

ing. But for some time now, the prime minister has practically been inviting it. His guilt for not preventing more casualties reached a new climax this week. The Palestinians, of course, bear their own share of the blame. But the Israeli leader makes their despicable work all that much easier.”

Furthermore, Samet wrote, since becoming prime minister, Sharon “has done everything in his power, over and over again—and with determination—to miss every opportunity to calm the situation.” As for the Saudi peace initiative, “Sharon has nothing but contempt for any chance for an agreement, but he’s no fool, heaven forbid. He’s a clever fox. Someone who isn’t ready to exploit any chance for calm can not be suspected of readiness to genuinely discuss a much more far-reaching initiative. He’ll kill it with politeness. The blood will flow in the streets and the prime minister will go on accompanied by his entourage of sycophants from the Labor Party.”

This may very well be the tactic that Sharon will take. However, as the peace movement grows inside the country, and if international support for the Abdullah proposal grows, Sharon will be driven into a corner, forced either to agree, or resign, as called for in a recent editorial in the London *Guardian*, which described his utter failure as prime minister.

There are forces inside Israel who will lobby for the Ab-

dullah proposal to go through. However, what is decisive, as *Ha’aretz* senior commentator Akiva Elder stressed on Feb. 26, is U.S. action. Elder’s commentary on the peace initiative by Prince Abdullah, was based on an interview with Henry Siegman, of the New York Council on Foreign Relations, who, himself, recently called Sharon the key obstacle to peace. Siegman told Elder, “If Bush doesn’t come out in favor of the initiative, nothing will come of it.” He said Bush faced the dilemma, of having to prove serious intentions for Palestinian-Israeli peace, in order to gain Arab consent to an attack against Iraq, while facing domestic U.S. political pressures in an election year. Siegman reported that his meeting with Foreign Minister Shimon Peres convinced him that the Labour Party was *not* prepared to fight for the peace proposal, and that the government was not responsive.

The Abdullah proposal, whatever its origins, can be wielded to effectively call the bluff on the Israelis—and also on those in the United States who are promising Middle East peace, as a cover for war against Iraq. The only way that the proposal can be implemented, is through the exertion of overwhelming pressure from abroad, especially from Washington. If this is not forthcoming, it will lay bare the fraud of peacemaking rhetoric generated by the Saudi move.

Primakov Warns of World War Over Iraq

The London-based Arabic paper *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* on Feb. 25 published an interview, done in Paris by Amir Taheri, with former Russian Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov, in which Primakov spoke very bluntly about matters in the Middle East, the region of his professional expertise.

On the threat to Iraq, implicit in President George Bush’s “axis of evil” formulation, Primakov said he did not think the United States was preparing military action against Iran or North Korea, “but the case of Iraq is completely different,” and the Americans “are not interested in any change in the regime’s conduct, but they are interested in changing the regime itself.”

Primakov debunked the notion that the Afghanistan campaign could be a model for actions in Iraq: “I have no idea about what the Americans are planning for, but I know that Iraq is not Afghanistan. The Americans have succeeded in Afghanistan for several reasons, including the fact that many countries, especially Russia and Iran, assisted them to a great extent. This will not be the case concerning Iraq.”

Primakov continued, “Arab countries are not expected

to cooperate with the United States on trying to topple Saddam Hussein. I do not think Kuwait itself will cooperate. Therefore, a U.S. military attack will trigger a process that could quickly spin out of control. This could lead to instability in the entire region. We might end up in a third world war.”

Asked if he were exaggerating, Primakov replied, “When the issue has to do with war and peace, exaggerating is much better than downplaying the magnitude of risks.”

Primakov also welcomed the consultations between the foreign ministers of France and Russia, “who are now working together on a plan to convince Washington to accept Saddam Hussein as a reality and include him in the search for a solution to Iraq’s problems. . . . The best way is to lift the sanctions on Iraq and allow it to restore its situation to normal. This will allow the outside world to be present in Iraq and influence developments directly.”

Primakov welcomed the current Saudi initiative as “a courageous step based on the land-for-peace principle,” but said it could only succeed after some time, because Ariel Sharon “is not interested in the land-for-peace principle.” But, added Primakov, “Sharon has led Israel to a dead end. Apparently, he cannot stay in his post as prime minister. Once he is gone, there will be new prospects for peace. The Saudi initiative indicates that the Arabs are ready for peace. It is now Israel’s turn to be ready for peace.”—*Rachel Douglas*