

A Coalition Government, A Likud Program

The failure of the Israeli policy of attempting to end the intifada through brutal military force is becoming more apparent with each passing day. The gains of the intifada and its repercussions locally and on the international level are taking their toll on the Israeli government. The failure of the «military solution» is being uttered increasingly by government officials from both the Likud and Labor. In the words of the army's Chief of Staff, Dan Shomron, «There is no such thing as eradicating the intifada because in its essence it expresses the struggle of nationalism.»¹

Israelis from a broad political spectrum have also voiced their ambivalence vis-a-vis a military solution, including Defense Minister Rabin who was quoted as saying in an inner cabinet meeting, «It is not possible to put an end to the intifada militarily.»² The head of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Security Committee, Eliahu Ben Elissar admitted: «The Palestinians are winning and we are losing.»³

This phenomenon, which is an offshoot of the intifada and which permeates the Israeli army and government circles, has not yet manifested in a practical and viable political program for reaching a solution.

In addition to the intifada and as a result of it, there has been mounting pressure in Israel and internationally for the coalition government to work towards a negotiated settlement. Two separate polls taken this year by the Israeli Institute of Applied Social Research and Dafah indicate that more than half of the Israelis are in favor of negotiations with the PLO. According to the Institute of Applied Social Research, 65% of Israelis are in favor of exchanging territory (occupied) for peace.⁴

On the international level, the European Economic Community has praised the PLO peace initiative and called on Israel to reciprocate. The US had decided to open a dialogue with the PLO. The Palestinian state was

declared at the 19th PNC (Palestine National Council) in Algiers and has gained the recognition of 87 countries world-wide, and at the UN numerous resolutions have been passed in the Security Council and in the General Assembly condemning Israeli atrocities, in addition to the decision to allow the state of Palestine to speak, as any other nation, within the Security Council.

The reaction of the Israeli government has been to step up repression - more killings, expulsions, home demolitions, land confiscations, imprisonment, collective punishment, etc., meanwhile declaring sham «political initiatives.»

One month before the formation of the government, Shamir announced his «new ideas» for a solution. Far from an initiative or a plan, these ideas are in essence within the framework of the Camp David agreements which were signed between Israel and Egypt a decade ago. Shamir presented three «new ideas.» The first calls for holding municipal elections without the participation of the PLO, but PLO sympathizers would be allowed to run for office. The second idea is the establishment of limited «self-rule» (Bantustans) whereby elections for this «self-government» would take place at a later date. The third idea is to conduct direct negotiations with the Arab governments on the basis of the Camp David agreements and the participation of Jordan. The UN, the US and the Soviet Union would be allowed to attend but not to participate in any way.

Shamir is trying to abort the intifada first and foremost, and to create an alternative Palestinian leadership instead of the PLO. This Palestinian «leadership» would then be in charge of «self-rule,» i.e., taking care of municipal and administrative duties, while the Israeli army would remain to oversee security matters.

Meanwhile, Rabin who has been using the big stick (brute force and beatings) to quell the intifada has finally offered the Palestinians the carrot.

To his dismay, however, it did not stop the intifada or slow it down; nor did it win support or encouragement from the Palestinians, or anyone else. Before declaring his initiative, Rabin delegated his generals to meet with Palestinians in an effort to illicit their support. Afterwards, Rabin called for elections (excluding the PLO) as a prelude to direct negotiations with the alternative «leadership.» In return Rabin is asking for an end to the intifada. Rabin's «generosity» extends to such limits as allowing this alternative «leadership» to consult with the PLO. However, according to Rabin, only the Palestinians in the occupied territories are to be included in his initiative.

In an effort to instill life in this doomed initiative, Rabin later extended his offer to any Palestinian in the West Bank to be part of this scheme, regardless of their political views. Rabin's attempts at bypassing the PLO and dividing the Palestinian people have failed miserably. As far as he is concerned, negotiating with the PLO would lead to an eventual Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories and the establishment of a Palestinian state and that, Rabin explains, is a «national catastrophe which can only be accepted by someone who is crazy.» Rabin will have a hard time trying to find a Palestinian crazy enough to accept his plan. Meanwhile, Peres declared his own plan which includes a confederation between Jordan, Israel and the occupied territories.

The United National Leadership of the Intifada has warned against these proposed elections in its call number 33, and considered them a conspiracy like «self-rule» and the Shultz plan which called for negotiations between Israel and a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. The UNL categorically refused the idea of holding elections under occupation.

The program of the Israeli government is clearly against the attainment of peace, despite the new political realities born out of the intifada, the declaration of the Palestinian state, the 19th PNC ►