

# Irgun — Haganah Battle Sheds Light On Threat of Civil War in Israel

By AL FINDLEY

The spectacular struggle between the Irgun and the Haganah, last week pointed up the danger of a right-wing-provoked civil war in Israel. The events confirm LABOR ACTION'S analysis that the Irgun was resolved at all costs to maintain its military freedom and to use its military power to establish its authoritarian rule. LABOR ACTION warned of this early last December, even when the socialist Zionists were minimizing the post-partition strength of the right wing bands.

Unfortunately for the Irgun, the time of the first test of strength came as an accident. The Irgun had not planned for it. A ship of their American Committee for a Free Palestine, loaded with small arms and some recruits, arrived after the UN truce had gone into effect. The ship was named the "Altelana"—penname of Vladimir Jabotinsky, theoretician and deceased leader of the extremely re-

actionary Revisionists. Of course the Irgunists magnified the cargo and the number of men the ship carried, in the traditional manner of its "big lie" propaganda technique:

The government demanded that the ship remain outside of the territorial waters and be placed under the jurisdiction of the army. The Irgun refused. They have long been accustomed to harsh demands followed by the capitulation of Ben-Gurion and his Social-Democratic Labor Party. This had taken place when the yellow union of the Revisionists forced Ben-Gurion to sign a permanent no-strike agreement (repudiated later by the rank and file) and again recently when he capitulated in accepting the agreement "coordinating" the Irgun and the army. But this time working class interests were not the main question. On that Social-Democrats find it easy to retreat. Involved here were commitments to world powers and there is nothing that a Social-

Democrat honors more than his commitments to strong powers.

The Haganah went into action, and after a short battle seized the beaches and prevented the landing of the munitions. The beaches were then turned over to Irgun units of the Jewish army. This was interpreted as a sign of the usual vacillation and the Irgun thereupon proceeded to attempt to unload the ship at Tel-Aviv. A battle resulted and the ship was put afire by shore batteries. Forty people were killed in the battle. Among the killed was Abraham Stavsky, convicted assassin of the labor leader, Arlazaroff. Approximately 400 were arrested as a result of this incident.

## VICTORY FOR BEN-GURION

The Irgun and Stern groups announced their withdrawal from the Jewish army and their return to the underground, calling for the overthrow of the government, which they characterize as a "Marxist dictatorship" of the Labor Party and Ben-Gurion. The ministers of the Misrachi and its labor affiliate resigned from the government—not because of any religious questions involved, but to uphold an ally of theirs in the fight against the real labor movement of Palestine.

However, the main groups of the Jewish bourgeoisie felt that the time was not ripe for a civil war NOW. The entire Jewish press with the exception of the Revisionists condemned the actions of the Irgun. With the uneasy truce liable to break down at any moment, they thought the time inappropriate. This feeling, it is reported, is shared by a good many of the rank and file of the Irgun and Stern groups who are returning to their posts. These are the nationalist elements who were attracted to the Irgun on a purely nationalist basis and ignored, rather than adopted, the semi-fascist and anti-working class policies of the leadership. The Misrachi ministers have returned to their fleshpots on the promise of an amnesty for those arrested. The Stern group has ordered its men back into the army and a statement of Irgun Radio said that Beifin (Irgun leaders) would do the same in a few days.

Ben-Gurion will probably use this victory to proceed to erase the independence of the Irgun and Stern group within the official army. In the June 25 issue of LABOR ACTION we said that the degree of military freedom of the Irgun within the army would be decided by "the political struggle." The accident of the timing

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## analyzes Situation in Europe

### Chairman Stress Path to Socialist Regroupment

one in France, Shachtman declared, wants to go back to 1939. The working class has a deep yearning for a thorough reorganization of society, for complete nationalization and for their own control of their destiny. They want to "continue the revolution."

The British Labor Party, he stated, has continued its nationalization program beyond the expectations of the Marxist movement. The possibility of the nationalization of the steel industry and chemicals cannot be excluded. The working class, which wants a more rapid and complete extension of the nationalization program, is beginning to exert some pressure on the labor officialdom. Today, even some minor trade-union officials are demanding workers' control of production and a thorough expropriation of the bourgeoisie. Although the left wing of the Labor Party is still small and infiltrated by Stalinists, the necessities of the English economy may impel the labor bureaucracy to push its program forward. The question of how far it will be able to go without encountering very serious resistance by the capitalist class is of great interest and importance for the Marxist movement. While remaining sharply critical of the government for all its inadequacies and cowardice, Shachtman points out that it is impossible

to take a position of head-on opposition to the Labor Party and that the small core of Marxists in England must function within it and act as the only organized force in England today, to push it to the left.

Concluding on a forward-looking note, Comrade Shachtman stressed his conviction that the small and scattered groups of Marxists will regroup and begin to function in the mass working-class movement and serve as the necessary leavening force to create the alternative to the barbarism of Stalinism and capitalism.

Justin Graham, member of the Socialist Youth League national bureau, welcomed members and sympathizers of the SYL who were gathered in New York over the weekend for a national student conference. Stating that the only future which capitalism offers the youth of America is graduation from school right into the army through the peacetime draft, Comrade Graham explained that the SYL has its own valedictory speech to make and that it will function and grow among the youth of America because it struggles for a world of peace and plenty, a world of socialist organization and universal brotherhood.

The August issue of *The New Internationalist* will carry extensive sections from Comrade Shachtman's report.

# Irgun — Haganah Battle —

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of the "Altalena incident" has decided this issue quicker than we expected. Ben-Gurion is at the same time moving to illegalize ALL non-official military organizations, including the Palmach, semi-autonomous striking force of the Haganah. This is strongly opposed by the United Workers Party, whose members comprise the overwhelming majority of the of the Palmach. Their protests will, of course, be of no avail. When a Social-Democrat strikes a blow at the right, he usually strikes two at the left.

## THREAT OF CIVIL WAR

Liquidating the freedom of the Irgun and Sternists within the Jewish army in the state of Israel will not, however, lay the ghost of threatened civil war. The key to this question lies in Jerusalem and "elsewhere," where the Irgun and Stern groups claim the right to continue as independent military forces. The events since the signing of the original agreement of unity point to the fact that both groups will attempt to keep their power intact by deserting other fronts and concentrating in Jerusalem. It is clear that with their power concentrated in nearby Jerusalem, "elsewhere" will include the territory of Israel. And, above all, it is absurd to allow the most important and decisive front in the entire Palestinian war to become the plaything of semi-fascist bands who want to use it as a stepping-stone on the road to authoritarian rule. The next time they move it will be a premeditated and planned move that will be more difficult to stop.

One of the by-products of this ill-timed attempt at the first stages of

a civil war is that it once more exposed the Irgun as a front organization of the Revisionists. In addition to the facts that leading Revisionists were involved in the fighting and that Irgun received support from the Revisionist press, the invasion by the Revisionist youth group of the Histadruth building in Tel-Aviv and the consulate in New York clinches the point. Kenneth Bilby of the Herald Tribune reports that the Revisionists will "join" the newly formed Irgun "Freedom Movement."

LABOR ACTION was the FIRST to point out that Count Bernadotte and England would attempt to prolong the truce indefinitely in order to whittle away at the Jewish state. By now every source reports that the UN is trying to get an indefinite truce. They are especially anxious to prolong the truce until after the presidential election in the U.S. and then put through a new "solution" at the fall session of the UN in Paris, one more favorable to their allies—especially Abdullah.

## NEW PEACE PLAN

In the meantime, Egypt has violated the truce by firing on a UN plane and preventing a Jewish convoy from reaching Jewish settlements in the Negev. Count Bernadotte has given the Jews the right to do as they please. This violation of the truce follows close on the heels of King Abdullah's visit to Cairo and is undoubtedly the result of the failure of Abdullah to cede the Negev to Farouk of Egypt. Abdullah, however, continues to make violent statements that he will never accept any Jewish state. This despite recurring reports in the Jewish press that Eng-

land is on the verge of recognizing the Jewish state in order to clear the flanks of trouble and concentrate on Berlin, Europe and Russia. King Abdullah, however, is not giving up in attempting to convince the other Arab feudal lords to give him most of Palestine. He is now proceeding to visit his family enemy, Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia.

Count Bernadotte, it is reported, has presented a draft of a peace plan that includes: (1) reduction of the area of the Jewish state; (2) complete internal independence of the Jewish state; (3) foreign affairs and defense to be under control of a central government. There is no question that these proposals are only a beginning in the demands that will be made on the Jewish state in an attempt to transform Rhodes into a new Munich.

American workers can be a decisive factor in preventing a new Munich by demanding the lifting of the embargo immediately and the preparation of arms shipments to leave as soon as the current truce ends. At the same time the American working class should insist that the government redeem its promise and use its transports to help 100,000 Jewish DPs migrate to Palestine NOW, instead of allowing them to rot in the stifling atmosphere of converted concentration camps.

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