Approved For Release 2010/01/06 : CIA-RDP88-01070R000301560005-0

RADIO TV REPORTS, INC.

4701 WILLARD AVENUE, CHEVY CHASE, MARYLAND 20815 (301) 656-4068

FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM ABC News Special Report

STATION WMAL Radio
ABC Network

DATE January 25, 1985 10:33 P.M.

CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT Sharon/Public Interest

PETER JENNINGS: General Sharon feels vindicated. Time magazine says it won. And how did the public interest fare in the Sharon libel case?

After prolonged deliberations, the jury in the Sharon libel suit against Time magazine returned, you might say, a split decision. The jury agreed that Time magazine acted negligently and carelessly in its allegations abaout General Sharon's reputed role in the massacre of Palestinian civilians. It agreed that the Time story was false and that the General had been defamed, his reputation damaged by the story.

Had General Sharon been a private citizen and not a public figure, that would have been enough to prove that he had been libeled. But the libel laws require a third critical test for public figures: Did Time knowingly print the false report? That is to say, was it printed maliciously and deliberately, knowing it was wrong. On that point, the jury said no. And so there was no libel, and General Sharon will not collect that requested $50 million in damages.

Both sides are claiming to be satisfied with the verdict. General Sharon is happy with the finding that the article about him was false. He feels vindicated. Time magazine says it is pleased with the verdict. The bottom line, say Time officials, is that, quoting them, "We won." Time, although it concedes it made what it called a minor mistake, still insists the story was essentially correct.

And so we come to the larger question, the one of public interest. Any reporter in broadcast or print journalism knows, or ought to know, the amount of public distrust that exists about

Material supplied by Radio TV Reports, Inc. may be used for file and reference purposes only. It may not be reproduced or exhibited.
Approved For Release 2010/01/06 : CIA-RDP88-01070R000301560005-0

Approved For Release 2010/01/06 : CIA-RDP88-01070R000301560005-0

the way we report the news. Despite court findings in case after case that no libel existed, a lot of people don't believe we're telling the truth.

Time really ought to rethink its victory. When we are wrong, we should say we are wrong and apologize. Freedom of the press implies a responsibility at least to do that much.

Approved For Release 2010/01/06 : CIA-RDP88-01070R000301560005-0