

## *Israel and the Arab Middle East*

**'In view of the existing tension in the Middle East, caused by the situation in Palestine and of the danger of that tension to world peace, the Asian-African Conference declares its support of the rights of the Arab people in Palestine and calls for the implementation of the United Nations resolutions on Palestine and achievement of the peaceful settlement of the Palestine question.'**

**Resolution of the Bandung Asian-African Conference of 29 States, representing the majority of the world's population, on April 24, 1955.**

**T**HE most explosive region in the world today is the Middle East. This is universally recognised. There is less general agreement whence the menace of explosion arises. Despite the unbroken record of Western aggression of the past three-quarters of a century, from the British bombardment of Alexandria in 1882 to the Anglo-French bombardment of Port Said in 1956, and the American massive naval mobilisation this year to overthrow democracy in Jordan, the Western powers have no compunction in presenting themselves as the apostles of peace, earnestly endeavouring

to restrain the turbulence of the inhabitants from tearing one another to pieces.

### **Through the Looking Glass**

Irony reigns supreme in the current official Western picture of the region they have chosen to call the 'Middle East'. After they have filled the region with their military, naval and air bases, their occupying forces, their military treaties and subsidised regimes, the Western rulers swear that their only desire is to 'protect' the peoples from the menace of penetration by the Soviet Union, which has no bases, no occupying troops and no military treaties in the region. After they have engrossed in their grip the bounteous oil resources of the region, draining out hundreds of millions of profits amid the poverty of the population, they can unsmilingly proclaim that their altruistic aim is to 'prevent Soviet imperialism from securing a stranglehold on the oil supplies' (U.S. Ambassador to London, Winthrop Aldrich, at the Pilgrims' Dinner, January 31, 1957). After having created the Arab-Jewish conflict, where before, until they came, there was Arab-Jewish peace, they now proclaim that the conflict between Israel and the Arab states—a conflict entirely created by their policy—is the justification of their intervention rendered essential in order to keep the peace.

### **Israel-Arab Conflict**

Nine years after the establishment of the State of Israel, the conflict between Israel and the Arab states remains unresolved, and the majority of Palestine Arabs remain refugees, cut off from their homes and the land of their fathers, and denied the rights of national existence, while the minority within Israel are held subject under military rule. The conflict between Israel and the Arab states—itsself entirely the creation of imperialism—is thus now made a main lever and justification of continued imperialist intervention. The peaceful settlement of this conflict is therefore a vital interest of anti-imperialist liberation in the Middle East, and the common interest of all the peoples living in this region. A recent visit by the present writer to Israel, to attend a congress of the representatives of the progressive working class, democratic and anti-imperialist sections of the Israeli people, organised in the Israeli Communist Party, who fought courageously against the aggressive Suez-Sinai war, shoulder to shoulder with the British labour movement and the militant working class, democratic and anti-imperialist sections of the French people, afforded an opportunity to see at close

quarters some of the conditions of this problem and its solution, and left some very vivid impressions which it may be of interest to share with readers.

### **'Middle East' Mystification**

The very term 'Middle East' in its current use is an invention of modern imperialist phraseology that conceals from view the reality and true dimensions of the gigantic Arab liberation struggle which constitutes the foremost battleground of the liberation struggle against imperialism today and which extends from Morocco and Algeria in Northern Africa, through Egypt and the Sudan to Iraq and Arabia, with close contacts with the African liberation struggle. Previously in the nineteenth century the term 'Middle East' was used by the Western rulers to describe, as distinct from the lands bordering the Eastern Mediterranean or 'Near East' or 'Levant', the region from Iran and Transcaucasia to Afghanistan. This terminology corresponded to the Anglo-Tsarist rivalry which dominated the politics of the region. With the twentieth century oil became the dominant issue. The term 'Middle East' was extended by the Western powers, irrespective of the character and composition of the peoples, to include the whole new region of imperialist rivalry, and embrace equally the Arab peoples of the Near East, Egypt and the Sudan, with the people of Iran, and even, in the most recent extension, to reach to Libya on the one side and Pakistan on the other—a geographical absurdity.

### **Arab Liberation**

The serious political student will ensure a closer grip of realities if he sees, not merely the complex of imperialist rivalries in the 'Middle East' (the 'struggle for the mastery of the Middle East' beloved of Mr. Gaitskell, or the 'power-vacuum' abhorred by Mr. Dulles), but the real heart of the situation and the living human reality, the liberation struggle of the peoples against imperialism, and in the forefront the Arab liberation struggle, led at present by Egypt and Syria. During the past decade the peoples of Eastern Asia, Southern Asia and South East Asia have over the greater part of the area overthrown the rule of imperialism, despite remaining pockets of domination. The central battleground of the liberation struggle against imperialism is today the Arab liberation struggle, with its close links with the African liberation struggle (already visibly on the way to becoming the final battleground in the not distant future).

## **Victories of Arab Liberation**

During the most recent years great victories have been won in the advance of Arab liberation. Syria and Lebanon had won their independence already immediately after the second world war. All attempts to establish a Middle East Defence Organisation parallel to Nato met with resolute resistance from the Arab states, and ended only in the establishment of the Middle East Command of three Western powers together with Turkey, the old oppressor of the Arabs. Even when the Baghdad Pact was imposed by imperialism, it could only secure the adhesion of one vassal Arab state under the vicious anti-popular dictatorship of Nuri es Said, an ancient adherent of British domination (former officer of the Turkish army), against the opposition of all the remainder, and had to drag in Turkey, Pakistan and Iran against the Arabs. Jordan rebuffed General Templer, rejected the Baghdad Pact and turned out General Glubb and the British occupying forces. Egypt under President Nasser secured the evacuation of the British occupying forces from the Suez Canal Zone. Sudan won independence. Morocco and Tunis won independence in face of the colonial war of French imperialism, and Algeria is now the centre of the battle of Arab liberation in Northern Africa. Egypt swept forward, defying the pressure to join the Baghdad Pact, securing the independent supply of arms from non-imperialist sources to make that defiance effective, and carried to a new height the national liberation of Egypt from imperialist chains by the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company.

## **Suez War Landmark**

In face of this advance of Arab liberation the Anglo-French imperialists, in collaboration with the Israel Ben-Gurion Government, massed all their forces to concentrate overwhelming military, naval and air superiority in order to strike a decisive blow at Egypt, the leader of Arab liberation, overthrow President Nasser (as the leaflets accompanying the aggression revealed) and re-establish their old domination in the Middle East. The outcome staggered them, and they are still licking their wounds, quarrelling with one another over what hit them and who was to blame. The aggression ended in total and unmitigated fiasco, enforced withdrawal and acceptance of terms which could have been obtained and had been contemptuously rejected before the war. The two once mightiest Western European imperialist powers had had to bite the dust; their aims,

no less than the expansionist aims of the Israeli chauvinists, had been exposed and humbled before the world.

### **New World Balance**

Even more significant than the fiasco was the cause of the fiasco. The cause of the fiasco of the aggressors was not merely the strength of Egyptian and Arab resistance. It was the superiority of the strength of the peace forces of the world, led by the Soviet Union, of the co-operation of the socialist countries with the newly independent countries, representing already the majority of mankind, together with the progressive anti-imperialist forces of the working class and peoples in the imperialist countries, alongside the contradictions of imperialism. The resolution of the United Nations was only the reflection of this new world situation, not the efficient cause of the fiasco, as the Anglo-French imperialists now seek to pretend, vainly endeavouring to cover up their humiliation by alleging that their dutiful and enlightened acceptance of international decisions was the cause of the cease-fire. On the contrary. The aggression and invasion was pressed still more violently forward for five days after the United Nations resolution, and only within twenty-four hours of the receipt of the Soviet Note was brought to a sudden and abrupt halt. Thereby a new balance of the world was revealed. The fiasco of the Suez War was the most significant demonstration of the new world situation since Bandung and Geneva. The lesson of the victory of the Chinese Revolution, of the collapse of the joint imperialist invasion of Korea, of Dien Bien Phu and the collapse of French imperialism in South East Asia, was now reinforced by the simultaneous defeat of the attempted Hungarian counter-revolution and the fiasco of the Suez aggression, all pointing the way forward to the future of the world.

### **Imperialist Counter-Offensive**

It is no matter for surprise that the most intense counter-offensive of imperialism, now led by the United States, taking over from the weakened Anglo-French imperialists, has been launched throughout the Middle East during these recent months after the defeat of the Suez and Sinai aggression. The Eisenhower Doctrine proclaimed the intention of the United States to intervene with all means, including military measures, against any country in the Middle East under the old Hitlerite 'anti-comintern' formula of assisting to 'protect' any country against the menace of 'international communism'.

## **Saving Jordan for the 'Free World'**

What this elastic formula meant in practice was immediately shown by the active intervention of the United States to overthrow parliamentary democracy in Jordan. The technique was simple. The newly elected left wing parliamentary government in Jordan had decided to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. A military terrorist coup was thereupon organised in the name of King Hussein, who had dutifully proclaimed a 'crisis' due to 'international communism'. According to the statement of the Jordan Chief of Staff, who refused to betray his country by participating in the coup and had to flee to Syria, the coup was organised under the guidance and control of United States diplomatic and military representatives. It was reinforced by the massive concentration of the American Sixth Fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean (with a striking power three times as great as that of the Anglo-French mobilisation for the Suez war), and the demonstrative landing of marines in Lebanon. The elected parliament and parliamentary government was replaced by military dictatorship, all patriotic leaders arrested, and all political parties and trade unions dissolved. An American subsidy of £10 million followed. Jordan had been—temporarily—saved for the 'free world'.

Some people may find it a little odd that the suppression of a popularly elected parliamentary Government in favour of a royal autocracy backed by the Army should be interpreted as making a country more 'pro-Western' in character. These questioners are likely to include quite a number of Jordanians.

*(Observer, 5.5.57.)*

## **Organising Counter-Revolution**

Throughout the Middle East the imperialist counter-offensive under the United States has been pressed forward. The Richards Mission was dispatched with 200 million dollars to buy over any reactionary government that could be lined up under the American banner. Israel was officially aligned under the Eisenhower Doctrine by a minority vote of its parliament to take its place in a common camp with the most violent verbal denouncers of Israel of the Nuri type. In Lebanon the anger of the people was expressed in overwhelming anti-American demonstrations in Beirut and a three-day general strike; demonstrators were shot and hundreds arrested, and under these conditions elections were organised to confirm the right wing Government in power against the National Front. The United States took over direct leadership of the Baghdad Pact by joining the Military Committee, with General Twining established as

Supreme Commander and dominating the Council meeting in June. In Iraq, the last remaining British stronghold, Nuri was replaced—possibly temporarily—as Premier by the former Ambassador to Washington, Jawdat. Every attempt was made, following the visit of King Saud to Washington, to detach Saudi Arabia from the Arab liberation front, and to associate its government with the puppet governments in Iraq and Jordan. Economic and financial pressure has been intensified against Egypt. A supreme offensive is now being concentrated against Syria to break the Government of the National Front and organise every reactionary and corrupt element that can be found in order, with the backing of military threats and dollar bribes, to bring about its overthrow.

### **A Threat to Peace**

This imperialist counter-offensive represents at the moment the most dangerous threat to peace in the Middle East. It endeavours to set Arab against Arab, just as President Eisenhower previously boasted of his aim to make 'Asian fight Asian'. With every means of dollars, military pressure, intrigue and blackmail it endeavours to build on the most corrupt and reactionary elements in order to break the popular liberation movement. It endeavours to disrupt the co-operation of Egypt and Syria with Arabia. It endeavours to mobilise Iraq and Jordan and Lebanon against Egypt and Syria. It plays on the mutual fears and hostility of Israel and the Arab states in order to bring both sides under American domination. Through the Baghdad Pact it disrupts Arab unity and aligns Iraq with the pro-imperialist governments of Turkey, Iran and Pakistan and with the two major imperialist powers. In the name of protection against aggression it organises aggression to establish puppet subservient governments. In their reply of June 12 the Western powers rejected the Soviet proposals for a joint declaration against the use of force in the Middle East, for the cessation of the supply of arms, and for the settlement of all disputes by peaceful negotiation. There is no question whence arises the menace of new explosions and war in the Middle East.

### **'Building on Corpses'**

Grave and dangerous as is this present imperialist counter-offensive in the Middle East, and the temporary setbacks it has been able to inflict upon sections of the national liberation movement, it would be a mistake to exaggerate the stability of the successes achieved by imperialism or to assume that the deeper currents of historical

development in the Middle East can be reversed. The Richards Mission met with more rebuffs than welcomes, and was not even able to spend its 200 million dollars, but came back with 80 million unallocated, while half of the 120 million allocated was for military aid. 'Much of the Arab world' wrote the *New York Times* (May 5) 'looks on the Richards Mission as a diplomatic blunder.' On May 9 the same journal wrote:

The military task of the U.S. in the Middle East has not ended with the successful demonstration of the Sixth Fleet, but is just beginning. . . . King Hussein has won a battle, but not the war. The long-term odds are against him unless he is bolstered by indefinite U.S. support, both economic and military.

American strategy seeks to defeat the popular liberation movement by building on the same unrepresentative reactionary feudal puppets on which British imperialism built, with results that are known. To try to build on such people as Nuri and Hussein is, as Egyptian comment has emphasised, 'to build on corpses'.

### **Zero Plus Zero = Zero**

In a revealing statement after the Baghdad Pact Council meeting in June Premier Suhrawardy of Pakistan, whose government now depends on the United States for 40 per cent of its budget, sought to boast:

People used to say that the Pact nations were being cut off from the Moslem world. Does that make sense when we in the Pact are 125 million Moslems against 25 million in the Middle East outside it?

In view of the conditions of martial law and military dictatorship required to maintain the régime in most of the countries concerned, it might be questioned how many of his '125 million Moslems' could really be regarded as adherents of the Pact. But what he went on to say was still more revealing:

The question is asked: Why don't we get together rather than be tied to big Powers like the United Kingdom or America? My answer to that is that zero plus zero is after all equal to zero. We have therefore to go further afield rather than get all the zeros together.

Exactly. So all his '125 million Moslems' are 'zero' in this frank admission of the Premier of the largest non-imperialist country in the Baghdad Pact. All the non-imperialist states caught in the net of the Baghdad Pact are 'zero'. The only reality is the Western imperialist powers. A curious 'Middle Eastern' Pact. Thank you, Premier Suhrawardy, for this engaging frankness. But the conclusion is inescapable. British imperialism also sought to build on

'zero' for the political basis of its military and economic power in the Middle East. Its collapse has followed. But the height of the short-lived British dominion in the Middle East was before the days of Bandung and the present strength of the national liberation movement. The attempt of American imperialism to take over from British imperialism the domination of the Middle East will be even more short-lived.

### **Israel-Arab Question**

It is in this wider context of the central dominant question of the Middle East, the struggle of Arab liberation against imperialism, that the special question of Palestine, of Israel and Israel-Arab relations, needs to be seen in correct proportion. Emphasis on this context as decisive is by no means equivalent to an expression of indifference to the vital interests of the close on two million people, sprung from many nations, who have been settled in the present State of Israel. On the contrary, only this approach corresponds to their true interests and offers the path forward to the solution of their problems. The Middle East is the Arab Middle East. The victory of Arab liberation may be regarded as certain in the near future. The end of imperialist domination in the Middle East draws into view. The future of Israel has to be considered in the light of this situation. There are increasing signs that some of the more sober and responsible political elements in Israel are beginning to recognise the necessity of such an approach to the question.

### **Is a Settlement Possible?**

In the present situation of the Middle East it is manifest that, so long as the present State of Israel, under its existing leadership and policy, should continue to represent an imperialist outpost, like the old Ulster plantation, imposed by the power of imperialist armed conquest and expropriation of the original inhabitants, and armed and economically maintained by imperialism (four-fifths of its imports are at present not paid for by exports), and aligned with Western imperialism against the Arab liberation movement, for so long the conflict inevitably continues. The prolongation of such a conflict could ultimately (since the power of imperialism in the Middle East is approaching its end) lead to consequences which could prove fatal, as the Bulganin Note to Ben-Gurion at the time of the Sinai aggression warned, to the future existence of the present State of Israel. Only when the people of Israel take their fate into

their own hands, reverse the rôle of imperialist outpost and recognise their rôle as a Middle Eastern people, united with the liberation movement of the Middle East against imperialism, only then a peaceful settlement becomes possible, outside the framework of imperialism, and corresponding to the principles of national self-determination and peace, as already indicated in the United Nations resolutions on Palestine. Imperialism created the conflict, thrives on the conflict, and, while professing to deplore it, in practice exacerbates it by its every action. A peaceful settlement is the vital interest of all the peoples of the Middle East, and of all supporters of democracy, national independence and peace throughout the world.

### **From Mythology to Reality**

The fantastic mythological picture spread by Western imperialist propaganda, and especially by official Zionist and Labour imperialist propaganda, of a little 'progressive' 'Western' 'advanced' and even 'socialist' state of under two millions struggling to maintain its existence in the midst of a hostile sea of 'backward' 'reactionary' 'feudal' 'militarist' Arab states striving for its extermination, needs to be replaced by a more sober estimation of the realities of the struggle of national liberation and imperialism in the Middle East, as well as of the special characteristics of the racial and class structure within Israel. In the present historical situation in the Middle East whatever supports the anti-imperialist struggle, irrespective of the class composition of the forces in the anti-imperialist camp, is fulfilling a progressive rôle. Whatever is aligned with imperialism is reactionary. In this sense, in contrast to the official Western imperialist mythology, there would be more reason to find a certain analogy in some respects—so long as the existing ruling forces and policy dominate Israel—with the position of the European Kenya settlers or occupants of the White Highlands in Kenya, presenting themselves as the representatives of 'Western civilisation' and 'advanced standards' amidst a hostile sea of 'backward' 'barbarous' Africans bent on their destruction, and demanding ever stronger military measures and policies of strength to maintain themselves. Such is the fatally dangerous situation to which the policy of their present rulers, allied with imperialism, have brought the people of Israel, and from which a way out must be found, in their own interest, no less than in the interest of all the peoples of the Middle East.

## **Background**

The background of imperialist policy which has led to this dangerous situation is familiar. British imperialism initially exploited the Arab liberation movement during the first world war in order to overthrow the Turkish Empire and establish its own empire in the Middle East. For this purpose the British Government signed a written guarantee in 1915 to establish an independent Arab state from the shores of the Eastern Mediterranean to Iraq, that is, including Palestine. In 1916 the plan for a single Arab state was chopped up by an Anglo-French secret treaty—which only became divulged thanks to the Bolsheviks—by which France secured Syria and Britain Palestine. When in 1917, with the advance of the Russian Revolution, it became clear that Arab liberation was likely to sweep far beyond the control intended by Britain and demand the fulfilment of the pledge for an independent Arab state, British imperialism sought for a counterweight against Arab liberation, and for this purpose made an alliance with Zionism. In November, 1917—a significant date—the Balfour Declaration to Rothschild, guaranteeing a ‘Jewish National Home’ in Palestine, sealed the alliance of imperialism and Zionism. The object was, as Sir Reginald Storrs, subsequent Governor of Jerusalem, later declared, to establish a loyal Jewish ‘Ulster’ of settlers aligned with imperialism as a counterweight to the Arabs. Conflict was artificially created where none before existed. Zionism, from being a reactionary sentimental utopian movement, became, after the Balfour Declaration of 1917, an official authorised subsidiary department of imperialist colonialism.

## **Zionism**

Zionism had developed during the latter part of the nineteenth century as a reactionary utopian movement, drawn from many strands, but winning support especially as a supposed answer to anti-semitism (Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, had been profoundly influenced by the Dreyfus trial). It was reactionary from the outset, despite idealist support, because, by proclaiming the separate nationality of Jews as Jews, it denied the national citizenship of Jews in the country of their birth or where they lived, thereby cutting them off from the general democratic movement and branding them as aliens in their own countries, just as anti-semitism did. It sought to solve the so-called ‘Jewish question’ (actually, feudal and capitalist fomenting of anti-semitism), not by

the advance of the progressive democratic movement, but by herding off all Jews into what Kautsky—when he wrote on the question as a Marxist in 1914, expressing the viewpoint of the international socialist movement—called a project for an ‘international ghetto’. The project of settlement in a populated country could only be fulfilled in alliance with imperialism as a department of colonial policy. Negotiations took place with the British Colonial Office in 1903 for settlement in East Africa, but proved abortive. Peaceful settlement in Palestine, despite lavish finance by the Rothschilds and Montefiores, brought only a few thousands there before 1918. Characteristically the *Encyclopædia Britannica* in 1911, reflecting the viewpoint of the official world before 1914, wrote:

Modern Zionism is vitiated by its erroneous premises. It is based on the idea that anti-semitism is unconquerable, and thus the whole movement is artificial. Under the influence of religious toleration and the naturalisation laws, nationalities are daily losing more of their racial character. The coming nationality will be essentially a matter of education and economics, and this will not exclude the Jews as such. With the passing of anti-semitism Jewish nationalism will disappear. . . .

Although Zionist organisation was numerically strong, its experience from 1897 to 1910 rendered it very doubtful whether its nationalist aspirations could, humanly speaking, ever be fulfilled.

(*Encyclopædia Britannica*, Eleventh Edition, 1911)

Subsequent editions of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, after the official alliance of Zionism and imperialist colonialism for the conquest of Palestine, sung the glories of Zionism. Despite the naïve illusions of *Manchester Guardian* editorial writers, it is not only the *Soviet Encyclopædia* which reverses previous estimations in the light of changes in the political situation.

### Occupied Palestine

Herzl had spoken of ‘the people without a land’ coming to occupy ‘the land without a people’. But Palestine was already inhabited. In 1912 there were in Palestine 752,000 inhabitants, of whom 83,000 were Jews, or a Jewish population of one-ninth. There were no Arab-Jewish conflicts, and a Jewish resident who recalled the conditions before the British mandate described the Arabs as the ‘most gentle and loveable people’. It was only after the British armed conquest of Palestine, and under the military and political power of British colonial rule, that the large-scale immigration of Jewish settlers into Palestine was organised. Between 1918 and 1948 a net influx of over 400,000 Jewish immigrants settled in Palestine. (Sometimes, as in 1927, more left than entered.) Land was bought

for them by the Jewish National Fund from rich Arab effendis or absentee landowners often on the Riviera; then the Arab peasant cultivators, whose families had tilled the land over the centuries, were expropriated by police or military eviction. Thus Arab-Jewish conflict was created by imperialism. Arab revolt against imperialist conquest and expropriation grew. The general Arab rising of 1929 alarmed the British rulers, who during the next decade proceeded to limit Jewish immigration to a quota—at the very time when the refugees from Nazi terror were seeking asylum. In consequence the British rulers found themselves faced with mass resistance and armed guerilla struggle equally from Jews and Arabs. Frankenstein had created a monster which passed beyond control. Incapable of continuing the battle after the second world war, British imperialism handed over its problem to the United Nations and announced a date for the termination of the mandate.

### **United Nations Solution**

The United Nations Assembly, after prolonged discussion of many schemes and rejection of the Soviet and Arab proposals for an independent democratic bi-national state with guarantees to both communities, adopted a plan for the partition of Palestine and the creation of two independent democratic states, one Jewish and one Arab. The balance of forces in the United Nations was reflected in the fact that the Jewish one-third of the population was awarded 52 per cent of the area, containing 498,000 Jews and 497,000 Arabs. This plan was adopted by the Assembly by 33 votes to 13, with 10 abstentions, the Arab states voting against. The British rulers forbade the entry of the United Nations Commission to prepare the establishment of the two states, and abruptly withdrew, expecting in the consequent chaos to re-establish their domination by war. The Jewish State of Israel was immediately established. Bevin's war against it followed, conducted in the name of the Arab states under British imperialist domination, and principally using the British-officered Arab Legion. The majority of the Arab peasants fled from the war, before the onset of the advancing Israeli armies and the British Arab Legion. As a result of the war the Israeli armies occupied the greater part of Palestine, far beyond the United Nations boundaries, the bulk of the remainder being incorporated by British imperialism into its then vassal state of Jordan, while a small strip went to Egypt. Thus the vast majority of the Palestine Arabs became refugees from the land of their birth, and continue to eke out a miserable existence on the borders of the homes and

the lands they have lost, the remainder falling under the domination of Israel. From that day to this the British imperialists and the Israeli rulers have united in denying the rights of self-determination to the Palestine Arabs and in resisting the fulfilment of the United Nations decision.

### **Refugees**

Today there are 903,000 Palestine Arab refugees in the camps, as well as some two to three hundred thousand outside the camps, and the Arab national minority of 200,000 inside Israel—a total population of from one and a third to one and a half million Palestine Arabs denied national rights. The refugee camps are mostly situated in Jordan, also in the Gaza strip, alongside the border with Israel. The border is an entirely artificial demarcation line, slicing Jerusalem in half or cutting off Arab villages from their traditional fields. The land on the Israeli side is maintained as a security area; kibbutzim or agricultural co-operative settlements have been strategically located along the border as armed outposts. The Arab peasant refugee may look across to his former land, sometimes creep through the barbed wire at night to sow it (as with the White Highlands in Kenya, much of the seized cultivable or formerly cultivated land is still not settled or cultivated), or to pluck olives from the tree his grandfather planted: he becomes an 'Arab infiltrator' to be shot. The United Nations has partially recognised its responsibility (since the non-fulfilment of its decision has led to this situation) by maintaining the refugees at a starvation level in grim conditions; but the Western powers have recently made approaches to 'solve' the problem by permanently uprooting them, denying them their rights and handing them over to the tender mercies of the counter-revolutionary dictatorship in Iraq. But the justice of the demand for the restoration of the refugees in their own homeland cannot be denied, and has been recognised by United Nations decisions.

Is it logical to say, as some in Israel do, that Jews have the right to return to their homeland after 2,000 years and Arab refugees have not the right to return after 9 years?

(Meir Vilner, Israeli Communist Member of Parliament, at the World Peace Conference at Colombo, June 15, 1957)

### **Bankruptcy of Policies of Strength**

What prospect is there for the Ben-Gurion Government or ruling Zionist parties in Israel permanently to maintain this position of

obstruction of the fulfilment of the United Nations decisions, alignment with imperialism, hostility to the Arab world and denial of the national rights of the Palestine Arabs, by superior military strength and periodical massive 'punitive' raids and aggression? The outcome of the Sinai war showed the bankruptcy of this policy. All the military superiority did not secure the spoils of expansion intended, in face of the overwhelming resistance of the peace forces of the world. Premier Ben-Gurion might boast to the Knesset on November 7, 1956:

Israel now occupies about 60,000 square miles of territory . . . three times the total area a week ago. . . . No pressure from outside will weaken Israel's determination to stay where she is so long as there is no peace settlement defining the permanent frontiers.

But Israel had to give up the spoils all the same.

### **Policies of Desperation**

The new effect of the Sinai war was that Israel stood condemned before world opinion as an aggressor, had exposed the expansionist aims of its rulers in the moment of victory, thus intensifying Arab hostility and justifying the Arab fears of the menace of Israeli military expansion, and yet had not even been able to retain the spoils of aggression. In desperation Ben-Gurion turned to the Eisenhower Doctrine to 'end Israel's isolation', as he claimed (like the fly entering the spider's web—to quote Moshe Sneh's witty reply in the debate—who, observing other flies already in the web, boasted that he was 'no longer isolated'). The result was to place Israel in the same camp of servants of imperialism along with the most reactionary elements of the Arab and Moslem world of the Hussein-Nuri-Suhrawardy type, who seek to cover up their surrender to imperialism by the most noisy proclamations of irreconcilable hostility to Israel. As the Government organ *Dawar* was compelled to admit:

The danger of the liquidation of the State of Israel comes precisely from the anti-Soviet elements in the Arab world which desire to use the Baghdad Pact for this aim.

### **Racial and Class Structure**

The internal racial and class structure of the present State of Israel corresponds to this bankrupt reactionary policy. It is not only a question of the oppressed Arab minority or of the stranglehold of foreign finance-capital and exploitation of the entire people. The actual structure is more complex, and in certain respects recalls

the Rhodesian or East African type of stratification of Europeans, Asians and Africans. There are in effect four tiers in the social pyramid. At the top, the Anglo-Saxon or West European Jews. Next, the East and South-East European Jews. Then come the stratum openly called 'Black Jews' from Asian and African countries, especially Yemen, Iraq, Morocco and Tunis. These have constituted the majority of immigrants in recent years. As the reserves of European immigration have dried up and there is no hope of immigration from the United States with the most numerous Jewish population of any country (the term 'Aliya' or migration to Israel is a forbidden word in American Zionist circles, reported the *Jerusalem Post* on May 31, 1957), agents have scoured the Middle East and Northern Africa to find pockets of population with relics of Jewish religious rites and organise convoys of immigrants to Israel. Once arrived, they are either conscripted into the army or transmitted to the appalling conditions of the immigrant camps of the Oriental and African Jews, to be exploited for the lowest unskilled and casual labour. If they try to leave, they find themselves faced with a heavy bill for transport charges to Israel, which they cannot pay; they are tied for life. (Only the Indian Jews succeeded by their demonstrations in compelling the intervention of the Indian Government to enable them to return home.) At the bottom of the pyramid come the Arabs, the most oppressed of all.

### **Arab National Minority**

Of the 200,000 Arabs in Israel, 180,000 come under Military Government. Permits or passes are required for entering or leaving these areas. The operation of the pass system recalls African models in that only short-term passes are given, thus making it difficult for those going out to work from the areas to take regular jobs and in practice relegating them to casual labour. Wages are 30 to 40 per cent below the level of Jewish workers. The Zionist-controlled Histadruth or trade union organisation (which is also the biggest employer in Israel, through joint companies with American capital) originally excluded all Arab workers, and has since admitted only 3,000 Arab workers (excluding many more thousands applying) in its trade union section, without voting rights or representation, sickness or health benefit, unemployment pay or strike pay. The kibbutzim or agricultural settlements are forbidden to employ Arab labour. The lavish high-class agricultural machinery sent from the United States to Israel is almost entirely reserved for the Zionist kibbutzim and settlers; of 3,500 tractors in

Israel only 11 are in Arab hands. Of the 4,000 students in the only university, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, there are only 50 Arab students, including one woman—or 1 in 4,000 for the Arab population as against 1 in 430 for the Jewish. The Military Courts can detain without trial or deport to any fixed locality. The Military Government can impose night curfews. It was in the imposition of such a curfew that arose the massacre of Kafr Kassim on the first day of the war, on October 29, 1956, when 49 men and women of one Arab village, coming back from labouring in the fields, were shot down in cold blood.

### **Conditions for a Solution**

What are the conditions for a solution of this situation and for a peaceful settlement between Israel and the Arabs? It is evident that the situation has arisen from the refusal to fulfil the principles of the United Nations decisions and the denial of national rights to the Palestine Arabs. Hence a peaceful solution requires the recognition of the right of national self-determination of the Palestine Arabs (not merely of the 200,000 within Israel, but of all the one and a third to one and a half million Palestine Arabs), including their right to set up their own independent State. Bound up with this is the right of restoration and rehabilitation of the Palestine Arab refugees in their ancient homeland. It is not correct that the limitation of the land area of Israel and the subsequent occupation of wide areas by Jewish immigrants makes such a restoration and rehabilitation in their own country impossible. Of the 8 million dunums (a dunum is one-quarter of an acre) of the total cultivable area of Israel only 3.6 million or 45 per cent are at present cultivated. It is not a question of laying down beforehand frontiers and areas. A settlement can only be reached by peaceful negotiation, without imperialist intervention or domination, on the basis of these principles.

### **Conciliation and Concessions**

Such a settlement requires concessions on both sides. It requires the recognition by Israel of the national rights of the Palestine Arabs and of the rights of restoration of the refugees. It requires recognition by the Arabs of the rights of independent national existence of the one and three-quarter millions of Jewish settlers of Israel, despite the historical background of imperialist invasion and conquest which originally made possible that occupation. But only such a settlement, ending the imperialist policies of

divide and rule, can open the way to peace, the recognition of Israel on the basis of such a settlement by the Arab States, the establishment of Israeli rights of navigation in the Suez Canal or Akaba Gulf, and the promotion of friendly relations between Israel and the Arab States.

### **Towards a Settlement**

Are the political conditions ripe for such a settlement? Not yet. But the conditions are gathering. It is true that Ben-Gurion's slogan of 'Not an Inch of Territory, Not a Single Refugee' would rule out negotiation or peace. But notably different sentiments have begun to be voiced, especially after the disillusionment of the Sinai war, by responsible leaders in all parties, including his own, recognising the necessity for a new approach, even though only the Israeli Communist Party has as yet put forward a positive programme for peace. The unofficial negotiations with some representatives of the refugees may be regarded as in part a reflection of this pressure. It is said that the Arab leaders refuse to negotiate and demand the extermination of Israel. This is a falsification spread by the enemies of peace. The responsible leaders of the Arab States, the Cairo Declaration of Egypt, Syria and Arabia in 1956, the Bandung Resolution on Palestine agreed by the Governments of all the Arab states, all have made clear the desire for a settlement on the basis of the United Nations decisions. There is no other path towards peace, which is the vital interest of all. Such a peaceful settlement is an indispensable part of the task of ending imperialist domination in the Middle East. The danger of war is still urgent. That only makes it the more important to strive for such a peaceful settlement, so that all the peoples of the rich region of the Middle East can enter into that future of freedom and prosperity which they have so justly earned by the ordeals and the heroism of their liberation struggles and which they will assuredly win during the coming years.

*July 15, 1957.*

**R.P.D.**