

The Face of the New Israeli Fascism

by Dean Andromidas

In preparation for launching a wider war, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on April 8 officially welcomed Gen. (Reserve) Effi Eitam into his government. Eitam is infamous for his racist and messianic world outlook, and is committed to becoming Israel's Mussolini. Sharon has brought him onto the "inner security cabinet," where he will participate in all strategic decisions. At the same table is Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, thus burying the last pretense that the Labor Party ministers are anything more than a rubber stamp for Sharon.

This appointment serves as a signal to the world that unless real pressure—such as cutting off military aid—is immediately applied, Sharon will not depart from his drive for a regional war. But the danger goes far deeper, because Eitam represents the face of an overtly fascist movement that is threatening to take full political power in Israel. Speaking to a mass demonstration in Rabin Square in Tel Aviv organized by the Israeli settlers movement on March 11, Eitam—as if he were Mussolini speaking from the balcony of the Piazza Venezia—called for crushing the Palestinians. The crowd of 100,000 rejoined with the chant, "We want war."

When Eitam's appointment was approved by the Knesset (parliament), opposition leader Yossi Sarid, chairman of the pro-peace Meretz party, said, "I am ashamed, as a Jew and an Israeli, to live in a country where people with racist views, who believe in transfer and Haiderism, sit in the cabinet."

Who Is Effi Eitam?

Eitam enters the government as chairman of the National Religious Party, which, historically, has represented the religious wing of the mostly secular Zionist movement. Since the June 1967 war, it has become one of the farthest right parties, as well as one of the most important advocates for creating settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Its primary base of support is among the most radical element of the settlers. The NRP, unlike other Orthodox or ultra-Orthodox religious parties, encourages serving in the Israeli Armed Forces, and has military yeshivas throughout the settlements. Relative to its small size, the NRP has a considerable number of adherents at all levels within the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Eitam, a brigadier general, is one of the most senior military officers from a religious background.

A senior Israeli military source commented that Eitam is far more dangerous than other rightists, "because he is a true believer." This is reference to the fact that Eitam is messianic,

and believes that the Zionism of "normality" has to give way to religious Zionism whose mission is the rebuilding of Solomon's Temple on the holy site al-Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount. Eitam left the regular military only in December 2000, and he has never held elected office. He was simply made chairman of the NRP, and brought into the government by Sharon.

Eitam does not plan to stay on the margins of the Israeli right, but to use his chairmanship of the NRP to form a new movement encompassing Sharon's Likud and other center-right parties as a platform for becoming prime minister.

Eitam laid out his worldview and policies in an in-depth interview in the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* on March 22, one week before Sharon launched his military attack on the Palestinians. Eitam said that the biggest danger Israel faces is capitulation to the demands of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat and Islamic fundamentalism. His solution: "I want to make it clear that I do not think we should use weapons of mass destruction. But I do think that in order to avoid a situation like that, we have to vanquish Arafat along with Iraq and Iran as one package. It is impossible to talk with them, impossible to effect a conciliation with them; they have to be vanquished. There is no other way."

One week after the interview, Sharon launched "Operation Defensive Wall," aimed at "vanquishing" Arafat. Will Sharon also make Iraq and Iran part of the same package?

In the interview, in answer to whether he thinks war is certain, and necessary to prevent a more terrible war, Eitam said, "Absolutely. The State of Israel cannot afford to have regimes like Iran and Iraq cross a line of nuclear capability. The model of a balance of nuclear terror will not work against regimes like that."

Asked if a preemptive strike were necessary, Eitam voiced the "breakaway ally" policy that U.S. Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche has warned about: "Certainly. If there will be no one else to do it, we will face the same dilemma that [Prime Minister Menachem] Begin faced when he bombed the reactor in Iraq [in 1981]. . . . So in my opinion we will have no choice, unless the Americans do it first."

Asked about a solution for the Palestinians, his solution is exactly what Sharon is implementing now: "The immediate solution consists of three elements. First, get rid of his leadership. Second, to enter Area A and uproot the military-terrorist capability. Third, to make it clear that there will be no foreign sovereignty west of the Jordan River. I am not sure that this is the time to organize what will happen east of the Jordan. But as for the area west of the Jordan, we have to state that no sovereignty will be established there other than that of the State of Israel."

As for the Palestinian leadership, Eitam said, "Put them on trial. . . . Simply that. . . . Conduct Jerusalem trials and place those murderers on trial." Eitam rants that Arafat is a "murderer, murderer, murderer," who should be put on trial as was Adolf Eichmann.

Eitam's "peace plan" is in fact a "piece plan." Once Pales-

tinian resistance is crushed, Eitam would offer them “residence” status without citizenship or even “self-rule” in bantustan-like cantons—since he considers all of the West Bank and Gaza to be the “Land of Israel.” The Palestinian state would be a “two-lobed state,” comprising the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt. Palestinians should understand that if they want to exercise their rights, “that is where they should be exercised.” But “whoever does not accept [that] will have to be told: ‘Your place is not with us.’ In cases like that, not even a wink is needed.”

Eitam said that if the Palestinians continue to resist, “the dynamic will shift to total war that is liable to inflict a tragedy on the Palestinian people. . . . I can definitely see that as a consequence of a war, not many Arabs will remain here.”

For Eitam, the same fate awaits the Israeli-Arab population, whom he called a threat that “resembles cancer,” and he says that they, too, should look toward a Palestinian state in “Jordan and the Sinai.”

In the April 4 *Ha’aretz*, commentator Akiva Elder criticizes the liberal left for protesting the fact that Nobel Literature laureate Jose Saramago recently drew a comparison between the situation in Ramallah and the Auschwitz death camp. Elder wrote, look at “a Jew like Brig. Gen. (Res.) Effi Eitam, who called the Palestinians a ‘cancer in the body of the nation.’ The fact that the Nazis were especially fond of this metaphor is probably not lost on the general.”

Friends in the United States

It would be folly to dismiss Eitam as just another rightist on the margins of Israel’s political spectrum. Unlike others such as Avigdor Lieberman of the Y’srael Beiteinu party, Eitam enjoys considerable support in the United States. Unlike the secular Likud leaders former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu or Sharon, Eitam’s messianic religious worldview puts him in the good graces with his Christian fundamentalist counterparts in the United States, who enjoy a strong hold on the Bush Administration. This faction is represented by Attorney General John Ashcroft within the administration, and by certain Southern Republicans who are dependent on the support of millions of Christian fundamentalists who blindly support Israel. Eitam’s commitment to “rebuilding the Temple” is music to the ears of these millions who hope, through supporting Israel’s march to war, to bring on the much-awaited “Armageddon” so they can be “raptured” and brought to paradise.

A senior member of the Israeli peace camp stressed this danger. “What worries me, is the cooperation between American conservatives and the fascists on our side. They are going against the vital interests of Israel,” he said.

Since leaving the army, Eitam has been promoted extensively in the United States, meeting Senators and Congressman, and receiving financial support from the same circles who have supported Netanyahu and Sharon.

In Washington, Eitam is sponsored by the utopian policy circles associated with the warhawks of the Bush Administra-

tion, especially Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Defense Policy Board Chairman Richard Perle. In November, Eitam was among the guest speakers at a conference on terrorism sponsored by the New Atlantic Initiative and the American Enterprise Institute. One of the AEI directors who participated in the conference was Perle. Eitam, who spoke on “Confronting the Terrorists,” sat alongside Iain Duncan Smith, the head of the British Conservative Party.

With the drive for a war on Iraq in full swing in Washington, Eitam’s call to “vanquish Arafat along with Iraq and Iran as one package” is also music to the ears of those who support the “axis of evil” strategic policy.

Sharon Trying To Consolidate Support

Eitam was brought onto the government precisely when Sharon is carrying out one of the most brutal massacres of Palestinians since those at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps during the Lebanon War. Now, to be added to those two refugee camps—whose names evoke images of the most horrendous brutality—will be the refugee camp of Jenin. Here, the lessons the IDF learned from its study of the Nazi tactics in crushing the Warsaw Ghetto have become a real-life nightmare. A fuller picture of the devastation, loss of life, and brutality of the operation will come to light. But already there are reports of hundreds of deaths, the digging of mass graves, and an unyielding resistance by the Palestinians that has so far taken 22 Israeli soldiers’ lives—15 in one engagement, the largest number in a single fight since the Lebanon War. Sharon’s attack will not only bring international scorn onto Israel, but could have a profound impact on the Israeli population, just as happened during the Lebanon War, when as many as 400,000 Israelis came out into the streets in protest. Already well over 400 Army reservists are refusing to serve in the territories. (A chronicle of Israeli atrocities accompanies our coverage.)

But it is not only the Palestinians who are suffering. Israeli civilians have been the target of Palestinian bombings.

Israeli commentator Meron Benvenisti, in *Ha’aretz*, warned that Sharon’s support among the population will evaporate. “No one has ever been able to predict exactly when the opposition to war and bloodshed turns from treachery into a legitimate, indeed proper approach; when moral condemnations of acts of war become politically correct, and when a phrase like ‘a war for our homes’ changes from being a battle cry into blathering nonsense. Nobody has predicted it in advance, but experience shows that the moment when the patriotism of the herd turns into critical skepticism does inevitably arrive, sooner or later—sometimes in weeks or months, or sometimes a generation or two later.”

By shaping a regime around the fascist ideas that Eitam espouses, Sharon hopes to capture this rage and disgust, and channel it away from a rational pursuit of peace, and into a mass fascist movement that will rally behind his war policies—a movement blind to the fact that such policies are bringing destruction down upon Israel.