

## In Israeli Elections, It's Shultz /Cheney vs. Sanity

by Dean Andromidas

After the victory of Hamas in the recent Palestinian elections, George Shultz and his crony, Vice President Dick Cheney, are taking no chances with the upcoming Israeli elections. They are doing what they can to ensure that a government comes to power over which they can exercise control, and when necessary, use it to strike against Iran, or otherwise start a new Middle East war. Such a government would be a coalition between Ariel Sharon's Kadima Party, now led by the former's top crony, Ehud Olmert, and the Likud headed by Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu, whose number one political patron is George Shultz. (See *EIR*, Feb. 23, 2006). The key to this operation is to ensure that the Labor Party, led by Amir Peretz, doesn't come anywhere close to the government table, either as Prime Minister or as a coalition partner.

Making a rare public statement on the Middle East, George Shultz told *Washington Post* columnist Jim Hoagland (March 5, "What's Achievable in the Mideast") that any effort for a Middle East peace should be dropped, and unilateral steps should be made to provide Israel's security, the exact policy that had been pushed by Sharon and his successor Ehud Olmert.

Discussing Shultz's policy, Hoagland wrote, "As former Secretary of State George Shultz, who thinks deeply about the Mideast, told me recently, the failure of the Oslo Accords and the Camp David talks has to be acknowledged and corrected." Shultz told Hoagland, "The only thing the Palestinians have, at this point, to offer the Israelis is a willingness to participate in constructing a secure environment." Hoagland quoted Shultz on his endorsement of Sharon's Berlin Wall of the Middle East: "But if the Palestinians won't commit to that, and the Israelis can produce that outcome themselves through security barriers and other means, negotiations are

pointless," Shultz said. "There are times when it is best not to try to get people to agree on a finality."

"Instead of getting bogged down in tactical disputes over whether to have diplomatic contacts with Hamas as a prelude to resuming peace negotiations, the Bush team and its allies should commit themselves to creating the conditions for the controlled separation of Israelis and Palestinians through effective and equitable security barriers by Jan. 1, 2009," Hoagland concludes. "Separation has replaced negotiation as the only viable approach to coexistence—at least for the time left to Bush—for both Israelis and Palestinians."

This is the old "no peace, no war" policy which led to the Arab-Israeli wars of 1956, 1967 and 1973.

### Will the Next War Be an Israeli-Iranian war?

Speaking March 7 at the annual conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in Washington, Vice President Cheney threatened to impose "meaningful consequences" on Iran if it dared to defy the Bush Administration dictate over its nuclear energy program.

According to an *EIR* intelligence source, "The fact that Dick Cheney and [other] administration officials made all those provocative speeches at the AIPAC conference just connects the two issues, an attack on Iran while Israel's own nuclear weapons are in effect protected by the U.S." The source agreed that Shultz and Cheney want a military strike against Iran. He indicated growing concern in official circles in Britain that Israel will attack Iran.

At a March 9 press conference in Berlin, Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, in answer to a question on whether Israel had a contingency plan in case the international attempts to stop the Iranian nuclear program fail, replied, "The

state of Israel has many drawers, containing all it needs in order to defend our citizens. . . . We do not intend to turn a blind eye to any threat that we may face, and we will do everything so that the threat is not realized.” Everyone knows that in one of those “drawers” are as many as 200 nuclear weapons. Mofaz, number four or five on the Kadima electoral list, will most likely be Defense Minister again, if his party wins the elections.

### **Amir Peretz: I Will Shape Reality**

Since Labor Party Chairman Amir Peretz is committed to a policy of statesmanship, not brinksmanship, as he made clear in an interview, he is opposed to the confrontation scenarios of Shultz and Cheney, and they would not like to see him become prime minister. Widely-known Israeli journalist Ari Shavit, in the March 3 *Ha'aretz*, describes Peretz as, “surprising in his honesty and directness. His faith in his personal gospel is so strong that it doesn’t even occur to him to fudge or obscure it. . . . He says his truth without any obfuscation.”

When asked, “What do you represent?” he answered, “Amir Peretz is the new Israel,” and went on to discuss how he, being of Moroccan, not European origin, overcame the problem of the socio-economic divide in Israel, that has been largely along ethnic lines. In this situation, he said Israel has two options: “either to sink into the mire of bitterness or transform the difficulty into an empowering and tempering instrument that adds to your strength. I always chose the second option.”

To the question whether he was “built to make a decision” if necessary to bomb Iran, Peretz answered, “I think I’m more capable than any of the other candidates of making a decision. My advantage over the others is that the moment the bombing of Iran appears as a possible mode of action, from that moment I must not sleep day or night in order to try and prevent that. The wisdom is not to reach a point where you say there is no choice, all options have been exhausted. The question is what to do before that happens. And I think this is my advantage over the others. I’m trying to forge a policy that will shape reality and I’m not willing to have reality dictate policy to me.”

### **Cheneyacs Want ‘Rambos’**

Peretz attacked the “Rambo” pose which the Cheneyacs expect Israeli prime ministers to take on security. “I’m not impressed by this Rambo pose. I find it ludicrous. And it hurts Israel, too.”

On a peace agreement, he said he would do everything possible to prevent starving the Palestinians. Israel will have to withdraw to the 1967 borders, withdraw at least 60,000 settlers, and exchange land and money for certain settlement blocks.

Peretz then attacked Bibi’s economic policy, which is so dear to Shultz, by saying that both Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Rabin addressed the divide between rich and poor,

and in this respect were the first social democrats. “Then came the bad years of Bibi, Sharon and Olmert. In those years the pie was resliced. . . . They created a situation in which out of 2.48 million salaried workers, one million make less than NIS 3,300 a month (about \$750). And there are a million workers without a pension. . . .”

When asked about Kadima, he said it represents “18 moneyed families. I think it is illogical for 18 families to hold most of Israel’s capital. It is untenable for there to be wealth on such a mammoth scale alongside such stark social distress. It is wealth on a scale kings and emperors never knew. It is perfectly clear that the families with this unimaginable wealth are connected to those in Kadima. . . . It is clear that when a Kadima government would make decisions, it would take into account the interests of the 18 families and this would be at the expense of the general public.” As for Ehud Olmert, “it’s clear that those who control capital are his reference group. . . . He is very plugged into groups of capital holders inside and abroad. Clearly that influences his decisions. . . .”

As for his own economic policy, Peretz said he would immediately raise the minimum wage to \$1,000 a month, reduce the power of the infamous manpower companies, and end privatization in the area of infrastructure, security, and social services. He would implement a law calling for free education from the first year through four years of university education. As for unemployment, he would end the notorious Wisconsin plan and turn the “whole employment service into a huge educational center to which universities and colleges will contribute.” This would be part of his plan to “foment a revolution in the sphere of the culture of idleness, not unemployment,” where the unemployed will have the opportunity to study (“don’t care what they study”) to “restore self-respect and self-confidence to the unemployed, and give them a framework. That will enhance the human capital in Israel.”

### **Kadima: The Party of the Living Dead**

The Kadima campaign has combined the creation of an atmosphere of fear and the macabre. The fear has been created by deploying the army to conduct targeted assassinations, whose consequences inevitably lead to revenge suicide bombings in Israel. The Hamas election victory in the Palestinian National Authority has been used to justify the continuation of the brutal occupation, and the cutting of all fund transfers. Furthermore Kadima has tried to link Hamas with an alleged “axis of terrorism” stretching from the West Bank, through Syria and Iraq into Iran.

Defense Minister Mofaz threatened to assassinate the Hamas Prime Minister-designate Ismail Haniyeh, if Hamas carries out terror attacks. Mofaz told Israel’s army radio, “If Hamas, as a terror organization, faces us with this challenge—the state of Israel confronting a terrorist organization—no one there is immune, not just Ismail Haniyeh, no one there is immune.”

Nonetheless, Kadima's biggest political asset continues to be its founder, Ariel Sharon, who has been lying comatose in a Jerusalem hospital for the last two months. The Kadima's election TV ads are an ode to Sharon as one of the "founding fathers" of the nation who bears the wounds of its wars, and how Ehud Olmert is his anointed successor. In keeping with the macabre, an old recording of Sharon's voice attacking Netanyahu has been resurrected for the ads.

But Olmert is not a new Sharon. His military career never went beyond his three-year national service, and the only battles he fought were in court for his rich corporate clients. In some of those court battles, he served as a defendant facing corruption charges. Nonetheless, with open support from the three leading dailies, including the moderate *Ha'aretz*, the polls give Kadima enough votes to form a government.

### **Netanyahu: With Help From Friends and Enemies**

In addition to behind-the-scenes help from his old patron, George Shultz, Netanyahu has benefited from an atmosphere of fear. The same polls indicate that his Likud party is gaining on Kadima. On March 8, Netanyahu got a boost from an unexpected source, Palestinian President Abu Mazen, who in a surprise statement gave his endorsement of Olmert.

"We'll respect the will of the Israeli people. I hope Olmert wins." Abu Mazen said in an interview to the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera*. "I know him well. I believe that with him we could work in a productive way." He also called Shimon Peres, now in Kadima, an "old friend."

Intelligence sources attribute this unprecedented action to pressure from the United States, especially the threat to cut all \$500 million in U.S. aid because the Palestinian people exercised their democratic right, giving Hamas a majority in the January elections.

Abu Mazen's statement could draw pro-peace elements away from the Labor Party towards Kadima. Nonetheless, it was an unexpected gift to Netanyahu, since it gave "proof" to Bibi's rhetoric against Olmert as a sell-out.

Bibi said he was not surprised by Abu Mazen's endorsement of Olmert, because contrary to Olmert, Bibi said, "I am looking after Israeli interests."

These maneuvers are aimed at drawing more left-of-center pro-peace votes away from the Labor Party to the Kadima, under the illusion that it will finally lead to a withdrawal from the territories. At the same time it will bring more right-of-center votes back into the Likud, bolstering Netanyahu and the possibility for a Likud-Kadima government.

Many observers are saying that the opinion polls are misleading, and are unable to gauge the mood of the poor development towns where the Labor Party is reportedly gaining support. Nonetheless, as long as Cheney and Shultz are anywhere near the White House, the hope for a peaceful Middle East is grim, no matter who wins the Israeli elections.