

**JEWISH GROUPS DRAW BATTLE LINES
AMID TALK OF SCHOOL PRAYER, REFORM**
By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, Nov. 14 (JTA) -- Less than a week after the Republican takeover of Congress, battle lines are being drawn between Jewish groups and GOP leaders, who have pledged swift legislative action on school-prayer and balanced-budget amendments as well as draconian cuts to the welfare system.

Republican victors have already initiated plans to introduce a constitutional school-prayer amendment before July 4.

Further GOP plans to eliminate all welfare programs for legal immigrants threaten not only tens of thousands of Jews from the former Soviet Union living in America but thousands more seeking to come to the United States.

While some Jewish activists here hope the Republicans will tame their rhetoric once the results of their sweeping victory settle in, the vast majority have already begun to plan strategies to combat GOP initiatives that strike at the heart of their agenda.

"We are likely to spend much of the next two years playing defense," said Mark Pelavin, Washington representative of the American Jewish Congress.

The uphill battles that lie ahead for many Jewish groups come at a particularly uncertain time for the community's influence on Capitol Hill. As Republicans assume the leadership posts, they will do so knowing they did not receive Jewish electoral support.

According to a poll published in The New York Times, Jewish voters continued a tradition of overwhelming support for Democratic candidates. In last week's midterm elections, 78 percent of Jewish voters cast their ballot for Democratic candidates, compared with 22 percent for Republicans, according to exit polls.

School Prayer Issue Troubles Activists

While these figures prove consistent with past election cycles -- at least 68 percent of Jews have voted Democratic in every election since 1980 -- the difference this time around is that the Republicans have obtained control of the Congress.

Nonetheless, Jewish activists stress that only one aspect of their traditional influence on Capitol Hill results from electoral support.

Equally important, they say, is their lobbying ability. They stress that their effectiveness at lobbying for their causes will be tested early on in the new Congress.

One cause troubling many Jewish activists revolves around school prayer.

Within days of the Republican sweep of the House of Representatives, U.S. Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.), launched a campaign vowing to pass a school-prayer amendment that would require voluntary prayer in the public schools.

Gingrich has tapped Ernest Istook (R-Okla.) to spearhead the school-prayer debate and bring an amendment to a vote by July 4.

Groups like AJCongress and the Anti-Defamation League have already begun to mobilize for the expected legislative fight.

Although AJCongress' Pelavin said he is "not particularly optimistic" the community will succeed in staving off a constitutional amendment, the group is going to give it its best shot.

Beginning this week, the group began mobilizing its members, building coalitions with other religious groups and planning strategies to work with allies on Capitol Hill.

Phil Baum, AJCongress executive director, has already sent a letter to Gingrich, pledging to oppose this "ill-conceived notion."

"We recognize that demagogues from both the political and religious worlds offer up school prayer as a panacea for the ills of the public schools," Baum wrote. "There is no gainsaying those ills, but school-sanctioned prayer is neither in whole nor in part the solution to them."

Baum noted that nearly a decade ago, a Republican-led Senate rejected a proposed constitutional amendment on school prayer.

What Role Will White House Play?

But the political climate today is much more conservative, observers note.

One of the greatest unknowns in the debate is what role the White House will take.

Strong opposition by the president could scuttle the measure in the Senate, activists say. Although in the minority, Democrats could in effect snarl GOP plans for a vote in the first half of 1995 by blocking debate as well as procedural votes.

Gingrich has also outlined plans to overhaul the welfare system that has Jewish leaders preparing for a no-holds-barred battle over the future of the welfare system.

The speaker-to-be not only seeks to eliminate aid to legal immigrants but also wants the government to allow states to end aid to children with mothers under 21 years of age. The states could use the money to build orphanages for the children dropped from the welfare rolls.

Jewish groups had already begun to plan for a fight to stave off cuts in aid to legal immigrants in response to the Clinton administration's welfare reform plan.

That plan would reduce government support for immigrants and extend the time that sponsors are financially responsible for their relatives once they come to America.

Gingrich, however, seems ready to take these cuts much further. He is pledging to propose a total elimination of all aid including Medicare, social security, food stamps and disability insurance for legal immigrants.

Gingrich and his "Contract with America," signed by more than 300 Republicans during the campaign, has emerged as another chief target of opposition by Jewish groups.

The contract promises to bring 10 legislative proposals -- including a balanced budget amendment -- up for a vote in the first 100 days of the 104th Congress.

While Jewish groups favor fiscal responsib-

ility as a general rule, a balanced budget amendment would lead to across-the-board reductions that would cut into the heart of virtually every social welfare program, as well as foreign aid.

The Republican contract does not include a school-prayer initiative. Gingrich has said he did not include the amendment to avoid criticism by opponents that the contract and the GOP are beholden to the religious right.

Not all Jewish activists share the dire predictions for Jewish concerns in the new Congress.

Jason Isaacson, director of the Washington office of the American Jewish Committee, said he favors working with the new Congress before passing judgment on its ills.

"We are not without allies at all levels in the Republican Party," he said. The level of activism "will depend to a large degree on how the 'Contract with America' is reflected in their legislative proposals."

PALESTINIANS PURSUE FUNDAMENTALISTS FOLLOWING GAZA SUICIDE BOMBING ATTACK By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Nov. 14 (JTA) -- The Palestinian Authority has broadened its crackdown on Islamic militants in the wake of last Friday's suicide bombing in the Gaza Strip.

Authorities banned street demonstrations and continued to arrest members of the Islamic Jihad, the group that claimed responsibility for the bombing.

Another 20 suspects were arrested Monday, raising the total number of detentions since the crackdown began over the weekend to more than 170. Contrary to earlier statements by Palestine Liberation Organization officials, Islamic Jihad leader Sheik Abdullah Shami was not among those arrested. Palestinian police did detain Shami's brother, who is connected to the Islamic Jihad's military wing.

Three Israeli reserve officers were killed when a suicide bomber with explosives strapped to his body rode his bicycle near the Jewish settlement of Netzarim in Gaza. Six other Israelis and five Palestinians were wounded.

The Palestinian Authority imposed new rules regarding demonstrations, after television broadcasts of an Islamic Jihad rally held last Friday showed protestors firing guns and burning flags.

Freih Abu Medein, justice minister in the Palestinian Authority, said the Islamic Jihad had crossed a red line during the rally.

"What you saw on television is very dangerous, and will be a bad sign to potential investors and the international community," he told Army Radio. "We are not a Lebanon, we are not an Iran. We are in Gaza, and everybody should comply with the rules."

The Islamic Jihad on Monday canceled a funeral procession for Hisham Hamad, the terrorist who carried out last Friday's suicide bombing, after Palestinian police stationed large numbers of forces at intersections throughout Gaza City.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was cautious in his response to the efforts of the Palestinian police, telling a meeting of the Knesset Labor faction Monday that he would applaud the effort to the degree that the Palestinian Authority prevents terrorist attacks launched "from Gaza, in Gaza, and outside of Gaza."

Israel and the PLO have, meanwhile, asked several countries to send monitors to the Palestinian self-rule areas of Gaza and the West Bank district of Jericho.

Under the Cairo agreement signed last May for implementing Palestinian self-rule, Israel and the PLO agreed to deploy a 400-member temporary international presence in both areas for six months.

The Palestinian Authority said in a statement that the observers would monitor any violations of the self-rule accord by the two sides. A similar mission was deployed earlier this year in the West Bank town of Hebron after a Jewish settler killed 29 Palestinians at a local mosque.

In Ramallah, meanwhile, Israeli security forces closed down a school after students repeatedly threw stones at passing Israeli vehicles.

It was the first time security forces had taken such a measure since Israel handed over responsibility for education in the West Bank to the Palestinians in September.

PERES BLAMES SYRIA FOR U.S. DECISION TO POSTPONE CHRISTOPHER'S NEXT VISIT By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Nov. 14 (JTA) -- Foreign Minister Shimon Peres is blaming Syria for this week's decision by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher to postpone a new round of shuttle diplomacy originally planned for later this month.

Peres said Syrian President Hafez Assad had not responded sufficiently to the diplomatic overtures of President Clinton, who visited Damascus on Oct. 27. News reports in the United States said Clinton was outraged by Assad's failure to publicly condemn terrorism, which Assad reportedly promised to do during their private talks in Damascus.

Peres said that delaying the shuttle mission was the American message to Assad that he must do more for the peace process.

Peres told reporters Monday that Syria could have gotten back all of the Golan Heights 15 years ago if Assad had followed the lead of then-Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and signed a peace with Israel in 1979.

Negotiations have been deadlocked over Syrian demands that Israel commit itself to a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights, while Israel demands that Syria first define the nature of the peace.

Syria has so far resisted raising the level of talks, which have been held at the ambassadorial level in Washington or via U.S. intermediaries.

In related news, a delegation of Americans for Peace Now arrived in Israel following a five-day stay in Syria, where they held talks with top government officials and business leaders.

The delegation received wide coverage in the Syrian media. Ahavia Scheindlin, the group's development and programming director, said her delegation left with the feeling that Syria wants peace with Israel, but that its conditions for reaching an agreement have not changed.

"No one we met with really knew how far President Assad has gone in political negotiations," Scheindlin stated, "but the message in every meeting was always the same: Give us back the Golan Heights, every inch, and we'll talk about peace."

ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISTS PLAN NEW ATTACKS AGAINST JEWS WORLDWIDE

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, Nov. 14 (JTA) -- As Islamic fundamentalists step up their attacks against Israelis, they are also busy planning terrorist actions against Jewish and Israeli targets elsewhere in the world.

In France, Interior Minister Charles Pasqua said last week that a group of terrorists belonging to the Armed Islamic Group was planning to attack Israeli and Jewish sites in France.

French authorities last week arrested about 100 members of the group, which hopes to overthrow the Algerian government and replace it with an Islamic state.

Although concerned about the latest arrests, an official with France's Jewish community said that security at Jewish institutions was being maintained at previously requested levels.

"It is good to have a visible police protection as a deterrent," said the official, who asked not to be identified. "But this would be of no help in case of a suicide terrorist attack, as we have seen in Israel."

In Germany, meanwhile, the news magazine Focus has reported that Islamic fundamentalists are renewing their efforts to carry out terrorist attacks against Jewish and Israeli targets in Germany.

According to the magazine, the German security service received intelligence information that radical Muslims recently held a secret meeting at a mosque in Berlin to discuss future terrorist assaults on German soil.

The meeting reportedly was attended by representatives of Hamas, Hezbollah and the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood.

Focus said the German secret service is concerned that the radical Muslims will try to carry out an attack as soon as security measures around Israeli institutions are relaxed.

Security at potential Jewish and Israeli targets in Germany was stepped up in September in the wake of intelligence reports that a terrorist squad of the Abu Nidal group had entered Germany aimed at launching a terrorist strike.

Confidence In German Security

Ilan Mor, spokesman for the Israeli Embassy, said in an interview that Israeli diplomats in Germany were confident that German security services would do their utmost to protect them and their families, and would offer similar protection to Israeli and Jewish institutions in Germany.

As concern heightens over the threat of more international terrorist attacks, the World Jewish Congress focused on the issue at its executive committee meeting in Mexico City last week.

Addressing the WJC, a U.S. State Department official blamed Hezbollah and "its state sponsor, Iran" as the major challenge to stability to the Middle East.

Philip Wilcox, the State Department's coordinator for counterterrorism, maintained that Hezbollah has infiltrated Muslim communities throughout the world.

Wilcox said Hezbollah "was almost certainly" behind the July 18 bombing of the Buenos Aires Jewish community building that killed 99 people and left more than 200 wounded.

"Hezbollah has a well-organized network of cells concealed in peaceful Lebanese Shia communities around the world, including in the Americas," Wilcox told the WJC.

Wilcox said the topic of international cooperation against terrorism will be a topic at the Summit of the Americas in December in Miami, which President Clinton is expected to host.

(JTA correspondent Gil Sedan in Germany and JTA staff writer Susan Birnbaum in New York contributed to this report.)

FOUNDER OF IKEA APOLOGIZES FOR INVOLVEMENT IN PRO-NAZI GROUP

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Nov. 14 (JTA) -- The founder of Ikea, the Swedish-based international furniture retailer, has apologized for his involvement in pro-Nazi groups in the 1940s.

His association with these groups was first reported in the Stockholm daily Expressen as part of an investigation begun after the leader of a post-World War II Nazi group died this past summer and the archives on his activities were opened.

The archives showed that Ikea founder Ingvar Kamprad had attended Nazi meetings in the 1940s, following World War II.

Kamprad, who is now 68, last week sent a personal, handwritten letter to the 25,000 employees of Ikea worldwide to apologize, explain his youthful reasoning and deflect expected criticism.

"This is a part of my life that I bitterly regret," Kamprad wrote. He said he attended meetings led by Swedish right-wing activist Per Engdahl between 1945 and 1948 because he "admired and shared (Engdahl's) fanatical anti-communist view."

"At first I got in touch with a pair of Nazified organizations and perhaps I even became a member. I have forgotten," Kamprad wrote.

He said he quit "after a couple of meetings in pure Nazi style," said Kamprad.

Jewish groups were inclined to forgive Kamprad, but were sorry that it took so long for him to admit his past involvement.

Ken Jacobson, assistant national director of the Anti-Defamation League, said that when the news came out, "we obviously were disappointed to learn of the individual's past."

But, he said, "we also believe that people can be redeemed. We also see that it is something that occurred in this individual's past."

However, said Jacobson, "there is one disappointing element to this story which raises questions -- that is, if in fact the individual had stepped forward voluntarily, then it would have been a much more believable apology."

Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center, expressed surprise and abhorrence and suggested that Kamprad could make amends by establishing a fund to benefit indigent Holocaust survivors.

Goran Carstedt, president for Ikea North America, said in a telephone interview Sunday that Ikea officials were, "first of all, very surprised and very disappointed."

He said he believes that "we all think that this involvement in this group -- without knowing exactly what it was -- is very reprehensible and inexplicable."

RECONSTRUCTIONISTS ENJOY GROWTH, BUT FACE CONFUSION ABOUT MISSION

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

DANA POINT, Calif., Nov. 14 (JTA) -- Forty years after five Reconstructionist Jews had their first organized meeting, and 20 years after the first rabbis were ordained by the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, the movement is at a crossroads.

Reconstructionism -- what it is and how it is different from Judaism's other liberal movements -- is often not clear to its own members, as well as to the rest of the Jewish world.

The confusion was the source of many jokes and of the theme for the recent conference of the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot, the movement's congregational arm, held at the Dana Point Resort here Nov. 10-13.

Titled "Spirit, Intellect, Community: The Reconstructionist Search," the conference, which attracted about 300 people, centered on defining the Reconstructionist integration of those three pillars of Jewish life.

It began with roundtable discussions on explaining and understanding the movement.

Part of the confusion stems from the fact that "people like sound-bites and easy answers, but Reconstructionism is not about that. It's about taking your own practice and belief system seriously," said Rabbi Mordechai Liebling, executive vice president of the federation.

Members often come to Reconstructionist congregations with little idea of what Reconstructionism is, said conference participants.

The movement now has 78 affiliates, more than triple the number of member congregations it had in 1980, and many of the congregations have themselves enjoyed explosive growth in membership.

That growth brings with it administrative and some financial problems for Reconstructionist organizations, which are still structured to serve a tiny movement.

Philosophical And Educational Challenges

It also brings with it philosophical and educational challenges for a movement which has been intimate, by design and by dint of its number of followers, and now must make the transition to the different dynamic inherent in a larger organization.

Most members of Judaism's youngest movement have backgrounds in other movements, or come from no synagogue affiliation at all, according to the movement's members.

And those things which heretofore set Reconstructionism apart from Judaism's other movements -- an emphasis on study, openness and creativity in liturgy and ritual, the ordination of women and acceptance of gay and lesbian Jews -- have become less defining as many non-Reconstructionist liberal congregations integrate similar approaches.

What is more, new members, like American Jews in every movement, are often Jewishly uneducated, according to Jane Susswein, newly installed president of the federation.

What makes Reconstructionist communities attractive to Jews looking to learn is their focus on study and their openness, said Susswein, a member of Congregation B'nai Keshet, in Mont-

clair, N.J. The communities "are a very comfortable place to learn," she said.

Reconstructionist theology and philosophy, as articulated by founder Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan and his followers, is profoundly different from Judaism's other movements. In practice, Reconstructionist Jews are often as observant, or even more observant, than Conservative Jews -- but for different reasons.

Reconstructionists see Torah not as a divinely inspired or even historically accurate document, but as a collection of myths reflecting the spiritual experience and searching of the Jewish people.

Reconstructionists' decisions about issues ranging from the kashrut policy of a synagogue to whether same-sex unions may be religiously sanctified are made after studying Jewish sources. The decisions are informed -- but not dictated -- by the tradition.

Torah "has a vote but not a veto," according to Kaplan's theology.

That plays out as "eat kosher but think treif," according to Rabbi Arnold Rachlis, spiritual leader of University Synagogue in Irvine, Calif., who led a workshop on spirituality.

It means "be a traditional Jew when it doesn't conflict with ethics, like on the women's issue, and to think to the very fullest limits," said Rachlis.

The Reconstructionist movement tries to negotiate a unique path between the individual autonomy at the heart of Reform Judaism and the obedience to Jewish law espoused by Conservative Judaism, if not Conservative Jews.

Community Has Primacy

In Reconstructionism, community has primacy. Kaplan espoused "belonging" as the vehicle for Jewish participation, rather than behaving or believing. This stands as a stark contrast with traditional Judaism, which focuses first on behavior, or the performance of mitzvot, then belief, and finally, membership, as the measures of Jewish commitment.

For Reconstructionists, the community is the center, and serves as the locus of decision-making. But American Jews today have been raised in a culture that emphasizes individual rights, not commitment to a group.

"Our biggest challenge is moving people from the American ideal of radical autonomy to the Jewish commitment to belonging to community."

"Our hardest struggle is around defining the content of commitment to community," said Rabbi David Teutsch, president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College.

According to Liebling of the synagogue federation, "The tension between individual and community is rich and needs to be explored" further within the movement.

A hallmark of the movement is its continued innovation.

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College -- which this year has 76 students, its largest class -- will soon be launching two initiatives: a new program to train rabbis to work with and in Jewish federations, and a center for Jewish ethics which will consider and produce materials to help others weigh the Jewish perspective on ethical issues.