

deploying tanks a few dozen meters from Arafat's main office, while he was in it. In a speech on Dec. 3, Sharon announced "war" against Arafat and the Palestinian Authority, and later rammed a resolution through the Knesset (parliament) declaring the Palestinian Authority to be a "terrorist-sponsoring" entity, a legalistic term to justify the "Taliban treatment."

When asked if Israel planned to oust him, Arafat told the press, "Not only me — me and the Palestinian Authority."

A senior Israeli military source, in comments to *EIR*, put it just as strongly. "Sharon has decided that Arafat is not relevant for the process, that Arafat is no partner. Sharon is systematically attacking all of Arafat's symbols," the source said. "Sharon did not even give him two days to round up terrorists." Asked if Sharon will kill Arafat, he replied, "He doesn't have to, since he is embarrassing him, making it impossible for him to move and refusing to deal with him."

The source warned that Sharon and his generals are making all the decisions and not telling even the senior ministers of their plans. Even Foreign Minister Shimon Peres is being kept in the dark. Although this is "normal" in the Israeli system, this source has never seen operational modes as extreme as they are now. He warned that such behavior is presenting a great danger.

A similar view was expressed by General Gazit in the Dec. 4 *Jerusalem Post*. "The main message of Sharon's short speech was a declaration of war on Arafat and the Palestinian Authority. While he refrained from openly declaring Arafat to be an enemy . . . his message was clear: Arafat is responsible for all that has happened and is happening," Gazit wrote. After the attacks on Gaza Airport, Gazit said, "there is no chance that Arafat will work against the terrorists, arrest their members and leaders, or work seriously toward a cease-fire. The recent actions by the IDF were meant to hurt Arafat symbolically, to damage his standing in the eyes of his people. One thing is clear: Only a Palestinian collaborator would work to suppress terror after the insulting blows that Arafat and the PA have incurred."

Pointing to the parallel between the current situation and Sharon's role in launching the 1982 Lebanon War, Israeli commentator Gideon Samet wrote in *Ha'aretz* on Dec. 5, that the decision to declare the Palestinian Authority a terrorist entity, "which the U.S. has refused to do, . . . looks like the start of a new [Operation] Pines plan, albeit a different version than the one Sharon concocted for Lebanon in 1982. But it's not unfamiliar. Sharon is pushing for the de-legitimization of Arafat and his demise. Just as back then — but now as prime minister . . . Sharon is surging ahead." Samet warned that "Sharon is now trying to complete the political work that he didn't manage militarily 20 years ago."

There is great concern in Israel and the United States, that another Sharon-inspired atrocity, along the lines of the massacre of Palestinian refugees in the Sabra and Chatila

camps in Lebanon, will again bury any chance for peace.

The additional danger now, is that there is even less opposition to Sharon's insane plans than in 1982. A senior leader of the Israeli peace movement warned, "Sharon has always thought he made two mistakes in 1982. The first was that in 1982 he did not have enough popular support for launching the war. The second was that the government coalition of Menachem Begin was too narrow. Now he thinks he has overcome both those mistakes."

Despite the international diplomatic mobilization, the situation remains grave. Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher El Sayed was dispatched to Israel on Dec. 6, to deliver a warning from Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak not to harm Arafat. But on his return to Egypt, Foreign Minister Maher said that his mission had failed.

A moment of truth has arrived. U.S. 2004 Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche warned in a statement published on June 23, that "Israel would now lose a new Middle East war." No one inside Israel is capable of coming forward to stop Sharon. Only the United States, in concert with Europe, Russia in particular, can stop him. Will they act?

## The Other Crimes Of Ariel Sharon

by Dean Andromidas

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon stands accused of being one of the worst war criminals of the last half-century for his role as Defense Minister in the massacre of thousands of Palestinian refugees during the 1982 Lebanese War. But even if the Belgian court — where 23 Palestinians have filed charges of war crimes against Sharon — were to convict him tomorrow, he would still be Prime Minister of Israel and free to drag the Middle East into another war. Yet, there are still other crimes for which Sharon stands accused in Israel — corruption, bribery, and electoral fraud — which, although not as bloody as those before the Belgian court, if pursued with vigor, are enough to put him in jail.

This possibility was raised on Dec. 2 in the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, which reported that a secret tape is believed to exist of a 1997 meeting between then-Infrastructure Minister Sharon, and Rem Viakirev, the chief executive of the giant Russian gas company Gazprom. If such tapes were to become public, they would revive an earlier investigation into bribery charges against Sharon. That investigation was completed by the Israeli police in 1999; their report recommended that Sharon be indicted for bribing a witness. At the time, the accusation ended Sharon's bid for leadership of the Likud

party and the Prime Ministership of Israel. But, Sharon was saved politically by Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein, who rejected the police recommendation. This is the same Attorney General who twice overruled police recommendations in respect to criminal investigations against Sharon's Likud rival, former Prime Minister Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu.

### 'Operation Pines'

This case goes back to an earlier attempt by Sharon to rewrite history, in order to cover up his bloody role in the 1982 Lebanon War. In 1997, Sharon sued *Ha'aretz* for libel, for accusing him of conspiring with the Israeli military high command in 1982 to mislead Prime Minister Menachem Begin and the Israeli cabinet, concerning "Operation Pines," which Sharon claimed would be a limited military-security operation along the Israeli-Lebanon border; it ended up becoming the full-scale invasion of Lebanon. Some even say that Sharon's true intention was to eventually march on to Damascus, Syria, and even on to the oil fields of the Persian Gulf. In this Lebanon War, Sharon now stands accused of ordering the massacre of thousands of Palestinian refugees in the Sabra and Chatila refugee camps outside Beirut.

In its defense, *Ha'aretz* asked Maj. Gen. Avigdor Ben-Gal (ret.) to testify. Ben-Gal was asked simply to repeat what he had said in a lecture at Tel Aviv University in 1987. In that lecture, Ben-Gal, who had been a senior commander in 1982, had revealed the existence during the Lebanon War, of a "secret, unapproved plan of the Defense Minister [Sharon] and the Chief of Staff." But, when Ben-Gal took the stand in 1997, he totally reversed himself, saying that his Tel Aviv University remarks were all a lie that he had made up because he was angry at Sharon at the time.

Then, in 1999, evidence came to light that, just prior to his testimony, Ben-Gal had been taken on an all-expenses-paid junket to Moscow accompanied by then-Infrastructure Minister Sharon. The junket was paid for by shadowy Russian tycoon Vladimir Gusinsky. Since Ben-Gal was a director at both Israel Aircraft Industries, and the engineering consultancy Tahal, the trip was seen as Sharon bribing Ben-Gal to change his testimony.

The 1999 police investigation into these allegations of yet another corruption case, plagued the government of Netanyahu, and helped to bring it down.

The court ruled in *Ha'aretz*' favor in the 1997 libel action.

Now, writes *Ha'aretz*, "According to new information received by police, senior Russian sources told their Israeli business partners they had heard that the conversations between Sharon and [Gazprom's] Viakirev had been recorded and could pose a problem for Sharon if publicized." They also write that such a recording "could be used by Russian intelligence agencies or Russian organized crime to blackmail the prime minister."

Although the police say that these new allegations are not

sufficient to reopen the case, nonetheless, if the tapes fall into their hands, they will be obliged to reopen the investigation.

### Election Law Violations

Sharon is currently under criminal investigation for breaking the election financing law. An investigation was completed earlier this year by State Comptroller Eliezer Goldberg, into the 1999 funding of Sharon's campaign for the chairmanship of the Likud party. Contrary to the law that forbids foreign political donations, Sharon's campaign was financed entirely from abroad. The money, close to \$3 million, was funnelled through a fictitious company called Annex Research. The directors of the company were four residents of the United States, whose names have not been released. Nonetheless, Goldberg determined that the company was controlled by Sharon's son Omri, and its chief executive was an Israeli businessman, Gabriel Manor. The company was allegedly formed with the help of Dov Weissglass, who was Sharon's lawyer in the 1997 *Ha'aretz* libel case, and is currently Sharon's lawyer in the war crimes case in Belgium.

According to press reports, under questioning by Goldberg, Sharon denied that he had anything to do with the funding arrangements for his campaign. He was immediately exposed as a liar, when Goldberg confronted him with the copy of a check with his signature on it, for 100,000 Israeli shekels. Known for his nerves of steel, Sharon did not flinch. "Yes, that's my signature," he conceded, adding, "On all matters concerning the finances, you have to ask my son, Omri."

According to Goldberg, Omri Sharon and Annex Research's Gabriel Manor "declined to answer my questions because they were concerned about self-incrimination. They chose to remain silent." Goldberg also said that Omri Sharon refused to answer questions "to avoid harming others."

Goldberg presented his report to the Attorney General's office, and, on Oct. 1, State Attorney Edna Arbel recommended that a criminal investigation be conducted. The final decision awaits the approval of Attorney General Rubinstein.

In the meantime, Sharon has announced that he has returned the money to the donors, reportedly by taking out a commercial loan using his Negev ranch as collateral.

It is still not known who the foreign donors were. Nonetheless, it is well known that Sharon's financial benefactors include the same financiers of the most fanatical right-wing groups in Israel, the settlers movement, and the Temple Mount madmen, who want to destroy the Islamic holy sites on Jerusalem's Al-Haram Al-Sharif, and to rebuild Solomon's Temple. The most important of these financiers, is the so-called "Mega Group," which includes such billionaires as Charles and Edgar Bronfman, of the Canadian whiskey empire; Max Fisher, the moneybags of the Republican Party, who amassed a fortune as bagman for the "Purple Gang" which smuggled Bronfman's Canadian whiskey into the United States during Prohibition; and hedge-fund king Michael Steinhart.