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## **A STARK BETRAYAL OF TRUST**

CONFLICTING statements out of the two sides of the same authoritative mouth are commonplace in Israel's political history; but it is hard to recall a case of obfuscation so deliberate, an effort to mislead the people so blatant, as the performance by the Rabin government on the Golan issue. A cynical generation does not perhaps expect its politicians to adhere strictly and always to the absolute truth. Here however the Labor government has forced upon Israel a problem of paramount import affecting its life and future.

The case of the Golan is even more serious than the deception practised during the process of peace with Egypt in 1978-1979. When Begin propounded his original "peace plan" he insisted that the Jewish presence in Sinai - the town of Yamit and the cluster of 14 villages - would remain inviolate. When negotiations began, Sadat demanded that Sinai be cleared of every last Jew.

Thereupon Begin, before setting off for Camp David, visited Sinai and swore to the Jewish inhabitants that if he were asked to give up the "settlements" he would "pack his bags and go home." Begin packed no bags - and the people to whom he made his promise were driven by force out of their homes. Notably Sadat stood firm and unrelenting throughout. It was the Labor leaders who originally urged young people to go as pioneers to live in Sinai - in a carefully constructed buffer zone which would serve as the irreducible minimum of Israeli security if, in a peace treaty, the rest of Sinai was handed over to Egypt.

They also built three airfields and a powerful naval base to ensure that security. In the Knesset they voted without a groan and almost unanimously to give it all up. (Sadat, for his part, at once had two tunnels built under the Suez Canal, for moving tanks into Sinai.)

The ongoing drama of the Golan is enfolded in a more elaborate farrago of untruth and deception. In 25 years of controversy over Judea and Samaria, the Golan (like Jerusalem) remained a part of the national consensus. Nobody suggested that it could be even a subject of negotiations.

How could it possibly be otherwise? Even without the horrendous experience of the Syrians' murderous behavior between 1948 and 1967, a people would have to be insane to think of returning the towering Golan. The Labor Party, and the government it formed after the election, did not explain to a troubled people why and how, suddenly, the Golan (as much, moreover, part of Israeli sovereignty as Jerusalem or Tel Aviv) should be brought to market. Their reticence is understandable.

President Bush had obviously insisted on it, as one of the conditions for the grant of the loan guarantees. Rabin's deputy, Mr. Peres, however, conceived a brilliant notion to explain the projected sacrifice of the Golan. On a visit to Europe, he proclaimed dramatically that Assad had changed.

He described the change as "sensational," no less. Assad, to remove all possible misunderstanding, at once made his sensational pronouncement: Israel must withdraw from the Golan, and all the other occupied territories - the Arabs' formula for the last 25

years. Indeed, their demands are plain.

They insist - why should one have to repeat it! - that Israel withdraw from the Golan, from Judea and Samaria, from Jerusalem, from Gaza; in the next phase - from Lod and Ramle and Jaffa and Western Galilee which Israel liberated in repelling the Arab attempt on infant Israel's life in 1948; then too, Israel must allow the "refugees" and all their descendants to return, to Jaffa, Jerusalem, Haifa et al. Rabin knows all of it - even if realization may have come to him only gradually over the years. But it is possible that having, through his deal with Bush, been granted the long sought-after boon of power, he has begun to dream, as once did Neville Chamberlain, that he might be the one chosen to bring Peace.

As we know, Chamberlain wanted peace so much that he left his brains behind when he went to talk to Hitler at Munich. It was his fate, when Hitler had overrun the whole of Western Europe, to exclaim: "Everything would have been all right if Hitler hadn't lied to me."