council, meeting in Cairo, of the P.L.O.'s national covenant aimed at Israel's destruction. While the Conference of Presidents recognized that the President's presence at the reception denoted "no change in the clearly enunciated policy of this and previous administrations of refusing to recognize or deal with the P.L.O.," there was nevertheless "discomfort and chagrin that our President should find himself at a social function to which this destructive and murderous force should be honored with an invitation." President Carter's speech was well-received at the United Nations. Because of the ban on cameras, the reception took place quietly and without incident.

The final U.N. function during the period covered by this report was a long-awaited meeting on March 30 with Ambassador Andrew Young. Candid, open, articulate, the American envoy made an overwhelmingly favorable impression on the 110 people who heard him over the course of the nearly two-hour meeting.

Mr. Young began by reminiscing on his childhood as a dentist's son in New Orleans and his realization that the problems of Jews and Black Americans were inseparable. It was Mr. Young's view that the television mini-series, "Roots," had ignored the religious motivation and survival mechanisms of Black Americans, which derived from the Old Testament. American Blacks did not identify with the Muslim religion (as in "Roots") or with Protestant pietism, he said but rather "we took the Old Testament as our book of reference: Moses, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Valley of the Dry Bones. The interrelationship of our cultures and our common heritage, which we are all too often unaware of, is the basis of our ongoing relationship."

As one who had been working in the civil rights movement since the early 1960s, Ambassador Young said, "we can't be concerned about the human rights of any people without being concerned about the human rights of all people." He recalled that in 1966, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. put into motion plans to lead a group of Black Americans to the Holy Land. (Five thousand people signed up for the tour, which was to have taken place in the summer of 1967. It would have been the largest group of pilgrims ever to plan a tour of Israel and

U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young briefs the Presidents Conference.



The Presidential Campaign

Jordan; because of the Six Day War, however, it never took place.) Andrew Young flew to the Middle East in November 1966 to make arrangements for the pilgrimage. He spent one month travelling through Israel, Jordan and Lebanon and it was there, for the first time, that he was struck by the "stark racist hatred" of Jews by Arabs, an experience he told the Presidents Conference that "brought terror to my heart."

Growing up in Louisiana, Andrew Young explained he had been able to dismiss hatred as part of the ignorant "Ku Klux Klan mentality" of the South. He was therefore unprepared when, for the first time in his life, he was exposed to hatred on the part of intellectuals in Jordan. As a result of that "epiphany," he deeply understood Israel's need for military security. "Israel," he said, "must be strong and secure if it is to cope with the hatred of its neighbors. My Middle East experience goes back to that brutal awakening." This experience had convinced him, he said, that "nobody else can decide for Israel the terms on which it must live and which would require great risk. People living thousands of miles away particularly cannot."

For these reasons he saw the American role in these terms: "to make Israel as secure as necessary militarily, as strong as possible politically, and as courageous and adventurous culturally and diplomatically as the Israelis wish." The American role, he added, was to "be supportive." Stressing that he was not speaking for President Carter—but believing he did reflect his thinking—the Ambassador said the President felt something had to be done to break the stalemate in the Middle East and encourage movement among the parties. The President was not attempting to impose a solution on the Middle East but rather felt there must be "flexibility in discussion," Mr. Young said.

After a lengthy discussion and question-and-answer period ranging over a broad canvas of issues, Ambassador Young regretted that he had to leave to attend a Security Council meeting. He left behind, however, his able and knowledgeable deputy, Ambassador James Leonard, who continued to field questions from the floor for another 45 minutes.

Mr. Young's candor, his informality, his good humor and his deep feeling for Israel and for the Jewish people made this one of the most successful meetings of the year. It also confirmed the view that in Andrew Young America had a charismatic and courageous U.N. spokesman, and the Jewish community and Israel had an understanding friend and warm supporter.

In June 1976, as the Republican and Democratic parties began preparations for their national conventions, Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, chairman of the Conference of Presidents, urged President Ford and "all candidates for the Presidency" to adopt a Mideast policy that would emphasize "the kind of peace which the Arab states must accept and the method by which agreement on that peace is to be achieved." The focus of discussion must shift "from the return of territories to the nature of peace," he said, "from a one-sided demand for Israeli concessions to the insistence that the Arab states take steps now—not a generation from now—to normalize their relations with the Jewish State and to make clear they have abandoned their refusal to accept Israel's sovereignty."

Executive Director Yehuda Hellman announced that both the Republican and Democratic nominees for the Presidency would be invited to make formal addresses to the Presidents Conference following their respective party conventions. He recalled that, in 1972, Senator George McGovern, the Democratic nominee, had addressed the Conference and that in 1968 both Richard M. Nix-



Rabbi Schindler greets Jimmy Carter at the Presidents Conference meeting with the Democratic Presidential nominee in Boston. Left to right: Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D.-Mass.), Governor Carter, Rabbi Schindler, and Yehuda Hellman.

on and Senator Hubert H. Humphrey had spoken at meetings of the Conference during the election campaign.

As the campaign headed down to the wire, the Conference did, as in years past, extend invitations to the respective nominees so that its members might have the opportunity to hear them present their views on the issues confronting the nation. While President Ford declined the Conference invitation, Governor Carter accepted and agreed to meet with Conference members to speak on foreign policy and other issues of concern to the Jewish community.

Augmenting its normal constituent members by extending invitations to other agency heads and to leaders of local Jewish community bodies across the country, the Presidents Conference met with Mr. Carter at the Ramada Inn near Boston's Logan Airport on September 30, 1976.

In opening the meeting, Rabbi Schindler gave Governor Carter a picture of the Jewish community to whose leadership he would be presenting his views:

"We are a proud community of Jews," Rabbi Schindler declared. "We are a self-confident community of Jews. We are a contented community, because our lot has fallen on pleasant places, because America has been good to us, because this is a great land, a bounteous land, a land of infinite endowment.

"But we are also a generation that has been most grievously wounded. In our lifetime—with our own eyes, as it were—we saw the annihilation of one-third of our people, the wanton slaughter of six million Jews; men, women, little children—one million children. . . . We rose from our ashes, determined to live in spite of it all. A state, a haven of refuge for our people was created, and we live.

"Wherever there is a Jewish community which is embattled, we will come to its aid. Wherever there is a single Jew in danger, in whatever country or continent, in the remotest corner of our far-flung globe, there will we find him, there will we reach out to him offering our hand, our heart, our very lives. Never more will it be said: 'that we had eyes but did not see, that we had ears but did not hear, that we had mouths, but that we failed to speak.'

"This is the sacred cause which unites us, the Jews of America, and Jews of the world.

"What do we want in a President?

"I suppose we would really like someone who will always agree with us, but barring that we want a man who will tell us the truth and who will then act upon that truth himself, and all those who are responsible to him.

"As a people of faith, we respect a man of faith. . . . Your concept of a spiritual rebirth is in harmony with our tradition and with these penitential days in which we meet. And at this penitential season our liturgy enjoins us in the words of the prophet 'to make us a new heart and a new spirit.'"

Obviously moved, Jimmy Carter responded by thanking Rabbi Schindler "for expressing in such eloquent terms the character of the Jewish people in this country and around the world." The Democratic nominee then took the occasion of his appearance before the Conference of Presidents to issue his sharpest attack to date against President Ford's policy of selling large amounts of arms to the Arab states. "We have become the world's arms supplier," Mr. Carter said, "and we've never shown any morality about the allocation of arms supply to foreign countries. We should not simply sell weapons to get oil—and risk peace—by vague threats which the Administration itself is perpetuating. We must stand staunchly with Israel. We must let the world know that there will never be any deviation in our commitment to the right of Israel to exist, to exist in peace, to exist permanently, to exist as a Jewish state.

"This is," he added, "a commitment of the American people and our government and we must provide whatever aid, economic or military, that is necessary to permit Israel to live and to live strongly and to live in peace."

After his speech, Governor Carter answered questions from the floor which encompassed the broad spectrum of Jewish concerns. In response to one question, he declared that he would "never envision a complete withdrawal by Israel to the boundaries that existed prior to the 1967 confrontation with their enemies."

On the question of anti-boycott legislation, the Democratic candidate declared: "I believe it is important to have legislation which outlaws both discrimination against Americans on grounds of religion or nationality, and secondary boycotts against companies which trade with Israel. When our Administration capitulates to pressure, it diminishes the chances for peace. When it behaves in a craven fashion, it demeans our country in the world. When it wantonly adds arms to Arab countries in the Middle East without limit on quantity or quality, it undermines our commitment to Israel. I see no reason why we should let a foreign nation, through economic pressure, circumvent or abrogate the Bill of Rights of the United States."

On the Palestinian question, Jimmy Carter told the Presidents Conference: "I don't believe anybody has an answer to the Palestinian problem in its entirety. I think the legitimate needs of the Palestinians must be met. I think the world should know, and I think the President of the United States and the Secretary of State of the future can explain, that the Palestinian problem did not originate because of Israel, that this is a long-standing problem whose complexity has been created to a substantial degree by the nations who surround it and who now blame the Palestinian problem on Israel itself.

"I don't want to try to describe to you a complete full-time settlement of the Middle East question. I think one of the proposals has been put forward, which I discussed with Mrs. Meir and Mr. Rabin and Mr. Allon and others, there is some possibility that the Palestinians be relocated in an area to be defined in the future, perhaps on part of the West Bank of the Jordan River, or to be under the aegis or under the sovereignty of Jordan itself."

Five weeks later, upon Mr. Carter's election, Rabbi Schindler sent him the following message of congratulations:

Saudi Arabian Arms Purchases

"In the name of the American Jewish community, organized through the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, I extend to you our heartfelt congratulations on your election. We wish you well. May you be blessed with good health and strength, and may your dreams for our land be fulfilled.

"We are deeply grateful for your commitment to the survival and security of Israel, to the attainment of peace in the Middle East and the ideals of human rights and dignity for which our embattled brethren in many lands so desperately yearn, and which you expressed so eloquently in your meeting with us and throughout the campaign.

"May the Almighty guide your doing and may the work of your hands continue to be acceptable to Him."

In June 1976, Administration officials revealed that Saudi Arabia was seeking to purchase massive amounts of sophisticated arms from the United States, giving that country one of the most potent military air systems in the Middle East. In September the Ford Administration, in its required letter of notification to Congress, proposed to sell to the Riyadh regime more than \$600 million worth of weaponry, including 850 heat-guided Sidewinder missiles, 650 Maverick TV-guided air-to-ground missiles and 1,000 TOW anti-tank missiles.

These proposals came under heavy fire from critics within Congress, including Rep. Benjamin S. Rosenthal (D.-N.Y.) and Sen. Dante Fascell (D.-Fla.), and the Conference of Presidents, which criticized them as being far in excess of Saudi Arabia's defensive needs. In a telegram to President Ford on September 2, Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler indicated the "collective and profound concern" of the Conference's 32 member organizations over the proposed sale, adding that "the extent and type of weaponry" proposed for Saudi Arabia "threaten seriously to upset the delicate arms balance in the Middle East."

Debates and negotiations continued in Congress for several weeks until the vote turned on the proposed sale of the 650 Maverick TV-guided missiles. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee was not inclined to object to the sale of the 850 heat-guided Sidewinder missiles nor of 1,000 TOW anti-tank missiles but many in the Committee did object to the Mavericks, which they regarded as offensive weapons against ground targets. Assistant Secretary of State Alfred L. Atherton, Jr., testifying before the Foreign Relations Committee, characterized the proposed sale as "appropriate and responsible" but Senators Clifford Case (R.-N.J.) and Hubert H. Humphrey (D.-Minn.) charged that the sale of the Mavericks to Saudi Arabia would be a "disturbing and a potentially destabilizing factor in the balance of power equation in the Middle East."

Their efforts to halt the sale of these lethal offensive weapons collapsed, however, in the face of a warning by Secretary of State Kissinger that such an action could undermine Administration policy in the Middle East. With the Senate committee unwilling to act, pro-Israel members of the House gave up their attempt to block the sale through the House Committee on International Relations. Speaking for the Conference of Presidents, Rabbi Schindler accused the Administration of not exercising "moral leadership" and charged that, on the contrary, "spokesmen for the executive branch and especially the State Department have been actively engaged in appeasement by blocking legislation that might offend the oil-rich Arab states."

Thus, in the face of strong White House opposition and the use of delaying tactics by Ford Administration supporters in Congress, the House and Senate

were not permitted to vote to block the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia. There was some consolation that during earlier negotiations between the Administration and several Senators on the Foreign Relations Committee, the number of Maverick and Sidewinder missiles had been substantially reduced from what the Administration had first sought. The Maverick missiles were reduced from 1,500 to 650. The Sidewinders were reduced from 2,000 to 850. Nevertheless, U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia in 1976 totaled more than \$7.50 billion—an ominous potential threat to Israel's security. It was for this reason that candidate Jimmy Carter, in his address to the Conference of Presidents in Boston on September 30, denounced the arms-sale proposal and charged the Ford Administration with "moral bankruptcy" and "bowing down to foreign blackmail. . . . There is no reason to think these missiles will increase security and stability in the Middle East," he said. "There is no reason to think they can be used only for defense. There are only reasons to fear that we will increase the chance of conflict. No Administration which was sensitive to the climate in the Middle East would let the sale go forward."

So long, Joe

Late in the spring of the year under review, the Conference of Presidents learned that after 25 years of State Department service, Joseph J. Sisco, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs and a long-time friend of the Conference, would be leaving his post on July 1 to assume the presidency of American University in Washington, D.C.

Wishing to pay tribute to the Secretary and his wife Jean, the Conference hosted a luncheon in his honor on June 7 with toasts, speeches, and an appreciative memento—an illustrated Hebrew-English edition of Psalms.

The tributes to Mr. Sisco were many: letters from President Ford and Secre-

Israel Ambassador Simcha Dinitz pays tribute to Undersecretary of State Joseph J. Sisco at a Presidents Conference luncheon marking Mr. Sisco's retirement. In the foreground left to right are: Yehuda Hellman, Mrs. Sisco, Rabbi Schindler, and Mr. Sisco.



The Issue of Dissent

tary of State Kissinger and speeches by Rabbi Israel Miller, immediate past chairman of the Presidents Conference; Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, the current chairman; Max M. Fisher, chairman of the Board of Governors of the Jewish Agency; and Simcha Dinitz, Israel's Ambassador to the United States, who said that with Sisco "we knew we had a friend in the State Department" because "nobody in the American government knows Israel and understands Israel better than Joe Sisco."

Rabbi Schindler used the occasion to assert that American Jews remained pledged to Israel's survival in security and peace "with our very lives." He declared: "Those differences that do exist among American Jews about Israel's foreign policy are nowhere as serious as they are portrayed to be. . . . What divides the 'doves' and 'hawks' on Israel is not the ultimate goal of peace but the kind of risks that should be taken to achieve that peace. The real issue then, is not 'hawk' vs. 'dove' but rather, what is the 'quo' that Israel has the right to expect for its 'quid'?"

"When the Arab states answer these questions, Israel and the world will know whether there will be a genuine peace in the Middle East or the kind of 'peace' that the Muslims and Christians of Lebanon are enduring as Arab slaughters Arab."

In his response, Mr. Sisco expressed the opinion that there was hope for peace in the Middle East because both the Arabs and the Israelis are "sick and tired of war." While recognizing and sharing "the deep concern" over the Mideast situation, he said: "I continue to believe that peace would come to the Mideast. But it will not be easy."

Mr. Sisco ended his remarks by telling the Conference of Presidents that he was not sure whether his departure from the State Department would be "a three year sabbatical or a 10-year sabbatical or a permanent one"—thereby leaving the door open to the possibility that Israel's great friend might eventually return to government service.

The emergence of a new American Jewish organization—Breira—that took public issue with the policy of Israel on security issues and other concerns affecting the Arab-Israel conflict led to widespread debate within the Jewish community during the period covered by this report. Reports in the general press, which perceived these discussions as indicating a serious schism within the community, led the Conference of Presidents to convene a major meeting on June 15 on the subject, "Dissent and the American Jewish Community: Issues and Responsibilities."

To ensure a full airing of the issues, Rabbi Eugene Borowitz of Hebrew Union College and Rabbi Fabian Schonfeld, immediate past president of the Rabbinical Council of America, were invited to make comprehensive presentations of their opposing viewpoints. Rabbi Borowitz argued for full, free and public discussion of American Jewish differences with Israeli policies. Rabbi Schonfeld held that any form of dissent was a sign of disunity and therefore dangerous to Israel's cause. After a lively discussion from the floor, Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, president of the American Jewish Congress, was called upon by Rabbi Schindler to summarize and weave together the varying strands of the debate.

Basing himself in part on Rabbi Hertzberg's summation, Rabbi Schindler said in a statement issued later that week that "the overwhelming opinion . . . was that there should be a full and open discussion within the Jewish community of all the issues pertaining to Israel and its policies. . . . Even as Israel is an open,

democratic, pluralistic society, so should the American Jewish community be open. There must be no endeavor to stifle dissent. There must be no endeavor to foreclose a debate. This would be injurious to the Jewish people as a whole."

The second area of agreement, Rabbi Schindler said, was that "it is the responsibility of the American Jewish community to transmit the best of our thinking to Israel with the utmost frankness." That is, "all of our ideas, whatever they may be, have to be communicated, and we have to establish these channels of communication individually in our organizations and also collectively through the Presidents Conference."

Finally, he said, the "near unanimous" opinion at the meeting was that dissent "ought not and should not be public" because it was felt that when Jewish dissent is made public in the daily press or in the halls of government, the result is "to give aid and comfort to the enemy and to weaken that Jewish unity which is essential for the security of Israel and, indeed, of the Jewish community in America."

The discussion appeared to mark the end of the "dissent" issue. Five months later, however, the Palestine Liberation Organization announced plans to open a lobbying and information office in Washington, D.C. When the P.L.O. representative, Sabri Elias Jiryis, was ordered to leave the United States for giving false information about his birthplace on his visa application, it appeared that would end the matter. The State Department announced, however, that while "from a foreign policy point of view, we do not believe it is a propitious moment for the P.L.O. to open an office in Washington," there was no way under American law to prevent the P.L.O. from opening a Washington office so long as it complied with regulations—including registration with the Justice Department as a foreign agent—and staffed its office with persons having the right to live in the United States.

The Presidents Conference was profoundly dismayed by the State Department comment and expressed its feelings to President Ford in a telegram sent on December 1. Signed by Rabbi Schindler, the telegram said that "it is not a question of what is 'propitious' but rather what is the principle involved in permitting an avowedly terrorist organization to open a headquarters in our nation's capital. Surely," the message to President Ford continued, "there is a law or a principle of law that can be invoked to protect the American people from the criminal conspiracy that constitutes the P.L.O. We urge you, therefore, to issue instructions prohibiting the P.L.O. from opening an office in Washington."

Regrettably, the issue did not appear to be as clear-cut to others as it was to the Presidents Conference. While the Conference was releasing its message to Mr. Ford, it was learned that Washington staff members of some Jewish organizations had met—some of them without the permission or foreknowledge of their national headquarters—with two leaders of the P.L.O., including Mr. Jiryis. On December 23, the Conference of Presidents met again to discuss the issue of dissent and its concomitant responsibilities. Out of that meeting came a statement of consensus, representing the position of all 32 constituent member organizations, that vigorously opposed and deplored "any meetings—official or unofficial—with the Palestine Liberation Organization."

The statement, introduced by David M. Blumberg, president of B'nai B'rith, noted that "recent events have confirmed the fact that the only purpose and possible result of such meetings is P.L.O. propaganda aimed at providing this terrorist federation with an image of moderation and conciliation." Stressing Israel's constant quest for a just, stable and lasting peace based on secure and defensible borders, the Presidents Conference statement said that "this will only come about through direct discussion by the countries concerned, not by unrepresent-

Entebbe Rescue

tative parties on either side." The statement of consensus endorsed and supported the U.S. Government's steadfast refusal to meet with P.L.O. representatives and expressed confidence that the incoming Carter Administration would maintain the same posture. What concerned the Presidents Conference was that "any private meetings such as [the one which occurred on November 15] with the P.L.O. could tend to undermine the peace process." In closing, the statement said: "We believe such meetings could also undermine genuine efforts toward peace in the Middle East. Peace can only be achieved by free and unfettered negotiation between parties to the conflict—Israel and the Arab states. Outside parties, be they foreign governments or individuals acting in private capacities, cannot take on the role of negotiators and could actually subvert progress on this front."

The issue surfaced again on December 30, when the New York Times, in a front page story headlined "American Jewish Leaders Are Split Over Issue of Meeting With P.L.O.," reported that a "bitter dispute" had broken out among the leaders of American Jewish organizations and asserted that the issue of meeting with the P.L.O. had been argued intensely. The following day, the Times corrected the record. "Because of an error in editing," the Times explained, the article had said a dispute had broken out "among the leaders" of American Jewish organizations when it should have said that the dispute had arisen among "some members of the American Jewish community, since the accepted leaders of the community who make up the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations oppose contacts with the P.L.O."

If ever one single exploit of daring and heroism captured the imagination of the entire world, it was the audacious operation by the Israel Defence Forces to rescue 103 Israeli nationals held hostage by West German and Palestinian terrorists at Uganda's Entebbe airport. What had begun as the terrifying hijacking of an Air France jet and the separation of Jews from non-Jewish hostages—a horrifying reminder of Nazi concentration camp procedures—ended with massive victory celebrations on the Fourth of July in Israel, in America and wherever men and women love freedom. Among those invited to Ben-Gurion airport by Israeli Defense Minister Shimon Peres to greet the returning heroes was a group of Presidents Conference leaders then in Israel.

New Yorkers, marking the American Bicentennial with an armada of "Tall Ships" and sundry flotillas of foreign naval vessels, greeted the news of the successful raid with words like "stunning," "unbelievable," "magnificent," "a miracle," and "legendary." And what had begun as a simple reception on July 6 for the young crews of two Israeli missile boats docked in New York to participate in the international naval review was spontaneously transformed into a jubilant celebration.

The co-sponsors of the reception—the Conference of Presidents and the Israeli Consulate in New York—set a 10:00 p.m. closing hour for the visit, but the overflow crowd had other ideas. For more than an hour afterward, guests of the Israeli Naval ships "Yaffo" and "Tarshish" sang and danced with the young Israeli crew members, showering them with kisses and applause and many toasts and cries of "l'chayim," "bravo," "kol hakavod," and "hurrah."

Rabbi Schindler, visiting in Israel on Conference business, declared in a message from Jerusalem that the liberation of the hijacked passengers, coming as it did on the Fourth of July celebration, was of particularly symbolic significance

Mexican Follies

for Americans "who see Israel as a sister democracy devoted to the prophetic ideals of human dignity and social justice that animates both our nations."

On November 30, the Conference of Presidents held a special luncheon meeting with Dr. Ephraim Sneh, chief medical officer during the Entebbe raid. Dr. Sneh, surgeon-general of Israel's infantry and paratroop corps, disclosed details of the medical plan devised for the treatment of the wounded both at Entebbe airport and in Nairobi.

While the world rejoiced over the victorious Entebbe raid, Mexico's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at the direct instructions of President Luis Echeverria, submitted an unsolicited letter to the U.N. Security Council accusing Israel of having violated Uganda's sovereignty. While condemning "all terrorist acts," the letter went on to state that "Mexico, faithful to its principles, cannot fail likewise to express its firm rejection of the use of armed force by any State as a means of trying to solve conflicts, because such acts are a flagrant violation both of the Charter of the United Nations and of universally accepted principles of international law, and create precedents of incalculable danger for all civilized coexistence."

Recovering from its initial surprise, the Conference of Presidents realized that Mexico's lame-duck president was still seeking to woo Third World states in his quest to become Secretary-General of the United Nations. Taking Sr. Echeverria's personal ambitions into account, Arthur J. Levine—acting chairman of the Conference in the absence of Rabbi Schindler—issued a statement that deplored the Mexican letter and placed responsibility for it squarely on the shoulders of the Mexican president, not on the Mexican people or the Mexican government.

Addressing a press conference in Tel Aviv that same day, Rabbi Schindler also condemned the Mexican letter, stating that the Mexican position had contradicted promises made by President Echeverria earlier that Mexico would not participate in any anti-Zionist actions at the U.N. Presidents Conference member-organizations with travel departments renewed their determination to resume trips to Mexico (cancelled following Mexico's vote at the U.N. calling Zionism a form of racism) only when a new President would take office.

In late November, leaders of six major American Jewish organizations were among the 1,300 foreign guests invited by the new president, Jose Lopez Portillo, to attend his inauguration. Twenty-five leaders of Mexico's Jewish community also attended, the first ever to be invited to a presidential inauguration in that country. Seymour Graubard of the Anti-Defamation League, who in December 1975 had led a Presidents Conference delegation that met with President Echeverria, now observed that Mexico's recent voting pattern in the U.N. was a cause for optimism. The arrival in Mexico each Tuesday of an El Al jet liner was further evidence of newly-improved relations between Mexico and Israel, he commented.

The Case of General Brown

General George S. Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, came under fire once again for loose remarks, in October 1976.

During the course of a taped interview with the nationally-syndicated political cartoonist and writer Ra'anah Lurie, made the previous April and released in

The Arab Boycott

transcript form on October 18, General Brown said that England was "pathetic," that the U.S. had no "stomach" to face up to the Soviet Union, that the Shah of Iran had dreams of a "Persian Empire" and that Israel was "a burden" to the United States.

According to the Pentagon's authorized transcript, General Brown was asked by Lurie: "From a purely military point of view, would you say that from the American global strategic interest, militarily is Israel and its forces more a burden or more a blessing to the United States?"

The Conference of Presidents learned of the interview and its contents several days before it was made public and pressed the White House for a response. "Certainly the Jewish community cannot permit to go unchallenged the statement that Israel is a 'burden' to the United States," declared Conference chairman Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler.

President Ford withheld personal comment but a White House spokesman said that the President had accepted General Brown's public explanation for his comments and since the State Department had reaffirmed its "support of Israel, its security and the close relations that have existed since the founding of Israel . . . considered the matter to be closed."

In response to this unsatisfactory response, the Conference of Presidents stated after a special meeting on October 19 that "the Jewish community does not consider the matter of General Brown to be closed" and called upon President Ford to "publicly censure General Brown and to repudiate the views he has expressed, lest there be any doubt that the dangerous course of action he recommends has any sanction whatsoever within the current Administration."

Though there were many protests from the Jewish community and Americans of both major political parties—including Presidential candidate Jimmy Carter and Republican Senators James Buckley and Charles Percy—the White House took no further action and General Brown has remained chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The struggle for enactment of an effective law to protect American Jews from Arab discrimination—and to protect American businessmen trading with Israel—was a major concern of the American Jewish community during the year under review. While leaving the details of drafting and mobilizing support for anti-boycott legislation in the capable hands of its constituent organizations—notably the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League—the Conference of Presidents did step in at a crucial moment in its own name to put the weight of its 32 members in support of the effort.

The old Export Administration Act had required American companies to report to the Department of Commerce any requests to comply with Arab boycotts or other demands. And while Jewish groups and Congressional committees had sought to make these reports public, the Ford Administration refused to do so. Then, in the second television debate with Jimmy Carter, President Ford announced that henceforth the names of those companies would be made public. But, while the Executive Order would call attention to those corporations that surrendered to the boycott pressures, there was still—in the words of a statement issued by the Presidents Conference—"no law that protects American companies from Arab pressure to stop trading with Israel and to stop trading with other U.S. companies trading with Israel."

Such a law, said Rabbi Schindler in a letter published in the New York Times, "must become a top priority for the next Congress and Administration no matter

who is elected President. Without such laws, the quality of citizenship of American Jews and all who support and trade with Israel will continue to be under growing Arab attack. Without such laws, the Arab states will remain free to exploit American industry as a weapon in their economic war against Israel."

President Ford's Executive Order, issued on October 7, followed by one week the expiration of the Export Administration Act of 1969—the result of Congressional maneuvering instigated, it was alleged, by the White House.

Three days before the law expired, the Presidents Conference wired President Ford urging him to use his "personal intervention" to assure passage of proposals to strengthen and extend the old law, which contained no enforcement provisions and which stated merely that it was the "policy" of the United States to "oppose" economic boycotts against countries friendly to the U.S.

"The organized Jewish community urgently requests your Administration to take all possible measures to assure the final adoption of the anti-boycott legislation now before Congress," Rabbi Schindler stated. "Economic blackmail must be resisted: America cannot sell its moral principles for oil money. It must not become the instrument for furthering the foreign policy aims of nations whose purposes are inimical to ours. The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations asks your personal intervention to that end."

But when the law was permitted to expire, Rabbi Schindler sharply criticized the Congressional "maneuvers" whose purpose was "to appease the Arab states. . . . The American people have a right to be outraged today," he said. "We have been victimized on two fronts by the failure of the Administration to act in accordance with its professed principles. American ideals have been bartered away for Arab oil."

The accession to office of a new Administration committed to enact anti-boycott legislation (as Jimmy Carter pledged in his September 30 address to the Presidents Conference) revived hopes and efforts in this direction. As the period covered by this report drew to a close, there were strong reasons for optimism that the year 1977 would witness, for the first time in American history, an anti-boycott bill that would put a halt to the Arab campaign to import anti-Semitism into the United States and the Arab effort to use American corporations as weapons in the economic war against Israel.

Abu Daoud

On Friday, January 7, Abu Daoud, a leader of the terrorist Black September, was apprehended in Paris after he arrived to attend the funeral of another Palestinian "activist" slain in that city the preceding week.

The routine arrest of one more PLO gunman erupted into an international incident when, after a swift and unexpected judicial hearing four days later, French authorities freed the man charged with having planned the slaughter of the Israeli team at the 1972 Olympics in Munich and allowed him to fly to Algeria. The hasty freeing of Abu Daoud followed a French court's rejection of West German and Israeli requests that he be detained for eventual extradition proceedings.

While many observers interpreted the French government's decision as stemming from an eagerness to improve relations with the oil-producing Arab world, President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing argued that the Daoud case was a police matter divorced from politics and that for legal and technical reasons, neither Israel nor West Germany presented valid grounds for extradition.

This assertion found few adherents among the French people or press, but the Giscard government insisted that it considered the matter closed.

West Germany's Ministry of Justice officially deplored the French court's decision. Israel recalled its Ambassador from Paris to register displeasure over French refusal to comply with the Israeli government's request to detain Abu Daoud, "a request made under the extradition agreement between the two countries."

A statement by the Conference of Presidents angrily declared that the French action represented "the height of irresponsibility" and betokened a "breakdown of international law and a signal to terrorists the world over that, even if they should be caught, they will be released to kill again."

On January 12, a hastily convened ad hoc committee meeting of the Presidents Conference was called to discuss and coordinate courses of action. Abu Daoud was free and beyond reach in Algeria, but the French government had to know that its cowardly submission to blackmail would not be sanctioned by the civilized world. Rabbi Schindler reported that he would lead a delegation to meet with Jacques Kosciusko-Morizet, France's Ambassador to the United States. At that 90-minute meeting, Rabbi Schindler informed the Ambassador that "thousands of members" of the Conference's 32 constituent agencies "were urging a ban on travel to France and a boycott of French products in the United States." Since each of the organizations is autonomous and independent, Rabbi Schindler noted, each "will respond to these demands in its own fashion."

The delegation also expressed "the shock and outrage of the American Jewish community over the callous and precipitous release of the notorious Arab terrorist Abu Daoud by a French court, with the obvious acquiescence of the French government." Rabbi Schindler told the Ambassador that "in our judgment his government's capitulation represents a shameful chapter in French history. The great Republic of France, which gave the world the traditions of liberty, equality and fraternity, has surrendered these noble ideals out of cowardice, cynicism and expediency."

The "legalisms" advanced by French officials to explain the release of Daoud could not be accepted, Rabbi Schindler said, adding that what France had done was a "breach of the extradition treaty with Israel and of its commitment to act with vigor against the terrorist movement."

The New York desk of the Presidents Conference swung into action with a similar confrontation with French officialdom—this time with the French Consul-General in New York. Led by Seymour Reich, vice-president of B'nai B'rith District #1, the 16-member delegation presented Consul-General Gerard Gausson with a letter signed by representatives of the New York branches of all 32 constituent bodies of the Conference of Presidents. The delegation warned M. Gausson that there were mounting pressures for a boycott of French products and a ban on travel to France. Spokesman Reich declared: "There can be no doubt of the revulsion that American Jews—and men and women of goodwill of every race, religion and ethnic origin—feel at the ignoble act that France has committed in defiance of its own treaty obligations, in disregard of its professed adherence to the international campaign against terrorism, and in contempt for the very respect for life and law that has been the hallmark of French civilization."

The Consul-General claimed that the failure of West Germany to apply through diplomatic channels for Daoud's extradition left the French court with no choice but to release him. But Jack Elkin, president of the New York Metropolitan Council of the American Jewish Congress, replied that "France found a technicality by which to release Abu Daoud. There is no doubt in our minds that France could have found a technicality to keep him in custody until the extradition process had been properly completed."

Farewell to Dr. Kissinger

The storm of protest drew world-wide support from non-Jewish spokesmen and organizations, including George Meany, president of the AFL—CIO, and the United States Senate, which sharply condemned France and urged the Carter Administration to consult promptly with France to prevent the recurrence of such an episode. The sense-of-the-Senate resolution, co-sponsored by Senators Hubert H. Humphrey (D.-Minn.), Clifford Case (R.-N.J.), and Jacob K. Javits (R.-N.Y.), was supported by 93 Senators, only seven short of the chamber's full membership.

Although there was no formal U.S. Jewish boycott of France, all the Presidents Conference constituent organizations with members' travel programs suspended their trips to France. Interviewed on WABC-TV, Yehuda Hellman expressed regret over the decline of French prestige resulting from such action and voiced hope that one day France would adopt policies that restored its good name among the American people. At the same time, reports reaching the Presidents Conference showed it would be a long while before many Americans would again purchase a litre of French wine or a few drams of French perfume. In the minds of many, it will be an even longer time before France regains the esteem in which she was once held and which she had so cravenly betrayed.

With the change in Administration, Dr. Henry A. Kissinger resigned his office as Secretary of State.

To say farewell to the government official with whom the Jewish community had been in such close and vital contact for more than three years, the Conference of Presidents hosted a formal luncheon on January 11 at the Hotel Pierre. Some 250 Jewish leaders from across the United States (along with more than 70 newsmen representing newspapers, radio and television) heard a warm personal letter of appreciation from Max M. Fisher, chairman of the Board of Governors of the Jewish Agency—which was read in Mr. Fisher's absence by Rabbi Israel Miller, immediate past chairman of the Conference—along with remarks by Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, the Conference's current chairman; Simcha Diniz, Israel's Ambassador to the United States; and Yehuda Hellman, executive

Rabbi Schindler and Yehuda Hellman present Dr. Henry A. Kissinger with a volume of the Encyclopaedia Judaica at the Presidents Conference luncheon honoring the out-going Secretary of State.



director of the Conference, who presented Dr. Kissinger with a 16-volume Encyclopaedia Judaica.

In his remarks, Ambassador Dinitz noted that while Israel and Dr. Kissinger "might have had arguments," there was one point over which they never disagreed—"and this is that Israel must be strong. It must be strong to defend itself, it must be strong to deter war, and it must be strong to negotiate for peace."

After reading a letter of congratulations from President Ford, Rabbi Schindler expressed the hope that Dr. Kissinger would remember the Jewish community "with exasperation tinged with affection." The Presidents Conference chairman acknowledged that the Secretary's Middle East diplomacy had been "controversial." But, he added, American Jewry rendered its regard to him "because we sense in his depths a commitment to Israel and to the Jewish people. . . . While Dr. Kissinger always saw Israel objectively, he never saw it as a 'thing apart.' He may have been objective, but he was never detached."

In his response, Dr. Kissinger noted that he had dealt with the Conference throughout his tenure, adding: "I need not tell you that [the Conference] is composed of a rugged group of individualists united only by a wary suspiciousness of all forms of government." Acknowledging Ambassador Dinitz' remarks, Dr. Kissinger observed: "I have also had the privilege of dealing with the Ambassador of the only country in the world where the representative in Washington can be criticized for having too close a relationship with the Secretary of State."

Then, the Secretary, his voice charged with emotion, told the Presidents Conference: "You and I have gone through a great deal together in recent years and I thought that if this meeting made any sense it would be if I spoke to you from the heart about some of the considerations on my mind."

"We have had, of necessity, a very complicated relationship. From my point of view, probably no criticism has hurt me more than if it came from this community; probably, from your point of view, it was especially painful if disagreements occurred between the Jewish community and the first Jewish Secretary of State in American history."

"I'd like to believe that the disagreements never went to the heart of our relationships, that they usually concerned tactics by which to achieve fundamentally-

Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger strikes a humorous note at the Presidents Conference farewell luncheon in his honor.



agreed objectives. I thought it was important for the future of Israel and for the future of the Jewish people that the actions the United States government took were not seen to be the result of a special personal relationship, that the support we gave Israel reflected not my personal preference alone but the basic national interests of the United States, transcending the action of who might be in office at any particular period."

With the audience totally hushed, Dr. Kissinger, his voice faltering ever so slightly, went on:

"I have never forgotten that 13 members of my family died in concentration camps, nor could I ever fail to remember what it was like to live in Nazi Germany as a member of a persecuted minority."

"I believe, however, that the relationship of Israel to the United States transcends these personal considerations. I do not believe that it is compatible with the moral conscience of mankind to permit Israel to suffer in the Middle East the ghetto existence that has been suffered by Jews in many individual countries throughout their history. The support for a free and democratic Israel in the Middle East is a moral necessity of our period to be pursued by every Administration and with a claim to the support of all freedom-loving people all over the world."

"So we begin in our concerns with a moral and a human dimension. Beyond that, any nation has a right to live in security and not to be dependent for its survival on the good will of its neighbors. It must be a basic principle of American policy that Israel must be strong enough so that its decisions are made by free choice and are not imposed on it by a combination of outside factors or by its neighbors. Therefore, it must be a principle of American policy that Israel must always be strong enough to defend itself and that the United States must see to it that Israel is strong enough because only then can a peace that is negotiated be lasting and only then can a peace be perceived to be just."

"I have believed that an effort must be made to advance the prospects of peace in the Middle East. No people can have a greater interest in it than those who for thousands of years have been subjected to the arbitrary will of many host countries or a nation that in its existence has never known recognition and acceptance by its immediate neighbors. Historians will have to judge the methods that were appropriate but that the relationship between countries divided by distrust and suffering for a generation could not be repaired easily and quickly—that the at-

House Majority Leader Jim Wright (D.-Tex.) addresses the Presidents Conference luncheon honoring Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in Washington.



The Rabin Visit

tempt to solve everything at once involved the risks of catastrophe as well as the prospects of success—can never be overlooked.

“The difference between statesmen and those who observe from the outside is that there are some experiments that statesmen cannot try because the consequences of their failure would be too profound.”

In closing, the Secretary said: “The problems of security and of peace in the Middle East will be with us for as long as we can see. I will remain dedicated to them as a friend of Israel and as a friend of this group for as long as I live.

“Throughout their history Jews have been saying to themselves ‘Next year in Jerusalem.’ I would like to think that sometime soon we can say this in its deepest sense in an Israel that is secure, that is accepted, that is at peace. And it will always mean a great deal to me to have worked with this group and with my friends in Israel to achieve this objective.”

For one special moment after the Secretary of State finished, there was stunned silence. Then, over tumultuous and heartfelt applause, Rabbi Schindler, speaking for all, concluded the luncheon: “We have sought our brother and we have found him,” he said, “and we are profoundly grateful for this experience.”

In March 1977—at the conclusion of the period under review—Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin flew to Washington for meetings with the newly-elected Administration of President Jimmy Carter. The meetings with Israel's Prime Minister were the first in a series for the President and Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance, who had announced they would meet with all of the leaders in the Middle East in their drive for a peace settlement.

To strengthen the impact of Prime Minister Rabin's visit to the U.S., the Presidents Conference held a luncheon in his honor in Washington, D.C. Luncheon guests included important members of the Senate and House (including House Majority Leader Jim Wright (D.-Tex.) and Senator Donald W. Riegle (D.-Mich.)), leaders of the Christian religious community, business and labor spokesmen and representatives of the Black community.

Rabbi Schindler introduces Yitzhak Rabin at a Presidents Conference luncheon welcoming the Israeli Prime Minister to the United States.



In his brief remarks, Senator Riegle reaffirmed America's long-standing commitment to Israel. A highlight of the luncheon, which evoked hearty applause, was the ringing declaration by Congressman Wright who—taking a leaf from President John F. Kennedy—proudly told the luncheon guests, “I am an Israeli.”

Rabbi Schindler, in introducing the Prime Minister, underscored the “undergirding unity felt by Jews everywhere—our unyielding determination to secure the future of Israel.”

In his impromptu speech, Prime Minister Rabin said that Israel was always prepared to take advice from the United States but in the end it was “up to the parties to the conflict to make final decisions.”

The visible manifestations of support and unity demonstrated at the luncheon would have been considered, on any other date, an unequivocal success. Unfortunately, shortly after the luncheon began, David M. Blumberg, president of B'nai B'rith and Dr. Daniel Thursz, its executive vice-president, left the meeting hurriedly, followed shortly thereafter by Mayor Walter Washington. It was not until the meeting ended that the guests learned that the Hanafi Moslem sect had just taken over the District Building, Islamic Temple, and B'nai B'rith building where they were holding and terrorizing scores of hostages. And it was not until three agonizing days later that the hostages at the B'nai B'rith headquarters—among them many friends and associates of the Conference of Presidents—were released.

THE STRUGGLE FOR SOVIET JEWRY

The tragedy of Soviet Jewry continues unabated. The solemn pledge by the USSR in signing the Helsinki accord to respect the human rights of its own citizens—including the right to emigrate—and to observe international standards of human rights in dealing with other states has been coldly ignored. Emigration has sunk to a level of little more than 1,000 per month; an occasional refusenik is allowed an exit permit; and the number of Soviet Jews refused permission climbs to an all-time high. There is also strong evidence that Soviet authorities give at least half of the exit visas they do grant to emigrants whom they have reason to believe will choose a destination other than Israel. This has resulted in a “drop-out” rate exceeding 50 per cent. How to deal with those Jews who leave the USSR on exit visas for Israel and then decide on other destinations on reaching the West has posed a serious problem for the world Jewish community.

On November 9, 1976, the Presidents Conference held a broad discussion on various approaches to the so-called “noshrim” issue. Two main points of view were expressed: some felt the Jewish community should take action to discourage the drop-out phenomenon because it might endanger the prospect of future emigration from the USSR; others argued that Soviet Jews had the inalienable right to determine where they wished to settle, even if they used Israeli visas to get out of the Soviet Union. The discussion was long and challenging but, in a statement issued after the meeting, Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, chairman of the Conference of Presidents, voiced satisfaction that the debate had helped to clarify the issue for the member organizations and for the Jewish community as a whole. Rabbi Schindler also expressed gratification that all of the participants—despite their differing views on how to resolve the issue—were determined to reach a unified position that would avoid polarizing the American Jewish community and that would also avoid polarization between American Jewry, the world Jewish community, and Israel.

In January, Yehuda Hellman, executive director of the Conference of Presidents and a member of the international steering committee of the World Conference of Jewish Communities on Soviet Jewry, flew to Israel for a seminar on absorption of Soviet immigrants. The seminar was an outgrowth of "Brussels II" (February 1976) and came about because of a formal request made at Brussels that a conference on the absorption of Russian "olim" be held. Reporting back to the Presidents Conference, Mrs. Charlotte Jacobson, chairman of the World Zionist Organization-American Section, noted that while some problems remained and some criticisms were voiced, the 100 Israeli, U.S., European and South American participants left the seminar highly impressed with the Israeli effort to improve "klitah" (absorption) efforts in every way possible, so that the integration of new immigrants to Israel be as smooth and positive as possible.

The inauguration of President Jimmy Carter marked a new phase in Soviet Jewry's struggle to be free. The President underscored the American commitment to human rights in his first address to the American people. In February he sent an eloquent letter of encouragement to Soviet dissident leader Andrei D. Sakharov. In a telegram to the White House on February 18, Rabbi Schindler praised the President, stating: "Your words will be particularly heartening to our brother Jews in the Soviet Union for whom Dr. Sakharov himself has also spoken out with courage and eloquence—those Jews who seek the right of emigration to the Land of Israel; those who seek to study and learn the religious and cultural tradition, so long denied them, of the Jewish people; and those victims of oppression who sit in Soviet detention camps—the Prisoners of Conscience to whom you referred and for whose release you have pledged your good offices."

In March, Rabbi Schindler and Yehuda Hellman flew to Geneva for the semi-annual meeting of the presidium and steering committee of the Brussels World Conference on Soviet Jewry. The meeting opened with expressions of "grave concern" over intensified Soviet government pressure against Jewish activists and dissidents, pressure that exceeded in virulence anything experienced by Soviet Jews since the end of the Stalin era. Delegates expressed particular concern at the ominous message in anti-Semitic articles in the Soviet press and in anti-Semitic television programs and films.

On March 24, Rabbi Schindler, Yehuda Hellman, and Eugene Gold, chairman of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, met with Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance on the eve of his departure for the Soviet Union. Before the meeting, Rabbi Schindler had disclosed that Secretary Vance would be asked to take up with Soviet leaders the issue of Soviet Jewry, especially in view of "the new campaign of vilification against Russian Jews." Speaking at a press conference on March 22, Rabbi Schindler said that the Secretary would be presented with a specific list of hard-core Soviet Jewish refuseniks prepared by the Soviet Jewry research bureau of the NCSJ and would be asked to intervene on their behalf with the Soviet authorities.

After the meeting at the State Department, Rabbi Schindler said he and Mr. Gold were "most pleased" by the Secretary's response to their requests on behalf of the Jews of the USSR. Rabbi Schindler vigorously rejected suggestions that President Carter's criticism of the state of human rights in the USSR had led to mounting pressure against Jews by Soviet authorities, including stepped-up harassment and persecution of Jewish dissidents and emigration activists in the Soviet Union. He noted that the barring of symposia on Jewish culture in the Soviet Union, the screening of anti-Semitic films on Soviet television and beatings of Jews on park benches in Soviet cities all occurred before the President "said a solitary word about Soviet Jews."

Unlike the buoyant optimism expressed by the world Jewish community after

Brussels II, the current year has been a sobering one. The atmosphere in the Soviet Union is such that many Jews live in a state of real fear. Recent arrivals from the USSR report that even in the larger cities many Jews are afraid to leave their homes or send their children to school. Letters from abroad are confiscated, telephones are disconnected, activists are persecuted and subject to arrest and interrogation, many are sentenced to long prison terms. Those seeking to emigrate do so under conditions which daily become more hazardous to themselves, their families and friends. Yet the flame of Jewish consciousness burns still in the far reaches of the USSR. And an aroused world public opinion is still the major hope and safeguard of our brethren in the Soviet Union in their struggle for spiritual and physical survival.

ROMANIAN JEWRY

On August 4, 1976, Rabbi Schindler and Yehuda Hellman travelled to Washington to meet with the new Romanian Ambassador to the United States, Nicolae Nicolae.

One week later, after receiving an official invitation from Bucharest through the U.S. State Department, in accordance with diplomatic protocol, Rabbi Schindler and Mr. Hellman flew to Romania for discussions with government officials and Jewish leaders there. The week-long mission came less than a month before Senate hearings on the renewal of most-favored-nation status (MFN) for Romania, whose performance on emigration must be certified annually by the President (under the Jackson-Vanik amendment to the Trade Act of 1974) to receive the benefits of MFN treatment. Before his departure, Rabbi Schindler said he would discuss the record of Romanian Jewish emigration when he met with members of the Ceacescu government, Communist Party officials and Jewish community leaders, including Chief Rabbi Moshe Rosen.

In Romania, Rabbi Schindler and Mr. Hellman visited synagogues, Talmud Torah classes, old age homes, kosher canteens and other social aid offices of the Romanian Federation of Jewish Communities of which Rabbi Rosen is president. They also met with officials at the U.S. and Israeli Embassies and with Romanian governmental officials, including V. Gigla, the Deputy Foreign Minister; Gheorghe Menciu, head of the Department of Cults; Stefan Andrei, Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party Central Committee; and Deputy Prime Minister Ion Patan. The meetings with these officials were described as having taken place "in a cordial atmosphere."

Upon their return, Rabbi Schindler and Mr. Hellman met with Arthur Hartman, Assistant Secretary of State for Eastern European Affairs, to discuss their visit with him. Then, on September 1, after a full Presidents Conference discussion of the Romanian visit, including reports from the Joint Distribution Committee and HIAS on the condition of Romania's Jews, Rabbi Schindler and Mr. Hellman left for Washington for further meetings with Ambassador Nicolae and with Harry Barnes, the U.S. Ambassador to Romania.

On September 8, Rabbi Schindler gave testimony before the Senate Finance Committee's Subcommittee on International Trade, headed by Sen. Abraham Ribicoff (D.-Conn.). In his statement before the committee, Rabbi Schindler said that while the Conference of Presidents "appreciates the extensive rights" the Romanian Jewish community enjoys "fully on a par with those accorded to her other minority groups," he was nevertheless "distressed to note that emigration expectations have *not* been fulfilled." Therefore, while the Conference of Presi-

dents supported the Administration's proposal to waive the requirements of section 402 of the Trade Act for one more year, he could give the proposal only "qualified endorsement" because "the law's requirement of free emigration has assuredly not been achieved. . . . Many Romanian Jews desiring to be reunited with their families here and elsewhere are denied the right to do so," Rabbi Schindler observed, adding:

"We see this against the background of those considerable rights which are granted to the Romanian Jewish community itself. We see it also in the context of that independent foreign policy which the Romanian government has pursued and which we favor—her efforts to normalize relations with nations outside the Soviet bloc, with our own country and with Israel." Rabbi Schindler stressed that while the Conference of Presidents supported an additional one-year waiver, it did so "with the urgent request that emigration figures be kept under continuing review" and that "our government representatives bend every effort" to make certain that the objective of free emigration "be in fact attained."

In late September, after hearings before both the Senate and the Subcommittee on Trade of the House Committee on Ways and Means, MFN for Romania was renewed. Regrettably, however, since that time, Romanian Jewish emigration figures have once again been lowered. The number of Jews allowed to emigrate in January 1977 was 46, the lowest figure since the signing of the Helsinki agreement and initial extension of MFN to Romania in 1975. The number in February was only 62 and in March 113. It is estimated that about half of the 60,000–70,000 Jews still in Romania wish to emigrate. At the current rate of emigration (approximately 2,000 per year), it would take some 15 years to complete the emigration of Romanian Jewry.

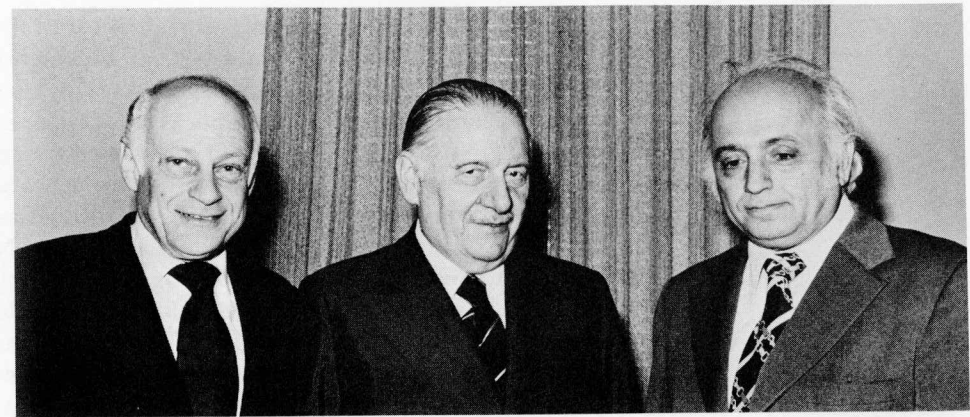
SYRIAN JEWRY

During the year under review the Conference of Presidents undertook a special project on behalf of Syrian Jewry whose results appeared to have a salutary effect in relieving some of the most severe pressures affecting that beleaguered community of 4,500.

In May 1976, Alain Poher, who as president of the French Senate holds the second highest place among all French government officials, came to the United States on a ten-day private visit in his capacity as chairman of the International Committee for the Rescue of Jews in Arab Lands. His purpose: to focus public opinion on the suffering of the Jewish communities in Syria and other Middle East countries. His host in the United States: the Conference of Presidents. On May 4, at a reception in his honor given by the Presidents Conference, the French leader declared: "The time has come to mobilize American public opinion on behalf of Syrian Jewry."

A resistance fighter in World War II and a leading layman in the French Catholic Church, M. Poher said he was undertaking the campaign because the situation of Syrian Jewry had not improved since the Six Day War in 1967, when freedom of movement was restricted and the right of Jews to leave the country was strictly forbidden. "We are determined," M. Poher declared, "to obtain a change of policy on this issue from the Syrian government and to convince President Assad that it is impossible in 1976 to keep people as hostages."

M. Poher's visit, which included meetings with members of the U.S. Congress, helped to dramatize the world-wide concern for the plight of this hostage com-



Alain Poher (center), President of the French Senate and Chairman of the International Committee for the Rescue of Jews in Distress in Arab Lands, on a mission to the United States on behalf of Syrian Jewry, at a reception given in his honor by the Conference of Presidents. With M. Poher are Yehuda Hellman (left), executive director of the Presidents Conference, and Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler (right), chairman.

munity. In November, Richard Murphy, the U.S. Ambassador to Syria, was routinely called home for consultations at the State Department. During his stay, a delegation representing member organizations of the Presidents Conference met with him at the State Department to discuss at length the continuing hardships confronting the Jewish community of Syria.

It is gratifying to report that improvements in the lot of Syrian Jewry have indeed taken place. Reports from visitors to Syria and from State Department sources confirm the lifting of restrictions limiting travel within Syria, employment opportunities, the disposition of property and other areas of daily life. As the period under review drew to a close, the Presidents Conference was involved in efforts to win U.S. government support of a plan to permit a group of young Syrian Jewish women—for whom there are presently no potential Jewish husbands in the country—to emigrate to the U.S. (This plan was put into effect in August 1977.)

The effort to alleviate the situation confronting Syrian Jews continues. While internal restrictions have been eased and obvious harassment has been discontinued, the Jewish population remains hostage to Syrian authorities. Through its member organizations, the Conference of Presidents will keep this issue alive and demand the right of emigration for this tiny and isolated community.

MIDDLE EAST MEMO

During the year under review, nine issues of the "Middle East Memo" were published. An indispensable adjunct to the activities of the Conference of Presidents, the "Middle East Memo" provides editors and editorial writers here and abroad with authoritative, pungently-written fact and comment on events and issues affecting the Middle East. The topicality of the "Middle East Memo" readily lends it to reproduction; many of them found their way in whole or in part into the nation's press. Others provided interpretive background material for hundreds of editorials and columns published on the Middle East situation.

Edited by Richard Cohen, associate executive director of the American Jewish Congress and public relations consultant to the Presidents Conference, the "Middle East Memo" dealt with Egyptian maneuvers in the Security Council; "doves" and "hawks" and the erroneous application of those labels in the context of the Middle East; the necessity for strong anti-boycott legislation (which also appeared as a letter in the New York Times signed by Rabbi Schindler); the confusion surrounding American foreign policy in the Middle East; the hypocrisy of U.N. attacks against Israel (reproduced as an ad in the New York Times); Egypt's staggering domestic problems and the bread riots in the streets of Cairo; the effect of the Arab boycott on American businesses, with clear and concise definitions of the various forms the boycott takes and their implications; the so-called "moderation" of the PLO in light of its refusal to amend its national covenant; and a comprehensive "Middle East news quiz" in which a score of 75 or better qualified one as a member of the editorial staff of *Al Ahram*.

ELECTIONS

In January 1976 Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, was the unanimous choice of the nominating committee (chaired by Arthur J. Levine, president of the United Synagogue of America) and was unanimously re-elected to serve a second one-year term as chairman of the Conference of Presidents.

OBITUARY

During the year under review the Jewish community was saddened by the loss of Dr. Maurice S. Sage, president of the Jewish National Fund. Dr. Sage collapsed shortly after introducing Mrs. Betty Ford at the JNF's gala bicentennial dinner on June 23, 1976. Dr. Sage was formerly president of Mizrachi-Hapoel Hamizrachi and had served as a member of the budget and finance committee of the Presidents Conference. The entire Jewish community joined his family in mourning his loss.

COJO

The Presidents Conference continued its role as an observer at the World Conference of Jewish Organizations (COJO) which met in Jerusalem June 30-July 2, 1976.

May 5, 1978

Rabbi Harold M. Schulweiss
Valley Beth Shalom
15739 Ventura Boulevard
Encino, CA. 91436

Dear Harold:

It was thoughtful of you to send me a copy of your paper, "A Response to the Thirty-Seven." I am grateful to you and want you to know that I share your views.

To my knowledge the rumour you heard is just that, I have not heard anything to bear it out.

With warmest regards, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

788-6000
872-1360



Valley Beth Shalom

15739 VENTURA BOULEVARD
ENCINO, CALIFORNIA 91436

Harold M. Schulweis

Rabbi

April 25, 1978

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex:

Rumour out here has it that some national Jewish organizations are on the brink of endorsing the public statement of the 37 Jewish leaders which was published in the New York Times.

I would like to express my private opinion in opposition to such a decision to go public. I hope, Alex, that you will do whatever you can to forestall such an action. The enclosed expresses my arguments.

Many thanks for your consideration.

Cordially,

Harold M. Schulweis
Rabbi

HMS:std
Enclosure

*Wisdor
wer
Schober*

*TK 7
Stone med.
Br. Boly.*

May 2, 1978

Mr. Martin Strelzer
72 Churchill Road
Cresskill, N.J. 07626

Dear Martin:

Thank you for sharing with me a copy of your recent letter to Al Vorspan. I am grateful for your candor and want to assure you that Al expressed his personal views in signing this manifesto. Of course, as a staff member of the UAHC his private judgments cannot be censored, he is entitled to them and I know you would uphold me in this judgment.

In this connection, you ought to know that a promise was made to Al that the UAHC designation would not be used. He had indicated he was signing as an individual and when the story was first released, in Israel, no organizational designation was given. However, the New York Times picked up the item and on its own chose to indicate the organizational designation and thus violated the promise which had been made to him. He, of course, cannot be held responsible for this action on the part of the Times.

I am grateful for your warm and gracious words in regard to my own efforts in behalf of Klal Yisroel.

With warmest regards, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

cc: Mr. Albert Vorspan

MARTIN STRELZER
72 CHURCHILL ROAD
CRESSKILL, NEW JERSEY 07626

April 26, 1978

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

I am enclosing a copy of a letter I have just sent to Al Vorspan in response to his being a signer of a message published Friday, April 21st in the New York Times.


I am certain when you read it, you will clearly understand my feelings and I do not have to express them again to you.

However, I would like to stress my uneasiness at his listing which could be assumed to state an official position of our Union. I sincerely hope that there could be some way to publicly clarify this.

Thank you for taking the time to consider what I have said.

Most important, let me thank you for myself and the American Jewish Community for all that you have done for us and Israel in the past. My God bless you and keep you strong to continue your work.

Most respectfully,


Martin Strelzer

MS:sg
encl.

MARTIN STRELZER
72 CHURCHILL ROAD
CRESSKILL, NEW JERSEY 07626

April 26, 1978

Albert Vorspan
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021

Dear Al:

I have taken the liberty to address you as Al for we have met on many occasions. Although you might not remember my name I am certain you would recognize my face.

I am active in the U.A.H.C. in various capacities. I am past president of Temple Beth-El in Closter, New Jersey and am now a vice president of Rabbi Zlotowitz's New Jersey - West Hudson Regional Council. Recently I was asked to serve on the R.J.A. Committee that will be tendering a dinner in honor of Rabbi Schindler in June of this year.

I am also heavily involved in Jewish Community Organizations and fund raising for UJA and Israel Bonds. I only mention this background information so that you will understand that I, like you, am deeply concerned with and work for Judaism and the State of Israel.

I have heard you speak many times and have read a great deal of what you have written. Whenever I have heard you speak or read what you have written, I always come away enthused, proud and with a lot more knowledge that I came with. I sincerely thank you for all of that.

I must now tell you that on Friday, April 21st, I was deeply disturbed by the publication in the New York Times of a message of support sent to an Israeli "Peace Group". You and a great many other highly committed American Jews signed that message.

I do not question or argue your motivation nor your right to dissent. I do not even argue most of the points covered in that message.

However, I do find it difficult to comprehend how so many dedicated and deeply committed American Jews of such a

MARTIN STRELZER
72 CHURCHILL ROAD
CRESSKILL, NEW JERSEY 07626

Albert Vorspan
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April 26, 1978

high level of intellect and service could have made such a damaging error in judgment on timing and necessity of public announcement.

There obviously were many long hours of anguished discussions and considerations, for it is academic that a group such as yours would not have come to any expedient decision fully recognizing the importance of the action.

However, in my judgment, at least one highly critical reality seems to have evaded your consideration. That one is the reality of the American political and legislative system. There will be in the very near future some intensely critical legislation coming up before our Congress. That legislation must be decided in favor of Israel.

American support in legislation, funds and philosophy is needed now by Israel as truly never before. Other than the United States, Israel is absolutely without one supporter in the rest of the world. Not because of what she stands for, and not because of what she has done but only because of what she has not got to offer, OIL.

There is an absolute, traceable relationship between the solidarity of the American Jewish Community's support of Israel to the support that legislators feel compelled to give. If our legislators sense a fragmentation of that solid front, they must question their own judgment in continuing to support Israel. They will not perceive or even understand what your message has tried to accomplish but only that you are publicly stating your disagreement and displeasure with Israeli policy.

There will be no second chance!!!

Again let me state my deepest and sincerest admiration, appreciation and respect for each and everyone of the distinguished gentlemen on the list of signors.

Your action has been taken, that cannot be changed.

However, there will be many more opportunities for the American Jewish Community to act on behalf of Israel. I hope with all my heart that at those times your direction

MARTIN STRELZER
72 CHURCHILL ROAD
CRESSKILL, NEW JERSEY 07626

Albert Vorspan
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and implementation will be more in the cause of construction.

I also would like to tell you that I think it was very wrong on your part to be listed in the message as, "Union of American Hebrew Congregations". That lets everyone reading that list assume that you are officially stating a position of our Union. I know that it is not so but most people do not. What the official position of our Union will be in a few months from now remains to be determined. In the meantime it is unfair to allow the American Jewish Community and in particular our own members, misunderstand. Rabbi Prinz was listed as "South Orange, New Jersey". I think you also should have used such a listing.

I look forward to seeing you at some of our functions and hope for your continued good health and strength to carry on the fine work you have done.

Most sincerely,

Martin Strelzer

MS:sg

Suggested Response to the Statement of the Thirty-Seven

The statement of the 37 Jewish academicians, rabbis and institutional professionals published in the New York Times on Passover eve reflects a basic psychological problem of Diaspora Jews, as well as shortcomings of political judgment.

The signers show a peculiarly Jewish-assimilationist need to look good to one's adversary. Their notion that Prime Minister Begin is "making it easier" for those who would jeopardize Israel's security is reminiscent of Jews of an earlier generation in western Europe. Perceiving anti-semitism in the environment, they turned to their fellow Jews asking them to speak softly, be less conspicuous, or step down from "exposed" positions of leadership lest they made it easier for the antisemites. It is a phenomenon as old as anti-semitism itself, but it is particularly jarring that its reappearance in such prominent form had to come in the week of Passover and on the anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto revolt. Many of us had thought for a few inspiring years that the holocaust had put an end to this ancient piece of social pathology.

Is there any question that President Sadat, the Carter administration, the European oil consuming countries or any of Israel's other "friends" would find ample reason to make Israel the culprit in the Middle East even without Mr. Begin's "making it easier" for them? After all, Itzhak Rabin's government, for which there is downright nostalgia these days in Washington, was called intransigent and inflexible in its day. And if the Allon plan for the West Bank was indeed as good as some of today's administration briefers and current columns say it was, why didn't anyone in Washington or in the Arab world take Israel up on it

during the many years when it was on the table ?

Instead, we had in those pre-Begin years the same kinds of pressure on Israel that are being put on the Begin government today. And in the Jewish community we had a group called Breira that was echoing the pressures of those days to include the P.L.O. in the Geneva negotiations, and for a "homeland" for the Palestinians.

Today, both the P.L.O. as a negotiating partner and the creation of an independent state appear to have been dropped from Washington's agenda. Here is where the failure of seasoned political judgment of the 37 comes into play. They appear not to see that the Begin government has immeasurably improved Israel's negotiating leverage by its foreign policy. Instead of being pressed on the P.L.O. and a Palestinian homeland, Israel today is being asked to suspend its settlement activity; and to agree to a formulation for the West Bank and Gaza that comes to eliminating (but does not yet eliminate) the possibility of a separate Palestinian state. In return, Mr. Begin is trying to accommodate the Carter-Sadat formula of Aswan. He disclosed to the Knesset on March 29 that Israel is proposing a formula under which the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza "will have the right to participate in the determination of their future through talks to take place among Egypt, Israel, Jordan and representatives of the Palestinian Arabs."

Mr. Begin's foreign policy also was part of the political environment in which President Sadat sent out his feeler of coming to Jerusalem. There is no way to demonstrate cause and effect, but perhaps the Egyptian President felt that Mr. Begin, having developed unprecedentedly broad and deep support for his

foreign policy, was a worthy negotiating partner.

Whatever has happened since then -- and there is plenty of blame to go around among all involved -- Israel's bargaining position is vastly improved. To be sure, there has been a cost in public opinion support and even in Congressional goodwill. But in politics, as in life, there is no free lunch. National security calls for more than "looking good." It is achieved and sustained through the appropriate use of the available tools for the exercise of power, of which the development and nurturing of public opinion support is an important, but not the only one. The net result so far is that Mr. Begin or the next prime minister of Israel will be in a far better position to negotiate on the basis of the present agenda than on the one with which previous governments had to contend.

These are factors that the 37 seem to have left out in their well-intentioned urge to make Israel and the Jews look good to the American and world environment. And while one must have high respect for the intelligence and the expertise of the 37 in their respective fields, none of them, as Sam Rayburn would have said, has ever been elected to office or carried the responsibility of high public office. And human events have taught us that intelligence does not necessarily go hand in hand with judgment, nor expertise with steadfastness.