BLACK AMERICANS

AND THE

MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

2059

Henry Winston

OTHER NEW PAMPHLETS

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Henry Winston was born in Mississippi in 1911. He is only two generations from slavery—his grandfather was a slave.

At the age of 19, Winston joined the Young Communist League and entered the struggles of the unemployed in Kansas City, 'Missouri. He participated in the National Hunger March to Washington, D.C. in 1932. He aided the defense of the Scottsboro Boys, and took part in the National Negro Congress and in the Southern Conference for Human Welfare.

During World War II Winston served in the Army Engineers for almost 4 years, and received an honorable discharge. Soon afterward, he was prosecuted under the infamous Smith Act, and in 1956 began an 8-year prison sentence. While in prison he became blind as a result of deliberate neglect of his health by the prison authorities. World-wide protests brought about his release in 1961.

At the 18th National Convention of the Communist Party in 1966 he was elected National Chairman of the Party, and was re-elected to this post at the 19th National Convention in 1969.

He is the author of numerous articles and pamphlets. Among his most recent pamphlets are New Colonialism: U.S. Style, Negro-White Unity, and Build The Communist Party—The Party of the Working Class. The last of these is his report to the 19th Convention of the Communist Party.

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Black Americans and the Middle East Conflict*

The Statement on the Middle East adopted by the Political Committee of the Communist Party on April 9, 1970 declared: "The situation in the Middle East is a grave one." Noting that a virtual state of warfare exists between Israel and the United Arab Republic, this statement warned that: "The danger of a flareup into full scale warfare grows daily, with the attendant peril of escalation into world nuclear war." The Statement further declared that "the primary source of the growing war danger is the continuing aggressive, expansionist policies which led to the Israeli aggression in 1967."

Nixon's Middle East Policies

Nearly three months later, President Nixon approved Phantom jets, Skyhawks and other military material for Israel. At almost the same time, in an interview with news analysts of CBS, NBC and ABC, he stated that he was for "peace" and the "integrity of every country in the area." These Phantoms and Skyhawks will be used to replenish the arsenal of the Meir-Begin-Dayan government for stepped-up military actions against the UAR, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, for increased raids on civilian targets, for greater use of napalm.

There is already talk about the use of the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean. In the same interview, Mr. Nixon laid the basis for this imperialist action when he asserted that "Israel is not desirous of driving any other countries into the sea—the other countries do want to drive Israel into the sea."

There is not a single major Arab government which subscribes to this idea nor is such a position held by the Arab masses. This fact Mr. Nixon knows very well. This falsification is needed to deceive the people of the United States lest there develop a movement in opposition to his policies in the Middle East similar to the great outburst against the Cambodian invasion extending the war in Indochina.

The President attempts to cloak the policies of U.S. imperialism by talk of "balance of power." Says he, "it is in the interest of the

^{*}This was written prior to the agreement for a Middle East cease-fire, which began August 8, 1970.

United States (read U.S. imperialism—H.W.) to maintain the balance of power—and we will maintain that balance of power." (Emphasis mine—H.W.) Here is the brandishing of the iron fistl The balance of power" concept reveals two things at once: anti-Sovietism and racism.

What Mr. Nixon is now saying was formulated in our statement in these words: "Today U.S. imperialism, seeking to offset the defeat of its efforts to overthrow the anti-imperialist governments of the UAR and Syria, and to counteract the growing strength of the Left and anti-imperialist forces throughout the Arab world, is using Israeli military power as its instrument. For this purpose it is supplying Israel with offensive military aircraft, despite her already overwhelming air superiority."

Mr. Nixon consciously and deliberately avoids mentioning the U.N. Resolution of November 22, 1967. This resolution calls for a peaceful settlement and, in the words of the Statement, "is based on both withdrawal from the occupied territories and recognition of Israel's right to exist in peace and security."

Everyone knows that the UAR, Jordan and Lebanon support and fight for the implementation of this resolution. The Soviet Union upholds these efforts for a peaceful settlement and consistently gives support to the peoples fighting for liberation from imperialism.

A special dispatch from Cairo to the New York Times (July 4, 1970) quotes a Western observer as stating: "It's not easy for the Egyptians to proclaim it at this time—but they have done everything except run up the Israeli flag and salute it to make it clear that the annihilation of Israel is no longer their objective." Their actual objective, as stated in the dispatch, is to "regain territories lost to Israel in the 1967 war and to gain a settlement for Palestinian refugees." Such reactions were general, and the Egyptians answered this calumny of President Nixon with great indignation. The stumbling block to implementing the U.N. resolution is its rejection, in any meaningful sense, by the Israeli government. This rejection, which is fully backed by the Nixon Administration, stems from the Zionist-inspired annexationist policy of Israel's rulers.

The real struggle for peace and national liberation is "transformed" by Mr. Nixon through a sleight-of-hand. To him, the immediate danger in the Middle East is now a struggle between capitalism and socialism, or put in his language, the danger of confrontation between "the two superpowers." This is imperialist arrogance with a vengeance. The existence of Israel as an independent state, the role of other powers in the Middle East and Africa—in particular, Britain, France.

West Germany, Belgium—are here viewed in the light of catspaws supporting policies of U.S. neo-colonialism and its dominance in a system of continuing imperialist oppression.

Boiled down, this is the essence of Nixon's present-day Middle East policies.

The dangers facing our people today are far greater than those which came from the soil of Nazi Germany and led to World War II. The greater danger of today, emanating from the soil of the United States, sharply poses the threat of thermonuclear war. Nixon's policy is the very opposite of the struggle for peace, democracy, national liberation, the rights of the Jewish people in Israel and the existence of Israel as a state, and it fundamentally contradicts the national interests of the people of the United States as well.

There is still time to check and reverse such a policy, leading in the direction of military collision and disaster. However, some leaders have drawn quite different conclusions. Many of them speak of peace, but are in reality supporting policies which knock at the door of world conflagration.

For example, I recently spent several weeks in the Democratic Republic of The Sudan and witnessed first-hand how the Revolutionary Council is building a national democratic state. I saw how it is leading the nation at a quickened pace in liquidating the crimes of British imperialism and unfolding a program of national reconstruction corresponding to the real needs of the people. Later I visited the Republic of Uzbekistan in the U.S.S.R., and there studied how socialism had rescued a people from Czarist oppression and brought about phenomenal developments in industry, agriculture, education, health, culture, the sciences, etc.

The march of the people of the Sudan toward political and economic independence from imperialism could lead to the same results. This was one of the greatest developments in the Middle East and on the continent of Africa. The realization of the age-old dream of the peoples in their fight for freedom from imperialism was moving from dawn to daylight.

The New York Times Ad

Upon my return I read in the New York Times on June 28, 1970 a full-page ad with the following heading: "An Appeal by Black Americans for United States Support to Israel." It was sponsored by the A. Philip Randolph Institute, headed by Bayard Rustin. This ad is a distinct service to the imperialist policies of the Nixon Administration in the Middle East. At the same time it is a distinct disservice to the

Black people of the United States, as it is to all proponents of peace and lovers of democracy in the U.S.

And this happens at a moment when the racist policy of the Administration is openly showing its fangs. Bishop Stephen G. Spotswood, Chairman of the National Board of Directors of the N.A.A.C.P., in his keynote address to that organization's annual convention held in Cincinnati at the end of June 1970, was right when he declared:

For the first time since Woodrow Wilson, we have a national administration that can be rightly characterized as anti-Negro. This is the first time since 1920 that the national administration has made it a calculated policy to work against the needs and aspirations of the largest minority of its citizens.

Nonetheless, the contents of this appeal for support to Israel should be read and studied, for mirrored in it is the true face of social democracy in general, and especially its adaptation by Mr. Rustin, who has the task of presenting it in such a way as to make it palatable to Black people. Of interest is the fact that Mr. Rustin succeeded in establishing a united front with the main integrationist current of Black reformism. And on the basis of opportunism, of a conscious omission of basic facts and a partial statement of truths, he was able to publish this appeal with the signatures of 64 Black men and women as a partial list of sponsors. Among the 64 are these 31: 10 representatives of unions, 5 from churches, 5 congressmen, 2 mayors, 3 state senators, 1 judge, 2 educators and 3 journalists. Some of these pepole are eminent fighters for peace and equal rights, and are active participants in the struggle against imperialism in general.

As I read this ad I recalled that Bayard Rustin had been concerned with sharecropping over a considerable period, and the following thought came to me:

Some sharecropping remains in the Black Belt of the South, even though sharecropping as a system no longer exists. The fight against the impoverishment of the tenants is an economic, political and social struggle whose character is objectively anti-feudal and anti-imperialist. The working class and all democrats must give unstinting support to this struggle.

Mr. Bayard Rustin might also be said to be a "sharecropper." But he is a different kind of "sharecropper," living in an urban community. He is a "political tenant" of a certain section of the bourgeoisie, and not of a plantation owner supervised by the riding boss. The share of the crop for this "political tenant" is the permission to give the appearance of developing a real struggle against the Nixon Administra-

tion, but in reality only shadow-boxing with it. The share of the crop for the master is "Phantom jets for Israel." What an exchangel An examination of the contents of the ad will suffice to show how Bayard Rustin performs his difficult feat.

First, in its 800-word statement on Israel and the Middle East the word "imperialism" is completely absent. Any serious student of the Middle East would be interested in knowing about the nature of the struggle, especially about the fight against imperialism, not only in the use of concepts like "colonies" and "neo-colonialism," but also about the stage of development of the struggle against imperialism, which varies from country to country.

It may be difficult to believe but the name of Nixon is not even mentioned, although the demand for Phantom jets can be implemented only by the Nixon Administration. The one point that is raised is anti-Sovietism. I shall refer to this later in a different context.

The first sentence of the ad reads: "The crisis in the Middle East is a cause of great concern to all Americans, non-Jew as well as Jew, black as well as white." The second sentence expresses the "concern" of Black people over this danger. The "motivation" for this "concern," the ad declares, is "not only . . . the threat to world peace which is posed by the Arab-Israeli conflict. We are also moved by the ideals which we have struggled to achieve in this country and which we firmly believe the U.S. should uphold in the Middle East."

The reader would expect to find issuing from such a pronouncement, conclusions which would give a true estimate of the situation in the Middle East, and would help to rally the masses, black and white, in struggle for a just solution of the conflict. But the ad completely avoids this question. The reason for this is evident. To give such an estimate would require, on the one hand, an exposure of Israeli aggression, of its support by U.S. imperialism, of national oppression inside Israel and the occupied territories, of the class struggle inside Israel, and of the mounting opposition to the policies being pursued. On the other hand, it would necessitate an honest presentation of the just struggle of the Arab peoples against imperialism. This is a difficult and complicated fight, within each of the Arab countries, against the comprador capitalists and other domestic reactionaries who are the mainstay of imperialist rule.

The oppressed millions understand that the impoverished position of the masses, the prevalence of illiteracy, ignorance, disease, and economic and social backwardness in general, are the bitter fruit of centuries of imperialist rule. The beautiful rhetoric in the ad conveniently covers up these facts of life. The ad states: "In our opinion the U.S. can best stand by these ideals by unequivocally guaranteeing Israel's security." Instead of a call to the people to compel adherence to the U.N. Resolution of November 1967, there is an appeal for greater U.S. involvement in the war in the Middle East.

There is no danger to the "security of Israel." This danger could arise only if there is a continuation of present Israeli policies, which cannot but lead toward thermonuclear war. The danger increases in direct proportion to the extent to which this kind of false appeal is made. For shamel

Racism in Israel

Acknowledging that Israel has its "shortcomings," the ad then asserts: "It is by far the most democratic country in the Middle East." Let us say, for the sake of argument, that this is true. Can this be a justification for Israeli aggression in the Middle East? Should not such aggression be condemned just as U.S. aggression in Indochina is condemned?

The ad does not tell us that Israel is not and has never been a colonial country. Israel is a capitalist country, and the ruling class directs the affairs of state under conditions of capitalist democracy.

In the Sudan, as I have noted, I encountered a higher type of development, that is, the growth of national democracy. This is not a democracy serving the interests of a ruling class, but of the entire people fighting for complete liberation from the vestiges of imperialism, and marching along the path toward socialism. The achievement of this goal will put an end to exploitation and national oppression, and will serve the interests of the nation as it continues to fight for peace in the Middle East and throughout the world.

Then we encounter this gem: "What is remarkable is that the high degree of political freedom has not diminished despite the constant need to maintain military preparedness." What is overlooked in this tribute to "political freedom" is the fact that within Israel there exists widespread national and racial discrimination and oppression—economic, social and political. This stems directly from the Zionist conception of Israel as an exclusively Jewish state and as a "Western" state—a state in which non-Jews and non-Westerners are looked upon as outsiders.

I shall quote an observation made by Dr. Hyman Lumer, editor of *Political Affairs*, in a pamphlet entitled *Which Way Israel?* (New Outlook Publishers, New York, 1966). He writes:

Israeli society suffers from the widespread existence of national discrimination and oppression within the country. Most notorious

is the oppression of the Arab minority, numbering some 270,000. Indeed, the Arab question in Israel plays a role in many ways comparable to that of the Negro question in the U.S. . . .

Continuing, Dr. Lumer says:

The powers of military rule have been used as a political weapon against Arabs daring to struggle against their oppression. They have been used also as an instrument for confiscating the lands of Arabs.

He goes on to say:

National oppression in Israel is not confined to Arabs; it is also the lot of the darker-skinned Jews of Asian and African origin. These have migrated to Israel in large numbers lately, chiefly from Yemen and Iraq, and are now about half of its total

population. . .

Their housing density is three to five times that of other groups. They are likewise crowded into the most unskilled, lowest-paying jobs. In 1964 their per capita monthly income was less than half of that of Western Jews and native-born Israelis. And they lagfar behind in education. They are subjected to all sorts of insults and indignities. "Cushi,' the Biblical term for Negro," says a New York Times story (January 29, 1965), "has taken on the same pejorative meaning in Israel as 'nigger' in the United States."

Or read this passage from a forthcoming pamphlet by Dr. Lumer:

Illustrative of the attitude towards "Orientals" is an article by Yael Dayan in the Israeli newspaper Yediot Aharonot (March 22, 1968) in which she tells of her difficulties in selling a house. "It's the neighborhood," the real estate agent tells her. She explains:

"The house's only neighbors are 'Orientals.' It borders on a Yemenite quarter called Morashah, and actually forms the border-line between the respectable neighborhood of Naveh Magen, which boasts of Israeli army commanders, and the Yemenite quarter, with one-story houses and nice gardens whose sons serve in the army of the Chief of Staff who lives on the right side of the neighborhood—a matter of two to three hundred meters. . . . It was thus that ghettos were formed. Thus grew the Negro, the Puerto Rican and the Jewish slums. Would you want your daughter to marry a Negro? Would you want to have a Jew as your neighbor? . . .

"I don't know what is more insulting—the fact that the whole phenomenon exists, or the total lack of shame implicit in openly admitting it. I would have paid 5,000 more for the house had it been in another neighborhood, a respectable lady told me. Five thousand Israeli pounds more so that Rabinovitz's children won't play with the children of this quarter. Five thousand pounds more

so that they won't mix, God forbid, with those who have dark eyes and black hair"

I should think that this is certainly "remarkable." But is it not strange that we are not told about this?

For or Against Imperialism?

The ad, nonetheless, hastens to tell us about the limitations of democratic liberties in the Arab countries, and correctly exposes the role of the Sheikdoms. But it never mentions that these are the creation of imperialism, and that their share of the take, which is used for their own enrichment, is but a small share of the riches extracted by foreign imperialism, which goes into the banks of London, Brussels and Wall Street. It never tells us that the most reactionary of these Sheikdoms, such as Saudi Arabia, are closely tied to the United States.

Neither does the ad tell us of the growing struggle of the masses in the Arab world for greater clarity, to put an end precisely to this state of affairs. The writers of the ad are learned men, and cannot be ignorant of these facts.

For example, we are told that the struggles in the Sudan and Biafra are not racial in character, but we are not told what they are. This cannot be done without explaining the role of imperialism which inflames racial strife and incites separatist movements all over Africa. This was the meaning of Biafra, Katanga, and now the policies of imperialism in the southern region of the Sudan. It is inseparably related to the overall policies of imperialism against the movement for national liberation. We are given a partial truth, only for the purpose of deception, only to hide the real essence of things.

The crocodile tears, shed in the form of "concern" for the "Arab refugees" and the "concern" about "the continuation of the conflict" as being against the interests of the people, become once more nothing but rhetoric, and meaningless when an appeal in the name of Black Americans is made to grant Phantom jets to Israel.

Growing tens of millions throughout the world recognize the role of the Soviet Union in its quest for peace and its support of the peoples struggling for freedom from imperialism. The ad states: "We believe that the United States has a vital role to play in ending the crisis. If it does not stand firm in the Middle East, the Soviet Union will be encouraged to increase its intervention, thereby escalating the conflict still further."

What do they call "intervention"? Against what does the ad call upon the President to act? The fact is that the reference in the ad to "Soviet intervention" is designed simply to conceal the true nature of

Soviet aid to the developing countries of Africa.

From a pamphlet by D. Chertkov, entitled *Time-Tested Friendship* (Novosti Publishing House, Moscow, 1969), we extract the following facts which show the kind of aid given by the Soviet Union in Africa and the Middle East:

The Soviet Union is helping Algeria to build nearly 80 projects... The biggest is the steel plant with a designed capacity of 300-350 thousand tons of rolled stock a year [which] will provide a basis for the country's industrialization...

On March 17, 1965 a Soviet-Iraqi protocol was signed for building a power station and water reservoir on the Euphrates and the con-

struction of a tractor assembly plant. . . .

When the enterprises now being built with Soviet assistance are commissioned, power production will increase 2.5 times in the United Arab Republic, steel production, 4-5 times, and cable production, 3 times. It will reduce or completely cut down the import of ships, coke, fine steel sheets, forgings, machine tools, instruments, electrodes, pharmaceutical preparations, radio sets, lubricants, etc.

While I was in the Sudan I learned that the Soviet Union had helped that country to work out a five-year plan whose goal is to build industry, mechanize agriculture, carry out electrification, extend transportation and communication facilities, and develop educational, health and cultural facilities. I saw with my own eyes, in the upper Nile Province in the South of the Sudan, how virgin lands, many thousands of acres never before touched by a plow, are now being cultivated on a cooperative basis. The tractors used for this come from the Soviet Union. The first phase of this program will be funded with internal Sudanese resources from nationalization of foreign-owned banks. The other sources of funds for the plan will come from the socialist countries, primarily from the Soviet Union. The old government in the Sudan limited Soviet aid to the building of two elevators, a milk cannery, two fruit and vegetable canneries and a few other such enterprises. But this changed sharply after the revolution of May 25, 1969, when a new relationship developed.

The pamphlet also states:

A considerable part of goods from developing countries comes to the U.S.S.R. in payment for Soviet plant, machinery and expertise. Developing countries acquire a stable and expanding market in the U.S.S.R. for their goods, which serves to maintain stable prices for these goods on the world market and reinforces their position vis-avis international monopolies which seek to reap extra profits from price cuts on raw materials and foods imported from tropical countries.

These are but a few examples out of the many countries receiving aid. Every state rightfully has its own army, which is a pillar of state power. The question is, what kind of state and what kind of army, what kind of state policy and what kind of military policy? If the policy of the state is one of national democracy, the policy of the armed forces must also take on this character. In the newly-liberated countries the role of the army is, in keeping with this, definitely anti-imperialist.

With the rise of the socialist world, and particularly of the Soviet Union, something new has developed in this respect. Previously, in states under the domination of imperialism, the armed forces could be built only in reliance on the imperialist powers, which took care that they would serve the interests of imperialism and the perpetuation of colonial or semi-colonial status. They were designed to be used against the people in these states, and in support of the aggressive policies of imperialism.

What is new is that the Soviet Union and other socialist countries pursue a diametrically opposite policy, one which flows from the very nature of socialism. Its aim is freedom from imperialism, and in this there is a complete correspondence of interests between the socialist countries and the newly-liberated countries. The aid which is given to a country in building its armed forces is designed not for aggression, not for use against the people, but for working with the people in the development of the country and in wiping out the crimes of imperialism.

The attack on Soviet aid to the Arab states as an act of "intervention" is a conscious and deliberate piece of propaganda by imperialism, which social democracy helps to spread. It is a shield for the policies of the Nixon Administration. The concept of "balance of power" in the Middle East is in reality a device for maintaining the status of U.S. imperialism in that area. For how can one speak of a "balance" between imperialist rule and independence? One or the other must prevail. The ad places itself on the side of the perpetuation of imperialist domination.

The slogan of "no right of Israel to exist" is the propaganda of imperialism. The healthy national sentiment among the Jewish masses is being monstrously distorted, and by confusion and falsification of fact is transformed into the nationalism of the Jewish bourgeoisie, into adherence to its most reactionary expression, Zionism. The attempted cleverness in the writing of the ad miserably fails to conceal this simple truth. That is why all progressives and lovers of peace, black

and white—all who are anti-fascist, anti-monopoly, and anti-imperialist—cannot remain silent in the face of attacks which would attempt to separate the anti-imperialist movements from their greatest friend, the Soviet Union, which renders them all-round assistance in their quest for freedom.

A Regrettable Editorial

It is with regret that I read in an editorial appearing in the Morning Freiheit (July 1, 1970) the following: "The call of 64 Black leaders to support Israel in the fight for her existence must be strongly greeted." (Emphasis mine—H.W.) The Morning Freiheit observes that the call is "a very good answer" to the "extremists" who "want to present the war in the Middle East as part of the struggle of the Black people in this country and in Africa against white imperialism." The issue is not fairly posed. If the editorial writer is referring to the struggle of the Arab people against classical colonialism and neo-colonialism, there can be no doubt that such a struggle is an inseparable part of the fight of the whole of the African people for liberation from imperialism. And this is indissolubly linked to the struggle of Black people in the U.S. for complete and unconditional equality.

However, the expansionist policies of the Israeli government, its occupation of Arab lands, its military attacks which flow from an aggressive war policy, are in the interests of the imperialist bourgeoisie in the U.S. and the Israeli ruling class which is subservient to it. This is a war against the liberation movement in the Middle East, in the whole of Africa, just as it is a war which undermines the struggle for equal rights for Black people in the U.S. The Morning Freiheit nevertheless considers the call to be a "very good answer."

The Morning Freiheit restates some of the arguments in the ad and expresses agreement with them. I have discussed these arguments above.

The Morning Freiheit is incorrect when it writes: "But the call of the Black leaders is not only important because of its correct attitude toward Israel." And it is incorrect when it says that the issuance of such a statement is "also very important for Jewish-Black relations in our country."

When one speaks of Black-Jewish unity the question is: unity for what? The unity expressed by the supporters of the ad is apparently unity against a danger to Israel's existence—a danger which is actually non-existent. But in reality it is quite definitely unity in support of U.S. imperialist policies in the Middle East.

These policies are threefold:

- 1. Continued control by U.S. imperialism of the oil riches in the Middle East.
- Support of puppet regimes which are obedient to the will of imperialism, in order to check and reverse the advances made by the people in the Arab countries toward political and economic independence.
- 3. Strengthening and reinforcing the imperialist ramparts in the Mediterranean, including NATO, and enhancement of the position of imperialism for struggle against the socialist world.

Jewish-Black relations can never be based on support of such policies.

The Morning Freiheit is absolutely right when it notes that: "The 'establishment' has done everything it could to divide the two minorities—Jews and Black people—and to try to create hatred between them." It is further correct in saying: "The racists who fight against full equality for Black people and who also hate Jews incite both and try to spread anti-Semitism among Black people." And it correctly concludes that ". . . Black people and Jews, should be united among themselves in the fight against racism. They must see who is their common enemy and must fight with united forces against the racism which is the blood brother of anti-Semitism. A great number of Jewish leaders also see the great importance of such a struggle. The quicker and the more broadly the united struggle develops the better it will be for both minorities and for American democracy in general."

This is not only good, but very good—if it is understood that such unity in the fight against racism and anti-Semitism must be a unity which includes all democratic forces in the country, and in the first place the labor movement. Such unity must first of all clearly identify the enemy (the racists and anti-Semites) and the allies in the struggle as well. And it must be based on struggle against racist trends among the Jewish people, such as the crusade which is now developing in some quarters against an alleged "anti-Semitism on the Left."

The massive concentration of the ideologists of imperialism must not derail the *Morning Freiheit* from the glorious role it has hitherto played and must continue to play in the fight against imperialism. The entire progressive movement has a right to look forward to the paper's unfolding of an ideological and political struggle against imperialism's two main weapons: anti-Sovietism and racism. A very good beginning would be the complete rejection and renunciation of the view that there exists a universal Arab insistence on the "non-existence of Israel," which is but a hoax of imperialism.

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