

Barak secures U.S. support for new peace offensive

by William Jones and Dean Andromidas

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, concluding his first official visit to the United States after having trounced Likud Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in recent elections, received full support from President Clinton in his attempt to put momentum back into the Mideast peace process. After having succeeded in building his coalition government, Barak met with the key leaders in the area, Egyptian Prime Minister Hosni Mubarak, Jordanian King Abdullah II, and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

Barak wanted to send a message to the world that he was proceeding apace to put momentum back in the Mideast peace process—a process which was aborted by Netanyahu during his term of office. From the moment he came to the United States, Barak indicated that he wished to achieve the “peace of the brave” between Israel and all its neighbors, including Syria, using the phrase coined during the initial peace ceremonies between Arafat and then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. He also indicated that something *had* to happen soon. “Time is of the essence for the whole process. We cannot sit idly and wait for the whole process to be solved somehow,” Barak warned.

Optimistic declarations pervaded Barak’s tour, but the most important achievements could not be seen in public statements. Much was made of the contrast between the positive “chemistry” created between Clinton and Barak, which contrasted sharply to the atmosphere of mistrust that had prevailed during the three years of Netanyahu’s premiership, and which had led to the collapse of the peace process. Political observers are quick to say that Barak and Clinton would not repeat the mistakes made during Netanyahu’s regime.

But the real lessons to be learned, were not those of the all-too-obvious failures of the Netanyahu years, but rather the lessons of the years of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, whose spirit no doubt cast a heavy shadow over the Barak-Clinton meetings. Rabin was not merely a deceased friend and partner,

but the victim of an assassin’s bullet, whose murder in 1995 had been intended to sabotage exactly what both Barak and Clinton are now trying to accomplish. One hopes, therefore, that Clinton and Barak do not believe in “lone assassins,” and that they have learned the appropriate lessons. Some of their statements, superficial as they may be, seem to demonstrate that they have.

This was directly reflected in the structure of the visit, which was organized directly between the White House and Barak’s personal staff; the U.S. State Department and the Israeli Foreign Ministry were not involved. As a result, three private meetings with Clinton were organized, while the meetings with Vice President Al Gore, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and her “State Department team,” took a back seat to the main event.

The purpose of this was, first, to reestablish the Israeli Prime Minister’s relationship with the President of the United States. As far as the Israeli political elite is concerned, this was the biggest crime of Netanyahu, and perhaps the most important cause of his demise. In eyes of the more alarmed Israelis, Netanyahu had “thrown Clinton into the arms of Yasser Arafat.” Netanyahu managed to undermine this relationship so much that he began to be seen as a strategic threat to the Israeli state.

This is why Barak told reporters, prior to his first meeting with President Clinton on July 15, “I think that the United States can contribute to the process more as facilitator than as a kind of policeman, judge, and arbitrator at the same time. This was the tradition when Yitzhak Rabin was leading the peace process, and I deeply believe that this is the right way to have the best kind of influence and the best kind of contribution that the United States can bring into the peace process.”

After three years of Netanyahu, this relationship could only improve, and it obviously already has.



President Clinton and Prime Minister Barak speak to the press in Washington on July 15. As Barak emphasized, in the effort to achieve “the peace of the brave” between Israel and its neighbors, “time is of the essence for the whole process.”

State Department Anglophiles growl

The second purpose of the meetings was to deal with permanent bureaucracy in the U.S. State Department and security structures, which act independently of whoever might sit in the Oval Office, and are ready to throw hand grenades in the path of any motion toward a comprehensive Middle East peace settlement. According to Israeli press accounts, Barak was committed to ensure that it would be President Clinton who would dictate to his aides what U.S. policy would be—and not the other way around. These same accounts reported that both special U.S. envoy to Israel Dennis Ross and Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs Martin Indyk—not to mention Albright—were a bit upset by Barak’s attitude.

It is now well-known in political circles that the State Department, particularly Ross and Indyk, as well as the American Ambassador to Israel, had been betting on a Netanyahu victory.

As for Clinton, Israeli sources assert that he sought Barak’s help in countering the Zionist Lobby, particularly the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). These institutions are dominated by Netanyahu’s supporters. Just prior to leaving office, the latter issued orders for them to mobilize in the U.S. Congress against Clinton’s aid bill for the Palestinians. This grouping is one of the biggest challenges that Barak faces.

Another important consideration, as Barak stressed, is *time*. President Clinton has less than 18 months left in office. The possibility of George W. Bush or Al Gore as candidates for the Presidency defines the 15-month time frame that Barak announced he is following.

Barak expressed this concern when he said: “It is clear to all of us that without the United States’ participation, contribution, and without the leadership that had been shown in the past by the President, and I hope will be shown in the future by the American administration, we won’t be able to reach a peace. And I’m confident that we will find these resources and move forward toward the peace that all our peoples are waiting for.”

The meetings were structured in such a way that Barak first met Clinton at the beginning of his trip. This included a three-hour private meeting in the White House, and in the evening a private dinner between the President and Mrs. Clinton, and the Prime Minister and Mrs. Barak. This was held at Camp David, where both couples spent the night and had breakfast the next morning. A second meeting was held two days later, after Barak’s return from a trip to New York City, where he had met leaders of the Jewish community, as well as Henry Kissinger. In those intervening days, Clinton contacted Arab leaders, including Palestinian President Arafat and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, to brief them on his meeting with Barak, and to bring their responses to his final meeting with Barak.

Although the talks were kept confidential, the outlines of what can be expected over the next period are clear: There will be simultaneous motion on the so-called Syrian-Lebanon and Palestinian tracks. Both the Israelis and the Syrians are committed to reopening talks. The modalities are relatively straightforward: withdrawal from the Golan Heights and the security zone in south Lebanon, in exchange for full normalization of relations. This would be similar to the Egyptian-Israeli agreement and would require similar security measures and substantial U.S. involvement, both financially and in the realm of security.

The Palestinian question will be more challenging. The question is not whether there will be a Palestinian state, but what that state will look like in its territorial extent and its sovereign rights. While Barak initially sought changes to the Wye agreement, Arafat, Mubarak, and Jordanian King Abdullah have demanded that the agreements be implemented as signed. Barak also declared his intention not to dismantle Jewish settlements already established throughout the West Bank, which will be points of serious contention with the Palestinians.

A tragic flaw to overcome

Conspicuously absent from the Barak-Clinton discussion, is mention of the aspect which turned out to be the fundamental flaw in the implementation of the original peace agreements: economic development. The cornerstone to the 1993 Oslo Accords was the annexes on economic development, which called for developing a broad range of regional infrastructure, agriculture, and industrial development projects—

a policy which could be possible only in the context of a New Bretton Woods type of agreement, as Lyndon LaRouche has defined it. This is absolutely essential, given the collapse of the economies in the region, and the widespread poverty, which will eventually radicalize the political situation there. The best intentions of the Israeli, Arab, and U.S. leaders will not prevent a political explosion, perhaps ignited by terrorism, unless a prospect of hope is imparted to the population, through seeing a improvement in their everyday lives and a better future for their children.

The creation of an Israeli Ministry of Regional Development under Shimon Peres is a glimmer of hope, but it must have the powers, resources, and vision necessary to produce concrete results.

One very bad sign is the fact that World Bank Director James Wolfensohn arrived in Israel on July 22. He held meetings with Arafat and with Israeli officials. It was reported that in the five years since the Oslo Accords were signed, the World Bank has presented only 16 projects worth a paltry \$267 million, and not all of this money has been disbursed. Wolfensohn will also travel to Jordan, which is in effect bankrupt.

Unless motion on this track is made, then all other efforts will easily stall or be sabotaged, and war will no doubt follow.

The joint statement issued by the two leaders following their meetings on July 19 is in large part geared to help restore confidence among the Israelis in the viability of the process, by assuring that Israeli security concerns will not be sacrificed. The United States will provide funding for a third Arrow anti-missile battery to protect against any ballistic missile threat. In addition, a new Strategic Policy Planning Group, composed of senior representatives of the relevant national security entities of both countries, will develop recommendations to bolster Israel's deterrent capabilities. The United States will also initiate a closer cooperation with Israel in the area of space. The President informed Barak that an Israeli astronaut and payload of Israeli experiments will fly on a U.S. shuttle mission in the year 2000. But here, again, without serious economic development for the region as a whole, no amount of military hardware or sophisticated defense systems will guarantee peace or security.

President Clinton has promised to follow up Barak's initiative, with Secretary of State Albright assigned to go the the Middle East in August, with an eye on moving forward the negotiations with the Syrians.

Barak spent most of his last day in Washington visiting Congressmen. When asked by some Republicans if he would support Congressional moves that would that mandate that the U.S. move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, Barak said he would never oppose such a move, but made it clear to them that it would seriously imperil negotiations with the Palestinians. Such a move would throw a monkey-wrench into any further progress on so-called final status issues of the peace negotiations, one of which is the status of Jerusalem.

Senate GOP backs HMOs, defeats patients' rights

by Linda Everett

For the first time in the two years since President Clinton proposed his Patients' Bill of Rights, millions of desperate Americans who battle their health maintenance organizations (HMOs) to get medical care, hoped that they would finally be represented when the U.S. Senate took up the HMO crisis. But, when the Senate acted, on July 12-15—only because of Democrats' threats to paralyze the Senate if the Republican leadership refused to allow debate on the issue—the GOP blocked every patient protection the Democrats offered, finally killing the entire Democratic package by inserting a GOP substitute.

The Republican action outraged patients and physicians alike. Some 80-83% of Americans support every major HMO reform in the Democratic bill, sponsored by Sens. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Tom Daschle (D-N.D.), which included guaranteed access to the nearest emergency room and to specialists, and the right to sue an HMO for malpractice. Emergency room doctors in California, for example, complain that they are limited to 12 minutes of care per patient in the ER; and physicians who keep their patients in intensive care one day extra have been told by their HMOs that they themselves would have to pay for it.

The GOP's political protection of these insurance vultures is a slap in the face to thousands of people harmed or killed by HMOs' denial of care. The final GOP bill (S. 1344) would codify such barbarous HMO policies into law. How can a nation tolerate policies, which kill children with cystic fibrosis by denying them access to the appropriate specialists to perform life-saving surgery? How can hospitals survive if HMOs are allowed to steal outright, exemplified by the case of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Maryland, which has denied Maryland hospitals more than \$155 million reimbursement for HMO-approved services that the hospitals provided, which the HMO had approved? These human rights violations, outright theft, and destruction of hospital care are escalating as the global economic crisis worsens—making it all the more urgent that the “managed care system,” and the predatory free-market policies driving it, are scrapped immediately, as the LaRouche movement has urged.

The hospital system must be salvaged, kept functioning, and rebuilt to serve the nation, while the financial system undergoes economic restructuring, as per the LaRouche's proposed New Bretton Woods system. Until that occurs, pa-