

ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND REAL ISSUES

By E. Touma

The Israeli press gives the impression that the "Election campaign is in full swing", and the sixteen lists contesting the 120 parliamentary (Knesset) seats are in an "earnest fight".

True there are differences between the parties belonging to the national government coalition and supporting the general official line. Thus for example Poale Agudat Yisrael, the ultra-orthodox party urges adopting the law of Mozes as Israel's legal code. While Mapam, the Zionist Social Democratic party, in alignment with the labour party, toys publically, from time to time with socialism and fights for a secular state.

There are also differences in annexationist appetites. On the one hand there is the list of Greater Israel led by Dr. Eldad which calls for the historical Israel and considers the present cease-fire lines temporary borders to be pushed to the East and North until Israel is established in its national-historical boundaries, and on the other there are all shades of annexationists who would settle like Mapam for the annexation of "Arab Jerusalem", the Syrian heights and the Gaza strip.

On the issue of the Arabs in the occupied areas there are more radical differences, but then these are more so between the extremists among the annexationists.

Thus for example the greater Israel list calls for the emigration of these Arabs to the Arab countries (Hatzofe, 30.9.69), while Gahal, the bloc of parties of the big bourgeoisie, which considers the present cease-fire lines as borders of the new Israel calls for granting full civil right to the Arabs within greater Israel (Their programme in Ma'ariv supplement 10.10.69).

Dayan the war minister, who represents certain substantial forces in the Labour Party while calling for increasing the tempo of "Israelising" the occupied areas wants the Arabs to remain out of the civil-political life of Israel (Television programme on 2.10.69).

Y. Allon deputy premier has gone further, he has called for self rule for the Arabs in the occupied areas which would not commit them to recognise the unity of Jerusalem under Israeli rule or Israel's policies in the territories. This to his mind constitutes the basis of a dialogue between Israel and the Arabs (Lamerhav 1.10.69).

An accompanying difference has developed over the "bridges". The Free Center, a splinter group which tore away from Herut,

is challenging the "open bridges" * policy instituted by the government and initiated by M. Dayan.

The Free Center leader S. Tamir declared that the "open bridges" policy encouraged terrorist activities and allowed terrorists to infiltrate to the "Israeli held territories" (Jerusalem Post 29.9.69). Dayan refutes this contention and claims that "the open bridges proves to the Arabs that living under Israel's rule does not mean that they are being cut off from the rest of the Arab world" (Television broadcast 2.10.69).

But all this emphasises that the real basic issues facing the country - the way out of the Middle East crisis, Israel's foreign relations and specifically Israeli-Arab relations - are not being debated by the national coalition parties and lists supporting the official line.

Collusion with U.S. imperialism (officially called Israeli-U.S. friendship), dictating "peace" terms to the Arab peoples and the strategy of war as an arbiter of conflicts seem to be the sphere of agreement between the official line lists in this election.

THE REAL ISSUE

It is pertinent therefore to remark that the real issue in these elections is between the coalition parties (lists) and the Israeli Communist Party known for the purposes of the elections as the New Communist List (N.C.L.; called Rakah in Hebrew). It is the N.C.L. which is putting on the election map the issue of war and peace; of the Middle East crisis and of Israel's foreign relations.

Thus the N.C.L. offers the real political alternative to the official line. The N.C.L. calls for the break with U.S. imperialism which wants Israel to perform the duties of gendarme in the Arab world against the Arab national liberation revolutionary process sweeping the imperialist positions. It calls for Israel's acceptance of the security council resolution of Nov. 22, 1967, which has all the elements capable of solving the Arab-Israeli conflict and for Israel being ready to implement its part of

* This means allowing Arabs of the occupied areas to visit the Arab countries and to send their young people to universities in those countries. It allows them to trade (export their produce) with Jordan.

the Resolution*. It calls for a policy of understanding with the Arab countries and for Jewish-Arab brotherhood.

The N.C.L. considers the official policy calling for Israeli-Arab direct negotiation at this stage a smoke screen to cover up its annexationist ambitions, and a means to scuttle attempts and international initiatives to solve the conflict politically and peacefully. Israel's official rebuff to the latest U.A.R. agreement to indirect negotiations on the 1948 Rhodes pattern** and its continued refusal to indirect agreement to implement the security council resolution shows that the Israeli ruling circles, gaining confidence from U.S. support and encouragement as expressed in Premier G. Meir's latest talk with U.S. president Nixon, are still far from the path of peace.

ANTI-COMMUNIST INCITEMENT

The political constellation explains why the whole wrath of the ruling circles is directed against N.C.L. . this was brutally expressed in the threat of Y. Allon deputy premier, levelled at the N.C.L. Arab supporters.

Speaking in Acre Allon addressed his "supporters" among the Arabs in these words:

"For the sake of continued good relations, you must dissociate yourself from the N.C.L.. If the New Communist List gains in strength, it will be a terrible disappointment for the Jews who for 21 years have been trying to nurture the idea of fraternity and normal relations between the two communities ...". Allon added if the N.C.L. won another seat in the Knesset it would not affect its composition or the future government's policy, "But it will ruin the mind of Arab youth and it will limit the possibility of Jewish-Arab dialogue. It will greatly damage the interests of the Arab population..." (Jerusalem Post 9.10.69). Leaving out the false claim that the ruling circles contributed to developing fraternity between the Jewish and Arab communities in Israel, and leaving out the open threat that the interests of the Arabs are liable to suffer if they vote in larger numbers

* It demands withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the occupied Arab territories, the end of belligerency and the recognition of the right of all states in the area to exist with full sovereignty, free shipping for Israel in Suez and the Gulf of Aqaba and solution of the Arab refugees problem.

** There the Israeli-Arab sides negotiated indirectly with the assistance of U.N. general secretary R. Bunc and concluded the armistice agreements after the Palestine War.

for the N.C.L. * , objective observers saw in Allon's statement on the question of dialogue a very dangerous symptom.

First, the N.C.L. is a Jewish-Arab Communist Party, and if a larger portion of Arabs support it, the fact remains that it represents a definite political line, which is in the interest of both peoples of the country. If its success limits any dialogue, it is not the Jewish-Arab dialogue but the Israeli dialogue between the ruling circles and the real opposition.

Second, if the Israeli ruling circles cannot bear a dialogue with its opposition, it means it also refuses any international or regional dialogue with the forces which contest its premises of expansionism and dictation.

Third, if in increased Arab support to the N.C.L., because the N.C.L., supports the legitimate rights of both the Israeli and Arab peoples, the ruling circles see a limitation of the Jewish-Arab dialogue in Israel, it means they close the door hermetically to an Israeli-Arab dialogue in the region.

It seemed to observers that under the conditions of increased Israeli isolation internationally the only Jewish-Arab dialogue which the Israeli ruling circles are willing to tolerate is their monologue of dictation with their Arab lackeys who support the policy of national discrimination.

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Though the real issues are not on the map of the coalition parties, they are there; though the contest here is unequal, the coalition parties and supporters of the official line have the huge information media at their disposal while the N.C.L. has very limited means and is being hampered on every side. For not only the N.C.L. Arab supporters are being cudgeled, the Jewish supporters are being victimised as well. The press is full of tendentious news items liable to frighten the people. Thus on 9.10.69 the press (Yediot Ahronot) carried a so-called public opinion poll claiming that 42% agreed to outlaw the N.C.L. However it is growing clear that threats would not save the ruling circles who have reached a dead end in their adventurous annexationist policy.

*In the Histadrut elections over 30% voted for the N.C.L. while 62% voted for the alignment.

ISOLATION AND REPRESSION IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

This dead end state has become more bluntly clear in the occupied territories lately. Gone are the illusions about rapprochement between the Arab people and the occupying authorities, and the elements who raised the banner of a "Palestine entity" as a means to give the occupation a show of legality have practically disappeared. What remains is the manysided resistance and the stark repression.

Deportations of patriots is increasing and two groups have been deported to the East bank of the Jordan from occupied Nablus, Jenin, Hebron and other places.

The last group deported on 6.10.69 included Ramallah's mayor and nine other public figures. At the same time demolition of houses is gaining .

The Jerusalem Post of 6.10.69 reporting the demolition of a house in Kalkilya added: "This was the tenth house demolished in the past fortnight. The first nine belonged to members of various terrorist organisations who were rounded up in last months wide scale comb out."

The demolitions are not confined to this townlet but are being intensified in Nablus, Hebron, Gaza and other places.

It is not necessary any longer to take part in armed action to lose one's house, alleged membership in an organisation is enough, even before it is proved in a law court. At the same time large scale round-ups were carried in Gaza netting dozens - according to the Jerusalem Post of 9.10.69 - and in other towns in the occupied west bank.

Further the area of Beit Sahout (Bethlehem area) was put under a 22 hour curfew for weeks and Hebron was blockaded from the middle of September up to 2.10.69 in an attempt to choke it economically and thus weaken the growing resistance.

Moreover, the pupils of a number of schools in Nablus and Jenin struck late in September, and this accentuated the tense situation in the occupied areas.

It has become clear that the Israeli occupation does not differ from other occupation and breeds increased resistance.