

## Middle East Report by Thierry Lalevée

### Israeli nationalists on the move

*Retired generals and colonels are taking up the cause of the peace camp—and they may speak for the active military as well.*

In coming weeks, Israeli citizens will be treated to the rare spectacle of retired Israeli high-ranking officers, together with scientists, touring the cities and villages to explain why Israel should negotiate a peace settlement now. They will explain the need for a withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza occupied territories, and why talks should even be held with the PLO of Yasser Arafat.

Although this message has been coming for years from "Peace Now" or dozens of other organizations, what's new is that the message will be delivered by Israel's military-industrial complex.

The sponsors of the campaign are gathered in the "Israel Council for Peace and Security," founded in April with 400 members, 100 of them high-ranking officers. Its fulcrum is the Tel Aviv Center for Strategic Studies led by Gen. Aharon Ya'ariv, formerly of Military Intelligence. It also includes General Lapidot and Gen. Motti Hod, both former Air Force Chiefs of Staff, former Mossad director Yitzhak Hofi, and Avraham Adan, a National Police Comptroller.

The Council's spokesman is Moshe Amirav, a former member of Herut, the inner core of Likud, expelled from his party earlier this year after he had met with PLO representatives in Europe. In an interview with *EIR's Middle East Insider* of June 13, Amirav stressed the Council's theme that Israel is strong enough to face peace. His colleagues have argued that Israel's military high technology—including missiles, and (though left

unsaid) Israel's possession of nuclear weapons—are better guarantees of Israel's security than control over lands.

The Council wants to be a non-political party organization. It will not campaign for the October parliamentary elections. Its creation points to a more fundamental phenomenon inside Israel. Israel's political system is in deep crisis, and the Council says that it is a "time for revolutionary thinking," which both the Labor and Likud parties reject.

Early in May, a non-extremist Jewish Orthodox representative in the Labor Party, Rabbi Hacoheh, blasted both Prime Minister Shamir (Likud) and Foreign Minister Peres (Labor) in the Knesset. Hacoheh argued that Israel's leaders should not be surprised to find out that Jews are not proud of their homeland, when they see cabinet ministers associated with the U.S.-based, shady financier Meshulam Riklis, or when they see Peres and Shamir "having international conferences organized and paid for by Edgar Bronfman, Saul Eisenberg, etc." Observers called Hacoheh's speech, which led Shamir to call him "vulgar," a typical "Israeli nationalist outburst" against the financiers who are seen as deciding national policy. It is a rebellion against Israel's establishment, which has imposed the de facto two-party system for the last 40 years.

The danger is that, with both Labor and Likud temporizing on the crisis in the occupied territories, many are led toward extremist solutions. Terrorist Meir Kahane's base has been growing steadily in recent months,

primarily recruiting from newly settled American Jews.

It was to contain that danger that the Council for Peace and Security was founded, seizing the ground otherwise dominated by the extremists—the national security issue. Several unconfirmed reports have hinted that behind the Council, made up of retired officers, is the active military leadership around Chief of Staff Dan Shomron, and Central Command (West Bank) Gen. Amiram Mitznea, who have openly clashed with the political leadership. In any case, broad strata in Israel's military-industrial complex have decided it is time to present an alternative to policies which are leading Israel into disaster.

One incentive is a nationalist awareness that unless Israel takes its own initiative now, it will become but a pawn in a superpower game. On June 3, the former cabinet spokesman of Menachem Begin, Arye Naor, long an advocate of peace negotiations, warned Israel to remember how easily Washington had dropped Taiwan to choose Beijing. Pointing to the recent spate of U.S.-Soviet negotiations, he said that unless Israel "takes its own initiative to revive the peace process now," it will become the "object of power policy by the superpowers, jointly or separately."

Neither Labor nor Likud is rising to the challenge. Shamir advocates a total rejection of any superpower-imposed solution via an international peace conference; Shimon Peres pins his hopes on the superpowers' ability to impose a solution over Israel, and the region. Both positions smack more of electoral posturing than of real policy initiatives. Hence, it is a race against time between the military-backed advocates of peace negotiations now, and the crazies who would rather set fire to the whole region than negotiate.