

**Introductory remarks to the theses  
prepared for the third convention of MAPAM**

The Third Convention of MAPAM will be devoted to a bold re-examination of tenets defined by the party in its Haifa Platform, and to which the party subscribed for many years. This thorough inspection of basic principles will encompass important aspects of our socialist outlook and will give expression to the changes which have ensued in our international orientation. However, a re-examination of basic principles, and subsequent changes, must not necessarily invalidate the fundamental postulates of revolutionary socialism, nor does it oblige a general revision of the party platform.

Another equally important task confronts this convention: a careful and critical appraisal of the policies, regarding the State and the Histadrut, currently followed by the party, as well as an evaluation of the experience gained in the past two-year period of participation within the government. An atmosphere of candour and complete freedom of expression prevails as the Central Committee and all the party branches deliberate the above-mentioned issues in preparation for the final convention debate. Neither self-criticism nor the examination of postulates which have not withstood the test of time will daunt us. Even far-reaching criticism, sometimes grossly exaggerated, should be heard with patience and good will. We are all deeply perturbed by the failures of the revolutionary world, and by the signs of degeneration which first became apparent to us at the time of the Prague Trials, and which the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of Soviet Russia made

even more obvious. We have been forging our way in Israel verily on the brink of an abyss, our future and very existence being constantly threatened. Under these conditions, only an atmosphere of good will and tolerance to opinions voiced in the course of the deliberations, will serve to consolidate our ranks and carry us forward to a common conclusion of these, most paramount, issues.

Only the important changes which have taken place within the party in the course of the three years subsequent to the schism within our ranks, have made possible this freedom of debate in an atmosphere both friendly and inspired by a genuine desire for commonly-arrived-at conclusions. Gone are the artificial barriers which once stood between the urban and the rural party members, between the various cultural communities, between members stemming from different immigration periods, between members whose party origins differed, and particularly between the various factions which in the not too distant past existed within the party.

We must fully appreciate the importance of having overcome this tendency to factionalism. With the complete disappearance of the factions from our party life, there have also disappeared the hypocrisy and the inter-factional strife which for so long undermined the collective strength of the party. Today there are no factions in MAPAM. The air has been cleared and a feeling of mutual trust prevails. Each one of us is today certain of the other's good intentions; nor has anyone cause to suspect ulterior motives behind publicly made statements.

Before dealing with the many issues before us, as outlined in the two sections of the theses, I should like to preface them by a few general remarks.

#### A. THE PLACE OF THE PROGNOSIS AND THE ULTIMATE GOAL IN A PARTY PROGRAM — THEN AND NOW

As revolutionary socialists we must not be led astray by the idea that only the pragmatic interests of the hour are of importance and that, by contrast, any ultimate goal can be but a symbol, a vague dream, flickering from out of a misty future. Never in the course of our daily life must we lose sight of our ultimate goal. However, if we must, on the one hand, avoid dedicating all our efforts solely to a pragmatic policy lacking all vision, on the other hand, we must not lose ourselves in day-dreaming of some utopian millenium and so become divorced from the actual struggle. Moreover, the further we find ourselves from the early days of Zionism and Labour Zionism, the more important becomes the real daily struggle for our chosen path. Often the current, concrete struggle overshadows the prognostic aspects of our ideological platform. It is no mere accident, for example, that the primordial days of Zionism were steeped in Herzl's utopian idea of "Altneu-land" (Old-New Land). But Borochof's prognosis clothed the utopian idea in a slightly more realistic cloak. By its very nature it dealt with the designation of a course of territorial concentration — that is, with a goal whose attainment was until then only at an embryonic stage. On the other hand, the concrete struggle was at that time being waged in the diaspora, itself, so that it is for no trivial reason that the then current task was labeled "Gegenwarts Arbeit", or "the work of the present hour".

In respect to the realisation of the Zionist dream, it was natural, then, that in Borochof's day the prognosis was still of paramount importance. Such is not the case today. While Borochof and his colleagues could only estimate and



debate as to how the phenomenon of migration to Israel would in some distant future become an actuality, we, today, find ourselves wholly immersed in a situation wherein wave after wave of immigration sweeps in from various parts of the world. Many matters which in Borochov's day were but an aim, a goal, today constitute the vibrating reality of two million Jews — of which six hundred thousand are organised workers, assembled from far and wide and concentrated in their homeland. Therefore, we must never for a moment lose sight of the goal to which we are striving. And yet, though equipped with a wealth of experience and able to boast of many great achievements, we are today but little occupied with predictions of how and when we will arrive at our much-yearned-for destination.

One part of the theses will be devoted to the questions: a) In what direction is the world going; b) which is the way to attain socialism, and what are the prospects that socialism will emerge victorious, in the struggle between the world's regimes; c) what is the part which our country and our people must play in this struggle?

In another part of the theses I deal with the problems confronting us in our struggle to assure the hegemony of the working class in the process of the realisation of the territorial concentration of our people in its homeland. I must preface this by remarking that in this section I had little to add to what was already said in section 23 of the conclusions stated at the close of the part devoted to this subject. My reasons were as follows: The in-gathering of our people to its homeland, is being accomplished as the nation wages a desperate battle to assure its existence and its future in the face of the grave dangers which surround it. Without losing sight of the goals which we have set for ourselves, we must not forget that the achievement of these goals is to a decided extent dependent upon international developments,

upon the course of the struggle between the two world orders, and upon that which happens in the region about us, the Middle East, and only to a far lesser extent is it dependent upon our will and our ability. For example, one must not underestimate the importance of our critical attitude regarding the Soviet Union's Middle Eastern policy. Furthermore, there is certainly a place for the criticism which we level at the policies which our own State has been following in respect to the surrounding countries. It is nevertheless clear to us that any policy will not be dependent, essentially, upon this or another course of action which our government may take. Even within the Middle East, where our State carries considerable weight, the choice between war and peace is not dependent solely upon our desire in the matter, but it is to a very great extent dependent upon international factors.

If the fate of peace in the Middle East is dependent for the most part upon the battle being waged between the great world powers, then to a far greater extent, will this struggle between the great powers determine the prospects of peace and socialism in the world as a whole.

We must expend, therefore, all our revolutionary zeal to safeguard the hegemony of the working class and to pave the way to the realisation of socialism within our country; we must remain ever loyal to our vision and its destination; yet all care must be taken to weigh the issues carefully before defining the prognosis.

## B. FASHIONABLE ALTERNATIVES TO ZIONISM AND SOCIALISM

There are some who believe that excessive concern with final aims is a sign of radicalism. In our country, only a few years ago, the slogan of "socialism in our day" was



paraded before the public at election time, by very well known reformists. The vision of socialism in our day was put on everyone's doorstep, together with electioneering material of MAPAI. The day after the election, however, the brooms were taken in hand and the vision, together with the slogan and the electioneering material, was swept away.

After the elections it transpired that the game had been rather too dangerous. Distinguished subscribers and loyal citizens of the United States, who were struck with horror both by the spectre of dual loyalty and by the echo of these daring slogans, vigorously demanded at Zionist and non-Zionist meetings, that the mistakes be corrected. The political commentators immediately set the propaganda machine to work calming overseas subscribers. The line was put out that the countries of the big donations were no longer to be considered as "Galut" (exile) but as the "Diaspora" (dispersion). The generous friends of Israel were guaranteed their American citizenship, almost until the very day of the Messiah's arrival. These countries were excluded, theoretically and in practice, from the process of the "Ingathering of the Exiles" (immigration of Jews to Israel). It was explained to them that their position was no different than the dispersion of Jews which had existed during the whole period of Biblical statehood and even before the destruction of the First Temple. Thus their sentiment for the renewed State of Israel was relieved of the sting of personal identification. As a final effort, the MAPAI leader, Ben Gurion, made an attempt, at first sight startling, but not without purpose, to disqualify the Zionist Movement and the term "Zionism". At first glance this seems to be an absurdity, but according to well informed circles the intention was to obscure the differences between Zionists and non-Zionists in America by annulling all personal connection with the State of Israel. Then, from their point of view, both groups would be equal.

Together with the belittlement of the term "Zionism", similar treatment was meted out to the term "Socialism". From the slogan of "socialism in our day" we reached the stage of messianic worship. But the type of Messianism now prevalent is not that which was spread by the Jewish Prophets.

The "prophets", in the present case, are sworn activists who consider the slogan of "brotherhood of peoples" as a political slogan supported only by naive and impractical people. The moral teachings of these "prophets" were adopted as a substitute for socialism. Those who rejected the terms Socialism and Zionism sought, and found, alternatives which would enable them to live in harmony with assimilated American philanthropists.

Even in the original party programme of MAPAI, socialism is identical with the abolition of classes and with the establishment of a classless society devoid of exploiters and exploited. The contemporary heralds of messianism, however, have set their minds on shaping a society wherein the exploiters and the exploited will live in harmony — in the spheres of law, economics, morals, and ideology. Such slogans of the ancient prophets as, "Law and Justice," "Charity and Mercy," all of which are no less important today in men's relationship to fellow men, have been substituted for socialism and the liquidation of classes and exploitation. The champions of the now-fashionable Biblical-morality are, in reality, seeking to obscure the ideological differences between bourgeois liberalism and reformism in its Israeli edition. The way has been opened for a torrent of scepticism and disbelief which is now overwhelming intellectuals, students, and philosophically minded people. The deep disappointment experienced as a result of developments in the socialist countries exacerbate still further the position.



It is not surprising, therefore, that Tel-Aviv clubs and meeting places are overflowing with socialist deserters, who lovingly embrace the new "messianism," now become so fashionable in our country. While these intellectuals now tend to turn up their noses at Marxism, and to lean toward the values of Western democracy — in the upper circles, Marxism has been completely tabooed. In countries such as England, and France, Marxists scientists are not only tolerated but even occupy leading positions in the universities. In our own country, amidst the "Chosen People," there exists, in the higher schools of learning, a sort of brotherly understanding between those who favour theocracy and those who accommodate themselves to Americanism, under the cloak of the above-mentioned "messianism." Any tendency towards Marxist interpretation in history or science is prohibited and the Marxist scientist or intellectual finds the gates of learning closed to him. The mist surrounding the proposed substitutes for scientific Socialism and Zionism is so thick, that much time and effort will have to be invested in order to lay bare the poverty of thought which lies behind all the noise.

*Our movement has strengthened its ideological independence. This independence must be maintained not only in the face of the violators of proletarian democracy and national equality within the Socialist countries, but also in the face of those who violate socialist principles within our own country. The attempt to remedy the weaknesses of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the signs of degeneration revealed in the socialist countries, is being exploited in our country by weak-minded elements who are seeking an excuse for abandoning socialism.*

Unfortunately, signs of retreat have managed to penetrate into our own ranks too. The time has come for our party to bestir itself and to make every effort to consolidate itself. The coming convention is faced by the task of casting

aside the mark of "messianism" covering the spiritual decadence which has recently spread like an epidemic among the enlightened sections of the country. The years following the failure of the 1905 revolution in Russia were years of prosperity for all kinds of decadents, nihilists and God-seekers. We are witnessing something similar in Israel today. These are heydays for a specific type of confused intellectual. I read in "Davar" an article by one of Mapai's intellectuals, who rejoiced at a certain literary attempt made in "Al Hamishmar" to deny Marxism-Leninism. In his opinion, only a socialist Utopia "is worthy of full faith, because, apart from such a Utopia, socialism means Stalin or, at best, Bevan." These arm-chair socialists are prepared to amuse themselves with Utopian and Messianic castles-in-the-air, but are repelled by any real socialism struggling to become a reality. All live socialism, led by men of ordinary flesh and blood, with all the weaknesses and reversals which appear in the process of its struggle to realize its ideals they besmirch as Stalinism or Bevanism. If we will not declare war on these deserters, they will eat away at the very roots of Israel's revolutionary chalutz movement, including MAPAM branches and the communal settlements of the Kibbutz A.tzi — Hashomer Hatzair.

### C. NOT MERE RENUNCIATION BUT DETAILED EXAMINATION AND CRITICISM.

Shortly before the last MAPAI convention, David Ben-Gurion published a party programme draft consisting of over 60 short clauses. Ben-Gurion did not bother to analyse or substantiate his arguments, but in his usual manner, proclaimed them as hard and fast principles summing up the past, enhancing the present and prophesying about the



future of his party. A good deal of space was devoted to the condemnation of the "totalitarian" collective ideology which allegedly holds sway in MAPAM and in the Kibbutz Artzi of Hashomer Hatzair. At the convention itself, Ben-Gurion further elaborated these theories. Among other things, he ruled that apart from MAPAI, no other workers party has the right of existence. Ben-Gurion declared it as his opinion, that the present coalition with MAPAM and Achdut Avoda is nothing but a subterfuge for safeguarding each others interests. The previous coalition with the General Zionists had more achievements to its credit and was more progressive. All these utterances were supposed to serve as an introduction to a future invitation to MAPAM and Achdut Avoda asking them to join MAPAI in an all-round political amalgamation. The total abnegation of our party's right to exist — in the past, present and future — was made at one of MAPAI's very weakest conventions from the point of view of ideological content. The main value of that convention was that it gave a certain amount of expression to the dissatisfaction felt by certain homeless rank and file members with the bureaucratic apparatus and leadership of the party.

We, on our part, have no reasons to go to such extremes in our attitude to MAPAI. At our convention we will not bring forward arguments denying MAPAI's right of existence. We will not reduce MAPAI to a leaf of dry bones in order that it should amalgamate itself with us.

We impose limitations on ourselves not only because we are not in favour of an amalgamation with MAPAI but also because we are eager for the maximum degree of cooperation with it.

I have devoted a few words in this introduction to the various devices used by MAPAI in its retreat from socialist values. My remarks are directed more towards strengthening

our own ranks against the influence of this political "messianism", with its attempt to capture the confused and the despairing, than towards conducting a polemic with MAPAI.

In the following chapters of this thesis it will not be difficult to prove how realistic a progressive coalition, led by the working class parties, is. At the same time, I will be obliged to lay bare the reasons motivating MAPAI and its leadership to divest the coalition government of all content. For over a year we have been combatting these destructive tendencies, which are the cause of increasing tension between ourselves and the majority party. Both in discussions and in written material, we have demanded that these wrongs be corrected; all of which met with no response. We will spare no effort to restore to the coalition the spirit of true cooperation between the parties. The Third Convention of MAPAM will be called upon to sum up these efforts and to draw up the balance sheet.