

# DIVORCES A MAJOR CONCERN TO CONSERVATIVE SYNAGOGUES

KIAMESHA LAKE, N.Y. -- To the synagogue's problem of "that vanishing institution, the Jewish family," once the bulwark of Jewish life, must not be added the phenomenon of the rapidly growing divorce rate and its result -- the single parent.

This, the "chilling impact" of the declining birthrate and the increasing age level of congregational membership cry out for top priority action, according to Arthur J. Levine, president of the United Synagogue of America, the association of Conservative synagogues and the largest Jewish congregational organization in the world.

Little or nothing has been done about the problem of integrating the single parent into congregational life, Mr. Levine declared, "except by offering it lower congregational dues status."

"To maintain a sense of Jewish identification in a home where there are two parents sharing the responsibility is difficult enough," he declared in his presidential address, marking the end of his second and final two-year term.

"How much more difficult is it when there is only one. The problems do not increase arithmetically but geometrically. I would suggest that it is not only more difficult but impossible."

Mr. Levine declared that it is the task both

of the rabbis and the lay leaders of the Conservative organization "to seek out these families and offer them guidance and support necessary for their survival not just as people but also as Jews."

Mr. Levine expressed disappointment that the United Synagogue had not been able to "create a meaningful pilot program for the older members of our congregations."

If the percentage of older people was high in preceding years, "it is higher today," he said. "In 1972, 32 per cent of our membership was over 55. Today that figure will be closer to 38 per cent."

He deplored the fact that the synagogue was not attracting young people "in sufficient numbers."

All these problems, however, "pale in comparison to the chilling impact" of the declining birthrate, Mr. Levine declared. This, and the growing number of intermarriages, he said, can cause a serious erosion in the Jewish population.

If intermarriage cannot be stemmed, he said, then "we must, at the very least, persuade the non-Jewish partner to convert." He urged a reexamination of the Conservative Movement's conversion policies and techniques to provide greater uniformity and better availability.

Carthage, Missouri, June 29, 1977

Prime Minister of Israel  
H. E. Menahem Begin

On behalf of sixty five refugees and my brother Le Dinh Quy I thank you, your government and the people of Israel for your kindness and hospitality. Your granting political asylum to these whom others had rejected has proved once again the courage and integrity of your nation. It is an honorable example to all the nations in the free world.

It is my understanding that this gesture of humanitarian concern was your first official act as Prime Minister. God bless you,  
Le Dinh Cu  
Refugee

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Jerusalem, July 5, 1977  
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Dear Mr. Cu:

Thank you sincerely for your warm words communicated to me through our Consul-General in Los Angeles. I wish you to know that as Prime Minister of Israel, the Jewish State, I could not do less than reach out to the helpless Vietnamese refugees rescued on the high seas by an Israeli vessel and offer them a haven in our country. It was indeed, my first act upon assuming the premiership. As a nation which for centuries has been the victim of persecution and holocaust we, the Jewish people, have known what it is to be homeless and hopeless. We, perhaps more than any other nation, know the meaning of the word refugee. Hence the act of our government and people in coming to the aid of your Vietnamese compatriots among whom is your own brother. We are doing the best we can to make their stay among us as pleasant and as comfortable as possible. Let us all work for a better world in which all nations will live in security, democracy and liberty.  
Menachem Begin.

# SOVIETS WOULD WELCOME RENEWAL OF RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL

By David Horowitz

UNITED NATIONS (WUP) -- A Soviet official gave a clear hint to your correspondent here this week that, in anticipation of an overall Middle East settlement at Geneva, Moscow would welcome a renewal of diplomatic relations with Israel so that the USSR, as co-chairman with the U.S. of the Conference, could sit in as an impartial adjudicator.

Rumors have abounded to this effect during the past several months but nothing definite as yet has eventuated. Apparently, the Kremlin leaders are hoping that the Israelis will make the first move towards normalization of relations and in this regard they await the outcome of the May 17 elections.

To justify his view, the Soviet official referred to two official USSR documents circulated here by the USSR Mission in recent days. One contained Leonid Brezhnev's speech at the Kremlin dinner honoring President Hafez al-Asad of Syria; the other reproduced an Izvestia article on the Middle East, written by the political correspondent A.

Bovin.

Taken as a whole, both the Brezhnev speech and the Izvestia article were unusually mild in tone as far as Israel was concerned. On the other hand, the Arabs came in for some harsh criticism.

In referring to the general political developments around the world, Brezhnev, in the full hearing of Assad, said that "the Middle East is no exception" as to what has been going on in other regions of the world. "The events (in the Mideast)," he said, "developed turbulently and were often dramatic. There are also zigzags at times in the policy of separate Arab countries..."

Of course, he did note that "all peaceful nations strongly urge the liquidation of the Middle East seat of tensions" and for "the removal of the consequences of the Israeli aggression. We stand for a radical settlement; our proposals on the score are balanced and, what is more important, honest."

Chairman Brezhnev went on to state that "there can be no lasting peace which would flout the vital interests of any State or people in the Middle East. This refers, above all, to the Arab Palestinian people, who are waging a courageous battle to set up their own state. This refers, of course, also to the other peoples of the given region, including the people of the State of Israel. They all have the right to state independence and secure existence."

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