

The Palestine Issue

by Joseph Starobin —

THERE'S a lot to be said about the Bournemouth conference of the British Labor Party, about the arrogant performance of that desperate Social Democrat, Ernest Bevin. But if there's one issue on which American progressives have seen most clearly the fraudulent character of "Socialism" as interpreted by Social Democrats, it's the issue of Palestine.



Bevin has now demonstrated that where imperialist interests are concerned, it's even possible for a Social Democrat to stoop to a thinly-veiled anti-Semitism. Where imperialist interests are concerned, the British mis-leaders of labor will not hesitate to propose commissions and committees, and every other technique of delay, and will then break their promises even where the commissions bring in reports favorable to them.

But all the fury against Bevin on the Palestine issue will not get us Americans very far, and could easily play into the hands of our own reactionaries, unless we begin the battle for a solution of the Palestine issue from the right starting point.

In my opinion, the starting point is not, and cannot be, the problem of the Jewish refugees in Europe. If we continue to let that be the starting point, American imperialists are going to make the most demagogic use of this issue, but not contribute one whit to the solution of any question in Palestine, especially the fate of the heroic Jewish community there.

Bevin says he cannot admit 100,000 refugees from Europe because it would require him to put another division of British troops there. That is correct. But the real question is why any British

troops whatsoever should be in Palestine at all?

Indeed, the British Tommy is an innocent victim — along with the Jews and Arabs alike — of a policy which forces him to garrison a land where he shouldn't be in the first place.

Mandate From a Corpse

Britain has a mandate in Palestine from a non-existent organization — the League of Nations. Britain promised in the White Paper to speed Palestine's independence. To my mind — as a Jew who does not want the Jewish community of Palestine to suffer as the rest of the Jews in Europe have suffered — there is only one way out of this immense tragedy now building up in the Holy Land.

That way is not to increase British troops, not to replace British troops by Polish fascist troops, and not to substitute American garrisons for British garrisons.

The only way to end the mandate is to give Palestine independence as a nation. It is to encourage through united action of the U.S., Britain and the Soviet Union the formation of a binational state, a settlement between Jews and Arabs.

This must be, as I see it, the central demand in fighting the double-dealing and open anti-Semitism which threatens to make Palestine the "unholiest land" on earth.

So long as either Jews or Arabs base their policies on dominating each other in Palestine, they will seek to play off the imperialist powers against each other. The Arab leaders did that before the war as between Germany, on the one hand and Britain on the other. The result was such fascist Arabs as the Mufti arising and becoming national leaders.

The Jewish public is disillusioned today, bitterly disillusioned with the British. They now turn to the United States government, which is not fundamentally interested in Jewish welfare either, but

seeks to gain a position for itself against Britain and Russia.

The Only Way Out

There is a way out. That is Arab-Jewish cooperation in a joint demand to the United Nations for an independent Palestine. Such an independent Palestine would not only be in harmony with the general struggle for independence in the Middle East; such a Palestine, because of the higher technical level of its Jewish element, could help industrialize a good part of the Middle East and modernize its agriculture.

There are no long-range solutions in Palestine — as between Jews and Arabs — until the economic disparity between them is eliminated, until agriculture is made more productive for all of them. And that is not possible until Palestine is freed from the grip of British imperialism, and the approaching grasp of American anti-Soviet objectives there.

In this framework, the problem of the Jewish refugees must be solved. It should be solved not only by immigration to Palestine — which is possible through a Jewish-Arab agreement. It should be solved also by the joint action of the great powers to admit those Jews who wish to emigrate into their own lands. I mean emigration to our country, emigration to the British Empire countries and to the Soviet Union.

A third and very practical aspect of the refugee problem is to overcome the present crisis among the great powers. If imperialist pressures were removed from the Balkans, for example, or from Poland, if democratic life could be established in those lands, large numbers of Jews would elect to remain there and take part in the general reconstruction.

Otherwise, we are all heading into a terrible blind alley. We are heading into a terrible explosion, another Ireland, another India, another Nazi Germany rolled into one.