

## Can Clinton thwart Netanyahu's drive for war?

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Since spring of 1996, when Benjamin Netanyahu was elected Prime Minister of Israel, over the dead body of Yitzhak Rabin, assassinated on Nov. 4, 1995, the peace process associated with the Rabin-Peres government had become a traumatic memory. It was not "interrupted" or "stalled," or characterized by any other of the euphemisms used by the press to ignore the facts; it was gone; it did not exist. Netanyahu had been put into power with the backing of British-led cricles including the "Christian" fundamentalist movement of his American buddies Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, with a clear mandate not merely to block implementation of the Oslo Accords, which had been signed by a previous government for the state of Israel, but to aggressively sabotage every paragraph of those agreements. Netanyahu's policy could be understood as the systematic, willful violation of every principle of the peace process. As a result, over the past year and a half, there has been only escalating tensions, and guerrilla warfare.

In strategic terms, Netanyahu's deployment represented an integral part of the assault against the U.S. Presidency. Not only was killing Oslo a means of undermining President Clinton's foreign policy, which had defined Middle East peace as a priority, but the entire Monica Lewinsky affair was conducted by Israeli intelligence assets as a coordinated flank at the same time (see "Netan-Yahoo's 'Get Clinton' Actions," *EIR*, Oct. 2; and *Investigation*, this issue). Thus, although there were a number of well-meaning attempts by other political forces in the Arab world and Europe to regenerate motion in the region, it was obvious that only direct, forceful intervention by Clinton would be capable of turning the tables, not only in the region, but inside the American political process as well: Either Clinton would step on Netanyahu, as Lyndon

LaRouche has put it, or Netanyahu would engulf the Middle East in the flames of a new, probably nuclear war.

The much-touted Wye Plantation summit between Palestinian Authority (PA) President Yasser Arafat and Benjamin Netanyahu, sponsored by Clinton, must be viewed in this context. Whether Clinton succeeded or not, will be seen only in the immediate weeks ahead. For, regardless of what was ceremoniously signed on Oct. 23 at the White House, peace will depend on the extent to which the terms agreed upon are implemented. As a Palestinian diplomatic representative told *EIR* on Oct. 27, "There is no euphoria among us about this agreement, because it all depends on implementation." He recalled the agreements signed in the past, and violated, but added, "We do, however, see this as better than the situation before; at least, there is some reason for hope. Implementation is the key."

And implementation, by Israel, of the Wye River Memorandum, will require the continuing personal pressure of President Clinton. It is not enough to step on a Netanyahu once; one must keep him smashed, pinned under one's heel.

### A pledge to implement

The text of the Wye Memorandum makes clear that it outlines "steps to facilitate implementation of the . . . 'Interim Agreement,' . . . [which] are subject to the relevant terms and conditions of the prior agreements and do not supercede other requirements." Thus, it is an agreement to implement agreements which have already been negotiated and finalized, but systemically violated by the Israeli side. The items considered include transfer of authority over territory occupied by Israel on the West Bank, security measures, infrastructure, and other matters.

The United States had initiated the process which culminated in Wye, by unofficially floating the proposal that Israel effect a second redeployment of its military out of a further 13% of the West Bank. Whereas Arafat agreed to the offer, despite the fact that it fell far short of what the Palestinians had hoped to gain in the second of three scheduled withdrawals, Netanyahu rejected the "American plan" outright, on so-called "security" grounds. In this light, it is not insignificant, that the Wye memorandum specifically commits Israel to the 13% withdrawal.

Concretely, this means "the Israeli side's implementation of the first and second FRD [Further Redeployment] will consist of the transfer to the Palestinian side of 13% from Area C as follows: 1% to Area (A) 12% to Area (B)." Area A refers to land under total Palestinian Authority control, Area B is under joint Israeli-Palestinian control, and Area C is under total Israeli control. In addition, as part of the implementation of the first and second redeployment, 14.2% from Area B will pass to Area A.

Three percent from Area B will be designated as Green Areas and/or Nature Reserves, under Israeli security responsibility. This was demanded by Netanyahu, on grounds that otherwise, Israel's security would be threatened. The designation of the area as a nature park, means that nothing new will be built on it. The Wye memorandum specifies that there will be "no change in status," i.e., no settlements will be built, and the rights of persons residing there, including Bedouins, will not be prejudiced.

As for the third withdrawal, foreseen in the Oslo Accords, the Wye agreement merely notes, "There will be a committee to address this question" and that the United States "will be briefed regularly." In substance, Netanyahu has insisted he would hand back at maximum 1% more in the third redeployment. The amount of land which the Palestinian Authority will have under its partial and full control, as a result, will be in the order of 41%, by the end of the interim period. Again, this falls far short of what the Palestinians had interpreted as their share of the West Bank, from the Oslo agreements. Although it was not nailed down in figures, the Palestinian side understood that it would gain control over all areas which were not occupied by Israeli military installations, or by settlers. The Oslo Accords spoke of redeployment of Israeli forces outside areas populated by Palestinians. The Palestinian side assumed they would eventually receive 90%.

Asked for his evaluation of the Wye agreement, former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres told the Paris daily *Le Monde* on Oct. 25-26, that "what seems important to me is the decision to proceed to the second redeployment. Without agreement on this point, it would have been impossible to continue." He added, "The step of 13% is modest, but opens the road a bit wider . . . even though there is quite a way to go."

The central portion of the Wye memorandum deals with security, the issue which Netanyahu has raised as a justification for blocking peace. During the talks at Wye, a Shin Bet

informant was responsible for throwing a grenade into a crowd of Israelis waiting at a bus stop in Beersheba, an attack arranged to provide Netanyahu with the upper hand in bargaining.

## Security mechanisms

Far-ranging security guarantees have been detailed in the memorandum, whereby Israel and the Palestinian Authority agree to prevent acts of terrorism against each other. This is the first time that the principle of reciprocity has been spelled out: "The Palestinian side agreed to take all measures necessary in order to prevent acts of terrorism, crime and hostilities directed against the Israeli side, against individuals falling under the Israeli side's authority and against their property. *Just as the Israeli side agreed to take all measures necessary in order to prevent acts of terrorism, crime and hostilities directed against the Palestinian side, against individuals falling under the Palestinian side's authority and against their property*" (emphasis added).

Both sides agree to combat terrorism, which includes the "terror support structure" and the "environment conducive to the support of terror." This leads to actions intended to outlaw terrorist organizations. Here, the Wye memorandum states that in addition to Israeli-Palestinian Authority coordination, a "U.S.-Palestinian committee will meet biweekly to review the steps being taken." The United States will cooperate with the PA, to "eliminate terrorist cells and the support structure that plans, finances, supplies and abets terror." The PA will arrest Palestinians suspected by Israel of "perpetrating acts of violence and terror," but will not hand them over to Israeli control. The PA will "issue a decree prohibiting all forms of incitement to violence or terror," and the Palestinian National Charter (PNC) will be amended, to nullify "provisions that are inconsistent with the letters exchanged between the PLO and the Government of Israel on 9-10 September 1993."

Commenting on this aspect of the agreement in his *Le Monde* interview, Peres noted that Netanyahu did not succeed in getting the right to extradite suspected terrorists, and said Arafat had argued that by the same token, the Palestinians would have the right to extradite settlers accused of violence. Regarding the planned meeting of various Palestinian organisms, including the PNC, Peres said he considered it superfluous, considering that the PNC is "an organism that belongs to the past" without any influence on Palestinian-Israeli relations.

Other security measures defined, include the prohibition of illegal weapons, and the prevention of incitement to violence. The latter issue is to be formalized in a decree by the Palestinian side "comparable to the existing legislation which deals with the same subject." This implies, again, reciprocity: that Israeli settlers, for example, armed to the teeth, should not be allowed to incite and organize violence against Palestinians.

## The security dimension to economic development

Thinking back to the original Oslo agreement, what stands out in one's memory is the extensive treatment of economic development, as the key to ensuring that peaceful coexistence could function. The annexes to that agreement, spelled out vast regional infrastructure projects which, had they been implemented, would have laid the basis for actual peace. Instead, as *EIR* documented, the economic policy content was taken over by the free-market maniacs of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, who, with precious few exceptions, prevented any productive investment from being allocated. Indeed, the showcase project of Palestinian economic development, has recently been hailed, in a huge gambling casino, run by Palestinians, but which caters to Israelis, who are not allowed to gamble inside Israel.

Among the projects identified in the original Oslo Accords, were a port and airport for Gaza, as well as a corridor connecting the Gaza Strip to the West Bank. None of them has been built, due to Israeli sabotage. Now, the Wye memorandum is attempting to put them back on the agenda.

Economic development, it says, is to be promoted through the opening of the Gaza Industrial Estate and the Gaza airport. An agreement is to be completed to allow for construction of the Gaza port. Safe passage for Palestinians between Gaza and the West Bank, is to be agreed upon within a week for the southern route, and "as soon as possible" for the northern route. A "strategic economic dialogue" is also contemplated in the Wye document, whereby existing obstacles to Palestinian economic viability will be dealt with; these include unpaid Palestinian debts, Israeli taxation practices, and Israeli trade barriers.

The permanent status negotiations are to be resumed right away, with the aim of concluding them by May 4, 1999. These are to deal with unsolved problems, including the status of Jerusalem and of a Palestinian state. "The negotiations will be continuous and without interruption," i.e., they should not be subject to Netanyahu's sabotage, assures the Wye memorandum. Furthermore, the United States has "expressed its willingness to facilitate these negotiations," indicating that Clinton may be disposed to continue his personal intervention. Finally, no step is to be taken that would change the status on the ground of the West Bank or Gaza, meaning that Israel must desist from expanding or building new settlements. The entire agreement is tied to specific deadlines, starting one week after signing, and proceeding, week by week thereafter.

The question left open by the Wye agreement, is one that cannot be answered in a written text: What will Netanyahu do? If he implements the agreement, he will be contested by the right-wing extremist Israelis who are the base of his and Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon's support. Either he shifts, to represent the majority of the population, which wants peace, or he sticks with this base, which will guarantee the sabotage

of the accords, and an escalation to war.

Before leaving the United States for Israel, Netanyahu did not give much reason for optimism, when he told Reuters, "No deadline of Oslo has been met, not one. . . . You extend deadlines and we've done that throughout the Oslo process and there's no reason not to do it here." Immediately after touching down in Israel, Netanyahu started spewing out statements designed to undermine the Wye agreements he had just signed. First, he said he believed the accords would not prevent him from continuing settlement building, including the Har Homa site in the Arab sector of East Jerusalem. Then, his media adviser, Aviv Bushinsky, told the press that Netanyahu had postponed ratification of the deal. "Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has decided to postpone the cabinet meeting scheduled for Thursday in which the ministers were due to ratify the agreement reached at Wye Plantation," he said. His statement said that the Palestinians had agreed last week to complete "within a week a Palestinian working plan for fighting terrorism but this evening it became clear that the Palestinians are not living up to the set timetable." It went on, to say that Netanyahu would convene the cabinet "to endorse the agreement immediately after receiving the Palestinian working plan for fighting against terrorism."

If public opinion polls are any indication of the popular mood, the 70-80% mandate for peace expressed by the Israeli people recently, should communicate to any politician who wishes to win elections, that he must take steps to implement peace. If the Knesset (parliament) approves an early election bill passed by the Constitution Justice and Law Committee on Oct. 26, then elections could take place in Israel as early as March 1999, rather than the year after. As long as the current Netanyahu-Sharon combination rules Israel, there is little hope for peace.

The other question is: What will Clinton do? If the text is to be taken seriously, it means that the U.S. President will have to force through implementation all the way. To dismantle the terrorist infrastructure on both sides, would mean cracking down on the network inside the Shin Bet which has been coordinating "Palestinian" terror assaults, and it would entail disarming the settlers. This is tantamount to disenfranchising the current government. It would also mean dismantling the vast financial and ideological support structure inside the United States which has fuelled extremists, like the Temple Mount crowd. Finally, to effect real economic development, which would lay the basis for peaceful coexistence, fundamental changes would have to be made in Clinton's economic policy overall.

The final, crucial question relates to an item not mentioned in the agreement, but widely reported in the press: that Clinton agreed to "review" the case of Israeli super-spy Jonathan Pollard. If Clinton were to capitulate on the Pollard issue, it would be a catastrophic concession, signalling that the Netanyahu-Sharon forces ultimately dictate terms. No peace would be thinkable in that context.