

Israel's fate: 'Mene mene tekkel upharsin'

by Scott Thompson

On Oct. 21, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak took the unprecedented step of publicly warning in an interview with *Al Ahrām* that there was a danger of a new Middle East war starting out of Lebanon. President Mubarak then called for an emergency Arab summit to deal with the Lebanese crisis. Since the Egyptian President issued his warning, numerous *EIR* confidential sources have echoed it, presenting an analysis that the Middle East is on a hair-trigger for a controlled conflict between Syria and Israel over Lebanon, that is most likely to occur before the elections for a new government in Israel and the United States in early November.

Should the present Israeli government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir be suicidal enough to escalate its present retaliatory raids into Lebanon into a full-fledged confrontation with Syria, then Israel will have sealed its doom. Not only has the military balance increasingly shifted against Israel in the Middle East, but a growing percentage of the Israelis would revolt over a renewed adventure in Lebanon. Nonetheless, Israel's foremost competitor for the title of "best Hitler imitation," Gen. Ariel Sharon, has been reported by U.S. intelligence sources to have employed his recent trip to the East bloc to pre-negotiate with the Soviets the rules of engagement for just such a controlled conflict with Syria.

On Oct. 25, the Pentagon announced that Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci will tour the Middle East, visiting Jordan from Oct. 29-30, Egypt from Oct. 31 to Nov. 2, and finally Israel from Nov. 2 to 4 for a visit that will fall a day after the Israeli election, which incumbent Prime Minister Shamir is favored to win as of this writing. Is Secretary Carlucci's trip intended to defuse an Israeli-Syrian conflict over Lebanon, which the Egyptian President has publicly warned of? So far, the only word from the Pentagon is that the secretary will discuss prospects for peace in the region.

It is also notable that the heads of state of the two Arab countries that Secretary Carlucci will visit have openly endorsed the candidacy of Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres over that of Shamir. After negotiations with Peres's adviser Nimrod Novik, Jordan's King Hussein went so far as to warn in a broadcast on ABC-TV, that the election of

Shamir would be a "disaster." Likewise, Egyptian President Mubarak took advantage of an Oct. 25 visit by French President François Mitterrand to again warn of the danger of a conflict over Lebanon. Mubarak condemned the intervention of countries like Syria and Israel in Lebanon, warning that there can be no Lebanese solution without their withdrawal. "Hands off Lebanon," Mubarak said. "Whether Syrian or other foreign forces, they can only complicate matters."

Finally, the Egyptian President stated that it was too late to revive the Arab-Israeli talks on Palestinian autonomy under the 1978 Camp David accords. "Who can revive it? Only God can revive it," he said. President Mubarak placed the blame for stalled peace negotiations squarely upon Prime Minister Shamir, stating, "He has already refused, even frozen, Camp David. . . . Shamir has changed the spirit of Camp David."

Palestinian state

One of the few bright spots in an increasingly dismal Middle East picture was an Oct. 24 statement by Abu Sharif, a spokesman for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), that the Palestine National Council meeting on Nov. 15 in Algiers, Algeria, will declare the existence of an independent Palestinian state. Opposition to a Palestinian government-in-exile not only emanated from Israel, but the Soviet Union had issued strong warnings to the PLO that such a step would only obscure the Soviets' demand for an international conference in which they expect to have a major role. Likewise, European heads of state refused to say whether they would recognize such a government-in-exile, when PLO chairman Yasser Arafat raised the issue with them during a tour of Western Europe last September.

Of all these influences, that of the Soviets appeared to have the strongest impact upon derailing the plan. U.S. intelligence sources report that the Soviets, in their quest for increased hegemony within the Middle East, have agreed to Sharon's proposal for a controlled Syrian-Israeli conflict over Lebanon, because this would permit the Soviets to step in as mediators. Now, despite this "New Yalta" pressure upon the PLO, at least one ranking spokesman has confirmed that the PLO plans to go ahead with its initial program.

Israeli Prime Minister Shamir has warned that he will meet such a development with an "iron fist," which includes the possibility of further assassinations of moderate Palestinian leaders. Already, Israel has employed the Oct. 19 bombing by the Iranian fundamentalist-linked Hezbollah terrorists that killed seven Israeli soldiers in Lebanon, as the excuse to carry out widespread bombing of PLO camps in Lebanon, even though they had nothing to do with the bombing. Should Shamir escalate to the brink of conflict with Syria, then it is feared that he will use this as an excuse for a tough crackdown in the occupied territories on the basis that they are part of the war zone. Already, the Israelis have killed 311 Palestinians in a vain attempt to crush the uprising.