

PART II

The Position of the

ARAB SOCIALISTS

on ISRAEL

By CLOVIS MAKSOUD

In the light of the preceding discussion:

(1) How should the Palestine controversy be resolved to prepare a healthy and socialist development in the Near East?

(2) Does the existence of Israel as an independent and sovereign state serve to block or aid this development?

(3) What should be the conditions for a political settlement that would guarantee the rights—the basic human rights—of the inhabitants of the area?

(4) What is the Arab socialist formula for the Palestine question, and the reasons for it?

I shall not give a systematic answer to these questions. I pose them since they are the ones that come to my mind in attempting to formulate a plan for the question of Palestine.

It would be easy to settle the Israel-Arab conflict on the theoretical level. Even then, certain premises have to be accepted. What is necessary, however, is not a *settlement* but a *solution*. This, in our view, should be a socialist endeavor.

A settlement presupposes the existence of an active conflict of interests. It does not purport to eliminate its causes. All it hopes to do is to reduce the activism of the conflict and establish a modus vivendi based on the acceptance of a de-facto situation.

A solution is in a way a revolutionary form of settlement. It is a settlement that requires a change and a breakaway from the old forms, while settlement implies naked adjustment.

A settlement does not settle a problem. It makes adjustments of interests in conflict. A solution goes into the causation of the problem. It does not only resolve but, in the process of eradicating its causes, it unfolds its positive values and brings to the forefront the latent good will of those participating in the solution.

Israel Is a Deterrent

Applying the test mentioned in the first part of my article—namely, that the solution ought to serve socialist realization (in the Arab world)—and dismissing for the moment the moral ramifications involved, the question of rights, and whether Zionist claims are true or not, let us ask ourselves the question:

Does Israel, the independent and sovereign state, serve as a generator of a progressive and socialist revolutionary development, or does it serve as a deterrent?

This is a question that ought to concern not only Arab socialists but socialists everywhere.

The answer, we submit as socialists, is that the presence of the sovereign state of Israel acts as a deterrent to the fulfillment of the revolutionary aspirations of the Arab masses.

Not only does potential Zionist expansion militate against the release of Arab revolutionary reserves, but Israel's expansion is checked only by active interference of the three Western powers who signed the 1950 Tripartite Agreement. To maneuver the Arab revolutionary forces into a position of choosing between potential expansion of Zionism and imperialist intervention to prevent it, seems to us a disservice to the cause of socialism in the Near East. Should the socialists in Europe and America continue in their one-sided support for Israel, they will not only contribute to the perpetuation of reaction in this area, but they will, in the long run, weaken their position by supporting forces that sap their own strength and appeal, namely, imperialism.

The task of the Arab socialists is therefore to break the deadlock and disengage ourselves from this limited framework of choice. Our immediate task is to regain the initiative in the field of international relations in order to create a climate where the two alternatives would be proved to be two phases of one.

Israel's existence and its safety have given pretexts for more active interference by the United States and Britain in the affairs of the Near East. The evacuation of the Suez Canal by British troops is held up because the Israelis fear the "aggressive" designs of Egypt. The Israeli government then considers British occupation of the Suez a guarantee for its security.

Pawn of Imperialism

The Johnson Plan designed to promote "stability" and "order" in the area is a plan that will allow American capital to develop our resources. It is not necessary for me to repeat here the drastic consequences of such measures and how they will seek to undermine socialist or even democratic movements. *They will more-over saturate the possibilities of a native extractive and productive capitalist development.*

Though such infiltration of capital will, by reason of a certain economic dislocation, effectuate a redistribution of social status and class structure, what will emerge is actually a class of entrepreneurs—commercial capitalists—drawn from the déclassé feudal lords and technicians, who will be transformed into an upper-bourgeois class closely connected with foreign interests and designs. This apparent change in the class structure of society is not at all a real and constructive change. It does, however, exploit the anti-feudal heritage of the progressive struggle of the genuine bourgeoisie. The time that elapses between this apparent "progress" and the discovery that *commercial capitalism is only an accommodating force for reaction and imperialism* and plays the same role of feudalism, this time is used to consolidate the new form of colonialism and its local stooges.

By this temporary split of the democratic revolutionary forces brought about by the neutralization of the "moderate liberals," Arab socialists are again faced with the need to retrace their steps and regain the initiative. The "stability" of the area requires and necessitates the acceptance of these plans. One only has to read *Newsweek* and *Time* magazines to see the promises that this plan holds for the inhabitants of the area. More important is the "patience" and "objective" perseverance of Eisenhower's roving Near Eastern ambassador!

Again we see how Israel serves to obstruct socialist development in the Arab world.

"Emasculation"

Arab socialists wonder why socialists in Europe and America—finding themselves supporting, as did the British Labor MPs, Sidney Silverman and R. H. S. Crossman, "stability" in the Near East to protect Israel—are completely indifferent to the consequences of "stability" in the Arab world?

The alternative in our view is the emasculation of Israel's sovereignty. This is a view that must be shared by every socialist.

As long as the Jews in Israel retain a sovereign, separate, isolated and independent existence, they will evolve interests which are exist-

THIS CONCLUDES

the presentation by Clovis Maksoud of "The Position of the Arab Socialists on Israel," begun in last week's issue. Next week we publish a reply to Maksoud from the point of view of LABOR ACTION'S position on the subject.—Ed.

pathetic to those of the inhabitants of the area. In addition, and by virtue of this isolated existence, they will not only alienate themselves from the inhabitants' aspirations but, in preservation of this isolation, they will move in an opposite direction.

As the Arabs are in a revolutionary situation expressed in an articulate will to change the social, political and economic systems under which they live, *Israel in preserving its "national" identity would exercise a counter-revolutionary influence.* This will, parenthetically, entail the frustration and isolation of genuine socialist groups among the Jews either by direct suppression, as they will necessarily become "subversive" and divisive elements with regard to Zionism, or by limiting the mobility of socialist appeal in the emotional and sensational mobilization where Zionists are master engineers.

Positive Program

The emasculation of Israel's sovereignty will require positive action too.

The first step will be the resettlement of Arab refugees to their former homes in Palestine; also the resettlement of Arab Jews in their homes in Yemen and Iraq with guarantees of their civil rights and reinstatement of their status.

The Jewish population in Palestine who lived there prior to the creation of Israel will be allowed cultural autonomy. The remaining inhabitants of Israel will be allowed to continue residence only in the light of the absorptive capacity of Palestine and the consideration of the human rights of the Palestinian population.

The remaining Jewish refugees cannot be considered an exclusive Arab obligation. They are an international obligation, as any victims of persecution ought to be. Some of the romantic Zionists who came as "pioneers" from their countries should not remain at all in Palestine, especially if they consider their stay there a matter of right. Socialists in the world should seek to liberalize their immigration laws and the presumption that anti-Semitism is a psychological component of certain national attitudes must be abandoned.

Therefore the Zionist myths must not continue to dominate Western socialist and liberal thinking. Their reactionary and racial premises and prejudices should be rejected.

Wider Problem

The cultural autonomy of the Jews in Palestine will mean the reintegration of these inhabitants into the broader framework of Arab unity. They will not be the only religious minority. The Arabs have always proved their assimilating capacities. Arabs have also a heritage of tolerance. Kurds, Armenians, Greeks and European Jews in many Arab countries assimilated into the pattern of Arab society.

A social revolution is a negation of all religious and racial prejudices. It generates progressive dispositions, and transcends discriminatory arrogance that characterizes reactionary classes when their survival is in question. The revolutionary situation in the Arab world is a liberation movement. Though it is a liberation from an "other," the struggle itself has a purifying impact in the process.

Only where outside influences, endeavoring to exploit, seek to maintain permanent footholds in the area is the perversion of the socialist revolution possible. The perversion can be either the subversion of this tempo to Soviet designs or the derationalization of revolutionary impulses to succumb to anti-democratic forces similar in designs to the forces they claim to oppose. The success of these revolutionary and perverted direction is possible only by frustrating democratic socialism.

Israel is an integral part of a wider problem. In its present Zionist structure and sovereignty

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Arab Socialists — —

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it will continue to be a source of tension.

Those who claim that the emasculation of Israel's sovereignty is "impractical" will have to face the justified Arab response that the maintenance and subsidization of Zionist sovereignty is also impractical. In my opinion the paramount interest of socialism should be the arbiter of this problem.

The socialists of the world should bear the responsibility of their decision. But their judgment will not be final or correct or socialist if it is motivated by a traditional dislike for the Arabs (as, e.g., Richard Crossman, Sidney Silverman, John Freeman) or by a self-publicized Zionist bias (i.e., Mallalieu, columnist for the London *Tribune*, Norman Bentwick, Aneurin Bevan, Michael Foot, or to a lesser degree Norman Thomas). Those socialists have closed their minds to an objective study of the socialist development in the Arab world. Though many have contributed to the cause of socialism they do not possess the objectivity to act in judgment on this issue. They are influenced by mistaken convictions or political interests.

WE ARE PRACTICAL

When studied carefully, and when the doctrine of socialism is applied, I am sure that the Arab socialist position on the question of Palestine will not only be appreciated but supported by all democratic socialist forces.

We shall not be intimidated by imposed *faits accomplis*. Nor shall we be maneuvered by imperialism to lose our revolutionary initiative, or abandon our zeal for what we consider is right and just in order to be "practical" and "realistic." What is a practical situation is what we make. It is the result of our action. *Nothing is practical unless we submit to it; we ought not submit to a situation that is considered wrong and unjust.*

Nazism was a practical situation, too

practical; did that mean that socialists ought to have submitted to it? Colonial administration is "practical" in many parts of Africa; does that involve submission? *What is, is not what ought be, unless it conforms at least to the minimum requirements of elementary socialism.* Zionism is not, in the same manner as Arab reaction and imperialism are not.

I have tried in this article to expound our position. The formula for a solution cannot be worked out in detail in circumstances where socialists do not have the instruments to execute their policies. But these are general lines of policy which we consider equitable but which must be worked out later.

IT IS A TEST

We do not seek sympathy but understanding. We will not try to exact from Western socialists a definite commitment, as the Zionists did. Their position has to be the conclusion of serious, objective and far-sighted studies. This is a vital issue and we will not be manipulated.

I have been frank because this is the only way to promote unity. If the forces of socialism remain divided on vital issues, fearing to give a clear-cut solution, they will become an auxiliary and secondary stream in the cross-currents of ideas and beliefs. In the long run it will be detrimental to all of us.

Arab socialists will do their best to prevent this befalling. Many Asian and African socialists share our determination. We will not be welcomed now in many fraternal circles in Europe, but we do not mind. Maybe it is a persecution complex, but we hope by our stand and perseverance to restore to the European socialists the confidence they have almost lost in their cause.

Palestine is a test for the socialist conscience. We hope they will not fail in helping Arab socialists to resolve this problem as a prelude to a socialist society in the Arab East.