
Israel

Sharon at the center of a political war

by Robert Greenberg

Over the last few months, an unlikely combination of forces, including Israel's Labour and Likud parties and the country's military leadership, has launched simultaneous attacks on Ariel Sharon, the minister of industry and trade, with the clear intent of destroying his political career once and for all. The question that has been asked by U.S. observers in response to this development, is whether Sharon will simply become a scapegoat for all of the incidents which have created serious tensions between the United States and Israel, such as the Jonathan Pollard espionage affair and Israel's role in the Iran-Contra scandal; or, are the attacks on Sharon part of a more serious effort by Israeli factions to dismantle the apparatus that Sharon has represented?

As has been exhaustively documented in *EIR's* Special Report, "Moscow's Secret Weapon: Ariel Sharon and the Israeli Mafia," Sharon has been the point-man for the creation of a Greater Israel, which, along with a Greater Syria, would police the Mideast as part of an arrangement between the Western and Soviet condominium of forces known as the Trust. It was in his capacities as minister of agriculture, defense, and now industry and trade, that Sharon began to implement a plan to turn Israel into a New Venice, a center of money-laundering and gun-running. The expansion of Jewish settlements into the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and Israel's plan to build the Lavi jet as a key part of its arms export program, were centerpieces of this program.

While it is not yet clear if the entire network that Sharon represents is being targeted, it is certain that over the last few weeks, Sharon's entire program has been threatened with destruction. Any attack on the larger apparatus will have immediate reverberations within the so-called secret government apparatus in the United States, which apparatus has worked hand-in-glove with Sharon and the Israeli mafia. Among the persons whose heads would be immediately on the chopping block, are national security consultant Michael Ledeen, presidential candidate Alexander Haig, Defense Department official Steven Bryen, former Defense Department official Richard Perle, and the entire grouping surrounding former CIA official Ted Shackley.

A national inquiry

The most recent development in the attack on Sharon, was a call by Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres for a state inquiry into the conduct of the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, which was carried out while Sharon was defense minister in the government of Menachem Begin. This unprecedented move by Peres, reversing his previous stance against such an inquiry, came one day after Sharon gave a rambling four-hour speech at Israel's Jafee Center of Strategic Studies, attempting to rebut the charges that he, on his own, masterminded the 1982 invasion. Sharon insisted that the entire Begin government knew about the plan, and thus had to take equal responsibility.

Sharon's defense of both his actions and the invasion created an uproar in the 500-person audience. Chief of Staff Mordechai Gur called Sharon's speech "the lie of the century," while Arye Naor, the former personal secretary to Begin, who wrote a book denouncing Sharon's role in the invasion, called his speech "an example of the newspeak of George Orwell." Former Defense Minister Ezer Weizman, whom Sharon accused of drawing up the plans for the invasion, simply called Sharon a liar.

In calling for the inquiry the following day, Peres made clear that Sharon was the target. Dismissing Sharon's speech as a "media event," Peres stated, "It's not that we weren't told, rather that we were told the opposite. I personally called Mr. Begin. Mr. Begin knew nothing of the bombs. He told me he would check with Sharon."

These are merely the latest in a series of recent attacks against Sharon, ongoing since June. It was in June that Sharon attempted a political coup to take over the leadership of the Likud Party, only to be defeated by a coalition of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and up-and-coming political figure David Levy.

Following that setback, the new Israeli military leadership, under the direction of Israeli Defense Forces head Dan Shomron, began taking on Sharon and his pet projects. In June, Shomron, along with the Air Force Chief of Staff, began denouncing the Lavi project as a waste of money, which, if carried out, would only undermine Israeli security by taking resources away from other badly needed projects. This attack on the Lavi, according to Israeli and U.S. sources, was carried out in coordination with U.S. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, who has been against the project from the beginning. The fate of the Lavi, which rests with the Israeli Cabinet, is as of yet undecided.

Following these attacks, the military took Sharon head-on when, in his capacity as industry minister, he attempted to dispatch bulldozers to begin clearing the way for new settlements in the West Bank settlement of Avnei Hefetz. In a highly unusual move, Central Command (West Bank) head General Mitza deployed his troops to stop the bulldozers, issuing a statement that he, and not Sharon, has jurisdiction in the West Bank.