

ing Israeli policy thinking. The most distinct elements in the new regional situation are: united Arab concern about the consequences of Soviet Jewish immigration; the democratization in Jordan, which opens new channels for support to the intifada; and the stated intention of Saddam Hussein to fight fire with fire in the case Iraq would be attacked by Israel. This is not exactly an unreasonable expectation on the Iraqi president's part in view of the 1981 Israeli air strike on the Iraqi nuclear plant (whereby, incidentally, Begin ensured his 1981 reelection). Israel has often sought to overcome its own crises by launching a spectacular first strike or even a major war (1967).

Only recently, Israeli chief-of-staff Shomron said that quick strikes remain among Israel's options. Speaking at a reunion of soldiers who participated in the 1976 raid on Entebbe airport, which he led, Shomron said: «...the IDF can do it again even today ...maybe even better,» citing improved equipment (Associated Press, May 10th). After a Palestinian naval attack on Israel a few weeks later, Israeli leaders spoke of hitting Libya that was accused of supporting the attack logistically.

Saddam Hussein's vow to inflict major damage on Israel if attacked spurred an expected Zionist media campaign trying to resurrect the image of «poor little» Israel beleaguered by the Arabs - the very image that Israel itself smashed by sustained brutality against the unarmed masses of the intifada. But although Israeli officials and strategists took the Iraqi «threat» seriously, few seemed to think Iraq would really attack. According to Deputy Chief of General Staff Ehud Barak, Saddam Hussein «will think twice and more before using chemical weapons against Israel's home front. He has good reasons to do so, and he knows these reasons better than most Israeli citizens» (*Jerusalem Post International*, April 21st).

Writing in *Jerusalem Post International*, April 14th, Harry J. Lipkin wrote that the Iraqi president's «saber-rattling» could even be a prelude to «peace,» noting that Egypt, as the strongest Arab state, had been the first

to make peace with Israel. It is noteworthy that Lipkin is a member of the Department of Nuclear Physics at the Weizmann Institute - the cradle of Israel's nuclear bomb. In the last analysis, this is why Israeli leaders can take the new Iraqi militancy with relative calm, for it is Israel that has the undisputed edge in the balance of terror in the Middle East.

Israeli experts have set about thinking how to turn the new Iraqi militancy to their own advantage. They are reshuffling the cards in the Israeli «security» doctrine in a new effort to divert from the Palestinian intifada and the PLO's peace initiative, using strategic arguments to augment Shamir's simple obstinacy. Typical of this trend is Dore Gold, director of the US Foreign and Defense Policy Project at Tel Aviv University's Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies. Writing in *Jerusalem Post International*, April 14th, he chides the US for having focused on the Cairo dialogue (with the Palestinians) rather than on the part of the Shamir plan that addresses the Arab states. Gold's argument goes as follows: «Should Iraq eventually replace Syria as the primary threat to Israel, such a development could have an enormous impact on the peace process. The greater readiness of many in Israel to make territorial concessions in Judea and Samaria (sic) but not on the Golan Heights has been partly a function of the perception of a more immediate threat in the north and a more remote threat to the east. Jordan's increasing security dependence on Iraq, combined with the latter's recent declaration of intentions, will require a revision of the calculations of the risks Israel faces on its eastern front. Certainly Israel's early warning stations looking eastward from the hill-tops of Judea and Samaria, as well as its air defense deployments there, will become more critical. Defensive positions against Iraqi ground forces that could cross Jordan in 48 hours will become more salient. Israel's strategic flexibility in negotiations over the territories could be altered.»

The *Jerusalem Post* editorialized in a similar vein on «The lessons of Iraq,» saying that: «The priorities of the peace process must be re-exa-

mined... without such progress (in curbing the Middle East arms race and moving towards accommodation between Israel, Iraq and Syria), concessions to the Palestinians would be at best futile.»

On Israeli television, then Foreign Minister Arens said, «I think that something is perhaps understood today that was not understood before Saddam Hussein spoke, that the Palestinian part of the Arab-Israeli conflict is only one of the parts and not the most important one...» Brigadier General Nachman Shai, army spokesman, echoed the same thought, saying: «...the argument is not now on the West Bank... You cannot settle the Nablus riots (sic) and be happy...» (Associated Press, May 3rd).

A parallel thrust is using the «Iraqi danger» as rationale for continued US military and economic aid when, for the first time in history, serious questions have been put concerning the amount of this aid by influential congressional representatives. Israeli military personnel have spoken of the need for buying US Patriot missiles, which were previously considered too expensive, until the Arrow missile system is completed. This merges with the discussion among Israeli strategists about how to fit their interests into the post-Cold War situation. Ostensibly, the new US-Soviet relations removed part of the rationale for massive aid to the Zionist state. On the other hand, the Bush Administration's list of possible forthcoming foreign arms sales totals \$30 billion - almost half of which could go to the Middle East. Many of the US tanks now in western Europe are being sold to Egypt. Israeli experts are concerned about the possibility of increased arms sales to Arab countries, and will surely seek yet more aid to maintain their strategic edge in the new situation.

Back into the future Renewed settlement drive

With the opportunities presented by massive Soviet Jewish immigration, Shamir's caretaker government had already been attempting a return to the settlement drive of the late 70s-early 80s, aiming to ensure the Zionist

