

Palestine Land Rules Show Imperial Britain's Betrayal of Jews

By I. Rennap

LONDON (By Mail).—The new land regulations in Palestine, drastically restricting Jewish land purchases, came like a thunderbolt to the Yishuv, (Palestine Jewry). The Zionist leaders had led the Yishuv and the whole world to believe that in return for their support of Allied war aims, Britain would, at least have postponed the enforcement of the White Paper policy of last May (of which these regulations are an important part) till after the war. The atmosphere in Tel Aviv, Haiffa and Jerusalem became similar to that of last May when the White Paper Plan was first issued. A wave of indignation broke out against the British Government. A one-day strike took place throughout the Yishuv. Large demonstrations were organized. Curfew was imposed in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

The new Palestine land regulations, whilst they were aimed at bringing into this bloc the dominant Palestine Arab leaders, are also the first step towards getting Moslem mass support for the war. And as Britain will find herself compelled more and more to woo the peoples in the Near and Middle East among whom there exists such strong anti-imperialist feeling, so it may strike further blows at the Yishuv. For it must be realized that the Arab-Jewish problem in Palestine is an issue not confined merely to Palestine. It is an issue which has had repercussions in the whole Moslem world.

In Palestine there is an appearance of peace and the "restoration" of "order." But guerrilla warfare still goes on. In spite of the Arab leaders truckling to Britain, there are strong rumors and reports of plots and plans for a renewal of the Arab revolt.

The British Government is aware of this underground ferment. This reflects itself in the British Colonial Minister's speech in the House in the debate on the new land regulations. He said:

"We have had the most stern warning in recent weeks that, despite appearances in Palestine, there was a growing unrest in the Arab villages and a growing suspicion that the British Government were not sincere in promising to protect the interests of the Arab cultivators."

It is important to note that these land regulations are a blow to the "moderate" Nashashibi Arabs, because these represent those Arab landowners and capitalists who have always been pro-imperialist and pro-Zionist, because they have made fortunes from land sales to Jews at fat prices. For these Arab gentry the issue of national independence has been a very bad second to enriching themselves through Zionist penetration. They will now find this much more difficult.

On the other hand, those landlords and capitalists represented by the Mufti and the old Arab Higher Committee are the big landowning families who have opposed Zionist penetration because they aim at becoming the rulers and masters of Palestine under British "protection." This group, if it has been forced to lead the revolt against Britain in its early stages, did so because of the mass pressure from below from the impoverished peasantry, large numbers of whom were dispossessed of their land by the same landowners. The necessity to divert discontent away from themselves and retain their traditional spiritual influence on the Arab masses drove them, for a while, into leading the anti-imperialist struggle.

In the hill country, where Jewish land purchases have been negligible, the landlords and usurers have dispossessed the peasantry of nearly 30 per cent of their land in one decade. In this part of the country in Nablus and Jenin, strongholds of Arab nationalism, are to be found some of the traditional leading landowning families who in 1936 were at the head of the revolt. There is nothing in the new regulations to prevent this landed gentry from further driving out the Arab peasantry. And this is precisely what Britain aims at: to see that this wealthy stratum benefits at the expense of Zionist aims and its political rivals, the Nashashibis.

Therefore, while the Government claims that these new land regulations will benefit the Arab cultivators, they do nothing of the sort. They merely attempt to fool the Palestine Arab masses and the peoples in the Near East, while in reality they bribe and win over to Britain's "united front" of Moslem aristocrats a still fairly influential section of the Palestine Arab landlord gentry. The lot of the Arab peasant will not be bettered. Only a progressive program of irrigation and land development schemes, radical agrarian reforms and effective social legislation which will safeguard the position of cultivator, both Arab and Jewish, will alter for the better the lot of the impoverished Arab peasantry. It would also improve the position of the Jews. Intensive agricultural as well as industrial development would create conditions for further Jewish immigration; whereas, the Government's new policy condemns the Yishuv and its achievements which, under different conditions can be such a tremendous force for progressive development in the interests of both communities, to stagnation. Such a program can only be achieved by the unity of the Arab and Jewish masses against imperialism and its war, as well as against imperialism's agents, the Moslem and Zionist leaders, for the creation of an Arab-Jewish Government that can embark on such a program.

The broad masses in the Moslem countries will not be bamboozled by imperialism and its war maneuvers. They are already beginning to awaken and to fight back. These peoples are the Yishuv's natural allies, with whose cause it must identify itself. Their path is the one which can open up new perspectives of rich creative development for the Yishuv and its neighbors; whereas, the path of the Zionist leaders and their pro-imperialist policy condemns it to a Ghetto status of degradation and poverty.