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After More Than 50 Years of Supporting Israel's Occupation, What Exactly Did the Israeli Left Think Would Happen?

The aftermath of the elections have shown that Israeli society has become partly religious and largely racist, with hatred of Arabs being its main fuel, with no one to stand against it Share in Facebook

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What did you think would happen? What was the Zionist left, which sank into a coma after the Oslo Accords, thinking? That it was possible to return to power out of a coma? Empty-handed? Without an alternative and without leadership? Solely on the basis of hatred for Netanyahu? Aside from that, it had nothing to offer.

No one should be surprised by what happened. It could not have been otherwise. It began with the occupation – pardon the annoying and clichéd mention of that – but that is where it really began, and it had to culminate in a government of racism and transfer. Fifty years of incitement against the Palestinians and scare tactics about them cannot culminate in a government of peace.

Fifty years of almost wall-to-wall Israeli support, from the Zionist left and right, for the occupation, could not end any other way than with Ben-Gvir as the popular hero. A never-ending occupation could only lead to the Benjamin Netanyahu-Itamar Ben-Gvir government. For if you're going to have an occupation, then you need to embrace its genuine version, the one that is not the least bit abashed about it – the Ben-Gvir version.

It was simply impossible to continue with the illusions – Jewish and democratic, an enlightened occupation, a temporary occupation – and that whole tired repertoire of phrases. The time for truth had arrived, and that is what Netanyahu and Ben-Gvir are going to tell us.

There is no point in pursuing a blame campaign now – Yair Lapid siphoned off Labor votes,

Labor didn't merge with Meretz, Balad didn't go with the Joint List. These things would have amounted to temporary pain relievers for a terminal illness. Even if all that would not have happened, nothing about the overall picture would have been different: The society that has arisen here is partly religious and largely racist, with hatred of Arabs being its main fuel, and there was no one to stand against that.

What happened two days ago did not begin two days ago. Maybe Golda Meir started it, maybe Shimon Peres, but in any event, none of their successors tried to go another way to stem the tide. Did you really think that Yair Lapid, a moderate and hollow rightist, filled with good intentions, was capable of offering an alternative to Ben-Gvir? What alternative? To kill gently? To embrace Emmanuel Macron? Now Israel has decided it prefers not to be gentle when it comes to killing. The next government will at least avoid the self-preening.

For years, a rudderless left and center that lacks leadership and lacks courage has desperately attempted to grovel to and look like the right. It just had to end with Ben-Gvir and with the nationalist Shas. There was no other possible outcome.

For years, Israelis have been about the Chosen People, about the Holocaust after which anything is permitted, about the Arabs who want to throw us into the sea, about our right to the land because of the biblical stories, about the IDF as the world's most moral army, about David versus Goliath, about Israeli Arabs as a fifth column, about the whole world being against us and that anyone who criticizes us is an antisemite. What did we think would arise out of all that? Ben-Gvir actually took his time. He could well have made his big splash a long time ago. That's what happens when you have a Bolsonaro and no Lula facing him. That's what happens when cries of "Death to the Arabs," which will now be drilled at morning assembly in schools, were not met with a single cry of "Freedom for the Arabs." That is where it began, this is where it ends.

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