

Confrontation and Prospects

By Meir Vilner

The following article consists of excerpts from an address delivered by Meir Vilner, General Secretary of the CommunistParty of Israel, to a meeting of Party activists in Tel Aviv, November, 1983.

Never since the second World War, has the international situation been so complicated and perilous as it is today. At first glance there is a contradiction in the situation. In the fifties, when the cold war was unleashed, the relation of forces in the world was different. The main imperialist power, the U.S.A., had then definitely military superiority over the Soviet Union, chiefly in nuclear weapons. In spite of this, even in the days of the Cuban crisis in 1962, I do not think that we reached such dangerous international tensions as exist today.

THE SHARPENING OF INTERNATIONAL CONFRONTATION

Today the relationship of forces is different. . . . From the military aspect, equality exists between the Soviet Union and the U.S.A. If we do not limit ourselves to the military relationship of forces, but also take into account the all-round ideological, political, social and moral power, one can say the Soviet Union enjoys superiority over the capitalist regime in the U.S.A.

But precisely at this time of the new balance of forces, the danger of a world war has intensified, as a result of the aggressive policy of the American Administration which has abandoned detente and strives with all its might to turn back by force of arms the wheel of historical development.

Despite this the situation is not as it was before the second world war, in numerous ways. Among the most important ones is the fact that within the chief imperialist power, the U.S.A., the internal situation differs from that which prevailed in nazi Germany before the second world war. In Germany at that time, the financial magnates succeeded in putting into power a fascist regime and in completely suppressing all opponents, first and foremost the Communists and Socialists. They succeeded in uniting around them, by lure and by terror, considerable sectors of the German people in preparation for an aggressive war for the domination of the world. Today there exists no such situation in the U.S.A. nor in Germany. The broadest masses are struggling against the ruling policy which endangers world peace, the very existence of mankind. . . .

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

As to the background of the international situation as I have tried to describe it, we must analyze the situation in the Middle East. First of all we must say that it is impossible to analyze the situation in the Middle East outside of the international situation. This error is committed by many who do not connect the wars and struggle for national liberation in this region with what is happening in the world. Moreover, there has not been any period as yet in which the problems of the Middle East were international problems to such a high degree. First, because is difficult to solve them in the present international situation — in the prevailing situation of relations between imperialism and socialism, and, in particular between the United States and the Soviet Union.

At the 19th Congress of our Party, in February 1981, we made the following assessment.

"Having suffered very significant defeats in Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Iran and South Yemen, which weakened its positions, imperialism has proceeded to a counter-offensive with the help of the reactionary forces in the region, and especially so by the Sadat regime in Egypt. Imperialism frantically started setting up military bases to replace those lost and even to intensify its military presence and forging new military alliances. The Camp David deal is an important link in the chain of the imperialist strategy."

I wish to stress our estimate that "imperialism has passed on to a counter-offensive." This takes place when the relationship of forces in the world has changed to the detriment of imperialism and when many liberated countries have embarked on a road of progressive development with some on the road to socialism. Imperialism is attacking not because it has been strengthened. It is carrying out its counter-offensive after many defeats, from a position of weakness vis-a-vis socialism and the national liberation movements. The Camp David deal, an example of the strategy of imperialism, is recognized for what it is in reality. Those from among the peace forces who supported it or still support it, are closing their eyes to reality or do not want to face the fact that this deal has delayed a comprehensive and stable peace in our region and led to the war against Lebanon and another example of U.S. imperialism turning away from detente towards international power confrontation, thereby endangering world peace.

Our 19th Congress also dealt with the matter of Lebanon. The Lebanese problem did not start last year with the aggressive war unleashed by the U.S. and Israel. We accurately defined matters noting:

"In the framework of the universal struggle of U.S. imperialism and the ruling circles in Israel against the Palestinian Arab people and against the anti-imperialist national movement in general, one must assess the incessant aggressive actions of Israel against Lebanon. Their aims are: (1) To liquidate the national existence of the Palestinian people; (2) To assist the forces of the right and fascism in Lebanon in their struggle against the patriotic forces; to prevent stability in Lebanon, in order to prepare the soil for its division; (3) To seize power over Southern Lebanon by means of the Israeli mercenary Haddad (Haddad has died since this report was made — editor). Southern Lebanon has virtually been turned into a territory under Israeli occupation; (4) To bring pressure to bear upon Syria by provoking her army in Lebanon and direct provocation against Syria from time to time.

The largest and the cruellest aggressive action against Lebanon in the recent period was "Operation Litani," one of the most barbaric actions since the Israeli-Arab conflict. . . .

We do not always refer to the policy of the Likud government or to the extreme right or the policy or the Alignment — the Labor Party and Mapam. We sometimes use the expression, "The ruling Zionist circles," meaning by this both those who ruled for 29 years (the Alignment) and those who are ruling now. On July 29, 1937 David BenGurion said:

"Lebanon is the natural ally of Jewish Eretz-Israel (the whole territory of Palestine is here called "Eretz-Israel" — editor). The Christian nation in Lebanon has no opportunity to multiply by Aliya (immigration) from the outside. Lebanon is also surrounded by a Muslim sea; it also constitutes an enlightened island surrounded by a primitive desert population (this is how he referred to the Arabs — M.V.).

"Lebanon needs our friendship and support as we need theirs. Not all the inhabitants of Lebanon are Christians and not all Christians are members of one (religious) community. The ruling community is that of the Maronites and they are a minority and without a Jewish neighbor they have no independent future. The neighborhood of Lebanon guarantees the Jewish State (which was not as yet established — M.V.) a true ally from the first day of its establishment, and it is quite conceivable that on the northern side of the Lebanese southern frontier which borders on the Jewish State we will have the first opportunity of expansion with the full consent of our neighbors who need us." (D. BenGurion *Memoirs*, Vol. p. 367).

This is Zionism as it was and as it is now and not as *Mar./Apr., 1984*

persons like Yossi Sarid (Knesset member representing left wing of the Alignment — editor) describes it saying that once Zionism was allegedly different and even the acme of perfection.

At our 19th Congress we said: "In the Middle East, as in other regions of the world, it is impossible to understand the events without a class analysis, without seeing that the exploiting classes prefer quite often their narrow class interest to the national interests of their peoples. They are afraid of the workers and the fellahin, the sons of their own people, of the progressive social changes and more than once they have joined hands with imperialism, and sellout their homelands. With the help of imperialism from the outside and by the liquidation of democratic liberties inside, they strive for preserving the privileges of the exploiting classes."

In this analysis, we discussed the political meandering in various Arab countries. The exploiting classes, including also the anti-imperialist national bourgeoisie, are afraid of revolution and are not consistent. They are, as experience has proven, liable to cross over to reactionary positions in certain situations. At the same time we said then that in spite of this complex character of the bourgeoisie and of the land-owners strata we must see that:

"In all the internal struggles one must take into consideration that the main contradiction is that between the peoples and imperialism. An anti-imperialist national front on the broadest basis is in the national interest of the Arab peoples, with the exception of groups of capitalists, who are connected with foreign capital, of reactionary bureaucracy and army officers, who by means of oil and bribes from the foreigners have been induced to betray the interests of their people and country."

Accordingly it is possible to comprehend the character of the anti-imperialist national front which was set up in Syria years ago. In this front, the Syrian Bath Party is the first violin. The Syrian Communist Party and other political groups are also part of it. The present regime in Syria took steps against foreign capital. Certain social reforms were also carried out but the capitalist social system in Syria has not changed fundamentally. Moreover, it is the evaluation of the Syrian Communist Party that the authorities in Syria are not at all concerned about the socio-economic interests of the workers and fellahin. Their situation, then, is difficult; there is social exasperation. Inner democracy is quite restricted. One may add what the Syrian authorities — the Bath Party — did in 1976 in Lebanon at Tel Zater (the massacre of Palestinians — editor) with the military assistance of

Israel, according to the revelations of Begin in the Knesset. This intervention weakened the anti-imperialist positions of Syria and led to a confrontation between Syria and the Progressive Patriotic Front in Lebanon and the P.L.O. in 1976.

How can this be explained from the political and class aspects? The leadership of Bath in Syria took such steps because it feared that the forces of the left in Lebanon are liable to emerge victorious and constitute the regime in Lebanon. Syria, from its vantage point determined to "balance" the situation by attacking the P.L.O. and the patriotic forces.

The principal question then arises: If this is so, why do we, and not alone we, define the policy of Syria as anti-imperialist? Syria is the chief Arab country which before and since the Camp David Accords stood together with the national liberation movements in the region and, together with the Soviet Union, against the Camp David Accords, which were intended to advance the U.S. penetration into the region and to liquidate the right of self-determination of the Palestinian Arab people. In spite of all the military, political and economic pressures exerted by the rulers of the U.S.A. and Israel, in spite of all attempts to bring about internal reactionary upheavals in Syria, the Syrian Bath regime has not deviated from the anti-imperialist line. That the U.S.A. and Israel are now preparing for war against Syria has no other reason than the independent anti-imperialist policy of Syria. Syria, as is known, has an agreement for friendship and cooperation in all spheres with the Soviet Union. Soviet military personnel and Soviet modern arms are in Syria for its defense in case the U.S.A. and Israel attack it.

With reference to this issue the position of the Soviet Union towards the internal struggle within Fatah must be clarified. The Soviet government has informed the Syrian government that what its doing in Tripoli with the support of the rebels within Fatah — their attack on the elected bodies of the P.L.O. and Arafat's leadership — must not be done and helps objectively the rulers of the U.S.A. and Israel who are preparing a war against Syria. The rulers of Syria claim officially that they do not participate in the fight against the forces of Arafat. Then they were told: You do not prevent this, and without you, the attack upon the Arafat forces could not have been carried out. Also, at the last visit of the Syrian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Khaddam, he certainly heard from the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, A. Gromyko, that the behavior of Syria in that matter brings enormous harm to Syria itself and contradicts the objective necessity of the unity of struggle against the common dangers.

In the joint statement of Syria and the Soviet Union, published at the end of Khaddam's visit, Nov. 11, 1983, we read:

"The two sides positively assess the beginning of the political dialogue between the rival Lebanese groups as a step which opens a prospect for an internal Lebanese settlement, on the basis of a national agreement. In the course of the talks, the importance of the unity and coordination of action of the Arab States was stressed, in order to frustrate the dark aggressive plans of the U.S.A. and Israel."

At the time of Khaddam's visit Gromyko in his speech said: "We see as an urgent and important task to overcome the quarrels and rebuild the unity in the ranks of the national liberation movement of the Palestinian Arab people, which must also in the future appear as an active factor in the anti-imperialist struggle in the Middle East."

In the Soviet press, various appeals were published, among them the official announcement of the government of India, calling for stopping the attacks against the P.L.O. leadership and Arafat. In his reply, Khaddam adopted clear anti-imperialist positions and condemned the intervention of the U.S.A. in Grenada. In the joint statement of Syria and the Soviet Union, they demand that the aggressive invading forces of the U.S.A. should leave Grenada immediately. They express solidarity with the people of Nicaragua against the aggressive threats of U.S. imperialism. Khaddam thanked the Soviet Union for the assistance given to Syria against the danger of an Israeli-U.S. aggression, for the assistance to all the Arab Peoples and also for the assistance to the Palestinian Arab People in their struggle for self-determination for an independent state of their own. The joint statement stated that the P.L.O. is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian Arab people and that the two sides conform their commitment to the Syrian-Soviet Agreement for Cooperation.

It is, then, completely clear that the Soviet Union is against the rebellion within Fatah and everybody who publishes anything else intentionally falsifies and incites against the Soviet Union as does Avneri.

It is, of course, possible to revoke everything with one stroke and say that the actions of Syria are reactionary and that all the rest is empty talk. This is not so. Two things exist: The anti-imperialist positions are a fact; they are expressed not only in talk but also in votes in the U.N., in the political confrontation with the U.S.A., in the rejection of the U.S. plans in the Middle East and in the international arena, in the all-around cooperation with the Soviet Union. It is true that the position of the

Syrian regime towards the happenings in Fatah stands in contradiction to its general position. This is a contradiction to its own position and behavior and not a contradiction in our evaluation. Syria today also conducts an anti-imperialist foreign policy and maintains friendly relations with the Soviet Union, not because of proletarian or communist ideology but because of a correct understanding of its national interest. On the other hand, it does things which completely contradict its own interest and progress when it will have to face the reality of the threats of aggression by Israel and the U.S.A. . . .

The Tasks of the C.P.I.

What is the task of the Communist Party of Israel in the present circumstances? Our task is, first of all, to struggle against the occupation and oppression of the Israeli rulers; to struggle against the strategic partnership with the U.S.A. and against the preparations for an aggressive war. We must wage an ideological and political struggle. We must explain and emphasize the relation between the struggle for putting an end to the wars and for the establishment of peace in the Middle East and the struggle for peace in the world, against the dangers for the very existence of humanity, which stem from the policy of Washington.

We must struggle against the dangers of fascism, against the destructive economic and social policy of the government and for equality of rights. All this we must do out of class attitudes toward understanding Israeli and general developments. Therefore, what is very much needed is the strengthening of the ideological education of the party and sympathizers. Only the deepening of the ideological and Marxist-Leninist teachings enables one to comprehend any situation, however complicated it may be; it enables one to analyze matters with a warm heart and also with a cool head.

Our Party has proven that it is able in the most complicated situations to apply creatively the principles of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism, and thus to serve in the best way the real interests of the two peoples in the country and the cause of peace and progress in our region and the world. We have guarded our independent considerations and correct tactics. . . .

Our ability to deal with the issues which have been presented by me, strengthens the rallying of our Party around the correct, well-considered and revolutionary policy of the Central Committee.

We have before us no easy times; we will face them honorably, despite the complications and difficulties, until we will, at long last, see the light at the end of the tunnel. □

Mar./Apr., 1984