

WHICH WAY ISRAEL?

**AN EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNT
BY A MARXIST EDUCATOR**

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and War Economy and Crisis*

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Introduction

In the course of his recent visit to our shores, Saudi Arabia's King Faisal provoked a storm of angry protest with his remarks: "Unfortunately, Jews support Israel and we consider those who support our enemies as our own enemies." The reaction to this anti-Semitic utterance caused Mayor Lindsay of New York to cancel a formal dinner and Governor Rockefeller to call off an appointment. But Secretary of State Dean Rusk and others were not similarly inclined, and the visit otherwise went off as scheduled.

King Faisal, we are told, later "clarified" his remark by stating that he was not opposed to Jews as such, only to political Zionism and to those Jews who supported it. But this hardly explains Saudi Arabia's refusal to accept Jews—any Jews—as diplomatic or other personnel sent from this country. Still less does it explain the State Department's readiness to comply with this prohibition.

All this brings us to the question: what was King Faisal doing in this country in the first place? The answer is to be found in U.S. policy in the Middle East—a policy of support to the most reactionary, pro-imperialist regimes in that area, among which that of King Faisal stands at the head.

The Arab countries are in a state of growing popular rebellion against the depredations of imperialism allied with reactionary Arab leaders. The forces of national liberation are increasing in strength, and the Johnson Administration is doing its utmost to hold them in check. In this endeavor, it looks upon King Faisal as one of its most reliable allies.

And while it bases itself on the Faisals with their anti-Semitism on the one hand, the Johnson Administration counts on the support of the government of Israel on the other. In the fashion characteristic of imperialism it strives to inflame Jewish-Arab hostilities in order to maintain its sway over both.

In this country there is much interest in Israel and its fate, plunged as it is into the political cauldron of the Middle East. What kind of country is Israel? Who are its people? What is the structure of its economy? What is the character of its government? What is its role on the international scene?

Recently, in the course of a two-week visit to Israel, I had the opportunity to probe into these questions. Though the visit was brief, I was able to see much of the country, its people and its institutions. In the series of four articles which originally appeared in *The Worker*, and which are reprinted here, I have endeavored to present a summary of what I found.

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209

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I. A LAND OF CONTRASTS

Israel is a small country. Its population numbers only some 2½ million—less than the number of people living in Manhattan. However, its significance on the world scene and the interest in its affairs which exists in this country far exceed its mere size. Hence the trip on which the content of these articles is based.

To be sure, a two-week visit scarcely qualifies one as an expert. But there are certain features of the country which are strikingly evident to the newly arrived visitor.

To begin with, Israel is a land of great variety and sharp contrasts. Within the compass of its 10,000 square miles the old and the new, progress and reaction, are to be found side by side, intermingling yet clearly distinct.

Itself an advanced capitalist country with a modern industrial economy, Israel is situated within the heart of an Arab world marked by economic backwardness and extreme poverty. Within the country, modern factories exist alongside relics of past civilizations, and the highly mechanized agriculture of the kibbutzim alongside the primitive peasant economy of the Arab villages and the nomadic existence of the country's Bedouin population.

Israel is also a land of rapid growth and rapid change. Since 1948, it has had more than a million immigrants and its population has nearly tripled. This in turn has been accompanied by a high rate of economic growth.

Originally the immigrants were mainly European Jews; more recently the majority have been Oriental Jews, mostly Yemenite and Iraqi. There is also Israel's Arab population, which today makes up about 12 per cent of the total.

The swiftness of the process of change is reflected in a pronounced contrast between the older and younger generations. The former are of diverse national origins and speak a variety of languages—Yiddish, Arabic, Bulgarian, Roumanian, Hungarian, Polish, German, English, French. They cling to their accustomed habits and cultures, and many have never learned Hebrew. In fact, the Communist Party of Israel, in addition to a daily newspaper in Hebrew and a semi-weekly in Arabic, has had to publish weeklies in Yiddish, Bulgarian and Roumanian, as well as a mimeographed paper in Hungarian.

The younger generation is very noticeably different. Its lan-

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