

Which Policy for Palestine?

LABOR ACTION is continuing its discussion on the vital and complex Palestine issue. We again invite contributions from our readers, with the request that all letters must be limited to no more than 1,000 words, and deal with the problem of Palestine and Partition rather than the "Jewish Question" in general. A defense of the point of view originally expressed in a **LABOR ACTION** editorial will be published in our next issue.—Ed.

Accept Partition

The editorial on partition in **LABOR ACTION** approaches the Palestine problem in what is basically the old conception: the Jews are a minority in a predominantly Arab Palestine, and moreover a "new" minority. The Jews should renounce the nationalism of Zionism that seeks a separate national existence in Palestine, break with imperialism and demand an independent Palestine crowned by a sovereign Constituent Assembly. In this way the propaganda of the Arab feudal lords that the Jews want to take over Palestine and displace the Arab people would make no inroads among Arab workers and peasants, who not only benefit from the economic development of the country due to Jewish immigration and capital, but would see the Jews as the champions of independence and democracy.

This approach was a good and correct one. But history has superseded this approach and made necessary the traditional national approach worked out by Lenin.

The old approach, followed out logically, must consider the Jews, to the extent they are political Zionists, as the enemies of Arab independence. It would mean, for instance, opposing Jewish immigration into Palestine on the ground that it is against the wishes of the Arab population and, given the circumstances, has the reactionary effect of derailing the Arab struggle for national independence into the anti-Jewish struggle of the Mufti. However, when the issue of immigration came up, the Workers Party supported Jewish immigration into Palestine on the ground of the democratic right of the Jews or anyone else to live where they want to. But in relation to the national right of self-determination of the Jews in Palestine an NC statement printed in the November, 1946, *New Internationalist* said: "Whenever such a national struggle, however, conflicts with the need of the general revolutionary struggle against world imperialism and for the proletarian revolution... that national struggle must be subordinated to the socialist struggle." We ask what the position of the NC would be if we substituted "democratic" for "national." Wouldn't its dictum still hold true? And furthermore, isn't this "democratic" right of immigration an integral part of the national struggle of the Jews in Palestine?

What are the sources of these contradictions? On the one hand we don't let go of the approach based on the premise that Palestine is essentially an Arab country. However, we don't follow out the logic of this premise, which would mean looking upon the Jews, who are overwhelmingly Zionist nationalists, as enemies of Arab national independence. On the other hand, we admit the Jews are in Palestine to stay and moreover have all the attributes of nationhood. But we stop at drawing the political implications of this fact, which would mean granting the national equality of the Jews with the Arabs in Palestine, including the national right of self-determination, which contains within itself the right of separation. We extricate ourselves out of our contradictory position by urging as a final solution the Constituent Assembly and meet the unpostponable problems as best as we can: immigration,

democratic right, partition, cease firing.

BURN SOME BRIDGES

Isn't it time to burn some bridges? Isn't it time to recognize that part of the whole retrogressive movement of society is the "legitimization" of Zionism? That in the ranks of the Jewish workers a party capable of fusing the Arab and Jewish workers in the struggle for independence and democracy didn't arise. That on the one hand 6,000,000 Jews perished, creating in the survivors the extreme nationalism of what has been called "Judeocentrism," while on the other hand there were sand dunes thirty years ago where Tel-Aviv with its 250,000 all-Jewish population today stands. To deny this central fact, that the Jews are in Palestine, alongside of the Arabs, as a nation, means to fall back, willy nilly, on arguments akin to those used in the UN debates. Let us say that the Jews sneaked in under false pretenses, that the Arabs didn't realize the implications of Jewish immigration, etc., etc., the living reality still remains: there are in Palestine two separate nations, Arabs and Jews!

The clear, unambiguous recognition of this fact indicates our course: the Leninist application of democracy to the national question, which declares the equality of nationalities; that rejects the formal democracy of majority rule because such formal democracy contains within itself the possibility of the national oppression of one people by another; that rejects in the given instance the abstraction of the Constituent Assembly, and the

equally meaningless "one vote—not more, but certainly not less"; but, rather, starting with the equality of nations, gives the right of self-determination including the right of separation. This is real democracy. And moreover it is only through real democracy that the social struggle can be advanced. We urge the recognition of the right of self-determination on both Arabs and Jews precisely because without that mutual recognition both peoples will only founder deeper and deeper in the morass of nationalist politics. We want to open the road to the essential struggle, the class struggle, which today is submerged in the respective national fronts of ultra-nationalism.

This is our program for today: to accept the separation. But we do not desire separation. And we work from today on, as we always have, for Arab-Jewish unity. The slogans are already indicated. Palestine united is a bi-national Palestine. We must work from separation toward bi-nationalism. The concept of bi-nationalism is a dynamic one. Its specific content at any given time is that degree of unity and centralization both peoples can agree upon. We must work toward a greater and greater fusing of the two peoples. We can do this by first recognizing their equality, thus making the first step in lifting their struggle out of the ultra-nationalist morass, and on the road of the class differentiation within both peoples, from which will come the Arab-Jewish unity of the working class.

Irving Swanson.

Proposed Solution for Palestine

Partition is a bad solution. It splits up a small country which is a single economic unit. It creates long and artificial boundaries which appear impossible to maintain for any length of time. It neither suspends nor solves the Arab-Jewish problem. Even the realization of partition again puts the Jews face to face with the bi-national reality of its part of the country. In addition, there is the necessity of cooperation with the inhabitants of the neighboring Arab country in order to assure the development of the entire land and make possible a substantial immigration.

Nevertheless, one fact cannot be denied. As of today, the partition solution has concentrated great international support for Zionism and as a result is the only present hope for breaking the status quo which Bevin has imposed on Palestine.

How did this come about?

A) Through a mistaken policy, the Zionist movement wasted the opportunities for developing Jewish-Arab agreement and thus prepared the ground for partition from the objective viewpoint. The Biltmore program made partition the sole Zionist program presented to the world. This fact exerted a decided influence. The official Zionist line is not blameless in the partitioning of Palestine.

B) However, the most decisive factor which makes partition the immediate practical solution, is the international situation, particularly the relations between the great powers. The program of an undivided, bi-national Palestine involves a more or less lengthy transition period under actual international supervision. Only this can assure the development of the country for all of its inhabitants, the absorption of a large immigration, and the political and social preparation for an independent bi-national state.

The sharpening conflicts between the great powers and the impossibility of Soviet-American cooperation under present conditions makes real international supervision for any length of time an impossibility. This fact has led the Soviet Union to support the partition solution, despite its announced position that its "first choice" is a bi-national state including Jewish immigration and continued Zionist development.

The British statement concerning its abandonment of Palestine, militarily and administratively, by August 1, 1948, has increased the urgency of a political solution for the Palestine problem. Despite the normal hesitancy to believe any British statement on Palestine, the present announcement may be accepted. There are four reasons for the new British policy:

A) Defeat of British policy in Palestine and Jewish opposition to the "White Paper."

B) The lack of manpower in the

British Isles and the need for easing Britain's military obligations throughout the world.

C) The British assumption that despite leaving Palestine, it will maintain a military hold in this area through its treaty with Transjordan which permits the maintenance of military bases in that country and the strengthening of the Transjordan Arab Legion.

D) The growing attitude in British military circles that the strategic importance of the Near East has greatly decreased in the face of overwhelming Soviet power situated so close to this area and the great distance from British and American bases.

To complete our understanding of the British policy, it should be mentioned that there is always the possibility that in the event of an actual partition, the Transjordan Arab Legion will conquer the Arab sector of Palestine and add it to Transjordan. In this fashion, Britain will maintain its right to military bases in Palestine itself (through its treaty with Abdullah).

One of the amazing manifestations of the present UN session is the Soviet position on Palestine. Undoubtedly there are strategic considerations involved in its stand: to support any solution which will remove British military forces from the country. But there is also implied the recognition of the strength and ability of the Jewish Yishuv as well as the right of the Jewish people to receive recompense for its sufferings and sacrifices during the last war. Yet this is not all. Apparently there is more to this Soviet stand than appears on the surface. Let us not ignore the influence which the Soviet stand must have on the masses of Soviet Jewry. Time will tell.

Even if partition will be achieved in the near future, we cannot entirely give up the hope for an undivided Palestine and Jewish-Arab cooperation. Such cooperation will be essential within the proposed Jewish state as well as between the Jewish and the Arab states. The economic union proposed by the UNSCOP as a prerequisite for the existence of both countries can become the basis for an increased program of mutual aid between the two parts of the population and the two states. The necessity for economic cooperation and the development of political relations can be the source of a decisive change with the passage of time.

This will be one of the vital tasks of progressive Zionism—to take advantage of all possibilities for immigration, for settlement, for development in whatever new political conditions are established and to penetrate deeply into the Jewish Yishuv and the Arab community in order to lay a strong foundation for Jewish-Arab peace.

Sylvia Weiss.

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