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Jihad in the Holy Land?

New elections may soon be held in Israel. The 1981 elections to the Tenth Knesset were marked by some of the worst violence — verbal and physical — ever seen during Israeli election campaigns. A number of commentators spoke specifically of the "demonic" oratory let loose by the main contenders, while others focused on the rising ethnocentrism evinced during the campaign. Few analysts, however, have tied both these phenomena to a third — and perhaps even more fundamental — problem: the non-congruity between the major parties' socio-economic platforms and their respective supporters' interests, a situation which forces each party to deflect the voters' attention by highlighting non-germane "issues" in strident tones. This essay argues that until the *ideological* problem is resolved by each party, the level of political discourse in Israel cannot rise above the level of mudslinging and obfuscation.

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The Israeli elections to the Tenth Knesset were over many months ago and the sounds of campaign oratory have long since died away. But the reverberations of the campaign itself, even more than the actual results, will be felt for some time to come. If the "*mahapakh*" (electoral mini-revolution) of 1977 gave the Israeli democratic system a much needed boost, the 1981 election campaign clearly showed how it could conceivably go bust. Deep soul-searching by all the parties concerned —political and the public — is the order of the day.

The problem, of course, does not lie in any specific policy or program of this party or the other. Rather, it is the *lack* of any clearly delineated platform — and the demonic style with which such *lacunae* are presented — that constitutes one of the major threats to the continued functioning of Israel as a liberal democracy. Simultaneously, and closely linked to this problem, is the specter of ethnocentrism which has reared its head once again, endangering the fragile equilibrium of Israel as an integrated society. True, this threat has appeared on a number of occasions before, but never as an institutional-

ized factor within the political system itself. The twin monsters of ideological demonism and communal ethnocentrism, then, reinforce each other. It is the two-headedness of this hydra within the same body politic which constitutes the fundamental danger to Israel as a viable polity and society.

To be sure, none of these phenomena emerged overnight. *Creatio ex nihilo* is rare even in the Holy Land. Each trend has a past — some even hoary by Israeli time standards — and a distinct evolutionary process. The elections to the Tenth Knesset merely brought them all to the fore in a concatenation of epic proportions. Thus, for Israel this is a watershed period in a way quite different from 1977; back then a new path had been chosen while today she finds herself at a crossroad. The alternative routes from here are all fraught with peril — but with opportunity as well.

> Politics in Israel is taken extremely seriously, and a militant adherent of a party considers himself a warrior in the war of righteousness against evil. In fighting to achieve power for his party and certain advantages for himself, he also fights to prevent evil from triumphing and to combat the forces of darkness.[1]

These words were written not in 1981 but in 1955. Yet over the ensuing two decades the approach of demonizing the opposition waned as a definite tendency toward de-ideologization became manifest in an increasingly utilitarian-minded Israel society. The recrudescence of such a phenomenon is certainly cause for grave concern, especially because it may be taking on forms more virulent than its predecessor.

There were a number of factors which led to a situation, even before the establishment of the State of Israel, whereby the major political camps viewed and related to each other in Manichean terms. To begin with, upon arriving in Palestine which was at the time virtually a social, cultural, economic, and political *tabula rasa*, the various Zionist "camps" were able — indeed sought to — establish communities congruent in all respects with their crystallizing ideologies. The Diaspora had at least taught these Jews one overriding lesson: if anything were to be accomplished it would only come about as a direct result of self-help. "Do it yourself" was the name of the game, and the early Zionist immigrants followed this line with a vengeance.

In the absence of an educational system, each "camp" built and ran its own schools; with no adequate health facilities they set up their own clinics and hospitals. By the 1920s and 1930s one found Jewish cultural fare, athletic clubs, youth movements, newspapers, cooperatives, housing projects, labor exchanges, etc. dotting the Palestinian landscape — all divided along party lines and in some cases even preceding the establishment of the formal political party itself!

Thus, the proto-Israeli parties not only sought to win over supporters but more importantly attempted to influence the entire lifestyle of its members. Taken together, the multifaceted services which the parties offered enabled them to socialize their adherents in a holistic fashion, i.e. to create a *Weltanschauung* significantly different from that of the other parties.[2]

Ideology and its accoutrements stemmed not only from purely physical necessities but also from a psychological need. Ever since the French Emancipation significant portions of world Jewry lost their specific religious identity in the social and cultural homogenization process of

the modern age. Of course, this was not only happening to the Jews; under the impact of industrialism, scientism, and rationalism, many in the Western world became religious unbelievers. Yet the human psyche needs to believe in something, and for most such lost children modern ideology took its place[3] — Marxism, Fascism, Conservatism, Colonialism, *et al.* For nationalistic Jews some hybrid form of Zionism came to be their transmuted substitute for a lost religious Judaism. This too accounted in part for the quasi-religious fervor of Israeli political debate.

Reinforcing this specific tendency was the characteristic (one might even say unique) tone of traditional Jewish discourse — argumentative at best, pilpulistic at worst. The Talmud, for example, utilizes the paradoxical system of building consensus through intellectual disagreement. For every thesis a dialectical antithesis is offered. Much along the same lines, although in the context of Jewish-Gentile relations, Cecil Roth has noted the ever-present phenomenon of the Jew in the role of "Eternal Protestant, who always refuses to be satisfied with the present condition of affairs."[4] In short, even (or perhaps especially) where general societal consensus exists, the Jew instinctively seeks out those points of greatest dissensus.

The institutional political setup in the *Yishuv* only served to reinforce the above tendencies. For the Zionist parties, the pre-State period under the British Mandate was marked by "authority without sovereignty."[5]

Although the brunt of the socio-economic and political infrastructure development was borne by the Zionist camps and not their British overlords it was the latter who had political sovereignty, enabling each Zionist party to attack their adversaries (and promise the moon to their supporters) in the most extreme manner possible. No Jewish camp was "sobered" by ultimate political responsibility since any blame for things gone wrong could always be deflected to the British masters above. In addition, the proportional system of representation which became institutionalized as early as 1920, guaranteed that even the smallest parties would have a voice. In such a system there is little chance of broadening one's support by becoming moderate since the ideological space to the left and to the right of almost every party was already staked out by some other camp. Ideological differentiation and stridency were the only means of securing one's niche along the political spectrum.

In sum, as Benjamim Akzin noted: "It is the interplay of these factors which lends to party-strife in Israel a certain intellectual quality, an aura of sincerity, but also an intensity and a bitterness, far beyond that which is discernible in countries where the differences between parties are largely pragmatic, tactical, and personal."[6] At least until the mid-1950s Israeli politics was not a game but rather a holy war. Unfortunately, the last election has seemingly taken on the same quality.

To a certain extent this comes as somewhat of a surprise since the intervening two decades have been marked by a noticeable decline in ideology as a salient factor in Israeli politics. Already in the late 1960s Alan Arian found that "it is in the younger generation that the signs of change are most unmistakable. Facing different problems than the older public servants faced, the students largely reject the socialist principles so dear to the earlier élite generation."[7] This trend further accelerated in the 1970s as a result of

Israel's post-Six Day War material prosperity. Like her overseas big brother the U.S., Israel was moving from the earlier "we" ideological foundation to the "Me Generation." In the rush to self-gratification, old-fashioned ideology was left behind.

Banana Hooliganism

Paradoxically, however, this same overall trend led to the intensification of social cleavage and political unrest, for while ideology tended to divide, it also served to coalesce large segments of the population within distinct political groupings. With ideology's demise this socio-political glue came unstuck, and each individual had to tend to his own devices in order to advance. As a result, public protest — as measured by street demonstrations, sit-ins in government offices, housing squatters, etc. — rose dramatically in the 1970s, reaching an all-time peak in 1979 of two such events every three days![8] Thus, there were indications well before the 1981 elections of what was to come. Still, the *extent* of the events in May and June, 1981 came as a nasty surprise to almost everyone.

The election campaign resembled those of Latin American banana republics with right-wing *Likud* supporters almost exclusively to blame. Hooliganism abounded. Labor Alignment speakers were hounded into silence or intemperate outbursts (e.g. "*Khomeinistim*, Fascists," Labor leader Shimon Peres erupted to his hecklers at one Petach Tikva rally[10]). Windshields and windows were smashed for displaying campaign stickers. Garbage cans with burning rubbish inside were heaved into campaign rallies. Numerous party branch offices were sacked and burnt down. Arrests ran into the hundreds. Government bodyguards even had to replace private guards to protect Peres as a result of assassination threats.[11] Police spokesmen acknowledged that "there has never been an election campaign in Israel as violent as the present one."[12]

No one accused Prime Minister Begin of actually ordering such violence and destruction. He himself consistently and publicly stated that such behavior was intolerable in a democratic society; indeed the police and courts were encouraged to act forcefully and expeditiously in the apprehension and punishment of the perpetrators. Yet this did not stop Peres or Begin in their mutual verbal recriminations and mud-slinging.

Peres attacked Begin on a number of occasions for directly instigating the hooliganism by creating a demonic electoral environment through "quasi-Fascist" demagoguery and character assassination. Indeed, he carried the Manichean argument one step farther than even his ideological forebearers whose castigations were usually kept on a "lifestyle" plane. In large campaign ads published in *Ha'aretz* and *The Jerusalem Post*, the Labor propagandists boldly charged that "Yes, Menahem Begin — YOU are responsible," connecting the current disturbances with past Begin-incited political violence. As the ad continued: "Victims have come and gone since then. But you, head agitator, have remained."[13] Peres' basic argument, then, entailed raising the ante. It was not an ideological battle *per se*, but rather one involving the very survival of Israel's political system, he argued: "On election day, there is a clear decision between democracy and one-man rule. . . Israel stands in danger from within."[14] Nor were Begin's scathing comments any milder. "Lacking in patriotism," "a sabo-

teur," and even the indirect hint of treasonous behavior were all thrown at his arch-rival.[15]

Yet even this verbal violence was not a novum to recent Israeli history. During the last four years preceeding the elections, he histrionics in the Knesset itself had reached unprecedented depths. Catcalling and slander were common. A member of the Knesset took to speaking from the podium with his back to the plenum as a sign of the low esteem in which he held his colleagues. Ejections of members by the Speaker of the Knesset for interrupting the proceedings reached an all-time high. With such precedents, it was little wonder that in the heat of the elections the candidates' vituperative oratory scaled new heights of demagoguery.

In short, from above and below, Israel's political culture is in a distinct pattern of regression. The term "political culture," however, refers not only to the level of political discourse or activity in the streets. On a more profound attitudinal level it encompasses the relationship between governors and governed. What sets democracies apart from autocracies is not only the structural form of the political system, but also the willingness of the citizenry to be active participants in the decision-making process rather than subjects passive to the powers-that-be.[16] From this perspective the election again provided disturbing evidence as to the direction in which Israel was heading.

"Begin, *melech Yisrael*" ["Begin, King of Israel"]. This refrain was heard at virtually every mass meeting of the *Likud* — over and over, in frenzied and adulatory tones. To be sure, the Prime Minister consistently disassociated himself from such an idea: "I am not a king, but just a simple, ordinary man. I'm a republican in fact." But as *The Jerusalem Post* noted: "The reply came in the form of an even louder rendition of the song. . . ."[17]

It is, then, the spontaneous and deeply felt need for one-man rule on the part of certain segments of Israel's masses which is so frightening, and which led Peres among others to use quite uncharacteristic language. For the demon this time seemed *really* to be escaping from the vessel of state; what is at stake is the very soul of Israeli democracy. Indeed, the fact that Begin in no way instigated or encouraged this phenomenon renders it even more scarifying.[18] One wonders what would occur should a candidate actively try to reinforce the "subject political culture" already emerging within the state.

Social Divisions — Political Plane

> It is impossible to explain the intense political society which has come into being in Israel without taking into account the ethnic diversity between Arabs and Jews, family and personal feuds among the Arabs, and especially the divisions among the Jews along lines of social philosophies and the state-religion problem.[19]

Again 1955. Here, however, of greatest interest is what Professor Akzin did *not* mention — ethnic divisions *between the Jews themselves.* Of course, such communalism was evident in Israeli society already in the early 1950s after the mass immigration of Jews from Arab countries, but this ethnic diversity was not significantly reflected in the political party makeup (in 1949 the *Sepharadi* list gained four seats, the Yemenites one; in 1951, two and one respectively), and certainly not at the level of political discourse.[20] Almost all of the traditional parties understood that it was in their own

as well as the country's interest to incorporate Levantine Jewry within the established framework. As Shlomo Avineri noted: "Work, housing and schooling were allocated with more or less efficiency by the existing power structure, and the newcomer was expected to be grateful, especially on Election Day."[21] The immigrants for their part, especially in light of a total lack of experience in the democratic game, were quite willing to go along. Thus, for quite some time Israel's *social* ethnic divisions did not have a counterpart on the *political* plane.

This is not to suggest that the *Edot Ha'mizrach* (literally, "Eastern Jews") spread their political allegiance along the political spectrum in the same distributive way as their Western counterparts. Rather, most gravitated to the Labor camp (and some to their erstwhile allies, the *Mizrachi* religious bloc) as a result of the Government's hold on the patronage and spoils system.[22] For the recently arrived immigrants this was but a continuation of the paternalistic system with which they were so familiar. Unrealized at the time, however, was a corollary factor at work here — the "strong man" syndrome. Ben-Gurion fitted extremely well their archetype of what a leader should be and how he should govern. The "passive subject political culture" perspective of the Levantine masses thus found its niche in Israel's participatory culture.

Unsurprisingly, the Labor parties began to lose their grip on the *Edot Ha'mizrach* after Ben-Gurion left the Government in the early 1960s. Not only were they becomng less in need of Government patronage, but perhaps even more significantly the subsequent Prime Ministers were not cut in the same mold as "the Old Man." Levi Eshkol, while a talented consensus builder, exuded no strength. Golda Meir, for all her charisma, was after all a women — anathema to those raised in a highly *pat*ernalistic culture. Yitzchak Rabin, despite his military acumen, did not have a forceful personality. Only one national leader (with the possible exception of Moshe Dayan) consistently acted and sounded like a man who could take charge — Menahem Begin.

Reinforcing this cultural-political aspect were socio-economic factors. While the Israeli economy underwent dramatic improvements in the 1960s, the bulk of socio-economic advancement was to be found among the *Ashkenazi* segments of the population. To a great extent this was not a result of overt discrimination but rather was due to the disproportionate education levels of the two *edot*. In any case, feelings of relative deprivation began to be felt by the Levantine sector (as dramatically evidenced by the Black Panther riots in 1971),[23] and the "culprit" was seen to be the ruling Labor Alignment dominated almost completely by *Ashkenazim*. While obviously not of Levantine origin himself, Menachem Begin masterfully held himself up as the spokesman for the underprivileged and persecuted (which in a political sense, at least, he certainly was). Thus, as Shevach Weiss very recently concluded, "Mr. Begin, . . . as early as the 1950s, knew how to promise help to the alienated 'Second Israel' . . . He, like the ethnics, was an outsider, denied participation in the 'jobs for the boys' practices that prevailed at the time. Here, Mr. Begin's Polish, *Ashkenazi* persona was no hindrance. Indeed, he made use of it to call emotionally on the ethnic electorates to rid itself of the predominant attitudes."[24]

Over the past twenty years, then, the transfer of electoral support by the *Edot Ha'mizrach* to the Begin-led parties

(*Herut, Gahal, Likud*) has been gradually and steadily increasing. Already in 1969 Lissak could statistically show that "regarding *Herut (Gahal)* the picture is much more clear cut than *Mapai* . . . the findings confirm the existence of an increasingly strong relationship between voting for *Herut* and membership in a neighborhood where the percentage of Asian-African born is higher than the average percentage of this population in the city under discussion."[25] And as the last election campaign and the ethnic election results therefrom indubitably show, the transfer has now become a flood. The ethnification of Israeli party politics — at least insofar as its two central parties are concerned — is an established fact.

Thus, the dismal showing of Religious Affairs Minister Abuhatzeira's newly formed *Tami* party list (representing primarily North African Jewry) should in no way be understood as a rejection of political ethnocentrism. On the contrary, the *Likud*'s successful stanching of the potentially large defection to *Tami* highlights the fact that insofar as most of the *Edot Ha'mizrach* are concerned they have already found their "ethnic" party. And the prognosis for the future is even less salutary. Of those Levantine Jews who did cast for the Labor Alignment the vast majority are of the older generation who are merely continuing their traditional voting patterns. When they begin to leave the scene, the *Ashkenazi* (Labor) vs. *Edot Ha'mizrach* (*Likud*) dichotomy will be virtually complete. Herein lies the seeds of a socio-ethnic *Kulturkampf* far more dangerous than the everpresent (but never actuated) religious one.

If the demonification and ethnification of Israeli politics was decried by many throughout the last election campaign, no less so was the striking absence of programmatic specificity and ideologial consistency. Yet what many seemed not to realize was that there exists a direct interconnection between the former two phenomena and the latter.

Demonification, Ethnification and Lack of Ideological Consistency

The confluence of this unholy triad has led Israel to a political situation unique in the contemporary democratic world. Simply put, Israel's two central parties have socio-economic programs which are the exact reverse of their supporters' basic interests! The *Ashkenazim*, who constitute the Labor Alignment's ethnic core, also constitute Israel's broad middle class whose interest lies in the Government pursuing a *laissez-faire* economic and social policy. It need hardly be noted that Labor continues to stand for quite the opposite type of program, despite some moderation in its Socialist platform. On the other hand the *Likud*, which does have such a *laissez-faire* socio-economics, garners its support predominantly from the *Edot Ha'mizrach* who as a group tend to be found lower down on the socio-economic scale, and thus should be most amenable to a Socialist program involving redistribution of income, expanded welfare, etc. In such a topsy-turvy ideo-ethnic world, it comes as no surprise that neither party showed any inclination to talk seriously about the issues and what each planned to do in order to resolve Israel's internal problems. Indeed, in such circumstances, the demonification of one's rivals becomes the only viable strategy — in order to divert attention from one's own programmatic *lacunae* as well as to encourage

support through delegitimazation of the opposition.

How did the two major parties arrive at such a muddled state of affairs? Again, the sources hark back to the *Yishuv* period. From the beginning, the Socialistically-oriented Labor camp (headed by *Mapai*) dominated and to a large extent controlled the socio-economic and political levers of power. In light of Palestine's almost complete lack of natural resources and the relative poverty of most Zionist settlers arriving in the Promised Land, economic centralism and social egalitarianism were the only viable approaches in developing a healthy economy and integrated society.

Unfortunately, there is (and continues to be) an inherent contradiction between these two Labor objectives. As long as the population was mired in genteel poverty, social equality was not only an ideological ideal but a critical necessity. However, as with all other developing countries, as soon as Israeli society began to make headway (from the mid-1950s onwards), the social equality ethic — not to mention the reality — began to break down under the impact of variations in different groups' rates of economic advance. In addition, as more and more citizens graduated into the middle class, the political pressure for a reducation in the high rates of taxation and general income redistribution became significant. After all, it was now *their* money being manipulated.

Thus, Labor's current ideological problem is a result of its past *successes*. The more it was able to provide the "good life" to greater numbers of Israelis, the more it sowed the seeds of its own electoral impoverishment. Today, it is mostly the older age groups — *Ashkenazi* and to a lesser extent *Edot Ha'mizrach* — which support Labor, either out of deep party loyalty, simple inertia, or aversion to the *Likud's* perceived stridency on matters foreign and domestic. In a sense, Labor is caught in the same bind in which America's Democratic Party finds itself: how to transform past ideology into something which speaks to those who no longer have any personal use for it.

On the other side of the fence, the political configuration now called the *Likud* has its roots in two different sources. *Herut*, Menachem Begin's political creation after all the pre-State Jewish "armies" were disbanded by Ben-Gurion, emphasized from the outset its fierce nationalism. Socio-economic ideology took a decided backseat, being more a natural outgrowth of its latent Polish and Central European *petit-bourgeois* tendencies than any comprehensive socio-economic *Weltanschauung*. The Liberal Party (the inheritors of the General Zionist and progressive parties' banners) contrastingly had an amorphous, pragmatically-oriented nationalist perspective, with a clear *laissez-faire* socio-economic platform — quite opposite from the reigning Socialist-Zionism.

The electoral union of *Herut* and the Liberals into *Gahal* for the 1965 Knesset elections, therefore, was a marraige of convenience — a good example of the cliché that politics makes for strange bedfellows. Two more diverse styles could hardly be pictured: *Herut's* firebrand, pyrotechnic populism vs. the Liberals' urbane, measured pragmatism. Yet each had something important to offer its counterpart. The Liberals seemed to have exhausted their electoral mine, with no additional constituency in potential sight. Any future dismantling of the Socialist apparatus, they realized, could not be accomplished alone. *Herut*, for its part, sought political "legitimacy." While

slowly growing in strength, it was considered by very large segments of the population to be not very "responsible," and hardly a "safe" alternative to Labor. The Liberals, pre-eminently "safe and responsible," provided *Herut* with its imprimatur — a seal of approval as to its being a "loyal opposition."

To no one's surprise, in time, *Herut* came to dominate the union, for in its nationalistic populism lay the combined party's future strength. Thus, the two allies gradually developed a *quid pro quo: Herut's* domain would be foreign policy, security, settlements, etc., while the Liberals ran the economy and related spheres. But of course, the more populist *Herut* became, the more it attracted the lower class Jews of Levantine origin (who traditionally have constituted the staunchest anti-Arab segment of the Jewish population) — the wider grew the gap between the *Likud's* socio-economic program and the interests of its growing constituency. As with Labor's quandary, one can perceive that here too the problem was an inevitable one given the circumstances of the *Likud's* own political evolution.

In short, the two central parties are caught in a cul-de-sac of their own making. As they squirm around and blur the lines of their own ideology, other miniparties come into being in an attempt to fill the gap, thereby further destabilizing the entire system. It is, of course, no coincidence that an all-time high was reached in the last election in the number of party lists running for the Knesset — thirty-one! One might think that in attempting to be all things to all the people the *Likud* and Labor would prevent electoral diffusion, but in a country such as Israel which still expects its parties to *stand* for *something*, the reverse is true. Ideological obfuscation merely leads to political fragmentation. The latter in turn leads to paralysis of the policymaking process. In the final analysis, then, the problem of ideological confusion is not merely one which affects the fortunes of the individual parties; it is of the greatest importance to the orderly functioning of the entire polity.

If there is any clear outcome from the 1981 election results it is that the two major parties — Labor and *Likud* — have some serious soul-searching to do (of course, this goes also for all the other traditional parties who suffered serious erosion of support, except for *Agudat Yisrael*). The election campaign held up a mirror to Israeli society, as well as to the two Zionist camps, and the picture is not a pretty one for all concerned. In different ways and for different reasons each will have to perform more than cosmetic surgery in the near future — from both an ideological and a personnel standpoint.

With regard to their fundamental ideological problem, the options for the *Likud* and Labor boil down to two: either reorientation of their ideology to conform to the interests of their core supporters, or seeking out potential supporters who already (at least tacitly) agree with the parties' socio-economic ideology. The latter option is quite unlikely since parties are rarely willing to jettison the support they have already garnered in the name of ideological purity. This is especially true in the case of the *Likud* whose supporters constitute the demographic wave of the future. But in Labor's case as well such an approach would be tantamount to self-castration — cutting itself off from its traditional, and still very numerous loyalists. The former alternative, however, has already begun.

In its campaign platform Labor talked about rationalizing the overbloated Israeli bureaucracy, decentralizing the econ-

omy, and most significantly, encouraging highly capitalized (and low labor intense) high technology industries in order to expand Israeli production for export. This is a far cry from the policies carried out by the Labor government in the 1950s and 60s, which addressed itself to the problems of absorbing the masses of immigrants and building an industrial infrastructure from scratch.

What, then, remains of Labor's "Socialism"? From an economic perspective, not much, but it has not escaped Labor's attention that the word Socialism is "social" at its root. The early Labor Zionists always stressed the duality of their program — economic equality and social justice. Although considered then to be inextricable, Labor today has all but abandoned the former and concentrated on the latter: improving the work ethic, equality before the law, a reduction in religious "coercion," improving the quality of life, etc. Yet even those "mother and apple pie" credos are problematical for Labor — at least in the short run — since they tend to highlight the fact that Labor was part of the reason Israel even needs such correctives today. For it was under Labor rule that job security became rigidified (undermining the work ethic), "protexia" became entrenched, religious legislation was passed, and the *quantity* of life overemphasized. Thus, while certainly this neo-Socialism is a program of which Labor can be proud, it is nothing less than a total political "*mea culpa*" for its past performance.

The *Likud*, meanwhile, has begun to shift course as well. While the Liberal Party-initiated New Economic Program of October 1977 removed many of the economic shackles developed by Labor, it also led to horrendous inflation rates. The greatest impact, as usual, was felt by the poor — the *Likud's* main source of electoral support. Thus, Prime Minister Begin turned in early 1981 to Yoram Aridor — the *Likud's* first *Herut* Finance Minister — and he promptly set out to reverse course with stunning poll results. Aridor restored many of the subsidies on basic commodites (after three years of *laissez-faire* reductions and eliminations), even adding new subsidies to some products never before subsidized (e.g. electricity). Purchase taxes were reduced on basic goods (an anti-regressive tax measure, since the poor must pay larger shares of their overall income for such items) — leading to an increased deficit in the balance of payments. The Treasury has even reinstituted a foreign currency insurance scheme for exporters worried about the slow rate of the shekel's devaluation, a program abolished by previous *Likud* finance ministers because it contravened the very idea of non-state intervention in the marketplace.

To be sure, some of the *Likud's* latest policies were mere pre-election ploys. But especially in light of their effect on the polls (a doubling of electoral support in only half a year), there is little doubt that in the future it will consider incorporating more of these "Socialistic" policies (without, God forbid, ever using that *verboten* word) as the *Likud* comes to understand that it is this "populist economics" which its basic constituency desires. Of course, here too there are risks, for such a change-over would also tend to highlight the failures of the *Likud's* initial economic policies.

Thus, the switch in socio-economic ideology for both major parties will not be an easy one. Not only does it entail acknowledging past errors, but it also means politically emasculating those party apparatchiks who were (and con-