

Leave Lebanon Immediately! Stop the Murder and Destruction!

By Meir Vilner

Below we publish the speech delivered in the Knesset by Meir Vilner, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Israel, in opposition to the Israel invasion of Lebanon. He spoke in behalf of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality. The members of the Front cast the only votes in opposition to the invasion.

The heart bleeds for every person who fails—whether Arab or Jew. The government leads Israel to an abyss. It carries out an action which in the course of time is liable to turn into a catastrophe for generations to come. I call upon the Members of the Knesset to carefully consider their stand and to avoid any name-calling. What has happened here? The majority of the political circles and also the majority of the press, just one or two months ago, opposed the opening of war by the Begin-Sharon government. Dozens of articles were published in the press, hundreds of speeches were made within the widest circles, accusing the Chief-of-Staff, the Minister of Defence, of wanting to lead us into an unnecessary war, endangering Israel. What has now happened? Has the die been cast? If so, many people had said that the government was liable to open up a war in contradiction to the interests of Israel's security. Then, is it not a political and conscientious obligation to call upon the government to stop, to call for a retreat before involving us still more? If so, who said that the government is wrong and that war would be wrong—that it will only bring victims and disaster? Is it possible that when war is carried through, a 180 degree turnabout is made, that the crime is praised and lauded, and that hands are lent to it?

The Chief-of-Staff, Lieut. Gen. Rafael Eitan, said, almost one month ago, on May 13, 1982,—and this struck the Knesset with wonder—“After I have built an extraordinary apparatus, costing billions of dollars, I can and must put it into action . . . It is possible that tomorrow I will be in Beirut.”

The majority of the press and the political leaders then said, “What has happened to the Chief-of-Staff? What is wrong with him? Is he crazy? If he had built up a military apparatus for billions of dollars, must he put it into action? Is this an argument?” I can quote one article after another from the press. What has changed?

The security of Israel is important to all of us, the security of the settlements in the North and of all the settlements. But real security will only be achieved by the establishment of peace, by our stopping the en-

slavement of other peoples. And peace can be achieved by a political solution which is just for all—Israel, the Palestinian people, and all the peoples in the region. There is no other security. Otherwise we are led from one war to another, from one disaster to another.

The policy of the Likud government is not new. The present war, which the government has opened by its initiative and without any reason, is an aggressive war, of conquest; a war to exterminate the Palestinian people; a dirty, colonialist war, not in the interests of peace or security of Israel. It is a dangerous illusion to think that the more Palestinians that are killed, the greater will be the security of Israel. Only cannibals can think like this. The opposite is true—over a long range, this very much endangers Israel. This is a war against a people which has no homeland, which has no state, against Palestinian people, against a civil population, against a national liberation movement. What heroism is this? This is a war against Lebanon, which suffers an endless tragedy.

From the aspect of international law, these are barbarous war crimes, complete disrespect for human life, not only of Palestinians, Lebanese Arabs in general, but also disrespect of the lives of our soldiers. Already dozens of youngsters have unnecessarily fallen victim—more than all of those that were hit in the Northern settlements!

Avraham Katz-Oz (Alignment): About whom are you really concerned?

Meir Vilner: I am concerned about the security of Israel. I am concerned about the removal of the nightmare of war once and for all. This cannot be achieved by killing, but only by Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Aharon Nahmias (Alignment): What did you say when the settlements in the North were bombed?

Meir Vilner: MK Nahmias, several months ago the representatives of the Northern settlements turned to the government and demanded to keep the cease fire. For ten months, quiet reigned. You turned to the government and cried out—Don't violate the cease fire, let us continue living in peace; and we supported you. This was just. There was a cease fire—the PLO signed it; internationally that was recognized. This should have been kept up. Instead of this, Israel started the barbarous bombings of Lebanon which have caused counteractions.

It is said that the war was opened up by Israel in order to remove the guns to a distance of 40 km. This is an argument for nursery schools! According to your logic, tomorrow, Beirut must be conquered and perhaps also Damascus, and who knows how far your military madness may reach.

Less than one month ago, on May 14, 1982, Yoel Marcus published in "Ha'aretz" the plan of war. This

was before the criminal attempt on the life of the Israeli ambassador in London. He exposed the plan, saying, "The plan is apparently approximately as follows: The army will seize the whole southern half of Lebanon while the Christians will seize the north. The two armies will clean up Beirut, as Israel will already have manned the policing force and the government in the Lebanese capital, and will have found 60 Haddads who will be appointed members of the Lebanese parliament. The heart of this comprehensive plan is the liquidation of the PLO and the expulsion of their members to Syria together with the return of the Syrian army."

Outlining this plan, Marcus adds, "If this is so, the government has gone out of its mind politically. The government must be warned that it risks the fate of the state in a bloody game of poker."

The criminal attempted murder of the Israeli ambassador in London is not the cause of this war, just as the murder in Sarajevo in 1914 was not the cause of the First World War. War is the continuation of politics with other means. Therefore, we must see what is the policy—then we will understand the cause of the war. The policy of this government is a policy of "The Complete Land of Israel"—annexation of the whole Palestinian territory on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. To attain this, a policy of brutal oppression is carried out in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, lands are seized, people are driven out, houses demolished, people are humiliated; the annexation of the whole territory to Israel is prepared—and then the idea of the "Complete Land of Israel" is expanded—the Syrian Golan Heights have already been annexed and now the annexation of territories in Lebanon is prepared by this war that is dividing up Lebanon. Officially or unofficially, this is a policy which will also lead to an attempt at realising the slogan of the "Herut" Party and the Revisionists (precursors of that party): "Both banks of the Jordan are ours." It is already being hinted at that the next war will be with Jordan.

This policy is the cause of the war. The political aims of the war are to liquidate the Palestinian people as a people, to create the basis, together with the sharp oppression in the occupied territories, for the annexation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to Israel. A "final solution" of the Palestinian problem is attempted by military means; the liquidation of the democratic forces in Lebanon and the putting in power of the fascist Falangas led by Bashir Jumayel and the Israeli puppet Sa'ad Haddad; hitting Syria in order to attempt the overthrow of the independent regime there because it does not toe the American line of Camp David.

The governing circles say that they are ready to retreat and turn over the territory to the "Free Lebanese" of Sa'ad Haddad and his ilk. But the meaning of this is Israeli occupation and annexation.

Also in 1967 it was declared that there are no aims of occupation and annexation. But we know the extent of the honesty and truth of these declarations.

One of the results of Camp David is this war. The United States openly supports the invasion and finances it. Everything was agreed upon during the visit of Minister of Defence Sharon to the United States on the eve of the opening of the war. The U.S. declarations of alleged disassociation are nothing more than hypocrisy. This war is also a part of the implementation of the Memorandum of Strategic Understanding with the United States.

On May 26, 1982, ten days before the opening of the war, the Foreign Affairs Commission of the U.S. Senate decided, at the time of the visit of Sharon, to add another 300 million dollars to the military grant to Israel, and, in addition to this, another 125 million dollars for economic assistance. In addition to this, another 75 F-16's will be supplied, costing 2.5 billion dollars. This was agreed with Sharon. This means that money is being given for this war, additional arms are given, and political backing is extended. This is an Israeli-American Goliath war against the little Palestinian David; a war of the many with the most up-to-date weapons against the few defenders.

The timing of the war—for about this war there has been talk for many months now—is connected with the development of the Iraq-Iran war and the U.S. strategic planning in this sphere. But I do not want to go into details about that here.

Not everybody agrees to this war; many oppose it and still more are very confused. Hence the great opposition that preceded the outbreak of the war. I tell the Members of the Knesset: Whoever opposed the war, whoever demands to withdraw the Israeli army immediately from Lebanon, whoever stands for a just Israeli-Palestinian peace, is the true defender of the security of Israel; he is the real defender of the settlements in the North and in the entire country; he is the one who concerns himself with preventing our sons from being victims in vain, sent out by unrestrained adventurists and militarists.

It is good that there is an opposition and it is good that people are demonstrating and that there are many actions by various circles with different ideological outlooks directed against this aggressive war.

Today, I read in the newspaper "Davar," a fragment

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of a letter which David Ben-Gurion wrote to Haim Guri, and I quote, "If Begin will seize power he will enter into political and military adventures which will bring about a disaster onto the people and destroy the state." And Begin has come to power and carries out these political and military adventures.

Prime Minister Menachem Begin: He wrote, "He will seize power." I did not seize it, I was elected.

Meir Vilner: All right, you have seized it in elections; you seized it by demagogy. But your demagogy has also seized them—the leaders of the Alignment, and this is what alarms me. They are the "heirs of Ben-Gurion" and look how they are turning into rhinoceroses, denying all they themselves said only two, three months ago.

There is only one solution—Israeli-Palestinian peace—return to the lines of June 4th, and independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, comprehensive peace with the Arab states, international guarantee for the peace agreements, demilitarized zones and other kinds of security measures to be agreed upon. Only such a comprehensive peace, such a just peace, only this will

give security. All the rest are dangerous adventures.

Historical experience has proved that in Europe, and beyond, where there have been conquerors and aggressive war mongers—all of them were finally defeated and forced to retreat after having brought disaster upon their peoples. Now, at the end of the twentieth century, a war of extermination is carried out against the Palestinian people in Lebanon. This is a war against the true interests of Israel, against the security of the Israeli people, against the prospects of peace. This is a war which still more demoralises Israeli society and still more intensifies the danger of fascism.

We propose no-confidence in the government. Whoever votes today with the government of Begin-Sharon, out of supporting the aims of the "Complete Land of Israel," or because they have turned into rhinoceroses and political cowards, unscrupulous and irresponsible, making hopeless electoral calculations, they will be partners to this aggression, partner to pushing Israel towards the abyss.

I call upon the Members of the Knesset: Be responsible for your voting today!

This is not yet the end of history. □