

ADL, no friend of Israel, peddles war

by Jeffrey Steinberg

During the first week in July, top Anti-Defamation League figure Seymour Reich traveled to Israel to confer with leaders of the Labor Party. Reich, the president of B'nai B'rith International, reportedly peddled the line that the American Zionist Lobby overwhelmingly supports the ouster of Shimon Peres as party boss and his replacement by warmonger Yitzhak Rabin. Reich reportedly told the Laborites that Likud hardliners Yitzhak Shamir and Ariel Sharon will have nothing to do with Peres, but would willingly enter into a broad coalition with a Rabin-led Labor Party. Such an arrangement, Reich lied, would "contain" the extremists within Likud.

By this intervention, the ADL has placed itself squarely in the camp of those pushing the Mideast in the direction of war.

Preparations are under way in Israel for the creation of a "national unity" war cabinet preparing a "final solution" to the Arab problem. The war plan centers around preemptively knocking out Iraq's military capabilities, wiping out the Palestine Liberation Organization's bases in southern Lebanon, and expelling Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories to the East Bank of the Jordan.

According to one source, Israel has amassed a \$25 billion war chest over the past eight years to finance this attack and has directed a large portion of those funds to building up a chemical and biological weapons capability to augment their already sizeable stockpile of nuclear bombs. Reportedly, Israel is retrofitting some of its submarine-launched intermediate- and short-range missiles to fire these chemical and biological warheads.

In early June, Rabin made a quiet trip to New York City where he met with the entire National Commission of the ADL, to line up their backing for his power play. Immediately after he returned to Israel, he pressed for an emergency meeting of the party's executive, scheduled for late in July, at which he intends to make his move.

Like the period before the Six Day War

Other developments are playing into the war climate.

Syria's President Hafez al-Assad, in meetings in Cairo with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, apparently indicated a willingness to enter into a de facto alliance with Israel. According to Egyptian sources, the terms of that deal include the return of the Golan Heights to Syria, and Israeli acceptance of Syrian absorption of Lebanon—in return for Syrian

non-intervention in the event of an Israeli strike against Iraq or Jordan.

And in a move that is certain to derail any prospects of a revival of the U.S.-PLO dialogue, in mid-July, Bush National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft refused to meet with a top Palestinian official, Khalid al-Hassan, who was carrying a proposal from Yasser Arafat for upgrading negotiations. The proposal reportedly specified how the PLO would discipline Abu Abbas, the author of a recent attempted commando attack against an Israeli beach. The Scowcroft meeting had been arranged by Saudi Ambassador Prince Bandar. The snub prompted Arafat to give an interview in which he denounced the "five appointees of Kissinger" who, he said, are steering Bush administration policy. While not naming the five, Arafat added, "Their policy is clear . . . kill the Palestinian people."

Worried tones are coming from Amman and Baghdad. On July 16, Jordan's King Hussein, in an interview with ABC News, expressed grave concern that the Mideast is careening toward war. He repeated those warnings in an interview in the *Wall Street Journal*. Hussein singled out Bush administration inaction as a contributing cause to the war climate. Senior advisers to the king report that the view in Amman is that the situation in the eastern Mediterranean is almost identical to the 1966 period of buildup to the Six Day War, in which Israel seized the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and East Jerusalem.

Iraq's President Saddam Hussein, the number-one target of any Israeli preemptive military move, is desperately attempting to line up financial backing to prepare for a feared Israeli attack. In preparation for the OPEC meeting in Geneva beginning July 25, Saddam Hussein fired belicose words at Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, which he accused of violating OPEC production quotas, driving down the price of oil on the world market.

While there has yet been no face-to-face contact between U.S. Secretary of State James Baker III and his Israeli counterpart David Levy (a scheduled meeting in mid-July in Paris was canceled), some high-level military talks have been taking place between American and Israeli officials. Gen. Colin Powell, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, spent several days touring the Mideast in early July and issued a statement from Tel Aviv declaring the talk of a war danger "exaggerated." Powell reportedly discussed accelerating U.S. plans to deliver the Patriot missile defense system to Israel, a move that would undercut Israel's justification for a preemptive strike to knock out Iraq's IRBMs and chemical weapons facilities. On July 20, Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Arens arrived in Washington, D.C. for an unplanned "courtesy visit" with Defense Secretary Richard Cheney. Arens was scheduled to go on to private meetings in New York City before flying back to Israel. The outcome of those meetings will offer an important indication whether any serious efforts are being made to reverse the war momentum.