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**JEWISH GROUPS CHIDE GOVERNOR
FOR 'CHRISTIAN NATION' REMARK**By Cynthia Mann
States News Service

WASHINGTON, Nov. 18 (JTA) -- Jewish organizations have sharply condemned a claim this week by Mississippi Gov. Kirk Fordice that the United States is a Christian nation.

The American Jewish Congress challenged the chairman of the Republican National Committee to repudiate the remark, which was made Tuesday at a meeting of the Republican Governors Association in Fontana, Wis.

The Anti-Defamation League sent a letter directly to Fordice, calling his comments "appalling" and "unworthy of any governor elected to represent a diverse and pluralistic constituency."

And B'nai B'rith International issued a condemnation, deeming the remark divisive and contrary to the pluralism upon which this country is founded.

"Unfortunately, Gov. Fordice has yet to learn that America is not a country that is defined in terms of religion or race," said Kent Schiner, the group's president. "The United States is a pluralistic society, as any high school civics course could have taught him."

Fordice declared that "the United States of America is a Christian nation" during a news conference at the close of the governors meeting.

He added that this was a "simple fact of life" that did not imply religious intolerance or that a religious dogma was being "forced on anybody else."

"The less we emphasize the Christian religion, the further we fall into the abyss of poor character and chaos in the United States of America," he said.

South Carolina Gov. Carroll Campbell Jr. made an effort to blunt the impact of the remarks by stressing the country's "value base" was of "Judeo-Christian heritage."

But Fordice chastised Campbell for the "clarification," saying, "If I wanted to do that, I would have done it."

'Shocking' Insensitivity To Jews

This rebuke showed a "shocking and incomprehensible insensitivity to Jews and Judaism," ADL's national director, Abraham Foxman, and Melvin Salberg, its national chairman, wrote in their letter to Fordice.

The exchange between the two governors was ironic because it came at the end of a conference intended to rehabilitate the image of a Republican Party that was badly hurt by its summer national convention, whose message of divisiveness appears to have turned voters off and away in droves.

Just prior to Fordice's comments, Campbell had been stressing the GOP's "big tent" philosophy, representing the party's embrace of diversity.

"The offensive statement by Gov. Fordice continues the extremist right-wing rhetoric that the nation heard to its dismay at the Republican National Convention," said Gary Bretton-Granaator, director of interreligious affairs at the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

"It will be a sad day for all Americans

should the party of Abraham Lincoln fall into the hands of those who would replace the stars and stripes with Jesus on the cross," he said.

AJCongress President Robert Lifton and Henry Siegman, the group's executive director, called on Republican National Committee Chairman Richard Bond to reject the comments.

"The necessary corollary of Gov. Fordice's remarks is that those who are not Christians or who do not share his vision of Christian morality," they wrote, "are a threat to the well-being of our nation and are unwelcome in the Republican Party."

'Out Of Step With The Mainstream'

The remarks "suggest a religious threshold which many Americans cannot or will not cross," they wrote.

"If you and other party leaders choose not to condemn these statements, we believe that your silence will say to American Jews and others that they are not welcome in the Republican Party."

An RNC spokesman said Bond was on vacation and that the party had not yet received the AJCongress letter. But he added that "the party and Chairman Bond certainly oppose any and all religious intolerance."

Matt Brooks, executive director of the National Jewish Coalition, a Republican group, said he was "extremely disappointed" by the remarks, which he called "quite unfortunate."

But he said the governor was clearly "out of step with the mainstream elements of the Republican Party."

One prominent Jewish Republican called this "the first salvo" in the battle to determine the direction of the Republican Party after President Bush's election defeat. He predicted the views of Fordice would remain marginal.

**JEWISH GROUP URGING U.S. TO ADMIT
25,000 REFUGEES FROM YUGOSLAV AREA**By Cynthia Mann
States News Service

WASHINGTON, Nov. 18 (JTA) -- The American Jewish Committee has urged President Bush to declare an emergency and resettle at least 25,000 additional refugees from the war-torn former republics of Yugoslavia.

"As Jews, we feel we are reliving a nightmare" with the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, AJCommittee President Alfred Moses and David Singer, the group's executive vice president, wrote in a letter to Bush sent Tuesday.

"As a community dedicated to preserving the memory and lessons of the Holocaust, we cannot remain silent while a portion of Europe again descends into massive displacement, detention and killing of targeted ethnic or religious groups," they wrote.

The AJCommittee letter is the latest action in a campaign being waged throughout the organized Jewish community to press the United States to take tougher measures against Serbian atrocities and to provide humanitarian aid to the victims.

Perhaps the most dramatic action was the evacuation last weekend by the American Jewish

Joint Distribution Committee of 350 Jewish, Moslem, Serbian and Croatian refugees from Sarajevo.

Bosnia's ambassador to the United Nations wrote a letter last week to The New York Times, not yet published, in which he praised the Jewish community's response to the crisis.

Ambassador Muhamed Sacirbey said many Jewish organizations had been "at the forefront in breaking the silence" with "calls for more resolute action."

Sacirbey wrote the letter in response to a Nov. 9 New York Times column by Flora Lewis that proclaimed world Jewry had a "special responsibility" to respond. He said the American Jewish community has "met this special responsibility" in Bosnia.

Budgetary Strain Cited

The Bush administration has offered to resettle about 300 people detained in camps and their families, or roughly 1,000 refugees, a number Moses and Harris called "clearly inadequate." There are an estimated 3 million refugees.

But the AJCommittee call comes at a time when the federal budget is under severe strain.

Jewish and other advocates for refugees had to battle for last month's congressional appropriation for the resettlement of the 122,000 refugees authorized to be admitted during the 1993 fiscal year. They had sought at least last year's funding, which was \$410 million, but received only \$381 million.

Only 1,500 of the 122,000 slots worldwide are for refugees from Eastern European countries other than the former Soviet republics, a drop from the 2,900 spaces allotted last year, according to the State Department.

Gary Rubin, AJCommittee's national affairs director, estimated it would cost between \$150 million and \$200 million to resettle the 25,000 refugees from the former Yugoslav republics.

"In the case of a true emergency, which this is, it is not a hell of a lot of money," he said.

An official with the State Department, which is responsible for setting annual refugee ceilings after consultation with the Congress, said she had no idea where the money for the AJCommittee proposal would come from.

But she defended the U.S. humanitarian aid response to the crisis, pointing out that \$121 million has gone to refugees within the former Yugoslavia. "With 3 million refugees, the most important thing is to take care of them and to keep them alive," she said.

"Bureaucracies are hard to move," said Rubin. "That's why we wrote to the president and not the State Department."

"We start with the proposition that people are dying in a way that is particularly abhorrent to Jews and in which Jews should take the lead," said Rubin.

"A meaningful response is needed. You can't tell me there's not money for this somewhere in somebody's budget."

Today's U.S. economy is not as bad as it was in the 1930s, when Jewish refugees were turned away, said Rubin. He called that a "moral mistake" that should not be repeated.

To invoke the emergency provisions of the Refugee Act, the president would have to ask Congress for a special appropriation. The provisions were invoked in 1989, said Rubin, to allow more Jews to emigrate from the former Soviet Union once the gates opened.

JEWISH LEADERS MEET BUSH AIDE TO REVIEW FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES

By Cynthia Mann
States News Service

WASHINGTON, Nov. 18 (JTA) -- Two dozen Jewish organizational leaders met at the White House this week with National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft to recall U.S. foreign policy accomplishments of the past four years and look to the challenges that lie ahead.

The late-afternoon meeting Tuesday between Scowcroft and the members of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations reportedly lasted about 45 minutes and was led by Shoshana Cardin, the group's chairman.

Cardin reportedly opened the meeting by expressing appreciation for the relationship Scowcroft had maintained with the Jewish community. Despite disagreements, he had remained accessible, she said, according to one source.

Scowcroft, in turn, "expressed gratitude for the association," calling it a "rich privilege."

He then pointed with pride to Bush administration actions that had transformed the Middle East landscape and enhanced Israel's security, including the Persian Gulf War and the Arab-Israeli peace process, begun last year in Madrid.

While he said there had been no substantive discussions with the incoming administration yet, he was confident the peace process would continue unabated.

In fact, President-elect Bill Clinton met Wednesday with President Bush for an informal briefing on some foreign policy matters, which were almost certain to include the peace talks.

Scowcroft reportedly briefed the Jewish group on a range of issues, including the increasing threat to the region posed by Iran, the Iranian-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon and the overall rise of Islamic fundamentalism.

He also talked about Middle East arms purchases, including the recent revelation that the United States is considering a request by the United Arab Emirates to purchase photo reconnaissance or "spy" satellites.

The State Department said Tuesday that the UAE request would be reviewed only in the framework of a broad, coherent policy of technology transfer.

AMERICAN RED CROSS HEAD URGES ISRAEL'S INCLUSION IN WORLD BODY

NEW YORK, Nov. 18 (JTA) -- The president of the American Red Cross is urging the International Red Cross movement drop its longstanding refusal to recognize Israel's Magen David Adom.

Elizabeth Dole has called on Red Cross societies abroad to "join with us to assure the full participation of the Magen David Adom in Israel" in the international humanitarian agency, the World Jewish Congress reported.

Dole issued her call for inclusion of Magen David Adom in letters to the heads of the largest Red Cross societies abroad, including those of Canada, Britain, France and Germany.

At the same time, both houses of the U.S. Congress have adopted a concurrent resolution calling for inclusion of Magen David Adom as "a legitimate national society of the International Red Cross-Red Crescent Movement."

Israel has been unsuccessfully seeking full membership since the Red Cross movement was reorganized in the aftermath of World War II.

VANDALS DESECRATE BEGIN'S GRAVE IN MIDST OF HAREDI RIOTS OVER DIGS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Nov. 18 (JTA) -- Amid controversy over archaeological excavations at an ancient burial site in Jerusalem, vandals have desecrated the grave of Menachem Begin on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.

Police found a black swastika daubed on the gravestone of the late prime minister after an anonymous caller contacted Israel Radio to say the act was in retaliation for the desecration of burial caves dating to the period of the Second Temple in the French Hill section of the city.

Tensions between government archaeologists and the haredi, or fervently religious, community were further widened following a ruling by the chief rabbi that bones found in the burial caves be reburied together with their coffins.

Archaeologists are seeking to retain, at the Rockefeller Museum in eastern Jerusalem, sarcophagi found in the caves north of Mount Scopus. The bones would be reinterred separately.

Police used force Tuesday to disperse demonstrators Tuesday in the haredi neighborhood of Mea Shearim who are protesting an archaeological dig at a burial site.

Archaeologists are carrying out a dig at the site in an effort to rescue artifacts before work starts on a new road.

The controversy underlines clashing perspectives of the religious and secular communities and has spilled over into the political sphere.

A haredi Cabinet minister, Interior Minister Arye Deri of the Shas party, called on the police to use "a light hand" in dealing with the protesters.

Retorting, the police minister, Moshe Shahal of the Labor Party said police had exercised great restraint in dispersing the demonstration in Mea Shearim at which 15 people were detained.

At the other end of the spectrum, a leader of the left-wing Meretz bloc, Energy Minister Amnon Rubinstein, urged Shahal to adopt a firm policy toward the demonstrators and not to yield to religious pressure.

Both Shas and Meretz are partners in the Labor-led government coalition.

TWO HEZBOLLAH GUNNERS KILLED

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Nov. 18 (JTA) -- Two members of the Iranian-backed Hezbollah were killed Wednesday in Lebanon during a sustained exchange of artillery fire with gunners of the Israel Defense Force and its allied South Lebanon Army.

The incident began when several shells were fired from north of the Israeli-controlled border security zone at an IDF post near Nabatiya, in the central sector of the zone.

IDF and SLA gunners returned fire, following which Hezbollah again opened fire on IDF positions.

The ensuing exchange went on for more than six hours, over a wide area inside Lebanon.

No casualties were reported on the Israeli side.

Hezbollah later announced that its forces had not been responsible for the initial shooting.

Lebanese reports said that Israeli air force planes flew sorties over Beirut and areas to the north of the Lebanese capital, but carried out no attacks.

GERMAN OFFICIAL TELLS ISRAELIS HE'S ASHAMED OF RACIST VIOLENCE

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Nov. 18 (JTA) -- Visiting Germany Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel told Israel's leaders Wednesday he was "ashamed as a German" of the racist outbreaks that had taken place in his country in recent months.

In separate working sessions with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, the German guest, here on a one-day official visit, said his government fully understood Israel's concern over this issue, which both Israeli leaders took the opportunity to voice to the German minister.

On the diplomatic plane, Kinkel stated his government's decision to become more involved in Middle East peacemaking, specifically in two areas of the multilateral talks: water resources and economic development.

Peres said several major foreign powers had taken leadership roles in various specific fields -- Japan, for instance, in ecology. To this, Kinkel replied that Germany wants to take the lead in the field of water cooperation, especially in regard to desalination.

Reviewing the bilateral peace talks, Rabin said Syrian President Hafez Assad had still not taken a step that would serve to "convince" public opinion, in Israel and in his own country, that he was seriously committed to peace.

Nevertheless, Rabin stressed, the two countries have embarked "on a road on which there is no turning back."

GERMAN CALLS FOR STUDY OF MASADA TO ENSURE HISTORY DOESN'T REPEAT

By Gil Sedan

OVER THE NEGEV, Israel, Nov. 17 (JTA) -- A helicopter flying the visiting German army chief of staff over the Negev on Tuesday made a slight detour.

Gen. Klaus Naumann asked to see the site where a small band of Jewish fighters in the first century C.E. held out against vastly superior Roman forces and then committed suicide rather than surrender.

Looking down at Masada from a Sikorsky aircraft, the 53-year-old German chief of staff told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that studying the historic event was important to make sure "it does not repeat itself."

Naumann spoke before donning an Israeli army-issue overall, bearing the insignia of the chief of staff, in anticipation of a visit to the armored corps command.

The brief flight over Masada was a demarcation point from past to future in the visit of the strongly pro-Israel German chief of staff. Earlier, he took part in a memorial ceremony at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial.

The German military leader spent much of Tuesday expanding his acquaintance with the Israel Defense Force. It was a meeting between the head of the strongest army in Europe and soldiers of the strongest army in the Middle East.

But Naumann emphasized a fundamental difference between them.

"We enjoy a tremendous advantage in Germany," Naumann told guests at a luncheon in his honor. "We now live in an environment in which we have no enemies. I wish Israel could enjoy the same benefit."

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:**HATE TRACTS SOLD OPENLY IN RUSSIA
WITH NO LEGAL MEANS TO PREVENT IT**

By Alexander Lesser

MOSCOW (JTA) -- On cold days in Moscow, passersby ducking the icy wind can choose from a wide variety of anti-Semitic material on sale in the pedestrian underpass below Pushkin Square.

With names like Russky Vestnik (Russian Courier), Russkoye Vozrozhdeniya (Russian Revival) and Dyen (Day), the crudely printed broadsheets, costing about a penny each, are laid out on the pavement by their vendors.

In St. Petersburg, too, the purveyors of anti-Semitic hate sheets operate openly right in the middle of town, on the sidewalks of Nevski Prospekt, the main thoroughfare of Russia's second-largest city.

The open sale of anti-Semitic material in Russia's largest cities is a blemish on the country's embryonic democracy that progressive forces are trying to erase. But they face practical and legal obstacles.

"In the present chaotic environment, anything can be printed," said Valery Fadeyev, a Moscow city councilman and chairman of the council's Human Rights Committee.

Fadeyev has been working to combat anti-Semitic agitation on the national level with legislators in the Congress of People's Deputies, among them Sergei Kovalyov, head of the parliament's Human Rights Commission.

"The existing law is defective," Fadeyev, an ethnic Russian, said in an interview. He was referring to the Soviet-era law that still governs, Article 74 of the Criminal Code. "In general, it's written too narrowly, and it requires proof of intent, which is difficult to do," he explained.

"For example, you have a hate sheet which talks about the role of Jews and Freemasons in Russian history. On the surface, it's a historical discussion, not an incitement," said Fadeyev.

"On the other hand, it could be seen as an 'insult to national self-respect,' which is also prohibited under the current law. But even here, what's an insult? It's too subjective," he said.

Change In Law Proposed

Fadeyev's example is far from theoretical. A recent article in the far-right Sovietskaya Rossiya by a leading Russian clergyman attacked the murderers of Jesus as forerunners of 20th-century Bolsheviks. Nowhere in the article was the word "Jew" mentioned, but from the context the author was clearly referring to Jews.

"The authors of these tracts know the letter of the law, and the smart ones stay inside it," said Fadeyev.

A draft law that Fadeyev's committee has submitted to the national parliament would improve the chances for successful prosecution.

The proposed law, backed by the Russian Interior Ministry, public prosecutor and the Ministry of Press and Mass Media, would prohibit "hurting an ethnic group's sense of dignity."

That phrase would cover "dissemination of information about a national group which causes a negative impression," wrote Georgi Ponomarev, a Moscow city prosecutor who helped draft the law.

Fadeyev hopes the bill will be considered by the Russian parliament next spring.

But other administrative changes are also needed to combat the hate tracts, he said. "Most of these sheets are produced by groups that have

no official status, and the papers themselves aren't registered" with the press ministry.

"It's much harder to fight because the papers have no masthead identifying their publishers -- that's deliberate -- and the vendors can say they're just peddling them for profit -- they don't know who printed them," said Fadeyev.

His committee has proposed changes to the ministry's rules that would expressly forbid distribution of unregistered periodicals.

'Cop On The Beat Doesn't Care'

Fadeyev is keenly aware of the dangers to free speech posed by the changes he and others are seeking. "The issue is how to determine what to suppress without limiting free expression, and we have no clear answer," he said.

Even if successful in changing the law, implementation will be a major challenge.

"Our prosecutors really don't pay attention to this problem, because they think it just isn't important, and the cop on the beat doesn't care either," Fadeyev complained.

There are also bureaucratic impediments.

"The press ministry says it doesn't have a budget for tracking down hate sheet printers. The Interior Ministry has a budget, but jurisdiction is with the ex-KGB," now called the Ministry for State Security, said Fadeyev.

The councilman does not think that the hate vendors will be closed down any time soon.

"It's too bad, because opinion polls show that show that only a small percentage of Russians have strong anti-Jewish views," he said.

"Most negative feelings are directed against Gypsies and people from the Caucasus, such as Azerbaijanis and Armenians," he said, assertions born out by polls conducted here in 1990 and 1992 for the American Jewish Committee.

"Yet the number of publications directed against Jews is much higher than against those groups. It's more organized," he sighed, "and very difficult to stop."

**ISRAEL'S NEW ENVOY IN MOSCOW
SAYS HE'S PLEASANTLY SURPRISED**

By Alexander Lesser

MOSCOW, Nov. 18 (JTA) -- After one week on the job, Israel's new ambassador in Moscow, Haim Bar-Lev, says he is pleasantly surprised by what he has seen so far of the Russian capital.

"It's very strange to someone like me, who has just fallen into this place," Bar-Lev, who arrived here Nov. 12, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

"I'd been told that there's no food here, no gas, no cars, lines for everything, dark streets, etc. I had a completely wrong image," he said.

But Bar-Lev is not ready to describe the Russian capital as a city of light. "I haven't been to the Bolshoi yet. Ask me then," he said.

Bar-Lev said that the "main political issue" between Israel and Russia is "to convince the Russians to convince the Arabs that without a willingness to compromise there will be no solution" to the Middle East conflict.

Apart from the peace process, he said he has two other priorities in Moscow: to represent the State of Israel and to reach out to the Jews of the former Soviet Union.

Israel's Moscow ambassador represents Israel in 10 of the 15 republics of the old Soviet Union. There are now two resident ambassadors serving the five Central Asian republics.