

Summary of the report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Israel to the 25th Congress

31 May – 2 June 2007

Chapter 1: Corporate globalization and the struggle against it

The globalization of capital and the rapid growth of modern industry, technology, information systems and media have been exploited by capital in an attempt to concentrate the control of resources, capital and wage labor. But this has also created the material basis for the international workers' solidarity exemplified in Marx and Engels' slogan: "Workers of the world, unite!"

The adoption of the neo-liberal model has aggravated socioeconomic inequality, both within nations and between rich and poor countries, to an unprecedented level, while increasing the numbers of unemployed people, poor workers, women, children and older people living in miserable conditions. In the first decade of the 21st century, wealth continues to be concentrated in the hands of the two hundred largest multinational corporations – that is, in the hands of a few hundred billionaires – while the majority of humanity is forced to live in poverty, lacking basic necessities such as clean water, food, housing, schools and hospitals.

The US administration continues to sabotage all attempts to reach meaningful international agreement on ways to curtail global warming (the greenhouse effect), thus endangering the very existence of the human race on Earth. The Bush Administration cynically exploits the concept of democracy in an attempt to conceal a cruel policy of conquest, destruction of social rights and impingement on democratic rights within the USA. "The war on terror" is the latest phase of the US attempt to create a "new world order". In this order the US has assumed the right to intervene anywhere, including the Middle East, and change the way public life is organized; this intervention can come in the form of military action as well as the training of security forces in various countries. The US administration continues to inflate military spending, thus spurring the world arms race, which now includes the development of weapons of mass destruction, missile systems and spy satellites.

"The war on terror" declared by the Bush Administration is not a war in defense of democracy, but a war of terror against democracy, civil rights and social safety nets.

Unlike the American administration and those who cooperate with it, our Communist Party can denounce terrorism without hypocrisy. The CPI is among the forces who stand together across the world in principled ideological, political and ethical opposition to terrorism in all its forms, whether state, organizational or individual; we are against the terrorism whose weapons are “smart bombs” and the starvation and imprisonment of entire peoples and against the terrorism which uses the weapon of suicide. As opposed to state terror, individual and group terror rises from the swamps of poverty, hunger, oppression, exploitation, humiliation and occupation; this is why these swamps must be dried up. This can only be done if the workers and the peoples of the world redesign the world order in such a way that it serves to defend the peoples, the rights of the workers and democracy from the tyranny of gigantic corporations and from the aggressive strategy of the US administration.

The Bush Administration and the occupation of Iraq

In 2003 the Bush Administration began a war of aggression and conquered Iraq. Like the war in Afghanistan, the war in Iraq was planned to secure high profits, control of natural resources and markets, and a comparative advantage over the foreign competitors of the American petroleum and arms corporations. But the peoples of the world are manifesting a growing opposition to the war. Especially important is the widespread opposition to the war within the US itself and the sharp fall in the popularity of President Bush which has followed it.

The threats the Bush Administration and its allies have been lobbying at Iran and Syria are the third phase of the long-term strategy of the American administration to strengthen its control of the Middle East, even if the price is the destruction of nations and the starvation of peoples. The European Union, playing the role of an imperialist power, has more than once toed the American line. But it is also attempting to counter American power by annexing the nations of the region into a European market controlled by the multinational corporations headquartered in Europe.

In the first decade of the 21st century the American administration continues to maintain an axis of Arab regimes obedient to its policy. This axis, which includes Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and the Gulf Emirates, sometimes also manages to coordinate action with Israel, as was seen during the Second Lebanon War (2006). The alliance between Israel and Turkey is growing closer, despite the rise to power of the Islamic party in Turkey. These two axes form bulwarks of American influence and make it possible for the US to prepare further war.

Under these conditions the CPI will continue to warn the Israeli people and the peoples of the world of the threat posed by the Bush Administration’s willingness to use military – and even nuclear – force to vanquish Iran and pressure Syria. The US pronouncements that it is considering the use of its own nuclear weapons and its uncritical support of the first nuclear power in the Middle East (Israel) expose its current *casus belli* in the Middle East – preventing Iran from procuring and stockpiling nuclear armaments –as pure hypocrisy.

Democratic changes in the world

The growing poverty around the world and the continued aggression of the American administration led to the growth of fundamentalist movements. At the same time, the suicide bombings which have been carried out around the world and the statements threatening the elimination of Israel or the United States have only served to assist the American administration in its attempts to garner support for its wars; thus, they have caused direct harm to the struggle to save the peoples from poverty and the destructive dependency on multinational corporations. In this way imperialism and fundamentalism feed on each other.

But a look at today's world does not reveal only imperialist warfare and colonial occupation. In the last few years important democratic changes have occurred in many countries of Latin America. The peoples of Brazil, Bolivia, Venezuela, Chile and Argentina have elected presidents who stand opposed to Washington's plans and are acting to carry out social reform and nationalize natural resources. In the European Union class struggle has flared up against the combined attack of capital and state on the rights of workers and young people. In referenda held in June 2005 the peoples of France and the Netherlands said "no" to the proposed European constitution and thus prevented its passage, which would have been greatly detrimental to workers' rights.

The resistance to corporate globalization

The growing opposition to globalization has crystallized in recent years in resistance to the US policy of war and to its neo-liberal economic policy, dictated to the countries of the world by the International Monetary Fund.

The wave of struggle and protest against corporate globalization, imperialism, and neo-liberalism and for independence and social justice is of great importance. This wave finds expression on three main planes: 1. The growing resistance of states and governments in the Third World to corporate globalization; 2. Deepening popular struggles in the Third World as well as in the advanced capitalist countries against globalization and imperialism; 3. Workers' struggles in every country against the privatization of water and electricity utilities, media, transportation, education and health.

The World Social Forum, serving as a frame for the global struggle against corporate globalization, meets yearly. The WSF and the Social Fora active around the world are the most visible political and organizational expression of the new generation of social activists, which poses a serious challenge to neo-liberalism. These activists stand opposed to those who place profits above people's needs, the environment and human rights.

The anti-globalization movement is still in its early stages in Israel. The CPI is the only party in Israel that states an unequivocal rejection of corporate globalization and neo-liberalism and campaigns publicly against these. The fact that aside from the CPI and its partners in the DFPE no party represented in the Knesset supports this attitude shows how problematic it is to define Israeli political bodies as "left".

The CPI's involvement in the intensification of the struggle within Israel against occupation, privatization and neo-liberal policies, as well as against the alliance with American imperialism, will form a contribution to the global struggle against corporate globalization and the freedom of the workers and the peoples.

Chapter 2: Political developments since the 24th Congress

Developments in the region

The aggressive policy of the Bush Administration and the band of “neo-conservatives” that surrounds him, which aims to deepen the control of American corporations over the Middle East’s oil reserves and to guarantee super-profits for oil and arms corporations, is the biggest threat to the peaceful future of the peoples of the area, including the people of Israel.

The CPI took an unequivocal stance against the war in Iraq from the first moment. At the end of March 2003 the CPI, together with its partners in the DFPE, organized Jewish-Arab demonstrations in Haifa, Nazareth and Tel Aviv demanding immediate US withdrawal from Iraq.

Israeli governments have showed criminal neglect for the security of Israeli citizens by following any and all orders from Washington and joining the military adventures of the Bush Administration. This trend became clearly visible during the Second Lebanon War (July-August 2006) and has remained so ever since, as Israeli officials proclaim their readiness to attack Iran, even at the risk of nuclear war.

The forces of peace in the world are acting to prevent the war against Iran which is being planned by the Bush government together with Israel and other states. At the same time, the forces of peace demand that the entire Middle East become a region free of nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction. The CPI is acting to engage the Israeli public in the achievement of these important goals. The CPI has unequivocally condemned the statements of Iranian President Ahmadinejad in which he denied the Holocaust of the Jews under Nazi Germany as well as Israel’s right to exist. These statements are exploited by the rulers of the USA and Israel to justify their preparations for war on Iran.

The Bush Administration is attempting to justify its belligerent policy as an effort to stop terrorism and prevent the development of nuclear weapons by nations such as Iran and Iraq. But following the occupation of Iraq the Bush Administration itself admitted that no stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction – the declared reason for war – had been found. In September 2006 a report of the American intelligence agencies found that the occupation of Iraq had actually encouraged the spread of terrorism. This official report demolished the Bush Administration’s argument that terror could be stopped through war.

The arms race and its dangers

The Bush Administration’s excuses for war are obvious nonsense; but this does not necessarily make nuclear war any less likely.

In October 2003 the media carried stories about the Israeli Navy’s purchase of Harpoon cruise missiles, which can carry nuclear warheads, from the United

States. This completes Israel's capability to launch nuclear strikes from land, air and sea. These same news stories also announced that the US expects Israel to be the first to drop a bomb on an Iranian nuclear facility, regardless of the fact that the expected Iranian reaction is a barrage of missiles toward Israel. As part of the preparations for a military attack on Iran, the US has equipped Israel with 500 "earth-penetrating" bombs weighing one ton each, in addition to 2500 ordinary bombs, also weighing one ton each (*Ha'aretz*, 21/9/04). Incidentally, these bombs were used during the Second Lebanon War, when Israeli Air Force planes dropped "bunker-busting" bombs on Beirut.

Israel's armament with nuclear weapons and the missiles capable of launching them is a danger to the peoples of the area; the willing participation of the Israeli government in the aggressive nuclear plans of the USA spells out a death sentence for the population of Israel. The CPI has argued time and again, including in an appeal to the Communist Party of the USA and the Tudeh Party of Iran, that the interest of all peoples lies in the complete rejection of any cynical attempt to turn the Middle East into a testing ground for nuclear war. What the peoples need is complete neutralization of the entire nuclear stockpile in the Middle East and prevention of the development and production of all weapons of mass destruction.

Sharon and his policy

The policy set by Ariel Sharon between his election to the premiership in February 2001 and the onset of the illness which cut his career short combined a military and political *Diktat* to the Palestinians and rejection of the demand for an independent Palestinian state with a vicious neo-liberal programme attacking workers, women, the Arab population, children and other social groups.

The CPI rejected the "Roadmap to Peace" (April 2003) as a ploy designed to postpone negotiations on final status between Israelis and Palestinians and a diplomatic attempt to "balance" the bloody war conducted by the US in Iraq. The CPI warned that under the auspices of the "Roadmap" the Sharon government would continue its acts of murder and other war crimes against the Palestinian people. Events have borne out this assessment.

The CPI suspected that Sharon's talk about a "Palestinian state" concealed a vision of a crippled creature composed of enclaves, separated and surrounded by "settlement blocs" to be annexed to Israel. The CPI adduced that Sharon was gift-wrapping his plans for annexation in words designed to appease the growing public support for the idea of two states, Israel and Palestine. In a poll conducted in May 2003, 53% of Israelis supported an end to the occupation of the Palestinian Territories.

The "disengagement" plan (announced by Sharon in April 2004 and approved by the government in February 2005) was a cunning response to the growing public demand in Israel and the world to end the occupation and reach peace with the Palestinians. The disengagement plan was planned to achieve international recognition of the continuing occupation of the West Bank, the annexation of land on which 90% of the settlers live and the destruction of any possibility of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with its capital in East Jerusalem. As official Israeli sources have admitted, the disengagement

was born as a reaction to the Geneva Initiative and the letters of Israeli pilots and officers in which they declared their refusal to take part in the occupation.

The disengagement plan also represented a new phase in the USA's support for Israeli annexation of the Occupied Territories. In March 2004, before announcing the disengagement, Sharon received an unprecedented letter from President Bush in which the US officially recognized Israel's right to annex settlement blocs in the West Bank. This was a disastrous turn for official US policy.

In the two years following the announcement of the disengagement plan, up to and after its implementation (July 2005) the CPI conducted a running public debate with Peace Now and the heads of the Labor and Meretz parties, which supported the plan, including in the Knesset. The support of these groups for the plan weakened the public campaign against Sharon's policies and strengthened his government.

The situation in the Palestinian Territories

In parallel with the disengagement plan, the Israeli army continued to carry out war crimes in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Of course, the report published by human rights organization Amnesty International in November 2002, which defined the extrajudicial executions, torture, house demolitions and prevention of humanitarian aid as war crimes, did nothing to stop the army. In July 2004 the International Court of Justice published its advisory opinion, in which it declared the Separation Wall built by Israel in the West Bank to be illegal, and furthermore defined the settlements and the annexation of East Jerusalem as illegal in themselves. This advisory opinion was approved by a huge majority of 150 nations in the UN General Assembly. But this unambiguous opinion, representing the position of most countries in the world, did not impress Sharon, who continued to anchor his policy in the baseless ruling of the Israeli High Court of Justice (1/7/04) that the construction of the Separation Wall has no political meaning and is not intended to annex territories to Israel.

In recent years the Israeli government has deepened its regime of closures, encirclements and checkpoints, which prevents the Palestinians from making a living and carrying on a normal life. The seamless siege on the Gaza Strip has been in place since 1995, when an electronic fence was built surrounding the Strip on three sides. In 2000 Israel closed down the "safe passage" between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and thus created a permanent rift between the two. The Rafah crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, under Israeli control, is also closed most of the year.

The situation in the Gaza Strip continued to worsen as the disengagement drew to a close, and even more so after the victory of Hamas in the general elections in the Occupied Territories in January 2006. The weakness of the Palestinian left provided Hamas with the opportunity to brand itself as an honest alternative to the corruption of the Palestinian Authority and its many weaknesses. But as far as the Sharon government was concerned, the victory of Hamas presented a convenient excuse for military incursions into the Gaza Strip and tightening the closure laid on it, as well as for refusing to hand over the funds collected by Israel as taxes, funds which rightfully belong to the Palestinian Authority. The effect of Israel's siege on the Gaza Strip is a humanitarian disaster.

As it disengages from the Gaza Strip and wages war on it, Israel is constructing 33 border crossings to handle the traffic of people and goods between the West Bank and Israel. These crossings, managed by civilians, function like border crossings between nations. In this way the rulers of Israel are attempting to constitute the Separation Wall as an international boundary.

The Israeli occupation, which has been going on for 40 years, is also a colonialist economic project intended to maintain the West Bank and Gaza Strip as colonies of Israeli capitalism. The Occupied Territories have always been used as a pool of cheap labor and a captive market for Israeli merchandise. Throughout the years of occupation the Israeli government prevented the development of Palestinian industry and the building of sea- and airports as well as the export of agricultural products from the Occupied Territories. Israeli control over these has not been relinquished, even in the wake of the Oslo Accords (1992) and the evacuation of settlers from the Gaza Strip (2005).

In March 2007 the heads of Hamas and Fatah reached an important accord on the establishment of a Palestinian national unity government, some of whose member ministers would not be identified with either movement. The national unity government adopted a platform emphasizing its commitment to the agreements signed with Israel, whose meaning is agreement to peace between the two states along the borders of 4 June 1967. The establishment of the national unity government has prevented a disastrous slide into bloody civil war in the Palestinian Territories. The Olmert-Peretz government's reaction to the national unity government has been to continue the policy of boycott of the Palestinian government. The tax funds held by Israel will not be transferred to the Palestinian Authority.

The occupation of the Palestinian Territories, which has been going on for forty years, has not made Israel more secure but less so. The suicide bombings in Israeli cities exact a heavy price on Israeli citizens for the continued occupation. The CPI has denounced suicide bombings targeting civilians, adding that they are detrimental to the struggle of the Palestinian people for an end to the occupation.

The struggle against the occupation and for peace

The desire to stop the disaster of the occupation has been expressed in recent years in various acts of protest organized by peace and protest groups in Israel. Among the groups at the forefront of this struggle are:

The high school seniors' (*Shministim*) movement of conscientious objection to service in the army of occupation – this movement supports young objectors facing conscription. Five objectors were sentenced to a year's imprisonment in a military court. The courts-martial against the young objectors were political trials intended to break their spirits and to set a high price-tag of punishment for objection to the occupation. These goals were not achieved; on the contrary, the objectors argued convincingly that conscience and politics are inseparable.

In March 2005, 250 high school students sent a letter to the Prime Minister in which they announced their refusal to enlist as long as the occupation continues, out of commitment to the values of democracy and humanism. They emphasized the damage caused by the occupation in greater insecurity, widespread despair,

societal corruption and wasted resources. This was the largest group of high school students yet to sign such a letter.

The veteran objectors' movement **Yesh Gvul** received an important reinforcement when, in September 2003, a group of 27 veteran pilots serving in the reserve announced their refusal to carry out illegal and immoral attacks against Palestinian populations in the Palestinian Territories. On the heels of the pilots' letter and a similar letter of refusal signed by soldiers in *Sayeret Matkal*, an elite commando, a new movement of objectors called "**Courage to Refuse**" was established.

The peace movements have organized days of protest against the occupation and the murder of civilians in which objectors' groups as well as women's organizations and solidarity groups have taken part. Many protests have been aimed against the construction of the Separation Wall and the growth of settlements, against the killing of civilians and home demolitions. The army and police have used violence against participants in these actions.

The varied acts of protest created clement conditions for the **Geneva Initiative** organized by various Israeli and Palestinian personalities (December 2003). While the CPI does not endorse all articles of the Geneva document, we see it as valuable for its insistence on a political solution and the necessary condition for this solution – negotiations with the Palestinian leadership.

In an advertisement in *Ha'aretz* (30/4/06) the CPI defined the reoccupation of the Gaza Strip as a war of conquest and demanded the IDF's immediate and unqualified withdrawal from the Strip. In the same ad the CPI emphasized that "the war on the Gaza ghetto proves that tricks like unilateral evacuation do not end the occupation. Only negotiations with the Palestinian Authority and the creation of a border of peace between Israel and Palestine along the Green Line can guarantee peace and security for both peoples."

The CPI has always demanded the evacuation of all settlements and criticized the line which sees them as an irreversible reality. The evacuation of the Gaza settlements has proven the CPI right on this point – the dismantling of settlements is possible if the government wills it. As for the public, opinion polls after the Gaza evacuation showed 54% support for the evacuation of West Bank settlements as well.

The evacuation of the Gaza settlements, carried out without an agreement with the Palestinian Authority, enabled the Sharon-Olmert government to achieve international support for its unilateral steps, such as the transformation of the Separation Wall into a "border" and the annexation of settlement blocs. But this achievement is temporary and fleeting. Peace with occupation and annexation is impossible, and without a just and stable peace wars will keep on raging in the future. Blood will continue to be spilled, hatred and despair will grow, and Palestinian and Israeli alike will continue to pay the price.

In June 1967 we could not know that the occupation would still be going on forty years later. But the CPI was not wrong in insisting all these years on what continues to be its platform for peace: the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, with its capital in East Jerusalem and the enforcement of UN resolutions. This peace plan continues to garner support in Israel and around the world; in fact, the support for it has even led Bush, Sharon and Olmert to announce that they support the principle of "two states for two peoples". But their

flaunting of support for a “Palestinian state” is actually intended to prevent its establishment.

The CPI’s programme for a stable and just peace is the only one still relevant, the only plan which provides a chance for a peaceful and secure life for both peoples, the Israeli and the Palestinian, and for all the peoples of the region. This programme is accepted by the majority of the Palestinian people and the neighboring countries, as is shown by the “Prisoners’ Document” (May 2006) and the adoption of the Saudi plan by the Arab states (2002, 2007).

The Olmert government

Ehud Olmert, who was appointed interim Prime Minister when Sharon fell ill, completed the creation of the new party, Kadima, and ran for election in 2006 under a new-old banner – the “convergence plan”. Like its predecessor, the disengagement plan, the convergence plan is a policy of military and diplomatic *Diktat*, affirming “there is no one to talk to” on the Palestinian side. The truth is that since the Rabin assassination (1995) Israeli governments have been the ones to refuse political negotiations aimed at ending the occupation; they have preferred to imprison the Palestinian people behind fences, rob it of its lands and institute physical and political apartheid in the Territories.

The victory of the Hamas in the elections for the Palestinian Legislative Assembly (parliament) brought a significant change in the situation in the Territories, as assessed by the CPI’s political bureau (27/1/06). This victory facilitated the continuation of the Israeli government’s policy under Sharon and Olmert, a policy of military, economic and diplomatic *Diktat* towards the Palestinians. The Sharon-Olmert-Mofaz government and its successor, the Olmert-Peretz government, have aimed for a systematic destruction of the Palestinian Authority’s infrastructure in order to draw the Occupied Territories into chaos and civil war.

Olmert’s “convergence” machinations won the acclaim of the Labor Party and even of MK Yossi Beilin, chairman of Meretz. In an interview for *Yediot Aharonot* (18/6/06) Beilin joined the chorus proclaiming the absence of a trustworthy partner on the Palestinian side. In the same interview Beilin suggested to Olmert that instead of carrying out the “convergence” unilaterally he could offer it to PA Chairman Abu-Mazen. “This is why I suggest that he [Olmert] carry the plan out differently: the only chance for a convergence is through a signed agreement. Because the moment Abu-Mazen signs an agreement with you, the world will accept it. Everyone will recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, and everyone will agree that the agreement removes the issue of the refugees from the agenda.”

The Second Lebanon War

The Central Committee of the CPI argued (26/5/06) that “the Labor Party, in the government, as well as Meretz, are jumping on the bandwagon of Olmert’s ‘convergence plan’; this is a great danger to the cause of peace”. The Central Committee called for massive participation in the demonstration organized by a coalition of organizations in Tel Aviv on 3 June 2006 to protest 39 years of occupation. The Central Committee also criticized President Bush’s sponsorship of the “convergence” plan at his meeting with Olmert in Washington DC in May 2006. At the time, we were unaware that at this same meeting a war in Lebanon was also being planned.

The Second Lebanon War began on 12 July 2006, after Hezbollah captured two Israeli soldiers and fired shots toward Israel. The Israeli army immediately began heavy bombings from the sea and air. These were aimed at roads and bridges, power stations and broadcast towers. On 13 July 2006, as soon as war was declared, the CPI released a statement emphasizing the truth that the war was prepared in advance, many months before the incident near Zar'it, and in perfect coordination with the Bush administration. (In his testimony before the Winograd Commission inquiring into the Lebanon War, Olmert confirmed that the war had been discussed in the IDF General Command starting March 2006). The war in Lebanon lasted 33 days. About a thousand Lebanese and 160 Israelis were killed, many buildings in Lebanon and Israel were destroyed, and around a million Lebanese and hundreds of thousands of Israelis were evacuated from their homes and became refugees.

CPI members were active in organizing the protests against the war, which began the day after it broke out. The CPI and DFPE initiated the large national Jewish-Arab demonstration against the war, which took place in Tel Aviv on 22 July, with the participation of various organizations and activists, including Zionists. Throughout the month of the war there were demonstrations in Tel Aviv, Haifa, Taybeh and other cities, demanding an immediate cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of the military from Lebanon. The Jewish-Arab character of these demonstrations was evident, together with the connection made between the war in Lebanon and the Israeli government's toeing of the dangerous Bush administration line. This mood was expressed in the popularity of the slogan – “We shall not die nor kill in the service of the United States.”

Protests against the war in Lebanon took place around the world, but actions in Israel were universally recognized as especially important. The conference of Communist and workers' parties in Athens (19-20 August 2006) saluted the struggle of the Lebanese people and the heroic stand of the Communist Party of Israel and other progressive, peace-seeking forces in Israel.

The Zionist peace camp proved its bankruptcy once more during the Second Lebanon War. Peace Now remained silent, while the Meretz leadership justified the war it its outset; the party elite was divided on the question of stopping it. In contrast to their leadership, Meretz members participated in the protest against the war. Only a few days before the end of the war did Meretz organize a vigil protesting it in Tel Aviv.

In the aftermath of the military and diplomatic debacle and the heavy economic toll of the Second Lebanon War (which cost the Israeli economy 30 billion NIS), the CPI sees both dangers and opportunities. Among the dangers, the CPI has listed the possibility of renewed fighting in the context of belligerent offensives against Syria and Iran; the growing hatred towards the Arab population and the consistent left; the danger to democracy posed by fascist attitudes; and the redirection of social budgets to military ends. As for the opportunities, the CPI has argued that the political crisis, the widespread fall in living standards and the plummeting prestige of the army all create more space for the CPI's principled criticism and greater chances for success in the crucial struggle to isolate racism and nationalism and defend democratic rights.

In the months following the war, Syrian President Bashar Assad called publicly for renewed negotiations for peace with Israel. These overtures were given the

cold shoulder by the Olmert-Peretz government, once again proving that peace is not one of its goals.

The political landscape in Israel

The instability of the Israeli political system is one expression of the social and political crisis of Israeli society. It is caused by the inability of the large political formations to provide any real answer to the many difficulties facing Israelis. The crisis has opened new possibilities for left action as well as grave dangers.

The deterioration of the political parties is a cause for concern. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) funded by wealthy donors are taking over more and more of the parties' functions. Growing corruption fuels the public disgust with the parties, but without providing an alternative.

The foundation of Kadima by Ariel Sharon has created a body with no clear external policy, located in the center of the political arena but tending towards the Likud. Kadima's socioeconomic policy is clearly right-wing. In the diplomatic sphere Kadima is characterized by its willingness to conform to the demands of the American government.

The failure of the Second Lebanon War has strengthened the forces of the extreme right in Israel. Under the leadership of Bibi Netanyahu the Likud has incorporated an explicit racist component into its rhetoric. Netanyahu combines extreme annexationist aspirations with military adventurism and economic Thatcherism; he is well-connected to the extreme right in the USA. Avigdor Lieberman and his party offer another species of extremist racist politics. Kahanist positions regarding the Arab population in Israel have become part and parcel of the platform of the mainstream right in Israel.

The behavior of Labor's leadership has given the lie to the "social agenda" which it claimed to be promoting in the last elections. The Labor Party poses no alternative, either in external or domestic affairs, and is content to follow Olmert's lead. The candidacy of Ehud Barak for party chairman poses a danger of even further rightward drift. Grassroots Labor activists and youth movement supporters are becoming more and more disappointed with the party's behavior.

Meretz is faced with a dilemma. If it continues to evaporate into the national consensus, as it did at the beginning of the Second Lebanon War, it will lose its *raison d'être*. Within Meretz some propose a merger with Labor while others advocate a left turn to an unequivocal dovish and democratic position.

In different ways, the Arab parties represented in the Knesset – the National Democratic Union (Tajama'u/Balad), the Arab Movement for Change, the Arab Democratic Party and the Islamic Movement – all represent a position which sees the Jews and the Arabs as two homogenous ethno-national entities facing each other. This stance lends credence to the erroneous and harmful propaganda of the Establishment, which presents the Arab population as a monolithic bloc with no diversity of politics or principle.

The CPI opposes these standpoints with a progressive and humanistic social worldview which promotes the unity of the oppressed and exploited in Israel, whether Arab or Jew, in the struggles for peace, equality and democracy. For this reason the CPI is also the leading force in the internal debate within the Arab

public to speak out against moods of despair and surrender, against separatism and communalism and for the equal rights of women.

The CPI has always been a force for unity in the struggle of the Arab population on issues of consensus, such as resistance to land expropriation, home demolitions, budgetary discrimination, racism and police brutality. But this unity should not and must not serve to blur the differences of principle and politics between the various parties and organizations active within the Arab public.

The left wing of Israeli politics contains many forces which are not today organized within a party. The “blue” (left-Zionist) youth movements support socialism or social democracy. The social organizations are involved in protests against government policy. Human rights organizations fight the violation of these rights. The environmental movement has radicalized in recent years and is today pronouncing profound social criticism.

The CPI proposes to all true left forces within the Israeli political sphere that we cooperate on creating a strong left alternative for the Israeli public.

The road to a just and stable peace

The struggle against the occupation and for a just, lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace – necessitating the creation of a Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem alongside Israel and a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions – has been a major regional and international issue for decades. The flashpoint of war in the Middle East is a matter of interest for all the peoples of the world.

The ongoing occupation and the bloody conflict are exacting a price in human life, destroying the Palestinian people and poisoning Israeli democracy and society. This is why all peace-minded people in the region and the world must continue to stand behind this humane and democratic message: the occupation is a disaster for both peoples, the Israeli and the Palestinian; no people can build its future on the destruction of another; there is no military solution to the drawn-out Israeli-Palestinian national conflict.

The involvement of peace-minded people throughout the world in the struggle to end Israeli occupation and in solidarity with the Palestinian people and peace forces in Israel is of vital importance. This is a major contribution to saving the peoples of Palestine and Israel from disaster.

Considering the complications of the Oslo process and the obstacles to realization of the Oslo Accords, as well as the inexcusable suffering of the Palestinian people and the deterioration of Israeli society, we are convinced that all proposals to postpone peace, along the lines of the “roadmap”, Olmert’s “convergence plan” or the creation of a “temporary Palestinian state”, must be rejected.

The year 2007 marks the 40th anniversary of the Israeli occupation beginning June 1967. The CPI, which has fought against the occupation and its crimes and for a peace based on the respect for the rights of all peoples throughout these forty years, sees the achievement of a general, just and stable Israeli-Arab peace, with an Israeli-Palestinian peace as its centerpiece, as a strategic goal of its political activity.

The CPI's platform for peace includes the following:

1. Peace shall be based on Israeli withdrawal from all Arab lands occupied in the war of aggression of June 1967, and on respect for the right of Israel, the Palestinian state and the Arab countries to a sovereign existence and development under conditions of peace and security.
2. The Palestinian Arab people shall realize its right to self-determination and to an independent state in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Arab East Jerusalem, alongside the state of Israel.
3. The problem of the Palestinian refugees shall be solved in accordance with UN resolutions (which guarantee their right to choose between return to their homes and reparations) and within the framework of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.
4. The annexation of East Jerusalem since its occupation by Israel shall be annulled. The sovereignty of independent Palestine will extend to East Jerusalem. West Jerusalem shall be recognized as the capital of Israel and East Jerusalem as the capital of independent Palestine, according to the wishes of both peoples. Within the framework of peace agreements, it is possible to come to a negotiated solution for the entire city of Jerusalem, to ensure cooperation between its two parts in the municipal sphere as well as free access to the holy places for all religions, etc.
5. All settlements in the Occupied Territories shall be dismantled.
6. The entire Golan Heights shall be returned to Syria.
7. Israel shall retreat from all Lebanese territory (including the Sheba'a Farms).
8. The peace accords shall be anchored in treaties between states, which shall form the legal basis for peaceful coexistence between them; the states will refrain from intervening in one another's internal affairs. All sides will revoke the state of war between them and respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of their neighbors, including those of Israel and the independent Palestinian state, as well as the right of all to live within recognized and secure borders, free from violence and the threat of violence.
9. The Middle East shall become a zone free of nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological weapons. Israel shall become a signatory to the International Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Considering the painful legacy of long years of war and mistrust, the UN and other international players must serve as guarantors of the agreements and treaties to be achieved. Israeli-Palestinian and general Israeli-Arab peace treaties will open the way for additional agreements, based on free will, in different areas of interest to all parties, including economic affairs.

The CPI estimates that the Olmert-Peretz government, in its attempt to perpetuate the occupation, together with the Bush government, mired in the Iraq War, and with Arab reaction, which sides with the US administration – are all attempting to place obstacles on the road to a just and stable peace. But this does not mean that we must wait and do nothing until the conditions for renewal of final-status negotiations return. These conditions must be forged within a

unified and continuous Jewish-Arab struggle against the occupation and its severe ramifications for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, as well as in international solidarity with this struggle.

The long-term struggle which the CPI has waged together with its partners in the DFPE and other peace forces has had one major effect: the principle of “two states, Israel and Palestine” is now accepted by many parts of the Israeli public. But at the same time Israeli society has become poisoned by the nationalistic and racist agitation of the right wing; despair and hatred have become commonplace. The ongoing occupation is responsible in many ways for the proliferation of poverty in Israel, for the social and economic degeneration which permeate Israeli society, and for the growing violence and corruption.

Under these complex conditions the CPI shall maintain its strategy of attempting to consolidate a wide Israeli peace camp on the basis of agreed principles. Those who support the principle of two states alongside one another can and should stand together in struggles for short-term humanitarian and political goals; it is important to proclaim and promote these goals right away, if a just and stable peace is to be achieved. In the face of despair and the claims that occupation has become irrevocable, the CPI continues to emphasize that the only road to a just and stable peace, for reason of both principle and pragmatics, lies in putting an end to the occupation and creating an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel.

Chapter 3: Israeli capitalism and social struggles in the first decade of the 21st century

The cycles of the US economy affect other countries as well. This is especially true of Israel, which was particularly linked to the American “new economy” and which has been dependent on foreign capital and involved in global transactions for decades. The crisis of high-tech stocks in the US in the year 2000 was compounded for Israel by the breakout of the Second Intifada in the same year. The Intifada blocked Israeli access to markets for its products in the Occupied Territories, which also serve as an occupied economy under the control of Israeli companies. The crisis “from above” (in knowledge-intensive industries, which export to the US and Europe) combined with the crisis “from below” (in labor-intensive industries, which export to the Occupied Territories) to produce an organic recession which did not end until 2005.

One of the results of the high tide in high-tech deals and speculation on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange in the years 2005-2007 has been a rapid increase in the flow of capital to Israel. At the beginning of 2007 Israel’s monetary surplus reached an all-time high of US \$30 billion; but this money is not used by the government for economic investment. The Sharon and Olmert governments, like

their predecessors, follow the dictates of the multinational corporations and the IMF and continue to minimize government involvement in the economy.

During the first decade of the 21st century the capital exported from Israel exceeded the capital imported into the country. This development marks the entry of Israeli capital into the competition for cheap labor in foreign countries and investment in economies with high rates of growth. And so it turns out that the tax cuts for companies with employees in Israel, which greatly increased their net profits, have in fact mostly been used to develop their business in other countries.

The dictates of globalization have become the centerpiece of the Olmert government's policy. These include the accelerated privatization of government corporations and services, a reduction in public spending and especially social spending, the marginalization of organized labor through the use of temporary employment companies and migrant workers, and tax cuts for corporations and high incomes.

The groups of capital

Historical experience teaches us that economic crises, serious as they may be, do not end in the destruction of the capitalist order itself. In the years 2000-2005, when the Israeli economy was in recession, the powerful groups who control it became even stronger at the expense of small and medium-sized companies, who were swallowed up. The major groups of capital grew in the past decade by pushing down the price of labor through the employment of temporary workers and migrant workers with no social rights.

The privatization of governmental and other public corporations, as well as the takeovers and mergers and the generous financial incentives, all helped the large corporations to increase profits and capital and strengthen their hold on the Israeli economy. **It is estimated that the Israeli economy is mostly under the control of 17 rich families.**

Following the abolition of various taxes, the years 1986-2007 saw employers enjoying a cumulative subsidy of 160 billion NIS – more than half the state budget for 2007.

The Sharon government accelerated the reform in direct taxation, which created huge tax breaks for high incomes, corporations and employers. The tax reform passed in 2003 lowered the tax on companies, which was 61% twenty years ago, to a paltry 25% in 2010.

The social price

The various Israeli governments which have carried out “structural adjustments” and other neo-liberal policies dictated by the IMF since 1985, have increasingly turned Israel into a subcontractor for multinational companies by various means. The import tariffs which protected Israeli production have been practically abolished, as have been subsidies on basic products; restrictions on the movement of capital, including the export of profits, have been lifted; and a long list of government corporations and social services have been privatized.

The identical socioeconomic policy of all these governments has deepened social inequality and **pushed 1.5 million citizens, including 770,000 children (37% of Israeli children) below the poverty line** (as reported in the government

Poverty Report for 2006). A major focal point of poverty is the Arab population. The percentage of those living in poverty among Arabs is three times as high as that among Jews; 60% of poor children are Arab.

More and more working families are falling victim to poverty. In the past fifteen years the share of national income going to each of the bottom seven tenths of the population has gone down, and only the top two tenths have increased their

portion of the income. "The new poor" include not only the unemployed but a large number of workers earning meager wages. Half of all wage earners in Israel do not make enough money to pay the income tax.

One of the main reasons for the descent of working people into poverty has been the policy of eating away the social gains of wage-earners through the use of manpower companies and temporary and part-time employment. The government, through the police and the courts, supports employers who unilaterally cancel existing labor contracts and forcibly prevent the establishment of unions in their factories or companies (as in the case of Haifa Chemicals South). Employers exploit the weak social status of worker immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia, many of whom are employed in substandard conditions.

Another main factor in the growth of the poor population has been the drastic cuts in National Insurance (Bituah Le'umi) payments decided upon by the Sharon government. These cuts continue to be implemented in 2007. The sum total of pension payments by the National Insurance Institution has been cut by 10% in five years.

In 2005 and 2006 the Israeli economy grew by 5% per year. Israel is among the developed industrialized countries, with an annual product of US \$20,000 per capita (2006 figures). But the rate of full unemployment was 9% at the end of 2006 – that is, 220,000 workers were unemployed. More than half a million workers, mostly women, were partially unemployed (employed part-time).

The employers are acting to push down wages and worsen working conditions; this is happening in the most established factories and businesses. They are exploiting high unemployment rates and the large pool of contract workers to pressure workers into agreeing to cuts in wages and benefits; when this does not work, they replace them with temporary workers working in undesirable conditions.

Since the mid-eighties, under the guise of "economic recovery", Israeli governments have minimized state participation in spending on health, education and welfare and thus deepened poverty and social distress. According to the Adva Center, the per capita budget of the Ministry of Health in 2007 was 14% lower than that of 2001, while the population has been aging. The cuts in education spending, the spread of poverty and the lack of affirmative action in government policy have brought about a situation in which 55% of 17-year-olds do not complete their Bagrut (baccalaureate). The situation is particularly bad among Arab students and students living in the periphery of the country, and especially among Bedouin youth. The government has also stopped building public housing, privatized government construction companies, and frozen the number of housing mortgages since 1992 – all of which have contributed to the deepening housing problem.

The consequences of the continuing occupation, military spending and debt repayment

The heavy price of serial wars and ongoing occupation continues to be a burden on the national budget. Outright military spending, including debt repayment, swallows up about half of the national budget.

In recent years, following the escalation of colonial oppression in the Palestinian Territories and the criminal war in Lebanon, there has been a rapid growth in military spending. Between 1989 and 2007 (from the first Intifada to after the Second Lebanon War) the Defense Ministry received special additions to its budget (beyond the regular budget authorized by the Knesset) to the tune of 37 billion NIS.

Israel is one of the most militarized countries in the world. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute has calculated military spending per capita in the world in 2005: in India US \$18 is spent per capita, and in China \$31, whereas Israel spends \$1,430 and the USA \$1,600. The USA, which is by itself responsible for half the world's military expenditures, gives Israel \$2.2 billion a year in regular military aid – the most aid given to any one country. According to official US statistics, American military aid to Israel in the years 1949-2004 adds up to \$64 billion.

Workers' struggles

Uri Yogev, Finance Ministry official in charge of budgets, was interviewed (*Ha'aretz*, 5/5/04) at the end of his two years in office, in which he pushed forward structural adjustments in the economy. He cited his greatest achievement, which he sees as a historic revolution: "We succeeded in taking advantage of the recession in order to change the rules of the game and promote the most dramatic revolution of all – **breaking organized labor in Israel**". He expressed his hope that the share of organized labor in the labor force in Israel (which is today 30% of all wage-earners) will fall below 20%.

The breaking of organized labor of which Yogev boasts is being carried out systematically. In addition to the liquidation of the Histadrut (General Labor Federation) and the pension funds and the aforementioned privatization, the government is also using the following means to promote this policy: an increase in the employment of workers through manpower agencies; importation of migrant workers, who earn half as much as the average Israeli worker; employment using personal contracts; extension of investment grants to private corporations who announce in advance that they will not tolerate unions (such as Intel); direct and indirect aid to employers who target workers attempting to unionize (as in the case of the Metrodan bus company); the organization of defamation campaigns against the organized workers of large government corporations (such as the seaports and the Electric Company).

The breaking of organized labor aids employers and the government in pushing down wages, cutting social benefits, drastically slashing the rights of the unemployed to benefits and professional training, whittling away pension funds, and minimizing the governmental employment service through the "Wisconsin Plan".

The Histadrut has declared a large number of labor disputes in recent years. It has also carried out seven general strikes, all of which had a pronounced effect

in the public sector. It ran an important campaign to protest the withholding of pay from workers in the municipalities (mostly Arab). The Histadrut is not fulfilling its role as needed in the struggle for the renewal of collective agreements.

The data on the **number of strikes and strikers** in the years 2000-2005 shows a peak during the struggle against Netanyahu's plans as Finance Minister and a fall in the activities of organized labor ever since. In the year 2000, 300,000 workers struck and the number of strike days was 2 million. In 2002 1.6 million workers struck and the number of strike days was 1.5 million. In 2003 1.3 million workers struck and the number of strike days reached a high of 2.7 million. In the years 2004 and 2005 there was a drop in the number of strikers and strike days. In 2004 1.2 million strike days were registered, and in 2005 – only 244,000.

The struggle for environmental justice

Israeli capitalism is also characterized by environmental injustice on the issues of air and water pollution, access to land and beach resources, and a lack of green spaces. The scarcity of land for the Arab population in Israel is also a clear example of environmental injustice.

The environmental struggle is breaking free of its naïveté, and activists now understand that environmental problems are not incidental mistakes that will be fixed if only everyone understands them. The threats on the environment are caused by someone's interests. It costs money to minimize emissions to air and water, and so polluters profit. Therefore, in order to remove threats to the environment one must struggle against the interests of capital and the regime that guarantees them.

The environmental movement in Israel has grown much in recent years. Israeli environmental organizations are gradually adopting a stance of resistance to the capitalist model of production for profit and beginning to advocate another model of progress: a more efficient and wise use of environmental resources and a just distribution of what they can produce for us. A few environmental struggles have been victorious in recent years.

The CPI's programme for the promotion of social justice

Our Communist Party's task is to consolidate a programme for the achievement of social justice which can address immediate problems, such as ethnic and gender discrimination, low wages and economic distress, conservation of the social safety net and protection of the democratic right of workers to self-defense. In parallel we must act to disseminate our conception of the essence of social justice, which is beyond immediate remedies for this or that aspect of poverty and discrimination: a conception of social justice which insists on the necessity of abolition of the exploitative capitalist regime itself and is replacement with government by the workers, for the workers. The connection between the short and the long term is clear: in order to bring about revolutionary change and create a socialist society which puts human beings in the center and bases itself on the abolition of class exploitation, and on equality and solidarity – we need young workers who have gained experience in day-to-day social struggle.

At the current stage in the development of Israeli capitalism and in light of the exacerbation of national social inequality and the attacks on workers' rights and wages, the CPI proposes a programme of feasible steps to replace the

government's plans – which are coordinated with the representatives of the employers, the heads of the large corporations and the big capitalists and serves their interest. The CPI's socioeconomic programme serves the interests of Jewish and Arab workers, unemployed people, women, old people, youth and students, of the residents of poor neighborhoods and immigrants as well as those living on National Insurance stipends.

The main points of the CPI's programme for extricating Israel from the socioeconomic crisis are: 1. A substantial cut in military spending and an end to the bankrolling of the occupation and settlements; 2. abandonment of the plans to privatize government corporations and public and municipal services; nationalization of government corporations and public services that have been privatized; democratization of the management of government corporations; 3. Protection of the interests of the Israeli economy from the dictates of multinational corporations, the IMF and the World Bank; creation of jobs through added public spending and employment in public services and municipalities; 4. Protection of real wages and a raise in the minimum wage, to 60% of the average wage; 5. A tax reform which will raise the maximum tax on high incomes and on corporate profits to 60%; no income tax for incomes below the national average; 6. Free education from the age of 3 to university; development of health, welfare, culture and sports services, mostly at state expense.

The Communist Party of Israel, together with its partners in the DFPE, is involved in the various social struggles of employed, unemployed and temporary workers, women, the Arab public, university students, the disabled, pensioners, environmental activists, artists, residents of poor towns and other social groups. We are active in promoting legislation that protects workers, promotes equality and extends social rights.

The CPI shall contribute its share to the consolidation of a coalition of workers and unemployed people as part of a wider social coalition composed of all those adversely affected by existing socio-economic policy – Jews and Arabs, women and men. These coalitions will fight in various ways for workers, the unemployed and pensioners, for children, students, youth and women, for equality between Jews and Arabs and for social justice.

Chapter 4: The menace on the democratic sphere and the danger of fascism

The conditions created by the ongoing colonial occupation are hurtling Israeli society towards a dangerous crisis at a rapid pace. The burning question is now: who shall isolate whom? In this context two basic options are possible – either the ethnic-cleansing Israeli right will isolate the left and the Arab population, or the democratic forces will isolate the right.

The electoral success of the ethnic-cleansing right-wing party “Yisrael Beitenu” under the leadership of Avigdor Lieberman in the last elections and the addition

of Lieberman to the Olmert-Peretz government as “Minister for Strategic Affairs” are signs that the extreme right is on the offensive.

A constant threat to Israeli democracy comes from the occupation and its crimes, and especially from the Jewish residents of the settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The norms of the occupation – contempt for the human and civil rights of the Palestinians, their freedom of movement and expression, and their rights to their lands, their homes and their livelihoods – are all penetrating into Israeli society. One of the expressions of this penetration is the high tide of violence and hooliganism, which reached a zenith in the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995.

Unrestrained neo-liberal policies on the one hand and warmongering and occupation on the other combine to exact a great toll on workers, the poor, young people and women. This is the objective reason for the growing anger and mistrust that wide parts of the public feel towards the government and the entire ruling establishment. The growing disillusionment from the corrupt mechanisms of bourgeois democracy has led, among other things, to a drop in voter participation in general elections. Even the holiest of taboos, the army, has lost some of its sanctity, as many reactions to the Second Lebanon War will show.

Their concern that the growing social and political anger will grow into opposition to occupation and privatization has led the capitalist and the political establishment to perform frequent permutations in the composition of the political map; politicians have begun skipping from party to party. But these political tricks, spiced with nationalist anti-Arab agitation, religious zeal and social incitement against organized labor and the poor, have not succeeded in stabilizing the regime. This basic instability finds obvious expression in the frequent elections to the Knesset in recent years (once every two or three years instead of every four and a half years as the law stipulates) and in the rapid succession of government coalitions.

The right wing, enjoying the support of big capital, is attempting to shift the responsibility for the deepening political and social crisis away from the warped bourgeois regime and incompetent government policies towards the system of government. In this way they aim to consolidate public support for a government with dictatorial aspects which will aggravate the policy of aggression, prevent representation from large portions of the public and empty the Knesset’s role of all content.

In Israel, which does not yet have a constitution, the CPI will continue to struggle for a democratic constitution that guarantees the equality of all citizens before the law, including in budgetary allotments and the cultural expression of different groups. A democratic constitution must guarantee the equality of women, separate religion and state, outlaw all discrimination and recognize the Palestinian Arab population as a national minority.

The Knesset itself is under constant attack from ruling circles, and under their pressure it has been passing legislation that cuts back on democratic freedoms and on its own power. The Knesset authorized the racist amendment to the Citizenship Law which prevents family unification between Arab citizens and their Palestinian partners. This amendment is nothing but a legal sanction for ethnic cleansing.

The Knesset has also cut back on the freedom of speech in Israel in its approval of a legal amendment widening the definition of “incitement”, proposed by the government and the extreme right. The CPI, whose criticism of the Supreme Court comes from the opposite direction – in the interest of judicial action against the crimes of the occupation, against ethnic discrimination and for recognition of social rights – supports the Court in the face of attempts from the right to curtail its powers.

In February 2004 a thousand or so policemen attacked the village of B’eneh in the Galilee under the pretext of carrying out demolition orders against four homes. In this attack, very similar to the ones carried out by the IDF in the Occupied Territories, policemen fired tear gas and percussion grenades indiscriminately and injured civilians. The brutality of the police and military has inspired isolated murderers as well. In August 2005, a settler soldier holding Kahanist views shot bus passengers in Shfa’amer and killed four.

The parties of the extreme right have been carrying out a racist campaign against the very right of Arab citizens to live in their homeland. At the 2003 Herzeliya Conference, then-Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared that the Arab citizens of Israel are “the real demographic danger” and “a threat to the democratic fabric”. In February 2004 Prime Minister Sharon publicly suggested revoking the citizenship of hundreds of thousands of Arab citizens when he called for the transfer of Umm al-Fahm and other Arab villages in the Triangle to the Palestinian state in the future.

The report of the Orr Committee, which investigated the deaths of 13 Arab citizens during the events of October 2000, was published in September 2003. Since then, not one of the committee’s recommendations has been implemented, from the recommendation to indict policemen suspected of killing civilians to the critique of the institutionalized discrimination against the Arab population.

Communist and Arab Knesset members have become targets for attacks by thugs. On 24 January 2003 two Kahanist hooligans planted a grenade under the car of MK Issam Makhoul, which was parked next to his house in Haifa, in an attempt to hurt him and his family. Fortunately, the grenade did not explode. The CPI demanded that the culprits be found, but emphasized that responsibility lies with the government, which has been running a campaign of de-legitimization against the Arab population and its leaders while maintaining the criminal occupation. Suspects in the attempted assassination of MK Makhoul were only apprehended a year after the fact. One was sentenced to prison and another committed suicide while under arrest.

The Communist MK’s have also become a target for attack by soldiers and policemen, who have no regard for their parliamentary immunity. MK’s Mohammad Barakeh and Dov Khenin have been injured with rubber bullets while demonstrating against the construction of the Separation Wall in the Palestinian Territories.

The governments of Sharon and Olmert have intensified the attack on workers’ rights and on organized labor. They have used the law, including the Arrangements Law, in order to circumvent collective agreements, lower wages, lay off workers, privatize pension funds and deny beneficiaries their rights, freeze the minimum wage and slash National Insurance stipends. The government and other branches of the State have focused much of their activity on targeting

organized labor through attacks on the right of workers to use strikes and other sanctions, as well as on their right to elect unions.

The army and police, as branches of the State, have been conducting a brutal campaign against Israeli and international peace activists who oppose the occupation, denounce its crimes and demand an end to the construction of the Separation Wall and the checkpoint regime. Communist students, as well as other leftist and Arab students, are regularly persecuted by the police.

In spite of the difficulties, unions and organizations for human rights, for the defense of democracy and civil rights, as well as anti-torture groups, are all active in Israel at the present day. The campaigns to defend democracy and civil rights, to maintain the relative-majoritarian election system, and against the occupation and all types of discrimination, are all ways to consolidate public, Jewish-Arab struggle against fascist ideology and practice.

As Communists, we are aware of the class limitations of bourgeois democracy, whose main purpose is to safeguard capitalist exploitation and accumulation. But bourgeois democracy provides a convenient space for left action for social change. Hence, when the rule of capital is endangered, it is willing to give up its democratic aspects and convert itself into a dictatorship, fascist or otherwise.

As far as the CPI is concerned democracy is not a transitory convenience but a principle to which we have been and remain committed. Ten years ago, at its 23rd Congress, the CPI declared that “basing itself on the democratic achievements already made, socialism shall expand democracy in a revolutionary way beyond formal rights and create a democracy that abolishes the exploitation of one human being at the hands of another and encompasses the entire social structure.

The 25th Congress reiterates these principled stands, which inform the day-to-day work of the party in defending democracy, uprooting racism and defeating fascism.

Chapter 5: The Arab population’s struggle for equality

The Communist Party of Israel was the first to demand that the Israeli political establishment recognize the right of the Arab Palestinian population in Israel to full equality in all spheres of life and to the realization of its civil, social and cultural rights. The CPI was the first to demand that the political establishment recognize the national rights of the Palestinian public in Israel and respect its identity as an active part of the Arab Palestinian people and as a national minority in Israel.

In the sixty years since the establishment of the state of Israel, the CPI has played a unique historical role in the consolidation of the Palestinian population of Israel as a democratic force, which together with Jewish democratic forces plays an important role in the struggles against the occupation, for a just peace, in defense of democratic liberties, against policies which deepen social inequality, against racism and the danger of fascism and for equality and social progress. We reject the tendentious attempt of the Israeli establishment to argue that the Arab population refuses to recognize Israel, and emphasize that the

political establishment is the one that refuses to recognize the Arab national minority in Israel and its right to full civil and national equality.

Expropriation and home demolitions

An analysis of class changes in the structure of Arab society reveals an ongoing process of proletarianization which has, since the 1950's, turned many peasants and agricultural workers into wage-earners. Within this sector, most Arabs are workers, and the rest are employees in public and financial services and academics.

On the issue of land, the main thrust of the authorities in recent years has been an offensive against the Arab residents of the Negev, attempting to dislodge them from their lands at any price, including the demolition of entire unrecognized villages, poisoning of crops from the air, enclosure of herds and more. A new onslaught seeking to minimize the living space of Arab citizens has been unleashed in the Triangle, through the construction of north-south and east-west highways which encircle and choke communities like the city of Taybeh.

In view of the absence of master plans for Arab communities, as well as Jewish-controlled municipal jurisdiction over most Arab-owned lands and economic distress, it is not surprising that thousands of Arab citizens have built houses without first receiving the proper permits. These families now face demolition orders, some of which are carried out by the police with a good deal of brutality.

Class and social changes under neo-liberalism

According to official statistics, in 2005 Arabs formed 11.5% of the employed workforce in Israel. 55% of all Arabs employed are laborers (skilled and unskilled), while the share of laborers (skilled and unskilled) in the Jewish workforce is less than half that – 24%.

Thus, despite the rising number of Arab wage-earners with a university-level education in the last twenty years, and despite the rise in Arab employment in the fields of education and health, the class and social character of the Arab minority is still a proletarian one.

Continued discrimination closes the doors of businesses in electronics and other “security-related” industries to Arab employees; this is also true of government-owned enterprises such as the Electricity Company. Israeli governments have always refused to employ Arabs in government offices (with the exceptions of health and educational institutions). The consequences of this discrimination for Arab workers have become clearer and clearer with the growth in the number of Arab university graduates, who search in vain for work in their fields. It is estimated that thousands of young Arab academics are forced to accept substandard work conditions or work outside their fields.

The structural discrimination in government policy means that almost no industrial zones have been created within the jurisdiction of Arab municipalities; thus, Arab workers mostly work away from their home towns. In recent years, government demands for “economic recovery” – that is, for lay-offs – have also cut at employment in the Arab municipalities.

The policies of neo-liberalism have also greatly aggravated the inequality of income and wealth between the rich and the poor. Seeing as Arab citizens belong for the most part to the working class and to relatively low income

brackets, the growing inequality has pushed a growing number of Arab families into economic misery below the poverty line. The number of poor Arab families (by income after taxes and benefits) has grown from 91,000 in 2001 to 137,000 in 2005. During this period the number of persons in poor Arab families grew from 455,000 to 650,000 and the number of poor Arab children from 238,000 to 350,000.

The obvious conclusion to be drawn from these statistics is that the struggle against neo-liberal policies which amplify class polarity to unprecedented levels is in the supreme interest of all workers and wage-earners, and especially of the Arab population, which is the primary victim of these policies. But this objective interest of the Arab population has not been translated into a struggle against the various aspects of neo-liberal policy.

One of the factors holding back the Arab population from the much-needed struggle against neo-liberal policy has been the proliferation of hundreds of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as a well-funded replacement for popular struggle and popular, democratic volunteer organizations. The NGOs, which have rapidly become an important source of employment for Arab academics and professionals, have created a new culture of struggle for pay, under the watchful eye of financial backers from Israel and abroad. The phenomenon of NGOs, each specializing in one specific area, makes it difficult for the Arab public to achieve a panoramic view of its discrimination. It blurs the lines of the central struggle for equality, which is a political struggle, as well as values such as mass popular struggle, sacrifice and fighting unity – values held high by the CPI in its everyday work and in the key moments of the struggle against discrimination and racism.

The fight for civil and national equality and the ideological struggle

Thirty years ago, the CPI's 18th Congress (1976) proposed a responsible and realistic programme of action for the promotion of the Arab population's struggle for civil and national equality. The broad outlines of this programme for full civil and national equality for the national minority are still valid today.

The realization of the possibilities for real progress in Israeli society depends largely on the ability and willingness of the Arab national minority to commit to struggle for this end. The Arab public, which is a democratic and peace-seeking force, cannot bring about this change on its own; but without it there is no social force in Israel which is strong enough to bring about any kind of change for the better on the main issues. Under these conditions, Arab and Jewish nationalists alike have an interest, each for their own reasons, in creating an ideological infrastructure that will isolate the Arab population and disconnect it from its allies in Israeli society.

The CPI rejects the damaging idea of the creation of an "Arab Parliament" within Israel as a withdrawal from the main sphere of struggle for power, the State sphere, into peripheral issues. The turn away from State politics is an expression of despair with democratic struggle and the wish to replace it with something else. Hence, it injures the existential interests of the Arab public in Israel and leads to an abandonment of the struggle for the rights of Arab citizens in Israel alongside the Jewish democratic forces, against discrimination and racism and for equal civil and national rights.

The national questions cannot in reality be understood and dealt with in abstract from the capitalist nature of Israeli society and the ongoing colonial occupation in the Occupied Territories. The Israeli bourgeoisie and the establishment which serves it are interested in exploiting the Arab minority as a cheap labor force, in dividing the working class along national lines, and in the propagation of fanaticism, nationalism and racism.

As a Communist party, we do not ignore the existence of differences between various bourgeois approaches. We reject the ideology of the racist right wing of the bourgeoisie out of hand and our struggle against it is all-out. On the other hand, our debate with liberal bourgeois ideology is a public and principled one, aiming to consolidate an analysis and policy that can achieve the goal of national, civil and socioeconomic equality for the Arab population of Israel.

The internationalist strategy

Since its creation in 1919 the CPI has applied Marx and Lenin's revolutionary theory to the conditions of the country. As a consequence, our strategy has been internationalist: we have opposed wars of conquest, raised the banner of "two states for two peoples", initiated and led the campaigns against the oppression and segregation of the Arab population, and preached unified Jewish-Arab struggle. From a historical standpoint, it would be correct to say that the Arab population has managed to conserve itself as a national Arab Palestinian minority in Israel and to wage important struggles against land expropriations, home demolitions and budgetary discrimination thanks to the class strategy of the Communist Party of Israel and thanks to its policy, which has been based on a class analysis of the national question.

The official policy of Israel's governments, part and parcel of which is discrimination against Arab citizens, has been to deny the very legitimacy of the demand these citizens raise for their recognition as an Arab Palestinian national minority. Official policy responds to this demand with a view of the Arab population as nothing but a collection of religious and communal minorities and clans. This is the local version of the well-known colonialist policy of "divide and conquer", and it serves the national oppression, dispossession and exclusion of the Arab citizens, as well as the effort to deny them their part in the struggle for profound democratic change in Israeli society.

Lately voices within the Arab public in Israel have been calling for establishment in Israel of a state structure called "consociational democracy". Our rejection of this slogan is both theoretical and practical. First, it is important to understand that under current conditions, "consociationalism" will perpetuate the inferior status of the Arab minority and reduce the ability of its members to take an equal part in the general struggle over the direction of Israeli society. This slogan is therefore tantamount to an abandonment of the goal of egalitarian democracy in Israel. Second, the attempt to argue that the Arabs in Israel are all of one stripe in terms of interests, class and personal ideological and political views blurs the essential differences that exist; this is detrimental to the minority's interests. Third, a view of all Arabs as of a kind, and a parallel view of all Jews, together with the emphasis on consociation "between Jews and Arabs", buttresses the ethnic segregation which has been so harmful to the struggle of the Arab minority against racism and for equal rights in Israel.

The internationalist strategy of the CPI is not a sign of weakness of the Communist Party on the national question. Rather, it is a point of strength, a unique advantage. The CPI has developed a dialectical conception of clear, unhesitating national identification of the Arab minority with the Palestinian people, together with a clear, unequivocal and outspoken membership in Israeli society and the in the Israeli working class. In the struggle of the Arab Palestinian national minority in Israel, the fight in defense of the land is organically connected to the campaign to defend its citizenship and civil rights.

The Arab population is not a burden on Israeli democracy but rather one of its bulwarks. The defamation campaigns against the Arab public are campaigns against Israeli democracy, and every achievement in the struggle for equality is an empowerment of democracy in general.

The challenge of religious fundamentalism

Fundamentalism is the other side of the coin of globalization, and in many senses the two are complementary. Both create divisions between workers, reject class analysis as well as the need for and possibility of an alternative to capitalism, and sow the seeds of despair as social and national distress deepen. The fundamentalist movements are buoyed by the ongoing occupation and imperialist aggression in Iraq and other parts of the Middle East and by imperialism's encouragement of religious and communal factionalism. Both fundamentalist movements and the champions of globalization support the reactionary thesis of the supposedly inevitable "clash of civilizations". Historical experience teaches us that imperialism and its allied regimes have encouraged and even created fundamentalist organizations like the Taliban in Afghanistan and Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

In the Israeli context, fundamentalist movements have exploited the worsening socioeconomic situation of the Arab population and the deepening oppression of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. They draw ideological and political support from the burgeoning fundamentalist movements in neighboring Arab countries, including the Palestinian Authority. The fundamentalist movements in Israel have fallen for the trap of playing by the imperialists' rules and conforming to their propaganda about "culture wars" and "religious wars", thereby obscuring the class nature of the imperialist war against the peoples of the region.

From the CPI's point of view, all fundamentalist movements – whether Islamic, Jewish or Christian – are reactionary movements using religion as a political weapon. These movements isolate the populations they work in, damage the struggle for democracy and equality, and hinder social progress, especially in the field of women's rights.

We Israeli Communists respect all believers and cooperate with believers and religious leaders who support a just peace, democracy, equality and social justice. We shall continue to cooperate on concrete issues with all the forces within the Arab population, including the Islamic movement, for instance in the National Committee of Arab Municipalities and in the High Follow-Up Committee of the Arabs in Israel. This cooperation does not imply any relaxation of our criticism of fundamentalist conceptions.

The CPI's programme for equal rights for the Arab population

Our Arab-Jewish Communist Party emphasizes the importance of joint Arab-Jewish struggle for equality. Joint struggle is an objective condition for successful struggle for peace and equality, democracy and social progress.

The CPI's programme for equal rights for the Arab population includes, among others, the following articles:

1. Recognition of the Arab Palestinian population of Israel as a national minority by means of a law which shall include, among other things, the following articles:
 - The right to Arabic Palestinian culture and language;
 - State recognition of the Nakbah and acceptance of responsibility for its consequences;
 - Establishment of national symbols inclusive of the Arab minority.
2. Intensified Arab-Jewish struggle against plans for ethnic cleansing ("transfer"), expropriation of the lands of Arab citizens, and the demolition of the homes of Arab families.
3. A just solution of the problem of the internal Arab refugees, who are citizens of Israel, based on the recognition of their rights to their villages, which were destroyed in 1948.
4. Creation and funding for a plan to eliminate the foci of unemployment in the Arab sector; abolition of the discrimination against Arab citizens in employment, professional advancement, wages and working conditions.
5. A legal ban on nationalistic incitement against the Arab public and definition of the incitement to "transfer" as racist; elimination of racism from all institutions, and especially from the police and the Prison Service.
6. Intensification of the struggle for equality in budgets and services for Arab municipalities, both rural and urban; development of the Galilee and Negev for the benefit of their Arab and Jewish residents, and not under racist "Judaization" plans.
7. A policy of affirmative action which will make it possible to close social gaps through the creation of educational facilities and resources at all levels, and an extension of welfare and health services.
8. Promotion of the Arab women and their equality in all fields of life, including work, social life and representation in elected bodies.
9. An end to the conscription of the Arab Druze community.

10. Empowerment of the Communist Party of Israel and the creation of a wide, Arab-Jewish front with the goal of extensive cooperation with all forces for peace, equality and democracy in the Jewish and Arab communities.

Chapter 6: The CPI and the struggle for women's rights

The attack on the status and rights of women is a major element of the policy of privatization and unemployment, destruction of workers' rights and slashing of social services. This attack has intensified the discrimination against Jewish and Arab women in all fields and the incidence of violence against them. This offensive adds to the suffering of women, who are already victimized by the policy of war and occupation. New evidence for this was to be seen in the suffering of women in the north of the country during the Second Lebanon War.

Women in Israel are also deeply affected by corporate globalization, which seeks to encompass the greatest possible number of countries, peoples and persons in the capitalist system of exploitation. Corporations are on the lookout for cheap, unorganized labor which at the same time possesses skills and professional abilities. Women are such a target group. One outcome of globalization is the growth in the number of female migrant workers, who are employed in Israel mostly in nursing the elderly and the disabled and in housekeeping.

The heavy price demanded of women by the neo-liberal policies of the Sharon and Olmert-Peretz-Lieberman governments places them in an objective position in which it is in their interest to join the struggles in defense of the welfare state and their rights as workers, whether employed or unemployed, as beneficiaries of public services and as mothers. The victims of "recovery plans" in the public sector, which always include layoffs, are more female than male; most of those who take pay cuts are also women. Most of the victims of cuts in National Security benefits are women.

This harassment of working and unemployed women, young and old, comes against a backdrop of growing numbers of working women. The number of working women is continually rising. In 2005, 1.3 million women were part of the workforce (employed and unemployed together), as compared to 900,000 in 1985. This number is quickly approaching the number of men in the workforce – 1.5 million. However, the discrimination in wages against women goes on. According to 2005 statistics women earn an hourly average wage that is 17% less than the average for men; the monthly average wage is 37% less for women. More women than men suffer from unemployment. While the rate of unemployment for men was 8.5% in 2005, for women it was 9.5%.

Economic difficulties which force women into the labor force do not usually result in a more equitable distribution of the tasks of housekeeping and childrearing. In this context, women suffer from the lack of legal and social recognition of the value of home labor and family investment in child-raising.

Arab women

The female Arab citizens of Israel suffer from a severe lack of available workplaces, and as a result most are unemployed or employed in part-time work, receiving low wages.

The solution of the problem of unemployment among Arab women must involve government investment in creation of industrial zones as well as educational and childcare infrastructure; placement of government offices and other public institutions in Arab communities; organized and convenient public transportation; enforcement of labor law, and especially the minimum wage; and up-to-date professional training which includes more than courses for hairdressers and child-care workers.

Arab women also suffer from their inferior social status within Palestinian Arab society in Israel. Perceptions based in religious tradition and patriarchal ideologies perpetuate the dependence of women on men and their responsibility for so-called "family honor". These reactionary attitudes justify violence towards women and the inexcusable phenomenon of the murder of women, excused as "defense of family honor". The CPI condemns the reality of violence and murder of women under whatever pretext and struggles for full equality for Arab women in society and family.

Arab women have become a prime target for attacks by all arms of the ruling establishment in its persecution of the Arab minority in Israel. An especially vile practice is the fear-mongering of the "demographic threat" supposedly posed by the Arab population. This is the background for the government's racist "temporary order" within the Citizenship Law, which denies legal status to Palestinian women from the Occupied Territories who are married to Arab Israeli citizens and expels them from their homes, tearing them away from their families.

Women in political and social struggles

All social struggles in Israel in the last decade have had a strong component of women's participation. Female teachers and child-care workers, municipal and State workers, nurses, social workers, as well as single mothers and pensioners, have taken a leading role. Women head large union locals and entire unions. Women head many organizations for social change and women's organizations tend more to become involved in social struggles.

Women are also highly visible in the struggle for peace and against the occupation and its crimes, in struggles against ethnic discrimination and equality, in the struggle against family violence and violence against children, and in the defense of the victims of violence and the traffic in women.

The Movement of Democratic Women in Israel (MDWI) has made a distinguished contribution, in the sixty years of its existence, to the fight against the occupation and for a just peace, to protesting discrimination against women and to the unified struggle of Jewish and Arab women. CPI members who are also MDWI members have an important responsibility of promoting the movement, updating its methods and extending its influence among young women, Arab and Jewish alike.

In the light of the multifaceted attack on the rights of women as employed and unemployed workers, beneficiaries of public services, mothers and heads of single-parent families, it is necessary that women organize differently. The

government and the employers are undermining all the important gains made by women in decades of struggle. Women have a special interest in the defense of organized labor and the struggle against the use of temporary labor agencies and contractors. Women also have a special interest in extending social services and reversing the privatization of social services.

The CPI's conception of women's equality

A social and Marxist feminist analysis challenges the very existence of the capitalist socioeconomic regime, which forms the main infrastructure for all kinds of discrimination, including discrimination against women. Marxist feminism incorporates indignation against the double and triple exploitation of women; solidarity with women suffering from exploitation and neglect; empowerment of women to action in defense of their rights; promotion of the social and political participation of women in the public sphere; and the fostering of sisterhood between Jewish and Arab women and women from differing backgrounds.

Experience, in Israel as well as in other countries, proves that under conditions of deepening class exploitation and economic polarization, the entry of more women into workforce and even legislation promoting equal wages for equal work and equal opportunity in employment are not enough to eliminate discrimination against women. Even women's success in education has not eliminated women's discrimination in wages and work conditions. In the first decade of the third millennium, more women are unemployed or employed part-time for low wages, thus becoming submerged in poverty. Women, who are a majority among the impoverished, suffer social distress and live in fear of hunger, of inability to pay for essential needs and of sinking into debt.

The necessity of increasing the number of women members in the party and their inclusion in the leadership

Analysis of the current situation of women in the party teaches that since the 24th Congress there has been no improvement in their status. Indeed, the problem may have worsened – the number of female members approaches zero in many party branches. This problem is thrown into high relief when contrasted with the high proportion of women (Jewish and Arab) in protest movements and social organizations – including in their leaderships. Among peace movements organized and directed by women are Women in Black, Bat Shalom, MahsomWatch, New Profile and the Women's Coalition for Peace.

It is true that party members uphold women's equality. But many times this egalitarian worldview is not reflected in action – neither within the party framework nor within the members' families. From experience we know that the Communist Youth Union includes many female members, more or less in parity with male members. But many of these young women do not end up joining the party, or withdraw from activity following marriage and childbirth. This indicates that as a party and as party members we have failed to create the proper conditions for women's activity in the party in light of the many burdens women must carry. Party members do not always act decisively to counter chauvinistic and fundamentalist attitudes towards women.

Many women who are Communist in their worldview are not organized in the party or belong to it only passively. In addition to the problems arising from the

mistaken attitudes of male members and party institutions to the issue of women's membership in the party, there exists a mistaken attitude among the women themselves. Women's equality is not a holiday gift and shall never be. Women have won this or that achievement in the fight for equality through effort, struggle, confrontation of conservative positions and disdain for prejudice. Hence, women party members have a special responsibility: they must and should be the motor for the internal processes which will transform the CPI into a women-friendly party, a focus point for women fighting in various frameworks for peace, human rights, workers' rights and women's equality.

Chapter 7: Ideological struggle and political front

The Communist Party of Israel defines itself as a revolutionary party struggling for peace, equality, social justice, democracy and profound social change – socialism.

Article 2 of the Basic Principles of the CPI says the following:

“The Communist Party was founded as a force for profound social change, a force whose goal is the creation of a new society. At the dawn of the third millennium this change is especially vital: late capitalism is a regime characterized by deep structural contradictions, injustice, destruction of the global environment, an onslaught against workers' achievements, and a world order with American imperialism as its center. The globalization of the rule of capital is no way out of the social crisis, but rather the main cause of it.”

The CPI's bylaws commit the party to a renewed revolutionary socialism and to a humane and democratic society of social justice. The values of socialism inform all our struggles, and especially our class and social struggles. We have defined our party (Article 4 of the bylaws) thus: “the CPI is the party of class struggle, a revolutionary party of the working class and all exploited strata, the party of internationalism and true patriotism, a Jewish-Arab party fighting for the true interests of Israel and for the well-being of all its inhabitants.”

Our Communist Party is swimming against the ruling ideological currents in Israeli society. In a more and more capitalistic society, we represent the socialist alternative. In a society rife with nationalism and split along ethnic lines we stand for a true joint struggle of Jews and Arabs for social change.

Maintenance of the ideological distinctiveness of the Communist Party is a necessary condition for its continued existence and success. On ideological issues it is important to set clear guidelines. Continuous ideological activity must characterize the party at all levels, from central party organs to grassroots organizations. Experience shows that the neglect of ideological activity leads to political and organizational weakness.

At the dawn of the 21st century, capitalism is adapting to technological change and reorganizing itself; it has been quite successful in hiding its true class character. But its basic nature is one of exploitation and oppression, and this has not changed. It is our responsibility to explain that capitalism remains capitalism, even when attempts at reform are partly successful, and that as such it deepens

exploitation, concentration of wealth in the hands of the few and poverty for the many.

We are engaged in cooperation in the struggle against corporate globalization, together with those who, like us, believe that “another world is possible”; but objectively speaking all victims of neo-liberal policy are our potential partners. Therefore, it is our duty to join them in struggles against the privatization of government corporations and public services and in defense of social rights.

The Communist Party of Israel, armed with a class analysis and a Marxist-Leninist worldview of revolutionary socialism, has the ability to fortify social struggles, especially in the areas of the rights of workers, women and the Arab minority and in defense of the environment. We see all these struggles as expressions of resistance to different aspects of capitalist oppression. Our unique contribution is the holistic view of the possibilities for transforming capitalism, a regime based on class exploitation and discrimination, into a regime of environmental and social justice.

We oppose capitalism with a real alternative – socialism, which is defined in Article 3 of the Basic Principles of the CPI as a “humane and democratic society of social justice”, “the rule of the working class”, and “a revolutionary social change replacing capitalism – the regime of class exploitation – the exploitation of man by man”. The Basic Principles of the CPI clarify that we do not wish to copy the model that collapsed in the 20th century into the 21st century, but rather to apply the lessons of that collapse. On the other hand, the CPI’s Basic Principles emphasize that the lesson we learn from the failures of the twentieth century is not an abandonment of the project of revolutionary social change, but rather a struggle to get this change right. The October Revolution, which broke out ninety years ago, was an enormous breakthrough in the history of social struggle. The world Communist movement, which was consolidated under its influence, made an immense contribution in the twentieth century to the achievements of the working class, to struggles for equality, to the historic victory over fascism and Nazism, and to the movements for national liberation. Together with the immense achievements came grave mistakes which we cannot ignore. The USSR had real social achievements but, as we have already agreed upon in previous Congresses, the model of the regime it posed did not withstand the test of history. Together with our comrades in the world revolutionary movement, our duty is to courageously analyze the lessons of Communist struggle in the twentieth century, not in order to distance ourselves from the ideals at its base but rather in order to realize them.

Our revolutionary worldview combines theory and practice. This is the difference between ourselves and those neo-Marxists who have given up the practical part of Marxism – actual revolutionary change in reality. Our theoretical activity is focused on uncovering the contradictions in our reality, out of which forces for social change may spring.

We do not accept the idea of multiculturalism, which proposes that oppressed people be satisfied with their corner of cultural identity and give up their aspiration to total change of the social system. Our attitude to culture is likewise class-based. We know that every national culture includes progressive and reactionary elements. We take inspiration from the former and reject the latter.

Internationalism has been and remains a vital principle for Communists. “Workers of the world, unite!” was and remains our principled rallying call. The internationalism of the Communists is also an expression of true patriotism. Our nationalist enemies have always charged the Communist Party with national disloyalty and cosmopolitanism and even with betrayal of the nation. Our Jewish and Arab comrades alike have been and continue to be attacked on this basis. We have always known how to repel such slander, and we will continue to do so, for the Communists express the true interests of the people. The rejection of empty nationalist slogans, which obscure class interests, is for us part of our activity on behalf of the people.

The CPI’s Basic Principles (Article 8) define our unique stance on the national question:

“We have always swum against the current of nationalist thinking among Jews and Arabs and continue to do so. We reject the ideological basis of Zionism, as well as its practice, both of which give rise to racist attitudes and are harmful to equality and democracy. We reject the stances of Arab reaction. Our position is class-based and internationalist; we divide the world along different lines. For us the important division is not between Arabs and Jews but between those with an interest in the current class system and those with an interest in changing it. For this reason we can offer a true Jewish-Arab politics, instead of politics for Jews and politics for Arabs.”

For many years Israeli Communists have fought the ideology and practice of Zionism – the “conquest of the land” and the expropriation of the Arab peasants from it, “Jewish labor” and the dispossession of Arab workers. Our party analyzed the class nature of Zionism and argued that it “expresses the interests of the big Jewish bourgeoisie and is opposed to the interest of the workers, the national interests of the Jewish people and the great interest of progress and socialism. We see the struggle against the ideology and practice of Zionism not only as the class interest of the working class and all working people in Israel, and not only as a general interest in progress and socialism, but also as an act of true concern for the national interest of Israel...” (Resolutions of the 18th Congress of the CPI). This is the reason for our longstanding rejection of the Zionist argument of identity between Israel and Zionism; we continue to emphasize this stand.

The struggle for joint action on a common, progressive basis and the ideological struggle are not contradictory. Our party is acting to join forces as much as possible with workers and progressives in Israel, with an eye to the achievement of concrete goals and against factionalism and prejudice.

The CPI, in an effort to extend cooperation with parties, groups and individuals of differing worldviews, initiated the creation of the DFPE (1977) and has since acted to reinforce and extend the front.

The vacuum in the Israeli left makes it possible and necessary to enlarge the DFPE within both Jewish and Arab communities. This extension will not happen of its own accord; it requires political effort on our side. The horizon of development for the DFPE is outwards. The DFPE must become a framework which encourages groups and individuals who are currently not within our political field to join it; these may include groups of conscientious objectors, Jewish and Arab activists in social struggles and in the struggle against the lurch

towards fascism, women's groups and the left wing of the environmental movement. The possibility of this was proven in the struggle against the last war in Lebanon.

Partners in a true front will by definition be different from each other. A front requires openness and mutual flexibility. A front is not a party; it requires a basic political agreement, while a party requires ideological clarity. Our willingness to cooperate in the framework of a front does not compromise our ideological struggle over issues of principle like socialism and Zionism. The front must be a flexible structure that enables each partner to maintain its unique identity and have real influence. A front necessitates public consultation, not secret wrangling, between the partners on every controversial issue. A front makes coordinated decisions based on wide-ranging agreement. The DFPE must provide a space for a variety of action structures. Our only red line was and remains – in a front with us there is no room for organizations directed against the CPI.