



General Gur: 'Ariel Sharon misled Israelis about the Lebanon war'

EIR's Mark Burdman interviewed Israeli Gen. Mordechai Gur from West Germany on July 4. Gur, a former Chief of Staff, is part of the Labour Party leadership, and a member of the Knesset, or parliament.

Burdman: We have noted with interest your criticisms of Mr. Sharon's thinking and strategy. Could you specify exactly what you have in mind in respect to Mr. Sharon and the Lebanon war?

Gur: All during the last year, there were talks in the government about the theory of *casus belli*, and they mentioned some "Red Lines" that might be used as *casus belli* for us to get into war. I have been against that principle, as a principle, for the entire past year.

The government also said that terrorism must eventually cause a war. I don't agree with this. Terrorism causes damage and bloodshed, but there is no absolute necessity that it must cause a full-scale war.

Third, I don't like the very exaggerated announcements of knocking out Syrian missiles. I want the Syrian missiles out, but the talk was too high. In the same way, I have been against the talk of a "Christian holocaust" in Lebanon, in principle. If the talk is too high, it obliges us to have to do something about it, we *must* do something about it.

I object to this. I am in favor of open options for Israel, for the government to react to circumstances, not to prior principles and obligations. Acting in this way on our part might prevent unnecessary military developments.

I have been against and am still against the use of power to solve political problems. We in Israel have built a wonderful defense system in order to *prevent* war, and to give the government as many options as possible. This to me is a basic principle that should not be violated.

Burdman: You have also said that Mr. Sharon lied to the country about the actual nature of the current military operation.

Gur: The Prime Minister and Sharon knew of the whole plan all along. As the majority and as the government, they had the right to launch the war. But too many

people were misled on the scale and size of the war and I don't like it. There has been a lot of criticism of this war.

It could have been enough to push the terrorists beyond the 40 kilometer line. We were against the war with the Syrians and the push to the north. This has created too high casualties and too much damage on both sides of the conflict. I think political issues should be solved politically.

Burdman: Are you thinking that the backlash against the war could lead to Sharon's resignation? Are you in favor of him resigning?

Gur: I don't know exactly about resignation. There are a lot of Israelis who don't like such a policy, and this should be expressed by a lot of people. Sharon's resignation might be actual. But the basic question is a matter of principle: what kind of wars are we fighting for what kind of purposes?

We think, and I agree, that after all our military achievements in Lebanon, we should try to do our utmost to reach maximum political achievements vis-à-vis the PLO in Lebanon, without renewal of military operations.

Burdman: So you are against a major military move into West Beirut?

Gur: I am against such a move. We can achieve a lot politically. There is no reason for the resumption of military activities. We can use our continued military presence to achieve what is right.

Burdman: How do you think matters will proceed after today's Israeli cabinet meeting?

Gur: I don't have inside information, but I think that basically there is enough room for political negotiations.

Burdman: When you say that there should be more criticism of the war, are you associating yourself with the "peace now" demonstrators.

Gur: That is only part of it; I hope people in *all* political parties, who didn't like this war, will say so. When the war will be over, people will feel more open to express their feelings about it.

Burdman: Do you think a Commission of Inquiry will be formed after the war to investigate how Sharon acted?

Gur: I don't know.

Burdman: Our founding editor, Mr. LaRouche, has asserted that Lebanon is becoming Israel's Vietnam, the wrong war at the wrong time, and so on. What do you think of this assessment?

Gur: I hope not. But there is no doubt that *if* we stay too much and too long, things *can* deteriorate. We would like that our stay in Lebanon will be as short as possible. We want the PLO out of West Beirut, but we shouldn't be getting involved in putting together a sovereign government for Lebanon and forcing the withdrawal of the Syrians. We should not over-involve ourselves in this.

Burdman: How do you see Israeli-Palestinian relations evolving at this point? There are many people who think, ironically, that the PLO emerges out of this situation in a strengthened political position, and that the whole Sharon strategy in that sense will backfire.

Gur: We suggested, and I suggested in an article that I in fact wrote today, that as a result of our military victory, we should be more open and generous to discuss with Palestinians that are *not* the PLO, to negotiate with Israel on the basis of our right to exist, without there being terrorist activities. This would involve real autonomy talks and a political arrangement with Jordan that would be more tempting to the Palestinian Arabs. We should put an end to the PLO's political activity by political means.

Burdman: Under certain conditions, might not Israel be able to negotiate with Arafat, under the conditions that now exist in the region, and him representing a pro-negotiations tendency in the PLO, against the extremists?

Gur: The problem is that Arafat raises among many Israelis many "anti" feelings. If the PLO changes its platform, recognizes Israel, and refrains from terrorism, it would no longer be the PLO. We should negotiate with *any* Palestinian organization that is willing to do this. But for the PLO leadership to take such a step is very difficult, but for others, in the West Bank, including those that I know, they could be courageous and step forward at this time. We on our side must replace military courage with political courage.

Burdman: It was Mr. LaRouche's view that the whole military operation in the first place could have been prevented if the U.S., after the British manipulated the Argov assassination attempt, had interposed military forces unilaterally between Israel and Palestinian forces. Do you think such an action might have neutralized the impulse toward Mr. Sharon launching the war?

Gur: This is all too speculative, and this is a question for

the United States to answer. The question is, is America willing to act in this way or not? But we prefer that things between us and our neighbors be on a bilateral basis, to deal with concrete facts and decisions.

Burdman: How do you think American-Israeli relations will evolve after the Haig resignation?

Gur: The behavior of the U.S. government during this crisis has been unbelievable. I think nothing is going to change with Haig out. There won't be any considerable changes.

Burdman: What do you mean by unbelievable?

Gur: We had almost total freedom of action, and we never had that before from the United States. I'm a military leader and I go to the President, and he's the one responsible for things like this.

Burdman: Getting back to the subject of Sharon, is it your assessment that the *a priori* policy of obligations and red lines could lead Israel unnecessarily into further wars in the future?

Gur: Any responsible Israeli should take that threat seriously. I hope more people will come out and speak out. We can be more political and less military. Sharon is a man who believes in power, and this belief is an exaggerated one. In our view, it is not good. It is important to be strong militarily and to be open politically.

Burdman: And you would reiterate that Sharon lied to the nation about this war?

Gur: The Prime Minister and Sharon had in their minds the whole plan for a long time. As an Israeli who did participate in many wars, that is not what I believe an Israeli government should do.

Burdman: You are saying that the Sharon policy is destabilizing for the whole Mideast region?

Gur: The destabilization in the region comes from the Arabs, but we shouldn't be adding to it.

Burdman: Then you would be against the Sharon policy of Israel arming and working with Khomeini in the Iran-Iraq war?

Gur: Israel should not be involved in matters not *directly* concerned with its own security. This is why I am against the memo of understanding that Sharon worked out with the United States. It commits us to an anti-Soviet pact, and while I certainly am against the Soviets, I don't think Israel should be formally integrated into a pact against the Soviet Union. For the same reason, I am against arming Iran. It's not our business. We should stick to our own interests, and not get involved in things that don't directly apply to our immediate military and security interests.