

## Middle East Report by Robert Dreyfuss

### Military expert cites war danger

*Menachem Begin may order preemptive strikes—to prop up Israel's economy.*

**I**s Israel's defense minister Menachem Begin contemplating a preemptive strike against Israel's eastern neighbors?

That question is not a speculative one in view of a remarkable article in the Oct. 17 *Jerusalem Post* that has received no notice in the U.S. newspapers of record.

On that date, the *Post's* military correspondent, Hirsh Goodman, in a piece entitled, "Dangerous Strategy," warned that "the thesis has been bruited about in the wake of the new Middle East realities created by the Iran-Iraq war that this may not be a bad time to settle scores with the Syrians and the Jordanians."

Goodman asserts that this "thesis" has been put forward in certain Israeli strategic circles for the following reason: "Jordan and Syria being involved, actively or passively, on both sides of the fence, in the Iraqi-Iranian conflict, they would be less ready to deal with Israel than in times of Arab unity."

According to Goodman, the most plausible reason given by these circles for a preemptive strike is that Israel's economy is collapsing. "Economically," Goodman cites these circles as affirming, "Israel will be unable to keep pace indefinitely with the huge arms purchases in the Arab world, without becoming totally enslaved to the U.S. and/or creating insoluble problems at home. . . ."

"Thus, it would be wise for Is-

rael now to launch a preemptive strike which would destroy as much as possible of the infrastructure building up in the main confrontation states and thus retard their war-making capability."

This would "give Israel a few years' reathing space" and would "also provide a hostility-free atmosphere" for the Israelis. Goodman does not ascribe what he calls "irresponsible sabre-rattling" to Defense Minister Begin personally. He does warn that this line of thinking can soon become "settled government policy . . . if it is repeated often enough."

In *EIR's* estimation, this line is being repeated frequently by one prominent Israeli grouping that has significant inputs into Begin's overall thinking. This is the so-called Tehiya (Hebrew for Renaissance) Party founded by the architect of Israel's nuclear-bomb capability, physicist Yuval Neeman.

To some, it may seem odd to lump Neeman and Begin together, given Tehiya's vocal opposition to the Egypt-Israel treaty ever since the Party's inception in 1979.

There is no difference, however, between both men's commitment to "eternal" Israel control over what they both call "Judea and Samaria." *EIR* has learned that Begin is sending two Israeli government representatives to a Nov. 1 dinner in New York sponsored by the newly formed Tehiya front group P.E.A.C.E., whose acronym

stands for "Preventing the Emergence of Another Arab Country in Eretz-Israel," and whose overt policy is for Israel to annex "Judea and Samaria."

Neeman's thinking on the situation facing Israel is evident from comments made to *Wall Street Journal* correspondent Jonathan Spivak, reported in Spivak's Oct. 22 feature entitled, "Israel's Triple-Digit Inflation Threatens to Upset Political and Social Stability, May Topple Begin."

In this piece, Spivak includes the following comments: "Inflation is beginning to threaten Israel's political and social stability. And defense specialists say it will soon weaken the nation's military capabilities at a time when the country's increasing diplomatic isolation leaves it more vulnerable to Arab force. 'There is a very good chance of the disappearance of Israel,' gloomily predicts Yuval Ne'eman, a military specialist and professor of physics at the University of Tel Aviv."

The significance of this juxtaposition is clear from Goodman's *Post* article. A key card in Neeman's hand is that his party effectively controls Israel's finance ministry. Minister Yigal Hurvitz is known to share the Tehiya Party's belief that the West Bank should be annexed and that Israel's population should be increasingly "fundamentalized" by undermining its "fixation" on material well-being.

Thanks to Hurvitz's policies, Israel's inflation rate is now approaching 150 percent—one of the highest in the world—and the very dynamic interplay that Goodman is warning about between economic collapse and expansionist warfare is coming to the fore.