



Dear Friends:
No description of events in the Middle East can possibly keep peace with the fantastically rapid changes since the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war just four days ago. This fact, however, does not invalidate the need for an analysis which would place the immediate situation in its proper historic and theoretic context. Quite the contrary; there is no other way comprehensively to view the Arab-Israeli collision. While the June 5th through the 7th Israeli blitzkrieg didn't just fall from the skies, neither did Egypt's May 18th request for the removal of the UN Emergency Force from the Sinai, followed on the 22nd by the declaration of a blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping and the threat of "total war", "annihilation" of Israel if it embarked on any "aggression" to change the fait accompli, the new "status quo."

The Arab states called this unholy mess a jihad (Holy War). Russia and China christened it "a national liberation struggle from Western imperialism." Although the Communist attitude to the Middle East has nothing whatever to do with ideology, and everything to do with oil, strategic outlets to seas and "spheres of influence", these, as well as the actions of the Arab states and Israel, have a history, the history of the 20 years since the creation of the state of Israel. All politics in the idle East seem to begin with that single historic fact. Let us see whether this is so.

I. ISRAEL: THE REALITY AND THE IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLES

There is no doubt that a new dimension surged up with the creation, in 1948, of the state of Israel in the Middle East, whose politics had heretofore been dominated by Oil. Although the fact is now conveniently forgotten, it was the anti-imperialist struggle of the Palestinian Jews that so overwhelmed the young, then unknown, Colonel Nasser, who had come to sign the pact ending the Arab-Israeli war, that, instead of dwelling on the armistice terms, he was plying the Jews with questions as to just how the outgunned, outmanned force could have overcome British occupation.

To what extent, if any (1), the struggle for freedom of the Jewish masses affected the philosophy of revolution that Nasser was to develop for the liberation struggle he was to launch against both Farouk and Western imperialism, is not important. What is important is that in the decade of 1947-56 Nasser gave priority, not to the

"destruction" of Israel, or "the liberation of Palestine from Jewish occupation" but "to liberate Egypt" (2) and put an end to "the enslavement of the people by the imperialisms and their lackeys, the Egyptian feudal lords and politicians." Even during the Suez War, when he certainly began to give priority to the question of Israel, his views were not as single-minded as those of his "Arab" brothers—either as expressed by the bastard socialism called Ba'ath (3) in Syria, or by the reactionary monarchy in Saudi Arabia.

At first sign, it may have appeared that the achievement of Arab unity in the month of May "proved" the totality of the opposition of the Arab masses to the very existence of Israel—as everyone (though for opposite reasons), from the Arab ruling classes to the Communists, and from bourgeois journalists to the Trotskyists, contends. In actuality, the restlessness of the Arab masses was due to dissatisfaction with their own conditions of life and labor, with the incompleteness of their revolutions, begun two decades ago, that still have not made a serious dent in ending their poverty (4). Originally, Nasser himself was conscious of this. Originally, that is to say, in the early 1960's as against 1967, Nasser attempted limited revolutions in the feudal kingdoms. Because of this he was taunted recently both by radio Amman and Saudi Arabia thus: "Where was he (Nasser) when the Jews were attacking his Arab brethren?...Nasser prefers to hide behind the protective screen of the United Nations Emergency Force...Meanwhile he bombs and pours poison gas on the Arabs of Yemen."

I do not mean to say that either Nasser or the Arab masses are full of love for Israel. Quite the contrary. Nor is it only the Arabs whom Israel has expelled and who live in unspeakable misery in their homeless refugee camps who have cause to hate Israel. The class relations in Israel are exactly what they are in any capitalist country—exploitative. And as in any capitalist country, minorities—in this case the Arabs who live in Israel—are discriminated against both in labor and in politics. But the solution to this situation is by the masses themselves, Jews and Arabs, in class struggle actions, and not through outside attacks by countries ranging from those who experienced some revolutionary change like Egypt to monarchies and sheikdoms like Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Libya. No matter how shrill the voice, or adroit the argument, Communist Russia and China must not be permitted to succeed in their attempts to christen

these feudal kingdoms as "freedom-loving, peace-loving nations."

What I do mean to say is that the struggle of Egypt against Israel hasn't been continuous and unvarying for the very good reason that Nasser was involved, more than the rulers of the other Arab countries, in political revolutions, in deepening the one in his own land both through agricultural reform, and some industrialization, building the High Aswan Dam, and in "socialization", i.e. nationalization. It was only when this political revolution didn't solve problems that only a social revolution can overcome; only when he got bogged down in trying to help revolutions get started in other Arab lands; and only because he is not about to complete the revolutions begun (which, in any case, only the masses can do—against him), that Nasser decided finally to lead the fight for "extinction of Israel."

Israel has as much right to exist as any other country. Its right to existence is the only issue on which Marxist-Humanists express themselves positively. On issues other than that of self-determination, it goes without saying, Marxist-Humanists take no sides in disputes between nations, nor compromise their revolutionary position for a totally new society based on human, not class, foundations.

To try to transform the concrete question of Israel into some "universal"—whether it be rooted in 2000 years of the irreconcilably different tales of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Qu'oran, or in the 20-year postwar history since the establishment of Israel—is to fail to see the most obvious facts: neither the biblical tales nor the postwar period tell and unvarying "universal" story. The Middle East has been the crossroads of many civilizations and the point of origin of at least three religions, none of which drove the others into the sea. The Roman Empire, which attempted total annihilation of its opponents, only brought about its own disintegration. The Middle East, in modern times—specifically in Palestine, specifically in the mid-1940's—saw at least two occasions in which Jews and Arabs collaborated in the drive against British imperialism.

Whatever were or weren't Zionism's achievements since Theodore Herzl in the 19th century theorized about a "Jewish homeland" (5), the Israel that was created was not established until after the Jewish masses launched into an anti-imperialist struggle on their own, disregarding the promises of British imperialism to Zionist leaders whom they doublecrossed (just as they doublecrossed the Arabs). This was after Nazism's attempted "final solution of the Jewish question" in the ovens of Dachau and Buchenwald and Auschwitz brought masses of non-Zionist Jews to Palestine because no other country, including the United States, would give them refuge. And it was after both the heroic self-activity of the Jewish masses and world opinion

forced the UN, including Russia, to recognize reality.

To try to divert from this concrete reality to some "general theory", as some radicals are trying to do when they mix in the brew of "the imperialist nature of Zionism" in any discussion of the "Jewish Question" is, if not a cover-up for anti-Semitism, surely the most opportunistic excuse for not facing reality with all its complications. It is true that some of the German Trotskyists who came to Palestine and tried to work for solidarity between Jews and Arabs, were so disgusted with the actions of the Zionists that they left Palestine in disgust. But it is equally true—and this fact they do not tell—that, like Zionism, Islamism too made it impossible to achieve this solidarity. This, precisely, is the tragedy of today's war. It is absolutely criminal to act as if only the Jewish masses need to overthrow their ruling class but the Arab masses are with their ruling classes, who are presently designated as "the progressive forces." (6)

II. REAPING THE WHIRLWIND: STATE-CAPITALISM, THE TWO CAMP THEORY AND ANTI-SEMITISM

For whatever purposes the original legend was invented that Stalin signed the 1948 UN Resolution recognizing Israel in a "fit of forgetfulness", the truth is that Stalin could then ill afford to show his global ambitions or his thirst for Arab oil and outlets to the Mediterranean, much less his anti-Semitism.

1948 was not, after all, 1939. The decade that separates the two dates saw 20 million Russians die in the war with Nazi Germany which the Hitler-Stalin Pact was supposed to have prevented. Nor could Stalin, in the postwar period, do in the Middle East what he had done in Europe—undermine every revolutionary situation which might have brought the proletariat to state power independently of the Red Army. He could not stop the self-activity of the Jewish masses that had so caught the imagination of the world. Under the circumstances, the point was how to be able to use that situation for his own needs to fight against the new infusion of capitalistic blood (via the Marshall Plan) into shattered Western Europe. Far from having signed the 1948 UN Resolution recognizing Israel in a "fit of absent-mindedness", Stalin signed with eyes wide open and fully prepared to use this recognition of freedom-fighters in order to help him continue his strangle hold on the Communist Parties in Europe.

Stalin died in 1953 and Russia's "Great Breakthrough"—via a Czechoslovak arms deal with the Arab states—came in 1955. Whether named Malenkov, Khrushchev, or Brezhev-Kosygin, Stalin's heirs followed the same class collaborationist line with their embrace of the Arab world and their shrill voices against "criminal aggression by Israel" as Stalin did when he embraced Israel and spoke, instead, against the Middle

East "feudalism." For the continuity of state-capitalism is not changed by the changes in "tactics." Stalin had long since reduced socialism to "nationalized property", or, more precisely, a mere administrative formula for production for production's sake, even as he perverted the internationalism of Marxism, or world revolution, into the nationalism of Russian Communism.

Where Stalin's "socialism in one country" meant transforming the Communist Parties of the world into mere outposts of Russia's foreign policies, Khrushchev's "deStalinization" and recognition of "other paths to socialism" meant opening the doors wide to the "neutral countries"—so long only as they aligned themselves with Russia against Western imperialism. In turn, Russian Communism spelled out its anti-Zionism as anti-Israel.

It is Stalin who set the foundations when, in place of the class struggle, he had declared that the whole post-war world was now divided into but two camps: his, which he called "socialist", and "the others", which he called imperialist. Moreover, the very specifics of anti-Semitism were spelled out by him. The anti-Semitism of Russian Communism came to the surface in the last years of Stalin's life not alone because of Israel, but, above all, because he had to contend with the true internationalism of Russia's returning soldiers—workers, peasants and intellectuals—who had seen "the West" and now asked what is so different about Russian Communism. Whereupon Stalin discovered that the new "enemy" was "Zionism", the "rootless cosmopolitans". (7) Everyone—from the Jewish doctors whom he was plotting to frame in Russia, to the Communist leader Slansky in Czechoslovakia—were all accused of being either "rootless cosmopolitans", or "Zionists", and very often both.

On this question there was a spontaneous affinity of ideas between Russian Communism and "Arab socialism." As we wrote in 1961(8): "The checkered role of so-called 'revolutionaries' can be seen also among the Middle Eastern Socialists. Thus the Arab Socialist Renaissance Party, BA'ATH, came about as a union of two separate factions in 1953. The history of both these groups goes back to the early '40s; they were pro-fascist and two of its present leaders—Aqram Hourani and Colonel Afif al-Bisra—took part in the abortive pro-Axis Rashid Ali revolt in Baghdad in 1941. One of these groups was originally headed by Michael Aflaq, a leading member of the Syrian CP. When the Axis failed they shifted sides. I don't mean to say there is no kind of "socialism." One must remember that the working men's total disillusionment with private capitalism was so complete that even Fascism called itself national socialism. This bastard socialism is what characterized Peron's Argentina and now characterized the Middle East."

Needless to say, anti-Semitism was not the only

point of affinity. Russian state-capitalism that calls itself Communist has its greatest point of attraction for the Middle East because statification can be done from above whereas revolution cannot; because industrialism demands a great deal of sweated labor and "socialist" ideology hopes to exact it where private capitalism can no longer do so; and, above all, because it holds out to be the "vanguard" (which was supposed to stand for the proletariat but then got reduced to "the Party" and further degraded to "educated revolutionaries, military and civil"(9) to become the ruling class.

This attitude to the masses, proletarian and peasant—that their job is to work and work harder—has led to the disillusionment with political revolutions, whether they occurred in Asia under Communist leadership, or in Africa and the Middle East under nationalist leaders. The warp and woof of Nasser's *Philosophy of Revolution*, from the start was indication enough of how the revolution would stop halfway. It would not go beyond the first steps when made from above, but continue on its class collaborationist path with both capitalists and feudal potentates. Here is how Nasser described the masses on the day of revolution: "The spark had been struck, the vanguard (Army) had taken the fortress by storm; we were waiting only for the hallowed march of the masses...Crowds without end were flocking around. But how different was the reality from our illusions! The masses were divided and disordered...We needed unity and discord had arisen in our wake. We needed zeal and ardour, but in these masses we found sloth and inertia. It is against these things that the Revolution set up its slogan of 'Union, Discipline, and Work.'" (10)

Without a comprehension of this warped philosophy of revolution it is impossible to understand the present impasse in the Arab Middle East, the compulsion to go from incompleting revolutions into anti-Semitic adventures and "taking sides" with one or the other of the two nuclear giants out for single world domination. Nor is it possible fully to understand the imperative nature of a theory of liberation as integral to any struggle, without which, in fact, the struggle is bound to be but a halfway house between the old society just overthrown and a totally new society.

Arab socialism may delude itself that, by aligning with Russia and China, it becomes "the vanguard" of the struggle against Western imperialism. But the truth is that it thereby becomes only a pawn in the struggle between [the KM] United States and Russia for world domination. More specifically, it leans on the collusion of the oil-producing monarchical countries with Western imperialism for private profit and anti-Semitism, on the one hand, and on the other hand, with Russian Communism for spheres of influence and, again, anti-Semitism.

III. SHORTCUTS TO REVOLUTION?

Whether the maneuvers by the giant global powers in the UN presently are actual preparatory steps to World War III, or merely to "save face", the truth is that Russia did not come to the aid of the Arab countries any more than did the United States, despite the Eisenhower Doctrine, come to the aid of Israel. Marxist-Humanists cannot allow themselves to be drawn into the criminal maneuvers of either Big Powers or littler power politics. What does concern us is how to utilize the events in the Middle East, what they all over again revealed about global conflict among the Big Powers, and also what they revealed about the failure of the struggle for the minds of men in the freedom movements themselves.

The anti-Vietnam war movement has suffered enough by sticking so closely to the pragmatic that it gave the impression that its principled anti-U.S. imperialism struggle was nevertheless "for" Russia and China. The point is now to see that the movement stands for one thing and one thing only—total liberation of Vietnam, which begins with the self-determination of Vietnam, free from all Big Powers. If we are to avoid divisions within that anti-war struggle on the basis of the Middle East events, what must concern us is that the movement is not drawn into taking "the progressive cause" and thus fails to reveal the global struggle and both sides' compulsion toward a nuclear Gotterdamung. Vietnam has brought us close enough to that holocaust.

The tragedy of the present situation, insofar as those who profess Marxism is concerned, is this: just when the freedom movements should be most concrete, they lapse into "general theory", and just when they must hold forth a universal, a vision of the new society on totally new beginnings, they suddenly demand "taking sides" with Communist state-capitalism "because" it is against Western imperialism.

Just when freedom fighters should be concerned with how to unite theory and practice—a practice that involves us in freedom movements, be they civil rights, labor, the right of self-determination, and anti-war struggles—in a way that would lead to revolution and "the day after" so that we have no more soured revolutions, that is just when they begin to turn away from the concrete that would be the expression of the universal.

Take anti-Semitism, again. We have the fantastic situation of a Trotskyist (and though he supposedly speaks "in a personal capacity" (11) he is a leader) proclaiming: "This is not an ordinary conflict between two nations. Therefore it is not enough to call for 'Coexistence based on mutual recognition of just national rights of two peoples.'" Furthermore, reference to Arabs is always to "progressive forces" without a single word of the concrete reality in the feudal monar-

chies. When speaking, however, of Israel, it is always of "Western imperialism." Nevertheless, conditions get "evened out" by calling for "an economic and political union of the Middle East, on the basis of socialism"!

Then there is a Cuban military expert—one Captain Jorge Enrique Mendoza—who assures the Cuban masses that the Arab-Israeli war is "not a race war" but that the lightning military Israeli victory was due to "support by American imperialism" and the Israeli army being "commanded by Nazis". To which China, of course, adds that the Arabs were "betrayed by Russian revisionism."

To get away from the immediate conflict for the moment (because this, too, involves anti-Semitism) I would like to relate one discussion I held in Ghana with a trade union leader, Mr. Magnus-George. I had everywhere spoken against Nasserite anti-Semitism being accepted by the African national revolutionary leaders for obviously opportunistic reasons. There was no anti-Semitism of any sort among the West African masses since the Middle East peoples—Syrian, Lebanese, etc.—hold the position in West Africa that the Jew holds elsewhere, as small merchants, the middleman who add their squeeze on the masses exploited by imperialism. Yet, for some abstract "African unity", one more Afro-Asian solidarity conference had been held and Nkrumah had voted with Nasser on the Resolution about Israel being an "outpost of Western imperialism." Mr. Magnus-George repeated the standard reply that Ghana was not opposed to the Jews or to Israel, but only to "Zionism." To prove his point he showed me a special issue of Ghana Times: I said: Fine, I believe you. Israeli help in agriculture and other projects in Israel and scholarships for Africans is accepted by you precisely because you are not anti-Semitic. But I do not accept the fact that signing Nasser's Resolution doesn't mean what it states. The consequences of a line are the same whether one "means" it or not.

It wasn't Israel the African states were hurting by these Resolutions. They were harming the African Revolutions. Playing big politics only led to constant diversion from the needed deepening of their own revolutions, diversion from being with the African masses in the unfurling in full of the banner of Marxist-Humanism. This is not the place to analyze how such politics aided, not African unity, but Western imperialism and the native military to take over power. But one thing must be asserted unequivocally: the tragedy of both the national revolutions and professed Marxism is this looking for shortcuts to revolution, in theory and militarily, as if guerrilla war is the universal substitute for proletarian revolution.

Thus, Che Guevara recently ended his silence in order to come out with a new slogan about "needing more Vietnams". He may have meant national liberation struggles against not only American imperialism

but any that would circumscribe the self-determination of oppressed peoples. It is, however, no accident that Mao's China came out with precisely the same slogan and did not mean that. The very opposite is the case. Mao meant any military actions that would slow down "American imperialism and Russian revisionism." Such actions, conducted with "Mao's Thought" in hand, have included the class-collaborationism which led to the monumental disaster in Indonesia, and the overly hurried nature of forgetting all about Ben Bella in order to convene the conference against Russian revisionism in Algeria the very week of Boumediene's coup. Presently such actions include conducting politics, in and out of the UN, which would prevent any peace in the Middle East, and stoke up the fires of the delusions of "Arab socialism" for the destruction of Israel—in the further hope that American intervention can finally be provoked and a "second front" be opened against US imperialism bogged down in Vietnam.

Finally, there not only is not a word about the internal situation in the Arab countries among all those who rise to the defense of "Arab socialism", but there is also not a single word on the question that when the Czech arms deal was first negotiated with Egypt and Syria, it, too, had its "political strings", as witness their silence on the Hungarian Revolution. If even we leave out the affinity of ideas on anti-Semitism, there is the affinity of state-capitalism and the admiration for the Sputnik which most assuredly meant more to the Middle East than did the Humanism of the Hungarian revolutionaries. The point is that the impasse on revolutions in the Middle East, Arab and Jewish alike, can under no circumstances be resolved, except when theory and practice do unite for total freedom, when internationalism does replace nationalism, and when the masses, and not some shortcut like the "vanguard", do have power in their hands. In a word, the struggle for the minds of men, as the struggle for freedom itself, makes of the question "why philosophy? why now?" not an academic question but one of life and death. It alone will distinguish us both from the ruling classes in each country and the fellow travelers who feel that "taking sides" with the "progressive forces" against Western imperialism must take precedence over unfurling the banner of Marxist-Humanism.

—Raya Dunayevskaya

NOTES

1. Communists, in this case especially the Chinese, try to say that everything in the underdeveloped world began with the Bandung Conference in 1955. There is no doubt that some of Nasser's views came after his 1952 coup and after his development of a "philosophy" in 1954, but this could as easily be reversed. That is to say, it is easy to show that the nationalist features and the greater opportunism in Communism arose from its encounter with Asian-Middle East nationalism. See *The Asian-African Conference: Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955*, by George McTurnan Kahin (Cornell Univ. Press, 1956). Also the anthology, *The Middle East in Transition*, edited by Walter Z. Laqueur (Praeger, 1958).
2. Gamel Abdul Nasser, Speech, Dec. 31, 1952, quoted in *The Ideology of the Egyptian Revolution* by Jean Vigneau.
3. It isn't only Ba'ath, discussed later in our Letter, that shows its peculiar origin. So does the Communist Party there, which emerged from illegality in 1954, dropped even its agrarian demands so closely did it follow a "national front" line and so eagerly did it replace the class struggle with mere anti-Westernism, including anti-Semitism. Its leader Khaled Bakdash, declared: "Syria is Arab nationalist, not Communist, and will remain so" and, appealing to, "all four classes" the 1955 Communist Party Manifesto declare its main aim to be simply "to unite all those who oppose the Pact of Baghdad." (See *The Soviet Union and the Middle East* by Walter Z. Laqueur (Praeger, 1959). To this day, the closest ties of Russia are with Syria.
4. For background and yet a fairly comprehensive view of the situation, see *Nasser's Egypt* by Peter Mansfield (Penguin African Library, 1965). Though a quite sympathetic account of Nasser's revolution, Mansfield does feel it necessary to conclude thus: "But having set the pace, Egypt has to show that it can arrive...it also has to show that it can emerge from social and economic backwardness to the status of a developed nation. If it does, the Egyptian 1952 revolution will be a seminal event of the 20th century. If it does not, Nasserism will leave as little impression of the world as Italian fascism."
5. See "The Origins of Israel" by Sir Isaiah Berlin (included in *Middle East in Transition*).
6. *The Militant*, June 5, 1967.
7. The "rootless cosmopolitans" was a reference also to the Varga debate on postwar capitalism's ability to plan. See the chapter, "Stalin" in *Marxism and Freedom*. Also *State-Capitalism and Marx's Humanism*, a News & Letters publication.
8. Weekly Political Letter: "The Syrian Revolt, The Cold War in the Middle East," Oct. 2, 1961.
9. The expression is contained in Resolutions of the Sixth National Conference of the Ba'ath Party, included in *Nationalism and Revolution in the Arab World* by Hisham B. Sharabi (D. Van Nostrand Co., Princeton, N.J., 1966).
10. *Philosophy of Revolution* by Gamel Abdul Nasser.
11. *The Militant*, June 5, 1967 has a most confusing statement which is supposed to be an Israeli Socialist Appeal, but it is delivered by a Belgian to a meeting of Palestinian Muslim Students. There is, of course, a Communist Party in Israel that does have such a position, and the Trotskyists base themselves on a similar position, suited only to the American Trotskyists who go through the paces of at least standing for "self-determination". See Editorial in *The Militant*, May 29, 1967.