

SPEAK YOUR PIECE

Israel and the Negro People

LOS ANGELES.

Editor, Daily Worker:

The picture presented by Abner Berry, and defended by your correspondent F. against Ben Davis' criticism, of Negroes as frustrated neutrals in the Israeli-Arab conflict is, in my experience and opinion, wholly erroneous. Had Berry taken certain factors into consideration I am confident he would not have arrived at the conclusion that the Negro people and their press are neutral vis-a-vis Israeli-Arab differences.

The first and most important of these factors is Israel's consistent record in the United Nations of voting with the "Free Western World" against its colonial slave-pens—against the petition and/or demands of colonial peoples.

This stooging for imperialism against the freedom aspirations of the peoples of Africa and Asia has evoked bitter resentment among Negroes who feel a deep sympathy and identification with the Asian and African peoples and their valiant efforts to achieve freedom and independence. It has helped to diminish, if not wholly wipe out, the natural sympathy with which most Negroes viewed the creation of Israel as a homeland for persecuted European Jews.

(It is pertinent to note here that quite a few Negroes saw in that event a violation of Arab territorial integrity and a move by the imperialist powers to establish a beachhead in revolutionary Asia).

Another factor ignored by Berry is the effect on Negro Americans of Israeli arrogance toward her Arab neighbors, their characterization of the Arabs as backward, uncivilized, untrustworthy, incompetent, corrupt, etc., Jewish attempts to sway Negro opinion on the basis of the existence of chattel slavery in some of the Arab states—as if chattel slavery can be exclusively associated with Negroes, the attempt, according to the Negro press, of Jewish groups in our country to hire Negroes at \$50 a day to picket King Saud during his recent visit to this country, in an effort to misrepresent Negro opinion.

Now, Negroes are fully aware that the Arab states are backward, but they know the imperialist origin of that backwardness. They are aware, too, of the existence of feudalistic remnants in those states, but they also know that these were protected

and fostered by the former imperialist masters of the Arab countries. Most Negroes, know, however, that the logic of events is increasingly forcing the Arab states into head-on collisions with imperialism. And a people's position on imperialism and colonialism is still the criterion for the Negro—no matter who now questions or seeks to blur that criterion.

Still another factor is the disturbing growth of Jewish-Negro tensions in the Negro community, resulting from discriminatory practices by Jews doing business in the community. It is true, of course, that they are not the only ones guilty of discrimination, but Negroes particularly resent such practices and attitudes on the part of another persecuted and oppressed group. There are other reasons, too, for this resentment, which I will not go into at this time.

As to the relative absence in the Negro press of critical comments on Israel's foreign policy, there are several reasons for this. First, few of the smaller papers, which constitute the bulk of the Negro press, have the forces or space to cover international affairs. Second, only the most militantly independent Negro papers dare to risk the raucous charge of anti-Semitism with which such criticisms in the Negro press are usually met, and the accompanying economic retaliation. And there's nothing fanciful in this analysis. I personally know that Negro papers, indulging in valid and reasonable criticisms of Israeli foreign policies, have been subjected to abuse and economic boycotts by reactionary Jews.

Several months ago The Pittsburgh Courier complained of Jewish attempts to intimidate and muzzle its columnists.

Here in Los Angeles, The Herald-Dispatch, most militant and progressive local Negro paper, is

the object of virulently abusive letters and telephone calls and an economic boycott. That paper used to have many Jewish advertisers. Today only one or two independent-minded Jewish merchants dare to advertise in its columns.

If most of the Negro papers are discreetly silent on Israeli-Arab issues, this does not mean that they sympathize equally with the Israelis and the Arabs.

Where their sympathies lie is demonstrated by the waste-paper basket treatment they give the plethora of pro-Israel, anti-Arab releases from Jewish organizations.

A more dramatic demonstration of their sympathies can be cited in the wholly negative results of a round of Jewish-sponsored cocktail parties for Negro publishers, editors and other community leaders in this city. Not one of the four local Negro papers gave any publicity to the anti-Arab speeches at those cocktail parties of local Jewish leaders and the Israeli consul. And The Herald-Dispatch continued to criticize, with increasing sharpness, Israel's pro-imperialist foreign policies.

It seems to me that progressives should ask themselves, why is it that Israel is today so completely isolated from the Bandung powers, the colonial peoples, Negro Americans and the Socialist bloc. And, too, is there a valid reason why the Arabs are unwilling to sit down with Israel. It is my belief that both Ben Davis, in his letter of March 8, and Ed Strong, in his letter of Nov 22, 1956, in which he sharply criticized Daily Worker editorial policy on Middle East issues, gave the correct answer to these questions and advanced a Marxist-Leninist approach to their solution.

C. B.

(Editor's Note: See Abner W. Berry's column on Page 5.)

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said, "As a partisan of Socialism and democracy I feel strongly that peace must be part of any program to advance the cause of democratic socialism."

Professor Sibley outlined the advantages of Socialism for the American people. He pointed out the weaknesses of the New Deal as seen by himself as a Socialist. His remarks, devoid of red-baiting,

were confined almost entirely to an examination of the American scene.

Max Schachtman declared that there is "not even the tiniest bit of freedom under Communism; if there were I would be in favor of it." He attacked communism as "horrible, abominable and revolting."

Many students congratulated Fine, following the meeting, on his presentation.