

REVIVAL

August 2006
Volume 3
Issue 2

The English News Magazine of the Israeli Labor Party

Israel at war to defend the home front



Party Chairman Defence Minister Peretz:
“The entire world must know that we did not choose the military option.”

Excerpts from Peretz’s speech to the Knesset can be found on page 7



International Secretary Avital:

“A return to the status quo ante, where Hezbollah could hit Israel at will, will serve as an invitation to Syria to continue to destabilize Lebanon, and could also reinforce Iranian recalcitrance on its nuclear program as well as embolden radical fundamentalists everywhere.”

Editorial by Colette Avital can be found on page 2



Ami Ayalon MK:

“With well-considered military and diplomatic moves, we can reshape the reality on our northern border. To succeed in the mission, we must recognize the fact that military moves must be complemented - and completed - by diplomacy. This is the real test for the Olmert-Peretz government.”

Article by Ami Ayalon can be found on page 3

ALSO INSIDE

Labor in Government: A look at the new ministers and government guidelines
by Guy Spigelman, page 5

Seen from Israel, this is a different war



It is a war no one here wanted, no one planned, and no one thought it would ever happen again. In May this year we commemorated the sixth anniversary of our withdrawal from Lebanon, with a wide consensus that this had been the right decision.

This is the tenth war imposed on a small country, barely 58 years old. Think at the suffering. Think at all the victims and the bereaved families: young soldiers, barely 18 years old, and civilians, yes - many civilians including children, women, the elderly. This time among them: a Christian Arab from the village of Ibellin, Ethiopian, Australian, US and Ukrainian young immigrants, a Moslem teenager girl from the Arab village of M'rar.

We have seen much madness in this region: hundreds of suicide bombings in Israeli cafes and buses, Shiites killing Sunnis and Sunnis retaliating. And yes, we have seen Israelis, retaliating at times by levelling whole buildings, with the guilty and the innocent inside. Innocent civilians have been killed in Lebanon. We sincerely lament and regret their deaths. Even if they were used by the Hezbollah as human shields, we cannot condone such killings.

This time we have seen madness go one step further: we have seen the Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, take all of Lebanon into a devastating, unprovoked war with Israel, just to improve his political standing, and take pressure off Iran.

Make no mistake - for Israel this is an existential war. But much more is at stake. A religious militia that calls itself the "party of God" takes over a State, drags it into war, using high-tech rockets, and the world is paralyzed. Hanging in the balance is the relative strength of moderates versus extremists in the most volatile part of the world.

A return to the status quo ante, where Hezbollah could hit Israel at will, will serve as an invitation to Syria to continue to destabilize Lebanon, and could also reinforce Iranian recalcitrance on its nuclear program as well as embolden radical fundamentalists everywhere.

On this, the fourth week of the conflict, the diplomatic clock has started ticking. We, at the Labour Party believe that the only way out of this crisis is a political settlement. In this issue, you will find some of our ideas and suggestions regarding such a settlement. Perhaps as President Bush and PM Blair have stated, this is a "moment of opportunity for change"

We wish it with all our hearts.

Colette Avital
International Secretary

Sign up & comments: REVIVAL@HAVODA.ORG.IL

A light at the end of the tunnel

By Ami Ayalon MK

The current crisis and its attendant dangers present a chance to reshape regional realities. The aim of the war should not be proving the justness of our cause -- that's clear to all -- but to improve our national security and statecraft. We must accept that a terrorist group cannot be routed and disarmed through military means alone, and certainly not through a protracted retaking of territory. War is a crucial stage, but ultimately our goals will be achieved through diplomacy.



The Lebanese government must be persuaded to move against Hezbollah, with the help of the international community. This is the only way to secure calm for our northern border in the long run.

Today's Lebanon, contrary to that of the 1980s, has a substantial majority that seeks national independence and democratic stability. This majority, which is made up of Sunnis, Christians and Druze, as well as some of the Shi'ite community, mounted an impressive popular campaign that ousted Syria's forces from Lebanon and undercut Syrian sway over Lebanese politics. Then there are the moderate Arab states, led by Saudi Arabia and Egypt, as well as the wider international community, that are interested in regional stability and in undermining Iranian influence. In other words, our interests coincide with those of most of the region's main players. This allows us to create a new diplomatic reality. It is also the reason that Israel is being allowed time to press its military offensive.

But getting the Beirut government to move against Hezbollah is no easy matter. Hezbollah combines an Iranian-Shi'ite outlook with Lebanese nationalism. It is not just Iran's proxy in Lebanon, rather a national Lebanese force. Hezbollah's legitimacy is only bolstered by the assaults on Lebanese sovereignty. So a delicate balance is required from Israel, in which it hits Hezbollah hard while doing its utmost not to create a humanitarian disaster in Lebanon that would harm the country's sense of sovereignty.

This balance will be compromised by our insertion of large ground forces to fight in southern Lebanon, because in the eyes of the Lebanese, and many others in the Arab world, we have returned as occupiers. Continued fighting in the current format risks restoring Hezbollah's legitimacy as guardians of Lebanon and its sovereignty, and as the vanguard of the struggle against Western aggression. We are single-handedly entrapping the Lebanese government. If it tried to move against Hezbollah against these conditions, it would be accused of collaborating with the Israeli invader.

To empower the Lebanese government, as well as the international community seeking Hezbollah's disarmament, we must weigh carefully how much military force to use and which diplomatic initiatives to pursue.

Continues on page 4

Sign up & comments: REVIVAL@HAVODA.ORG.IL

Militarily, we should rely on air power and avoid face-to-face combat as much as possible, as the terrain massively favors the defenders. With that said, having engaged in ground fighting we should not hesitate to bring in major firepower and armor in order to reduce our casualties and the time spent on Lebanese territory.

From a diplomatic standpoint, weakening Hezbollah means empowering the Lebanese majority that favors independence and democratic rule. This requires a clear diplomatic horizon in Lebanon, based on the implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559. An accord with the Lebanese government should therefore be based on the following key principles:

- * The Lebanese army redeploys to the south of the country immediately upon the Israeli Defence Forces' withdrawal.
- * If foreign peacekeepers are required, they should be requested by the Lebanese government. Peacekeepers should include units from moderate Arab countries, to lend their mandate legitimacy in the eyes of Lebanese who might otherwise perceive them as a tool of occupation by Western superpowers.
- * Hezbollah is disarmed, remaining a political party only.
- * A timetable is set for Israel's withdrawal from the Sheeba Farms and for the border to be redrawn under U.N. auspices, in coordination with Syria and Lebanon.
- * Our abducted soldiers are freed in return for the release of Lebanese prisoners in Israel.

The next stage would be to pave out future contacts between Israel and Lebanon on matters such as water sources, bilateral relations, terms for foreign forces to leave the region, and international aid for the Lebanese.

As long as the diplomatic framework is not drawn up and endorsed by the international community, as long as the hostages are not transferred to the custody of the Lebanese government, we must continue waging this war. But we must not set up an Israeli buffer zone in southern Lebanon. Nor should we repeat the mistake of the Tannenbaum deal by releasing Palestinian prisoners within the framework of negotiations with Lebanon. In any negotiations with the Lebanese government only Lebanese prisoners should be released. Handing over Palestinian prisoners to the Hizbollah would give that organization unnecessary prestige and crown Nasrallah as the leader of the Palestinian cause.

Most importantly, we should remember that Iran is the real existential threat for Israel, and that whatever may unfold in Lebanon, it must not be allowed to harm the struggle by Israel and the international community against Iranian threat.

With well-considered military and diplomatic moves, we can reshape the reality on our northern border. To succeed in the mission, we must recognize the fact that military moves must be complemented - and completed - by diplomacy. This is the real test for the Olmert-Peretz government.

Ami Ayalon MK is a former Admiral in the Israeli Navy and former head of Israel's General Security Service. Before his election to the 17th Knesset, Ayalon led a popular peace movement, "the People's Voice".

Labor enters the coalition

By Guy Spigelman

Since our last issue, the Israeli elections took place with Labor gaining 19 seats in the Knesset, making it the second largest party in parliament. Israeli politics has been realigned – with Kadima, a new centrist party formed by former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon – who is still fighting for his life after a severe stroke left him in a coma in January this year – gaining 29 seats. Labor's traditional rival, the Likud, gained just 12 seats – relegating it to the opposition.

Following the announcement of the results, coalition negotiations ensued. Labor, under the leadership of Amir Peretz MK, achieved significant concessions from Kadima with regard to the Government's basic guidelines.

These included commitments for socio-economic legislation – including a significant rise in the minimum wage, pension reform, an overhaul of the education system – from pre-school to university, regional development for the Galil and the Negev as well as a commitment to improving the status of Arab Israelis.

On the diplomatic front, Labor insisted that negotiations with the Palestinians would be the government's first priority, and only if these prove fruitless would unilateral moves in the West Bank, similar to the Gaza disengagement, be undertaken.

Labor's new Ministerial line-up



Party Chairman Amir Peretz MK Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence

Upon taking up the position, Peretz had to grapple with budget cuts and the ongoing terror activities in Gaza and the West Bank. The conflict in Lebanon has since erupted, with Peretz responsible for Israel's military strategy that, as he says, is designed "to create a new security and diplomatic reality on Israel's Northern border".



Prof. Yuli Tamir MK Minister of Education

Prof. Tamir led the development of Labor's education platform and inherited a wounded education system, following budget cuts and a failed reform process that drove down the morale of teachers. In the short time since taking office, Tamir has repaired relations with teacher unions and proposed an overhaul of the school system that is now under negotiation with the finance ministry.

Sign up & comments: REVIVAL@HAVODA.ORG.IL



Benjamin Ben-Eliezer MK
Minister of National Infrastructure

Former Party Leader and Minister of Defence, Ben-Eliezer has returned to the National Infrastructure Ministry, a portfolio he held in the Sharon government. Challenges include reform of the energy sector and the introduction of desalination plants to increase water supply.



Shalom Simhon MK
Minister for Agriculture

As a former leader of the Moshav farming movement, and former Minister for the Environment, Simhon brings a wealth of experience to the position. Israel's agriculture industry faces numerous challenges – including the outbreak of bird-flu late last year and the conflict in the North – that has seen the damage to numerous farming communities.



Isaac Herzog MK
Minister of Tourism

Herzog served as Minister of Housing and Construction in the last Sharon government. Until the conflict in the North, 2006 was on track to being the biggest year for Israeli tourism on record. Herzog has in place a “rapid-recovery” plan that is designed to bring tourism back as soon as the conflict is over. He is also negotiating an “open-skies” policy – to deregulate air travel to and from Israel.



Ophir Pines-Paz MK
Minister for Science, Culture and Sport

The Science Ministry was expanded to include culture and sport and is led now by Pines-Paz. Israel excels in scientific research and culture and Pines-Paz is committed to expanding international cooperation in these fields. Pines-Paz – former Minister of the Interior – and avid amateur hand ball player – is working closely with local government to help bridge the digital divide and implement cultural and sporting programs.



Eitan Cabel MK
Minister without portfolio, with responsibility for the Israel Broadcasting Authority (IBA)

Labor Party Secretary General Cabel, is serving for the first time as a Minister and has been put in charge of the IBA. The IBA is in urgent need of reform and Cabel is drawing up plans, in conjunction with the board of the IBA to implement major changes.

Excerpts from statement by Defense Minister Amir Peretz to the Knesset

31 Jul 2006

This is a war against the axis of evil, of states that support terrorism and fan the flames of hatred. We are fighting Hizbullah, which is a front of the extremist regime in Tehran, which funds, directs and encourages its murderous activity. Its members serve the same murderous ideology and receive orders and funding from the terror headquarters in Tehran and Damascus.

The entire world must know that we did not choose the military option. The world must remember that we have no territorial conflict on the northern border with Lebanon or on the southern border with the Palestinian Authority. Israel has left the Gaza Strip and has not been in Lebanon for six years, but terror does not cease. Rather, it has continued to grow, crossing Israel's territorial boundaries, physically as well as morally, and required us to act. This is a war that was forced on us after we did everything to prevent it.

“While we make every effort to target only terrorist elements, Hizbullah strikes indiscriminately at Israeli civilians and population centers”

The government of Lebanon abandoned the population of southern Lebanon to Hizbullah, which made them into a shield for their military power. Our current operation against Hizbullah has revealed its true face. We found rockets and missiles stored in private homes, sometimes in special rooms built to conceal them. We found Katyusha launchers firing from the courtyards of mosques, churches and schools. We found terrorists and munitions in every village, operations and communication centers in private homes. We found terror as part of everyday life in south Lebanon. Terror flourished, and the government of Lebanon remained silent.

While we make every effort to target only terrorist elements, Hizbullah strikes indiscriminately at Israeli civilians and population centers. They send suicide bombers to explode in buses and restaurants. While they have no regard for human life, not giving a second thought to using innocent Lebanese civilians for their purposes, we make every effort to avoid harming uninvolved civilians. When they succeed in killing innocent train workers in Haifa, they consider it an operational success. When we kill innocent civilians, we consider it a tragedy to be investigated thoroughly.

I would like to state categorically: There is no Israeli pilot or commander who would issue an order to hurt uninvolved civilians. Whenever we intend to target a munitions depot in a

Continues on page 8

Sign up & comments: REVIVAL@HAVODA.ORG.IL

building in which a family resides, Israeli Intelligence devotes great effort to find the telephone number of that family, phone them and ask them to leave the house two hours before in order that they not be harmed. Yet, despite this, people are sometimes killed. This is a war zone, and the terrorist organizations know that their presence in populated areas will lead to civilian casualties.

I regret the outcome of the incident in Kafr Qana. We regret harming any adult or child, and we will continue to do everything to avoid it. We will not hesitate to investigate this incident claimed so many lives, in order to learn how to prevent loss of life in the future. We are not doing this to make a good impression on anyone. We are doing it for ourselves, for our own moral conscience.

We believe in the future of our region. It is therefore our aim to weaken the terrorist elements that threaten regional stability and to strengthen moderate elements, enabling them to assume responsibility for their own lives, their own countries. We do not wish to wage war against the Lebanese people, just as we have no interest in waging war against the Palestinian people. We are fighting terrorism in Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority.

At the same time, we demand that those who maintain sovereignty also take responsibility. We cannot continue to differentiate between sovereignty and responsibility – they go hand in hand.

Diplomatic efforts have intensified in recent days, alongside the military activity, and they complement one another. In coordination between myself and the Prime Minister, it was decided to restrict air force activity for 48 hours and to focus on countering attacks against Israel, while facilitating humanitarian aid to the Lebanese population in the combat areas. US Secretary of State Rice has left Israel in order to continue to create the diplomatic foundations for a change in reality, but the real outcome will be affected by events on the ground. There will therefore be no change in our determined stand.

The IDF will broaden its activity against Hizbullah. The IDF has succeeded in significantly damaging Hizbullah's long-range rocket-launching ability. It is important to stress that the size of Hizbullah's arsenal of rockets exceeded that of many regular armies. This arsenal still poses a threat to Israel, and we will continue to work to minimize Hizbullah's rocket-launching capacity.

Continues on page 9



*Defence Minister Amir Peretz
Addressing the Diplomatic Corps at
Labor Party HQ in Tel Aviv in July*

We will not agree to the return of Hizbullah's flags waving on Israel's border and posing a threat to the State of Israel. The multinational force to be stationed in Lebanon will be empowered by the United Nations to act firmly against any terrorist elements that will attempt to resume its activity in the field. The multinational force will have to train the Lebanese army and police the border crossings between Syria and Lebanon, in order to prevent the rearming of Hizbullah. We insist that the multinational force to be sent to the region will be competent and well trained, and that it be given significant powers of enforcement, not symbolic, in order that it be able to fulfill its obligations in south Lebanon.

We also appealed to the international community to establish a civilian multinational force that will be responsible for the rehabilitation of Lebanon, so that Iran will not be able, through its funds and resources, to take root again within the population of southern Lebanon.

As a man of peace, I say: We must not agree to an immediate cease fire. Only by overcoming terrorism can we achieve peace.

Social legislation led by Labour

One of the main issues that the Israeli Labour Party led during recent electoral campaign was the struggle against poverty.

The main components of our plan included:

- * A commitment to raise the minimum salary up to \$1000 (around 4400 NIS).
- * A commitment to pass a law providing every Israeli citizen with a pension.
- * A commitment to dramatically increase the funding for pre-school education
- * A commitment to introducing student loans based on the successful Australian model

Our first commitment to our public has been fulfilled.

On June 19 the Knesset passed a bill to raise the minimum wage in three stages:

From June 1 2006 to March 21, 2007 the minimum wage will rise to 3,585 New Israeli Shekels (NIS)

From April 1, 2007 to May 31, 2007 - it will be raised to 3,710 NIS or up to 47.5% of the national average wage.

From June 1, 2007 till the end of the period that this law is in force, the average wage will rise to 3,835 NIS.

The Government is committed to raising the wage to 4400 NIS by the end of its term in coordination with business and the union movement.