

ISRAEL—SECOND ANNIVERSARY

An Editorial Article

ON May 14, Israel celebrates its second birthday. Two memorable years have passed since the days when British tanks and armored cars rode through Palestine, since the days when the rising Jewish national liberation movement in Palestine, aided by democratic peoples everywhere, forced the British to get out. No single act or event gave such inspiration, none so clearly showed that the moment was opportune for the liberation struggle as the historic UN decision of November 29, 1947. That decision, achieved through the consistent efforts of the Soviet Union the new democracies and democratic people throughout the world, signalized the end of the British mandate.

But the efforts of the British ruling class to maintain their hold over Palestine did not end. Even as the formalities of withdrawal were being carried out, British agents were mobilizing their feudal vassals for war against the newborn state.

Imperialist strategy was diabolically simple and, as it seemed at the time—was foolproof. The British would arm the enemies of Israel, while Washington, through an embargo policy, would keep Israel unarmed. And both would meantime seek to destroy the November 29 decision through maneuvers in the UN. The strategy would have succeeded if it were not for the efforts of democratic allies who supported Israel's struggle for independence both on the political as well as the military front. The Soviet Union frustrated all attempts to destroy the November 29 decision and was the first to give de jure, that is, full and unequivocal recognition, to Israel. And despite angry protests from our State Department, Czechoslovak arms kept pouring in for Israeli fighters.

Taking advantage of this favorable international situation, Israeli men and women waged an inspired and heroic struggle. The enemy was halted.

Independence Still the Issue

Two years have passed. The democratic forces of the world, headed by the Soviet Union, have remained steadfast in their resolve to ensure the freedom and independence of Israel. But the imperialists have remained firm in their aim of destroying Israel's sovereignty and of "inte-

grating" that country to their imperialist, cold war plans.

Thus the issue of national independence continues to be the central issue confronting Israel, regardless of new forms the problem may assume.

What was the essence of the problem on the eve of statehood? Two peoples, Jewish and Arab, were living in Palestine under British imperialist rule. National consciousness and the desire for freedom were growing among both peoples. But side by side with common national interests there existed mutual distrust and antagonism. The need for a common struggle against those who were basically responsible for having inflamed and intensified antagonisms was weakened by the absence of a strong and powerful progressive-national movement among either people. Thus, the anti-imperialist struggle which led to the creation of Israel was accompanied by strife between the two peoples; rising national consciousness was accompanied by chauvinism which necessarily hampered the development of a powerful progressive movement and gave imperialism greater maneuvering power.

The circumstances under which Israel was created were far from simple. The existence of Anglo-American antagonisms weakened the British regime and was a factor which the Jewish national liberation struggle was able to take advantage of. At the same time—and most decisive—was the aid given by the Soviet Union and the role played by that country in international affairs. This help made possible the transformation of the dream of freedom to reality.

The objective conditions which affected Israel at its birth have not disappeared. What has changed is the subjective element—the readiness of Israeli ruling circles to continue the struggle for full independence and security.

We would do well to remember that such elements as the Mapai leadership joined the battle in a faltering and vacillating way and even then only when confronted with the overwhelming will of the masses. Even at that time and indeed until the very last moment this leadership did everything to check and hold back the movement for independence. The most that such people dreamed of was some sort of *formal* independence conveniently fitted to continued British rule and therefore *in practice* was the status of a semi-colonial country.

It is not so strange, therefore, that today, since Britain is forced to give ground to America in the Middle East, this leadership should accommodate itself very easily to the concept of Israel as an American protectorate. This narrow, anti-national concept not only disregards the historic opportunities which Israel has been afforded, but actually endangers the very existence of Israel as an independent state.

The Ben Gurion Orientation

The evils and burdens that weighed so heavily on the masses during the reign of Britain, could not be liquidated merely by the transfer of power to Ben Gurion. If Israel was to achieve independence, security and full industrial development, the social realities established by the mandatory power had to be liquidated. But the Ben Gurion group did not undertake this. There was clear indication that this group would not do so, since it chose to join hands with the right wing capitalist and clerical parties instead of creating a government of the working class parties.

As a result class antagonism sharpened. The Ben Gurion government circumscribed the economic development of Israel, undermined the unity of the people and created defeatist moods among the people as to the possibility of retaining the independence won during the war.

Nor were national antagonisms resolved. From the birth of the state the Jewish and Arab working class was confronted with the alternatives of striving on the one hand, for an internationalist solution to the problems of the peoples of Palestine, that is, for national independence through ever greater unity of Arabs and Jews and, on the other hand, of a nationalistic and chauvinistic approach, which identified the solution of the national question with the annihilation of the other people.

Failure to encourage and develop an internationalist approach led to the sharpening of national antagonism and to an unfolding and continuous conflict between Israel and the Arab states without any perspective for a solution. For, though bourgeois nationalist bravado may satisfy chauvinist sentiments, it cannot lead to stability and peace. Treaties of friendship and agreements with Abdullah or with other feudal lords and imperialist hirelings cannot by the wildest stretch of the imagination be anything but an ersatz for a real and enduring peace.

Many Zionist leaders in reply to such considerations have argued that those who really want peace must deal with political realities and concrete facts. Abdullah is master of Transjordan and controls the Arab sector of Palestine. Peace, they argue, can be achieved only through agreement with Abdullah. Those who reject this, they insist, are utopians, idealists or trouble makers not really concerned with the fate of Israel.

According to these Zionist leaders, their approach constitutes political realism. Such people have tragically short memories. They seem to forget that in the name of this

kind of "political realism," the Jewish masses were told for years that Jewish aspirations in Palestine could be fulfilled through cooperation with Britain. The tragic consequences of that orientation have certainly been pretty well exposed by now.

True and False Realism

The proponents of this view are, however, far from discouraged. Today, in the name of the same kind of "political realism" they argue that a deal with Abdullah (read Bevin) is again possible and necessary. Thus, the very same approach, whose bankruptcy was so clearly exposed yesterday and whose consequences were so tragic for the Jewish people, is now being held forth once again as the only road to security for Israel.

This is not realism but suicide, not peace but capitulation. This is betrayal of the struggle for a free and independent Israel.

The questions of enduring peace, immigration, economic planning are recognized by all to be of most decisive consequence to the future of Israel. But those concerned with aiding Israel will hardly be able to do so unless they are clear as to the *real* causes for the absence of peace, for the critical economic situation, for the tragic plight of the new immigrant, for the increasing attacks and discrimination against the progressives and communists in Israel.

The pressure of the masses in Israel has forced the Ben Gurion government to proclaim itself "neutral" in the major struggles for peace. But no one is fooled by this pretense of "neutrality" as to the real direction of Israeli ruling circle policies. Subordination to Anglo-American imperialist aims is the real content of present day activities of the Ben Gurion government. Consequently, the people of Israel are confronted with the increased threat of war, with growing economic crisis and with the continued subordination of their economic and social development to imperialist dictates. Thus, the masses of Israel, who so heroically gave their lives in anti-imperialist struggle to achieve freedom and independence, are today confronted with the increasing colonialization of their country.

This is the situation two years after the creation of the state of Israel. Friendship for the people of Israel and sincere concern for their future welfare and happiness make it necessary that these facts be made known and not remain obscured. For only knowledge of these facts and action based upon such knowledge can help us to carry on the kind of struggle that will help the Israeli people in their struggle for full freedom and independence.

On this second anniversary, we send our warmest greetings to the people of Israel, heroic fighters and builders of a free and independent state. We send our assurance that the progressive forces of America, like the progressive forces throughout the world, stand firmly at their side in the struggle against imperialist intrigues to rob Israel of its independence, in the struggle for peace and friendship of nations.