

A Discussion of the Recent Convention of the ZOA—

The New Line of the American Zionists

The following article is from The Jewish Newsletter, July 14 issue, a weekly review published by William Zukerman. The views expressed are Mr. Zukerman's, of course, and are presented here for their interest toward a discussion of what has been happening to Zionist ideology since the birth of Israel.

We are planning to present further discussion material on the nature of Zionism and Israeli nationalism today, as well as on the "Jewish Question" more broadly—soon, we hope. As always, the columns of LA are open to viewpoints on this question from our readers, including comment on Mr. Zukerman's article. We look forward to the clarification of socialist thinking on this field as a result of such a discussion.—Ed.

By WILLIAM ZUKERMAN

It is not yet widely recognized that the last Zionist convention in Chicago was a landmark in American Zionist history and that it has ushered in a theory of Zionism, or at least an interpretation of it, which contradicts the one which dominated the American Zionist movement for two decades. Superficially the convention dealt mostly with the so-called "autonomy" question, or the independence of the Zionist Organization of America. But behind that question, another one which goes deeper to the heart of the Zionist theory, occupied the minds of the delegates.

Indeed, the question of independence of the ZOA and the consequent clash between the Israeli and American Zionist leaders, was but one aspect of the larger problem. This was: a new conviction that American Zionism can no longer be the same as in Europe and in Israel; that conditions of the Jews in America are different from those in other countries and therefore Zionist theory cannot be applied in the same manner to American Jews as to Jews in Europe and in Israel.

In Europe, Zionism has always been a movement to transplant the Jews themselves from their places of persecution and homelessness to Israel. In America, Zionism has been a movement to help other Jews to go to Israel. Stated differently, European Zionism has been nationalistic; American Zionism, philanthropic. For a time when Zionism was but a theory, the distinction between the two brands could be overlooked or glossed over. But now that Israel has been established, the difference between the two has become so sharp that they cannot parade as one any longer.

Zionism as Philanthropy

All this is, of course, not new. The distinction between Zionism and nationalism has been debated in Europe and in this country among nationalists and anti-nationalists for years. The new development now is that at the ZOA convention in Chicago, American Zionists have taken a new stand on the question which is both radical and unique and which will affect the Zionist movement for years to come.

The American Zionist movement began fifty years ago as an avowed philanthropic movement intended to help Jews of Czaristic Russia leave their homes and settle in Zion. That phase of the American Zionist movement continued approximately until after the end of the first World War. During the tragic years which followed, with the rise of Polish and Nazi anti-Semitism, American Zionism became more and more Europeanized and nationalistic, partly because of the psychological atmosphere created by

Nazism, and partly by the impact of the large masses of Jewish immigrants who came to this country from Central and East European countries. Shortly before and during the second World War, it looked as if American Zionism had almost blended with its European counterpart and both had become one united Jewish nationalistic movement.

It was this intensified nationalism, known in America as "militant" Zionism that called forth the first organized reaction in the United States against Jewish nationalism in the form of the American Council for Judaism (a movement, incidentally, which had its counterpart in Europe in the Jewish Labor Bund and other anti-nationalist groups many decades before the Council was born in the U. S.). It is important to add that almost all Jewish anti-nationalistic parties were never opposed to philanthropic Zionism—they fought only the political and nationalistic aspects of Zionism.

Letdown

But so intense was Jewish nationalism in this country before and during the war that even such partial opposition was met with hatred and passion that far transcended political partisanship and became almost pathological. The anti-nationalists, especially of the Council for Judaism, were the enemies of the Jewish people, traitors, anti-Semites, and they were hated with the same hatred as were the Nazis.

This lasted until the establishment of the state of Israel, when a new great "let-down," as it was called, set into the ranks of the American Zionists. The "let-down" was not with regard to

Israel, or aid to it. On the contrary, the interest in Israel has probably increased with the new feeling of collective pride which the emergence of the state called forth.

The decline was in nationalistic feeling and this for a very understandable reason, for the establishment of the state of Israel has confronted American Zionists with a concrete and painful dilemma:—If they were, as they said, nationalists, then they had no other recourse than to settle in Israel, or at least to start packing. For Jewish nationalism has always meant that Israel is the home of all Jews and that no Jew can live fully and happily except in Israel. American anti-nationalist Jews, or even non-nationalists, could be excused for remaining in the United States, but no self-respecting Zionist, if he adhered to the nationalistic interpretation, could remain here and keep his self-respect.

Ingathering

This was the deeper reason why American Zionists began to leave the Zionist Organization in the thousands. It is not pleasant to be aware constantly that one's action contradicts one's words, and that one acts conspicuously the part of hypocrite. This moral discrepancy of the ordinary Zionist could be done away with only by leaving the United States and settling in Israel (which a very few Zionists did); or by changing the interpretation of the Zionist theory.

Adding to the complication, the Israelis began to exacerbate the painful dilemma by reminding the American Zionists of their numerous nationalistic promises and to demand their fulfillment. Ben Gurion, Dobkin, Lurie, Golde

Meyerson, Greenbaum and the other leaders of Israel have always remained consistent nationalists. They sincerely believed their own propaganda that all Jews outside Israel are in "exile" and have to be "redeemed" through a process of "ingathering" to the Jewish state and that no Zionist with a feeling of dignity can remain in the diaspora now that Israel is established as a state. They thus began to send their calls to American Zionists to honor their nationalistic promises and to come to Israel or at least to send their children.

New View

American Zionists found themselves in the position of men who had issued promissory notes and could not meet them on demand. This, not the question of autonomy or leadership, is the real issue behind the clash between Israeli and American leaders.

It is a clash between a theory which grew up in one part of the world (Europe and Israel) and conditions of life which prevailed in another part of the world (the United States and other overseas countries). In such a clash, reality usually takes the upper hand and theory adjusts itself to life. This is what happened at the Zionist convention in Chicago.

This was well illustrated in the speeches of Drs. Silver, Neumann, Irving Miller and other more liberal American Zionists. But nowhere was it stated more strikingly than in an article by a conservative Zionist of the nationalist type who until recently had led the nationalistic section of the Zionist movement. Dr. S. Margoshes, who usually voices the official policy of the ZOA, stated in the *Tog* on the day of the opening

of the convention (June 30):

"It is no longer possible to deny that the prevalent opinion in Israel is that the historic process of the Ingathering of Exiles has placed the State of Israel in a position in which it must preside over the liquidation of the whole of the diaspora. It is no longer a question of the Jewish State receiving those who seek its shores out of necessity or choice. The version that is being entertained now is of absorbing all the Jews of the world. Thus, many in Israel expect not only a mass-migration, composed of the remnants of the Jewish people in European lands and Arabic countries, but also of the bulk of American Jewry. To them it seems not only undesirable but inconceivable that the vast majority of the five million Jews should remain in the United States. The Zionist Organization of America must take a definite stand against this view that would equate the Jewish State with the whole of the Jewish people."

These words are significant not because they are new or proclaim a truth unknown before. They have been repeated again and again by anti-nationalists of all parties: by Bundists, Volkists, Freelanders in Europe, and in this country by the American Council for Judaism. What is new and almost revolutionary is that an official spokesman of the ZOA now uses the same language and embraces the same theory.

It is a public acknowledgment of the failure of nationalistic Zionism in America. It marks a retreat from a position held by American Zionists for at least ten years. It is a definite victory for the Jewish anti-nationalist forces in America and a vindication of the struggle of many years. . . .

SWP Leader for Stalinists in Korean War

The leader of the Socialist Workers Party (official Trotskyist group), James P. Cannon, last week came out in complete support of the Stalinist side of the Korean war. This was announced in the July 31 issue of The Militant (SWP weekly) in the form of "A Letter to the President and Members of the Congress" by Cannon.

The letter, which is evidently written as a statement of position on the war, gives a virtual 100 per cent whitewash to the Stalinist invasion. The only derogatory remark directed against the Russian Stalinists is the passing sentence: "It is true that the-Kremlin seeks to take advantage of this struggle for its own reactionary ends and would sell it tomorrow if it could get another deal with Washington. But..." (This group plugs the fanciful proposition that Stalin's main aim in life is to make compromise "deals" with the West rather than come into conflict with it.)

The rest of the letter is an attack on American imperialism ALONE, much of what it says in that direction being true. In this respect it is similar to all the

propaganda on the war of the Stalinists, who can also speak part of the truth as long as it is directed against only one side in this two-sided imperialist war.

The Korean Stalinists do not exist, as far as Cannon's declaration is concerned. North Korea is no longer a "puppet state," as it was for The Militant of July 3 and July 10. There was no invasion, but rather the outbreak of a Korean "revolution," etc. Cannon concludes: "The right in this struggle is all on the side of the Korean people," by which he means the North Korean puppet state of the Kremlin.

There is, it is clear, nothing in common between the political position taken here and the Independent Socialist "Third Camp" view of political opposition to both sides in this imperialist war.

Cannon's line is, rather, identical with that of the CP, and also with that of the Fourth International resolution which we quoted and discussed two weeks ago in LABOR ACTION. There has been, then, a marked change from the view of the war taken by Cannon's Militant in this first two issues after the start of hostilities as compared with Cannon's declaration now. Along with its Stalinization in so many other respects, the SWP has also adopted the Stalinist practice of switching its line from one issue to another without even a nod to the old one.

Following the July 3 and 10 issues of The Militant, LABOR ACTION pointed out why the basic politics of the SWP would force it to support the Stalinist war. They have now done this up to the hilt. That their new line is consistent with their basic Stalinized politics is clear. That it is in crying contradiction with their first reaction to the war is equally clear from the accompanying Zig-Zag box—the same kind of box we have so often had to run with regard to CP switches.

ZIG—

The Militant
July 3-10

• "The contention that either side is concerned with the self-determination of Korea is as foul a lie as Hitler ever concocted." (July 3)

• "This series of events is taking place within the broader framework of the struggle for world domination which is the essence of the cold war and of the current new phase of developments." (July 3)

• "The 30 million inhabitants of both North and South Korea have had no say whatever, especially since their 'liberation.'" (July 3)

• "It is generally taken for granted that Korea most likely represents a testing ground rather than a direct prelude to a world war. But even as a testing ground, the war in Korea must offer some very serious objectives to the Kremlin, to involve it in such a tremendous risk." (July 10)

• "Stalin and his regime bear direct responsibility for the tragic plight in which the Korean people now find themselves." (July 3)

ZAG

James P. Cannon,
Militant, July 31

• "The explosion in Korea on June 25, as events have proved, expressed the profound desire of the Koreans themselves to unify their country, to rid themselves of foreign domination and to win their complete national independence."

• "It [the Korean struggle] is part of the mighty uprising of the hundreds of millions of colonial people throughout Asia against Western imperialism. This is the real truth, the real issue."

• "It is true that the Kremlin seeks to take advantage of this struggle for its own reactionary ends. . . . But the struggle itself has the overwhelming and wholehearted support of the Korean people."

• "This is more than a fight for unification and national liberation. It is a civil war."

• "Whatever the wishes of the Kremlin, a class war has been unfolding in Korea. The North Korean regime, desiring to mobilize popular support, has decreed land reforms and taken nationalization measures in the territories it has won. The establishment of people's committees has been reported. These reforms, these promises of a better economic and social order have attracted the peasants and workers."

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