

SIR GARFIELD REPLIES TO "COUNCIL"

MELBOURNE: The Attorney-General of the Commonwealth, Sir Garfield Barwick, in a reply to representations from the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Antisemitism, has written that he considers his statement in the House was sufficiently explicit to require no supplementary statement on his behalf.

The statement of the Attorney-General to which the Council's representations referred was made in the House of Representatives on March 22 1961, in connection with a Russian application for the extradition of a migrant for trial as a war criminal.

Details of the Jewish Council's letter and of Sir Garfield's reply, both of which appear elsewhere, were disclosed at last week's 19th Annual General Meeting of the Jewish Council, when the Council's President (Mr. S. H. Cohen) described Sir Garfield's reply as unsatisfactory.

Presenting his annual report, Mr. Cohen described the current Eichmann trial in Israel as the highlight of the year in those spheres which came under the Council's purview.

Adverting to current newspaper headlines wherein Eichmann himself implicated Chancellor Adenauer's right-hand man, Dr. Globke, Mr. Cohen reminded his audience that the Council had publicised similar allegations against Globke for at least two years.

Mr. Cohen said the Council was a unique organization—one that never sacrificed principle for expedience, although it thus sometimes consciously incurred unpopularity.

"We still welcome and wish unity with the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies and other organizations. We are not interested in disunity but continue our desire to play a wider part in the Jewish community."

Mr. M. Ravech, Chairman of the Council's Vigilance Committee, seconding the mo-

tion of the Council's Vigilance Committee, seconding the motion for adopting the report, referred briefly to recent correspondence from a Jewish survivor in Germany alleging the presence in Australia of two war criminals.

Mr. Ravech said the letter had been written after the writer despaired of stirring Australian authorities directly into action on his allegations, which included detailed descriptions of horror war crimes as well as the names of the two accused and the actual Australian address of one.

Mr. Cohen, in the course of his remarks, emphasized the need not to overlook the "little Eichmanns", and also referred briefly to a strong protest the Council had sent to the Soviet Ambassador in Australia against the publication in the "Daghestan Times" of a vicious "blood libel", alleging that Jews used the blood of children for ritual purposes.

Annual elections resulted in the uncontested return of all retiring office bearers, viz. President: Mr. S. H. Cohen, Vice-Presidents: Messrs. S. Goldbloom and N. Stabey; Hon. Treasurer: Mr. T. Trevaaks; Assistant Hon. Treasurer: Mr. L. Jedwab; Executive Members: Messrs. M. Marks and E. Kempler.

During the second half of the proceedings, all of the more than 40 members present were enchanted by the guest speaker, Mr. Eric Westbrook, Director of the National Gallery of Victoria.

Mr. Westbrook, whose topic

was "Culture as a factor towards better understanding of people", examined various definitions of and reactions

of people", examined various definitions of and reactions to "culture" and associated fads before giving eloquent expression and advocacy to his firm belief and philosophy that culture in the true sense should be made available and palatable to the many rather than snobbishly restricted to the view. This led him to an exposition of the new scheme for the National Gallery and the high hopes centred thereupon.

An animated discussion period ensued and Mr. Westbrook was not allowed to depart without virtually promising to make himself available again in the future to one or several Council events.

The letter sent by the General Secretary of the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism (Mr. E. Platz) stated that the Council sought clarification of remarks made by the Attorney-General (Sir Garfield Barwick) in the House of Representatives on March 22 last. It quoted the Minister ("Hansard," March 22, page 452):

"Honorable members will, no doubt, have in their minds the proceedings now immediately pending in Israel against a man who stands charged, in effect, as a major war criminal. For ourselves, however, in the kind of case which the present demand suggests, and which is distinguishable in many respects from the case in Israel, we think the time has come to close the chapter."

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It is, truly, the year 1961."

"Whilst we assume that your Government would not place war crimes and participation in the mass murder of Jews in the category of political

crimes, it is felt that some ambiguity exists in the position as stated by you to the House. It is not clear whether the Government would be opposed to the extradition of a person, even in circumstances where it was clearly established that such person had been guilty of war crimes or crimes against humanity, which expression includes, of course, crimes against civilians.

"For our part, we do not believe that the crime of murder can be subject to any statute of limitations."

The Attorney-General replied to Mr. Platz: "I am in receipt of your letter of May 26th with respect to my statement in the House of Representatives about a request by the Soviet Union for the surrender of a person who was a naturalised Australian.

"I note the views which you express and consider that my statement in the House was sufficiently explicit to require no supplementary statement on my behalf."