

Behind the Sharon coup threat in Israel

by Mark Burdman

More than half a dozen leading Israeli strategists have expressed enthusiastic agreement with *EIR* founder Lyndon H. LaRouche's Feb. 5 declaration that Israeli Minister without Portfolio Ariel Sharon should "retire from politics" and that the majority of Israelis would favor Sharon taking a permanent vacation from the political scene. The statement appeared in the Feb. 21 issue of *EIR*.

"I agree with LaRouche," a Tel Aviv insider said, "except that he underestimates how much people hate Sharon here. We hold Sharon personally responsible for destroying everything this country stood for with his invasion of Lebanon. It is the first war we have ever lost."

At least one Knesset member, Mordechai Virshubsky of the small Shinui Party, has called on the Shamir government to kick Sharon out of the cabinet, because of his actions in Lebanon. Two new books have appeared in Israel documenting how Sharon deceived the parliament and cabinet in June 1982, in extending the parameters of Israel's invasion way beyond the earlier agreed-on 40 kilometer limit. A top judge in the Commission of Inquiry that published a report in February 1983, detailing Sharon's responsibility for a brutal massacre of Palestinians in the Sabra and Chatila refugee camps of Lebanon, has declared that Sharon has no right to be a member of a government of the State of Israel. Yet, despite all this, the "Sharon danger," as one Israeli source labeled it on Feb. 13, is growing every day.

This is making the byzantine occupants of the Kremlin enormously happy. Sharon's invasion of Lebanon of June 1982, arranged with then-U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig and former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, was the biggest boon to the interests of the Soviet Union and their Nazi International comrades in the Middle East in the post-World War Two period.

On Feb. 10, the widely read Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* ran a "game" of what a military coup in Israel would look like. An Israeli journalist told *EIR* Feb. 13: "This was put out because of fear of Sharon. The article implies clearly, and will be understood in this way by anybody reading it, that Sharon is doing something. Sharon is making all kinds of flamboyant statements, and there is a feeling in many circles in Israel that the Lebanon invasion was in any case a cold coup, since it was run by Sharon and Chief of Staff Eytan behind the back of [prime minister at the time] Begin."

Hardly had the catastrophe of Beirut dawned on the Israeli's Feb. 6-7 than Sharon suddenly announced that he would be challenging Prime Minister Shamir for the candidacy for the premier position of the ruling Herut-Likud Party in anticipation of new elections some time during the next months.

The announcement was a "signal" that Sharon, who is hated by wide segments of the Israeli population, was moving immediately for control over the reins of policy, under conditions of gravely worsening economic crisis in Israel and the collapse of the Israeli strategic position in the Middle East.

A Sharon "cold coup" over Israeli policy may indeed crystallize sooner than most people think. On Feb. 15, French television quoted Shamir himself advocating "participation of the Soviet Union in talks in the Middle East" and announcing that diplomatic contacts have been "established" between Moscow and Jerusalem-Tel Aviv. Such contacts had been initiated in Cyprus in December 1982, by Sharon, in secret sessions with high-level officials of the Soviet military intelligence, the GRU.

The test of Sharon's policy influence will be Israel's posture toward Egypt in the days following Egyptian President Mubarak's trip to Washington. While policy differences with Egypt can be understandable, what is ominous is that Israeli sources began starting Feb. 14-15 to talk in private of a possible "reoccupation of the Sinai" to counter the effects of Mubarak's diplomacy in Washington. "Mubarak is looking for trouble," an Israeli source who had served under Sharon in the attack on the Sinai during the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war told *EIR* Feb. 14. "If he keeps ignoring the Camp David agreement we signed, that will be the safest way to lose the Sinai. He's treading a dangerous path."

This source dismissed a Feb. 13 statement by Egyptian Foreign Minister Hassan Ali to the Israeli paper *Maariv* reaffirming Egypt's commitment to Camp David as "fun and games."

A fact of Israeli political life is that several powerful members of the cabinet—including Shamir himself, but also Defense Minister Moshe Arens and Minister of Science and Technology Yuval Neeman—were violently opposed to Israel's evacuation of the Sinai in the first place. A Feb. 12 *Jerusalem Post* op-ed warns against an Israeli school of thought which "bewails the fact that we gave up Sinai and thus missed the chance of building 'the third Jewish Empire.'"