

# Irgun: Threat to Israel Democracy

By AL and ED FINDLEY

Menachem Beigin's recent visit to the U. S., heralded by full page ads, attracted attention and aroused considerable controversy. There were an open letter signed by Rabbi Lazaron, a Protestant minister and a Catholic priest, and a statement issued to the welcoming committee signed by Prof. Einstein, Sidney Hook and other personalities (including Seymour Melman of the Council for Jewish-Arab Cooperation), both of which attacked Beigin. In addition, there was the picket line of the Workers Party and the Socialist Youth League. Who is Beigin? What is his Freedom Party (Irgun) and why all the furor?

The answer to the last question is that the Freedom Party, headed by Beigin, is making a bid for power in Israel. Their success or failure in Israel depends to a considerable extent on the amount of moral and financial support they can muster in the U.S.A. in general and among the Jews in particular. The Irgun commander, Beigin, has to some extent become a legendary figure, whose anti-British struggle has attracted many Americans—liberals and ex-radicals. They admire this struggle, but are not familiar with the political history of the Irgun leaders and unknowingly aid a party that is a threat to the democratic character of Israel and a barrier to Arab-Jewish cooperation and to peace in the Near East.

The Freedom Party poses as a new political formation, which sprang into existence full-blown through the transformation of the Irgun into a political party. The fact is that it itself acknowledges a political tradition and an organized body of thought. Any attempt to deal with the Freedom Party on the basis of its platitudinous program would be sheer nonsense. Only one thing can be gathered from its program—the Freedom Party considers itself an irredentist movement above classes.

To really understand the Freedom Party and the Irgun a study of its leaders and their political origin and past politics is necessary. Not the Irgun, the Freedom Party, nor any of its leaders have ever repudiated their political ideology. We must look at the political tradition of the organization, see whose disciples they claim to be and whose books they

We have received several challenges to justify the accusations we recently made against the Irgun movement, now called the Freedom Party (Heiruth) in Palestine. The article which appears below, the most extensive account of the Irgun movement yet published so far as we know, presents that justification. To questioners we have said, and repeat it here, that we are prepared to withdraw any part, or the whole, of our indictment if it can be disproved.

As the article sets forth, we recognize a difficulty. Until recently when it officially became a political party, that is to say, during its years of underground existence, the Irgun published few written documents except for broadsides. The nature of Irgun must therefore be traced to its originators, to the elements which compose it, to the people who constitute its leadership.

Some Irgun sympathizers have claimed that the Heiruth cannot be held responsible for the views that individuals who are now in its leadership, once held; that, for example, one could not accuse an anti-Stalinist organization of Stalinism because former Stalinists have joined it. The difference is that in the case of, let us say, a Stalinist joining a social-democratic party in the U.S., it is done as a clear break with Stalinism, and everybody knows it. But where is this true of the Irgun party, or its leaders whom we discuss below? Where are the programmatic disclaimers of Jabotinskyism? Where are the written repudiations?

Admittedly, much of our evidence is "old," going back to the 30s or before. We have, however, seen no evidence to discount the validity of this evidence today. We have heard the argument that much of the evidence against Irgun comes from anti-Irgun sources, like the labor Zionists. That is more or less in the nature of things. However, the accusations made by these sources link logically with the views of those who can be proved to be the ideological creators of Irgun, as set forth below.

So too, Irgunist sympathizers have pointed to the heroic behavior of young Irgun fighters in the fight against Britain. Yes, this heroism, this militancy is to be commended, and we have done so in LABOR ACTION. These young men and women may themselves have been motivated by the noblest purposes. Unfortunately, it is irrelevant to the matter, as irrelevant as the heroism of a Chinese peasant fighter would be in discussing the political objectives of Chinese Stalinism.

We are prepared to return to this question as occasion demands, either to add to the evidence here presented, or to withdraw whatever in our charges can be proved false. We would like to hear in writing from an official spokesman for Irgun or the Freedom Party.—Editor.

continue to circulate as official dogma.

In addition, we must take into account the character of its supporters and the movements with which they are fusing. (Beigin is reported to have promulgated a slogan, "No Link—No Bridge" to the Revisionists when he assumed command of Irgun in 1943. We cannot, however, view this as anything more than a political convenience.)

The job of nailing down the Irgun and Freedom Party is a little difficult. For one thing, they were an underground organization and there is little material except for broadsides, radio statements and only occasional written proclamations. In ad-

dition, in the past few years, since the Irgunists began to pretend to be an "all class and all party" national movement, they have deliberately withheld their ideas.

However, an impartial examination of the evidence can come to only one conclusion. The Freedom Party, with the reactionary ideological background of its leadership, its social composition, its chauvinism, its hostility to the trade union movement today—coupled with the fact that it has never seriously repudiated the anti-labor ideology of its theoretical founders—suggests a definite fascist threat. A threat that at present, after the defeat of Hitler and Mussolini and in the present

democratic atmosphere of Palestine, assumes a different form but that can nevertheless drive to fascism given the proper historical turn of events.

## ORIGIN OF IRGUN— THE REVISIONISTS

The Irgun's early history is shrouded in some mystery. One thing is clear, however. The Irgun was founded in the thirties by dissident groupings within the Revisionist movement. Who are the Revisionists and what is their ideology?

The Revisionists were (and are) an ultra-nationalist organization within the Zionist movement, originally led by Vladimir Jabotinsky. This movement developed an anti-labor orientation and practice. It was also anti-Arab. In addition to its chauvinist and reactionary character, the Revisionists had groupings that openly proclaimed fascist ideas. Of these, the best known are the "Revolutionary Zionists," the "Brith Baryonim" and the group around Wolfgang Von Weisal.

The Revolutionary Zionist program called for "a national dictatorship, creation of a Jewish state through blood and fire." Their programmatic statement went on to say "Mussolini is the man who saved humanity from communism. We are the pioneers in the struggle against Socialism, Marxism and Communism. . . . For ten years we have been seeking a Jewish Mussolini." (Alazaroff trial evidence, Aug. 1933)

Abba Achimeyer was one of the most anti-labor and pro-fascist thinkers of the Revisionist movement. He was the theoretician of the Brith Baryonim.

ABBA ACHIMEYER's political philosophy is clearly indicated in the speech he made to an assembly of Haifa students. "You are not students, you are so much molasses. There is not one of you capable of committing murder after the fashion of those German students who murdered Rathenau. [German liberal leader—F.] You lack the national spirit that dominated the Germans. There is not a single one among you who could kill like the German students who murdered Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxembourg."

Abba Achimeyer is now one of the  
(Continued on page 3)

