

Bush Must Now Push For Middle East Peace

by Dean Andromidas

President Bush's only exit strategy from the current quagmire of spreading war and chaos, is for him to move immediately and aggressively to implement—without compromise—the Israel/Palestine two-state solution, with the needed economic investment to assure that it works, said Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche on April 12. Such a move, taken in conjunction with genuine international cooperation to rebuild Iraq, will provoke total hysteria among the neo-conservatives, and the Sharonists in Israel. The President would then have the opportunity to get rid of the filthy neo-conservative apparatus in his Administration.

The situation in Israel and the Palestinian National Authority is primed for such an intervention, as everyone awaits the Administration's release of the "Mideast Peace Road Map" to begin the process that is expected to lead to Bush's vision of a Palestinian state living side by side in peace with Israel. Although its text has not been officially released, it is said to include a demand that Israel freeze settlement activity unconditionally and simultaneously with Palestinian peace moves. Moreover, the road map has the support of the "Quartet"—the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations, along with the United States—each of whose members has delegated a representative who has been in constant discussion with both Israel and the Palestinian National Authority.

Nonetheless, the road map is no more than a work plan that will get the two sides to the negotiating table; it does not deal with substantive issues. It pales in comparison to LaRouche's "vision," which is premised on the Treaty of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years' War religious conflict that ravaged Germany in the 17th Century, and in which the warring parties seek peace through a commitment to ensuring each other's national, political, and economic aspirations. This is embodied in LaRouche's famous Oasis Plan for anchoring a Middle East political settlement in a regional economic plan aimed at developing new water resources through nuclear desalination, and the development of a regional infrastructure which will turn the Middle East into the land-bridge linking Eurasia with Africa.

Sharon and Neo-Cons Must Go

The major obstacle to this road map—a greater problem than Bush's "good friend," Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon—is the gaggle of chicken-hawks in Washington who entertain even more extreme views than Sharon.

Fearing that the Bush Administration would release the road map after the Iraq war, Sharon dispatched his cabinet secretary and top henchman, Dov Weisglass, to Washington on April 11, where he presented Sharon's 100 reservations to the road map, divided into 15 groups. Weisglass, who is also Sharon's personal lawyer and co-suspect in more than one criminal investigation, met with Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice. Although neither Powell nor Rice endorsed any of the Israeli changes prior to the road map's release, two other Administration officials were present at the meeting: NSC director for the Middle East, Elliott Abrams; and Douglas Feith, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy—two of its top chicken-hawks and Likudnik moles.

At the same time, Sharon gave interviews to Israel's two leading dailies, claiming that he is prepared to make "painful concessions" in order to arrive at a "peace for generations." Both were filled with his "yes, but" approach: Yes, he agrees with the road map, "but" he has some reservations.

Nahum Barnea, who interviewed Sharon for the *Yediot Ahronot* on April 16, wrote, "With Sharon, you always have to read the small print." For Sharon, the Palestinians will have to make all their "painful concessions" first, before Sharon is prepared to consider his own "painful concessions." Thus the Palestinians would, as a precondition, have to give up their right of return to their former homes in Israel proper and stop all terrorism, whether the Palestinian Authority is responsible or Hamas. Barnea writes, "The rhetoric may be dovish but the substance is not."

Many have doubts that President Bush will be able, with his current Administration, to make his "good friend" in Tel Aviv follow any road map. Henry Siegman, former president of the American Jewish Congress and senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, penned a commentary appearing in the *International Herald Tribune* on April 15, bluntly declaring, "The much-touted road map for an Israeli-Palestinian peace is a sham." Siegman, who is a strong critic of Sharon, wrote that President Bush, in his Rose Garden speech of March 24—despite his promises of being "personally committed" to support the road map, made it a "sham" when he said that Israel will not be required to stop settlement activity, or change any of the draconian measures it is now implementing, until "the terror threat is removed and security improves," and "progress is made towards peace." These clauses, Siegman charged, negated the most important part of the road map, which stated that there had to be a settlement freeze and negotiations immediately and without preconditions. Thus, Siegman wrote, Bush has "compromised" the process "even before the road map has been formally released" because he has introduced the same formulations used by Sharon to sabotage the previous Mitchell Plan and Tenet proposals, by demanding "seven days of quiet" before he would implement them.

Siegman noted that three years ago, no one would have

characterized a demand for a settlement freeze as being “anti-Israel”; but now it is so labelled, thanks not only to Sharon, but most particularly, to the lobbying of “the Christian fundamentalists, and of an official American Jewish establishment that has embraced a hard-line rightist extremism. It is an extremism that until recently, most of these same Jewish organizations denounced in the strongest terms. It is frightening to realize that Sharon’s policies, which these Jewish organizations now embrace, are far closer to the views of his coalition partners—who advocate ethnic cleansing—than to the views of all of Israel’s previous leaders.”

Yediot Ahoranot’s Nahum Barnea made the same point, when he concluded his interview with Sharon by commenting that the success of the plan lies in Bush’s hands. Although many in Israel believe that Bush will not press Sharon because he fears losing Jewish votes in the 2004 election, Barnea writes that the real reason is the control over Bush by what he calls the “iron triangle” within the Republican Party. This consists of Jewish donors, ideological neo-cons, and the Christian right. This group, stated Barnea, stands to the right of the American Jewish community.

Veteran Israel peace activist Uri Avnery went even further in his article exposing the danger of the neo-conservatives, writing, “After the end of hostilities in Iraq, the world will be faced with two decisive facts: First, the immense superiority of American arms. . . . Second, the small group that initiated this war, an alliance of Christian fundamentalists and Jewish neo-conservatives, has won big, and from now on, will control Washington almost without limits. The combination of these two facts constitutes a danger to the world, and especially to the Middle East, the Arab peoples, and the future of Israel. Because this alliance is the enemy of peaceful solutions, the enemy of the Arab governments, the enemy of the Palestinian people, and especially, the enemy of the Israeli peace camp.

“It does not dream only about an American empire, in the style of the Roman one, but also an Israeli mini-empire, under the control of the extreme right and the settlers. It wants to change the regimes of all Arab countries. It will cause permanent chaos in the region, the consequences of which it is impossible to foresee.”

Sharon Can Be Dumped

At this moment there is a unique opportunity in Israel to dump Sharon, and a move from Washington could go a very long way. Sharon’s weakest flank is the brutal economic program he and Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are desperately trying to implement. According to *Ha’aretz* on April 11, his confidants report that Sharon fears the economic crisis will become the “mass grave” of his government. Sharon’s fears are justified. There is now an open revolt throughout the country, because the program will deconstruct Israel’s welfare state and drastically reduce living standards.

Today, the most popular man in Israel is not Sharon or Netanyahu, but Amir Peretz, the chairman of the Histadrut

labor federation, which has been spearheading the opposition to the economic plan. Peretz, who is also a member of the Knesset for the small One Nation party, has formed an alliance with social organizations, pensioners, and others, who are now holding protest actions throughout the country. Netanyahu finds himself relentlessly pursued by flying squads of the Histadrut’s youth movement who appear at all his public appearances. Demonstrations have been held daily, with slogans like, “Moses led us into freedom and Netanyahu is leading us back into slavery.”

Joining these protests are all the Knesset opposition parties, led by the Labor Party and Meretz, who are saying loud and clear that the occupation and failure to hold peace talks with the Palestinians are among the principal reasons for the economic crisis. Even among Likud voters, over 50% oppose the economic program.

The entire social movement could come to a head right after the Passover holidays, when talks between the Histadrut and the finance ministry over the economic program are expected to collapse. This could lead to a general strike of 500,000 workers, which would be supported by social organizations, pensioners, and others. Such an upheaval could cause a government crisis that could bring down Sharon. Although not yet seen as likely, in the event of a collapse of Sharon’s government, the Israeli President could ask the head of the opposition, Amram Mitzna—chairman of the Labor Party and main advocate for peace negotiations—to form a government.

Pointing once again to the role of Bush, Gideon Samet, commentator for *Ha’aretz*, warned that the only way the “Bush Road Map” will be successful is if Bush makes it successful, by not letting Sharon sabotage it. If it fails, Samet wrote, “The clear culprit will be the person for whom the vision of regional peace is named.”

Samet goes on, “Bush does not need to make any commitment to the Israeli prime minister. The only commitment he should make is for the welfare of the Israelis. And on that score, they have been expressing their opinion for many years . . . in consistent polls. In them there is clear support for deep withdrawals, settlement removal, and any compromise that would bring a gradual end to the conflict. If the American President is not totally decisive about this mission, he will betray the Israeli interest. And if Bush does so because of his personal interests—to enhance his re-election with the help of Jewish votes behind a mask of a flowery vision of peace—he will not find any atonement.”

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