

The Daily Worker and the Middle East Crisis

By EDWARD E. STRONG

FRIENDS OF PEACE and oppressed humanity everywhere should give careful consideration to several key aspects of the Daily Worker's treatment of the Middle-Eastern crisis. The writer refers specifically to the editorials of Oct. 31, Nov. 1 and Nov. 2. While generally correct in calling for an immediate cease-fire and in placing prime responsibility for the present Middle-Eastern crisis upon Western imperialism, I believe, nevertheless, that the editorials departed seriously from a Marxist-Leninist analysis with respect to the underlying causes for Arab-Israeli differences and the program required to overcome them.

There are two irreconcilable points of view on why it has been impossible since the birth of Israel for the Israeli and Arab peoples to find a basis for peaceful coexistence.

View number one is that of the Ben-Gurion government, leading representatives of the Israeli bourgeoisie, and the leading spokesman of the Jewish community in the United States. Briefly stated, this view holds that the conflict between Arabs and Israelis arises from the determination of the Arab peoples to destroy the state of Israel for no reason whatever, and without any justification whatever. Further, this view holds that this hatred of Israel by Arabs is due primarily to the agitation, hysteria, and personal ambitions of Arab despots, and at this moment agitation by the most dangerous of the despots, Nasser.

This estimate also sees Israel as about the only "civilized" country in the Middle East, that it is an outpost of Western culture, art, science, education, ethics, and technology.

Another aspect of this view is that the Arabs are backward, uncivilized, untrustworthy, incompetent, corrupt, and that they certainly lack the capacity to establish democratic self-government, as is proved by the "fact" that the "simple-minded" Egyptians permit a fascist and anti-Semite like Nasser to rule over them. Surely, it is further argued, such a people are unreliable allies for the Western nations, that agreements with them vis a vis the cold war are meaningless in any case. Why, then, appease Arab nationalism and dictators? Is it not clear that our only reliable ally in the Middle East is Israel?

IT IS UPON this estimate that the Ben-Gurion government

justified its launching of a preventive war against Egypt. It is on the basis of this estimate that sixteen leading Jewish organizations in our country, including the Jewish War Veterans and the American Jewish Congress issued a statement on Nov. 1 fully supporting Israel in the present conflict.

The statement of the sixteen major Jewish organizations is instructive. I quote the story in the Nov. 2 Daily Worker:

"Sixteen major Jewish organizations charged last night that Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser has plunged the Middle East into turmoil by his 'ambitions for aggrandizement and empire.'

"After two days of meetings, the organizations said in a pointed statement that under leadership of Nasser, 'Egypt has voluntarily opened itself and the whole Middle East to Soviet penetration and Communist subversion.'

"They charged that the Egyptian government has 'systematically sought to terrorize' Israel by fedayeen (suicide) squads, derauling of trains and the mining of roads.

"These continuous acts of horror and violence have been accompanied by Egypt's announced intention to 'annihilate Israel,' the statement said.

"They said the conflict between Israel and Egypt is a battle between democracy and an expansionist dictatorship, between the free world and Nasserism backed by Moscow.

"They said it is in the national interest of the U.S. to recognize the basic identity of interest of Israel and the free world' and called upon the Eisenhower Administration for a 'fresh appraisal' of its foreign policy.

"Although in accord with the government's 'expressed desire for a just and lasting peace in that region' they said that 'peace cannot be achieved without a bold and statesmanlike appraisal of the issues behind the conflict.'

There is no doubt in my mind whatever that this statement represents the majority sentiment of the Jewish people in the United States. But I am equally convinced that from the viewpoint of class interests, the objective consequences of the line advanced serves only the policy of the Sulzbergers, Sarnoffs, and Baruchs whose ties with Wall Street and American big business are well known.

Moreover, the line of the statement inevitably leads to the

further deterioration, hostility, and conflict between Israelis and Arabs; it lacks a program arising from the common interests of the Israeli workers, farmers, and middle class, on the one hand, and the Arab masses on the other. It subordinates and ignores the distinct class needs of the Israeli majority population, of Jewish workers in our own country, as well as American workers generally, Negro and white.

THE STATEMENT of the 16 Jewish organizations is certainly correct in pointing out, however, that permanent peace (as distinct from securing an immediate cease fire, is unobtainable without "a bold and statesmanlike appraisal of the issues behind the conflict." We have set forth above, one appraisal of the issues behind the conflict, and should like to turn to another appraisal of the issues behind the conflict, quite different, and in fact, diametrically opposed to the first, and arising from the true national interests of the Israeli and Arab peoples alike.

This assessment starts from the premise that the primary and decisive phenomena making for conflict, instability, and war in the Middle East today is the irreconcilable struggle between the anti-imperialist, national independence movements of the Middle Eastern peoples, and the Western imperialist powers (the U.S., Britain, France) with their collaborationists and accomplices in the Middle East. This historic antagonism has given rise, not only to the general crisis in the Middle East, but to the particular war of aggression now being waged against Egypt by Britain, France and Israel.

The spokesmen for Israel argue, and many of her leading friends in our country—Mrs. Roosevelt, Mayor Wagner—concur, that "preventive" war against Egypt was justified because of the continuing military raids against her by Egyptian soldiers. The Daily Worker, while rejecting war as a solution, agrees that Egyptian and Arab provocations led Israel to launch the war. In three editorials it manages to make this point eight different times. Because of this analysis the Daily has yet to write a direct, unequivocal editorial, (as of Nov. 6) which says that Israel com-

mitted an act of aggression against Egypt. It places the question of Israeli aggression by implication and inference only, as contrasted with its unambiguous assertions of Arab provocations.

But more than this, the Daily Worker actually denies that Israel started the war in the Middle East. In its front page editorial of Nov. 1, written 48 hours after Israel had launched war on Egypt, it was stated: "British and French bombs exploding in Egypt have shattered the uneasy Middle East peace."

What then is the difference between the Ben-Gurion statement and the Daily Worker estimate, if it is conceded that Arab provocations were behind Israel's action? Actually, the Daily Worker is without a basic answer to the question of measures required to bring about permanent peace between Arabs and Israelis. It is without such an answer, having departed from a Marxist-Leninist analysis of Arab-Israeli relations, and having taken up a nationalist posture regarding these relations, it becomes incapable of defining a class program to which Israelis and Arabs alike must rally if the antagonisms between these peoples are to be permanently resolved and peaceful coexistence established between them.

IS IT TRUE that the antagonisms between Israel and Egypt basically arise from the intransigence of Egypt, from Egyptian provocations and raids, (as Mr. Ben-Gurion and the Daily Worker maintain)? I submit that this is a false estimate, one which leads inescapably to the misleading programmatic confusion already advanced in the Worker—that what must change fundamentally if there is to be permanent peace is Egyptian and Arab policy towards Israel. This view entirely ignores the fact that possibly there must be basic and fundamental changes in Israeli foreign policy.

There are, for example, no small numbers of United Nations reports showing that Israel has launched her own share of unjustified raids against her Arab neighbors, just as there is an abundance of evidence which shows that Egypt and other Arab nations have conducted unjustified raids against Israel. So the charge of raids and who started them can be argued ad

infinitum. But the mere reiteration of the charge "raid," fails to explain why these raids take place or what motivates them. For raids are symptoms, not a cause.

Then, if raids are not the cause of the underlying differences between Arabs and Israelis, what are the causes, and what must be done to remove the? The first basic reason for antagonisms between Israel and Arab nations arises from two different approaches to foreign policy.

Increasingly, Arab nations are basing their foreign policies upon the Bandung Conference, while Israel continues to base its foreign policy upon the cold war and the Western Imperialist powers. Therefore, in respect to this first fundamental difference, it is the foreign policy of the Ben-Gurion government which needs to be reversed, and a foreign policy adopted which allies Israel with the Bandung Nations and places Israel among the neutral nations. Only along this path is it possible to resolve the semi-colonial status of Israel, and liberate the country from a reliance upon Western capital, and Western military aid. Such a foreign policy would serve the true national interest of the Israeli peoples, the workers, farmers, and middle classes.

The present foreign policy serves only the class interests of the Israeli bourgeoisie and big capital from America and Western Europe. The struggle for a new foreign policy within Israel, by Israeli workers, farmers and middle classes, would inevitably bring such a movement into conflict with Western imperialism and into parallel action, if not joint actions initially, with the liberation movements of the Arab people. Such a movement, particularly if it came to power in Israel, would eliminate the main reason for hostility among Arabs against Israel, namely their conviction that Israel came into being as a tool of imperialist machinations, that it has always been and remains today, a tool of imperialist machinations.

A new Israeli foreign policy based upon Bandung, neutrality, the military and economic independence of the country, would at the same time make it possible to remove the widespread fear among the Israeli peoples that their survival depends upon support from the West. Such a for-

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own policy would lead Israel to seek support from her natural allies in that area—such countries as India and Indonesia.

ARE THERE FORCES in the Middle and Far East prepared to vigorously champion an Israel whose foreign policy is in harmony with that of the majority of the peoples in this part of the World? I submit that there are such forces, as was amply proved at the Bandung Conference. But the Ben-Gurion foreign policy, climaxed with a preventive war, will secure few friends for Israel in Asia or Africa, thus forcing Israel to rely even more on Western support. But there is a point beyond which this policy of relying upon the West cannot go. This has been proved in Jordan; it is being proved in Pakistan; it is being proved in many countries of the world.

The Daily Worker editorials repeat several times the statement that the Ben-Gurion government has taken an action which creates a terrible danger for Israel, but nowhere is it explained that this terrible danger grew out of a suicidal foreign policy. By omitting this basic factor, the Daily Worker surrenders its independence and initiative on this important matter, and becomes a captive of the supporter of the Ben-Gurion government in the U.S.

Antagonisms between Arabs and Israelis arise, not only from the contradictions in foreign policy that exist among them in the Middle East, but because of the imperialist foreign policy adopted towards Arabs and Israelis alike by the U. S., Great Britain and France. In pointing to this central feature behind the Middle East crisis, the Daily Worker, I believe, has been correct. Therefore, we have the task in the U. S. of working to compel our government to reverse its imperialist policies towards Israel and the Arab peoples.

A THIRD FACTOR making for antagonisms between Arabs and Israelis has to do with the important differences in the culture and general historical development of the two peoples. Arabs are generally considered to be colored peoples and Israelis white. Arab culture is generally based upon an African and Far Eastern heritage, while Israeli culture is based primarily upon the West. The idea of Arab inferiority is given wide currency among the Israeli people; on the other hand anti-white and anti-Semitic views receive wide acceptance among Arabs.

Given this harmful ideological block to unity between the two peoples, it becomes the urgent duty of the advanced forces among the Israelis and Arabs to fight against this particular backwardness of their own people, yielding not at all to these views, no matter how strongly they may be held.

Of special importance in this regard is the status of the 202,000 Arabs who live in Israel and constitute approximately 12 percent of the population. On this question, American Marxists and militants have a primary duty to help correct the ideological blocks which exist towards Arabs among Americans.

How did the Daily Worker editorials approach this question? In my judgment, the editorials treated it in a chauvinistic manner, accepting in a non-critical manner, explicitly and implicitly, some of the most backward approaches towards the Arab peoples.

This conclusion is based on the following:

1—The editorials, as already

indicated, give an entirely false and misleading presentation of raids. Its presentation ignores the United Nations reports. It cites no objective facts. Had such reports been cited, the editors would have been forced to point out that Israel had also conducted unjustified raids. In this instance the editorials simply suppressed the facts, which, incidentally, used to appear in the Daily Worker. The result of this approach is to support objectively the white supremacy idea that Arabs are bad people who cannot be trusted, while Israelis, who are white, and have Western mores, are quite reliable.

2—The editorials are guilty of repeating a number of clichés that are chauvinist in their meaning: Arabs participating in raids against Israel are called "marauders" in the Nov. 1 editorial. According to the 20th Century dictionary a marauder is "a rover in quest of booty or plunder; a plunderer; a freebooter." But what are the Israelis now encamped on Egyptian soil? Since the Daily does not describe the Israeli soldiers now in Egypt, I should like to do so. They are the farmers, students, workers, the youth of Israel. They are in Egypt because they were sent there by their government. Likewise Arabs who crossed over into Israeli territory are young farmers and workers, members of the military establishments, carrying out a political mission in behalf of their governments.

3. **THE DAILY WORKER** demands an immediate cease-fire and the speedy restoration of peace in the Middle East. But it raises this correct slogan primarily, it says, because peace is needed to save Israel from a great catastrophe. "Peace is essential to save the state of Israel," the Oct. 31 editorial informs us. This thought is placed six different times in three editorials.

Undoubtedly, the struggle for peace in the Middle East is a fight for the survival of Israel. But at the same time it is a fight to prevent the imperialists from setting back the clock of history in this entire area by crushing the liberation movements of the Arab and African peoples. For a setback for the liberation movements of these peoples strengthens the hands of the war makers on a world scale, with a corresponding weakening of democratic forces.

It is our duty in the United States to point out the positive links between the American labor, Negro, and general democratic movements, and the historic upsurge of the Middle Eastern peoples. From the way the Daily treats the question, one could imagine that these movements are a menace to the American people.

During the last few months the entire world has been saturated with a barrage of propaganda against Egypt. President Nasser has been singled out as the main culprit. The most reactionary imperialists in Britain, the leadership of the French Socialist Party, the overwhelming majority of American liberals, and even Nenni in Italy have joined in this chorus of condemnation. But in my judgment this campaign against Nasser and the policy of the government of Egypt is fundamentally unsound. Since it is the main ideological prop by which the imperialists justify to the masses British-French intervention in Egypt, it seems that this position should be resolutely combatted.

It is impossible to accept the estimate of Nasser made by these

groups and at the same time claim to be giving support to the liberation movements of the Arab peoples. Because at this juncture the Egyptian movement, under the leadership of Nasser, is the pivot for this struggle in the entire Middle East. Anyone who wages a political and ideological struggle against Nasser at this juncture, to say nothing about a military one, within the present context of events, is objectively fighting against the national independence movements of the Middle Eastern peoples.

UNDER THE LEADERSHIP of Nasser, the Egyptian people have to their credit the following major accomplishments, achieved over an incredibly short period of time:

1—They kicked out the decadent pro-imperialist government of King Farouk.

2—They allied Egypt with the historic Bandung conference, adopted a foreign policy of neutrality amongst the major powers, a foreign policy arising from the true national interests of Egypt rather than the imperialist West.

3—They have lent all-out support, moral and material, to the liberation movements in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco.

4—They gave support and were a major influence in the recently successful efforts in Jordan to throw off British rule.

5—In the sphere of economic life important steps have been taken to free the country from remaining an economic vassal of the major Western powers. Not the least of these steps was the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company.

6—In the sphere of military policy, armaments were negotiated with the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, thus creating conditions for the first time in the last seventy-five years for the Egyptian government to control its own military establishment.

7—They have championed the unity of the Arab peoples, and fostered close fraternal relations between them. Such fraternal relations are essential for the success of their movements for national independence.

8—They are being reminded that Islamic culture has made profound contributions to the development of world civilization. Arabs have made tremendous contributions in practical discoveries and in pure learning—in mathematics, astronomy, and in art. They are being reminded that Islamic civilization reached its zenith when Western Europe was passing through that phase of its history generally known as the Dark Ages. They are being called upon by Nasser and other leaders to stand united as a people who possess a proud cultural heritage.

These are the primary accomplishments of the Nasser government; these are the deeds which that government should be judged by. I submit that these deeds merge with the basic interest of democratic humanity in all parts of the world. It is not the fact that Nasser is a so-called dictator which worries so many people in the West. What worries them is that Nasser refuses any longer to ask Western sanction in the formulation of Egyptian policy.

Daily Worker

Published daily except Saturday and Sunday by the Publishers New Front, Inc., 35 E. 12th St., New York 5, N. Y. Telephone ALgonquin 4-7854.

Registered as second class matter Oct. 22, 1942, at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

3 mos. 6 mos. 1 year
Daily Worker only \$4.00 \$7.00 \$12.00

SUBSCRIPTION RATES
(Except Foreign)
Daily Worker & Worker 4.75 8.00 13.00
The Worker 2.00 3.50