

## Primakov Issues Book On Mideast Prospects

*Vladimir B. Isakov, the vice president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation, who works directly under the president of the Chamber of Commerce, Yevgeni M. Primakov, former Prime Minister of Russia, sent this contribution to the Berlin conference. Dr. Isakov regretted that he would be travelling during the conference, but conveyed his best wishes for its success, and submitted the text of this statement, which was delivered by Primakov on Sept. 4 in Moscow at a press conference to launch his book, Confidential: The Middle East in the Spotlight, and Behind the Scenes. The translation was done by EIR, and subheads have been added.*

*For Lyndon LaRouche's comment on Primakov's thesis, as the latter was summarized at the Berlin meeting, see last week's EIR.*

This book is about one of the main aspects of what I have experienced in my life. I have been dealing with the Middle East for over half a century, as a journalist, a scholar, and a politician. As Yesenin wrote, "What we cannot see, face to face/ Big things are seen from a distance." The book reflects this, to a certain degree. This is not only because certain documents, which were previously not generally accessible, have been published here for the first time. For the first time in many years, I opened my diaries, some of which have yel-



DoD/R.D. Ward

*Yevgeni Primakov. In his press conference statement, relayed to the Berlin meeting by his associate V.B. Isakov, Primakov called for an international conference to work out a peace settlement plan for Israel and the Palestinians.*

lowed pages, and read them over again. The book includes a reconsideration of certain events, certain processes.

Naturally, the book will be criticized. In any event, for one thing, there are many established notions, with which it does not coincide. At the same time, however, it does not share nihilistic evaluations of everything from Soviet times. I have tried to write an objective book.

Now it goes before the court of the readers, as they say. . . .

### Two Nationalisms

I would like to take the opportunity of our meeting today, to share with you some thoughts about problems, related to a settlement of the Middle East conflict—a chronic, bloody, and dangerous conflict, which touches the interests of practically the entire world community, in one way or another. This conflict is not, and I would like to emphasize this, either religious or social in character; whether or not we recognize the fact, it is a clash between two nationalisms. So, is it possible to reach a settlement of this conflict?

Henry Kissinger, who is one of the most experienced and intelligent politicians of the 20th Century, concluded that regional conflicts are more susceptible of being settled, when they are in a "hot phase." In principle, I agree with this way of posing the question, although, of course, that does not mean that conflicts ought to be "heated up," in order to settle them. I am grateful to Kissinger for writing the preface to my book, *The World After September 11 and the Invasion of Iraq*, which was published in English in the U.S.A., but my opinion of him as an analyst is by no means predetermined by the fact that he wrote it, nor by some assumption that I would share all of his approaches to the Middle East and related matters.

But, let us turn to the facts.

**The 1967 war.** After it ended, efforts to achieve a settlement failed. Israel did not want to vacate the occupied territories for anything. And the Arab leaders, motivated by their



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*Vladimir Isakov (center), vice president of Russia's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, conveyed his greetings to the Berlin conference.*

emotions, gave thumbs down to the Latin American UN General Assembly resolution, which would have linked Israeli force withdrawals to the positions of June 4, 1967, with an end to the state of war with Israel. This position of refusing to negotiate with Israel was also affirmed at the Arab summit in Khartoum. And yet some chances of finding a pathway to a settlement did exist. The Arab position evolved somewhat, in which the influence of the U.S.S.R. played a role. That is borne out by the fact that, after the Khartoum meeting, the main Arab countries agreed to UN Security Council Resolution 242. But the U.S.A. made no steps towards a settlement. The Soviet Union also failed to take advantage of the situation. During [Soviet Prime Minister] Alexei Nikolayevich Kosygin's meeting with President Johnson in the U.S.A., the Americans threw out the idea that they might be interested in Soviet help in getting out of the "Vietnam dead end." Kosygin could have tied this in to a coordination of the positions of the two superpowers on a Middle East settlement. But the Cold War was under way; and, in addition, the U.S.S.R.'s head of government lacked the authority to act in this way. Overall, his meeting with Johnson was viewed as an interim event, of little significance. The established practice in that period was that all real summits had to involve Brezhnev. I write about this in my book.

**The 1973 war.** The Geneva Conference was convened, after it ended. It would seem that the situation was now more favorable for a settlement. The first phase of that war had stunned Israel. Not even their eventual military victory could erase the true state of affairs, which had been revealed to the Israelis: that the Arab countries were beginning to draw even

with Israel, militarily. But the pathway to peace was blocked, because the U.S.A. departed from the line that led towards a comprehensive settlement, emphasizing rather the preparations for a separate agreement between Israel and Egypt.

What is happening in the Middle East today is also a real war, which Israel is waging on three fronts: in Lebanon, Gaza, and the West Bank. It can be said that the conflict has "heated up" again, bringing out certain realities, which ought to be used in order to achieve a settlement.

### **The Realities Today**

**First reality.** Events have shown that Israel cannot achieve its objectives militarily. The agreement to exchange the seized Israeli soldiers, for Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners in Israeli prisons, is quite telling in this regard. Israel's efforts to defend its citizens should be given their due, but they had wanted to obtain the soldiers' release by using force on a large scale, and it didn't work.

**Second reality.** Events have shown that it is impossible for Israel to establish its borders unilaterally, without negotiations. That was Sharon's goal, and it has been Olmert's. The annexation of the occupied territories is also precluded, as an alternative to that unilateral approach to the establishment of borders, because then Israel would cease to be a Jewish state, since the Arab part of the population would, with time, become larger than the rest of the population.

**Third reality.** Events have shown that it is impossible for Israel to ensure its security, without an overall settlement of the conflict. That means the necessity of moving forward not only on the Palestinian track, but also, and most importantly,

on the Syrian. After the failed attempt to reopen the wounds in the internal Lebanese situation, it has become even clearer than before, that there must be negotiations with Syria on returning the Golan Heights. It is good that even a member of the Israeli government is talking aloud about this. That has never happened before.

**Fourth reality.** Unless the Middle East conflict is settled, it will become more dangerous, taking into account the Iran factor, not only for its immediate participants, but also for the main players in the international arena, including the U.S.A.

**Fifth reality.** It can be presumed that the United States, and not for the above-cited reason alone, will be more interested in a Middle East settlement; and such a settlement is practically impossible, without the United States. Despite the upcoming elections, which do, of course, reduce Washington's room for action to influence Israel towards compromise, there is such an interest, based on the fact that the U.S.A. has gotten bogged down in Iraq, and is rapidly losing its authority in the Arab world. A settlement of the Middle East conflict could compensate for many U.S. losses in the Middle East.

**Sixth reality.** In the multipolar world that is taking shape, Europe, China, India, and some others, which are clearly inclined to favor a Middle East settlement, are acquiring ever greater possibilities for influencing the world situation.

Lastly, I do not see any insurmountable obstacles to finding solutions for the problems that would represent the basis of a settlement.

**Borders.** They could be defined, including through a certain adjustment of the cease-fire lines, and even some small territorial exchanges.

**Refugees.** The right of return does not mean that they all will want to return. A majority may prefer financial compensation, which will enable them, finally, to stop living in the Palestinian camps, and to settle either in the Palestinian state, or in some other Arab country. Incidentally, my book mentions that Gamal Abdel Nasser, already, wrote to Israeli Prime Minister Sharett about such compensation, in one of his secret letters. The topic of separating the right of return, in principle, from the mechanism—including compensation—was discussed fairly recently during informal talks between former Israeli minister [Yossi] Beilin and member of the PLO leadership Yasser Abd Rabbo. The conversation partners agreed.

**Jerusalem.** We should remember, at the very least, that none other than American President Clinton, in his settlement plan, proposed the division of Jerusalem into two parts: an Israeli and a Palestinian.

Of course, these are all difficult problems. Nonetheless, I still advocate, first, that the Quartet [Russia, United States, European Union, United Nations], bringing in other participants, work out a compromise settlement plan; and, secondly,

demand that it be accepted by the parties to the conflict. After all, we have the precedents that Israel came into existence, and Palestine was partitioned, not as the result of Jewish-Arab negotiations. The convocation of an international conference, with the active participation of Russia, the U.S.A., Europe, and the UN, could be a way to implement the ideas I have indicated. . . .