

On Avigdor's Lawn

by

Dan Ben-David

I miss Arik. Not Sharon, but Arik Einstein and the “Good Old Eretz Yisrael (Land of Israel)” songs that an entire country grew up with, the Arik that put out an album in 1971 with Miki Gavrielov, “On Avigdor’s Lawn”. Those were the days, my friends.

On Avigdor’s lawn, this time Avigdor Lieberman’s, the Eretz Yisrael tunes have changed. No more good old Eretz Yisrael, but an Eretz Yisrael that still has not internalized the fact that orange (the color adopted by the settlers) is not blue-white (the colors chosen by an entire nation).

The same dream team that brought us “two banks to the Jordan river” had no idea that its ideology would be kidnapped by religious leaders that fear no God. The former did not understand the link between demography, democracy and the continued existence of the Jewish State. The kidnapers simply never cared.

To enable us to keep all of the Eretz (at least the parts currently in our hands) and also preserve a country that is both Jewish and democratic, the ideological descendants of the dreamers came up with the infamous “transfer” idea. But what to do when the world is no longer the same place that it was in earlier centuries? Someone forgot to tell the dreamy descendents that what the Europeans did in their colonies and the Americans to the Indians is no longer an integral part of Western civilization – and it is highly recommended that those who want continued supply of F16i’s for our defense register this little detail in their minds. The religious kidnapers of the dream, of course, see other defense alternatives in the sky to F16i’s.

Avigdor Lieberman understood the problem and came up with a solution. Another brilliant idea from our oversized guild of politicians incapable of seeing beyond their noses. As he wrote in Maariv on August 5th, “we propose that the border be moved so that the residents of Um El-Fahm will live on its eastern side” in exchange for Gush Etzion, Ariel, etc.

A brilliant idea indeed – but with one minor drawback. The basic rights of every Israeli citizen include freedom of movement anywhere in the country, including the freedom to choose where to live. What kind of a nutcase would prefer remaining in a house that will come under the sovereignty of a corrupt and dangerous Third World country? Did Lieberman take into account the likelihood that hundreds of thousands of Israeli Arabs will simply prefer to move to Haifa, Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem rather than to Abu Mazen? Could the exorbitant civilian compensation costs resulting from the Gaza disengagement provide a legal basis for similar compensation for “Arab triangle” evacuees? How would the demographic problem – as seen by Lieberman – be solved then if we remain with the same Arab population, with thin land spikes to Ariel and Maale Adumim, but without free passage to the Galilee through Wadi Ara?

Maybe what Lieberman really has in mind is to revoke the citizenship of Israeli citizens by birth? But before doing so, it would be a good idea for Israel to become entirely self-sufficient in the production of all its weapons, food, clothing and medicine since on that day the door to the Western world will close before us. If you will it Avigdor, it is not a dream. Ever hear of Rhodesia and South Africa?

There is another alternative, a natural policy that can attain the goals of all the political parties, regardless of their position on Israel’s Left-Right political spectrum. Simply start investing as much as necessary in the educational, physical and health infrastructures of Israel’s Arab population. Stop the discrimination against them and let as many as possible attain the highest education and reach the kinds of positions that their natural and acquired abilities permit. Really provide them with all of the rights that the Jews in Israel receive – and which no other Arab population in the Middle East can even dream of today – while at the same time also putting on their shoulders all of the same responsibilities and obligations, including that of service to their country, since even they have something to be proud of, and they also have much to lose if something happens to the State of Israel.

Not only will their birth rates decline (satisfying the Right) as a result of full integration within Israeli society, but the complete equalization of rights and obligations is also the decent and right thing to do (satisfying the remainder of the nation). That is how the good new Eretz Yisrael should look in the future. Otherwise, we won’t have a future as a Jewish, democratic and moral country.