

# Netanyahu As Israel's Generalissimo Franco

by Dean Andromidas

Finance Minister Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu's Aug. 7 resignation from the Cabinet of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, indicates that his intention is to topple Sharon's government, which, according to Israeli sources, he would carry out by leading a fascist movement in the tradition of the Falange of Spanish dictator Generalissimo Francisco Franco and the Fascist Benito Mussolini.

Netanyahu hopes to capture the ferment of the tens of thousands of settlers, right-wing activists, and messianic Zionist fascists who have taken to the streets of Israel, to protest Sharon's disengagement from Gaza.

The latest poll of members of Sharon's and Netanyahu's Likud party, revealed a dramatic shift toward support of Netanyahu. If an election were to be held today for the chairmanship of the Likud, according to the poll, Netanyahu would receive 47%, and Sharon only 33%. Commenting on the potentially disastrous situation Sharon faces in the Likud, the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* on Aug. 10 warned that Sharon might consider going to war, since "it seems as if only a political miracle could change the situation [for Sharon]. A successful disengagement [from Gaza], or alternatively a major military operation, might do the trick. . . ." Since the Bush Administration is committed to an attack on Iran, it cannot be ruled out that Sharon would order an Israeli pre-emptive attack on Iran's nuclear facilities.

In Israel, it is being taken as a foregone conclusion that Sharon's government will fall after the completion of the disengagement from Gaza. The Knesset could fail to pass the 2006 national budget, which would automatically lead to new elections. Sharon would then be expected to put any further withdrawals from the occupied territories on political ice, to devote his energies to winning the elections. A political advisor of Sharon told the Aug. 10 *Ha'aretz*, that if Sharon lost the leadership of the Likud, he would run in an "alternative framework." "Once upon a time, Sharon created the Likud," said Sharon's advisor. "Now, he can create a new Likud."

Commentators are saying this could signal the so-called "big bang," in which Sharon's faction would join with parts of the Labor Party and the neo-liberal Shinui party, to form a "centrist party," leaving the right wing of the Likud, the settlers, and the lunatics for Netanyahu. This new formation would not be committed to a peace process, but to the comple-

tion of Sharon's Berlin Wall, and concentrating on the so-called "existential threat of a nuclear-armed Iran."

## 'The Lost Cause'

In the press conference announcing his resignation, Bibi admitted that stopping the disengagement was a "lost cause," but, casting himself as the hero, declared, "I am not willing to be party to a move that ignores reality and blindly advances toward the establishment of an Islamic terrorist base that threatens the state." He went on to say, "A stone has been lifted from my heart. Now I feel at peace." Referencing his father, the historian Benzion Netanyahu, an expert on Zionist revisionist Ze'ev Jabotinsky, Netanyahu said, "I am the son of a historian. In another 10, 50, or 100 years, I want people to say unequivocally: He was not party to this."

It was not for his place in "history" that Netanyahu made such populist statements, but to play up to the Israeli right. In its editorial commenting on Netanyahu's resignation, on Aug. 8, *Ha'aretz* declared: "Benjamin Netanyahu's resignation from the government right before disengagement places him, finally, in the spot that suits him—as the leader of the extreme right in Israel. Netanyahu crowned himself as the leader of the [secular] nationalist and nationalist religious camps."

*Ha'aretz* then warned that his resignation could make him leader of the ultra right, transforming Israeli politics: "Perhaps" Bibi's resignation "will also signal the beginning of a reform of the political system, and the reorganization of political parties, based on their genuine, updated platforms. On the one side will be the camp of the entire occupied Land of Israel, and on the other side will be the parties that support democracy in an Israel with redrawn borders."

## The 'Orange Falangists'

With this new political offensive, Netanyahu is making a bid to become Israel's own Generalissimo Franco, who came to power in Spain in 1939 at the head of his Falangist storm-troopers.

This comparison was made by Israeli commentator Gideon Samet, who wrote in the Aug. 10 *Ha'aretz*: "Likud Member of Knesset Benjamin Netanyahu offered himself this week as the leader of the orange Falangists." The fanatic opponents of Gaza disengagement adopted the color orange, unlike the Spanish Falangists who wore black shirts. Samet went on to note that Netanyahu "has placed himself at the head of the action of a widespread subversive rebellion of which we are now seeing only the beginning." He called Netanyahu's resignation a "putsch-like move" and only a "narcissistic Napoleonchik" like Netanyahu would think that "history" will even remember his name 50 or a 100 years hence.

"Generalissimo" Bibi's Orange Falangists will be a combination of revisionist Zionists loyal to the teaching of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, who was an open admirer of Mussolini, and the messianic religious Zionism which has been predominant in the settlers' movements in the West Bank and Gaza. He will

draw spiritual and monetary support from the Christian Zionist allies in the United States among the tens of millions of Christian fundamentalists.

The orange-shirted stormtroopers will be drawn from the right wing of the Likud, which takes inspiration from Jabotinsky as well as the nationalist Jewish terrorist Stern gang, whose leaders in 1948 were thrown into prison by Israel's founding father David Ben Gurion. They would be joined by several right-wing factions now in the Knesset, which have been mobilizing against the disengagement plan. These include the Renewed National Religious Zionism party, led by Effie Eitam, a "newly religious" former Israeli military officer, who is often referred to in the Israeli press as a "fascist" or "kook." Others would include the National Union party and its two factions; one, the Moledet party, led by Rabbi Benny Elon, who provided spiritual inspiration for Yigal Amir, the assassin of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. This party calls for the "transfer" of the Palestinian population out of the "Land of Israel."

The other faction is the ethnic Russian Party, Yisrael Beiteinu. The latter's leader, Avigdor Lieberman, was Netanyahu's campaign manager and chief of staff when Bibi was Prime Minister, at the end of the 1990s. Lieberman then left the Likud to form his party, in order to build support for Netanyahu within Israel's Russian immigrant community. One of Lieberman's financial supporters is the notorious Russian tycoon Michael Chorney, who lives in Israel because he is wanted by the Russian government for a number of mob-related crimes.

Netanyahu, along with these other factions, enjoys close connections to the Christian Zionists in the United States. For example, Knesset member Yuri Stern of the Yisrael Beiteinu is the founder and leader, along with Rabbi Benny Elon, of the Knesset Lobby group, the Christian Allies Caucus. On Sept. 2-5, the Caucus will be sponsoring a conference in Fort Worth, Texas, whose speakers' list reads like a Who's Who of the U.S. Christian Zionist movement. It could very well become a rally for Netanyahu.

### **Draconian Austerity Policy**

Netanyahu is not only a would-be Generalissimo, he is also a modern-day Hjalmar Schacht—Hitler's Economics Minister, and the man who helped Bank of England Governor Montagu Norman organize the financial backing to put Hitler in power. As Finance Minister in Sharon's government, Bibi implemented radical free-market reforms and brutal austerity that has deeply scarred the Israeli population. The day after he resigned, the fruits of this policy were exposed in an official report of the Israeli National Insurance Institute on poverty in Israel, during the first two years of his policy. In 2003, poverty went from 18.1% of the population to 19.3%, and in 2004 it increased to 20.3%. There are now 1.534 million Israeli poor, including 700,000 children: a rise of more than 100,000 people in a population of 6 million.

"Nobody has caused so much suffering to so many people, and nobody has inflicted such a moral disgrace with his policy on all of us as Netanyahu has," said Member of the Knesset Yossi Sarid, of the Yahad-Meretz party.

The chairman of Israel's Histadrut Labor Federations, Amir Peretz, declared, "This is a stain which Netanyahu cannot escape from even if he escaped from the Finance Ministry. This report is an indictment against the entire government."

Like Schacht, Netanyahu is only implementing the policies of his controllers in the Anglo-American financial oligarchy, especially George Shultz, the architect of the Bush Administration. Shultz, descended from the Wall Street financial circle that put Hitler in power, has been Netanyahu's political godfather for more than 20 years.

Having lived many years in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, Netanyahu has built strong bonds with such neo-cons as Daniel Pipes, Richard Perle, and those in the Bush Administration like John Bolton. A few days after his resignation, Netanyahu reportedly headed for New York and Washington, where he was no doubt huddling with his neo-conservative friends, and soliciting money for his political campaign.

The big question is, whether Dick Cheney will change Israeli horses, dumping the gangster Sharon for the Falangist Netanyahu.

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