

THE CASE OF PAUL NOVICK

I

When the war of June 1967 broke out in the Middle East, our Party promptly condemned it as a war of aggression on the part of Israel and called upon Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories. The National Committee, meeting at the time of the war, adopted a statement to that effect with but one dissenting vote--that of Paul Novick, who took the stand that it was a war of self-defense on Israel's part.

This position, directly contrary to that of the Party, Novick has continued to maintain up to the present, with all the consequences flowing from it. He has repeatedly expressed it in public speeches and in articles in the Morning Freiheit and elsewhere.

He has aligned himself and the Morning Freiheit with the renegade Mikunis-Sneh group in Israel, which has abandoned the path of Marxism-Leninism and has become little more than an appendage to the Meir regime and its reactionary foreign policy. In line with this, he has repudiated the Communist Party of Israel led by Vilner and Toubi, which our Party has recognized as the only true Marxist-Leninist party in Israel.

He has signed his name, together with certain other leaders in the progressive Jewish movement, to two statements on peace in the Middle East (September 29, 1969 and December 1, 1970) which run directly counter to Party policy. While purporting to support the UN resolution of November 1967 as the basis for a peaceful settlement, these statements place the entire onus on the Arab states and virtually absolve the Israeli government of all guilt for the present situation. They call not for commitment by Israel to withdraw from all the occupied territories but for withdrawal to "secure and recognized borders"--an erroneous interpretation, differing little from the formulation of the Meir regime.

Paul Novick has thus been guilty of opportunist capitulation to the pressures of Jewish nationalism and Zionism, which has led him to depart more and more from a Marxist-Leninist position and to move increasingly in the direction of Jewish nationalism.

He freely admits to his differences with the Party on these questions and states that he cannot change his views. He seeks to justify his position on the grounds that a) to follow the Party's line would mean to bring the Morning Freiheit into catastrophic collision with the Jewish community, and b) that it corresponds to a "trend" embracing certain parties within the world Communist movement. Such arguments must be rejected. Questions of principle cannot be decided on tactical grounds; this is the essence of opportunism. Nor can one seek to justify rejection of the policy of the party of which he is a member on the grounds that some other party does so. On such grounds any member of the CPUSA could claim the right to hold a Maoist or a revisionist line as representing a "trend" among Communist parties. Nothing could be more destructive of Party unity and discipline.

II

In his attitude toward the Soviet Union, particularly with regard to the Jewish question, Paul Novick has increasingly departed from the position of the Party. Though speaking out against the slanderous anti-Soviet campaign in this country, he has, in the name of a "balanced" position, placed an increasing share of the burden of responsibility on the Soviet Union itself. The Soviet government, he contends, gives ammunition to its enemies by refusing to allow Jews to emigrate, by stifling Jewish culture and by conducting an anti-Zionist campaign with anti-Semitic overtones. But these are the contentions of the slanderers themselves, and Novick has thus placed himself more and more on their grounds.

At the time of the Leningrad hijacking trial he signed his name, along with others, to a telegram calling on the Soviet government to free all the defendants, thus joining hands with the anti-Soviet elements who falsely charge that the trial was unjustified and a frameup.

Further examples could be cited, illustrating the fact that Novick's nationalism has led him into an increasingly anti-Soviet path.

III

The rise of Jewish nationalism and Zionism in recent years has led also to a rise of racism and white chauvinism within the Jewish community. And Paul Novick's capitulation to the former has led him also to opportunist accommodation to the latter. This was expressed, for example, in the "impartial" position taken by the Morning Freiheit in relation to the racist strike led by Shanker a few years ago, a position which placed emphasis not on fighting Shanker's racism but on attacking "extremists on both sides." It was expressed also in a tendency on the part of the Morning Freiheit to magnify "Black anti-Semitism" all out of proportion to reality.

More recently it found expression in the fact that for many months after the fight to free Angela Davis began, it received little more than lip service from the Morning Freiheit and from Novick himself. Only when it was made clear that the Party took very seriously the failure to join in this struggle, which is in fact a test for every Communist, did the situation change.

Here, too, further instances could be cited. Paul Novick, however, flatly rejects all such criticisms and contends that he and the paper should actually be commended for their line on the question of racism. This refusal even to recognize such serious influences of white chauvinism is in itself shocking.

IV

On these grounds we hold Paul Novick guilty of grave departures from Party policy and from Marxist-Leninist principles. Moreover, he has persistently adhered to this course despite numerous discussions and other efforts to resolve differences. In view of his influential position as editor of the Morning Freiheit and as a leading figure in the progressive Jewish movement, his active opposition to Party policy has done much damage to the Party's fight for a Marxist-Leninist, internationalist line among the Jewish people.

At a meeting of the Political Committee on April 14, 1970, at which Novick was present, a statement on the Middle East was adopted which concludes with the following paragraph:

In recent years we have had to fight for our position against powerful pressures of bourgeois nationalism. Some in our ranks, however, have been guilty of opportunist capitulation to such pressures, and have taken a line in direct opposition to that of the Party. The National Committee took note of this in its letter to the Party clubs of a year ago. It is now necessary to place the matter much more sharply. The escalation of military action by the Israeli government with the encouragement of U.S. imperialism has brought matters to a critical stage. It becomes increasingly urgent that the Party enter fully into the struggle, particularly in the ideological sphere. Under these circumstances, looseness with regard to following Party policy can no longer be permitted. It is incumbent on every Party member to fight for the Party's policy in this area and to work to carry it out to the best of his or her ability. The Party can demand nothing less.

This holds with equal force today. It is the duty of every Jewish Communist to fight against Jewish nationalism and to champion the line of proletarian internationalism. Paul Novick has abandoned this fight and has succumbed to Jewish nationalism. We consider this incompatible with his continued membership in the Communist Party. On the basis of these charges we believe that his membership should be terminated.

Hyman Lumer

Claude Lightfoot

Jose Ristorucci