

the provisions of the Road Map, and the Arab peace initiative of 2002.”

In a telephone discussion Aug. 24 with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Russian President Vladimir Putin also discussed the need for a Madrid-style approach. According to a Kremlin release, the two discussed “normalizing the situation in Lebanon as well as steps taken by the international community for a *broader Middle East settlement*.”

Frenetic Diplomacy

Actors in the region have been engaged in a flurry of diplomatic activity, all pointing to the possibility that a Madrid II process may be in the offing. The diplomatic moves centered on Syria and Iran. Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, during a visit to Damascus for talks with the leadership on Aug. 23, expressed unusual optimism about the prospects for a regional peace. “I would like to express with great pleasure that what I heard from the President was very promising for the future,” he told reporters, after talks with Syrian President Assad, Vice President Farouk al-Sharaa, and Foreign Minister Walid Moallem. “There is now a great opportunity to activate the peace process in the region, and I heard that from President Assad, al-Sharaa, and Moallem,” he said. “We find that after each crisis, there is a chance for peace.”

Moallem travelled after that to Finland to meet with the government currently holding the rotating chairmanship of the European Union, after which Finnish Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja left for talks in Berlin and Paris. At the same time, the EU foreign ministers were to meet on the Lebanese crisis and the region as a whole.

The visit by the Qatari Emir, noted above, is also significant, as he handed an invitation, from Syrian President Assad to Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora, for a meeting on the crisis.

Iran is also, at least indirectly, involved in the process. Aside from an unusual, three-hour meeting between Foreign Minister Manochour Mottaki and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo, Iran has entered center stage in the strategic considerations of world powers, like Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In response to Iran’s answer to the UN “5+1” proposal (the five permanent Security Council members plus Germany) on its nuclear energy program, Russia and China expressed their agreement with Tehran’s suggestion that negotiations on unresolved issues be started. At the same time, Britain’s prestigious Royal Institute for International Affairs, or Chatham House, issued a lengthy report on Iran, with a scathing critique of failed U.S. policy in Iraq, and a sober recommendation that any military option against Iran be shelved—*permanently*.

These moves signal the growing awareness on the part of such circles, that Iran must be part of any regional equation for peace. The enormous task on the agenda is to convince powers in the United States that this must be the case—a task LaRouche has taken up.

Israeli Peace Camp Pushes U.S. To Act

by Marjorie Mazel Hecht

Leaders of the Israeli peace movement have seized an opening in the aftermath of the Lebanon War to take their message for peace negotiations to the U.S. public, highlighting the urgent need for a change of U.S. policy if peace is to be achieved.

Yossi Beilin, head of the Meretz-Yachad Party and an architect of the 1993 Oslo Accords, brought his proposal for a Madrid II peace conference to the “Fresh Air” interview program on National Public Radio Aug. 23, and held a conference call with the U.S. Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace (Brit Tzedek v’Shalom) on Aug. 20. Uri Avnery, the leader of the Israeli Peace Bloc (Gush Shalom), and a longtime radical peace activist, spoke via a conference call with the Progressive Democrats of America, Aug. 18. (See *Documentation*.)

Both Beilin and Avnery made it clear that the Bush Administration is an “impediment to peace,” to use Beilin’s words. “The Bush Administration doesn’t believe in Mideast peace,” he said. Bush sees the very fact of negotiations as being a “prize” awarded to the enemy. “Israel wouldn’t have *dared*” to start the war alone. “The U.S. did everything possible to postpone a ceasefire, and wanted Israel to provoke Syria,” Avnery said.

Beilin and Avnery called on Americans, and particularly the American Jewish community, to support the peace effort. Beilin urged American Jews not to be “just a rubber stamp for Israel,” if Israel is harming itself. It’s been the same story for many years, he said, that the American Jewish community has supported the government in power without regard to that government’s policies. If you care about Israel, and understand the damage of maintaining the settlements in the West Bank and Golan Heights, he said, how can you support this government? We have a mutual role, he told the Brit Tzedek, in legitimizing the fact that you can be pro-Israel and not favor a particular Israeli government.

Traditionally, the Israeli peace movement has not had a presence in the U.S. media, including the Jewish press, which has been a faithful “rubber stamp” for whatever Israeli government is in power. But the horror and confusion of the Lebanon War has created a possibility for change. *The Forward*, a longtime Yiddish socialist paper, now a conservative Jewish weekly, had a sharp response to the new situation. Its Aug. 18 editorial, titled “Time To Change the Tune,” reported on the Beilin proposal for a Madrid II peace conference, concluding:

“Bush has been convinced by self-appointed spokesmen for Israel and the Jewish community that endless war is in Israel’s interest. He needs to hear in no uncertain terms that Israel is ready for dialogue, that the alternative—endless jihad—is unthinkable. Now is time to change the tune.”

‘A Coalition of Sanity’

What the “change in tune” entails is very simple. Beilin explained to the National Public Radio interviewer Terry Gross Aug. 23—when she asked about the present situation of “Islamic extremism” and anti-Semitism, and how it affected Israel’s security—that the task is to create a “coalition of sanity.” As Beilin said:

“I would like to reject the idea that what we have is a war of civilizations, or war of religions. I think that everywhere, and also in the Islamic world, you have extremists, you have moderate people, and you have pragmatic people. The wisdom is to create, always, the coalition of sanity, of those people who are much more moderate, much more pragmatic on both sides, and who want to live, and who want their kids to live. These are the majorities, by the way, everywhere.

“So the coalition of sanity is something which is available, and I think that the role of the peace camp is to put an end to the war situation in the inner circle so that the inner circle—meaning Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Palestinians—will not create a pretext for those who want to fight forever, that they are fighting for some kind of a just cause, like the idea of the Palestinian state, or something like that.

“And this was the idea of the late Itzhak Rabin. He wanted very much to have peace in the inner circle, before Iran is becoming a nuclear power, and before the hatred towards Israel is so big in the Arab world, that anybody who would make peace with us will be seen as a traitor. And he was right. And it is still not too late.”

The U.S. partners of the Israeli peace movement in the past have too often been American individuals who themselves hate the United States, such as Noam Chomsky. But now the opportunity demands a broader “coalition of sanity” in the United States itself, linking the Israeli peace camp with a wide range of U.S. institutional forces—including the military—who are working to overthrow the policies of the Bush-Cheney Administration with a sane alternative based on economic development for the entire Southwest Asia region.

Turning around the situation in Israel, where the neo-con operative Bibi Netanyahu is ready to relaunch the fighting, down to the last Israeli soldier, in large part depends on what the LaRouche movement and its allies can bring into play in the United States. The peace possibility does exist. As Yossi Beilin told interviewer Terry Gross:

“I’m far from being pessimistic—I’m not just an optimist who believes that the situation will be better tomorrow. I believe that it is my task to make it so.”

Documentation

Beilin: Facing the Challenge

These are excerpts from the opening remarks of Yossi Beilin, member of the Israeli Knesset (parliament), to a conference call sponsored by the Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace, Aug. 20. The transcript and an audiotape are posted at <http://btvshalom.org/resources/transcripts.shtml>, under the title “After the Ceasefire: What Comes Next?”

I believe that we find ourselves—in the beginning of the ceasefire after 33 days of the second war in Lebanon—in a very strange situation. One of the most interesting results is that it is a kind of a meeting point of weak leaders. . . . The question I am asking myself, and I am asking you, is whether in certain situations one can hope for a change just because of this weakness. Is it possible to use . . . this weakness so that decent leaders will understand that they might find a common denominator by going for something big enough, which might serve the national interest and save their political lives?

I do believe that the role of the peace camp, wherever it is—Israel, Palestine, in other places, in the United States—is to try and push for this big thing, and one of the options for such a big thing is to have a second Madrid Conference 15 years after the first one, which took place on Oct. 31, 1991. My idea is that we should push for something like this so that Syria, Lebanon, Palestinians, Israelis, and of course America, or the Quartet, will participate in such a conference, will launch bilateral talks between Israel and Syria, Israel and Lebanon, Israel and the Palestinians, and try to suggest that in a few months it could be possible to have peace treaties with our neighbors.

I must admit that right now it might seem quite detached from reality. The reality seems very gloomy when you think about Israel. . . .

So the question right now is whether the embarrassment, the confusion, the gloomy feelings, and the weakness of the leaders, might lead us, at the appropriate time, to go toward something which will attract the attention of the peoples in the region, of the peoples in the world, away from this sadness, or darkness, into a hope and into light. This is the question. . . . I don’t want to analyze exactly what went wrong. . . . I can only tell you, that had we only been wise enough to make peace with Syria and with the Palestinians and with the Lebanese when it was possible years ago, we wouldn’t have found ourselves in this situation and in war with Lebanon at the beginning of the 21st Century.

But we failed in the past, we made our mistakes, and we have to face the future and the new challenges, and ask ourselves whether it is possible now. . . .