

Sharon's 'Hallelujah Chorus' Shouts For Mideast War

by William Jones

Like clockwork, as President George W. Bush sat down with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in the Oval Office on May 7, a suicide bomber blew himself and 15 other people up in Rishon Letzion, near Tel Aviv, causing Sharon—as he did his last meeting with Bush—to cut his visit short.

The bombing did not, however, come as a surprise. An hour before Sharon's arrival at the White House, one reporter waiting in the briefing room asked aloud, "I wonder when the bombs will go off." Indeed, such attacks are expected accompaniment for Sharon whenever he comes to the White House to discuss his peculiar idea of "peace" in the Middle East.

Credit for the bombing was taken by Hamas, an organization which was literally created by Sharon and his circles as a counterpole to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat. While the events leading to this particular suicide-bomber's act may never be fully revealed, with regard to *cui bono*—i.e., "in whose interest" the bombing occurred—the explosion got Sharon off the hook of a difficult encounter with President Bush, and allowed him to again don the mantle of "avenging angel" in order to recast "facts on the ground" in the West Bank in accordance with his own gameplan.

While Bush announced that he will be sending Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet to the region to help "reform" the Palestinian security apparatus, and put into place elements of security cooperation between the Palestinians and the Israelis which had been rent asunder by Sharon's attacks on Palestinian towns, after the suicide bombing it was no longer clear when such a visit might occur.

At his press conference shortly thereafter, Sharon blamed Arafat for the bombing, warning, "He who rises up to kill us, we will pre-empt it and kill him first." Sharon made clear that he had not informed the White House how he would respond to the bombing on his return to Israel. But it's his actions will be aimed at forestalling any measures proposed by the White House to re-start talks with the Palestinians.

On May 3, Secretary of State Colin Powell, in an address to the pro-Zionist Anti-Defamation League (ADL) of B'nai B'rith, announced that the administration wants to get some form of negotiations back on track and to bring the region back from the abyss. Sharon's actions are propelling it there.



President Bush with a large problem, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, on May 7 at White House. Sharon, with factional help in the Administration, Congress, and from Hamas bombers, was trying to overturn what remains of U.S. Mideast policy of the past two decades.

“Last week I met with United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, Foreign Minister [Josep] Pique of Spain, High Representative [Javier] Solana of the European Union, and Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov,” Powell said. “Our ‘Quartet,’ as we call ourselves . . . committed itself to working for the realization of the vision . . . of the Middle East offered by President Bush on April 4, a Middle East where two states, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace and security with an internationally recognized border.”

The strategy consists of three elements, Powell indicated: creating a secure environment, delivering immediate humanitarian and economic aid to relieve the suffering inflicted on the Palestinians, and initiation of political dialogue. Rather than sequencing the elements, a futile operation in which Phase I is never concluded, they would occur simultaneously. “All three elements need to be integrated: security, a political way forward, and humanitarian and economic activity,” Powell said. “It is crucial that the parties in the region end the violence; it is also crucial that they each have hope, both economic hope and political hope.”

The Targeting of Arafat

Despite Sharon’s efforts, the Bush Administration was not prepared to accept Sharon’s demands that Arafat be eliminated as a counterparty to the peace efforts. Under questioning by reporters after the meeting, a senior administration official

said simply, “Look, we are not going to try to choose leadership for the Palestinian people. What we will do . . . is to speak out about the responsibilities of any leader or anyone who purports to be the leader of a people to do certain things to bring about peace.”

The administration did adopt Sharon’s rhetoric about how the Palestinian Authority must be “reformed,” and it set the goal of the new Tenet mission as that of assisting in the “reform” of the security apparatus. But Sharon’s goal is radically different: to reestablish total Israeli sovereignty over the Palestinian territories, annexing the “Biblical patrimony” of Judaea and Samaria, the names Sharon continues to use to refer to the West Bank. With the bombing incidents as pretext, Sharon is attempting to win time for his friends in the United States to force the administration to accept his “final solution to the Palestinian question.”

Sharon and his U.S. “Christian” fundamentalist allies are pulling out all the stops to change the situation on the ground in order to force the Bush Administration to accept his “final solution.” Although the U.S. and Israeli media portray the White House as putting pressure on Sharon, the situation is just the reverse. Sharon has been intent on mobilizing the Zionist lobby and his “hallelujah chorus” in the Christian fundamentalist churches, to force President Bush to back away from dealing with Arafat and to allow the expulsion of the Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza.

The 'Fifth Column'

Prior to Sharon's arrival, conferences in Washington were creating a crescendo of support for Sharon. From the meeting of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in late April, to the ADL National Leadership Convention on May 5-7, there has been a steady drumbeat labelling Arafat as a terrorist and urging Congress to pressure President Bush to allow Sharon to deal with the Palestinians in his own way.

Sharon addressed Abe Foxman's ADL minions on May 6, accepting their Distinguished Statesman Award. "We need you now more than ever," Sharon said. He defiantly took pride in his refusal to allow outside monitors to investigate the numerous allegations of Israeli Defense Forces' atrocities against the Palestinian camp at Jenin, and called the accusations a "blood libel." He also indicated that the Bush Administration, under pressure from the Clash of Civilizations perpetual-war clique around Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle, had supported his efforts to defy the UN, which wanted to send observers to the area.

Sharon defiantly refused to respond to the war crimes accusations against him personally, involving a lawsuit in Belgium, and, possibly, the International Court of Justice at The Hague. "No one in the world has the right to bring the state of Israel to court," Sharon said.

Sharon's visit had two immediate goals: painting Arafat as a terrorist and smearing European nations as anti-Semitic. The attack on Europe is egregious, given the role that they would play in Powell's efforts to fundamentally recast the Middle East situation.

Resolutions regarding Arafat and the Palestinian Authority have already passed the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. One particularly vicious resolution, which praised Israeli efforts to reclaim Judaea and Samaria, authored by House Whip Tom DeLay (R-Tex.), the born-again Christian poster-boy of the AIPAC conference, and Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), the perennial favorite for all Zionist causes, passed by an overwhelming majority. It condemns Arafat for collusion with terrorists and expresses solidarity with Israel in the steps it may take against the Palestinian Authority. "We must support Israel as they dismantle the Palestinian leadership that fosters violence and hate," DeLay said. "Arafat and his Authority have been an impediment to peace and a threat to the emergence of moderate Palestinian voices. During four decades of terrorism, Yasser Arafat has proven his total contempt for human life." DeLay told a CNN talk-show interviewer he supports the "transfer" of the Palestinian population out of the West Bank and Gaza.

While the White House, knowing that such a resolution would strengthen Sharon's hand, asked DeLay to wait on submitting his resolution, the introduction of a similar resolution of solidarity with Israel, authored by Sen. Joe Lieber-

man, prompted DeLay to proceed. Both resolutions were passed by overwhelming majorities.

Targeting Europe as 'Anti-Semitic'

The ADL's Foxman has patched up any past differences he may have had with Sharon, and is now giving him full backing to drum up support in the Congress, and in the United States more broadly, for Sharon's war drive. Foxman is wielding his "anti-Semitism" bludgeon against any individual or nation not jumping on the Sharon bandwagon. For example, the ADL played an integral role during the 1980s in working with the FBI to target U.S. statesman and Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche as an "anti-Semite." LaRouche had caught the wrath of the ADL by his 1975 proposals for peace in the Middle East, based on the launching of major irrigation and desalination projects and other infrastructural projects in the area.

At the ADL National Leadership Conference on May 3, Foxman said, "Anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism. . . . If a country is critical only of Israel's actions, this is anti-Semitism. If Belgium continues in its attempt to bring the Israeli Prime Minister to trial for [his 1982] war crimes, this is anti-Semitism. . . . If the Portuguese poet Laureate compares the situation in Ramallah to Auschwitz, this shows he doesn't know what Auschwitz really was, and this is anti-Semitic."

While much rhetoric flowed during these conferences about the Arab-Israeli conflict, the real aim of this confrontation goes far beyond the Middle East, with a Mideast war serving simply as the spark that could set off the Huntington-Brzezinski Clash of Civilizations, a perspective of which Foxman is clearly aware. "I don't agree with the President of the United States when he says that this is not a religious war," Foxman said. "There is a religious element in it. Call it political Islam or radical Islam. And where are the alleged voices of moderate Islam? The suicide-bombers of the Tanzim wrap themselves in God. They are awarded by the secular Iraq as well as by the religious Saudi Arabia. My father told me, 'Watch out for God's cossacks.' Well, we have been watching very closely . . . at the growing incidents of anti-Semitic attacks. We will soon share with the American people the results of our findings." Foxman said that the ADL will release an "anti-Semitism" exposé, aimed at discrediting European involvement in the Mideast peace process. Sharon told the ADL, "We must fight a new fight against the new anti-Semitism in Europe and elsewhere."

While the Bush Administration fiddles with its plans for a regional conference, the brainwashed minions of AIPAC, the ADL, and their Christian fundamentalist fellow-travellers are hitting the streets with their attacks on the "new anti-Semitism," vigorously backed by that fifth column of fundamentalists in the U.S. Congress and the Wolfowitz "Utopians" at the Pentagon who are eager for an imperial Clash of Civilizations with the Muslim world.