

LIGHT ON PALESTINE

*What are the aims of Anglo-American imperialism in the Middle East?
An analysis of the findings of the US-British Committee of Inquiry.*

By **MOSES MILLER**

COLONIAL countries have been endlessly "blessed" with commissions of inquiry. Whenever England, for example, reached a critical point in its Empire relations the Foreign Office shipped off a group of investigators to dig for facts which they had in the first place and to come to conclusions which they had reached before they left the country. The procedure has always been a sham but it has given the colonial masters a breathing spell—a way of riding out the storm. Palestine has been host to several such commissions—in 1921, in 1929 and in 1937.

Now the new Palestine commission has finished its work. But it was a commission of a "new" type. This time the British had Americans join them, for it is obvious that Britain no longer feels confident about keeping the Empire together by itself. American imperialism was quite ready to cooperate in a venture which would help establish its authority in an area of the world it has coveted for years.

But to understand the Palestinian scene more fully it will be necessary to familiarize ourselves with the conflicts and intrigues that pervade the Middle East. In brief they run as follows: Towering above all is the fact that the antagonism between British imperialism and the colonial peoples has become more intense than ever. Britain's rule is threatened by the rising demand for freedom. Small wonder then that Britain is attempting to control the Arab League by throwing its weight behind the reactionary and feudal figures in it. It also explains the sudden termination of the British mandate over Trans-Jordan, where under the guise of granting independence Britain has actually strengthened its position. Under the terms of the new treaty, one of the most scandalous in diplomatic history, Britain can hold on to its bases and is given facilities for maintaining and training British troops.

Light is cast on British policy in the Middle East by a dispatch in the *New York Times* of April 22 which



Portrait of a fellow-inmate at Buchenwald, drawn by Boris Taslitzky, Parisian artist, in January, 1945.

states that "Palestine will become the main land base at the eastern end of the Mediterranean and British military men will insist that it be kept under British control."

The antagonisms between British

and American imperialism have also sharpened. Its economic might enormously enhanced by the war, the United States is trying to muscle its way into oil fields, markets and bases that the British have regarded as their

rightful domain. The Anglo-American oil agreement is but one example of how Britain is being forced to make concessions to American big capital. At the same time the two imperialisms are joined by the need to build a common reactionary front against the Soviet Union, against the new people's democracies of eastern Europe, against the colonial and semi-colonial peoples of Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. Thus the interplay of conflict and collaboration is the matrix in which Anglo-American relations are developing in the Middle East.

Were the United States and Britain truly desirous of aiding the people of Palestine to achieve self-rule and independence, they would have submitted the issue to the UN, of which they happen to be rather influential members. They would not have undertaken action which was in direct violation of the Charter which they had helped shape at San Francisco. Meier Vilner, testifying before the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on behalf of the Communist Party of Palestine, stated quite bluntly:

"The alien power has succeeded in creating the following paradoxical situation: a commission appointed by the British government in cooperation with the United States is to judge between Jews and Arabs, whereas the Security Council of the UN, in active cooperation with the parties directly interested, i.e., the Jews and Arabs, ought to judge the policy of the British government in Palestine."

The fact that both the UN and the Soviet Union were ignored indicated a desire to reach decisions that would serve the interests of Anglo-American imperialism and frustrate the aspirations of both the Jewish and Arab masses. The committee's recommendations are now public. A careful reading of the document reveals the following facts:

1. The report states without equivocation that neither Jew nor Arab should receive national rights and independence.

2. Responsibility for the evils that exist are placed on the Jews and Arabs and not upon British imperialism.

3. The report seeks to strengthen imperialist rule and to involve the United States as partner in oppression.

4. Though the report talks of an eventual trusteeship for Palestine under the United Nations, it hastens to point out that Palestine is a Holy Land of

three world religions and cannot therefore be judged on the ordinary basis of the right of national self-determination.

5. The report talks glibly of the necessity of improving the welfare of the Arab masses. It calls for "a deliberate and carefully planned policy on the part of the mandatory" (that is, Britain) to raise the Arab standard of living. At best this is a pious hope. I doubt whether the committee members themselves intended anyone to believe that the imperialist masters of India, Burma, Egypt, etc. would spend any significant portion of their super-profits on the "natives" of Palestine.

6. The report recommends that 100,000 Jews be allowed to enter Palestine as quickly as possible.

IT is this last point which has won praise for the committee even in circles which are critical of other parts of the report. I believe it is a mistake to view this document in terms of good and bad points. The report must be seen as an integral whole. It is a program for Palestine, and as such it is reactionary and pro-imperialist. In this context the proposal to admit 100,000 Jews is merely bait to lure Jews and non-Jews throughout the world into supporting a program designed to do anything but aid the Jewish victims of fascism and imperialism. Prime Minister Attlee's statement that the British government would not consider admitting 100,000 Jews unless the United States sends troops to help disarm the Jews and Arabs and police the country makes clear that Britain has no intention of carrying out this proposal. It reveals the danger that this issue will be used to impose an Anglo-American military dictatorship on Palestine.

The Anglo-American report must in my opinion be condemned and rejected in its entirety. There is no hope for either Jews or Arabs in linking their fate with imperialism.

There are some who argue that the American government is quite sincere in its desire to aid the Jews of Europe, but that the British are blocking a solution. The report speaks in compassionate tones of the suffering of the Jewish victims of fascism and declares that everything must be done to help them. There is, however, not a word about the necessity of rooting out Nazism and fascism, which is basic to the future and security of the Jewish people. Not a word is said about the

fact that American authorities, by placing Germans in charge of displaced persons' camps in Germany, are responsible for the abuse and even murder of Jews in these camps. Are we to believe that the American government is genuinely concerned with the fate of the European Jews when a year after V-E Day the concentration camps which the Nazis erected still contain thousands of Jews whose treatment is not much better than under Hitler? Are we to rely on imperialism, which perpetuates conditions of anti-Jewish persecution in Europe, to aid the Jews in Palestine?

The problem of aiding the Jewish victims of Nazism remains. A real program would include the following:

1. The starting point must be the struggle to uproot fascism and strengthen democracy. This requires the effective implementing of the Yalta and Potsdam agreements and the return by the American and British governments to a policy of Big Three collaboration.

2. We must recognize that a majority of the Jews of Europe will remain there and rebuild their lives there. Contrary to much of the prevailing propaganda, the democratic leaders of the Jewish communities of Europe have indicated that with the establishment of new people's democracies and with the consistent efforts these governments are making to stamp out anti-Semitism, the conditions are being created for a peaceful life for the Jewish people. Anti-Semitism still is rife in many parts of these countries, but the vigorous efforts to wipe it out are yielding results that augur well for the future.

For those Jews who feel they can no longer live in those countries a coordinated program of emigration should be worked out. For them the doors of all countries, including Palestine, must be opened.

3. The displaced persons camps should be immediately dissolved. Proper housing should be provided for these refugees even if it means taking over homes from the German population. The fate of the displaced persons should no longer be left in the hands of the American and British authorities. They should be immediately placed under the supervision of the UN Refugee Commission and given proper food and medical attention. Under the direction of the UN steps should be taken to facilitate their entry into the countries where they seek to go. We

in America should demand that our government open its doors to those who wish to come here.

4. Palestine is today an armed camp, a country under colonial rule. Neither Jew nor Arab is permitted democratic representation in the government of the country. A just solution of the Palestine problem can only be achieved by the abrogation of the mandate and the immediate establishment of a trusteeship under the UN. Such a trusteeship must undertake to prepare the way for a free and democratic Palestine in which the national rights of both Jews and Arabs will be guaranteed. Palestine, rid of imperialist rule, will be a land in which full Arab-Jewish unity will flourish and find expression in a bi-national state as well as in all other aspects of the country's life. This unity, however, will be achieved only if both Jews and Arabs abandon reliance on imperialism and develop joint struggles to solve their problems.

5. Those victims of Nazi oppression who wish to go to Palestine should be allowed to do so. It is clear that imperialism will not aid them. When it does permit a few Jews to trickle through, it uses this as a basis for aggravating the antagonisms in the country.

There is another fact that must be kept in mind. Jews are being killed in Palestine today not by Nazis, but by British soldiers. It is a travesty to call for immigration without assuring that such immigration does not catapult persecuted Jews from the Nazi frying pan into the British fire.

The British have used the question of immigration as one of the principal devices in their divide and rule policy. Progressives must not allow imperialism to get away with this inhuman exploitation of Jewish suffering. The question of immigration, like all the other problems which confront the Jewish people, needs to be dealt with as an integral part of the anti-imperialist struggle. In the course of the joint struggle for a free and democratic Palestine the conditions which nurture Arab fear of Jewish immigration would cease to exist.

A program such as is here outlined can unite the Jewish masses and non-Jewish workers and other progressives throughout the world. Within Palestine itself there are forces among both Jews and Arabs, particularly in the labor movement, that are moving in this direction.



THIS IS OUR PLAY

As THIS issue goes to press there is a play on Broadway fighting for its life. *On Whitman Avenue*, at the Cort Theater, is more than just our kind of play. It was born out of our struggle for human decency; it bears the mark of our thoughts, our wounds, our tears. It has the look and voice of our will. It affirms our acceptance of the conditions of battle, and it carries, like seeds within it, our assurance of victory. *This is our play.*

It is a play about white and Negro people and most of the critics do not like it. Mr. Kronenberger of *PM* thinks the incidents melodramatic and observes ironically that the actors struggle, "a few of them rather violently." Mr. Barnes of the *Tribune* talks of the Negro war veteran's family as his "clan." He finds the scenes repetitious. Lewis Nichols objects that playwright Maxine Wood's "portraits of the white neighbors are so unflattering as to detract from the honesty of purpose." All this sounds like the complaint of an unemployed Rumanian diplomat who was asked what disturbed him about Soviet diplomacy. "It is so realistic!" he cried.

For once the critics were forced to look life in the face, and asked to live it. They had to stare at the bare body with its sores, and they were not allowed to close their eyes with a sen-

sitive and noble gesture. This time there was no hiding place, not in kindness, nor sympathy, nor charity. There were no "interesting" psychological problems to explore and chatter about.

They were simply told that it was not enough to feel the "pity of it." They too would have to act. For in this capitalist jungle the hunted have no choice but to turn on their tormentors. This was the truth that troubled them. So they turned to a discussion of "style." Safe ground.

As I left the theater I watched the crowd swarming out of *Harvey*, a play about a rabbit. It was attracted to this cute fantasy by the rave notices of our New York drama reviewers. When *On Whitman Avenue* was shown out of town, people wept openly at its climactic moments. Many did here too, though it is not a sentimental play and New Yorkers don't cry easily. But the fastidious critics shut their ears to the verdict of people who are closer to reality than hearsay. They prefer fairy tales about animals that talk.

I urge you to see *On Whitman Avenue*, a drama which is worthy of better critics and which helps restore dignity to the American theater.

CHARLES HUMBOLDT.

There will be a full review of "On Whitman Avenue" in our next issue.