

Documents

LEFT UNITY IN ISRAEL?

The Communist Party of Israel proposed on August 29, 1948, in a communication to the left-wing Zionist United Workers Party (Mapam), the formation of a united slate for the elections on the basis of a nine-point program on which both parties were in agreement. (This communication was published in JEWISH LIFE, December 1948.) The offer was rejected. Following are the reply of the United Workers Party and the final response of the Communist Party of Israel. This exchange provides illuminating material on the character of Mapam and on the whole question of the united front tactic.

—Eds.

To the Communist Party

Tel-Aviv, Sept. 6, 1948.

1. You write: "for years our party has been fighting for unity of all left labor forces in Palestine." This emphasis is a little strange to us because:

a. For years, your party has opposed immigration, the constructive work of the Jewish people in Palestine. This negative attitude could not constitute a basis for the unity of left-wing labor in the country with you.

b. Thereby, your party provided an example not of unity, but of splitting.

c. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of the left camp in Palestine, organized in the Ahduth Avodah-Poale Zion and the Hashomer Hatzair Workers Party, united in theory and practice, and created the United Workers Party!

2. You write: "In spite of our great efforts to achieve cooperation and a united front between our two parties on the aforementioned basis . . . your party has up to the present refused to set up such a front." This, too, does not conform with reality.

a. Our party did not refuse, but suggested cooperation through regular liaison for coordination between the representatives of the two parties in an effort to achieve cooperation in various spheres such as the State Council, the League for USSR, etc.

b. For us the "United Workers Front" under our conditions and in conformity with the practice of the whole left-wing labor camp is a more general term. Such a front would not exclude the Palestine Labor Party (Mapai) either. We fight for such a workers' front as vital for the workers of Palestine. Nor do we absolve right-wing labor from agreement on such a front despite its rejection of this front.

3. We were prepared to open discussions with you on the programmatic foundations for a united front of Palestine workers, and we agreed to discuss these foundations. The first essential point of discussion naturally centered upon the focal issue for the Palestine labor movement and our people in general—territorial concentration in Palestine as the solution to the Jewish problem. To our regret, we have not as yet received a basic reply from you on this issue on which there is agreement today among the whole working class in Palestine and the masses of our people in the whole Diaspora. Your comrades preferred—before this discussion was summed up—prior discussion on some practical questions. We agreed to this. . . .

4. Among the fundamental points raised by you, you omit to mention one which has occupied a place of considerable importance in our discussions—the attitude towards the activities of the Halutz (workers' training) movement and towards the rights of the Zionist organization in the Diaspora. This point is basic for any cooperation with us, and calls for a clear answer and practical consequences.

5. You write: "the absence of a united progressive workers' front has already had most serious consequences." And you mention the cases of Abdullah, the Arab democratic forces, taxes and Jewish fascism. These are most serious matters—but you should not ignore some simple facts:

a. The fight on these important issues is being conducted mainly by three institutions: the Zionist Organization, the state of Israel, and the Histadruth. The Zionist Organization . . . is boycotted by you up to this day. Since you are not represented in the Zionist Organization, you are not in a position to support, for instance, our move against Abdullah in the Zionist Executive Council.

b. In the State Council we have five delegates and you have one. Notwithstanding the striking difference in the balance of forces, we appreciate our parallel policy with you respecting all important questions pointed out in your letter.

c. In the institutions of the Histadruth, in which our representation amounts to more than 40 per cent, you are represented (in the Histadruth Council) by one member in an advisory capacity. In this case, too, joint or separate action with you does not make much difference in practice.

d. Certainly we do not make cooperation within the labor movement conditional on numerical value and weight. However, some remarks in your letter are somewhat out of proportion to the numerical balance of forces within the working class and left-wing labor in Palestine.

At the same time, we approve of the

continuation of our negotiations, and hope the negotiations will have constructive results. . . .

6. As regards the question of elections to the Constituent Assembly of Israel, we shall discuss your appeal when our party discusses the question of these elections and we shall inform you of the results of our discussions.

With comradely greetings,

UNITED WORKERS PARTY OF PALESTINE
Central Secretariat: L. Levite; J. Riftin.

To the United Workers Party

Tel-Aviv, Nov. 7, 1948

From your letter of September 6th and from the discussion between the representatives of our parties which followed, we understand that you continue to oppose the setting up of a united front of the United Workers Party and the Communist Party of Israel and that you have no intention of putting up a joint list with us for the elections to the Constituent Assembly of Israel.

In our appeal to you last August we pointed out that the consolidation of the forces of fascism and reaction for the elections calls for a united progressive workers' front. . . . We suggested that this front be based on a nine-point political program, including the basic problems and the foreign and home policy of our state, the problems of the toiling masses, Jewish-Arab relations, immigration and colonization, the struggle against the dangers of American imperialist penetration and the safeguarding of peace.

As early as our first meeting in the beginning of September, you informed us explicitly that you consider the platform suggested by us acceptable in principle, and that this might serve as a basis of operation between us. However, in addition to this platform, you asked for a discussion of basic ideological questions.

We told you then that we are not opposed to ideological discussions. However, the setting up of a united front based on an agreed political program does not necessarily include a common ideology of the two cooperating parties. A united front is not an organic fusion of two workers' parties, which requires identical ideological foundations, but a front of joint defence and attack, which calls for an agreed minimal program adequate to the interests of the working class and the masses in the period involved.

You make the setting up of a united front conditional on our accepting Zionist ideology. We on our part did not demand

from you as a condition that you should accept the Marxist ideology on the national question. Every sound thinking individual will understand that it is neither logical nor practical to demand such conditions, which in advance doom to failure any attempt at progressive cooperation within the working class. You cannot point to a single example in the history of the world labor movement when cooperation has been started *this way*. We believe in the future organic unity of the working class in this country. However, it is obvious that this unity will only be possible on the basis of the victorious theory of Marxism-Leninism. . . .

You frustrate all attempts of united action by emphasizing points of friction between us, and not of common interest, and by raising questions from the past. We proposed a united front from the viewpoint of significant needs of the present and immediate future and not from the point of view of "bygone memories." We did not, for instance, remind you that for long years, and even up to the last moment, you supported the British Mandate in Palestine, opposed the struggle for independence of Palestine, etc., because we want cooperation with you.

A progressive workers' party is being tested by its deeds in days of trial—and these are days of trial. The very fact that, as against our proposal of a united front with you, you stress the need for a front with Mapai, raises doubts as to your understanding of this front and its needs.

The question is not how broad and long the front is to be, but its quality and political foundation. From your own criticism of Mapai it is evident that no common basis exists today for a front with it under its present leadership, which follows the foreign and home policy of the

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bourgeoisie. . . . It is only a united front of the United Workers Party and the Communist Party of Israel which can effect ideological changes within Mapai and create conditions for a united front with it in the future.

Your reply reminds us of relations that existed within the League for Friendship with USSR. When we called upon the Hashomer Hatzair to carry out certain actions to save the League from stagnation, they made their agreement conditional upon the consent of Ahduth Avodah-Poale Zion. The latter would agree, if Mapai would, and so on. No, comrades! This is too open a maneuver. Your reply to a united front with us, which is possible and necessary, is a front which makes the inclusion of Mapai unreal today. This approach is not serious and incomprehensible.

We accuse you of insincerity and hypocrisy relative to the tasks which today face a progressive workers' party—progressive in its deeds, not only in its proclamations. We accuse you of double book-keeping, one in Israel and another in the countries of people's democracy.

It is known that your party stands in a united front with the communists in the new democracies in central and local authoritative institutions in Poland, Rumania and other countries. In those countries you did not make the united front conditional on their acceptance of the Zionist ideology or on the national question. It is known that in those countries you are numerically insignificant as compared with the communists. However, the sincere approach of the communists with respect to the democratic front renders this cooperation possible. Do not these rules apply to the state of Israel as well? Do you think you can solve the problem by your acquiescence to "contact and coordination" with us in such fields as the State Council, the Israel-USSR League, etc., instead of practical cooperation in the political arena? It seems that you were ready to pay lip service to the cause of the united workers' front and to "do your duty" before the outside world by your "contact" with the C.P.I. Maybe it suits you to play the democratic game for the benefit of Warsaw, Bucharest, Sofia and other countries, and to fulfil a typical social-democratic function in Israel, on the main front in which the progressive and non-progressive character of a workers' party is reflected. . . .

In your efforts to find as many pretexts as possible to justify your divisive attitude, you simply arrive at absurdities. For instance, you ask us to "view favorably" the rights of the Zionist movements abroad—in other words, you wish us to fight together with you for the rights of fas-

cists within the Zionist movement (Revisionists and "Heruth" (Freedom) people of the Irgun Zvai Leumi), for the rights of the Brodetzkys and Goldmans of the Bevin gang, for the rights of the Silvers and Neumanns and the representatives of the bourgeoisie and reaction in America, who belong to the Republican and Democratic Parties, for Dewey and Truman, for the rights of the clergy and of all those who belong to the imperialist and anti-democratic "Western" camp. And these people, as is known, constitute the overwhelming majority in the Zionist movement.

You still hold the mistaken and harmful view that the Jewish people is split into two camps: Zionists and non-Zionists. This brings you into "brotherly proximity" with Jewish reaction within the same organization, and to the rejection of relations and actual cooperation with the forces of progress in Israel.

The truth is that the Jewish people, like all other peoples, are divided into two camps: the camp of pro-imperialist reaction, which in all countries is related to the warmongers and enemies of USSR and the peoples' democracies, on the one hand, and the camp of peace-loving progress, which is related to the progressive labor movement, the friends of USSR and the peoples' democracies, on the other. And it is known that the main and ruling forces in the Zionist Organization support those imperialistic forces who work to bring disaster upon Israel, reduce its boundaries and infringe upon its independence and sovereignty. The progressive forces among the Jewish people—and the communists first of all—are leading an obstinate and consistent struggle, together with the USSR and the countries of people's democracy, for the defense of

Israel and its frontiers, independence and sovereignty. Is this not striking proof of the correctness of our evaluation with respect to the relation of forces among our people? Does not the general national welfare demand the setting up of a front of our two parties for the fateful political struggles?

The independence and sovereignty of Israel, its frontiers and natural resources, the democratic liberties of its citizens and the vital interests of its working class are threatened. Anglo-American imperialism and its satellites; the big Jewish bourgeoisie and its fascist wing *Heruth* (founded by the Irgun); and clericalism and its satellites among the working class attack us in order to liquidate the achievements of democracy and its victories in this part of the world.

The answer must be: a progressive workers' front. The day has come for testing your anti-fascist and democratic proclamations, your proclamations in favor of the progressive unity of the working class and your sympathies with the anti-imperialist camp in the world. You should realize clearly: your refusal to set up a united front and a joint list with the Communist Party of Israel in the elections to the Constituent Assembly will fully serve the interests of the forces of fascism and reaction in our state. We ask you to reconsider this question in view of the clouds that are gathering in the skies of our country. You should put aside any narrow party quarrels in order that we may carry out the great tasks in the policy of our state which are demanded today of the forces of peace, democracy and social progress.

With fraternal greetings,

COMMUNIST PARTY OF ISRAEL

S. Mikunis, Gen. Sec. M. Vilner, Sec.

Letters from Abroad

WHAT REALLY GOES ON IN RUMANIA?

The letter below from a member of the Jewish Democratic Committee of Rumania is a reply to the calumnies and hysterical attacks in this country against the new people's government of Rumania and its Jewish community for alleged "anti-Zionist" actions there. Mr. Eisinger here tells what is really happening. The attempt of

the Jewish press in our country to confuse the issue of Zionism and the cause of Israel is scandalous in view of the record of the Rumanian government toward the Jewish state. Rumania was one of the first to grant de jure recognition to Israel and only recently gave a hearty welcome to the Israeli ambassador. Hysteria of certain sections of the Jewish press about Jewish schools in Rumania is shown to be groundless by the recent news that Rumania has a network of 69 elementary and 32 high schools with over 1,000 teachers. All studies