

The «Greater Israel» Government

On June 11th, the Knesset voted confidence in Prime Minister Shamir's newly formed rightist coalition. The stated priorities of the new government are to «uproot» the Palestinian intifada and to «absorb» the new waves of Soviet Jewish immigration. The formation of this government signals a new stage of Zionist colonization and efforts to drive the Palestinian people from their homeland.

by Farida Al Asmar

Government spokesman Yossi Olmert described the new coalition as a «nationalistic right-wing government but one dedicated to pursue the peace process,» but this only aims to throw dust in the face of the international community. The government is more like a new declaration of war on the Palestinian people and their rights. Its platform pledges to «enhance, expand and develop» settlements in «all the land of Israel» (read: especially in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and whole Jerusalem district). Such settlement-building is considered «the right of the Jewish people» and «an inseparable part of our (Israeli) national security» (*International Herald Tribune*, June 9-10th).

The new platform reaffirms the basics of the previous government such as the Camp David accords and the Shamir plan, ruling out negotiations on Jerusalem's final status as well as any direct or indirect contacts with the PLO. The Shamir plan has been bulwarked against any possible liberal interpretations. In early May, Likud ministers Meridor and Nissin drew up guidelines for the coming government that specifically excluded East Jerusalem from any peace talks as well as from the autonomy plan; it also excluded the 140,000 Palestinians of Jerusalem from voting in the envisioned West Bank elections. The Cairo meeting proposed to lead to a Palestinian-Israeli dialogue was simply not mentioned in the new platform. Instead, the parts of the Shamir plan dealing with talks with the Arab governments and the «rehabilitation of the refugee camps» were reasserted.

Surely this is a government for «Greater Israel,» signalling new political and physical attacks on the Palestinians, more violent military repression in the occupied territories, the definitive resurgence of state-organized settler terrorism and intensified settlement-building. The «Greater Israel» coalition aims to end once and for all any Palestinian claims to Palestine, or even a part of it.

The settlement-transfer junta

Ariel Sharon, responsible for the Sabra-Shatila massacre, wanted the post of defense minister, but it is no less dangerous that he received the housing and construction portfolio. He also heads a special committee for absorbing new immigrants. Since there is already an Absorption Ministry *per se*, and since Jerusalem falls under the jurisdiction of the Housing Ministry, placing Sharon in this post indicates that the new government wants to fill Jerusalem with the new Soviet Jewish immigrants. The attack on Palestinian presence in Jerusalem's Old City and surrounding districts, already escalated under Shamir's caretaker government, will be waged with new vengeance.

The appointment of Rafael Eitan of the Tzomet Party as Agriculture Minister also echoes Zionist crimes of the past. In Lebanon, in 1982, he was army chief-of-staff and teamed up with Sharon, then Defense Minister, in the effort to annihilate the PLO, with the ultimate aim of enabling Israeli annexation of the 1967 occupied territories. The Agricultural Ministry is pivotal in gaining access to funds for promoting settlements. Sharon and Eitan failed in Lebanon, but they can now team up again for a new colonial invasion, this

time attacking the occupied State of Palestine and its capital, Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, the US-educated veteran of the Israeli arms industry, former Foreign Minister Moshe Arens, resumes the post of defense minister which he held in 1983-4, with the special task of supervising a new Israeli effort to crush the uprising.

In view of the slim majority which Shamir's new government commands in the Knesset, many have questioned how long it can last and how much it can accomplish. But there should be no doubt that it is a landmark in the ongoing shift to the right on the Israeli political scene. The Palestinian intifada has created new polarization in the Israeli polity. Though more Israelis began to see the need for coming to terms with the reality of the Palestinian cause, the stronger tendency in this polarization was towards the right - for more repression and fascism. The new government symbolizes this increased right-wing tendency and will at the same time serve to reinforce it through more aggressive wielding of state power.

The danger of efforts to implement the «transfer» option - mass expulsion of Palestinians - has thus increased. Shamir had, in fact, planned to appoint Rehavan Ze'evi, leader of Moledet, the party which openly advocates transfer, as police minister. This would have given Ze'evi a chance to carry out his promise of «liquidating the intifada» in the Jerusalem area. In the end, Moledet did not join the new government, because its position is even more openly extreme than that of Likud; it rejects Camp David and the autonomy plan as giving too many concessions to the Palestinians. However, those favoring «transfer» are a trend much broader than this one party; they are well represented in the new government which will give much more space to work for this goal. A poll published in Israel on May 29th confirms polls of the last few years concerning the strength of the transfer option: it showed that one-half of Israeli teenagers (tomorrow's soldiers and politicians) are for expulsion of