

# How Will 72 Election Affect Soviet Jews?

*The brutal suppression by Communists of the Jewish community in Russia, plus the blatant Red support of Arab extremism, are the major reasons for increased support of President Nixon by U.S. Jews*

By ROMAN BRACKMAN

Soviet Jews feel that their destiny will be profoundly affected by the American people's presidential choice next November. Their hopes and fears were voiced by Vitaly Svehinsky, the leader of Soviet Jews, during his recent visit to this country.

Mr. Svehinsky, an accomplished architect, had led the Jewish movement in Russia since its very inception. In February 1971 Mr. Svehinsky had left Russia for Israel, where he was elected to head the committee of activists, who have represented the Jewish movement in major Russian cities and areas.

"So far American Jews have helped us a lot," said Mr. Svehinsky. "Without their support we would have been crushed by the KGB like the Crimean Tartars were before us. How long can American Jews sustain their efforts on our behalf? Will their support prove sufficient to keep the Exodus going in the difficult years ahead? Those are troublesome questions.

"We need a strong helping hand for which the Soviet leaders have a healthy respect. We sense that they have such a respect for Mr. Nixon. Mr. McGovern, on the other hand, has made statements which have been very disturbing to us.

**"We believe that for us the stakes in the next presidential election are too high and the differences between Mr. Nixon and Mr. McGovern are too wide to remain silent. Soviet Jews in Russia will come out for Mr. Nixon, no matter how it will enrage the Kremlin."**

What are the stakes? First, Soviet Jews are concerned with the security of Israel, the haven which they are striving to reach. McGovern's expressed commitment to the security of Israel would be patently hollow if he were to carry out his campaign promises of cuts in our defense budget by some 40 per cent, scaling down carrier forces from 15 to 6, and the unilateral reductions of American commitments in Europe, particularly Greece.

Mr. McGovern has often used such a euphemism as "reorientation of our priorities," which apparently means moving national defense and commitments abroad way down the list of American priorities. How is this gigantic landslide of priorities going to leave the unique American commitment to Israel intact? One is left puzzled.

Secondly, McGovern's promises to withdraw American troops from Viet Nam first and then "beg" for the release of American prisoners of war also has disturbing implications for Soviet Jews. Seeing an American President cast in the role of international beggar is sad, but for Jews in Russia to nourish hope that such a President could bargain effectively with the Kremlin for their release would be naive. The new Soviet tax on exit visas is nothing less than extortion by blackmail or for ransom in hundreds of millions of dollars for the release of what the Soviet rulers consider to be their chattel or state serfs. In the background of this Big Power blackmail the international hijackers, Munich fanatics and other criminals look like small-time operators. To submit to blackmail would mean to encourage it. Strong economic and diplomatic pressure is now in order to persuade the Soviet leaders to change their extortion tactics. Neither preaching of international morality nor begging will suffice.



*Militant Jewish Defense League leader Meir Kahane stages a sit-in at the Soviet Embassy in Washington to protest the plight of Russian Jews.*

"Moscow does not heed tears"—says an ancient Russian proverb as valid today as it was at the time of their extortion tactics. Neither preaching of international morality nor begging will suffice. "Moscow does not heed tears"—says an ancient Russian proverb as valid today as it was at the time of Ivan the Terrible and Stalin the Great.

Thirdly, Jews in Russia fear the effects, which broad changes in U.S. foreign policy as advocated by Sen. McGovern might have on the political climate in Russia. It is no coincidence that the Jewish as well as other freedom movements in Russia have achieved substantial gains during the last four years, while Soviet aggressive designs abroad have been foiled, most notably in the Middle East and Viet Nam.

Russian history, both Tsarist and Soviet, has consistently demonstrated the close relationship of failure in adventures abroad and liberalization at home. Setbacks in the Crimean War, the Russo-Japanese War, the First World War, the Soviet-Polish War and the Soviet-Finnish War have forced Tsars as well as Commissars to make concessions to their people.

During the last four years a profound revolution in international relations has been in progress. Mr. Nixon has steadily been making his way to the very top of the American-Soviet-Chinese triangle and into the comfortable position of arbiter in the Soviet-Chinese conflict, while successfully winding down the Viet Nam war.

In the Middle East, the favorable trend began in September 1970, when the civil war in Jordan left the Arab "Viet Cong" totally annihilated. American forces then were ready to land on the banks of the Suez to protect Israelis from the south, while Israeli tanks stood ready for an assault on the Syrian army in the north. This close American-Israeli co-operation had a solemn effect on Soviet and Syrian leaders.

**Mr. Nixon had passed his Cuba-type test in the Middle East with little fanfare, but the consequences of his resolution during the Jordan crisis have been changing the political face of the**

**Middle East ever since.**

In Cairo, the pro-Soviet Ali Sabry group had been liquidated last year, and recently the Soviet military personnel were ordered out by President Sadat. In the Sudan

the Communist party was completely eliminated and so was Soviet influence. Neither Israeli security nor her interests have been compromised while these events have been taking place.

Mr. Nixon's foreign policy achievement could not but favorably impress both Israeli and Soviet Jews. Israel is "Nixon's country" now. She was not in 1968, when the Israeli press was predicting troubles for Israel as a result of Mr. Nixon's victory. This author's articles in Israeli newspapers were the only exceptions. The most important indication of this change was the recent statement by the Israeli ambassador to the United States, Yitzhak Rabin, who went out of his diplomatic way and made quite a splash in hot political waters in order to praise Mr. Nixon and, in effect, to endorse his candidacy.

Soviet Jews have been endorsing Mr. Nixon all along. Risking imprisonment, they tried to address Mr. Nixon in person while he was in Moscow. They delegated Vitaly Svehinsky to address Mr. Nixon on their behalf. They confirmed Svehinsky's credentials in a telegram from Moscow to the White House. Recently they sent a petition to Mr. Nixon which was signed by 302 heads of families. They know about Mr. Nixon's intervention with Brezhnev on their behalf at the time of the Moscow summit.

Soviet Jews are aware of Brezhnev's annoyance with what he described as intervention in "Soviet internal affairs." They are not discouraged. Whether Mr. Nixon will pursue further his efforts on their behalf, only the future will tell. As for Mr. Nixon's ability to drive a hard successful bargain with the tough Soviet leaders, and for his aversion to begging, he has impressively demonstrated both.

Whether the above considerations will significantly change the attitude of American Jews towards Mr. Nixon, the November results will tell. As skeptics can correctly point out, people do not easily change their ideological or political affiliations, and Jews are of course no exception. In 1968 only a meager 17 per cent of Jewish votes went to President Nixon. Yet some perceptible changes have been taking place.

Max Fisher, a Republican, until recently the lone Jewish wolf of considerable financial substance in the Nixon camp, is no longer so lonely there. Fisher and Sam Housman, who heads the New York Jewish Committee for

Re-election of the President, have said recently that Jewish support of Mr. Nixon has been "excellent" lately.

One dares to suggest that the deep concern of American Jews with the security of Israel and with the fate of Jews in Russia might this time very well make the difference.



*President Nixon, shown here campaigning, stands to pick up a substantial percentage of the Jewish vote, which can help swing pivotal states such as California, New York and Illinois.*

*Mr. Brackman, a native of Moscow, was arrested in 1950 and served in Siberian political prison camps until 1955. He left Russia in 1959 and emigrated to the United States in 1962. He received U.S. citizenship in 1968 and is presently writing a 'dissertation at New York University on Stalin, the Jews and the rise of Israel. His articles have appeared frequently in U.S. and Israeli publications, dealing with U.S. foreign policy. President Nixon and the Middle East. He is a lifelong friend of Mr. Svehinsky, with whom he served in a Siberian prison camp, charged with the same accusations.*