

17th CONGRESS OF ISRAELI COMMUNIST PARTY

The Communist Party of Israel held its 17th Congress on June 12-24 in Tel Aviv.*

The Congress was attended by 394 delegates, the delegations of 17 fraternal Communist and Workers' parties and a delegation of the journal *Problems of Peace and Socialism*.

The Congress received greetings and messages of solidarity from the majority of Communist and Workers' parties, numerous labor and youth organizations and different groups of the Israeli population.

The Congress was opened by Politbureau member Tawfiq Toubi, who greeted the delegates and the delegations of fraternal Communist and Workers' parties.

The 17th Congress of the CPI, he said, is meeting at a time when the crisis caused by the June 1967 war is still endangering peace and security in the Middle East. He stressed that the Israeli rulers are laboring under a delusion if they believe that they will be able to perpetuate the occupation by their aggressive policy. Rejecting a just political settlement, they thereby create a situation which is becoming ever more explosive.

It is quite clear now that Israel's security has never been as

*Resolutions of the Congress will be published in our next issue.—Ed.

precarious as it is today. Feelings of anxiety and insecurity are running high in the country.

"Showing concern for the cause of peace and security of the Israeli people and all the peoples of the area," Toubi continued "our Communist Party appeals to all forces in Israel who cherish the cause of peace, to all organizations and public personalities opposed to the continuation of the occupation and demanding fulfilment of the Security Council resolution, to unite in the ranks of a peace front and to mobilize the masses for a nationwide political struggle so as to force the government to abandon its hidebound position and act in favor of the long-awaited peace without annexations."

The Party's urgent task today is to expand the political struggle against the policy of occupation and annexation. The Communist Party, all its organizations and members are actively participating in the struggle of people who are acting against the anti-democratic and anti-labor policy of the government and the policy of racial discrimination.

The Party is fighting in complex conditions, in an atmosphere of chauvinism, hatred for other peoples fanned in the country and of anti-Sovietism. The Party is constantly persecuted under the emergency laws. Party leaders and members are obliged to live in areas specified by the authorities and are subjected to systematic arrests.

Toubi warmly greeted the peoples of Iraq and Syria who have established their sovereignty on their land by nationalizing the Iraq Petroleum Co., which is an important gain for the Arab national-liberation movement.

In this connection he pointed out that the process of establishing the governments of progressive national fronts in Syria and Iraq is one more evidence of continuous change taking place in the relationship of forces in favor of the anti-imperialist, democratic and progressive forces fighting in this area of the globe.

Condemning the U.S. aggression in Vietnam, Toubi said:

"Expressing our resolute protest at this Congress against the inhuman crimes perpetrated by the U.S. imperialists, we tell them: Enough of killing! Stop the crimes against the people of Vietnam and the whole of mankind. American colonialists, get out of Vietnam!"

"We express our fraternal solidarity with the people of Vietnam and feel confident that thanks to their heroism and the fraternal assistance of their true friends, the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, the people of Vietnam will win through to victory."

Toubi emphasized that the internationalist unity of the Party is the vital basis of its activity. Unity of the Communists, both Jews and Arabs, will illumine the path of the two peoples towards a better

future. And he added: "The relations of friendship existing between our Party and the Communist parties of the Arab countries prove that there are great opportunities for establishing new relations in our region, provided there is a radical change in the official policy of Israel."

The speaker pointed to the firmness of relations linking the CPI with the fraternal Communist and Workers' parties. "For us, the participation of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the work of our Congress in the present situation is a wholehearted expression of solidarity with the struggle of the Communist Party of Israel, an expression of sincere friendship which the Soviet Union has for the workers and other people of Israel, just as for the other peoples. Your being present here, Soviet comrades, expresses the sincere concern of the Soviet Union for establishing a just and durable peace between Israel and the Arab countries.

"We view the arrival of the delegation of many fraternal Communist parties at our Congress as an expression of solidarity with our Party, an expression of friendship for the working people and the popular masses of Israel aspiring to peace."

Below we publish an abridged version of the Central Committee report to the Congress delivered by Meir Vilner, General Secretary of the CC CPI.

OUR BASIC TASK IS TO SECURE THE WITHDRAWAL OF TROOPS AND ESTABLISH PEACE

Our 17th Congress has convened three and a half years after the preceding, 16th Congress. Historically, it is a brief period, but it was one of rapid development and progress of the world's progressive forces. Positive political and social changes have come about in our region, the Middle East. Nor did life in Israel stand still.

"Our 17th Congress has convened five years after the June 1967 war, at a time when the occupation of the Arab territories still continues. The continued occupation and the absence of peace — this is what attracts the main attention of our Congress."

The Israeli rulers undermine the opportunities for establishing peace in the Middle East. They are alarmed by the successes of the Soviet-American summit meeting, which dealt a serious blow to the cold war policy.

It is known, however, that the U.S. ruling circles were forced to take this step as a result of changes in the world balance of forces. The main thing now is to fulfil the agreements signed during the summit meeting. The factors that compelled U.S. imperialism to retreat from some fundamental tenets of its bankrupt foreign policy are bound to compel them to fulfil these agreements too.

At the same time, Vilner stressed the principled and flexible character of Soviet policy aimed at strengthening peaceful co-existence, on the one hand, and at giving maximum support to the peoples fighting against imperialism, as, for instance, in Vietnam, on the other.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The developments in the Middle East and the changes that have taken place in the area, Vilner said, are anti-imperialist in character. The period under review witnessed the strengthening of friendly Soviet-Arab relations, as expressed in the treaties of friendship and cooperation signed between the USSR and Egypt and between the USSR and Iraq. A progressive national front has been established in Syria and is being formed in Iraq with the participation of the Communist parties which has served as the basis for forming coalition governments.

Nationalization of foreign oil companies in Iraq and Syria strikes a strong blow at the positions of imperialist monopolies in the Middle East. These and other progressive, anti-imperialist moves in the Arab world serve the interests not only of the Arab peoples, but also those of the people of Israel, and the interests of peace and security in this region of the world.

The Jordanian ruling clique, which organized the massacres of September 1970, Vilner said, did not succeed in eradicating the national movement of the Arab people of Palestine.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE OCCUPATION, FOR PEACE

The Golda Meir government does not want a just settlement and clings in every way to the policy of annexation.

The speaker cited statements of high-ranking figures, which reveal the expansionist aspirations of the Israeli rulers.

In so doing, he referred in particular to the statement of retired General Meir Banl, who speaking at a meeting in Tel-Aviv on May 27, 1972, protested against the plundering and eviction of thousands of Bedouins in the Rafah region, and said:

"When I see such chauvinism, when I see such frenzy, such intoxication over our military strength, I am seized with alarm and feel that I want to give up the (occupied) territories as quickly as possible, and in return obtain a political solution of the question."

But generals like War Minister Moshe Dayan and people like Haim Bar Lev, Minister of Industry and Agriculture, continue to back the policy of expansion. Recently, the ruling element recorded its expansionist aspirations in a Knesset resolution, of March 16, 1972, trying even to find a "justification" for them in history.

Vilner warned the Israeli rulers against the illusion that they can deprive the Arab people of Palestine of its rights.

"In the past there was a historical process which culminated in the establishment of the rule of the great imperialist powers over most of the Asian and African countries. This process continued for more than a hundred years. But what do we see now? Not only has this process ceased, but the colonial system of imperialism itself has collapsed once and for all. And in the countries still ruled by colonialists, the earth burns under their feet. The policy of the Israeli rulers, who are making the life and death of the State of Israel dependent on the imperialist powers, is a menace to the country's future. The State of Israel can continue to exist and live in security only if it becomes a peace-loving and independent Middle Eastern state maintaining good-neighbor relations with the Arab peoples. This is why anyone who expects the hundred-year-old policy of colonialism to continue and even expand in future, is nothing but a racist and an advocate of aggression, exposing his people to danger and denying them a life in peace and security."

In this connection, the General Secretary referred to the role of the United States government, which openly supports the Israeli rulers' policy of conquest and to the latter's connection with the U.S. imperialists. Firm action by the forces of peace, national liberation and socialism in the entire world, with the Soviet Union at their head, can make the imperialists discontinue their support.

OUR PLAN OF ACHIEVING PEACE

Our slogan, "Against the Occupation — For Peace," Vilner said, expresses the essence of the Party's peace plan for the Middle East. The masses in Israel are swiftly becoming more politically aware and active, which is exceedingly important for the effectuation of the peace plan. For this, it is necessary to create an anti-imperialist democratic front, whose important task it will be to establish peace in the Middle East.

"Our peace plan," Vilner said, "is based on the implementation of all the provisions of the Security Council resolution of November 23, 1967, elucidated and confirmed by the UN General Assembly decisions of 1970 and 1971 and the Security Council resolutions on Jerusalem."

"Our Party offers the people the following plan for achieving peace:

"—respect for the rights of all peoples and states in the region, including the people of Israel and the Arab people of Palestine;

"—fulfilment of all the provisions of the Security Council resolution of November 22, 1967;

“—the peace frontiers must be the frontiers that existed on June 4, 1967, and the Israeli troops must withdraw to within these frontiers;

“—the sides must declare renunciation of the state of war and respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all the states of the region, and their right to live in peace within the recognized and secure borders without resorting to the threat or use of force in any way;

“—lasting peace must be established between Israel and the Arab states;

“—a just solution must be reached of the problem of the Palestine Arab refugees, based on respect for their rights in accordance with the UN decisions securing them a free choice between repatriation and receipt of compensation;

“—freedom of navigation must be secured for Israel, as for any other country, through the Suez Canal and Tirana Straits.”

FOR BUILDING A PEACE FRONT

Further, Meir Vilner said:

“One of the most important tasks of our Party’s 17th Congress is to work out ways leading to the growth and consolidation of the peace forces in Israel, and also to the intensification of the struggle. Unification of the peace forces should turn them into a highly influential factor in the country’s political development. The main weapon used by the enemy in his attempts to obstruct the unification of the peace forces in Israel is anti-communism.

Therefore, it is necessary to do everything possible to create a united peace front embracing different ideological and political currents in order to mobilize the broadest possible forces for the struggle against the occupation and annexation, for a just, peaceful settlement of the crisis. In this respect, it is extremely interesting to note the many protests against the government’s policy, and the growth of opposition forces among various sections of the country’s population. The growing comprehension of the aggressive nature of the June War of 1967 is to no small degree giving impulse to this course.

THE PALESTINE PROBLEM

Passing to the Palestine problem, Vilner noted that the Communist Party of Israel has always worked for recognition of the Palestinian Arabs’ national rights. The June war, the occupation and the aggravated problem of refugees, he said, had spurred the development of a mass movement of Palestinian Arabs for their national rights and against imperialism and the occupation.

The General Secretary rejected the appeal for the Palestinian Arabs to exercise their right to self-determination in conditions of occupation. “Only after the occupation of the areas seized in June 1967 has ended,” he said, “will there be conditions for the Arab people of Palestine to exercise their right to self-determination.”

The situation in the occupied areas today is appalling: the people are subjected to inhuman terror and harsh economic exploitation. “From the economic point of view, the occupied areas are an Israeli colony.” The problem of East Jerusalem, which Israel has officially incorporated into its territory, deserves special attention. “Under a peace agreement,” Vilner said, “the eastern part of Jerusalem should be returned to Arab sovereignty. However, once the occupation is ended there can and should be an agreed settlement assuring all religions free access to the holy places.”

SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION AND INTENSIFIED CLASS STRUGGLE

The General Secretary briefly described the country’s social and economic position:

“Israel’s economy is more than ever tied to foreign capital, mainly to the American monopolies. As a result Israel has moved further and further away from the attainment of economic independence.

“The five years since the June war have seen the extreme militarization of the economy and the national budget.

“Big business profits have grown. Real wages have declined; there is more poverty and sharper class contradictions.”

The speaker cited incontestable data showing the degree of economic militarization. For instance, military expenditure has increased sixfold since 1966, from 1.2 billion pounds in 1966 to 7 billion in 1971. This has made for a bigger balance of payments deficit. There is also a growing foreign debt, which has risen from \$1.6 billion in 1967 to \$3.6 billion in 1971.

“The growing foreign debt is one manifestation of Israel’s increasing enthrallment by foreign capital of the imperialist states, primarily the United States.” American economic “aid” and specifically “aid” for the acquisition of armaments has given the Israeli economy a lopsided pattern.

In general, the influx of foreign capital is damaging Israel’s economy, leading to inflation and to steep rises in prices and taxes. For instance, according to official statistics rents in 1971 were up 70 per cent on 1968. No wonder there is mounting discontent among the people.

The workers are the hardest hit by the economic and social consequences of the occupation. Real wages have declined while the

profits of local and foreign capitalists have been rapidly increasing from one billion pounds in 1968 to 1.4 billion in 1970, an increase of 40 per cent. Intensified exploitation and the economic stranglehold of foreign capital have greatly aggravated the class struggle. This can be seen in the growth of the strike movement: from 144 strikes in 1969 to 169 in 1971. The strikes are evidence of mounting worker resistance to the government and employer onslaught on living standards, which are steadily deteriorating.

Social welfare data reveal that one family in five and one in four of the urban population are in need or are living on the borderline of poverty.

ARAB POPULATION

The General Secretary dealt with the question of the Arab population, which makes up 12 per cent of the country's total. The Arabs suffer from the government's racial discrimination in employment, education, welfare, etc.

"The Israeli government has tried to present to the world a democratic and enlightened image. In reality, however, it is following a policy of racial discrimination, and not only in the occupied areas, but also against the Arab citizens of Israel."

The Communist Party plays the leading role in the struggle against discrimination and national oppression. It advocates equal rights for Jews and Arabs. "The Israeli Arab population is a national minority and part of the Arab people of Palestine. This minority is fighting for civil and national equality within the Israeli state, for social progress and democracy, for realization of the natural national rights of the Arab people of Palestine, for a just peace between Israel and the Arab states."

AGAINST ZIONIST IDEOLOGY AND ANTI-SOVIET PROPAGANDA

Dwelling on the ideological and political struggle, the General Secretary said that the 16th Party Congress had profoundly analyzed Zionism in the light of Marxism-Leninism. "We should emphatically declare that the ideology and practice of Zionism run counter to the interests of laboring Jews in every country, just as they run counter to the national interests of the Israeli people. In capitalist countries, Zionist policy helps the forces of reaction, racialism and anti-Semitism. Hence, far from promoting the true national interests of the Israeli people and of laboring Jews, support of Zionist policy is wholly contrary to these interests."

That being so, the struggle against Zionist ideology and practice is a manifestation of Israeli patriotism, a struggle for the true

national interests of the Israeli people, for the interests of laboring Jews in all countries, for world peace.

Closely linked with imperialism, Zionist organizations are rendering it a valuable service in the fight against communism by their inflammatory anti-Soviet propaganda and conspiratorial activity. In recent years, anti-Soviet propaganda has grown to incredible dimensions in Israel. Many a Knesset session has been turned into a shameful anti-Soviet spectacle.

The anti-Soviet campaigns of the Zionist leaders and Israeli rulers, all their plotting directed against the socialist countries and anti-imperialist regimes are simply the price paid imperialism for supporting the Israeli extremists. This propaganda runs counter to the interests of peace in the Middle East. Its purpose is to prepare the ground for a possible escalation of the war, and this would go against the vital interests of the Israeli people. It is urgently necessary for Israel to establish good relations with the Soviet Union, but that can be achieved only by abandoning the policy of aggression and annexations and ceasing anti-Soviet propaganda.

OUR PARTY AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

Remarking on the third anniversary of the 1969 Moscow Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties, Meir Vilner said it "signified the beginning of a new stage in strengthening unity of the Communist movement on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism."

The Communist Party of Israel supports the conclusions drawn by the Meeting. Their correctness has been confirmed by developments. The Party rejects the policy of the Chinese Communist Party leaders as contrary to the interests of the socialist camp, the international Communist movement and the anti-imperialist struggle.

The speaker then stressed the leading role of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as the party possessing the greatest revolutionary experience. "Our Party will continue to extend its cooperation with all fraternal Communist parties on common problems, and will support international, regional and bilateral consultations."

The 17th Congress of the Communist Party of Israel is a significant event for Israeli Communists and all peace-loving forces. There can be no doubt that the congress will make an important contribution to Party unity and the struggle for peace, democracy and social progress.