

CHAPTER IV

INDEPENDENCE AND NEUTRALITY

1. THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST NEUTRALITY

This chapter is a natural continuation of the previous one. Our party has never ceased to declare that neutrality is one of the chief conditions for our country's progress towards full independence. Those responsible for our government's policy confront us with all sorts of arguments. I will deal with the main ones in the following pages. These arguments are roughly as follows :

There is no such thing as a country which is completely neutral. Different countries, which declare their neutrality, do so only so long as it suits them. At the same time, they leave the door open for further maneuvers, by permitting a certain amount of dependence on one of the great powers, to the extent that it serves their interests.

In these days there is virtually no country which is economically autarchic and which does not have strong mutual ties with other countries, resulting in mutual and sometimes even one-sided dependence. Neutrality is out of the question for a country "Gathering in its Exiles" and surrounded by enemies. Neutrality is suitable for a rich country like Switzerland, which serves as a meeting-place and bargaining-center, both in days of peace and of war. Others need this country more than it needs them. The

position of our country is entirely different. It is dependent on the help of America and its Jews. Neutrality will adversely affect the assistance which is given to us from across the sea. Finally, the argument is heard that in the Middle East the slogan of neutrality is a pretext for the Soviet Union for luring countries away from Western influence and for ensnaring them in the net of Communist power politics...

I do not want to give a hasty answer to these arguments. I will try to clarify the problems before us by examining the roots of the tension in the Middle East and the factors which can alleviate the present position. The neutrality of Switzerland or Austria is tolerated by both East and West, despite the fact that, from a social and culture point of view, both countries tend strongly to the Western system. It is clear therefore that ideological sympathies, one way or another, are not identical with political status. We have never been opposed to furthering the ties of friendship with individual countries, such as France or Italy, to the benefit of both sides. We most use every possibility for acquiring defensive equipment without having to pay for it by our country's enslavement. What we demand is that our policy-makers avoid one-sided dependence, as is successfully achieved by Austria and Switzerland, especially in view of the fact that our position is infinitely graver, due to the rivalry between the two blocs in the Middle East. The dangers facing us are of such a magnitude as to endanger our future existence. We (of MAPAM) are prepared to be more modest in our demands. We will continue to struggle for the neutrality of our country and for the neutrality of the Middle East as a whole but, for the moment, we demand from those responsible for our country's policy; first of all, non-interference in the struggle between the rival blocs which is

centered sometimes around Jordan and sometimes around Syria and which is growing fiercer daily. The dangers facing us from excessive dependence on American policy and strategy in the Middle East are so great, that all the real and imaginary benefits which we hope to derive are not equal to the undoubted disadvantages.

There was a time when our statesmen, although not prepared to commit themselves to neutrality, did not want to stick their necks out too far. They sought a middle way, such as non-identification between the two blocs and non-intervention in the struggle going on between them. The country's leaders, while dissociating themselves from neutrality, claimed that they will not give up the struggle for maximum independence. They argued that a preference for American friendship is not identical with losing one's independence, or becoming tied up in military pacts. Furthermore, they argued that the special ties between ourselves and America, on account of the help received from that government and from the Jews there, does not relieve us of the necessity of maintaining good relations with the socialist countries and, in particular, with the Soviet Union, especially in view of the rising influence of these countries in Middle East affairs and the fact that there are millions of Jews living in them.

When the first faint echos of the Eisenhower Doctrine reached Israel, long before the arrival of Eisenhower's emissary, in the Histadrut newspaper "Davar" there appeared a whole series of articles on this subject, including an editorial. All the articles, without exception, were critical of accepting the Eisenhower Doctrine. MAPAM, also, said that we must beware of fresh entanglements and of doing anything which will lead to a sharpening of relations with the Soviet Union. Everybody expressed the same fear that the acceptance of the anti-Soviet doctrine by Israel would aggravate still

further the position of the Jews in the Soviet Union and endanger still more any future possibility of their immigration to Israel.

At that time the MAPAI leaders also sought to avoid being involved in the struggle between the rival blocs; nor did they doubt that such a policy of non-intervention was possible without in any way adversely influencing our close relations with American Jewry, or even our relations with the American government.

The 24-hour visit of an American emissary was sufficient to change everything from top to bottom. This special messenger's power of persuasion was apparently so great, that he succeeded overnight in making our leading politicians turn a somersault. It will not be far from the truth if we say that the opposition to the blandishments of the Eisenhower Doctrine and additional dependence on America was weak enough to start with. The ground was prepared beforehand for the sudden change. When the test came, those who sneered at neutrality, quickly turned their backs on independence and all the dangers which they themselves had previously declared to be inherent in the Eisenhower Doctrine. No great efforts were needed for them to overcome their inhibitions and accept the Doctrine.

2. WE HAVE NOT DESPAIRED OF OUR STRUGGLE WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT

It is well known that our party does not draw hasty conclusions about its rivals among the working class Zionist section of the community, nor does it easily give up hope in the struggle for Israel's independence. Without weakening our struggle against the policy of submission followed by the country's leaders, we hesitated to leave the government, even after the partial acceptance of the Eisen-

hower Doctrine. When a decision was actually taken, we said, and we are still of the same opinion, that adherence to this political declaration is still a long way from enslavement. We believe that we still have a possibility of fighting against the signing of any military pacts with one of the Powers, which will lead to the loss of our independence. We reject the charges of the Soviet propaganda machine, denouncing Israel as a blind tool in the hands of American policy. We therefore do not despair of our struggle within the government.

3. THE UNFAIR DISCRIMINATION OF SOVIET PROPAGANDA

Soviet statesmen, and in their wake, that incorrigible enemy of Zion, MAKI, are today behaving towards Israel as if the country had lost all vestiges of independence. Our country is sometimes described by Soviet diplomats in the United Nations and by the Soviet propaganda machine, as being the worst of the imperialist satellites; worse than Jordan or Lebanon! The Soviet spokesmen readily admit that these countries have a chance of retrieving themselves and, despite their full adherence to the Eisenhower Doctrine, Soviet diplomacy continues to court them and shower them with declarations of friendship.

The Soviet representative in the United Nations has taken under his wing not only Syria any Egypt, but also every Arab state which has a quarrel with Israel. They blandly justify any provocation committed against us, while every reaction on our part is automatically denounced by them as an "aggressive plot". Even the complaints of the Jordan government are supported by them, and an act so "aggressive" as the planting of trees in the no-man's land on the Mount of Olives is interpreted by them as an act

of provocation, dictated to us, of course, in secret, by the American State Department.

This unrestrained vilification does much to weaken the efforts of those forces in our country which are struggling for the neutralisation of Israel and the Middle East as a whole. The antagonistic propaganda of the Soviet Union can mislead many people of goodwill into believing that there is no point in struggling for independence. They may reach the conclusion that the Soviet Union prefers, above all, the friendship of those countries and peoples which can help them to gain a stronger strategic foothold in the Middle East.

4. TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS OR A POLICY BASED ON PRINCIPLES ?

We can at least allow ourselves to be comforted by the assumption that the anti-Israeli campaign of the Soviet propaganda machine is based on tactical considerations and not on principles. When Israel's Foreign Minister declared at the United Nations that we have no intentions of attacking our neighbors, Syria among them, providing of course that they will leave us in peace, the Soviets immediately dropped the name of Israel from the list of countries which, in their opinion, are conspiring to attack Syria. The exclusion of Israel may, of course, be only temporary. For the moment however, we have ceased to be target No. 1 in the Cold War. We are convinced that eventually the present anti-Israeli tactics of the Soviet statesmen will be replaced by a policy more principled and faithful to their declared peace-offensive. We are reminded of the years immediately following the establishment of the State, when the Soviet Union was most careful not to cause the young State of Israel any harm in the interna-

tional arena. Even after our leaders began to abandon the policy of non-identification with either of the two blocs, the Soviet Union followed the same policy. Soviet policy today towards Israel is in direct contradiction to the policy pursued by them during the first years of our independence. Nevertheless, there is no reason whatsoever to assume that this charge is permanent. Sooner or later, it will pass and we, for our part, must do everything in our power to hasten its demise. We must struggle for a change for the better, although at present the picture is very black.

We cannot ignore the fact that the Bandung Resolution, which renewed the demand for the implementation of the 1947 Partition Plan, was adopted by the Asiatic and African peoples, with the knowledge and support of the Communist world and with the complete boycott of Israel. The Asiatic part of the Communist world gave its most enthusiastic support to the anti-Israeli resolutions. MAPAM fights for the neutrality of the Middle East and for the full political independence of the State of Israel. MAPAM has always sought to foster friendship with the Soviet Union, even in these difficult days. Precisely for these reasons, it is MAPAM's duty to protest in the strongest possible terms against the opportunistic, anti-Israeli policy of the Soviet Union. We emphatically demand from the Soviet Union a policy of neutrality towards the two sides involved in the Jewish-Arab conflict. We still maintain that the enmity shown by Soviet propaganda against Israel is only temporary.

5. MIDDLE EAST NEUTRALITY AND ARAB-JEWISH AGREEMENT

We have lately had opportunities of meeting Communists of a different type from those in our own country. We met Communists who knew how to free themselves completely

from servitude to the dogmatic Cominform slogans of the last years of Stalin's regime. Unlike our local MAKI people, they were not persecuted by a self-hate complex. They were blessed with a quality totally unknown to MAKI; their minds were open to everything and they were not ashamed to be impressed with what they heard and saw. It is not surprising that these Communists are as far removed from the MAKIsts, as East is from West, notwithstanding their firm adherence to the principles of Communism.

In our meetings with these people, the question was often asked: What comes first, neutralisation of the area and the abrogation of the Baghdad pact or Jewish-Arab agreement. We on our part did not go to extremes. We started out from the assumption that a Jewish-Arab agreement is no less important in guaranteeing peace in the Middle East than is an agreement between the 4 Powers for the abrogation of pacts, the cessation of the arms race and the promise of independence to the area as a whole. Not only are these two demands of equal importance, but one is dependent on the other. *The independence of the Middle East and its exclusion from military pacts, the arms race and the various intrigues of the Big Powers, will not be guaranteed so long as there is no peace settlement between Arabs and Jews.* The Communists to whom we talked, at first claimed that we over-emphasise the importance of peace between ourselves and the Arabs because of subjective reasons. They argued that an unprejudiced investigation of the causes of tension in the Middle East, must lead to the conclusion that an agreement between the 4 Powers, which will include the abrogation of aggressive pacts, the cessation of the arms race and the guaranteeing of the area's independence, is not only more important than an Arab-Jewish agreement but is even its precondition.

They intimated that Arab-Jewish peace is in the nature of a part, while an agreement between the Four Powers represents the *whole*, and serves as a key to peace in the Middle East, both externally and internally. In these discussions they did not tire of emphasising the importance of our dealing justly with the Arab minority in Israel, as a contribution towards reducing tension on the borders and in the Middle East as a whole. They emphasised that a change of policy towards the Arab minority is a precondition in ensuring that a future peace settlement between Arabs and Jews will find its place in a general agreement between the Four Powers on Middle East matters.

We asked these people several questions which they found difficult to answer. We pointed out that the Soviet Union had not succeeded in reaching an agreement among the Big Powers concerning Middle East affairs, despite the enormous pressure which she has exerted. Despite all the Soviet's efforts, the imperialist bloc still believes that it has the material political means to put a stop to the spread of Soviet influence. The Communist bloc has not understood that the incitement and exploitation of hatred for Zionism and the State of Israel was first used by the British and now by other Imperialist Powers in Iraq, Saudi-Arabia, Jordan and Lebanon, as the best means of strengthening their influence in the Middle East and uniting the different countries against the Soviet Union. We argued that the absence of a peace settlement between ourselves and the neighbouring countries limits still further the independence of the rival parties. All the Middle East countries are, as a result, living in a state of neither war nor peace. Expenditure on arms and the permanent tension hinder the social and economic progress of all these countries, without exception. We pointed out that as a result of the tension between Israel and the Arab states,

the various military pacts are strengthened and that they threaten not only the peace of Israel but that of the area and the world as a whole.

We emphasised in these discussions that despite the importance of Arab-Jewish agreement, we did not demand from them that preference be given to a peace settlement between Arabs and Jews over a general settlement between the Four Powers. We did demand, however, that the Soviet Union and the different Communist parties call a halt in their policy of shunning Arab-Jewish peace negotiations. This attitude stems from opportunistic political reasons which have nothing in common, whatsoever, with a logical and consistent peace policy. In the long run, it will weaken the prospects of peace in the Middle East. We pointed out that there are Arab Communist parties whose representatives have declared at Council meetings of the World Peace Movement that the demand for direct negotiations between Israel and the Arab states serves only the interests of the imperialists.

6. THE SHORTSIGHTEDNESS OF ISRAEL'S LEADERS

We must admit that in these discussions there was one question posed by our honest and openminded opponents which we could not answer. We were unable to explain why Israel's leaders have been so shortsighted in their treatment of the Arab minority. On more than one occasion we managed to convince them that an Arab-Jewish agreement was no less important than one between the Great Powers. They were even prepared to agree that to a great extent the two were interdependent. They understood that the problem facing us was no less important than the general problem affecting the area as a whole

and that the solution of one was the precondition for the solution of the other. They understood our demand that the institutions of the World Peace Movement must make greater efforts than previously, in bringing the two sides together. They even admitted that we have a basis for complaint in the opportunistic evasion by the Soviet delegates and the Arab delegations in the World Peace Movement in dealing sincerely with the Jewish-Arab problem.

There were a number of things, however, which we ourselves were unable to explain, such as the apathetic attitude of Israel's leaders to the question of a Four Power agreement, their acceptance — even if partial — of the Eisenhower Doctrine, their attitude to the Arab minority, and the policy of activism adopted towards our neighbours. We were unable to point out even one sincere effort made by Israel's leaders to reduce tension between Israel and its neighbours. More than once we were told, for example, that after every declaration in favour of peace made by Israel, there occurs some sort of reprisal raid, such as that which occurred at Kineret. Although we have supported a policy of active defense and considered many of the punitive reprisals made by Israel as being necessary, we felt, in these discussions, that the arguments used against us were not always without basis and that the declarations in favour of peace made by our leaders, were not always consistent with their actual deeds.

To our regret our leaders are incapable of coordinating support for a Four Power agreement and the neutralisation of the area, with the mobilisation of sympathy and support for direct Arab-Jewish negotiations and for the recognition of the sovereignty of our country and its borders. I fear that I will not be far from the truth in saying that the apathy of Israel's leaders, with regard to the possibility of a Four Power agreement, goes hand in hand

with their defeatist scepticism of the possibility of peace negotiations and of the prospects of reducing tension between ourselves and our neighbours. It is this lack of faith which prevents them from making a really serious contribution to improving conditions. To this has to be added their natural inclinations to the West and the increasing anti-communist mentality, in recent years, of MAPAI circles. All these factors prevent our leaders from any bold thinking in favour of the neutralisation of the Middle East and of the State of Israel.

7. NON-IDENTIFICATION IS A PRACTICAL POLICY

We do not expect our leaders to become fiery adherents of the Soviet system overnight, nor do we expect them to end their adherence to Western democracy. *All that we demand is a return to the policy pursued at the time of the State's establishment. We demand a return to the policy of non-intervention and non-identification with the rival blocks and a renewal of the policy of fostering friendship with both. We demand that same independent stand which united us all in the days of the provisional government and the establishment of the State of Israel.* MAPAI leaders have up to now not succeeded in explaining to us why such a policy was possible then, at a time when our very life was at stake, when Britain's Bevin had despatched the Arab armies to annihilate us and the State Department threatened us with sanctions if we penetrated further than Beer-Sheba. They have not consented to explain to us why such a policy of non-identification is now impossible, although our strength has grown enormously and the dangers of one-sided dependence likewise. They owe us an explanation as to why in the days of the War of Liberation they did not submit to American threats of an embargo

or to the machinations of Bernadotte, while today our delegates at the United Nations raise their hands automatically at the behest of the State Department. The truth is that thanks to our policy of non-identification and our pride and dignity in standing up to the great and mighty, American Jewry raised itself to a state of unparalleled enthusiasm for the young State of Israel. Their material and moral support increased enormously.

Today, at a time when Israel accepts the Eisenhower Doctrine, those same Jews are subject to the dual-loyalty complex. A pro-Western mentality, anti-Communist prejudice and short-sighted opportunism have all combined together and have more influence on the MAPAI leaders than the real and true interests of the State of Israel. It is interesting to note that, despite differences in outlook, Zionists such as Dr. Goldmann, Dr. Abba Hillel Silver and Dr. Neumann, who have always been treated with contempt by MAPAI, show a greater degree of independence with regard to the State Department and more understanding for the necessity of the neutralisation of the Middle East and for Israel's independence, than do the MAPAI leaders themselves. It is a figment of the imagination to allege that the Jews of America demanded our adherence to the Eisenhower Doctrine. American Jewish solidarity with Israel, like that of the Jews the world over, will grow to the extent that they feel proud of our courage and dignity. *The loss of independence by the State of Israel bears in its train the humiliation and servitude of the Jews in the Galut. This the Jewish masses understand, and there is no doubt, that they would proudly stand as one with the Jewish State, were it to defend its independence and refuse to submit to the dictates of the Great Powers.*

8. THE STRUGGLE FOR A SOLUTION

In protesting against the anti-Israeli policy of the Soviet Union and its refusal to consider our needs, we cannot overlook the responsibility resting on our own politicians for the state of isolation in which we find ourselves and for the tense situation between ourselves and our neighbours. We have every reason to dissociate ourselves from Soviet policy, before and after the Sinai campaign and before and after our adherence to the Eisenhower Doctrine. There are, however, grounds for believing that the Soviet declaration in favour of a Four Power agreement, which would include the independence of the whole area and non-intervention in the internal affairs of the different countries, could have broken the ice in the stalemate between Israel and the Soviet Union. This could have been the case, had Israel's leaders not adopted such a cold and apathetic attitude. The proposals of the Soviet Union, that an agreement between the Four Powers should also include proposals for a peace settlement between ourselves and the Arab states, are not necessarily to our disadvantage.

We have proved more than once that we are capable of resisting outside pressure, seeking to force upon us a solution which is not to our good. We have stood up to British pressure and even to American, and we can do so once again. We will not hesitate to defend our territorial integrity by all the means at our disposal. It is not out of the question that the very participation of the Soviet Union in guaranteeing the peace and independence of the Middle East, is capable, especially in view of our own identical interests, of restoring their former attitude of friendliness towards us, as in the early years of the State.

Can it be said that America is pampering us? America is today sending arms to Jordan and Saudi-Arabia, arms

which are intended, first and foremost, for use against us. This, even after our adherence to the Eisenhower Doctrine. Israel had no reasons, whatsoever, for declaring its adherence to a doctrine which aims at ensuring imperialist domination over the internal affairs of the Middle East peoples and their submission to the needs of anti-Soviet schemes. If the government knew how to dissociate itself from the Baghdad Pact, it is even more vital that we should know how to extricate ourselves and the Middle East from the eve-of-war situation in which we find ourselves. Is there a grain of truth in the assumption that we can build our country by tying it up with one of the rival blocs struggling for hegemony in the Middle East? What prevented us, therefore, from reacting favourably to the suggestion of a Four Power agreement which would reduce tension in the area and exclude all its peoples, including ourselves, from the sphere of the Cold War and Big Power Politics?

9. SUMMARY

MAPAM must demand that the government make all efforts possible to reach a peace agreement with the Arabs. The government must adopt a favourable attitude to an agreement between the Four Powers and must demand guarantees from the United Nations and from the Four Powers in respect to our national sovereignty and the integrity of our territory. Our government must struggle for the independence and neutrality of the Middle East and its exclusion from Big Power politics. We declare in no ambiguous terms, that the exclusion of the Middle East from aggressive pacts and the arms race, is not only in the interests of the area but in Israel's interest too. The independence of the zone, and of the countries within it, will serve as a further step in our own country's progress

towards independence. We are vitally interested, as patriots and as internationalists, in the abolition of all military pacts and arms supplies. The cessation of the arms race will enable the peoples of the Middle East to devote their energy to economic development and social progress. The economic and social development of the Middle East, under conditions of peace, will open up for our country fresh possibilities of mutual help, to the benefit of the national interests of both sides.

I repeat that the antagonistic attitude of the Soviet government to the State of Israel is not something unchangeable, that it is but a temporary phenomenon and that the former friendly attitude can be restored.

Not everything is dependent on us, and it may happen that our efforts will not bear fruit for many a day. It is of utmost importance, however, that we do everything in our power to break down the barriers between ourselves and the Soviet Union. *Under all circumstances will we defend ourselves and our vital interests, but our future will not be assured so long as we have not won the friendship of all peoples, both East and West, and above all the goodwill of our neighbours, the peoples in the Middle East.*

The necessity for independence and neutrality, which must form the basis of government policy, is being increasingly understood. Apart from ourselves, this approach is finding supporters among members of all the government parties. On entering the government, we guaranteed ourselves the right to struggle for our country's independence and neutrality, at the same time striving to achieve the maximum degree of cooperation with our partners.

We must struggle under all conditions, for the realisation of these principles and for a change in policy of the present government.