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## A REVERSAL OF JEWISH NATIONAL POLICY

IF election propaganda influences the waverers who have not already made up their minds, the performance of the Likud is certainly helping to enhance the prospects of a Labor victory. The Likud's public relations practitioners are evidently not strong on political history. There have been great figures in modern times who were noted for their drinking capacity.

Winston Churchill, who directed Britain's fortunes in World War II, was one of them. Another was Ulysses S. Grant, who led the Northern armies to victory in the American Civil War.

Israel is not a drinking nation. Yitzhak Rabin is thus an exceptional case. He has, however, managed to function quite normally as chief of the general staff, as prime minister and as minister of defense.

Indeed, he served in this capacity a couple of years ago in Yitzhak Shamir's cabinet. He has been the deserving target of much criticism and opposition, but nobody has suggested that his functioning is affected by what he drinks. To make a public issue of Rabin's social preferences is not only ugly, it is inane.

As election propaganda it is downright stupid: it is surely losing votes for the Likud. Above all, it is a betrayal of trust. It is a betrayal of trust because it diverts public attention from the real dangers in a Labor victory.

The public should be forewarned of what is likely, indeed what is certain to happen if Labor wins. A Labor government would be based on a coalition with the militant, frankly vicious, Meretz group, with support from whatever Arab party candidates are elected. There would be many weak seams in such a coalition, but in its essential first steps it would present a united front.

On a major issue which would need early action, there exists a consensus among all these elements. For evident reasons, one of a Labor government's very first acts would be the eagerly awaited announcement of a freeze of Jewish settlement in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. Eagerly awaited, that is, by all the enemies and the false friends of Israel.

The motive behind the short text of "freezing the settlements" is lethal. To all those enemies and false friends it represents an essential preliminary to ultimate complete withdrawal by Israel from the heart of Western Eretz Yisrael. They all, all, want to see the erasure of the Jewish victory which followed the Arab aggression of 1967 - the Six Day War.

They all wish to see Israel enclosed within the 1949 Armistice Lines. They all have campaigned for this objective year in year out; and now, overnight, an election in Israel would result in the realization of their cherished hopes. Whatever the immediate practical implications, however complicated, however remote the prospect of implementation, they will have in their hands a pledge of intent of historic significance; a reversal of Jewish national policy.

The likely joy of the American administration may be imagined. The boost to Mr Bush in his bid for re-election could be decisive, and cheerful toasts would be exchanged by Mr Baker with the Saudi and other Arab ambassadors. The effect on the Palestinian

Arabs would be electric.

Freezing of the Jewish presence in Judea, Samaria and Gaza is of incomparably greater danger to Israel's future than Iraqi Scuds. The Arabs would not trouble to go up to the roofs to dance. They would be dancing in the streets.

ANOTHER issue, secondary but also urgent - and of major import to our economy - will inevitably be dealt with by a Labor government. Labor's leaders have pledged to bail out a variety of institutions and dependencies of the Histadrut from a major financial mess. Bailed out once before, little was done to cure their chronic ills; and so they have accumulated debts of some NIS 20 billion (\$8b.).

Mr Rabin knows that he will not be able to take over NIS 20b. waiting to be "poured into the settlements." He knows that there are not 2b. or even 1b. in the budget for settlements. He knows that the "billions poured" have been a gigantic bluff of the enemies of the Jewish presence in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. The realistic figure of what he may find is probably less than one billion (used for building up Jewish life in the villages and towns across the Green Line).

The burden of fulfillment of the Labor Party pledge will fall on the national treasury. There is another fact that the Labor Party is making a great effort to obscure: Rabin will not be the dominant figure in a Labor government. Its dominant figure will be Mr Peres, who undoubtedly commands the support of a majority of the likely Labor members of the Knesset.

It is a fact that the minority which so nearly defeated Rabin in his bid for the leadership, subsequently obtained a majority of the "realistic" spots on the Labor's Knesset list. They now no doubt realize how fortunate it is for them that Rabin was elected leader. They now are able to look to him to win the election for them.

He is much more popular than Peres, and than the Labor Party as a whole. That is why they allowed Rabin's name to be included in the official description of the party. That is why they - the Burgs and Ramons and Yossi Beilins, who do not love Rabin - were delighted by the Likud's propaganda focusing the limelight on Rabin (and gaining sympathy for him).

He is proving the perfect stalking-horse for the "left wing" of the party. The personalities in that wing have an agenda of their own, closer to Meretz than to Rabin; and they, with Peres, will control the majority in the party. It is no legend that a vote for Rabin will put Peres and Burg and Beilin into the seats of power.