

Ford Scores General On Jewish Remarks

By Michael Getler

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President Ford yesterday rebuked Air Force Gen. George S. Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for remarks made by Brown last month—and reported yesterday—complaining about Israeli and Jewish influence in the United States.

White House press secretary Ron Nessen said that "the President considers Gen. Brown's remarks ill-advised and poorly handled," and that they "in no way represent" Mr. Ford's views "or the views of any senior officer of his administration, military or civilian."

Nessen told reporters the President "feels very strongly" about this matter and had communicated his reaction to Brown's superior, Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger.

Asked if Brown, who took over as chairman only four months ago, would remain in his presidentially appointed post, Nessen said he had heard of no plans to replace him.

Earlier in the day, Pentagon



GEN. GEORGE S. BROWN
...remarks "ill-considered"

spokesman William Beecher told reporters Schlesinger regarded the general's comments as "unfortunate and regrettable," but said the Defense chief continues to retain confidence in Brown.

Brown yesterday, in a statement issued by the Pentagon

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and in a telegram to the Jewish War Veterans, apologized for his comments, saying he deeply regretted his remarks at Duke University law school on Oct. 10 and that they "certainly do not represent my convictions."

Despite Brown's apology, however, the four-star general has suddenly become the center of a major problem for the Ford administration.

Within the Pentagon, Brown has been held in high regard and there was hope that this episode would blow over and that the general could stay on as the nation's highest-ranking military officer.

But within the administration and in some quarters of Congress, questions about Brown's future have been raised, focusing not only on his comments but on whether his voicing them in public reflects badly on his abilities as chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

In general, administration sources believed Brown's future is "tenuous," dependent on how events unfold. There was concern that his comments could complicate U.S. Middle East policy by raising false conceptions among Arab leaders. There was also some concern about the effect on Jewish members of the armed forces.

Within the Pentagon, where officials both publicly and privately said there had never been a hint of anti-Semitism in Brown's previous comments or actions, there was a sense of bewilderment at what had happened.

Brown's comments at Duke about Jewish influence, in general, were directed at the strength of the Israeli lobby in getting its way in the U.S. Congress, a point which has been made in milder language by some U.S. legislators.

But then Brown made an additional statement that the Jews, "own, you know, the banks in this country, the newspapers. You just look at where the Jewish money is in this country." It was that comment, widely viewed as an ethnic slur, which senior officials in and out of the Pentagon and White House said yesterday sent shock waves through the Ford administration.

At another point, during a question and answer session at the Duke appearance, Brown suggested that if another oil embargo caused real suffering in this country, Americans might get "tough-minded enough to set down the Jewish influence in this country and break that lobby."

The publication of his comments in The Washington Post yesterday provoked a stream

of criticism of Brown, who has had a distinguished military career.

Rep. Samuel S. Stratton (D-N.Y.)—a senior member of the House Armed Services Committee—sent Brown a telegram saying his comments "betrayed a dangerous and out-moded kind of thinking" which Stratton said "cannot help but cast very grave doubts on your ability" to continue as chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

Sen. Jacob K. Javits (R-N.Y.), himself a Jew, said he was asking Chairman John C. Stennis (D-Miss.) of the Senate Armed Services Committee "to look into this whole episode," which Javits called "a matter of utmost gravity."

Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.) called for Brown's immediate resignation, claiming his statement that Jews own the banks and the newspapers in this country "betrays an appalling ignorance. Almost precisely the reverse is true," Proxmire said.

Proxmire, expected to be new chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, said, "There is probably no industry in this country that has more consistently and cruelly rejected Jews from positions of power and influence than commercial banking."

Sen. Clifford P. Case (R-N.J.) said, "There is no doubt

that even without Israel, the United States and other Western countries would still be under severe pressure by the Arab states, backed up by the Soviet Union."

In his statement yesterday, Brown said: "I deeply regret my remarks at Duke University... They were both unfortunate and ill-considered and certainly do not represent my convictions."

"In particular," Brown said, "the remarks might mistakenly lead to the wholly erroneous inference that American citizens and groups do not enjoy in this nation the privilege of expressing their views forcefully. What are called pressures lie at the very heart of democracy. We in defense know that; we experience pressure from contractors; pressures from those opposed to defense expenditures; pressures from foreign governments."

"Moreover," Brown continued, "my comments could be read to suggest the American Jewish community and Israel are somehow the same."

"Americans of Jewish background have an understandable interest in the future of Israel parallel to similar sentiments among other Americans, all of whom at one time or another trace their descent to other lands."

"I do in fact appreciate the great support and deep interest in the nature of our security problems and our defenses that the American Jewish community has steadily demonstrated," Brown said, "and I want to re-emphasize that my unfounded and all-too-casual remarks on that particular occasion are wholly unrepresentative of my continuing respect and appreciation for the role played by Jewish citizens, which I have just reiterated to the Jewish War Veterans."

The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the Jewish service organization, also called for Brown's dismissal. That organization charged that the general's comments "are not only false but contemptible and have an illiterate odor of prejudice and malice." Similar comments came from the American Jewish Congress.