

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ The United States vetoed a U.N. Security Council resolution calling on Israel to rescind its planned expropriation of Arab land in eastern Jerusalem. The move marked the first time in five years that the United States used its veto at the U.N. body.

■ Most Jewish groups quickly and vehemently rejected the Christian Coalition's "Contract with the American Family." Groups voiced most concern with its call for a religious equality amendment to the Constitution. [Page 1]

■ The U.S. ambassador to the European Union embarked on a visit to East European nations in an effort to encourage governments there to compensate Jews for property seized by the Nazis and the Communists. The visit came after members of Congress urged stronger action on the issue. [Page 2]

■ A majority of Jordan's Parliament called on the government to freeze or even cancel its peace treaty with Israel. The 60 deputies, angered by Israel's plan to confiscate some 140 acres of mostly Arab-owned land in eastern Jerusalem, included some members who supported the peace treaty. The foreign minister said the government would seriously consider the move, but that it is non-binding.

■ One Israeli soldier was killed and three others wounded in a clash with Palestinian terrorists in the southern Lebanon security zone. The Damascus-based Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility for the attack. [Page 4]

■ Lt. Gen. Ehud Barak reportedly declined an offer to become Israel's interior minister. The post is being vacated by Uzi Baram, who is leaving the government to care for his ill wife. Barak reportedly said he would prefer to join the government in November.

■ A Dutch monument honoring 350 concentration camp prisoners was found daubed with black tar. Because of the vandalism, the monument probably will be demolished. No suspects have been found in connection with the incident.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Most Jews quick to reject Christian Coalition contract**

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, May 17 (JTA) — Almost as quickly as Republican leaders embraced the Christian Coalition's new "Contract with the American Family," most — but not all — Jewish groups vehemently rejected it.

The proposed solutions to America's social ills in the contract "are wrong-headed, misguided and divisive," said Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

Dubbing the new contract a "Contract with Some of America's Families," the American Jewish Congress said in a statement, "The proposed contract runs roughshod over the diversity of American family and religious life."

Modeled after the GOP's "Contract with America," the coalition's 10-point plan calls for the return of prayer to America's schools, a ban on most abortions and the return of religious displays to public property.

The coalition's executive director, Ralph Reed, unveiled the agenda Wednesday at a Capitol Hill ceremony.

"It is a pro-family agenda, and it is supported by the vast majority of the American people, Republican and Democrat, Christian and Jew, black and white, Protestant and Catholic," Reed said.

As he spoke, Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Texas), a contender for the Republican nomination for president, Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) and other members of Congress filed in to offer their support for the plan.

The Christian Coalition boasts 1.5 million members. Considered the pre-eminent organization of the religious right, it wields considerable power in the Republican Party.

Gingrich promises House vote on contract's provisions

Among the most potentially explosive issues is the contract's centerpiece, which calls for a "religious equality" constitutional amendment that would allow for voluntary, student-initiated, non-denominational prayer.

The contract also calls for a \$500 per child annual tax credit, vouchers for private school education, disbanding the Education Department to give funding directly to local school districts, restricting pornography and ending government subsidies to the National Endowment for the Arts and public television.

Gingrich promised that the House would vote on all the provisions in the coalition's contract.

"Just as we kept our word in the first hundred days, you're going to find that in the new 'Contract with the American Family' that House Republicans are going to be totally committed," he told cheering coalition supporters.

"Everybody back home can learn who says in Washington and does in Washington the same things that they say and do back home," Gingrich said.

Not all Republicans lined up to support the coalition's contract.

Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), who has attacked the Christian Coalition during his campaign for the Republican presidential nomination, labeled the contract "extremist."

"It is subterfuge designed to undermine a woman's right to choose and the separation of church and state," said the Jewish senator in a statement.

In a twist, Specter and Reed found themselves going separate ways once again, as the two men unknowingly crossed paths by a bank of Capitol Hill elevators just prior to Reed's news conference. As Reed went up to the Capitol reception room, Specter stepped onto a different elevator, headed down toward his office.

Democrats, meanwhile, were also quick to condemn the coalition's initiative.

Although many in the Jewish organizational world voiced total opposition to the contract, some Orthodox groups withheld immediate judgment. "We're going to look at the contract issue by issue," said Betty

Ehrenberg, executive director of the Institute for Public Affairs of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America.

Orthodox groups have made vouchers for private school education and family tax credits key components of their legislative agenda.

Other Jewish organizations appeared united in opposition to the forthcoming religious equality amendment, which is expected to be introduced in Congress during the next 100 days.

It is not clear exactly what such a proposed amendment would include.

Among the Jewish groups firing off immediate responses to the contract were B'nai B'rith International, the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee, all of which condemned the idea of a religious equality amendment.

"The battle over the contract looks to be the first salvo in a battle that could well determine whether or not America will remain a pluralistic society," said Steve Gutow, executive director of the National Jewish Democratic Council.

For his part, Reed said religious minorities should not feel threatened.

"What we're interested in is non-denominational, student-initiated or citizen-initiated religious speech in non-compulsory settings," Reed said, citing his particular support for prayer at school graduations.

As for the public display of religious symbols, Reed said he supported the posting of the Ten Commandments in public buildings and the display of nativity scenes or menorahs on public property.

Many Christian leaders also condemned the coalition's contract.

"The Christian Coalition does not stand for the values that I learned in the Bible, the values of caring for the poor, the sick, the hungry, and the outcast," said Robert Brooks, director of government relations for the Episcopal Church.

Brooks was one of several religious leaders who held a separate news conference on Capitol Hill to voice opposition to the Christian Coalition's proposals.

The contract "raises many vital questions about the legitimate and pressing problems American families face today," Saperstein said at the opposing conference, which was attended by several Jewish activists.

But, Saperstein stressed, "we profoundly reject the Christian Coalition's answers." □

Restitution in Eastern Europe is focus of U.S. official's visit

By Alexandra J. Wall

NEW YORK, May 17 (JTA) — The U.S. ambassador to the European Union has embarked on a visit to East European nations in an effort to encourage governments there to compensate Jews for property seized by the Nazis and the Communists.

Stuart Eizenstat's visit, which began in Hungary and Poland this week, comes in the wake of a congressional letter to Secretary of State Warren Christopher, urging him to pressure East European countries to make property restitution a high priority.

Eight congressional leaders, including House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) and Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) signed the letter, which came at the urging of Edgar Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress. The members of congress warned that the relationship between East European nations and the United States could suffer if these governments failed to respond appropriately.

In a letter to Dole last week, Wendy Sherman, the State Department's assistant secretary for legislative affairs, said Eizenstat would be on "a special mission to advance our efforts to encourage appropriate restitution of — or compensation for — property confiscated from the Jewish community and others."

The letter called on the governments in the region to "develop a fair and non-discriminatory" approach to restitution that addresses the victims of Nazi oppression as well as victims of the Communist oppression.

According to the WJC, East European governments are still in possession of billions of dollars worth of property and assets seized by the Nazis during World War II and later confiscated by the Communist regimes.

The East European governments "were stonewalling us" on these issues, said Elan Steinberg, WJC executive director.

Bronfman, WJC president, also serves as chairman of the World Jewish Restitution Organization, the international Jewish body that oversees restitution negotiations with local governments.

'This issue is important to the U.S. government'

The organization includes representatives from Israel, the international Jewish community and the local communities involved.

Eizenstat's visits to the nations in the region are "meant to inform them that this issue is important to the U.S. government," Steinberg said.

According to Steinberg, Slovakia and Bulgaria have made the most progress in resolving restitution issues. The Czech Republic and Poland have presented the biggest obstacles, he said.

In her letter to the members of Congress, Sherman said the most potential for progress is "in the area of communal property restitution."

She said Poland and Hungary have established government commissions to process and evaluate communal property restitution claims.

The Polish Parliament is expected to consider a draft bill later this month that proposes returning Jewish communal properties to the Jewish community of Poland or other local communities, she said.

She predicted that the issue of personal property restitution "may be more difficult," especially in cases in which direct heirs cannot be identified or properties are currently held by private third parties.

Meanwhile, Hungarian Justice Minister Pal Vastagh completed a three day visit to Israel, where he discussed the restitution issue with Israeli representatives of the World Jewish Restitution Organization.

The justice minister said the restitution problem is a tricky one.

Hungarian sources say the lack of unity in the Jewish community concerning the amount and size of the restitution claim is hindering the talks.

The Socialist-Liberal Hungarian government coalition, which has been in office almost one year, has expressed sympathy for Jewish restitution, but no tangible steps have been taken thus far.

Steinberg said he got positive feedback from the meeting in Israel.

"There is a great amount of interest in resolving this issue on both sides," Steinberg said.

But there is still much to be accomplished before Hungarian Prime Minister Gyula Horn is scheduled to visit the United States next month, Steinberg said.

"Restitution is a high priority on the bilateral agenda between the U.S. and Hungary," he said. □

(JTA correspondent Agnes Bohm in Budapest contributed to this report.)

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Friend or foe? Dole's record on Israel has shifted over time

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, May 17 (JTA) — When it comes to Israel, it's hard to read presidential hopeful Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.).

Dole, the Senate majority leader who is currently leading the campaign to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, has done a 180-degree turn on this and other issues that are related to the Jewish state in recent months.

Is he pandering to the Jewish community? It depends who you ask.

Dole unveiled his Jerusalem legislation last week at the annual policy conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby.

Since then, he has unabashedly targeted American Jews to publicize his proposal.

A press release from Dole's campaign headquarters boasts the headline: "American Jewish leaders praise Dole" for his initiative to move the embassy.

The campaign is offering a photo of Dole "discussing the Jerusalem legislation" with former AIPAC President Robert Asher and veteran Jewish leader Max Fisher, both avid Dole supporters.

Many Jews who do not identify themselves as Dole supporters cheered when the senator announced his candidacy, hoping his run for the presidency would engender more pro-Israel statements coming from the Senate majority leader's office.

The plan for the embassy, which would require construction to begin on the Jerusalem site next year and an official move in 1999, marks a significant shift for the senator.

In 1990, Dole argued that the United States should not move its embassy and that Israel took eastern Jerusalem "in effect, by force."

The status of Jerusalem is "better left to negotiation among the parties involved," Dole said on the Senate floor as he withdrew his support for a Senate bill that recognized the city of Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Israel.

He also demanded the repeal of a 1990 Senate resolution acknowledging that Jerusalem "is and should remain the capital of Israel."

The senator now argues that much has changed since then.

'Nothing but a cynical ploy'

The Cold War is over and Israel has a peace treaty with Jordan and has signed the Declaration of Principles with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

"The peace process has made great strides, and our commitment to that process is unchallengeable," he said at the AIPAC dinner.

Although cheered by his supporters, his latest remarks have not silenced his critics.

Dole's "willingness to leverage the peace process to gain political points is shocking and appalling," said Monte Friedkin, chairman of the National Jewish Democratic Council.

"This is nothing but a cynical ploy by Dole, Gingrich and others on the right," Friedkin said.

However, Dole supporters argue that the effort is bipartisan and not aimed at getting Jewish support.

"Bob Dole is a consensus builder and only acts when there is an unmistakable consensus," said Fisher, who is Dole's national finance chairman.

Fisher pointed out that seven of the 26 co-sponsors

of Dole's bill are Democrats. Supporters say Dole underwent a genuine change of heart from 1990.

"Bob Dole has consistently been pro-Israel and always believed the U.S. Embassy belonged in Jerusalem. It was only a question of when," an aide to the senator said.

Dole's record speaks for itself, the aide added.

"Why are we looking a gift horse in the mouth?" said Matthew Brooks, executive director of the National Jewish Coalition, the Republican Jewish organization.

"It's not in our interests to accuse anyone of pandering or question their motives. We should appreciate this," he said.

But supporters and detractors alike acknowledge that Dole has not always been in the pro-Israel camp.

In part because he was frustrated with the lack of Jewish support during his 1980 and 1988 bids for the Republican nomination for president, Dole flirted with an anti-Israel agenda in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

"Dole was definitely dissatisfied with the amount of Jewish support he got in 1988," said Morris Amitay, treasurer of Washington PAC, one of the largest of the pro-Israel political action committees.

As for Dole's change of heart, Amitay said: "While I believe in redemption, coincidentally he seems to be getting an awful lot of [financial] support from the Jewish community."

He noted that a substantial number of big Jewish donors are supporting Dole's campaign.

Although Dole has consistently voted for foreign aid, he is widely remembered in the Jewish community for advocating a 5 percent cut in Israel's \$3 billion package in 1990.

Under fire for his proposal, the senator at the time labeled Israeli opposition to the move as "selfishness."

Scathing letter to Senate majority leader

Ironically, when Dole called for a cut in Israel's aid, Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.), now the Speaker of the House, joined three colleagues in a scathing letter to Dole, declaring "our unwavering commitment to Israel."

Dole fired back: "The leaders of the pro-Israel lobby are shortsighted and selfish in their zealous effort to protect Israel's aid level at any cost."

"Unfortunately, some people seem to think that if you disagree with a single policy or practice of the Israeli government, or criticize anyone who lobbies on behalf of Israel, you should be characterized as 'anti-Israel.' That is bunk," Dole wrote.

Evidence that time heals all wounds: It was Gingrich who sponsored Dole's Jerusalem legislation in the House last week.

Dole also blamed Israel for the killing of a U.S. intelligence officer by Arab terrorists in Lebanon, arguing on the Senate floor that "perhaps a little more responsibility on the part of the Israelis would be refreshing."

In 1989, pro-Iranian terrorists said they killed Lt. Col. William Higgins, a member of the international peacekeeping force in Lebanon, in retaliation for Israeli commandos kidnapping Muslim cleric Sheik Abdul Karim Obeid.

And the senator took an early stance against providing \$10 billion in loan guarantees to Israel to assist the Jewish state in resettling refugees from the former Soviet Union.

In the midst of the controversial debate on the issue in 1991, Dole said on NBC's "Meet the Press":

"Now, we have homeless in America, we have homeless veterans in America, and they're wondering, 'Why don't we get the same treatment?'"

But in the end, Dole supported the guarantees. □

**One Israeli soldier killed
in southern Lebanon attack***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, May 17 (JTA) — An Israeli soldier was killed and three others wounded in a clash Wednesday with Palestinian terrorists in the southern Lebanon security zone.

Staff Sgt. Amir Kara, 20, of Ness Ziona was killed in the mortar attack, for which the Damascus-based Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility.

The wounded soldiers were airlifted to a hospital in Israel, where the condition of one of them was described as moderate to serious. The two others were said to have sustained light wounds.

A soldier with the South Lebanon Army, Israel's ally in the region, was also wounded in the attack.

The Popular Front militantly opposes the Palestinian self-rule accord with Israel. Sources speculated that the attack might have been planned in coordination with the Iranian-backed Hezbollah movement, which has vowed to drive Israeli forces from Lebanon.

Israeli and SLA forces retaliated with artillery shelling of guerrilla targets in Lebanon.

Radio stations in Lebanon reported that one Hezbollah gunman was killed and at least three others wounded in the fighting. □

**Pope urges symbolic visits
to Nazi concentration camps***By Ruth E. Gruber*

ROME, May 17 (JTA) — In a message commemorating the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, Pope John Paul II urged Christians to make symbolic, spiritual pilgrimages to Nazi death camps to pay homage to the 6 million Jews murdered in the Holocaust.

In his 25-page message, the Polish-born pope wrote about the suffering of people doomed by the Nazis to extermination in what he called "an unprecedented marshaling of hatred."

In the name of ideology, he said, that hatred "trampled on man and everything that is human."

"The point was reached where hellish death camps were built, where millions of Jews and hundreds of thousands of Gypsies and other human beings met their death in atrocious conditions," he said.

"Their only fault was that they belonged to another people," the pope added.

Christians, the pope said, had a duty to "make a pilgrimage to these places, in mind and in heart, on this 50th anniversary."

The pope himself visited and prayed at Auschwitz, the largest and most notorious Nazi death camp, in 1979, on his first return to Poland after becoming pope the previous year.

Now, he wrote, "I go back in spirit to those death camps. I pause especially before the inscription in Hebrew which commemorates the people 'whose sons and daughters were condemned to total extermination' and reaffirm that 'no one is permitted to pass by with indifference.'"

He called Auschwitz "a horribly eloquent symbol of the effects of totalitarianism."

Noting that there "were varying degrees of responsibility in the events which led to the war," the pope urged European Christians to ask forgiveness from God for allowing World War II to take place.

He bemoaned the fact that current wars, such as the bloody conflicts in Bosnia and Chechnya, showed that the lessons of World War II had not been learned.

Half a century after World War II and five years before the millennial year 2000, he said, "arms are still roaring and human blood continues to be shed" in the Balkans and in the Caucasus.

"In the face of every war, we are all called to ponder our responsibilities, to forgive and to ask forgiveness," he said. □

**Rabbi warns Moscow's Jews
of ongoing fascist ideology***By Alissa Kaplan*

NEW YORK, May 17 (JTA) — Last week's gathering at a Moscow synagogue to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II marked a "tremendous outpouring" by the Russian Jewish community, said Rabbi Arthur Schneier of New York.

But Schneier, who spoke May 10 before a congregation of more than 1,000 Jews, warned his audience that some groups today keep Hitler's ideology alive.

In a telephone interview from Moscow, the rabbi, a Holocaust survivor himself, said the events elicited a wide "spectrum of feelings."

"On one hand there's elation and on one hand there's pain," he said.

"The message is clear: Hitler may be dead. But unfortunately, his ideology has not been put to death," said Schneier, a Holocaust survivor who lost much of his family during the war.

The rabbi said it was particularly disturbing that young people are involved in skinhead and neo-Nazi groups.

The reappearance of swastikas, armbands and other paraphernalia used by these groups also is unsettling, he said.

"We cannot close our eyes to the new plague of ethnic conflict and xenophobia," said Schneier, who heads the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, an ecumenical group that pursues religious rights issues around the world.

At the same time, he expressed joy at the presence of young people at the synagogue, a phenomenon he said would not have occurred 30 years ago.

A spark has been rekindled in the Jewish community, he said, citing the sprouting of Jewish schools across Russia.

"God performs miracles in every generation of Jewish people," he said.

Israeli President Ezer Weizman also spoke May 10 at the synagogue.

A day before the synagogue event, Schneier had joined world leaders to participate in ceremonies at Lenin Square.

That night, the group attended a state dinner at the Kremlin.

While in Moscow, Schneier held meetings with several Russian officials, including Moscow Mayor Yuri Lushkov; Segei Filatov, President Yeltsin's chief of staff; and Ivan Rybkin, speaker of the lower house of Parliament.

In the meetings, Schneier said he found a readiness on the part of officials to assist the local community of Jews.

He said Rybkin offered to beef up security at Moscow's Jewish institutions and Lushkov said he would help the community secure a facility that would serve as a much-needed matzah factory.

During a discussion about the growth of fascist groups in Russia, Filatov said he would recommend to lawmakers a bill to curb the activities of far-right groups, Schneier said. □

(JTA staff writer Mitchell Danow contributed to this report.)