

OUR STRUGGLE FOR THE BROTHERHOOD OF NATIONS

We represent an alternative road within the working class and the people as a whole, but we have no claim to a monopoly or birthright over many of our views. There is hardly one demand of those regarding our relations to the Arab people that has not been embraced at one time or another by Mapai spokesmen.

In our view, a prerequisite of the territorial concentration of our people within the framework of a socialist regime is the attainment of peace between the Arab people and our own. In the past this was a common premise of the entire labor movement. For instance, who spoke more emphatically, in the twenties and the thirties, of brotherhood and peace between Jews and Arabs — than D. Ben-Gurion in his book, "We and Our Neighbors?" In those days the common faith of the two peoples was unquestioned by the above author who declared that "Together with them we fall and together we rise." Up to their appearance before the Peel Commission of the Mandatory Government in 1936, both Ben-Gurion and Berl Katznelson opposed the idea of a Jewish state, terming it an instrument for the overcoming of one people by another. They proposed then a bi-national approach so as to guarantee, within the framework of greater Eretz Israel, political equality between the returning Jewish people and the masses of Arab people living in the land.

There were then two elements which opposed the idea of peace and equality between the two peoples: the heads of the Arab nationalists, and the heads of the Revisionist minority in the Zionist Movement. A minority of the Arabs and a majority of the Zionists

were then in favor of non-suppression of one by the other. The deciding elements in setting the pattern of dissension between the two peoples were the officials of the Mandatory Government.

From the time of Ben-Gurion's appearance before the Peel Commission and onward, a major change came about in the attitude of Mapai and its leaders to this problem. From that point on, they gave preference to the partition of the country and the achievement of a dwarf Jewish state of about 5,000 sq. km., minus the Negev, Jerusalem, Jaffa, Ramla, and Lod. They preferred this to driving toward political independence of the two peoples by means of peace and brotherhood, within the framework of a greater Eretz Israel. Thenceforth, a major change came about also in Mapai's attitude toward the Arab people within the country and without. They chose sovereignty first and foremost, even if it meant partition and greater separation between the peoples.

Meanwhile the war broke out, after which British policy became more severe toward the Jewish community. Then came the struggle against the White Paper. British rule began to crumble and the rift between the two peoples deepened. A possibility arose of gaining a Jewish state in a portion of Eretz Israel with the support of both the Soviet Union and the United States. Before the decision in the U.N. we too came out in support of this demand.

In 1947 the United Nations made its decision, and one year later the declaration on the establishment of the independent state of Israel was made. This independence was won in the war with seven Arab states who came at us from all sides. Our victory in the War of Liberation extended our frontiers and brought about an armistice between us and the Arab side. But this was an armistice laden with political problems and saturated with unceasing tension. To this day we face a situation of neither war nor armistice with the

neighboring countries. Non-recognition of our existence has become even more pronounced. The boycott against us unites all the Arab states, not withstanding differences in regime, or even internal strife between them. Those countries which set the tone in the Arab League continue to declare their wish to destroy us. These declarations are accompanied by feverish armament. The arms race reaches terrifying dimensions; it goes from conventional arms to missiles and, on the horizon, nuclear weaponry.

The two blocs involved in the cold war compete in supplying arms to the Arab countries. Israel is obliged to make every effort in order to acquire the arms necessary for its defense. But in the final outcome this competition undermines the finer aspirations of our people and of the Arab people as well. Only by actively striving towards peace, and at the same time seeing to our defenses, can we shake ourselves free of the danger to our existence inherent in this fatal competition.

Alongside military tension rises political tension. The problem of the refugees becomes increasingly severe. The Arab minority in our country lives under a regime of military administration which deepens still more the rift between the two peoples.

The United Workers' Party came into being in the same year as the State of Israel. The Party inscribed on its banner the desire to regain the original territorial boundaries of the country by means of agreement between the peoples. Since then, fifteen years have gone by, and the agreement is nowhere to be seen. Our spokesmen do state their readiness for peace negotiations without previous conditions, and they are undoubtedly sincere in their approach. But they are extremely pessimistic about the possibilities of peace in the forthcoming period. They are preparing for decades of near-explosive tension. That is why they are declared activists. That is why they plan drastic

retaliatory measures in reply to serious clashes and less serious ones as well. Instead of trying to disclose initiative of any sort in calling for peace, they are under continual pressure, not only by opponents in the world arena, but by the statesmen of the United States.

We are certain that our government, be it this one or another, must eventually accept our Party's stand on the refugees and the cessation of military administration. Until that time, we shall continue on our own to press for peace with our neighbors and the guaranteed security of our country.