

The Israeli Salvation Front

Uri Avnery

March 28, 2015

THE 2015 ELECTION was a giant step towards the self-destruction of Israel.

The decisive majority has voted for an apartheid state between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, in which democracy will slowly disappear.

The decision is not yet final. Israeli democracy has lost a battle. It has not yet lost the war.

If it does not draw the lessons, it will lose the war, too.

All the justifications and alibis of the Israeli Left are useless. It's the bottom line that counts.

The country is in existential danger. Not from the outside, but from the inside.

An Israel Salvation Front is needed now.

We have no other country.

FIRST OF ALL, the full extent of the debacle must be acknowledged and full responsibility must be taken.

The leaders who lost must go. In the struggle for the life of the state, there is no second opportunity.

The struggle between Isaac Herzog and Binyamin Netanyahu was a match between a lightweight boxer and a heavyweight.

The idea of a National Union government must be rejected and roundly condemned. In such a government, the Labor Party would again play the contemptible role of a fig leaf for the policy of occupation and oppression.

Now a new generation of leaders is needed, young, energetic and original.

THE ELECTION pitilessly exposed the deep chasms between the different sectors of Israeli society: Orientals, Ashkenazis, Arabs, "Russian", orthodox, religious and more.

The Salvation Front must encompass all sectors.

Every sector has its own culture, its own traditions, its own faith(s). All must be respected. Mutual respect is the foundation of the Israeli partnership.

The foundation of the Salvation Front needs a new authentic leadership that must emerge from all sectors.

The State of Israel belongs to all its citizens. No sector has exclusive ownership of the state.

The huge and growing gap between the very rich and the very poor, which largely parallels the gap between the ethnic communities, is a disaster for all of us.

The salvation of the state must be based on a return to equality as a basic value. A reality in which hundreds of thousands of children live under the poverty line is intolerable.

The income of the upper 0.01%, which reaches to the heavens, must be brought down to a reasonable level. The income of the lowest 10% must be raised to a humane level.

THE ALMOST total separation between the Jewish and the Arab parts of Israeli society is a disaster for both and for the state.

The Salvation Front must be based on both peoples. The chasm between them must be eliminated, for the good of both.

Empty phrases about equality and fraternity are not enough. They lack credibility.

There must come into being a sincere alliance between the democratic forces on both sides, not only in words but in actual daily cooperation in all areas.

This cooperation must find expression in frameworks of political partnership, joint struggles and regular joint meetings in all areas, based on respect for the uniqueness of each partner.

Only a permanent joint struggle can save Israeli democracy and the state itself.

THE HISTORIC conflict between the Zionist movement and the Palestinian Arab national movement now threatens both peoples.

The country between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River is the homeland of the two peoples. No war, oppression or uprising will change this basic fact.

If this conflict continues without end, it will endanger the existence of both peoples.

The one and only solution was and is their co-existence in two sovereign states: a free and independent State of Palestine side by side with the State of Israel.

The two-state solution is not a recipe for separation and divorce. On the contrary, it is a recipe for close co-existence.

The 1967 borders, with mutual agreed changes, are the basis of peace.

The co-existence of the two states in the joint homeland does necessitate frameworks of partnership at the

highest level, as well as open borders for the movement of people and goods. It also needs solid security arrangements for the good of both peoples.

Jerusalem, open and unified, must be the capital of both states.

The painful tragedy of the Palestinian refugees must find its just solution, agreed upon by the two sides. This solution will include return to the Palestinian state, a limited symbolic return to Israel and the payment of generous compensation by international funds to all.

Israel and Palestine shall work together so as to achieve a return of Jewish property left in Arab countries or the payment of generous compensation.

The State of Palestine will keep its affinity with the Arab world. The state of Israel will keep its affinity with the Jewish people in the world. Each of the two states will have sole responsibility for its immigration policy.

The problem of the Jewish settlers in Palestine will find its solution in the framework of agreed border changes between the two states, the inclusion of some settlements in the Palestinian state with the agreement of the Palestinian government and the re-settlement of the rest of the settlers in Israel.

Both states shall cooperate in the creation of a democratic regional partnership, in the spirit of the "Arab Spring", while resisting anarchy, terrorism and religious and nationalistic fanaticism throughout the region.

The masses of Israelis and Palestinians will not believe in the chances of peace and co-existence if there is no real and open partnership between the peace camps of both peoples.

To establish such a partnership, organizations and individuals of both sides must start right now to conduct joint political action, such as constant consultation and joint planning on all levels and in all areas.

THE JEWISH character of the State of Israel finds its expression in its culture and its affinity with the Jews throughout the world. It must not express itself in its interior regime. All citizens and all sectors must be equal.

The democratic forces within the Jewish and the Arab public must join hands and work together in their daily actions.

International pressure by itself will not save Israel from itself. The salvation forces must come from within.

World-wide pressure on Israel can and must assist the democratic forces in Israel, but cannot take their place.

BASIC VALUES do not change. However, the ways of talking about them with the public must change.

The old slogans are ineffective. The values must be

re-defined and re-formulated in up-to-date language, in line with the concepts and language of a new generation.

The two-state vision was defined after the 1948 war by a small group of path-blazers. Since then, huge changes have taken place in the world, in the region and within Israeli society. While the vision itself remains the only practical solution of the historic conflict, it must be poured into new vessels.

There is a need for political unity, a unifying salvation front that brings together all the forces of peace, democracy and social justice.

If the Labor Party is able to re-invent itself from the bottom up, it can constitute the basis of this camp. If not, an entirely new political party must be formed, as the core of the Salvation Front.

Within this front, diverse ideological forces must find their place and engage in a fruitful internal debate, while conducting a unified political struggle for the salvation of the state.

The regime within Israel must assure complete equality between all Jewish ethnic communities and between the two peoples, while safeguarding the affinity of the Israeli-Jewish public with the Jews in the world and the affinity of the Israeli-Arab public with the Arab world.

The situation in which most of the resources are in the hands of 1% of the population at the cost of the other 99%, must come to an end. A reasonable equality between all citizens, without connection with their ethnic origin, must be restored.

There is no social message without a political message, and there is no political message without a social message.

The Oriental Jewish public must be full partners in the state, side by side with all other sectors. Their dignity, culture, social status and economic situation must be accorded their proper place.

The religious-secular confrontation must be postponed until after peace is achieved. The beliefs and ceremonies of all religions must be respected, as well as the secular worldview.

The separation of state and religion—such as civil marriage, mass transportation on Shabbat—can wait until the struggle for existence is decided.

The protection of the judicial system, and above all the Supreme Court, is an absolute duty.

The various associations for peace, human rights and social justice, each of which conducts its laudable independent struggle in its chosen field, must enter the political arena and play a central role together in the unified Salvation Front.