

CHANGING CONCEPTS OF PARTY AND "MOVEMENT" DEMOCRACY: THE CASE OF THE ISRAELI LABOR MOVEMENT

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This article identifies and analyzes three concepts of democracy that have developed in the history of the Israeli Labor movement: institutional, competitive and pioneer. The institutional concept originated in the Labor party, and the Federation of Labor (Histadrut); the competitive concept was fully articulated by members of the circle of young leaders of Mapai in the 1950s; and the pioneer concept was developed by the collectivist kibbutz movement. The differences among the three concepts are discussed in relation to the suggested distinction between a system of democratic choice and a system of democratic approval. The former recognizes elections as a sufficient source of legitimacy; the latter adds to it other tests (normative and constructive). Accordingly, the system of choice is open to competitive election, while the selection of leaders in the system of approval is carried out by an inner circle, and the formal election is turned into a ritual act of approval.

This article discusses the clash between the institutional and competitive concepts of democracy in Mapai (1930-1968); the kibbutz and the pioneer approach; the collective charismatic assertion of founding leaders; and finally, the current victory of the competitive concept of democracy that was coupled with the weakening of the historic institutions of the Israeli Labor movement — party organization, Histadrut, and kibbutz.

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Issues of democratic theory are largely confined to the study of the overall polity. With few exceptions, they are not found at the center of the study of voluntary organizations, except for issues of inherent oligarchical tendencies.¹ The political party is generally viewed as a mediating institution between the civil society and the state, or more specifically its institutions of government. The emphasis of theoretical discussion is, therefore, on the party's systemic democratic function, modes of institutionalization and the capacity to adapt and survive, rather than on the democratic character of the party itself.² Indeed, the characterization of the wider systemic function of the party has provided the basis for some late contributions to theoretical model-building of political parties.³ We do not have similar contributions in relation to the issue of internal party democracy. Nevertheless, public attention and research scrutiny have been steadily growing on the operative issues of party management,⁴ primarily nominations. In the American polity, this process began much earlier. The absence of mass parties, in Duverger's terms, with the shield of a legitimating, all-embracing social ideology, exposed the American parties already by the beginning of this century, to democratic criticism and reform, championed by the progressive movement. This campaign led to the birth of the nominating primary, which in the American case encroached on the jurisdiction of the party and limited its independence in managing its most critical organizational function.⁵

This article offers a conceptual framework for a discussion of party or "movement" democracy in the historic Israeli Labor movement. It does not entail an exhaustive survey, but relates primarily to the case of the dominant Labor party, Mapai (1930-1968), and the case of a pioneer kibbutz movement, Hashomer Hatsa'ir, and the latter's associated party, Mapam.

The use of the term "movement" is justified for a nonelectoral, less-structured organization than a political party or when the party constitutes but one of several institutions within a jointly organized community. This certainly applied to the historic Israeli Labor movement, which was characterized from the time of its early development and for a very long period by the intensive interaction of three institutions: the political party, the federation of labor (the Histadrut), and the pioneer collectivist settlement movement (the kibbutz).

The discussion of party or movement democracy requires a preliminary distinction between two types of public consent: choice and approval. The availability of a system of choice has become a critical test to the very realization of democracy within the realm of the state, whereas the assumed approval of a leader and a "truth"

forms a major feature of the totalitarian regime that claims legitimacy purportedly on the basis of the concept of consent.⁶

Maintaining a system of approval in a voluntary organization does not necessarily bear the same consequences if it is truly based on open voluntary membership, which requires the acceptance of a set of given principles or goals, and if this organization maintains a statutory permission and a political license to resort to a system of choice. Each voluntary organization tends to produce a certain balance in the application of the two systems of democratic consent. This balance is likely to change in response to pressures from within, reflecting the level of legitimacy of the existing leadership, and to pressures from without, reflecting a change in public orientation.

A system of choice in a voluntary organization is also based on the recognition of election as a sufficient source of legitimacy. It, therefore, offers arrangements for routine competition in the selection of leaders and in the nomination of candidates for public office. Conversely, the system of approval is based on the rejection of open elections as the sole legitimate test of leadership selection. Unchecked personal assertion and open competition are viewed by the proponents of this system as a threat to the collective purpose, authority, and solidarity of the movement as a whole. In a system of choice, elected party bodies reign supreme, and there is no normative obstacle in the way of the expansion of the process of election to the entire membership. In the system of approval, the real selection, or rather the renewal of the legitimacy of existing leaders and the recruitment of additional ones, is performed by an inner circle (nominating committees), and the formal election is turned into a ritual act of approval.⁷

Three Concepts of Movement Democracy

Three concepts of democracy have developed in the history of the Israeli Labor movement.⁸ Each concept originated in a different organization, borrowing from a system of democratic choice, a system of democratic approval, or both.

1. The institutional concept of democracy originates in Mapai, the major Israeli Labor party (1930-1968), and the Histadrut (the General Federation of Labor). The Histadrut had been ruled continuously by Mapai and subsequently, upon the latter's merger with two other Labor parties, by the Israeli Labor party until 1994. The institutional concept of democracy is essentially compatible with the expectations of a system of democratic approval: restrained per-

sonal competition and guarded change in leadership. It subscribes, however, to the formal structure of a system of democratic choice.

2. The competitive concept of democracy was developed by members of the Tse'irim (the circle of young leaders in Mapai).⁹ This concept is compatible with both the rules and the expectations of a system of democratic choice — namely, frequent change of leaders and legitimate personal competition for leadership decided by a secret ballot.

3. The pioneer or kibbutz concept of democracy was compatible with a system of democratic choice because this movement subscribed to the notion of direct democracy and held a common expectation for rotation in positions of leadership.¹⁰ It was close to a system of democratic approval, however, because of its negative attitude toward what it viewed as open, self-seeking, and unmitigated personal competition for leadership. The kibbutz attempted to reconcile the two systems through the adoption of rules and norms of “work placement” in the selection of candidates for leadership positions — namely, selecting leaders according to the candidates’ suitability and not necessarily their proven popularity. The recommendations of recruiting or nominating committees were put to a direct vote, in most cases only for the approval of the general assembly of the kibbutz or the central committee of the kibbutz movement and/or its associated political party. Table 1 compares the three concepts with regard to four different issues.

Although it is possible to point at the major institutional origins of each one of the three concepts of movement democracy as they developed within the historic Israeli Labor movement, these concepts cannot be identified either completely or exclusively over time with any one of the groups or institutions mentioned. The leaders of Mapai and the other Labor parties made intermittent use of the available statutory arrangements for personal competition and secret ballot. The kibbutz movements remained loyal to their ideological and political leaders for a very long time, and rotation was mostly confined to a limited though growing group of loyal activists. The kibbutz movement shifted to a more representative and competitive system of democracy in the late 1980s.¹¹ Finally, the Tse'irim of Mapai did not keep up their intense pressure for a radical democratic reform of their party for any length of time; they concentrated, instead, on the advancement of their own leaders.

Table 1
THREE CONCEPTS OF MOVEMENT DEMOCRACY: A COMPARISON

Attitude Toward Personal Competition		Rate of Desirable Change		Process of Choosing		Legitimacy of Choice	
System of Choice	System of Approval	System of Choice	System of Approval	System of Choice	System of Approval	System of Choice	System of Approval
Institutional concept of democracy	negative	low			nomination & approval		constructive test (loyalty & experi- ence)
Competitive concept of democracy	positive	high		competitive		open election	
Pioneering communal concept of democracy	negative	high (executive leadership)	low (move- ment leadership)		nomination (draft & approval)		constructive & norma- tive tests (loyalty, experience, & values)

The Clash Between the Institutional and the Competitive Concepts of Democracy in Mapai (1930-1968)

The concept of institutional democracy was never fully claimed or formulated by party leaders and activists because of its restrictive democratic connotation. It can, however, be pieced together and extrapolated from positions taken, and arguments used to defend them, in the face of challenges by advocates of democratic reform. Such an organized challenge first took place toward the end of the 1930s and the early 1940s and was posed by Siah Beit (Faction B).¹² Its origins lay in the struggle of several proletarian protest groups that had emerged in the Tel Aviv branches of the Histadrut and the party (Mapai). These groups demanded observance of strict equality in the allocation of workdays in the employment-stricken economy at the time. They pressured for rotation in the appointments to management positions in the economic concerns of the Histadrut, and demanded democratization of the party in terms of appointments, representation, and the implementation of majority decisions. These groups were joined by most of the leaders and a majority of the membership of Hakibbutz Hameuhad (the largest kibbutz movement at the time) in forming an opposition faction that threatened the position of the existing urban leadership of the party and of the Histadrut. Under the leadership of the kibbutz, this opposition faction widened its reach and intensified its challenge, adopting an overall radical ideological posture that contained some uneasy combinations: on one hand, a proletarian, close to a syndicalist trade unionist orientation; on the other hand, support for the normative and political leadership bid by the non-urban and the collectivist kibbutz movement (Hakibbutz Hameuhad) in the party and in the Histadrut. On one hand, it supported the nationalist ideology of "Greater Israel" and the rejection of a partition solution for Palestine; on the other hand, it called for the adoption of a universalist, radical, socialist Marxist philosophy. The challenge ended in a party split, following the decision of the Mapai Convention in 1942 to forbid the organization of factions within the party. The opposition refused to abide by this decision and continued to maintain its factional organization. In 1944, it formed an independent party — Hatenua Leahdut Ha'avoda. (In 1948, this new party merged with another kibbutz-led party, Hashomer Hatsa'ir, to form Mapam.)

The emergence of an opposition faction within Mapai prompted the formation of a loyalist faction, Siah Gimel (Faction C), which was

dismantled soon after the victory of the established, largely urban leadership at the Party Convention. A second reformist challenge was posed by the Tse'irim of Mapai beginning in the early 1950s. In response, a new loyalist organization came into being — an informal, semi-secret group, known as the Gush (bloc), and containing leading urban activists in the party bureaucracy, the Histadrut establishment and the various party-led municipal governments.¹³ Some of the leaders of the Gush had formerly been linked to Faction C, and now resumed a similar role — to protect the leaders of the party and the existing party regime from a takeover threat by what they viewed as an outside group: in the case of Faction B, by the leaders of a kibbutz movement; in the case of the Tse'irim, by former leaders of the party-associated youth movements and young party members who had already built a national reputation in the army and the government. (Most prominent among them were Moshe Dayan, who was the Chief of Staff of the Israeli Army at the time, and Shimon Peres, the then Director-General of the Defense Ministry.) According to its leaders, the Gush had been formed to defend party leaders and to protect the position and representation of urban activists in the party.¹⁴ Those who belonged turned their party work, in one form or another, into a life-long commitment and vocation. They perceived the party and the party-led Histadrut as the legitimate domain of its leaders and managers, and propagated the view that those who founded or developed the party and other "movement institutions" should continue to do so as long as they maintained their loyalty to the party and its leadership and as long as they kept their personal viability.

The leaders of the Gush represented the utmost expression of the conservative institutional concept of movement democracy. The emergence of a new leadership, according to this view, should be the outcome of a gradual process of growth in the service of the party. Rapid change of leadership and unchecked personal competition posed a threat to the unity of the party and undermined its capacity to rule the state and to realize its goals. Hence, even a majority decision in party bodies becomes truly legitimate only if it is not directed against the existing party leadership. Some of the early leaders of the Tse'irim were incorporated, at first, into the party bureaucracy and given responsibility for founding its "Young Guard"; however, their campaign to democratize the party, followed by a bid for positions of party leadership, were branded by the Gush and most veteran leaders as illegitimate. The leading spokesman of the Tse'irim in its initial stage, Avraham Ofer, articulated the critical view and reformist orientation of this group at the 1956 party convention. He charged that the party showed signs of totalitarian-

ism, a cult of leaders instead of a party program, a rule of party activists instead of mass participation in party work, and ad hoc decisions by closed committees instead of open deliberations in party bodies.¹⁵

Two years later, Ofer was even more direct in his criticism of party leaders, about whom he raised an embarrassing question: "Did those thirty party members who are known as its leaders — those who lead the state, manage the economy and, head the Histadrut — ever stand for personal election in a party body?"¹⁶ The Tse'irim were successful at this convention in carrying their motion to elect two-thirds of the party's Central Committee directly by the party branches. Appealing to the convention to repeal this resolution, Moshe Sharett (perhaps still the party's second most important leader at that time) described it as "an attempt to impose the principles of primitive democracy on a complex society."¹⁷ For Sharett and the other veteran leaders of Mapai, issues of internal democracy were secondary to the attainment of the overall goals of the party. They supported and sanctified democracy as a system of choice in the parliamentary system of the state, even in the multi-party Federation of Labor (the Histadrut). Within the party framework, however, their views were closer to the institutional concept of democracy and to the expectations of a system of democratic approval. Party democracy, according to their approach, had to meet five requirements, or pass five tests, most of which related to its leadership.

1. *A normative test.* An egalitarian mode of behavior, or at least its appearance, had to be demonstrated in a lack of distance between leaders and party members.

2. *A test of commitment* to the ideological mission of the party, which equated the interests of the nation, and certainly those of the Labor community, with the interests of the party. Thus, commitment to democracy was viewed as a commitment to a process chiefly at the state level, and as an undertaking to serve the people, and to realize ideological goals at the party level.

3. *A test of unity and majority rule.* The party should maintain free debate, but party members must await guidance from their leaders and should not reward critics whether from within or from without. Minority opinion should be tolerated, but not the organization of factions. Such an attitude followed a Rousseauistic claim that factional organizations not only disrupt the unity of the party, but also corrupt the deliberative process leading to a genuine democratic decision. Hence, the 1942 split in Mapai was finally accepted as inevitable, even as a rehabilitative process that reconstructed the unity and effectiveness of the party leadership, thus strengthening

its capacity to govern and to realize its political program. For the sake of such leadership unity and efficacy, most of the party's activists and leaders later acquiesced in Ben-Gurion's dismissal of Moshe Sharett, the popular Foreign Minister, from the government (in 1956) and bowed to the Prime Minister's desire to dismiss Pinhas Lavon from his party-sponsored position as the Secretary-General of the Histadrut (in 1960) because of Lavon's "anti-party" stand in the political affair that carried his name.¹⁸

4. *A test of choosing leaders.* The selection of new leaders should be carefully monitored by the existing leadership. Leaders should be chosen and advanced, after being processed by a committee, on the basis of their party record as well as the need to strengthen the party's capacity to provide leadership and representation in all branches and levels of government. These criteria took precedence over open competitive nominating elections which were unsafe and sometimes accidental in their outcome. In other words, choosing leaders was viewed as a complex process subjected to the overall mission of the party and the needs and preferences of its established leadership. The search for unity and the concept of leadership as a team had built expectations for leadership continuity and rationalized the maintenance of a centralized party regime, especially in the area of nominations, within a formal, half-dormant structure of a system of democratic choice.

5. *A test of representation.* The continuous renewal of the party's democratic mandate directly by the people (the Labor party lost power for the first time only in 1977) indirectly challenged and depreciated the sovereignty of party bodies. The broader democratic mandate received in state elections was personalized and, to a large extent, was attributed to the role of the party's foremost veteran leaders in government. This equation encroached on the legitimacy of party bodies and dissuaded party activists from rebelling against their leaders.

The Kibbutz and the Pioneer Approach

The kibbutz movement went beyond the regular Labor party in its search for a constructive test as an alternative to the competitive vote ("beauty contest") for leadership. As an ideological and egalitarian community, the kibbutz was better suited than the political party to pursue the norms and methods of work-placement in selecting its executives and emissaries and many of its political leaders. The kibbutz was even less resigned than the regular party

to accept open personal contests for leadership; in this respect, it accepted the institutional concept of democracy. For the same reasons of equality and solidarity, however, the traditional kibbutz believed in direct democracy and rotation and, thus, was also close to the competitive concept of democracy. The kibbutz also differed in attitude to the very institution of the political party. While the regular exponents of the institutional concept of democracy fully accepted the legitimacy of this institution, advocates of the pioneer approach were initially suspicious of the political party as an organization, and showed at the outset signs of a general aversion toward party activism as a life-long vocation. During the early years of Hakibbutz Hameuhad (founded in 1927), members of the kibbutz refused to enlist as full-time party workers, considering such an occupation to be an escape from the duties of pioneer realization.¹⁹ In the case of Hashomer Hatsa'ir, the initial ambivalence toward the institution of the party and the fear of its negative impact on this organization's educational credibility, centered on the youth movement, actually contributed to a delay in its institutionalization as a full-fledged political party — from perhaps 1927 until 1946.²⁰ This attitude changed with the adoption of a radical MarxistLeninist ideology that exalted the revolutionary role of the party. The pioneer youth movements, especially those associated with the social-democratic Mapai, have continued to maintain the anti-party bias. The Tse'irim of Mapai initially shared this attitude. At the same time, they had discovered the party's singular viability as an avenue to a political career. Their early disappointment with the institution was best expressed by a writer-parliamentarian, Izhar Smilansky, who criticized the party for being only a "summer theater" or an electoral party rather than a political movement. A veteran party leader, Mordechai Namir, responded that the party was not an educational seminar, but an "organization that aspires to put its imprint on the state."²¹

The kibbutz, which fulfilled a major role in the conflict over democratic issues in Mapai and in the Histadrut in the late 1930s, did not assume a similar collective role in the conflict over issues of democracy in this party in the fifties. Indeed, most of the kibbutz leaders of Mapai in the later debate appeared as alienated supporters of the institutional attitude of the veteran leaders toward party democracy, and as somewhat reluctant critics of the reform message of the Tse'irim. It should be noted that in the early fifties, the kibbutz members of Mapai became even more dependent on the party because of a split in the kibbutz movement (1951), which divided several well-established kibbutzim. (Members of Mapai who split from Hakibbutz Hameuhad merged with Hever Hakevutsot, a small

loyal movement to Mapai, to form a new kibbutz movement, Ihud Hakevutsot V'hakibbutzim). The severity of the inner kibbutz conflict, which ended in a split, weakened the normative status of the kibbutz and undermined its legitimacy as a possible guiding force on issues of movement democracy. It dramatized the failure of the kibbutz movement itself to maintain a pluralistic political democracy.²² It was, therefore, both fitting and logical that the new campaign for party democratic reform was led by a young circle of leaders rather than by the kibbutz, and that the single collective message of the new reform group was confined to procedural issues of party democracy, designed to open the party to new claimants for leadership rather than debate over ideological issues.

Collective Charismatic Assertion Within the Movement

If the definition of charisma is not confined to its most extreme expression, as defined by Max Weber's pure model,²³ it may be found in the proclaimed identity between a movement and a leader, or a group of leaders, even without the claim of super-human or supernatural powers.²⁴ The narrowing of the definition of both the charismatic claim and the nature of its acceptance may be helpful in understanding the special role and authority of the founding leaders in ideological political movements. In the Israeli Labor parties and the politicized kibbutz movements, the personal charisma of founding leaders had been manifested primarily in the acceptance of their authority in formulating the party ideology and defining its goals; it was not expressed by any appreciable signs or scenes of public adulation. It was fortified, however, from the start, by their skillful management of party organization.²⁵ The collective charismatic assertion of founding leaders did not turn the Israeli Labor parties and movements into "charismatic parties" since the leader's image had never totally overlapped the party's identity; yet, their modes of operation brought them, at times, close to some elements of Panebianco's model of such a party: a centralized organization; a cohesive dominant coalition held together by loyalty to the leader; and a close relationship between the party and a movement of a special nature, the kibbutz.²⁶

The assertion of a restricted charisma was embedded in the Israeli Labor movement in a collective charismatic claim of an entire generation and an entire movement, which in turn were assumed to be expressed by a single leader or group of leaders. In a polemical

article against the Tse'irim, one of Mapai's outspoken veteran leaders, Zalman Aran, wrote in 1963 that he was certain that the entire nation trusted the veteran generation of leaders and expected it to continue as long as it had the strength to do so because "this generation of leaders (in almost all the parties) is unique and is not to be repeated." He continued: "This group learned in most of the faculties for the revival of the Jewish people in the diaspora and in Israel. What he learned and taught is not bought...[therefore,] what is needed for the people and the state is the continuity of successors whose place is determined by their value." Developing this argument further, Aran contended that no other group of leaders would be equal to the veteran one. "The uniqueness of this group emanates from the era in which they grew, and from which they drew their skills."²⁷

The collective claim for leadership articulated by Aran was widely accepted by the party. It is noteworthy that the main thrust of the Tse'irim's public attack was not directed against the national leaders of their party, certainly not against Ben-Gurion, but against the middle-level organizational leaders, in particular members of the Gush, and against the oligarchic party regime. The phenomenon of limited movement or group charisma in the historic Israeli Labor movement was even more apparent in the case of Hashomer Hatsa'ir and its kibbutz movement, Hakibbutz Ha'artzi. This case merits some detailed discussion.

The System of "Historic Leadership" in Hashomer Hatsa'ir

Two founding leaders, Meir Ya'ari and Ya'acov Hazan, gained prominence fairly early in the history of their movement and were almost unanimously accepted by their peers, to the point that they were openly related to as the "historic leadership" of this movement. The proclaimed collective nature of this charismatic claim made it easier for an ideological movement and a collectivist community to accept it, despite the commitment to equality and direct democracy.

The two leaders collaborated intimately in the councils of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi and its associated party, Mapam. In the public eye, they constituted one leadership unit, almost one public personality with only minimal noticeable friction between them. Ya'ari, who was the more authoritative and ambitious of the two but less impressive in public oratory, always occupied the top leadership position, as Secretary General of the party. Hazan constantly served

as a member of the leadership bodies of his movement, but never in an executive position. Ya'ari routinely defined and redefined, under his own personal signature, the ideological platform of Hashomer Hatsa'ir and played a major role in guiding the political course of his movement. He also asserted his personal authority in arranging personal appointments at all levels of the leadership.

The unique leadership position occupied by Ya'ari and Hazan (the "historic leadership") was possible because of several ideological and structural features of their movement:

1. The institutional and ideological supremacy of the kibbutz movement (Hakibbutz Ha'artzi) over its associated party, Mapam and youth movement.²⁸

2. The acceptance of the principle of "ideological collectivism" by this kibbutz movement. This principle did not provide a congenial environment for the emergence of an organized opposition; in fact, it created greater dependence on those who were historically entrusted with the responsibility to provide ideological leadership. The ideology of the movement, which was defined by Ya'ari, thus became a legitimating ideology for the historic leadership itself.

3. The avant-garde pretence of the movement as a whole. This feature added a collective motive for political and educational mobilization and cemented the adherence to "ideological collectivism." The continual recruitment of emissaries in the service of the movement in all arenas, internal and external, rationalized in turn the need for a system of democratic approval. It established a pattern of rotation rather than personal competition as the standard test of democratic choice. Recruitment, however, produced and constantly expanded the loyal circle of activists, who became the inner core in every institution of the movement and the party.

Members of the newly elected bodies of the movement were first recommended by a nominating committee ("personnel committee") and then ratified, at times with minor changes, by the outgoing bodies. Indeed, the rejection of the list of candidates to the Hakibbutz Ha'artzi Action Committee submitted by the nominating committee in 1969 signified the beginning of the end of the "historic leadership" system. This atypical move, which Ya'ari treated as an angry, illegitimate outburst of emotion rather than an exercise of a legitimate democratic authority, was the precursor to the enforced departure of Ya'ari himself from his post as Secretary-General of the party (1972). The final rejection of Ya'ari came, however, only following the collapse of a major component of the legitimating ideology — the disenchantment of Mapam with revolutionary Marxist-Leninist ideology, because of the Soviet Union's extreme anti-Israel stand (which came to a head in the Six-Day War of 1967) and the exposure of

tyrannical manifestations in the Soviet Union and the socialist countries under its wing.²⁹

Ya'ari's leadership authority, under the umbrella of the "historic leadership," far surpassed the mandate given to a position of formal leadership and granted by democratic selection. His charismatic acceptance among his veteran peers was apparent in what they said about him following his enforced departure from the position of Secretary-General of Mapam.³⁰ The Secretary-General of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi, Shlomo Rozen, described Ya'ari at the time as "the Founder-teacher, the father of the Hashomer Hatsa'ir and Mapam; their ideological and political mentor, who is given to moral inspiration." A former editor of the movement's newspaper, Ya'acov Amit, offered a personal testimony, "I recognize Meir Ya'ari's misgivings until he brings before us his perfect spiritual product." He hoped that Ya'ari would "continue for many years to draw from his springs and constitute a succinct symbolic expression of the movement." There was no rotation in this role, he concluded. Of special interest is the reaction of another leader of Hashomer Hatsa'ir and Mapam, Ya'acov Riftin, who was at that time at odds with Ya'ari and eventually left the party: "There are people that are very difficult to replace. These people are not only great artists but important ideologues. Would somebody ever consider asking Pablo Cassals to stop playing, or Marc Chagall to stop painting? The same rule must be applied to great ideologues."³¹

Victory of the Competitive Concept

The idea of democratic representation tries to reconcile the need for leadership with the principle of equality. The historic Israeli Labor movement attempted to minimize this conflict and to compensate for the phenomenon of leadership beyond the concept of representation by promoting greater solidarity and a deeper sense of collective mission. It also searched for a higher test of leadership legitimacy. The informal test, which was supposed to guide the recruiting and nominating committees, may be described both as normative — loyalty to the ideology, institutions, and leadership of the party, and as constructive — choosing leaders on the basis of functional and electoral party considerations and the desire to maintain the unity and efficacy of the leadership. The guarded process of nomination helped to maintain the position of existing senior party leaders. It also gave them the capacity to supervise the advancement of others to positions of party leadership. This pro-

cess, which was supposed to apply the procedures and orientation of work placement, effectively blocked the way to open personal contests for leadership.

Restrictive attitudes toward internal movement democracy in Israel tended to grow with the development of a strong organization: a centralized mass party, or a mobilized kibbutz movement; it certainly grew with the addition of a communal bond. The historic Israeli Labor movement had initially developed its institutions within a community that was well defined, both instrumentally and ideologically. Overlaying inter-factional debate was a common communal vision ("labor society"). The communal bond led in 1920 to the formation of a General Federation of Labor (the Histadrut); and the communal vision contributed to its development as a politicized, diversified organization far beyond the limited role of a trade union. This bond also contributed to the legitimacy of the direct rule of political parties, primarily Mapai, in the Histadrut, and to the emergence of the institution of the kibbutz as a political movement within this community. The political involvement of the kibbutz created significant but problematic links between the institution of the political party and the institution of a collectivist community that had constituted, in most cases, a radical political movement.³² The party-kibbutz link was one of the major factors contributing to the organizational strength of the historic Labor parties. The two others were the link between the party and the Histadrut, and the critical role of the party (and the party-led Histadrut establishment) in the absorption and political socialization of the mass immigration in the first two decades of the state.

The kibbutzim have traditionally formed a mobilized section of the Israeli Labor parties, especially the kibbutz-led parties. Even in the case of the mainstream, largely urban Mapai, the party often recruited kibbutz activists for key positions in Labor councils and party organizations. This practice was sharply reduced in Mapai at the end of the 1950s; it continued, however, in the kibbutz-led parties (Mapam and Ahdut Ha'avoda party).

The Histadrut offered the primary source of activists for the Israeli Labor parties, especially Mapai (subsequently, the Labor party). The Labor parties either placed their activists in the Histadrut's elected bodies and vast bureaucracies or recruited them there. The local Labor Councils provided an institutional base and a recruitment channel for the party branches. For example, about one-third of the members of the Tel Aviv Secretariat of the Labor party in 1973 were employed in the local Labor Council.³³ Close to half of the members of the Haifa Labor party Secretariat were employed at the same time by the local Histadrut establishment, including the Labor

Council.³⁴ In many cases, the Labor Council organized the municipal activities of the Labor parties. A third of the heads of municipal governments who were elected on Mapai lists between 1950 and 1967 had served previously as secretaries of the local Labor Council.³⁵

Several major factors contributed to the dominance of the institutional concept of democracy, either in its pure form within the major Labor party (Mapai) or in its mixed form as part of the pioneer concept of democracy developed by the kibbutz movement:

1. The exceptionally high legitimacy, even partially charismatic hold of founding leaders over their respective movements. This legitimacy was reaffirmed by their dominant role in the governance of the state, in the case of Mapai, or by their dominant ideological role, in the case of the radical kibbutz-led parties.

2. The concept of non-routine party mission in nation, state, and society-building, and the pioneer, avant-garde concept of the kibbutz.

3. The role of the national and social ideology, which had a legitimating impact on the party, on the kibbutz movement, and on their leadership.

4. The rationale offered by the socializing role and the integrative strategy of the Labor party in relation to the new immigrants. The party attempted first to organize and politicize the new communities — development townships and cooperative settlements constructed by the state and the Jewish Agency for the new immigrants — by veteran activists (recruited, in some cases, from the neighboring veteran kibbutzim and moshavim), who were under the direct supervision of the party's national headquarters. The successful nurturing of indigenous local party leaders within these communities gradually forced party bureaucrats to recognize, not without some intense conflicts, the growing independence of these new party branches and their leaders and to grant them representation in party bodies. Integration was the only available strategy for Mapai and the other parties in order to be able to mobilize the new immigrants' votes, to gain their cooperation and to obviate the emergence of an alternative to the existing party system in a society that doubled its population during the first three years of statehood and that granted immediate citizenship and voting rights to Jewish new immigrants. Integration, however, turned the constantly growing party into a potentially unsafe organization for its leaders and created the need to strengthen the centralized party regime, especially in the area of nominations.

5. The almost pure proportional system of elections which has been in existence in all three major systems of representative govern-

ment in Israel (state, local and Histadrut elections). This system provided another reason for the prolonged maintenance of a centralized method of nominations. Proportional representation lent itself more easily than any other system of election to "electoral engineering" in the making up of the party lists of candidates, in order to assure representation for all major segments of the party and of the diverse, expanding electorate.

The competitive concept of democracy was initially articulated with the emergence of reform-oriented opposition factions and the ensuing struggle for leadership in Mapai — Faction B in the late 1930s and the Tse'irim in the early 1950s. The first of these factions drew its concept of democratic reform from the merger of a proletarian-type protest in the struggle for equality with the kibbutz's concept of direct democracy. The second of these factions was influenced by a suspicious and critical attitude toward the regular party organization and by the overall process of change in the public orientation of Israeli society following the formation of the state, from ideological and collectivist toward pragmatic and individualist.³⁶

Within this framework of change, several factors contributed to the eventual, almost unconditional victory of the competitive concept of democracy in the Labor party as well as in the other parties: the passing of the founding leadership, the fading commitment to the historic social ideology (socialism), and the weakening and shrinking of the party organization (and also that of the kibbutz movements). All these factors undermined the legitimacy and functionality of the oligarchic, centralized method of nominations. The notion of open, equal competition within the party, even within the kibbutz movement, superseded the concept of recruitment in the service of the movement. Electability now suppressed constructive or normative tests of leadership legitimacy. The idea of representation finally gained precedence over the concept of mission prescribed by the historic collectivist ideology. The party's nominating committees lost their usefulness and what remained of their legitimacy when they turned into a claimants' forum, with the major sections of the party fighting one another for the few available seats in the electable part of the party's list of candidates for the Knesset. In 1969, Mapai's nominating committee (the largest section in the Labor party) was headed by a former secretary general of the party and was comprised of ten assigned representatives of all major districts and organized sections of the party. No wonder that the committee nominated six of its eleven members to the party list. The failure of the nominating committee to manage the power struggle for nomination with any appreciable legitimacy led to the gradual

transfer of nominations to a major party body (the Central Committee or Party Council), in which secret ballot replaced closed-door pressure politics. In the 1969 elections, close to half of the Knesset (55 of the 120 members) were nominated by secret ballot in a major party body of their respective parties. In the 1973 elections, this number remained almost unchanged (54). In the 1977 elections, however, an overwhelming majority of the members of the Knesset (93) was so nominated.³⁷

This change was accelerated by the crisis of confidence in political institutions following the traumatic Yom Kippur War (1973). The new prevalent and more democratized system of nominations in a major party body was also subjected to criticism, within and without the parties, because it still left nominations in the hands of the regular party activists. Despite decision by secret ballot, nomination turned into a manipulative struggle because of the limited size of the electoral body and its composition of organized groups representing the various districts, sections, and clubs of the party. The victory of the competitive concept of democracy was epitomized by the adoption of the nominating primary by the two major Israeli political parties: Labor, in the selection of its leader and the list of its candidates prior to the 1992 and 1996 Knesset elections³⁸ and the selection of its candidate for Secretary General of the Histadrut in 1994; and the Likud, in the selection of its leader in 1993, and the nomination of its candidates to the 1996 Knesset elections.

Each one of the major historic Israeli Labor institutions — party, kibbutz, and Histadrut — underwent a gradual change that produced a growing acceptance of the competitive concept of democracy and a wider subscription to it. The historic Histadrut actually came to an end following the 1994 election of its Convention and the implementation of the National Health Insurance Law in 1995. The election put an end to the uninterrupted dominance by the Labor party and its party antecedents in the Histadrut. The successful electoral challenge to the Labor Party grew out of a party split over the Health Insurance Law and the future direction of the Histadrut. The law separated the Histadrut from its medical insurance system thereby abolishing a critical reason for the past mass membership in the Labor Federation. The Histadrut subsequently lost over half its membership and had to reestablish a system of dues, which previously was linked to its medical insurance. The new leadership proclaimed the formation of a “new Histadrut” divorced of past traditions, and immediately began to reduce both its financial obligations and its organizational network, opting to turn the Histadrut into a mere federation of trade unions without party control.

The new kibbutz, like the new Histadrut, entered a period of transformation from a political movement into an interest group. This change raises questions concerning the continued commitment of the kibbutz to its historic collectivist way of life and the value of equality.³⁹ Both parallel developments drastically altered, and threatened to undo completely, the historic links between the Labor party and the two other Labor organizations.

The victory of the competitive concept of movement and party democracy, which was coupled with other major institutional changes, altered the nature of the problem of movement (party) democracy. The original question of whether a movement can maintain full-fledged internal democracy was succeeded by the question of whether it is possible to maintain a strong political party under such a direct form of democracy. This question, however, requires a separate discussion and a different perspective.

Notes

1. See Seymour Martin Lipset, Martin Trow and James Coleman, *Union Democracy* (New York: Anchor Books, 1956).
2. See Kay Lawson and Peter H. Merkel, eds., *When Parties Fail, Emerging Alternative Organizations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).
3. Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, "Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy," *Party Politics*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1955):5-28; Kay Lawson, "When Linkages Fail," in Lawson and Merkel, eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 11-37; Jean Charlot, "Political Parties: Towards a New Theoretical Synthesis," *Political Studies* XXXVII (1985): 352-361; Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 262-274.
4. See, for example, Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, eds., *Party Organizations — A Data Handbook on Party Organizations in Western Democracies, 1960-1990* (London: Sage Publications, 1992).
5. Louis Overacker, *Presidential Primary* (New York: Macmillan, 1926).
6. J.L. Talmon discussed the theoretical and historical origins of this phenomenon in *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (London: Secher & Warburg, 1952).
7. On the role of ritual performance in party bodies, see Myron Avronoff, *Power and Ritual in the Israel Labor Party* (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977), pp. 74-97.
8. An early discussion of this typology appeared in Nathan Yanai, *Party Leadership in Israel — Maintenance and Change* (Ramat Gan: Turtle-dove, 1981), pp. 196-203.

9. On the Tse'irim, see Yonatan Shapiro, *An Elite Without Successors — Generations of Political Leaders in Israel* (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 1984), pp. 136-148 (in Hebrew); Nathan Yanai, *Split at the Top* (Tel Aviv: Levin Epstein, 1969), pp. 97-133 (in Hebrew).
10. M. Rosner and N. Cohen distinguish between kibbutz democracy and liberal democracy. The former democratizes authority, maintains direct participation and decision-making, and rotation in positions of authority. The aim of this type of democracy is identification with the society and it is based on agreement concerning basic values. See *Direct Democracy in the Kibbutz*, Research Institute of the Kibbutz and the Collective Idea (Haifa: Haifa University, 1982), pp. 4-7 (in Hebrew).
11. See Dani Rosolio, *The Causes for the Crisis and the Change in the Kibbutz System: A Systemic Analysis* (Tel Aviv: Golda Meir Institute for Social and Labor Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1995), Publication no. 76, pp. 21-49 (in Hebrew).
12. Yael Ishai, *Factionalism in the Israeli Labor Movement: Faction B in Mapai* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1978), pp. 23-69 (in Hebrew); Meir Avizohar, *National and Social Ideas as Reflected by Mapai — The Israeli Labor Party 1930-1942* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1990), pp. 293-313 (in Hebrew).
13. Peter Y. Medding, *Mapai in Israel: Political Organisation and Government in a New Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 134-161; Nathan Yanai, *Party Leadership in Israel: Maintenance and Change* (Ramat Gan: Turtledove, 1981), pp. 111-118, 127-135.
14. Yanai, *Split at The Top*, pp. 79-81.
15. Mapai's Eighth Convention, Ninth Session, August 29, 1956, Mapai's Archive, Beit Berl.
16. Mapai's Eighth Convention, Second Conference, Fifth Session, May 25, 1958, Mapai's Archive, Beit Berl.
17. Mapai's Eighth Convention, Second Conference, Eight Session, May 15, 1958, Mapai's Archive, Beit Berl.
18. Yanai, *Split at the Top*, pp. 15-31.
19. Henry Nir, *The Kibbutz and the Society 1923-1933* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Publications, 1984), pp. 382-387 (in Hebrew).
20. See Ya'acov Hazan's Speech at the Founding Convention of the "Labor Party — Hashomer Hatsa'ir," *The Founding Convention — A Report* (Tel Aviv: Mapam, 1946), p. 19 (in Hebrew).
21. M. Namir in an interview with Y. Marcus, *Davar*, January 18, 1963 (in Hebrew).
22. Following the split, Hakibbutz Hameuhad, which previously had rejected Hashomer Hatsa'ir's binding "ideological collectivism," defined itself as an "ideological alignment."
23. S.N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 48-54.

24. For such an approach see Ann Ruth Wilner and Dorothy Wilner, "The Rise and Role of Charismatic Leaders," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 358 (March 1965):79.
25. Yonathan Shapiro, *The Organization of Power on the Historic Ahdut Ha'avoda* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1975), pp. 9-14, (in Hebrew).
26. Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power*, pp. 143-147.
27. Zalman Aran, "One Should Not Rise on Crutches," *Davar*, July 26, 1963 (in Hebrew).
28. Ya'acov Hazan, "The Kibbutz and the Party," *Hedim Quarterly* 2, (41) (1952) (in Hebrew); on the rise and early development of this movement see Elkena Margalit *Hashomer Hatsa'ir — From a Youth Community to Revolutionary Marxism* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1971) (in Hebrew).
29. On the impact of the "Prague Trial" on Mapam, see Yael Ishai, "The Prague Trial and its Consequence," *Medina, Mimshal V'yahasim Benleumiim* 7 (1975):76-94 (in Hebrew).
30. Mapam's Convention, Dinner in honor of Meir Ya'ari, December 29, 1972.
31. Yanai, *Party Leadership in Israel*, p. 153
32. David Zeit, *Pioneers in the Maze of Politics — The Kibbutz Movement 1927-1948* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Publications, 1993) (in Hebrew).
33. Lists published in the Newsletter of the Secretary-General of the Tel Aviv district of the Israel Labor party, no. 18, 1973; see also Medding, *Mapai in Israel*, pp. 158-159.
34. S. Weiss and G. Ben Dor, "Activists, Bureaucracy and Political Institutionalization in Israel," *Revaon Lemechkar Hevrat*, 5 (1973).
35. S. Weiss, *Typology of Local Elected Officials and the Question of Stability in the Local Government in Israel* (Jerusalem: Academon, 1970) (in Hebrew).
36. Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lissak, *Trouble in Utopia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 110-113; see also Alan Arian, *Ideological Change in Israel* (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1968).
37. Yanai, *Party Leadership in Israel*, pp. 25-39.
38. Giora Goldberg, *The Israeli Voter 1992* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1994), pp. 42-66 (in Hebrew).
39. Menahem Rosner and Shlomo Getz, "Toward a Theory of Changes in the Kibbutz," *Journal of Rural Cooperation*, vol. 22, 1-2 (1994):41-61; Yehuda Harel, *The New Kibbutz* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1993) (in Hebrew).