

Military Leaders Expose Sharon's Lies

by Dean Andromidas

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his hardline generals have for the last three years openly called for the assassination of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. They have told the Israeli public and the world, and convinced the Bush Administration, that Arafat wants to destroy Israel, and therefore there is no “partner” for peace negotiations. Known in Israel as the *konseptzia*, or “concept,” this story has been used by Sharon to justify a brutal policy that has led to the death of over 3,000 Palestinians and over 1,000 Israelis. Now senior members of Israel’s military-security establishment have come forward declaring that the *konseptzia* is based on lies and is at complete variance with the written professional reports of Israeli Military Intelligence (MI).

Maj. Gen. Amos Malka (res.) told the Israeli daily *Ha’aretz* of June 8 that during his tenure as head of Military Intelligence between 1998 and 2001, the *konseptzia* was not only false, but posed a danger to the security of Israel. Malka charged that it was created by certain senior military officers and fully accepted, with duplicity, by Sharon’s government. The *konseptzia* is based on the following lies:

- Arafat and the Palestinian National Authority do not recognize Israel’s right to exist and have used the Oslo Accords to further the goal of eliminating the state of Israel.
- Arafat will never give up the full right of return of Palestinian refugees to their former homes inside Israel, in order to destroy Israel through the “demographic weapon” of the Palestinian high birth rate.
- Arafat was responsible for the collapse of the Camp David talks with former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, mediated by U.S. President Clinton, and initiated the al-Aqsa Intifada to achieve his ultimate goal: the destruction of Israel.

Malka charged that one of the key promoters of these lies was Maj. Gen. Amos Gilad, currently head of the Israeli Defense Ministry’s Diplomatic Security Office—a department created for him by Sharon and Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, from which he is able to maintain liaison with Vice President Dick Cheney’s neo-con cabal in Washington. Gilad served as head of MI’s research division between 1996 and 2001, after which—2001-03—he implemented Sharon’s brutal policies against the Palestinians as coordinator of activities in the occupied territories.

But Gilad is low man on the totem pole. Well above him are Sharon, Defense Minister Mofaz, Chief of Staff Moshe Ya’alon, and the current head of MI, Gen. Aharon

Ze’ev-Farkash. Moreover, these mantras were accepted by the masses of Israelis, both on the right and the left, which is one of the primary reasons Sharon has been able to stay in power.

Since Malka’s interview, he has been joined by Col. Ephraim Lavie (res.), who headed the Palestinian desk at MI’s research division between 1998 and the first months of 2002, and Mati Steinberg, who until 2002 was an advisor on Palestinian affairs to the Shin Bet, Israel’s internal secret intelligence service. Both gave interviews to *Ha’aretz*, concurring completely with Malka’s assessment.

Arafat Committed to a Two-State Solution

Blasting the theory that Arafat was never seriously interested in signing a peace agreement with Israel, Malka, according to *Ha’aretz* of June 11, said that his professional assessment, as head of Military Intelligence prior to the Camp David talks, was “that it was possible to reach an agreement with Arafat under the following conditions: a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital and sovereignty on the Temple Mount [al-Haram al-Sharif—ed.]; 97 percent of the West Bank plus exchanges of territory in the ratio of 1:1 with respect to remaining territory; some kind of formula that includes acknowledgement of Israel’s responsibility for the refugee problem and a willingness to accept 20,000-30,000 refugees. All along the way . . . it was MI’s assessment that he [Arafat] had to get some kind of statement that would not depict him as having relinquished this [the right of return], but would be prepared for a very limited implementation.”

In a *Ha’aretz* interview of June 16, former Shin Bet consultant Mati Steinberg confirmed Malka’s statement and said, of the dogma that Arafat wants to destroy Israel: “Factually, there is no support for this contention. . . . Let’s assume for a second that this was Arafat’s intention. Why then did he need to adopt the peace process? Opting for the diplomatic route cost him dearly—between 1997 and 2000 he began to cross the threshold, leading toward a violent stand-off with his opponents. . . .

“As to the assumption that the Palestinian demand for the right of return in a negotiation framework necessarily entails Israel’s destruction—that’s an erroneous assumption. It’s impossible to conceal this sensitive subject, and not include it in an agreement. In fact, it can be claimed that ignoring this topic in negotiations paves the way for Israel’s destruction. . . .”

Steinberg also stated that Arafat and the Palestinian Authority are committed to a state based on the 1967 borders, as was achieved by Egypt and Jordan in their peace treaties with Israel. “They understand that the point of contention isn’t the existence of the State of Israel, since its existence is accepted by the world, and by Israel’s majority. The struggle, as far as they are concerned, is to ensure that the Palestinian state has the means it needs to survive. That means territorial contiguity, the establishment of a capital in Jerusalem, and the Palestinian sovereignty on the Temple Mount. For Palestinians,

realizing sovereignty rights on the Temple Mount is not just a religious or symbolic matter: it's a matter of survival. A Palestinian state which controls the Temple Mount will be a source of interest, and will attract millions of Palestinians; it will be a magnet for tourism and pilgrimages. There isn't a single Muslim—not even the most selfless altruist—who can accept Israeli sovereignty on the Temple Mount. None of this means that I myself propose that Israel accept these demands. I'm only trying to sketch the parameters of a possible arrangement.”

Malka warned Barak prior to the Camp David meetings that if these conditions were not met, Arafat could not accept an agreement. Yet Barak at Camp David only offered Arafat somewhere between 77% and 90% of the West Bank, and only after a period of 20 years.

Malka's scenario corresponds almost exactly to what was agreed to in the Geneva Accord peace initiative between Yossi Beilin and Yasser Abed Rabbo—an initiative that Arafat supported, but Sharon did not.

Israel Fanning the Flames of the Intifada

Malka explicitly states that Arafat did not start the Intifada. “The assumption was that Arafat prefers a diplomatic process, that he will do all he can to see it through, and that only when he comes to a dead end will he turn to the path of violence. But this violence is aimed at getting him out of a dead end, to set international pressure in motion to get the extra mile.” Reading from his notes from March 2002, Malka said he warned Barak: “Without movement in the diplomatic process, which would give Arafat a sense of real progress, there is a high likelihood of hostilities.”

Malka said MI issued a warning, prior to Sharon's infamous march onto the al-Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount in September 2000, that the tensions were such that all that was needed was a spark to set them off. Although Malka does not state it, Sharon supplied the spark. He also said that when the Intifada broke out, it was the Israeli military that fanned the flames. He reports that in the first month of violence, the military shot over 500,000 rounds of rifle ammunition alone. He said at the time, “the significance is that we are determining the height of the flames.” He reported, “I brought the issue up at Central Command discussions, but [then-Chief of Staff] Mofaz went with the militant bit from the very first day and all along the way.”

This assessment was supported by Colonel Lavie, who said, according to *Ha'aretz* of June 11, that Arafat was not the mastermind behind the Intifada. “As in the case of the first Intifada, this one also broke out at the grassroots level, as a result of anger toward Israel, toward Arafat and toward the Palestinian Authority. . . .” He reiterated that despite the Intifada, “Arafat had identified the practical possibility of reaching a full agreement while Clinton and Barak were still in office, and he was serious about examining the possibility. . . .”

Rewriting History

All three told *Ha'aretz* that the *konseptzia* has served to justify the hardline policy and bloody deadlock.

Colonel Lavie said, “I can unequivocally state that the written, official assessments of the research division, as formulated during my service from the summer of 1998 to February 2002, [was that] there was no intelligence foundation for the prevailing concept nowadays. Practically speaking, there were no assessment papers that express the spirit of the prevailing concept.”

Steinberg added that the *konseptzia* has become a self-fulfilling prophecy: “Under conditions of an asymmetric confrontation, one in which Israel is many times stronger than the Palestinians, we have decisive influence on the course of events. Hence, a mistaken assessment of the stronger side's part creates reality; it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Major General Amos Gilad claims that the proof of this approach is its verification on the ground; and this motif has echoed in statements made by Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz. I claim that a vicious circle has turned here. Whoever upholds such a position has concluded that there is no possibility of attaining an agreement with the Palestinian side. This approach dictates just one choice to the Palestinians: either they surrender to Israel's dictates, or they rise up against the dictates at all costs. . . . The Palestinian public has come to feel that it has nothing to lose. That's the background to the emergence of a culture of suicide bombers, a culture which grants legitimacy to suicide bombers, regarding them as persons who serve the public. . . .”

'A Scandalous Conspiracy'

Pro-peace members of the Knesset (MKs) and other political leaders called for a government investigation of these charges, including Yahad/Meretz party chairman Yossi Beilin, who described the accusations as revealing “a scandalous conspiracy between certain elements in the defense establishment and the radical concept of Sharon's government, that ganged up to deceive the Israeli public for more than three years, telling it there was no partner for peace.” MK Amram Mitzna, former chairman of the Labor Party, also called for an investigation, saying the revelations point to a “political conspiracy” to manipulate intelligence assessments.

One Israeli intelligence source told *EIR* that these attacks by Malka and others, represent a factional struggle going on in Israeli Military Intelligence, and are related to the ongoing Super-Watergate in Washington. “The situation in the U.S. is part of this faction fight.”

Another source told *EIR* that, although he could not comment on whether there was a direct connection to what is happening in Washington, there certainly was a parallel. “Just like in the U.S. where you had people building up a perception that had little to do with reality to justify their policy, we here have a similar problem.”