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A PROFOUND ANALYSIS AND A REALISTIC POLICY

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The 20th Congress of the Communist Party of Israel which was held in Haifa in December 1985 was an important landmark in the difficult struggle of the Israeli Communists. The Congress, which aroused widespread public interest, received unprecedented mass media coverage and was attended by the President of Israel (the Communists were in this respect put, for the first time, on an equal footing with other parties), by prominent public figures and representatives of various political parties and democratic organizations, has demonstrated the growing strength of the CPI and stressed anew its role as an important factor in the country's life.

Our forum was convened at a time of grave international tensions, of a growing threat of nuclear confrontation and of an intensified arms race brought about by the aggressive global policy of US imperialism and the monstrous plan of the Reagan administration to militarize outer space. Washington's imperial ambitions are clearly manifested in the Middle East where a dangerous hotbed of war remains. The Zionist ruling circles in Israel are fully involved in these sinister imperialist schemes—as reflected in the strategic alliance between Israel and the USA. The aggressive policy of the Israeli government, aimed against the Arab national liberation movements and against the Palestinian people, at the continued occupation of the Palestinian territories on the West Bank of the river Jordan, in the Gaza Strip, on the Golan Heights and in the South of Lebanon, is fully backed by Washington. This expansionist policy carries in its wake the imminent danger of a new armed conflagration in the region. This policy of annexation, oppression and colonial settlement has adversely affected Israeli society and produced

an unprecedented economic, social and moral crisis coupled with a growing danger of fascism and unbridled racism.

Under such conditions, the main questions which faced the 20th Congress of our Party were to examine thoroughly the prevailing dangerous situation, to point out ways of establishing durable peace in the Middle East based on a just solution of the Palestinian problem and to expose the roots and causes of the crisis gripping Israeli society. The Congress was to sum up the CPI's rich experience and to show how the Party would continue mobilizing new sections of the people for the struggle to bring about a radical change in Israel's official course and in its attitude to the policy of peace and national independence. The discussion also dealt with promoting joint action by the workers in defence of their rights and wages and against unemployment; setting up a broad militant front against the danger of fascism and the spreading poison of racism; and rebuffing the shameful policy of national discrimination and oppression directed against the Arab population of Israel. Last but not least, the Congress advanced the task of strengthening the Party ideologically, politically and organizationally so that it could cope better with its challenges and with its immediate tasks linked inseparably with the revolutionary, Marxist-Leninist strategic goals of the Communists. Two months prior to the Congress, the CPI Central Committee published its draft report to be submitted to the Congress. The draft report was discussed in a comprehensive and concerned manner in all Party organizations.

Comrade Meir Vilner, General Secretary of the CPI Central Committee, delivered the Central Committee's report to the Congress. The report included a profound analysis of the various developments that had occurred since the 19th Party Congress in 1981 and of a number of ideological questions, laid down basic guidelines related to the future work and defined the immediate and long-term tasks and goals of the Communist Party. Eighty-two delegates (out of the 615 elected to attend the Congress) took part in the lively discussion of many major issues related to the Party's ideology, policy and overall work. Drawing on their experience in grassroots Party organizations, the speakers stressed the need to overcome shortcomings in order to advance the work of the Party and intensify its struggle. Marked by a bold spirit of criticism and self-criticism, the deliberations of the Congress demonstrated the ideological, political and organizational unity of the Communist Party of Israel.

Special attention was focused at the Party forum on the problem of war and peace and on the urgent need to promote and intensify a concerted struggle for peace. The summit meeting in Geneva and the constructive Soviet peace initiatives have produced new effective instruments for countering the aggressive policy and the nuclear madness of the Reagan administration, for stopping the arms race and improving the international climate. Aside from declaring its appreciation of and support for the consistent policy of the Soviet Union aimed at preventing nuclear war, curbing the wasteful arms race and strengthening peaceful coexistence, the 20th Congress of the CPI called upon the country's peace forces to step up their struggle for Israeli withdrawal from the catastrophic strategic alliance with the United States, for transforming the Middle East into a nuclear-free zone and above all for bringing the Israeli government to accede to the Treaty on Nuclear Non-Proliferation which it still refuses to sign.

The Congress assessed the results and the repercussions of the US-Israeli aggression against Lebanon in June 1982. It was emphasized that despite the casualties, destruction and massacres, despite the methods of extermination and the scorched earth policy applied by the aggressors, this war was a complete failure since it did not attain any of its basic aims:

— the war did not succeed in liquidating the national existence of the Palestinian people or the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), its legitimate representative. The invaders proved unable to force them to cease their struggle. The Palestinian problem remains at the heart of the Israeli-Arab conflict in the Middle East;

— the aggressors failed to impose on Lebanon the rule of the fascist Phalangists, agents of US imperialism and of the ruling Zionist establishment;

— the war did not succeed in toppling the anti-imperialist regime in Syria or even in forcing it to abandon its independent policy and its relations of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union;

— finally, the hostilities in Lebanon have demonstrated that US imperialism is unable to make the peoples of the region bow to its pressure and that the pro-imperialist Zionist establishment is powerless to “solve” the Palestinian problem by force of arms or impose its will on the Lebanese people or the other neighbouring Arab peoples.

On the other hand, a popular mass movement against the war in Lebanon developed in Israel. For the first time in the

country's history the Communist Party was not alone in its opposition to and struggle against this aggression, as had been the case in the previous aggressive wars. The truth, however, is that at first the Communists and their allies in the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality were the only ones who opposed the reckless adventure in Lebanon. But as the heroic resistance of the Lebanese patriotic forces and the Palestinians gained strength and as the anti-war activities of the Israeli Communists and their allies who boldly explained the causes, goals and nature of the war to the masses assumed increasingly impressive scope, various other circles and organizations launched protest actions which gradually developed into a mass anti-war movement. The Communists played the most active and sometimes the decisive role. Sustained efforts were exerted by our Party—and not without success—to promote the unity of the peace forces and to enrich their correct political vision.

Some Zionist activists in the various anti-war currents tried, as usual, to split the struggle on an ideological basis, claiming that it was impossible to cooperate with those who opposed Zionism. This was a transparent attempt to isolate the Communists and the Arab population of Israel and thus objectively weaken the anti-war movement. Our Party opposed vigorously this anti-communist attitude and advocated the broadest possible unity of all those interested in stopping the criminal war irrespective of the ideological differences or party affiliation. The appeal did not fall on deaf ears, and the anti-war movement grew stronger. The CPI's vigorous involvement enabled it to reach new sections of the population, working to overcome their prejudice and distorted ideas regarding the communist positions and policies.

The lessons of the Lebanese adventure, its repercussions and the struggle against it have led many Israelis to reassess the nature of the previous aggressive wars and to question the policies of the Zionist establishment, especially towards the Palestinian people and the neighbouring Arab countries.