

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-

ians and "Left-wing" (i.e. non-Christian) Lebanese. Thus the recent civil war in the Lebanon, put down by the massive intervention of Syrian troops, who remain in control north of the Litani river, is being continued in miniature south of that line, where the Syrians have not penetrated. Israel is in effect daring and taunting Syria to do something about it. Mr Dayan, Israeli Foreign Minister, who it has been revealed is talking to a prominent PLO sympathiser in Gaza, said yesterday: "You can't get the Arab opinion by sitting and talking with Jews." Nor can you get it by shelling Lebanese.

Washington Star, editorial, Aug. 28:

The calmness—the apparent indifference, it might be said—of Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti about the possibility of illegal Israeli intelligence activities in this country is rather curious.

He is reluctant to look into reports that Israeli agents bugged the July 26 meeting in New York City between U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young and a representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization because, he said, "I have seen no information or evidence that it was bugged or surveilled."

Mr. Civiletti was curtly dismissive of press reports, including one in *The Star* quoting knowledgeable U.S. sources, that Israeli agents have pursued their vocation in this country with a vigor that runs to excess and perhaps even illegality....

The attorney general said he had not received a request from Congress or any of its committees to look into Israeli espionage activities in this country. Well, we hope such a request will materialize.

But it strikes us that the reports of Israeli bugging have been sufficiently informed that Mr. Civiletti would show more concern, in his official capacity, over who's doing what to whom.

As part of the effort to undo Begin, sections of Israeli intelligence tied to the Begin machine are also being targeted—as exemplified by Newsweek's Sept. 3 feature article "Israel's Spies in the U.S." Similar articles have appeared in other U.S. papers.

Corralling Syria

Earlier this summer, in a New York Times op-ed, CBS diplomatic correspondent Marvin Kalb signaled the enactment of a plan to rope Syria into a METO "Peace" configuration for the region. A key component of this scenario involves rupturing Syria's relations with Iraq and coercing France into throwing its weight behind the operation.

A more recent editorial in the Financial Times of London gloats that the growing unrest inside Syria is forcing President Assad into a Camp David-style peace arrangement with Israel. The editorial admits that a Syrian deal with Israel would be nothing but an outgrowth of Henry Kissinger's step-by-step diplomacy, a diplomacy that exacerbated, not ameliorated, tensions in the Middle East. Excerpts follow.

New York Times, op-ed, "The Syrian Connection" by Marvin Kalb:

The American attitude is, to put it mildly, shortsighted. ... Syria cannot be sidestepped in any realistic pursuit of peace. The recent upsurge of sectarian violence, directed against the regime of President Hafez al-Assad, has led to the surfacing here of an intriguing theory circulating among some of the principals who see its pitfalls and benefits: It holds that Syria may not be ready for a subtle approach (probably by the French) aimed eventually at negotiating an Israeli return of the Golan Heights under airtight security arrangements in exchange for a pledge of peace and co-existence.

According to this theory, Mr. Assad is in bad trouble; he requires a major victory capable of rallying nationalistic sentiment. His minority, Alawite regime, drained by the civil war in Lebanon, is being challenged