

Israeli Parties Maneuver For Power in Fall Election

By ED FINDLEY

AUGUST 23—The Palestinian war is fast being dwarfed by internal political conflicts. Life in Israel today appears to be dominated by political polarization, party splits and jockeying for control of the 171-man Constituent Assembly to be elected this fall.

The Constituent Assembly is to be elected by country-wide proportional representation of all adults within the borders of Israel. Apparently this democratic rule was intended to apply to all Arabs now living in Israeli held territory. However, some doubt on this score is raised by reports, in the New York Yiddish press, that "security considerations" may be invoked to bar full Arab participation. In any event, the only organized political force that operates openly among the Arabs in Israel is the Arab League for National Liberation, the pseudonym of the Arab Stalinists. It would indeed be tragic if the only Arab voices heard in the Israeli Constituent Assembly were those of Moscow's agents.

In Jewish political circles two contradictory processes are developing. On the one hand there is an atomization of old political formations into a multitude of new parties. On the other, there is a tendency toward realignments into new, larger political units and electoral blocs.

During the past weeks the influential, though numerically small, bourgeois party of General Zionists

split into two wings: Group A, a sort of New Deal wing, "friendly" to labor; and Group B, a conservative wing, hostile to the union movement and in the past a protector of semi-fascist Irgun and Stern groups. Group A is reported to be negotiating with several important bourgeois groups to form a new "Progressive Zionist Party." Among these are the New Immigration Party (Aliya Chadasha), a moderate bourgeois party; the Zionist Worker group and the Wiza, a popular women's organization.

This realignment, if carried through, is likely to be a boon to the Mapai (Palestinian Workers Party), a reformist-socialist party which controls the labor movement and is the strongest party in the provisional government of Israel. It will give the Mapai greater maneuverability vis-à-vis its main opponent and competitor in the labor movement, the Mapam (United Workers Party), a left-wing, socialist-Zionist party whose self-Stalinization is proceeding very rapidly. The existence of a liberal bourgeois party will give the Mapai an opportunity to form a coalition government, less heavily weighted with rightists.

On the far right, two electoral blocs are probable. First, a political unit analogous to the Catholic Center Party of Germany or the Christian Democrats of Italy, composed of the following orthodox groups: Mizrachi, Agudath Israel and their affil-

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iated trade-union movements. These groups seek to give the new state a theocratic, religious character. Politically, they have generally found themselves in de facto alliances with the reactionary, anti-labor Revisionists and the Irgun.

The newest and most spectacular political formation is the "Freedom Movement" formed by M. Beigin, commander of the Irgun. Beigin chose to transform the Irgun into a party rather than work through the existing Revisionist organization for three reasons: (1) the official Revisionist party is too discredited and politically vulnerable; (2) to achieve the most direct and maximum exploitation of the prestige and popularity gained by the Irgun during the fight against the British; (3) to obviate the necessity of sharing political leadership with the old Revisionist leaders. The Irgun's transformation into a political party was quickly imitated by the Stern group.

This gives the Revisionist fathers a real headache. They face the alternatives of liquidating their organization and joining these Irgun and Stern parties or going to the polls as a separate party with an indistinguishable program in the certain knowledge that most of their followers will vote for the Freedom Movement or the Sternist Party. The first is the more probable variant.

VICIOUS CAMPAIGN

As these lines are written all of the ultra-nationalist Revisionist groupings are engaged in a wild agitational campaign of fascist-like slander and hate against the reformist provisional government. Special targets are the reformist-socialist Mapai and its leader Ben-Gurion.

How successful is this campaign? At this writing this cannot be ascertained. It is known that Beigin has been attracting tremendous crowds on his barnstorming tour. There is no way, however, to distinguish between sympathizers and the curious, who come to see the fabled guerrilla leader. One thing is clear. It is naive to underestimate the totalitarian threat to the democratic character of the Israeli state that emanates from this direction.

In the opposite corner of the Israeli political ring is the Mapam (United Workers Party), formed several months ago out of several left-socialist groups: Hashomer Hatzair, Achduth Avodah (a split-off from the Mapai) and the left Poale Zion.

Since its formation this party has become increasingly Stalinized politically. It denounces the pro-West orientation of the Mapai and calls for an exclusive orientation toward an alliance with Russia and the "new democracies." Its support of the Stalinist position in international politics is almost as complete as that of any Communist Party. Its organ sided with the Cominform against Tito.

In domestic politics, the Mapam has many correct criticisms of the reformist leadership of the trade union movement for its conciliatory attitude toward the aggressive bourgeois parties and for failing to face realistically the totalitarian challenge of the Irgun and its allies. Unfortunately, the Mapam is adopting, spontaneously and without outside compulsion, more and more of the Stalinist position.

STALINISTS "HELP ALONG"

The Stalinists understand what is going on in the Mapam and are making every effort to hasten the process. In his dispatch to the Morning Freiheit on June 30, A. B. Magill reports that the CP distributed a letter at the conference of the Mapam (United Workers Party) which said that "there are no great differences existing between the United Workers Party and the Communist Party and that there was no reason why they could not unite on a platform dealing with concrete and immediate problems."

Apparently there seems to be a real likelihood that this proposal will be accepted. In the Palestinian dispatches to the Jewish Morning Journal, August 23, there is a brief, unelaborated report that the Mapam and the CP may form a common electoral bloc.

This voluntary, self-Stalinization is a serious blow to the hope that out of the left socialist-Zionist camp would emerge cadres for a real revolutionary socialist party in Palestine.

While this correspondent will not, at this time, venture to predict the election results, he is inclined seriously to doubt that the Mapam will supersede the Mapai as the strongest party. In this connection a glance at the statistics of the last major election is illuminating. Almost two years ago, 194,000 Jewish voters participated in an election to the World Zionist Congress. The Mapai obtained 70,000 votes (almost 36 per cent) and the groups which now compose the Mapam received 48,000 votes (approximately 25 per cent). The CP is not likely to be a vote-getting asset for the Mapam. In its best show-

ing several years ago its ticket garnered only 3000 votes.

STRENGTH OF STALINISTS

The past unpopularity of the Palestinian Stalinists and their numerical weakness should not, however, lead to an underestimation of the influence of Stalinism in the Israeli labor movement. Those who are entranced by figures alone should remind themselves that, on the eve of the Spanish Civil War, the Spanish CP had no more than 500 members. Yet by exploiting the material aid that Russia gave the Spanish Republic they became a dominant voice in government councils. This, without ever attaining a majority of popular support.

This historical fact is adduced here not to create the impression that the Stalinists are on the verge of becoming the dominant force in Israeli life. They are far away from that. It does, however, point up the threat that Stalinism presents when it finds willing political allies in the mass, working-class parties of a country. This they have found in the leadership of the Mapam, despite the undoubted presence in that party of hundreds of fine militants devoted to the working class and the cause of socialism.

Soapbox Statistics

We see that, according to the Magazine Advertising Bureau, the nation's top advertiser is Procter & Gamble, the soap kings.

Their total expenditure was just under \$28 million in 1947. Hastily taking out our slide rule, we find that said sum is 2,800,000,000 cents. Wheeling up the comptometer, we figure that IF every man, woman and child in the U. S. used P&G soap exclusively (a sales manager's dream), and IF every m., w. and c. used one cake of soap a month (some people do), THEN: about two cents of the price on each cake of soap goes for advertising. There are some rough spots in that calculation, but it will serve to give an idea of the social waste (and cost to the consumer) of what the free enterprisers laughingly call "consumer education."

We'll bet we know what the P&G workers would hear if they asked for a two-cent raise: No s--p!