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THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

By **HYMAN LUMER**

Author of "Which Way Israel?"

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hyman Lumer is widely known as a political analyst, writer and educator. He is the author of numerous books and pamphlets, the most recent being *Which Way Israel?* based on an on-the-spot study of conditions in that country in 1966. He is also the author of *War Economy and Crisis* (1954), *The Promise of Automation and How to Realize It* (1956), *Disarmament and the American Economy* (1960), *Is Full Employment Possible?* (1962), *Poverty: Its Roots and Its Future* and *What Are We Doing in the Congo?* (1965). Among his numerous articles and essays on the Jewish question is "Soviet Anti-Semitism"—A Cold-War Myth.

He is National Educational Director of the Communist Party and associate editor of the magazine *Political Affairs*, from the July issue of which this pamphlet is reprinted in a revised and expanded edition.

The Middle East Crisis

Among the Jewish people in the United States, events in the Middle East have aroused a pitch of emotion such as has seldom been witnessed before. This reaction stems from a deeply-felt concern over the fate of Israel, from a powerful desire to defend its existence as a Jewish state. Such feelings are wholly natural and understandable, and we Communists fully associate ourselves with them. Gus Hall, general secretary of the Communist Party, expresses it eloquently in these words:

The existence of the State of Israel is of importance not only for the people living within its borders. It has a deep meaning for the entire world but above all for the Jewish people throughout the world.

Its existence is related to a history of generations of special oppression. It is related to a world-wide struggle against anti-Semitism. The threat of Israel's extermination is linked to the extermination of six million Jews by the fascists of Germany.

Therefore one can well understand the concern, the deep anxiety of the Jewish communities throughout the world. The continued existence of the State of Israel must be the concern of all peoples. (*The Worker*, June 11, 1967.)

But the crisis in the Middle East has also given rise to a terrifying flood of intense nationalism and anti-Arab chauvinism, fed especially by the military victories of the Israeli armed forces. Concern for the welfare of the Jewish people in Israel obliterates every other consideration. That welfare is viewed as attainable only in opposition to and at the expense of the Arabs. And "defense of Israel" is equated with defense of the reactionary policies of its rulers. With such sentiments we most certainly *cannot* associate ourselves.

As Communists, we must judge events not emotionally but in the light of sober reality. We must judge them not from the standpoint of a nationalism which pits Jew against Arab, but from that of working-class internationalism—from an understanding that one cannot fight for the security and freedom of one's own people without fighting for the security and freedom of *all* peoples, and that one must proceed from the community of interests of the Jewish and Arab peo-

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ples in the fight against their common foe: imperialism and its supporters. And when events in the Middle East are examined in this light, it becomes only too clear that the decisive factor in the picture is the aggressive policy pursued by the Israeli ruling class—a policy which betrays the interests of the Israeli people.

Oil Imperialism

The basic conflict in the Middle East is not between Jews and Arabs but between U.S. and British imperialism on one side and the peoples of the Middle East, both Jewish and Arab, on the other. The issue is oil.

The fabulous oil resources of this region and the equally fabulous profits to be obtained from their extraction, have exercised an irresistible attraction on the giant oil monopolies, not least on those of the United States. A *New York Times* editorial (May 31, 1967) puts it very bluntly. Southeast Asia, says the *Times*, is only of peripheral interest to the United States. But not so the Middle East:

. . . The region is now of paramount strategic importance to this country. . . .

The Persian Gulf area produces 27 per cent of the world's petroleum and has proved global reserves of 60 per cent. American firms have a gross investment in the region of more than \$2.5 billion. There is nothing comparable in American interests that can be said of the Southeast Asian peninsula.

Nearly the whole of this immense bonanza is in the hands of eight oil companies: Standard Oil (New Jersey), Standard Oil (California), Texas, Gulf, Socony, Royal Dutch Shell, British Petroleum, and Compagnie Française des Pétroles. Five of the eight are U.S. companies; indeed, U.S. firms control more than 60 per cent of Middle East oil, while British firms control another 30 per cent.

These are the lushest oil-hunting grounds in the world. Costs of production are far lower than in any other area, in part because the oil-bearing strata lie close to the surface, but in part also because wage scales are among the lowest in the world. Thus, an Iranian oil worker receives for a full day what an American worker doing the same work is paid for one hour. These wages are barely enough to buy bread and vegetables, and many are without clothes or dwellings. Hence it is not surprising that malnutrition and diseases like tuberculosis are rampant. The situation in the Arab countries is no different.

In addition, the monopoly of production by a handful of giant

companies makes it possible for them to sell Middle East oil on the world market at the same price as U.S. oil. Consequently the rate of profit on the former is astronomical. In the mid-fifties, it was reported, the average profit on a \$2.00 barrel of oil ranged between \$1.75 and \$1.90 (Bushrod Howard, Jr., "Goodbye to a Dollar a Barrel," *New Republic*, August 4, 1958). And more recently, according to the *Wall Street Journal* (March 14, 1966), the 1965 pre-tax profits of Aramco (which controls the total output of Saudi Arabia) amounted to 85 per cent on sales, as against an average of less than 10 per cent for all U.S. manufacturing corporations. Clearly, there is no other investment anywhere which offers U.S. monopoly capital such phenomenal returns as does Middle East oil.

It is the pursuit of these profits, as well as the strategic importance of the Middle East as a world crossroads, that has shaped U.S. policy there and has given rise to unceasing machinations designed to secure and expand the empire of the U.S. oil monopolies at the expense of their rivals and of the Arab people.

In 1953 the Mossadegh government in Iran, which had nationalized the nation's oil industry, was overthrown with the aid of the CIA. As a consequence, the previously existing Anglo-Iranian Oil Company was replaced by a consortium in which a 40 per cent interest is held by U.S. companies. In 1955 the Baghdad Pact was engineered, with five official members—Britain, Pakistan, Turkey, Iraq and Iran, and one unofficial member—the United States. In 1959, when Iraq withdrew, it was renamed the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). The United States directly participates on two of CENTO's chief committees: those dealing with military planning and control of subversive activities (which means national liberation movements).

In 1956 there took place the ill-starred invasion of Egypt by Britain, France and Israel; of this we shall have more to say later. In 1958, when an anti-imperialist regime took power in Iraq, the United States responded by sending troops to neighboring Lebanon, on the pretext that the Lebanese government had asked for them as a protection against the threat of Iraqi attack. A storm of protest against this thinly-veiled plot to overthrow the new Iraqi government forced their removal. And more recently, with the establishment of a progressive government in Syria, U.S. plans began to take shape to bring about its overthrow—plans which led to the present crisis.

The targets of these operations are all who oppose the imperialist robbery and exploitation of their countries, and especially the present regimes in the United Arab Republic and Syria, which have taken

a non-capitalist path of development and have nationalized most of their industry. The allies of imperialism are the reactionary feudal elements, such as the Husseins and Faisals who now rule Jordan and Saudi Arabia (though this alliance has been shaken by the present crisis). This is the decisive conflict, in relation to which all other conflicts and all policies of governments or political parties must be judged.

The Role of Israel

In this picture the ruling circles of Israel have come forward, almost from the very beginning, on the side of imperialism. Both the Ben Gurion and Eshkol regimes have proclaimed Israel's allegiance to the West and have made their country an adjunct to U.S. policy in the Middle East.

Israeli foreign policy has its roots in the Zionist concept of a *purely* Jewish state, constituting the homeland of *all* Jews everywhere in the world, a concept based on the thesis that anti-Semitism is ineradicable and that the only solution is the complete separation of Jew and non-Jew. Consequently, Israel has developed as a clerical state in which the Jewish religion occupies a favored position. It has developed as a state in which any Jew anywhere may claim citizenship, but in which Arabs born in Israel are relegated to second-class status and subjected to various limitations. It is a state which energetically encourages Jewish immigration but prohibits the return of Arabs who fled or were driven from Israel during the War of Independence in 1948. It is conceived of not as a country in which Jew and Arab live together in equality and friendship but as one based on displacement of Arabs to make room for Jews.

In this scheme of things it is the Arabs who are the enemies and the U.S. and Britain who are the friends and protectors of Israel. The result has been to tie Israel's future completely to these "protectors." Her economy is dominated by U.S. and British monopoly capital (it is this which lies at the bottom of her economic difficulties today). In her foreign policy, Israel is similarly tied to the imperialist powers. Thus, in the United Nations, on questions affecting the interests of African and Asian countries, the Israeli vote has virtually always been on the imperialist side. A particularly notorious case in point was Israel's vote in December 1959 against an Afro-Asian resolution recognizing Algeria's right to independence. In Africa, Israel has played the role of an ally of neo-colonialism, as for example in the provision of military training to Tshombe's troops in the Congo.

Also illustrative of Israel's imperialist ties is her establishment of close relations with the revanchist, Nazi-ridden Bonn regime. And as we shall see, the dependence on imperialism is equally evident in Israel's policies toward the Arab countries.

One must, of course, take into consideration the implacable hostility toward Israel which exists on the part of Arab leaders. At its very birth, the State of Israel had to defend itself against an Arab invasion (egged on and in part led by the British). Since then the Arab states have without exception refused to recognize or maintain commercial relations with Israel. The Suez canal has been closed to her. And more, the Arab leaders have repeatedly called for Israel's destruction as an "artificial creation of imperialism."

Certainly such demands must be unequivocally condemned. Far from being a creation of imperialism, the State of Israel was established through the action of the United Nations, with the initiative and the active support of the Soviet Union and in the face of opposition from Britain and the United States. Its legitimacy is beyond question. It is sheer foolishness, moreover, to think that the problems of the Arab countries can be resolved by wiping it off the map. Such an appeal only plays into the hands of imperialism, which thrives on such division, and aggravates the war danger. The same must be said of the carrying on of raids and counter-raids, from whichever side these emanate.

But if one wishes to do more than condemn, if one wishes to change things, it is also necessary to recognize that the most formidable obstacle to overcoming Arab hostility is the foreign policy of the Israeli government, a policy based on resort to force as the only means for securing Israel's existence.*

This policy came to fruition in the Sinai invasion of 1956. In the official accounts, this action is described as one of self-defense, necessitated by incessant raids from the Gaza strip, which had become intolerable, and undertaken on Israel's own initiative. However, the recent revelations of Anthony Nutting, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs under Eden in 1956, who resigned in protest against the policy of invading Egypt, tell a different story. The invasion, says Nutting, was the outcome of a well-planned conspiracy to overthrow the Nasser regime, of which Israel was a part. To carry out this plot, Eden

* The contention of the Israeli spokesmen that they had literally no alternative, that the Arab governments refused to have any dealings whatever with them, will not hold water. It was Israel, not the Arab states concerned, that refused to take part in the UN mixed armistice commission which *did* offer a point of contact, whatever the difficulties and complexities.

deliberately deceived the British people (and, of course, the Israeli government deliberately deceived the Israeli people as to its complicity). Says the *New Statesman* ("Sex Lies and State Lies," May 12, 1967):

Since 1956 the evidence of collusion has accumulated to the point where it has become irrefutable. The significance of Mr. Nutting's revelations is that they provide detailed confirmation of our worst suspicions—in some respects going beyond them—from a man who was at the center of events. It is a shocking tale—one of the worst episodes in our modern history.

The invasion, despite its military successes, backfired. But the policy remain unchanged.

Roots of the Crisis

The current crisis, as we have indicated, has its roots in a U.S.-hatched plot to overthrow the present government of Syria. Among the signs of this were the massing of Jordanian troops on the Syrian border and an abortive military coup in September 1966, whose leaders fled to Jordan when it failed. Among them, too, were the growing signs of Israel's involvement in plans to invade Syria.

In the spring of 1966 the United States sold to Israel a number of Skyhawk attack bombers. This sale, following on the sale of a group of Starfighter jets to Jordan, represented a new departure in U.S. policy. It was the first time that such offensive weapons had been sold directly to Israel. Official circles in Israel rejoiced. But evidence soon began to appear that this was no act of magnanimity. The *New York Times* Jerusalem correspondent, James Feron, reported on June 11, 1966 on some conversations with Israeli officials. The following excerpt is highly instructive:

This is the way a Foreign Office official put it: The United States has come to the conclusion that it can no longer respond to every incident around the world, that it must rely on a local power—the deterrent of a friendly power—as a first line to stave off America's direct involvement.

In the Israeli view, Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara outlined this approach last month just a few days before the Skyhawk deal was announced. In a major address in Montreal, one that attracted considerable attention in high quarters here, Mr. McNamara reviewed American commitments around the world and said:

"It is the policy of the United States to encourage and achieve

a more effective partnership with those nations who can, and should, share international peacekeeping responsibilities."

Israel feels that she fits this definition and the impression that has been conveyed by some Government officials is that Foreign Minister Abba Eban and Mr. McNamara conferred over Skyhawk details in the context of this concept when the Israeli diplomat was in Washington last February.

The *quid pro quo* in the Skyhawk sale is clear. It became even clearer in the Israeli reactions to a number of border raids from Syria and Jordan in the ensuing months. The Israeli army was placed in a state of alert and troops were concentrated on the Syrian border. On July 14, 1966 a large-scale air raid was carried out on Syrian water installations, assertedly in retaliation for a series of border provocations but far out of proportion to anything which might conceivably be justified by them.

At the same time, talk in official circles increasingly hinted at the need for a "new Sinai." Thus, the *New York Times* (October 23, 1966) reported in connection with Security Council discussions on Israel-Syria relations:

Arab sources and some Westerners have been worried by remarks of Israel's Ambassador, Michael S. Comay, who told the Council Monday that it would be "unwise and unwarranted to draw any analogy" between this situation and the events that led up to the Israeli campaign in the Sinai Peninsula in 1956, but that the campaign did nevertheless end the terrorist raids by the "fedayeen" based in Egypt.

And in an interview with the *Jerusalem Post* (October 28, 1966), Abba Eban stated that the Sinai campaign had yielded "beneficial results."

On October 16, 1966 Prime Minister Eshkol announced in the Knesset that the government would take military action against Syria in the name of "self-defense." A month later there took place the large-scale attack on the village of Es Samu in Jordan which led to the censure of Israel by the UN Security Council by a vote of 14-0. Of this unwarranted attack even U.S. Ambassador Arthur J. Goldberg was impelled to state that "deplorable as these preceding incidents were . . . this deliberate governmental decision must be judged as the conscious act of responsible leaders of a member state and therefore on an entirely different level from the earlier incidents. . . ." (*New York Times*, November 20, 1966.)

Eshkol sought to justify the attack on the grounds that the Syrians were sending saboteurs through Jordan. On April 7, 1967 there took place another major air attack on Syria, with threats of even larger ones to come. And talk about the need for a full-scale attack on Syria continued, together with preparations. In an Independence Day interview, the *Jewish Chronicle* of May 19, 1967 reports, Eshkol stated that the only deterrent available to Israel against Syria is a powerful lightning military strike—powerful enough to produce a change of heart or even of government in Damascus and quick enough to prevent any other countries from rallying to Syria's support.

Eshkol's words, it appears, were matched with deeds. The Independence Day parade took place in Jerusalem on May 15, but the display of arms was much smaller than usual. The reason is indicated in an article, "The War Game That Went Wrong," which appeared in the London *Sunday Times* and was reprinted in *Atlas* of June 1967. The article states:

But on the morning of May 14 an observant Egyptian spy noticed a curious phenomenon: a lot of the Israeli units ostensibly bustling about in readiness for tomorrow's parades were actually heading away from Jerusalem. They were driving north, which gave them only one possible destination—the 47-mile Israeli-Syrian border winding along the Sea of Galilee.

When the Jerusalem parades proved to be notably thin on modern heavy weaponry, Syria knew where it was. According to the Egyptian intelligence, the better part of fourteen Israeli brigades were a few miles from the Syrian border. At the same time, Israeli aircraft appeared to be gathering into a defensive screen along Israel's southern frontier with Egypt.

The article goes on to say: "The Israeli chief of staff, Yitzhak Rabin, is known to calculate that his troops could be in Damascus within twelve hours of crossing the border. It looked as if he meant to prove it. The tactics had a familiar ring: they had worked at Suez." All this, be it noted, took place *before* any Egyptian moves.

If there was collusion of Israel with Britain and France in the 1956 invasion of Egypt, the evidence clearly points to collusion with the United States for an attack on Syria at this time, again in the name of putting a stop to border raids. If the attack did not come off as planned, it was because of the actions of the United Arab Republic and the unexpected unity of the Arab states, in the face of the threat to Syria.

The UAR Actions

The crisis came to a head in mid-May when the United Arab Republic asked for the withdrawal of the United Nations Emergency Force from its territory adjacent to the armistice line and began to mass its own troops there, and when it followed this by blockading the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping. Israel promptly began to call up reserves, denounced the blockade as a violation of international law and an act of war designed to destroy Israel economically, and threatened military action to break it if it were not quickly lifted.

In relation to these events it is necessary to clear up a number of points of confusion which the American press has assiduously cultivated. The first of these is the charge that U Thant helped precipitate the crisis by hastily agreeing to removal of the UNEF from Egyptian soil. Thant himself has answered this most effectively. He points out that the UN forces were there and had been there for ten years solely by permission of the UAR, which was quite free to withdraw this permission, and he adds that Israel had consistently refused to allow such forces on her territory. "Moreover," he states, "for all of these ten years Israel's troops regularly patrolled alongside the line and now and again created provocations by violating it." (*New York Times*, June 21, 1967.) Finally, the UN troops were not armed for combat and two of the countries supplying them, Yugoslavia and India, fearful for their safety, had asked for their return.

Secondly, the contention of Israel and the United States that the Gulf of Aqaba has been clearly established as an international waterway open to innocent passage by ships of all nations does not conform with the facts. It is based only on a unilateral declaration to that effect by John Foster Dulles in 1956. The question has never been determined in international law. On this point Roger Fisher, Professor of Law at Harvard University, writes in a letter to the *New York Times* (June 11, 1967):

United States press reports about the Gulf of Aqaba situation were grossly one-sided. The United Arab Republic had a good legal case for restricting traffic through the Strait of Tiran.

First, it is debatable whether international law confers any right of innocent passage through such a waterway. Despite an Israeli request, the International Law Commission in 1956 found no rule which would govern the Strait of Tiran. . . .

There are, of course, good arguments on the Israeli side too, and an international court might well conclude that a right of innocent passage through the Strait of Tiran does exist.

Some argue that the right of innocent passage is guaranteed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, adopted in 1958, which says that "there shall be no suspension of the innocent passage of foreign ships through straits which are used for international navigation between one part of the high seas and another part of the high seas or the territorial seas of a foreign state." But however an international court might rule on this, it still leaves an even more important question to be answered: does shipment of strategic goods to be used in an attack on Syria come under the heading of "innocent passage"? And did not Israel forfeit its right of passage by threatening and preparing such an attack?

Nor is it true that the blockade constituted a death-blow against Israel's economy. The fact is that less than 10 per cent of Israel's foreign commerce passes through the port of Eilat, and this could be rerouted to other ports. True, the expense would be greater, but the closing of Eilat could hardly be said to be fatal.*

Thus, while the blockade might well be a matter for protest and adjudication, it offered no valid reason for the U.S. proposal to "test" it by running an armada through the Strait of Tiran. And above all, *it offered no excuse whatever for the launching of war by Israel soon after.*

Thirdly, it is claimed that the actions of the UAR, together with the mobilization of troops by other Arab states, constituted preparations for launching the long-threatened war of extermination against Israel. This claim, too, is disputed by the facts. The UAR stated at the outset that its actions were taken not for the purpose of attacking Israel but for the purpose of defending Syria, with whom she has a pact of mutual assistance, in the event of an Israeli attack. This statement was repeated on more than one occasion, and no visible

*The chief import at Eilat is oil, which is piped to a refinery at Haifa. The pipeline, it is worth noting, was designed not only to supply Israel's needs, but also with an eye to providing the U.S. and Britain with an alternative route in place of the Suez Canal. With regard to Eilat, a story in the *New York Times* (July 7, 1967) states: "Israel is pouring millions of dollars into this little Red Sea port to build a trade route to rival the Suez Canal. . . . Israeli experts contend that unloading oil at Eilat and pumping it overland would reduce its cost to Europeans. . . . Trans-Israel pipelines and freight routes would neutralize President Gamal Abdel Nasser's use of the Suez Canal as a political weapon and would deal another blow to Egypt's already shaky economy." The port of Eilat, therefore, is important not so much to Israel, which could obtain oil from the Soviet Union by way of the Mediterranean Sea instead of from Iran, as it is to U.S. and British imperialism as a potential weapon against the Arab countries.

evidence has been offered to the contrary. Even Nasser's widely publicized threat to destroy Israel was predicated on the proposition "if Israel starts war." The *New York Times* (May 27, 1967) reports it in these words:

President Gamal Abdel Nasser said tonight that any Israeli military action against the United Arab Republic or Syria would lead to all-out war.

If war starts, he said, "our main objective will be the destruction of Israel."

Furthermore, one is impelled to ask: If it was true, as Israel claims, that Egypt's armed forces stood poised for invasion, which was forestalled only by the Israeli preemptive action, how is the almost complete destruction of the Egyptian air force in the very first hours of battle to be explained?

The evidence points clearly to the conclusion that the Israeli government, once the U.S. test of the blockade failed to materialize, determined to attack, ostensibly to lift the blockade. The *New York Times* (June 11, 1967) states:

Then, convinced they had only themselves to count on if they wanted to avert a process of slow strangulation, they decided to strike out in force at the first provocation. The provocation—more light shelling by the Syrians and Jordanians—was not long in coming. What followed amazed the world.

Time, in its issue of June 23, 1967, describes in some detail the secret cabinet meeting on June 4 at which the decision to launch war was made. The meeting discussed "pre-emptive war" and the new defense minister Moshe Dayan insisted it be launched without delay. He carried the meeting by a vote of 16-2. Detailed plans were made which were put into effect the following day.

Once having attacked, Israel continued the war, despite the UN cease-fire resolution, until her major military objectives were gained, and capped the performance with an invasion of Syria on the pretext that the latter had violated the truce.

Such was the road to war. It is clear that this was not, as we are constantly told, a defensive war on the part of Israel against an enemy seeking her extermination, but a deliberate act of aggression. More, it was the culmination of the policy of relying on aggressive military action as the means of making Israel's existence secure—a policy which increasingly gained the ascendancy in Israeli ruling circles.

The final step in the process was the admission into the government only a few days before the attack, of Moshe Dayan and the ultra-Rightist Menachem Begin. Dayan belongs to Ben Gurion's Rafi Party which went down to devastating defeat in the 1965 elections, and Begin is a leader of the extreme Right-wing Gahal Party. At issue in these elections was the defense of parliamentary forms and democratic institutions against the trend toward military dictatorship represented by Ben Gurion. Today his leading adherents are back in the government. All that is lacking is his own presence.

The dominant figure in Israel today is Dayan, the "hero of Sinai," an outspoken advocate of militarism and reliance on force of arms. It is *his* policy which has triumphed and with it the threat of military dictatorship. The tragedy of it all is that for the Israeli people it is a suicidal policy.

A Hollow Victory

It is already clear that the military victory, swift and spectacular as it was, has solved none of the basic problems facing Israel. On the contrary, it has aggravated them. In his *New York Times* column of June 8, 1967, Tom Wicker wrote:

Israel has resorted to violence and won its victory. Among her friends and particularly those whose ties to her are of blood and the spirit, there can only be relief and exultation. Yet, victory is not necessarily settlement; and perhaps only as the battle ends will the enormity of what has happened become clear. . . .

Nor will military triumph over the Arab states bring an end to their profound hostility toward Israel, or to the deep-seated Arab bitterness that festers on the conviction that the Western nations imposed the Jewish state on them unfairly and with callous disregard for their rights and feelings. Indeed, if anything could further have inflamed Arab hatred on the question of Israel, the humiliating new defeat will have done it.

U.S. News and World Report (June 19, 1967) notes:

None of the crucial, long-range problems was settled by the lightning warfare. Hatred between Arabs and Israelis, and hunger for revenge, is greater than ever.

Israel remains a resource-poor land of 2.7 million people in a sea of 100 million hostile neighbors.

The cold facts are that Israel must continue to exist in the middle

of an Arab world and that it cannot do so by force of arms. Such a policy can lead only to a series of wars in which the overwhelming numerical superiority of the Arabs must in the end assert itself, leading to Israel's extinction. Only through reconciliation with its Arab neighbors can her survival be assured. In the words of I. F. Stone: "No quickie military victories should blind it to the inescapable—in the long run it cannot defeat the Arabs. It must join them." (*I. F. Stone's Weekly*, June 12, 1967.)

The need for a reversal of the present Israeli foreign policy is therefore more crucial than ever, and especially with regard to the Arab refugee problem. This problem lies at the very heart of the Israeli-Arab hostility, and it is chiefly in the name of justice for the Palestinian Arabs that the demands for destruction of the State of Israel have been made.

The UN resolution which established the State of Israel also established an Arab state in Palestine. But this state never materialized. The territory assigned to it was seized by other countries during the War of Independence in 1948. Jordan took the territory on the west bank of the Jordan River, Egypt took the Gaza Strip, and Israel increased its area by one-third by taking much of the Negev, including the port of Eilat.

At the same time, in the course of the war some 900,000 Arabs living in what is now Israel—the great majority of the Arab population—either fled in panic or were driven out, to become refugees living in wretched settlements across the border. Today some 700,000 of them live in Jordan (out of a total population of 2 million in a country consisting mostly of desert), another 300,000 in the Gaza Strip and smaller numbers in Syria and Lebanon.

The question of what is to become of these refugees is the most burning source of Israel-Arab friction. The Israeli Communists have long advocated a policy of either compensating them for the property taken from them or permitting them to resettle in Israel. The Israeli government, however, has adamantly refused to assume any responsibility for them, insisting that they are the responsibility of the Arab countries.

This attitude stems from the racist concept of a purely Jewish state to which we have already referred. "They cannot return to their old lands," said Prime Minister Eshkol in a recent television broadcast. "After all, they are better off among their own people of the same race and religion." How reminiscent this is of the language of supporters of segregated housing in this country!

It is this attitude toward Arabs which must be abandoned if there

is to be any hope of living in peace in an Arab world. This is now coming to be recognized by a growing number of people in this country. In a letter to I. F. Stone, the author Paul Goodman says:

... it has been grossly immoral for Israel to have neglected for twenty years the plight of the displaced Arabs and not to have taken all initiatives for a settlement with its Arab neighbors, however painful and despite rebuffs. In some respects, the Israel attitude toward the Arabs has been miserably reminiscent of the American treatment of the Indians. (*I. F. Stone's Weekly*, June 19, 1967.)

This comparison is more pertinent than ever today. Ironically, most of the refugees (and nearly all the territory originally designated as that of the Palestine Arab state) are now in Israeli hands, and the question of their fate is now thrust directly on Israel.

There is much pious talk about the need to "do something for the refugees." But what this means in practice is indicated first of all by the severe discrimination against Arabs in Israel itself.* It is indicated further by the character of the warfare conducted by Israel. The widespread use of napalm has already been established. *New York Times* correspondent Charles Mohr reported from the Sinai desert (June 18, 1967): "The Israeli Air Force used napalm freely. The evidence on the ground showed that it dropped napalm canisters on or just in front of Egyptian tanks so that the sticky, burning napalm would roll over them in waves, incinerating the crews inside." According to Agence France-Presse (June 17, 1967), doctors in the Meadi Hospital near Cairo said that 75 per cent of the military casualty cases were napalm victims, 50 per cent of whom would die. Furthermore, tens of thousands of Egyptian soldiers were left to wander in the desert without food or water, and only after sharp public protests from abroad was a rescue operation belatedly begun. This helps to explain the tremendous discrepancy in casualty figures. Thus, Israel announced 679 military deaths, while Jordan announced 15,000 and the Arab total has been estimated at 50-75,000.

The Israeli attitude toward the Arabs is particularly evident in the treatment of the civilian population in the occupied areas. One manifestation is the compounding of the refugee problem by the

* With the outbreak of the war a number of Arab Communist leaders in Israel and other Israeli Arabs opposing the war were imprisoned without trial and in many cases were held indefinitely, with relatives and attorneys refused permission to visit them.

wholesale flight of Arabs from the West bank of the Jordan. The *New York Times Magazine* (July 9, 1967) states: "According to UN estimates, some 120,000 Arabs have fled into eastern Jordan, over 90,000 to Syria, since June 5—and the total is still rising." These figures speak only too eloquently of the conditions which must exist to impel such numbers to desert their homes and belongings and flee, in not a few cases for a second time. And despite the studied efforts of the press in this country to conceal the facts, it is becoming clear that many of these new refugees were *driven* from their homes.

Concerning the forcible eviction of civilians, Meir Vilner, Communist member of the Knesset, in a speech on June 26, 1967, quotes an eye-witness report by Amos Kenan, reporter for the newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth*. Kenan writes:

The platoon commander said that the three villages of Beit-Nuba, Yalu and Amwas in the Latroun sector should be demolished because of strategic, tactical and security reasons. First in order to straighten the Latroun wedge, second to punish the nests of murderers, third to deny a base for infiltrators in the future.

Describing this as an "idiotic conception" which would only increase the number of Israel's enemies, Kenan goes on to describe the demolition:

With a strike of one bulldozer the cypress and olive trees were uprooted; in ten minutes the house became debris together with the belongings and the little furniture therein. After the demolition of three houses, the first caravan of refugees arrived from the direction of Ramallah. . . . There were old people who walked with difficulty, wailing old women, infants in the arms of the mothers, youngsters and children who cried and begged for water. The caravan raised white flags.

We told them to go to Beit-Sira. They told us that from every place they are expelled and nowhere are they allowed to enter. Four days they have already been moving without food, without water and some of them have already died.

All this betrays an attitude toward the Arabs hardly better than that of U.S. imperialism toward the Vietnamese people. Among Americans there is growing awareness of this. Thus, in response to the condemnation of the Christian Church by leading rabbis for failure to speak out in behalf of Israel, Henry P. Van Dusen, a former president of Union Theological Seminary, speaks in a letter to the *New York*

Times (July 7, 1967) of a "profound disquiet over Israel's actions and ambitions" among Christian leaders. He goes on to say:

All persons who seek to view the Middle East problem with honesty and objectivity stand aghast at Israel's onslaught, the most violent, ruthless (and successful) aggression since Hitler's blitzkrieg across Western Europe in the summer of 1940, aiming not at victory but at annihilation—the very objective proclaimed by Nasser which had drawn support to Israel.

Many in the Church, says Van Dusen, hold this view privately but find it inexpedient at this point to voice it publicly.

What is meant by "doing something" for the Arabs is indicated by the following comment in the *New Republic* (June 24, 1967): "There was talk in Israel last week of turning the conquered land west of the Jordan into some kind of vast Arab reservation, under Israeli rule. But the Israelis cannot in the 20th century treat Arabs as Americans treated the Sioux in the 19th."

The point is, however, that the Israeli ruling class not only *can* but evidently *will* if it has its way. The result for the Israeli people would in the end be disastrous. The need for a reversal of such policies is inescapable.

Israel and the United States

No less important than a reversal of policy with reference to the Arab refugees is the need to put an end to dependence on imperialism, and particularly on U.S. imperialism. Continued reliance on it to protect Israel's existence can well lead to disaster.

U.S. imperialism is not pro-Israel and anti-Arab. On the contrary, as Hans J. Morgenthau points out: "The officials responsible for our Middle Eastern policy have consistently followed a pro-Arab orientation, qualified by consideration of the Jewish vote in this country. They have considered Israel a nuisance, which made it impossible for the U.S. to pursue a straightforward policy among the Arabs." ("The U.S. and the Mideast," *New Leader*, June 19, 1967.) It is the Arab states, not Israel, which have the oil, which are dominant in the area and which can influence other Moslem countries. Hence the fact that the United States has given more than ten times as much military equipment to Jordan and Saudi Arabia as it has to Israel. And hence the fact that the CIA, as revealed by *The Nation* (May 9,

1966), has funneled money into such a pro-Arab, anti-Israel organization as the American Friends of the Middle East.

The Truman Administration, as is well known, showed no great enthusiasm for the State of Israel at its birth. The oil companies in the Middle East actively fought its creation. Robert Engler writes:

Aramco and allied oil groups advised and fought against the United Nations decision to partition Palestine and create Israel. They warned against recognition by the United States, and then, after consultation with Arab leaders, James Terry Duce of Aramco along with other oil leaders recommended to the departments of State and Defense that the United States repudiate its stand. (*The Politics of Oil*, Macmillan, New York, 1961, p. 256.)

Engler goes on to describe the cooperation of the oil companies with the Arab States in their boycotting and blacklisting of Israel, and the collusion of the State Department in the exclusion of Jews practiced by countries like Saudi Arabia. "Where Aramco accedes to Saudi Arabian demands that no Jewish personnel work in or deal with the country," he writes, "the American Government refuses passports and even screens its armed forces and Foreign Service to make sure Saudi Arabia's sovereign 'idiosyncrasies,' to use Secretary of State Dulles's term, are respected." (P. 257.)

In the present crisis the position of the Johnson Administration has been an ambivalent one. It has expressed support of Israel and at the same time has declared itself "neutral." When the fighting broke out the Administration hoped for and later was pleased by Israel's lightning victory, which was decidedly to its advantage and at the same time relieved it of having to make painful decisions about intervening on Israel's side. Today the Administration supports the Israeli government's expressed intention to hold on to at least some of the conquered territory and speaks of a "durable" peace, having in mind a strengthened Israel which can more effectively function as a U.S. policeman in the Middle East. But at the same time, its goal of overthrowing the present governments of the UAR and Syria (a goal shared by the Israeli rulers) has not been achieved. And faced with the breaking of diplomatic relations and the halting of oil sales to the U.S. and Britain by some Arab states, it must seek to mend its fences in that direction, if need be by limiting its backing of Israel.

From all this the nature of U.S. policy in the Middle East is clear. U.S. imperialism is prepared to use Israel for its own ends, but it is also prepared to sacrifice Israel if it deems it necessary.

The Soviet Union and the Middle East

One of the products of the Middle East crisis has been a disturbing upsurge of anti-Sovietism. Among Right-wing elements the Soviet Union is labeled the aggressor, with the UAR and other Arab states acting as its pawns. One of the most vicious expressions of this view is the June 1 statement of AFL-CIO President George Meany, which concludes with these words:

In the present critical situation, Israel is the first target of Soviet aggression by proxy (Nasser). Clearly Israel is not the only or last target of this aggression. The freedom and security of our country, of the entire free world, are the real and final target of the Communist aggressors.

But such expressions are not confined to people like Meany. They have become widespread in Jewish circles, including some which had previously taken a more friendly approach to the Soviet Union. For example, an editorial appearing in the Chicago Jewish periodical *The Sentinel* on June 1, 1967 says the following:

By some crazy logic, the victim becomes the aggressor; the aggressor becomes the aggrieved; and dignified statesmen go through the act of pretending that this is all for real. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union, claiming to represent the oppressed peoples of the earth, takes upon itself the dishonored mantle of Adolph Hitler as it encourages the exploiters of the Arab masses to finish the job he started.

Of this we can only say that even such veteran anti-Sovietees as Senator Dodd or Senator Eastland could do no better.

In view of these developments it is essential to make clear the true role of the Soviet Union in the Middle East, particularly with relation to Israel. This role has been consistently one of fighting to uphold the rights of all nations in the Middle East, for the maintenance of peace and settlement of all differences by peaceful means.

In keeping with this, the Soviet Union has consistently supported the anti-imperialist forces in the Middle East in their struggle for national freedom. If it has sold arms to countries like the United Arab Republic and Syria, this was not for the purpose of attacking Israel but to enable them to defend themselves against the only too real threat of imperialist invasion.

As for Israel, the Soviet attitude has recently been restated by

Premier Kosygin in his speech before the UN General Assembly on June 19, 1967. We can do no better than to quote him:

... The Soviet Union is not against Israel—it is against the aggressive policy pursued by the ruling circles of that State.

In the course of its 50-year history, the Soviet Union has regarded all peoples, large or small, with respect. Every people enjoys the right to establish an independent national State of its own. This constitutes one of the fundamental principles of the policy of the Soviet Union.

It is on this basis that we formulated our attitude to Israel as a State, when we voted in 1947 for the UN decision to create two independent states, a Jewish and an Arab one, in the territory of the former British colony of Palestine. Guided by this fundamental policy the Soviet Union was later to establish diplomatic relations with Israel.

While upholding the rights of peoples to self-determination, the Soviet Union just as resolutely condemns the attempts by any State to conduct an aggressive policy towards other countries, a policy of seizure of foreign lands and subjugation of the people living there.

To be sure, the Soviet Union has condemned the Israeli government as the aggressor in very strong language, and many honest Jewish people have deeply resented this since they find it impossible to accept the idea that Jews, themselves members of a people persecuted for centuries, could be guilty of a policy of oppression and cruelty toward other peoples. But we believe that the facts speak otherwise in this situation, and that in its condemnation the Soviet Union performed a service, not a disservice, to the cause of peace. Certainly, racist acts committed by Jews are no less to be condemned than those committed by others.

Nor have the endeavors of the Soviet Union on this score been one-sided. There is ample evidence to show that it has worked to restrain threats to the peace from the Arab side, and this has been recognized in Jewish circles. Thus, the *Jewish Observer and Middle East Review* (December 30, 1966) reports: "The Soviet Government sent identical notes last week to the Governments of Egypt, Iraq and Syria. These expressed Soviet concern at developments that might lead to 'disturbance of the peace' in the Middle East." In an interview with the Israeli daily *Maariv* (October 21, 1966) Nahum Goldmann, head of the World Zionist Organization, stated that "the Soviet Union is influencing Syria not excessively to sharpen the situation and not to allow a state of war against Israel."

At the annual Policy Conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee in Washington this year, a panel of experts discussed the Soviet role in the Middle East. *Israel Horizons* (February 1967) reports their conclusions as follows: "These men were in full accord that Russia did not want a war and would do everything possible to prevent one, and would step in very quickly to stop it if one developed. Moscow is evidently making this clear to the Arabs themselves, and especially to Syria. . . ."

These words are almost prophetic. The Soviet Union did in fact do everything possible to avert war in the Middle East in the only way it could be averted—by exposing and combatting the aggressive policies of the Israel ruling circles as well as by seeking to prevail on the Arab countries to exercise restraint. And when war broke out nevertheless, a war which served the interests of neither the Arab nor Jewish peoples but only those of imperialism, the Soviet Union did all it could to bring it to the quickest possible end, supporting the cease-fire resolution for that purpose.

What Kind of Negotiations?

At this moment the fighting is over but the painful task of achieving a settlement still lies ahead. The Israeli government has announced that it will negotiate only directly with the Arab states, and that it will hold the conquered territory and use it as a club to compel agreement to its terms. This approach will solve nothing, since it is clear that the Arab states will never agree to such a basis for negotiations.

Fruitful negotiations are possible only on the basis of withdrawal to the previous armistice line and the acceptance of mediation. The argument that this would only restore the conditions that led to the crisis must be rejected. The "right of conquest" cannot be accepted as the basis of relations between states. Negotiations cannot succeed if they are to be between victor and vanquished, on the basis of trading territory for concessions. On the contrary, they must be based on the need of Jews and Arabs to live together in peace. There can be no road to peace other than the unconditional relinquishing of the conquered territories and a readiness to negotiate on the basis of a genuine desire to live in friendship with the Arab people as equals, not as their conquerors.

Such a path *can* be found. The Israeli people fought with great courage and determination because they believed their survival was at stake. But as the jubilation of victory subsides and sober reflection grows, they will increasingly be compelled to question what the present

policies have gained. And I have no doubt that growing numbers will conclude that a different path *must* be found.

Of fundamental importance to the future of both Jew and Arab is the elimination of imperialist exploitation from the Middle East. A truly secure and prosperous Israel is possible only as part of a united, independent Arab world, free to enjoy the benefits of its natural resources and to develop a modern industrial economy.

For us in the United States the task is to expose and combat the role of U.S. imperialism in the Middle East as well as to show the folly of trying to guarantee the future of a Jewish state in Israel through dependence upon it and support of its efforts to exploit and oppress the Arab peoples.