



TODAY ABROAD

by Joseph Clark

An Amazing Demand From East Germany

FOR A YEAR and a half in 1951-1952 difficult negotiations were conducted between the Israeli and West German governments concerning reparations. The extreme Right Wing in German politics objected to the whole idea of making recompense for the terrible wrongs inflicted on the Jews by the Nazis.

The Adenauer government itself was riddled with former Nazis. For example, Hans Globke, State Secretary of the Adenauer government, was a co-author of the "commentaries" on Hitler's Nuremberg Racial Laws. These "commentaries" were used as a basis for the Nazi extermination campaign against the Jews. A conservative newspaper, the Frankfurter Rundschau, called Globke's "commentaries" the "banners above the trail of millions of murdered human beings of Jewish ancestry."

FINALLY THE reparations agreement was signed and Israel has been getting valuable German products ever since. These include machinery for factories, equipment for reclaiming the desert, railroad cars, ships, etc. This was exactly the type of capital goods necessary for the very existence of the new state. It is the type of capital goods which every Middle Eastern country needs and on a much larger scale.

The tragedy of the Middle East is that its people exist in a sea—or desert—of poverty. Western interests dominated the area for over 30 years following World War I. They have taken out billions in profits—mainly from oil. But they have left the Arab countries poor, disease ridden, under-developed.

Regardless of one's views

about Israel's foreign policy, its alignment with the West in the cold war, its support for the colonial powers on many issues—one thing was just and necessary, the reparations agreement with West Germany.

I for one was therefore amazed to read a report that the Communist German Democratic Republic has denounced the Adenauer government for continuing to supply Israel with reparations commodities. It is understandable that in Europe, as well as throughout Asia and Africa, and in our country too, there has been overwhelming public opposition to the invasion of Egypt by Britain, France and Israel. The United Nations condemnation of the invasion was almost unanimous.

BUT TWO WRONGS won't make a right and it's unbelievable to read the angry fulminations of the East German authorities against West Germany's decision to continue paying reparations. That small measure of atonement for the murder of six million Jews is attacked by the East German Foreign Ministry because it "unscrupulously violates the interests of the German people."

True it is that the interests of all people were violated by the invasion of Egypt. It is equally true that the Western powers, led by the oil billionaires of our country, violate the interests of peace and security in the Middle East with their military alliances, their colonialism, their efforts to suppress the Arab liberation movement. But in the name of justice and common sense how can such efforts be confused with the payment of reparations for the murder of most of the Jews of Europe?

There is no question that the Adenauer government is acting not from any considerations of honor and justice. The fact that Hitlerites are active on all levels of the West German regime is evidence to the contrary. But again we would ask, how in the name of all that is decent can any good come from a demand that the West German government stop paying reparations to Israel?

PERHAPS IT IS timely to remind some political figures of the approaching 10th anniversary of a famous speech by a Soviet representative in UN—Andrei Gromyko is his name. That speech together with the parallel action of the U.S. in UN, led to the establishment of the state of Israel. Gromyko's name means thunder in Russian, but he spoke quietly as he told how "the sufferings and miseries of the Jewish people are beyond description." And he hurled a challenge at that time which couldn't be answered by any of the Western powers:

"The fact that not a single Western European state has been in a position to guarantee the defense of the elementary rights of the Jewish people or compensate them for the violence they have suffered at the hands of the Fascist hangmen explains the aspirations of the Jews for the creation of a state of their own. It would be unjust not to take this into account and to deny the right of the Jewish people to the realization of such an aspiration."

Today those words are a challenge to both the leaders of the Soviet Union as well as of the West. And all Middle East solutions will have to take into account and protect the rights and the sovereignty of all—the Arab peoples, as well as Israel.