

Bush Rebuffs Arabs and Courts Mideast Disaster

by Paul Gallagher

By the end of his meetings with Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak at Camp David on June 7-8, and with Israel's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon at the White House on June 10, President George Bush had all but completely isolated his administration from the Arab nations, a mistake which Secretary of State Colin Powell's hurried floating of the mirage of a "preliminary Palestinian state" did little or nothing to repair. Israel's wide-bodied Prime Minister left with what he considered Washington's implicit backing to do whatever he and his extremist cabinet choose, militarily—not only to Palestine, but to Syria, Iraq, or Iran. In this regard, it was ominous that Sharon's government, just before his trip to the United States, had issued a *démarche* to Syria, charging that it had ordered the bombing of an Israeli bus which killed 13 soldiers and four civilians, wounding many more.

President Bush's listless rebuff—"later, later"—to the energetic intervention of Hosni Mubarak, who demanded an early date-certain for a sovereign Palestinian state, courted disaster, when compounded by his equally listless echoing of Sharon's formulations a few days afterwards. "Now is not the time for peace negotiations," and "first we need a new Palestinian leadership," are precisely the formulations introduced by the crafty fascist Sharon in connection with the staging of the *Karine A* affair in January, to gain time for the continuous invasions of Palestinian territories since then. So it seems that the President who last year made an unusually clear call for a Palestinian state, now goes along with Sharon's idea that an Israeli-puppet leader must first be found to replace Yasser Arafat, and run whatever bantustans and ghettos the Likud party decides to allot him. The U.S. Senate simultaneously passed \$200 million in new aid to Israel in an emergency appropriations bill.

Both America's and Israel's economies are sinking into a global depression, and the two governments are increasingly controlled by factions which want new wars in the Mideast by this Summer or early Fall. Bush's performance, while the news coverage of Lyndon LaRouche's breakthrough presentation at the Zayed Centre of the Arab League in Abu Dhabi on June 2, was still circulating through the Arab world, threw into stark relief the necessary alternative American leadership which LaRouche represents to the Mideast nations.

Mubarak's Proposal a Last Chance

Mubarak's demands upon Israel for the beginning of a political peace-and-statehood negotiation, were an even more

simple form of those of the Saudi peace initiative put forward by the Arab League. As he explained at his June 8 press conference with President Bush at Camp David, "Israel must end the siege imposed on the Palestinian people, and withdraw its forces to positions occupied on Sept. 28th, 2000, and halt assassinations, and the repeated incursions into the territories under the control of the Palestinian Authority, and immediately halt all [new] settlement activities in the occupied territories, including the illegal confiscation of land, and the expansion of settlements under the pretext of natural growth or any other consideration."

All of the Israeli military and colonization activities he cited are already recognized as war crimes and otherwise illegal activities under conventions of international law and UN resolutions; Mubarak was effectively asking that Israel stop committing war crimes, no more. He praised Bush's support for a Palestinian state, and proposed the early declaration of intent by the nations to create that state. As he had told the *New York Times* on June 4, his proposal would confer statehood on all Palestinian lands recognized by the United Nations, before negotiating exact boundaries and other issues such as the existing settlements.

Mubarak pledged his government to push through the reform of the Palestinian Authority leadership, ahead of P.A. elections later this year. But, he insisted, "we have to use Arafat in this present situation."

Egypt's Deputy Minister of Information, Nabil Osman, speaking to a group of journalists in Washington on June 3, called the Mideast situation the worst it has ever been, with the entire region—not only Israel and Palestine—"pushed to the edge of the abyss. . . . We need a deadline, a timetable for a final, not an interim, solution." He emphasized that this cannot happen without an agenda being laid out from the United States, one which is in the United States' own interests. The United States otherwise faces a certain explosion of extremism and war throughout the region.

Sharon's Perpetual War Strategy

American Mideast policy for more than a decade—involving the desire to get Israel to abandon at least its most provocative settlements, and to recognize the "two states at peace" idea—has been dramatically shifted during Bush's seven meetings with Sharon. One of Sharon's major objectives this time was to formally kill a State Department reiteration of the policy of shutting down Israeli settlements within three years. The Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* reported on June 12, that Sharon told Bush, "Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat's immunity is not self-evident," and he did not reiterate a previous promise to the United States not to try to kill Arafat.

Bush, according to *Ha'aretz*'s sources, did not respond. The Israeli Defense Forces, just hours earlier, had reinvaded the West Bank cities of Tulkarm and Ramallah and shelled not just the Palestinian Authority's West Bank headquarters in Ramallah, but Arafat's residence within it. P.A. leaders

were arrested, Ramallah was again declared a war zone, and foreign correspondents were expelled or seized. The London *Sunday Telegraph* that day reported that Israel will force Arafat into exile after the next major suicide bombing.

In an op-ed published in the June 9 *New York Times*, Sharon vowed that Israel will never accept its pre-1967 borders under any circumstance, and claimed that “only a victory in the war on terrorism will provide a new diplomatic basis for a stable Mideast peace.” Thus he seized on the “perpetual war” doctrine of the Clash of Civilizations faction in the United States, which is more and more dominant over the administration. Sharon and his Likud party extremists define “victory over terrorism”—as does that Anglo-American faction—as including war and/or coups against the governments of Syria, Iraq, and Iran, at minimum.

Thus, for the forces President Bush is now encouraging, continuously spreading Mideast war is the “basis for a stable Mideast peace.”

Bush’s all-embracing statement on the invasions of the Palestinian territories—“Israel has a right to defend itself”—also matches Sharon’s formulation, “Security [for Israel] is the prerequisite of peace.” But “security” under Sharon’s rule, clearly not yet attained, has been paid for with the lives of 500 Israeli civilians killed since he became Prime Minister 18 months ago—more than one civilian death per day—not to speak of the Israeli reservists and soldiers killed.

Irreconcilable Breach With Arabs

In fact, President Bush’s current non-policy, leading to certain spreading war, looks for the support not of American Jews or Israelis, but of the extreme “Christian Zionist” fundamentalist groups in the United States which are blackmailing him around the 2002 Congressional and other races in the mid-term elections. In Israel, the peace forces are growing in size and activity, despite widespread “wartime approval” of Sharon among the population (see “Israel’s Beilin Forms New Movement,” *EIR*, June 14, 2002). The more rational position among American Jews was forcefully represented in the June 13 *New York Times* by New York Council on Foreign Relations senior fellow Henry Siegman, the son of refugees from Nazi Germany, who wrote that what he went through as a child enables him now to understand what it is like to be a Palestinian living under Israel’s illegal and brutal occupation. “This does not excuse suicide bombings,” said Siegman, “but the way Israel deals with these outrages is suspect, as long as



Unprepared with any policy for peace, President Bush agreed to Israeli Prime Minister Sharon’s disastrous war policy, after Bush had rebuffed Egyptian President Mubarak’s attempt for peace.

they are exploited to extend the occupation and enlarge Israeli settlements.” He does not look “to the [current] political leaders of Israel, many of whom are Jewishly illiterate, to define for me the meaning of Jewish identity or solidarity.”

It has been evident since the very large April “dueling demonstrations” in Washington, and polls taken at that time, that there is very considerable opposition to Sharon among Americans, definitely including American Jews; and that by pushing Sharon forward in order to please “Christian Zionist” voters, Bush is making a political mistake.

But far more serious are the strategic mistakes involved. The President is unleashing the *golem* of perpetual war in the Mideast. The breach between the United States government and the Arab nations’ leading representatives, after the Mubarak and Sharon trips to Washington, now appears virtually irreconcilable. Colin Powell’s attempt to disguise the breach with an *Al Hayat* interview June 12, in which he mooted an imaginary “provisional Palestinian state,” was rejected out of hand the next day by Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher. From the Arab nations’ standpoint, a Summer of spreading wars and destabilizations looms in the wake of Bush’s mistakes.

President Bush has announced that he is preparing a major Mideast policy pronouncement, following his weeks of meetings with Arab and Israeli leaders. That speech could be delivered before the end of June. The only way for Bush to get out of the Mideast quagmire he has helped create, is to embrace, fully, the plan for genuine Mideast peace, based on large-scale cooperative economic development projects, spelled out by Lyndon LaRouche. If, and only if, Bush goes with the LaRouche “Oasis Plan,” can the Mideast be brought back from the brink of war, even at this late date.