

Ariel Sharon's dangerous game

by Nancy Coker

Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon is moving recklessly ahead to take advantage of declining American power in the Middle East. At the behest of his sponsors in British intelligence, the British-connected European oligarchies, and the international Propaganda-2 Freemasonic networks, Sharon is doing what he was installed in power to do: transforming Israel into a Middle Eastern Switzerland, an international haven for dirty-money bankers and a playground for terrorism, dope-running, arms production and smuggling, free enterprise zones, and other Mafia-related activities. Sharon and his backers could use such an economically transformed Israel as an independent regional superpower, free to carry out military strikes and other adventurist policies without the constraints imposed by Washington.

With the United States fast becoming a second-rate power in the region, Sharon, with Prime Minister Menachem Begin in tow, is moving rapidly to act now. According to Israeli intelligence insiders, Sharon is preparing a "utopian, comprehensive solution" for the Arab-Israeli conflict based on a sweeping revision of the Middle East map. His plan involves not merely invasion and partition of Lebanon, with Israel absorbing parts of that shattered country: Sharon also envisions the fall of the Syrian government, the toppling of King Hussein in Jordan, the annexation of the West Bank, and, eventually, the integration of Jordan itself Israel. The Palestine Liberation Organization, according to the Sharon master plan, would fracture into "10 squabbling PLOs" and move closer to Moscow, becoming politically irrelevant. "Sharon is even thinking of occupying the Saudi oil fields," the sources report.

Recolonizing the Persian Gulf

Sharon's power play is backed by the intelligence service of Great Britain and its factional hangers-on in the United States and continental Europe, who seek to recolonize the Persian Gulf, using the military forces of Israel and Iran as proxies against the Arabs. London's

backing of Israel's ally Iran in its war against Iraq—and Washington's quiet assumption of the same position—underscore a revived perception of Israel as the centerpiece of a regional military axis ostensibly dedicated to "preventing Soviet expansion" in the area.

This perspective was spelled out by Sharon last year when he put forth the notion that Israel's strategic zone of concern stretched from Africa through Turkey and Iran into Pakistan and Indonesia.

Should the United States follow Britain's lead and decide that Israel and Iran are the strategic bulwarks of anti-communism in the region, Washington will not have out-foxed Moscow; rather, it will have jeopardized its own best interests in the area. The collapse of Iraq—the likely result of such a policy and the openly expressed goal of Israeli officials, who revile pro-development Iraqi President Saddam Hussein as another Hitler—is certain to trigger the demise of the pro-American regime of Prince Fahd in Saudi Arabia (see article, page 43) creating the conditions for the spread of Khomeinist-style Islamic fundamentalism throughout the Arab world. With the demise of President Hussein the very concept of the nation-state would be severely weakened in the region, and with it any semblance of regional political stability and any chances for economic growth. Israel's role as the pre-eminent political and military power in the region would thus be assured.

Angling for power

Sharon is also tied into an international network of organized-crime figures inside and outside Israel. His connection into this circle is said to be through Meshulam Riklis, who sits at the top of the Rapid-American corporate empire and is a reputed associate of underworld kingpin Meyer Lansky.

Inside Israel, Sharon has maneuvered into a strongman position from which he intends to take official power once the ailing Begin passes from the scene. Although there exists considerable opposition to Sharon's power play both from within the government and from the opposition Labour Party, no Israeli political leader of any stature has stepped forward to challenge the wild-eyed general.

According to one Israeli source, most of Begin's Herut Party had originally been opposed to Sharon, including Begin himself, who, unlike Sharon, is reluctant to provoke a full-blown crisis with the United States by invading Lebanon. However, Sharon's demagogic charisma has led many in the Herut executive to believe that Sharon is the only one who could carry the party to victory in the post-Begin era.

To consolidate his position, Sharon has waged a ruthless war against the Herut "old boys," gathering around him his most loyal cronies from the military and playing off different factions against each other. For

example, by publicly reversing his stand on Israel's scheduled withdrawal from the Sinai and becoming the leader of the pro-withdrawal faction in the government (despite his behind-the-scenes support for the Stop the Withdrawal fanatics), Sharon succeeded in neutralizing strong opposition to him from Deputy Prime Minister David Levy, the leader of the ruling Likud's large Oriental (Sephardic) Jewish bloc.

Sharon then won the support of Finance Minister Yoram Aridor by agreeing to cut the defense budget and to suspend the purchase of foreign weapons.

Sharon has also moved to reorganize the entire Israeli defense apparatus, eliminating all civilian input and establishing a central military command over the defense ministry and related civilian institutions. It was in the context of this fight that Sharon recently blocked the appointment of David Kimche, Director-General of Israel's Foreign Ministry, as head of Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency. Kimche was reportedly the candidate of Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir, Sharon's rival in the succession struggle. "To clinch the whole deal, Sharon is seeking a war," one Israeli journalist explained. "This is a risk for him, because a war might be a disaster. But he is hoping to become another war hero and thus become unstoppable in Israeli affairs."

Begin, a moderate in comparison with Sharon, is reliably reported to be intent on returning the Sinai on schedule and on restraining Sharon. "Begin has given us assurances, and Sharon is opposed to Begin," commented an Egyptian official. However, the furor after the April 11 shooting at the Dome of the Rock mosque in East Jerusalem, which touched off violent protests and worldwide denunciations of Israel by Muslims, has pushed Begin in Sharon's direction, according to intelligence sources. Israeli intelligence sources report that the instigator of the Jerusalem mosque incident was none other than Sharon, who personally orchestrated the affair through his networks in the Jewish Defense League (JDL) and the fanatical settlers movement, Gush Emunim.

Labour Party paralysis

The threat of a military move into Lebanon by Sharon and Begin has met with opposition on the part of some Labour Party and military realists who do not want to risk a rupture in relations with the United States. In an interview with Israeli radio, Gen. Haim Bar-Lev, Secretary-General of the Labour Party, said that an invasion of Lebanon at this time was unwarranted. He recommended that Israel not move militarily unless attacked or unless Syrian troops advance against the Christians in Lebanon. Gen. Mordecai Gur added: "The last days have not created such a situation [to warrant invasion] and do not require us to act." Gur warned of a "general confrontation with Syria . . . we

do not know where [such a war] will end." Begin called the statements "acts of irresponsibility of the highest degree."

Because Bar-Lev was a key participant in the discussion of a possible "government of national unity" which took place with Begin, Sharon, and Shamir earlier this month, his statement attracted great attention in Israel; it violated the confidence of that meeting, the central topic of which was the Lebanon crisis.

Labour Party chief Shimon Peres, however, has not turned down the proposal for a national unity/war government. By all accounts, Labour is paralytically divided, with Peres' main interparty rival, former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, angling for some sort of government of national unity in which he would play the major role. According to one source, the Labour Party would become nothing but a carbon copy of Begin's Likud. The core of the party's power base, the Histadrut labor union, is defecting in droves to Likud; Israel's large Sephardic Jewish population is fast abandoning Labour for the leadership of Deputy Prime Minister Levy; the left wing of the Labour Party is considering an overt break. Peres's lack of leadership has all but ensured the collapse of an effective Labour opposition much less a Labour rise to power.

With the opposition in disarray, and with Washington hardly on top of the Middle East situation, Sharon's faction has seized the initiative. The possibility of war over Lebanon looms; the Sinai withdrawal is imperiled as Sharon manufactures reasons not to go through with it; the West Bank is aflame as Sharon and Begin escalate their operation to depopulate the occupied territories of Arab inhabitants and annex the land.

To give Israel the leverage and freedom of action to carry out his designs, Sharon is championing the controversial Lavie project, an ultra-expensive plan for having Israel manufacture its own sophisticated jet fighter. Sharon justifies the Lavie project by emphasizing the importance of Israel's acquiring "independence" through developing an arms-producing capability. In point of fact, Sharon, who as defense minister personally controls no less than 40 percent of the Israeli budget, is out to completely militarize Israel's economy. Given Israel's precarious economic situation (inflation is officially pegged at 127 percent), the Lavie project will only hasten Israel's transformation from real economic activity to arms production and Mafia-run drug and gambling operations.

"Israel will become the new Switzerland of the Middle East," said one Israeli source. "Only strong American pressure from outside Israel can work, combined with a U.S.-sponsored plan for the redevelopment of the militarized Israeli economy as part of a package deal for regional economic integration and development. Anything short of that won't work."