

Israel-PLO breakthrough strikes blow against Soviet-Nazi war plans in Middle East

by Mark Burdman

The Soviet plan to launch a strategic crisis between the superpowers in the Middle East has, in the short term, been potentially pre-empted by the courageous Israeli government initiatives of Nov. 23-25.

On Nov. 24, the Shamir-Arens government announced that it was releasing 5,000 Palestinian prisoners from both Israeli prisons and southern Lebanese internment camps in exchange for six Israeli prisoners held in the besieged city of Tripoli, Lebanon, by the forces of PLO leader Yasser Arafat. On the next day, the Israelis announced that they were prepared to release 4,000 more prisoners captured during last year's invasion of Lebanon and during previous operations, if the Syrian government and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine commander Ahmed Jebril, Arafat's warlord opponent, were prepared to release five Israelis.

The Nov. 24 action, in its timing and content, was one of the most remarkable diplomatic-political initiatives in years. That day had been the slated deadline for Arafat's forces to become the target of an all-out military offensive by Jebril's fanatical Soviet-Syrian-backed militias, leading possibly to Arafat himself being killed. That would have unleashed the forces of hell throughout the Middle East and other parts of the world, as radicalization among Palestinians stoked Soviet plans for war, terrorism, and general chaos.

Two weeks earlier, *EIR* founder Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. had sent an appeal urging Israeli leaders to prevent a new Auschwitz in Tripoli and declaring that the enemies of Arafat were the same forces trying to destroy Israel. On Nov. 25, I dispatched a telegram to Israeli President Chaim Herzog on LaRouche's behalf, communicating his congratulations for Herzog's policy address in Washington Nov. 23 and for the prisoner-exchange initiatives of Nov. 24-25. "It is Mr. LaRouche's appreciation that your speech and your nation's brilliant action of Nov. 24 coincide in providing an Israeli policy reference-point for initiating processes leading to a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli crisis and for encouraging the forces of rationality and reason throughout the Middle East. This combination of initiatives, Mr. LaRouche feels, may be providing a unique way of heading off danger-

ous strategic confrontation in the Middle East region."

Israel's action provided a great political victory for Arafat against his Syrian and Iranian-run opponents, since the besieged leader could now point to the release of prisoners as a triumph for his diplomacy. Following the announcement of the release, a jubilant Arafat told journalists in Tripoli: "I'm still in charge of the PLO, as you can see. It's a miracle we got them out alive. I have been working day and night for four months to ensure their safe release. . . . It's a very happy moment for us."

The next questions

Arafat's options for leaving Tripoli alive also increased on Nov. 24, as he could now consider a departure without the shame of being a defeated military leader. Negotiating efforts to secure Arafat's life are ongoing through complementary or combined efforts of the governments of Algeria, Egypt, and France, and of Saudi Foreign Minister Saud el-Feisal. By the late afternoon of Nov. 25, French radio reported that the Syrian government had agreed to Saud el-Feisal's proposal for a negotiated settlement that would end the fighting in Lebanon and aid Arafat's chances for leaving Tripoli.

A veteran observer in Tel Aviv expressed concern that "the Soviets and some Syrians, through Jebril, will now try to organize murderous actions against Israel, either from lands to our East or by sea. They would want to force Israel to react in a violent way, and, by their desperate action, to overturn all the potential good that has started over the past 24 hours. My fear is that they could do something like this very soon."

European and Middle East intelligence experts are particularly nervous about the intentions of Syrian Defense Minister Mustafa Tlas, especially in view of the emerging power vacuum in Damascus caused by Syrian President Hafez Assad's apparent step-down from active rule. Tlas, according to a knowledgeable Paris source, "is hardcore Soviet KGB, a really dangerous killer. My fear is that he could come in with the most extreme elements of the Syrian army and trig-

ger something really nasty." Tlas, a notorious pervert, had told the Beirut magazine *Al-Kifah al-Arabi* Nov. 19 that Syria was preparing contingencies for bombing Israel's nuclear reactor near Dimona in the Negev desert in Israel and for "suicide raids" against U.S. Sixth Fleet naval installations off the coast of Beirut. "If the Americans attack us, then we shall answer with all adequate means," Tlas spat. "We have flyers ready to undertake kamikaze attacks on American warships."

"The Soviets are not happy with what happened today," an Israeli source told *EIR* Nov. 24. "They have a strategy of tension for the Middle East, and now tensions have possibly been lowered. They are particularly upset, as far as I understand, that this prisoner-release deal was arranged by Western nations' diplomatic efforts." The source underscored that the deal was carried out by unusual indirect diplomatic exchanges, through intermediaries, between former Israeli Justice Minister Shmuel Tamir and PLO military chief Abu Jihad, an Arafat loyalist and the PLO Executive Committee member chargé d'affaires for the Israeli-occupied territories. The mediation was carried out by the post-Bruno Kreisky Austrian government, the French government, and elements of the International Red Cross.

A new Israeli policy?

In combination with an important strategic policy address made by Israeli President Chaim Herzog before the National Press Club on Nov. 23, the Israeli prisoner-exchange initiatives provide an Israeli policy reference point for potentially shifting the Middle East situation away from looming strategic disaster, especially as they may reinforce both the forces of reason and rationality in Cairo, Algiers, Amman, and Riyadh and the anti-State Department Washington factions associated with U.S. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, former U.S. National Security Council head William Clark, and White House special Middle East envoy Donald Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld's recent trip to Jerusalem and other Middle Eastern points is believed to have helped lay the groundwork for the extraordinary actions of the Shamir-Arens team.

Herzog, a former head of Israeli military intelligence, told his Washington audience that the Soviets and Syrians were planning to launch a series of strategic crises throughout the Middle East, Persian Gulf, and Africa. "The Syrians," he warned, "have assumed the position of the leaders of the forces committed to blocking any advance toward peace. . . . In its policy to block and prevent the peace process, Syria has found a kindred soul in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union wants to sabotage the peace process because it has no part in it and because the United States is at the center of the process. Their chosen instrument in order to block this process is Syria. . . . The Soviet Union has perfected the process of the conduct of policy through surrogates."

Herzog's comments dovetailed with the landmark Nov. 22 statements by Weinberger in Washington—which the American and European press chose in large part to black

out—that the Oct. 23 terrorist atrocity against American and French installations in Beirut had been committed by "basically Iran, with the sponsorship, knowledge, and authority of the Syrian government."

Herzog's Washington meetings were an important antidote to the policy line of former Israeli Minister Ariel Sharon, the main spokesman for that *Gotterdammerung* faction in Israeli circles which holds that Israel's interest lies in encouraging the forces of extremism in the Arab-Islamic world, so that Israel can create a regional mini-empire on top of the chaos. Sharon had reportedly met with a chieftain of the Soviet GRU military intelligence in December 1982 in Cyprus to match Israeli plans with those of the "Third Rome" strategists in Moscow.

It is that *Gotterdammerung* policy which is being discarded in Israel. The first substantial signal of this was Israel's Nov. 15 bombardments against the training camps in Baalbek, eastern Lebanon, of Islamic Amal, the fanatic Shi'ites under Hussein Moussavi who had launched the Oct. 23 Beirut massacres and the attack several days later against Israeli installations in Tyre. These Israeli bombardments were soon followed by massive retaliatory bombings by French jets against Islamic Amal sites in the same area, and opened the way for further decisive actions against the terrorist psychotics deployed by Moscow, Damascus, and Teheran.

Several factors are behind the emerging Israeli policy change.

- A growing alarm that the violently anti-Semitic Third Rome military grouping in Moscow (General Yepishev, political commissar of the Armed Forces; Marshal Ogarkov, Chief of Staff; and others) poses a direct and violent threat to Israel, and is intending to lure Israel into a major new Middle East war.

- A perception, acute in certain Israeli and French intelligence circles, that the Soviet threat is heightened by Soviet deployment of Nazi assets based in Switzerland, Damascus, Teheran, Libya, and other points. High-level Israeli sources are investigating the circumstances of Swiss protection of Nazi International-Muslim Brotherhood operatives who avowedly want to destroy Israel.

- The condition of the Israeli economy is desperate. The burdens of sustaining Israel's occupation of Lebanon have become unsupportable, under conditions where the country is now suffering over 200 percent annual rates of inflation (as of the latest figures released in November). "Arens will soften, in exchange for American aid promises, there is little choice, the economy is in such wretched shape," an Israeli source told *EIR*.

These considerations create a new basis for the discussions during the week of Nov. 28, when Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and Defense Minister Moshe Arens arrive in Washington. Preliminary indications are that they will be more receptive than in previous Israeli-American negotiations to linking Israeli policy to the requisites of meeting the global Soviet threat.