

# Rumblings in the Zionist State

The Palestinian people's heroic uprising has led to further polarization in the Zionist state. Labor-Likud friction has escalated, and there are realignments among Israeli parties. New dissenting groups have surfaced, as has discontent in the army. At the same time, polls show a move toward the small parties of the extreme right, and it is yet unclear which of the two major blocs in Israeli politics will come out ahead in the event of elections.

## CONSENSUS ON REPRESSION

In terms of how to deal with Palestinian unrest in the immediate situation, the Israeli coalition government has displayed a high degree of unity, fully backing the army's repression. On December 24th, the cabinet approved the methods used to suppress the uprising, including shooting to kill, the banning of the Palestinian press and mass arrests hitting Palestinians as young as ten years of age. In late December, the inner cabinet met to consider *stronger* measures to halt the uprising, ordering the deportation of nine Palestinians. Four of them were deported on January 13th.

On January 17th, the whole cabinet endorsed the brutal measures being implemented by the occupation army, which had escalated to include sealing about 300,000 Palestinians in their West Bank and Gaza Strip camps, causing food shortages, and the policy of «beating not bullets,» i.e., the deliberate breaking of bones and other forms of maiming.

As the government followed the typical Zionist pattern of closing ranks in the face of any real or supposed threat, polls showed that this position reflected public opinion. As reported by the Israeli newspaper, *Yediot Aharanot*, on December 25th, 96% of the Israelis polled by the Dahev Institution concurred with the army's measures. Later, Gallup conducted a poll for *Newsweek* magazine, which was printed in the Israeli daily *Haaretz* on January 18th; 86% of those who responded supported repressive means to end the uprising; 81% supported the expulsion policy; 40% thought the measures being taken were lenient and

insufficient, while 46% judged them to be sufficient.

There did seem to be some hesitancy about restricting the press from the occupied territories, because the Zionist leadership was loath to make the obvious parallel between itself and the apartheid regime in South Africa. However, parts of the Gaza Strip were declared off-limits to the press in January, and the press was barred from the West Bank in early March, after worldwide viewing of the CBS film of four Israeli soldiers brutally and deliberately beating two tied Palestinians in Nablus. Israeli Labor Minister justified the ban with the absurd claim that: «... the presence of the media causes the riots.»

Labor's convergence with Likud on beating down the uprising with brute force did have internal repercussions in the party. Member of Knesset Abdul Wahhab Al Darawsheh (a Palestinian living under occupation since 1948) withdrew from the Labor Party on January 23rd, under the impact of the huge Nazareth demonstration in solidarity with the uprising. He charged that Labor policies would never bring peace or equality between Arab and Jew in 'Israel' and further targeted

Rabin's tough policy and the broad support this enjoyed in the party's ranks. Darawsheh went on record with his own position of recognizing the PLO, and demanding Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

Dovish forces in the Labor party argued for a course other than that set by Rabin, and articulated by Peres as follows: «First of all, the fire in the occupied territories must be put out, using as much force as necessary.» Such people were pressured by the party not to participate in Peace Now events. After Rabin was received in a hostile manner by a group of fellow Laborites, Labor rightists held a meeting of their own and threatened to cause a split in the party «if the dovish rampage is not stopped» (*Israel and Palestine Political Report*, January 1988).

## LABOR—LIKUD COMPETITION

Differences did sharpen between the Labor and Likud blocs on the means to a political solution to the crisis caused by the uprising. The two blocs traded accusations as to the uprising's causes. Laborites accused the Likud of driving the Palestinians to revolt by rejecting means to a political solution, such as an international conference. Likud and other extreme rightists claimed that Labor's «defeatism» had encouraged the Palestinians to revolt. To put this war of words in perspective, let us look at an example of Labor's «defeatism»: On December 26th, on Israeli army radio, Defense Minister Rabin, lifelong

