

INTERVIEW WITH MEIR VILNER — GENERAL SECRETARY, CC CP OF ISRAEL

Where is Israel, where are the Israelis four years after the "six-day" war, the occupation of Arab territory and the refusal to negotiate?

The following is an interview with Meir Vilner, General Secretary CC CP of Israel who headed his Party's delegation to the 24th CPSU Congress in Moscow. Comrade Vilner was interviewed by a special correspondent of *Humanite*.

Q.—The Congress of the Labor Party, of which Golda Meir is one of the prominent figures, has again declared its intention of annexing large areas of Arab territory. What is the significance of this stubborn position of annexation by the Israeli rulers at a time when great efforts are being made, especially by Egypt, in order to reach a peaceful solution in the Middle East?

A.—Golda Meir's Labor Party Congress, the speeches at the Congress and last week's resolution show that the Israeli rulers have learned nothing from the past. They demand radical boundary changes. Golda Meir's speech shows that the extremist forces have the upper hand. This does not mean, however, that there do not exist more realistic tendencies in the country.

Q.—How can such a position be explained?

A.—A small country like Israel cannot afford to ignore international opinion and Security Council and UN resolutions. Such positions can be maintained only with help from the outside. In this case, support by North American imperialism.

The United States is hampering a political solution in the Middle East. With the aid of Israeli occupation it wants to force the Arab states to make political concessions and prove to them that the only way out is a rapprochement with the United States. That is why the United States continues supporting Israel's extremist positions in spite of certain tactical differences.

Q.—Is this realistic?

A.—We believe that the calculations of Washington and the Israeli government are not realistic. Their evaluation of the new balance of world forces is incorrect. In the Middle East they underestimate the fact that Egypt and Syria have created anti-imperialist regimes and established strong, friendly ties with the USSR and that the internal progressive reforms there are rooted deeply among the people.

Besides, these calculations do not take account of the change in the sentiments of Israeli society.

Q.—What is the nature of this change in sentiments in Israeli society?

A.—The population is gradually changing its appraisal of the situation. The people are no longer prepared to take part in a new war. There are several reasons for this:

1. Many have come to see that an annexationist policy with American support cannot lead anywhere. The events in Indochina have shown that the United States is not invulnerable.

2. The latest statement by the Egyptian government has made a big impression in our country. Egypt has officially declared its readiness to sign a peace treaty with the state of Israel, recognizing its sovereignty and guaranteeing freedom of navigation in the Suez canal and the Strait of Tiran.

People are coming to realize that there exists a realistic possibility of achieving a political solution and ending this hopeless war.

3. The war and the continued occupation of Arab territory are having an increasingly adverse effect on the country's economic and social life.

Q.—What is the cause of the growing social struggle in Israel?

A.—Prices and taxes keep climbing. In 1970 real wages for many working people, and in some cases the nominal wage, dropped. The compulsory defense loan is also a burden. Intellectuals and workers alike have to contend with the consequences of the government's expansionist policy.

In 1970 there were twice as many people out on strike as in 1969 and there is a powerful movement among dockers, power plant employees, ground crews in civil aviation and even among pilots. For seven weeks teachers in secondary schools were out on strike and hospital personnel, too, was involved in a prolonged struggle.

Taking into account the disaffection of public opinion, polls among the youth and even soldiers, the government is trying to find a remedy in anti-Sovietism. It has launched a campaign of unprecedented ferocity.

Q.—What is the purpose of this anti-Soviet campaign?

A.—The main reason is that the USSR advocates peace without annexation while the Israeli rulers prefer annexation without peace.

Those people who were saved by the Soviet Union during the Second World War finally get the impression that Jews were exterminated not by the Nazis but by Soviets. We are fighting against this immoral campaign.

Besides, anti-Sovietism helps build up American-type fascist groups. We have seen groups of students arriving here from the United States, wearing uniforms of the fascist Jewish Defense

League. The fascist Beitar organization recently attacked our Party premises in Tel-Aviv.

Q.—In these conditions, what is the policy of the Israeli CP?

A.—Our policy is aimed at establishing the widest possible front of groups and individuals advocating strict observance of the Security Council resolution, peace without annexation, irrespective of their political views and appraisal of the "six-day" war.

Our Party is no longer isolated as it was in 1967 when it was the sole political force opposing the war and occupation. Today groups and individuals cooperate with our Party, striving to reach the goals just mentioned. At a meeting on March 29 in the Journalists' House in Tel-Aviv, for instance, people of different backgrounds took the floor, including a rabbi, trade union functionaries and a journalist from the newspaper *Haaretz*.

This is a significant event, if we recall that there was a time when no one had any desire for discussions with the Communists.

We are struggling against anti-Sovietism, against any curtailment of freedom, especially freedom for Communists. Together with others we are fighting against any encroachments on democratic rights, against arrests, torture and destruction in the occupied areas.

In conclusion I should like to stress that the policy followed by the Israeli rulers rests only on the armed forces of American imperialism. This is very dangerous, especially for the state and the people of Israel.

There are people abroad and unfortunately also in France, possibly honest people, who want security for Israel, but at the same time back the policy of the Israeli government. As Israeli patriots, we say to them that their position is insolubly contradictory. Those who wish to see Israel existing in conditions of security and peace, supporting friendly relations with its Arab neighbors, must oppose the Israeli rulers' annexationist claims, come out against the refusal to recognize the rights of the people of Palestine and against subordination to American imperialism. This is the only way to defend the true interests of the Israeli people.
