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FOR NC INFORMATION:

[The following article was sent to the National Office with the hope it could be included as part of the convention discussion last month. It was received only after the convention had adjourned, however, and is therefore being sent to National Committee members for their information since it cannot be included in the convention discussion bulletin.]

THE ARAB-ISRAEL CONFLICT

By Beverley Wise

I would like to call for a change in the position of the SWP on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Unfortunately I have not worked through a theoretical analysis which can be used as a formal position. However, I think it is essential that the position which both we and the world movement have taken be questioned and reassessed. For a revolutionary socialist party to find itself in the position of advocacy of genocide is more than embarrassing -- it is untenable.

Here are a few points that I think must be considered:

1. The nature of the Arab coalition which includes autocracies and feudal kingdoms as well as the Egypt or Syria type of state. If we call Israel a beachhead for imperialism, what do we call Jordan?

2. The utilization of anti-Semitism by the Arab coalition and by the USSR. (SNCC's use of this same tactic was also given a pretty light tap on the wrist by The Militant. Nobody will deny the exploitation of the ghetto by small Jewish businessmen, but the main enemy is hardly these picayune if undefensible gougers.) Anti-Semitism is the cement of the Arab world, not anti-colonialism.

The cynical comparison by the USSR of Hitler and Dayan reflects the unprincipled politics of Stalinism, of course, but also builds up the semi-official anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union.

The long propaganda attack by Egypt, especially, against Israel was on the basis of anti-Semitism. If Israel had lost, and there had been mass slaughter of the Israelis, would this have been justified on the basis of the colonial revolution?

3. Obviously Zionism is not the answer to the "Jewish question" but the establishment of Israel, albeit at the expense of Arab dispossession, was at that point in history the only answer to the saving of those particular lives. (Also, obviously, Israel's tactics in relation to the Arabs have been disastrous

and incorrect, but that is something Israeli revolutionaries -- and we -- must point out.) The response of Israel in June, 1967, was on the basis of survival (again as a result of incorrect policies, but that does not change the point). We are not defending Zionism if we do not agree with genocide.

4. There appears to be a tinge of opportunism in our position. Revolutionary socialists want to be on the same side as the colonial revolution, the black struggle, of Cuba (note that the latest Ramparts indicates Cuba has some doubt about the genocidal aspects of Egypt's attacks, incidentally), etc., but to be in an unpopular position is certainly not a new experience for Trotskyists. Our position should not be that of the Arab coalition, of the Zionists, of U.S. imperialism, of the Soviet Union. There are elements in the Arab-Israeli conflict which differentiate it from the imperialist-colonial world struggle, and we must delineate these.

5. A not very important point is an objection to the use of the phrase "sneak attack" when referring to the Israeli attack on Egypt. I presume the element of surprise is a military tactic, not a moralistic one. If Egypt had extended the closing of the port to bombing, would that have been an "honorable" attack? I recall that the U.S. labelled the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in the same terms.

I know many comrades have questions and reservations about our position but to my knowledge no one has formalized these. I hope these sketchy suggestions for debate will open up at least a questioning of our position before the next explosion in the Mid-East.

San Francisco
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