

Question of Conscience

By Jack Seigel

Some time ago, Leonard Bernstein, the eminent conductor-composer-pianist, had a party in his New York apartment to raise funds for the defense of the Black Panthers. This action raised a hue and cry and Mr. Bernstein in a special letter to the Jewish Press explained his actions. He said he knew there was an anti-Israel attitude among Black Panthers, if not anti-Semitism. He did not have to agree, he said, with the program of the Panthers but thought they had a right to defend their positions, legally. And it was to this matter that he lent himself.

So what does one do, if one is a Jew, about a group of people, with a political platform in which there is a call to support Palestinian guerrillas, a program in which the exiled Minister of Information, Eldridge Cleaver includes an attack on what he called "Kosher Nationalism."

Before Cleaver fled this country, he made a public statement that the Arabs and the Jews would get along, if let alone. Has his change of heart come from a deep consideration of all the political, ethical and more problems existing between the Arabs and the Israelis? Or is it a care for the feelings of his hosts, the Algerians, who are Arabs.

Living in the third world, which is what certain militants and radicals call part of the globe not identified with either the United States or the Soviet Union, one can change a point of view. But the Third World itself is fractured, with constant coups d'etat, with political attitudes dependent on whether the people are Moslem, Christian, (Protestant or Catholic), on whether the patron country is the United States, Russia, France or England. Nigeria is a case in point, with Russia and England openly supporting Algeria and France (and possibly South Africa) helping Biafra. The convolutions are varied and full of surprises.

One cannot separate what is going on in this country with what is happening elsewhere. So we come back to the same question and to the famous statement by Voltaire: "I disagree with you but defend to the death your right to say it." The Panthers are one expression of the ferment among black people. They are militant and subscribe to the use of force, but in self-defense, as they see it. They have a program which calls for a change in the American political structure, possibly along Marxist lines. They do not believe black people will get justice in the United States, which can explain, if not necessarily justify, their behavior in courts.

We must never forget the lesson of Germany. The Nazis' first target was the Jews, and then dissidents of every demonation. And it CAN happen here. It could start with the Panthers. Regardless of their program, with which we can disagree strongly, they are entitled to the full benefit of the law. When this requires money, it should be found for them, even as Leonard Bernstein did.

We, as Jews, can do no less.

JERUSALEM (WNS) -- Iraq was reported to have eased its restriction on its small Jewish community by cancelling two laws that limited members of the Jewish community in their dealing with Government agencies and by providing that Iraq would look after Jews who have been deprived of their citizenship.

ISRAELI BUDGET

(Continued from Page 1) explained that the Government's economic policy was "designed to curb" the drain of hard currency and "avoid the dangers" arising from the decline in foreign currency reserves which have dwindled to less than \$400 million. The reserve has been shrinking at a million dollars a day rate recently and the total is now \$100 million below what economists said was the danger level for the nation.

The gap in the balance of payments reflected in the drop in currency reserves is again expected to be enormous, the Finance Minister said. It will have to be bridged as in the past through grants and loans from foreign governments and international agencies, individuals and Jewish agencies abroad and by West German reparations to individuals for sufferings and losses endured during the Nazi regime.

Defense expenditures total 56 percent of the budget, a record \$1.171 billion. Indirect military costs add about another \$100 million to the figure. The nation has to spend \$650 million in foreign currency for the direct defensive needs with local resources used for the indirect costs.

The defense budget has rocketed up during the last few years from \$420 million in fiscal 1966, the last pre-Six-Day War year to over the \$1 billion mark in fiscal 1969. Costs include military hardware plus funds to hold the occupied lands and even Arab terrorists held prisoners (Our World, newsletter of the Keren Hayesod, quoted official sources as reporting that the 2,800 terrorists, including 65 women, in jail cost Israel about \$4 million.)

Despite the record outlay for defense, Mr. Sapir said Israel had to maintain its present level of social services and education and ab-

sorb an estimated 50,000-60,000 new immigrants this year. The budget allocates \$91 million for immigrant housing over the initial absorption costs which are borne by the Jewish Agency.

(The Jewish Agency was drawn up a \$380 million budget for fiscal 1970, \$50 million higher than the previous year. The expenditures include \$230 million for absorption of immigrants, \$50 million for education and \$30 million for land settlements. The Agency estimates it costs \$15,000 to bring in and absorb a single immigrant family.)

To meet the needs for defense, social services and education, the budget calls for a cut from \$255 million to \$221 million for fiscal 1970 for new development plans such as road construction, electric power, postal and telephone services and water pipelines.

As the budget was presented to the Knesset, the Central Bureau of Statistics reported a drop of 0.2 percent in the cost of living for January, due mainly to a decline in the price of clothing and footwear.

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