

ers, Jews and Israel

THE BLACK PANTHERS, JEWS AND ISRAEL

By GEORGE WALD

by

Rabbi Albert
S. Axelrad

Rabbi Robert
E. Goldberg

Huey
Newton

Morris U.
Schappes

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Wald

A **Jewish Currents** Reprint

Forty Cents

1. A LETTER TO HUEY NEWTON

By **GEORGE WALD**

DEAR Huey Newton;
There's so much that I want to say to you about black men and Jews that it's hard to know where to begin. But I'll try.

There's no experience in the world as much like being black as being a Jew: a black man without money, and a Jew without money.

It's no accident that the self-image of the blacks in America has been that of the Jews in bondage in Egypt. "Tell old Pharaoh to let my people go." "My home is over Jordan." And all the rest of it.

PROF. GEORGE WALD of the Harvard Biological Laboratories was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1967. Since then he has also become widely known as a great moral voice in the peace movement to end the war in Vietnam and as an advocate and interpreter of campus youth and faculty movements. Huey Newton, whose conviction of "voluntary manslaughter" was reversed by the California Court of Appeals May 29, 1970, was not released on bail, pending retrial, until Aug. 5. Meanwhile, The Black Panther April 25 had published a blatantly anti-Semitic article by Connie Matthews, International Coordinator of the Black Panther Party. It was in this context that Dr. Wald sent his letter to Huey Newton Aug. 24.

The Jews in Israel are no conquerors. They're refugees; the remnant of the biggest massacre in history. About 400,000 of them are refugees from the Arab countries. Since 1948, more than half the immigrants came from underdeveloped Asian and African countries. As of 1968, one quarter of those persons had had no schooling at all, and only 28 per cent had got past 8th grade. About 40 per cent are unskilled workers.

There are 2.5 million Jews in Israel. They're refugees, with no other place to go. For as long as Israel has existed—22 years—those Jews have been continuously threatened with a massacre. Not political domination or a military defeat—a massacre. (About a year ago Al Fatah changed its line from that to democratic co-existence in an open secular state. There seems little unanimity on that score even in Al Fatah; yet even if such statements are to be taken seriously, there are plenty of other Arabs still promising that massacre. Not much to stake one's life on, and that of one's children.

What those people want is one small place in the world where Jews can manage their own lives. After 2,000 years of being kicked around, the universal scapegoat, burned out, murdered, exterminated. Surely you can understand that.

As they—as I—try to understand you.

Arabs without money are another oppressed people. Those are two liberation movements. The tragedy is to pit them against each other, when each should be fighting its own class struggle.

I find much to criticize in Israel, as I do here. That's the way it is with a lot of Israelis too. Israel was trying to be a Socialist country, and getting closer to that than any other place I've ever been. Now all the things that most Israelis oppose are being forced upon them by the constant threat of that massacre.

That massacre could come at any time. The line-up is terrifying. And Nixon's America altogether problematical. Israel is accused sometimes of being an outpost of American imperialism. Crazy. If it's a matter of American imperialism, that brings us squarely on the Arab side. That's what David Rockefeller tells Nixon all the time. That's where the oil is; that's where the market is. Israel's a competitor, and a drain. Not good business.

If that massacre comes, I should think black persons in America or

anywhere else would want no part in it.

I haven't said anything yet about American Jews. They come all ways—just like black people. Some of them hate themselves—just like black people. Some of them are always trying to cross over—just like some black people.

But not the best of them. You must know that. The best of them are trying all the time to help black people to realize themselves, Arabs to realize themselves, and Jews to realize themselves, each in his own way. To make a place for all those things. It won't be easy, but nothing else will do.

So now I've said a little of it.

Everything I know about you is good. So I hope we can be friends, whether or not we meet. Everything I know about the Panthers makes me want to help. Whatever happens, I'll do that. It's that Jewish obsession with Justice.

We need a place to live. You need a place to live. Wherever it is, there's always somebody else already there. They need to live too. It's tough, but one has to find a way. Sincerely,

GEORGE WALD

Cambridge, Mass., Aug. 24, 1970

2. FROM A PRESS CONFERENCE

By HUEY NEWTON

Huey Newton held a press conference Aug. 26, 1970 in the offices of KPFA, the Pacifica radio station in Berkeley, Calif. The taped conference was rebroadcast Aug. 27 by Pacifica station WBAI in New York. Sept. 11 we wrote to Mr. Newton for permission to publish an excerpt from this taped press conference in any edited version he approved. It was then suggested to us that we reprint from the text published in The Black Panther, Sept. 5, 1970, pages 16-17. This, therefore, is the text now used here.—Ed.

... SO WE would like to reiterate our support for the Palestinian people. We would like to make it very clear that the Black Panther

Party is not anti-Semitic. We've been charged with being anti-Semitic. As a matter of fact, some statements could be cited where some member of the Party has made some statements in anger in order to hurt some of our White radical friends because we believed that they did not live up to the friendship agreement. But these were internal fights. They should have been kept internal, but they were exposed and used by the reactionaries, and this was partially our fault because we indulged in that.

But as far as our official position, we are not anti-Semitic. As far as the Israeli people are concerned, we are not against the Jewish people. We are against that government that will persecute the Palestinian people. We have to admit that there's something wrong in the Middle East. The Palestinian people are living in hovels, they don't have a land, they've been stripped and murdered; and we cannot support this for any reason. We also realize some of the shortcomings of the United Arab Republic. And our views on this is that we think that the people led by the Palestinian people should be led into a struggle, a revolutionary struggle in order to transform the Middle East into truly a peoples' republic.

And at the same time we support a small group of people who are in Israel who are revolutionary and who are working to see that the Zionist government of Israel is transformed into a secular peoples' state instead of a religious state. We say that the way the country is operating at this time is the height of chauvinism and ethnocentrism. I say this because any state that requires its members to adhere to a certain religion is a reactionary state.

We must realize that our main concern is to transform the world into

a place where people can live. We're chiefly interested in the survival of our people, but not at the expense of other people. Black people in America have been persecuted; therefore it's easy for us to identify with other people who are suffering. We have a long history of being enslaved and murdered. We have wrestled with the question of nationalism and we have concluded that we have a moral right to embrace nationalism. We have a moral right to choose separatism, to move into a separate state just as the Jewish people have that moral right.

But we realize that United States imperialism will not allow us to separate and live side-by-side with United States imperialism. It's obvious that we could not become self-determined because the United States will not let countries exist 15,000 miles away in freedom. They will not let these countries exist in freedom 15,000 miles away, so they certainly will not let us exist in a separate state in North America in freedom. So the question can be put into the future.

The first task is to transform society so the people can live in freedom. Our central task is to overthrow the ruling circle, who will not permit self-determination to exist in the world. After we achieve this goal the question of nationalism can be handled. Black nationalists could then go to the U.N. and ask for a plebiscite in order to ask the people what way they want to go.

After transformation into a socialist society there may be no need for separation. This transformation can only take place by wiping out United States imperialism and establishing a new earth, a new society, and a new world. So politically and strategically the correct action to take is not sep-

aration, but world revolution in order to wipe out imperialism, and then people will be free to decide their destiny. Self-determination and national independence cannot really exist while United States imperialism is alive.

That's why we don't support nationalism as our goal. In some instances we might support nationalism as a strategy; we call this revolutionary nationalism. The motives are internationalist, because the revolutionaries are attempting to secure liberated territory in order to choke imperialism by cutting them off from the countryside.

When the motive for national liberation is solely to create a capitalist state so that the ruling circle of that capitalist state can align itself with United States imperialism, then it's reactionary nationalism and cannot be supported by revolutionaries. Israel was created by Western imperialism and maintained by Western fire power. The Jewish people have a right to exist as long as they solely exist to down the reactionary expansionist Israeli government.

Our situation is similar in so many ways; we say that morally perhaps the Jewish people can make a case for separatism and a Zionist state based upon their religion for self-defense. We say that morally maybe we could accept this, but politically and strategically we know that it's incorrect. In the first place what it is doing is perpetuating nationalism; perpetuating reaction, if nationalism is reaction, and I think that the United States has proved that it is because it used nationalism to rape the world and dominate everyone else. In other words it went from nationalism to the natural conclusion, and that is empire or imperialism.

So the Jewish people must be very careful not to be an agent of imperialism. We're asking the progressive forces, the revolutionary forces inside of Israel to transform that society so that the people of the Moslem religion, the people of the Jewish religion, the people who live in the Middle East will be able to come together as one man and truly build a new world. As a matter of fact, we're looking forward to this time, we see that this time will exist; because we see the contradiction that's developing between the Palestinian people and the UAR. We also see a growing group of Israel that's organizing against the racist tactics of the Israeli government. I say that if we go over the record we can see where the Jewish students demonstrated against their Minister of Defense, against the war tactics of Israel; and we encourage this activity, we struggle with this group of the Jewish people. So we reject any charges of being anti-Semitic.

We realize that some people who happen to be Jewish, and who support Israel will use the Black Panther Party's position that is against imperialism and against the agents of the imperialist as an attack of anti-Semitism. We think that this is a back-biting, racist, underhanded tactic; and we will treat it as such. We have respect for all people, and we have respect for the right for any people to exist. So we want the Jewish people and the Palestinian people to live in harmony together. We support the Palestinian's just struggle for liberation one hundred percent. We will go on doing this, and we would like for all of the progressive people of the world to join in our ranks in order to make a world in which all people can live. **ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE.**

Jewish Currents

3. COMMENTARY ON NEWTON'S VIEWS

BY MORRIS U. SCHAPPES

We welcome the assurance by Huey P. Newton, Minister of Defense of the Black Panther Party and therefore an authoritative spokesman for it, that "the Black Panther Party is not anti-Semitic" and that "as far as our official policy is concerned, we are not anti-Semitic."

It has also been suggested to us that Huey Newton had in mind the anti-Semitic article by Connie Matthews, International Coordinator of the Black Panther Party, in *The Black Panther*, April 25, 1970, when Newton spoke of "some member of the Party has made some statements in anger," and declared that these "internal fight" is a sign of danger, kept internal . . ." Well, to express anti-Semitism even "in anger" in an "internal fight" is a sign of danger, but this anti-Semitic article was published in the official organ, *The Black Panther*, and was signed by Matthews with the official title of International Coordinator. Without explicit public repudiation of this anti-Semitism, with a clear statement of why the Matthews article is anti-Semitic and of what harm it does to the Black Panther Party and the black people's movement, how are the readers of *The Black Panther* to learn to combat anti-Semitism when they meet it again, as they did, for example, in *The Black Panther* of May 19 and June 13, 1970? To fail to do so for any reason is to play into the hands of reactionaries and to weaken ties with white, including Jewish, supporters, friends and allies. We trust that Huey Newton will implement his declaration that his Party "is not anti-Semitic" by public activity against anti-Semitism wher-

ever he finds it, as part of his continuing struggle against reactionary ideology of all sorts. And anti-Semitism, like white racism, is part of reactionary ideology.

As for Huey Newton's remarks on Israel, we recognize in them a familiar tangle of charges, claims and proposals that aim at the destruction of the State of Israel. Within the framework of this brief commentary, we can touch only on a few of the main issues opened up by Huey Newton.

First, Mr. Newton is wrong in his flat statement, "Israel was created by Western imperialism . . ." The forces that created the State of Israel, in addition to those of the Zionists and the even more numerous non-Zionist Jewish refugees from Hitlerism, were decisively the anti-imperialist, democratic and socialist forces expressing themselves in the United Nations. It was the Soviet Union and other socialist states that defeated the maneuvers of U.S. and British imperialism in the Middle East by mobilizing moral, political and finally weaponry support for the U.N. resolution of Nov. 29, 1947.

Representing the anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist Soviet Union, Andrei Gromyko made an address in the U. N. General Assembly May 14, 1947 (full text reprinted in our May, 1967 issue) that marked a turning-point in this anti-imperialist struggle. Explaining with profound understanding and even compassion "the aspiration of the Jews for the creation of a state of their own," Gromyko declared: "We must bear in mind the incontestable

fact that the population of Palestine consists of *two peoples*, Arabs and Jews. Each of these has its *historical roots in Palestine*. . . . Neither history nor the conditions which have arisen in Palestine now can justify any unilateral solution of the Palestine problem, either in favor of the creation of an independent Arab state, ignoring the *lawful rights of the Jewish people*, or in favor of an independent Jewish state, ignoring the *lawful rights of the Arab population*.” (Our italics.—M.U.S.)

For these reasons, Gromyko proposed “the creation of one dual, democratic Arab-Jewish state,” but, he added in the same speech, if that state turns out not to be practicable now, in 1947, there should be “the division of Palestine into two independent, separate states—one Jewish, and one, Arab.” The U.N. Resolution of Nov. 29, 1947 expressed this anti-imperialist, socialist, democratic, humanist political wisdom, despite everything the imperialist camp could do to thwart the carrying out of the resolution.

The imperialist camp did succeed in preventing the establishment of the Palestine Arab state envisioned in the U.N. Resolution. It was the puppets of British imperialism who ruled the Arab states that invaded Palestine in violation of the U.N. Resolution; it was British imperialism that provided the arms for the invasion (while U.S. imperialism put down an embargo on arms to Israel) and it was socialist states that provided the arms to the Jews of Israel to protect and consolidate their State. At that time, the entire international anti-imperialist movement, all socialist states and communist parties, supported the creation and defense of the State of Israel. Thus to say “Israel was created by

Western imperialism” is to fly in the face of the known historical record.

Now this State of Israel has many features, and its government has many policies, with which we disagree and about which we have not hesitated to express our criticism. But Israel’s *right to exist* is *inalienable*. To call for the destruction of a state is imperialist tactics and smacks of genocide, not of revolutionary democracy. Nowhere have revolutionaries called for the destruction even of imperialist states. The Algerian Liberation Front never called for the destruction of the state of France; the Vietnam Liberation Front does not call for the destruction of the USA as a state, nor do the liberation fronts fighting against Portugal, Spain, West Germany, Great Britain and other imperialist states call for their destruction.

Therefore we deny the “revolutionary” character of those who, in any way, call for the destruction of the State of Israel. We, however, see Huey Newton’s call that Israel be “transformed into a secular people’s state instead of the religious state” as one such call, somewhat disguised. For his offhand formula expresses the Al Fatah program. That this program unmistakably aims at the destruction of the State of Israel is made abundantly clear in *The Black Panther*, Nov. 7, 1970, which devotes a two-page spread to “Al Fatah Statement—Towards a Democratic State in Palestine.” We are told that “The statement was drafted at the Second World Conference on Palestine, sponsored by a coalition of Palestinian liberation groups,” held at Amman, Jordan, Sept. 2-6, 1969.

The new statement repeats the 1968 Al Fatah declaration: “We are fighting today to create the new Palestine of tomorrow: a progressive, democratic and non-sectarian Palestine in which

Christian, Moslem and Jew will worship, work, live peacefully and enjoy equal rights.” Together with the entire progressive Jewish leadership in the USA, we rejected this concept in our declaration Dec. 1, 1970, when we pointed out (see our Jan., 1971 issue, p. 6): “This reference only to religions falsely reduces the Jews merely to a religious group and thus denies the national identity of the Jews. This is in complete contravention of the position that Israel has a right to exist and to a *secure* existence as well.”

Whereas Gromyko in 1947 took note that in Palestine there were two *peoples*, an Arab and a Jewish, that both had rights to statehood, and that the Jewish *people* had the right to a “state of their own,” Al Fatah comes along with a concept of a state that speaks only of religions (“Christian, Moslem and Jew”) and would merely offer individual citizen’s rights to people of all religions.

A close reading of the Al Fatah statement indicates over and over that destruction of Israel is the aim. Israel is referred to as an “alien state” within “the Arab homeland” and we are assured that the new Palestine state “will end artificiality of the present status of Israel. . . .” At one point Al Fatah even asserts that “It is the belief of the revolution that the majority of Israeli Jews will change their attitudes and will subscribe to the new Palestine, especially after the oligarchic state machinery, economy and military establishment are destroyed.” This is the rhetoric of reactionary fantasy. The Israeli Jews will defend their state, their economy and their institutions to the death—and all progressive mankind, and Jews throughout the world, will give them all possible aid in such a struggle for survival.

After much obfuscating rhetoric, the Al Fatah statement goes on to dispel any possible doubts about its aims: “The new Palestine is not to be built around three state religions or two nationalities.” Obviously the Jewish nation, or nationality, or *people* are to get no consideration. “The sine qua non of the new Palestine is the destruction of the political, economic and militarist foundations of the chauvinist-racist settler state” (which is the dogmatic Al Fatah term for the State of Israel sanctioned by the 1947 UN Resolution).

That Al Fatah expects few Jews to survive to live in the “new Palestine” can be inferred from their reference to “a voluntary mass exodus on the eve of liberation,” an exodus they expect to bring about but which they speak of quite regrettable. Later on we also are informed that “The process of the revolution will inevitably increase the tempo of emigration, especially of those beneficiaries of a racist state who will find it very difficult to adapt to an open pluralistic society”—that is, to the “democratic, secular, etc. state” in which Jewish nationality is denied and suppressed. And to show how considerate Al Fatah is of the Jewish people’s future, we are told that Al Fatah is in fact now “in serious negotiations” with Arab states to take their own Jews back! In other words, destroy the State of Israel and all its institutions, exterminate the Jews trying to defend their State, force the emigration of the remnant—and prepare havens for them in generous Arab states! This is not only a program of genocide—but with mockery in the bargain.

How can such a program square with any view of progress, much less “revolution”? Yet we find Huey Newton saying, “The Jewish people have

a right to exist as long as they solely exist to down the reactionary expansionist Israeli government"! But by what right, or in terms of what "revolutionary" ideal, does Newton presume to put down *conditions* for the right of the Jewish people to exist? The Jewish people—ANY PEOPLE—has a right to exist, period. In Israel many forces not only of the left but of the political center oppose and combat the expansionist thrust of the Beigins but the people of Israel would unite to the death against any threat to its right to exist. Similarly, outside Israel, progressive Jews oppose expansionist policies in Israel, but the Jewish people will unite to defend its *right to exist*.

Huey Newton puts it well when he writes: "We're chiefly interested in the survival of our people, but not at the expense of other people." We agree fully. We too are interested in the survival of the Jewish people and of the State of Israel "but not at the expense of other people." As progressive Jews, we support the right of Palestinian Arabs to self-determination, including a state of their own, *but not at the expense of the State of Israel*. As internationalists, we support unreservedly Israel's right to exist *and* the Palestinian Arab right of self-determination. We invite Huey Newton to consider *this* as his program. Then we can discuss how peace in the Middle East can be achieved, with freedom, equality and guaranteed rights and states for both peoples. We offer as our view the basic propositions in the Dec. 1 declaration of progressive Jewish leaders, which center on the UN Security Council Resolution of Nov. 22, 1967 as a package.

But Huey Newton and the Black Panther Party are beleaguered, harassed and persecuted by every level of government in our country. Huey New-

BLACKS IN OFFICE

THERE are now 665 black elected public officials in the South, according to the Voter Education Project, Inc. In the U.S. Congress there are now 12 (a gain of three). In the lower houses of Southern state legislatures, the number of blacks elected increased from 37 to 51, with new representation for the first time in modern history in Alabama and South Carolina (two and three respectively). Arkansas is now the only state in the old Confederacy with no black state legislator. In upper houses of the Old Confederacy, there are now 11 black representatives (a gain of two).

ton is fighting back—as well as talking. In this fight-back, we have all along supported full civil liberties for Black Panthers as we have fought during all the 25 years of our publication for full civil rights and meaningful equality for black people and the black people's movement. Rabbi Robert E. Goldburg in our Nov., 1970 issue and Rabbi Albert S. Axelrad in our Jan., 1971 issue have in their way expressed our view that it is the duty of progressive Jews to defend the rights of Black Panthers. This is an unconditional duty. But it is certainly harder to carry out this duty when Panther publications convey and stir anti-Semitism and when the Panther position on Israel allies it with those who call for its destruction. These positions are serious obstacles to marshalling Jewish support for Black Panthers' rights and affect negatively even the Jewish people's support for the black people's movement as a whole. Only the leadership of the Black Panthers can remove these obstacles.

JEWISH CURRENTS REPRINTS

1. *Shylock and Anti-Semitism*, by Morris U. Schappes 10 cents
2. *The Image of the Jew in the Negro Community*,
by Rabbi Paul H. Levenson out of print
3. *Nazi War Criminals Among Us*, by Charles R. Allen, Jr. out of print
4. *Ersatz Judaism*, by Rabbi Robert E. Goldberg 5 cents
5. *The Strange World of Hannah Arendt*, by Morris U. Schappes 40 cents
6. *Jewish Identity: Dialogue with Jewish Youth*,
by Agronoff, Kerman and Schappes out of print
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