

Labor Political Report

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The new Likud-led government of Israel has begun to implement its policy positions in both foreign and domestic areas. In the course of just several months, the following far reaching decisions have been made:

1. The previous Labor government's freeze on the expansion and building of new settlements has been canceled.
2. The oral agreements gained in laborious negotiations with the Syrians have been rejected out of hand by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.
3. The Ministry of Infrastructure has announced plans to build a new highway crisscrossing the West Bank.
4. The Ministry of Education has announced its decision to all but close its Unit for Democracy and Coexistence. This department has been responsible for developing, encouraging and implementing both formal and informal educational programs on the subjects of democracy and Jewish-Arab relations.

Achievements of the new Prime Minister:

1. The greatest friend of Israel ever to serve in the office of President of the United States, Bill Clinton, was stunned to learn first hand that the campaign rhetoric of the new Israeli Prime Minister was an accurate expression of the policy positions which his government actually intends to implement.
2. For the first time in more than a decade it appears that the Arab world is once again united in its opposition to the policies of the State of Israel.

Quote/Unquote

On the peace process:

"Israel will be the principal casualty of the current paralysis in the peace process since it is likely to reverse the goal (of peace) and result in a violent response.

The positions of the Netanyahu government are likely to expose Israel to danger".

Osmah El Baz, Advisor to Egyptian President Mubarak.

19 August 1996

The Palestinian track:

"I hope that this (Israeli) Government will understand that settlements and peace do not go hand in hand. If the government of Israel does not understand that the meaning of the settlements is that in another 20-30 years this area will be a Bosnia... it is playing with fire. If the Netanyahu government continues with settlement activity of any kind, it will mean the burial of the peace process... Settlements will bring violence, and peace and violence do not go together, and settlements and peace do not go together".

Saib Arekat, a senior Palestinian Authority leader, 26 July 1996

The Syrian track:

"The essential meaning of the (Israel govt's) policy change on the Syrian track is the appreciable increase in the likelihood of a war with Syria.

The current government's positions represents a general retreat from the understandings achieved in negotiations during the period of the Rabin and Peres governments.

So long as the negotiations continue to be frozen the Syrian motivation will increase to initiate a war intended not necessarily to win but to break the negotiation stalemate. The objectives of such a war will be political.

The sole area in which Syria can cause great damage - if not militarily but surely psychologically - is an attack against the civilian home front.

The idea of "peace *with* the Golan" is a fantasy. Therefore the choice is "peace *or* the Golan". If Israel chooses to maintain its sovereignty on the Golan Heights then the government ought to openly say to the nation that it is very likely that we will have to defend this sovereignty with force. And it is possible that this time the main casualties will be civilian and on the home front".

Ze'ev Maoz, Director, Jaffe Center for Strategic Research, Tel Aviv University, 18 August 1996