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Aktuelles aus israelischen Tageszeitungen

31. Juli – 16. August 2008

1. Olmert zieht sich zurück – Kadima-Vorwahlen

Am 31. Juli kündigte Premierminister Olmert an, in den Vorwahlen in seiner Partei Kadima nicht kandidieren zu wollen. So kommt der lange Kampf Olmerts, an der Macht zu bleiben, zu einem Ende. Rufe nach seinem Rücktritt waren nach dem 2. Libanonkrieg im Sommer 2006 laut geworden und seitdem nicht verklungen. Korruptionsvorwürfe und polizeiliche Untersuchungen haben seine Position seit Monaten weiter geschwächt. Er teilte mit, er werde sein Amt an der Regierungsspitze niederlegen, sobald im September ein neuer Kadima-Vorsitzender gewählt sei.

Nun wird spekuliert, wer seine Nachfolge antritt. Als Favoriten gelten Außenministerin Livni und Transport- und ehemaliger Verteidigungsminister Mofaz. Der neue Parteichef wird Olmerts Amt als Premierminister in einer Übergangsregierung übernehmen. Wenn es ihm gelingt, eine neue Koalition zusammenzustellen, könnte Kadima so bis zu den nächsten Wahlen im Frühling 2010 an der Macht bleiben. Kritik an diesem System wird in den Medien vor allem deswegen laut, weil somit die 60.000 Kadima-Mitglieder, die in den anstehenden Vorwahlen den Parteivorsitzenden wählen, darüber entscheiden, wer Israels nächster Regierungschef wird.

Olmert, a dignified end

„In the end, it was a dignified acknowledgement of an untenable reality.

In a brief, and rather sad, address to the nation last night, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert [...] insisted he had satisfactory answers to the numerous corruption accusations that have been levelled against him, but nonetheless bowed to the inevitable and signaled the end of his hold on power. [...] He did refer to relentless attacks upon him, from his very first days

in office, launched by self-styled champions of justice. But he leavened such criticism with firmly stated respect and fealty to the rule of law, and commendably stressed his pride in being a citizen of a democratic state in which a prime minister is not 'above the law.' [...]

Olmert, in departure, has mercifully spared Israel the shameful potential ignominy of having a prime minister indicted while in office.“

JPO 30.07.08

Zwei Jahre zu spät

„Wahrscheinlich haben die Durchschnittsbürger, von denen laut letzter Umfrage nur einer von 8 Olmert unterstützt, gestern verständnislos das große Getue im Fernsehen angesehen und sich gefragt, was daran wohl neu ist. Hat irgendjemand [...] denn wirklich daran geglaubt, dass Olmert bei den Primaries von Kadima antreten wird? [...]

Olmerts provokativer Charakter, seine Selbstrechtfertigungen [...], all diese Eigenschaften, die ihn auch auf den Sündenweg des 2. Libanonkrieges geführt haben, haben ihn auch diesmal dazu verleitet, ein Maximum an Fehlern zu begehen. Er wird seine Tage als PM so beenden, wie er sie seit dem 12. August 2006 verbringt – einsam, gedemütigt, das Beispiel eines Misserfolges für Generationen nach ihm.“

Ofer Sheach, MAA 31.07.08

Making a farce of democracy

„Kadima is essentially a defunct political party. It never really existed, but took on a virtual existence without ever establishing a political identity when Ariel Sharon broke away from Likud and took with him a number of hangers-on. Its membership roll [...] has been packed with thousands of recent recruits, many of whom have no connection with the party and no intention of voting for it in the next Knesset election. But they will participate in the

primary election that Kadima candidates insist will determine who the next prime minister of Israel will be. That is making a farce of democracy. [...] So who are these candidates who insist that they have the qualifications to be Israel's next prime minister? They are, all four of them, Olmert's cohorts, who participated in the decisions that led to Israel's defeat in the Second Lebanon War, and stood by him when the full measure of the fiasco had already become clear."

Moshe Arens, HAA 05.08.09

Kadima, unvarnished

"With Prime Minister Ehud Olmert set to step down as party leader, the spotlight focuses on Kadima's September primary race - the assumption being that the victor will form a new coalition.

Will Olmert be replaced by Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, Transportation Minister Shaul Mofaz, Public Security Minister Avi Dichter or Interior Minister Meir Sheetrit? [...]

The polls show Livni as being highly popular with the general electorate, though Mofaz appears to have the stronger party campaign apparatus. [...]

The stability of Israel's political system has always depended on which party leader can muster 61 Knesset seats - and not on how she or he got to be party leader. [...]

Of course, what Israel really needs is an overhaul of the electoral system - perhaps some creative combination of direct election by district and proportional representation, with a relatively high threshold. [...]

With polls showing that 53 percent of Israelis want new elections, it is too bad that Kadima's 72,000-strong membership [...] will likely decide who becomes Israel's next prime minister.

At the very least, however, Livni, Mofaz, Dichter and Sheetrit would do the country a service by publishing substantive position papers instead of snipping at each other."

JPO 07.08.08

Don't vote for Livni

"[A]s a former [Kadima] voter and Israeli citizen at present, I feel I have the right to turn to you ahead of the fateful primaries that are just around the corner. I ask one thing of you: Weigh your vote carefully. [...] In the name of everything that matters in this country I ask you not to vote for Tzipi Livni. Don't take this risk. Don't make us, at such sensitive junction, put up with such inexperienced leadership. Livni is still

not ready to be a prime minister. She hasn't proven herself yet. [...]

When faced with the choice between Livni and Mofaz the latter is the one who is worthier, more level-headed, more experience, and the person who would make Israelis feel safer. [...] There is something moral and precise about him. He is very level-headed, as if he belongs to a different era of leaders. He is less about the media, doesn't know that much about spins, he's modest, and very to-the-point. I can't remember him ever yelling or uttering silly words. [...]"

Hanoch Daum, JED 09.08.08

Netanyahu the devil

"In any proper country Mofaz would have long ago been delegitimized because of responsibility for what are considered war crimes elsewhere in the world. If he is elected prime minister, he will not be able to visit certain countries for fear of being arrested. Neither has anyone settled accounts with him over his part in the IDF's unpreparedness for the last war. But [supposedly] even Mofaz is not as frightening as Netanyahu."

Gideon Levy, HAA 10.08.08

2. Olmert's Vorschlag für ein Friedensabkommen

In der zweiten Augustwoche präsentierte Israels Premierminister Olmert dem palästinensischen Präsidenten Abbas einen umfassenden Vorschlag für ein Friedensabkommen. In diesem ist Israels Annektierung der großen Siedlungsblöcke im Westjordanland im Austausch gegen Land im Negev vorgesehen, sowie freier Durchgang vom Westjordanland zum Gazastreifen, die Entmilitarisierung des palästinensischen Staates und die Rückkehr der palästinensischen Flüchtlinge in einen zukünftigen palästinensischen Staat. Außerdem wurde in den Medien berichtet, Olmert habe zugesagt, dass eine geringe Zahl von Flüchtlingen im Rahmen von Familienzusammenführungen nach Israel zurückkehren könne. Diese Aussage wurde jedoch dementiert.

Die palästinensische Seite wies den Vorschlag, der die Diskussion um Jerusalem auf einen späteren Zeitpunkt verschiebt, als unakzeptabel zurück.

Auch in den israelischen Medien wurde der Vorschlag mit Skepsis betrachtet. Da Olmert kaum Rückhalt in der Bevölkerung hat und seine Tage im Amt gezählt sind, werden seine Friedens-

bemühungen oftmals als Versuch betrachtet von seinen Fehlern abzulenken.

Painful historic miss

"At the dusk of his term, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is offering Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas a 'shelf agreement' on borders, refugees and security arrangements. [...] It would also allow him to leave behind a foreign affairs legacy, rather than be remembered as the prime minister who had to step down as a criminal suspect.

Olmert's offer [...] is almost an exact replica of the ideas discussed eight years ago, at the end of the Barak and Clinton administrations. This similarity can be seen as an expression of a painful, historic missed opportunity. After all the deaths and bloodshed, the parties are returning to the exact same place and facing the same difficulties in coming to a decision.

There are a few important differences, however [...]. Olmert tried to learn from Barak's bitter experience and adapted his offer to the political capacity of his coalition. Under pressure from Shas, Olmert decided to put off the discussion on Jerusalem. [...]

On the Palestinian side, the negotiations are being conducted by a weak leader who lacks the power and authority of his predecessor, Yasser Arafat. [...] The situation on the ground is also more complicated: Hamas is in control of the Gaza Strip while Israel built a separation barrier in the West Bank, creating a precedent for determining the border. [...]

Olmert's proposal is commendable as a basis for negotiations, even if the details are unacceptable to the Palestinians, who seek a much smaller land swap. The problem is that like Barak, Olmert has reached the critical moment too late in his term, after losing his political and public support and deciding to resign. [...]

The lesson to be learned is that in foreign affairs, any delay is negative and waiting only increases the likelihood that the negotiations will fail. [...] Even if it is too late now to reach an agreement, Olmert's successors would do well to learn from his experience and advance the peace process as soon as they take office - not when they are about to leave it."

HAA 13.08.08

Boundries for Israel

"Early this week Prime Minister Ehud Olmert reportedly handed Palestinian Authority President

Mahmoud Abbas Israel's detailed proposal for a 'shelf agreement.' [...]

By Tuesday night, however, Abbas spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh provided the Palestinian response: 'The Israeli proposal is unacceptable. [...] The Palestinian people will agree to a state with territorial contiguity only in a way that includes Jerusalem as its capital.' [...]

Beyond the intriguing question of why the story was leaked by the Israeli side, what impresses is how faithfully and unwaveringly Erekat and Abu Rudeineh adhere to the Palestinian line. They demand an Israeli withdrawal to the June 4, 1967 boundaries [...].

By contrast, to this day Israel has yet to officially declare which territories it *insists* on retaining in any deal with the Palestinians. This black hole in Israeli diplomacy explains why international public opinion believes, wrongly, that Israel should be, and even would be, prepared to withdraw to the 1967 "borders" assuming the details can be worked out. It will be an uphill battle to disabuse the world of the notion that Israel can safely return to the indefensible 1949 Armistice Lines - and to make a clear and unequivocal case for the borders the Jewish state can live with. [...]

Israel needs to define, finally, the boundaries of the Jewish state in the context of its vision for a viable two-state solution - and to place the onus for failing to achieve 'two states for two peoples' squarely where it belongs: on 100 years of Palestinian intransigence. "

JPO 14.08.08

3. Georgien

Der Konflikt zwischen Georgien und Russland um die abtrünnigen georgischen Provinzen Südossetien und Abchasien wird von den israelischen Medien umfassend thematisiert. Dies hat mehrere Gründe: Zum einen gibt es in Israel eine große Gruppe jüdischer Immigranten aus Georgien, die zum Großteil weiterhin eng mit ihrem Geburtsland verbunden sind. Israelische Geschäftsleute haben in den letzten Jahren zudem begonnen, umfangreiche Investitionen in dem Kaukasusstaat zu tätigen. Außerdem pflegen die beiden Staaten enge bilaterale Beziehungen. Israel ist ein wichtiger Waffenlieferant für Georgien, und Israelis haben als Angestellte von privaten Militärunternehmen georgische Truppen trainiert. Unter Druck von Russland meldete das israelische Verteidigungsministerium jedoch nach Ausbruch der

militärischen Auseinandersetzungen, den Waffenhandel mit Georgien reduziert zu haben. Israel ist im Konflikt mit dem Iran auf Russlands Wohlwillen angewiesen und bedacht, seine Interessen in diesem Zusammenhang nicht zu gefährden, indem Russland verärgert wird.

Putin's pique

"The disquieting question of the day is: What will now satiate Putin? Not only have his forces defeated Georgia in the separatist areas; by taking the war into Georgia proper, the Russian leader seems intent on humiliating Saakashvili and perhaps driving him from office.

[...] No one imagines that the US would go to war with Russia over Georgia [...]

Putin may have set out to make an example of Georgia. But in the process he has also brought relations with the US to a post-Cold War nadir and provided useful instruction to, among others, Europe and the Ukraine that a resurgent Russia will not hesitate to use disproportionate force to achieve its political objectives.

These lessons may yet come back to haunt him. "

JPO 11.08.09

Russia teaches US a lesson

"In this war, Russia won, Georgia lost, and the United States was resoundingly defeated. From now on, all former Soviet states would know that at best they can expect pretty words from Washington. Officials in Iraq and Afghanistan may also start thinking that they cannot rely on the US. Perhaps officials in Israel will start thinking twice as well."

Orly Azoulay, JED 13.08.08

Sympathy for the aggressor

"I don't see Russia as the bad guy in this fight, but more than that, I don't see Georgia as the good guy. [...] It's a humanitarian disaster and everybody's blaming Russia - the US, the EU and if not the Israeli government, then certainly the Israeli media.

Why would that be? Well, Russia is clearly the Goliath in this fight. Russia under Putin is becoming a dictatorship again, while Georgia is awfully overmatched; Georgia is David, the underdog. So I can see some basic reasons for the world to have an emotional affinity for little Georgia against big, bad Russia.

But now let's find out the facts of this war, such as who started it. [...] Georgia shelled Tskhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia, and sent its troops in to take over. Anywhere from hundreds to thousands of

civilians were killed, and tens of thousands became refugees. [...]

The people of South Ossetia and Abkhazia identify with Russia, not Georgia. [...]

So what we've got here is a bloody war started by Georgia against a small, pro-Russian province it wants to rule - against the will of the people who live there."

Larry Derfner, JPO 14.08.08

Das gleiche Gesetz gilt für Israel und Georgien

"Putins Russland, dessen Handlungen in Georgien von einigen Leuten mit den aggressiven Manövern Deutschlands Ende der 30er Jahre verglichen wurde, ist nicht nur das Problem der USA. Alle wichtigen Demokratien, darunter auch Israel, sehen aus, als würden sie unter Ohnmacht leiden, sogar im Koma liegen.

[...] Nicht nur das demokratische, pro-westliche Georgien ist in Gefahr, jetzt ist auch der ganze Gürtel der Länder in Gefahr, die sich von der Sowjetunion gelöst haben – als nächstes die Ukraine. [...] Der Westen ist verwirrt [...]. Er vergibt Förderungen und Beihilfen an totalitäre Staaten und sogar an Terroristen, ist aber nicht darauf vorbereitet, die Errungenschaft der Demokratie zu festigen. Und in diesem Punkt gilt das gleiche Gesetz für Israel, die Ukraine und Georgien, auch wenn [unsere] Bedrohung ihren Ursprung in den Ländern der muslimischen Achse des Bösen hat."

HZO 13.08.08

From Tbilisi to Teheran

"As the Russian bear plunges its claws into the heart of its much smaller neighbor Georgia, few outside the region seem to appreciate the danger posed by Moscow's latest aggression. [...]

How this crisis plays out will have a direct impact on the ability of Israel and the US to confront an even greater menace that lies just around the corner - Iran and its stubborn drive to build nuclear weapons. Here's why: Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin is testing the West's mettle. He senses weakness, and is using the conflict with Georgia, a close ally of Washington, to see to what extent the US and Europe will stand up for their friends and their own interests. [...]

[...] And if allowed to go unanswered, the attack on Georgia will strengthen Russia's resolve to further undercut key Western interests.

That is where Iran comes into play. [...] After all, in recent years Moscow has stood by Iran's side in the face of mounting Western pressure. Russia has

been supplying Iran with materials for its nuclear program. [...]

If Putin sees that the West is a paper tiger and allows Georgia to be trampled, then he likely will not hesitate to block additional Western efforts to strip Iran of its nuclear ambitions."

Michael Freud, JPO 12.08.08

Our friends in Georgia

"Israel wanted to play a central role in Georgia. [...]

Many diplomatic and business opportunities opened there, and battalions of former generals, diligent entrepreneurs and middlemen quickly swooped down on them. Now, as the Russian media, guided by the Putin government, is emphasizing Israel's contribution to 'the Georgian aggression,' the Israeli Foreign Ministry is suddenly quick to mention that it always has warned against the wholesale weapons export permits issued by the Defense Ministry. [...]

Moscow does not recognize nuances. It is giving Israel a clear choice: Stand with Georgia [...] or preserve far more important interests.

As far as Israel is concerned, the choice is simple. [...] It's not only a matter of the geopolitical power of the Russian giant [...] and its key role in the diplomatic game with Iran, there is also the Jewish question. Hundreds of thousands of Jews are at his mercy, and all it would take is a small hint from the Kremlin in order to arouse chilly winds and make their situation deteriorate. [...]

[F]our years ago, during one of the crises with Ukraine, Putin spoke of the influence of 'Zionist advisers.' If the situation in Georgia worsens, anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli notes will begin slipping into Russian propaganda. [...] Official Israel has understood the message, although belatedly, and it is beginning to lower its profile."

Anshel Pfeffer, HAA 14.08.08

No reason for pride

"While keeping one eye on our representatives at the Olympics, we were also watching, with pride and concern, our fine boys fighting in Georgia. Well, not exactly our fine boys, but rather, the students of our fine officers and soldiers, who traveled to Georgia to sell their war skills.

[...] The media here reported heart-warming details regarding the impressive performance of the elite regiments trained in line with the imported IDF tradition, and many Israelis blushed when a grateful

Georgian minister warmly praised the courage of soldiers instructed by former Israeli officers.

In fact, we should have been ashamed. This is the customary thing to do when a country becomes a distinguished exporter of mercenaries.[...]

[...]Teach anyone to kill just to make money? Market the reputation and 'profession' they acquired here at the expense of the blood of their own people and other people? This is a shameful disgrace. And also a dishonorable outrage."

B. Michael, JED 12.08.08

HAA = Haaretz
HZO = Ha Tzofe
JED = Jedioth Ahronoth
JPO = Jerusalem Post
MAA = Maariv
IHY = Israeli HaYom

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