

**THE MIKUNIS-SNEH GROUP: A PICTURE OF  
POLITICAL DEGENERATION.**

By: Hyman Lumer

In 1965 the Communist Party of Israel split into two groups, one headed by Meir Vilner and Tawfig Toubi, the other by Shmuel Mikunis and Moshe Sneh. Each called itself the Communist Party of Israel. At that time other parties, including the CPUSA, took the position of calling for reunification and of extending recognition to neither group as the Communist Party of Israel.

Yet it was clear even then that the group headed by Mikunis and Sneh had already moved far in the direction of Jewish nationalism and Zionism. Increasingly it had centered its attack on "Arab chauvinism" rather than on the aggressive, pro-imperialist policies of Israel's ruling circles. And it had begun to align itself with Eshkol as against Ben Gurion, under the illusion that the former represented a turn to a more enlightened course.

In 1967 this opportunist, bourgeois-nationalist trend culminated in joining the ranks of those who portrayed the Israeli ruling-class aggression as a war of self-defense against an imminent threat of annihilation. With this act the process of political deterioration became very rapid.

Since war, in the famous words of Clausewitz, is a continuation of policy by violent means, to justify the war it became necessary to justify the policies of the Israeli government which preceded it. Hence the Mikunis-Sneh group has progressively abandoned whatever Marxist-Leninist position it once held. Today its degeneration is complete.

Few in Israel any longer regard this group as a Communist party or even as part of the Left. An article in the Jewish Digest of January 1969 (Israel Kollar, "Israel's Political Parties and the Occupied Areas"), after describing the position of Rakah (the Communist Party of Israel, led by Vilner and Taubi), goes on to say:

"To the right of this group is an assortment of Israelis now concentrated in four parties, the Communist Party (the Mikunis-Sneh group-H.L.), the United Labor Party, the Israel Labor Party, and the Independent Liberals, who, in reality, constitute one political outlook with minor and infrequent deviations." (Emphasis added.)

On my recent trip to Israel I spoke to a number of leading figures in the peace movement. Several of them told me (and without my asking) that they did not consider the Mikunis-Sneh group as part of the opposition to government policy, let alone part of the Left.

Thus, the well-known journalist Amos Kenan characterized it as "the Left wing of the Labor Party"--the party of Golda Meir. For the past year or more, he said, it had supported the government positions and hence could not be considered part of the opposition.

Ya'akov Riftin, head of the Left Union of Zionist Socialists, a group which has split off from Mapam, said: "Sneh has gone farther than the Mapam leaders. He has moved like an express train, with no stops. He generally supports government policy. Sneh is no Communist." The comments of others were similar.

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The false differentiation between Ben Gurion and Eshkol has now developed into an equally false differentiation between the leaders of Gahal and Dayan as the "hawks" and Meir, Eban and their supporters as the "doves." On these grounds the attack is centered on the former and the latter are supported, overlooking the fact that despite their differences all of them are adherents of a basic policy of aggression and expansion.

This position was dramatically demonstrated earlier this year when the vote on a motion of no confidence in the government was taken in the Knesset at the time of the Goldmann affair. As expected, the Communist and "New Force" (Ha'olam Hazeq group) deputies voted for the motion and others solidly against it--with one exception, Sneh, the one deputy of the Mikunis-Sneh group, abstained.

Of this action an article in Ha'olam Hazeq said: "Sneh's abstention from voting non-confidence in the government--and that on the occasion of such a clear issue as Goldmann's peace mission--is indubitably a further great leap in the turncoat career of the 61-year old leader. "It practically withdraws the Mikunis-Sneh group from the opposition," the article added.

Sneh also attacked Goldmann sharply, as did Eban and others in the government.

The approach of the Mikunis-Sneh group to the U.N. Security Council resolution is essentially that of the government. It is viewed not as a document whose basic provisions are to be accepted in advance by both sides as the basis for negotiations, but rather as one to be accepted only "in principle", with the meaning of its provisions to be then debated in negotiations. Thus, a communique' of the Political Bureau issued in June of this year calls for "reaffirming the acceptance of the Security Council resolution of November 22,

1967, including all its provisions, their agreed interpretation to be determined in negotiations between the parties through the U.N.O. Emissary."

The position on withdrawal from the occupied territories is also substantially that of the government. In a Knesset speech last May, Sneh declared: "We must say immediately: we shall withdraw only to mutually agreed borders of peace."

Golda Meir, at the time of her visit to the United States, stated that Israel would withdraw only to secure and defensible borders. Implied in both statements is a rejection of the resolution's declaration of the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war" and the intention of bargaining over how much of the conquered territories would be returned. Indeed, Sneh has maintained that acquisition of territory by war, when necessitated on grounds of security, is not annexation. But this is tantamount to a rejection of the resolution itself, and this rejection the Mikunis-Sneh group shares with the Meir regime.

The Mikunis-Sneh group has gone over to Zionism, posing as the advocate of a "modernized" Zionism. The essence of its position is described in an article in Ha'aretz (September 5, 1968), based on an interview with Sneh, as follows:

"M. Sneh's party advocates Jewish emigration to Israel as an uninterrupted process which will fortify the Jewish nation in Israel and will strengthen its ties with the Jewish communities in the diaspora, because it supposes there is a possibility of existence and development of Jewish minorities in democratic regimes in the capitalist world as well as in the reformed socialist world.

"M. Sneh's party feels that the world Zionist Organization is undergoing an incurable crisis. At the same time, Sneh advocates a democratic world Jewish organization for the realization of the Jewish people's attachment to the State of Israel as well as for defense of the rights of the Jews in the diaspora and also for the spreading of Jewish culture and Jewish education."

Such an organization would be formed by a merger of the World Zionist Organization and the World Jewish Congress, according to Sneh. This position, which resembles that of certain Zionist elements in this country, is a basic departure from Marxism-Leninism. And it betrays its anti-Sovietism in the formulation "reformed Socialist world", that is, one that is cleansed of its alleged "anti-Semitism."

Anti-Sovietism has become the hallmark of this group as it has of all such renegade groups. Mikunis, Sneh and Company have become fully a part of the slanderous campaign against the Soviet Union based on fraudulent allegations of persecution of Soviet Jews. When a group of prominent Soviet Jewish personalities held a press conference to protest these slanders as well as the barbarities being committed in the occupied territories, this group adopted a vicious resolution condemning the Soviet Union for "using Soviet Jews to promote the vilification of Israel. Thus it aligned itself fully with the anti-Soviet elements in Israel and elsewhere.

Sneh regards the Soviet Union as a "dictatorship of the bureaucratic apparatus." In an interview with Ha'olam Haze'h (October 9, 1968), he said that the balance of truth with regard to the Soviet Union is "that socialism has not yet been realized in the Soviet Union or any other country belonging to the Socialist camp."

The USSR is also accused of pursuing imperialist aims along with the United States, and of using "Arab-Chauvinism" as its instrument for this purpose in the Middle East. In the discussion preceding the group's last convention, S. Mikunis wrote that "the Soviet Union built its perspective of influence in the Middle East upon adjustment to the chauvinist anti-Israel frame-of-mind of the Arab countries' rulers."

It is the Soviet Union which is regarded as the source of the danger of war in the Middle East. A resolution adopted by the Central Committee in June states that the CC "appeals to the Communist and Worker's Parties, to the forces of peace in all countries, to exert their full influence to prevent Soviet intervention in the Middle East conflict." The resolution goes on to assert that Israel can be expected to do everything possible to prevent a clash; if one occurs, it will be the Soviet Union's doing.

More, the Soviet Union is alleged to be involved with U.S. imperialism in a plot to divide the world up between them. Sneh, in a Knesset speech last May, expresses this most brazenly. He said that "the relations between the United States and the Soviet Union are at present of a complex nature; they are rivals, competitors, clashing one with another--but at the same time they are also talking one with another, dividing up assets and coming to terms one with the other, and discussing the establishment of a cartel between both for the purpose of world domination..."

Thus does this renegade grouping join in the Trotskyite and Maoist distortions and vilifications of the Soviet Union. And this in addition to becoming part of the current campaign of anti-Soviet slander emanating from the Israeli ruling circles and the U.S. State Department, and vigorously pursued by Zionist organizations everywhere.

Quite naturally, the spokesmen of the Mikunis-Sneh group have had the bourgeois communications media fully opened up to them. They are published freely in the bourgeois press, and Sneh writes frequently for Yediot Aharonot, one of the most reactionary newspapers in the country.

They will earn these privileges by the services they perform. For example, an article in Ma'ariv (August 10, 1970) by Yehuda Lahav, a writer for the Mikunis-Sneh newspaper Kol Haa'm, makes a vicious attack on the Communist Party of the United States. He insinuates that the Party's policy on the Middle East and on the Jewish question generally was dictated by the CPSU, and in return for this alleged subservience the CPSU provided the necessary funds for re-establishing a daily newspaper. This is not the only example of such slander, but it suffices to show the depths to which these people have sunk.

On the other hand, as an organized force this group is becoming more and more inconsequential. It organizes no demonstrations, public meetings or other mass actions of its own, and plays little role in the popular struggles of today. Its youth organization has disintegrated. Its newspaper has been reduced from a daily to a weekly. Its vote in elections to the Knesset, Histadrut and other bodies has declined. Many members and leaders have left its ranks, including some members of its Political Bureau, and its membership is dropping.

A good part of those who have left have entered the Communist Party of Vilner and Toubi. This party, which took a principled, Marxist-Leninist stand against the war and fought courageously for its position under conditions of isolation and severe persecution, has grown in numbers and influence. And within the world Communist movement it has won virtually universal acclaim for its heroism and recognition as the real Communist Party of Israel. On the other hand, the Mikunis-Sneh group, which has long forfeited any right to the name "Communist," has been dropped from the ranks of the world Communist movement--and properly so.

All this prompts certain questions: what is one to say of those in progressive Jewish circles in the United States who continue to accept this decadent grouping as "the Communist Party of Israel?" What is one to say of those who publish and circulate its writings here and who parrot its anti-Marxist ideas as "Marxism"? And what is one to say of those who speak of "two Communist parties" in Israel as a device for legitimizing this group of renegades?

The answer seems clear.

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