
Israel

Bush networks take aim at Weizman

by Dean Andromidas

Political forces linked to George Bush have launched a destabilization of Israel in order to undermine the peace process that has been rekindled following the election of Prime Minister Ehud Barak. The destabilization has taken the form of a "payments scandal" targeting President Ezer Weizman, who has been an outspoken activist for peace with Israel's neighbors. The scandal began late last year, when journalist Yoav Yitzhak presented documents on Israeli television charging President Weizman with receiving over \$400,000 from millionaire Edouard Saroussi, between 1988 and 1993. Yitzhak claimed that the payments were illegal and constituted a form of bribery. Weizman has admitted to receiving the money, but maintains that it was a gift, which was not in violation of the law. His lawyer also disputed that the amount of money was ever \$400,000. Saroussi, who lives in France, is a long-time advocate of peace.

Nonetheless, the charges have led to calls, from both his own Labor Party and the opposition Likud, for Weizman to resign.

Weizman, who is the nephew of Israel's first President Chaim Weizmann, and a former commander of the Israeli Air Force, is known for his outspokenness, and cannot be expected to easily succumb to such an attack. Speaking on Israeli TV on Jan. 23, he said: "I do not intend to resign. I repeat, I do not intend to resign. A person with a clean conscience is not afraid and does not flee. One way is to fight for the truth and the other is to resign."

Many political observers have pointed to the fact that this scandal broke out precisely at the time that the peace talks between Syria and Israel were restarted at the end of last year. Weizman made several very strong statements in support of the talks, and underscored the necessity for their success. His statements drew bitter attacks from domestic opponents of the peace process, who howled that Weizman had "overstepped" his role as President, who, they claimed, should not comment on national policies. Weizman, as could be expected, turned a deaf ear to attacks: Well-known as a political maverick, he left the right-wing Likud almost two decades ago, because he saw the necessity for a political settlement of the Israel-Arab conflict.

The attack on Weizman also exploded into the headlines at a time when the criminal investigation of former Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (Likud) was reaching a critical phase. Netanyahu has been under the microscope for corruption and bribe-taking. On Jan. 12, a group of Likud Central Committee members organized an "Israeli forum for Benjamin Netanyahu" with the aim of having "Bibi" run again for prime minister in the next elections. Likud Knesset (parliament) members admitted that he could only run "if" he is not indicted on corruption charges. Netanyahu is said to be pleased with the initiative, but, coyly, has not yet made any commitment.

Observers are expressing fear that Israel is falling victim to the same "Clean Hands"-type political corruption witch-hunts that destroyed Italy and now now plague Germany and France.

Enter the Nimrodís

The allegations against Weizman, including a police investigation, have been reported throughout the international press. But, not reported outside of Israel, is the fact that police have opened another investigation on whether Ya'akov Nimrodi, a player in George Bush's guns-for-drugs-for-hostages Iran-Contra operation, may have been involved in illegally obtaining documents from Weizman's attorney's office, which set off the payments scandal in the first place. The police launched their new probe into Nimrodi's actions following revelations in the daily *Ha'aretz*, that Ya'akov Nimrodi and his son Ofer were behind the scandal. (*EIR* covered the other criminal investigations against the pair in its Dec. 17, 1999 issue.)

Ya'akov Nimrodi is a former Mossad agent, one of Israel's most notorious arms dealers, and played a key role in the Iran-Contra operations run by George Bush from the Vice President's office. Son Ofer Nimrodi is currently in prison awaiting trial for conspiracy to commit murder, obstruction of justice, and bribery and corruption. The case is a model of how a private intelligence apparatus could extend its tentacles into the highest levels of Israel's security and criminal justice apparatus.

The obvious implication of the *Ha'aretz* revelations is that the Nimrodís were leading a major effort to destabilize the Barak government, an operation that would destroy the entire peace process. There are two Nimrodi connections into the destabilization operation: First, Yoav Yitzhak is a correspondent for the daily *Ma'ariv*, owned by the Nimrodís.

Second, it has been confirmed by the appropriate authorities that the Nimrodís met with Weizman last August at his private residence in Caesarea, supposedly to ask the President to officially pardon Ofer Nimrodi, who had been convicted and sentenced to prison for illegal wire tapping in 1995. Weizman refused. The discussion became heated, and, according to friends of the President, the Nimrodís told Weizman they would "liquidate" him. Furthermore, the ongoing criminal investigation against Ofer Nimrodi is also looking into whether Nimrodi was blackmailing Weizman. Not only

did Nimrodi intend to go after Weizman, but he was also preparing dossiers on other senior government officials. Also in August, Ofer Nimrodi met with Prime Minister Barak, in his effort to get a pardon. Barak, too, turned him down.

The evidence that Yitzhak is brandishing against Weizman, is so detailed and confidential, that it could have only been stolen directly from the offices of President Weizman's attorney, Hanina Brandes. She managed a series of trust funds, in which the Saroussi money was held on Weizman's behalf. Brandes has accused a former employee, Avi Flexer, of having stolen the documents shortly before he left her law firm. The police have subsequently put Flexer under arrest, and are investigating the charges of theft, as well as his possible links to the Nimrod's.

Unfortunately, outside of *Ha'aretz* and the police, no other major dailies are seriously pursuing the Nimrodi angle, even while the scandal is starting to hit other leaders, just as *Ha'aretz* had warned.

Vendetta against Shimon Peres

On Jan. 20, Yoav Yitzhak appeared on Israel's Channel 1 television, charging that Minister for Regional Cooperation Shimon Peres, one of the architects of the 1993 Oslo Accords, politically benefitted from other payments linked to Weizman back in 1984. Yitzhak alleges that, in 1984, one David Blass gave \$3.4 million to Rami Unger, who was a former business partner of Weizman's. According to Yitzhak, the payment was in return for a promise by Weizman not to join a Labor-Likud national unity government then being negotiated. Yitzhak continues that the true beneficiary of this maneuver was Shimon Peres, who then became prime minister in the national unity government. It was then, that Peres, as prime minister, put the gears into motion for a peace process, although the initiatives were not successful.

Although Yitzhak makes no suggestion that Peres accepted money, his allegations cast the impression that the peace advocates are animated by corruption.

These charges, too, bear the paw-prints of Ya'akov Nimrodi. As Prime Minister in 1984, Peres replaced Nimrodi as the main liaison to the United States for the covert sale of weapons to Iran; some say it was because Peres simply did not trust Nimrodi. The man whom Peres chose to replace Nimrodi was Amiram Nir. In 1986, when the Iran-Contra scandal broke in the U.S. press, Vice President George Bush met with Nir in a Jerusalem hotel, and demanded that Nir take the blame for the illegal operations. Reportedly, Nir refused. We will never know: In 1988, shortly after George Bush was elected U.S. President, Nir died in a plane crash in Mexico. It has been alleged—but never proven—that Nimrodi arranged the crash on Bush's behalf.

Moreover, the man whom Ofer Nimrodi has been charged with conspiring to murder, is one Arnon Mozes, the owner and chief editor of *Yediot Aharonot*, Israel's largest daily. Arnon Mozes is Amiram Nir's brother-in-law.

Conference Report

Peaceful unification of China, Taiwan on agenda

by Leni Rubinstein

As part of the ongoing serious work among Chinese compatriots toward a peaceful reunification of mainland China and Taiwan, about 120 scholars from Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and mainland China, as well as some international guests, participated in a three-day conference in Zhuhai, China on Dec. 26-29, 1999.

The conference, organized by the Institute of Sino Strategic Studies, was the fifth in a series, and very similar in tone, content, and seriousness to the conference that took place last July in Hong Kong on the "Peaceful Reunification of the People's Republic of China." The theme was twofold: to celebrate the return of Macao to China, and for peaceful reunification. The location, the city of Zhuhai, which very fittingly means "the pearl at the sea," just across from Macao, formed a perfect setting for good work.

Indeed, *EIR*'s representative at this conference found the most striking aspect to be this commitment to work, and a genuine effort from the participants to contribute with ideas, and to find solutions toward a peaceful reunification, as witnessed in the many discussions, and in the more than 100 papers presented covering a broad range of political, economic, and cultural aspects in regard to reunification.

This atmosphere of seriousness was sharply accentuated by the nasty, and potentially very dangerous developments in Taiwan just prior to the conference. Independent candidate James Soong, the only candidate who upholds the Sun Yat-sen tradition in Taiwan, had just stopped petitioning to be put on the ballot for the Presidential election that is to take place on March 18, due to a dirty smear campaign led by Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui. Rumors abounded that Soong was going to drop out of the campaign altogether. (For more background, see Lyndon LaRouche, "Puppet Emperor Lee Teng-hui," *EIR*, Jan. 21.)

Foreign intervention a reason for problems

To open the way toward a peaceful reunification between mainland China and Taiwan, Chinese leader the late Deng Xiaoping formulated the principle of "one country, two systems," but Hong Kong and Macao have rejoined China first. Many speakers emphasized that both Hong Kong and Macao clearly were controlled by foreign interests, and that this also is the case regarding Taiwan, which represents the key obsta-