

**SCHOOL PRAYER OPPONENTS GAIN VICTORY,
BUT THE BATTLE IS STILL FAR FROM OVER**

By Michael Shapiro and Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, Aug. 3 (JTA) -- In what has been described as an unparalleled grass roots effort to combat school prayer, Jewish groups have scored a major victory with the Senate defeat of a measure designed to cut funds to schools that prevent prayer.

Last week's narrow 53-47 defeat of the amendment came just six months after the same amendment, introduced by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), was adopted as part of another piece of legislation.

After intense lobbying by Jewish groups and others who favor a strong separation between church and state, lawmakers removed the language from that legislation. The move prompted Helms to reintroduce the amendment as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which is now under consideration in the Senate.

Despite the victory, opponents of school prayer say the push must continue in the wake of a surge in activity by school prayer advocates across the country.

In Mississippi, lawmakers recently passed a measure allowing prayer in schools. And last month, a major court decision in the nation's capital cleared the way for a voter referendum on prayer in Washington schools.

"People are looking at prayer in the schools as a panacea" for the country's ills, but "we can't allow fundamental protections to be destroyed," said David Friedman, regional director of the Washington office of the Anti-Defamation League.

Lobbying against the Helms amendment represented "the most significant push on a church-state issue in at least the last five years," according to Michael Lieberman, associate director and counsel of the ADL's Washington office.

"Our backs were up against the wall," Lieberman said, noting that back in February, only 22 senators opposed the amendment.

Helms had called for a cutoff of federal funds to states and school districts that "deny or effectively prevent participation in constitutionally protected prayer in public schools by individuals on a voluntary basis."

'An Unnecessary And Pernicious Measure'

During the floor debate in the Senate last week, Helms stressed that his amendment "does not mandate school prayer" and "does not require schools to write any particular prayer," but would protect students' individual rights.

According to the conservative senator, the amendment would "prevent school districts from establishing official policies or procedures with the intent of prohibiting students from exercising their constitutionally protected right to lead -- or participate in -- voluntary prayer in their schools."

David Kahn, president of the American Jewish Congress, which worked to defeat the Helms amendment, said in a statement that Helms'

action was "an unnecessary and pernicious measure which threatened two treasured American values -- separation of church and state and local control of education."

Rabbi David Saperstein, director and counsel of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, also viewed the Helms proposal as dangerous to schools.

"Senator Helms' amendment would have placed widespread financial burdens on schools through total funding cutoffs, lawsuits and legal fees -- potentially millions of dollars that could far better be used in improving the quality of education in our nation's schools," Saperstein said in a statement.

While defeating the Helms amendment, the Senate adopted, with a 93-7 vote, a competing measure that could only bar funds to a state or school district if a federal court rules that it has "willfully violated" a court order to allow constitutionally protected prayer. The amendment was offered by Sen. Nancy Kassebaum (R-Kan.).

Because of the legal battles that the amendment would require in determining "willful violation," opponents of school prayer say they do not see this as a threat to their interests.

In Mississippi, meanwhile, opponents of school prayer are legally challenging the new law that requires public schools to permit invocations, benedictions and nonsectarian, non-proselytizing, student-initiated voluntary prayer at all school events.

Predicting that the lawsuit will go all the way to the Supreme Court, Marc Stern, co-director of the Commission on Law and Social Action of the American Jewish Congress, said the challenge will be "useful politically" and "show the other side that it's a two-way street, that they will be challenged." While the legal battle in Mississippi has just begun, school prayer advocates in Washington, D.C., have begun to collect signatures to put a similar measure on the ballot as early as next April.

**ARGENTINE JEWISH LEADER FEARS TENSIONS
WITH GOVERNMENT, RISE IN ANTI-SEMITISM**

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Aug. 3 (JTA) -- Torn by a bomb that killed more than 100 people and leveled its communal institutions, Argentina's Jewish community is now facing tensions with the government and the fear of a resurgence of anti-Semitism.

For Ruben Beraja, the president of the DAIA Jewish communal umbrella organization whose office was demolished by the blast, this has brought new challenges to the tightrope he walks as a communal leader.

With some 220,000 members, Argentina has the second largest Jewish community in the Americas. But its history, including both ties with Germany during the Holocaust and a military dictatorship that ended only a decade ago, has given the Jewish community fears and sensitivities unfamiliar in the United States.

Statements and actions that might have been

taken as routine expressions of Jewish pride and solidarity in North America have come under criticism from various quarters in Argentina.

Beraja tried to explain this to his American audiences in appearances before a congressional panel Monday and in a meeting in New York with American Jewish leaders Tuesday.

Some in the Argentine media have fanned the flames, said Beraja on Tuesday, with one influential commentator warning that the Jewish community's high profile could rouse the "dormant beast," referring to anti-Semitism.

These criticisms, coming at this sensitive time, Beraja told the American Jewish leaders, challenge the Jewish community to "moderate the feelings of many Jews who feel threatened by everybody and are paranoid at this time, and feel everybody's an anti-Semite."

At the same time, "we also have to face those who are anti-Semitic, and are taking advantage of the present situation to do what they usually do."

The community received strong support at a rally three days after the July 18 bombing, attended by 150,000 people. Jews were outnumbered by their non-Jewish neighbors at what was described as the largest mass demonstration in the country in the last 10 years.

But the bombing, the second in two years, has also led non-Jews to fear their Jewish neighbors. In 1992, a bomb leveled the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, killing more than 30.

For Beraja, the fear among non-Jews is understandable. Beraja elaborated on this in testimony in Washington on Monday before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Security, International Organizations and Human Rights.

The fear has generated "an attempt to create a separation between Jews and non-Jews, in a reappearance of attitudes that we believed had been definitely eradicated from Argentinean society."

Speaking to Jewish leaders in New York on Tuesday, he described this as "a great challenge in the field of social politics."

Blast Reopened Another Wound

"We are working with the Argentine government on this," he told a meeting sponsored by the World Jewish Congress American Section and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

The recent bomb blast reopened another wound: the failure of the Argentine government to apprehend those responsible for the 1992 embassy explosion.

President Carlos Menem, who has a friendly relationship with the Jewish community, is not seen as having been zealous in the 1992 investigation or in being vigilant on security matters since then.

He was booed when he appeared at the rally last month.

It is perhaps not surprising then that the rally was soon the target of criticism from both the government and elements of the press.

Beraja's speech at the rally, in which he criticized the legal establishment as "neither efficient nor effective" in punishing terrorism, was attacked.

Another line of criticism boiled down to the

question: Why, if the Jewish community kept insisting the attack was against all Argentines, was the rally so Jewish?

Critics attacked the Jewish community, which organized the rally, for failing to invite a representative of the Catholic Church to speak, for having several speeches in Hebrew, for displaying an Israeli flag on the dais and for concluding with the singing of Hatikvah.

Some of the criticism, Beraja told Jewish leaders, came from "good friends" of the community.

To some extent, he said, the community was to blame. Reeling from the shock of the attack, it "lacked the necessary balance and peace of mind to design a more general event more open to the public.

"This is not a matter of lack of character or dignity," he said. "It is a matter of understanding the concerns of a specific society, and how to respond to those concerns."

These actions made the community vulnerable to "certain commentators" who tried to stir things up, hoping to "fuel the conflict between the DAIA and the government," said Beraja.

He has maintained a continuous dialogue with Menem and other high government officials concerning the controversy, trying to calm things down, while indicating that the Jewish community would not lower its profile.

"Menem has shared our concern and reiterated his commitment to neutralize those alarm signals," Beraja said in Washington.

And he told the Jewish leaders in New York that in terms of concrete actions, the government was doing a "good job."

Nonetheless, Beraja said that "after this unfortunate episode our relationship with the government will be somewhat different than before. There will probably be different channels or different levels of relationship."

ISRAELI FILM DRAWS MUSSOLINI'S IRE

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, Aug. 3 (JTA) -- Alessandra Mussolini, granddaughter of Italy's wartime fascist dictator and a right-wing member of Parliament, was unsuccessful in her attempt to have an Israeli-made film about her withdrawn from a film festival this week in Sicily.

The film, "In the Name of the Duce," was shot by Israeli director Amos Gitai during Mussolini's losing electoral campaign for mayor of Naples last fall. It was compared to "The War Room," the documentary about President Clinton's campaign.

A communique issued last week by Mussolini's party, the National Alliance, said the film was a distortion of reality.

The Milan daily Corriere della Sera said Gitai and his crew were evicted from Mussolini's office after they began filming a poster-sized portrait of the dictator Benito Mussolini on the wall. The crew also filmed the entire scene of their being thrown out of the room.

Gitai said Mussolini had demanded the documentary be withdrawn from the festival without having seen it. "The blind reactions of Mussolini reveal the mentality and methods of the right, ready to repress the free exercise of information," he told reporters.

IDF INDUCTS RECORD NUMBER OF RECRUITS AS THE LENGTH OF SERVICE IS REEVALUATED

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 3 (JTA) -- The Israel Defense Force this month inducted its largest number of recruits ever, according to the commander in charge of the IDF's manpower branch, Maj. Gen. Yoram Yair.

The actual number of new recruits is not published for security reasons. But according to Yair, 33 percent of the new recruits will join combat units, mostly at their own request.

Yair also said the recruits' educational level was the highest on record, with an unprecedented 86 percent being high school graduates.

This contrasts sharply with a decade ago, when Rafael Eitan, then the IDF chief of staff, established supplemental schooling for recruits, many of whom were thought to have insufficient education for a modern army.

Speaking to military correspondents this week, Yair said that of those recruits volunteering for combat units, a high percentage wanted to join the undercover units that deal with Palestinian militants in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"We will continue to maintain those two units, despite the recent agreements with the Palestinians," Yair said.

He added that Israel's peace initiatives will result in lessening the burden on reservists.

NEWS ANALYSIS:

FIRST RABIN MAKES PEACE WITH JORDAN, THEN HE MOVES TO MAKE PEACE WITH PERES

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Aug. 3 (JTA) -- The Mideast peace process, wrote one leading columnist here this week, does not include the war between Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

Following their latest angry bout, played out during the Israeli-Jordanian summit in Washington, the two men met privately in Jerusalem on Monday in an effort to resolve their differences.

After two hours of discussions -- at which only one mutual friend, attorney Giora Eini, was present -- the two inveterate allies and foes proclaimed a renewed "working relationship."

But anything other than this public stance was not made entirely clear.

Their aides claimed they had hammered out an agreement marking their various areas of responsibility in the peace process and that it contained a pledge to cooperate fully and to conceal nothing from each another.

But in the words of the media wag cited above, whatever the details, this latest agreement can only restore a state of non-belligerency. Full peace and normalization in the Rabin-Peres relationship seem as remote as ever -- particularly, as pundits say, as the 1996 elections approach.

Peres was reportedly much offended by being virtually sidelined by Rabin during the two days of ceremonies in Washington, where Rabin and Hussein officially ended 46 years of hostilities.

The Rabin-Peres tensions were only the latest display of a well-known and long-standing rivalry between the two.

The latest tension arose because Rabin apparently waited until the last moment to invite

Peres to Washington. The invitation reportedly only came after Rabin aides leaked rumors Peres was not going to be included at all.

The slight was magnified by Peres' highly visible role in negotiations with the Jordanians only days earlier, when he joined U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Jordanian Prime Minister Abdul Salam al-Majali in a three-way session.

The July 20 meeting marked the first time that an Israeli official publicly set foot on Jordanian soil.

Peres' glum disposition throughout last week's Washington summit was a constant subject of media attention and speculation in Israel.

During the Washington trip last week, Rabin, in conversations and briefings, reportedly belittled Peres' contribution to the diplomatic breakthrough with Jordan.

Peres Considered Resigning

In his public addresses, Rabin barely mentioned the foreign minister, who is widely regarded as the main architect of the government's peace initiatives.

Peres was so hurt that at one stage he apparently told his confidants he was considering resigning.

According to some reports here, during Tuesday's meeting with Peres, Rabin offered a faint expression of regret for having publicly and repeatedly belittled Peres during the Washington trip.

"I didn't mean to hurt you," the prime minister was quoted as saying.

According to columnist Yoel Markus of the Hebrew daily Ha'aretz, the explanation for their tensions is to be sought wholly in the realm of politics.

In Markus' view, this latest eruption of their two-decades-old hostility signals "the first round of the 1996 election buildup."

Markus noted Rabin's aside to President Clinton during the Washington trip that both of them would be facing re-election in 1996.

This was believed to be the first time the Israeli prime minister publicly confirmed that he intends to run again.

Peres, who served as prime minister for only two years, 1984-1986 -- presiding over a gridlocked unity government -- pointedly declined to field a question on his own possible prime ministerial ambitions during a recent television interview.

He merely noted that Rabin had been elected for the present term and that he fully supported the prime minister in their peacemaking odyssey.

Peres and Rabin first fought over the leadership of the Labor Party in 1974, when Rabin won by a narrow margin.

They have revived the rivalry every few years since then.

With no especially strong challenge evident from Labor's next generation, the two septuagenarians may have yet another go at it come primary time before the 1996 election.

According to this interpretation, it was solely political considerations that led Rabin to seek all the credit for the Jordanian breakthrough and to deny Peres any part of the success.

(JTA correspondent Cynthia Mann in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:

ATTACKS ON DIASPORA JEWS RAISE NEW QUESTIONS ABOUT AN OLD RELATIONSHIP

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Aug. 3 (JTA) -- The recent spate of bombings of Israeli and Jewish targets in Buenos Aires and London has managed to sharpen the already intense focus on the nature of the Israel-Diaspora connection and shatter some stereotypes in the process.

Israel clearly can no longer be reduced to the role of the Diaspora's weaker, more vulnerable cousin, needing charity and protection to survive in the face of existential threats.

Rather, say some, it is the Diaspora that seems suddenly defenseless and it is Israel that now can and does come to its aid.

At the same time, the inextricable link between Israel and the Diaspora is irrefutable, if only because the perpetrators of the attacks made it so. They clearly believed that by hitting Jewish targets, they were wounding Israel and the peace process it has labored so painstakingly to build.

It is a link acknowledged explicitly by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

"Jews once again are being killed precisely because they are Jews. The motive this time is to halt the search for peace," he said recently.

"Israel will do all within its power to find and punish those responsible for these bombings," he pledged.

Others, too, have noted the links connecting Jews worldwide in wake of the recent attacks.

"The terrorists and hatemongers understand one thing very well -- (we) are all Jews," wrote Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, in an opinion piece last week.

Avi Beker, Israel director of the World Jewish Congress, also wrote an op-ed saying the Buenos Aires and London bombings "underline the common fate of Israeli and Diaspora Jews."

In Israel, there were visible signs that the attacks and their aftermath touched a nerve, but Israelis differed in their reading of events.

Mezuzot Can Be Moved To Minimize Risk

An advertisement in Israeli newspapers last week proclaimed, "Now it's our turn to give! The Jews of Argentina need your help..."

In addition, a solidarity rally was held in Tel Aviv to coincide with the rally in Buenos Aires protesting the attack and mourning the victims.

In response to the threat to Jews worldwide, former Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren declared that Jewish law permits Diaspora Jews to move mezuzot on outside doorposts to inside doorposts to minimize risk.

The newspapers here have been filled with stories of Israelis going to South America and Europe to offer their expertise in rescue operations, psychology, terrorism and intelligence.

For Michael Oren, director of the Israel office of the American Jewish Committee, the attacks in the Diaspora are a direct reflection of Israel's extraordinary strength.

"It is because Israel is so strong that terrorists are striking at the vulnerable periphery," he said. He also said that "Israel has traditionally seen itself as (responsible) not just for Jews within its borders but beyond them. It is inherent in the Zionist idea."

David Clayman, Israel director of the American Jewish Congress, sees a more profound dynamic at work. "There is a shift in the (Israel-Diaspora) balance of power on a whole series of levels," he said.

Clayman believes Israel has in the past few weeks come dramatically into its own as an international player. He cited as only one example the Argentine president's summoning of the Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency, to Buenos Aires after the bombing.

Current events obligate Israelis, Clayman said, "to reciprocity and responsibility," in "supporting and defending their Diaspora brethren."

Israel is also offering aid to non-Jews in other needy places throughout the world. Though Israel has previously provided help elsewhere in the world, it has never done been so public as now, he said.

This comes as a result of Israel's new legitimacy in the international arena, Clayman said.

But not everyone agrees with these assessments.

Uri Savir, director-general of the Foreign Ministry, dismisses the notion that recent events reflect anything new about Israel-Diaspora relations.

The attacks "do not create a situation where the Diaspora is more vulnerable than Israel," he said. "Terrorism has a negative effect on everyone. It is just that Israel, as a state, has the tools to deal with it. And they did it in the past."

Unity Should Be Built On 'Positive Aspects'

He also refuted the idea that the common bond between Israel and the Diaspora is strengthened by such disasters.

"We shouldn't base our unity on the views of fundamentalists" or those espousing anti-Semitism, he said.

"We have to build it on more positive aspects, on history and continuity. I prefer the peace process to be a unifying element (rather) than Jewish enemies," Savir said.

Gabriel Sheffer, a political science professor at Hebrew University and an expert on Israel-Diaspora relations, is also wary of drawing what he terms simplistic conclusions from recent events.

"It would be a mistake to think in terms of one party (to the relationship) being weak and one party being strong," he said. "Each has its strengths and weaknesses."

He also does not believe there is a profound concern among rank-and-file Israelis for the safety or fate of Diaspora Jews. "The majority couldn't care less," he said.

The solidarity rally here drew 1,000 people at most, he said, most of them Argentineans.

He believes the Israeli media's heavy coverage of the bombings arose because Israelis are concerned with the international terrorist campaign against Israel, not Jewish targets per se.

Sheffer said his own 25-year-old daughter told him she was not especially moved by the Buenos Aires attack because the victims were Jewish.

He said "she was just as moved by the bombing in (New York's) World Trade Center. She said she cares about human life."