

# **AJCONGRESS TO FIGHT PRAYER BILL ADOPTED IN SURPRISE HOUSE VOTE**

By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, May 15 (JTA) -- The American Jewish Congress has vowed to fight an amendment adopted last week by the U.S. House of Representatives that requires schools receiving federal funds to allow voluntary prayer.

The amendment is unnecessary and unconstitutional, AJCongress charges.

The amendment was attached at the last minute to the Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act, passed late on the night of May 9 by a vote of 269-135, with 30 abstentions.

It was proposed by Rep. William Dannemeyer (R-Calif.) late into the House debate on federal funding of school training programs.

The amendment states that funds available under the program would not be available to any school "which has a policy of denying or which effectively prevents participation in prayer in public schools by individuals on a voluntary basis."

The amendment appears to have little practical effect. As AJCongress points out, there is little evidence that there is now widespread interference with students' right to pray privately.

But the Supreme Court has ruled since 1962 that the Constitution does not permit schools to set aside periods specifically for voluntary prayer.

Advocates of church-state separation fear that a school could justify a period of voluntary prayer under the amendment, especially if it claimed such a period would be the only way to guarantee a student the opportunity to pray.

## **Constitutional Amendment Next?**

Dannemeyer told lawmakers last week that "there is no effort on my part as the author of this amendment to mandate that we have voluntary prayer in the schools."

But he criticized the 1962 Supreme Court decision banning school prayer, linked a host of social ills to a lack of school prayer and quoted a 1931 Supreme Court justice's opinion that the United States is "a religious people, Christian nation."

And on Monday, an aide to Dannemeyer said the conservative congressman now hopes to introduce a constitutional amendment that would "soon turn things back to pre-1962."

"We got what we wanted: a roll-call vote on school prayer in the House of Representatives, which will act as a springboard for what we intend to do," Paul Mero, a spokesman for the congressman, said in a telephone interview.

Critics bristled at the amendment's vague wording and the haste with which it was inserted into the debate on training programs.

"Are we somehow or other mandating that (schools) state a certain time that you have voluntary prayer?" Rep. John Goodling (R-Pa.) asked during the brief debate.

Goodling, like other representatives who were not enthusiastic about the prayer amendment, nonetheless voted for the vocational funding bill.

Also voting for the amended bill was Rep. Dan Glickman (D-Kan.). Glickman, who is Jewish,

said he strongly supports the separation of church and state, but felt the amendment "does not have a practical effect."

"Very few districts take active and deliberate steps to oppose voluntary prayer," he said in a telephone interview from Washington.

## **Must Still Clear Senate**

Other Jewish representatives who voted for the bill included Ben Erdreich (D-Ala.), Willis Gradison (R-Ohio) and Ron Wyden (D-Ore.).

But according to Steven Silbiger, Washington representative of the AJCongress, the amendment "opens up the debate" on school prayer.

"By a 2-1 majority, the House of Representatives has voted somewhat for school prayer, and that's a problem," said Silbiger.

"If Dannemeyer sees he has an opening, he'll put it on lots of bills. There has to be a campaign of people who are opposed to school prayer," he said.

The National Jewish Commission on Law and Public Affairs, which represents the interest of Orthodox Jewish groups on church-state matters, had no comment on the legislation.

The amendment is expected to go through a number of versions before being voted upon by the Senate. Opponents hope it will die in the Senate Labor and Human Relations Committee.

## **ARENS PROMOTING PEACE PLAN ABROAD, AS OPPOSITION TO IT MOUNTS AT HOME**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 15 (JTA) -- Foreign Minister Moshe Arens will leave Tuesday for the United States and Western Europe, in an effort to promote Israel's new peace initiative and win support for it from friends and allies.

The plan, the centerpiece of which is Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, was approved by the Cabinet on Sunday by an overwhelming 20-6 vote margin.

But it faces fierce opposition from some powerful Likud hard-liners and groups farther to the right, including militant Jewish settlers.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and his political allies are bracing for strong resistance, much of it from Likud party faithful. A showdown is expected in internal party forums.

Arens is scheduled to meet with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and Vice President Dan Quayle in Washington this week. He will be the guest of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee on Sunday, during the pro-Israel lobby's annual policy conference.

He will fly to Brussels later to address the foreign ministers of the 12-nation European Community, which is headquartered in the Belgian capital.

The Israeli plan has been put together in some detail, apparently at the behest of the Bush administration, to which Shamir first presented his proposals when he visited Washington last month.

The plan was drafted by Shamir and Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, a Laborite, in close collaboration with Arens, Vice Premier Shimon Peres, who heads the Labor Party, and their closest aides.

It is therefore a joint Likud-Labor endeavor, although the coalition partners still differ on details and interpretations. The plan "is founded on the assumption that there is a national consensus for it," according to a text provided by the government.

#### Best Arabs Can Hope For

Under the plan, Palestinians would elect delegates to represent them in negotiations with Israel for self-rule during a five-year interim period. These representatives would later participate in negotiations on the permanent status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, to be begun after the third year of self-rule.

Israel promises to negotiate with whomever the Palestinians elect. At the same time, it adamantly refuses to talk to the Palestine Liberation Organization.

But the success of the plan hinges on the Palestinians' willingness to participate in the process.

Justice Minister Dan Meridor, a close confidant of Shamir who helped draft the plan, warned Monday that it is the best deal the Arabs can hope for. He said that if they reject it, Israel will not come up with another one.

The Arabs must be convinced "that they cannot squeeze more from the United States," Meridor said.

They also must be convinced they cannot achieve more from Israel if they continue their uprising, he told reporters.

Meridor said Israel intends to disseminate the plan among the Palestinians in the territories and urge their acceptance of it; suppress the uprising in the territories, now in its 18th month; and seek foreign support for the plan.

#### No-Confidence Vote Called

The far right, meanwhile, is mobilizing its forces to try to kill the plan by a no-confidence vote in the Knesset. The opposition party Tehiya introduced an agenda motion for debate Monday, warning that the plan would lead to the creation of a Palestinian state.

Geula Cohen of Tehiya claimed that the Palestinians elected under the plan would be the leaders of the intifada, as the Palestinians call their uprising. She also claimed that to permit East Jerusalem Arabs to vote would invite the eventual dismemberment of the unified city.

It remains to be seen whether Likud critics of the peace plan will oppose the government in a no-confidence vote.

The Shamir document expresses hope that in addition to settling the Palestinian problem, the initiative will result finally in a peace treaty with Jordan, matching Israel's 1979 accord with Egypt.

Both Arab countries are invited to participate in the plan. Arens met Monday with the Egyptian ambassador in Tel Aviv, Mohammed Basyouny, to solicit the Cairo government's support.

#### CANADA OFFERS ELECTION ASSISTANCE

By Michael Solomon

MONTREAL, May 15 (JTA) — "Canada is ready to assist Israel with supervising eventual elections" in the West Bank and Gaza Strip "should the government of Israel ask for it," External Affairs Minister Joe Clark told members of the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee in Ottawa on Friday.

He also suggested that the Palestine Liberation Organization has a long way to go to assure Israel of its good intentions.

"The Palestinian movement first must take steps to dissipate the anxieties of the Israelis," Clark said.

Clark, who on March 13 authorized Canadian diplomats to meet with representatives of the PLO, stressed that "Canada must encourage those elements favorable to Arafat inside the PLO." He said that if moderate elements "fail in their efforts, the radicals will take over, and we don't like them."

He was sharply criticized by Jewish deputies on the committee, representing the opposition Liberal Party, for initiating talks with the PLO in the first place.

#### MILITARY CRACKS DOWN IN GAZA AS NEW MEASURES ARE PROPOSED

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 15 (JTA) — The military took tough measures Monday against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip while legislators considered constraints on terrorist organizations allegedly inciting Israeli Arabs with money.

A group of Jewish hikers came under a barrage of stones Monday when they deliberately entered the West Bank Arab village of Beita and had to be rescued by soldiers.

Authorities clamped a blanket curfew of indefinite duration on the Gaza Strip on Monday, only two days after a similar curfew was lifted.

There was no explanation for the move, which surprised many, inasmuch as the territory had been quieter than usual in recent days. Some observers suggested the tactic was intended to seize the initiative from the leadership of the Palestinian uprising.

Meanwhile, Justice Minister Dan Meridor announced that legal amendments are being considered by the ministerial legal committee to allow the authorities to seize money terrorist organizations are funneling into Israel and the administered territories.

#### Reprise Of Beita Incident

Also under consideration is an amendment to enable the courts to disband groups that cooperate with terrorist organizations.

The incident in Beita was a reprise of one that took place during Passover week in 1988, but without the tragic consequences.

On April 6, 1988, a group of teen-age hikers, affiliated with the militant Gush Emunim settlers movement, entered Beita after an armed guard accompanying them shot and killed two young Arab stone-throwers.

The guard was surrounded and beaten by the enraged family of one of the slain youths. He accidentally fired his rifle, fatally wounding a hiker, 15-year-old Tirza Porat.

On Monday, a similar group of hikers, with firearms, traced the route taken a year before and entered Beita. They failed to coordinate their plans with the local military authorities and, as expected, came under a hail of rocks.

This time, the settlers fired into the air and summoned the army by radio. They were extricated by soldiers. No one was hurt.

Benny Katzover, chairman of the Samaria Regional Council, criticized the hikers afterward, not for their unauthorized outing, but because they did not shoot their rifles "to hit."

**JEWISH CULTURAL ACTIVISTS  
TO GATHER NEXT WEEK IN USSR**  
By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, May 15 (JTA) — Jewish cultural activists from throughout the Soviet Union will meet in Riga, Latvia, next Sunday and Monday. It will be the first time in memory that such a national Jewish gathering has taken place in the Soviet Union.

The meeting was announced in off-hand fashion by Emmanuel Zinger, director of the Jewish Cultural Society of Lithuania, at a news conference convened jointly last week by the Workmen's Circle and The Forward Association, publisher of the Yiddish newspaper.

Zinger, a 32-year-old Jewish cultural activist who sports a three-piece suit and speaks fluent Yiddish, was invited to New York by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, which began in Vilna in 1925 and is now based here.

He was invited to YIVO by its executive director, Samuel Norich, who attended another landmark conference, the inaugural conference of the Jewish Cultural Society of Lithuania that took place March 5 in Vilna, now known as Vilnius.

Norich invited Zinger expressly so that the Vilnius scholar could study Yiddish literary manuscripts in the YIVO collections, many of which come from the Lithuanian capital.

A number of Jewish leaders from the United States and Israel will also attend the meeting in Riga. Among them will be Norich, who compared his visit to the Soviet Union in March with his last trip there in 1977.

"It's another world" now, he said, shaking his head in disbelief.

**A Revival In Lithuania**

Zinger, who gave a lecture at the Workmen's Circle immediately following his news conference, spoke of the support the Vilnius Jewish community has received from non-Jewish Lithuanians, whose budding nationalism has allowed a revival of Jewish culture in a city once known as the Jerusalem of Lithuania.

The Jewish community of Vilnius received help in setting up its Jewish cultural center from the Lithuanian government and representatives from the Lithuanian Communist Party, who greeted its opening from a podium bearing a Star of David.

The Lithuanian Jewish cultural society, said Zinger, is a wide-ranging group drawing its membership from different political streams. "I myself am not a Communist," he said, but there are Communists in the group, too, and there are even "those who feel insecure about extending themselves," he said.

Zinger reported that Jewish cultural societies are registered and functioning in Riga and the Estonian capital of Tallinn, with the full cooperation of the local Communist parties.

The Latvian government is officially backing the Riga conference, he said.

Zinger, who spoke in Yiddish and was aided by an interpreter, told the group of journalists, including reporters from Tass and Moscow News, that before he left, Jews told him to urge American Jews to support both those who wish to continue Jewish culture in Vilnius and those who want to emigrate.

Zinger said the community needs support "for all cultural exhibits, high schools, kindergartens and theaters, which have begun to thrive."

Zinger said that Jewish cemeteries were desperately in need of funds for restoration because of damage and decay wrought over the years.

He also said the Jewish Cultural Society of Lithuania would like to set up a Jewish printing press to begin publishing in Lithuania.

The Workmen's Circle and The Jewish Forward Association also want to help this renaissance of Jewish culture, said William Stern, president of the association.

Contributions can be sent to the Nathan Chanin Foundation, 45 East 33rd St., New York, N.Y. 10016.

**VISITING ESTONIAN OFFICIALS SIGN  
AN EXCHANGE AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL**  
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, May 15 (JTA) — The Soviet Baltic republic of Estonia has signed an agreement with Israel for an exchange of experts, beginning next year.

The pact, believed to be the first of its kind with a Soviet republic, was announced by the Estonian first deputy minister of agriculture, Vello Lind, as a 12-member Estonian delegation wound up an official visit to Israel, the first ever from a Soviet republic.

Vello spoke at a farewell dinner hosted by Education Minister Yitzhak Navon. He invited an Israeli delegation to visit Tallinn, the Estonian capital, for the opening of Israeli Culture Week there next year.

Estonia is the smallest Soviet republic. The visit to Israel was organized by Andres Aarma, chairman of the Estonian Society for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.

Lind praised Israel's "remarkable development" and said this was one of the most important and interesting of his visits to 28 countries.

Meanwhile, a group of Soviet Jewry activists is scheduled to leave Tuesday for Moscow to attend a conference on "Freedom of Movement" sponsored by the International Foundation for Human Development.

The foundation is headed by Nobel laureate Andrei Sakharov, the prominent Soviet human rights activist.

The Moscow meeting is expected to be attended by several high-level Soviet officials, including Deputy Foreign Minister Yuri Reshetov.

Yuri Stern, one of the Israeli delegates and spokesman for the Soviet Jewish Zionist Forum, said the group would also go to Riga, Latvia, for a meeting of the Jewish Cultural Association of Latvia.

**COST OF LIVING RISES SHARPLY**  
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, May 15 (JTA) — A sharp, unexpected 2.6 percent hike in the cost-of-living index for April came as an unpleasant surprise to Treasury officials when it was announced Monday.

They hastened to blame seasonal factors, not economic measures taken by the government.

The figures, reported by the Central Bureau of Statistics, were well above the less than 2 percent rise anticipated for the month. Inflation is now running at an annual rate of 9.4 percent.

The price index would have been kept within "reasonable limits," Treasury officials said, were it not for seasonal rises in the prices of clothing, footwear, fruits and vegetables.

## LAWMAKERS SAY AID TO ISRAEL MAY BE ENDANGERED IN FUTURE

By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, May 15 (JTA) -- Four Democratic members of the House Foreign Affairs and Appropriations committees assured Jewish leaders here last week that Israel's \$3 billion in yearly foreign aid remains secure.

But they warned that budgetary pressures may build against the aid package in the not-too-distant future.

The solution, in what one of the four representatives acknowledged was an "intensely partisan" appeal, is to help the Democratic Party retain its majority within the House of Representatives.

Speaking here last Thursday before the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations were Reps. Dante Fascell (D-Fla.), chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee; Mel Levine (D-Calif.) and Larry Smith (D-Fla.), members of the committee; and Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), member of the House Appropriations Committee.

They appeared at the invitation of the Conference of Presidents, as part of what Malcolm Hoelen, its executive director, called an ongoing series of briefings with top congressional leaders.

The umbrella group has previously met with Republican Party Chairman Lee Atwater, and will meet with his Democratic counterpart, Ron Brown, on June 19.

"I don't know of a single issue in this rewrite of the foreign aid bill that would directly affect Israel in any way," said Fascell, like the others a staunch supporter of Israel.

### Aid Request Presented

"However, the major problem is we don't have any money. And when we don't have any money, all the money that is earmarked for Israel comes under pressure," he said.

On Friday, Israel asked the United States for \$3 billion in aid for the 1990 fiscal year. That request matches the grants of the past few years, which have been apportioned into \$1.2 billion in economic support and \$1.8 billion in military assistance.

The federal budget deficit and the Gramm-Rudman legislation providing for budget cuts, however, have created a climate of austerity in Washington. In 1986, Israel agreed to a Reagan administration request to return \$51 million of the money it had received that year in order to forestall across-the-board cuts to other countries.

U.S. Ambassador William Brown told reporters Friday that, because of inflation, Israel had effectively accepted a cut in aid this year by not increasing its request from last year.

Levine said Israel's share under the foreign aid and State Department authorization bills is secure, but that defending it is "going to become more difficult than in the recent past."

He said support for Israel is not strictly a partisan issue and praised the Reagan administration for its support of Israel. But he said the "jury is still out" on the Bush administration. He asked the leaders to make sure that "support is there" for the Democratic Party.

Hoyer was the most blunt in his pitch for Democratic votes. "Read my lips" is not working," he said in a reference to President Bush's campaign pledge not to impose new taxes.

## POLICE CRACK DOWN ON PROTESTS AGAINST NEO-NAZIS IN GERMANY

By David Kantor

BONN, May 15 (JTA) -- Thousands of demonstrators clashed with police over the weekend as they protested neo-Nazi political rallies in cities and towns throughout West Germany.

Tear gas was used to disperse the angry crowds. Dozens of police and demonstrators were injured, and arrests were made.

The most serious confrontations occurred Sunday and Monday in Göttingen and Mainz.

Police were out in force in Göttingen to protect a rally of the extreme right-wing National Democratic Party (NPD). About 2,000 protesters, mainly leftists, made several unsuccessful attempts to burst into the open-air meeting.

Police pushed them back, but they managed to cut off several microphones. Three were arrested.

The Göttingen authorities originally banned the NPD rally. But a Braunschweig court ruled last week that the neo-Nazis had a right to assemble.

In Mainz, a meeting of another neo-Nazi group, the German People's Union, coincided with a music festival. Hundreds of music lovers descended on the rally. Police intervened with tear gas.

The far right-wing parties, most of them subscribing to Nazi doctrines, are campaigning vigorously this month for election to the Parliament of Europe, to be held on June 18.

## NOT ALL JEWISH GROUPS HAPPY WITH TALK SHOW HOST'S APOLOGY

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, May 15 (JTA) -- Not all Jewish leaders are satisfied with the apology made last week by Oprah Winfrey, host of the popular talk show, for featuring a mentally ill guest who claimed Jews practice ritual infanticide.

Winfrey and her producers met May 8 in Chicago with representatives of Jewish organizations, chosen by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, to mend fences and seek guidance to prevent potential recurrences.

After the meeting, Winfrey and her production company, Harpo Productions, made a statement of their own, and Jewish representatives drew up a joint statement of response to that.

On Monday, however, the American Jewish Congress released its own statement expressing dissatisfaction with Winfrey's apology.

The statement, made by the group's associate executive director, Phil Baum, found "inadequate" the program's response "to the harm done by the dissemination by one of her guests of religious canards about Jews and Judaism."

A joint statement by Jewish community leaders was not released until Friday, after everyone present at the meeting had read and approved the text.

It said, "We were satisfied that Oprah Winfrey and her staff did not intend to offend anyone and that Oprah was genuinely sorry for any offense or misunderstanding."

Baum, saying Winfrey's regrets "cannot possibly reach any significant part of the massive audience" that watched the program, suggested she make amends on camera "to make it plain to her audience that she regards all such comments with revulsion and contempt."