

INTRODUCTION

It was necessary to overcome a number of misgivings that I don't want to conceal from those who are interested in them in order to write this thesis. First, I'll point out that I am wary of the ideological weariness that has made inroads among us here and there. Today, in a movement and party that were always characterized by ideological enthusiasm, discussions in kibbutzim and urban party branches frequently attract smaller audiences than mediocre suspense films. Many factors combined to cause this phenomenon. This mood can be attributed mainly to disillusionment and pragmatism caused by disappointments with socialism which were brought about by its perversion and distortion in the Stalinist era. As a matter of fact this mood is not monopolized by Israeli youth alone. It has spread through Europe and America; and it hasn't by-passed Moscow, Leningrad, Prague and Warsaw. This mood provides a justification for indifference and cynicism. The political weariness that has crept into the hearts of many of our veteran comrades combines with this mood.

Some of the old movement faithfuls seek a justification for this weariness by pointing to the disappointing (to them) tally of "9-9-8". These numbers refer, of course, to the percentage of votes which Mapam received in the previous Knesset elections and indicate - as they see it - a lack of any real hope that our party will become a power to be reckoned with. Thus these comrades seek justification for their abandonment of political activity. Nevertheless, I have no doubt that in the end these same comrades - or at least the overwhelming majority of them - will lend a hand and do their share in the collective effort required by the coming elections. But fatigue and doubt continue to corrode and they particularly undermine the strength of some of the younger generation. Is a more serious danger to our continued existence and mission conceivable than the failure of youth to bear the brunt of our mission together with us as equals?!

In my opinion, the sensible thing to do is to give youth a generous grant of credit, provide them with serious challenges and heal

their indifference with activity. At the next convention we must mobilize, a sizeable group of youth for activity on every plane. One doesn't learn to swim on dry land. A generation that has wonderful economic and social achievements to its credit in addition to its military accomplishments in the Six-Day War can not help but reveal the same degree of ability and impetus if it is called upon to carry out important social and political tasks which would be a blessing to undertake.

In the months before and after the Six-Day War we couldn't even complain of indifference. Exuberance, revival and a desire to test basic concepts anew supplanted indifference. It is not our intention to conclude a new agreement but we do not have the right to avoid a new examination of several basic assumptions which serve as a basis for the ideological and political program of our party. Perhaps this is the best and most efficient way to banish the weariness of old-timers and activate youth. I hope, therefore, that it will not irritate readers of this thesis if on this occasion I discuss again things that formerly could have been taken for granted.

After all the failures of European political parties in the beginning of the present century, the totalitarian movements and parties that aspired to dictatorial rule developed programs that incited against the concept of the political party. In Israel not only the "underground" and quasi-fascist totalitarian movements but also individuals with humanistic sensibilities such as Izhar Smilanski attempted to defame political parties and their ideologies. Smilanski aided this campaign by expressing his opinion of tattered flags and ideologies that circulate in the streets. Strange as it may seem, Mapai newspapers often abetted this campaign. In these papers all parties except Mapai were frequently presented as splinter parties which had been born in sin and it would be a blessing to destroy them either by respectable means or by discrimination and oppression. As a result of such criticism youth movements with a political and ideological purpose such as Hashomer Hatsair were forbidden to function in schools. Today, too, thanks to this pretext our movement continues to be locked out of the entrance gate to working youth. Of course, the results of this

10

Introduction

prohibition soon appeared. Pampered progeny of the upper crust attempt - often successfully - to take the place of the pioneering youth movements, as do the street gangs.

There are those who attempt to console themselves with biological sophistry. They argue that youth of today matures late and that this is a general phenomenon regardless of country and social system. I even heard a similar argument at a convention of "shlichim" (movement emissaries) that took place in Paris a few months ago. In Israel we have for example become accustomed to youths of 25 serving as Captains in the army. They stand the test, display outstanding leadership ability and serve as an example to others. But, on the other hand, when we speak of political efficiency it becomes apparent that the same twenty-five year old prefers to hide in a corner. Is there any justification for this? Every father and grandfather knows that his sons and grandsons ask political questions which are surprisingly astute. When they are fourteen, fifteen and sixteen years old they stick to their opinions resolutely and do not accept every answer. Everyone knows this fact when he is at home but when he goes to the party call in the kibbutz or the city branch his standards immediately change and he surrenders to the standards that prevail among the "teddy boys" in the United States and England. But those youths don't have to worry about making a living; their careers are guaranteed in advance and they can quietly spend their time contemplating themselves. This is not the case with Israeli youth.

Does our youth which has risked its life three times since the establishment of the state of Israel and is responsible for the existence of the Israeli society and economy in both city and country have the right to adopt this defective yard-stick? Actually, the mood among college youth both in the United States and Western Europe has changed lately. Their dissatisfaction is mounting in the face of the increasing seriousness of the Negro problem and the filthy war in Vietnam.

We don't have the right, therefore, to reconcile ourselves to late maturity. It is impossible for kibbutz members to pay attention

only to local and private economic interests just as it is impossible for urban members of Mapam to be concerned with their professional interests without feeling intensely that we are surrounded by a belt of enmity that compels us to engage in a vital military and political struggle for our existence and our future every day in the year and not only during the Six-Day War. In the existing political conditions it is impossible for members of a kibbutz or members of the city branches of Mapam to act as if all that matters is economic self-interest.

I got wind of a complaint that my thesis allegedly presumes to solve all the problems and teach all of the Torah bible on one foot. According to these grumblers, for some of whom complaining has become a habit and a source of satisfaction - the Party convention should be devoted to clarifying one or two problems that demand an immediate solution; ideological, scientific and professional problems should be discussed by a forum of experts, before they are discussed in the broad forum of the party of the movement. I would gladly accede to the demands of these members but here's the rub: this convention is being convened five years after the previous one and after the Six-Day War. This outline must reflect not only the tests we faced in the past five years but also what happened before, during and after the Six-Day War in order to learn lessons and chart the road to the future. Our party must be capable of giving answers to the problems whose solutions will determine the fate of the working class and the entire nation.

This thesis only deals with problems that have been discussed and expounded many times in movement and party institutions, branches, and papers. The three parts, "The Struggle for Political Independence, Peace and Security," "The Integration of National Development and the Class Struggle" and "On Unity and Division in the Workers' Movement" deal with areas of activity in which - according to our suggestion - the united workers' movement including Mapam will be collectively responsible for areas in which we are obligated to maintain our independence. On the other hand the part "On the Road to Socialism" is concerned with the national and international background for the decisions which must

Introduction

be made at the convention. What has all this to do with groups of experts or amateurs that meet at the grass roots? Does any group have more authority than the Political Committee or the Executive that was elected democratically by a convention, represents the will of tens of thousands, embodies experience and knowledge and has been tested in long struggles? I hope that many of these malcontents will be elected to the convention by their party branches and will also be elected perhaps to the institutions whose responsibility it will be to examine the thesis for the next convention. In that case I hope that there won't be any members who follow their lead and refrain from making the same complaint against them that they are leveling against us.

And talking about groups of experts and specialists - we have taken them into consideration also and there is no need to convene them now simply because they exist and are active all the days of the year. I am referring to: A. TRADE UNION COMMITTEE composed of members of the Knesset, members of the Executive Committee of the Histadrut and other members of the party who deal with these problems and represent the party in governmental and Histadrut institutions.

B. THE MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE which is also made up of experts and responsible people who serve the public and represent the party in these matters.

C. THE ECONOMIC COMMITTEE that publishes economic surveys and bulletins on the state of the economy and economic problems regularly and is staffed accordingly.

D. THE MARXIST CIRCLE in which ideological problems are discussed. This circle is open to all members of the party and its discussions are published from time to time in the party monthly "BaShear". And if that isn't enough, there are also committees and councils of the Arabic Department, the Women's Department, the Department of Information, the Department of Oriental Communities, the Youth Section etc, etc. I pointed out in the outline, for example, that in economic affairs I was helped

by the surveys of permanent groups maintained by the party such as "The Trade Union Committee" and "The Economic Committee".

In order for the few Israelis to confront the many Arabs and face the armies of all the Arab countries successfully, no principle is more helpful than this one: "If I don't look out for myself - who will?" We verified the redeeming and life-giving value of this motto in the three wars since the establishment of the State of Israel. But it is another matter when the subject at hand is not the saving of our lives and guaranteeing our victory in emergencies but guaranteeing our existence for a long time. We won't be able to reach havens of security and peace without help. At least two are required for peace with security. Peace in the Near East is also very dependent on international factors. It is true indeed that we can't be compared to a leaf in a storm. Just as knew how to take root in our historical tradition which served us as nourishing soil and a kind of wandering homeland during two thousand years of dispersion, so, in Israel, surrounded by a ring of enmity, we have known how few could withstand and overcome many. Indeed we have driven a stake deep in our homeland. However, unless a lasting peace is insured we can expect another "round" and even if we win again some great-power will replenish the defeated enemy's supply of arms. Moreover, we must say that the population of Israel continues to grow at a snail's pace in contrast to the tremendous natural increase of her neighbors. Of course there are people who think that we are fated to live by the sword for generations until our neighbors resign themselves to Israel's existence because they have no choice. As opposed to such consolation we think that in order to achieve peace and true stability it is necessary to add "activism" for peace to the constant concern for security. It is not enough for Israelis to be orientated toward themselves; they must open broad windows to the Jewish world. We shall mark time and be unable to make great strides forward without the support and assistance of the forces of progress, peace and socialism in the world, and that is the special mission of Mapam.

The negotiations which aim to create an alignment between Mapam and the newly founded united labor party will be the main topic of

Introduction

discussion of the forthcoming convention. In my thesis I devote considerable space to our ties with countries on the road to socialism. We don't have the right to omit a discussion of this kind even if it can't influence the negotiations. However, I suggest that the convention shouldn't make any hard and fast decisions on this subject. There's plenty of time for that.

We have argued about this problem at length in the past; we are arguing about it at present and in all likelihood we'll continue to argue about it in the future. I only hope that zealous partisanship will be accompanied by a spirit of mutual tolerance at the convention that will permit us to reach a joint conclusion. This debate is liable to distortion and to our sorrow there are already signs of this here and there. I hope that we'll know how to preserve a spirit of comradeship during the discussion. This is an indispensable condition if the argument is to serve as a means of unifying us on the basis of our historic mission among the people in general and the working class in particular rather than a pretext for thinning our ranks.