

THE PRESENT STRUGGLE IN PALESTINE

By I. Renap (London)

Bloodshed and conflict continue to increase and become sharper in Palestine. On February 27, 91 Arabs were killed as a result of bomb explosions and in shooting outrages. Leaders of the fascist revisionists (extreme Right-wing of the Zionist movement), including one who had written a glowing biography of Mussolini, were arrested. Similar outrages took place last July in which many Arab lives were lost. Not only were these rabid anti-Arab Revisionists responsible, but the hand of Italian fascism was seen in that incident.

This recent bloodshed occurred amidst Arab rejoicing and demonstrations when the first news came through of the British Colonial Minister's plan for an independent Palestine. A number of Jews were killed during these demonstrations, while cries of "Palestine is ours—the Jews are our dogs" and "Long Live the Mufti—Death to the Jews" were heard. It is said that the bombs thrown at the Arabs were Jewish reprisals against Arab anti-Jew excesses.

On March 6 a lorry carrying Jewish settlers from Kouzoth Alonim was blown up by a land mine. Troops, assisted by blood-hounds, followed a trail from the scene of the explosion which led to the German Templar Settlement, Waldheim. The German Consul was sent for, while the troops awaited instructions before making a search.

According to a report in *Humanite*, a demonstration of Arabs took place outside the German Consulate in *Haifa*, "Heiling" and applauding Hitler.

These happenings are extremely serious. Anti-Jewish excesses were isolated and sporadic by-products of an anti-British Imperialist revolt (admitted as such even by the Zionist leaders) in the first eighteen months or so of the uprising. Now intercommunal conflicts of Arabs against Jews and Arabs against Arabs are tending to increase ("Peace Gangs" of young Arabs have been formed for the purpose of combating the Arab terrorist bands who are pro-Mufti). There is every indication that the fighting in Palestine has gone far beyond the bounds of Arab rebels fighting British troops. The alarming increase in inter-communal strife *is an indication that fascism, with its tactics of inflaming and intensifying existing communal antagonisms, is making big inroads into Palestine.*

The fascist offensive against the democracies is to-day the main enemy. Fascism in its search for strategic bases aims at entrenching itself in the colonial countries. This would mean an economic and strategic strengthening of fascism. It does this by gaining a foothold in the colonial liberation movements. Through its agents fascism pretends to support these colonial liberation movements. But actually it aims at using them for its war purposes. In order to gain a foothold and weaken the true liberation struggles fascism splits these colonial movements and diverts them from their true course. The success of these aims would mean a worse enslavement for the colonial peoples and a strengthening of fascism. Therefore, the *primary* struggle of the colonial peoples must be against fascism

and its agents in the colonial liberation movements, since the struggle of the colonial peoples for democratic rights, *which must still be carried on*, can only be successful if the splitting and diverting influence of fascist penetration is crushed. And every democratic freedom won by the colonial people is a strengthening of the progressive forces and a weakening of fascism.

The Arab struggle for democratic rights and independence is basically revolutionary and progressive. Its driving force comes from the workers and peasants and urban middle classes. Its present leaders are clerical, feudal, land-owning and bourgeois elements. Socially these elements are the most reactionary in Palestine and could never be regarded as those who would lead the liberation struggle to its final conclusion. In the past they have dampened down the struggle and have compromised with British imperialism. But the widespread and deep-seated character of the 1936 revolt against British imperialism drove these elements into leading the anti-imperialist struggle if they were to retain their hold on the Arab masses and deflect discontent away from themselves. In 1937 the *Peel Commission* proposed the partitioning of Palestine. In principle this was accepted by the British Government. This led to the revolt flaring up anew. Partition was uncompromisingly resisted by the Arab masses, led by the Arab Higher Committee. This opposition led to the forcible dissolution of the Arab Higher Committee by the Palestine administration. In so far as the Grand Mufti and his associates were still leading the fight against British imperialism by fighting partition, they were still fulfilling a progressive function. At that time there was little fascist influence in Palestine. The fascist offensive had not yet reached the present stage.

The beheading of the Arab liberation movement and the use of troops and repressive measures (as well as the Arab-Jewish antagonisms created by imperialist and Zionist policy) created favourable conditions for fascist influence to penetrate among the Arabs. While the arms captured from Arab rebels in the first year of the revolt were only fit for a museum, the weapons collected after the illegalising of the Arab Higher Committee were of German and Italian make. Fascist agents and "instructors" to the rebels were already busy in Palestine. On the one hand these agents were able to influence those rabidly chauvinistic Arab elements which led to increasing terror and attacks on Jews (the massacre of Jewish women and children in Tiberious last November); on the other hand these agents have contact with the fascist revisionists who have been responsible for atrocities against Arabs. *Conflicts between Arabs and Jews, and Arabs against Arabs have increased to an extent which has tended to divert and complicate the normal anti-imperialist struggle.*

The responsibility for this fascist influence and its impeding of the anti-imperialist struggle lies with the *Mufti* and his clique who have been receiving financial aid, arms and "instructors" from the fascists. By accepting fascist support which has polluted the Arab movement, the Mufti and his gang are undermining the Arab struggle for democratic rights and helping to strengthen fascism. The Mufti who was never to be trusted and who might once again have sold out to Britain has now sold out to the fascist axis instead.

On the other hand British imperialism which dominates Palestine also has its agents and allies. Its main ally is the Zionist leadership

which has as its aim the establishment of a Jewish majority in Palestine. Britain has used the Zionist movement as a buffer against the Arab aspirations for national independence. This has driven the Arabs into armed revolt.

The other ally of Britain is the group of "moderate" Arabs, the *Nashashibi* group, which represents that section of Arab landlords and capitalists who have become enriched by Zionist penetration under British rule through land sales to the Jews, and have, therefore, more than any other section of the Arabs, always sought the path of compromise with British imperialism and Zionist penetration. The Nashashibi group will betray the Arab struggle for independence at the earliest opportunity.

Thus the struggle in Palestine to-day, *viewed in the broad perspective of the present international situation with fascism advancing and gaining strategic bases at the expense of the democracies*, has ceased to be a struggle *purely* of the Arab masses against British imperialism and Zionist penetration. This struggle has now become complicated and influenced by the war aims of the fascist axis against the democracies at the cost of the peoples in Palestine.

The Arab people, supported by the progressive forces within Palestine Jewry, must wage an uncompromising struggle against the Mufti and his associates, who, in spite of his demands for Arab independence will sell the Arabs and all other peoples in Palestine to the fascist axis in return for services rendered. They must be exposed as fascist agents whose path can only lead to the exchange of the British taskmaster for the more oppressive one.

At the same time the Jews in Palestine and elsewhere must realise that the present Zionist leaders, with their policy of a Jewish majority, which is against the wishes of the Arabs, bear, with British imperialism, a considerable share of the responsibility for fascist penetration into Palestine, and thereby for the strengthening of world Jewry's enemy. To persist in this policy is objectively to assist in the undermining of Palestine Jewry, and Jewry the world over.

The menace of fascist penetration makes it imperative for the progressive forces among the Jews and Arabs in Palestine to come together for a unified struggle against the fascist axis and its agents in the Arab and Jewish camps. They must also, through democratically elected representatives, reach agreement on all the problems of Palestine, such as democratic government, immigration, agrarian reforms, land sales, etc. Such an agreement will erect a barrier to the penetration of fascism, while at the same time possibilities will be opened up of further Jewish immigration, not only into Palestine, but into the neighbouring Arab countries also (*Iraq* is prepared if agreement is reached, to accept 300,000 Jewish immigrants according to a report of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency).

The Palestine Conferences in London have not brought Arab-Jewish understanding. The Arabs have been fobbed off with a plan which will give Palestine independence in "instalments" over an interim period of 5 to 10 years. Thus Britain's grip will still be on Palestine. But this is a death-blow to Zionism. Britain, faced with fascist penetration among the Arabs, has openly repudiated the Balfour Declaration (i. e. the promise of creating a Jewish majority in Palestine) although she never had any real intention of fulfilling it.

Britain has, thereby, abandoned her Zionist tool in her attempt to placate the Arabs.

The dominant Zionist leadership with its "trust Britain" policy, stands exposed as being bankrupt. Therefore the Jews in Palestine must understand that they have nothing to gain and everything to lose by tying themselves to British imperialism instead of seeking an understanding with the Arabs.

Apart from such individuals as *Dr. Magnes* and *Norman Bentwich*, who have worked untiringly for an Arab-Jewish understanding, there is *S. Kaplanski*, a Zionist labour leader who has opposed the official Zionist line of co-operation with Britain, and has stood for negotiating a peace pact with the Arabs. The bringing together of these progressive Jewish elements with the progressive Arabs who desire peace and Arab-Jewish co-operation in a democratic Palestine, with the backing of Palestine Jewry, would help considerably in undermining the influence of the Mufti and his clique, an influence which the reactionary pro-imperialist and anti-Arab policy of the official Zionist leaders has done such a great deal to strengthen among the Arab workers and peasants.

That the Mufti is not synonymous with the Arab masses striving for democratic rights can be seen from an article in the *New York World* by *Raif N. Kuri*, a young Arab nationalist leader, who makes clear that the masses of Arabs in Palestine hate fascism and that all progressive Arabs stand for a democratic Palestine with a democratically elected *Arab-Jewish Government* settling the problems which confront Arabs and Jews alike.

Thus there exist on both sides progressive elements whom the world Labour and progressive movements must bring together on a common platform of struggle against fascism for a democratic Palestine. This task would be made easier if the present *Histadrut* policy of dividing Arab and Jewish workers were replaced by one of making the *Histadrut* the basis of a bi-national Labour movement in Palestine. The task of creating *Arab-Jewish workers' unity* would contribute greatly towards rallying together the progressive forces among Arabs and Jews in the spirit of world unity against fascism and for a free democratic Palestine with equal rights for all.
