

THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION AT THE PRESENT
STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT.

(From comrade Meir Vilner's essay "Summaries and Conclusions," in Arakhim, organ of the C.P. of Israel on questions of theory and practice, No.9, July 1970.)

One of the biggest failures of the Israeli rulers, of the Zionist leadership and of American imperialism backing them, is on the question of the Palestinian Arab people.

The Israeli leaders - thus we have warned since the June war - are detached from reality, the international as well as the Mideastern one. They deceive themselves, so we said, when they think the Palestinian Arab people will reconcile itself to the occupation, that "time will do its work". We said that the conquered people, especially under the present regional and international conditions, will not only fail to reconcile itself to the occupation, but that the struggle against the occupation will be intensified and become unbearable for the occupier.

The Palestinian Arab people, whose rights and whose very existence the Israeli leaders wanted to eliminate once and for all by means of the June war, has not only not been wiped off the Mideastern map, but has become a national and political factor of great weight in the region and the international arena, in a measure it had not been previously.

As far back as a year ago some ministers in Israel, such as Israel Galili, dared appear in public and declare with nationalist arrogance that no Palestine Arab people exists. In an atmosphere of unbridled militarist self-confidence, the racist senselessness led many Zionist leaders to positions and statements with which hardly any racialist in Rhodesia, South Africa and other places would compete.

The policy of brutal oppression in the occupied areas, the Zionist policy of denying the rights of the Palestinian Arab people and its very existence, the policy of perpetuation of the occupation and territorial annexations, the sufferings of the refugee masses, driven out from their homeland, their lands and their homes for more than 20 years, their redoubled sufferings during the June 1967 war and after, when many of them became refugees for a second time, the turning of additional hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs into refugees as a result of the June war--all these have intensified and deepened the hostility towards Israel in the Arab world in general, and among the Palestinian Arab people in particular.

In this difficult situation it is hard to exaggerate the great importance of the appearance of anti-imperialist, patriotic forces in Israel, which have stood up against the policy of aggression and territorial expansion of the ruling Zionist pro-imperialist circles, for the recognition of the just national rights of the Palestinian Arab people, including the right of the Arab refugees to choose between return to their homeland or receipt of compensation according to the UNO resolutions.

Our Communist Party has fulfilled a highly important task in this struggle. Thanks to the principled policy and struggle of our Party, and thanks to additional forces of fighters for peace in Israel, which have lately raised their voices against the prevailing aggressive and anti-national policy, no image of identity between the reactionary government ruling Israel and the popular masses in Israel has been created. Thanks to our internationalist and patriotic policy we have found a common language with the Arab Communist parties and with other anti-imperialist forces in the Arab world fighting for peace, in the struggle against the common imperialist enemy, for our and their freedom, against occupation and for a just peace.

At the same time one must not ignore the fact that the aggressive June war, opened by the Israeli government, the occupation and all the acts of oppression of the Palestinian Arab people by the Israeli rulers, have helped to extend extreme positions among certain parts of the Palestinian Arab people and in various circles in the Arab countries.

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Side by side with the correct principled and realistic positions of the Communist parties and many anti-imperialist circles, of President Nassar and the UAR Government and of other Arab states, who accept the Security Resolution of November 1967 and are ready to implement it, we see extreme positions of leaders of the Palestinian resistance movement and of certain Arab governments.

The struggle of the Palestinian Arab people against the occupation and for its national rights has won the growing sympathies of all progressive mankind. At the same time those battle slogans which call in question the right to existence of the State of Israel, evoke reservation and opposition.

After the June war on immense development of the Palestinian factor has begun. Before the June War, the positions and speeches of Ahmed Shukeiri who was then the chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, evoked anger instead of sympathy. With his speeches, in which he preached the liquidation of Israel, he brought immeasurable harm to the just struggle of the Palestinian Arab people for its national rights, and aroused great joy among the imperialists and the Zionist leaders. These understood very well how to use Shukeiri's speeches against the right to existence of the State of Israel for their own purposes, in order to justify

their non-recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian Arab people.

The June war, the occupation, the aggravated refugee problem, the policy of creation of faits accomplis in the occupied areas, coupled with the degradation of the Arab masses of inhabitants--all these have with time led to the development of a mass Palestinian Arab national movement. The Palestinian organisations have assumed a new character. Now they have become a national movement, which expresses the struggles of the Palestinian Arab popular masses against the occupation and for their national rights. Thousands and tens of thousands of Palestinian Arab youth, workers, fallaheen, women and mothers, students and teachers, people belonging to all strata, volunteer and are ready to sacrifice their lives in the struggle against the occupation, for national and human freedom. With many the struggle for national liberation becomes integrated with the struggle for progressive social changes. It is a fact that the peoples of the whole world sympathize with the Palestinian Arab people, its sufferings and its struggle against the occupation and for its legitimate rights.

At the same time criticism is sounded and opposition is expressed on the part of the anti-imperialist forces in many countries against those parts in the program of the Palestinian resistance organizations which deny the fact of existence of an Israeli nation, its rights to self-determination and as a result, the right to existence of the State of Israel as a sovereign state.

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Our Communist Party of Israel, and together with us, the international Communist movement and the majority of anti-imperialist and progressive forces in the world, start from the fundamental assumption that Palestine, whatever the causes and circumstances, has become in the course of its historical development, a bi-national country; at the side of the Palestinian Arab people a Jewish people has developed in the country--a Jewish nation. (One ought not to mix up the notion of a Jewish nation developing in Palestine with the Zionist notion of an extra-territorial, world Jewish nation).

Every nation has the right to self-determination. Under the new conditions which developed in Palestine, in view of its being turned into a bi-national country, the correct and realistic solution of the national question is the realization of the right to self-determination of the two peoples, the Israeli people and the Palestinian Arab people.

The Zionist reactionaries denied from the beginning, and deny to this day, the right to self-determination and even the very existence of the Palestinian Arab people. Already in the 1948 war of independence they worked for preventing the establishment of a Palestinian Arab state and the realization of the right of the Palestinian Arab people to self-determination according to the UN resolution of 1947, and exerted efforts for a maximum expansion of the

territory of the Jewish state and for the removal from their homeland of a maximum of Palestinian Arabs.

A successful struggle against the Zionist aspirations to expansion, and for failing the imperialist designs in our region, can be waged only on the basis of a democratic program, apt to rally all peoples in the anti-imperialist struggle, apt to win the support of the socialist world and the anti-imperialist forces. This has to be a program which is correct in respect of principle, practical and realistic in respect of the balance of forces in the world and in the region.

Our point of departure for every fundamental solution of the Palestinian question, as of any other national question, is the interest of the anti-imperialist struggle, the interest of the independence of the peoples and the interest of international peace and security. The form of solution of a national question is always concrete, according to the time and place.

In the reality of Palestine, where there exist two nations, any solution that takes into consideration the right of self-determination of only one of the two is not correct in respect of principle, nor is it realistic. Any such representation of the solution assists the imperialist forces, which are interested in dividing the peoples in our region in order to rule them. When such a program is brought up by Palestinian factors, it evokes the joy of the imperialists and the Zionist rulers of Israel.

Those paragraphs in the program of Palestinian resistance organizations which deny the right to sovereign existence of the State of Israel, as a consequence of the assumption (which in the historical past was correct, but is no longer valid in the new reality), that no Israeli nation exists at all, to which the right of self-determination could be accorded--those paragraphs are used as a main political weapon by the Israeli rulers and the Zionist leaders, and also by imperialist propaganda. Demagogically they imbue the Israeli youth and public, and also world public opinion with the theory of "there is no option." This theory says that the question is not that of retreat from the occupied zones and of the implementation of the Security Council Resolution, but the very refusal of the Arabs to recognize the right to existence of the State of Israel within any frontiers.

In various circles among the Palestinian resistance organizations the plan for the establishment of a Palestinian, democratic, Jewish-Christian-Moslem state has been discussed. Even if ignoring the religious criterion in this definition, which creates a partition within the Palestinian Arab people itself, the question arises: What is the realism of such a plan? Now the question on the agenda is not whether to establish the State of Israel or not, its existence is a fact, recognized by the United Nations and by the countries of the world, by East and West alike.

If the debate refers to the remoter future, one cannot ignore that there are possibilities in various directions, including the establishment of a

federation of states in our region, a narrow federation which would include the State of Palestine and the State of Israel, or a Jordanian-Palestinian state and the State of Israel, and many more possibilities. But whatever the development might be, it can only be the outcome of the free decision of the peoples, which will draw nearer to each other as a result of social changes inside each one of the states. Federations can be established, but they must not be imposed.

The presentation of a plan of a Palestinian democratic state for all the Arab and Jewish citizens, while abolishing the Israeli sovereign state, as a condition of a peace settlement between the State of Israel and the Arab states and as a condition for the solution of the Palestinian question, is not correct on principle and makes things easy for the common enemies of the Palestinian Arab people and the Israeli people--imperialism and its Zionist henchmen.

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Therefore the question is: what is our attitude to the national question and its solution? Is it a bourgeois-nationalist or a proletarian class point of departure? Do we take into account the general interest of the struggle against imperialism, for national independence and socialism or are we ready to stand against this general interest, against the forces of socialism and progress in the world?

Under the concrete historical conditions, in view of the balance of forces in the world and in the Middle East, that attitude which presents as condition for the solution of the Palestinian problem the calling in question of the very right to existence of the state of Israel as a sovereign state is not correct, is not realistic, and causes harm first of all to the Palestinian Arab people itself.

We, the Israeli Communists, warn day in and day out against the grave consequences for Israel as a result of the aggressive, pro-imperialist and anti-Arab policy of the Zionist rulers. We warn the Israeli people that the rulers of Israel, who are most closely linked with American imperialism, are liable to bring a national disaster upon Israel, that they endanger the future, the very existence of the State of Israel.

But there exists a difference in principle and quality between the disastrous consequences which the prevailing Zionist Israeli policy might bring upon Israel, and between the presentation of non-existence of the State of Israel as a political target by the National Liberation movement of the Palestinian Arab people and the stipulation of basing any settlement on the acceptance of the program of establishment of a Palestinian democratic Jewish-Moslem-Christian state.

This theme has important topical repercussions: with a part of the Palestinian factors the principled position which denies the right of existence of the State of Israel is also connected with their opposition to the Security Council Resolution of November 1967, which demands the Israeli withdrawal from all areas occupied in the June war, a just solution of the question of the Palestinian Arab refugees in accordance with the UNO resolutions, and the recognition of the sovereign existence of all the states in our region, including Israel, within recognized and secure frontiers.

The question arises: from the point of view of the Palestinian Arab people, does the Security Council Resolution solve its national question, does it ensure its rights?

No doubt the Security Council Resolution is a compromise resolution which was accepted unanimously by the great powers and the other members of the Security Council. The Security Council Resolution took into consideration the aspect of principle of the problem, the right of the peoples, as well as the balance of forces in the international arena, when there still exist two world systems, the socialist and the capitalist, and also the balance of forces in the region. And like every compromise, it does not completely solve all the problems which it deals with.

Still, it would be a mistake and a detachment from international and regional reality not to see that the Security Council Resolution is a positive resolution, in respect to peace and security in the Middle East and in the world as well as in respect to ensuring the rights of the peoples, including those of the Palestinian Arab people.

In respect to the Palestinian Arab people, whose struggle is linked with the general anti-imperialist struggle in the region and the world, the implementation of the Security Council Resolution will restore to it its lands, which were conquered by Israel in the June war. It will make it possible to solve the refugee question by giving them the right to choose between return to their homeland and the receipt of compensations - in accordance with the UNO resolutions.

These are very fundamental matters in favor of the Palestinian Arab people. Thus the Security Council resolution in a rather large measure advances the full solution of the Palestinian problem.

The question is: what is the alternative, in the concrete Mideastern and international circumstances? The real alternative is not between the Security Council Resolution and a finer and better solution, but between the all-round implementation of the Security Council Resolution and the status quo--the present situation of Israeli occupation and unbearable conditions of the members of the Palestinian Arab people in refugee camps.

Every Arab factor speaking against the Security Council Resolution deceives himself if he thinks that by that he hits the enemies of the Palestinian Arab people. Objectively, he plays their game, helps their designs to perpetuate

the occupation and to prevent the refugees who wish to do so, from returning to their homeland.

The Security Council Resolution states that after its full implementation all the controversial questions or those which have not been solved, will be solved politically and not by force.

From the point of view of the historical development of our region, the complete solution of the national question will be connected with progressive social developments in the Arab countries and in Israel, which will put the whole complex of relations on an entirely different basis when the points of departure of each side becomes social-class and not only national.

After the implementation of the Security Council Resolution various problems are liable to crop up, such as questions connected with the rights of the Arab population in Israel, whose weight will be augmented by the return of Palestinian Arab refugees. These are problems whose correct solution will depend on the balance between the progressive and reactionary forces within Israel, and also, of course, on the general developments in the region and in the world.

Questions that are liable to arise in the future will have to be solved in the course of the years by political means, according to the rights and interests of the peoples and according to the general interests of the anti-imperialist struggle for peace, the independence of peoples and socialism.

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It is the Zionist circles ruling Israel - and the American, British and West German imperialists backing them - who are responsible for the tragedy of the Palestinian Arab people. It is they who are responsible for the aggressive June war, which brought a further heavy disaster upon the Palestinian Arab people as well as disaster upon the neighbouring Arab states and the Israeli people itself.

The Zionist circles which rule Israel and their imperialist godfathers are not only the enemies of the Arab peoples; they are also the enemies of the Israeli people. They push it to an abyss and are liable to bring on it a national disaster.

For the attainment of their targets the ruling Zionist circles are prepared to bring about such an escalation of the war in the Middle East as will involve the great powers in a confrontation and will endanger world peace. Therefore the anger increases among the peoples against the aggressive and annexationist Israeli government and there is a growing demand on the part of the peoples of the entire world for the withdrawal of Israel from all the

occupied territories and for the implementation of the Security Council Resolution, in all its parts. The Israeli rulers are more and more isolated in the international arena.

Inside Israel itself the opposition to the governmental policy is seriously increasing, as well as the demand for withdrawal from the occupied areas within the framework of implementing the Security Council Resolution. The rulers of Israel, whose policy is increasingly failing abroad and at home, are grasping at the extreme speeches and positions of certain Palestinian factors, as a drowning man grasps at a straw, in order to evade withdrawal from the occupied territories and to evade recognizing the rights of the Arab refugees, to which the Security Council Resolution obliges them.

When we, Israeli Communists, discuss this problem, we have a special right to do so. At all times have we fought against the Zionist anti-Arab, pro-imperialist policy, always have we struggled for Israel's recognizing the national rights of the Palestinian Arab people, always have we accused the Israeli rulers and their imperialist godfathers of responsibility for the disasters befalling the Palestinian Arab people.

But one must not ignore the fact that historical experience has taught that errors and incorrect and extreme positions of the leadership of the Palestinian Arab people have assisted the Zionist leaders and the imperialists to carry out their plans against the Palestinian Arab people.

We look upon the Palestinian Arab people as a brother and friend. No force and no terror and intimidation from the side of the reaction ruling Israel will deter us from considering the struggle of the Palestinian Arab people as an anti-imperialist struggle, and the Palestinian Arab national movement as an anti-imperialist national movement. We are in solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian Arab people against the occupation and for its legitimate and just national rights.

Therefore, as friends we say: any plan for a solution of the crisis in our region which includes the denial of the sovereign existence of the State of Israel, is not correct; it is not just and not realistic. The interests of the Palestinian Arab people and of the Israeli people alike, the supreme interests of the anti-imperialist struggle, the liberty of the peoples, of peace and social progress demand today the rallying of the peoples in our region in a joint struggle for the implementation of the Security Council Resolution of November 1967. The implementation of the resolution will deal a serious blow at the American imperialists and its Zionist stooges, will solve fundamental questions of the Palestinian Arab people and will free the neighbouring Arab countries from occupation, will bring peace and security to all the Arab peoples and to the Israeli people, will create better conditions for social changes in the countries of the region.