

Israel Round-Up

BY DAVID ARTZIEL

Israel is hopeful that the two-year - old cease fire will be maintained through the coming year, enabling the country to concentrate on internal issues. Egypt's ouster of the Soviet military advisers this summer gives good grounds for this optimism: without close Russian support Egypt is unlikely to begin a new round of fighting, or even provoke limited engagements which could quickly escalate out of control. Israel has repeatedly warned that it will not be dictated to as to the scope of hostilities -- and with the Soviet gone there would be little to stop Israel taking the initiative if Egypt starts a localized engagement on the Suez Canal. Egypt, it is thought here, is fully aware of this.

Nevertheless, everyone here is aware of the possibility of a change in U.S. policy after the elections, and faintly apprehensive on this score. The new Administration -- whatever the party -- will doubtless undertake a review of foreign policy early in its term and may decide to launch a new diplomatic initiative in the Middle East. As far as Israel is concerned any change in the U.S. position would be for the worse. Israel would like to see the present situation continue until the Egyptians tire of it, and, with their war option closed by U.S. military aid to Israel and

their hope of an imposed settlement dashed by Washington's refusal to negotiate the matter with Moscow, they decide to try the only untried course -- negotiations.

On the home front, 5733 will be a pre-election year -- or quite possibly an actual election year. The poll is scheduled for next fall (1973) but it may well be advanced to the spring. Mrs. Meir's four-party coalition is already showing signs of splitting apart - mainly on state- and - religion issues.

The party strong man, Pinhas Sapir, Minister of France has announced his intention to resign so often and so forcefully that people are beginning to believe him. At any rate, he will not go before doing his utmost to ensure that Moshe Dayan does not become Premier. Dayan -- together with Ben-Gurion -- led the breakaway Rafi party which split from Labor in the sixties, and Sapir has never forgiven him. The 2 men are divided on issues too -- in particular on the all - important issue of defense and security where Dayan is a "hawk" and Sapir a "dove." Sapir is concerned above all that a large Jewish majority be preserved in the State of Israel, and for that reason he advocates returning most of the administered areas.

Dayan sees the people of the territories, not as a growing threat to the Jewish character of the State, but as a bridgehead to peace. The Labor Party is divided on domestic issues too, and these divisions will come increasingly to the fore as the year wears on. The name of Yitzhak Ben-Aharon, Secretary-General of the Histadrut and stormy petrel of Labor politics, is going to be heard of increasingly. He is fighting for a return to a purer socialism, with tighter control on private enterprise. He wants to see "a war economy," with the managerial cadres of the expense account cut down to size. Ben Aharon enjoys massive popularity among the workers and the poor, and healthy animosity from the majority of his party colleagues.

The main opposition party, Gahal, is also in disarray. Gahal is an electoral bloc composed of Menahem Begin's Herut and the Liberal Party (formerly the General Zionists); but the two are uneasy bedfellows in a marriage of convenience whose sole purpose is to create "a viable alternative" to Labor. This summer Gahal nearly

split apart over the Liberals' support of a Labor bill for electoral reform.

On the other hand, the Government has become more sensitive to social injustices -- thanks in no small measure to the Black Panthers -- and has already begun active vigorously to alleviate the worst problem of all, the housing shortage, as the elections approach, more efforts will not doubt be channeled in this direction.

BOSTON (WNS) -- Six Boston area rabbis, all members of the Massachusetts Board of Rabbis, were among 29 persons arrested at the John F. Kennedy Federal Building during a demonstration against the Vietnam War.

WASHINGTON (WSN) -- By a vote of 305-65 the House of Representatives has authorized the expenditure of \$85 million to help resettle Soviet Jews in Israel. An appropriation now has to be voted.

NEW YEAR GREETINGS

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