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CRITIQUE OF UNITED WORKERS PARTY PLATFORM

By Esther Valenska

In April we published the platform of the newly-created United Workers Party of Palestine, formed by the unification of the two left-wing Zionist parties, Hashomer Hatzair and Achduth Avodah. The Communist Party of Palestine has appealed to this group for united progressive action and the criticism below must be viewed in the light of this plea for a united front. The following critique by one of the secretaries of the Communist Party of Palestine appeared originally in Hebrew in Kol Haam, communist daily of Tel Aviv, on January 23, 1948.—Editors.

THE fact that two opposition workers' parties within the Histadruth close ranks and form a single party is without doubt an event of great significance in the history of the workers' movement and the Yishuv. We should like to discuss the unification platform of the new party and its ideological bases.

The platform affirms that "the party will fight for real independence of the state and against all political, military or economic dependence on the forces of imperialism." This position represents a great advance, as compared with past tendencies to subordination to the colonial government. However, a general statement is not enough. It is necessary to define the term independence in clear, unmistakable terms. An uncompromising demand for the removal of the British military and administration and of military bases and the rejection of American imperialist penetration is necessary. Furthermore, real independence means outright opposition to the Marshall Plan and to foreign intervention in the internal affairs of the Jewish state under the pretext of "economic aid."

The real question, therefore, is:

For or against Marshall Plan enslavement?

For or against imperialist military bases?

A clearcut answer to these questions is the decisive test for all progressive workers' parties.

One paragraph in the platform affirms that "the party will work for the unification of Eretz Yisroel on the basis of an agreement between the nations and without domination and aggression." This pronouncement of opposition to the Revisionist program of "unification" through force, is positive and very valuable.

However, where the platform seeks to

outline the form of the future structure, it appears that, apart from the valid demand for "political independence for the Jewish nation," there is no parallel positive stand in favor of the political independence of the Arab nation. This evidently reflects the "Biltmore" influences (advocacy of a Jewish state over all Palestine—Eds.) within the Achduth Avodah Movement and leaves the door open to irridentist aspirations in the unified party. It would seem that on this point the Hashomer Hatzair retreated by conceding the principle of bi-nationalism. Under present conditions in Palestine bi-nationalism means the right of each nation to a state of its own in accordance with the decision of the UN.

The platform fails to propose federation as the structural form of the country upon which free political unity of the Jewish and Arab states can be based. Absence of this provision contradicts the principle of real political equality between the nations of which the platform speaks. A clear, precise formulation with respect to future political structure is imperative not only for the programmatic completeness of the platform. It is also necessary for the immediate political situation. Such a formulation is vital for the achievement of that Arab-Jewish unity without which, as the platform itself agrees, the unification of the country is impossible.

Experience proves, however, that despite agreement on these general premises in the past, certain circles in the uniting parties were not deterred from the "activities" of militant displacement of Arab workers (*Kibbush Avodah*), boycott measures, etc. In the light of this bitter experience it is clear that a general proclamation about "complete equality of rights" is not sufficient. It is a fact that even Mapai (Labor Party of Palestine) champions complete equality of rights in words, but is not prevented thereby from practicing inequality in deeds.

The platform must be clarified on whether it advocates discrimination against Arab workers in the Jewish State or the right to work of every toiler without national distinction. Does it favor "Jewish production" or "national production"? A progressive position on these questions will provide the general proclamation on equality with real content.

The struggle for a genuinely democratic Jewish state is intimately bound up with the problem of the basic practical relationship with the large Arab minority in the

state. It is therefore imperative that the position on this question be defined with the utmost clarity.

We find nothing in the unification platform about the relationship of the Yishuv to the Jewish communities in Europe and elsewhere.

The construction of the Jewish state in Palestine does not negate the survival and many-sided development of the Jewish communities in Europe and elsewhere. Just as it is necessary to increase the efforts to build the Jewish community in Palestine, so it is equally necessary to establish positive relations with the activities for survival of Jewish communities everywhere. The principles of the united party disregard the will-to-live and to-survive of the Jewish communities of the world in which about 95 per cent of the Jewish people live. They fail to take a positive and constructive position with respect to them.

The United Workers Party announces in its Platform of Unification that "it draws upon the heroic traditions and sources of the revolutionary thought of socialism and bases its educational activities on the principles of the world view of Marxism."

Along with this theoretical principle, the united party declares that it will support "the development of a practical fighting alliance between the workers of the world and the Soviet Union."

This is very noteworthy and worthwhile. However, it is rather strange that at the moment when Meyer Yaari, leader of the Hashomer Hatzair, is seeking to translate this clause into reality, the "world view of Marxism" is thrust aside and the date for the formation of a progressive front is postponed indefinitely.

In relation to national and international needs and to the communist parties of the world we find, to our sorrow, these strange words: "political communism requires subservience to orders from on high. International orders are binding upon every Communist Party, even if they negate immediate national interests." Furthermore, "As a consequence of our struggle for national and social liberation, we are unable to see our way clear to an international unity of workers except through the channel of the realization of Zionism and the gathering of the dispersion. We are compelled to postpone the actual joining of the front to which we are committed." (*Mishmar*, Dec. 26, 1947.)

Yaari's explanation is very significant. He attacks communist parties in the familiar way. Leon Blum, right wing leader of French social democracy, says crudely, "Orders from Moscow." Meyer Yaari says the same thing more politely, "Orders from on high," "orders which negate immediate national interests."

We are told that a contradiction between a progressive solution of the national ques-

tion and international interests is possible. This approach is a negation in principle of Marxist theory. Marxism teaches that the true national interest of all peoples is identical. These interests are not contradictory to but in complete consonance with the general interests of the forces of progress.

The "practical" advice of Meyer Yaari according to which the united party is compelled "to postpone the actual joining of the front to which we are committed," means in effect non-participation in the international anti-imperialist struggle, which is no less a national struggle of the Jews than of any other people. "The front to which we are committed" is the battlefield against imperialist aggression, against the warmongers, against fascism and anti-Semitism everywhere.

Whoever reassures himself and others that it is possible to "postpone" active political participation in such a front is far from serving the best interests of the Jewish people. It is possible to be for the progressive front or against it. There is no third alternative. We are forced to admit that the policy of postponing joining the great army of the progressive workers movement, at whose head stand the communist parties, casts a shadow over the many radical pronouncements of the Unification Platform.

Speaking of the unification, Meyer Yaari says, among other things, that Hashomer Hatzair regards the unification as one step in the direction of setting up "a united front of the three workers parties in the defense of labor hegemony in the development of political independence." (*Mishmar*, Dec. 26, 1947.) "Three workers parties" means—according to Yaari—Mapai, Hashomer Hatzair and the Achduth Avodah Movement.

The platform of the united party completely disregards the need for the establishment of a front of *all* the opposition groups within the Histadruth against the Mapai leadership. It disregards the need for the joint action of the united party and the Communist Party. Despite the fact that one of the points of departure for the formation of a united opposition movement is need for struggle against the political and economic line of Mapai, Meyer Yaari does not fail to call for joint action with Mapai. In addition, he disregards the need for joint action with the Communist Party.

It is known that the "black clause" in the constitution of the Histadruth, according to which communist workers were excluded from its ranks, has long been invalid. In 1945, the executive board of Histadruth resolved to restore the rights of communists in the Histadruth. The communist group is recognized and is represented on the Histadruth Council.

In the elections to various trade union

councils (Haifa, Nathanya), municipal councils (Nahariah, Rishon L'Zion) and the Representative Assembly, the Communist Party succeeded in electing its candidates. The daily *Kol Haam*, established through the efforts of thousands of enlightened workers, is proof of the extent to which the Communist Party is finding roots and is expanding in the *Yishuv*.

Joint action does not mean loss of identity, or surrender of the autonomy or ideology of any of the parties. Joint action means the coordination and strengthening of the fighting issues against a common enemy.

We therefore turn to the united party with a proposal of joint action on the principles set down in the Unification Platform.

REVIEW

DIGGING TO THE ROOTS

By Louis Harap

WITHOUT ado it should be said that Carey McWilliams has written a very important book¹ which can substantially help in the fight against anti-Semitism. Some reviewers have suggested that this book will not convince confirmed anti-Semites. This comment indicates that they miss the point of the book, which is intended to sharpen the understanding of anti-Semitism among those who detest it and thereby to make more effective their fight against it. The book is a welcome addition in a field where too often the battle is being sabotaged, wilfully or not, by some of those very organizations and "authorities" who pretend to be combating anti-Semitism. Thus McWilliams gives the *coup de grace* to those "social scientists" who get lost in the minutiae of "group tension" (p. 236); to those who spend enormous sums in distributing so-called "tolerance propaganda," as they would sell tooth paste (p. 243), with a fatuous "educational" technique; and to those who promote the "silent treatment" method (pp. 257-261), since "fascist tendencies must be opposed in an organized manner, openly, publicly, democratically" (p. 261).

What makes the McWilliams book almost unique in the literature of the subject is its consistent tracing of the various facets of the problem to their socio-economic foundation. One may have reser-

¹ *A Mask for Privilege: Anti-Semitism in America*, by Carey McWilliams. Little, Brown & Co., 1948. \$2.75.

1. Against political reformism and for a class line in the Histadruth.

2. Against reaction in the *Yishuv* and for struggle for the hegemony of labor and democracy in the *Yishuv*.

3. Against any dependence whatsoever on imperialism.

4. For the realization of complete equality of rights of both Jews and Arabs.

5. For Jewish-Arab agreement.

The relationship with the Communist Party and the experiences of joint action will prove to be the test of the workers' parties. We are certain that a resolution on the readiness for joint action on the part of the united party with the Communist Party will prove very meaningful for the class struggle of the workers and for the character of the Jewish state.

vations at some points of his argument, but on his primary thesis it seems to me that McWilliams is sound. At the start he demonstrates that anti-Semitism in America entered a new phase in the 1870's. One may question the historical accuracy of some of his statements about the phenomenon before that time, but there can be no doubt that his explanation of this new stage of anti-Semitism is the best we have ever had. By the seventies, the "Second American Revolution," "the revolution that assured the triumph of business enterprise" (p. 8), was decisively won. The rise of a new phase of anti-Semitism at this time was a symptom "of the profound transformation taking place at the base of society" (p. 11). The same time saw the spread of the general pattern of making scapegoats of minorities with the help of the courts and federal policy.

Until the 1920's anti-Semitism grew gradually. McWilliams points out that discrimination against Jews in want-ad columns begins about 1911 and rises with the years. Why so? McWilliams cogently explains that the second generation of Jews was then entering into competition for white-collar jobs, for which most of the discriminatory ads appeared. By the 1920's the build-up of anti-Semitism issued in a new phase. Henry Ford's *Dearborn Independent* first assaulted the Jews in 1920; the Ku Klux Klan revived; the Immigration Act of 1924 was chiefly aimed at excluding Jews; and the public advocacy of a college quota system was made by President Lowell of Harvard in 1922. On the ideological front Madison Grant,