

**ISRAEL AND JEWISH GROUPS ASK SWEDEN
TO BAN ANTI-ZIONIST CONFERENCE**

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, Nov. 25 (JTA) -- Israel and Jewish groups around the world have called on Sweden to bar entry into the country of delegates to a "world anti-Zionist conference" scheduled to be held in Stockholm this weekend.

Stockholm Jews have already linked the desecration of their cemetery this week to the conference, which is being organized by a Stockholm-based Islamic broadcaster.

"With the explosion of neo-Nazi violence across the European continent, such a gathering will only add fuel to the fires of bigotry in your country," Rabbi Abraham Cooper, of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, said in a letter to the Swedish ambassador to the United States.

In a telephone interview, Cooper noted a "special irony" in bringing together neo-Nazis and Moslems at an anti-Israel conference in the wake of the killing of three Turkish Moslems in Germany this week by right-wing extremists.

The daubing of swastikas on 52 Jewish graves in Stockholm lent added weight to his plea to Swedish authorities, Cooper said.

The European Jewish Congress, an affiliate of the World Jewish Congress, has requested its representatives throughout Europe to call on the Swedish ambassadors in their countries and ask them to convey to their government the Jewish communities' deep concern about this conference.

The EJC also asked for Sweden to ban entry of the delegates to the conference, which is scheduled for Nov. 28-29.

Farrakhan Among The Participants

Scheduled participants include Chicago Black Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan, Holocaust revisionists Robert Faurisson of France, David Irving of England and Fred Leuchter of the United States, as well as representatives of Russia's anti-Semitic Pamyat movement and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah and Hamas Moslem anti-Israel terror groups.

In his own letter to Swedish Ambassador Anders Thunborg, Kent Schiner, president of B'nai B'rith International, wrote that "participants in this proposed conference have been refused entry by Austria, Germany, Italy, the United States and Canada."

He asked that Sweden bar entry, as well, "and keep this contagion from further infecting the European body politic."

Just two weeks ago, Holocaust revisionist Irving was deported from Canada after ignoring a ban on entering the country.

In New York, Jewish leaders said the conference highlighted the link between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism.

"It once against puts to rest the notion that these things are easily separable," said David Harris, executive vice president of the American Jewish Committee. "They are all people cut from the same cloth who share the same goals."

The organizers reached out to like-minded souls, said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

"They have reached out to the Holocaust

deniers and tried and true anti-Semites and put them under the rubric of anti-Zionism, which has little viability," said Foxman.

The conference plans a right-wing parade on Nov. 30, the anniversary of the death in 1718 of Charles XII, the Swedish warrior king idolized by Swedish neo-Nazis and skinheads.

Ahmed Rami, the conference organizer, said he expects 500 delegates, of whom 300 would come from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco and Sudan.

Rami has served six months in jail and has had his radio station closed by Swedish authorities for broadcasting racial incitement.

(JTA staff writer Debra Nussbaum Cohen in New York contributed to this report.)

**SHOVAL CALLS ARAFAT GREATEST OBSTACLE
IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PALESTINIANS**By Cynthia Mann
States News Service

WASHINGTON, Nov. 25 (JTA) -- Israeli Ambassador Zalman Shoval has presented a sober picture of the Middle East peace talks and called Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat the biggest obstacle in the negotiations with the Palestinians.

Shoval made his remarks Wednesday in an address to the National Press Club. He remained confident, however, that the parties would agree to resume the talks in Washington on Dec. 7.

The seventh round of talks concluded last week on a sour note and without a clear commitment by all delegations to return in December at the invitation of the United States, the talks' sponsor.

The delay in the decision to return reflects doubt by some that much can be accomplished until the Clinton administration assumes power.

In Tunis on Wednesday, Arafat told reporters that during two days of meetings earlier this week, the Palestinian delegation had come very close to deciding against returning to the talks. He said members of the group had concluded that the last two rounds had achieved "zero," but would likely return to Washington next month anyway.

The talks broke with the Palestinians and Israelis seemingly far away from an agreement on interim Palestinian self-rule. The Palestinians charged the Israeli proposal was not serious and merely "legitimizes the occupation in another form."

The Israelis accused the Palestinian delegation of adopting an "all-or-nothing attitude that makes compromise impossible."

Shoval reinforced this accusation when he said "the results could be there for the asking if the (Palestinian) delegation was engaged in serious and concrete talks."

He said the negotiators were intent on focusing on the "dark side" and were not reporting to their constituency "the little progress" that has been made. The negative emphasis was "bound to incite violence and encourage rejectionism" at home, he said.

Shoval said that Arafat was "probably the single greatest obstacle in our talks with the Palestinians."

Since Arafat "thrives on the status quo," he said, any implementation of an interim agreement and creation of democratic leadership in the territories "would make his redundancy more and more obvious."

Shoval's comments about Arafat were identical to those made by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin earlier this week at a meeting of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

Shoval also elaborated on Israel's refusal to spell out the territorial concessions it is willing to make to Syria on the Golan Heights until Syria specifies the nature of the peace it is willing to give in return.

"We would like to see a great deal more than a glorified non-belligerency," said the ambassador.

Shoval said the steering committee for the region's multilateral talks is scheduled to meet in London early next month. He said Israel was hopeful the talks would help create an "infrastructure for a stable peace" in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, the ambassador refused to say whether his designated successor, Itamar Rabinovich, would assume the post in January, as has been rumored, or next spring. Rabinovich heads the Israeli team negotiating with the Syrians.

GOVERNMENT TO SUBMIT NEW MEASURE ENDING BAN ON MEETINGS WITH PLO

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Nov. 25 (JTA) -- The government is planning to propose legislation next week lifting a ban on meetings between Israeli citizens and officials of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Justice Minister David Libai said the proposed measure makes such meetings a criminal offense only if they are intended to prejudice the security of the state.

The decision by a ministerial defense committee to submit the legislation to Parliament comes in response to pressure from left-wing Labor Knesset member Yael Dayan.

Dayan, who had come under criticism for meeting with a PLO official in Europe, threatened to submit her own private member's bill if the government failed to act by the end of the month.

Labour and its left-of-center coalition partner Meretz pledged in their election platforms last spring to abrogate current provisions making it a crime to meet with PLO officials, no matter what the motive.

Libai said the bill equalizes the status of the PLO with that of other enemy states in respect to such meetings.

FRENCH PRESIDENT OFFERS FUNDS TO HELP REBUILD MIDDLE EAST

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Nov. 25 (JTA) -- French President Francois Mitterrand arrived in Israel for a state visit offering his country's economic cooperation in building a peaceful Middle East.

"Israel is one of the places where world history is still being made. I am honored to be here," he said upon his arrival Wednesday for a three-day visit.

It was his second trip to Israel during his presidential term. Ten years ago, he broke an unwritten taboo by becoming the first serving French leader to tour the Jewish state.

He was welcomed at Ben-Gurion Airport by President Chaim Herzog, who told him, "We all know your personal ties to our country. The people of Israel welcome you as a friend."

Mitterrand was soon closeted alone with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin at his Jerusalem hotel in a first working session.

In the evening, the Herzogs held a state dinner at the president's residence for Mitterrand, his wife Danielle and a large delegation of ministers and aides accompanying him.

He is considered a close personal friend of Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, a fellow member of the Socialist International with whom he was to meet Thursday.

Peres told reporters that France is already playing a helpful role in designing an economic future for a peaceful Middle East. He specified that France would help with transportation, communications and banking.

France hosted multilateral talks between Israel and its Arab neighbors on regional economic development last month.

Israeli officials briefing reporters stressed the economic aspect of the visit, with Israel anxious to secure French support for closer ties with the European Community.

Mitterrand was also slated to meet Thursday with Palestinian leaders at the French Consulate.

And he was to tour the recently inaugurated Valley of the Destroyed Communities at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial.

Israeli officials briefing reporters stressed the economic aspect of the visit, with Israel anxious to secure French support for its bid for closer ties with the European Community.

From Israel, Mitterrand goes on to Jordan, where he will confer with King Hussein.

On Wednesday, France officially denied reports that the president plans to meet, while in Amman, with Yasir Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

GERMAN ARMY, IDF MAY COOPERATE

By David Kantor

BONN, Nov. 25 (JTA) -- The German and Israeli defense forces are studying a plan for cooperation between units of both armies. The idea was hatched during the official visit to Israel last week by the German army chief of staff, Gen. Klaus Naumann, according to a spokesman for the Bundeswehr, the German army.

The project would be part of an effort to promote cooperation and understanding between the Bundeswehr and the Israel Defense Force at all levels, the spokesman said.

Naumann, upon his return from Israel, said that both countries are seeking ways to bring together their soldiers in exchange programs designed to advance mutual understanding.

Such a project would do much to turn around feelings of apprehension that have existed among Israelis, particularly Holocaust survivors and their families, and Germans.

Naumann said he had met hundreds of young Israelis and had the impression they are fair-minded toward Germany.

But many of those he met voiced concerns over the current wave of neo-Nazi attacks on foreigners.

NEWS ANALYSIS:**FLAP OVER 'CHRISTIAN NATION' REMARK IS SALVO IN BATTLE FOR THE GOP'S SOUL**

By Cynthia Mann
States News Service

WASHINGTON, Nov. 25 (JTA) -- The flap at a Republican governors gathering last week over whether the United States is a Christian nation is a window on the battle being waged for the soul of the GOP in the wake of President Bush's election defeat.

Political analysts say the incident reflected the determination of the religious right to be heard and its intention to be rewarded for its loyalty to Bush with power and influence in the party.

They also say it was a wake-up call to Jewish Republicans and other moderates to mobilize the grass roots and fight the growing influence of the Christian right.

Ultimately, they expect the forces of moderation will prevail, if only because a party that rejects diversity cannot muster enough support to win a national election.

The controversy at a meeting of the Republican Governors Association last week erupted when Mississippi Gov. Kirk Fordice called the United States a Christian nation and said the less Americans emphasized the Christian religion, the farther they would fall "into an abyss of poor character and chaos."

Rejected More Inclusive Remarks

He pointedly rejected another governor's efforts to be more inclusive by referring to the nation's "Judeo-Christian" tradition.

Republican Party leaders, prodded by Jewish groups, later issued a condemnation of religious bigotry and intolerance, without mentioning Fordice, while the governor himself offered a clarification and apologized for offending Mississippians.

Ironically, the governors conference had been designed to rehabilitate the image of a party tarnished by a divisive national convention last summer in Houston that featured Pat Buchanan declaring a religious war.

The Fordice incident is emblematic of the threat posed to the party by the religious right and the battle that may ensue, said William Schneider, political analyst with the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank.

"The GOP wants to close the wounds (of the campaign) and avoid open warfare, but the Fordice statement said it won't be easy," he said.

"The religious right is determined to be heard, and they're making a bid for control and influence in the party."

Schneider said the "us-versus-them" views of the right are dangerous and divisive. "Calling the United States a Christian nation is stigmatizing because it says non-Christians don't belong."

Jack Stein, a leading Republican Jewish activist and longtime friend of Bush, was deeply disturbed by the Fordice comments and said they represent a high-stakes fight in the party over its "moral, ethical and political" direction.

He called the Fordice remarks and the rhetoric of the Houston convention "ugly, exclusive and out of the mainstream of the Republican Party."

He said they marked a "misreading of the American electorate and a distortion" of the constitutional separation of church and state.

Stein conceded that Jewish GOP leaders have dropped the ball by ignoring the political grass roots and by focusing solely on the party's top leadership, which has consistently sounded a message of moderation and inclusion and is solidly pro-Israel.

"Everything was going so well for Israel, we never involved ourselves in the nuts and bolts of the party structure and local government," Stein said.

The party moderates have their work cut out for them. Evangelist Pat Robertson and his Christian Coalition recently saw hundreds of victories in local races.

And one survey of the Republican convention reported 42 percent of the delegates were born-again Christians. Just 3 percent were Jews.

Bush Garnered Meager Jewish Vote

After a concerted push by the Bush campaign to woo Jewish support, the president managed on Nov. 3 to garner a meager 12 to 15 percent of the Jewish vote, a notable drop from 1988, when he received roughly 30 percent. He won 61 percent of the vote of the Christian right.

Matt Brooks, director of the National Jewish Coalition, a Republican group, believes there is a problem within the party but that it has not yet reached crisis proportions.

"I'm not ready to batten down the hatches," he said. "We are not yet under siege from the religious right."

As evidence, Brooks points to the fact that none of the half-dozen or so candidates for the party's chairmanship identifies with the far-right agenda.

But Brooks wants it made clear he views Fordice's comments with concern. He termed them "a wake-up call" and said he thinks that now is the time to respond.

"As elements of the religious right mobilize and organize, it is incumbent upon Jews and others to mobilize," he said.

Stein also believes the fight for the party's soul is "very much in the interest of the Jewish community."

"Our broader, long-term interests are served by having a meaningful role in both parties," he said. "It would be a terrible mistake (for Jews) to abandon the party."

But another Jewish Republican argued that the weak Jewish showing for Bush was a referendum on the man and not the party.

He pointed out that GOP Sen. Alfonse D'Amato won 40 percent of the Jewish vote in New York, where the president got less than 10 percent.

Buchanan 'Filled The Void'

He also observed that the right-wing message had resonated only because there had been no party leadership and no overarching vision. "Pat Buchanan (and his message) filled the void," he said.

The right-wing fundamentalists clearly see in the party's post-election scrambling the "opportunity for an opening," said one Jewish leader, who asked not to be identified.

"But those scrambling to inherit the (leadership) mantle realize if the party moves in this (far-right) direction, it can't win," he said. "It will be a 33 percent party unless it makes a broader pitch."

The election for the next party chairman is slated for late January.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:
BLACK ACADEMICS DECRY ANTI-SEMITISM
BUT JEWS WONDER WHO IS LISTENING**
By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Nov. 25 (JTA) -- Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Cornel West -- two of the country's most prominent academics and both African-Americans -- have been speaking to a lot of Jewish audiences lately, decrying anti-Semitism in the black community.

Jews are pleased with these passionate pronouncements, but in the wake of recent incidents, they are beginning to wonder whom Gates and West truly represent -- and who else is listening to them.

Gates, a professor of English and chairman of the Afro-American Studies Department at Harvard, called remarks about Jews by Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan "morally bankrupt" when he addressed several hundred people at a conference on anti-Semitism convened in Boston by the Anti-Defamation League earlier this month.

West, a professor of religion and director of the Afro-American Studies Department at Princeton, has addressed synagogue audiences and a hotel ballroom full of interested listeners at the Council of Jewish Federations General Assembly here on November 11.

Seen against the backdrop of recent survey data that shows that hard-core anti-Semitic attitudes are twice as likely to be found among blacks as among whites, Jews in just about every stratum of the community find deeply troubling the proliferation of black anti-Semitism.

Do They Carry Much Weight?

The issue has been pushed into the spotlight by the death last year of a Hasidic Jew at the hands of a black mob in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, the acquittal of the only man charged with his murder and the subsequent highly charged exchanges between black and Jewish leaders in the aftermath of the verdict.

To the Jewish establishment, Gates and West are two responsible voices willing to critique the growing popularity among African-Americans for scapegoating Jews for the social and economic ills that continue to beset the black community.

But there is some concern that these lone voices may not carry much weight in their own community.

When "Skip" Gates filled the entire second page of the New York Times one day last week with well-aimed arrows of criticism of those blacks who spread anti-Semitic canards, he found himself roundly denounced by many blacks.

His essay sparked a heated debate within the larger African-American community that has yet to subside.

Gates was not just criticized, but castigated, and received anonymous death threats for bringing into very public view an issue which many in the black community feel belongs behind their own closed doors.

Just after Gates' essay was published, Minister Don Muhammed, head of the Nation of Islam in Boston, said to a radio interviewer on WILD there: "Something is wrong with the black-Jewish relationship, Mr. Gates. Some of our people who call themselves educated are simply well trained."

"When Gates wrote his piece people wondered what the politics were behind it," acknowledged E. Ethelbert Miller, director of the African-American Resource Center at Howard

University, a black university in Washington.

But the debate over motives, in fact, may have sidelined the central issue that Gates tried to bring forward.

West described the debate as one over "the politics of presentation" rather than anti-Semitism itself, and said that the shift may, in the end, quash the real dialogue that it should inspire.

"If we lose sight of the moral issue, it generates even deeper levels of distrust" between our two communities, West told the G.A.

But according to Gary Rubin, director of national affairs for the American Jewish Committee, Gates succeeded in his effort to place anti-Semitism on the agenda for discussion among black intellectuals.

"Coming out like that was a shock to the black community, but one which made them begin to take notice of something that they knew about but weren't into discussing in a coherent way," said Rubin.

Silence As A Sign Of Acquiescence

"The voices that have come out have been very critical, but have been very few and not very powerful," said Rubin.

"I take the large silence as a measure of quiet acquiescence."

According to some observers, West and Gates are not alone in their vocal opposition to black anti-Semitism.

"The Jewish community has been fixated on the voices of anti-Semitism, and not hearing the voices of conciliation and outreach," said Rubin.

Black ministers have been among the most vocal opponents of anti-Semitism among African-Americans and have reached huge numbers of black Americans in their churches, said West.

And according to the Rev. Jesse Jackson, the health of the black-Jewish coalition should be measured by the "good working relationship" of black and Jewish members of Congress, and of black mayors and the Jewish communities in their cities.

"In my traveling, the black-affirmed relationship is more the rule than the exception," Jackson told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

But as influential as they may be in the world of academia, the credibility of Gates and West among African-Americans may not extend far beyond the gates of their Ivy League campuses, said Miller of Howard University.

"As intellectuals, Gates and West can take a more principled position than a politician can. It's not as if you're dealing with people who represent organizations. They're individuals," he said.

Still, according to some observers, the fact that two individuals as prominent and respected in intellectual circles as Gates and West have so clearly repudiated anti-Semitism in their own community can only promise more of the same.

'Powerful Pull To The Center'

"This powerful pull to the center is of enormous significance to legitimize other black figures who want to confront this extremism," according to Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Reform movement's Religious Action Center.

AJCommittee's Rubin said Gates' and West's statements gave "new prominence and visibility to this voice."

But he warned that "it will have no importance at all if it's considered just the courageous voice of one or two people unconnected to the larger community."