

On the Jewish Problem

IT is a long time since I saw such a tangle of confusion and contradictions as that displayed by Bert Ramelson in "An Old Problem Re-discussed".

The very first sentence claims that "The Jewish problem is not the same as the problem of Israel". A very convenient sort of theory which leaves only anti-semitism as the real problem. The truth is that the existence of Israel impinges, to some extent, on Jewish life in all countries, and Ramelson underlines this truth in his own article, by dealing at some length with the problem of Israel and then contradicting his own theory.

Similarly, on the national question he emphasises that since the Jews are not a nation, they cannot be affected by the national question. If that is true, how is it that Ramelson himself can state as he does that an "Israeli nation is rapidly emerging"? Can such a nation emerge in such circumstances without pre-supposing that the national question does indeed apply? Should we not be examining the particular historic forms and inter-connections that gave it birth?

I think it is time we realised that our approach as in Ramelson's article has led us into a blind alley. The theory that "anti-semitism is the main

issue" was true enough in the pre-war years and succeeded in rallying the Jews in the fight against Fascism. But we have failed altogether to recognise the intense feeling of Jewish consciousness that arose as a direct result of the Nazi murders and which had such a powerful impetus on the national struggle for the State of Israel. Since the war, this factor has played a much more important part in Jewish life than the problem of anti-semitism. By ignoring it as we have done, we have cut ourselves off from the main body of Jewish people so that the splendid and widespread support we were once proud to have is now at a low ebb.

More than that, as our influence decreases, that of the reactionaries grows. The sad fact related by Ramelson of Jewish workers supporting the Suez aggression shows the extent of this decline among a body of workers that were always generally clear-sighted politically.

Only when we take cognisance of the new Jewish consciousness and work out a positive policy in line with it will we once again take up the position of leadership that we once held on the Jewish question.

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