CHICAGO, March 19....The vice-chairman of the campaign to re-elect President Nixon today declared that the Administration had aided and would continue to aid the Jews of the Soviet Union in two ways: by "pressing the Soviet Government to let emigrate all those Jews who seek to leave, on fair and humane terms," and by "resisting every attempt on the part of the Soviets to argue that the treatment of Soviet Jews is of concern only to the Soviets."

Mrs. Rita Hauser, former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, speaking at the opening session tonight of a two-day National Interreligious Consultation on Soviet Jewry at the University of Chicago's Center for Continuing Education, underscored the fact that "the plight of any one Jew or groups of Jews living in the Soviet Union is subject to arbitrary determinations by the Soviet leaders -- determinations neither guided nor controlled by the rule of law, due process or constitutional guarantees of any kind."

The consultation is sponsored by the National Interreligious Task Force on Soviet Jewry. It was initiated and planned by four national co-chairmen: Sister Margaret Ellen Traxler, Executive Director of the National Catholic Conference on Interracial Justice, and President of the National Coalition of American Nuns; Dr. Andre Lacoque, Professor of Old Testament, Chicago Theological Seminary; Rev. Robert G. Stephanapolous, Director of Inter-Church Affairs of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America; and Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, National Director of Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee. Hon. R. Sargent Shriver, former Director of the Peace Corps and former U.S. Ambassador to France, serves as Honorary National Chairman of the Consultation.
"The fate of Soviet Jews, or other minority or religious groups not in favor," Mrs. Hauser stated "turns on the hazards of internal and foreign politics and the personalities of the Soviet leaders at any given time."

While pointing out that all Soviet citizens are deprived of many rights that citizens in free countries take for granted, Mrs. Hauser declared that "Jews are subjected to a greater degree of cultural deprivation and state control than most other Soviet minorities."

Among the restrictions placed on Soviet Jews, she listed the denial of "any sort of national or provincial organization, secular or religious, such as most other recognized religions have."

"Rabbinical training is virtually non-existent, religious articles and foods are difficult to obtain, and the number of synagogues is being quietly reduced," she stated.

In addition, she pointed to the fact that "Jews are treated as a nationality, regardless of religious practice, and must list their nationality in their identity documents as 'Jewish.' But unlike most other national groups, their distinctive language, activities and community institutions have been severely restricted."

Terming the situation of Soviet Jews "overt persecution," Mrs. Hauser also stated that "although Jews are still well represented in scientific and artistic professions, non-Jews receive preference in education," and also that "they are virtually excluded from high-ranking political and management jobs, as well as from areas of the bureaucracy and the military which the Soviet Government considers sensitive."

Overriding all domestic considerations within the Soviet Union, however, Mrs. Hauser pointed to the fact that "many Soviet Jews have kin abroad -- in Israel, the United States and West Europe -- and these ties make them vulnerable to official suspicion."

"It is clear," she stated, "that the vast majority of Soviet Jews seek emigration to Israel," adding:

"Too often, the Soviet authorities have permitted some members of a family to go while retaining others -- a cruel deception of those who can leave. In addition, the Soviets often require payment of substantial sums of money, not easily come by, to recompense education received or in the guise of an exit tax."
Declaring that "the Nixon Administration has repeatedly expressed its concern for the plight of Soviet Jews and for their right to emigrate freely," Mrs. Hauser listed a series of actions taken by the United States Government in the past few years to relieve their situation.

Pointing to the fact that the issue of Soviet Jewry had been raised by the United States at the United Nations in the General Assembly, the Commission on Human Rights, and the Inter-Governmental Committee on European Migration, she stated:

"This Administration has been firm on its belief that the systematic denial of basic human rights is a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and raises a matter not of limited domestic jurisdiction, but of international law and international interest."

She also cited "numerous private, high-level diplomatic approaches to Soviet authorities" and "repeated representations in cases of Soviet citizens seeking to join relatives in the United States," adding that "the U.S. Embassy in Moscow has facilitated the emigration of Jews granted exit permits by Soviet authorities, and has issued immigrant visas expeditiously to those applying to come to the United States."

In addition, she noted that United States' aid to Israel in the last fiscal year was in the neighborhood of $500 million, and that "a substantial portion of this aid has been utilized for refugee resettlement," indicating that this included resettlement of Soviet Jews.

Mrs. Hauser also referred to President Nixon's "explicit urging of January 11, 1971, for freedom of emigration as permitted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" and the fact that the U.S. State Department supported a Congressional resolution on Soviet Jewry before the House Subcommittee on Europe on November 9, 1971. She also recalled that the Administration "provided for the eased entry of Soviet Jews under the parole authority granted to the Attorney General by the Immigration and Nationality Law."

Granting that "the impact of official statements or approaches to the Soviet Government remains limited," Mrs. Hauser told her audience of more than 200 civic and religious leaders of all denominations that "so far as we can determine, the few Soviet concessions of recent years have come about in response to expressions of concerned public opinion from abroad." Noting that more Soviet Jews were permitted to emigrate in 1971 than in any previous year, she termed it "evidence that the moral weight of peaceful,
lawful expression of public opinion throughout the world may yet persuade the Kremlin to reconsider its practices."

"I am confident," she concluded, "that the Nixon Administration will continue to assert its interest in the desire of many thousands of Jews still unable to depart the Soviet Union for Israel and elsewhere. It is my firm belief that American response, both governmental and private, to the problem of a beleaguered minority has been magnificent. It has emanated from all quarters -- Jews and non-Jews alike -- and reflects our nation's abiding commitment to human rights the world over. This is a commitment grounded in our history and in the knowledge that systematic deprivation of human rights anywhere poses a threat to all of us."

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