

## A Palestinian state by the new year?

by Jeffrey Steinberg

A high-ranking U.S. State Department official told *EIR* on Aug. 25 that the United States is firmly opposed to any Israeli policy of mass expulsion of Palestinians from the occupied territories, and that any further Israeli deportations could result in severe damage to U.S.-Israeli bilateral ties. Speaking on condition that his name not be printed, the senior diplomat also confirmed that the United States was working "through channels" to "encourage" Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yasser Arafat to formally recognize Israel's right to exist as a step toward resolving the Israel-Palestine crisis.

These remarks came within hours of Undersecretary of State John Whitehead's strong note of protest to the Israeli government over the expulsion of 25 Palestinian activists from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israeli sources confirmed to *EIR* that the Whitehead note, delivered by U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering, had been read by Israeli government officials, including Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, as a dramatic shift in American policy toward Israel. In the past, the United States had never filed a formal note of protest on any issue outside the immediate scope of U.S.-Israeli bilateral matters, such as the 1985 Pollard affair in which an Israeli spy ring was discovered stealing American military secrets and passing some of them on to the Soviet intelligence services.

According to United Nations sources in New York, the Whitehead note was followed immediately by another demonstration of Washington's pique at Israel. On Aug. 26, the president of the U.N. Security Council, Chinese Ambassador Li Luye, issued a "consensus" statement criticizing Israel's expulsion policy. The statement reportedly came as the result of behind-the-scenes negotiations involving Arab states and American U.N. Ambassador Vernon Walters, who all gave their approval to the final wording of the rebuke. The statement was described as a preferred option to a full-scale Security Council debate and a formal resolution. Citing "grave concern" over the "continued deteriorating conditions" in the Israeli occupied territories, including "closing off [of vil-

lages], curfews, increased injuries and deaths," the consensus statement called upon the Israelis to immediately stop all deportations and to allow all Palestinians already expelled to return safely.

While the "by consent" statement on behalf of the 15 members of the Security Council averted a formal resolution that would have had more teeth (and may have been therefore vetoed by the United States), the fact of the U.S. participation was considered to be yet another signal that a policy shift is afoot in Washington.

In a further move aimed at distancing itself from Israel's Palestinian policy, the U.S. Commerce Department in mid-August added Israel to a list of nations engaging in unfair labor practices, thus placing America's traditionally strongest Middle Eastern ally in the same camp as Chile, Syria, and several Soviet bloc nations. AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland, a prominent backer of Michael Dukakis and one of labor's most strident Zionists, rushed to Israel's defense, denouncing the Commerce Department action and demanding that Israel be removed from the list of nations that have repressed the growth of independent labor unions.

### Moment of opportunity for Arafat

The recent American willingness to publicly chastise Israel in an apparent effort to shut off the option of mass deportations, provides a short-lived potential moment of opportunity for PLO chairman Arafat to achieve a Palestinian state.

In the aftermath of Jordanian King Hussein's July 16 withdrawal of all claims of sovereignty over the West Bank and his de facto recognition of the PLO as the legitimate representative of the 1.5 million Palestinian people living in the territories taken from Jordan by the Israelis during the 1967 war, the PLO has been reportedly moving toward declaring itself either a government-in-exile or a provisional government that would be based somewhere inside the territories, probably in East Jerusalem.

Toward this end, PLO chairman Arafat initiated a series of personal diplomatic efforts that could lead to statehood:

- On Aug. 27, Arafat met for several hours in Geneva with United Nations Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuellar—ostensibly to discuss the possibility of the PLO chief addressing the opening session of the General Assembly later this month. PLO sources told the *Washington Post* the next day that Arafat was additionally probing the possibility of a U.N. resolution creating a "provisional government" in keeping with the Nov. 29, 1947 U.N.-administered partitioning of Palestine that provided for "independent Arab and Jewish states" to be created in the territory formerly comprising the British mandate. Following the Geneva meeting, Arafat made public reference to that 1947 U.N. Resolution 181.

- On Sept. 3, Arafat will address the foreign ministers meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement. Ten days later he will address the European Parliament.

Pending approval by the Palestinian National Council, the 450-member governing body of the PLO, Arafat could use any one of these high-profile speaking engagements to make a dramatic announcement of the formation of a "provisional government."

Such a move would be almost certainly coupled with a formal declaration by the PNC, recognizing the state of Israel and dropping some traditional Palestinian demands, including, some sources say, the demand of the immediate return to the pre-1967 borders and the withdrawal by Israel of any claims over Jerusalem.

According to one well-placed Palestinian source, Arafat would like to announce the PNC recognition of Israel before the Israeli elections occur later this autumn.

While Likud candidate and current Prime Minister Shamir has been stirring up the already deeply polarized climate inside Israel with bellicose campaign rhetoric denouncing the Palestinian demonstrators and the PLO, reports have also come out of Israel indicating that the Likud bloc has been involved in back-channel discussions with PLO representatives for six months. And Shamir, as distinct from outright crazies like Ariel Sharon and Rabbi Meir Kahane, has reportedly been shaken up by the recent American warnings against mass deportations and an annexation of the West Bank and Gaza.

One key factor that must be taken into account by Arafat as he charts the PLO through the most opportune, albeit dangerous period of its existence, is the continuing danger that the Palestinian cause may be sold out in some superpower New Yalta condominium. Were Arafat to take some significant initiative prior to Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze's scheduled early-autumn trip to Cairo, that would clearly go a long way toward undercutting any Washington-Moscow deals.

Moscow's recent decision to drastically expand its naval facility at Tartus, Syria in the eastern Mediterranean, certainly underscores the Russians' intention to move in a major way into the region, and may be suggestive of a Russian-American *quid pro quo* to jointly box in an Israeli state that is armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons. If the recent American moves against Israel are part of a superpower deal, then Arafat is in a position to judo those arrangements.

If the Arafat initiative gains steam, the PLO chief will be confronted with another grave obstacle: the prospect of a Syrian-Israeli joint effort to sabotage the independence process through either a serious assassination try against Arafat or an orchestrated "limited war"—during which the Israelis might "justify" the mass deportation of the Palestinians.

With Gov. Michael Dukakis already committed to an "Israel can do no wrong" foreign policy if he is elected in November, it is becoming more and more likely that the fate of the Palestinian people and the entire eastern Mediterranean will be determined by events compressed into a very short period of time—between now and November.

## Soviets back IRA in war on Britain

by Mark Burdman

Days before the Irish Republican Army launched its August offensive against Great Britain, the Soviet magazine *New Times* published an unusually blunt statement of support for the IRA, in its July 1988 edition. Britain is being especially targeted for Soviet-backed irregular warfare because of its traditional close ties to the United States within the NATO alliance, and because of the Thatcher government's opposition to "New Yalta" superpower condominium arrangements for Europe, southern Africa, and other regions in the world.

Vladimir Zhitomirsky, described as Moscow's Belfast special correspondent of *New Times*, wrote the article entitled, "People and Bullets," which went way beyond a critique of British policy toward Ireland, into a diatribe against British "terror" against Northern Ireland. Zhitomirsky dated the crisis to "eight centuries ago," when "the Anglo-Norman regular devastating raids on Ireland began," and when "Ireland was turned into the first English colony," with an "apartheid policy" used against the Irish.

Zhitomirsky traced the "present crisis" to the end of the 1960s: precisely the moment that the moribund IRA was revived as an organization by the Soviet intelligence services.

"In 1969, the British government sent its troops across the Irish Sea," he went on, claiming that the British used "as a pretext," the extremist actions of both the "so-called Provisional IRA, which had broken away from the main IRA in 1970," and the ultra-Protestants. The *New Times* author charged that, from 1972 on, "London, in effect, raised the terror against [the people of Northern Ireland] to a new level." He concluded by attacking the Tory government of the U.K., for having refused to implement social projects to help the Irish: "London has no funds for such things. Clearly, maintaining a British military contingent in Ulster costs too much."

### 'The IRA war'

Since the morning of Aug. 1, with its bombing of an army barracks near British Prime Minister Thatcher's home election district of Finchley, the IRA has been waging an offensive bloodier than any since the 1970s. On the night of Aug. 27-28 alone, British security forces in Northern Ireland reported almost 200 violent events in Belfast and Londonderry, including 27 incidents of shooting at police, 17 bombings, and over 50 hijackings of vehicles whose owners were then forced to drive their vehicles loaded with explosives to se-