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### **The disarray in Labour**

HAIM BAR-LEV's statement that the Labour Party would favour a "territorial compromise" on the Golan bears symbolic significance well beyond its immediate startling impact.

It was abysmally irrational. Bar-Lev's best friends had to ask themselves, "Why did he say it? What did he need it for?" He must surely realize that Israel closed the Golan question two years ago by the Knesset's legislation – which binds the Labour Party as well. He is surely aware that the incorporation of the Golan in Israel is the will of the overwhelming majority of the people. He has surely sensed the passion in the attachment to their home of the 8,000 Golan pioneers. It seems hardly possible, moreover, that he does not understand the practical absurdity of "offering" the Syrians a slice of the land when they claim that the whole of it is theirs anyhow.

A powerful, indeed overwhelming, compulsion obviously swept all rational thought from Bar-Lev's mind. It was the automatic, reflex desire not to be identified with the "intransigent," the "annexationist" Mr. Begin, but to present a "good" image, of the complaisant Israeli, so eager for the gentile pat on the back (in this case by a politician from Spain, which has still not established diplomatic relations with Israel).

Bar-Lev's gaffe serves, however, as a timely reminder of an outstanding fact – unfortunate for all of us – in Israel's political life: the continuing, even growing, intellectual disarray in the Alignment opposition. Exploitable, and exploited, by Israel's enemies and her hot-and-cold-blowing friends, that disarray is no less a source of weakness to Israel than the sins of the government.

FOR 15 YEARS the Labour Party has pursued the will-o-the-wisp of a "territorial compromise" over Judea and Samaria. Though it never formally endorsed the Allon Plan, that plan presented its only coherent formula for the "compromise."

Yigal Allon comprehended, reasonably, that Israel must retain effective control of the whole of western Eretz Yisrael. Incorporation of Judea and Samaria would, however, involve incorporation of the Arab residents – which he thought undesirable. (Together with the Arabs within the Green Line, those in Judea and Samaria and Gaza constituted – as they still do – about one-third of the total population west of the Jordan.) He consequently proposed handing over to Jordan the major portion of Judea and Samaria – the area bordering on present Israel, where the vast bulk of the Arab population resides.

To eliminate the potential danger arising from this propinquity to the heart of Israel's population centres, Allon laid down that the area surrendered to Jordan must be demilitarized: no Arab arms or soldiers would be permitted there. The remainder of the area, the Etzion bloc and a strip along the Jordan Valley, would be incorporated in Israel.

Accordingly, the Labour-dominated government approved the settlement of the Etzion bloc; accordingly, a series of Israeli villages flourish between the Jordan and the eastern ridge of Samaria.

The demographic and security problems were thus "provided for." One small difficulty remained. Neither Hussein nor any other Arab leader would react with anything but outright rejection, indeed derision, to the proposed contraption of a mutilated, second-class sovereignty for the "West Bank" province of Jordan, not only denied arms for itself

but punctuated at its heart by enclaves of Israeli sovereignty armed (as they would have to be) to the teeth.

Labour Party leaders, however, did not hesitate to make the proposal to Hussein. Nor did they desist when confronted with his refusal to consider it. Hussein, of course, has never abandoned the traditional Arab demand for total Israeli withdrawal to the armistice lines of 1949 – the essential prelude to the final assault on the existence of the Jewish state.

Whatever its weaknesses, Labour's sustained attachment to the Allon Plan did tend to demonstrate the consistency of its doctrine that Israel's security required military control of the whole of western Palestine. But since last September, when the Reagan Plan was announced, it has become doubtful whether the Labour Party is any longer so committed.

IT MUST BE said in fairness that the Reagan Plan is in keeping with Washington's unchanging concept of a "solution" to the Arab-Israeli conflict: the return of Israel to the 1949 armistice lines. That concept (identical with the present phase of the Arab purpose) was codified in the Rogers plan of 1969.

Later, Begin's "peace plan" of December 1977 was tailored, under American guidance, into the Camp David format which, for Washington, represented merely a suitable five-year interim of Arab self-government, leading inexorably to ultimate Arab sovereignty over Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

As neither Jordan nor the Arab residents were prepared to negotiate on the basis of Camp David, the Reagan administration, assuming the moment to be propitious for coaxing Hussein and bearing down on Israel, came out in the later summer of 1982 with a slightly refurbished Rogers Plan.

The Reagan Plan once again proposed, with little camouflage, the handing over of Judea and Samaria (and Gaza) to Jordan: while providing for autonomy status for the Arabs west of the river. It predicated the cancellation of Israeli sovereignty over East Jerusalem (whose fate would have to be "negotiated"). To illustrate the spirit in which the plan was composed, its authors slipped in the idea of "exchange of territory." This meant that if Israel were to be "granted" a few hundred square metres of territory beyond the 1949 armistice lines, it would have to pay for them with territory from within those lines. Even Rogers was not so niggardly.

THE LEADER of the Labour opposition, Shimon Peres, gave the plan broad approval. He said on ABC Television: "We found in the President's position a rather very close approach to our own."

This could mean that Labour had abandoned the idea of a territorial compromise (including the Allon Plan), and that it was "very close" to accepting the handing over of the whole of the West Bank to Jordan.

Alternatively, it could mean that at that moment – in September 1982 – with relations between Washington and the Begin government very strained indeed – Mr. Peres was so eager to project the Labour Party both to the American public and to the Israeli electorate as the accepted friend of the United States that he did not study thoroughly enough what was actually said in the Reagan Plan.

Now, in June 1983, there is no excuse for misunderstanding by Mr. Peres. In Washington's fevered pursuit, after September 1982, of Hussein's agreement to negotiate (and, indeed, of Arafat's acquiescence) it was made quite clear time and again (in the hearing of the whole world) that he was being offered all of Judea and Samaria, to be preceded by Israel's freezing of settlements, and that Washington continued to regard East Jerusalem as occupied Arab – that is Jordanian – territory.

THERE IS NO certainty that Washington will be able in the near future to put together a new diplomatic act for the re-floating of the Reagan Plan; but if it does, the public in Israel is entitled to know what the Labour opposition's policy will be.

Knowing now for certain what the plan portends, will it continue to give it its benevolent nod? Or will it make it plain that it will resist to the end any idea of Israel's return to the 1949 armistice lines or their neighbourhood?