

# Sees Israeli Policy Trend Alienating Own Arab Masses

## Arab Refugees Become Bargaining Pawn in Negotiations as Israeli Government Leans Toward Their Exclusion

By ED FINDLEY

The mass flight of Arabs from Palestine continues unabated. Most of these now head for Damascus and Bagdad because both Cairo and Amman are already bursting at the seams with refugees from the Palestine war.

The continued exodus across the borders testifies to the deep, intuitive conviction of the Palestine Arab masses that the present cessation of hostilities is far from permanent. That the truce is but a temporary interlude in the bitter fighting is a notion shared by the Jewish masses. This should not be surprising in view of the daily skirmishing on many fronts and the discouragingly little progress made toward arriving at a negotiated settlement between the two peoples of Palestine.

The Arab refugees come mainly from areas that were drawn into or threaten to be drawn into the arenas of military operations. They are driven by the natural, human desire to get themselves and their families out of the way of flying bullets. Others received orders from local Arab military commanders to evacuate

their homes with the political object of convincing world public opinion that it is impossible for Arabs to live peacefully under Israeli rule.

A much larger group, and in this correspondent's opinion the overwhelming majority, were driven by the fear of Israeli maltreatment and discrimination, engendered by the series of unpunished atrocities of the Irgun Zvai Leumi at Deir Yassin and the unprovoked barrel-bomb massacre at the oil refinery in Haifa. The genuine and sincere verbal guarantees of fair and equal treatment—particularly on the part of the labor movement—sounded feeble indeed when considered alongside the Irgun atrocity campaign (which went unpunished by the Jewish authorities). The Azzam Pashas sounded plausible when they warned the Arab masses of "Jewish terror."

At the start of the war, the authorities of the embryo Israeli state and especially the labor parties, viewed the departure of the Arab masses as a first-rate political calamity. The Arabs were called upon to remain in their homes and to continue in their

peaceful pursuits with the assurance of all civil and national rights.

The political atmosphere in Israel seems to have changed. There are signs that most of the bourgeois parties and even sections of the labor movement are coming to view the war-induced flight of Arabs from Israel as an unexpected blessing and would like to make this development permanent.

**The vision of a homogeneous Israeli state without a troublesome minority problem, intoxicates them.**

Moshe Shertok, foreign minister of the Provisional Government of Israel, gave expression to this general mood on August 1, when he stated that "the Palestinian Arab exodus of 1948 is one of those cataclysmic phenomena which, according to the experience of other countries, changes the course of history."

**Officially, Israeli government spokesmen have not gone as far as to deny, in principle, the right of the Arab refugees to return to their homes in Palestine. Nevertheless, despite the original promises, mere cessation of hostilities is no longer**

enough for their return. Only when a stable peace is concluded and signed will the question of their coming home even be considered. There is no longer the same frank recognition of the right of the Arab peasant or worker to return to his home in Israeli territory.

The question is now admittedly the subject of deals with reactionary Arab League governments. Power politics reigns supreme over human politics. The atrocious pogroms against the Jews in Cairo and the crime of the concentration camp on Cyprus call for retribution, but can hardly justify this anti-democratic exclusion policy. The Israeli state cannot be built through the exclusion of its Arab population.

While legitimate considerations of military security and economic hardship do exist, they are being exploited beyond their justified limits. Judging from the absence of any trouble with the fifty to one hundred thousand Arabs who remained in Israeli territory, there is reason to assume that a safe way could have been found to take back, without much

danger of fifth column activities, most of the Arabs who fled, especially the aged, women and children.

As to the natural reluctance to accept the onerous burden of supporting these destitute masses, recent events demonstrate that the Israeli position would have been, morally and diplomatically, immeasurably stronger if the Israeli government had signified its readiness to accept the war refugees on condition that international economic aid was forthcoming.

There remains one consideration of great moral strength, the "position and fate of the Israeli communities in Arab countries." An attempt will be made to use the Palestine Arab refugee problem as a bargaining weapon to improve the conditions of these communities or if possible to effect an exchange of populations.

In this connection three aspects of the question should be kept in mind:

(1) **It is highly improbable that the Iraqi and Egyptian governments are so genuinely concerned about the hardships endured by the dispos-**

(Continued on page 3)

# Israeli Policy on Arabs - -

(Continued from page 1)

assed refugees that they would materially improve the conditions of their oppressed Jewish communities.

(2) Economically and vocationally these two populations are not interchangeable.

(3) In all likelihood, the overwhelming majority of the Arab refugees would refuse to remain in their countries of exile and would wish to return to their homes in Israel. One can conceive of obtaining the agreement of corrupt Arab League rulers to a transfer deal of sorts but what happens to the right of self-determination of these hundreds of thousands of Arab civilians who by general Israeli admission are, by and large, innocent of active collaboration in the war of the Mufti and Arab League states against Israel?

**Aside from humanitarian and dem-**

ocratic considerations, this exclusion policy — which is opposed by large sections of the Israeli labor movement — is utopian and suicidal.

It must be crystal clear to all who look ahead and are not overwhelmed by temporary military superiority that the Israeli state cannot remain in a PERMANENT state of conflict with the Arab world.

## **BUILDING ON QUICKSAND**

In a world of imperialist intrigues and shifting alliances, who can predict how long the backward Arab states will remain economically and MILITARILY weak?

Which of the big imperialist powers can a tiny, isolated Israeli state count upon as a trustworthy ally against a hostile Arab world?

Despite the very significant support given the Israeli state by Russia, who can assert with certainty

that tomorrow or the day after tomorrow Russia will not revert to its former pro-Arab policy?

**To build on the support of foreign imperialist aid, whether it be Anglo-American or Russian, is to build on quicksand.**

**The survival and security of Israel depend, in the long run, on bridging the gap between the Arab and Jewish peoples of Palestine.**

There is no better way to break the Mufti-spread fear of annihilation and degradation at the hands of the Jews than through a democratic and humane treatment of the Arab population of Israel. The advantages outweigh all disadvantages.

An indicated first step in this direction is a clear and frank statement on the part of the Israeli government that the Arabs of Israel will be welcomed home.