

The Arab League Vs. Arab Masses In Middle East

(Ed. Note: This is the second of a series of articles on the Palestine question.)

By H Vallin

We have seen that neither the terrorists nor the leaders of the Jewish Agency act in the interests of the majority of the Palestinian population. Do the leaders of the Arab League act differently?

The political life of the Arab population of Palestine has been confined for a long time exclusively to the great semi-feudal landowning families.

The different political "parties" which existed before the war were nothing but clans, each backed by a certain number of these "noble" families. Any idea of fighting for the political sovereignty of the masses was foreign to them. Their opposition to Zionist immigration and colonization was inspired by fear lest the industrialization of the country bring with it the proletarianization of the Arab masses and the sharpening of social struggles.

It was above all during World War II that industrialization of the Middle East advanced with giant steps. Egypt was transformed into an immense military camp for the British Eighth Army. An extremely prosperous industry, serving all the needs of the Allied troops, blossomed forth. Thousands of Arab peasants left their wretched villages to work in these industries or in the military installations. Commercially cut off from the rest of the world, Palestine was forced in large measure to provide for its own needs and, because of this, began to manufacture a number of products formerly imported from the great industrial nations of the world.

This feverish industrialization of the Arab world could have no other result than the rapid formation of an Arab proletariat which completely changed the relationship of social and political forces on the Middle East chessboard.

RAPID PROGRESS

Arab trade unionism made rapid progress. The Egyptian trade unions became organizations of tens of thousands of members. Two Arab trade unions were organized in Palestine, one sponsored by imperialism, the other distinguished by exceptional militancy. In Syria, Lebanon and even in Transjordan, a trade union movement began to develop. There were great strikes all the way from the textile industry in Egypt to the first strike movements among the oil pipeline workers in Transjordan. But that was not all. The workers movement also played a leading role in the political struggle for independence which was unleashed against British and French imperialism toward the end of the war. In Syria and in Lebanon each wave of anti-imperialist struggle culminated in a general strike of the industrial workers. In Egypt a committee of workers and students led huge demonstrations demanding the immediate withdrawal of the British troops.

In Palestine the Arab workers movement had to combat many enemies at the same time. Jewish fascist terrorists acted as strike-

breakers. British imperialism planned, long in advance, an operation for the complete oppression of militant organizations of the Arab workers.

The Arab bourgeoisie tremendously enriched itself during the war, especially in Egypt, but also in Palestine and elsewhere. This bourgeoisie is perfectly willing to exploit imperialist difficulties in order to obtain a larger share in the division of the super-profits between the imperialists and the native capitalists. It doesn't for one moment, however, consider mobilizing the masses of workers and peasants in a decisive struggle against imperialism. It is too terrified by the development of the workers' movement to dare issue an appeal to the workers. It is too closely connected with the great landowners to want to set the agrarian revolution in motion.

RACE FOR OIL

On the other hand American imperialism entered the scene during the war by securing oil concessions in the realm of King Ibn Saud. The American oil corporations have continued their penetration. Their political agents have not failed to reassure the Arab nobles confidentially that the noisy propaganda of the American press in favor of Jewish immigration into Palestine was only an election tactic which pursued, moreover, the aim of stirring up trouble for the British competitor. The president of the United States sent a secret letter to King Ibn Saud, assuring him that American imperialism and the president would effectively block Jewish immigration into Palestine.

Let us also note that the Soviet bureaucracy too has attempted to penetrate more deeply into this part of the world, employing two instruments for its propaganda: (1) the Greek Orthodox Church and (2) the different "communist" parties which conduct an unbridled and absolutely contradictory nationalist agitation.

Thus the Arab owning classes have no intention of freeing their country from imperialist oppression. Their sole concern is choosing the master who will pay them the most for their services. Formerly the exclusive instrument of British imperialism, the Arab League is now divided into clans—pro-British, pro-American and perhaps even pro-Russian. The Arab masses can hope for nothing from these exploiters. From now on the task of leading the struggle for the national and social emancipation of the Arab world devolves on the Arab masses, and on them alone.

Next week: The Arab Revolution and the Zionist Workers' Movement.

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