

Lies, fraud surround Bush-Rabin meeting

by Joseph Brewda

The U.S. relationship to Israel is characterized by “trust, warmth, and a commitment to meeting common challenges. This is strategic cooperation at its very best.” So gushed President George Bush following his meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin at Bush’s summer home at Kennebunkport, Maine on Aug. 11. It was their first meeting since Rabin’s Labor Party edged out former Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir’s Likud bloc in national elections in June.

Bush declared that he would “enthusiastically” recommend that Congress grant the Jewish state \$100 billion in loan guarantees that he had held up last spring, supposedly over Israel’s illegal settlement construction in the Occupied Territories.

A key election issue

The Israeli election results had largely been determined by the suspension of the loan, and the related threat that the United States would not continue to underwrite the bankrupt Israeli economy. Rabin, whose ties to Washington have always been central to his political career, made much of that threat in his campaign. Soon after the Labor Party assumed power in Israel in July, Rabin claimed that he was freezing the previous government’s construction program.

That, as we shall show, is an outright lie.

Bush also claimed that he had been persuaded by Rabin that his government is determined to make the Middle East peace negotiations, which are set to resume in Washington on Aug. 24, succeed.

“I call upon Arab parties to respond in kind,” Bush said. “The time has come to make peace, not simply talk of it.” What concessions the Arabs are supposed to make this time, he did not specify.

For his part, Rabin thanked the United States for channeling Soviet Jews to Israel (although many would have preferred to emigrate to the United States), while chiding Washington for not doing enough for the Bosnians now being slaughtered by the Serbs. In an odd twist of logic, Rabin told the Israeli press on the eve of his U.S. trip that the Serbian atrocities vindicate Israel’s policy of doing whatever is necessary to “defend itself” against its adversaries. He did not compare Serbia’s “ethnic cleansing” policy and expulsion of Bosnians to Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians.

Settlements continue

Contrary to Israeli and U.S. claims, there is no Jewish settlement freeze at all, except in name. The Rabin government is currently undertaking the biggest building spree in Israeli history.

First of all, the Rabin government has announced that any housing construction begun by the previous government, even if it only scratched the soil, will be completed, and is not considered to fall under the freeze. That involves at least 9,500 new homes for Jewish settlers. There are currently some 100,000 Jews living on the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem), as a result of a colonization program which began around 1973. The new homes under construction will house at least 50,000 more Jews, according to Israeli estimates.

All that Rabin’s so-called freeze has changed is that another 5,000 homes that had been planned by the previous regime will be canceled, at least for now.

Further, Israel claims that East Jerusalem, which it seized in 1967, is forever part of “Greater Israel.” It claims to have “legally” annexed it, and therefore does not consider it to be occupied. Even the U.S. government does not agree to this annexation, and officially considers East Jerusalem to be occupied territory. But it now turns out that Rabin’s pledge to cancel new housing in the Occupied Territories does not in any way include East Jerusalem.

According to data of the Israeli Construction and Housing Ministry, Israel is now constructing 7,000 housing units in East Jerusalem and its suburbs. An additional 10,000 units in these areas are planned.

In a typical fraud, the previous Israeli government under Prime Minister Shamir had tripled the size of the municipal jurisdiction of the city of Jerusalem, in a series of administrative reorganizations. The Shamir government said—and this claim is entirely honored by Rabin—that this expanded urban area is also part of Israel and not part of the occupied West Bank.

This new municipal area has not been expanded uniformly, but rather extended in such a way as to link up with already existing or planned Jewish settlements on the West Bank. Soon these settlements will be legally classified as Jerusalem suburbs—or will be so, *de facto*.

According to the Housing Ministry, if the current rate of construction is sustained (that is, the rate under Rabin), East Jerusalem will have a Jewish majority in three years. Already, approximately 120,000 Jews, over 30% of Jerusalem’s total Jewish population, live there.

As it is, because of this policy, Arabs now constitute only 55% of East Jerusalem’s population. From 1967 until the end of 1990, the Israelis built 72,000 housing units in East Jerusalem, of which only 12% went to Arabs. Some 60,000 new Russian Jewish immigrants are now slated to be housed there. Meanwhile, the Israeli government is doing everything possible to drive the Arabs—both Christian and Muslim—out of the city.