

## Middle East Report by Robert Dreyfuss

### The plot to topple Begin

*"It will take someone with courage" to replace Israel's premier; the Anglo-American crowd now thinks they've found the man.*

The Anglo-American crowd that is committed to using the Camp David Egypt-Israel-U.S.A. accords as the basis for creating a Middle East Treaty Organization (METO) is working to oust Israeli Premier Begin and replace him with Defense Minister Ezer Weizman.

It will take "someone with courage to overthrow the government of Begin," editorialized the *Daily Telegraph*, May 5, speaking for British Tories who aim to extend NATO's military arm into the Mideast in order to gain a stranglehold over world oil supplies.

Begin's obdurate refusal to negotiate on the pivotal issue of Palestinian autonomy has blocked the finalization of the Camp David agreements. According to the calculations of London and Washington, once even a cosmetic agreement is reached on the Palestinian issue, other Arab states may be induced to come in on the talks.

The Camp David agreements have served to link the intelligence and military services of Egypt and Israel as the foundation of METO, for which Weizman has been the chief architect in Israel. The expansion of the Camp David dialogue is intended to serve as a vehicle to expand METO.

As a further step in this direction, London aims to steer Iran's Islamic fundamentalists toward an

alliance with Egypt, on the pretext of resisting Soviet expansionism." The *Baltimore Sun* today featured Egyptian President Anwar Sadat as the first "Muslim leader" to arm the Islamic Afghani insurgents to confront occupying Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

Well-placed French sources say that the terrorist raid on the Iranian Embassy in London this week was orchestrated by British intelligence to create the pretext for a thaw in Iran-British relations. British commandos stormed the embassy, freeing Iranian hostages, allegedly held by Arabs of Iranian nationality. These sources report that British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Iranian Foreign Minister Bani-Sadr were in constant touch throughout the affair. In the aftermath of the attack numerous British press sources are lauding the "great improvement" in Iran British relations.

For months Weizman and Israeli Labor Party chief Shimon Peres have openly conspired to replace the increasingly unpopular Begin. Just before a visit to Washington by Peres and Weizman last month, Weizman declared that he was prepared to leave Begin's government and possibly form a new Center Party or a coalition government with the oppositon Labor Party.

In response to this growing

challenge, Begin has provoked a crisis on the Israeli-occupied West Bank by allowing the militant Gush Emunim settlers, the religious fanatic sect that believes Israel has a biblical right to Palestine, to encroach upon Arab-owned land. Begin calculates that the crisis will enable him to rally popular support. But it is Begin's hardline policy on the West Bank, the home of the Palestinians, which his opposition is using against him.

Since the first instance of a Peres-Weizman alliance two years ago Begin has promoted a policy of using the Gush Emunim against the Arab population on the West Bank. This has led to a cycle of terror between Palestinian guerrilla groups and the Israeli military, which culminated this week in a terrorist incident in which Palestinian terrorists killed five paramilitary Gush Emunim members.

Last week, 150,000 members of the Israeli Labor Federation, the Histadrut, demonstrated against the Begin government and its Friedmanite economic policies which have led to over 100 percent inflation. The *Jerusalem Post*, speaking for Begin's opposition, attacked his government for its military ties to the Lebanese fascists, declaring that Israel and the Falange should pull out of southern Lebanon.

Outspoken senior Zionist statesman Nahum Goldmann, who has termed the Begin government a threat to world peace, recently harshly attacked the Gush Emunim cult. Following the Palestinian raid this week, 500 members of the cult called for Weizman's dismissal accusing him of not imposing strong enough punishment on the Arab West Bank population.