

Arab Chauvinism: A Reactionary Ideology

The American Left and the Communist Party have always maintained a strong interest in Israel and have looked with sympathy on the struggles of the progressive and anti-imperialist forces in that country. In recent years new political developments involving Israel and its Arab neighbors, some of an ominous nature, require a renewed discussion in our country to define the responsibility of our movement to Israel and to Israel's progressive and anti-imperialist forces.

The draft resolution on the Jewish question provides a correct frame of reference to conduct this long delayed discussion. The draft resolution contains a section on Israel which presents a factual and responsible exposition of some of the problems faced by the progressive forces of that country.

Advocates of peace, as well as friends of Israel, will welcome the forthright statement of the draft resolution that: "We unequivocally defend as unchallengeable the right of Israel to exist as a sovereign state, and condemn all declarations, from whatever source, which falsely label Israel as an artificial creation of imperialism and call for its destruction." (*Political Affairs*, August 1966, page 29.)

The resolution notes that it is the policy of the imperialist

powers and of U.S. imperialism in the first place, "which fans the flames of war in the Middle East," to the detriment of both the Arab and the Jewish peoples. To achieve its ends imperialism seeks to take advantage of both Israeli chauvinism and Arab chauvinism so as to sharpen the hostility between the Arab and Jewish peoples. Unfortunately, imperialism finds willing helpers in both camps.

Thus the draft resolution states that not only is Israeli chauvinism a basic obstacle to peace in the Middle East which must be combatted, but also recognizes, and *this is its great merit*, that "Arab chauvinism directed against Israel and the Jewish people is also a formidable obstacle which must likewise be combatted." (Page 30.) *This recognition of the dangerous role of Arab chauvinism has for too long been avoided in some circles on the Left.*

In dealing with the complicated Middle East situation it is misleading to hold Israel alone responsible for the tension and war danger in that area. A recognition of this fact is in no way to deny that the government of Israel has seriously compromised itself by its long and unnecessary association with the Western imperialist powers and by its stubborn refusal to solve the problem of the Palestinian Arab refugees.

Incorrect and unrealistic atti-

tudes prompted by nationalism and chauvinism have hardened both in Israel and in the Arab countries surrounding Israel, and such attitudes and provocations on one side reinforce similar attitudes and provocations on the other. From the viewpoint of Marxism both Israeli chauvinism and Arab chauvinism are equally reprehensible and both serve the aims of imperialism.

Israel's government is not the only one with imperialist connections in the Middle East. A few of Israel's neighbors such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia are ruled by cliques of feudalist reactionaries who are armed by American imperialism and there is nothing progressive in their malevolent hatred for Israel.

Also, many of the leaders of the anti-imperialist Arab governments, such as those of Egypt and Syria, still express extreme chauvinist and war-like attitudes towards Israel and contemptuously reject any idea of an eventual peace settlement with Israel.

Thus in any discussion of the Middle East one ought not only dwell on the sins of the government of Israel, and they are many, but also on the "contributions" which the side of Arab nationalism makes towards the tension and the war danger in this area, and these are considerable, too.

The New Arab Line On Israel

Recently the prominent Israeli Communist leader, Dr. Moshe Sneh, had this to say on current Arab attitudes on Israel:

The Arab leaders, and here we do not necessarily mean the flunkies of imperialism, have adopted a false position that the State of Israel is supposedly a product of colonialism and racism and that the Arab people of Palestine is a victim of this Zionist, Colonialist and racist occupation. And since there is no possibility of reaching peaceful settlement or achieving peaceful coexistence between the colonialist invader and his victim, there is therefore no other solution to the problem than freeing Palestine by military force. This false, chauvinist and war-like position whose essence is the liquidation of Israel is propagated by the representatives of the Arab nations at international gatherings of democratic and anti-imperialist movements and not entirely without success. This anti-Israel, chauvinist position is favored without reservation by the Chinese leaders. (*Morning Freiheit*, May 29, 1966.)

It is not widely known that most Arab leaders have specifically rejected the very notion that the recent agreement between India and Pakistan which the Soviet Union helped bring about at Tashkent could serve as a possible model for a future Arab-Israel accord. In their view "the spirit of Tashkent" cannot apply to Israel because Israel is supposedly a foreign occupier of Arab territory and "the spirit of Vietnam" rather than "the spirit of Tashkent" is valid here.

This view has gone beyond the verbal stage. For the past two years almost all Arab rulers, both those who are pro- and anti-imperialist, have sponsored a movement known as the Palestine

Liberation Organization whose professed goal is to organize Palestinian Arabs for "the inevitability of the battle to liberate their homeland," that is, present day Israel.

A clear statement of position of the Palestine Liberation Organization is contained in a pamphlet entitled *The Palestine Problem*, which has been issued by the Information Department of the United Arab Republic and can be obtained from the U.A.R. embassy in Washington, D.C. This pamphlet states:

All the Arabs regard the presence of Israel as an affront to their integrity and sovereignty and have vowed that they will not rest until the Zionist state of Israel ceases to exist in their midst.

The Arabs demand that the State of Israel be dissolved and that Jewish immigration to Palestine should stop. (Page 30.)

In other statements the leaders of this organization have promised that after the coming military defeat and liquidation of the State of Israel all Jews who settled in Palestine after the year 1918 will be deported, which, of course, means most of the present Jewish population of Israel.

This organization has also put into the field an armed auxiliary of terrorists and saboteurs, the "Al Fattah," whose bases are located in Jordan, Syria and the United Arab Republic. These terrorists conduct raids on Israeli border settlements and boast of their killings of Israel citizens. Naturally, their raids provide the

POLITICAL AFFAIRS

excuse for counter-raids from the Israel side. The Israeli Communists have always warned the Israel government against conducting such counter or revenge raids, but it must also be clear that Israel cannot always be dubbed the "aggressor" in these situations.

The Palestine Liberation Organization is headed by a notorious feudalistic reactionary, Achmed Shukairy, who represented Saudi Arabia at the United Nations for many years, where he distinguished himself with his anti-Semitic tirades. This same Shukairy has publicly claimed upon his return from a state visit to China last year that Mao Tse-tung himself had said to him: "You Arabs are forty million and the Jews are only two million. What are you waiting for?"

War Threats Against Israel Become Accepted Way of Life

It is no secret that the Arab world is flooded with the worst types of nazi-like anti-Semitic and anti-Israel propaganda. War threats against Israel are common fare and Arab politicians resort to the McCarthy technique of accusing their rivals of being "soft on Israel." Each boasts that he is more "militant" on Israel, which simply means that he is more war-minded.

As recently as July 26, 1966 an A.P. dispatch from Alexandria, Egypt, quoted President Nasser as boasting that the Arab revolutionary nations can mount four million men for "the liberation of Palestine," and he taunted the

reactionary-led Arab nations, such as Saudi Arabia, as being the ones who are "sabotaging" the Arab struggle against Israel.

Do not the repeated statements of this type coming from such an important leader as President Nasser—and he is among the more restrained—sharpen national antagonism and promote a chauvinist, war-like state of mind among the Arab peoples?

There appears to be no disposition among the Arab leaders to reconcile themselves even to an Israel which would break all ties with Western imperialism and end every form of discrimination suffered by the Arab minority in Israel, as all Marxists and progressives urge Israel to do.

The fact is that the Arab nationalist leaders simply refuse to acknowledge that Palestine became the homeland of two peoples, the Arabs and the Jews, and that both these peoples have the right to self-determination and other rights which ought to be respected. Most Arab leaders are actually indifferent to whatever changes the Jewish majority in Israel can make to meet the just demands of the Palestinian Arab people.

These then are some of the Arab "contributions" to the tension and war danger in the Middle East. This irresponsible, irrational campaign against Israel's very right to exist is slyly used by the reactionaries in Israel to increase their dependence on Western imperialism and to refuse any accommodation with the Arab nations.

At the same time this campaign of Arab chauvinism has also created serious problems for those forces within Israel which sincerely seek peace and solidarity with the Arab peoples. The problem of how to react to the Arab chauvinist insistence that Israel has no right to exist has actually forced a split within the Israeli Communist movement, unfortunately, largely along national lines.

Israeli Delegates Excluded From International Gatherings

In the past two years the campaign of the Arab chauvinists to deny Israel its right to exist as a nation has spilled over into the international peace and anti-imperialist movements. This has taken the form of insistence by the Arab delegations on the exclusion of all Israeli delegates from a number of international conferences sponsored by these movements, or of the refusal of these gatherings to include Israeli delegates on committees to which they are entitled to be represented. At such gatherings the Arab delegates usually team up with the Chinese delegates and succeed in passing resolutions which call for Israel's liquidation. This most alarming problem ought to be faced before it becomes more acute. The Communists of Israel have been pleading with urgency, and perhaps despair, that their comrades in other countries begin to react to this situation.

For example, when the World Youth Festival was scheduled to be held in Algeria in the summer

of 1965 before Ben Bella was overthrown, the Arab representatives on the organizing committee prevented invitations from being issued to *any Israeli youth organizations*. This unexpected act of discrimination was quickly protested by a number of European Communist Parties and also by *The Worker* in an editorial on June 6, 1965. This was the first time that an Israeli youth delegation would have been barred from attending a World Youth Festival.

However, this type of discrimination has continued at other international gatherings and has not been seriously resisted. Israeli youth were not invited to attend the International Youth Conference in East Berlin in 1965 which was called to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the victory over Hitler fascism. Youth from all countries were able to attend this conference, including the Arab youth, but the Jewish Communist youth of Israel, the survivors of the people whom Hitler intended to destroy, were excluded. (*Frei Yisroel*, Tel Aviv, May 27, 1965.)

In January 1966, the historic Tri-Continental Solidarity Conference of the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America was convened in Havana. One hesitates to point out a blemish on such an important undertaking, particularly as it did not seriously affect the very fine contributions of this Conference. Nevertheless, it must be mentioned that here too, the Arab nationalists prevented the issuance of invitations to any Israeli delegates whatsoever, though

Israel is very definitely in Asia and most Israelis are Asian-born.

After this galling act of exclusion the Arabs combined with the Chinese delegates to push through a resolution on Palestine which denounced Israel in the familiar terms of Arab nationalism and called for the liquidation of Israel. Of course, there were no delegates from Israel present to argue against this resolution, and this honorable task was undertaken by the Soviet delegates to whom great credit is due, even though their generous effort did not meet with success.

The Israeli Peace Movement issued a Memorandum on the Havana Conference on February 2, 1966, in which it expressed its dismay at having been barred from attendance at Havana and its protest at the Resolution on Palestine which was passed in its absence. Of this Resolution, which called for the abolition of the State of Israel, the Memorandum states:

What this resolution signifies is incitement to resolving the Israeli-Arab conflict by arms and call to war. For the abolition of a state by peaceful means and through agreement is inconceivable, as is the abolition of the right of the people of Israel to an independent, sovereign national existence in its own state!

It is important to note that the Memorandum on the Havana Conference was signed by both of the Communist Parties of Israel and thus represents the unanimous and considered opinion of all

Marxist-Leninists of Israel!

Further, the World Peace Council at its meeting in Geneva in June, 1966 passed a resolution on the Middle East which again, due to the pressure of the Arab nationalists, failed to include a call for a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israel conflict. A proposal that the right of Israel's existence as a nation be emphasized in the above-mentioned resolution also failed to gain adoption. The Israeli Communist delegate to this Peace Council meeting, Esther Vilenska, reported that she had to refrain from voting for this resolution because of these crucial omissions. (*Morning Freiheit*, July 10, 1966.)

An even more ominous example of the vindictiveness of the Arab nationalists occurred at the most recent conference of the World Federation of Democratic Youth which was held at Sofia, Bulgaria in June 1966. Here, as usual, the Arab nationalist youth delegates introduced and won acceptance for their routine anti-Israel resolution. At that point the representative of the Dutch delegation proposed a correction to the resolution which would have expressed recognition of the struggle of the progressive forces in Israel. *But even this correction was unacceptable to the Arab delegates, who sought to prevent its adoption.* Finally, after two votes the correction was accepted by a vote of 22 to 17. (*Frei Yisroel*, June 23, 1966.)

Of this incident at the WFDY Conference the editor of *Frei Yisroel*, I. Lipsky, wrote:

If representatives of the pro-

gressive forces in the neighboring Arab countries will attend peace forums and gatherings of progressive, Democratic and Communist youth and oppose appeals for a peaceful solution of the Arab-Israel conflict (and even refuse to acknowledge the progressive forces in Israel which have been conducting a stubborn struggle for peace, for Arab-Jewish brotherhood and an Arab-Israel peace settlement), then it would seem, as it is said, this is the last straw. . . . The complete denial of the role of the progressive forces in Israel places them in very difficult position. (*Morning Freiheit*, July 3, 1966.)

At this WFDY Assembly, the representative of the Young Communist League of Israel, Yair Zaban, took the rostrum to complain of an earlier resolution adopted by the Federation's Executive in Accra in April 1965, which even omitted any mention of Israel as being in the Middle East. Zaban quoted from this resolution which said: "The Executive Committee has considered the various forms of staunch struggle of the youth of the Middle East, (the Arab countries, Turkey and Iran) and gives its full support to their struggles and aims."

This Israeli young Communist remarked: "Pay attention, please: according to this passage Israel does not exist in the Middle East!" He asked: "How could such a harsh passage really become part of an official document of our Federation? Was it included to teach us a new lesson in geography when it lists the Middle East countries,

The ease with which the Arab nationalists are able to impose their anti-Israel chauvinism on international progressive gatherings by taking advantage of the natural good will that exists within these movements for the just struggles of the Arab peoples should be a matter of concern to everyone who takes the concept of proletarian internationalism seriously.

It is true that the Arab anti-imperialist movements are numerically larger and more effective and even more important than the anti-imperialist movement in Israel. But it would be a tragic error to make this the excuse for accepting the line of Arab chauvinism in regard to Israel, or to seem to give credence to the notion that the Jews of Israel are too small in number to be overly concerned about, or that the Jews of Israel are expendable in this struggle.

May it also be noted that Arab nationalist governments not only threaten war against Israel, but at least two of them, which also claim to be anti-imperialist, have been conducting massacres of near genocidal proportions against other minority peoples, the Kurdish people of Iraq and the black African tribesmen in the southern area of the Republic of the Sudan. (See *World Marxist Review*, April 1966, p. 79, on the plight of the Kurdish people in Iraq today.)

Marxists Distinguish Between Peoples And Governments

Within some sections of the

Left in our country, and even among some Communists, a sort of Chinese-type position has asserted itself in regard to Israel, though the adherents of this position may not be Maoist in anything else.

This position is one of studied contempt for Israel and its Left-wing movements. Its adherents see only the Arab movements and view the Jewish population as a solid reactionary mass hopelessly tied to imperialism. This position, of course, has its parallel in the ultra-Left view of the American working class which is also regarded as a reactionary mass, with revolutionary hope being placed in the Negro people exclusively.

This ultra-Left position fails to reckon with the fact that Israel is a country like any other capitalist country, with a working class and a class struggle, and with its own peace and Marxist movements which are capable of responding to the demands history has imposed upon them.

This ultra-Left position blandly assumes that Israel's existence is not an important matter to begin with and that Israel cannot, or even should not, exist unless its foreign policy becomes completely anti-imperialist. *It is interesting that of no other country is such an absolutist demand made.*

Marxists, however, distinguish between governments and peoples. Marxists do not subscribe to the opinion that a people must be held to be so responsible for the wrong actions of its government that such a people may be compelled

but excludes Israel?" (*Information Bulletin*, C.P. of Israel (MAKI), August 1966.) to give up its independence and its nationhood. It should be recalled that during the Second World War the Soviet Union never made this demand of the German people, and today the Vietnamese people do not make this demand of the American people. Yet, the Arab nationalists persistently make this irrational demand of the Jewish people of Israel.

The dogmatic and irrational claims of the Arab nationalists in regard to Israel ought to be challenged within the world peace and anti-imperialist movements, and by the Communists who are the upholders of proletarian internationalism, first of all. The

mere raising of these questions before these organizations and in public statements will not only give a much needed lift to the progressive forces in Israel, but will also surely be considered by those Arab personalities and groups who value the support they receive from the international movements.

The Communists of Israel, both Jewish and Arab, have a long and honorable record of struggle against imperialism and against Israeli and Arab chauvinism and divisiveness. Their problems and their efforts deserve greater attention and appreciation from their American comrades and friends. The draft resolution on the Jewish question is a welcome step in this direction.

CORRECTION

In the discussion article by Abe Strauss, December 1966 *Political Affairs*, several lines were dropped from the last paragraph, first column, page 44. The sentences should read: "The assumption that the Jewish national minority in the Soviet Union is entirely assimilated does not correspond to reality. There is no doubt that in the Soviet Union . . ."