

Editorial

Who Wants a War in the Middle East?

On the eve of the Israeli elections, there is very little doubt that the world is facing an imminent war in the Middle East. Not merely out of stupidity, but because some of the leading people in the Bush Administration *want* a war in the Middle East. And they're not making any secret out of it.

The crucial new incendiary ingredient, of course, would be the election of the butcher of Lebanon, Ariel Sharon, as Prime Minister of Israel. This dangerous event is very likely to occur in the Feb. 6 elections. While the "old men" of Israel could have trashed Sharon's candidacy any time, they have not done so. Prime Minister Barak's refusal to transfer his electoral slot to senior statesman Shimon Peres, who is widely considered to have a much better chance of beating Sharon, seems to have sealed the fate of this option.

It is highly likely that the warhawks in the Bush Administration are counting on Sharon's election, to activate their plans for the region. These plans involve two major aspects. First, as demonstrated by the appointment of wild religious fundamentalist John Ashcroft as U.S. Attorney General, the Bush Administration represents an ascendancy to power of the irrationalist religious "right," those very fundamentalist sects that are funding, and pinning their hopes on, the religious war around the Jerusalem Temple Mount, in order to bring on the "rapture" and Armageddon. These forces, in combination with having the provocative Sharon in power, will push the U.S. Administration toward confrontation in Israel, particularly around Jerusalem.

The second heavy impulse toward a bloody, expanding conflict in the Middle East, is the building confrontationist stance toward Iraq. If the consequences were not likely to be so hideous, one would be tempted to laugh at the way that the tragic Gulf War of 1991, is about to be repeated as farce.

The press drumbeat is blatantly obvious. A series of "leaks" and articles from major press outlets for the Establishment in London and the United States, began on Jan. 22, with an article in the *New York Times* saying

that "satellite photos" had documented the presence of Iraqi factories which, while officially producing castor oil brake fluid, were allegedly also producing a byproduct, a "deadly biological toxin called ricin." The *Times* added that these reports would provide a "test" for President Bush, as to whether he would follow through on his policy of being "tough with Saddam."

In the immediately following days, both the *Times* of London and the London *Daily Telegraph* featured heavy-handed coverage, promoting a showdown between Bush and Saddam Hussein.

Just days later, on Jan. 28, the *Telegraph* picked up another of those "defectors," this one an Iraqi military engineer claiming that he had helped Saddam Hussein build two atomic bombs, which were now "ready for use."

On Feb. 1, none other than Secretary of State Colin Powell denounced Iraq and called it a danger to the children of the region—a sick joke, considering the hundreds of millions of children who have been killed by the sanctions against Iraq.

What does the Bush team think it's going to get out of provoking war in the Middle East? Lyndon LaRouche's evaluation is that top Anglo-American strategists think that the creation of this crisis will give them the ability to impose emergency rule in various industrialized nations, including the United States, and shatter the emergent economic cooperation now under way among nations of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. The arrogance of power, combined with a hysterical determination to save that power in the midst of the collapse of the world financial system, is driving them to detonate a war they believe will humiliate their enemies.

But the warmongers are badly miscalculating. A new war in the Mideast will not end in a glorious march on Baghdad, but rather a spreading global religious conflagration. Nor could a military response from Russia, the world's second-largest nuclear power, be ruled out. If saner heads, globally, do not begin to take up LaRouche's proposals, the prospects are grim indeed.