

Israel's Sharon Still Calculating on War

by Dean Andromidas

EIR's report of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plans to go to full-scale war to destroy the Palestinian Authority, using Hamas terrorism as his tool, was posted on the *EIR* website, larouchepub.com, on July 10, and was subsequently covered in press reports internationally. Despite that exposure, the march to war continues as of this writing, and only its timing is in doubt. Our sources reported that Sharon counted on being able to manipulate the Bush Administration's support for war, to justify a U.S. defense buildup.

Although the countries of the European Union have certainly not given Sharon a green light for war, and have stepped up their criticism, they have not yet been able to put a stop to Sharon's plans. The Bush Administration still refuses to take active measures. Sharon therefore still has a "yellow light" to continue his "slow invasion" tactics against the Palestinian Authority. Furthermore, the White House still continues the insane policy of leaving the decision up to Sharon, on when the so-called cease-fire has taken hold, and when the Mitchell Commission peace plan can begin to be implemented. This, despite the fact that the world knows that Sharon has no intention of ever implementing the Mitchell plan.

On the evening July 17, Israeli military forces reinforced the occupied West Bank, moving a full armored brigade within striking distance of the northern West Bank city of Jenin, and another full armored brigade to the Israeli settlement of Gush Etzion, within striking distance of the West Bank city of Bethlehem. These heavily armored units, reinforced with regiments of infantry, represent the advance guard of an operation that would divide the West Bank into three sectors, as soon as the orders to attack are given.

Ahmed Abdel-Rahman, aide to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, declared that Israel's goal was to attack the Authority: "These huge numbers of military units, tanks, and heavy artillery have only one goal, which is to attack the Palestinian National Authority . . . pushing the fragile situation to the edge of explosion."

According to Israeli press reports, the deployment was not simply to intimidate the Palestinians, but also to send a clear message to the European Union, the United States, and those set to meet at the Group of Eight summit in Genoa, that Sharon is prepared to go to war.

Israeli intelligence sources have told *EIR* that Sharon may not have launched his invasion yet, but he is actually wreaking, slowly and methodically, over a longer period of time, the same damage he could inflict in a *blitzkrieg* assault. This includes attacks on Palestinian Authority political infrastructure, assassinations, house demolitions, and tightening the blockades of towns and cities, all of which are intensifying day by day.

As long as the United States and Europe do not step in and implement the Mitchell peace plan, this process will continue into an early, generalized war, disastrous for Israel, and for Palestinian and Arab targets, alike.

Temple Mount Fanatics Mobilize

The trigger may be Israeli right-wing extremists, rather than Hamas. Lyndon LaRouche has warned that the assassination of Sharon himself cannot be ruled out, turning him into a martyr that would bring to power the most extremist Israeli factions. This possibility should not be lightly dismissed. Sharon continues to operate within the confines of his national unity government between his Likud party and the Labor Party. The latter is not yet prepared to back a full-scale war, especially without the full backing of the United States. This has defined a very uneasy consensus to continue the "slow war" approach. Until Sharon makes the decision to break the coalition consensus, he will continue to come under increasing pressure from his fanatic allies, hence making his elimination another danger that cannot be ruled out.

In the last weeks, the fanatics have launched a major operation to bring the explosive issue of Jerusalem and the al-Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount back into the center the current conflict. Unreported in the press outside of Israel is the July 18 decision of the Rabbinical Council of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza—i.e., the West Bank and Gaza—to lift the ban on allowing religious Jews to enter the al-Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount. This organization comprises the most radical rabbis representing the settlers in the Occupied Territories, and the Temple Mount fanatics who want to destroy the Islamic holy sites on the al-Haram al-Sharif and build the "Third Temple of King Solomon." These madmen could touch off the religious war throughout the region that has been feared since the beginning of this conflict.

On Nov. 3, 2000, *EIR* published a report ("Who Is Sparking a Religious War in the Middle East?"), exposing this movement as being backed by powerful Anglo-American political forces. These super-chauvinist religious Zionists work closely with U.S.-based Christian fundamentalists typified in the Bush Administration by Attorney General John Ashcroft.

The rabbis are expected to meet with the Yesha Council of Jewish Settlements, which represents the settlers in the West Bank and Gaza, to organize mass trips to the Temple Mount around the July 29 religious holiday. Their call is noth-



Ariel Sharon: His assassination could unleash a nuclear conflagration.

ing less than a call to arms to ignite a new Middle East war. The Temple Mount has been closed to all Jews by the Israeli government since Sharon, then in the parliamentary opposition, made his “march on the Mount” one Friday last September, touching off riots outside the Al Aqsa Mosque there, and sparking the current Intifada. The call also violates a ruling by the majority of Orthodox rabbis, that forbids religious Jews from visiting the Temple Mount, lest they accidentally tread on areas of the temple, such as the holy of holies, which were reserved for the priests. So far, continued obedience to that ruling has helped prevent catastrophe.

It is not hard to imagine what will occur if hundreds of radical religious Zionists start marching toward the entrances of the al-Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount when thousands of Muslims are at afternoon services.

The rabbis’ call was, no doubt, arranged with the cooperation of Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert, and Police and Security Minister Uzi Landau, who are hankering to put Jerusalem at the center of political attention. Both have started a campaign claiming that the Muslim religious authorities are damaging “archeological evidence” through their renovation work, as a provocation to try to undermine the Muslim authorities’ responsibility for the holy site. Jerusalem Mayor Olmert maintains direct ties to the Temple Mount Faithful, one of the most radical groups linked to the above rabbinical council. He has helped them occupy houses in Jerusalem’s Old City and in East Jerusalem. Olmert is also close to Irving Moscowitz, the California-based gambling king, who is the Temple Mount Faithful’s chief fi-

nancier. Olmert has started a campaign to demolish every illegally built house in Palestinian East Jerusalem. (Most post-1967 Palestinian housing has been built without permits, because the Israeli city administration refuses to issue them.) Already, 25 houses have been demolished, leaving hundreds of people homeless.

Arab Leaders Denounce ‘Rogue Government’

In another provocation, Police and Security Minister Landau, on July 17, almost provoked a riot by refusing to allow a scheduled memorial ser-

vice for Palestinian leader Faisal Husseini, who died suddenly in May. At the last minute, Landau issued an order forbidding 5,000 mourners, including many Israelis, from attending. When the ceremony was nonetheless held at Orient House, the Palestinian representative’s office in Jerusalem, Landau deployed hundreds of police to surround and block the streets leading there. The ceremony did take place, but with only a few hundred in attendance. It was only thanks to the better judgment of the Palestinians that no outbursts occurred.

Sharon’s march to war has drawn the harshest response yet seen from the Arab nations, where the mass of public opinion supports the Palestinian cause. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, in a press interview, denounced, “With Sharon, there is no solution. . . . [He] knows only murder, aggression, and war. By his nature, he cannot accept peace, and frankly, I don’t believe there is any hope with Sharon and his gang, which includes extremists.” Mubarak urged the United States to intervene into the “explosive situation.”

The final communiqué of the Arab League’s meeting of foreign ministers on July 18, included a statement denouncing Israel as a “rogue state.” The communiqué declared, “Israeli policies and practices, including assassinations, kidnappings, house demolitions, land destruction, and settlements make Israel a rogue government acting outside international law.” Amr Moussa, former Egyptian Foreign Minister and the League’s secretary general, went further: “Israeli policy aims at imposing facts on the ground and imposing an Israeli peace with Israeli conditions.” He, too, characterized Israel as a “rogue state.”