

tion. Before it erupted, the occupation was expressed chiefly in texts, in court verdicts, and in military government orders. The intifada has peeled away the paper texts and has revealed the violence lurking underneath—violence that was always there.

Supreme Court justices who demolish houses, divide families, uproot trees, pull out the land from under the

feet of its inhabitants, and decree for these inhabitants a life of invisibility are no less violent than soldiers who beat and shoot in a blind rage. The State Department reports of previous years, which refrained from condemning Israel for its actions in the territories, did not realize at the time that Israeli morality was being slowly but inexorably eroded. □

THE PATHOLOGY OF THE OCCUPATION

The Decline of the Labor Party

Haim Baram

Little more than an empty shell, the Labor party today is well organized but devoid of any real political direction. Worse—it lacks the will to live. Everyone understands this; the dirges have begun. The party's internal intrigues are endless, pathetic outcries for Shimon Peres's head abound, and party hacks have begun to regroup around Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Labor is in decline because it has failed to define a viable political alternative to Israel's right-wing leadership. For several years prior to the 1988 elections, Shimon Peres spent much of his public credibility defending the possibility of a "Jordanian option" as a realistic way to deal with the West Bank. Under the plan, Jordan's King Hussein would negotiate for the Palestinians through a Palestinian-Jordanian confederation. In advocating the "Jordanian option," Peres implicitly denied the importance of Palestinian national self-determination and statehood. Once the intifada began and Hussein himself renounced any Jordanian claim to representation of West Bank Palestinians, Peres's plan was rendered obsolete, if not ludicrous.

As the elections approached, Labor was forced to change its position at the last moment and support the notion of "land for peace." Having spent the previous four years advocating a different course of action, however, Labor found itself unable to explain its new position to the public. Then, after the (1988) electoral defeat, Labor refused to take on the role of an opposition party that would work to build a new national consensus around the concept of "land for peace." Instead, Labor entered the national unity government, providing what

Tikkun editor Michael Lerner described as a "fig leaf" for Shamir's policy of perpetuating the occupation.

This "fig leaf" role comes easily to some of Labor's most esteemed leaders, many of whom are covert Likudniks. Yitzhak Rabin is only the most visible of a large group in Labor whose aims and tactics are almost identical to those of the so-called moderate faction of Likud. The differences between Rabin's followers and Shamir's Young Princes (Dan Meridor and Ehud Olmert, for example) are negligible. And even those Labor leaders who do have some ideological differences with Shamir are quick to subordinate these differences to their own self-interest. Wishing above all else to remain in the corridors of power, many Labor party leaders are willing to make critical statements about Likud's position and then oppose any actions that would actually break up the government. Moshe Shahal (Minister of Energy), Gad Ya'acobi (Minister of Communication) and Motta Gur (Minister Without Portfolio) are three leading candidates for the Labor party's leadership. All, Ya'acobi and Shahal in particular, make occasional, vaguely dovish noises but end up echoing Rabin.

The United Kibbutz Movement (Takam) plays an even more conservative role. Shimon Peres's position as Finance Minister provides Takam with the best possibility it has of receiving the kind of governmental support needed to bail out the economically strapped kibbutzim. Takam can reasonably argue that a Likud government would be delighted to see the collapse of these last vestiges of the "socialist" ideas upon which the Labor party was founded. Less reasonable is the expansionist ideology of the Takam representatives in the government, Avraham Katz-Oz (Agriculture) and Ya'acov Tzur (Health). Labor's new fig-leaf role doesn't trouble them.

Ezer Weizmann is the only major figure who consis-

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tently votes for breaking away from Likud. But Weizmann is a new member of the party. He has neither deep roots nor a following in Labor, and can do very little in his current capacity as—appropriately enough—Minister Without Portfolio.

Due to the Labor leaders' collusion with Likud, Labor has failed to define any consistent alternative viewpoint on the fundamental issue of the West Bank and Palestinian self-determination. Afraid to be seen as too soft toward the Palestinians, the party continues to react to the right-wing dynamic in Israeli society. Labor refuses, for example, to advocate solutions that might lead to a demilitarized Palestinian state on the West Bank. Without a plausible scenario for peace, however, Labor is unable to help the Israelis consider alternatives to occupation.

No wonder Israeli society has moved to the right. Because the major party on the left offers neither vision nor vigorous analysis, most Israelis identify the rhetoric of the right with "common sense." Labor party leaders then use this rightward shift to defend their middle-of-the-road approach. Any election held in the short run, they say, would result in a loss of seats for Labor in the Knesset.

Are Labor's fears justified? Consider the events of July 1989, when Sharon forced Shamir to accept the following restrictions for any election plan for the West Bank: (1) no land for peace; (2) no vote for Palestinians living in East Jerusalem; (3) no elections until the intifada ends; (4) continued building of new settlements. At first, Labor acted boldly, some members telling the press that Labor might quit the government. But these same "bold" Labor members were quick to accept a weak assurance from Shamir that Likud's vote on the restrictions did not change matters. (Shamir was telling the truth; after all, Sharon and other Likud hard-liners were only making explicit the points Shamir had in mind all along.) Why, then, did Labor capitulate? Because, interpreting a certain poll conducted by Modi'in Ezrahi for the Israeli newspaper *Ma'ariv*, they were afraid of losing votes.

But take a closer look at that poll. It predicted that Labor would obtain only twenty-eight seats in an election, a net loss of eleven seats. Yet only two of those seats were predicted to go to Likud. Five would go to the Citizens Rights Movement (Ratz) and four to Mapam—both parties that are willing to articulate a dovish position. Indeed, some Israeli analysts are beginning to consider the possibility that the "Pragmatic-Expansionist" wing of Labor might someday unite with the Shamir-Arens group to form a new Likud. Sharon's forces would create a new, protofascist radical right while the doves and two-state-solution supporters in Labor would merge with the Zionist left (Mapam

and Ratz).

Even if this realignment of forces is not imminent, one thing is certain: Labor will continue to flounder. It may lose its majority in the Histadrut this November. If the debate in the Histadrut follows the national pattern, Labor will join Likud in a coalition that will take over Israel's preeminent labor organization. In such a scenario, workers' support for Labor would certainly erode.

*If there is any hope for Labor
it will come from those who are
prepared to publicly challenge the
party's current direction.*

Foreign observers tend to regard the Labor party as moderate, even left-wing, much to the amusement of native experts. It is not surprising, then, that the entire international community finds itself incapable of predicting Labor's behavior. Outsiders are unaware of the way in which a given politician can take a very progressive stance on one issue and a reactionary one on another. For example, is there really any intrinsic connection between a dovish stance toward the Palestinians and social-democratic positions on socioeconomic issues? How is it that well-known doves such as Deputy Finance Minister Yossi Beilin support Milton-Friedman-style economic policies (thereby alienating the working class and the poor, who are, in any event, already attracted to right-wing nationalist policies)?

To help *Tikkun* readers understand these complexities, I've prepared a detailed chart of the positions of the Labor party's Knesset faction. These thirty-nine Knesset Members (M.K.s) are the most visible and influential elements of the Labor Party leadership, the hub of all of Labor's political activities. The chart's categories deal with a given M.K.'s position on the Palestinians and on socioeconomic questions. I've devised a series of evaluative "pegs" to classify Knesset Members.

In the political arena, we find:

1. *Pragmatic-Expansionists*. Labor M.K.s in this category strive for the retention of parts of the occupied territories without formal annexation. In theory, they accept the possibility of partial Israeli withdrawal, which would rid Israel of the densely populated urban areas in the occupied territories. They realize that this position is totally unacceptable to the Palestinians and to their former would-be partners, the Jordanians. Automatic Palestinian opposition is what makes this position attractive, since it allows the Pragmatic-Expansionists to employ a peace-seeking rhetoric while they perpetuate the occupation. Like the Shamir-Arens camp in Likud, the Pragmatic-Expansionists appreciate Israel's depen-

dence on the international community, especially the U.S. They are, therefore, sensitive to North American Jewish opinion. They place a high value on presenting their case sweetly and subtly, often framing their positions in such a way as to ensure that the Palestinians appear to be the ones who reject peace. For example, the Pragmatic-Expansionists are careful to insist that their wars are always "defensive," their settlements on the West Bank "pioneering," and their motives humanitarian.

2. *Doves*. These are M.K.s who accept the inevitability of serious territorial concessions. Doves reject many of the settlement policies in the West Bank and Gaza. Most were wary of Sharon during the 1982 invasion of Lebanon. They are vociferous in their concern about the brutalization of Israeli society, which they consider a direct consequence of the long occupation. They lack a shared vision of a concrete, acceptable peace plan, and they insist that a unified Jerusalem be the capital of Israel.

3. *Two Staters*. These M.K.s are doves who advocate Israeli withdrawal from most of the occupied territories and are ready to have the Israeli government negotiate directly with the PLO. Most of the Two Staters are "constructively vague" about the future of Jerusalem, but they do accept the Palestinian right to self-determination, and they are reluctantly willing to accept an independent Palestinian state.

On socioeconomic questions, the following categories may be useful:

1. *Reaganite-Thatcherite Conservatives*. These are Laborites who belong, more or less, to the Milton Friedman school of thought. They believe in using governmental policies to contrive unemployment and recession as remedies for inflation. They are anti-union, unless the unions are fully controlled. They have a deep faith in the free market as a natural cure for economic problems.

2. *Middle-of-the-Road Conservatives*. These are Laborites who support a mixed economy, based on private enterprise, some governmental intervention, industrial peace, and coexistence between private and public sectors. They espouse "moderate" unemployment and support cautious anti-inflationary policies. They see the Histadrut and its weak economic and industrial enterprises as a liability rather than an asset, but fear that a possible defeat in the Histadrut elections will strengthen Likud's claim as the rightful governing party.

3. *Social Democrats*. These are the more Histadrut-oriented M.K.s who emphasize economic growth as a remedy for unemployment, and moderate, "compassionate" measures to curb inflation. They advocate the belief that employers and employees should shoulder economic burdens equally. The Social Democrats oppose drastic cuts in social services, though they also oppose unofficial strikes. They support public and cooperative

enterprises, but the old enthusiasm and pioneering zeal have been abandoned. They have gradually given up the cause of salaried employees to socialist Mapam and to the populist factions within Likud.

When reading reports of Israeli politics, *Tikkun* readers may find it helpful to have a chart of the Labor Party M.K.s' stance on these issues, in order to check the general orientation of a given M.K. The evaluations, of course, are my own:

LABOR MEMBERS OF KNESSET: WHERE THEY STAND

Name	Israel/ Palestine	Socio- economics
1. S. Peres	Dove	R.T. Conserv.
2. Y. Rabin	P.E.	R.T. Conserv.
3. Y. Navon	P.E.	M.R. Conserv.
4. Y. Kessar (Histadrut)	P.E.	Social Dem.
5. E. Weizmann	Two Stater	R.T. Conserv.
6. S. Hillel	P.E.	M.R. Conserv.
7. U. Baram	Two Stater	Social Dem.
8. M. Shahal	P.E.	M.R. Conserv.
9. O. Namir	Two Stater	Social Dem.
10. S. Arbeli-Almoslino	P.E.	Social Dem.
11. G. Yaacobi	Dove	M.R. Conserv.
12. Y. Tsur	P.E.	Social Dem.
13. M. Gur	P.E.	M.R. Conserv.
14. H. Ramon	Two Stater	M.R. Conserv.
15. A. Katz-Oz	P.E.	Social Dem.
16. D. Libai	Dove	M.R. Conserv.
17. H. Bar-Lev	P.E.	M.R. Conserv.
18. A. Peretz	Two Stater	Social Dem.
19. R. Edri	Dove	M.R. Conserv.
20. L. Eliav	Two Stater	Social Dem.
21. A. Burg	Two Stater	Social Dem.
22. A. Shohat	Dove	Social Dem.
23. S. Shetreet	P.E.	M.R. Conserv.
24. M. Harish	P.E.	M.R. Conserv.
25. B. Ben Eliezer	Dove	No category
26. E. Dayan	Dove	Social Dem.
27. N. Arad	P.E.	Social Dem.
28. Y. Beilin	Two Stater	R.T. Conserv.
29. G. Gal	P.E.	Social Dem.
30. S. Weiss	Dove (but pro-Rabin)	Social Dem.
31. E. Ben-Menachem	Undecided	Social Dem.
32. M. Bar-Zohar	P.E.	M.R. Conserv.
33. E. Zisman	P.E.	Social Dem.
34. E. Gur	P.E.	Social Dem.
35. N. Massalha (Arab)	Two Stater	Social Dem.
36. H. Meirum (Takam)	P.E.	Social Dem.
37. R. Cohen	P.E.	Social Dem.
38. M. Goldman	P.E.	Social Dem.
39. E. Solodar	P.E.	Social Dem.

It should be clear from this chart that there is no correlation between an M.K.'s views on social issues and her or his stance on the Palestinian issue. Two of the Labor party leaders, Rabin and Bar-Lev, have personally engineered the government's policy in the West Bank—a policy responsible for documented cases of torture, killing, wounding, and deportation. When it comes to human rights issues in the territories, six of these M.K.s are sensitive, twelve are extremely callous, and the rest maintain righteous sentiments but are unwilling to confront the human rights violations that their policies helped create.

Given the complex differences on economic questions and the Palestinian issue, it is hard to imagine that a group of Labor Doves could emerge with sufficient ideological coherence to challenge the old leadership. Two Staters might be able to win over many of the Doves, but many of these Doves would be unwilling to take steps that would force them to follow the leadership of Two Staters onto social-democratic terrain. Therefore, it is unlikely that we will see a coherent opposition make any serious attempt to wrest power from the current leadership. Peres himself, despite his vagaries, may be able to maintain his position of power precisely by warning other Doves and Two Staters that, without him, power might fall into the hands of the Rabin wing of the party.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that there are six Labor party M.K.s who have demonstrated considerable courage in the present situation. Abraham Burg, Haim Ramon, Ora Namir, D. Libai, Yossi Beilin, and N. Massalha have all shown great sensitivity to violations of human rights, and have spoken out unequivocally in condemnation of the policies set by Yitzhak Rabin. Their willingness to criticize Rabin, despite Rabin's growing strength within the Labor party, has enhanced their stature both within Israel and internationally. These six have become the nucleus of a larger group of Laborite doves who may yet attempt to organize a viable opposition. Indeed, if there is any hope for Labor it will come from those who are prepared to publicly challenge the party's current direction. At the moment there are few indications that these people are willing to mount the kind of public challenge to the Labor leadership that would make it possible to save the party from decline.

Labor, then, is failing in its effort to win public support for its peace politics because it has been unable to communicate a coherent policy that poses a serious alternative to Likud's worldview. Unless it can articulate such an alternative, Labor may find itself a more serious loser in future electoral struggles for power. □

Shards

Enid Shomer

Inside the strict pine
coffin he is wrapped
in a cotton sheet
and over the three
vanities—the eyes and mouth—
potsherds have been placed.

All night a vigilant
Jew sat by the body
while a candle ate
into the dark
and his feet grew rigid
pointing to Jerusalem.
Now we cover him

with tidewater clay.
To slow us down,
to remind us that grief
is a difficult labor, we dig
at first with shovels
turned over, a trickle
of red dirt fine
as hourglass sand.
Then we are permitted
grunting shovelfuls, stabs
that match the cries

of the mourners who watch
from unsteady chairs
as we spade respect
onto the *aron*, Hebrew
for coffin, for clothes closet,
wardrobe, chest of drawers,
that one word conveying
what we hope against:
that nothing can contain us,
that wood itself
is only soil haunting

the above-ground world,
ghosts in solid form.
It is right that burial
begin at the face
with earth baked
into something like a memory
of itself, so that his
humanness can be taken away
from us, so we will not
picture him about to
blink or speak, so we
may begin the leveling
with small rubble.