

May 4, 1984

WAITING FOR SHAMIR'S PLAN

HAVE THE LEADERS of the Herut Party lost their sense of direction? The members of the party are insisting on the reduction of the Liberals' share of Knesset seats. The claim, based on the indisputable weakness of electoral support, was rudely enforced by the refractory behaviour of a few Liberal members in the 10th Knesset.

There has, moreover, long been a general feeling of unease in Herut over possible Liberal backsliding on the crucial issue of the future of Judea and Samaria.

These considerations and concerns are all logical and valid; and the Herut leaders could feasibly impress upon the Liberals that thinning out their ranks, in addition to its inherent logic, would make possible the introduction of stalwarts in the struggle for Eretz Yisrael.

It seems, however, that Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and Defence Minister Moshe Arens are weakening their own case – by suggesting that two of the seats they are reported to be asking the Liberals to give up will be handed over on a platter to Shmuel Tamir and Shlomo Lahat.

Shamir and Arens (and those who support their view) have apparently a logic of their own. They have no valid reason to believe that Lahat and Tamir are such stalwarts.

Lahat is himself a Liberal Party member who, when he has touched on national affairs, has given signs of dissent from the Herut view.

As for Tamir, one quality he cannot be accused of possessing is adherence to the idea which is supposed to be central to Herut policy: the integrity of Western Eretz Yisrael.

He was, after all, a leading member of the now-defunct Democratic Movement for Change under Yigael Yadin, whose policy on this issue was approximately that of the Alignment.

In government, its members worked hard to obstruct the policy of settlement in Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

Tamir has given no public indication that he has changed his mind. How credible an advocate of this policy can he now be?

The Liberal Party would have just cause for resentment at such a suggestion. Why should two of their own candidate (who may all be regarded as loyal to the Likud view) be pushed out to make room for these problematic (though able and otherwise admirable) personalities?

This consideration, however, pales before the deeper significance of the proposal for Herut itself: Whither are the leaders leading the party?

THERE IS, in fact, a large befogged area in Herut policy. It was recently pinpointed by two leading members of the party.

Last week, Michael Reiser, an energetic member of the young guard and head of the organization department, said the main thrust of the party's campaign would be on the struggle for Eretz Yisrael.

Up to seven years ago, the meaning of such a statement was clear to everybody. Since the launching of Menachem Begin's "peace policy" in 1977, and, more specifically, since the 1978 Camp David agreement, it has been ambiguous.

Only a month ago, the enormity of the content and significance of that agreement was exposed to view once more – this time by a Herut leader.

Dr. Eliahu Ben-Elissar, chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, said then that the highest price Israel paid for the peace with Egypt was not the return of Sinai, but rather the part of Camp David which deals with autonomy and which now prevents Israel from claiming sovereignty over Judea, Samaria and Gaza (*The Jerusalem Post*, April 8, 1984).

A leading exponent of the Begin policy has thus admitted the truth about the Camp David agreement. Far from safeguarding Israeli rights in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, Camp David ruled out the prospect of Israeli sovereignty there. Under the agreement, the question of sovereignty will be resolved, after five years of Arab autonomy, by negotiations between Israel, Jordan, Egypt and the elected representatives of the Arab residents of the area.

Unless the three Arab parties to the negotiations offer sovereignty to Israel, there will be no Israeli sovereignty there.

What is morally more significant than all the other clauses is the provision that any agreement reached will be submitted – a second time – to the representatives of the Arab residents.

Herut members (and others) have allowed Begin to pretend that he did not surrender the prospect of sovereignty.

It is true that, in public, he has since 1978 formulated the prospect more accurately: "In the negotiations under the Camp David agreement," he repeatedly said, "*we shall claim sovereignty.*"

Nevertheless, during the years since 1978, Likud spokesmen have flaunted the slogan that they would conduct the "struggle for Eretz Yisrael.

It sounds good and true until you analyse the reality behind it – as Ben-Elissar has now, belatedly, done.

THE STRUGGLE for Eretz Yisrael, which obviously requires skilful and sophisticated action on the political front, will not be won as long as Israel, even while establishing Jewish communities in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, continues in fact to endorse the doctrine – contained in the Camp David agreement – that there will *not* be Israeli sovereignty over these areas.

The agreement need not remain a millstone around Israel's neck. It is, has long been, a dead letter. The Egyptian government unceasingly insists on a set of conditions which go far beyond, and bear no relation to, what was agreed at Camp David.

They are, of course, merely reiterating the traditional Arab formula propounded over the years before Begin offered Sinai to Sadat.

Sinai has been swallowed up and now they simply want the rest: Palestine, with Judea and Samaria as a first course.

The essence of this demand is backed by Washington, where the "Reagan Plan" effectively nullifies the Camp David agreement. Not a single reason, formal or moral, binds Israel to the concessions Begin agreed to at Camp David. On the contrary, every

consideration – morality, or equity, of international behaviour, and of Israel’s interests, cries out for its abrogation.

The truth is reinforced by the almost daily evidence that the other part of the Camp David agreement – which gave birth to the “peace treaty” – was a trap and a hoax Sinai is gone; and the one great achievement Begin claimed to justify its surrender – the exit of Egypt from the Arab coalition for the destruction of Israel – was a mirage. This is growing clear to more and more innocent Israelis.

To compound Egypt’s ongoing failure to honour most of the few positive clauses in the treaty, almost every day brings a new, flagrant and often contemptuous breach.

Egyptian scientists are denied permission to attend a conference in Israel; Israel is denied participation in Cairo’s international book fair – the list is endless. Trade is absolutely minimal. Egyptian tourism to Israel is practically non-existent.

Above all, Egypt conducts a permanent propaganda and diplomatic war against Israel. Virulent anti-Israeli writings – under government control – are the order of the day.

As for physical war – there was not, after all, a war every year before 1977; and Egypt did not – and will not – start a war on its own. It simply continues the preparations for one – against “The Day” – while digesting Sinai and hoping that Israel will first be pressed from without, or subverted from within, into a withdrawal into the 1949 lines of maximum vulnerability.

IS ALL THIS not clear? Is it not clear that while Israel’s deterrent power lies in its strong and sophisticated army and in its control of Western Eretz Yisrael – where it should establish its civil law – a drastic shake-up must be effected in its diplomatic stance and information services.

It must put an end to its reticence in presenting the truth of the Arab purpose before the world. Especially the Jewish people – so recently given shocking evidence of the recrudescence of anti-Semitic incitement – must be alerted to that truth.

The first step, however, must be an unequivocal clarification of Israel’s truth, its needs and its determined purpose. Sinai indeed is gone. Let not the Camp David agreement befog the future of Western Palestine.

On the contrary, Israel should follow the lead of Egypt and the U.S. – who signed the Camp David agreement and have turned their backs on it.

In its place, Washington has the “Reagan Plan, Egypt has the “Fez Plan.” Israel should announce its own plan.

Why not the “Shamir Plan”?