

Joint Chiefs' Chairman Sparks a Furor With Remarks About 'Jewish Influence'

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WASHINGTON—Gen. George S. Brown, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is in serious political trouble as a result of comments he made concerning "the Jewish influence in this country."

The General's comments, made Oct. 10 at Duke University and disclosed yesterday by The Washington Post, provoked strong protest by Jewish organizations, generated criticism on Capitol Hill and brought the 56-year-old officer a stern rebuke from President Ford. White House press secretary Ron Nessen told reporters President Ford "considers Gen. Brown's remarks ill-advised and poorly handled" and "feels very strongly" about it.

The political uproar threatened to reduce the Chairman's effectiveness and stature as the nation's top-ranking military man and immediately triggered speculation that his job might be in jeopardy. At the Pentagon, the betting was that Gen. Brown whose two-year term as chairman started in July would be able to survive. But civilian and military Defense Department officials deeply embarrassed by Gen. Brown's comments weren't certain. "There's a real question whether he can ride it out" said one official, "it depends on how strong the pressure is."

Gen. Brown spent much of the day issuing apologies through Pentagon spokesmen for "unfortunate and ill-considered" comments that "don't represent my convictions."

Answer to a Question

Behind all this furor is Gen. Brown's response to a question concerning the Mideast following a speech at Duke:

"Now, in answer to the question would we use force in the Middle East. I don't know—I hope not. We have no plans to. It is conceivable, I guess. It would be almost as

bad as the seven days in May. You can conjure up a situation where there is another oil embargo and people in this country aren't only inconvenienced and uncomfortable but suffer.

"They get tough-minded enough to set down the Jewish influence in this country and break that lobby. It is so strong, you wouldn't believe now. We have the Israelis coming to us for equipment. We say we can't possibly get the Congress to support a program like this and they say, 'Don't worry about the Congress. We will take care of the Congress.'"

"This is somebody from another country, but they can do it. They own, you know, the banks in this country, the newspapers. Just look at where the Jewish money is. . . ."

Gen. Brown acknowledged that these comments make it "awfully easy to conclude, for anyone who wants to, that the Chairman is anti-Semitic. That's just not true."

Words Came Out "Poorly"

In a telegram to the national commander of the Jewish War Veterans, Gen. Brown said: "In a rather rambling treatment of a difficult and complex subject the words came out very poorly. I share with you and all America the pride you and members of your organization rightfully feel in their demonstrated patriotism and sacrifices, and I am well aware of the tremendously important contributions to our country made by its citizens of Jewish faith. . . . I deeply regret that my poorly articulated statements have offended a segment of the American population."

Defense Secretary James Schlesinger, who recommended Gen. Brown for the Chairmanship of the Joint Chiefs earlier this year, was said by an aide to believe that Gen. Brown's remarks were "unfortunate and regrettable." But Pentagon spokesman William Beecher said Mr. Schlesinger "continues to have confidence in the Chairman." By way of further explanation of the General's remarks, Mr. Beecher said that they came "at the end of a long day."