

The Labor Movement in Syria and Palestine

By H. M. Wicks

BRITAIN in Palestine and France in Syria face not alone the nationalist movements that flare into open rebellion at frequent intervals, but there is also developing a labor movement that challenges not merely the power of the imperialist banditti of these two powers, but is equally determined to crush all capitalism in these countries.

While there still rages the unrestrained frightfulness of the French hordes invading Syria, while Damascus lays in ruins at the feet of the French pillagers, and thousands are being cremated in the ruins of the towns burned by the marauding bands of French imperialism, the nationalist struggle consumes the energy of all classes in that stricken land.

But as these mandated areas become objects of imperialist development, the labor movement also develops. It is not the reformist social-democratic trade unions, nor the trade unionism of the British type, nor the syndicalist type of unions, but a movement under the domination of the Communist Party.

The Beginnings.

BEFORE the present trade unions came into existence the only unions in that part of the world were the Jewish unions in Palestine. Jewish workers, driven into Palestine by the anti-semitic movements of the capitalist countries, endeavored to transplant their trade union experience into new soil. Instead of creating a mass movement among the natives, this movement was confined to the narrow space of the ghettos, to which the Jewish immigrants flocked. With large groups confined to certain localities in the industrial cities the movement became purely nationalistic.

Altho the Jewish movement celebrated the First of May as International Labor Day, the celebration itself was merely a nationalistic demonstration. They perverted the labor movement into nationalistic channels. The native workers considered the First of May as a Jewish nationalist and religious holiday—one of the many holidays celebrated by various religious elements that exist in Palestine.

The Illusion Vanishes.

THE activity of the Communist Party in Palestine and Syria, where the most difficult campaign of organization and education was carried on for the purpose of creating a genuine labor movement, finally broke down the barriers of prejudice.

Following a true Bolshevik policy the Communists became the organizers of the new labor movement in Syria and Palestine. The struggle against the imperialist invaders was directly connected with the class struggle; the frightful terror of the armed mercen-

aries of France and Britain and the intensive exploitation of labor created the objective conditions favorable for our agitation. One of the Communist leaders in Palestine reports that within the past two years hundreds of thousands of copies of newspapers, brochures, tens of thousands of Communist proclamations, hundreds of meetings, and small groups meeting in secret to plan organizational work, laid the foundation for the rise of the labor movement and dispelled the illusions created in the minds of the Arabs by the Jewish immigrants deliberately segregating themselves and creating nationalist groups under the guise of unionism.

The Communists report that on last May Day, for the first time in the history of these territories, the workers in all the industrial centers participated in huge mass demonstrations. In the principal centers the celebrations were of a real Communist character, the workers, in spite of police threats and terror, marching thru the streets with the red flag defiantly flying.

Bolshevik Tactics Necessary.

COMMUNISTS in Syria and Palestine who have become the leaders of the labor movement are confronted with most serious tasks because of the complicated character of the struggle existing in the mandates territories. Not only must they strive against great odds to build up the unions in defiance of the bayonets of the foreign invaders who defend the investors, but they must fight against the nationalism that manifests itself in the slogans of Mohammedanism.

Such slogans as are calculated to cause an uprising of the Mohammedan world against the rest of the world are most dangerous and it is one of the major tasks, and may soon become the one imperative task, of the Communist Party to dispel that illusion just as they had to combat the Jewish nationalism of the earlier movement.

Such slogans as "Asia for the Asiatics," and "The World of Islam for the Faithful," have nothing in common with Bolshevism. They are absolutely, now and forever, irreconcilable with the tactics of Communism. Amidst the Islamite clamor and the general merging of all classes in the struggle to throw off the foreign invader the task of holding aloft the banner of the class struggle becomes extremely difficult. In periods of open, bloody struggle such as now convulses Syria, the class struggle becomes obscured. In this critical period the Communist Party struggles with might and main against the submerging of class lines in the swamp of religious rebellion against all the unfaithful, as the anti-imperialist wars rage.

As a protest against the French storming of Damascus, strikes, under

Communist leadership, were called thruout Syria. Every effort was made to give the movement a distinctive class character and to prove to the workers the necessity for clearly distinguishing between the world struggle against imperialism and the religious slogans of Mohammedanism against the rest of the world.

Keeping in mind the international character of the class struggle, the Communists of Syria and Palestine

The Syrian Inferno



The war in Syria has shifted from around Damascus to Lebanon where the French are being driven from one position after another. American destroyers are lying off the coast of Sidon ready to aid the French murderers of colonial peoples. The French mandate is in Syria, the British mandate territory begins at the border of Palestine (indicated by line) and British forces are mobilized there watching the struggle and awaiting the time when Britain thru the league of nations can wrest the Syrian mandate from France and control the entire territory.

(who work together as one unit) oppose the rallying cries of the world of Islam for the reason that a struggle against the imperialist powers on such a basis arouses a feeling of hatred and distrust against the whole population, including the workers, of the European countries. In this general Islamitic wave the class struggle between the workers and the native bourgeois is found to be obscured. While taking a most energetic part in the nationalist struggle to forcibly expel from these territories the imperialist bandits operating under mandates from the league of nations, the revolutionary proletariat must always keep in mind the fact that the achievement of national independence is not an aim in itself, but only the starting point for the development of the class power of the workers that will realize the proletarian revolution

Revolutionary Prospects.

THE revolutionary wave that will expel the invaders must not be permitted to subside, the workers must not be permitted to disarm themselves and submit to the yoke of a native bourgeois, who, altho they use national shibboleths, would in reality serve the ends of foreign imperialism. Instead of surrendering to the nationalist bourgeois they must maintain their arms and follow up the overthrow of the power of the imperialist nations of Europe with the crushing of the native bourgeoisie.

The task of overthrowing the national bourgeoisie will not be difficult for the reason that the industries of these mandates areas were developed by foreign capital, with absentee ownership. Like all the colonies where imperialist bank capital has penetrated, the industries have grown and with the growth of the industries there arose an industrial proletariat. But while the industries created the proletariat they did not create a powerful native bourgeoisie; the result being that in all these countries the strength of the capitalist class is weak compared to the strength of the working class. This situation makes it much less difficult to achieve the actual overthrow of the native bourgeoisie than in the countries where capitalism has followed the normal course of development and where a native capitalist class has grown up with the industrial development of the country.

In the struggle in Syria where the French forces are meeting with the determined resistance of the native population, Britain maintains an attitude of neutrality because she hopes that the upheaval can be utilized to prove France incapable of administering the mandate of the league of nations. In the event of the league deciding against France, then Britain would get control over Syria. British troops are mobilized on the Syrian border in northern Palestine awaiting the signal to enter and help "restore order." Another motive is the threat from the labor movement, as Britain well knows that such nationalist struggles against imperialism may at any time break forth into a class conscious movement against all capitalism.

But not far to the north and east lays the Soviet Union, and the workers in the colonies and mandates areas know that when they have accumulated sufficient energy to act against imperialism as a class they will not be at the mercy of the imperialist butchers. Once a wave of proletarian upheavals, divested of the nationalist garb, starts among colonial peoples it means the beginning of the end of capitalism in Europe, Asia and Africa.

WHILE the labor movement in countries developed in hot-house fashion by the great imperialist nations has many obstacles to overcome that other labor movements do not have, there is one blight that it has escaped. That is the deadening influence of the social-democracy of the Second International. The heroes of that international of ineffable infamy were so busy serving their various capitalist masters and kings that they devoted no time to the colonial movement except to help enslave the colonials.

While the colonial territories were being subjected and enslaved by the imperialist nations the social-democrats were playing grand politics by entering the cabinets of their various countries and aiding in forwarding the interests of imperialism.

Being true social-democrats and therefore slimy philistines they formulated a theory for their betrayal by a monstrous perversion of Marxism. They held that a real labor movement could only develop in those countries where capitalism was highly developed and that it was useless to attempt to bring the workers of backward countries into the labor movement until such time as capitalism had sufficiently developed. The logical deduction from such a position was that by aiding their capitalist masters exploit the colonies the social-democrats were conferring upon the natives the blessings of capitalist civilization and preparing them so they would be fit to enter the exalted company of the Second International.

This distortion of Marxism was utilized to conceal the material interests of these mercenaries of the bourgeoisie. The extreme exploitation and open plunder of the capitalist nations in the colonies results in a super profit which is shared with the skilled strata of the working class of the home country.

Social-democracy is the representative of this bribed and corrupted strata of the working class.

The failure of social-democracy to gain a foothold in the colonies, combined with the fact that we are living today in the era of world revolution, accounts for the developing of the labor movement in these countries under the domination of the Communists.

In the present struggle against the immeasurable terror of Britain and France in the colonies and mandated areas the Communists strive with the nationalists to break the imperialist chains so that they can clear the ground for the final conflict.

With the labor movement in the colonies under control of Communists, and Communist influence gaining in the home countries, of imperialism the death knell of capitalism will soon be sounded.