

An Israeli Liberal Voice

On the Arab Refugees

The Arab refugee problem is now no longer taboo, but is even being discussed, in the Israeli and American Zionist press. It is now no longer denied that 700-800,000 Arabs have been kept from returning to their homes by the Israeli government. But while the fact is conceded, the injustice is still defended.

The Zionist viewpoint on "The Arab Refugee Problem—How It Can Be Solved" has been put forward in a booklet issued by a group of prominent U. S. Zionists. It informs us that "the unwillingness of the Israel government to permit the return of the Arab refugee population has hardened into adamance," the reasons being the old ones: the Israeli leaders "opposed and tried to prevent" the flight of the Arabs; the refugees have been "indoctrinated" with hostility to Israel and would be a security threat; the vacuum has been already filled by Jewish refugees; the Arab states refuse to discuss a settlement, etc.

Particularly scandalous to Jewish liberals must be the statement quoted from Israeli premier Ben-Gurion, in answer to the question, "Do you think any of these refugees can go back to their old homes?" He said:

"To what will they come back? Did the Armenians ever return to their homes? Can the Latvians, the Estonians, the Lithuanians ever return to their homes? Can the German Volksdeutsche ever go back to their lands in Poland or Czechoslovakia? Can the ten million Pak-

istani and Hindustani ever go back to the lands they gave up? Can the Jews ever go back to reclaim their losses in Europe or now in Rumania, Iraq or Yemen? None of these situations is just. They are all based on race hatred or discrimination arising from national origins. Yet they are as they are, and the only solution is resettlement in new lands outside the 'homeland.'"

Ben-Gurion's principle, it would seem, is: "Do unto others as others have done unto you." His choices for comparison, in justification of his own government's policy, lack little in candidness—or cynicism.

In contrast is the point of view of the Hebrew magazine, published in Jerusalem as the organ of the *Ichud* movement, *Ner* (the Candle). This movement was initiated by the late Judah L. Magnes to promote Jewish-Arab equality and cooperation. The following is from its September 1951 issue.

PROPOSAL FOR ISRAEL

"Three quarters of a million human beings—of whom nearly 80 per cent are felaheen (peasants), artisans and workers—suddenly fled their cities and villages, driven by the terror of war. . . . They believed that theirs would be only a temporary departure; that however the war ended, they surely would be allowed afterwards to return to their homes and to their way of life. However, things did not

turn out that way for them. The war ended in the defeat of the Arabs, and their conquerors—the Israelis—closed the country's doors to its (Arab) inhabitants and would not let them return to their own homes. . . .

"On the other hand, the villages of these refugees were occupied by newly arrived immigrants, people who until recently had been dignified by the Hebrew title of *Ma'apilim* (Commandos—so-called because they dared the British mandate forbidding their entry into Palestine), as against the humiliating title of *infiltrates* now bestowed upon such old-time Arab inhabitants who attempt to return to the houses they themselves had built, to the orchards and vineyards their own hands had planted and to the fields they toiled in the sweat of their brow, they and their forefathers, for upwards of a thousand years! These are called *infiltrates* and are treated like thieves. . . .

"Such is the tragically depressing problem. . . . The flight of the Arabs was not a political maneuver calculated to conform to pre-conceived Machiavellian strategy, as some of our speechmakers would have it. It was rather one of those hysterical moves which take place ever so often in time of war—the kind, for example, which overtook millions of Frenchmen in 1939. It was the spontaneous reaction of people who weren't ready for war and didn't want war, and fled merely to escape death. . . .

"And as their exodus (from Israel) was no conspiracy, so is their will to return no conspiracy. It is not stubbornness of heart that prompts them to return, but only the pain and suffering of exile. . . . And we Jews are responsible for the condition at least as much as the other elements that helped to create it, the other elements being the Arabs and the world at large. We are responsible, consequently, for at least one third of the solution. And the solution must be a humane and just one. To those who, with Bismarck and Hitler, think that the answer to every problem is force, that we have the force today and will have it tomorrow and ever, that we therefore could afford to ignore the problem altogether—to those people I have not a word to say. Their God is not my God, their Bible is not my Bible and their morals are not my morals. But surely, the voice of conscience is not yet entirely silenced in Israel, and people with a conscience will weigh these words carefully. . . .

"I propose that the Government of Israel, in the very near future, proclaim to Israel, to the Arabs and to the whole world that:

"(1) The government of Israel, having reconsidered the problem of the Arab refugees . . . decided to bring back about one-third of the total of Arab refugees, especially the felaheen and the artisans and the workers, at the rate of 50,000 souls a year over a period of five years. The government of Israel hopes that the problem of the remaining two-thirds of refugees will be tended to by the Arab states and the United Nations.

"(2) The government of Israel will rehabilitate the Arab refugees at its own expense. As far as possible, the felaheen (peasants) will be restored to their former places; but whenever impossible, they will be settled in other places inside the state of Israel. They will also be given some money and seed and will be free from taxation for several years. . . .

"All returned refugees will automatically become full-fledged citizens of Israel, on par with the Israelis. . . ."

The above information, including the quotation from *Ner*, is from the *Jewish Newsletter*, Feb.

HOWARD AND TITO

into the book—which, even back then, was merely a Stalinized, crude and mechanical version of the right of nations to self-determination. This will suffice:

Stalin's book lays special stress on the national question in Yugoslavia (*very sign-if-i-cant!*). Stalin tells the Yugoslav Communists that, looking forward to a "Soviet revolution," they must "include in the national program a special point on . . . secession." (*Get it?*) Finally they must "include a special point providing for national territorial autonomy . . . in Yugoslavia. . . ." (*Everything is clear now.*)

Assuming out of charity that the Scripps-Howard's expert Snell is merely stupid and ignorant and not really a scurvy emulator of the Kremlin's own falsifiers, we only point out that the references to "secession" and "territorial autonomy" concern the right to secession and autonomy of the national peoples WITHIN Yugoslavia (Croatia, Macedonia, etc.) FROM the Yugoslav state itself! Snell's revelation comes when he triumphantly identifies "the present territorial autonomy" for Yugoslavia" as having been "created in June 1948 with an announcement by the Cominform of the Stalin-Tito split."

Well, this piece of deception may be stupidity compounded by ignorance, as we said, or it may be deliberate knavery—it is hard to tell the difference, these days, with the experts on Marx, Lenin and Stalin—but it is used for a much more serious political purpose.

A DEMAND

For, having "proved" that Stalin planned a fake "secession" of Yugoslavia, Snell still adds: "Although Stalin actually planned a Yugoslavian 'secession' and it happened squarely according to his timetable, it is possible, of course, that his feud with Tito is genuine."

How is Tito to prove its genuineness? The crux is Snell's

Scripps-Howard-sponsored demand:

"Any doubt of its [the split's] authenticity would be erased if Stalin were to invade Yugoslavia, or if Tito were to enter fully into the Western alliance and WELCOME GENERAL EISENHOWER'S TROOPS TO YUGOSLAVIAN SOIL—WHICH TITO HAS GIVEN NO SIGN THAT HE EVEN CONTEMPLATES DOING." (My emphasis.)

Because, says Snell, if Yugoslavia were to remain neutral in a war with Russia, its neutrality "would mask complete alliance with the Soviet Union." This is so because Yugoslavia protects the "soft underbelly" of Russia. If the Western powers could not get at Russia through Yugoslavia, Tito would be in effect making it unnecessary for Stalin to maintain his divisions there to do the job.

This line of thought, and not fantastic quotations from Stalin, is what is behind the demands on Tito to prove the "genuineness" of his split. And it is a line which may have more meaning if war comes than it has now.

YUGO INDEPENDENCE

Snell, for example, pretends not to know that Tito's UN delegates have "stood against the Soviet bloc" in the world body. He does not mention any of the cases in which the Titoists have manifested their turn in the direction of support of the Western bloc against Russia. He wants U. S.-UN troops physically occupying Yugoslavia's soil now.

But more than that, his argument means that, in event of war, he and his people (that is, the people for whom he pounds a typewriter) have a rationalization for invading a would-be "neutral" Yugoslavia in order to get at Russia.

Now, as a matter of fact, Tito has indicated, as clearly as he dares to do at this time before his own people, that war would find

(Turn to last page)