

WASHINGTON DATELINEBY TRUDE B. FELDMAN
ISRAELITE'S WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT*The Kennedy Magic*

NEW YORK CITY -- Senator Edward M. Kennedy is a long way from political oblivion despite his loss of the Democratic Presidential nomination last year here at Madison Square Garden. That was made even more clear last week when the Massachusetts Democrat addressed the annual meeting of the American Jewish Congress.

Sen. Kennedy chose the occasion to challenge President Ronald Reagan on both domestic and foreign policy. And the enthusiastic reception he received from over 500 delegates from across the nation was the strongest indication to date that the Kennedy magic still works, and that the youngest Kennedy brother remains a potent political figure who still has his sights set on the White House.

The Senator strode into the sanctuary of the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue, where the meeting was in progress, accompanied by his sister, Pat Lawford and his top aide, Jan Kalicki. Kennedy was greeted by friendly applause. But his reception was mild compared to the response he drew when he assailed President Reagan on foreign affairs, and particularly on the Middle East.

"I believe the President is wrong on El Salvador, wrong on nuclear arms control, wrong on human rights and wrong on arms sales to Saudi Arabia that will jeopardize the security of Israel," Sen. Kennedy declared.

His words on the proposal to sell Saudi Arabia additional fittings for the F-15 jet fighters which the Saudis bought two years ago -- over the opposition of Kennedy and other senators were strong and pointed: "I oppose the Administration's decision to sell advanced military equipment, with obvious offensive capability, to a government that has sworn to destroy the State

of Israel," Sen. Kennedy asserted. "An arms race never has, and never will, bring peace to Israel and to the Middle East."

Kennedy continued: "We know that Saudi Arabia is now spending nearly \$400 million a year to finance the terrorists of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). We know that Saudi Arabia fiercely opposes the Camp David process. We know that Saudi Arabia has sought to prevent a strategic petroleum reserve that can guard America against future oil embargoes.

"Israel has been and will be our strongest friend and our surest ally in the Middle East. Israel is not only a strategically vital source of stability in that region, it is a beacon of democracy and social justice, shining out over a sea of fear and terror and hatred."

Then the Massachusetts Senator announced that, together with Senators Joseph Biden of Delaware and Alan Cranston of California, he would introduce a resolution to halt the new arms sale to Saudi Arabia. "I opposed the last arms sale," he recalled. "I oppose this arms sale. And I will oppose any arms sale in the Middle East that endangers the security of Israel."

Sen. Kennedy appeared in excellent physical condition -- he has slimmed down some since last year's round of political chicken dinners; and he was obviously pleased by the reaction to his address from the delegates and their guests, who gave him a standing ovation when he finished.

On domestic affairs, Kennedy was equally outspoken. He took a swipe at the Moral Majority, which has marked him for political defeat. "In recent days," he said, "we have witnessed decisions by the Administration that call into question the fundamental principles that define our destiny as a free people -- principles that have taken years, and sometimes generations, to build. Those principles must not be set aside at the whim of passing political majorities. And certainly they must never be swept aside by those who dare to call themselves the Moral Majority."

Sen. Kennedy was clearly seeking to stake out the liberal leadership within the Democratic

Party from his potential rival, former vice president, Walter Mondale. Rejecting the Reagan view that -- as Kennedy put it -- "government itself is the root of all social evils" -- the Senator from the Bay State stressed: "Those of us who call ourselves progressives must adopt our enduring values to changing realities. That is not a novel idea, but an old tradition that reaches from the New Freedom of Woodrow Wilson to the New Deal of Franklin Roosevelt to the New Frontier of John F. Kennedy.

"In their spirit, we must offer new hope in the 1980's."

The applause still ringing in his ears, Senator Kennedy left the American Jewish Congress meeting with his friend and political supporter Howard Samuels, a senior Vice President of the Congress and a former Undersecretary of Commerce in the Johnson Administration. Together with his wife, Loulette, Samuels offered the Senator and his aides a serving of coffee, cake and political strategy in their apartment overlooking Central Park. Later, Kennedy returned to the nation's capital -- and to the task he has assumed of holding the line against Reagan economics and Reagan policies which in his view are wrong because they downplay detente, reduce concern for human rights, ignore nuclear arms control and seek to take the wrong side in El Salvador.

It's a long road to the next presidential campaign, but Ted Kennedy's strategy already seems clear: attack the President and assail his policies, on the assumption that they will fail and that the American electorate will be looking for another approach and another leader. When that happens -- if it does -- Ted Kennedy will be waiting in the wings.

NEW YORK (WNS) -- Joseph Polakoff, the Jewish telegraphic Agency's Washington Bureau Chief for the last 10 years retired April 3, it was announced here by Martin Fox, JTA president. Fox also announced that David Friedman, a staff writer for the JTA in New York for the last eight years, will succeed Polakoff.



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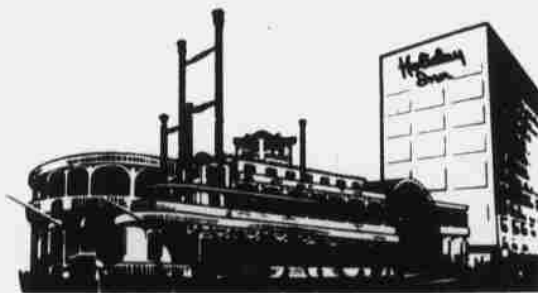
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