

Sharon Fails in U.S. Visit To Win Bush Blessing for War

by Jeffrey Steinberg

On June 23, on the eve of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's arrival in the United States, Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche called on President Bush to join European and other leaders in blocking a Sharon-provoked Mideast war that would surely result in the destruction of the state of Israel. In a statement (see page 47), LaRouche emphasized that "Bush's action to block such an effect, might not be sufficient by itself; but, were he to take such action, he would have a decisive margin of support for the same effort within Europe, and elsewhere."

While Israel has a decisive advantage over the Palestinians and their Arab neighbors, in conventional force and nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, Israel is incapable of defeating the kind of irregular warfare the Palestinians, with Arab backing, are prepared to wage—in the Occupied Territories, and inside Israel, where more than 25% of the population are Israeli Arabs. "Israel," LaRouche wrote, "could not outlive a protracted state of general chaos accompanied by irregular warfare, in the Middle East region."

LaRouche added that any failure on the part of President Bush to deliver this message to Sharon, with the appropriate pungency and force, would have devastating consequences for the Bush Administration itself.

The LaRouche statement was widely circulated among U.S. government officials, the entire U.S. Congress, and the majority of foreign diplomats, posted in Washington, D.C., New York, and foreign capitals worldwide.

Disagreements Surface

President Bush did indeed hold several hours of meetings with Sharon in the White House June 26, and even the news coverage of the session, in U.S. and Israeli media, confirmed that there were sharp disagreements between the two men over the issue of Palestinian compliance with the cease-fire, organized earlier this month by CIA director George Tenet.

Bush emphasized the serious efforts by Chairman Arafat and the Palestinian Authority to curtail violence, to which Sharon countered that he would accept nothing short of a total cessation of all individual acts of violence—an impossible demand.

Ha'aretz, on June 28, revealed that Sharon had walked into the White House with a working document, aimed at "tying the President to a joint strategy," centered on the idea "that Yasser Arafat is the problem, not the solution." The *Jerusalem Post*, the same day, reported that Sharon had brought Bush a map of his proposed "solution" to the Palestinian problem—a collection of separate Palestinian "bantustan" enclaves, surrounded by Israeli territory, comprising under 40% of the West Bank.

The clearest indication that Sharon did not get his way during the Washington meetings, was the hysterical reaction from some of Sharon's leading U.S. media apologists, following the Oval Office session. The *New York Times*'s William Safire ranted on June 28 that Bush had soft-pedalled on Arafat. Sidney Zion, columnist for Rupert Murdoch's *New York Post*, wrote that "George W. Bush mugged Ariel Sharon in the Oval Office on Monday," and warned, ominously, that, the next time a terrorist attack, such like the June 1 Tel Aviv disco suicide bombing, occurs, Sharon will strike back for all it's worth, and "even a White House mugging won't stop him then."

Ma'ariv correspondent Hemi Shalev was quoted in the *New York Times* June 28, under the headline, "Shock Wave in Israel Over Bush Comment." He wrote, "Sharon expected strokes and coddling. Instead he got a humiliating public blow from the President."

A Policy Shift

Immediately after his own meeting with Sharon, Secretary of State Colin Powell departed for the Mideast, where he met with Egyptian President Mubarak, Jordan's King Abdul-

lah II, Palestinian Authority head Yasser Arafat, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, President Moshe Katsav, and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. En route back to the United States, Powell made a stop-over in France, where he met with Saudi Crown Prince Abdallah.

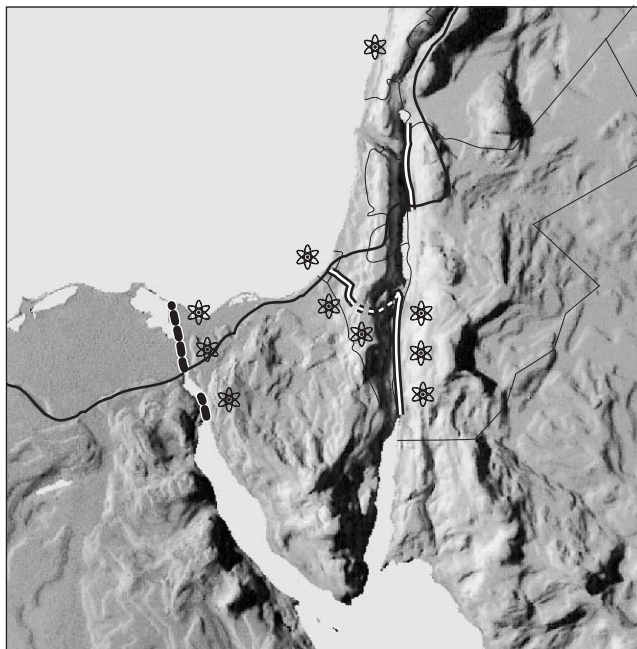
At the conclusion of his meetings in Israel, Secretary Powell announced that a precise timetable had been agreed upon, for the implementation of the Mitchell Commission recommendations. Powell and Sharon both confirmed that, following one week of a cessation of all violence, both sides would begin a six-week period of cease-fire and "confidence-building measures." Among those demanded by the Mitchell Commission, was the freezing of all Israeli settlement expansion, which has been a critical Palestinian demand.

More dramatic than the announcement of a timetable for moving the cease-fire and peace effort forward, was Powell's statement in support of an outside monitoring group, to abet the peace process. Up until the Powell trip to the Mideast, the Bush Administration had been adamant that they would not support such a peace force, because the Israeli government opposed the idea, and, therefore, it was not feasible.

During his June 28 joint press conference with Chairman Arafat in Ramallah, Powell had emphasized the U.S. Administration's unequivocal support for the Mitchell Commission, "from an unconditional cessation of the violence, to the confidence-building measures ultimately leading to negotiations on final status, on the provisions of UN Resolutions 242 and 338." He added, "I also assured the Chairman that we will solve this as a package—no part of the Mitchell Committee Report is to be separated from any other part. . . . Not a word of the Mitchell report is to be changed. The United States will be working diligently to make sure that the Mitchell report is implemented in accordance with its tone as well as in accordance with the spirit of the Report as prepared by Senator Mitchell and his colleagues."

Then came the exchange on a monitoring group. A reporter asked Powell, "Mr. Secretary, the Chairman just suggested a monitoring group, if I understood, that might include the United States and European Union. The Israelis have always voiced opposition to this. What merit do you see in this proposal?" Powell replied: "I think as we get into the confidence-building phase, there will be a need for monitors and observers to see what's happening on the ground, to serve as interlocutors to go to points of friction and make an independent observation of what has happened. Now, what the nature of that monitoring or observer regime might look like, who might be members of it, we have not yet come to any conclusions on that. But I think there is clear understanding of the need for some kind of monitoring observer function performed by some group." Later in the day, when asked about the Powell statement on the observer group, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer attempted to downplay it, claiming that the United States had supported such a scheme ever since the Wye Plantation summit, and that Powell had not put forward any change in U.S. policy.

'The Oasis Plan'



If war is averted, the basis for durable peace is water and economic development. LaRouche's "Oasis Plan" idea, to build "Med-Dead" and "Red-Dead" Sea canals and nuclear desalination plants along them, has been echoed in the past by many Israeli and Arab sources, including Jordan's Prince Hassan.

Sharon's willingness to comply with the Powell-brokered framework, which he purportedly accepted, is dubious, at best. He remains committed to the idea that Arafat is "a terrorist," and therefore Sharon unconditionally refuses to negotiate in good faith with the Palestinian Authority. Sources in Washington have emphasized to *EIR* that Sharon will seek to give the appearance of cooperating with the peace efforts, while buying time to continue to expand the settlements in the West Bank, creating a *fait accompli* on the ground.

Without the unequivocal backing from the Bush White House for his next-phase escalation, Sharon must now decide whether he is willing to further jeopardize relations with the Bush Administration, by taking unilateral action.

Sources in Washington and Israel report that LaRouche's June 23 statement, emphasizing the danger of an Israel destroyed by a Sharon flight-forward attack on the Palestinians, expressed a view widely endorsed by leading Israeli military circles, including some active-duty military leaders normally closely associated with Sharon. An internal opposition to Sharon's madness, particularly among senior Israeli military planners, could prove another crucial stumbling bloc, in the way of a war drive by the "Butcher of Lebanon."

War Criminal Sharon?

As *EIR* reported last week, Western European pressure against Sharon is also contributing to the war-avoidance ef-

fort. On June 17, BBC "Panorama" aired an hour-long exposé of Sharon's role in the massacre of 800 unarmed Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon in 1982.

The devastating exposé featured lengthy statements by Morris Draper, President Ronald Reagan's special emissary to Lebanon, who held Sharon (then Israel's Minister of Defense) personally responsible for the massacre. Simultaneous with the "Panorama" exposé, a group of Palestinians who survived the Sabra and Shatila massacres filed a war-crimes complaint against Sharon in a Belgian court. That case is under review.

Washington sources confirmed to this author that, at the time of the massacre, some prominent officials in the Reagan Administration were pressing to bar Sharon from entering the United States. That was averted by Sharon's forced resignation from office.

Sen. Mitchell Delivers Message to Washington

by Michele Steinberg

On June 25, one day before Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon arrived in Washington, former U.S. Sen. George Mitchell, who headed the commission founded at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on the causes of Israeli-Palestinian violence, warned that either the recommendations of the commission must be adopted by Israel and the Palestinian leadership, and pursued by the United States, or the "alternative is . . . unthinkable." Mitchell had invited former Sen. Warren Rudman, the other American who served on the five-person commission, to join him at the press briefing. The presence of Rudman, a prominent Republican, was an important signal that the efforts from the United States to stop the drive to Middle East war, must be bipartisan.

Mitchell made one of the most important statements during the question period. It concerned a White House visit by Palestinian Authority President Yassir Arafat, and follows immediately below.

Moderator: Prime Minister Sharon from Israel is going to return to Washington . . . his second official visit. But the Bush Administration has yet to meet with the Palestinian leader Arafat. Do you think the U.S. should invite Mr. Arafat to come and speak with him soon?

Mitchell: Yes, I do. And I think that is the intention of the administration at the appropriate time. I think it would be presumptuous of us to attempt to dictate to the administration . . . in this public forum on when the best time would be. . . . But I believe that it should be, and I expect that it will be, at

the appropriate time.

From Mitchell's formal remarks:

Last October, the leaders of the government of Israel, the Palestinian Authority, the United Nations, the European Union, and the governments of Egypt, Jordan, and the United States, met in a summit at Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt. They agreed that an international committee should be formed to look into the then-recent outbreak of violence between Israelis and Palestinians. In November . . . President Clinton asked us to serve on the committee, along with the former President of Turkey, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, and the European Union's High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy.

In January . . . Secretary of State Colin Powell, acting on behalf of the Bush Administration, advised us of his support for the continued work of the committee.

Throughout our inquiry, we made it clear to . . . Israel and the Palestinian Authority that we were dependent upon their cooperation, and that if either permanently withheld its support, we would terminate our activities. . . . They chose to support our work.

As we said in our report, a cessation of violence cannot be sustained for long without movement on the further steps. . . . The restoration of trust is essential. We recommend several steps to this end. Given the high level of hostility and mistrust, the timing and sequence of these steps are obviously crucial. This can be decided only by the parties. We urge them to do so promptly.

The Palestinian Authority should make clear, through concrete action, to Palestinians and Israelis alike that terrorism is reprehensible and unacceptable, and . . . make a 100% effort to prevent terrorist operations and to punish perpetrators. . . .

The government of Israel should freeze all settlement activity, including the natural growth of existing settlements. [It] should ensure that the Israeli Defense Force adopts and enforces policies and procedures encouraging non-lethal responses to unarmed demonstrators. . . .

The Palestinian Authority should prevent gunmen from using Palestinian populated areas to fire upon Israeli populated areas and Israeli Defense Force positions. . . .

The government of Israel should lift closures, transfer to the Palestinian Authority all tax revenues owed, and permit Palestinians who had been employed in Israel to return to their jobs, and should ensure that security forces and settlers refrain from the destruction of homes and roads, as well as trees and other agricultural property in Palestinian areas. We acknowledge the government of Israel's position that actions of this nature have been taken for security reasons; nevertheless, the economic effects will persist for years. . . .

Finally, we recommend the parties find a way back to the negotiating table. A halt to the violence, resumption of security cooperation, and steps to restore trust *cannot long be sustained* without serious negotiations.