

Sharon's Gambit Signals Weakness of the Right

by Dean Andromidas

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon resigned as chairman of the Likud party on Nov. 21, taking 13 of the party's 40 Knesset members. Forming a party called Kadima (Forward), he took three non-Likud Knesset members, including Haim Ramon and Dalia Itzak of the Labor Party, and independent Knesset member David Tal, with him. Then on Nov. 30, former Labor Party Chairman Shimon Peres, defeated by Amir Peretz in the Labor Party leadership race on Nov. 9, quit the Labor Party to jump into bed with Sharon, to become his "peace envoy."

While Sharon is convinced his latest maneuver will propel him once more into the prime minister's seat in the upcoming March 28 election, well-known Israeli military historian Meir Pa'il told *EIR* that the reality is that Sharon's splitting of the Likud has put the right wing's largest faction into a "process of disintegration. This is good news, no matter what Sharon's own intentions might be." With the disintegration of the right, Pa'il welcomed the election of Peretz as new Labor Party leader, which is now transforming the entire political landscape, allowing an open debate for the first time on "what Israel must do for the next generations." Pa'il, who is also a member of the pro-peace Meretz-Yahad party, said that a successful future for Israel requires a withdrawal from the West Bank, and a peace treaty with the Palestinians. With the remains of the Likud in the hands of leaders like Benjamin Netanyahu and Uzi Landau, the Likud will continue to be in disarray. He said, Netanyahu and Landau are "Israeli Jewish fascists, I would *not* call them Nazis, but they are fascists."

Sharon intends, with his latest gambit, to defeat Amir Peretz and the new agenda Peretz has set for the country. Peretz is demanding an end to the radical free-market economic policies implemented by Netanyahu, when the latter was Finance Minister in Sharon's government. These policies have resulted in widespread poverty, leaving one in four Israeli children living under the poverty line. And Israeli pen-

sioners have been seen rummaging through garbage bins.

Just as important, and just as dangerous for Sharon, Peretz is orienting his campaign toward political developments in Washington, where Lyndon LaRouche is playing a leading role in mobilizing Democratic and Republican party support for the ouster of Vice President Dick Cheney, Sharon's number-one benefactor in Washington. Within days of his election as head of the Labor Party, Peretz held private meetings with former President Bill Clinton and Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.), who were in Israel attending events commemorating the tenth anniversary of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. The Clintons have been playing key roles in this political process in Washington.

Forward to Peace or War?

With Sharon's new party's name, Kadima, his spin doctors are putting out the propaganda line that Sharon intends to march "forward" towards peace and security. But the reality is quite the opposite. The only "peace policy" Sharon has been speaking of is the so-called "Road Map" for a Middle East peace, which was still-born three years ago, when it was first announced by President George W. Bush. Sharon has not implemented one single item of the plan, with the excuse that he is waiting for Palestinian President Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas) to "stop terror." Sharon has made clear he can wait forever, so he is implementing his real agenda of building his Berlin Wall of the Middle East, and grabbing 58% of the West Bank, while preparing Israel for possible war against Iran and Syria.

The same day that Peres announced his intention to join Sharon, the head of Israeli Military Intelligence, Gen. Aharon Zeevi Farkash, let the cat out of the bag. In testimony before the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, he stated that by the end of March 2006, Israel must be prepared

to take military action against Iran to prevent it from producing nuclear weapons.

"If by the end of March 2006 the international community will have failed to halt Iran's nuclear weapons program, diplomatic efforts will be pointless," said Farkash. "Iran has the upper hand in negotiations with the international community." The "end of March" happens to be right after the election scheduled to take place on March 28.

Although he did not detail other options, according to the report in the Nov. 30, 2005 *Jerusalem Post*, sources on the Knesset committee said Farkash was referring to the military option.

Military commentator Ze'ev Schiff, writing in the Nov. 23 edition of the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, warned that Sharon's security chiefs might not wait until after the election, and could launch provocations that could have a serious influence on the election. Schiff warned, "The interim period that the Israeli political system has entered, and the resultant shock waves it is going through, necessarily intensify sensitivity to security. The fact that the current government is left without the balancing ministers, and the crash of the ruling party on the shoals, require extra caution."

Schiff referred to the fear that Israeli Chief of Staff Dan Halutz, Mossad chief Meir Dagan, and Shin Bet chief Yuval Diskin, will now lack "internal monitoring" and possibly launch targeted assassinations and other aggressive activity. "The loss of control and extremism in operational activity could re-ignite a wide-scale military clash. The internal political debate in Israel would be diverted from its main course, when judgment is influenced by security incidents, and not by the overall picture. . . ." Schiff called for an end of aggressive operations, such as targeted assassinations.

Schiff failed to mention the well-known fact that these three security chiefs have all been hand-picked by Sharon, and follow his orders.

As Schiff wrote these words, the Israeli military was continuing military operations in the West Bank, that could provoke terror attacks within Israel which would benefit Sharon, as he attacks Peretz for being "inexperienced" and soft on terror. On Dec. 5, Islamic Jihad did Sharon a favor by sending a suicide bomber into a shopping center in the town of Natanya, killing five Israelis and wounding scores of others. Sharon's ratings in the polls shot up and Peretz's went down.

Peres the Sophist

While internationally Shimon Peres is treated as a noble senior statesman, within the Israeli political scene he has exposed himself as an opportunistic schemer. No one should be surprised by the move of Peres to undercut Amir Peretz and the Labor Party, where Peres spent almost his entire 60-year political career, to jump ship to join Sharon. Peres has been Sharon's partner and served as his diplomatic fig leaf for the last five years, while Sharon carried out a war of attrition against the Palestinians. Peres has also been one of the loudest

voices to attack Iran as the number one danger to Israel.

Peres's announcement that he's joining Sharon because of his commitment to "advance the peace process," was universally seen as mere sophistry. Labor Party Knesset member Ophir Pines Paz declared, "The Labor Party is committed to peace more than any other, and Peres's attempt to use peace as an excuse is pathetic." Peres is just as committed as Sharon to stop Amir Peretz, and like Sharon, is prepared to engage in mud-wrestling tactics. In a disgusting display of vindictiveness, Peres got his own brother, Gigi Peres, to slander Peretz, by making racist comments about Peretz's Moroccan background. Comparing Amir Peretz to Spanish dictator Francisco Franco, Gigi said, "Peretz and his people are a foreign body in the Labor Party. Like General Franco in Spain, they were the falangists who came from southern Spain, who came to infiltrate as a fifth column into Madrid, and destroyed the magnificent republic."

Peretz the Powerhouse

Despite the media lies, Sharon's latest gambit is being made from a position of weakness, not strength. For over a year, Sharon had been conspiring with both Peres and the latter's opportunistic protégé, Haim Roman, the Labor Party Knesset member who has just defected to Sharon's party, to create a new party that would steal large numbers of members from both the Likud and Labor parties. But the Peretz victory reshuffled the political deck and put some fight back into the Labor Party. Sharon may now have 16 Knesset members by his side, but the momentum is expected to subside.

A powerhouse grass roots organizer, and chairman of the Histadrut trade union federation, Peretz has tremendous credibility among the masses of economically distressed Israelis. Born in Morocco, Peretz is seen as a powerful leader within the "Mazrahi" community, who are Jews born in Muslim countries of North Africa and South West Asia. Therefore Peretz represents a major danger to the populist Likud, whose primary base of support has been in the largely economically distressed Mazrahi community, and the new party Sharon has founded. Shrugging off the departure of Peres and Ramon, his political strategy is to bring new faces into Labor who are committed to implementing his new socio economic-peace agenda.

In what is being reported as a major blow to Sharon, Avishai Braverman, the highly respected president of Ben Gurion University of the Negev, rebuffed Sharon's invitation to join his new party, and then announced on Nov. 24 that he was joining the Labor Party. Speaking at a press conference, Braverman said he had resisted entering politics because of his work in building up his university, but "Amir Peretz's entry as the leader of the Labor Party, changed my decision." He said he was convinced that Peretz would bring about an "economic, social, diplomatic, and above all, moral" transformation of Israeli society. "I believe that the state of Israel is at a crossroads today. If Israel continues on its present path,

it will degenerate into a Third World country.”

Another new recruit to Labor is popular TV presenter Shelly Yachomovich, who, in a press conference declared, “I have a world-view and an agenda, and there are things that I want to change in the horror that is raging now. . . .” She said that she had been closely following Peretz for two decades, and that he is the leader she has confidence in.

It remains to be seen whether Sharon will win the election, since the polling agencies that say he will win, are the same polling agencies that predicted that Peres had the upper hand in the election for the chairmanship of the Labor Party, only to see Amir Peretz defeat Peres.

However, a poll on those seen to be corrupt politicians by Israeli citizens, was made public at the Sderot Conference for Society, in Peretz’s home town. The findings read like a who’s who of the top leaders of the Likud Party, Sharon’s new Kadima party, and the Sharon family.

Sixty-five percent of the public view Omri, Sharon’s son, as the most corrupt public official in Israel, and he is also seen as the most corrupt member of the Knesset; he recently pled guilty to violation of the election fundraising law, and criminal fraud in support of his father’s 1999 election campaign. Benjamin Netanyahu, who is running for the chairmanship of the Likud party, is seen as the third most corrupt public official, and 41% believe the title belongs to Ariel Sharon.

In terms of the most corrupt cabinet minister, first place goes to Tzachi Hanegbi, who recently left the Likud for Sharon’s new party. He is followed by Yisrael Katz, also a would-be contender for Likud chairman, and top representative of the settlers’ movement; then Education Minister Limor Livnat who is also running for the Likud chairmanship; then comes Finance Minister Ehud Olmert, who is now number two in Sharon’s new party, with Ariel Sharon in fifth place. by Ariel Sharon.

What can be said clearly, is that the fate of Sharon, Peretz, and the State of Israel, depends on what will happen in Washington. Sharon’s fate is intimately linked with that of Cheney. If the latter is booted out of the White House, Sharon might find himself in early retirement; and then there would be hope for Israel and the Middle East.

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