

DR. SNEH AND THE ISRAEL CP

An interview with the brilliant Israeli leader on the occasion of his joining the Communist Party of Israel together with 1,000 Left Socialists

By Avrom Yanofsky

A significant event occurred in Israel in November 1954, when 1,000 members of the Left Socialist Party, led by Dr. Moshe Sneh, Adolph Berman and others, dissolved their party and joined the Communist Party of Israel. Below are two accounts, reprinted here from the Canadian Jewish Weekly of December 2 and November 18, 1954, respectively, which show the background of this event.—Eds.

I ARRIVED in Israel precisely at the historical moment. Led by Dr. Moishe Sneh and Adolph Berman, the 1,000 members of the Israeli Left Socialists early in November 1954, entered the ranks of the Communist Party of that country.

The youth of the Left-Socialist movement (whose organization was named after the late leader of the *Palmach*, M. Shadde) in their turn joined the ranks of the Young Communist League of Israel.

This event shook the country, with the main clamor on the part of the press centering around the person of Dr. Sneh. "Outrageous," "How could he?" were some of the expressions being used by Zionist newspapers from the extreme right to the so-called "left."

"Sneh, the former Zionist; Sneh a former leader of the *Haganah*; this same Sneh has become a traitor to the Jewish people and a betrayer of Israel," they cried. A flood of articles, both polemical and satirical, appeared; a wave of caricatures against him were printed.

I took a personal interest in the "Affair Snch." I heard many heated discussions on the matter, particularly in the Kibbutz "Degania B," where I went as a guest of my relatives in Israel.

Later in Jerusalem I attended a session of Knesset (Parliament). Following a speech by the Arab Communist Deputy Emil Habbibi (it was his maiden speech in Hebrew and the feat won him congratulations from Knesset Speaker Shprintzak). I sent a note to Deputy Meir Vilner, a noted leader of the Israel Communist Party. I knew the latter personally from his visit to Canada several years ago, and I asked him to introduce me to Dr. Sneh to interview him. It was speedily arranged.

Knowing that Dr. Sneh was extremely busy, I decided to put only one question before him. Of course he made it clear to me right from the start that the main question was not his personal entry into the Communist Party, but

the fact that the entire Left Socialist Party had taken that step. I made the point, however, that since the reactionary Jewish press not only in Israel but elsewhere was making a great to-do about Sneh's abandonment of Zionism and was interpreting it as a betrayal of Israel and the Jewish people, it was important to have a personal statement from him on the question of Zionism, communism, Israel and the Jewish people.

Dr. Sneh's Development

Accordingly, I asked him the following: "Knowing that your searching for an answer to the sufferings of the Jewish people led you first of all to Zionism, is this the same motive which now leads you into the ranks of the Communist Party?" Dr. Sneh, a solidly built man with broad shoulders, a quick-witted and intelligent look in his eyes, smiles at my question and gives me the following statement:

"I was brought up in the spirit of Zionism from my very childhood. My middle class background, on the one hand, and the widespread anti-Semitism existing in pre-war Poland on the other, both steered me towards the path of Zionism, just as these did many another Jewish young person in that country. I threw myself into Zionist activities with the fullest conviction that herein lay the solution to the problems of the Jewish people. This view I believed in and held until the outbreak of the Second World War. I have lived in Israel since 1940. In the years between 1940-1946, I became the chief of the *Haganah* (Israel's home defense army). In the years between 1945-1947 I led the resistance against the British occupation.

"Two great upheavals in the life of the Jewish people led me to feel a boundless friendship towards the Soviet Union. These were the USSR's work in saving Jewish people from the Nazi extermination in Europe and her efforts on behalf of our country's struggle for independence. These two great historical facts made it clear to me that the main enemy of all mankind, as well as of the Jewish people, is imperialism; conversely, the friend of all mankind, our own people included, is the Soviet Union.

"In the ranks of Mapam (so-called 'left wing' of the Zionist movement) I and the other comrades campaigned for a consistent anti-imperialist policy as well as for a united front with the Israel Communist Party.

"Our wing of Mapam—the left wing—fought against the right-centrist elements in the leadership of that party who pushed aside our anti-imperialist approach and who spread the ideology of collaboration between all classes and all parties for the goal of "Kibbutz Galiot" (Ingathering of the Exiles).

The Split From Mapam

Dr. Sneh continued: "In the course of two years joint action with the CPI, a feeling of proletarian brotherhood and a comradeship forged in battle developed between our two parties. At the same time, the past two years in the Left Socialist Party have been devoted to a deepening of our understanding of Marxist-Leninist theory. After two years of united front activity, the Central Committee of the Left Socialist Party declared that there were no longer any differences between us and the CPI and that the only consequent conclusion must be our joining of the Communist Party of Israel.

"The theoretical base for this step was laid in a special book, *Conclusions on the National Question in the Light of Marxism-Leninism*, which I wrote and which received the full endorsement of our Central Committee as well as of the Central Committee of the CPI."

I interrupt Dr. Sneh and ask: "*How do you view this transition from Zionism to Communism?*"

He replies: "Objectively it must be seen as an expression of a social and political process, which is only beginning in our country. The content, the essence of this process is the conflict between the actual interests of the Israeli working folk and the nationalist ideology of the labor Zionist parties (Mapai, Mapam).

"This conflict grows ever sharper and leads to constant splits in the ranks of the Zionist Socialist parties. The Left Socialist Party is only the first battalion of Zionists to have freed themselves from the chains of this ideology and to have joined the ranks of the party of the Israeli working class—the Communist Party.

"Not Zionism but Communism can assure a happy future for the Jewish people. The Jewish masses the world over will not be helped in solving their basic problems through the Zionist Utopia. Only the fight for peace, democracy and socialism can guarantee the security, equality, and free development of the Jewish communities in every land.

"In Israel itself, the liberation of our country from the yoke of foreign capital, its deliverance from serious economic crisis and the peaceful solution of the Israel-Arab problem will only be achieved by the creation of a people's democratic government. Towards this end the Communist Party is working steadfastly and heroically.

"Viewed in this light, Communism is the highest expression of patriotism, an expression of true devotion to the interests of the Jewish people in all countries."

With this Dr. Sneh rose and explained that he must return to the Knesset.