

## Mideast War, Sooner Rather Than Later

by Dean Andromidas

Absent a political miracle, Ariel Sharon may well be the next Prime Minister of Israel. American statesman Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. recently commented that a Sharon government would become a key part of a plan to launch general religious war in the Middle East and Asia over the coming year. LaRouche stressed that this is not an Israeli-Palestinian issue, but a strategic geopolitical issue, in which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would serve as the cockpit for implementing the “clash of civilizations” doctrine of Harvard’s Samuel Huntington and the Anglo-American policy circles he represents.

The ascendancy of the Bush Administration, backed by the “Southern Strategy” right wing and the Christian fundamentalist Armageddon cults which are the American backers of Sharon, puts this war danger on the shortest of fuses.

It was Sharon, whose provocative march onto the Al Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount area of Jerusalem on Sept. 28, ignited the conflagration that has engulfed the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, and which now threatens the entire region with religious war. In the last three months, nearly 400 people, among them more than 350 Palestinians, have been killed, and thousands wounded in the low-intensity war now raging in West Bank and Gaza Strip.

### Failure of Clinton’s ‘Bridging Proposals’

The much-vaunted “window of opportunity” for a peace agreement during the last weeks of the Clinton Administration is proving to be a complete illusion. The conditional “yes” by both Palestinian Chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, to President Clinton’s bridging proposals only serves to postpone the funeral of the already-dead peace process. These proposals, aimed at concluding a framework agreement for negotiations between Israel and the

Palestinians, are proving to be totally inadequate. In fact, according to details released in the press, these proposals not only failed to go beyond those presented and rejected at the failed Camp David summits, but contained the very same deep flaws. These include putting the holy sites of the Al Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount again on the “chopping block” of the negotiating table. It was precisely this issue which set the stage for Sharon to carry out his provocative march onto the Al Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount, which transformed the politically charged and tense atmosphere between Israelis and Palestinians, after the failed Camp David summits, into a religious war.

Most importantly, the Clinton proposals, as far as is known, were completely devoid of any initiatives for establishing and funding programs to promote regional cooperation in development of water resources, so desperately needed in the region. Nor was there any American initiative for ensuring regional economic development, the absence of which will doom any agreement even before it is signed. As *EIR* has emphasized, nuclear desalination of seawater, in order to provide abundant fresh water to all the peoples of the region, is the essential precondition for any peace agreement to succeed.

Political observers both in Israel and the Arab world agree that it would have been impossible for Arafat to accept the proposals offered by Clinton, because of Palestinian and broader Arab opposition. Such an agreement would have ignited mass protests throughout the Arab world.

### The Political Shift in Israel

The failure of the Clinton Administration has set the stage for Ariel Sharon to win the elections for Israeli Prime Minister



*President William Clinton and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, at Camp David in July 2000. The current talks are doomed, if Clinton fails to do what he did not do previously: place the issue of economic development, especially water development, at the top of the agenda.*

on Feb. 6. While all sane Israelis know that a policy of confrontation, intransigence, and war will lead to massive bloodshed, which will only bring the warring parties back to the same negotiating table eventually, the Israeli policy establishment refuses to come to its senses. Witness the fact that former Israel President and leading Labor Party figure Ezer Weizman, has made public his intention to vote for Sharon, Likud party chairman, over Labor's Prime Minister Barak. This is the same Weizman who almost two decades ago resigned from the Likud, and from the government of Menachem Begin, because he disagreed with Sharon's disastrous decision to go to war with Lebanon in 1982.

With the polls showing Sharon having a 20-point lead over Barak, Sharon is trying to recast himself as a "moderate," and never fails to announce that the first thing he would do as Prime Minister is to invite Barak into his government. Even worse, is the fact that Barak would be inclined to accept, and, if the Labor Party refused to join him, some observers have said that he would leave the party and become Sharon's defense minister, as an independent.

Furthermore, Barak's failure to come to a peace agreement has alienated the peace camp and the important Israeli-Arab vote. It is widely believed that this section of the electorate will just not vote. In fact, the peace camp appears to be so demoralized, that even the specter of Sharon, known as the Butcher of Lebanon, in the Prime Minister's office, is not enough to bring them out into the streets in protest, let alone to the polls.

The shift of Israeli politics to the right has brought forward a new generation of radical Zionists into the national leadership. Although Sharon has been their mentor and controller,

these are religious Zionists, whose views fit right in with the plans for religious war, envisioned by the likes of Samuel Huntington and Zbigniew Brzezinski.

This was dramatically demonstrated by the resignation on Dec. 27 of Brig. Gen. Efi Eitam from the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), following a decision by the General Staff not to promote him to full general. On the day before his resignation, Eitam gave a lecture at Bar-Ilan University, in which he called Arafat "a murderer who five years ago didn't have a place to lay his head." He then declared, "The IDF can tomorrow . . . conquer Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip and expel the population there overnight. It's not a problem to do this. We have a problem of having the will to do this. As a nation, we are inhibited. . . ."

The 48-year-old Eitam, who was described by a former IDF officer as a "fascist," is a "born-again Jew" and a right-wing religious Zionist. Living in a religious Zionist settlement on the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, he is one of the few IDF senior officers to wear the skull cap, the *yar mulke*. In 1988, during the first *Intifada*, he was accused of ordering his soldiers to use clubs to break the bones of Palestinian demonstrators. Several of his soldiers were subsequently convicted of murder, after one Palestinian demonstrator died from these beatings. Although Eitam, who was a colonel at the time, was not convicted, the judge ruled that he was unfit for promotion. But, in 1992, the outgoing Chief of Staff, Gen. Ehud Barak, promoted him to brigadier general. Some Israeli observers have described this promotion as an attempt by the politically ambitious Barak to court the right wing.

Eitam is expected to become leader of the National Religious Party, the party that sees itself as the representative of

the religious Zionist movement in Israel. The NRP is the most influential party in the Jewish settlements, and despite its small size, has been in almost every Israeli government in the past two decades. Furthermore, it is a party that enjoys the closest ties to the right-wing religious Zionists in the United States, who are the biggest financial supporters of the settlements.

### **The Killing of Kahane**

The killing of Binyamin Kahane, the son of the slain Rabbi Meir Kahane, the founder of the terrorist Jewish Defense League, has provided these right-wing fanatics with a martyr (see accompanying article). Ten days before his slaying, the younger Kahane raised \$80,000 in Brooklyn, New York, in order to finance a “private military body” to protect the Jewish settlements. This is extraordinary, since Kahane’s Kach and Kahane Chai organizations have been on the U.S. State Department’s list of terrorist organizations since 1995, making it illegal for them to raise funds in the United States. They were put on that list, following the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Also Baruch Marzei, the head of the Kach Party, was fundraising in the United States at the same time. The donations they solicited were put into the New York-based Kahane Memorial Foundation, which has been given tax-free status by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service.

Neither the U.S. State Department nor the FBI have answered inquiries on how it is possible for them to openly operate in this way. But now that Kahane has been killed, there is a mobilization to have these organizations taken off the terrorist list, which could very well happen under the Bush Administration. In any case, on Jan. 4, the FBI raided the offices of Kach’s U.S. headquarters, the Hatikva Jewish Identity Center, in Brooklyn.

Although Israeli authorities attribute the young Kahane’s slaying to Palestinian gunmen who did not know whom they were killing, some Israeli intelligence sources question this contention. These sources point to the fact that Kahane’s father’s assassination in 1990, occurred during the crisis that led to Sir George Bush’s Gulf War. They also point to the fact that following his death, the younger Kahane, who is considered a fringe fanatic, was raised to almost the status of a national leader.

Prime Minister Barak promised to bring Kahane’s murderers to justice, and apparently ordered the killing of Dr. Thabet Thabet, the director of the Palestinian National Authority’s Ministry of Health, in retaliation. This is despite the fact that the Kahane organization’s website hosts computer games with titles like “The Escape of the Oslo Criminals” and “Whack Barak,” targetting Barak, as well as Labor Party peace architects Shimon Peres and Yossi Beilin.

Kahane’s killing has served as a focal point for mass actions by the settlers. These include pilgrimages from various West Bank settlements converging on Jerusalem, expected to

culminate in a mass demonstration at the gates of the Al Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount later this month. General Eitam is playing a leading role in these marches.

Kahane’s death was already the occasion for violent demonstrations by his followers, and supported by hundreds of others who were members of the National Religious Party in the Old City of Jerusalem. These demonstrators even tried to storm the Al Haram Al Sharif. In addition, Israeli police fear that the mosques on top of the Al Haram Al Sharif could be targetted by rocket launchers deployed from the hilltops that surround the Old City.

### **War Now, or in a Year**

One senior Israeli intelligence source said that the question is not whether a war will occur, but whether there is a war in the immediate period ahead, or a postponement for a year. And whether it is an all-out war against the Palestinian National Authority, or includes Syria, Iraq, and Iran.

In any case, the *Jerusalem Post* on Jan. 3 reported that the Israeli government will ask the incoming Bush Administration for \$350 million, in addition to the \$2 billion in military aid it receives annually from the United States, in order to fund “its preparations for war.”

Speaking on Jan. 1, at the weekly IDF General Staff forum, Barak told his generals to “bear in mind” that the security situation could deteriorate rapidly and lead to war. Although Barak did not order the covers to be taken off the tanks, nor a general call-up of reserves, he ordered preparations to be taken, in terms of accumulating necessary war supplies and training personnel. Extra reservists have been called up to replace full-time combat units that have been deployed in the Occupied Territories, allowing full-time troops to return to regular combat training.

The IDF General Staff is planning for the possibility that the expansion of the conflict with the Palestinians could lead to war with Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq. Meanwhile, they are prepared for an increase in tensions along the Lebanese-Israeli border that could lead to war with Syria and Iran.

### **Are There Prospects for Peace?**

Speaking at a seminar in Washington, D.C. on Jan. 3, Lyndon LaRouche called on President Clinton to move *now*, to announce a policy on Mideast water development: “What we need—and everybody who’s intelligent in Israel will agree—the only way we’re going to avoid a war from breaking out very soon in the Middle East, spreading throughout much of the rest of the world, is to push through *now—right now*, while Clinton is still President—to push through a U.S. position, saying there is no peace in the Middle East, unless there’s a massive program of desalination, to ensure *at least* that there’s the water and the energy needed, so that the children of the present inhabitants of the region have a *peaceful future for their grandchildren*. That should be the policy of the United States.”