

# Camp David with a Balkan face?

## Romania's Middle East peace drive

Over the past two months, an international diplomatic campaign has developed, with the goal of forging a cosmetic resolution of the Palestinian issue, the heart of the Middle East conflict. The prime movers in this diplomatic initiative, the government of Romania and Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan, were, not coincidentally, central figures in launching the original Camp David bilateral peace between Egypt and Israel.

The current series of moves, which was launched in July with the controversial meetings between Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yassir Arafat and Austrian Premier Bruno Kreisky, has provoked a global intelligence war involving various agencies, including the Israeli Mossad, as a result of Israeli Premier Menachem Begin's flat refusal to make any deal with the PLO. Due to this stance, Begin has come under heavy attack from prominent Zionist leaders and the normally pro-Israel governments and press of Great Britain and the United States.

At the heart of the current pro-Palestinian diplomatic flurry is an effort to blackmail Syrian President Hafez Assad into negotiations with Israel over the Golan Heights, for which some "breakthrough" in the impasse between Israel and the PLO would serve as the cover. Coinciding with the Romanian-led efforts to achieve such an agreement between the PLO and Jerusalem, Syria has been hit by a wave of domestic instability and by Israeli incursions into Syrian-protected Lebanon, both aimed at weakening the Syrians' resolve to resist the Camp David process.

### The diplomatic players

European Socialist International circles with long-standing ties to Britain and the European nobility are the major machine in the current initiative. London, in alliance with the New York Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the anglophile Ditchley Foundation, and the Carter administration, wants a Middle East agreement which will allow for the establishment of a Middle East Treaty Organization to serve as the regional extension of NATO.

Such a plan would allow for the institutionalization of the World Bank's appropriate technologies plan as the basis for "small scale" economic development and

for the necessary military force to back up such a neo-colonialist economic policy for the Mideast and eastern Mediterranean region. This policy for the Mideast is an integral part of the proposed neo-Malthusian zero-growth policy for the world economy prescribed by the CFR in a study, the so-called Project 1980s, in which prominent Carter administration officials participated. This comprehensive plan for the Mideast has been publicly backed by top U.S. and Canadian Zionists and pro-Zionists, most importantly liquor magnate Edgar Bronfman, Senator Henry Jackson, and Senator Jacob Javits.

More immediately, such an arrangement would effectively place at London's disposal both the Middle East "oil weapon" and the petrodollar assets of the Middle East oil-producing nations. Both would be available to disrupt efforts by European nations and Japan to build a new international economic order based on the European Monetary System.

Romanian president Nicolai Ceaucescu's role in initiating the latest flurry of meetings and negotiations is seen by the Anglo-Americans as central in "selling" their peace package to the Kremlin. Working closely with Ceaucescu is an array of European, Middle Eastern, and American figures associated either directly or indirectly with the Fabian Socialist International. Austrian Premier Bruno Kreisky and his close associate Socialist International head Willy Brandt met with Arafat earlier this summer to inaugurate the widely publicized dialogue between the PLO and the European socialists.

Among the other key players backing up Romania's initiative are:

- former World Zionist Organization head Nahum Goldmann, a founder of the state of Israel and a leading Zionist "dove";
- Jean Danielle, the editor of the French weekly *Nouvel Observateur*, a fellow traveler of the French Socialist Party and a close friend of the party's leader, François Mitterand, himself a long-standing confidant of Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan; and
- Jordan's Prince Hassan, an outspoken proponent of appropriate technologies for the Middle East. Prince Hassan is known to have close ties to Rifaat Assad, the

brother of Syrian President Hafez Assad, who is regarded as a virtual Romanian agent within Syria. Earlier this summer the Israeli daily *Haaretz* (which is closely linked to Dayan) mooted the possibility that Prince Hassan may soon take over in Jordan.

Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito has also played a sustained role in setting up the current mediation between Israel and the PLO. Both Tito and Romanian President Ceaucescu are known for their allegiance to the International Monetary Fund. Tito has been a long-standing advocate of keeping the Nonaligned group of nations under the IMF's aegis, while Ceaucescu's government is the only East bloc nation to belong to the IMF, and to have relations with Israel.

### Sequence of diplomacy

Following the meeting between Kreisky and Arafat in mid-July, Nahum Goldmann gave a startling interview to the West German weekly *Die Zeit*, in which he called for an overall peace settlement for the Mideast and attacked Begin as a security risk to the state of Israel because of his intransigence on the Palestinian question. Corresponding to these developments, Britain's Lord Caradon, who has formulated a peace plan similar to that put forth by Goldmann, made a visit to the West Bank to get the West Bank Palestinian mayors to back United Nations Resolution 242, drafted by Caradon together with Arthur Goldberg and Eugene Rostow specifically to provide a legal basis for continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank. Since the Caradon visit, Moshe Dayan has had a number of publicized meetings with West Bank mayors termed "close sympathizers" of the PLO.

Within Israel, Shimon Peres, the head of the Labor Party, is now making an open bid for the premiership. Peres, a member of the Socialist International, has had several meetings with Ceaucescu, including one this month, and has also met with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. The Aug. 14 *Christian Science Monitor* reports that Romania was nearly successful in setting up a meeting between Peres and Arafat, from which Peres withdrew only at the last minute. On the same day, a report was leaked from Vienna that the U.S. Ambassador to Austria, Milton Wolf, a prominent Cleveland Jewish figure, had held at least one meeting with Arafat aide Sartawi. A few days later Nahum Goldmann was quoted in the *New York Times* as saying that he had been asked by State Department sources to set up a meeting with Arafat. Such developments occurred against the backdrop of the scandal involving U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young's meeting with the PLO's observer to the U.N., Zehdi Labib Terzi, the event which led to Young's resignation. The next day, Aug. 15, Ceaucescu arrived in Syria for talks with Assad.

During this period Arafat was involved in extensive diplomacy related to the Anglo-American initiative. On

July 24, Arafat met with the British Ambassador to Lebanon and urged him to press Washington to back the Brandt-Kreisky efforts to open a dialogue between Israel and the PLO. On Aug. 27, Arafat was visited by former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, a top figure in U.S. National Security Council circles who also helped the Ayatollah Khomeini take power in Iran. Clark's visit to Beirut was set up by Arafat aide Sahfiq al Hout, who recently made a tour of the U.S. at the invitation of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. Shortly thereafter, Arafat made a sudden visit to Romania to meet with Ceaucescu.

### Target Syria

At the heart of the operation is the destabilization of Syria, and the breaking up of the Syria-Iraq alliance—to leave a weakened Syria no choice but to enter the Camp David axis.

Among the events directed toward this goal have been the assassination of Zuhair Mohsen (the head of Saiqa, the Syrian PLO guerrilla organization) during a visit to France in late July, which has been attributed to Israeli intelligence. The murder took place after Palestinian terrorists, who were identified as Saiqa members, seized the Egyptian embassy in Ankara. This incident supplied the pretext for the hit against Mohsen, and was calculated to split the Syrian wing of the PLO off from Arafat's liberal wing and smooth Arafat's efforts to make a deal with Israel through Romanian mediation.

Also tied to the destabilization of Syria is an attack which took place about the same time on a Syrian military academy in Aleppo. This incident was attributed to the extremist Muslim Brotherhood. Shortly thereafter, the Syrian government officially linked the attackers to Zionists and Zionist-connected Lebanese Maronite Christians. The attack has sparked a wave of assassinations against Syria's Alawite minority, from whose members Assad and most of the Syrian political and military leadership are drawn. Syrian sources state that Rifaat Assad and Mohammed Haider, the Deputy Premier for Economic Affairs, are behind the recent terrorist attacks. Haider, too, is a contact man within Syria for Romanian interests.

The internal troubles in Syria took a quantum leap forward last week when riots broke out in the port town of Latakia in the northern section of Syria, which is predominantly Alawite. Since then, reports have swept the European press of civil war conditions building in Syria. These latest riots are reportedly the work of the Muslim Brotherhood, and took place at a time when Syrian President Assad was out of the country, leaving handling of the affair to his brother Rifaat.

Also timed with the Romanian diplomatic drive was the collapse of Iraqi-Syrian efforts to federate. The collapse occurred following the takeover of Iraq by the

number two man, Saddam Hussein, who exposed a plot within the Iraqi Ba'ath Party to take over the government—a plot reputedly linked to Syria. Syrian diplomatic sources report that the conspirators were deliberately exposed in order to cast a shadow over Syria-Iraq relations. In an interview with West Germany's *Der Spiegel* this week, Assad notes that the negotiations between his country and Iraq have reached a stalemate. Such a stalemate serves the interests of the Israelis insofar as it leaves Syria militarily more vulnerable to Israel—particularly in light of the repeated provocations against the Syrian peacekeeping forces in Lebanon by the Israeli armed forces.

Sources from the CFR and the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies are also predicting that Assad may soon be assassinated. Such rumors are designed to further intimidate the Syrian regime into following Egypt's example along the Camp David path. But if Assad cannot be broken by the Romanian-Israeli carrot and stick policy, then the possibility of an assassination is very real.

London and its allies appear to feel that their operation is moving forward smartly. Only last week, Ceausescu sent a special emissary to Israel to meet with Prime Minister Begin. Though the public statements from the meeting indicated no breakthrough, *Corriere della Sera* and other European press sources indicate that behind the scenes substantive differences are being resolved. The Aug. 31 *Cambio 16* reports that Kreisky is vacationing in Mallorca and has held a number of round-the-clock meetings with the "political department" of the PLO there. Simultaneously, Moshe Dayan has launched his own effort to open talks with West Bank associates of the PLO and, according to the British Broadcasting Corporation, with Palestine National Council member Dr. Hamzeh Natchi.

But, to the extent that the Romanian-led diplomatic drive has focused worldwide attention on the Palestinian question, it has opened the door for others to inject a more broad-based and viable peace plan into the Middle East—the approach stated in the October 1977 U.S.-Soviet call for an overall Mideast peace parley. Such initiatives would likely come from the Soviet Union and France, both with extensive interests and contacts in the region. France opposed the current Anglo-American effort because France and other European nations would be the first targets of the "oil weapon" that establishment of METO would place in the hands of London; the Soviets fear the threat that the Camp David process poses to global peace and stability. Beyond that, however, neither power has any goal in the Middle East that poses any threat to basic U.S. or Arab interests, and on this basis, a French or Soviet counterinitiative cannot be counted out in the Mideast sweepstakes.

—Judith Weyer

## Britain attacks Begin

*The normally pro-Israel British have recently done an about-face, attacking the government of Prime Minister Menachem Begin for its intransigence on the Palestinian-West Bank issue and for its continuing raids into Lebanon. The British "outcry" against Israel is part of a plan to set the stage for the removal of Begin and his replacement with a liberal, Labor Party-linked government led by Shimon Peres. Such a government would, according to the London scenario, be more amenable than the Begin crew to making a deal with the PLO and Syria, a deal that is aimed at roping the Palestinians and Syrian President Assad into a new stage in the British-Second International-sponsored Middle East "separate peace."*

*Following are excerpts from the British press:*

### **The Economist, editorial, "Israel's Blunt Instrument," Sept. 1:**

Despite a hiccup of Israeli protest, Mr Menachem Begin's government has declared its intent to continue its policy of attacking Palestinians in Lebanon by sea, land and air regardless of what these particular Palestinians have, or have not, done against Israel. ... Last week the foreign minister, Mr Dayan, complained that he could not justify this policy to Israel's unhappy American allies....

Pre-emptive attack is sometimes a genuine and justified means of defence. ... But Israel should not feel free to attack the Palestinians and their Lebanese neighbors at will, and without attempting to draw a distinction between weapons and tactics that are reasonably accurate and those that are not. To do that is to answer terrorism with terrorism, and the answer is no more acceptable than the deed it answers.

### **The Daily Telegraph, editorial, Aug. 31:**

A small-scale war has been going on in the Middle East for several weeks. Almost every day, Israeli forces, or Israeli-backed forces, bomb and shell villages and ports in southern Lebanon. ... The subject is causing unease within Israel itself and has led to dissension in the Israeli Cabinet. It is yet another aspect, and the most worrying one, of the unsolved Palestinian question.

Israel's declared object is to make the Palestinian guerrillas who operate from south Lebanon so unpopular with the indigenous Lebanese that they get squeezed out. It is not working. If anything the Israeli attacks are causing greater solidarity between Palestin-