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Bibi scores big win
Photo: Eli Elgarat

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Likud hump removed

Netanyahu convinced Likud Central Committee to shoot itself in the foot

Attila Somfalvi

If the Likud were a hospitalized patient, the Tel Aviv Exhibition Grounds the operating room, and Benjamin Netanyahu the surgeon, the doctor would have come out of surgery Wednesday night with good news to those cynically gathered in the hall: The hump on the patient's back has been removed.

The patient is still in critical condition, but he is stable, and he will live. We hope for the best, and we hope his condition will improve soon. Very soon.

Bibi Wins

Likud Committee transfers power to all members / Ilan Marciano

Party's Central Committee approves with large majority Netanyahu's initiative to pass Likud's party list through vote by all Likud members from now on; 'We came here this evening to open the door so that many of our friends can return home,' Bibi says prior to vote

Full Story

Without forgetting the cynicism with which the Likud chairman guided this process (27 days before an election? Where was he before?), we can't take away from Netanyahu his due: In an almost suicidal act, one he had almost no hope of winning, he convinced those holding the gun to pull the trigger.

"Go ahead," he said, even asking politely for the hunters to point their weapons at their own hands and feet. "Let's finish it all in one shot. We'll emasculate this body, this out-of-control body that everybody loves to hate and only makes problems for us."

And against all odds, the desperate wrestler succeeded, somehow, to cause the monster that turned on its creator in recent years to do exactly what it

was asked to do by his handler at his toughest moments: To cut its own hands and feet off, to put an end to its reckless life, and to quickly get used to the idea that what has always been is no longer.

From now on, starting today, the Likud Central Committee returns to its natural standing, to the place it occupied before Ariel Sharon and co. came along, together with other Knesset members and government ministers who inflated it.

Wednesday night, the out of control animal returned to its cage. With or without a warning sign, there will no longer be anyone to feed it. There simply won't be any need.

Will the votes come home?

It is customary to blame the Likud Central Committee for the fact that it turned political beggary, applied pressure and the central committee and lobbyism of the lowliest type into an especially profitable profession.

It is also customary to pin all the ills that plague Israeli politics on the 3,000 members of the committee. But those who would place the blame only on their shoulders are mistaken: They are not the only ones who have used Knesset members and government ministers as their own personal stewards.

This pipe is two-directional: For every favor a minister or MK did for some-or-another committee member, there was generous political quid pro quo further along the road.

Likud ministers and MKs used members of the central committee as a whip, aimed at their political rivals, and used them to further their personal and political interests. A deal for a deal, Knesset member for committee members. That was the deal, and everybody took advantage of it.

You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours, said the unwritten agreement – everybody understood the rules of the game, and played the game with great enjoyment.

Thus, the complicated surgery the Likud has just undergone, that was meant to remove the ugly, out-of-control hump called the "central committee" from its back, was intended in some significant degree to save the party's life.

Policy irrelevant

Therefore, it does not matter what Benjamin Netanyahu offered, and it does not matter what political or economic platform the Likud presents. For better or worse, the leaning was, at the end of the day, to go back to ridiculing the hump, and to blame it for all its ills.

"Why are you speaking about corruption," the political writers asked Netanyahu, "when you've got the central committee?, and Netanyahu got the hint. Wednesday night, even the committee itself understood that it was better off without itself, that it was well-advised to get used to life without hands. It's better than life without air.

The de-humping rescues both the Likud and Netanyahu from a tough problem. From now on, it will be hypocritical not to view the Likud as an ideological party with clear policy lines on matters of economics and diplomacy.

Anyone trying to find easy solutions in order to heap scorn on the Likud will be shocked to find that the hump has been successfully removed. One may agree or disagree with Netanyahu and co.'s position, But one cannot escape the fact that, essentially, it is now impossible to ignore them, claiming that members of the central committee are only looking for jobs.

This may be true, and essentially – it is absolutely true. But starting Wednesday night, that fact is no longer relevant. The committee is so irrelevant, in fact, that senior Likud members allowed themselves to joke around following the vote.

"I'm going to a wedding," said MK Gilad Arden, a man Committee members loved in particular.

"But there's no more Central Committee," someone said.

"Yes, but I mean a friend's wedding. We can relex," Arden replied with a broad smile and continued on his way.

Now, we must wait and see if the voters can manage to swallow the development and if voters will abandon Kadima and, in Netanyahu's words, "come home – to the Likud."

Back