
Interview: Mordehai Bar-On

Economics must be part of peace process

Mordehai Bar-On fought in the Israel Defense Forces in 1948 in the Givati Brigade. He served with the IDF for 20 years, achieving the rank of colonel.

Upon leaving the Army, he was elected to the executive committee of the World Zionist Organization. In the early-1980s, he became a leading Peace Now spokesman. He was a member of the Knesset 1984-86, as a member of the Citizens Rights Movement (Ratz).

The following excerpted interview was conducted on March 12 at "The Road to Peace" conference in New York City by EIR correspondent Scott Thompson.

EIR: What do you think will come from Shamir's trip to the U.S.?

Bar-On: When Shamir comes here, it will become clear to him that American Jews are not behind his policies. He also will find that within the administration, while there is no clearcut policy, there is a lot of eyebrow-raising. There is no dissatisfaction directly. Right now President Bush and James Baker are not prepared to change their policy. . . . I do not think before a half-year that one can expect a real stock-taking by the State Department on the Middle East. What they are doing now is marking time. . . .

The trip by Shamir might expose him, however, because intelligent journalists will ask: "What is your plan?" And, they will discover that there is nothing new. He does not have a new plan. . . .

EIR: A lot of Israelis have made clear that they have reservations about an international conference, that might dictate unfavorable peace terms at Soviet instigation. What are your thoughts about that?

Bar-On: I don't think an international conference is the most effective, exciting formula. It is very cumbersome. The superpowers, three to four Arab powers, and Israel. But, you do need it for two reasons: First of all, the PLO and Jordanians insist on it. And, if they insist on it, then we have to have it as part of the settlement. Secondly, it might also give a chance for the United States to mobilize international guar-

antees, international investments.

I think you need to reach agreements on everything of substance, however, before you hold the international conference. . . . There might, for example, be bilateral meetings between the U.S. and Soviets with the parties, before bringing them all together. . . .

EIR: Has your party given any thought to the economic program to accompany the peace plan, as Peres did with his "Marshall Plan"?

Bar-On: It will take \$10-20 billion. A lot of money, a big amount of money. Israel will have to indemnify the refugees, but that would not be more than \$5 billion. It will not be enough. And, Israel itself will have to get some loans to be able to pay it. But, in addition, one has to think to mobilize Japan and Germany. . . .

Agro-industrial projects are okay, but you will also need modern industries not necessarily connected with the agrarian side. My guess is that water is so critical that you will have to develop massive desalinization by nuclear energy.

EIR: Would you agree such an economic program must accompany a peace settlement?

Bar-On: I see that you should draw such an agreement in a semi-authoritative way. An appeal must be made to the American government, the Japanese, and others involved in a Middle East peace negotiation. It must be part and parcel of the thinking about peace and certainly the negotiations for peace. . . .

EIR: Is there anyway of boxing Shamir in more?

Bar-On: Some of us in the peace movement think we have to develop a tone of discarding completely the Labour Party, and speaking loudly of coalition making and challenging the Likud in a positive, constructive way. . . . At this moment, I want to try this tactic and tell Shamir: "You say you have a peace program. Let's hear it. We promise to support you on anything that is realistic or even semi-realistic."

At the same time, to say to the Labour Party that if they don't come up with something much more clear, they may be completely discarded and become completely irrelevant. . . .

EIR: Some of the younger members of Likud wanted to enter a peace dialogue with the Palestinians. Do you think this is hopeful?

Bar-On: Yes, I think there is a need to keep open channels with them. One problem is that some of the young guards are very passionate, Western-trained, and used to rational thinking, but they are hung up by their parents and years of indoctrination. That's what makes it so difficult. But, if we believe that rationality means that we must talk with the PLO, then there must be some way open to such a situation. Not now though. We have to meet them half-way. . . .