

Horowitz

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE OUTLINE ON THE MIDEAST

October 1, 1970

The role played by U.S. imperialism in attempting to contain the Arab colonial revolution places special obligations upon the SWP to mobilize opposition to Washington and Israel, in defense of the Arab revolution. This necessitates our having a clear line on imperialism, Israel and the dynamics of the Arab revolution. The following is a general outline of the line our press has been following and should continue to follow:

1) We give unconditional support to the struggles of the Arab peoples against imperialism and its agents for national liberation. That is, we support all these democratic struggles in spite of their current leaderships.

2) Israel, created according to the Zionist idea of a homeland for all the Jews, could only be established in the Arab East at the expense of the indigenous peoples of the area encompassed by the Zionist state. Such a state could only come into existence and maintain itself by relying on imperialism; this has been the case. An expansionist and colonialist-settler state maintained by imperialism, it is an imperialist beachhead in the Arab countries and is used by the imperialists against the Arab revolution. We unconditionally support the struggles of the Arab peoples against Israel.

3) The chief victims of the creation of Israel have been the Palestinians -- i.e. the Arabs who inhabited the region where Israel was established, who have been driven from their homes or placed in subjugation within Israel and the other "occupied territories" (those territories most recently occupied). The Palestinians are part of the Arab peoples, but they are also a distinct national grouping, with its own history of struggle, for example in the uprising in 1936-39 against the British. Being driven from their homeland by the creation of Israel greatly intensified national feelings among the Palestinians. The upsurge of Palestinian nationalism we see in the recent period was particularly marked in the refugee camps and is a result of the special oppression these people have suffered at the hands of the Zionists. The recent events in Jordan have further intensified Palestinian national consciousness.

4) The essence of the Palestinian struggle is to fight to regain their homeland through the destruction of the state of Israel and the establishment of a democratic Palestine. We give unconditional support to this struggle for Palestinian self-determination.

5) In the epoch of imperialism, neither the Palestinians in particular nor the Arab peoples in general can carry through their struggle for self-determination to the end except through the process of the permanent revolution. That is, the democratic tasks can only be completely realized and guaranteed by the working class at the head of the toiling masses, chiefly the peasantry, in a revolution against the imperialists, their Zionist agents, the Arab national bourgeoisie and Arab feudal remnants. This revolution will combine democratic tasks with transitional and socialist tasks and lead to the creation of a workers' state. This proletarian strategy implies 100 per cent support for the implementation of the democratic tasks. The national bourgeoisie, whether "progressive" or "conservative," cannot lead the struggle for national liberation and democratization to victory, and do their utmost to block and divert it.

6) To achieve the final victory of the Arab revolution the creation of Bolshevik mass parties is absolutely essential both in the Arab countries and Israel to lead the struggle for the democratic tasks to completion.

7) Unfortunately, such parties do not exist anywhere in the Arab East or in Israel. None of the various Palestinian liberation groupings meet the criteria for such Bolshevik mass parties in either theory or program or organization. However, these nationalist fighters have shown potential for political development, have so far remained consistent and increasingly independent fighters for Palestinian self-determination. The major Palestinian liberation organizations have grouped together the best of the Palestinian fighters. The recent events in Jordan demonstrate that these fighters have deep ties with the Palestinian masses. An important and hopeful sign is the non-Stalinist origins of the major Palestinian national liberation organizations. At the present time, given our limited information and the fact of political confusion and lack of clarity among the different Palestinian groups themselves, it would be premature for us to give any one of them special support over the others. We should maintain an attitude of general support to the Palestinian struggle and to all the main struggle organizations, of course with freedom to criticize them on program and tactics.

8) Although one of the goals of the Arab revolution will be the unity of the Arab peoples, we cannot approach this problem schematically or formally. The Balkanization of the area by the imperialists and the special oppression of the Palestinians have created separate Arab states and differences among the Arab peoples. The revolution will unfold in an uneven way in the region, therefore, and can leap ahead or suffer setbacks in one or another of the Arab states. Although we see the eventual establishment of a united socialist Middle East, it does not follow that this will issue from a simultaneous and uniform revolution throughout the area. At present, the Palestinian struggle against Israel, as part of the general confrontation between the Arab peoples and Israel,

is the focal point of the Arab revolution. The dialectical relationship between the Palestinian struggle and the Arab revolution as a whole was graphically illustrated in the recent civil war in Jordan.

The above is an outline of the line we have been following and should continue to follow.

Concerning the question raised in Bob and Berta's letter, and also in Comrade Micha's contribution in the International Information Bulletin, that is, the question of whether we should support the right of the Israeli Jews to establish a separate state:

1) There are various arguments put forward to support this idea. One is that the Israeli Jews have formed a new nationality separate and distinct from world Jewry, and that therefore they should be granted the right of self-determination including the right to a separate state. The question of whether or not the Israeli Jews form a separate nationality from world Jewry is subject to theoretic investigation. A strong case can be made for this judgment. But the question is politically moot, because it does not follow that because a nationality exists, whether a separate one or part of world Jewry, that we must fight for its right to form a separate state if it so chooses. Each case must be examined separately, within the totality of the given conditions, and a key Leninist distinction must be made between an oppressed nationality and an oppressor nationality.

2) Comrade Micha seems to mean by this right to a separate state defense of Israel itself. (quotes) Of course we are opposed to this.

3) Bob and Berta, however, say they do not raise the demand for a right to a separate state for the Israeli Jews as an immediate slogan, since this would be confused with supporting the present state in Israel, and would appeal to Israeli chauvinism. They point out that the Israelis have a state, and therefore the demand as an immediate demand is logically meaningless. They raise it as a concept to be applied after "the destruction of the Zionist state and the abolition of the oppressive relations vis à vis the Arabs in an Arab East in transition from capitalism to socialism." That is, after the establishment of a workers' state or workers' states in the region.

4) Bob and Berta's error consists of identifying an arithmetical minority nationality with an oppressed nationality. Bob and Berta are wrong when they say that a "basic principle of proletarian democracy" is "the right of a national group to secede from some larger, multinational state and form a separate state. . ." Revolutionists call for the right of oppressed nationalities (that is, those who have been denied their democratic rights) -- whether they are a majority or minority -- to self-determination because of democratic principles and the revolutionary dynamic of such struggles. This dynamic is missing from the call for a separate state for the Israeli Jews -- an oppressor nationality.

5) Bob and Berta state that the Israeli Jews very likely will be oppressed after the victory of the Arab revolution. (Quote page three) Thus, they raise the call presently for the right to set up a separate state for that time, as a guarantee that the Israeli Jews will not suffer such oppression.

There is absolutely no reason to assume that this will be likely. There is absolutely no reason to assume that the Arab liberation movement will, contrary to all the principles it is fighting for, contrary to the dynamic of such struggles everywhere, and especially after a socialist revolution, will institute a system of national oppression of the Israeli Jews. Of course, this cannot be excluded theoretically (after a big defeat for the world revolution which resulted in the bureaucratization of the revolution, for example), but it is wrong to raise such a demand now to guard against an unlikely eventuality.

6) In any case, even after the revolution, the most likely danger would be that the Israeli Jews, who would retain a heritage of special privileges in all fields as compared to the Palestinians, could continue to be oppressors rather than oppressed, if there is continued national oppression. There is the danger in raising the demand for the right to form a separate state for an oppressor nation after a revolution: such a state would objectively result in the safeguarding of the privileges of this oppressor nationality inherited from the past.

7) Unlike the demand for self-determination for the Vietnamese which is directed against imperialism and its lackeys in Saigon, or for the Palestinians, which is directed against the imperialist and Zionist oppressors of the Palestinians, the demand now for the right of the Israeli Jews to set up a separate state after a successful revolution is directed against the Arabs today, and in the current struggle helps mobilize Israeli Jews against Arabs, who are oppressed by the Israeli Jews and not the other way around.

8) To advocate the right of the Israeli Jews to set up a separate state in the Middle East under undefined conditions sometime in the future, comes into conflict with the right of self-determination of the Palestinians and other Arab peoples. This alone excludes the demand as abstract, for the real struggle is for the concrete rights of the Palestinians and other Arabs.

9) There are analogous cases in other parts of the world: Northern Ireland, South Africa, Rhodesia, Quebec. In all of these cases, as in Palestine to mix up an abstract right of the minority oppressor nationality to set up a state as part of the right of self-determination should it become oppressed would lead to complete confusion and thus play into the hands of reaction.

10) There is also the tactical argument advanced, that raising such a demand is the way to split the Israeli Jews and

world Jewry from Zionism. It is ridiculous to believe that an Israeli Jew will be convinced to join the Palestinian struggle to smash the state of Israel on the grounds that the Arabs promise him the right to set up another state in the future to protect himself from oppression by these same Arabs. Instead of raising slogans which reinforce the fears of the Israeli Jews that they will be oppressed by the Arabs if they are victorious, it is the duty of revolutionists to warn the Israeli Jews that their future lies only in aligning themselves with the Palestinian and general Arab liberation movement wholeheartedly and without any reservation whatever, and it will be to the extent that he does this that he can escape from the death trap Zionism has prepared for him in the Mideast.

11) Bob and Berta say that to fail to raise this demand means abandoning the effort to win the Arab masses to proletarian internationalism. This is not the case. We oppose all anti-Jewish statements and programs among the Arabs, and support a democratic and secular Palestine -- as the most important Palestine struggle organizations do -- with full civil and cultural rights for all nationalities including the Israel Jews. This is part of an internationalist program.

12) Finally, concerning tactical questions, it is not enough to look at the reaction of the Israeli Jews to a slogan. It is more important to ask what the reaction of the Palestinians and other Arabs would be to the slogan. To advance the abstract slogan of the right of the Israeli Jews to form a separate state in the Mideast would certainly be misunderstood by the Arab masses in their current desperate struggle as only a disguised form of Zionism and call into question the genuineness of our support to the Palestinian struggle to regain their homeland. It could only be twisted to their advantage by the Zionist rulers.

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