

the government. There is some discrepancy on the issue of whether we should agree to a free trade zone with the Palestinian autonomy, but I think on this issue we can come to a successful conclusion. Otherwise, Histadrut also has close links with the trade unions in the territories, and we had some meetings with the representatives of the Palestinian trade union leaders in Tunisia.

EIR: Is cooperation between Histadrut trade unions and the territories growing?

Nathanson: Yes, I would say it is growing; contacts are growing, and it is a very positive development on this issue. And it is also very important for us that within the territories, a proper trade union movement is developed capable of organizing the workers and dealing with labor market conditions. The trade unions are not yet well organized. They have a leadership, they have a framework, but we cannot say that there is a general federation of trade unions in the territories. They would like to build one, and they are of course working very hard, and they have a legitimate and effective leadership, also in other sectors, such as professional unions for doctors and lawyers and so forth. But they have to build up an organization, an umbrella organization, and be recognized by the Palestinian autonomy as a proper trade union movement, and negotiate and make policies and collective agreements.

EIR: There has been discussion of opening up the Israeli market to Palestinian goods, particularly agricultural products, as well as to allow numbers of Palestinian workers to work in Israel. What is your view on this?

Nathanson: The size of the Palestinian economy is about 4% of the Israeli economy in terms of GNP. Workers earn one-tenth of the income in terms of GNP per capita, as do Israeli workers. So even if we have very open economic relations with the Palestinians, which could do some harm to the Israeli economy, it would be very little compared to the advantages that Israel would have in the economic potentials of peace, such as an end to the Arab boycott, more foreign investment, more infrastructure, better access to energy sources. The advantages are enormous compared to the very little damage that an open economic relationship with the autonomy would have.

And the Palestinians would need this openness to develop their own economy and avoid building up a fortress autonomy system simply as a demonstration of national aspiration. If we could develop a system where each economy could concentrate its comparative advantages, we all will profit from it. We also have to consider that they have to provide 100,000 working places by the end of the century. That is why I believe Israel will have to supply 100,000 work places in the short term. In the longer term, I hope they will provide enough working places and it would not be necessary to work in Israel. So this is more or less my approach.

Interview: Raffaele Tiscar

Embargo against Iraq is not justified

Italian Christian Democratic parliamentarian Raffaele Tiscar was interviewed by telephone by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach shortly after his return from a fact-finding trip to Iraq.

EIR: Mr. Tiscar, with whom did you travel to Iraq?

Tiscar: It was an official Interparliamentary Group led by the Honorable Cresco, president of the Parliamentary Sub-commission on the Middle East.

EIR: Did you meet government representatives in Baghdad?

Tiscar: We met the vice president, the prime minister, the minister of foreign affairs, Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, the health minister, the minister of trade, and various prefects of the provinces of the south. We did a tour of the region of Basra. We went to visit the area where there was a problem reported with the Shiites.

EIR: What was the overall aim of your visit?

Tiscar: The aim was to see with our own eyes the consequences of the embargo. We, as Italian parliamentarians but also as representatives of the Interparliamentary Group, went with the idea of reestablishing diplomatic ties and also to promote an initiative in the Italian Parliament to convince the government to become the promoter of a dissuasive action vis-à-vis the embargo. The results [of the embargo] we were able to see were not those initially expected, because, with the excuse of blocking the supply of even spare parts, in reality, human lives are being placed in jeopardy, because a lot of medical equipment does not arrive. Since it is impossible due to the lack of spare parts to repair pumps of hydroelectric plants, there is no electricity in the hospitals. There are no spare parts for hospital equipment.

EIR: Recent press reports have noted that even the middle and upper classes are being affected.

Tiscar: I can confirm their difficulties, and add the important fact that the most seriously affected are the weakest layers, i.e., the aged. Despite rationing of food and basic commodities, the situation is becoming dramatic, especially for the ill, the children, and the elderly. Infant mortality has been multiplied 20 times over last year's levels. So the

situation is tragic, even more tragic for those in rural areas far from the cities.

EIR: Did you visit hospitals?

Tiscar: Yes. The dramatic statistics we received refer to material not officially covered by the sanctions. There aren't even syringes and needles for blood transfusions, items which should be allowed in through trade despite the sanctions. Keep in mind, since Iraq is forbidden to sell oil, it cannot acquire the foreign exchange to purchase such goods.

EIR: How do the politicians with whom you met view the continuation, even intensification of the embargo?

Tiscar: They are convinced, and I don't think they are wrong, that the U.N. Security Council is heavily influenced by the United States because the countries in the Security Council, if taken one by one, would agree to a softening of the sanctions, because the conditions no longer exist to maintain the embargo; also the reports by the U.N. envoys regarding weapons factories and nuclear and chemical plants have stated that Iraq has complied with the Security Council demands.

EIR: The British press has been fuelling the campaign for Shiite sanctuaries in the south, allegedly to protect the people living there. You were in that region. What did you see?

Tiscar: We were on an official delegation, so I cannot say that what we say corresponds 100% to reality. But we saw no police deployment comparable to what would be required if there were a problem keeping the peace. Iran, just ten days prior to our visit, had claimed that chemical experiments had been carried out in the southern marshes region. Certainly, it must be taken into consideration that creating a pro-Iranian situation inside Iraq could help the United States to weaken Saddam Hussein further. The fact of the matter is, the United States did not succeed in fragmenting the credibility of Saddam in the country; it seems to me that he has enhanced his power inside Iraq as a result of the U.S. and U.N. actions.

EIR: Then the rumors of coups d'état and opposition mobilizations have no basis?

Tiscar: No, none at all.

EIR: What about the reports in the British press of suffering of the marsh Arabs allegedly caused by the Iraqi Third River project and other reclamation efforts?

Tiscar: Since there are documents showing that Iraq has complied with the U.N. resolutions which were behind the embargo, in my view, they are trying now to reopen the Shiite file. That's it. It is only a pretext to continue with the embargo.

EIR: Iraq still represents potentially the industrial power-

house of the region, whose capacities one would think should be utilized if one really wanted peace in the region. Did you talk to the Iraqis about this?

Tiscar: We talked most of all about precisely this, also because Iraq and Italy have various trade relations. There is no doubt that Iraq has the role of industrial leader in the region, which interests us enormously. We presented our view, that if you want to build peace, you have to overcome the embargo, facilitate trade and the exchange of productive know-how, in order to improve the lot of those in difficulties. Iraq certainly has a greater potential than all of its Middle Eastern partners put together. So this risks undermining relations even for the future, i.e., we're risking further deterioration of the situation, increasing reciprocal hatred—just the opposite of what should be sought.

EIR: Did you talk to the Iraqis about the Israel-PLO agreement? What was their view?

Tiscar: Their official position, which they stated to us repeatedly, was that they cannot but look with favor on a climate of global détente, so they are for the peace accord, even though it does not affect them immediately. On the other hand, we understood that they are trying to establish direct relations with Israel. Just as they led us to understand that they already have unofficial relations with Britain and France. France has sent someone there to head up an interests section. Furthermore, from a Jordanian source, we learned that the border with Iran best lends itself to trade in goods—naturally illegal trade—which benefits especially the British and French. This represents a shift from the previous state of affairs, when the border with Jordan was the most heavily used. This has been reduced in favor of Iran's border.

EIR: Did you learn anything during your visit about the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro (BNL) scandal?

Tiscar: The foreign minister spoke about documents showing that neither Iraq nor Italy were responsible for the Atlanta BNL scandal, because it was an operation desired by, thought up by, and executed by the Americans.

EIR: It's time such documents were published.

Tiscar: They are looking for a beach-head in the West. I believe that, despite the embargo, diplomatic activity is quite intensive.

EIR: Is there any possibility that the Italian government might do something to lift the embargo?

Tiscar: The chances are slim, because the current foreign minister is the most pro-American that Italy has ever had. Nonetheless, I think that the Parliament is very sensitive particularly to the human suffering that has been caused by the unjustified application of the embargo. There is no justification for continuing the sanctions, which are contrary to the desire for peace in the world.