REKAKH, the Israeli Communist List, is the only mass-party inside Israel to defend non-anti-Zionist positions. As such, it has become the obvious representative of the Arab minority inside the country and has adopted a program defending a just peace in the Middle East, the existence of the State of Israel as a nation-state, the fulfillment of the national rights of the Palestinian Arabs, (including those living inside the "green line" or pre-1967 borders; the Palestinians in the occupied territories; and all Palestinian refugees).

REKAKH has a predominantly Arab membership but its cadres and leadership are constituted on a 50-50 basis, by Arabs and Jews. So, usually, the Knesset or Parliamentary representation of the party. Those Israeli citizens, Jews as Arabs, who adhere to the party must accept the existence of Israel but oppose the policy of the Establishment as well as Zionist ideology.

The keynote speech at the 18th National Conference of the Communist Party, which was held in October 1976, was given by Knesset Member and one of the Party's leaders, Meir Vilner and Tawfik Toubi. Meir Vilner and Tawfik Toubi, a strong minority inside the Party, but nevertheless decisive, can be resumed in the following quotes, taken from that keynote speech:

"...The State of Israel is a Jewish State, since it expresses the fulfillment of the Jewish People's striving and right to self-determination. This right was recognized, together with the Arab Palestinian right to self-determination, in a Resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 29 November, 1947.

"But the State of Israel is not just a Jewish State, it is also a state which has a Jewish majority and an Arab minority, which is very considerable... the official statements contending that since the State is Zionist, the Arab population cannot enjoy full rights and has to be deprived of its Land in favor of the Zionist settlement and of the Judaization of the country - such a view cannot be tolerated and proves the racist character of these Zionist premises."

And further on:

"The Arab population in Israel, as a national minority inside Israel, has full right to struggle against a policy of discrimination and national oppression, for equality of rights, civil and national, and the Arab population inside Israel indeed struggles for equality of its rights in the framework of the Israeli State.

"The Arab population in Israel, which is part of the Arab Palestinian people, has full rights to struggle for the national rights of the Arab Palestinian people, against Occupation and for a just and firm peace..." (ZU HADEREKH, 22 December 76).

STATISTICS
The Party has some 1200 full-fledged members: 80% of those, at least, are Arab. However, the Arab influence is far bigger, as most of the Party's electoral members. In the 1973 elections, REKAKH got 4 mandates, mostly elected in the Arab sector, the rest of the Arab vote in Israel went to three Arab lists connected with the ruling Labor HAAVADA party; one mandate went to the MAFADAL, the Jewish National Religious Party, that controls the budgets and power in heret in the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. One and a half mandates went to the HAAVADA party proper. There is little doubt that in 1977 the balance of the two parties will be far more in the past. Moreover, not only quantity will rise, quality, too, with improve. REKAKH 1977 is a far cry from REKAKH 1976 or even 1973. At the same time, the Zionist parties have lost face and reputation, but in the Jewish and the Arab sectors of Israel, and most particularly has been struck the Arab Policy of the Labor-led majority.

FIVE "BLACK" LISTS
The Establishment seeks to combat this, for itself, negative development by sending to the electoral ballot box. Consequently, five Arab lists: one led by Meri A-Din Zuabi and Sheikh Jabar Muad, a Druze, this list won two seats in the 1973-elected Knesset. Another list is put forward in the name of the resettled Israeli Bedouins (one seat in 1973). A third list is presented by a senior advisor to the Minister of Trade and Industry, Ad- vocate Kamal Kassem. List Number 4 is led by Mahmoud Abbas, a writer, and one of the leaders of the "Peace and Change" group, also affiliated with the Labor party. The last, probable, Arab list may be headed by Jamal Trabiyeh, Mayor of the Sahleh municipal council. (YEDIOTH, 11/12).

The appearance of these lists reminds one strikingly of the racist document published by Mr. Kenis, District Of- ficer for the Northern Area at the Ministry of the Interior, who wrote: "...A sister party should be created for the Labor party and inside the sister party the leading ideas should be Equality, Humanism, Culture and Language, Social Struggle and rising the standard of Poo- lice in our area. The authorities should prepare a HIDDEN RULE PRE- SENCE IN THIS PARTY."

Gee Kang Rapoport, in The New York Times, 30 November 1976, puts it this way: "The peace program which we propose is the right one and the most realistic one. Israel can get, at best, the 4 of June 1976 borders, in the framework of a peace settlement with international guarantees. More wars will not grant Israel more land, only more dead..." going on to depict in detail the Resolutions of the 18th Conference. Vilner then said: "We shall go to the Knesset elections in a front-list for peace and democracy, a Jewish-Arab front list, based on a program which will not adopt our maximalist positions but only five main points: A just peace, based on full recognition of Israel's rights and sovereignty inside the pre-1967 borders, and on full Is- raeli territorial integrity; recognition of a Palestinian independent State in the West Bank and in the Gaza strip and, of course, in the Arab part of Jerusalem; A just solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees. Free navigation towards Israel, by vessels of all nationalities; and all this in the framework of contractual agreements. This is point No. 1.

"Point No. 2: Defending all democrati- cally legitimate rights, No. 3: Defending the Rights of the Workers, No. 4: Ensuring full equality of rights, both national and civil, for the Arab population in Isra- el. No. 5: an end to discrimination between Oriental and Occidental Jews. (ZU HADEREKH, 22 Dec. 76).

The reasons given for adopting this minimum, peace-front program may be found in a Report to the 18th Conference by the Central Committee of REKAKH, and read at
the conference on the 15-18th of December. A wide front to the electoral campaign is necessary; the Central Committee estimated then, because the peace forces in Israel suffer from one main weakness - a lack of unity. Struggling for peace one may unite in battle Jews and Arabs, Communists and Zionist, Religious par- ties and others, since the main di- vide in Israel is not along Communist-Zionist lines but rather a class and political division: workers and Ca- pitalists, peace forces and war ele- ments, democratic forces and those leading to Fascism.

According to the Central Committee of REAKKH, the struggle for peace is linked to the struggle for the wor- kers' interests. The military situation of the Israeli masses is, first and foremost, the result of the fact that Israel is a class state and that Government policy is a class- policy favoring the Capitalists - ac- cording to this Report. The regime lets the working classes carry the brunt of military expenditure, and the capitalists get rich. The Central Committees sees such military expendi- ture as the most serious consequence of the economic crisis; since 1973 exp- enditure grow amazingly, as the 1976/77 budget earmarks two thirds of its 85 billion Lira budget on mi- litary, and militarily-linked expendi- ture. As a direct result, the budget for education, culture was cut, in the years 1972-1976 and according to official statistics, from 10.5% of the national budget to 5.3%. Health - from 3.1% to 2.5%; Housing - from 6.8% to 3.9%. Taxation, particu- larly indirect taxation, also rose. The government started, on 1 July 1976, a new Wage tax which immediately caused basic staples to rise. The government also cut subsidies to basic staples. The first signs of lowered production and of unemployment are felt this year. The picture, in the fall of 1976, is rather bleak. In Israel the country has yearly importations worth eight billion dol- lars, and exports goods for about half this amount. Therefore, it is expected that Israel's national debt will grow to a staggering nine billion dollars by 1 January 1977.

The Report concludes by stating that the main reason for this is an immense quantities of arms bought by the re- gime; American economic grants and loans (half and half of each kind of US assistance; and all this intended only for payment of American pro- duced armaments sold to Israel. In point of fact, Israel gets weapons, not dollars from the American govern- ment and is forced to incur consid- erable debts to ensure their pay- ment; interest-paid on the Ame- rican loans. (ZU HADEREKH, 22 December 1976).

Therefore, the Party estimates that only a just peace can lead to social reorganisation; and for this reason it was decided to go to the elections with a non-Communist, even Zionist, group. The question is - will the Communist Party find any willing, and important partners for such a peace-front?

SHASSI'S AND ELIAVA'S REACTIONS

Three factors must be mentioned in this context. First, the adhering of SHASSI (The Socialist Israeli Left group - an outcome of the demar- chation of SIAH, members of which went to MOKEI) to the proposed

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REAKKH-led peace-front. SHASSI, a small but very active socialist group, will remain independent but wage a common electoral campaign with REAKKH.

More significant in influence if not in numbers is the telegram of gree-tings sent to the 18th REAKKH Conference by the Socialist Inde- pendent Party (Zionists) led by Knes- set Members Arieh Enay and Masha Friedmann. As well as another tele- gram sent by the populist BLACK PANTHERS movement which delega- ted to the 18th Conference its left- wing leader, Charlie Bitton, who stated that "our Movement will struggle hand in hand with the Com- munist Party against the dangers of Fascism". (At the same time, the BLACK PANTHERS officially stated they would go to the elections alone, and even held talks, simultaneously, to no avail, with General Yigal Ya- din's DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT and with General Ariel Sharon's right-wing SHLIMTZION.

ARAB COUNTRIES COMMUNISTS STAND

Also significant, are the positions coming to the surface in greetings sent to the 18th Conference by Commu-

new general strike on west bank

A new wave of strikes and protest- actions broke out in the West Bank in December 1976. Participation was perhaps the widest yet; businessmen, workers, young, agricultural workers, students, as well as students and high school pupils started a series of demonstra- tions against Israeli occupation. The first act opened with a businessmen's strike, in which storekeepers protest- ted against the imposition of the new Israeli Added Value Tax which Israel had adopted in the summer but impo- sition of which in the Occupied Ter- ritories had been postponed in the wake of former general strikes.

On 4 December the Chamber of Commerce called upon its members to hold a strike, and at the same time approached the Military Autori- ties with a request to stop applica- tion of the new tax until April 1977, hoping to find somehow some kind of arrangement which would free the Territories from the AVT, altogether.

Only Hebron held a full-day general strike, on 8 December, according to YEDOOTH of 7 12 76.

On 7 December the strike widened, particularly in Nablus. Hundreds of high school pupils started breaking stones at Security Forces, piled up rubble and put up barricades, then proceeding to burn tires, in the time-honored protest style of the Occu- pied Territories. All shops in central Nablus were closed. The Military Governor, Lieutenant Colonel Yossi Cohon, ordered a curfew to be im- posed on this part of town. The Kasab, at which entrances heavy gates had been installed last year by the Security Forces, was cut off and several "provocateurs" were ar- rested. Meanwhile, the Nablus Muni- cipal Council had held a meeting, at which the Chamber of Commerce members and those of the Trade Unions participated, deciding to or- ganize an action committee to deal with the situation (Turn page)