

## Crawling on His Hands and Knees: Kissinger was Craven

Written by Dr. Michael Berenbaum  
Thursday, 23 December 2010 00:00

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The recently released new batch of Richard Nixon's recordings of Oval Office conversations were chilling. Nixon is revealed for what he was an antisemite and Henry Kissinger a craven Jew.

I suspect that the damage to Kissinger's reputation will outlast the damage done to Nixon's. Anyone who followed the former President's career knew of his antisemitism. He was acting in character, perhaps more candidly than he would want known, but Kissinger's weakness stunned his admirers and even his detractors.

The former Secretary of State has asked that his statements be examined in context; fair enough. Yet once examined in context they seem even worse than initial appraisal given to them by the press, most particularly The New York Times.

What is the context? We have long known that Nixon and Kissinger opposed the Jackson-Vanik amendment that linked favored nation status for the Soviet Union with progress on Jewish emigration. Jackson, an arch foe of the Soviet Union and Vanik, deeply proud of his Czechoslovakian roots and equally antagonistic to Soviet invasion of Prague the summer of 1968, were teamed up by two Jewish staff members, Richard Pearl and Mark Talisman who were anxious to advance American interests and Jewish interests, American values and Jewish values, to attack the Soviet Human Rights policy. For a realist such as Kissinger, this was needless moralizing in the balance of power between the two giants, an encumbrance to the progress that he and his President could make with their Soviet counterparts without such domestic interference.

Clearly, his realism was revealed as timidity and short sightedness. The Soviet Jewry movement was one element that helped bring down the Soviet Union by demonstrating the flaws in its policy, by denying it as a model society and showing that elite members of that society were willing to pay a heavy price in order to leave.

The process of the Soviet Union's demise took more than 15 years; it included Pope John Paul II's visit to his native Poland in 1979, President Jimmy Carter emphasis on Human Rights as an essential part of American Foreign Policy, President Ronald Reagan's military expansion and his dressing down of the Soviet Union, internal economic failures, an inability to compete militarily and economically, and the Human Rights movement within the Soviet Union itself, but

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the emigration of Soviet Jewry was a defeat for the Soviet Union. Kissinger lacked foresight.

On a personal level, let us examine the context.

Dayenu, it would have been sufficient, had Kissinger merely said that the emigration of Soviet Jews was an internal Soviet matter and not a matter of American Foreign Policy. Sad, wrong and tragic as that remark was, it would not have been craven. Many have argued that domestic policies that violate Human Rights are not a central American Foreign Policy concern. Those voices can still be heard among the Foreign Policy elites that see no linkage between Saudi policy toward non-Islamic religion or Egyptian violations of democratic principle and American support for the regimes. After all, we need a reliable supply of oil and a coherent energy policy would be bad for business.

But the first Secretary of State of “Jewish origin” to use Kissinger’s self description went one step further. He upped the ante and said: if they put Jews into gas chambers in the Soviet Union, it is not an American concern, but a humanitarian concern, maybe?.”

He knew full well that the President was aware that he was from a German-Jewish family that had escaped Hitler’s Germany just in time and that relatives of his were killed in those very concentration camps. He was crawling on his hands and knees, betraying his family, his people. He lacked elemental dignity and decency.

Those who have called him a “court Jew” are giving Court Jews a bad name.

Nixon was an antisemite but supported Israel in its hour of need during the 1973 War when military resupply was a matter of life and death. Let us recall that that decision was made by an antisemite – Richard Nixon – a man, who had had a Bar Mitzvah and converted to Lutheranism while at Harvard – Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger – and a craven Jew – Henry Kissinger.

Israel was fortunate that the battle between Israel and its neighbors was seen as a surrogate battle between the client state of the United States and the client states of the Soviet Union.

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Otherwise? One shudders to think of otherwise.

But Israel was also stunned: committed to its own independence and ability to act on its own, it faced the historic circumstances exilic Jews dependent on the good will of mighty rulers for its very survival.

Recall as well that throughout the 1972 campaign, Israel's Ambassador to the United States Yitzhak Rabin had urged the American Jewish community to support Richard Nixon because he was good for Israel. True to their instincts the American Jewish community supported McGovern far beyond any other white Americans.

This is a vivid demonstration that Israel's interests and Jewish interests – in this case the interests of the American Jewish community and Soviet Jews – do not always coincide. We would be wise to remember that as other Israeli officials tell us how to vote.

Thankfully, and in keeping with this week's Torah portion, a new generation has arisen confident in themselves as Americans and confident in themselves as Jews, who are not hesitant to press American and Jewish concerns, American and Jewish values, and that view such cravenness with appropriate disdain.