

A DISCUSSION: Zionism and 'Terminology'

By HAL DRAPER

Over at the righthand column, our valued contributor Al Findley has a letter which raises a point of view, at least a nuance, with regard to our anti-Zionism. He wrote the letter in (by editorial collusion) with the aim of evoking this comment and discussion, and so we are carrying out our part of the bargain here.

Comrade Findley puts it that he is raising a question of terminology ("semantics"). He basically agrees with the ISL views on the subject, but in effect he asserts that these views are directed against only one form of Zionism—that form of Zionism which claims that "all Jews must necessarily owe allegiance to [a] Jewish state." So he refuses to describe himself as "anti-Zionist."

It is tempting to agree that this is simply a "terminological" question and let it go at that. But—

After all, in a real but useless way almost anything can be reduced to "terminology." It is perfectly possible to define socialism as merely "one form of liberalism" by an appropriate extension of the term liberalism. It even has been done, especially by socialists whose own separation from liberalism is not very clear. It could be justified; but if Comrade Findley would demur, at least one reason is this: Such a "terminological" amalgam of socialism and liberalism would tend to blur precisely that difference which makes them, or ought to make them, distinct political movements in real political life. In point of fact, it is a "terminological" approach which has appealed only to those socialistic elements who do want to blur the line between liberalism and socialism in political life and not only in "semantics."

So we ought to beware of "terminological" approaches which blur understanding rather than help it.

Therefore we point out first that we are using the term Zionism in the same way as it is used by virtually the whole Zionist movement in real political life. Comrade Findley knows that—cf. his second sentence.

WHO ARE ZIONISTS?

But, he argues, there are Zionists who "reject the political ideas and 'ethos'" of the Zionist parties, yet continue to call themselves Zionists. He points to the existence of such people and rests his "terminological" case. But this is not helpful. There are all kinds of "socialists," all kinds of "liberals," "democrats," and "Zionists." It is inevitable that there be mixed-up Zionists and inconsistent Zionists, as there are such categories in every other field. Whom is Comrade Findley pointing to?

He is pointing to two examples. His examples help to show the trouble with his "terminological" approach. They are the "American Zionists" and the "cultural-Zionists."

(1) It is not true that the "American Zionists" reject the ideas of typical Zionism. Findley is thinking of something else.

The mass of "American Zionists" simply refuse to draw the personal consequences of their ideas, i.e., emigration to Israel. This is why they have been denounced by Ben-Gurion and Zionists abroad. The American Zionist movement is a scandal in the world organization. They are a case of people who proclaim their agreement with the full program of Zionism for others, but for themselves it would mean too much sacrifice. Their case has little to do with "terminology" except insofar as "terms" are used to cover up the smell of the fleshpots.

We have here pathetically inconsistent Zionists, that's all. And this should not confuse us into making Zionism a "terminological" question.

INCONSISTENT ZIONISM

(2) The second example is also a case of inconsistent Zionism, insofar as it bears on the question. The term "cultural-Zionism" means little by itself; as soon as some elementary questions are asked, it immediately breaks up into either (a) a clear form of Zionism, perhaps with a

secondary emphasis; or (b) a notion which cannot be labeled Zionism in any sense whatever.

If one looks to build a cultural center for Jews (a cultural "Zion") somewhere in the world, that may be in New York or Vienna or Rome or Palestine, or in any and all Jewish communities at once; but such aspirations have nothing whatsoever to do with Zionism in anyone's terminology—until the question is raised of the political and territorial context of such a cultural "Zion." When any given "cultural-Zionist" answers this question for himself, he must either accept or reject "the political ideas" of the Zionist movement. Naturally, not all people think such questions through for themselves. When they do not, they sometimes use the label "cultural-Zionist" as a label for their particular species of confusion.

Why should anyone think in terms of a single world cultural center of Jewry, unless he is already thinking in terms of a single political-state center? Birobidjan was, in its own way, a type of proposal for a Jewish cultural center (even a territorial center of a sort), without the Russians thereby becoming "Zionists." A cultural center can be established by minority treaty rights within another state, without anyone looking on the arrangement as fulfillment of Zionism. Similarly, a Jewish (or other minority) cultural center can be established and maintained simply by democratic toleration and support within another state. . . . None of this becomes "cultural-Zionism" until a sufficient admixture of the real Zionist ideology has been added: for example, the proviso that there must be a single cultural center and in Palestine at that.

So Findley's examples are not examples—not for his "terminological" point.

ZIONISM & CHAUVINISM

Now there are a couple of useful terminological distinctions that can and should be made, as long as the question has been raised. For example, there is the useful term "Jewish territorialism" as distinct from Zionism.

The Marxist (anti-Zionist) point of view does not automatically exclude all conceptions of some kind of territorial center for Jews. For example, the concept of a Birobidjan may be good or bad, and we are not interested at the moment in the Stalinist execution of it, but certainly our point of view does not automatically rule such a project out. It can fairly be considered a form of socialist Jewish territorialism in a broad sense, as distinct from Zionism. So also Trotsky had interesting ideas on the possibility, under socialism, of some kind of new territorial center for those Jews who wished to found a new life in such a way. All of this is outside the Zionist framework.

But if one insists that such a territorial center must be in Palestine; or if one insists that such a territorial center must be the homeland of all Jews in the world (Ingathering of the Exiles); or even if one insists on calling and making such a territory a "Jewish state" in the Israeli sense—then, we must conclude, a different set of political ideas is involved and this latter is the political ideology of Zionism.

A second "terminological" point is implicit in the ISL resolution on the subject, as Comrade Findley knows. Our resolution does not reject "Jewish nationalism" per se. It looks on Zionism as a reactionary form of Jewish nationalism (Jewish chauvinism).

None of this probably has much to do with the "anti-Zionism" of the Arab socialists (Maksoud). The latter's emphasis is on opposition to Israel, it would seem.

Lastly: the ISL resolution, it is true, "leaves open the theoretical question of whether the Jews are a nation, people, etc." It would be wrong to pass resolutions on mooted points of theory; resolutions are limited to settling political questions. Instead our resolution points out that the specific Jewish community in Palestine acted as a national people. I would add that this already indicates a correct approach. It does not speak of "the Jews" but of a given and existing Jewish community in a given territory and society. In my reply to Maksoud I wrote that I doubt whether it is at all meaningful to talk about "the Jews" in any other way. Outside of the tribal mysticism of the Zionists, I cannot see anyone looking on the Yemenite Jews as being a part of the same (separate) national people as the Jewish community in (say) Mt. Vernon.

To the Editor:

With reference to the exchange of views in LABOR ACTION on the position of the Arab socialists, allow me to point out a difference between the anti-Zionism of Draper and the anti-Zionism expressed by Maksoud.

Draper's anti-Zionism is opposition to the political ideology and program of the Zionist parties, including such ideas as the following: that all Jews must necessarily owe allegiance to the Jewish state; that the Jews must inevitably and for all time be alien and hated by their neighbors, etc.

Maksoud's anti-Zionism is that any idea of a Jewish territorial center is reactionary, and he opposes categorically any idea that the Jews may be a nation or a people.

Draper (or the ISL), as far as I understand, leaves open the theoretical question of whether the Jews are a nation, people, etc. He is in favor of allowing Jews the right of self-determination, and includes in that, the right to choose a territorial basis for their self-determination.

For my part Draper is wrong insofar as he identifies Zionism per se with the above ideas. Many Zionists accept the idea of a territorial center in Israel and reject the political ideas and "ethos" that Draper and I object to. This is true especially of American Zionists and "cultural Zionists." My disagreement with characterizing ourselves as anti-Zionist is therefore one really of semantics. Neither of our points of view has any connection with Maksoud's kind of anti-Zionism.

AL FINDLEY

YOU and SCIENCE

We Go Slumming in the Astrological Underworld

By CARL DARTON

When we meet an engineer or scientist who says he is a "socialist," we naturally get interested. We want to discuss with him, broach some ideas, etc. So we did in a recent case. We knew the person in question habitually showed a certain disregard for concrete and immediate social issues, so we tried to tackle a question of more general interest. Before we could say abracadabra, we found ourselves confronted with the following question:

"Do you believe in a vast Cosmic Ocean which surrounds us all, a sort of Soul of the Universe from which we receive our very thoughts, our ideas, our incentives for action?"

Before we could recover balance, the intended victim thrust into our hands two issues of a magazine named *Horoscope*.

He insisted on calling attention particularly to an article entitled "Astrology in the World Today," by one Sidney Omarr. The subtitle read: "An Interview with Dr. Gustaf Stromberg and Aldous Huxley."

Unaccustomed as we are to the esoteric and unusual style of the astrological underworld of pseudo-science, we did manage to arrive with some difficulty at a fair understanding of the author's thesis. Author Omarr is seeking some sort of endorsement from modern science for astrology. He is trying to show that he has got it, in these interviews with Huxley and Stromberg.

SWEEPING CLAIMS

It is naturally impossible here to list all the examples of sweeping claims and faulty conclusions which pepper the article.

We should remember that Huxley is not representative of modern science even though he—

(a) is an "author who is one of the most distinguished literary figures of our times."

(b) "belongs to a famous scientific family."

(c) "is noted for his provocative use of scientific and philosophic ideas in such novels as *Point Counter Point* and *Brave New World*."

(d) is "one of the rare minds of our time."

(e) is quoted as saying that "We had better admit then that there will probably never be a completely adequate science of man."

The same is true of Stromberg, who, the article claims, is "a simple man in the best sense of the word. He is enthusiastic, perceptive, and sympathetic to the problems faced by astrology in a generally hostile scientific world." Stromberg was trained, and for years was an astronomer, at the Carnegie Institute's Mount Wilson Observatory. More recently he has been analyzing "data on certain 'living fields' which seem to have their roots in a non-physical world, a world beyond the realm of space and time."

One can only agree with Omarr that the doctor is "unlike most astronomers."

In all fairness to Huxley and Stromberg, it must be reported that they did not actually endorse astrology. Omarr tries hard to make the identification with remarks such as: "Like students of astrology, Huxley has been concerned with man himself and the world in which he lives." To the direct question of what the

two famous "scientists" thought about astrology, the best he could get from Huxley was: "It is a strange subject. . . . The reason most scientists are inclined to veer away from astrology is that it falls in the philosophical realm."

That last remark of Huxley's would be nearer correct if it said "mystic realm." While it may be true that most scientists do not concern themselves directly with philosophical questions, this is an entirely different attitude from that toward pseudo-scientific quackery like astrology.

SCIENTIFIC BACKING?

Certain scientific observations and theories were dragged in by the *Horoscope* article to support the validity of astrology.

• Item: Terrestrial magnetic storms coincide with certain positions of the planets. These storms affect our physical environment and thus our lives. Therefore, it has now been "proved" by science that astrology is correct in one of its main claims that the position of the planets directly affects individual lives. . . .

• Item: Dr. Shapley of the Harvard Observatory has declared that there are 100 million planets which may be "life theaters." Omarr concludes that this is a rebuff to those scientists who are "only too ready to shut their minds to any influences, let alone life, from other planets." . . .

• Item: The menstrual period of women has much in common with the lunar cycle, being approximately the same length. This tremendous discovery then becomes a justification for the study of astrology.

Among the various quack devices for fortune-telling, astrology seems to be pre-eminent in its appeal to otherwise educated and intelligent people. Perhaps its reputed vogue in the Hollywood and entertainment world is exaggerated, but surely it is greater than the general level of intelligence among its victims would make plausible.

The background of this fact is undoubtedly composed of feelings of uncertainty and insecurity, perhaps more acute than elsewhere, but just as undoubtedly, one factor responsible is astrology's effort to cover itself with the mantle of science.



LABOR ACTION

September 27, 1954 - Vol. 18, No. 39

Published weekly by Labor Action Publishing Company, 114 West 14 Street, New York 11, N. Y.—Telephone: WATKINS 4-4222—Re-entered as second-class matter May 24, 1940, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1874.—Subscriptions: \$2 a year; \$1 for 6 months (\$2.25 and \$1.15 for Canadian and Foreign).—Opinions and policies expressed in signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the views of Labor Action, which are given in editorial statements.

Editor: HAL DRAPER

Asst. Ed.: GORDON HASKELL,

BEN HALL

Business Mgr.: L. G. SMITH

WEEK by WEEK . . .

LABOR ACTION screens and analyzes the week's news, discusses the current problems of labor and socialism, gives you information you can't find anywhere else.

A sub is only \$2 a year!