

EDITORIALS OF THE MONTH

Communist "Defenders of the Faith"

WE HEAR that Barzilai, secretary of the Palestine Communist Party was arrested after his return to Russia for allegedly misinforming the Comintern in regard to the situation in Palestine. It would be interesting to know what the Comintern considers misinformation. Does the Comintern feel that the labors of the Palestinian disciples are not as effective as represented? Were the despatches from Palestine too rosy, or were they "defeatist"? Whatever the shortcomings of Mr. Barzilai as a reporter, the Comintern should be at peace. The zeal of the Palestinian comrades has not abated one jot. They are still working faithfully to arouse the Arab masses against the Jewish settlers. In fact, their tactics show a few improvements which should be commended in Moscow. The Communist proclamations have never hesitated to influence the Arabs against the Jews working peacefully in their midst, but previously the appeal was political. Apparently, however, the attempt to rouse the Arabs' revolutionary passion has not been sufficiently productive. A more primitive motivation for further terrorism and murder had to be found. Now the appeal is to the religious fanaticism of the Arab. The latest Communist proclamation (whose text we print below) is in some respects the most unscrupulous yet to issue from that source. The complete cynicism with which the Communists play on the powerful religious prejudices of the Moslems marks a new low in Communist strategy in the Orient. The Communists have no illusions about the cultural *niveau* of the Arab masses. They are not wasting their time with quotations from Marx. And it seems that the force of the "nationalist-revolution" cry is also waning. But when all else fails, one weapon remains—Islam. If the Arab will not loot and kill with sufficient zeal for "political" motives, he may be trusted to do his best when his faith is involved. Nor are the Communists alone in their efforts to foment a holy war. Agitators from Syria, whose funds come from the revolutionary money-bags of Mussolini are also active in the villages with the new slogan—the defense of Allah and Mohammed. Those who kill in the name of Islam will dwell with the houris of Paradise.

The Communists in Palestine have long been keeping strange company. Mussolini and the reactionary Arab leaders are curious bed-fellows for the followers of Lenin. Every new dispatch

throws further light on the "revolutionary" character of the Arab attacks. The Palestine terrorist who attempted to assassinate the Egyptian Prime Minister recently confessed that he was a member of the "Green Shirts", a Fascist organization associated with the pan-Arab movement; the history of the other terrorist bandits is equally pure. But the Palestine Communists have strong stomachs—they can take it. They have learned a lot from their allies. No one can accuse them of being dogmatic in Palestine; just how undogmatic they have become may be judged from the unexpected interpretation they are giving to their famous tenet — "Religion is the opium of the people." No, we will not charge the Palestine Communists with being doctrinaire. They will not leave friend Mussolini alone as "Defender of the Faith." If opium is to be ladled out, they too will enter the drug-business, despite the orthodox Communist objections to this branch of human endeavor. When Czarist officials instigated Russian peasants to slaughter Jews in the name of Christ, religion, we gather, was the opium of the people, but when anti-religious Communists inflame fanatical nations to slaughter Jews in the name of Mohammed and the Grand Mufti, what revolutionary metamorphosis takes place? How loudly do they chuckle in Moscow as they read these frenzied appeals for "religious liberty"? Or is the Comintern "misinformed"? The text of the proclamation speaks for itself:

"Call a general assembly!

"Determine your stand on the open attack on your religious liberty!"

That is the headline. Below it are discussed the extraordinary strong-arm activities against the Arab people of the imperialist power, "which is a prelude to the imposition of the partition plan by force." "Imperialism hopes that all these strong measures will help toward establishing security, but it will soon realize that such tactics are merely oil spread on the fire."

Arab and Moslem feelings are aroused to "come to the defense of our existence, our liberty, the unity and sovereignty of our country."

"Imperialism is trying to impose its rule over your (i. e., the people's) religious affairs, it has robbed you of your legal right to conduct your *Waqf* (Moslem Taxation Fund), your religious courts, and your other religious institutions. Therefore, proclaim your absolute refusal, and your preparedness to fight for your rights!"

"Your *Cadis* (religious judges) and *Ulma* (clergymen) and all leaders of the Supreme Moslem Council must publicly declare their stand against the infamous attack on their honor and rights. Let them convoke a conference, and proclaim their stand. The people will join them and lend their support in the struggle.

"The four members of the Moslem Council were elected by the people's representatives. It is their duty to refuse to cooperate with the new Commission appointed by the government to control the *Waqf*.

"People! Better to close your mosques and your religious courts, than to agree that your *Imams* (cantors) shall serve British imperialism, who will prescribe what to preach Fridays and what to teach in the mosques. They will go even further, if you will remain quiet. They will yet forbid your *Imams* to read the verses (in the Koran) on the *Jehad* (holy war) and to denounce imperialism. They will not permit any verse (of the *Koran*) that inspires us with strength and determination to fight against them!

"Call a conference of the spiritual leaders, the *Cadis*, the *Imams*, and preachers, and all officers of the Moslem Council! Let them proclaim a strike—until the government will restore to the people their religious rights, and will dissolve the new Commission, at the head of which are English imperialists—the Commission aiming to control Moslem affairs!

"Boycott this Commission. Do not negotiate with it. Every one who cooperates with it is a traitor to his Fatherland, a renegade!

"Close the mosques and courts until the government returns your stolen rights, and will refrain from meddling in your religious affairs.

"People! Raise your ringing voice and demand:

- (1) "The return of the deported leaders, and the amnesty of the imprisoned;
- (2) "The restoration of the 'Supreme Moslem Council' and the national committees, with their full powers;
- (3) "Dismissal of the new *Waqf* committee and the restoration of *Haj Amin Husseini* (the Mufti), to his position, and full authority to the Moslem Council;
- (4) "Nullification of all fines on the villages, dismissal of all special police, who are paid by special assessments on the villages;
- (5) "Stoppage of destruction of houses, and other brutal acts of imperialism.

"These," ends the proclamation, "are your demands, from which you must not retreat. Victory will surely come with the help of Moslems and Arabs from all countries."

It is signed, "Central Committee of the Palestine Communist Party."