

'Jewish Lobby' Part Of American Texture

Second of two articles

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The "Jewish lobby" now operating on Capitol Hill is perhaps the most effective ethnic lobby ever assembled in Washington.

Assessments of its influence vary, however, upon who is looking at it, and how.

Gen. George S. Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, implied that it was much too powerful when, at a speech recently, for which he later apologized, he said that "it's so strong you wouldn't believe now."

Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) thinks "it's a strong lobby. But there are other strong lobbies, too"

LOBBY, From A1

"Considering the numbers that we are in a country of 200 million," Bookbinder told them, "I think we pull our weight nicely."

"We use our resources effectively and thank God we've learned how to use them effectively. That is, for the numbers that we are, we get pretty good results."

"But it would be a terrible oversimplification and it would be very much a disservice to the things we believe in if we felt that in fact we controlled or we determined what our government wants."

"At any time when our government or our country believes that our interests in the Middle East are not consistent with our American interests, we don't have that much power that we can keep America from making that judgment."

"So our objective is always to help . . . Americans understand that the things we believe in are, in fact, good things, right things

Sen. Frank Moss (D-Utah) thinks "it's strong and persuasive, but I just don't think it's overbearing."

Sen. James Abourezk (D-S.D.) doesn't agree. Abourezk, the only senator of Arab descent, says, "The Israeli lobby is overwhelmingly powerful here on Capitol Hill."

An unusual glimpse of how persons within the lobby regard their work came in March, 1972, when Hyman Bookbinder, Washington representative of the American Jewish Committee, briefed an assemblage of committee members who had come to a private meeting here.

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and consistent with the goals of this country. . ."

That, in sum, is what the "Jewish lobby" in Washington is all about.

That is the lobby Gen. Brown was describing when he said a new oil embargo might lead Americans to "get tough-minded enough to set down the Jewish influence in this country and break that lobby."

"It's so strong you wouldn't believe now," Brown said. "We have the Israelis coming to us for equipment. We say we can't take care of the Congress, support a program like that."

"They say, 'Don't worry about the Congress. We'll take care of the Congress.' Now this is somebody from another country, but they can do it. . ."

While Brown was wrong in his remarks that followed—that "Jews control the banks and newspapers in this country"—he was not wrong about the strength of support in Congress that Israel-oriented legislation has drawn.

Whether anything is wrong with that—as Brown

implied at first, and then later took back—is quite another thing.

"There's absolutely nothing wrong with American Jews trying to appeal to Congress to urge the United States government to take a position of helpfulness to Israel," said Isaiah L. (SI) Kenen, head of the "Jewish lobby" here. "We have a right to petition our government under the Constitution."

And petition he does, through the organization, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, with its \$250,000 annual budget and 17 staffers, and through the national Jewish organizations like the B'nai B'rith, American Jewish Commit-

tee, American Jewish Congress and other organizations.

Kenen came to Washington in 1950 to begin his lobbying operation because, he says, "while the government of the United States was friendly toward Israel, it was always reluctant to initiate programs of assistance to Israel because it feared the reaction of the Arab states."

The fear, he said, was of what the Arabs might do with their oil, and of the Soviet Union's ambitions in the Middle East. "Ever since Israel was established," he said, "it has been a victim of the Cold War."

Kenen's presence, of course, also countered what many consider the most powerful lobby in the nation, that of the oil companies, which often has differed with the Israelis on American policy in the Middle East.

Israel was in dire economic straits when he first came to Washington, says Kene, the 600,000 people there having absorbed 650,000 refugees from Hitler's Europe, and he asked the then-administration for help for Israel.

"Their answer," he said, "was that the Arab states don't ask for our assistance—we'd rather the initiative come from Congress."

And that is where the initiative has come in the ensuing years.

In the most recent issue of his weekly newsletter,

"Near East Report" (which is sent to every member of Congress, as well as to 27,000 subscribers), Kenen notes that:

"During the last five years there have been many pro-Israel resolutions and declarations circulated on the hill, and the number of co-sponsored in the Senate has generally totaled 70 or more."

"On the House side, declarations always have had a clear majority, sometimes garnering two-thirds of the number."

"House support reached a peak last December, when 364 representatives approved the administration's \$2.2 billion Emergency Security Assistance Act for military grants and credits to Israel."

Kenen is the focus of the lobbying effort, and he has cultivated easy access to most members of the House and Senate.

The Israeli embassy here needs to do no hard lobbying, as such, with Kenen's organization in operation.

Although the embassy would not talk about Gen. Brown's complaint, recent Israeli ambassadors have been notable social figures in Washington, exchanging visits with senators and congressmen—as other ambassadors do.

A few senators have complained loudly about Kenen's success—or, rather, the success of Israeli-oriented

legislation. Principal among them has been Sen. J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark.), chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, who was defeated in the Arkansas Democratic primary this year, and Abourezk.

In a recent speech, Fulbright assailed his fellow legislators as being "uncritical" in supporting legislation to aid Israel, and said that was responsible for "the enormous distortion of American interests in our present course."

"Endlessly pressing the United States for money and arms—and invariably getting all and more than she asks—Israel makes bad use of a good friend."

Said Abourezk: "I think what Gen. Brown said with

regard to the Israeli military attaches telling him not to worry about Congress because they've got that taken care of is very accurate.

"I can't think of a piece of legislation or an amount of money that the Congress would reject if it was for Israel's benefit," he said.

Abourzek said that during last year's debate on the \$2.2 billion in aid for Israel, "Fulbright and I were up there trying to bring about some sort of moderation and reason, and a senior senator came up to me and said, 'Well, Jim, left me tell you. You're losing this vote for one major reason: the Jews vote in this country and the Arabs don't.'"

Abourzek is right about that. There was about 1.5 million people in this country of Arab descent, compared with about 6 million Jews, and the Jews vote far more heavily than any other group.

Although Jews make up about 3 per cent of the population, because some other groups tend not to vote and the Jewish group's heavy voting, they cast about 4 per cent of the vote nationally. The extra one per cent can be crucial in major electoral-vote states, where Jews tend to live. The Jewish vote was considered particularly crucial, for instance, in the 1960 presidential victory of John F. Kennedy over Richard M. Nixon.

Of perhaps greater significance, however, is the kind of voters Jews are. Demographic data show that, as a group, Jews are the best-educated Americans, the most affluent, the most professional. Further, they tend to be disproportionately active in politics.

And, to the extent that the Jewish lobby is effective, that is the reason. When the lobby feels a particular senator or a congressman is needed to back a resolution or piece of legislation, letters and calls start coming from constituents back home.

The system—not used until recently by Jewish lobbyists here—is much the same as that used by other lobbying groups for years; by the

National Rifle Association, as a case in point.

Sen. Floyd K. Haskell (D-Colo.) notes that, although his state has few Jews, when there is legislation pending that matters to them, they are his most voluminous correspondents.

"They're just very articulate folks," he says, adding that when the letters come, they do not appear to be orchestrated, "and I can tell when there has been orchestration."

The way the Jewish lobby operates is that Kenen's group, AIPAC, takes the lead on Capitol Hill. He and/or his legislative liaison, Kenneth Wollack, know where most of the legislators stand or are likely to stand.

They, in turn, are backed up by AIPAC's resources and by other organizations that can mobilize voters and campaign contributors around the country. Some of the help calls originate from activist staffers who work on the Hill (some of them non-Jewish), the lead members of whom over the past session have been Mark Talisman, an aide to Rep. Charles Vanik (D-Ohio); Richard N. Perle, an aide to Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.), and particularly Morris L. Amitay, an aide to Sen. Abraham A. Ribicoff (D-Conn.).

Kenen will be retiring in April, and Amitay will become AIPAC's executive director as well as editor of Near East Report.

In addition to the Hill staffers and Bookbinder (who has good sources in the executive branch) are Herman Edelsberg of the B'nai B'rith International Council, David Brody of the Anti-Defamation League, Olya Margolin of the National Council of Jewish Women, and Lawrence Rubin of the American Jewish Congress.

As with all lobbies, mailing lists are vital.

Amitay has told this writer that "you use the traditional tactics of the democracy for making elected representatives know of constituents' feelings: letters, calls."

When he was deeply in-

involved in aligning support for the Jackson amendment to aid Soviet Jewry, Amitay said:

"There are now a lot of guys at the working level up here, who happen to be Jewish, who are willing to make a little bit of extra effort and to look at certain issues in terms of their Jewishness, and this is what has made this thing go very effectively in the last couple of years. These are all guys who are in a position to make the decisions in these areas for these senators. You don't need that many to get something done in the Senate.

"All you need is a certain commitment to get something done and if guys are willing to put time into that instead of a million other things they have to do, if they're willing to make a couple of calls, if they're willing to become involved, you can get an awful lot done just at the staff level . . .

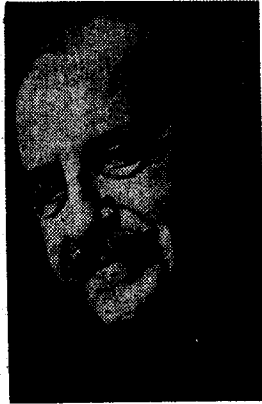
"The senators have a million things to do and they'll take the recommendation [of their administrative assistants] most times.

"With a senator from the Far West, we won't bother on something like the Jackson amendment. But if we get a senator from an industrial state, a state with any sizeable Jewish population, and he doesn't come out, we don't let him get away with it. That's when we call for outside help."

When the word goes out for help, senators or congressmen can find themselves deluged with calls and letters.

Amitay, Perle and the Jewish organizations mounted so much support behind the Jackson amendment that 78 senators co-sponsored the legislation, despite the firm opposition of the administration.

The Hill staffers have sensitized most senators' administrative aides to key Jewish issues. They downplay the importance of money from Jewish contributors (Jews give more than half the large contributions to Democratic campaigns, a



REP. JOHN BRADEMAs

ISAIAH L. KENEN

... is a lobby necessary when an issue gets 364 votes?

survey by this writer has indicated), saying that, rather, it is the kind of constituents the Jews are—people the legislators cannot ignore.

These Jewish constituents work hard at politics. Says Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) of his Jewish constituents: "The Jewish people are outspoken, they're active in politics, they believe very strongly in what they believe in, they're tough competitors."

Part of the activism stems from the ashes of World War II. The horrors of the Nazi era have tended to activate the American Jewish community in behalf of fellow Jews who live in less fortunate conditions — as they have activated many, non-Jewish Americans.

The lobbyists—and those lobbied upon—tend to agree that the lobby succeeds only because its aims are in America's interests.

A concomitant of that is that congressional opinion on Israel-oriented bills reflects not just what the Jews of America believe, but what Americans believe.

Rep. John Brademas (D-Ind.), whose state has few Jews, says, "Many Americans, of the Jewish faith and of non-Jewish faiths, have strong links with Israel that they don't have with the Arab states.

"For one reason, Israel is a parliamentary democracy, a constitutional democracy. Second, the United States played a historic role in helping bring Israel into being. Third, many Americans

are of the Jewish religious faith. Fourth, many Americans who are not Jewish nonetheless have a sense of identification with Jews as a product, in large part, of the interfaith relationships that have gone on in most communities in this country.

"There's no corresponding linkage between the United States and the Arab world. That's just a matter of fact.

"Then I think the history of persecution of Jews under the Nazis has left a great legacy of concern in the United States that, in part, contributed to our role in helping the State of Israel come into being.

"Coupled with that is the fact that the religious links between American Christians and American Jews are close. People talk about the Hebrew-Christian religion; they don't talk about the Moslem-Christian religion. They read from the Old and New Testaments, not from the Koran.

"It's built into the very fabric of American religious, social and political life."

Brademas feels that a lobby isn't even necessary when an issue gets 364 votes, as did the \$2.2 billion in emergency aid for Israel last December.

"You have to have a compelling case—morally, legally, and politically. But it still is sometimes essential to have an effective lobbying operation in order to win the day. In other words, being right is not always enough."

Not only is being right not enough, it is helpful to have support from both liberal and

conservative wings of Congress. Through happenstance, the cause of Israel has attracted both. Many liberals have felt strongly about Israel for humanitarian reasons, while many conservatives have been equally as strong because Israel represents a bulwark against the Soviet Union's influence in the Middle East.

An interesting corollary of that has been the changed posture of liberal intellectuals on America's defense establishment. In some cases motivated by their feelings toward Israel, some of these intellectuals—who so passionately argued for America to back out of Vietnam—have been just as keenly pushing for a strong America that can help Israel in its times of need.

What happens to a legislator when he doesn't agree with the Jewish lobby? It depends on whom one talks with.

Utah's Moss strongly opposed inserting the issue of Soviet emigration into a trade bill, and refused to co-sponsor the Jackson amendment.

"I recognize there's a degree of influence [on the part of the Jewish lobby]," he said, "but I don't think it's excessive. I haven't always gone along with them, but I've never felt any flack for not going along. When I refused to go on the Jackson amendment, a couple of them talked to me about it, but that was all I heard about it."

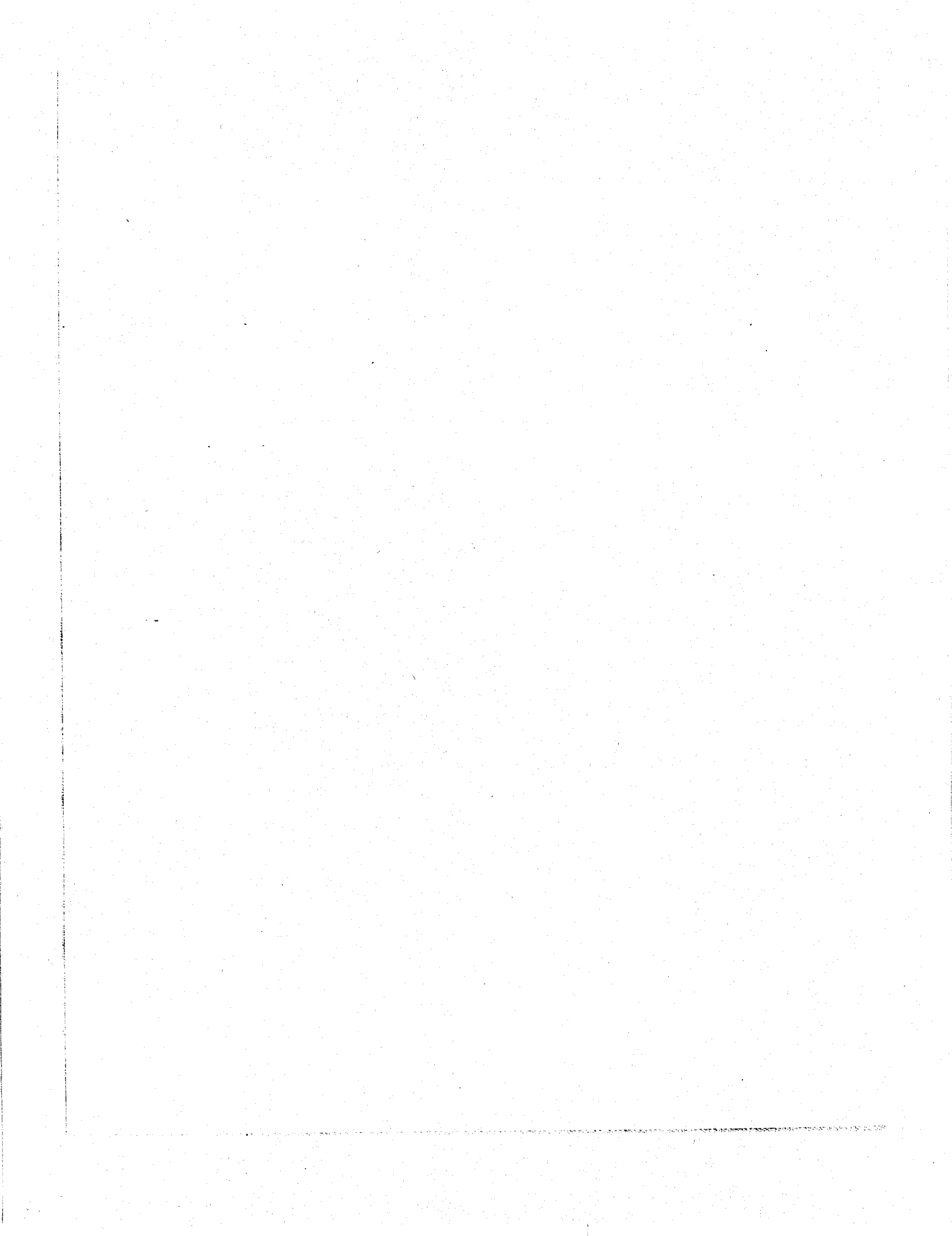
Moss later turned around and supported the \$2.2 billion in aid for Israel.

Abourezk feels differently and says several of those in the Jewish lobby have threatened to hurt him politically.

"I haven't always agreed" with the Israelis, says Moss, "on their inability to reach any final conclusions with the displaced Palestinians, and maybe some of their troubles are coming home to roost now . . .

["But] any group that has maintained its identity over the centuries as the Jews have done ought to have some homeland someplace that is their point of reference, even if they choose to live as citizens in other countries."

Over the years, surveys of



opinion have shown, the overwhelming majority of Americans have consistently supported Israel's right to exist as a separate sovereign state—with a correspondingly low level of support for Arabs' claim to the land.

A recent nationwide survey for the American Jewish Committee by Daniel Yankelevich showed more than 70 per cent of the nation feeling that way—a level of support that has varied almost naught over the last decade, despite energy crises and wars.

Much of the affinity, some theologians feel, is religious. One theologian who feels that way is Dr. A. Roy Eckardt, chairman of the department of religion at Lehigh University, in Bethlehem, Pa., a United Methodist clergyman.

"I have a kind of a personal stake in Israel," he said, "in that I feel as a Christian that I have been brought into the Jewish family via Jesus of Nazareth. I think Christians should consider themselves part of the Jewish family . . .

"We Christians have been in some strange way brought into the covenant of the Jewish people . . . In existential religious terms, to me we have a personal stake in Israel that would not be the case if it were Hindu or Buddhist or Moslem."

The Jewish lobbyists here have always been delicately careful to frame their request in humanistic, moralistic terms, one example being the Jackson amendment. While the legislation applies primarily to Soviet Jews, it

mentions no religious, racial or ethnic group especially, and the lobbyists stressed that the moral grounds of the legislation were the very moral bases of the United

"The reason we're so seemingly powerful," says Bookbinder of the American Jewish Committee, "is that the American Jewish community has successfully made the point that the concerns of the issues of Soviet Jewry and of Israel are consistent with America's own national interest, and in the best American traditions of American compassion and concern."

An important factor here

is that the lobby is a Jewish one, essentially, and not an Israeli one. The people involved, both in Washington and out in the country, are the same people who were involved in early civil rights struggles and in other humanitarian issues involving the maintenance of an open, unauthoritarian society.

And the lobby tries to protect Jews wherever they are, not just in Israel. An indicator of that was the deep involvement of AIPAC in the summoning of support for the Jackson-Vanik Soviet Jewry legislation.

Bookbinder wonders why the Jewish lobby is attacked on issues like Israel when it is never attacked for using its influence on behalf of social legislation, or world hunger programs, or civil rights legislation.

"Why," he asks, "is our modest effectiveness assailed and put down only in areas that go to the very existence of Jewish life and security? Why should we not seek public support for today's 6 million Jews in Israel and the Soviet Union? Why should we have to apologize for efforts in our people's self-defense through the basic American democratic way—public education and advocacy?"

Further, says Bookbinder, "it's painfully clear to me that our efforts are not powerful enough if we have not yet succeeded in eliminating from the minds of the George Browns of the world the discredited canards and

calumnies that have plagued Jews for centuries."

Some Jewish activists here also wonder why they are assailed when Arabs and oil interests have long had vigorous, successful lobbies.

"There is an imbalance," Kenen maintains, pointing to oil industry lobbyists and 20 Arab embassies in Washington, compared with one Israel embassy and the organization he put together.

He cites last October's Middle East war, when "the oil people in this country were very much opposed to assisting Israel. The large oil companies began to lobby, and they reach a much larger percentage of the population than we do. I think it's mischievous to suggest that the people of this country will cast Israel, or the Jewish community here as the scapegoat for the energy crisis" as Gen. Brown's statement implied they might.

Kenen feels Israel's appeal to Americans stems from the kind of nation that Israel is — a democracy "whose people can defend themselves, who have not required America's soldiers . . .

"When you get right down to it, what we're trying to do is to keep the arguments pro and con before the Congress of the United States, which obviously must be our target, because it represents the people."