

ROOTS OF THE ISRAEL-ARAB CRISIS

What are the real issues in the crisis which threatens war in the Middle East? Path to a solution in the interests of both peoples

By Louis Harap

AS the sixth anniversary of the State of Israel approaches—the new state was established on May 14, 1948—the Israeli people, who fought so valiantly for their state, once again face the danger of war. The Arab peoples, subjected to wars, oppression and abject poverty by their feudal overlords, face the same catastrophe.

For Spring has ushered in a new series of crises between Israel and the Arab states. Hardly a week passes but some new grave situation arises. Border incidents between Israel and the Arab states which have been continuous since the end of hostilities, have increased in frequency and magnitude since last summer, reaching a climax in the Kibya massacre.

A new climax in tensions occurred on March 17, when 11 Israelis on a bus were brutally murdered at Scorpion Pass. After an interval of heated exchanges on both sides and the refusal of the UN Mixed Armistice Commission to censure Jordan because the trail of the murderers was lost at the Jordanian border, the Israeli representatives walked out of the commission. On the night of March 28-29 Israelis murdered nine Jordanians in the village of Nahhalin. On March 29, a Soviet veto in the UN Security Council defeated the New Zealand resolution to reaffirm a UN resolution of September 1951, urging Egypt to cease interfering with Israel shipping through the Suez Canal. Even as we write, the Security Council is considering the complaint of Israel against Jordan for the latter's refusal to attend an armistice conference, demanded by Israel in accordance with terms of the armistice agreement, and for the massacre at Scorpion Pass; and the Arab request to take up the murders at Nahhalin.

Who Is Arming Arabs?

If a "second round" is to be avoided, the real root of the problem must be recognized and appropriate action taken. There is widespread tendency, encouraged by Washington and London and by the press, to interpret the dangerous developments in the Middle East as primarily a conflict between the peoples of Israel and the Arab countries. Arab leaders and Zionist and Israeli leaders tend to assign responsibility for the crisis to the "antagonisms" of the peoples involved. But this is not true, as we shall see.

What can be done to lift the very real danger of war in that unquiet area? One thing is clear—no piecemeal ap-

proach of tackling isolated aspects of the question such as the Egyptian interference with Israel shipping through the Suez Canal can do it. The Washington-London-dominated majority of the Security Council rammed through a vote of "censure" of Israel for the Kibya massacre that was one-sided and quite deliberately avoided doing anything to further peace in the Middle East, as even the *New York Times* pointed out editorially (November 26, 1953). The reason is that peace is the last thing that Dulles wants, since he would thereby lose his influence over the area. The same is true of the UN Security Council's resolution on the Suez Canal issue. As Soviet UN Delegate Andrei Vyshinsky said in the debate on the question on March 28, "there is no connection between the proposals contained in this draft resolution and attempts to settle or even approach a settlement of the general and, of course, more important Palestine question."

In the course of his remarks Vyshinsky showed the only path to a peaceful settlement of the issues between Israel and the Arab States. It has been commonly said that the Soviet Union vetoed the resolution on the Suez Canal in order "to plunge the Middle East into disorder," as Thomas J. Hamilton asserted in the *New York Times* (March 31). Yet, it is the Washington-London policy, as we shall explain, that demands and leads to turbulence in the area. As Robert C. Doty wrote from Cairo in the *New York Times* of March 7 on the overturn of regimes in Egypt and Syria, "these recent events . . . might result in some gain for the Western objective of bolstering defenses in this vital area linking three continents."

Who is supplying arms to the Middle East and setting up a feverish arms race that is so unsettling? Obviously, Washington and London: it is they whose provocative arms policy is holding back a peaceful solution and who are primarily responsible for the threat of war that would be so destructive to both the Israeli and Arab peoples. No one has accused the Soviet Union of supplying arms to the Arab states because the fact is that no arms are coming from there. How then can one say that the objective of the Soviet veto was to keep the Middle East in disorder?

Why then did the Soviet Union veto the UN resolution to reaffirm the 1951 resolution asking Egypt to cease interference with Israel shipping through the Suez Canal? Vyshinsky explained his position in his speeches on the issue. Not only, he said, did this resolution evade the real

and basic question, solution of the overall problem, but the UN acted on the resolution "in order to distract attention and to show that you are doing something." He pointed out that Egypt has refused to comply with the UN request for two years and Egypt let it be known in advance that she would refuse to comply if the resolution were passed again. Thus, it was apparent that "the Security Council, by adopting a worthless, inane and unsatisfactory resolution, impairs its prestige and its international authority."

Why the Veto?

The Soviet Union stated instead that the *only* way to deal with this question was "that we (the UN Security Council) should recommend that both parties should reach agreement and find a solution to the problem by means of direct negotiations. . . . On one side we have the representative of Israel and on the other the representative of Egypt; they are sitting opposite one another. Let them sit down at one table and try to settle the questions which the Security Council cannot settle now. I am deeply convinced that they can find a better solution. That is why certain representatives and States show a stubborn disinclination to permit direct negotiations between the interested parties and are trying to interfere in and, unfortunately, to hinder those negotiations."

The Washington-London policy does in fact fear direct negotiations, for this implies a relaxation or cessation of their control over the eventual outcome. In the case of Jordan, everyone knows that this government is a puppet of Britain: the Jordanian army is financed by Britain and commanded by the British general, Glubb Pasha. If the Jordanian regime, which is involved in the most recent exchange of border massacres at Scorpion Pass and Nahhalin, refuses to enter into direct negotiations with Israel, is London innocent of this intransigence? Could not Dulles urge the Arab states to sit down to negotiate directly, if this plan were consistent with his objectives in the Middle East? Yet one does not hear anything from Washington about the necessity for direct negotiations. They don't want a peaceful solution by direct negotiations because this would loosen their hold over the area.

Toward Direct Negotiations

Direct negotiations under present circumstances are difficult to achieve. But the various ineffectual resolutions advanced by the Washington-London majority or by one side or another of the parties to the disputes are not only foredoomed to failure, but do not hold the possibility of a real solution to the problems even if they were carried out. Despite the fact that direct negotiations are hard to realize, mainly because of the reluctance of Washington and London actively to further them, this is the only solution in which the interests of the parties are mutually fulfilled and agreement is reached by voluntary action.

So far as Israel and the Arab states are concerned, direct

negotiations require changes in attitudes and policies. For the Israel regime, this means a radical change in the approach to the Arab peoples. It demands a halt to the discriminatory treatment of the Arabs within Israel, revision of the second class status of Arabs in Israel in relation to citizenship and the holding of property, freedom of movement and equality in every respect. It requires efforts towards agreement on the Arab refugees. It also requires adoption of a position like that of India towards an arms race—opposition to American arms "aid" to any country in the area. On the Arab side it demands the tempering of intransigence on issues, willingness to negotiate such questions as the anti-Israel economic boycott and the refugee problem. Above all, the condition for satisfactory negotiations is the resistance against pressures by Washington and London and reassertion of genuine independence.

Such an outcome is completely in the interests of both the Israeli and Arab peoples. Only in this way can peace be won for the Middle East. Is it a coincidence that this cumulative heightening of tension in the Middle East in the past months follows upon the carrying out of the policy announced by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles after his tour of the Middle East last June? The basis of this policy is the international McCarthyite myth of the "threat of Soviet aggression." The real objective of the policy is control of the oil resources of the Middle East (more than half of the known world resources) and closing the gap of anti-Soviet military alliances. The palpable signs of the Dulles policy are the agreements to send arms to Arab countries in exchange for an anti-Soviet military agreement, miscalled a "defense plan."

Dulles' Middle Eastern Plan

Dulles' plan is by now well advanced. Washington has entered into an agreement with Pakistan to send arms to that country despite the intense protest of all India, which regards this as a threat to her security and to peace in Asia. Further, under Washington auspices a military alliance has been concluded between Pakistan and Turkey. These two countries are to form the eastern and western anchors of a chain of anti-Soviet military establishments in the Middle and Near East which Dulles is trying to set up in accordance with his expressed overall anti-Soviet plan.

Intense activity is going on to reach agreements on the sending of arms to the Moslem states between Pakistan and Turkey. As Dana Adams Schmidt said in the *New York Times* on February 13, "Eventually, it is hoped, other countries of the Middle East (in addition to Pakistan and Turkey), particularly Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia, will join this defensive grouping of nations on the Soviet Union's southern borders. Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia are the countries that produce the oil that the West desires to defend the Middle East." In one form or another, the regimes of Saudi Arabia (*Chicago Sentinel*, January 14) and Syria (*New York Times*, March 5) have indicated willingness to cooperate with this scheme.

Among the inducements offered by Dulles to the Arab leaders are arms and technical aid in building an army. All this is given, of course, in the name of "defense against Soviet aggression." Yet there is something passing strange in this claim. For it is agreed by all observers that the people of the Middle and Near East are totally unconcerned about this "threat of Soviet aggression" for the simple reason that they know it does not exist. A report on United States foreign policy issued in March by the Brookings Institute, a conservative research organization in Washington, said, according to a Jewish Telegraphic Agency dispatch (week-end of March 19), that "the Arabs (meaning, we presume, the Arab people as well as the leaders—L.H.) are probably less inclined than ever to join a regional defense organization 'in view of the latest Soviet peace offensive.' The Arabs, the report stated, indicate 'a marked lack of awareness of any menace from the Soviet Union.'" One should add that they are not "aware" of it for the sound reason that it doesn't exist.

Why then are the Arab leaders indicating that they will accept arms from Washington and cooperate in such a regional pact against the Soviet Union? India has expressed its sharp apprehension that United States arms to Pakistan increase tension in the relations between the two countries since India believes the arms are aimed at her—for India, too, is well aware that no threat exists from the Soviet Union. And Israel has protested vigorously that the arms now promised to the Arab leaders are really intended for use against her, notwithstanding the frequent assertions of the State Department that the granting of arms is conditioned on their not being used against Israel. The reactionary Arab leaders, who together with the people know that they are not threatened by the Soviet Union, are exploiting Dulles' offer of arms to strengthen their own military positions for their own purposes and not for "defense" against "Soviet aggression."

Israel and Dulles

And what of Israel in this situation? Is the Mapai-General Zionist regime following a policy designed to further peace and to reach a settlement of differences with its Arab neighbors? Far from disputing the Dulles anti-Soviet policy in general or in relation to the Soviet Union in the Middle East, Zionist and Israeli leaders vehemently affirm their agreement. They oppose Dulles because he refuses to agree with the Israel regime that Israel is the strongest and most reliable Middle Eastern power for a military alliance for "defense against Soviet aggression." After the putsches in Egypt and Syria in March, Israeli Premier Moshe Sharett pointed out that arming such states was not a reliable method of setting up Middle East "defense" arrangements. Giving arms to the unstable Arab governments "within the region will make no contribution either to the defense of the region against outside aggression or the promotion of stability within." (*Israel Digest*, March 15). In other words, Sharett wished to impress Dulles with the fact that

Washington's "defense" scheme was not being furthered by giving arms to Arab leaders, who really intend these arms to be used against Israel. The basis of the Israel government's position, support of Dulles' anti-Soviet Middle Eastern scheme, is thus suicidal. For this plan promotes strife and unrest in Israel-Arab relationships. If Dulles' scheme is not opposed, the basis for Israel-Arab strife remains.

The disturbed Middle East situation is made even more turbulent by the effort of the State Department to displace British influence in order to gain undisputed dominance over the Middle East. The jockeying between London and Washington can be discerned from the attempt of the State Department to act in the area without consulting its "ally," Britain. Here are a few decisive instances. In Egypt, Washington is trying to take London's place as the controlling power now that London is being pushed out by the Egyptian people's demand for independence. "It was learned from authoritative State Department sources," said the *Jewish Record* on January 7, "that the United States has already informed Great Britain of its decision to send arms and dollar aid to Egypt. This move is taking place despite British objections arising from the present tense negotiations between Britain and Egypt involving the Suez Canal Zone."

The case is similar with Iraq. "British Foreign office sources confirmed this week," said the Chicago *Sentinel* on January 14, "that the United States government had concluded an agreement with King Saud of Saudi Arabia for the training and equipment of a substantial Arabian army. The same sources said the British government had not yet been consulted by the United States on a similar arrangement proposed for Iraq."

The evidence thus shows that the tension and threat of war arises from the Dulles policy of working toward dominance over the Middle East and of promoting an anti-Soviet war atmosphere. Coincident with this feverish activity of the State Department, the Middle East—specifically the relations of Israel and the Arab states—has been thrown into a turmoil by the succession of incidents and crises. Direct negotiations between Israel and the Arab states as free as possible of pressures from Washington and London offer prospects for a solution.

JEWISH BOOK WEEK

May 1-9

THIS year Jewish Book Week has particular significance, for we are celebrating 300 years of Jewish settlement in the United States. Although the actual Tercentenary date is September, when 23 Jews arrived in New Amsterdam in 1654, the occasion is being marked through the year. The event provides the opportunity for deepening one's knowledge of the progressive tradition of American Jews so as to act more effectively.