

national peace conference, and just wait for the Israelis and the PLO to get together, if they want to.

But such benign passivity bears no relation to the actual pace of events. During a secluded seminar which was held at the end of November near Moscow by the Soviet foreign policy think tank IMEMO, a selected group of Soviet, American, and Israeli diplomats gathered to discuss the world's regional conflicts. The Americans and Soviets reportedly agreed that the key to the Middle East is not a solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, but, according to Israeli diplomat Gideon Raphael, to ensure a "de-stratification" (sic) of the conflict: "Let them stew in their juice and kill each other," as long as this does not threaten world peace. According to Raphael, the idea is that the Middle East conflict should be lowered from a strategic conflict to the level of the Sudanese or Sir Lankan ethnic riots—an endless and unsolvable crisis, which, however, does not involve either of the superpowers directly.

The Soviet-Israeli connection

A key step toward that goal, is for the Soviets to establish with Israel the same kind of relations it has with the Arab countries. Intelligence sources report that this is close to being achieved, since the orchestrated hijacking that took place in the Soviet Union on Dec. 1. Four people seized a busload of Soviet schoolchildren and their teachers in the Caucasus, then demanded and were given a Russian military transport plane, on which they flew to Israel. The four were seized by Israeli authorities at the Tel Aviv Airport and returned to the U.S.S.R. The Israeli daily *Haaretz* commented, "The hijacked Soviet plane fell like a gift from heaven on the stagnant diplomatic channel between Moscow and Jerusalem."

Most analysts believe that the hijacking was an elaborated diplomatic exercise whose aim was to justify Moscow's establishing of diplomatic relations with Israel. Not by chance, it followed a secret visit by Avraham Tamir, director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, to Moscow on Nov. 27. The visit was denounced by Israeli officials who claimed that they were "unaware" of it. Yet, they cannot claim that they were unaware of the fact that the Soviets had quietly allowed the Israeli consular delegation in Moscow to be upgraded, with Arieh Levin, an Israeli diplomat with the rank of ambassador, replacing Consul Gordon Meron in mid-November. And who could protest when seeing Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze congratulating "Ambassador" Arieh Levin for the cooperation between the two countries?

The Soviet-Israeli rapprochement may take some months still, and the Bush administration seems set on a timetable of doing nothing before February or March. The diplomatic ploys bear little relation to reality, as King Hussein pointed out. How long can a region filled with medium-range and even long-range missiles, equipped with nuclear or chemical warheads, be "de-stratified" and put on the back burner?

Burmese 'undesirable' tours Europe, Asia

by Our Special Correspondent

During October, Brang Seng, the leader of the guerrilla army known as the "Amiable Assassins" and head of the Kachin Independence Organization in Burma, made a remarkable, extended international tour, ending up in Europe. Brang, as Britain's *Observer* noted Oct. 30, is one of "the most wanted men in Burma," and for years was on the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service's "undesirables" list as a drug-runner, insurgent, and associate of communists.

EIR reported from Bangkok Sept. 30 that the Kachin minority group, unlike the much larger, strictly no-drugs Karen insurgents, controls 5-10% of Burmese opium production and also deals in jade and gold.

Brang himself purports to be a leader of the Burmese opposition to the military government, and during August of this year, called on resistance fighters united in the National Democratic Front to join in a nationwide military offensive against the armed forces.

On this tour—run in Europe, at least, by Amnesty International and a circle of "Burma hands"—Brang met with representatives of the governments of Japan, Pakistan, Italy, West Germany, Great Britain, and the Vatican. There was no official sponsor of the tour outside of the Kachins themselves, several sources said. He apparently "has lots of money," as one source said, "because, after all, they are at war, and these people always waste all kinds of money."

According to a source in Great Britain, Brang met with "prominent people" in Tokyo, including representatives of the Socialist Party, and government officials, some from the Foreign Ministry. In Pakistan, he met with Gen. Nawad Khan, and the leadership of the Muslim League and the Seven-Party Alliance of Afghan Mujahideen.

Those who organized it say that his tour of Europe was equally impressive. But there were very different accounts from a number of the West German government officials who encountered Brang, ranging from denials that he actually met with many of the people his friends claimed he did, to charges of outright fraud over the trick Brang used to put pressure on West German Chancellor Kohl to support the opposition in Burma. One source in the office of the West German national security adviser said that an important feature of Brang's operation is to "pretend that he has met half the government and half the opposition."

According to one intimate of Brang in Europe, the Kachin leader gave a press conference in Italy on "human rights issues" with Margherita Boniver, who is the international

secretary of the Italian Socialist Party and was deputy chairman of the Italian Senate's Foreign Relations Committee. Boniver has been president of the Italian branch of Amnesty International since 1976, and is a senior Italian member of David Rockefeller's Trilateral Commission.

Brang's visit to the Vatican was not quite so impressive, however. He did visit the office of Cardinal Casaroli, the Vatican secretary of state, but only in his capacity as a Christian, and not as a representative of the Kachins or the opposition.

The "Burma hands" in Britain and West Germany are a tight little group, all well acquainted with the *Far Eastern Economic Review's* Burma man, Bertil Lintner. Chief among Brang's friends apparently is one Martin Smith, a "free-lance journalist" who was at Brang's side during his visit to Britain. Brang's current trip was three to four years in preparation, and he was so widely received because there has been, according to Smith, a "change in perception" among European governments, of the Burmese opposition and of the Kachins, especially on the drug-running issue. Whereas he was officially regarded as a drug-runner, now he has become acceptable to meet with, as the international campaign against the "military government in Burma" has made the opposition movements more and more fashionable.

However, Smith complained that the new Burmese government is far more "on-the-ball" than the old one, and is much more interested in foreign opinion, as is notable in the government's attempts to crack down on the British Broadcasting Company for its coverage of events in Burma.

The latest incident in the government's campaign against the BBC was the arrest of a lawyer, Nay Min, in Rangoon on charges of sending "false news and rumors" to the BBC, the *Observer* reported Nov. 27. A member of the Burmese State Law and Order Restoration Committee recently stated that if it had not been for the BBC, students need not have died during the disturbances this summer. The BBC, the official claimed, had so destabilized the country that the army had to move in.

Genscher's role, and an embarrassment for Kohl

Smith considered Brang's trip to West Germany especially important, for one reason: Germany was the first European Community country to freeze aid to Burma, back in August. Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, citing "human rights" issues, had ordered the freeze.

The EC, Smith stated, would make the next move. It was after the meeting of EC foreign ministers on Nov. 4 that Great Britain also finally agreed to freeze aid, one Bonn source said. In the German case, the ban will now effectively end many aid programs that had only been frozen, the source added, because most aid programs are re-negotiated every October; some have already been phased out, although some technical programs are continuing.

However, although Brang met representatives of all parties in the West German Bundestag, a spokesman at Social Democratic headquarters denied that he had met former Chancellor Willy Brandt or anyone at Brandt's office. He added that Brang's activity in Bonn appeared to be under the wing of Amnesty International.

Although Brang met with National Security Adviser Horst Teltschik, there were no published accounts of the nature or results of the meeting, according to Teltschik's office. But, the spokesman said, there was a "very nasty, and very unpleasant" incident as Brang attempted to claim Chancellor Kohl's support. Brang gave a press conference in Bonn, where he read a letter from the Chancellor outlining future German policy to Burma, making all aid contingent upon economic reform, improvements in human rights, and steps by Rangoon to find a peaceful solution to the civil war, being fought against the Burmese opposition and against the minorities which now control some 25% of Burmese territory.

But Brang Seng had no right to even have this letter, and certainly not to make it public. It was an entirely private reply to a letter to Kohl from a German church official asking what Germany could do to foster democracy in Burma. How he got his hands on it is not known, the spokesman said, and his use of the letter was tantamount to fraud. Brang himself later denied he had claimed that the letter was addressed to him.

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