

OUR POSITION ON THE MIDDLE EAST

A discussion

By **TOM FOLEY** and **SID RESNICK**

I noticed in your Oct. issue that a reference was made to my article, "Israel's War," which appeared in the latest issue of the *New World Review*. In the "Dialogue on Israel" between Morris Davis and Sid Resnick, Resnick characterizes my article as an "utterly biased defense of the Arab nationalist position."

People who read the article can judge for themselves whether or not I am an Arab nationalist. However, I strongly object to the approach Resnick has taken in his attempt to reply to Morris Davis. It is an approach that fails to distinguish between Arabs and apparently considers all Arabs as being alike, as "one reactionary mass."

Resnick drags in Kurdistan and the southern Sudan in trying to answer Davis. But clearly the Arab peasants of Palestine have nothing to do with what goes on in these two areas. Also, they had not the slightest relationship to the slave trade, which is mentioned elsewhere in your Oct. issue. In fact, the resurrection of the slave trade in modern times is due to the oil wealth of the U.S. imperialist-backed regime in Saudi Arabia, and is not at all related to Arab workers and peasants.

If we fail to distinguish between those Arabs and Israelis who are fighting imperialism and those who have sold out to it, then we can never hope to attain the least understanding of the basic realities of the Middle East conflict.

The Middle East conflict is not a national one, between all Arabs on one side and all Israelis on the other.

To believe otherwise is to fall into the trap of chauvinism, pure and simple. Only a chauvinist could believe that King Feisal of Saudi Arabia and the Arab oil workers his police torture and kill are all alike, are all "the enemy." Only a chauvinist could equate King Hussein and the Arab Legion with the down-trodden Arab peasants of Jordan and Palestine.

I am happy to see that, within Israel, powerful forces are emerging which do not take the chauvinistic approach and are fighting the militarism and annexationism of their own ruling class. The Communist Party of Israel led by Meir Vilner and Tawfiq Toubi has won the respect and admiration of all Arab progressives for its part in this struggle. This kind of development points the way to a real solution. The "chauvinist solution" shows us a bleak, hopeless future of one war after another. *JEWISH CURRENTS* is doing its readers a real disservice by giving its readers no hope and by systematically defaming the Arabs. It is time it decided which side it is on in the Middle East Conflict.

TOM FOLEY

New York, Oct. 23

Sid Resnick Comments:

It is gratifying to learn that Mr. Foley concedes there are Israelis "who are fighting imperialism." In his 12 page article in the *New World Review* one would never suspect such Israelis existed.

Our difference with Mr. Foley does

not hinge on whether or not we "distinguish" those Arabs who are fighting imperialism. Our concern is that most of the anti-imperialist Arab forces have not shed their own chauvinist, anti-Jewish and anti-Israel prejudices nor their determination to liquidate the State of Israel. In addition, hardly anyone in the international left is urging them to knock it off.

Mr. Foley may deny his article is a defense of the Arab nationalist position, yet on every conceivable issue that's where he winds up. He even follows the Arab nationalist practice of lauding the guerrilla-terrorist movements operating against Israel and never indicates their leaders include reactionary extremists and other adventurers, a criticism the Jordanian Communists made over a year ago and which we cited.

What is more alarming is Mr. Foley's absolute failure to mention, let alone condemn, the basic premise of these terror movements, which is their openly proclaimed goal to liquidate or "remove Israel as a state." This irrational demand may even lead to a massacre of the greater part of the Israeli people, who will of course defend their State to the death. This demand goes far beyond the settling of scores with leaders one disapproves. By his failure or refusal to indicate and condemn this danger, Mr. Foley has defaulted on his own internationalist duty.

Though he is a writer for the *Daily World* on Middle East affairs, Mr. Foley has failed to draw any conclusions from the criticism made of these Arab terrorist forces by Meir Vilner, the Israeli Communist leader of whom Mr. Foley presumably does approve. Though we have basic disagreements with Vilner, it is most significant that even he found it necessary to state:

"Not everyone who struggles against the [Israel] occupation is right. If the struggle is not for the liberation of the occupied territories, but also for the liberation of the Middle East from the State of Israel, we resolutely oppose such a struggle" (*Morgen Freiheit*, Aug. 17, 1969).

We hope Mr. Foley will favorably consider Vilner's opinion rather than sing the praises of Al Fatah.

How deeply venomous and racist this Arab chauvinism has become is evident from the behaviour of Arab anti-imperialist delegates at international left-wing conferences where a more responsible attitude might be expected. We once assumed that anti-imperialists and left-wingers are also internationalists who would not bar anyone on the basis of his national origin. Yet we have seen on all too many occasions how Arab delegates have obstinately insisted on the exclusion of *all Israelis* from such gatherings. The Arabs frequently make the exclusion of the Israelis the condition for their own presence. In this way the Arab nationalists demonstrate before the international left their fixation that Israel is not a legitimate nation and that *all* its citizens be boycotted everywhere.

This extreme nationalist attitude was displayed anew at the Congress of the Italian Communist Party last year, to which delegates from various Arab movements were invited, along with a delegation from the Vilner-Toubi wing of the Israel Communist movement. On this occasion half the Arab delegates left the Italian Congress in protest at the seating of the Israelis. Those Arabs who stayed nevertheless walked out of the Congress session when the Israeli delegate rose to speak and thus did not hear him express his boundless solidarity with them! Is this

proletarian internationalism or its desecration?

Mr. Foley maintains the Vilner-Toubi Communists of Israel won the respect and admiration of "all Arab progressives." Their behavior cited above and elsewhere indicates this is still a pipedream.

Of course, most of the Arab liberation movement is engaged in an anti-imperialist struggle and deserves support when it is directed at imperialism and not at Israel's existence. It is odd for anyone to argue at this late date that the hatred of the Arab nationalists for Israel as such and for Jews as Jews is not a factor to be reckoned with in this situation. Arab anti-Israel chauvinism is the banner which rallies the most diverse types of Arab nationalists, feudal princes, ex-fascists as well as more politically advanced people. The line-up of the Arab nations in the June, 1967 War showed that despite other differences in the Arab camp these were subsidiary to the chauvinism directed at Israel.

Mr. Foley lectures us needlessly on the evils of King Feisal of Saudi Arabia. We remember well how the same King Feisal and King Hussein and the Iraqi dictator Aref, the mass murderer of the Kurds and Communists, gladly joined with the Socialist Nasser to prepare for a war on Israel in May and June, 1967. The same Feisal has been sustaining Nasser financially ever since and is a big contributor to the Al Fatah.

JEWISH CURRENTS has reported approvingly for a long time that "within Israel powerful forces are emerging which do not take this chauvinistic approach and are fighting the militarism and annexationism of their own ruling class." Yet these splendid Israelis, including Prof. Talmon, Amos Oz, Amos Kenan, as well as the Israeli

Communist Party headed by Sneh and Mikunis, part company with Mr. Foley on the very point he calls "nonsensical" in his *NWR* article. They all believe Israel fought a war of defense in June, 1967 which was imposed on it by the chauvinist minded war hawks on the Arab side. On this they are quite firm.

Mr. Foley asks which side JEWISH CURRENTS is on in the Middle East conflict. It is on the same side it was on in 1948 when Israel fought off the Arab aggressors and had the complete support of the Soviet Union and the other Socialist states. Unlike the Al Fatah and the other Arab chauvinist movements, JEWISH CURRENTS has always subscribed to the watchword, "*Israel is here to stay.*" Its view thus conflicts with that of the Palestine terrorists and the other Arab chauvinists who aim to "*remove Israel as a state.*" We hope the international left will in time be convinced of the absolute irrationality of the Arab chauvinist viewpoint and its incompatibility with the right of existence of Israel.

As it happens, the position of JEWISH CURRENTS and most Jewish left-wing organizations (but not of Mr. Foley apparently), coincides with the Soviet Union's position of 1947-48, which acknowledged the historic ties of the Jewish people (not merely the Zionists), to Palestine and recognized their "*aspiration*" for a "*state of their own*" in Palestine. If Mr. Foley wishes this original Soviet position to be revised let him state so frankly and not accuse others of being "Jewish nationalists" for adhering to it today.

Readers of this magazine know it does not see a "bleak, hopeless future" for the Mid-East as Mr. Foley charges. It supports the United Nation's Security Council Resolution of Nov. 22, 1967 as the most sound and realistic basis for achieving Arab-Israel peace. It has criticized the Israeli government

IDA KAMINSKA AND THE VOICE OF AMERICA

WHEN LEONARD LYONS in the *N. Y. Post* late in Oct. reported that Ida Kaminska had given an interview to the Voice of America, inquiries led her husband, Meir Melman, to issue the following statement, which was published in the *Morning Freiheit* Nov. 5:

"As far back as two years ago, with the approval of the Polish government, Ida Kaminska gave an interview to Voice of America. In that broadcast she described the work of the Yiddish State Theater in Warsaw. In the recent interview with Voice of America, Ida Kaminska spoke exclusively about her theater work and plans in the USA. She described the great difficulties she faces here, including the unsuitability of the auditorium in which her company is performing, and the continual worry about making the company financially secure. To the question, how this compares with the work of the artist in Poland, Ida Kaminska underlined that in Poland the artist is economically and materially secure. He is free to concern himself only with creative and artistic problems. At the same time, Ida Kaminska expressed the hope that the American Jewish community would come to the aid of the new-born theater and create for it a secure base for its continued existence."

When this statement was printed, two of the three Yiddish dailies, the *Forward* and the *Day-Jewish Journal*, carried viciously unfair articles by their play reviewers aimed at undermining the new and struggling Kaminska Repertory Theater. Indifferent to the questions that perturbed many progressives about Madame Kaminska's having appeared at all on the Voice of America, these play reviewers berated her for what they called her downgrading of the American scene and the Yiddish theater here, and announced righteously that she therefore no longer had any right to appeal to the American Jewish community for support. Nevertheless, the Kaminska Theater will appear Jan. 18 with the premiere of a comedy with music, *Dem Yehupitser's Tochter* (Daughter of the Man from Yehupitz). We wish them success.

for not supporting this Resolution with more vigor and has denounced the annexationist aims of Dayan and Beigin.

At the same time Mr. Foley ought to recognize that the Arab terror movements and such Arab governments as Syria, Iraq, Algeria, Sudan and Libya have officially rejected this Resolution, a fact which he "failed" to mention in his treatise. At present it is hard to say there are any Arab governments that really endorse this Resolution at all. Certainly the recent sabre-rattling speech of Nasser before his National

Assembly Nov. 6 contradicts the aims and his supposed endorsement of this Resolution, which calls for a peaceful, political settlement of the Mid-East conflict.

Both Arab and Jewish chauvinists anticipate the failure of the Security Council Resolution. Both need to be opposed and exposed for the dangerous adventurers they are. Jewish left-wingers and JEWISH CURRENTS will not be found wanting in carrying this important fight for peace in the Mid-East to the Jewish community.