

Readers of Labor Action Take the Floor...

Israeli Policy

To the Editor:

In his August 15 article in LABOR ACTION, Al Findley criticizes the Israeli government for resorting to diplomatic maneuvers in its search for peace instead of "appealing to the Arab masses for an immediate alliance," and also for failing to follow a policy which would "awaken the Near East by a proposal for a People's Federation of the Near East." I wish to make the following comment on this criticism:

Viewed abstractly, propaganda for the unity of various nations is always in order. But, at any particular point in history, to convert this into the central content of a political program may be several hundred miles off the beam. Whether unity between nations is possible or not depends, upon whether each is willing to accord the status of equality to the others (this does NOT mean majority rule; it means above all the right of the weaker nation to set up its own state in complete disregard of the wishes of the stronger nation). Without this there may be unity by conquest or oppression, but under no circumstances is voluntary unity even conceivable.

Essentially this was our guiding concept during the war, and the one that we still follow. After the initial German successes, we relegated the slogan of a United States of Europe to the background for we recognized that before unity was possible the various peoples of Europe first had the task of attaining their independence and equality with their German masters. During this period, therefore, in spite of the people's desire for peace, only those slogans caught

fire that revolved around the movements of national resistance.

It might be pointed out that even at this time, had there been a powerful underground movement in Germany, the slogan of a United States of Europe would have retained all its immediate validity in that nation, for Germany not only had its own independence but could offer equality to other nations as a basis for unity.

For the same reason, after the war it became possible to pose the question of a united Western Europe in the former Allied states; but in Germany only those slogans had vitality that were aimed at the regaining of independence. The initiative for uniting Western Europe must come from the victorious states; it cannot possibly come from Germany, which must first of all re-establish its independence.

SEES ATTACK COMING

Israel was born last year in the midst of a war. But the independence of this state is still far from secure; the Arabs have not yet admitted the Jews, the pariahs of the Western world, to equality with themselves. All of them, with Egypt in the lead, are undertaking armaments programs which, for the Near East, are tremendous. Britain has resumed shipping arms into the region; in Egypt a radio regularly calls for a new war to push the Jews into the sea; and perhaps most ominous of all are the persistent reports that Arabs of all classes live in fear of "Jewish expansionism."

Since there is not an iota of evidence to indicate such expansionism, or even any tendency toward it, this "fear" can be interpreted only as being of the same nature as that exhib-

ited by Russia toward Finland, or by Mussolini toward Ethiopia—i.e., it is a justification for a new attack upon Israel when the time is ripe for it.

Under these circumstances it is a mistake to believe that the Jews could initiate a movement for the federation of the Near East on the basis of equality, since equality is precisely what the Arabs wish to deny to them.

All slogans in Israel must still revolve around the safeguarding of independence. The policy of unity is, of course, excellent, but the lead for it must of necessity come from the Arabs, who are stronger and whose independence is not threatened. (Of course, the analogy with Germany breaks down in that an independent Israel constitutes no threat to the minorities within its borders, or to its neighbors.)

But there are even more fundamental reasons why Comrade Findley's course is not feasible in Israel. Lenin pointed out that theoretically, even after the victory of socialism, there would remain some small and backward nations that would refuse to join the others, but would insist upon an independent national existence. One reason for this is that historically these peoples' weakness had been exploited by their more powerful neighbors, and it would take a long period of patience, understanding and help before they could be persuaded voluntarily to give up their own states.

The second, and more profound, reason is that these people, who had been deprived of the right to creativeness in politics, who had not had experience in building their own state, now wish to experiment with their new-found freedom, to create new

and diverse forms of democracy; they do not wish simply to repeat the forms already invented for them by the "superior" peoples.

Both these considerations apply a hundred times over for the Jews today. They are not a backward people, but their experiences for the past 2,000 years, and especially in this century, have hardly been such as to inspire them with confidence in the benevolence of more powerful nations. It should not be forgotten that it is hardly a year since the most powerful voice in Arab Palestine, that of the Mufti, was calling for the extermination of all Jews.

But even more significant are the universal reports from Israel about the inordinate pride of the people in their state, and their happiness simply because of its existence, regardless of the difficult conditions in the country. The meaning of this state of mind lies, of course, in the fact that after 2,000 years this pariah and reviled nation has at last fought its way to an uncertain equality with its superiors, and the people have taken to experimentation in new and unique forms of democracy as though wishing to feel their new freedom with their own hands. Today there is a greater flourishing of democratic forms in Israel than in any other spot in the world.

It is probably no exaggeration to say that, if by some miracle socialism were established throughout the world overnight, the Jews would be among the last, rather than among the first, to give up their state.

BASIS FOR POLICY

Only a few sentences are required to consider the counterposing of an appeal for peace to the Arab people

as against a course based on the attitudes of the present governments. Such a policy would be analogous to advising Finland or Norway to ignore the attitude of the Russian government and instead to appeal to the peaceful desires of the Russian masses. No doubt the sentiments of the Russians toward the Finns are friendly and peaceful enough; but when the tanks start rolling they will be manned, not by the Russian "people" but by soldiers in the army of the Russian government.

Similarly, although we cannot know, it seems rather unlikely that the shipments of British arms are going to the Arab masses; it is more probable that they are going to the governments. Of course the present regimes may be overthrown, but the timing and direction of such an upheaval will be determined by local Arab conditions, influenced by worldwide forces, in which the actions of the Jews will play anything but a controlling role. For the Israeli government to base its policy today upon such a future upheaval means for it to base its existence, simply and purely, upon chance.

As for the proposed treaty with France, it is not clear whether Findley's criticism is meant to be principled or only tactical in nature. Clearly, however, the government of any small nation has a perfect right to enter into a pact with the U. S., Russia, Tibet, the municipality of Hamtramck, or the Brooklyn Dodgers, if it believes that doing so will help in some measure to secure its independence. Criticism on this score is legitimate only if it is based on a purely practical, tactical level.

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