

that it cannot count on support forever if it appears to be the rejectionist in the peace process.»² Lerner was speaking at a conference in New York, organized by *Tikkun* and attended by over 2,000 American Jews from 37 states. Lerner added that programs will be held in every Jewish community in the US, in order to set up an alternative voice to the traditional leadership.

THE TROIKA AND EUROPE

As for Europe, a flurry of activities have been taking place lately, most importantly, those of the troika which is composed of the foreign minister of Greece, Karlois Papoulis, France's Roland Dumas and Spain's Francisco Ordonez, who were delegated to visit the Arab countries and Israeli prior to their January 27th meeting with PLO Chairman Arafat in Madrid. Ordonez, the representative of Spain which assumed the presidency of the EEC as of January 1st, met with Shamir in Israel on behalf of the 12 European countries, but with no positive results. Likewise, Dumas arrived in Israel and met both Shamir and Arens. Dumas called for mutual recognition and for Israeli leaders to compromise and reciprocate the Palestinian peace initiative.

Shamir reacted by accusing the European community of having a «love affair» with the PLO; as far as he was concerned, the PLO peace initiative «in no way disguises the satanic plots and intentions of these people.» He added, «We are currently witness to the entire western world as they worship the flag of the people who hate Israel.»³

The EEC representatives said repeatedly that they had no peace initiative of their own and that their mission was aimed at breaking the deadlock. The EEC endorses the concept of an international peace conference under UN auspices with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council, as well as all concerned parties, including the PLO. European Parliament Speaker Plum said the EEC wanted improved conditions for the Palestinians, and reminded the Israelis that the EEC had to apply sanctions against

Israel until it allowed direct exports of Palestinian citrus from Gaza.

Britain's deputy foreign secretary, William Waldegrave, met with PLO representative, Bassam Abu Sharif, in London, and later with Arafat in Tunis. On his return he was praised by Prime Minister Thatcher and other government officials who defended him after he called Shamir a «reformed terrorist,» which created an uproar in Israel.

The Scandinavian countries have also joined in the search for peace in the Middle East. Arafat visited Sweden and Finland on invitation, and held talks with Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg in Tunis, not to mention the role played by Sweden as an intermediary between the US and the PLO.

THE SOVIET PEACE INITIATIVE

In line with the Soviet Union's global peace offensive, Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze visited the Middle East, a tour which took him to Damascus, Cairo, Amman, Baghdad and Tehran. It was the first such visit by a Soviet foreign minister since 1975. Shevardnadze's visit, like that of the troika, was aimed at pushing the UN Security Council to convene an international peace conference with the participation of all parties to the conflict, including the PLO. He suggested that the five permanent members of the Security Council assume the role of a preparatory committee to coordinate between the different parties and facilitate the convening of the peace conference, with the time limit for the preparatory phase not to exceed nine months.

Upon his arrival in Damascus, Shevardnadze said, «It is our profound conviction that favorable prerequisites are now in place for movement towards convening an international conference.»⁴ He outlined three necessary steps for setting the stage for peace. The first is the role of the Security Council, and he suggested that the foreign ministers of the member states of the council meet and discuss the issue. The second step is the forma-

tion of a preparatory committee from the five permanent members of the Security Council, to be in contact with the parties involved in the conflict. The third is the role of the UN and its Secretary General.

Shevardnadze complained that although the Security Council, the General Assembly and the European countries all support the convening of an international conference, Israel still rejects this.

On February 22nd, Shevardnadze flew to Cairo where he held separate meetings with Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Arens and PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat. He told Arens that peace in the Middle East cannot be realized without a sincere effort on the part of Israel. According to the Israeli newspaper, *Maariv*, February 22nd, Arens told Shevardnadze, «We will reject any proposed solution if it includes the PLO.»

Afterwards, Shevardnadze met with Arafat. At a news conference after the meeting, Arafat said that he was satisfied with the position and support of the Soviet Union.

TACTICS OR CONCESSIONS?

Although the US-PLO dialogue is a positive step, it has unfortunately led the PLO leadership to give unnecessary concessions, such as offering the US intelligence services «important» information, expressing willingness to conduct direct negotiations with Israeli officials, and the proposition to form an economic union between Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine, etc.

These concessions are contrary to the PNC's decisions, and detract from the main goals of the present phase, which are continuing the intifada and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. As such, they create confusion among the Palestinian and Arab masses, and impact negatively on Palestinian national unity which is of utmost importance at this crucial juncture. Such concessions could be harmful to the intifada which is the real reason for the US decision to open the dialogue with the PLO in the first place.