

## Is the Republican Party headed for a crack-up?

by Jeffrey Steinberg

One hardly needs to be a brain surgeon to see that the Republican Party is going through a bout of fratricidal warfare that could lead to the permanent dismemberment of what's left of the "Party of Lincoln." The most obvious expression of this deep crisis within the GOP ranks is the punching-bag treatment of Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, at the hands of a broad coalition of right-of-center Republicans who were once among his most loyal boosters.

In the past several weeks, Gingrich has been attacked in the pages of the *Weekly Standard*, the neo-conservative magazine launched several years ago by British media baron Rupert Murdoch; *Human Events*; and the *Washington Times*. The spectacle of the Grand Old Party cannibalizing its own leadership has been grabbing headlines in daily newspapers throughout the United States. And overseas, for example, on April 5, the London *Economist* posed the question on its cover: "What Happened to the Republican Revolution?"

### Gingrich is on the ropes

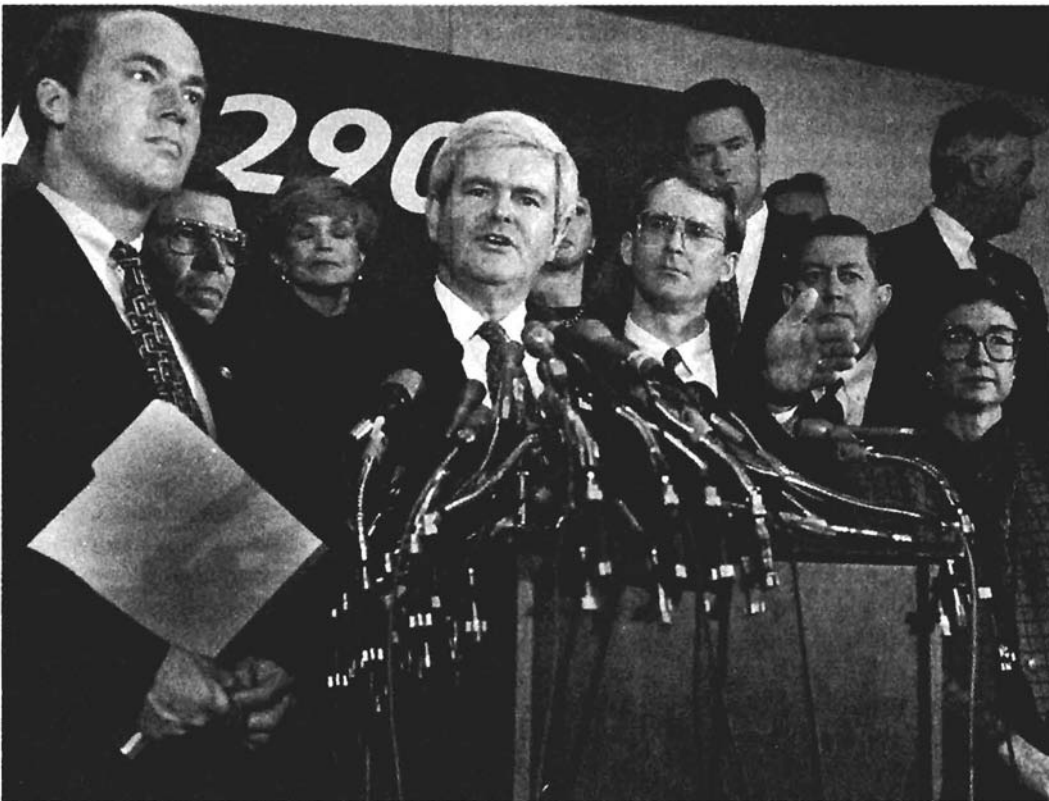
Gingrich's problems began at the opening bell of the 105th Congress, when the bipartisan House Ethics Committee ordered him to pay \$300,000, as part of the resolution of a year-long ethics probe of the Speaker, centered around a string of tax-exempt groups and political action committees that he used, interchangeably, to funnel cash into Republican Party campaign activities. For those Republicans who jumped on the Hollinger Corp.'s British bandwagon, and adopted the idea that the destruction of the Clinton Presidency, through a barrage of corruption scandals, was the number-one priority, Gingrich's tarnished reputation posed a major impediment, so long as he was out-front as the GOP's leading spokesman.

Gingrich's fundraising shenanigans left a lot of other Republicans vulnerable. The Internal Revenue Service is report-

edly still investigating several of those Gingrich-linked groups, including GOPAC, the Heritage Foundation, and the Abraham Lincoln Opportunity Fund. On April 10, the *New York Times* reported that another group of Gingrich-boosted fundraising operations had been served with subpoenas, to submit their records to the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, chaired by Sen. Fred Thompson (R-Tenn.). The committee is investigating possible illegal campaign fundraising practices in the 1996 general elections. Among the groups subpoenaed was Americans for Tax Reform, headed by Gingrich confidant Grover Norquist.

According to the scathing attack against Gingrich that appeared as the cover-story in the March 31 *Weekly Standard*, under the headline "Newt Melts," all hell broke loose inside the House Republican Caucus on March 17, when Gingrich, without canvassing his fellow GOP congressmen, announced that he would be prepared to forgo deep tax cuts, in order to achieve a balanced budget. This provoked a torrent of angry public statements from both supply-siders and libertarian zealots, among especially House Republican sophomores, who consider tax cuts to be a sacred principle—one of the last issues that holds together the post-Reagan GOP.

The *Weekly Standard* also featured a signed piece by Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.), under the headline "Why I Oppose Newt." King, who got into a public brawl with Gingrich, House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-Tex.), and other Republican Southerners last year over their ideological opposition to an increase in the minimum wage, let flow a torrent of condemnations of Gingrich, calling him "the most powerful liberal in American politics." "Coming out of 1996 with a public-approval rating a few points shy of the Ebola virus, Newt Gingrich had become a clear liability to the Republican Party," King said. "As roadkill on the highway of American



*Many of Newt Gingrich's former allies are now maneuvering to dump him as House Speaker. Here, Gingrich (at mike) in January 1995, with some of his Conservative Revolutionaries, shortly after they took control of the House of Representatives.*

politics, Newt Gingrich cannot sell the Republican agenda. So instead of replacing Newt, the Republican leadership has replaced the agenda. Gone is the Contract with America. In its place is an amorphous 'agenda for a governing majority'—13 suggestions carefully crafted to upset no one and accomplish not much of anything. As a consequence, congressional Republicans are adrift. We are in danger of losing our identity as a party."

According to a news report by *Washington Times* editorial-page editor Tod Lindberg, Gingrich spent much of his flight back to Washington from the Far East at the beginning of April, fuming over the *Weekly Standard's* ambush. Gingrich, according to the account, holds the magazine's editor, William Kristol, personally responsible, and has referred to Kristol as a "dangerous" man with a hidden agenda. The Rev. Sun Myung Moon's *Washington Times* disagreed. Lindberg called Kristol's assault on Gingrich's leadership "informed criticism."

The next blow to Gingrich came from *Human Events*, the national conservative weekly that has been a voice for both the Religious Right and what are referred to as the "paleo-conservatives," the old-line neo-isolationists and social conservatives who often spar with the neo-conservatives over their slavish allegiance to the Israel lobby. Under the front-page headline, "Gingrich Hold Slipping, As . . . Backbenchers Ponder Palace Coup," John Gizzi spelled out three possible scenarios, by which the House Republicans could dump

Gingrich from the speakership. The most likely of the three options, reported in *Human Events*, would involve invoking Rule 7 of the House Republican Charter. Under Rule 7, a petition by 25 House GOPers could trigger a no-confidence vote within the Republican Caucus. A simple majority of Republicans could then remove Gingrich, and leave the caucus free to select a successor, who would enjoy the unanimous backing of the Republican legislators, thereby assuring them of being able to beat back a Democratic Party effort to have Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.) elected to the post.

*Human Events* quoted several House Republicans, that they would give Gingrich until August to reassert leadership, or else the Rule 7 option would be activated. Others told *Human Events* that they are not prepared to wait that long.

### **It's bigger than the issue of Newtzi**

While Gingrich has been drawing most of the fire in recent weeks, the malaise inside the GOP runs far deeper than the Speaker's fall from grace. There are ample signs that the party is deeply divided, along several ideological fault-lines, and that demoralization and anger has gripped the party at its most vulnerable point: its fundraising. Sources in Washington have told *EIR* that even the most up-beat GOPers acknowledge that, with President Clinton's reelection victory in November 1996, despite the fact that the Republicans held onto control of the Congress, the GOP is a minority party. Its electoral

success is based largely on its ability to outspend the Democratic Party by 50% or more. For a typical Republican Congressional candidate to win against a Democratic incumbent, he or she must be able to outspend the opponent by three to one. The GOP hierarchy, the source insisted, will never allow campaign finance reform to go through this year, because it would kill the Republican prospects of retaining control of the Congress and winning the White House in the year 2000.

On April 7, thirty of the Republican Party's biggest financial backers, all members of the Republican Eagles, sat down with Republican National Committee Chairman Jim Nicholson at the Capitol Hill Club and delivered an ultimatum: Clean up the GOP mess in Congress or the checkbooks will slam shut. As this issue of *EIR* goes to press, the party's top brass are meeting with all 50 Republican state party chairmen, in an effort to stem the revolt, and chart out a coherent strategy for the next round of state and federal elections. That may prove to be a more difficult task than putting Gingrich's reputation back together again.

Ironically, Gingrich's recent move to back down from his earlier pledge to balance the budget, while implementing big tax breaks—skewed to benefit the wealthiest 10% of the population—was, perhaps, one of the few smart things that Gingrich has done since taking over the Speaker's gavel. Only a lunatic, or someone out to bring a reign of economic

terror down on the United States, could conceivably peddle a deep tax cut on top of the draconian austerity already imposed by the balanced-budget frenzy. Having barely survived the fallout from two government shutdowns, and an earlier standoff on the tax cut question, Gingrich opted to avoid the chaos, and another bloody battering at the hands of President Clinton and the Congressional Democrats. Instead, he was attacked by Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.), nearly physically accosted by Rep. Steve Largent (R-Okla.), a former professional football player, and ambushed by several score House and Senate GOP Conservative Revolutionaries.

### 'Institutional' alliances

To this picture, add the following: The so-called Christian Right, associated with groups like the Christian Coalition, and figures such as Patrick J. Buchanan, is attempting to assert its clout within the GOP, after having been silenced at last August's nominating convention. Their agenda is an amalgam of single issues, from abortion to home-schooling to school prayer, that are among the most divisive issues being thrashed around today. A second group, associated with Congressional austerity fanatics, like Senator Lott and Representative Arme, is equally obsessed with tax cuts for the rich and murderous austerity measures. This "nasty lott," given half a chance, could help trigger the biggest social explosion since the Civil War—a prospect that has London's Club of the Isles salivating. The London-centered financial oligarchy fears that, in the context of the looming world monetary and financial blowout, President Clinton could adopt Lyndon LaRouche's plan for a New Bretton Woods Conference. Engulfing the United States in social chaos and racial strife is one way to diminish the chances of Clinton going with the LaRouche plan.

The Republican Party also has another pro-London tendency, associated with former President George Bush and the remnants of the 1980s corrupt Iran-Contra apparatus. Bush has let it be known that he intends to aggressively push his son, Texas Gov. George W. Bush, as the next GOP Presidential nominee; and, Bush has launched a number of dubious fundraising efforts to push that prospect forward.

There are, within this stew of contending unhealthy factions called the Republican Party, a number of decent representatives, senators, and elected officials at the state and local level, who could be called the "institutional" Republicans. Increasingly, these individuals are finding themselves at odds with the party leadership and all of the factions identified above. These institutional Republicans have forged alliances with like-minded Democrats on a number of issues, including the recent compromise on shaping a Senate probe of 1996 campaign finance irregularities, and possible criminal conduct. Increasingly, as the GOP disintegration continues, as it all but certainly will, such bipartisan "institutional" alliances will become the order of the day.

DO YOU  
KNOW

- that the American Revolution was fought *against* British "free trade" economics?
- that Washington and Franklin championed Big Government?
- that the Founding Fathers promoted partnership between private industry and central government?



Edited by Nancy Spannaus and Christopher White

READ

The Political Economy of the American Revolution

edited by Nancy Spannaus and Christopher White

order from the publisher:

EIR News Service

P.O. Box 17390  
Washington, D.C.  
20041-0390

or call

Ben Franklin Booksellers

800-453-4108

\$15.00

plus \$4.00 shipping and handling