

Present developments in Israel

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ISRAEL IS CONSTANTLY IN the world headlines. The Security Council discusses the consequences arising from the Israeli-Arab conflict much more frequently than it does any other problem. What is the background to this?

1. THE BALANCE OF POLITICAL FORCES

The general election held in Israel in November 1965 was won by the main government list, the so-called "alignment" list composed of the MAPAI and Ahdut Avoda parties, which represent the Zionist Right Social Democracy headed by Prime Minister Eshkol. This list succeeded in electing 45 members to the Knesset, and together with associated Arab lists is represented by 49 members. Altogether there are 120 members in the Knesset.

Electors voted for this list not so much from conviction but because they were against RAFI, the D. Ben Gurion list, which was favored by the military extremists. The Ben Gurion list won a mere ten seats. Yet, together with the twenty-six GAHAL members (Right bourgeois bloc) it is a fairly powerful Rightist opposition exerting considerable pressure and influencing government policy.

The pressure of the Right is strong because of the weakness of the Left opposition consisting of five members. The Left was weakened when MAPAM (Zionist Socialist Party) swung to the Right and, notwithstanding the opposition of many of its members, unconditionally entered the government coalition. The coalition government headed by Eshkol is composed of the alignment list, MAPAM, the National Religious Party and the Independent Liberal Party.

This political map of Israel finds its expression in the policy of the Government.

Nevertheless the balance of forces in Parliament does not reflect the aspirations of the masses. Many voters did not vote for the Eshkol ruling party to enable the government

to proceed with the anti-people and anti-national policy of his predecessors.

Although for a time the Eshkol government used a new tone in its public statements, it soon became clear that it was following the old pattern and even strengthening its contacts with the imperialist powers, particularly with the USA and West Germany. The ruling circles are ever ready to render the traditional services to the Western powers against the anti-imperialist movements in the Arab countries, to serve neo-colonialism in Africa and Asia and to join in the global slander campaign against the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries.

In consideration of these "good services" and other things, a stream of capital from the West, mainly from the USA and West Germany, is pouring into the country.

The capital received via the reparation treaty with the neo-Nazis in Bonn, and the American credits, the policy of leasing special privileged rights to foreign capital investments, while helping to expand the capitalist economy in Israel, especially in agriculture, light industry, defense industry and in building, have at the same time resulted in economic deficiencies that constitute a real danger. The economy resembles a great body standing on the legs of a chicken and liable to collapse at any moment.

This flow of foreign capital into Israel during the nineteen years of its existence, relatively greater than the flow of foreign capital into any other capitalist country, has not led to strengthening our economic independence. On the contrary, it has made the economy of Israel and its security increasingly dependent on foreign monopolies and on the imperialist powers.

Here are some examples.

In 1965 the deficit in the balance of payments amounted to 485 million dollars.* An-

*Official Government Statistics 1956.

nual deficits of half a billion dollars have become the accepted thing in recent years.

The sum of 809 million Israeli Liras,** 17.6 per cent of all the 1966/67 State Budget, is spent on payments for paying external and internal debts. About 40 per cent of the State Budget is allocated, as the Prime Minister himself declared, to overt and covert military expenditure. Expenditure for military purposes and payments on debts totals 57 per cent of the Budget.

This has led to a still greater dependence on foreign capital; it necessitates acceptance of new enslaving loans from abroad amounting to 623 million Liras; to this should be added the 500 million Liras in new internal loans. According to the 1966 budget, State loans will exceed the sum of six billion Liras, a colossal sum for a small country.

The 1966/67 budget is the most reactionary budget in the history of Israel. The development budget has been cut by 121 million Liras. Allocations for housing, too, have been severely cut, notwithstanding the growing need for more homes.

Finance Minister Saphir, actually admitted in his Knesset speech that the government policy had been unsuccessful and had no perspective. "The trend in the deficit of the balance of payments," he said, "is on the increase."

Thus Government policy is causing grave damage to the country. Economic dependence has reached a level which endangers the entire economy.

The machinery and raw materials needed by industry, the equipment needed by our agriculture, fuel supplies and even bread are almost entirely imported.

Instead of changing this policy the new government is continuing it, trying to solve its economic difficulties by a call to the working people to tighten their belts, by strengthening its contacts with the European Common Market, and especially with West Germany, to say nothing of the close tie-up with the U.S. monopolies. West German investments in Israel, which in 1965 were four times the 1964 figure are still rising.

The Government tries to justify the decline in the working people's standard of living by saying that the living standard in Israel is "very high"; they lump together different strata of the people and their standards of living. Official statistics, however, clarify the matter. We give here statistics which were published by the Histadrut, the General Federation of Labor, which is headed by the ruling MAPAI party:

	Monthly wages	Percentage of working People
up to 200	I.L.	18.6
201-300		12.4
301-400		12.0
401-500		12.4
501-600		14.8
601-700		7.7
701-800		4.2
801-900		4.2
901 and upwards		13.7

As the table shows, 31 per cent of the working people receive less than 300 I.L. a month, 43 per cent receive less than 400, 55.4 per cent less than 500, and 70.2 per cent less than 600 a month. These wages are regarded in fact as being low in view of the high prices charged for consumer goods.

It is important to note that the above figures are gross incomes, i.e., before the deduction of income tax, national insurance, municipal taxes and Histadrut dues.

The Communists insist on the monthly gross income of I.L. 600 being free of income tax, considering this sum the minimum subsistence income for a family of four.

Moreover, unemployment is rising. The Finance Minister did not deny this in his Budget speech. He mentioned the figure of 100 thousand redundant workers out of a total of 900 thousand.

In September 1966 the official figure of unemployed reached 35,000; in reality it is higher.

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The policy of national discrimination against Arabs in Israel, who form 12 per cent of the population, continues notwithstanding the fact that wide circles of Israeli public opinion are against this policy. In the Arab areas a special rule has been established, according to which the freedom of movement and residence of Arabs in these areas is restricted. Expropriation of the land of the Arab peasantry also continues. Discrimination is clearly expressed in the State Budget. Here are a few examples.

The housing budget allocates only 2.5 per cent to house building in Arab villages. The health budget of 151 million I.L. allocates only 30 thousand I.L. for health services for the Arabs. According to official statistics about 55 per cent of the Arab population still lives in houses without electric light.

These facts reflect the official line of a short-sighted policy which runs counter to the national interests of the Israeli people.

**Three Israeli Liras=one dollar.

2. THE WORKING CLASS FIGHTING FOR ITS RIGHTS

The Israeli working class and the working people generally have displayed their diligence and initiative in a big way; they have demonstrated militancy in upholding their rights and interests against the onslaught of the capitalists. The year 1965 was a year of big class actions the importance of which goes far beyond the economic sphere. Workers in industry and in agriculture, brain workers and other strata learned how to consolidate their ranks in the struggles and overcome party and ideological differences.

An interesting fact is that while the leaders of the ruling parties vote in the Knesset with the Government for anti-labor laws and the budget, for raising taxes and prices, and for cutting social services, the rank and file members of their parties are organizing action in their work places against government policy and submit their demands to the private and government employers as well as to Histadrut and the Jewish Agency. The workers are organizing strikes on a large scale.

The Federation of Labor (Histadrut) is a big organization of great potential strength. But the Right leadership of the Histadrut acts as a rule as the helpmate of the government, and sees its task in retarding the struggle and in working for class peace.

This explains why most of the strikes are organized by the workers themselves at the point of production through their shop committees or through special action committees elected in the course of the concrete struggle.

Most of the strikes are described as "wild-cat strikes," since they take place against the will of the Histadrut leaders.

Here is the official table of strikes in Israel issued in 1966 by the Ministry of Labor:

ALL STRIKES		
	1964	1965
No. of strikes	132	275
No. of strikers	43,630	93,366
Working days lost	95,584	203,452
STRIKES RECOGNIZED BY HISTADRUT		
No. of strikes	46	66
No. of strikers	8,358	8,033
Working days lost	29,636	23,139
STRIKES NOT RECOGNIZED BY HISTADRUT		
No. of strikes	86	209
No. of strikers	35,272	85,333
Working days lost	65,948	180,313

This table shows first of all that in 1965 the working-class struggle gained in intensity. Second, the percentage of strikes not recognized by the Histadrut leadership is rising steadily (56 per cent in 1963, 65 per cent

in 1964, and 76 per cent in 1965). Nearly all the main strikes, in which most of the days were lost, were not recognized by the Histadrut leadership.

In 1965, 91.4 per cent of all strikers downed tools without the approval of the Histadrut leaders.

Another wave of strikes took place in 1966. The government retaliated with a Knesset motion for a law restricting the right to strike and curtailing other union rights.

However, the working class is fighting against the draft law.

It is clear that the antagonisms between the working people and the Right leadership of the Histadrut are deepening; this gives the perspective of changing the leadership of Histadrut and transforming that body into a militant class organization.

3. FOREIGN POLICY AND ISRAELI-ARAB RELATIONS

The home policy of the Government is, as we have seen, reactionary; its foreign policy is clearly pro-imperialist.

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the infamous aggression against Egypt, Mr. Abba Eban, the Foreign Minister, in an interview with *Jerusalem Post* (28. 10. 1966) claimed that the Sinai campaign had yielded "beneficial results." "The Sinai war," he added, "never made a permanent harmful impact on our relations with the U.S., quite the opposite. The last years of the Eisenhower administration were very harmonious. They increased their aid and began to discuss Middle East affairs and world affairs with us, with an intimacy that has grown ever since."

The truth is that this intimacy between our ruling circles and American imperialism is expressed in more than one sphere, whether related to Israel directly or indirectly. The performance of Foreign Minister Eban during the last session of the UN General Assembly, especially his virtual support for the U.S. aggression in Vietnam, is proof of this intimacy.

Moreover, characteristic of the attitude of the ruling circles to Vietnam was the letter of David Hacohen, Chairman of the Foreign and Security Knesset Committee, published in the semi-official daily *Davar* on May 24, 1966. In this letter Hacohen stated: "The defeat of the U.S. in Vietnam would be the beginning of the end of the independence of all the peoples of Southeast Asia, and the dead end of the independence and freedom of man all over the world."

Again symptomatic of this policy is the Government's closer relations with Bonn. Without

national dignity and responsibility, the ruling circles have strengthened relations with the heirs of Hitler in West Germany. At the same time Foreign Minister Eban found it appropriate to launch an attack on the Democratic Republic of Germany in the Knesset.

The pro-imperialist policy becomes even more dangerous when it serves organically the imperialist designs in the Near East, to which Israel belongs.

Thus the Eshkol Government persists in its obdurate rejection of any proposal to denuclearize the Near East. The Prime Minister found it necessary to declare to *Davar* on April 4, 1966, that the position of the Great Powers who oppose the spread of nuclear weapons "is not moral and not straightforward."

However, the Israeli Communists see one of their main tasks in mobilization of public opinion in support of denuclearizing our region.

While in the past the U.S. refrained from supplying Israel with arms directly, and chose to do so through West Germany and other NATO states, it changed its attitude shortly after the establishment of the new regime in Syria. With great publicity the U.S. provided the Eshkol Government with Sky Hawk bombers.

The Communists in the Knesset denounced this U.S. arms transaction and the U.S. intrigues against the anti-imperialist regime in Syria.

The danger of Israeli involvement in this imperialist intrigue against Syria gained momentum when the Prime Minister bluntly announced in the Knesset on October 16, 1966 that his Government would take military action against Syria on the basis of "self-defense." Only the three Communist members in the Knesset voted against this resolution and two members abstained.

Recognizing the danger facing the country and the people, the Israeli Communists have more than once pointed to the danger of direct military intervention in Syria on the part of Israel. They have stressed that the real interests of the Israeli people, the interest of Israel's future demand that Israel stand by the Arab people against imperialism, not with imperialism against the Arab people. Mass meetings were held throughout the country under the slogan "We don't want another Sinai."

At the same time the Communists denounced the terrorist activities of AL FATAH and the declarations against the right of Israel to an existence, declarations used by imperialism and Israeli reactionaries as pretexts for their aggressive designs.

The Israeli Communists refute the argument that the Soviet attitude to our regional questions runs counter to the interests of the people of Israel. The Soviet attitude serves the cause of peace in our region; and whatever serves this cause corresponds with the best national interests of the peoples of Israel and the Arab countries.

Davar of October 17, 1966 quoted Prime Minister Eshkol as saying: "The clear-cut stand of the Soviet Union behind the Government of Syria created a difficult political situation vis-à-vis any Israeli retaliatory action on the military plane."

Thus, it is an excellent service to the peoples concerned, among them the Israeli people, that the Soviet stand obstructs military aggression and saves peace.

In various circles an awareness that the old policy has failed is beginning to crystallize. At the beginning of 1966, after the general election, 20 members of the CC of MAPAM voted against continued participation by their party in the government coalition.

Throughout Israel effective solidarity demonstrations with the people of Vietnam were held. The Israeli Peace Committee, in which our Party is active in a united front with other political parties and public figures, is rallying mass support for funds to provide the people of Vietnam with medical aid.

Wide sectors of public opinion oppose the Government policy of closer relations with Hitler's heirs in Bonn, and in the mass activities against this policy the Communists were in the forefront.

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We believe that the Arab-Israeli conflict can be solved peacefully in the interests of the peoples concerned. Imperialism and local reactionaries are interested in an Israeli-Arab war. The Palestine question and the Israeli-Arab dispute can be solved by eliminating imperialist intervention and by Israel's recognition of the national rights of the Palestine Arab people, and above all, of the right of the Arab refugees to choose between return to their homeland and compensation in accordance with the U.N. resolutions. This would pave the way for the recognition of Israel and its national rights by the Arab states.

The Communists in Israel are working to establish a united workers' front and a national democratic front in order to bring about a change in government policy, i.e., for a policy of peace, independence from imperialism, neutrality, friendship with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, democracy, peoples' fraternity and social progress.

The Communists see in Jewish-Arab unity in their ranks the bright prospect of the future Israeli-Arab relations in the Near East, freed from imperialist intervention, from national oppression and class exploitation.

All the difficulties notwithstanding, we are convinced that in the course of time there will appear in Israel a new correlation of forces that will lead to a government of peace and national independence.