

EIR Special Report

Will Israel find the moral fitness to survive?

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In bringing about the ouster of Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, Israel's state commission of inquiry may have blocked the imminent outbreak of a new Middle East war. It also may have provided the margin for Israeli nationalists to head off the continued moral dissolution of their nation.

Authoritative sources in Israel and Europe have indicated that the commission of inquiry, operating on the basis of intelligence provided by the Israeli army and the United States, as well as by a number of services including *Executive Intelligence Review*, issued its findings several days earlier than expected in order to preempt a planned strike by Sharon, possibly against Pakistan's nuclear facilities. Sharon was also known to be pressing for a "little war" with Syria, and was circulating a secret Mossad report on the "merits" of waging war with Egypt.

In calling for Sharon's removal from office on the grounds that he bore "personal responsibility" for last September's bloody massacre of Palestinians in Beirut, the commission of inquiry has potentially broken the grip that Khomeini-style "political messianism" has had on Israel in recent years.

Whatever confusion Israelis may feel over whether or not the war in Lebanon was justified, what was clear to the commission of inquiry and what is clear to many Israelis is that Sharon, in allowing for the senseless slaughter of humanity in Beirut, went too far, and that his transgressions were transgressions against the basic tenets of morality that Israel, since its inception, has claimed to uphold.

The commission of inquiry's findings and Sharon's subsequent dismissal may close the book on the Beirut massacre. They do not, however, resolve the question, "Whither Israel?"

"I am very glad that Sharon is getting his due for what he did in Lebanon," commented one Israeli journalist. "But when my foreign friends congratulate me for the commission of inquiry's decision, I tell them that there is nothing to celebrate. It is a sad day, really, when your country's top ministers and military leaders are indicted for murder, even when you are convinced, as I am, of their guilt."

As leading Israelis know, Sharon's crimes go beyond murder. "Sharon should



Uzi Keren

Peace Now demonstration near the prime minister's office in Jerusalem. On Feb. 10, pro-Sharon demonstrators hurled a grenade into a crowd of Peace Now marchers, killing one person and wounding several. Israeli newspapers denounced Sharon for orchestrating the attack.

be tried for treason," said another Israeli, "and I bet if someone had the wherewithal to follow through with it, he would be found guilty."

From the moment he assumed the defense portfolio, Sharon pursued policies counter to Israel's better interests, commandeering the government and the army along a dangerous course of political, military, and economic brinkmanship that has imperiled the country's survival. At the behest of the intelligence services of Great Britain, with which he is closely tied, Sharon cultivated secret relations with Moscow, in the interest of knocking the United States out of the Middle East and achieving what he has claimed would be "independence of action" for Israel. Both Britain and the Soviet Union have worked out a tacit arrangement to undermine American influence in the region and to use Sharon as a tool in this endeavor. Sharon's insane Greater Israel ambitions, his willingness to defy the United States in pursuing these ambitions, and his unparalleled ability to stir up anti-American sentiments in the Arab world and in Israel have endeared him to Moscow and London. For example, in a speech following the release of the commission's findings, Sharon attacked the commission for cooperating with an "American plot" to unseat him and install the opposition Labour Party in his stead.

"The best friend Moscow has in the Middle East is Sharon," stated one observer. "As for the United States, Sharon has become a strategic liability."

"Sharon has been playing a very dangerous game with the two superpowers," another source noted. "Israel could get crushed if Sharon doesn't watch out. In my book, Sharon

is a traitor, because he has put Israel's very existence at stake."

Israeli army draws the line

In the first few days following the release of the commission of inquiry's report, Sharon gave no indication that he intended to fade quietly from the Israeli political scene. He emphatically declared that he would not resign. And he privately threatened Prime Minister Begin that he would bring down the whole house of cards should Begin fire him. "Begin was afraid of Sharon," said one Israeli insider. "Sharon was ready to get up and say, 'Everything I did in Lebanon I did with your permission.' It was blackmail, that's what it was."

Sharon also strove to stir up the Israeli army to reject the commission's recommendations. "Sharon and [Chief of Staff Rafael] Eytan are playing with the army," the source continued. "He is organizing a French-style OAS type of resistance against the commission, telling the army that the commission's actions were not correct, not fair, that the commission attacked officers who were only doing their job."

Although Sharon still enjoys the support of a significant military faction, Israeli intelligence sources report that it was the army more than anything else that influenced the commission of inquiry to issue its findings early in order to preempt a new military adventure by Sharon. "The Israeli army was already on the hot seat for what had happened in Beirut. They weren't eager to be dragged into any new escapades that would harm them further," one Israeli said.

"If Sharon had had the slightest morality, he would have snapped to attention, saluted, and disappeared after the com-

mission declared him guilty,” another source commented. “The old military types like Douglas MacArthur would understand this. Unlike Sharon, MacArthur was a soldier. He had that kind of morality.”

Sharon: ambitious and duplicitous

Among Israeli nationalists, Sharon is recognized and despised for being the unabashed fascist that he is. “Sharon is obsessively ambitious,” stated one Israeli emigré. “He has no regard for legalities, for constitutionality, for traditions. Our perception is that throughout the Lebanon campaign, he did things behind Begin’s and the cabinet’s back—going beyond the 40-kilometer line in southern Lebanon, for example, despite pledges to the contrary.”

Within days of his invasion of Lebanon, Sharon moved quickly to build up infrastructure in that war-torn country, laying roads and putting in elaborate communication systems to facilitate, among other things, dope-trafficking among the Israeli, Syrian, and Lebanese mafias, to whom he is known to be closely linked.

While Sharon’s ouster as defense minister is a moral victory for the state of Israel, the continuing crisis in which Israel finds itself will only be resolved when the extremism of the Eretz Israel blood-and-soil cult associated with Sharon is abandoned and the country returns to the ideas of nation-building and economic development that characterized the 1948-67 period.

During this period, many of Israel’s actions, particularly in the political sphere, were hardly commendable—a not surprising fact given the role of the British in creating and manipulating Israel to keep the region off balance and vulnerable to London’s strategic games. Nevertheless, many Israelis, whatever else they may have thought they were doing, wholeheartedly threw themselves into building Israel’s economy. Thus, there emerged a legacy of state-building that many Israelis now long to see revived in lieu of the extremist, land-grabbing policies of Ariel Sharon.

Israel’s achievements in building up its economy during this early period, dramatic as they were, could have been more so if Britain had not blocked a Middle East peace settlement in the late 1940s. According to recently discovered secret diplomatic documents, several Arab states were ready to reach a peace agreement with Israel in 1949, but were dissuaded from doing so by Great Britain out of fear that an Arab-Israel bloc would consolidate itself independent of British control.

Destroying the dream

Over the last 15 years, the goal of the majority of Israelis to build Israel into a beacon of culture and science for the region and the world has been rudely sidetracked, and instead, under the guidance of what was once a radical-fringe minority, Israel has been gradually transformed into an in-

tolerant theocracy, whose extremism many Israelis compare with that of Khomeini’s Iran. The similarities to Iran are no coincidence, given the central role that the Begin government, working with Great Britain and Cyrus Vance, played in putting Khomeini into power and in keeping him there.

The last 15 years have also witnessed the steady deterioration of the Israeli economy, now staggering under the weight of monstrous debt service requirements, military expenditures, and declining productivity.

Most alarming of all has been the drastic changes that have taken place in Israel’s most valuable resource: its population. In 1981, for the first time in Israel’s 35-year history, more people left Israel than settled there.

The negative immigration balance is not simply due to a desire on the part of Israel’s citizens to seek greener pastures in the West. “I do not like living abroad” is the common refrain of many Israelis who have left Israel. “But I cannot live in Israel. It is not the threat of war—that I can live with. The problem is that there are no jobs at my skill level. There are no affordable apartments, unless, of course, I’m willing to go live on the West Bank. So I’m here until the time is right for me to go back.”

The threat of civil strife

Complicating the situation for many emigrés is the fact that “home” is no longer the home it used to be. Since the 1967 war, and more intensively over the last five years, the social fabric of Israel has been radically altered by the rise of irrationalism, which, to many Israelis, particularly those of European origins (Ashkenazim), portends a replay of the insanity of the 1930s.

The Ashkenazim tend to see themselves as the bearers of European Jewish cultural and political traditions in Israel. Late last year, Israel’s Ashkenazim were the targets of mobs of economically and culturally deprived Oriental Jews—those Jews hailing from North Africa and the Middle East who are now the majority of Israel’s population. The Orientals rampaged through Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, painting swastikas on the walls along with slogans reading, “Send the Ashkenazim to Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Dachau!” The incident struck horror into the hearts of Jews around the world, most of whom had believed Menachem Begin’s pious vows of “Never again!” Now, Begin’s political supporters were running wild in the streets of Israel threatening, “Again!”

Israel’s Oriental Jews comprise the bulk of Sharon’s and Begin’s political base; many continue to back Sharon despite the commission of inquiry’s censure of him, on the grounds that “it was only Palestinians who were killed” in Beirut. To maintain the loyalties of the Oriental population, Sharon and Begin have deliberately manipulated the virulent anti-Arab sentiments of many Orientals and have played upon their rage and frustration over their second-class status in Israel. Rather than concentrating on uplifting the Orientals from the backwardness that has dominated their lives since before

their arrival in Israel, the Begin-Sharon government has preferred instead to encourage the Orientals to vent their anger against Israel's Arab neighbors and against the Ashkenazi-dominated Labour Party "establishment."

A well-known Israeli novelist commented ruefully on the devolution that Israel has undergone: "In the 1948-67 period, the idea of building a state as part of an international community of states predominated in Israel. Now, all that is passé. Since 1967, and even more so recently, the Israeli population has been made paranoid and parochial. We've been taught to hate. We've been brainwashed into believing that the entire rest of the world is out to get us. For example, our schools do not teach world history any more, only Jewish history, because to matriculate these days, only Jewish history is required. I hate to say it, but Israel has slowly but surely arrived at the edge of becoming what so many of us, ironically, fled 40 and 50 years ago: a fascist state."

Throughout Israel and the Jewish diaspora, there are bastions of opposition to the Khomeini-ization process now ongoing in the Jewish state, mainly centered among old-line factions of the Israeli intelligence community, the armed forces, and the labor movement. One such base of opposition is found within the Histadrut, Israel's giant trade-union confederation whose several large affiliated companies are known for their decades-long tradition in construction, scientific development, and technologies associated with the "make-the-deserts-bloom" attitude that characterized the pre-1967 period in Israeli history. Many leaders of the Histadrut, and of the Histadrut's Hevrat Ovdim holding company, want now to reinvigorate that historical commitment and are fighting a battle against factions within the Histadrut who want to cash in on real-estate speculation, construction boondoggles, and related scams promised by Sharon's annexation of the West Bank.

Another base of opposition to the Khomeini-ization process is found in the National Religious Party around Interior Minister Yosef Burg. In a revealing statement published in the Israeli press early this year, Burg asserted that he has always been against messianism in all its forms as a basis for state policy, and would oppose manifestations of that mentality now. Burg is currently in a bitter faction fight with National Religious Party fanatics like Haim Druckman, who want to destroy the Burg machine and merge the NRP with the most extremist elements inside the Israeli political scene.

As an institution, the Israeli Labour Party has up to now done little to counter Israel's downhill slide. Factional warfare between Labour Party leader Shimon Peres and former Labour Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin continues to drain the energies of the party, keeping it an ineffective counterpole to the Khomeini-ization process taking place all around it. Yitzhak Navon, who recently announced his decision not to seek a second term as Israel's President, could reunify the party if he chooses to take up the fight and challenge Begin for the prime ministership. Sharon is fearful of this possibility and

has committed himself to preempting it.

No to fundamentalism

The fear among Israelis of an up-alism threatening Israel's very existence, is widespread. Last month, radio, television, and newspapers throughout Israel picked up and published, with alarm, an exposé from the Jan. 18 issue of *EIR* on how a group of U.S.-based Christian fundamentalists, supportive of and supported by Ariel Sharon, were working with a group of Greater Israel Jewish fundamentalists in Israel to set off a bloody wave of inter-religious warfare in the Middle East.

The *EIR* story and subsequent Israeli press coverage focused on the secret activities of the Temple Mount Foundation, an organization headed by California wheeler-dealer Terry Reisenhuver, a millionaire and self-proclaimed reincarnation of the prophet Nehemiah. Evidence compiled by *EIR* and independently corroborated by Israeli investigators showed that the Temple Mount "crazies," the term used by the Israeli press, were buying up land in the West Bank to expedite Sharon's plan to annex the area, and were also promoting a project to build the Third Temple in Jerusalem on the very spot where the Dome of the Rock Mosque, the second holiest shrine in all of Islam, now stands.

The widespread exposure of the Temple Mount Foundation's planned escapades in Israel has dealt a severe blow to its efforts to destabilize Israel. "You can be sure that there will be no Third Temple built in Jerusalem," stated one veteran Israeli political observer.

The close ties that the Begin government has cultivated with American fundamentalists have many Israelis worried, and rightly so. Evangelicals such as Reisenhuver are the American Christian-in-name-only version of Iran's Khomeini, and are run by the same top levels of British intelligence that put Khomeini into power, and that sponsored Hitler and Mussolini earlier in this century.

The rise of Christian fundamentalism in the United States and its link-up with Jewish fundamentalist extremists in Israel are part of a project, set into motion originally in Great Britain and currently run out of the Stanford Research Institute in California, to spread occult irrationalism and related forms of kookery in the American population, in order to soften it up for a new form of fascism in the 1980s. Leading evangelicals are now pushing zero-growth "greenie" propaganda, since zero growth brings the apocalyptic end of the world and the Messiah's second coming one step closer. Leading evangelicals also want Israel to be the vehicle for launching World War III to bring about the apocalypse, on whose eve all Israeli Jews will, according to perverted fundamentalist belief-structure, convert to Christianity.

Why would any Israeli want to work with such cutthroats? The problem lies in the fact that many Israelis, particularly those associated with the Begin government, have been captivated by short-term strategies, losing sight of the longer-

term realities whose dire consequences will not spare Israel. Hence, Israel's "strategic" cooperation with Khomeini; hence, Sharon's "strategic" cooperation with known neo-Nazi operatives in Europe and the Middle East; and hence, the willingness of Begin and other leading Israelis to work with the American evangelical crazies because of the latter's "useful" pro-Israel pronouncements.

Such dangerous pragmatism on the part of leading Israelis, which has allowed Israel to embrace the Christian fundamentalists and to nurture on Israeli soil its own brand of Jewish fundamentalism, has fostered an irrationalist world outlook that traces its roots back to the mystical, witch-dominated Kabbalism invented in Spain in the 12th century. This outlook negates any lawfulness in the universe, and defies the real universal values of Judaism. It also defies the existence of Israel, which is rooted not in any special "racial Jewish" particularity, but in the application of the universal principles of science and development to the Israeli context.

"Israel's problem is that it is not a Jewish state," said one Israeli wryly. "I am not criticizing Israel's secularism—that is not the point. What I am saying is that this Greater Israel cultism and Jewish fundamentalism spits on 2,000 years of Jewish history. We have always regarded ourselves as a 'light unto the gentiles,' helping to contribute civilized mores to every country where we have lived.

"Now look what's happening to us because of this Greater Israel policy. If we annex the West Bank and make the Arabs citizens, like the Arabs inside Israel itself, then we will soon no longer be a Jewish state. If we don't give them citizenship, then we're just another South Africa. That's not what Israel was created for.

"Sharon," he continued indignantly, "says the answer is to force the Arabs out of the West Bank. About 20,000 or 30,000 were forced out last year. Since when do Jews act like that?"

Shades of 1967

As many Israelis intuitively sense, the situation today is ominously similar to that just prior to the 1967 war.

In the 1965-67 period, Israel underwent a profound economic and moral crisis, reflected in a dramatic rise in emigration. The ruling Eshkol government implemented a series of deflationary measures that only served to disaffect the trade union base and demoralize the country. Leading Israeli Anglo-KGB asset Moshe Dayan saw the burgeoning crisis as a "window of opportunity" to make a power play and to launch Israel on a new imperial course. He received backing for this endeavor from the anglophilic Johnson administration in the United States and from the Soviet KGB crowd around Yuri Andropov, who ascended to the leadership of the KGB only weeks before the 1967 war was begun. The Andropov accession was a signal of a Soviet faction willing to dump Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser, and to work with the British to set into motion the round of provocations from the Arab side that gave Dayan the pretext for launching his preemptive

strike and lightning military victory.

It is significant that David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel and the man most associated with Israel's 1948-67 "make-the-deserts-bloom" commitment, warned on the eve of the June 1967 war that that war would in the long term represent a mortal threat to Israel's existence.

Sharon, like Dayan before him, operated like the Roman proconsul he fancies himself to be, and made a series of byzantine global deals premised on a new round of wars and upheavals in the Middle East. Sharon's recent overtures to Moscow were not merely bluff, but reflect the fact that the Russian blood-and-soil clique around Yuri Andropov and his allied "Moscow-is-the-Third-Rome" faction in British intelligence have promised to give Israel a big cut in the New Yalta arrangement being worked out for the Middle East—all to the disadvantage of the United States. Sharon was willing, Israeli sources suggest, to bomb the nuclear facilities in Pakistan in return for Andropov's cutting Israel in on the global deal.

Sharon's headlong plunge into a New Yalta in the name of securing "strategic independence" for Israel is a dangerous game that is destined to result in disaster for the people of Israel and of the region as a whole. The independence that many Israelis seek is not to be found in Sharon's strategic gambles and military adventures, but in channeling Israel's resources and foreign aid into the only thing that can ensure Israel's continued existence: development of the economy and of the neighboring Arab economies.

This approach is not altruism. It is the only method capable of securing peace.

Since signing the Camp David treaty, Israel has reneged on its responsibility to work with Egypt to develop the Egyptian economy, much to the disappointment of Israeli scientists, technicians, and businessmen. Israel has a unique, and historic, contribution to make in the economic development of Egypt and the region. Such cooperation to bring economic growth and with it political stability to the region is Israel's best and ultimately only insurance policy.

Moreover, given the worldwide financial crisis and the fact that Israel's per capita debt is the highest in the world, the United States will not be able to carry Israel for much longer. Again, the solution lies not in realizing Sharon's Greater Israel illusions or in serving as a vehicle for bringing about the apocalypse but in realizing the dream that drew so many to Israel over the years: the dream of building a state, in community with the other states of the region, based on the highest moral standards as embodied in Judaism, and the lessons of the past.

An impossible dream? Only if Sharon's madness continues to dominate policy making in Israel. And only if the voices of reason, both inside and outside Israel, are stifled.

The commission of inquiry's findings and the dismissal of Sharon could be the turning point for Israel. Decisive political leadership inside Israel is necessary to ensure that they are.