

What is Happening in Palestine?

An Editorial

AS WE go to press it is still impossible to determine whether the bloody disturbances in Palestine are completely over. The last dispatches received have been reassuring: There have been no new attacks on Jews and the rioting has been restricted to the Jaffa-Tel Aviv section. This does not mean however, that the forces behind these bestial attacks on Jews intentionally localized their "activities". Judging from the character of the riots they were to serve as a signal for a campaign of destruction against all Jewish settlements. The wire-pullers of the Arab-nationalist pogrom movement undoubtedly wanted a repetition of the events of 1929, only on a larger scale and with more tangible political results. If we are not unduly optimistic in our belief that the worst is over and that the government has the situation under control, the Arab instigators of the disturbances are bound to realize that their attempt has failed. Several more innocent victims have been buried in the Tel Aviv cemetery, but the profound mourning of the community, shared by world Jewry, will not weaken its will to build, grow and strike still deeper roots in Palestine.

There is no occasion for panic in our ranks. It may be inevitable that our peaceful work of reconstruction be bound up with suffering and martyrdom. Should such be the case we accept this destiny with full confidence in the final triumph of the moral power inherent in Zionism.

We do not know whether our professional alarmists will again come forth with dark prophecies, and forebodings. We did not take them seriously in 1929 when they offered the brilliant advice that we take out "the handful of Jews" from Palestine. Between 1929 and 1936, "the handful of Jews" instead of fleeing, more than doubled its number. Their warnings will have no more effect now than then on those sections of our people who have a historical perspective and a will to live.

This does not mean, however, that we are prepared to counsel a calm unconcern. Our front in Palestine is not broken, but the situation is grave. Unruffled tranquility would be folly. Our political problems in Palestine are not solved through the damming of a pogrom wave which threatened to engulf the land. Even the fact that our enemies have been obliged to put their guns and knives back into hiding does not mean that they have capitulated, and that we may return cheerfully to our daily tasks. A general strike is taking place in several large Arab centers. Though the economic significance of the strike is slight, its

political importance must not be underestimated. Incendiary propaganda, which cannot be silenced merely by government decree, is being spread throughout the country. Perhaps at no time have we been in so great a need of watchfulness, energy, tact and discipline as now. We must also have a clear unbiased conception of what is happening.

What are the direct causes of the present difficulties in Palestine? It is impossible to thrust the onus of blame on any one factor, in order to find a guilty party. We must allocate the blame impartially, without prejudice against others, and without mercy towards ourselves.

First of all the Arabs are to blame. Their political leaders and demagogues who strive to utilize the tension created by war-rumors in the Near East within the past year are to blame. The backward, politically untutored Arab masses who furnish such readily inflammable material to unscrupulous agitators, are to blame, though in a slighter measure. As long as they are blind to their own class interests, there will always be individuals ready to exploit their ignorance, their religious fanaticism, and their nationalist sentiments for ends alien to their welfare. Most to blame is the Arab terrorist band which has been in existence for some time and which cannot be considered as an ordinary criminal group organized for murder and pillage. This band bears every sign of being inspired by patriotic political motives. It would be short-sighted to view it as an aggregation of robbers who can readily be tracked down and wiped out by the police. Its members are prepared to make the extreme sacrifices characteristic of revolutionary parties. The government, as well as our movement, must reckon with this fact. This does not mean that we have to regard them as a revolutionary force in the progressive sense of the word. In essence they represent the opposite of revolution. They are thoroughly reactionary; their political viewpoint, in so far as it has taken form, is out and out fascist. In addition, they have a generous portion of oriental religious fanaticism. The readiness for individual sacrifice is by no means the special prerogative of true revolutionists—even the hosts of darkness have their saints. Fascism, in all countries, has had its heroes and martyrs. The existence of the Arab terrorist band is a fact; its idealism is also a fact though it serves no genuine social ideal.

No less guilty is the government. Though we realize that the crushing of the terrorists is no light task, we feel that the government did not

take sufficiently stringent measures at the right time in order to weaken their influence. Had the government expended the time, energy and money that it devotes to tracking down a few "illegal" Jewish immigrants, to discovering the identities of those "legal" residents who endanger the peace of the whole country through their criminal assaults, the situation would now be less serious. But the government displayed no special vigor in this regard. It tolerated incendiary propaganda in the Arab press. It permitted demonstrations in Nablus which shouted the slogan "Long live Al-Kassam's spirit" (Al-Kassam was one of the terrorist murderers slain by the police, who has now been canonized by Arab leaders as a national hero.) After the debate in the English parliament concerning the Legislative Council—a debate which showed a sympathetic and understanding attitude toward Zionist aspirations, the government permitted the Mufti's journal, "A Liva", to create the impression that all elements friendly to Zionism in England were in the pay of Jews. "The old Empire bows its head before Jews, because Jews have money," or further "the Mandate is only apparently in English hands because Jews have purchased it long ago." Another Arab paper "Falastin" agitated openly for an alliance between the nationalist movement and Sir Oswald Mosley. The government seemed incapable of understanding that though it might be possible to treat fascist agitation humorously in London, amusement was out of place in Jaffa. The entire German population of Palestine numbers barely three thousand. Assuming that every one of them is a Nazi, they are still unable to publish a daily newspaper without assistance. The fact that a Nazi paper began to appear in Jerusalem, was in itself evidence enough that well-financed Hitler agents were in the country striving to establish contact with the Arab population. The government saw fit to ignore this. Now it need not be surprised that the words "Heil Hitler" should be a magic pass-word, protecting the speaker from Arab attack.

There are still other contributory causes. The fact that the government put the Legislative Council on the order of the day undoubtedly had a provocative effect. Possibly High Commissioner Wauchope, honestly believes that the Legislative Council will serve the interests of the country and will even improve relations between the Arabs and Jews. Actually his policy intensified the friction between the two groups. It raised the question of respective power, and of the eventual political status of Palestine at a time too tense for the consideration of such delicate problems; it compelled Jewish public opinion categorically to oppose the establishment of the so-called "parliament", thus giving the Arab reactionaries a chance to make further political capi-

tal. The government's sudden blundering sponsoring of "democracy" gave demagogues a rich opportunity for anti-Jewish agitation and misrepresentation.

The responsibility of the communists must be considered also. There is no need to overestimate the strength of the communist movement in Palestine, but its destructive provocative effect has been felt. As far as the Arab population is concerned, it would be folly to speak of any true communist movement with social aspirations in their midst. The Bolshevik emissaries carry on no real communist propaganda in Nablus, Jaffa or Tulkarem. The function of the communists consists in stimulating primitive Arab chauvinism. With their "anti-imperialist" appeals they arouse Jew-hatred and a pogrom psychology. They encourage the reactionary fascist activities of the terrorist bands, by hailing Arab massacres of helpless victims as "revolutionary uprisings." Their recent pogrom proclamation to the Arab masses—a proclamation which they confessed to be an "error of judgment" has apparently borne fruit. This does not mean that the communists participated directly in the recent disturbances, but their propaganda has been one of the precipitating causes.

The revisionists have again not failed to display their "heroism" at the expense of the Jewish population in Palestine, as well as of the whole Zionist movement. According to all present information, we may thank the fiery revisionist "temperament" for the fact that the funeral of the Greek Jew killed by Arab terrorists was transformed into a political demonstration. Street demonstrations are forbidden in Palestine because of their possible explosive quality. For the present, political opposition must seek less dangerous channels for its expression than mass parades. The entire Jewish population understands this with exception of the revisionists. The Jews understand that the government cannot permit Jewish street-gatherings and forbid Arab ones. They understand that one cannot expect a government which shot down 30 Arabs in an anti-government demonstration in Jaffa in 1933, to look on calmly while Jews indulge in anti-government demonstrations in Tel Aviv. The Tel Aviv demonstration culminating in the imbecilic and criminal outcry on the part of one member "Let us go to Jaffa; let us take revenge", was an act of provocation. It provoked the English police into shooting at the Jews; such a shot was enough to incite and encourage the hostile Arabs in Jaffa.

Furthermore, besides the revisionists, we have been blessed with plain ruffians in Tel Aviv who are becoming a real political menace. Three days after the Tel Aviv demonstration they drove out Arab hackmen and boot-blacks from Tel Aviv—

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poor workers who came from the neighboring city of Jaffa in order to earn a few pennies. This act alone could have led to bloody riots. Small wonder that the Hebrew press was unanimous in expressing its condemnation and regrets.

The list of factors which played a part in the present disturbances would not be complete without mention of the Jewish plantation-owners. They too have a share in the responsibility for the Jewish blood that has been spilt. Hauran Arabs were among the most active attackers. How did these Hauran Arabs come to Palestine? Who brought them over and gave them employment? The system of seeking cheap, unorganized seasonal labor has brought its results. Against our protests, Jewish colonists have, in the past few years, imported thousands of Hauran Arabs to compete not only with the organized Jewish worker, but even with the unorganized Palestine Arab, whose standard of living is now higher than that of the Hauran Arab. These imported seasonal workers, whose economic status borders on slavery, proved to be the most inflammable material for misdirected revolt, as the events in Jaffa have shown.

For an objective picture of the situation this whole complex of elements must be taken into account. One may err in the importance assigned to any one factor, but none can be ignored. We must now exert the maximum political pressure on the government to keep it from making false deductions from the events. The government must not further complicate the case by ill-timed projects; it must not put obstacles in the way of our colonization; it must permit a larger Jewish immigration; it must vigorously stamp out the terrorism of the secret and public Arab chauvinist groups.

We must, with fresh energy, mobilize as much national and constructive private capital as possible, so as to increase the scope of our colonization and of our immigration. We must begin a new fight for the right of Jews to work; we must oppose the "Hauranization" of the Jewish colonies. We must root out all traces of hooliganism in our midst. We must seek more passionately than ever that which we have till now perhaps insufficiently sought; greater economic and political cooperation with those elements of the Arab people who must sooner or later understand the significance of a progressive Palestine to them.

In order to achieve these ends, there is one prerequisite — discipline. To-day Palestine is a front. It will be a front for years to come. On a front there must be discipline, tact, coordination, and a sense of duty. There must be no unauthorized outbursts of caprice and "temperament". This must by now be clear to all.