



The Israel Democracy Institute
International Workshop on "Citizens, Politics and the Political Profession"
18 December 2008
Session 4 part 2- Mr. John Lloyd: The Triple Crisis of the Media – and of
Politics

Participants:

Prof. Tamar Hermann
 Mr. John Lloyd
 Prof. Yossi Shain
 Mr. Daniel Ben Simon
 Prof. Astrid von Busekist
 Dr. Danny Filc
 Prof. Yael Yishai
 Prof. David Ohana
 Prof. Asher Arian
Dr. Aryeh Carmon

Prof. Tamar Hermann: John the floor is yours.

Mr. John Lloyd: Thank you. This is a talk by non academic. It is also a talk which was changed radically after yesterday's seminar in view of the comments both by Yossi Shain and Dr. Ben Meir so it is more than usually based on anecdotes and I hope that you will forgive me. What you have been discussing has been rich in talks of crisis. Many of you claimed that the democratic politics in Israel is much more frail than it has been in the past and that this crisis can to some extent at least, given national differences be generalized across other democracies and that what you have seen and what you have noted is the decrease in engagement of citizens with politics, much higher level of distrust and cynicism, reduced capacity of the state to fulfill the tasks with which it had been entrusted and all of you tended to feature a narrative which is seemed at least the possibility, in some cases the probability of the breakdown of the state's order.

Now journalism has its own narrative of despair which I will touch on briefly. I meant to go into greater detail about our despair as compared against your despair but I will shorten my despair. Western journalism and I say Western because it does not apply for example to journalism in India, in China, and in other places. But Western journalism broadly defined now suffers from two kind of crisis. One is the crisis of the market. We are loosing readers and in television and radio we are loosing viewers and listeners for news and current affairs programs quite rapidly in some cases. And linked of course to that and inclusive to that is of course that we are loosing resources in order to do news, especially foreign news which is very expensive. It is expensive to keep foreign correspondents in foreign places and indeed to do what Yossi Shain and Dr. Ben Meir investigative reporting referred to. The third crisis which is more to

the point of the seminar is that we journalists are vexed and in uneasy relationship with political systems in our country which is marked by a strong and increasing discourse of lack of trust. Briefly on the self pity. It reminds me when there was a Communist Party newspaper in Britain, still is actually, called The Morning Star. The Morning Star used to have a column which said if you want to keep The Morning Star going send in your money to a given address and now I think even The Times of London is beginning to ask to send in your money so that we can keep The Times coming out every day. It is a serious matter because throughout the Western world in some countries more than in others, we are all suffering severe declines in daily, weekly, Sunday newspapers. In the U.S nearly all of the big city newspapers and most of them are city monopolies have declined very much in the last few years. Even the big ones, the three big ones which still retain substantial foreign staffs and substantial scope The New York Times, Washington Post, and the Los Angeles Times even they are cutting the news. They had enormous staff by international comparisons and The Los Angeles Times had the biggest editorial staff, some 1200 of any newspaper in the world and it still does but it is coming down very rapidly. In the UK which I know best, the local newspapers, especially daily and evening newspapers, are now shutting as are our weekly newspapers. At least two of the big national newspapers one is The Daily Express which used to be the voice of Britain and had a crusader with the bright sword of truth is now owned by a pornographer and he is now selling 8000. This is quite a lot but it used to be 5 million. The Independent which begun about 25 years ago and begun with a tremendous élan, big foreign staff, deeply into the circulations of newspapers like The Times and The Guardian and The Telegraph is now essentially for sale and nobody wants to buy it. First time in my lifetime that this has happened. Rich people buy newspapers not to make money but to have status and entry into political power. No one seems to want to buy The Independent. And this means that resources which have gone into conventional journalism are now constrained. As I have said there are cutbacks everywhere. Much higher work rates for journalists. One could argue that journalists' work rate was not very high in the past. It now is quite high. In part because they are fewer people to put the same amount of news, current affairs, features and so on but also because journalists are now been asked to do pop casts, audio and video and website as well as to contribute to a newspaper. So I think there is some justification. Of course it is overdone. Every professions complaints, even those of scholars, are overdone. People tend to complain in order to get things and journalists are no exception. However, I think there is some substance to the complaints that journalists, including the very best ones, are now giving. They are given a series of tasks which can be fulfilled, but can be fulfilled only at the expense of research. And journalists, contrary to impression possibly gained yesterday, do undertake research and it does take time. Especially it takes time if you go to places. If you go to interview settlers for example. It takes time to find people, it takes time to digest, it takes time to make a package of that. It is now fatally easy for journalist to cut these corners because what we have is a screen and what we have is Mister Google who will give us an entrée into vast amount of information from which we can compile quite rapidly pieces which have the aspects of journalism but actually are plagiarism. And increasingly you find that what journalists do and to some extent are being constrained to do it. And we have seen the results of that. Fewer foreign correspondences. There was a survey done I think by Columbia or the center in Harvard, a survey of foreign correspondence in American newspapers. It is now down to about 130 all around the world of full time correspondents for American newspapers. That is from memory. I do not stand by that. But it is low, especially by

historic comparisons. When I was a correspondent in Eastern Europe and then in Russia all of the big American networks CBS, ABC, NBC and just beginning then CNN had big bureaus in Russia admittedly at the time of extraordinary events. They had 3 or 4 reporters, the same number of producers, cameramen and so on. Bureaus of 50 people were not uncommon. Now all of these except CNN which retains a bureau, all of them have a one solitary stringer who is there in order to phone up New York to say something big is happening, send somebody. So the decline has been perceptible and one assumes then that there has been a loss. One assumes that the American or the British or the French or the Italian public are getting less than they were used to in terms of first hand journalistic knowledge. Although this may be debatable.

Now on yesterday's experience one might say too bad for you but you deserve it because after all, you have distorted the political system so much that people would be better off without you. This is not just a scholarly thought. It is a popular one. As we have heard, except possibly in Israel. I was surprised by this but obviously it is true in most places, certainly in Britain and America, Western Europe generally journalists are not popular. They rank with the politicians very low, given what is happening in the economy a little above people who sell houses for a living. But not much. There are good reasons for that, which I might come back to.

Now since this is a seminar about anti politics, I wanted to take it on the chin as it were, and take the criticism from Yossi Shain and Yehuda ben Meir which I admit myself at least to some extent, perhaps not as radically, but I also made it myself and I wanted to start, as journalists do, with an anecdote. This anecdote comes from my youth. I grew up in a Scots' village, a fishing village which was part of a community of fishing villages on the East Coast of Scotland and in this group of fishing villages, five or six in a region called East Fife, there was a newspaper, it does no longer exist, called the East Fife Observer, commonly known as The Two Minutes Silence. It took you two minutes to read it. And the East Fife Observer was my goal. When I was a kid I wanted to be a journalist. It was the paper in town as it were and I went to the editor who was also the printer, the publisher, the reporter and the sub editor and the advertising manager and said that I wanted to write for him. He said fine and so I wrote something that was a revelation as it were. A revelation of a mayor in one of the towns who was a Scots' nationalist. An early example of what is now a very strong political movement in Britain of nationalism. I did this piece about him and the editor read it and said he could not publish it and I said why not, I said it is true naively. And he said well that is the problem. And the problem was that in the community in East Fife, in that group of fishing villages which still had a traditional view of itself, saw itself as a community based around the fishing industry which has stretched back centuries in which a dialect of Scots was spoken which was incomprehensible to English. Very close knit. Outsiders were people who came from Edinburgh 60 or 70 miles away, and they were called strangers. So it was very very traditional and in that the newspaper played a particular role. Its role was not to reveal. Its role was to express the values of the community and these included the annual fishermen ball and who went to it. The East Fife dramatic society and what they put on. The catches of course of the fishing boats in the various villages, the naming and launching of a new fishing boat, the proceeds of the district council, what happened, not a report written by the editor reporter but a report given to him by the leader of the council. So the newspaper was if you like, an expression of the community but not an investigation of it. This was a perfect democratic community. People voted different ways, voted

Liberal, voted Conservative, voted Scots Nationalists, voted Labor. We had arguments. It was in fairly open place. Not too much prejudice. Some but not too much. But it regarded its press, not big newspapers like The Times or The Scotsman, but its press as something which should not carry embarrassing material and that should not investigate its own people.

Another anecdote and this is the last one. This is closer to your home than mine. This acquaintance of mine is the head of Chaim Herzog Institute of Communication, Politics and Society called Yoram Peri who was himself an editor of a newspaper. He tells the story in a book he wrote sometime ago. A very good book called Telepopulism which was largely about Israel's media but not wholly. He tells the story of Ben Gurion who would visit his grandchildren, his daughter or son who was married and lived in London. And once he went to visit them and he came in and he expected his grandchildren who were then very young to come to him and greet him as grandfather and they did not. And he went into the living room and there they were sitting and watching television and hardly recognized him. He was very upset by this and according to Yoram made a mental note that television would not come to Israel. And apparently it did not under Ben Gurion, Yoram says that it was his vision of a family whose family values have been destroyed by the sheer power of television. And there too you saw a certain kind of vision. In 1950's and in the 1960's Scots' fishing village, 1950's Israel where you still had a dominant view that we do not want our media, in Ben Gurion's case we just do not want it, in my case we do want it to do certain things. And that is partly of what Yossi and Ben Meir were saying yesterday that that is just gone. It is simply gone. I wanted to put to you as a political scientist, I am not the only journalist, there is one over there. He can come to my assistance. He can testify well to the whole question of media and politics. To put to you whether or not this can change. Have we been given a choice?

I wrote a book some years ago which is called What is the Media Doing to Our Politics? And one of the main cases actually has something to do with the Middle East. It was in 2003 when a reporter called Andrew Gilligan did a broadcast on Today Program which is tremendously popular morning program which lays out the news and the affairs of the day. A must listen for anybody who is concerned with public affairs. And soon after the program began the reporter did a report on what was known as the Dodger Dossier, a dossier put out by the Blair's government which justified the invasion of Iraq on the basis of secret service information which showed that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction. And Gilligan said that he talked to an unnamed source and the unnamed source had told him that the government had put up this dossier with material which it knew to be false. This was said in a course of a two way interview between the presenter of the program and the reporter who was still at home at the time so he was doing it from his own phone. And he said twice more or less unequivocally the government knew that this was a lie and put it out in order to encourage people to support what was about to be the invasion of Iraq. Ulster Campbell, the spokesman for Tony Blair, who is something of a famous man in his own right, than objected vociferously to this. The BBC ignored the objections and there was then an inquiry by a parliamentary committee. The source of Gilligan's report was then revealed to be a Doctor David Kelly not actually a member of the Security Services but an expert on weapons of mass destruction who worked for the Defense Ministry. Kelly was then forced to get evidence. His evidence said that he

had not told Gilligan what he calimed to have said. He however felt conscious stricken that he had breached the confidence which he owed to his employer to the government that he committed suicide. There was then an inquiry into the specifics, not into whether or not the dossier was correct but this inquiry inquired into the whole nature of Gilligan's report, the Kelly suicide and so on. Hutton came to conclusion that the BBC was quite wrong. The government was more or less fully right to object, the BBC was wrong, the reporter was wrong and the actions of the BBC, both of the reporter Gilligan and the of the BBC in standing behind him were insupportable. After 2 or 3 days of somewhat chaotic negotiations both the managing director and the chairman of the board of the BBC resigned. Gilligan was fired. However a poll about a week later showed that the majority of British people something 2 to 1, supported the BBC against the government. There were demonstrations by BBC staff in favor of the managing director and the chairman and against the government as it were, standing up for the right of the BBC to broadcast. In other words what had happened was that the BBC had refused to take seriously the objections from the government on the basis that this is what any government would do and therefore it could be ignored. In other words whether or not the report was correct the first duty of the BBC and of the reporter was to stand by the story and secondly that beyond that it was up to any media organization to defend the right to put stories into the public arena whether or not they were correct. Now that was more or less explicitly said by a number of people. Humphrey, who was the main presenter of the debates programs at the time, said that journalism would be stifled if it could not sometimes be wrong. So you had a particular principle- the right to be wrong against any government right to complain about the particular report of any kind. And even today I think there are journalists who believe that the BBC was right, Gilligan was right even if his report was not right. And the government was wrong and that the popular response shown in the polls was underpinned that view. In other words that the popular view was the same as the journalistic view. The popular view wanted journalists to put it up there right or wrong and to blame the government rather than the journalists. What happened after this was as power to the BBC. It was expected that the government having gotten the Hutton report behind them would not just receive the resignations of the top brass but would also constrain it. In fact nothing like that did happen. The BBC continues to criticize, to investigate, to expose as do other newspapers and broadcasting outlets in the UK and there is no revenge as it were. Nor could there be and this is my second point and a point I was trying to make yesterday- That is, that politicians now have nowhere else to turn except to the media. The media is their only medium. Because as had been the case politicians were supported by mass movements, either explicitly by the Labor Movement which in Britain as here was extraordinarily powerful and was itself the transmission belt for messages, news, understandings. Our people were in the Labor Movement or in the Trade Union Movement or in the working class or were professional middle class with Left Wing sympathies. Our people encompassed millions of people who would certainly be part of the broad Labor voting family and on the Conservative side given that Britain tended to have two large blocks of Right and Left with the Liberals somewhat squeezed in between and the Conservative side, patriotic organizations, the Church of England at one time, the business organizations of various kinds and they passed the messages. When Clement Attlee became Labor prime minister immediately of the war he saw no need whatsoever to talk to any reporters who he regarded as nuisances. He was there to govern. He was not there to speak to reporters. Reporters after all could get press releases or read the debates at the House of Commons which a number of newspapers including The Times printed

verbatim as did newspapers everywhere. In every major democracy newspapers reported what happened in the main legislator verbatim. That was fine. That was what they should be doing. They were reporting the real democracy of the country which was happened in Parliament, in Council Chambers, in Trade Union Organizations, in the meetings of the Employers Organization. In other words the corporate and formal democratic life of a country was open. It was democratic, competition between parties and that is what in Attlee's view, he was certainly not alone that is what journalists did, they reported on that. They did not have to come to talk to him particularly or ask him questions. Far less the process with accusations of corruption or the reproaching for not having done something which he said he would do in his election address.

So because politicians now have lost that support not just in Britain but here too throughout Western Europe, America, it is a universal democratic loss they depend upon the mass media and the mass media therefore because it has gotten the power has become clearly swollen with that power. Even as we the media are loosing power, politicians are loosing it faster and therefore they depend very much upon us and we have taken the advantage of that. We have tried to come to a new understanding with politicians which, at times, can somewhat be the understanding that the Mafia come to with somebody who has a shop. Nice shop you have got here, pity if something happened to it, give us your money, give us your attention and nothing will happen to it. At its worst, media can be like that with politicians and politicians very often simply have to accept it. So that is my agreement, We have become exaggerated. The position we have as holding power to account we can now be interrogators and accusers of politicians rather than explain their politics. That is certainly true. For example the US press media spent a lot of time investigating Sarah Palin in minute detail and got up a lot of transgressions many of which were extremely minor, the kind of transgressions that anybody who is a human being would do let alone somebody who is Sarah Palin. But at the same time as you will have seen as everybody saw it she got immense amount of television time. And her forceful personality was amply displayed. And for a while she blotted out the Obama phenomenon because of her personality which was undoubtedly attractive. So the deal tends to be we give you all the space, we give all this time, we therefore have the right to investigate you because that is our public purpose. That is what we the media are here for.

I would like to mention three journalistic heroes which stand behind modern journalism. One of them is British, William Herald Russell who is The Times correspondent to the Crimean War, the war between England and France on the one hand and Russia on the other in the 1860's. Russell was sent by The Times to cover the war, and the telegraph was invented at the same time so his reports rather than taking 6 weeks to get back took a couple of days to get in The Times. He reported in vivid detail about the incompetence of the British Generals at the time, about the horrific conditions under which the troops worked and especially those who were wounded. That was the time that Florence Nightingale became famous. And his reports were so vivid, so rapid relatively that it helped to cause the then Aberdeen government which was in power at the time. The second hero is a Frenchman. Emil Zola who in his publications in L'Aurore and in other publications took up the cause of Captain Dreyfus and who was more than anyone else responsible for having the trial of Dreyfus who was accused of treachery and put in prison for it. He revealed that that was anti-Semitism, that Dreyfus was Jewish and got the prison sentence

squashed. Partly by sheer force, also by the fact that he was the most famous novelist in France at the time but also by revelation. He just revealed the facts. And the last hero is an American and rare in that time, a woman called Ida Tarbell who worked on a newspaper called the McClures's who in a series of pieces revealed what was going on in the oil fields. Standard Oil was then by various means buying up the various small oil producers of the oil fields in America and was becoming the huge corporation that it became in the first decade of the 20th century. She then brought these reports together into a book called The History of the Standard Oil Company which was published and helped break up Standard Oil. So these three journalists by means of revelation, indignation if you will and sheer force of their own personality and of their writings managed to change things dramatically. I mentioned yesterday Woodward and Bernstein who are the modern equivalents of these people. What lies behind the myth; the necessary fiction in journalism is precisely that. A journalist through dedication or luck or both, hard work, contacts can uncover a fact or a series of facts which add up to injustice and by revealing the injustice can then have it eradicated. That seems to me to be a powerful myth which of course has a substantial reality and one that gives us our democratic justification and certainly justifies ourselves to ourselves if not always to others.

That is the question I wanted to put to you, I think. Is this not what journalism should be? It is not what journalism always is. But it is what journalism sometimes is. Journalism is also something much less dramatic. It is also the guy who goes around every week to report on the local council unlike East Fife who actually does report it rather than take a press release from it, who asks questions of the mayor, of the chief executive, or the various councilors or at the other level goes to the Knesset or to the House of Commons and does a report and talks to people and reveals something of what goes on behind the scenes as well as what happens on front stage and gives us our knowledge of what happens. Your examples from settlers presumably came from journalism. What else do we know about the world apart from our intimate circle but through journalism? It is a large responsibility for journalists which they often refuse to live up to. Nevertheless it is difficult to think of what could replace it. The internet has not yet come up with anything despite its exciting nature. It does not propose anything that is different than hard won journalism.

So finally let me quote the man I mentioned yesterday, this man Mark Schuman. He is here in this essay talking what happened after 9/11 in the States. And after 9/11 the political entity came together as you remember in outrage, Democrats and Republicans and everyone else came together and so did the media. For some time at least, a week, two weeks there was very little in the media which was normal politics. There was unity, unity around outrage, unity around the values of America and so on. And then about 10 days later Schuman writes in The New York Times carried the story about Giuliani, the mayor of New York who had been a hero in the course of 9/11 proposing that he should stay on beyond his fixed term and The New York Times reported that people thought it is a bad idea and wrote an editorial saying it was a bad idea saying that he was a man that was not indispensable who behaved extremely well but was not indispensable and should go at the end of his term. In other words, the democratic institutions were more important than the celebrity which Giuliani had. What happens that the media was returning to business as usual. And Schuman writes: "It was wonderful to see all that messiness again, all that comfort, all that stuff that makes people turn in disgust from the backbiting, back stabbing, low down of politics.

Media scholars have been apt in recent years to complain that standard political reporting in American press is cynical indicating between the lines that politicians are motivated invariably by the desire for office or re election not by act or conviction about their own careers. I am among those who have complained. While the cynicism is surely there but it represents more democratic virtue and vigor than critics have allowed". The question is should we have what Schuman says, an unlovable press? Do we need an unlovable press which does all these awful horrible things? Is that the price that we have to pay or one would hold power to account even if inadequately? And if it is then how do we make it rather better at doing so?

Prof. Yossi Shain: First of all thanks for your comments. I just wondered, you are describing an interesting phenomenon whereby these politicians have nowhere to turn but the journalists and the question is where journalists have to turn to. If the clients are still the politicians or you also even said that the journalists in some ways are holding the politicians sometimes like a Mafia, they have a hold over them, they can incriminate them, they can bring their downfall or if need be they can elevate them for a while at least. But there is also the question of the public trust. Because if the public trust is in decline with journalists we can see also what I call the party of silence. Israel has known such periods where high politicians or leaders of the country have been elevated in the minds of the public and the public image, the more they kept silent, the more they kept aloof from politics the more they were able to somehow show that they have tenacity, longevity without really having to go into studios, without being interviewed or selecting very carefully where they are going to spread their word and the arena in which they will speak. So the idea of needing the journalists have sort of become, there was a reverse trends of sorts because the public itself understood that the media is playing to some extent the role of the king maker and the king breaker and very quickly and they became kind of confused. That is one point that is important. The second is where are the outlets? We talked about the media and one thing is clear, at least in the American media and you know very well the British media, there are two ways today that the media works. One is the politicians have this podium of what you call the talk show hosts and every politician has to go to the talk show host. You remember the case of David Letterman, McCain did not go to David Letterman. He paid dearly for that and this came back hammering how come you did not come to the talk show and that was a big issue. The second of course is the investigative reporting that you talked about. These are the two outlets. One is sort of catching the politician, the other is allowing him to be hugged. In Israel there is the Friday night shows. So the media has these different outlets. The question is whether there is something in between? We are lacking. I remember in England it was always impressive, I do not know how it is now, which is really the table for serious political debates with politicians, discussions. We have it now very lightly because it is all yelling and shouting and very quickly finishing the discussion. If this is where we have now to start to put emphasis if you want to put politics back.

Prof. Astrid von Busekist: I am not going to argue of course about the internet and so forth but what you said about the East Fife is exactly what Ben says about journals as backbones of nations and communities. The journal is a morning prayer for the whole nation and that is why we are a nation because this is comradeship through journals. Maybe the causality goes the other way around because politicians and journals are not anymore the incarnations and common thing for nations. Nations broke up before journals and journalists broke up. And Zola is a borderline case because he almost

broke the whole nation. The whole nation was divided. But the others are more enhancing the bonding within the nation. Maybe that applies to Israel in some way also.

Mr. John Lloyd: The thing is that journalists have another role and that is entertainment. Entertainment now accounts for huge amounts of news bulletins, newspapers even serious ones. Looking at the television in my room last night and this morning turning on the Israeli channels which I do not understand but you can understand what they are on about by people who come on the shows. And certainly the CNN and Fox the bulletins are now at least as much composed of consumer advice, health, especially celebrities as they are through politics and politics as you say is often shouting. So journalists are increasingly turning away from politicians. When they do do politics it tends to be confrontations and or turning politicians themselves into celebrities. Sarah Palin was one such partly because of Katey Kurik, who was not regarded as being particularly investigative reporter but simply undermined her by a few very simple questions, and of course Obama. Obama is huge in media terms and is constantly being referred to in almost every story about America. Because that is the hook. Or so it was with Princess Diana when she was alive. With Princess Diana you put her image on a cover and the magazine rose in 20%. Obama is now the same until the disillusion sets in. Returning in a sense away from politics except as celebrity and entertainment and where people have to know about politics, people like you, people in business, people in the political structure themselves then increasingly what happens is that niche publications come in and they do well. A paper I worked for- The Financial Times is a global paper is doing quite well. Bad in terms of advertising at the moment, but in terms of circulation pretty well. The Economist is doing well. The publications and the programs which can find a particular niche and serve it and if that niche is itself profitable do well. So you are getting a kind of a distance between mass circulation media and niche media. It was always there but now is increasingly evident. That too is pretty universal. It varies and Britain is not unique in Europe but is perhaps the most obvious case of something which has an enormously vigorous tabloid press. Less vigorous now because it is declining as is the other press. When you were saying, as I understood, is that your politicians are keeping themselves back from the media and are showing that to appear a little is better than appearing too much.

I want to make one point I should have made. Politics, business, any kind of coming out in public depends hugely on public relations. Public relations are now so much part of the news business that the latter is no longer explicable without the former. Everybody in public life including these organizations have a public relations officer. And no one would think of having a major public event without going to a public relations person of some kind. So that all news is now packaged. It can be packaged very well. It can be packaged better than a journalist without the package would apprehend because a good public relations person can give you the main points, summarized, put them in order and so on. So it is not that public relations always distorts. It can be huge clarification but it is always there and nearly everything that we see therefore somebody else has talked through first about how we should see it and thought through first about the effect upon it. If you have a public service ethic, if you have money behind the public service broadcaster it can do that. But it did broadcasting to fewer and fewer people. The shouting programs where you get journalists and politicians shouting at each other are a bit more popular. Even they are

suffering and they do not have the popularity they used to have. East Five is up there with Hegel and of course East Five like everyone else was in imagined community and East Five was part of its imagining. It is an interesting question as to whether or not newspapers are ceasing to be incarnations. I had thought of it but I think you are on to something. Not so much about the East Five Observer but The Times or indeed Le Monde. Two years ago is like twenty years ago. One could assume that The Times, Le Monde, Corriere de la Serra, New York Times I guess where the establishment the French, the British establishments in newspaper form. The Times now is a tabloid. The most dramatic has been of course Pravda. I mean Pravda was Soviet journalism. Now there is not one. There is a paper which I like very much called Arguments and Facts. It is hugely popular because it has a lot of fiction in it. It has got a lot of Russian love, spiritual faith healing and mysterious events which actually lots of Europeans and Americans love too. The National Inquirer is perhaps the establishment's paper of United States.

Paul: I am struck by what you said. I want to suggest that the cynicism about politics and politicians and the political system is an unintended consequence but a severe consequence of the success of investigative journalism. I am thinking in two senses. The first one is that the percentage of the impotence or the incompetence of political systems and governments in the face of crisis and mobilization and terrorism can lead to a sense in which anyone who goes into politics cannot really change that much and therefore why are they doing it? They are doing it to further their own personal interests. And secondly the potential transformation lies with the media. If you have a problem that the government has ignored or has done you an injustice you go to the media and the media will expose it and as a result the government will act. So the agents for change shifts from the relationship between the citizen and the government to the citizen through the media pressurizing the government. And that's why the media becomes the area for potency in politics and the government is left impotent. And that is part of the success of investigative journalism. The second thing is the increasing psychologization of news reporting. I used to listen to Rafi Reshef in the morning and he is annoying. Whenever a politician was on and they gave an ideological reason for something that they were going to do, he would say in fact you want to be a minister. Journalists are moving into politics. But in many circumstances ideology is not enough. You need some kind of psychological or biographical background on why certain people are doing certain things. It is not good enough to have a certain belief. It is not good enough to hold a certain ideology. And not just biography. Personal interest and self interest become another explanation for why people are doing what they are doing since ideology is no longer enough. And that is also a result of modes of investigative reporting. You want to know more about these people. You want to know more about their dark secrets side as well as their relationships with their parents and their children. Whether their children can abide by the morality they themselves set. And this is paradoxical. There are severe consequences of the success of investigative journalism. The perceived impotence of politics and therefore the perceived potentiality and the agency of media and the secularization of politics and the decline of ideologies as an explanation.

Speaker: I just want to strengthen Paul's words. First of all I want to ask is there any ideology? And what is ideology? And why do you assume we are talking about ideology? The second thing is, there are relationship between socio-political reality and media reality. The socio-political reality is not functioning? The symbolic reality

which the media is one of the biggest agents there plays a very important role for example privatization of social things in the state comes up in talk shows and journalists are doing the job so we cannot throw everything. The journalists are playing a very important role in post modern era when ideology is not very understandable when privatization of the market is so widespread and we have to take it also into account.

Mr. John Lloyd: It is an interesting question about the effects of investigative journalism. Possibly you are overstating it. More important to what you are talking about and to the psychologization of politicians and public figures is what is called "The Me Generation". From the sixties, the coming away from corporate entities, large blocks and ideologies into 'what about me'? And that was expressed in a variety of ways. Classic investigative journalism is not much about The Me. It was more about what exactly happened. Who did what to whom? Not who you are but what did you do. Which was the mechanism which made this thing go wrong. The Me journalism is concerned with consumer journalism and being seen. Me thing is much more in the huge proliferation of various kinds of citizens movements of various kinds including vast amount of consumer organizations which fed journalism. Journalism was essential to the whole NGO phenomenon. Everything from little consumer organization to Amnesty International and Greenpeace needed journalism in order to flourish and vice versa. Journalism needed them in order to get the drama which they were putting on the screen or in the newspapers. It was more the Me thing as much as investigative journalism. And I was going to ask the question that you asked. There is this ideology. Up until the seventies and eighties the press and the media could say Labor was socialists and Conservatives were anti socialists. You cannot say that now with the new Labor. New Labor is explicitly not socialist. This is not a critic of the new Labor but it is what it is and therefore you have to regard politics in a new light. You can no longer follow it or at least not adequately follow it through ideology.

Prof. Tamar Hermann: Thank you John. We are now moving to Danny Ben Simon who is you know moved from journalism to politics.

Mr. Daniel Ben Simon: And since I was running for office or for a seat in the Knesset I did not have time to prepare a lecture so this is unprepared thoughts about journalist who did well who turned to be politician. Not yet. We will know two months from now. And my second reservation is that I am still a journalist in my soul so I am so open and I am so candid and I am so frank that people tell me you have to switch. Now anything you say is on record so I have to pay attention. I must tell you, since I still see myself as a journalist, I have been a journalist for 25 years, is like quitting cigarettes and it takes time. I tend to tell people, journalists my personal thoughts and then they print them and they ask Mr. Barak or Mr. Netanyahu, Mr. Ben Simon said this and this, what is your reaction? I said hey, this is personal. So I have to get used to this. You were talking about journalists who exhausted their capacities and had nothing to do and they looked around and said, why not politics? I am just joking. The question that people asked me was why? Why? Because you have so many tools of influence. You can do anything you want. You can bring down a prime minister, you can bring down a Defense minister. You can change everything and the question which I had to address is why a journalist who was doing well would leave television, paper to go into the circus? Where I went I was pushed to the wall and I said I felt bad. Probably I lost my mind maybe and I was kind of apologizing that I had to do it.

But then came the question why Labor Party? After I got over the first question they said why Labor? I said because I believe in the ideology of the Labor Party. People said, Mr. Ben Simon don't be naïve, there are no more ideologies. What is the difference between Ehud Barak, Benjamin Netanyahu and Tzipi Livni? There is no difference. Why not to go to Bibi? I said. Why? They said, according to the polls you will get into the Knesset with Bibi. I said but I do not believe in Bibi's ideology. They said why not Tzipi? I mean the issue of ideology became as if it never existed. There is almost no difference in terms of external politics. Not even in the internal politics. And the question was legitimate.

The main change is that myself who wrote extensively about people, I was a kind of acoustic journalist going to poor places, sitting and listening, I was a good listener. I never interfered. The only question I asked was why and why. Simple questions and I got the best answers. And I took the story to the paper. They said, wow, did you really go to Kiryat Malaachi? And I said, yes I went. And they said, did you see these people or did you write to them by email? I said, yes I went there. You drove to Kiryat Malaachi? It is half an hour from Tel Aviv but it is like moving from one world to the third world. And there was a sense that these stories had an impact. And for years I wrote about what we call the Second Israel. The people who are not doing well economically and socially who live outside Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and of course the Arabs also. So I had so much impact as a writer. Why go to politics?

It is because I have been a witness to politics for 20 years. I decided to get in. Some of the answers you can find in the reports the Institute gets about the legitimacy of politics. Politics in Israel is losing its legitimacy. Wherever I went in the last few years, people would not talk to me about the future of politics or the elections. They were totally dispirited about the fate of politics. But I went to it because I am a bit naïve and an idealist and I think good people should get involved. Do not cry for me but I as a journalist saw the worst things in politics and I am going to speak about the Likud which I was an expert on the Likud. The things I saw made me, a few years later, want to do something. Either to leave Israel or to get inside. There was no way out. And I must tell you as a witness to the party in power, talking about the Likud the things I saw in the primaries. I was sent by my paper to cover the primaries, the Ariel Sharon's party. In 2003, just 5 years ago the Likud had 300 thousands registered members, voting members who can elect the candidates. Today they have 100 thousands and 1977 when the Likud rose to power they had 100. So moving from 100 to 300 thousands is a huge thing. Of course these 300 thousands brought Ariel Sharon to power and sent his son to jail. Everything was Kosher. I went to the place where the Knesset members were elected. And I never knew what is Kosher and what is not Kosher. What is legitimate and what is not legitimate, what is forbidden and what is allowed. Money was going from one pocket to the other. People were paying thousands of one hundred dollars bills. I saw it in my eyes. There were the Druze, the Arabs and the Jews. It was like a bazaar. You could buy and you could sell. And candidates were for sale. And families. Big families. I saw people who spent time in jail and were convicted criminals suddenly becoming heads of groups, deciding who is going to be in Parliament. It was shocking to me. I am talking about the year 2003. For me it was the worst time of my journalistic career. There were a few things in other parties but not as open as in the Likud. And this is one thing about the Likud-everything is in the open. They have this tendency to show everything. They kill you in a different way. Here they come with a knife in front of you.

I experienced these things. I was writing for Haaretz. I went into a hotel where some 150 of the central committee were staying. And after midnight I filed my story. I went to the bar. People were telling me Mr. Ben Simon are you staying at this hotel? I said yes. It was a very expensive hotel. I did not pay for it. My paper and the hotel had some agreement. It was shocking, but because it was after my deadline I did not write it. It was in Ramat Gan where the prostitutes had their headquarters. I saw women coming in. Members of the Likud asked me who are you going to bed with. I said what are you talking about. They said we also have been offered for our support this kind of thing. I said it is not possible. There was an open corruption about candidates how to influence members of the party who were coming from all over Israel in order to get their votes. Money, prostitutes, and other things that I did not see because I did not get the chance to get also what they got. It was for me a revelation. I asked all the journalists what is going on here? They said that is the Likud. I did not know what I should write because I did not know what was forbidden. Everything was in the open. And television was there, journalists were there. Of course I went into the voting booth when the time came and there were three women members of Knesset standing and greeting each member. It was summer and they were dressed in a minimal outfit. And there were many hugs and many kisses and many pictures with these 3 women who were candidates. They were pushing too much. So the voters had to move through these three women and to get their blessings before they went to the booth. Two of them were elected. And I said to myself, should I write about this? I asked the photographer. You become blaze. You become indifferent. You lose touch with what is good and what is wrong. I saw thousands of ultra orthodox voters in the Likud. I knew a few of them. I asked them, what are you doing here? They said we became Likud members. How come? We got paid for it. Each one had gotten something like 800 shekels for bringing members. Something like 20 thousands orthodox joined the Likud. And of course they never voted Likud and they left as soon as the primaries were over. There were things that you never saw before. That was the first sign for me that something is wrong. In the year of 2003 the Likud got 38 seats. Ehud Olmert was number 37 in the list. The second part of the list, the last 20 were people that Likud did not expect to see in the parliament. And the result is obvious. They became a national joke in television shows. I felt pity for them. They were not supposed to be there. But when you are buying votes and selling votes and this and that it is a market. What they did was something that was done behind closed doors. Now it was in the open. That was the first thing that moved me to do something.

The second thing was the elections in 2006. I personally had, as a journalist, huge expectations that maybe the system was changing and the Likud fell from 40 members to 12 members. There was a sense that something good is happening and a new party coming to the fore- Kadima out of the Likud. I thought maybe things are back to normal. People were going to participate and there was also an ideological change which was moving from the agenda of war to disengagement in 2005, from the big security budget to a different set of values the social agenda. I remember that all parties spoke about education, about society, about the poor, about the most basic issues in life. And there was no talk of security except for Benjamin Netanyahu who spoke about the Hamas in his propaganda and spoke about the Iranian danger. Ehud Olmert on one side, Amir Peretz the guy from Sderot became the pillars of 2006 elections. The talk was to move to civil agenda, to a social agenda, to spend more money on education. And there was a sense that Israel is looking into itself in order to

correct things that happened in the Sharon era, the second Intifada, which ended with the disengagement. Summer 2005 was the split in the Likud, Sharon went to build his new party and Netanyahu remained with his people those who objected to the disengagement. And I saw it as a sign of politics repairing itself. Kadima won. Labor was second and Netanyahu was crushed. And as a journalist I had a chance to speak on radio, on television. I said politics is back because there is hope. Now Israelis can identify with the message of the winning parties, the message of correcting things and paying attention to the poor, to the underprivileged. The Netanyahu years were the worst for me with his Capitalism where he took away the money from the poor. In the year 2006 he apologized for what he did to one third of the population. And then hope turned into despair. The Second Lebanon War which was 2 months after the new government was established and of course the militant agenda, the return of the Generals and the exit of the social agenda. That was for me as a journalist a moment of truth. I spent so much energy, I wrote so much about the fact that Israel is doing the right thing now. And it took two months to get back to the politics of disillusionment. And of course the man that was the incarnation of hope the head of the Labor Party who came from one of the poorest towns in Israel who came with a social record of 30 years on social issues the first thing he did when asked was to be a Defense minister. For me it was not just a personal tragedy, it was a collective tragedy. It was something you cannot do to voters. This is exactly the reason why people do not trust politics. And I said, my God, just two months after the election, he ran on the social ticket. When the Lech Valensa of Israel became the Defense minister and was part of the decision to go to war was for me a second moment of truth. At a certain moment something happens to journalists, they become so cynical and for me there was a kind of a crossroad, where to go. People asked me daily questions. Suddenly I felt I am being an idiot. How can I have trusted these politicians?

After the Second Lebanon War I did a series of stories and I confronted a third phenomenon which pushed me into politics. People did not want to talk to me about politics. They were fed up. There was a sense of distrust so deep that the result was I did not have stories. I went to feel the political mood in places and people told me what are you talking about. What happened with the Likud and Kadima and the Labor Party brought people to give up on politics. I came to the editor of my paper and I said I do not have stories. What to do now? During the Second Lebanon War I spent a month in the northern part of Israel the urban area. The changes in Israel moving from being a welfare state to a super Capitalist state made me realize the price we paid for this kind of politics. I thought that the Capitalist state did not fit Israel, did not fit developing towns, did not fit one million and a half Russians, did not fit the Ethiopians, did not fit the Arabs. When I went to talk to them so many of them said we miss the fifties. We miss the first years of Israel. There was nothing then but there was a sense of equality. There was solidarity. And then came the time I had to decide what I am going to do and this combination of reasons pushed me to try and get into the arena. I said instead of writing, instead of telling people what to do, instead of having this imaginary power of a journalist I should do something else. In Haaretz we had a sense of being the bosses. We were really calling the shots. This falling apart of the social culture had pushed me to come to the paper a few months ago and tell them enough is enough. They said what are you going to do? I said I am going to try to go into politics. They were a bit sorry for me and they said why don't you take a leave of absence? Because you might want to come back. I said, no, this is one way. I left the paper. I felt so lonely by that time and on a daily basis I read the papers. And the

sense is to intimate people with the notion that politicians do more than journalists. Most people think that the media runs the country. So for them you are on the losing side because do whatever you wanted without responsibility. Now you are more limited and with more responsibility. You must be an idiot. I said yes. Thank you very much.

Dr. Aryeh Carmon: Thank you. I must say I feel a little embarrassed not being here throughout the workshop and to be making comments so I would like to apologize but I hope that some of the observations will be helpful. Number one I am very glad that we are recording you because we are getting very interesting raw material for analysis about the state of politics in Israel and really ties with the observations that I have to share with you. My comments do not relate personally to Danny who has participated around this table as a journalist. We hope that now as a politician but to the phenomenon that he related to namely the wave of journalists and media people who are moving into politics. I have many questions and I think he raised many issues. What does this mean about our political culture? What does this mean to our politics? What are the messages sent to the media? The ethics? What would it do? How it will affect the anti political sentiment of Israeli society? There are many ethical questions in my mind. Are politics and journalism interchangeable or is it one way? If it is one way again where it will lead us? At the point of departure it seems to me that, how do not know how much you are familiar with the system that allows now journalists to enter big parties. Not small parties. In small parties there is a committee of sorts that puts this man or another in. The so called primaries it is quite significant it is very symptomatic to the personalization of politics in Israel.

To share a thought with you. In this institute several years ago we ran a major research about the way candidates are being selected to political parties before elections in 40 OECD parties in different countries. There have been some differences but there was one common denominator. Differences stem from the difference in the systems. If it was majority based or proportional system. If the system had two houses or one etc. But there was one thing which was clear cut- while the differences stem from one thing and you see different procedures, generally speaking the commitment to the parties' platform was very clear. The party prepared a platform with which they come to the public to show it and seek their support through which they get a commitment and at the end of 3 or 4 years they would seek again either punishment or reward. I do not think that the same phenomenon that we see now could have happened three decades ago even here in Israel. We did have in the past journalists who joined politics but in a very different way. None of those, who by the way became very prominent politicians in Israel was a celebrity. Many of those journalists who now turned into politics became celebrities and it says a lot not of them but about the culture that allows the personal side to enter into politics. The personalization of politics is a major thing that underscores the deterioration in the political culture. Politics is a skilled laden occupation. In a way Danny Ben Simon and the Prince are two opposites. I am talking about the Machiavellian Prince of course. Danny Ben Simon was interviewed and was tricked about the way he raised money. In his naivety he played right into the hands of those who tricked him. An experienced politician would not be the same. There is a certain path for a person to join politics that requires some sort of apprenticeship to get into politics. We work so closely with the Knesset with committees. It does require so many skills that I am not so sure that the ethics that stems from journalism provides it.

Speaker: If we think about politics as something that relies on information, so if we are against the political procedure in its modern form perhaps journalists as providers of information are not relevant anymore. Perhaps it is a part of the crisis that we experience.

Dr. Danny Filc: I very much identified with your story and what drove you to politics. There is a kind of paradox. It is difficult for me to understand why you joined the Labor Party. If there is a real ideological difference than it seems to be that there is less sense of urgency for people like you to go into politics because the ideological difference is still there. The way in which Ehud Barak was elected with the support of Ben Eliezer is not so different from what you described about the Likud. The personal ideological vision of Ehud Barak and what he did as a prime minister is not so different from Benyamin Netanyahu's vision of politics. The betrayal of electoral promises concerning social issues what characterized Barak in 1999. So there is a kind of contradiction. If there is no difference between the parties then what are you doing in the Labor Party? If there is enough difference why do we need journalists? There are enough politicians guaranteeing this difference. So there is something that I do not understand even though I very much identify with the sense of urgency.

Prof. Yael Yishai: I have to admit that what you said Danny was the best news that I have heard in the workshop. Actually what you told us is that you do have trust in the system. You ask these people in the Negev why do you distrust politics, why are so alienated? You did not tell us anything about the answer but my guess is that they simply distrust the system. And you tell us about the terrible Likud and Danny asked you rightly about Labor but you do trust the system, otherwise you would have thought about other ways to influence it. So how you can account for this difference between distrust of politicians and trusting the system? You did have an alternative. You did not choose politics as the second best.

Prof. David Ohana: Danny you are the answer to the despair of the politics, the academic blaze, we saw everything, Arik Carmon and myself we will not go to politics. We know what the price is. We like to be observers. We do not agree with Plato who saw politics as a noble occupation. We agree with the system when we are so desperate. Good people went to Kadima and some of them were disappointed. Politics without hope is not politics. To be cynical towards Barak and Tzipi and to say everybody is the same, that there is no alternative, what is politics if not to choose among alternatives. In the academia we are so cynical because we are interpreters. We are still citizens. I was too a candidate for the Knesset 20 years ago with Lova Eliav, Why should Danny apologize for going into politics?

Mr. John Lloyd: Two points. One, I wanted to ask Daniel specifically when he asked the question should I report what you said it was a colossal corruption. Huge sums of money, the use of sex to seduce people. A colossal corruption. Do you have to ask? Of course you should have reported it.

Prof. Tamar Hermann: It was after the deadline.

Mr. John Lloyd: There was the next day. I mean what is the inhibition? I mean clearly there is an inhibition there. You recognized the corruption, you disliked it.

There is some inhibition which I would like to know. And the second point maybe scholars and journalists as observers are not the best people to observe or rather there must be some way of describing politics from within at the same time as being without. Especially now. What do politicians would be great for you after 10 years to describe. What are the passions that make men and women who presumably were decent and may still be decent to do what they are doing. It is very easy for observers. Journalists, scholars, to say what a bunch of corrupt people they are. It is rather more difficult to describe the pressures. Not to excuse but to describe it.

Prof. Asher Arian: Yesterday we mentioned Max Weber and his notion of politics. I think that is crucial. If you see this as a profession, as a vocation that is very noteworthy, it is very positive, it is very good. And I want to commend you for it. And the question which party especially when there is no difference is irrelevant. The Labor Party, if there are all the same. It is a worthy and noble decision. And I want to remind us that Mosta the political sociologist wrote about social forces and he said that in every society the important profession has to generate the leadership of that society. We have been through a period where the political leaders have come from political organizers and then from the army and now at least it seems partially from the media. That is a very good indicator of the structure of power and influence in the system and more than that we have to look forward to the moment when business and economic world will supply us with some of their people.

Prof. Yossi Shain: Danny you are a man of passion. We all know. You take your passion one step forward, you also have guts. We academics have to publish our books every several years and we know very well that very few will read them and we are content. Of course you also like have a streak in you which is hungry for more. You have a sense otherwise you would not have gone to politics that I can do it better. Otherwise why should I do it. You do not just think that I am a reporter. You see yourself as an ideologue, someone who believes in view, you see yourself as a moralist and you also see yourself as a leader. Now when you bring such traits to journalism, I am asking you backwards now, what does it to do journalism? We have this idea that it is a different class of its own. This is called the public intellectuals. These are journalists who write for newspapers but are basically not reporters. They advocate their views. They advocate their morality, they want to change society, they are Marxists of various kinds. I wonder why this style of journalism has been earned? To what extent? Because whenever you listen to is already predisposed to your views, to what you want agenda to push. If you have the neoliberal agenda you will push it but you have a different agenda. When you go to the North you see the ills of society, you do not see the successes of society. This is not journalism in my opinion. Not that you are not a great journalist. This is fine. But this is not journalism. This is advocacy at best and of course advocacy as an element in politics and I see a direct link. This is an opinion maker. And I wonder what you think about it. Because is something that we now know and the book I mentioned yesterday Media Madness talks about this kind of morality that came into the media all over the world now. And I just wondered how do you react to that. What is the role that you saw for yourself?. You see yourself as what, in the media before you moved to politics?

Mr. Daniel Ben Simon: First on a personal note I am someone who came here to Israel in 1970 and I was 16 without family and without language as a new person. I started life at 16. There is a sense of giving back to the society that gave you whatever

difficulties I met during my life. There is a sense of almost recognition. I am sorry for being sentimental. Maybe the sense that someone is not born automatically and goes to hi tech or to do this or that and to do for himself. There is a sense of public duty. I have it. It has to do with the fact that you want to do good things for your own society in order to make it better. That may sound naïve but it something that I feel inside and that is what I took to heart things that were done wrongly while I was a political commentator. I took it personally. We have one small country. There is the personal thing. You do it as a journalist and when you exhaust your capacities of trying to change you look for something else, public. Not going to make money or something like that. I left without knowing when elections will be held.

Now you cannot say there is no difference between Labor and Kadima and the Likud. Maybe I am attached to the myth of the Labor Party in the fifties. Now Labor is a small party and is not doing well at the polls. So you cannot say that I am an opportunist. The Labor will do much better than you expect. We had the primaries 2 weeks ago. I got something like 15 thousands votes. Of course I bought few of them. I am just joking. I was told I have to belong to a group. Each group has its boss. One of them told me I will give you my support. If you are elected I want my nephew to be your parliamentary aid. On a daily basis get less and less shocked. I went to the Arab sector. Something has to be done with that sector. As an Israeli I must tell you. Most of it is on sale and I am saying it on record. And then you get to sit with the Bedouins and you learn a lesson in politics. As journalists we are a bit romantic. I used to write about developing towns in the South. The big fiesta started a few months before elections. That is the time you can get anything you want. My bad luck is such that in the Arab sector I got almost zero. The Druze sector zero, the Bedouins zero. And I know why. I have nothing to offer. They tell me when you are a minister come and see us. I did not get their votes and not by accident. I am Labor, I am a socialist. Now I cannot say this even in the Kibbutz. I believe in this kind of society of solidarity, of the rich getting less, of the poor getting more, of the state being more involved. Thank you very much.

End of Session 4 part 2