

WASHINGTON LETTER

by Trude B. Feldman
ISRAELITE'S White House Correspondent

Governor Spiro T. Agnew, Republican Vice Presidential Nominee, echoes the opinion of Presidential nominee Richard M. Nixon, that "the Middle East is now more explosive than is Vietnam".

During an exclusive interview at Miami Beach's Delano Hotel on the morning after his nomination, Gov. Agnew said that the "tensions which exist in the Mideast are distressing to everyone", and that it merits a great amount of our time and attention.

"Inasmuch as the violence in the Mideast has been sporadic, rather than sustained, it merits more determined attention on our part to keep it from erupting," Agnew said. "I think the awful sameness of the end products of the widely divergent problems in the Mideast are obvious to all, however, the people involved in the Mideast situation are more amenable to negotiation if a third party intermediary acts skillfully."

Replying to direct query on the subject of the plight of Russian Jewry, Spiro Agnew--the Governor of Maryland - said he is familiar

with the issue because he had conferred with a group of Maryland rabbis in order to support their effort to direct attention to the "wrongs committed against the Jewish people in Russia."

When asked to expand on his proposals to solutions to this problem, Agnew said he has written to President Johnson and to many Congressmen about the situation.

"I suggest we support all attempts to remove any type of discrimination or fears of granting people an equal opportunity, and the right to live in peace under law with justice," Agnew replied. "There is really no activity that can be taken other than to protest to the government, sometimes, the Government only responds to the pressures of the people, and the pressures that we tried to generate were pressures from the total American community, not just the Jewish community, because what is taking place in Russia is not only a slap in the face at the Jewish community, but a slap in the face to America."

Because there appears to

be an emphasis on a Jewish bloc vote -- particularly this year - I asked Gov. Agnew for his thoughts on the subject.

"The Jewish bloc vote disappeared as a vote when racial violence occurred in our cities," he answered. "Now, the Jewish community feels as I do about this problem. They are 100 per cent pro-civil rights. That means equal opportunity and education and jobs and removal of discrimination and the right to demonstrate peacefully. I think there are still some members of the Jewish community who are basically sympathetic to any kind of activity by Negro militants because they are not touched by it, but there are many in the Jewish community - the burned-out-merchants and their relatives - who have had enough of this."

As for President Johnson's selection of Abe Fortas for Chief Justice, Mr. Agnew said he considers it a "good appointment", and that Fortas will make an "excellent" Chief Justice. He added that Fortas has proven himself to be a "pragmatic and extremely able judge and will do a service to our country."

Asked to comment on the prevalent anti-Nixon feeling among the Jewish population Gov. Agnew said he is aware of such a "whispering campaign", but because the Jewish Community "in-

sists on being informed," that when they discover Nixon's "articulate and forthright statements on the issues," they will be able to "analyze his views, and then they will reject any preconceived opinion." Agnew went on to say that there is no foundation for

such a whispering campaign. "I suppose the feeling arises from the fact that most of the so-called liberal establishment does not particularly like a moderate candidate in the Republican Party, but I don't think it is justified," he said. "Nixon's record in Congress is

certainly not a conservative-reactionary record and his record in the Senate indicates an awareness and a concern for people. He is a good, solid man who is honestly interested in people and in minority groups. He understands the sensitivity to bias.

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