



# REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISM

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF THE RCIT

ONE WORLD - ONE STRUGGLE - ONE REVOLUTION



[www.thecommunists.net](http://www.thecommunists.net)

Issue Nr.38

August 2015

# The Origins of the Jews

by Yossi Schwartz

Price: €3 / \$3,5 / £2

# English-Language Journal of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), No. 38, August 2015

Preface of the Editorial Board	p.3
Chapter I: What are the origins of the Jews?	p.4
Chapter II: The Rise of Anti-Semitism	p.9
Chapter III: Anti-Semitism and Zionism	p.17
Chapter IV: The Russian Revolution: Bolshevism, the Bund, and Stalinism	p.23
Booklets on Russian Imperialism	p.28
NEW BOOK: Building the Revolutionary Party	p.17
Books from the RCIT	p.29
RCIT: What do we stand for	p. 30

*Front page: Jewish female resistance fighter who were arrested during the Uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto in April-May 1943*

Published by the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT). The RCIT has sections in Pakistan (Revolutionary Workers Organisation, RWO), Sri Lanka (United Lankan Workers Party, ULWP), Brazil (Corrente Comunista Revolucionária, CCR), Israel/Occupied Palestine (Internationalist Socialist League, ISL), USA (Revolutionary Workers Collective, RWC), and Austria (Revolutionary Communist Organisation for Liberation, RKOB). In addition the RCIT has members in Yemen, Tunisia and Britain.

**[www.thecommunists.net](http://www.thecommunists.net) - [rcit@thecommunists.net](mailto:rcit@thecommunists.net)  
Füchselhofgasse 6, 1120 Vienna, Austria**

# The Origins of the Jews

By Yossi Schwartz, July 2015

## Preface of the Editorial Board

The following booklet by comrade Yossi Schwartz analyzes the history of the Jews and anti-Semitism. He outlines the emergence and development of discrimination against the Jews, the various forms of anti-Semitism (including its Stalinist version), the relationship of anti-Semitism and Zionism as well as the principles of the Marxist program to fight anti-Semitism.

For over five decades Yossi, an Israeli-Jew, has been a Trotskyist and Anti-Zionist. Since the beginning of his political activity in the 1960s, he has consistently been a supporter of the Palestinian liberation struggle. Schwartz is a long-time leader of the *Internationalist Socialist League* which joined the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* in spring 2013, becoming the RCIT's section in Occupied Palestine/Israel. He currently lives in Jerusalem. The author has published a number of essays and articles on the Jewish question and the Palestinian liberation struggle against the Zionist state as well as other subjects. In particular we refer readers to his two historical studies on Israel's wars in 1948 and 1967. (\*)

The following booklet was originally written by comrade Schwartz in 2003 and was published by the "*International Marxist Tendency*" of which he was then a member. The author has edited the document for republication. We republish the booklet not only because of its important historical analysis but also because it addresses and shatters various myths spread by reactionary anti-Semites as well as others circulated by Zionists.

**Footnotes:**

(\*) Yossi Schwartz: Israel's War of 1948 and the Degeneration of the Fourth International, in: *Revolutionary Communism*, Special Issue on Palestine, No. 10, June 2013, [www.thecommunists.net/theory/israel-s-war-of-1948-1](http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/israel-s-war-of-1948-1)

Yossi Schwartz: Israel's Six-Day War of 1967. On the Character of the War, the Marxist Analysis and the Position of the Israeli Left, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 12, July/August 2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/israel-s-war-of-1967/>

For an overview of the Trotskyist strategy for Israel / Occupied Palestine we refer readers to the RCIT's section program: Summary of the Program of the Internationalist Socialist League, February 2014, <http://www.the-isleague.com/our-platform/>

An additional elaboration of the Trotskyist program can be read in: Michael Pröbsting: On some Questions of the Zionist Oppression and the Permanent Revolution in Palestine, in: *Revolutionary Communism*, Special Issue on Palestine, No. 10, June 2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/permanent-revolution-in-palestine>

**Order from our contact adress past issues of the RCIT's Journal Revolutionary Communism!**



## Chapter I: What are the origins of the Jews?

In part one Yossi Schwartz looks at the origins of the Jewish people, separating myth from documented historical fact. This is a reply both to the racist anti-Semites and also to the official myth constructed by the Zionists.

Contrary to the common belief pushed by Christian and Jewish Priests and Rabbis that anti-Semitism is rooted in the Jewish religion, it is in fact rooted in the social contradictions of class society, beginning with slave society. It is not the different sets of religious dogmas that have been fighting each other for thousands of years. It is the social class interests that have been fighting each other. Since the history of humankind is based on the evolution of the forces of production, upon which a superstructure of politics, laws and ideas have sprung, we are obliged to seek the roots of the hatred of the Jews in the position of the Jews in different societies, namely their place in the different modes of production and the different stages of the evolution of these societies.

A very common assumption is that the history of the Jews began in the 18th century B.C. in the Middle Bronze period with the Hebrew nomads who settled in Canaan. According to the Jewish tradition, the father of the Jews was Abraham, who emigrated at that time from the Fertile Crescent, the part of the world where human civilization began less than 10,000 years ago. The Fertile Crescent encompasses the area between the banks of the Nile in Egypt, the Levant (the middle section where Israel/Palestine is located), and the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. Some six or seven thousand years ago, society evolved from hunting and gathering people who spent their whole day looking for food, to people who were able to domesticate livestock. This meant they could raise animals for food and milk production, their hides, and to plow the land in order to grow crops.

Once this occurred, there was a surplus of food. This was the first form of surplus value, which led to population growth and the division of labour. Society became divided between those that worked, such as craftsmen and warriors, and those who were liberated from work, such as scholars and priests. This in turn led to the growth of cities.

The Fertile Crescent is the result of three great rivers responsible for the fertility, and consequent desirability, of this area. The Nile is the longest river in the world. Without the Nile, Egypt would be a desert. In ancient times, 3% of Egypt was arable land and 97% was desert. The Euphrates and the Tigris Rivers run through what is today basically Iraq and Turkey - what historians have dubbed Mesopotamia, which is Greek for "in the middle of two rivers."

There is some debate whether the first civilization appeared in Egypt or in Mesopotamia (Sumer), but most anthropologists agree that writing originated in the Fertile Crescent.

Writing was a tremendous social development that allowed people to communicate much better and collect

the necessary information for their activities - namely survival. It began with pictographs. A stick for example stood for "man." Later those pictures evolved into more abstract symbols which stood for phonetic sounds, until eventually there came about a system of three "letters," each representing a sound and combining together to make a word that conveyed an idea.

On the surface of it, the Jewish tradition makes sense. True, we do not have any explanation of why a group of people left behind Ur Kasdim, or Ur of the Chaldees, which has been excavated by archeologists in today's Iraq. Why did they leave an advanced civilization in order to settle in a much less advanced society that existed in Canaan? Why did they settle in a much less fertile part of the country, namely in Canaan or the center mountains? Most of us know of course that the Bible is not a book of history but a book of theology. For this reason we are ready to reason that the Bible, including the story of Abraham, is an attempt to prove the mythical connection between the Jews and the "Promised Land". We know that unlike Egypt, which is protected by the desert, Mesopotamia had no natural defenses. It was a giant flood plain sitting in the middle of the great migration pattern of all ancient peoples. Whatever conqueror came out of Asia or out of Europe set foot here. It had no natural defenses, no mountains, and no deserts - it was very desirable fertile land. For this reason we are ready to accept the possibility that the Hebrews became nomads after they escaped Mesopotamia for their lives.

### What if this Saga is no more than a Myth?

The Jewish version of its history tells us that the next important chapter in the formation of the Jews is the exodus of the Hebrew slaves from Egypt.

In 1440 BC Egypt was ruled by Amenhotep II. It is here that the first mention of Hapiru is found in Egyptian texts. Some have argued that these are the Hebrews. However the word means "undesirables" and not "nomads", and was used to define various social groups that were disliked by the rulers of Egypt. The word "Hebrews" as a word used to describe people who lived in Egypt is not mentioned even once in any of the archeological findings. In 1365 BC Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten) came to power. He unsuccessfully tried to promote a form of "monotheism" (actually a monolatrous form of religion) with the Sun god 'Re' as the creator. If Moses were an actual historical figure, the Bible indicates that this may be the time he would have been born. Yet the story of a slave rebellion and escape is not mentioned even once in any of the archeological findings.

Is it possible then that a group of Canaanite slaves escaped from Egypt in that period and went to Canaan? We know that there were Canaanite slaves in Egypt - the Egyptian word for "Canaanite" also meant "slave". We know that some slaves escaped. Is it plausible that a group of escaped slaves from Egypt were the original "Exodus" group, and

that their story grew into the biblical story?

Some experts on this subject write: "As dim and uncertain as Hebrew history is in the age of the patriarchs, there is no question that the migration out of Egypt around 1250 BC is the single most important event in Hebrew history. More than anything else in history, this event gave the Hebrews an identity, a nation, a founder, and a name, used for the first time in the very first line of Exodus, the biblical account of the migration: "bene yisrael," "the children of Israel." (Richard Hooker, World civilization, Washington State University on the internet).

These scholars are of course aware of the fact that there is no evidence for their assertions. The same Richard Hooker wrote a few lines later: "How did this happen? How did this diverse set of tribal groups all worshipping a god they called "god," suddenly cohere into a more or less unified national group? What happened in Egypt that didn't happen with other foreigners living there?"

*Well, we really can't answer that question, for we have almost no account whatsoever of the Hebrews in Egypt, even in Hebrew history. For all the momentousness of the events of the migration for the Hebrews and the dramatic nature of the rescue, including plagues and catastrophes raining down on Egypt, the Egyptians do not seem to have noticed the Hebrews or to even know that they were living in their country. While we have several Egyptian records of foreign groups during the New Kingdom, they are records of actively expelling groups they feel are threatening or overly powerful. The Hebrews never appear in these records, nor do any of the events recounted in the Hebrew history of the event."*

So what if all of it did not happen and this is a simple myth created much later?

According to the Bible, Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt. According to the biblical narrative, the Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years and eventually came to "the Promised Land" in Canaan (Palestine). Moses died before entering Canaan, and Joshua became the next leader, a brilliant leader who forced down the walls of Jericho. Yet archeological findings tell us that in the 13th century BC, the time of the story of the Bible, that Jericho did not have any walls around it. Not only this, but the many documents of the late Bronze Period (1550-1150 B.C.) that have been discovered give us detailed reports that the Egyptians, who were at that time very powerful, ruled Canaan as a colony and would not allow some Hapirus to conquer it without a major fight, yet nothing is mentioned in the findings in Egypt about such an event.

### **What then if this saga is simply a myth?**

The story in the Bible of the Hebrews defeating the local Canaanites and settling in the area is clearly untrue. We have evidence that the Hebrews indeed lived in the central hill country and a few places near the Jordan River valley, trying to hold their own against other Canaanites and the powerful Philistines, some of which had chariots and warriors armed with iron weapons against which few could stand.

The Bible tells us of the great kings of the House of David. We are told that Solomon created the wealthiest and most powerful central government the Hebrews would ever see, and that he did so at an impossibly high cost. Land was given away to pay for his extravagances, and people

were used as forced labor in Tyre in the north.

This story however is impossible. The southern part of the mountains (Judea, where King David and Solomon ruled) was much less developed than the northern part – the Shomron, where the kingdom of Israel existed. Were these two kingdoms to be united in the 10th century BC, as we are told, it could only be under the rulers of Israel and not the rulers of the more primitive Judea.

We know that King David did exist. In 1993, a stone was discovered at a digging site in Dan with Aramaic writing that tells the story of an Aramaic king that defeated the kings of the House of King David.

But if we have evidence that King David was a real figure, the story of his great kingdom is clearly a myth. Similarly we know that King Solomon existed. However, he could not be the builder of a great temple for the Jewish god. Even the Bible tells us something very different. The Bible tells us that King Solomon did not worship only Yahweh but many other gods. Thus monotheism was not the common ideology even in the time of King Solomon. In his time Yahweh, so it seems, was one god among many.

*But king Solomon loved many foreign women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, [and] Hittites;*

*Of the nations [concerning] which the LORD said to the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in to you: [for] surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon cleaved to these in love.*

*And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.*

*For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, [that] his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as [was] the heart of David his father.*

*For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.*

(First Kings 11)

Not only this, but also the story that the Jews were monotheists (actually monolatrous) since the 13th or even the 18th century BC does not stand any serious test. Even the Bible is full of references telling us that the Hebrews worshipped other gods like El (Saturn), Jupiter, and Venus (Astarte). We will mention only a few of them:

The story of a ram in the scene of the purported sacrifice of Isaac points to Jupiter. The ram was the animal representing that planet. We should keep in mind that Malki-Zedek, the name of the High Priest of Jerusalem in the days of the Patriarch Abraham, indicates that Jupiter (in Hebrew "Zedek") was the figure around whom the cult of that city was based. Malki-Zedek means "Jupiter is my lord (king)". Many of the Psalms reflect ideas found in astral religion. The psalms "Hallel" may have been adopted from the "pagan" worship of the Morning Star. The visions of the Lord traversing the sky with rays streaming from his body, as in the book of Habbakuk, are not monotheistic. These passages, and the passages in the books of Tora telling us of sacrifices to the Supreme Being, contradict the belief that the Jews were monotheists.

As a matter of fact, not only monotheism but also Pantheism (many gods with a central god like the Greeks believed) could not appear in peoples' minds prior to a stage where the development of the forces of production allowed for the appearance of city-states, kingdoms and

empires. In the 13th century BC, we can find traces of the Hebrews in Canaan, and there was no center or city for the worship of Yahweh as there was no central government in the form of a kingdom. Each tribe had its own gods. This is common knowledge amongst the historians of that period: *"The Hebrews themselves, however, do not seem to have settled comfortably into the Yahweh religion. According to Hebrew history, the Hebrews regularly abandon the Yahweh religion for local cults, particularly Canaanite cults. The Canaanite religion focused on the god Baal, and the Hebrews frequently disassemble their Yahweh altars and build Baal altars. Those Hebrews that settle in the Canaanite cities literally disappear into the Canaanite religion; the Yahweh religion seems to have been largely maintained among the nomadic groups in the hill country"* (Richard Hooker, World civilization, Washington State University on the internet).

### **From where did the Jews come to Canaan, and when?**

Scholars have debated this question for many years. This however, is not only a leading question but a misleading one.

Archeologists who accepted the story of the occupation of Canaan by Joshua tried to discover remnants of Hebrew culture in the ruins of the cities Jericho, Belet El, Lachish, Hazor. They found many interesting things about the period but none leading to the early Israelites. These cities are located along the shores and in the rich valleys far away from the forested mountains where the early Israelites lived.

The Israelites lived on the mountains between Israel valley and the Valley of Beersheba, a part of the land that came under Israeli occupation in 1967. Here the Archeologists found the remnants of many villages.

These villages are much more primitive than the Canaanite cities. They contained no palaces, no elaborate jewellery, and some samples of very simple pottery. These villages indicate a stage of social development between that of raising sheep and farming - a stage that combines the two. It indicates the beginning of permanent settlements that could revert back to raising sheep during bad times for farming.

These people had their religious beliefs as well. Yahweh, however, could not be a god that Abraham brought with him from Ur. According to the biblical story, Moses was introduced to the cult of Yahweh after he escaped Egypt and was hiding in Sinai. Nor could this god be the same god of the late Hebrew kings. Yahweh could be only a local god, one among many.

This god of the 13th century BC was an anti monarchist. As recounted in the books Samuel I and Samuel II, the Hebrews approached Samuel, the "judge" of Israel, and demanded a king. The account makes clear that both Samuel and Yahweh considered the desire for a king to be an act of disobedience towards Yahweh; the Hebrew people, according to Samuel, would greatly suffer for this disobedience. The conflict between Yahweh and the Hebrew monarchs brings to mind another similar event that took place in Egypt - that of the Pharaoh Akhenaton, who initiated the worship of Ra, the Sun god, as the chief god and was killed for it by the priests.

### **From where did the Hebrews then take their Mythology?**

The mythological elements we find in the Bible are part of the mythology of the entire region. Here we have to point out another interesting discovery. The wave of nomads settling down in the 13th century BC to a more permanent place was not the first wave of this type but in fact the third.

The first wave was in the Early Bronze Period (3500-2200 BC). It ended around 2200-2000 BC, when the settlers resumed the lives of the nomads. The second wave took place during the Middle Bronze Period (2000-1550 BC) and ended after a crisis in the Late Bronze Period (1550-1150 BC). This pattern, in opposition to the story in the Bible (that tries to leave the impression that the Israelites destroyed the Canaanite cities), indicates that during the time of crisis of the Canaanite cities the Hebrew settlers were dependant on these cities and then became nomads once again. It is possible that the latest wave of Canaanite settlers that became the Hebrews learned their myths from the previous two waves.

### **Yahweh becomes the only Ruler**

This conflict, that eventually leads to the victory of the kings over the caste of priests, would form the basis of a massive change in the nature of the Hebrew religion.

Later on, in the 8th and the 7th centuries BC, the last kings of the two kingdoms realized that the historical development of the large empires was against the independence of small states. Slave society, like other societies in history, suffered from a major contradiction. As the economy was expanding and becoming a regional economy, it suffered from the existence of small states that blocked this extension. Every empire was driven to try and control the entire known economy. In order to accomplish this the smaller states had to become colonies. This process would reach its peak only during the Roman Empire which would be not only the highest stage but the final stage of the mode of production based on slave labor. In 722 BC, the Kingdom of Israel was defeated by the Assyrians. They forced many of the native inhabitants to relocate to other parts of their empire. At the same time they sent Assyrians to relocate in the conquered territory. The new people who settled in Israel were the Samaritans. This new population in Samaria adapted themselves to local conditions. The evidence for this is that they at first were worshipping Yahweh as well as other gods; within a couple centuries, they would be worshipping Yahweh exclusively. This caused a major schism in the religion of Yahweh: a schism between the Jews, who changed some aspects of their religion, and the Samaritans.

The Israelites who were exiled disappeared as a separate group from history permanently. They are referred to as "the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel". The reason for this is not difficult to grasp. The Assyrians did not relocate the Israelites in one place, but scattered them in small populations all over the Middle East. They were farmers who integrated themselves easily into the other cultures. The writing on the wall was clear for the rulers of Judea. The lack of a strong centralized state, as in the case of the Israelites, helped the Assyrians to conquer the Northern

Kingdom with its many gods.

Yahweh would have to change his political perspective. From the image of an anti-monarchist during the time of Samuel, he would have to become the god of a strong monarchy. This however, contrary to the story of the Bible, did not happen under David or under Solomon, but three hundred years later. It is in the writing of the Bible in the seventh century BC, more than 500 years after God supposedly spoke to Moses, that Yahweh became the chief and only God of the Hebrews of Judea. The Bible was rearranged at that time to explain Jewish mythology from the ideological point of view of the royal priests of Judea. These priests claimed that there was a united kingdom under the house of David in order to justify an attempt to organize such a kingdom.

In 701 BC, the Assyrian Sennacherib gained territory from Judah, and the Jews would have suffered the same fate as the Israelites had it not been for the fact that by 625 BC, the Babylonians, under Nabopolassar, reasserted control over Mesopotamia and created a power vacuum. The Jewish king, Josiah, sought to extend his territory in this power vacuum. In his attempt to create a strong center he came armed with the ideology of the one and only supreme God, bringing monotheism as well as the major theme of the Bible - worship only one God or be punished and be exiled..

The Bible tells us that Josiah rediscovered the Book of the Laws of Moses and destroyed all the other cults. Thus, he did the right thing in the eyes of God.

*And it came to pass in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, [that] the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of the LORD, ...*

*And Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it...*

*And Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.*

*And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.*

*And the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying,*

*Go ye, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found:*

*for great [is] the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened to the words of this book, to do according to all that which is written concerning us.*

*And the king sent, and they gathered to him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem.*

*And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD.*

*And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all [their] heart and all [their] soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant.*

*And the king commanded Hilkiyah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made*

*for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them to Beth-el.*

*And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places around Jerusalem; them also that burned incense to Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven.*

*And he brought out the grove from the house of the LORD, without Jerusalem, to the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped [it] small to powder, and cast the powder of it upon the graves of the children of the people.*

*And he broke down the houses of the sodomites that [were] by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove.*

*And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burnt incense, from Geba to Beersheba, and broke down the high places of the gates that [were] in the entrance of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which [were] on a man's left hand at the gate of the city.*

So the king did the right thing according to the priests of Yahweh. However, he was surprised to find out that doing the right thing in the eyes of the supreme God does not mean doing the right thing in history.

King Josiah went to war with Egypt and was defeated. The grand desires of this king were just that - grand desires and illusions. It is true of course, that when a progressive class relies on the laws of history it will likely lead to a victory. However, King Josiah was not the leader of a progressive class, nor did he rely on the laws of history. He acted against the laws of history and was defeated.

Judah soon fell victim to the power struggles between the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Egyptians. When Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, became king (put into power by the Assyrians), the king of Egypt, Necho, rushed into Judah and deposed him. Judah then became a tributary state of Egypt.

After the Babylonians defeated the Egyptians in 605 BC, Judah became a tributary state of Babylon. Then after the Babylonians suffered a defeat in 601 BC, the king of Judah, Jehoiakim, defected to the Egyptians. So the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, occupied Judah in 597 BC. King Jehoiachin, handed the city of Jerusalem over to Nebuchadnezzar, who then appointed a new king over Judah - Zedekiah. In line with Mesopotamian practice, Nebuchadnezzar deported around 10,000 Jews to his capital in Babylon; all the deportees were drawn from professionals, the wealthy, and craftsmen. Ordinary people were allowed to stay in Judah. This deportation was the beginning of the Exile. This period, which began in 597 BC but is traditionally dated at 586 BC, is called the Exile (Diaspora) in Jewish history; and ended in 538 BC when the Persians overthrew the Chaldeans.

In exile the wealthy Jews set up separate communities and developed international commerce. At the same time they developed their religion according to their new situation. The exile could not be explained by Hebrew theology, because it was built on the promise of Yahweh to protect the Hebrews and use them for his purposes in human history. Their defeat and the loss of the land promised to them by Yahweh seemed to imply that their faith in this promise was misplaced.

The new Jewish God would no longer be a local god of

tribal wars over land. The new Jewish religion of the period after the exile in Babylon would include elements from the new Persian religion.

This religion, called Zoroastrianism (in Greek, Zarathustra is called "Zoroaster"), was based on the claim that the universe was dualistic, and that it was made up of two distinct parts. One was good and light and the other evil and dark. Cosmic history was simply the epic battle between these two divine forces. At the end of time, a climactic battle would decide once and for all which of the two would dominate the universe. Human beings, in everything they did, participated in this struggle. All the gods and religions were also part of this epic, almost eternal battle. If the Lord of the Rings comes to mind you may be justified in doing so. This dualism was integrated into the new Jewish religion.

For the early Hebrews, the belief was that only Yahweh dominated the universe. After the exile, the new Jewish priests adopted the Persian idea that the universe was composed of two diametrically opposing forces; one good, and the other evil. Now there was an evil force, Satan, who opposed Yahweh as expressed in the story of Job.

Another new element that was adopted was the belief in a dualistic afterlife. Before the Exile, the Hebrews believed that after death the soul went to a house of dust which they called "Sheol," to abide for a brief time before fading completely from existence. This belief was identical to all other Semitic versions of the afterlife. The Persians though, believed that the souls of the good would reunite with the principle of good in eternal bliss; the souls of the evil would reunite with the principle evil to suffer until the final defeat of evil. This view of the afterlife explains suffering in this life, such as the Exile; cosmic justice is apparent only at one's death rather than during one's life. Before the Exile, Judah and Israel were kingdoms; now Judah became a theological state and at the same time a Persian colony. Yahweh had finally found his place in this world. He became the Supreme Being and Creator of everything and at the same time a servant in the service of the Persian Empire. Under the direction of Zerubbabel and later Ezra, the temple was rebuilt. The new Hebrew society was a place where non-Jews, especially those with foreign religions, were persecuted and expelled. During the Persian period and later, Judah was the state where Yahweh and only Yahweh was worshipped.

For two hundred years, while Persia dominated all of the Middle East and Egypt, Palestine was a tributary state of Persia. After Alexander of Macedon conquered Persia in 332 BC, Palestine became a Greek colony. The Greek empire would last no longer than Alexander's brief life; and after his death his generals divided his empire. One general, Antigonus and then later Ptolemy, inherited Egypt; another, Seleucus, inherited the Middle East and Mesopotamia. After two centuries of peace under the Persians, the Hebrew state found itself once more caught in the middle of a power struggle between two great empires: the Seleucid state with its capital in Syria to the north and the Ptolemaic state, with its capital in Egypt to the south. Once more Judah would be conquered first by one, and then by the other, as it shifted from being a Seleucid vassal state to a Ptolemaic vassal state. Between 319 and 302 BC Jerusalem changed hands seven times.

In 168 B.C. a Jewish revolt under the Maccabees in

support of Rome in its war against the Greeks defeated the Seleucids. For a brief time, Judah became a semi-independent state and eventually a Roman colony.

During this period the Jews lived in several areas including Judah, Mesopotamia and other parts of the Middle East, and in Egypt and other parts of North Africa and in Asia. The dispersion of the Jews began during the Exile in Babylon. Large, powerful groups of Jews lived all throughout the Persian empire, then later in the Hellenistic kingdoms and the Roman Empire.

Since it was possible under the Greeks for foreigners to become citizens in the polis, it became possible all throughout the Middle East for Hebrews and others to become citizens of states other than Judah. This is vital for understanding the Jewish dispersion; for the rights of citizenship (or near-citizenship, called *politumata*) allowed Jews to remain outside of Judea and still thrive.

In 63 BC, Judea became a protectorate of Rome. The Jewish state came to an end in 70 AD, when the Romans defeated the Jewish rebellions. However, the Jewish Diaspora ("Diaspora" = "dispersion, scattering") had begun long before, at least since the Assyrians conquered Israel in 722 BC, and Nebuchadnezzar deported the Judeans in 597 and 586 BC to Babylon. Another group of Judeans fled to Egypt, where they settled in the Nile delta. From 597 BC onwards, there were three distinct groups of Hebrews: a group in Babylon and other parts of the Middle East, a group in Judea, and another group in Egypt. A large number of Jews in Egypt became mercenaries on an island called Elephantine in Upper Egypt. From now on the history of the Jews is the history of the Diaspora and the changing role of Yahweh.





## Chapter II: The Rise of Anti-Semitism

**Y**ossi Schwartz continues his analysis of the origins of the Jews by looking at the rise of Anti-Semitism in the Middle Ages.

From very early times the Jews were literate. They were a people who shared a common language with their relatives and with other Jews in other lands. This was a very useful skill for international trade. Literacy led not only to learning but had material benefits.

Being the "People of the Book" gave Jews dealing with commerce great advantages. Throughout the ages the participation of the Jews in the evolution of commerce was far out of proportion to their numbers.

Jews became integral to the international trade of the countries into which they settled or were hurled. This does not mean that all the Jews were dealing with international commerce or finance. Many Jews were seamen, artisans and even slaves.

### Before the Rise of Feudalism

According to the material collected on the Hebrew History Federation website, Judaic maritime history begins with the association of the Judahites with the Kinanu, in the ports of Tyre Sidon and in Carthage.

The Canaanites disappeared from maritime activity after the Romans defeated the Carthaginians and conquered the Levant. The Jews however continued to be a significant factor in Mediterranean trade. Jews were not only ship owners and the financiers of commercial voyages, but sailors as well. Philo records that one of the four main occupations of the Jews of Alexandria was maritime activity in all its forms. The church leader Origen (AD 185-254), who was born in Alexandria, wrote that not only did Jewish carpenters, masons, and other workers of Alexandria cease work on the Sabbath, but that Jewish sailors did as well. Synesius (AD 375-413), the Bishop of Ptolemais, reported that on his voyage out of Alexandria, that the captain and more than half of the crew were Jews. During the Roman occupation of Egypt, Alexandrian Jewish entrepreneurs became deeply involved in the sea trade. Ships carrying merchandise sailed not only to the Red Sea, but also to the Gulf of Aden and across the Indian Ocean.

The Roman rulers were not the traders traveling the routes, whom they held in low esteem, but the overlords who derived a healthy income from the activity of the traders. The Romans collected customs duties at military camps established to "protect" caravans along the African route sometimes amounting to as much as 25% of the value of the goods.

Since the 8th century BC, when the Assyrian ruler Tiglath-Pileser deported over 10,000 Israelites to Persia (this is according to the conqueror himself), Jews have been at the forefront of international trade. The subsequent Babylonian exile added many thousands of Judahite families to the Persian/Babylonian milieu. Persia became a center from which trade between the eastern and the

western worlds evolved. The Jews were a bridge between those worlds.

Jewish bankers were involved in the development of Persian industry and initiated a system of credit. The surviving records of two Jewish banking families are among the most revealing documents of the Persian period. These were the Jewish banking houses of "Murashu and Sons," and "Egibi and Sons".

Tel Abib was one of twenty-eight Jewish settlements in the Nippur area that are featured in the Murashu records.

Most of the Jews referred to in the Murashu documents were of the lower classes, some of which were slaves. Two such slaves, one bearing a clearly Judaic name, were contracted by the head of the house of Murashu to repair the dam of the irrigation canal passing through Murashu property. The contract stipulated that damages would be assessed if the commitment was not fulfilled, a condition that infers that the "slaves" had independent property of their own which could be assessed!

There are a number of references to Jewish engineers who earned their living as irrigation experts. All fourteen canal managers known to us by name through these documents were Jews. They were responsible administrators who exercised a technical trade central to the economy of the region.

From the 5th century BC onwards, Jewish merchants traveled on land routes to China. Jewish merchants and artisans then established colonies at strategic points along those routes.

Glass beads appear to be among the earliest goods that found their way from Babylonia to China. Such beads were recovered from Chinese tombs at Loyang, the capital of China in Late Zhou Period.

Reverend William Charles White was the driving force behind the excavation of the Loyang tombs where a great variety of glass beads was recovered. Among these were the ubiquitous eye-beads of the same technique, design, and composition that had been produced in Judah and exported through Tyre and Sidon throughout the Mediterranean.

The same routes were used to exchange linen fabrics (Byssus) produced by Jews for silk. This route became known as the Silk Road.

The Chinese fancied linens as much as westerners fancied silks. Linens were therefore as marketable in China as silks were in the West. Woven linen textiles and glassmaking were both prime Judaic occupations in Alexandria. Jewish artisans dominated the inter-related trades of weaving and dyeing. As merchants, they dominated the market for fibers and fabrics. The Jewish weavers of Beth-shean achieved worldwide fame as producers of fine fabrics. The Jerusalem Talmud refers to the "fine linen vestments that come from Beth-shean."

The exemplary quality of textiles and clothes produced by the Beth-shean Jews was noted by Diocletian in his "Edict of Maximum Prices". The edict paid particular attention to the woven produce of Beth-shean: "*Textile goods are divided*

into three qualities: First, second and third. In each group the produce of Scythopolis appears in the first class."

Other important commodities traveling back from China were spices.

The Chinese paid for glass and linen not only with silk but also with, cinnamon, cassia (the bark from which a form of cinnamon is produced), jade, camphor, and a variety of other products.

Both India and China were sources of exotic spices, which were valued because they both enriched the taste of food and helped to preserve it in an era when refrigeration was as yet two millennia away. Spices were also valued for their medicinal properties.

The production and the use of dyes was an industrial secret of the Jewish traders and artisans. The royal purple (argaman in Hebrew) and the ritual blue (tekhelet in Hebrew) were two particularly important colors in the culture of ancient Israel.

Soap was used only by Mesopotamians in antiquity. Soap was unknown to the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans. In Jeremiah we learn that the Judahites had full knowledge of both the production and use of soap: "For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God."

Thus the Jewish traders before the Middle Ages spoke Arabic, Persian, Frankish, Andalusian, and Slavonic. They travelled from East to West and from West to East by both land and sea. From the West they brought adult slaves, boys and girls, brocade, beaver, pelts, assorted furs, sables and swords. They sailed from the land of the Franks on the Western Sea (Mediterranean) and set out for a-Faruma (a port on the easternmost branch of the Nile). There they transported their merchandise by pack-animal to al-Qulzum (on the Red Sea) several parasangs (a parasang is estimated to be anywhere from three and a half to four English miles) away. From al-Qulzum they set sail for al-Jar (Medina) and Jidda (the present port for Mecca), after which they proceeded to Sind (the Indus River valley), and then to India and China. From China they brought musk, aloe wood, camphor, cinnamon, and other products as they made their way back to al-Qulzum.

Silk and spices were not the only things brought back from the East to the West by the traders. Knowledge was brought back as well.

Jewish traders in India dealt in the Indian decimal system (with the critical use of zero). In the centuries after the fall of Rome, the Jewish traders translated Indian mathematics into Arabic and introduced the system to Islamic North Africa, thereafter to become known as the "Arabic number system." It was called this in the West not because the Arabs had invented it, but because the Europeans obtained it from the Arabs.

Most biblical scholars agree that the acceptance by the Jews of exclusive abstract monotheism in the 6th century was linked in some way to the national loss of the Kingdom of Judah and the Temple in Jerusalem and the exile to Babylonia. (John Bright, *A History of Israel*. London: SCM Press, 1960); (Rad, Gerhard von, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 2. Translated by D. M. G. Stalker. London: SCM Press, 1965); (David Aberbach, *Imperialism and Biblical Prophecy 750-500 B.C.E.* London: Routledge, 1993).

There have been many attempts to explain why the Jews, who before the First Exile, were no less polytheist than

the Canaanites developed a concept of an abstract god. According to Freud's "Moses and Monotheism", Moses was assassinated by the Hebrews because he wanted to impose a religion that was too spiritual on them. From a materialist, namely scientific point of view however, the existence of the Jews after the exile outside of a Jewish state without any center dealing with international commerce is the reason for the appearance of an abstract god.

### The Jews in the Middle Ages

Following the destruction of Rome, life in Europe was miserable for most people. However, when the instability and chaos of the Early Middle Ages receded and the invasions stopped, the medieval economy recovered and prospered. New agricultural methods such as the heavier plow, the metal horseshoe, and the shoulder harness were used. The peasants who produced the basic necessities of life were able to cultivate the land, and available farmland tripled. Peasants were at the core of medieval society: most of the farming people of Europe lived in villages of ten to several hundred families. These villages were located on manors that were ruled either by a local lord or a nearby monastery or convent. The manors were generally self-sufficient economic units, providing everything the lords and their peasant subjects needed. Villages were clusters of huts surrounded by the fields. Each family was assigned various strips of land, often unconnected, to plant. From these plots the farming families raised sufficient foodstuffs to feed themselves and the surplus was taken in form of tithes to the church and duties to the lord. Near the village would usually be a pasture where the plow animals and sheep, pigs, and cattle would graze on common land. There was generally a wooded area where the peasantry could forage for wood for fuel. Typically a village did not have schools, hospitals or other public buildings, although these features were beginning to appear in significant numbers in the medieval towns. The church was the cultural center of the village; it was where the villagers celebrated religious holidays, baptisms and marriages. The villagers told the time of day by the churches' bells and were buried after they were used in the churches' graveyards.

European commerce expanded dramatically in the 10-14th Centuries. Early medieval trade had been largely local, with merchants exchanging perishable items over short distances. By the 11th century, however, long distance trade was beginning to revive. The Medieval West re-established trade relations with the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic world, trading goods for Islamic silver and Byzantine gold. This helped re-establish a currency-based economy in the West.

By the late 12th century, the merchants of Western Europe were moving continuously along Europe's waterways and roads and trade was displacing agriculture as the most dynamic force in the European economy. The trade boom caused the growth of the cities and industry. This growth was disrupted for a time in the Late Middle Age by the Black Plague of the 13th century and also by a series of wars, but the developing importance of trade, which lead to the growth of the cities ultimately was one of the main factors which ended the medieval period and its feudal agricultural system. Manufacturing was

slower to develop in Western Europe than trade. Medieval manufactured products were typically made by artisans who produced goods in their own shops and sold them directly to the public. Various industries were organized by guilds: professional organizations that controlled how their industry operated and protected their members' interest against outsiders. They secured each member a share in the trade by regulating prices and competition, and by limiting the number of people who could join a trade. The guilds also operated as social units, conducting banquets and religious festivals and seeing to the care of widows and orphans of its members and proper burial of its deceased.

The expanding economic activity sparked a growth in town life. The German word "burg" in its various forms came to be used to describe the towns whose inhabitants became known as "burghers". Towns were much more heterogeneous and volatile than the countryside, and contained a mix of commoners and members of the aristocracy, students and scholars, as well as runaway servants and peasants. Medieval cities and towns were relatively small; in the 11th century a typical town had about 5,000 inhabitants, but towns grew as commerce expanded and on the eve of the Black Death of AD 1349 many Italian towns had over 100,000 inhabitants. The cities were the center of growing heresy, an early expression of anti-feudalism.

The Inquisition was established as a formidable tool for the establishment of papal dominance. 12th century popes ordered bishops to stamp out heresy within their dioceses. The accused were denied legal counsel, interrogated by torture, and required to prove repentance by naming accomplices. As the church was required not to spill the blood of those the church found guilty it usually turned them over to the secular authorities. Being burnt alive was a common method of execution for heretics. The Inquisition was only carried out against heretics (Catholics who had abandoned their faith for false beliefs), but this category included converted Moslems and converted Jews.

Between AD 900-1300 the kings in some parts of Europe managed to replace the severely decentralized political order of the 9-10th Centuries with more organized political structures known as feudal monarchies. The office of the king was declared sacred by the church in order to provide legitimization. The king's main duty was to enforce peace within the realm and administer justice as well as to raise and lead national armies against external foes.

Feudal monarchs were overlords within the feudal structure. They did not have direct authority over the mass of their subjects — between the king and most of his subjects were several layers of lesser vassals with whom the king shared power. Under the feudal structure kings had contact primarily with their chief vassals and the subjects of the king's own domains. The king did have the right to seize territories of an unfaithful vassal. Kings governed through a series of relationships and lacked the financial wherewithal to provide more than basic services to their realms. In 12th century England provided the most organized and best governed of the medieval feudal monarchies; the French feudal monarchy developed more slowly but by 14th century had become a model for other states. Strong feudal monarchies failed to develop in Germany and Italy, a factor that would influence their

later development.

The Jews living in feudal Europe dominated by the Christian ideology had more a difficult existence than the Jews living in Islamic states. They were excluded from most occupations except trading and the lending of money. Anti-Semitism was encouraged amongst the commoners who also believed a good deal of nonsense about the Jews. They held the Jews collectively responsible for Jesus' death since it was the Pharisees who had pushed the Roman government into executing him. Widespread rumors in the Middle Ages claimed that the Jews practiced blood sacrifices at their religious ceremonies and killed Christian children, poisoned wells, and spread disease. The Jews were subject to massive attacks during the Crusades and during the spread of the Black Death in the 1300s, when the European population went truly hysterical.

During the 9th and 10th Centuries, the Christian Reconquest of Spain from the Moslems caused a wave of Jewish immigration as the Spanish rulers threw out the Jewish as well as Moslem inhabitants of their new territories. Many ended up in the French and German territories as well as in North Africa and Turkey. As persecutions continued in Western Europe, many Jews eventually moved to Poland and Lithuania, forming large Jewish settlements there.

In AD 1179 the Third Lateran Council forbade Jews from living in Christian communities and exiled the Jewish populations to ghettos - walled sections of the city where the Jews lived apart from the rest of the community. European rulers also periodically exploited popular sentiment by killing or expelling Jewish money-lenders and seizing their property.

In the 12th century a popular form of Christian devotion sprang up, the "Cult of the Virgin Mary," which featured folk tales of popular saints and martyr stories. These plays and tales showed Mary playing a prominent role in saving people, especially children. Jews often appeared as stock villains in these pieces, which were performed on church steps and repeated in Catholic dogma lessons. The Jewish villains were depicted as constantly plotting to kidnap and kill Christian children or attack the community. Jews functioned in these stories as a focus for all the uncertainty and fear of the people; as scapegoats who could be blamed for any breakdown in the medieval sense of security.

The key to understanding the origins of anti-Semitism in this period is the fact that the Church, as a part of feudal society, wanted to discourage the growth of the cities. The common feature of the Jews since the exile by the Babylonians has been their mode of living as city dwellers. From the time of the Babylonian exile, Jewish communities were rarely established in the hinterlands. Jews have lived in ports, or along trade routes, or in administrative and industrial centers, rather than in the country-side as peasants living off the land. Feudal society was essentially a caste society. It was desired that everyone "should remain in his place." It was extremely difficult, if not impossible for bourgeois to enter the nobility, just as the noble who lowered himself to the practice of a trade or to engaging in business was disdained. Peasants were prevented from escaping to the cities, and the Jews for them were part of the dangerous city.

The church, which forced the Jews to deal with usury, used it later on to justify the persecution of the Jews. Unfortunately, the idea that the root of anti-Semitism in

the Middle Ages was a result of the function of the Jews in usury penetrated even the left.

### **The False Interpretation of the Origins of Anti-Semitism in the Middle Ages**

In 1942, shortly before he was murdered by the Nazis, Abraham Leon wrote a well known book called *"The Jewish Question"* in which he developed his thesis of the Jews as a people-class, or a class that was transformed in the Diaspora from people dealing with commerce to a pre-capitalist financial class – usurers. This was an occupation that became outmoded with the rise of capitalism. It became an obstacle to the further development of the forces of production. As a result the Jews were pushed East to less developed parts of Europe. The following are some excerpts from this book:

*"It was consequently the economic development of the West which destroyed the commercial function of the Jews, based on a backward state of production. The commercial monopoly of the Jews declined in the degree that the peoples, whose exploitation had fed it, developed.*

*"In the beginning, the economic transformation reaches only certain important urban centers. The seignorial domains are very little affected by this change and the feudal system continues to flourish there. Consequently, the career of Jewish wealth is still not ended. The seignorial domains still offer an important field of action to the Jews. But now Jewish capital, primarily commercial in the preceding period, becomes almost exclusively usurious. ... If during the preceding period "Jew" was synonymous with "merchant," it now begins increasingly to be identified with "usurer."*

*"From the thirteenth century on, the importance of the German cities grows. As elsewhere, and for the same reasons, the Jews are eliminated from commerce and turn towards the banking business. The center of gravity of Jewish usury is concentrated in the nobility. ... But this state of affairs could not continue indefinitely. Usury slowly destroyed the feudal regime, ruined all classes of the population, without introducing a new economy in place of the old.*

*"Everywhere in Western Europe, and in part in Central Europe, the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries are the epoch of the development of Jewish usury. But economic evolution brings about its rapid decline. The definitive expulsion of the Jews took place at the end of the thirteenth century in England, at the end of the fourteenth century in France, at the end of the fifteenth century in Spain. These dates reflect the difference in the speed of economic development within these countries. ... Feudalism progressively gives way to a regime of exchange. As a consequence, the field of activity of Jewish usury is constantly contracting. It becomes more and more unbearable because it is less and less necessary.*

*"The transformation of all classes of society into producers of exchange values, into owners of money, raises them unanimously against Jewish usury whose archaic character emphasizes its rapacity. The struggle against the Jews takes on increasingly violent forms. Royalty, traditional protector of the Jews, has to yield to the repeated demands of congresses of the nobility and the bourgeoisie.*

*"It is in this fashion that the Jews were progressively expelled from all the Western countries. It was an exodus from the more developed countries to the more backward ones of Eastern Europe. Poland, deeply mired in feudal chaos, became the principal refuge*

*of Jews driven out of every other place."*

The thesis is clear, yet it is of great interest for Marxist historians that Leon did not analyze the conditions of the Jews in Moslem Spain. He simply wrote: *"The social and economic position of the Jews in Moslem Spain is not known with accuracy. There is, however, not the shadow of a doubt that they belonged to the privileged classes of the population."*

It is a pity that Leon was not familiar with the situation of the Jews in Moslem Spain. It would have spared him an interesting but false thesis.

### **The Jews of Spain**

No one familiar with the history of the Jews in Moslem Spain could argue that the Jews are "a class or, more precisely, a people-class" – dealing with usury.

Leon is right of course to show the stupidity of the idealist argument of the Zionists that claims that there is something unique in the survival of the Jews that can be explained only by their religious beliefs. The fact that the Jews have not been assimilated for so many centuries must have a materialist explanation that can be found in the context of their position in production. Nathan Wienstock, who in his book *"Zionism a false Messiah"* defends Leon's thesis of the Jews as people-class, is right of course when he wrote: *"In fact Jewish history offers the most striking example of the process by which ethnic minorities fulfilling a distinct socio-economic role within a given society preserve their own identity and do not become assimilated into the surrounding population. The same phenomenon can be found in less finished form in the case of the Gypsies, the Armenians of the Diaspora, the Copts, the Chinese merchants in South-East Asia, the Moslem traders in the cities of China, the Hindu usurers in Burma and, until the Second World War, the German minorities in the Slav countries"*.

This however does not change the fact that Wienstock and Leon are wrong when they insist that the Jews were simply a group of people based on a pre-capitalist economic function. Furthermore, where Leon's case rests on avoiding the issue of Moslem Spain, Wienstock gives us a false account when he writes that: *"After Rome fell, they were gradually transformed into a mercantile class through a process of selection which eliminated the poorer Jews. The christianised Jewish farmers merged with the surrounding population. The only ones to preserve their Jewish ethnic, cultural and religious characteristics, an originality retained by virtue of their social function, were the merchants and brokers and, especially in the Eastern countries and Moorish Spain, the artisan class."*

He is quoting Goitein, who describes *"(the acceleration of) the process by which the Jews were transformed from a people engaged mainly in manual trades into one whose most characteristic occupation was commerce"*. It was during the first centuries of Islam that the Jews of the Moslem world, abandoning agriculture, began to take up those occupations, and *only* those occupations, with which they have since been traditionally associated: traders, spice merchants, financiers, goldsmiths, jewellers, craftsmen, etc.

This is simply untrue. The Jews of Moslem Spain were much more integrated into Spanish society. They were able to flourish in politics, in the economy, and in culture. They became physicians, astronomers, treasurers and tax collectors. Samuel HaNagid (AD 993-1056) became the

head of the armies of the Moslem ruler of Granada, while at the same time writing poetry and studying philosophy. Haim Hillel Ben Sasson, in the monumental work (Haim Hillel Ben Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People*. Harvard University Press: 1976, page 395.) summarizes Jewish livelihoods in the Islamic Countries in this way:

*"The diversified branches of the crafts and commerce were the main occupation of Jews in the cities. At the same time there were other Jews, in the border areas of the Caliphate and in Africa, who continued to engage in agriculture for a very long time.*

*"Jewish craftsmen were plentiful in the cities and made up a large part of the Jewish population. In fact, it appears that this economic class had existed as early as the end of the classical period. A hostile Moslem writer went so far as to claim that 'among the Jews one finds only dyers, tanners blood-letters (i.e., barbers and surgeons), butchers and waterskin repairers.' However, he was referring only to those occupations to which he wanted to draw attention (as being the most demeaning). More objective sources mention also Jewish blacksmiths, gold and silversmiths, harness-makers and shoemakers, some of whom were itinerant craftsmen working in Moslem villages."*

The Ottomans wisely made welcome Jews escaping the tentacles of the Inquisition. In return, the Jews built factories on the Bosphorus that supplied the munitions and artillery that enabled the Ottomans to build a great empire. In 1791, William Lempriere wrote a work on his tour of the Ottoman region, in which he described the condition

of the Jews in each district. *"Every part of the empire,"* he wrote, *"more or less abounds with Jews, who originally were expelled from Spain and Portugal, and who fled into Barbary as a place of refuge. These people are not confined to towns, but are spread over the whole face of the country. Mount Atlas itself not excepted" ...The whole country depends on their industry and ingenuity and could hardly subsist as a nation without their assistance. They are the only mechanics in this part of the world (and are) entrusted in the coinage of money, as I myself have witnessed.* (William Lempriere, *A Tour From Gibraltar to Tangier, Salee, Mogodore, Santa Cruz, Tarudent, and thence over Mount Atlas to Morocco...* London: 1991, pp 188-92)

According to "Jews in Spain VI: A Political-Economic Study" by Abraham A. Neuman (1942):

*"By the High Middle Ages, most Jews in Spain lived within the aljamas (Jewish quarters) in the cities, and had city-based jobs, although some managed country estates.*

*"Jews developed extensive commercial operations in Barcelona under Christian rule. They owned fields and vineyards through allodium (outright ownership) or as tenants. When they traded lands with bishops or other church officials, the transfer deeds were written in Hebrew or at least have a Hebrew signature.*

*Their professions throughout the peninsula included:*

*High government officials: diplomats, bailiffs, ministers of finance, tax collectors, and royal concessionaires of mills and salt marshes.*

*Scholars: physicians, lawyers, teachers, scribes, rabbis, judges,*



*Jewish Women and Children arrested during the Uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto in April-May 1943*

*preachers, cantors, notaries, town clerks, and couriers.*

*Financial officers: brokers, bullion merchants, moneylenders, cambists or money-changers, and international traders.*

*Merchants of: skins, furs, leather, wool, cloth, silk, timber, spices, oil, carriages, cattle, horses, mules, "corn", grain, and wheat.*

*Shopkeepers: bakers, butchers, and general merchandise.*

*And more: mine operators; sheep raisers; flax growers; glove and leather products manufacturers; soap and candle makers; dressers of skins; makers of armor; makers of anchors; minters; smelters; braziers; jewelers; watchmakers; sailors; ship owners; shoemakers; carpenters; tailors; locksmiths; blacksmiths; vintners; weavers; dyers; tanners; gilders; parchment-makers; bookbinders; rope-makers; saddle makers; upholsterers; clothiers; professional gamblers and lion tamers!"*

At the end of the 19th century, Mordechai Hacohen in his work "Hanaghid Mordechai", documented the fact that virtually all crafts and commerce of North-central Africa were in the hands of the Jews. *"The Jews appear as a group, specializing in trading and crafts, which is ritually and socially separated from the Moslems, who specialize in agriculture... The Jews are non-combatants, not being allowed to carry arms. Yet in their role as smiths, they are responsible for making and repairing arms."*

*"(Jewish) blacksmiths,"* Mordechai continued, *"fan charcoal fires and create useful tools: hammers, axes, hatchets, scythes, plows, and all the other tools required by the people of the region. They also repair weapons. These artisan's shops are in the entrances of their homes. The Berber who needs any tool will bring the metal and the charcoal to the Jew's house."* (Further information about the role of the Jews as artisans under Islamic rule can be found in HHF Fact Paper 19-IV *Jews in Africa, Part IV The Islamic Diaspora.*)

Leon's thesis as a matter of fact justifies anti-Semitism. If the Jew is an obstacle to historical development, then history has to remove him. From a scientific point of view however, this thesis is one sided and therefore false. It is not that only a segment of the Jews dealt with money lending, while many Jews were forced into it; but it is enough to point out the fact that the Lombardies who charged an interest rate of 250% were not persecuted to show that this thesis is wrong. More to the point however, is that it was in the interest of rising capitalism to remove the obstacles on the path of the complete integration of the Jews. Contrary to Leon's thesis anti-Semitism is not an expression of the need of the forces of production. It is an expression of the decay of the feudal and later on of the capitalist system. It is a reflection of the fact that history has left the full integration of the Jews to socialism.

The thesis of Abraham Leon is in opposition to the position of Lenin and Trosky and even to that of Karl Kautsky, who prior to the historical betrayal of the Second International was a leading Marxist theoretician. His views on this question as we shall see later influenced Lenin and his fight against all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism. Karl Kautsky's thesis on this issue was published for the first time in 1912 under the name: "Are the Jews a Race?" Unlike Leon, who defined the Jews as a people-class, Kautsky starts from the definition of the Jews as a caste of city dwellers in the Middle Ages evolving in the direction of becoming a part of the working class in developed capitalist countries in Western Europe and the USA - which was true at the time he published his work. He started with the following explanation:

*"... the great mass of the Jews has constituted for two thousand years an exclusive, hereditary caste of urban merchants, financiers, intellectuals, including some artisans, and has developed, by practice and accumulation from generation to generation, more and more of the traits peculiar to all these strata, as opposed to the peasant masses of the rest of the population.*

*"The Jews have always been distinguished from the latter since the termination of the existence of the Jewish state; they have always seemed strangers to the rest of the population, a condition encouraged in the Middle Ages by the fact that each vocation within the city was always concentrated in a certain quarter of the city. Within this quarter, if several races were represented, each of the races had its specific section. In addition, in the case of the Jews, we also have the peculiarity of their religion and their rite, all of which are matters that have nothing to do with race traits. But while the Jews may always have appeared foreign, they were not always treated as enemies. Whether the Jews were regarded favourably or not depended entirely on the needs and conditions of the country in which they lived. The opposition which is frequently represented as a natural race hostility was determined by very mutable economic circumstances."*

Unlike Leon's thesis of the outmoded Jewish occupation, Kautsky argued that *"Wherever there was need of merchants or financiers, or intellectuals in general, and wherever the native supply of such elements was insufficient, the Jew was welcome."* *"For the Jews in Christendom fared somewhat as the Germans in Bohemia. As long as they were needed in order to develop and encourage the growth of cities and in order to invigorate trade, they were welcome. When the cities began to develop a class of native financiers, traders, and artisans, the imported foreigners, once they had become established, were no longer regarded as a welcome assistance, but as an undesirable competition, as "undesirable aliens". .... While the Jews had been sought for in Western Europe down into the Thirteenth Century, every effort was made from that time on to make life unbearable for them, to abridge their rights; they were maltreated, plundered, and driven out, if not actually slain. Wherever a wretched existence is still possible for them, their activity is restricted in every possible way. They are prevented from engaging in large-scale commercial enterprises, are forbidden to own land, to practise a trade. Nothing is left to them but the trade of usury and a petty huckstery and colportage. The haggling Jew as a type of the Jewish "race" is a product of Christian charity."*

*"We may mention - merely as a curiosity - the fact that it was during this period of the most intense persecution that the Jews were forbidden to visit disorderly houses. Thus Queen Jeanne I issued such a prohibition in AD 1347 for the City of Avignon. This pious and virtuous potentate reserved the privilege of visiting the bordello for Christians. By reason of its endurance into the 16th Century, this privilege was transformed into a greater privilege on the part of Christians to acquire syphilis. Perhaps as a measure of compensatory justice, Christians were forbidden to obtain treatment from Jewish physicians.*

*"The reader will observe that the health of the Christians was not enhanced by the persecutions of the Jews."*

The crucial difference between the thesis of Kautsky and Leon's is that where Leon sees the Jewish mode of existence as an obstacle to the development of capitalism, Kautsky's argument is that the opposite is true.

*"It was not until industrial capital became strong that the general position became more favourable to the Jews.*

*"Industrial capital arises not only in opposition to feudal landlordism and to guild handicraft and financial capital. The*

latter aim at attaining privileges from the state, while industrial capital seeks to maintain free competition within its ranks. The greater the competition among merchants and those who hold the power to grant credits, the better will industry flourish. It was in the interest of industry to permit Jewish traders and Jewish financiers to compete with Christians, to abolish the barriers which kept out the former. This attitude was fully in keeping with the general tendency to abolish mediaeval guilds. The ghetto was one of the mediaeval corporations. It had to go, in the interest of a speedy evolution of capitalism; though it continued, in some cities, into the Modern Era, its fate was sealed.

"... It became absolutely necessary for the new and rising mode of production to liberate the Jewish intelligentsia and to cut off the uninterrupted blood-letting practised by the Church, particularly the Catholic Church, with its commandment of celibacy, on the non-Jewish intelligentsia.

"... Only by overthrowing this authority could the path be cleared for a most speedy evolution of the new mode of production. In this process, industrial capitalism found allies only in the lower classes, in the proletariat and in the peasantry, as well as in those strata of the petty bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia which were not among the privileged classes and which could advance only by means of an elimination of all privileges. Thus modern democracy arose with its pronouncement of the equality of all creatures in human form. The natural consequence was an effort to emancipate Judaism, and also - on the other hand - an alliance between the energetic, aggressive elements of Judaism and revolution. Only through revolution could Judaism be liberated. "The liberation of the Jews was realised in the great French Revolution and in its minor successors. It was heralded by an increasing tolerance for the Jews in the more advanced capitalist states, first in Holland, then in England, beginning with the Seventeenth Century, a change which brought many Spanish and Portuguese Jewish or pseudo-Christian capitalists to those states. Finally, the Jew obtained equal rights with all other citizens. Thereupon he began to rise rapidly in capitalistic society, to whose needs he had become so perfectly adapted, in trade, in banking, in journalism, in medicine, in jurisprudence. But simultaneously there also began the Jew's adaptation to non-Jewish society, his assimilation."

Clearly there is a major difference between the two theses. Where as Leon's thesis leads to the conclusion that anti-Semitism is the result of the need for progress in history, for Kautsky, anti-Semitism is a reflection of the crisis of the petit bourgeois in decaying capitalism.

"...The opposition to liberalism; assumes, as is well known, quite a different form among the proletariat than among the petty bourgeoisie. Both find their social position in capitalistic society intolerable. But, in the case of the proletariat, the achievements of democracy and of capitalist economy are the presupposition for its own liberation. The proletariat does not seek to neutralise these achievements of democracy, but rather to annex them, to utilize them in its own struggle.

"...Considerable portions of the petty bourgeoisie, turning from liberalism, do not seek their salvation in advancing beyond liberalism, but rather feel themselves obliged to retrace their steps, to become politically and economically reactionary, in which process they find allies in the powers that had been surmounted by liberalism.

"Powerless to combat capitalism as a whole, it has no other recourse than to fight individual, partial manifestations of capitalism and thus to join the political reaction, of which it expects, of course in vain, an economic reaction also.

"In this situation, it finds a fruitful soil for the reawakening of anti-Semitic tendencies. The battle against capital as a whole seems hopeless. But the conflict with Judaism, with Jewish capital, which is so unpleasantly felt by many a non-Jewish capitalist, seems to afford better prospects of success.

"Thus, since the 'seventies of the Nineteenth Century, we again find movements in rather extensive sections of the population of Germany, Austria, France, etc., which favour a political disfranchisement, and a legal restriction or at least a social boycott of the Jews. Aspirations which unite with the anti-Jewish hatred on the part of narrow-minded circles and with the contempt for the Jews on the part of feudal arrogance, to both of which they impart renewed strength."

Kautsky's explanation for the situation of the Jews in Russia and Poland is very different from Leon's. He argued that it is precisely because of the backwardness of Eastern Europe, which was unable to overcome this limitation imposed by Western Europe, that the Jews were not able to develop the capitalist mode of production and were forced to live on poor crafts rather than industry.

"The situation became much worse with the penetrating of Western capital After the Crimean War ... At a single stroke, the natural economy of the peasant was transformed into a commodities economy, which under the given circumstances did not improve the operation of his farm, but rather ruined it by reason of a more and more intensified robbing of the soil. An increasing proportion of the country population was driven into the cities. ... But in the cities, these persons found no quickly growing industry which might have been able to absorb them, nor did the deteriorating peasants offer any adequate market for such an industry. Competition grew among artisans and peddlers. The Jews were now oppressed more and more; their situation - never very brilliant - now became more and more hopeless. But the non-Jewish population also suffered; the frame of production was too small to accommodate all.

## Chapter III: Anti-Semitism and Zionism

Yossi Schwartz continues his analysis of the origins of the Jews by looking at the relationship between anti-Semitism and Zionism, as well as other nationalist movements in the early half of the 20th century.

### The Law of Uneven and Combined Development

Opposite to Leon's thesis, Jews were welcome in developing societies and oppressed in declining societies. If history were simply a mechanical process and Eastern Europe at the end of the 19th century had been able to repeat the same process as in Western Europe, the story of the Jews would be very different. History however, as Lenin and Trotsky argued many times, is a process of uneven and combined development. When capitalism reached Eastern Europe the capitalist world system was already in decay. Capitalism could not fully develop in Russia. A further development of the forces of production required a socialist revolution. Thus in the 19th century in Eastern Europe the situation continually worsened. The aristocracy subjected the Jewish craftsmen and petty bourgeoisie to fierce competition with the small rising local capitalists. This national rivalry combined with the rapid development of large-scale industry undermined the foundations of the old agrarian economy of the peasants and craft manufacturing and made it impossible for the Jews to play the role of capitalists. From its first appearance, Eastern European capitalism bore the mark of degeneration. Economic crisis became permanent and unemployment endemic. In these conditions the economic nationalism of the native petty bourgeoisie grew more intense and took the form of virulent anti-Semitism. A large Jewish proletariat existed in Eastern Europe at the end of the 19th century. However, the structure of the Jewish working class was considerably different from that of the working class in general. The majority of Jewish wage earners were in fact *artisans* working for small Jewish employers in workshops or small consumer industries. It is not that the Jews' specific position as the sole agents of monetary economy in feudal society was undermined by economic development, nor is it the case that this was the basis for modern anti-Semitism, as Leon and others have argued. It is the decline of the capitalist world system from the end of the 19th century that has produced this ugly form of racism. "The socialism of the fools" as Bebel correctly called it.

Thus from the last part of the 19th century, anti-Semitism grew in Eastern Europe and in the West at the same time. It was a reflection of the general and historical crisis of the capitalist world system. In Eastern Europe it took the form of discriminating laws and pogroms. In Western Europe, decaying capitalism, after the 1873 crash, the anti-Semitic movement grew in strength and anti-Semitic ideology (Treitschke, Marr, Duhring) became widespread. France underwent a similar evolution (Drumont, the Dreyfus Affair). It was fed by the growing emigration of Jews from Eastern Europe to Western and Central Europe.

Contemporary anti-Semitism, like all other forms of racism, is an ideological expression of the contradictions of imperialism. This contradiction is the expression of the rivalry among the imperialists struggling among themselves to re-divide the world market while there is a lack of domestic markets for the petty bourgeoisie. Fascism exploited the anti-Semitism fostered by the petty bourgeoisie's fierce national competition. They used it as a device to channel the confused anti-capitalist sentiments of the masses into the poison of anti-Semitism.

The consequence of the anti-Semitism of the Nazis is well known: six million Jews exterminated in the crematoria.

If until 1880 Jewish migration was mainly from Western to Eastern Europe. Later on it shifted mainly to the United States and later on to Israel. This trend developed considerably under the reactionary decrees of 1882 and the pogroms that grew worse and worse from 1881 onwards. Migration to the United States alone exceeded 533,000 people between 1881 and 1898, and 1,200,000 between 1900 and 1914. Thus the American Jewish community, which numbered 230,000 in 1880, had grown to 1,500,000 by 1904. As severe restrictions were placed on immigration to the United States, Jews from Eastern Europe continued to emigrate to Central and Western Europe, Canada, Argentina, Australia and other countries. In these countries they became much more integrated and ended their existence as members of a caste.

### Zionism

The Zionists argue that they are the expression of the historical dream of the Jews to return to their "Promised Land". In reality each time the basis of Jewish social life has come under serious threat, a section of the Jewish population has created a form of Messianic mysticism.

Jewish nationalism, however, in particular in its Zionist form, was a *new* conception born of the socio-political context of Eastern Europe in the 19th century. Victims of the aggressive nationalism of the rising bourgeoisie in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Jewish middle class adopted, in their turn, the nationalist ideology of their neighbors.

The Zionist dogma has incorporated most elements of the doctrines of anti-Semitism, starting from the argument of the incompatibility of the Jews and the Gentiles, through the call for the massive migration of the Jews to Palestine with the aim of establishing a Jewish State. It was not Herzl who was the first advocate of the Zionist ideas. Moses Hess, an associate in his youth of Marx and Engels, was the first theoretician of Zionism. In 1860 Hess wrote "Rome and Jerusalem", which turned out to be a Zionist manifesto where he called for the return of the Jewish people to their ancestral homeland. This idea however can be traced to a pamphlet that appeared in 1860, written by Napoleon III's personal secretary, Ernest Laharanne in which he laid down the suggested role of the Jews for the occupation of Syria by France. In fact, it was precisely the same idea



suggested by Lord Palmerston, in 1840, when Britain had established a consulate in Jerusalem, who proposed the founding of a European Jewish settler colony to “preserve the larger interests of the British Empire.” (Hidden History of Zionism, by Ralph Schoenman, Chapter 2)

This same idea was expressed in “Rome and Jerusalem”, which advocated the idea that Jewish settlers should undertake military training in order to fight the resistance of the Bedouins.

The principal ideologist of the Zionist movement however was Theodor Herzl, who in reaction to the ‘Dreyfus Affair’ published a pamphlet by the name “Der Judenstaat” (The State of the Jews). In this book Herzl argued that anti-Semitism could be eliminated only by the concentration of the Jews in an autonomous centre. This center in Herzl’s own view was not necessary Palestine but a state established with the backing of the colonial powers in exchange of the services offered by the Zionists.

*“We should there form a portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilisation as opposed to barbarism.”* (Theodor Herzl, *A Jewish State*. London: 1896, p.29)

He appealed to Kaiser Wilhelm, Sultan Abdul Hamid II (at the time Palestine was a province of Syria under the Ottoman Empire), Plehve, the Tsarist Minister of the Interior and a major organiser of pogroms, Witte, another of the Tsar’s ministers and a rabid anti-Semite, the Pope, Victor-Emmanuel and Chamberlain, the British Colonial Secretary. Herzl failed in this mission but his successor Haim Weitzman, who would become the first president of Israel, was able to secure the charter known as the Balfour Declaration. Zionism has indeed been able to build a

state, but only within the framework of Western, and in particular British, colonial expansion.

The objective of Zionism has never been to colonize Palestine in order to exploit the native people - as was the goal of some colonial and imperial movements during the 19th and 20th centuries. The Zionists aim was to build a Jewish state and this could not be done without dispersing the local population and dispossessing them. From the very beginning the Zionists pretended that the country was empty and waiting for the dispersed Jews to return to their ancient home. In essence this was the same attitude of all the colonialists who claimed the doctrine of “discovery” over “empty” lands. The Zionists had for the Palestinians the same solution the Europeans had for the Indians whom they saw as a savage obstacle.

Palestine at the end of the 19th century was not an empty land. There were over one thousand villages in Palestine at the turn of the 19th century. Jerusalem, Haifa, Gaza, Jaffa, Nablus, Acre, Jericho, Ramle, Hebron and Nazareth were flourishing towns. Over half a million Palestinians lived in the country on the eve of the British occupation.

The British issued the Balfour Declaration not only as a payment for years of the Zionist leadership’s support for its war against Imperial Germany, but as an instrument for the colonization of Palestine and the instrument for political control over the Palestinian population.

*“Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad is rooted in present needs, in future hopes of far profounder import than the desires of the 700,000-plus Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land.”* (Cited in Harry N. Howard, *The King Commission: An American Inquiry in the Middle East*. Beirut: 1963. See also

## New Book!

### Michael Pröbsting: Building the Revolutionary Party in Theory and Practice

Looking Back and Ahead after 25 Years of Organized Struggle for Bolshevism

The RCIT is proud to announce the publication of a book called *BUILDING THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE*. The book’s subtitle is: *Looking Back and Ahead after 25 Years of organized Struggle for Bolshevism*. The book is in English-language. It contains four chapters on 148 pages and includes 42 pictures. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who serves as the International Secretary of the RCIT.

The following paragraphs are the back cover text of the book which give an overview of its content.

A few months ago, our movement commemorated its 25th anniversary. In the summer of 1989 our predecessor organization, the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) was founded as a democratic-centralist international tendency based on an elaborated program. The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) continues the revolutionary tradition of the LRCI. Below we give an overview of our history, an evaluation of its achievements as well as mistakes, and a summary of the lessons for the struggles ahead. This book summarizes our theoretical and practical experience of the past

25 years.

In Chapter I we outline a summary of the Bolshevik- Communists’ theoretical conception of the role of the revolutionary party and its relation to the working class. In Chapter II we elaborate on the essential characteristics of revolutionary party respective of the pre-party organization. In Chapter III we deal with the history of our movement – the RCIT and its predecessor organization. Finally, in Chapter IV we outline the main lessons of our 25 years of organized struggle for building a Bolshevik party and their meaning for our future work.

You can find the contents and download the book for free at <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/rcit-party-building/> ■

**Building the  
Revolutionary Party  
in Theory  
and Practice**

*Looking Back and Ahead after  
25 Years of organized Struggle for Bolshevism*



By Michael Pröbsting

Published by the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency

*The Hidden History of Zionism: Chapter Two*). It is not a great surprise to discover that the future Prime Minister of South Africa, General Jan Smuts, who, as the South African delegate to the British War Cabinet during World War I, helped to secure the Balfour Declaration. By the turn of the century, a large Jewish population, primarily from Lithuania, had settled in South Africa. The Zionist leaders regarded this population as potential supporters of Zionist ideas because of their own settler status in South Africa. This however does not mean that Israel and South Africa are identical. South Africa is based on the exploitation of the black working class. Israel is a new class society based mainly on the exploitation of Jewish workers.

In 1923 the father of right wing Zionism, Jabotinsky, in total honesty wrote an article "The Iron Wall," in which he explained the essential premises of Zionism which had, indeed, been laid out before, if not as eloquently, by Theodor Herzl himself:

*"There can be no discussion of voluntary reconciliation between us and the Arabs, not now, and not in the foreseeable future. All well-meaning people, with the exception of those blind from birth, understood long ago the complete impossibility of arriving at a voluntary agreement with the Arabs of Palestine for the transformation of Palestine from an Arab country to a country with a Jewish majority. Each of you has some general understanding of the history of colonization. Try to find even one example when the colonization of a country took place with the agreement of the native population. Such an event has never occurred.*

*"Whether through the Balfour Declaration or the Mandate, external force is a necessity for establishing in the country conditions of rule and defense through which the local population, regardless of what it wishes, will be deprived of the possibility of impeding our colonization, administratively or physically. Force must play its role - with strength and without indulgence. In this, there are no meaningful differences between our militarists and our vegetarians. One prefers an Iron Wall of Jewish bayonets; the other an Iron Wall of English bayonets."*

The crimes of the Zionist movement against the Palestinians are well documented. Much less known is the scope of the crimes that the leaders of this bourgeois movement have committed against the Jewish masses. To begin with, the Zionists share with the anti-Semites the attitude of the Jew as a foreigner in the countries Jews have lived for many generations.

Herzl himself wrote of the Jews in the following fashion: *"I achieved a freer attitude toward anti-Semitism, which I now began to understand historically and to pardon. Above all, I recognized the emptiness and futility of trying to 'combat' anti-Semitism."* (Marvin Lowenthal, ed., *The Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, p. 6. Cited in Lenni Brenner, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators*. Westport, Conn.: Lawrence Hill, 1983. page 6).

*"The Jewish people,"* wrote Jabotinsky in the same way, *"is a very bad people; its neighbors hate it and rightly so ... its only salvation lies in a general immigration to the land of Israel."* (Brenner, *The Iron Wall*).

The founders of Zionism not only did not believe in fighting anti-Semitism but saw themselves as allies of the most reactionary anti-Semites in the battle against the revolutionary movement. In his meeting with Count von Plehve, the organizer of the worst pogroms in Russia, including the pogroms of Kishinev, Theodor Herzl offered him: *"Help me to reach the land (Palestine) sooner and the revolt*

*(against Czarist rule) will end."* (Brenner, *The Iron Wall*. page 14).

Count von Plehve agreed, and he undertook to finance the Zionist movement. He was later to complain to Herzl: *"The Jews have been joining the revolutionary parties. We were sympathetic to your Zionist movement as long as it worked toward emigration. You don't have to justify the movement to me. You are preaching to a convert."* (Ibid)

Jabotinsky negotiated an alliance with Petilura, proposing a Jewish police force to accompany Petilura's forces in their counter-revolutionary fight against the Red Army and the Bolshevik Revolution. Simon Petilura was a Ukrainian fascist who personally directed pogroms which killed 28,000 people.

After the Nazis took power many attempts were made to change the immigration laws of the United States and Western Europe in order to provide refuge for persecuted Jews of Europe. It was the Zionists who actively tried to stop these efforts. For the Zionists however, the only Jews who counted were those who emigrated to Palestine. Ben Gurion informed a meeting of Labour Zionists in Great Britain in 1938: *"If I knew that it would be possible to save all the children in Germany by bringing them over to England and only half of them by transporting them to Eretz Israel, then I opt for the second alternative."* (Brenner, *Zionism at the age of Dictatorship*. page. 48).

As late as 1943, while the Jews of Europe were being exterminated by the millions, the US Congress proposed to set up a commission to "study" the problem. Rabbi Stephen Wise, who was the principal American spokesperson for Zionism, came to Washington to testify against the rescue bill because it would divert attention from the colonization of Palestine.

This is the same Rabbi Wise who in 1938, in his capacity as leader of the American Jewish Congress, wrote a letter in which he opposed any change in U.S. immigration laws that would enable Jews to find refuge. He stated:

*"It may interest you to know that some weeks ago the representatives of all the leading Jewish organizations met in conference. ... It was decided that no Jewish organization would, at this time, sponsor a bill which would in any way alter the immigration laws."* (Ibid. page 149).

Chaim Weizmann, the Zionist leader who had arranged the Balfour Declaration and was to become the first president of Israel, made this Zionist policy very explicit:

*"The hopes of Europe's six million Jews are centered on emigration. I was asked: 'Can you bring six million Jews to Palestine?' I replied, 'No.' ... From the depths of the tragedy I want to save ... young people [for Palestine]. The old ones will pass. They will bear their fate or they will not. They are dust, economic and moral dust in a cruel world. ... Only the branch of the young shall survive. They have to accept it."* (Chaim Weizmann reporting to the Zionist Congress in 1937 on his testimony before the Peel Commission in London, July 1937. Cited in Yahya, page 55. )

This policy of saving only the Jews for the Zionist project in Palestine led to the agreements between the Zionist movement and Nazi Germany, which first became known in 1953. Dr. Rudolph Kastner of the Jewish Agency Rescue Committee in Budapest signed a secret pact with Adolf Eichmann to "settle the Jewish question" in Hungary. This took place in 1944. The pact sealed the fate of 800,000 Jews. It was to be revealed later that Kastner was under

the direction of the Zionist leaders abroad when he made this agreement with Eichmann. The agreement entailed the saving of six hundred prominent Jews on the condition that silence was maintained about the fate of the Hungarian Jews.

It was exposed however in Israel by a survivor, Malchiel Greenwald, who denounced Kastner as a Nazi collaborator whose deeds in Budapest cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of Jews. Greenwald was sued by the Israeli government, the same leaders who had drawn up the terms of the Kastner pact.

The Israeli Court came to the following conclusion:

*"The sacrifice of the majority of the Jews, in order to rescue the prominents was the basic element in the agreement between Kastner and the Nazis. This agreement fixed the division of the nation into two unequal camps, a small fragment of prominents, whom the Nazis promised Kastner to save, on the one hand, and the great majority of Hungarian Jews whom the Nazis designated for death, on the other hand."* (Judgment given on June 22, 1955, Protocol of Criminal Case 124/53 in District Court, Jerusalem. Ibid. page 58).

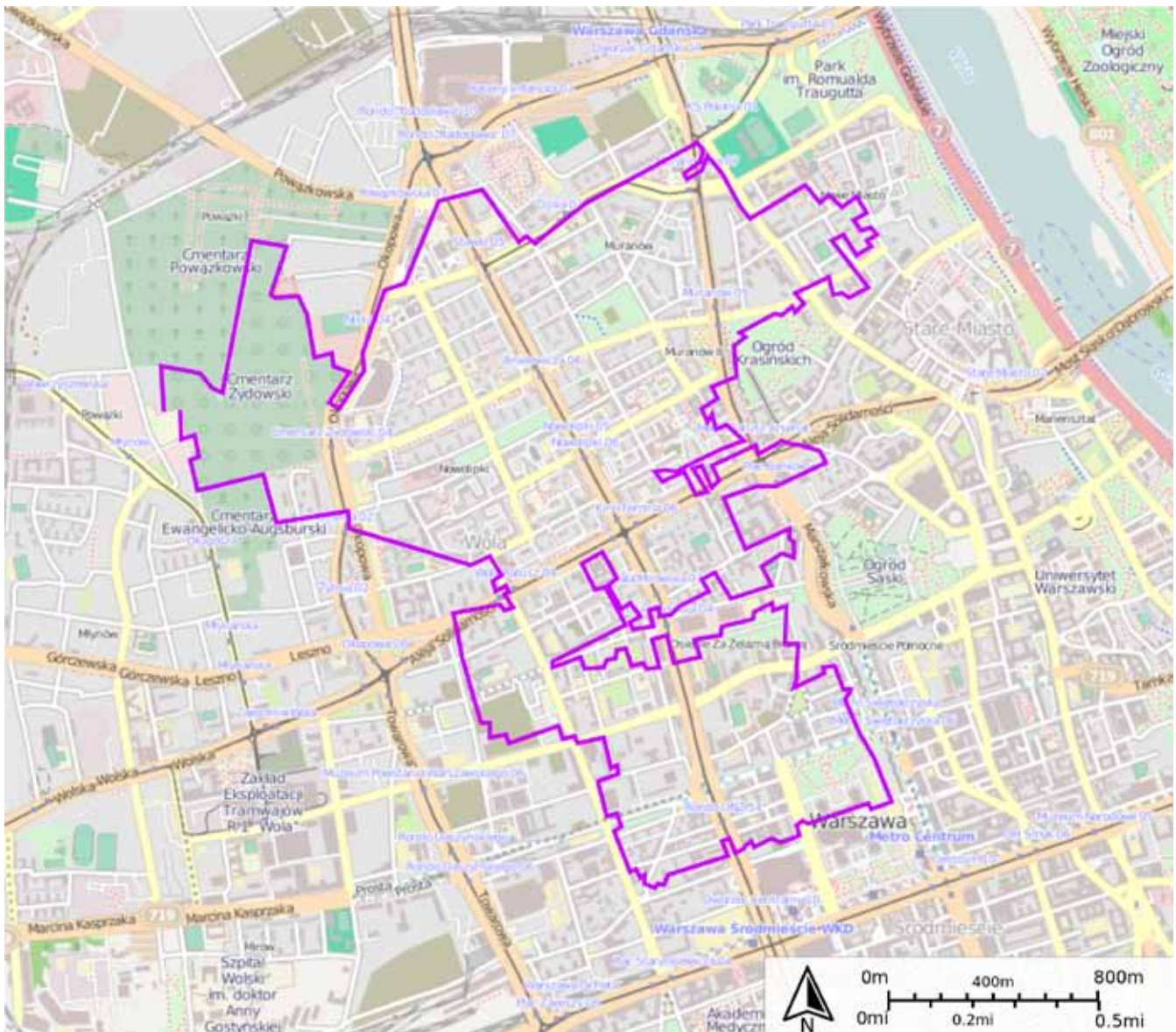
The court declared that the imperative condition of this pact was that neither Kastner nor the Zionist leaders

would interfere in the action of the Nazis against the Jews. These leaders undertook not only to eschew interference, but they agreed they would not, in the words of the Israeli court, "hamper them in the extermination." Collaboration between the Jewish Agency Rescue Committee and the exterminators of the Jews was solidified in Budapest and Vienna.

Later it was revealed that Kastner intervened to save SS-General Kurt Becher from being tried for war crimes. Becher was one of the leading negotiators of the deal with the Zionists in 1944. He was also an SS-Major in Poland, and a member of the Death Corps. He was appointed Commissioner of all Nazi concentration camps by Heinrich Himmler.

The study of the real history of the Zionist movement leads to a clear conclusion: it is a nationalist movement serving the interests of the elite. As Marxists we condemn all of the crimes it has committed against the Arab and Jews alike. However unlike those who think that there is something that set the Zionist movement apart from other nationalist movements in support of the decaying capitalist order, as Marxists we understand that Zionism reflects the same class nature of the nationalist movements

## Map of the Warsaw Ghetto



who pretend that the other nationalists are bad while they are somehow better. We oppose any attempt on the part of left wing intellectuals since the war of 1967 to portray the Zionists as an unusual monstrous branch of nationalists. All nationalists serve the same rotten order that continue to exist while the masses suffer terribly. The Zionists are as bad as all other nationalists.

Most Zionists try of course to deny this obvious truth by arguing that the Zionist movement has been very different from any other known colonialist movement, namely that it protects the interest of the Jewish masses. Zionism according to them is a movement for self-redemption and the return of a displaced people to the land of its origins. All others were conquerors --Greeks, Assyrians, Romans, Turks, English, etc. The Jews who returned to Israel redeemed the land, and they then reclaimed it from 2,000 years of neglect. They prospered, in spite of great hardships and dangers. As they redeemed the land and increasing numbers of Jews arrived, so too did Arabs flock to this new prosperity.

The Zionist ideology has a striking similarity to the ideology of Apartheid of the original Dutch-origin "Afrikaners." They believe in the divine election. They too understood themselves as God's 'Chosen People'. South Africa was their 'Promised Land'. The Dutch arrived on the tip of Africa in 1652 when the Dutch East India Company set up an outpost. Soon after, the company began bringing settlers from Holland. They became known as the "Boers" or "farmers." The Afrikaners believed the British persecuted Dutch settlers. In 1836, the Afrikaners abandoned the Cape area. They set out for the Transvaal region in the north to establish their own republic. This movement north became known as the "Great Trek." In their minds it "forms the national epic-formal proof of God's election of the Afrikaner people and His special destiny for them." (Apartheid and the Promised Land: Afrikaners and the "Great Trek")

As they set out in covered wagons, according to their viewpoint: *"They were followed by the British army, like that of Pharaoh, and everywhere were beset by the unbelieving black "Canaanites." Yet because God's people acted according to His will, He delivered them out of the hands of their enemies and gave them their freedom in the Promised Land."*

Many Afrikaners died during the trek. Others were killed in battles with Africans. The decisive battle was at Blood River on December 16, 1838. 10,000 Zulu warriors attacked the trekkers. Over 3,000 Zulus were killed. No Afrikaners died. The Afrikaners attributed their victory to God's intervention. They claimed it was a covenant God had made with them. They established their own republic, but continued to be in conflict with the British over land and minerals. The Afrikaners defeated the British in 1880-1881 in the first Anglo-Boer War. The second Anglo-Boer War ended with the Afrikaners' decisive defeat in 1902.

This bitter historical experience was perceived as the "sacred saga of Afrikanerdom." Old Testament stories, especially from the Exodus and Promised Land traditions, were prominent. They were guiding images for their self-understanding. An Afrikaner poet put it this way:

*But see! the world becomes wilder;  
the fierce vermin worsen,  
stark naked black hordes,  
following tyrants.*

*How the handful of trekkers suffer,  
the freedom seekers, creators of a People.  
Just like another Israel,  
by enemies surrounded, lost in the veld,  
but for another Canaan elected,  
led forward by God' plan.*

The Afrikaners were the People of the Covenant. Land was central to this self-image. The very backbone of Afrikaner history (no less than the historical sense of the Hebrew scriptures upon which it is based) involves the winning of the 'Land' from alien, and indeed, evil forces. The land had to be redeemed. These alien and evil forces included the British, but especially the indigenous Africans. They were viewed as inferior. They were Canaanites destined to be the servants of the Afrikaners. Over the years black Africans were thrown off their farms and grazing lands so that extremely few continued to live in the rural areas as landholders.

As we have written elsewhere, despite the ideological similarity between the situation in Israel and Apartheid era South Africa, there is one fundamental difference between them. In contrast to South African Apartheid, the Zionists expelled most of the native population and created a new state and a new working class in Israel.

The similarity of the Zionists and the ideology of the Boers is known to many politically oriented people. It is important however to realize that Herzl and Zionism are similar to other political movements, for example to Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association.

UNIA was probably the largest mass movement of black people in the history of the United State. Proclaiming a black nationalist "Back to Africa" message, Garvey and UNIA established 700 branches in thirty-eight states by the early 1920s.

Later groups such as Father Divine's Universal Peace Mission Movement and the Nation of Islam drew members and philosophy from Garvey's organization, and UNIA's appeal and influence were felt not only in America but also in Canada, the Caribbean, and throughout Africa.

Garvey's philosophy and organization had a rich religious component that he blended with political and economic aspects.

Garvey stated that his "Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World," along with the Bible, served as "the Holy Writ for our Negro Race." Garvey was born in 1887 in St. Anne's Bay, Jamaica. He travelled to London in 1912 and stayed in England for two years. During this time he was exposed to the arguments of Irish nationalists. He was also exposed to Booker T. Washington's autobiography "Up From Slavery". Washington believed African-Americans needed to improve themselves first, showing whites in America that they deserved equal rights. Washington repeatedly rejected political action of the masses. He argued that African-Americans would not benefit from political activism but rather from practical industrial training. Garvey embraced Washington's ideas and returned to Jamaica in 1914 to found UNIA with the motto "One God! One Aim! One Destiny!" He moved to the US and discovered the diminishing hope on the part of African-Americans that they would ever gain the rights enjoyed by every white American citizen. They

were losing hope that they would ever be integrated into American society. African-Americans served in large numbers in the war, and many expected some kind of respect and acknowledgment that they too were equal citizens. However, as black soldiers returned from the war, and more and more African-Americans moved into the urban areas, racial tensions grew. Between 1917 and 1919 race riots erupted in East St. Louis, Chicago, Tulsa, and other cities, demonstrating that the white rulers did not intend to treat African-Americans any differently than they had before the war.

Garvey like Herzl was convinced that integration would never happen. He established the headquarters of UNIA in New York in 1917 and began to spread a message of black nationalism and the eventual return to Africa of all people of African descent. Garvey's ideology became one held that people of African descent could establish a great independent nation in their ancient homeland of Africa. Like Herzl, he took the message of Washington, opting not to struggle against the ruling class but rather to turn the class struggle into nationalist dream.

In 1919 Garvey purchased an auditorium in Harlem and named it Liberty Hall. There he held nightly meetings to get his message out, sometimes to an audience of six thousand. In 1918 he began a newspaper, *Negro World*, which by 1920 had a circulation somewhere between 50,000 and 200,000. Membership in UNIA is difficult to assess. At one point, Garvey claimed to have six million members. That figure is most likely inflated. However, it is beyond dispute that many and even millions were involved.

Garvey hammered home the idea of racial pride by celebrating the African past and encouraging African-Americans to be proud of their heritage and proud of the way they looked. Garvey proclaimed "black is beautiful" long before it became popular in the 1960s. He wanted African-Americans to see themselves as members of a mighty race. "We must canonize our own saints, create our own martyrs, and elevate to positions of fame and honor black men and women who have made their distinct contributions to our racial history"

Garvey created an African Legion that dressed in military garb, uniformed marching bands, and other auxiliary groups such as the Black Cross Nurses.

Marcus Garvey along with Potentate Gabriel M. Johnson of Liberia, Supreme Deputy G.O. Marke of Sierra Leone, and other UNIA leaders reviewed the parade opening the 1922 UNIA convention, in New York City.

While racial pride and unity played important roles in Garvey's black nationalism, he touted capitalism as the tool that would establish African-Americans as an independent group. His message has been called the evangel of black success, for he believed economic success was the quickest and most effective way to independence. In 1919 he established the Negro Factories Corporation and offered stock for African-Americans to buy. He wanted to produce everything that a nation needed so that African-Americans could completely rely on their own efforts. At one point the corporation operated three grocery stores, two restaurants, a printing plant, a steam laundry, and owned several buildings and trucks in New York City alone. His most famous economic venture was a shipping company known as the Black Star Line, a counterpart

to a white-owned company called the White Star Line. Garvey started the shipping company in 1919 as a way to promote trade but also to transport passengers to Africa, in particular to Liberia. He believed it could also serve as an important and tangible sign of black success. However the shipping company eventually failed due to expensive repairs, mismanagement, and corruption.

With all his talk of a mighty race that would one-day rule Africa, like the Zionists, he understood the role of religion as an important tool for controlling people. In the African-American community Christianity played this role.

The UNIA meetings at Liberty Hall in Harlem were rich with religious ritual and language, as Randall Burkett points out in his book "Black Redemption: Churchmen Speak for the Garvey Movement".

Garvey blended his black nationalism based on capitalist interests with his Christian outlook rather dramatically when he claimed that African-Americans should view God "through our own spectacles." If whites could view God as white, then blacks could view God as black.

Garvey's message of black nationalism and a free black Africa met considerable resistance from other more left leaning African-American leaders like W.E.B. DuBois. By 1922 his rhetoric shifted away from a confrontational stance against white racist America to a position of separatism mixed with just enough cooperation. Like Herzl who met with the Russian pogromists he applauded whites who promoted the idea of sending African Americans back to Africa. He even met with a prominent leader of the Ku Klux Klan in Atlanta in 1922 to discuss their views on miscegenation and social equality. In 1924 DuBois claimed that "Marcus Garvey is the most dangerous enemy of the Negro race in America and in the world." Owen and Randolph, whose paper saw the race issue as one of class more than one of skin color, called Garvey the "messenger boy of the Klan" and a "Supreme Negro Jamaican jackass" while labeling his organization the "Uninformed Negroes Infamous Association."

While there are the similarities mentioned above, there also exists an important difference between the Zionism movement with the Black Nationalist movement of Marcus Garvey. The Garvey movement – despite all its reactionary features – was historically progressive insofar as it represented the first "national/racial" political mass awakening of the black minority in the US (after centuries of extreme oppression and super-exploitation). Of course, there existed various other Black nationalist organizations like those of W.E.B. DuBois and the Niagara movement and later the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (NAACP). Even more important were black Communists like Claude McKay and Otto Huiswoud and in particular the socialist *African Blood Brotherhood* which had close to 4,000 members and which was close to the Communist International. However, in contrast to the Garvey movement, which claimed several millions members, these progressive left-wing organizations were not mass movements.

Unlike Garvey's movement, Zionism did not represent a first "national/racial" political mass awakening of oppressed Jews. Much larger and more progressive mass organizations fighting for the rights of the Jews (the socialists, the Bund, etc.) already existed when Zionism made its debut. From the beginning Zionism

was a reactionary movement fomented by sectors of the Jewish middle class while in parallel many progressive working class and petty-bourgeois Jewish and pro-Jewish movements already existed.

Zionism was born as the expression of *the crisis and inability of the Jewish middle class* to be integrated with the European ruling class and at the same time rejecting the working class solution for the oppression of the Jews. Herzl met Plehve, the Russian Minister of Police, 'the founder of the Black Hundreds', the man considered by Jews, not without reason, to be responsible for the pogrom at Kishinev. But Herzl realized that they had the same interest in maintaining the same political order based on capitalism. It is true that Zionism has never been made of one social group. On the left flank of the Zionist movement there were many people who honestly saw themselves as socialists. Contrary to the Jewish socialists, active in the non-Jewish workers' parties or the Bund, the left Zionists despaired over working-class solidarity and found a solution by deserting the class struggle. Left Zionists had to embrace the reformist dogma of the two-stage revolution in order to be Zionists and still claim to be socialists. In this way they could renounce the struggle for socialism in the present and push for a future struggle in a Jewish Palestine where the social structure had been 'normalized'.

The Labour wing of Zionism was represented by the *Poale-Zion* (Workers of Zion) party, and its principal theoretician was Ber Borochov (1881-1917). There can be no doubt that many of them aspired to be Zionists *and* revolutionaries. During the First World War the Russian Poale Zion took an anti-imperialist stand. During the Russian civil war the *Borochov Regiment*, participated in the struggles of the Red Army.

Borochov met Lenin and asked him what he thought of his theory. Lenin told him that it must be very difficult to sit between the chairs. Borochov's analysis begins from the idea that the Jews were economically, *Luftmenschen*, literally, suspended in mid-air, an observation which connects with Marx's famous remark about the Polish Jews living "in the pores" of society. The Jewish working class, he argued was handicapped by the abnormal social structure of the Jewish people. The Jewish workers, predominately ruined artisans and wage earners employed in small manufacturing industries, were particularly vulnerable to the slightest economic recession. Moreover, capitalist development tends to eliminate the smaller businesses within the retail trade and the Jewish workers were exposed to relentless national competition. In these conditions, for lack of an adequate "strategic base", the Jewish proletariat could not wage a class struggle and the petty-bourgeois masses failed to undergo proletarianisation. It was therefore necessary to "normalize" the Jewish social structure and to this end Zionism appeared as a historical necessity.

The formation of a Jewish proletariat in agriculture and basic industry would be possible only through Jewish "territorial political autonomy". This could not be accomplished in Russia after a socialist revolution but in an under-developed, semi-agrarian country, where petty Jewish capital and labor may be utilized. In such a country of low cultural and political development there would be no fear of competition.

But why Palestine precisely? Borochov does not give a

clear answer to this question, and the reason is simple: his theoretical schemes are really a rationalization and an attempt to harmonize socialism and nationalism.

In "Class and Nation", Borochov extends the notion of national competition to all classes, resolving the national question through the "solidarity of national interests" which will assure the proletariat a normal base for its labor and class struggle. Once again class and nation appear to him to be in harmony and he does not conceive the development of the national struggle of an oppressed proletariat into the same movement of the general working class struggle for social emancipation. This position contradicted the long list of socialist leaders of Jewish origin (Rosa Luxemburg, Axelrod, Martov, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Trotsky, etc...).

Borochov pointed out the problem of the relationship of the Jewish masses to the productive sectors of the economy. But far from being a "Jewish problem", what is involved here is a much larger question: the need of the workers of the oppressed nations to be part of the general working class movement. Furthermore, it is only when this united proletarian movement comes to power that it can begin to solve the problems that the capitalist system has created. Ironically, the same problems that Borochov pointed out in his writings on the Jewish question exist today for the Palestinian working class.

### Israel and Anti-Semitism

These days we are witnessing a new wave of anti-Semitism. It is rooted like in previous days in the economic crisis and the historical crisis of the capitalist system. At the same time the criminal actions of the Israeli ruling class against the Palestinians is contributing to the rise of anti-Semitism. Contrary to the predictions of the Marxists, an Israeli state has been established. However, the Zionist success is not only the result of anti-Semitism in Europe culminating in the Holocaust. One cannot forget about the rise of Stalinism, which along with Nazism pushed the Jews to the hands of the Zionists. Israel has been the main tool of imperialist domination in the Middle East. At the time of the economic boom after the Second World War it attracted many Jews who found social safety in Israel. Israel has been identified by many people with the interests of US imperialism. Israel has been identified with support for the US in Iraq. Hatred towards the US ruling class has been connected in many peoples' minds with hatred of the Jews. It is the socialism of the fools as Babel correctly called the hatred of the Jews who were identified with the ruling class. However as long as Jews continue to identify themselves with the crimes of the US and the Israeli state, it will be difficult to fight successfully the racist slurs of the anti-Semites. However, we live now in a different situation. The Israeli ruling class is in charge of a system mired in a very deep economic, social, and political crisis. The Israeli working class is under attack and sooner or later, in spite of the existing right wing leadership of the Histadruth, will begin to fight back. Such a struggle will open the possibilities for many Jews to separate themselves from the American and the Israeli ruling class and allow them to identify themselves with working class internationalism. This is the only way to fight anti-Semitism.

## Chapter IV: The Russian Revolution: Bolshevism, the Bund, and Stalinism

**Y**ossi Schwartz continues his analysis by looking at the position of the Jews in the Russian Revolution and the re-emergence of anti-Semitism under Stalinism.

In 1898, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) was formed. From the very beginning many of its leaders were Jews. The two wings of the party, both the reformist Mensheviks and the revolutionary Bolsheviks, opposed the notion that the Jews were a nation and opposed all manifestations of anti-Semitism. The position of the Bolsheviks was that the fight against all forms of chauvinism required the unification of all the workers in a single party. For this reason Lenin clashed with the Bund, a party that was formed in 1897, one year before the RSDLP. At that time, the Bund could also claim to have more genuine working-class support than any other Social-Democratic organization in Russia.

The *Allgemeiner Yiddisher Arbeiterbund*, the General Union of Jewish Workers of Lithuania, Poland and Russia, commonly known as the *Bund*, was founded in Vilna. This party united different groups of Jewish workers. Initially, the organization conducted its activities in Russian, but from 1910 onwards, Yiddish was officially recognized by the Bund as *the* Jewish national language.

Whilst the party was opposed to Zionism, and the Zionist demand for emigration to Palestine, it gradually slipped into increasingly nationalist positions. At its third conference held in Kovno in 1899, the Bund still firmly rejected any nationalist demands, stressing that such agitation would carry the risk of diverting the workers from the class struggle and break up working-class solidarity. But this would happen at the Bialystok congress in 1901. The majority, using Otto Bauer and the Austro-Marxists' doctrine of national-cultural autonomy, declared that the concept of nationality applied to the Jewish people as well, although there was as yet no demand for the Jewish workers to be organized separately. That step would come in 1903. In 1903, at the second RSDLP congress after the majority of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks refused to recognize the Bund as the sole representative of the Jewish working class, the Bundists split.

Lenin was very aware of the terrible oppression of the Jews, who were suffering from systematic discrimination, were subject to bloody pogroms, and forced to live in the Pales (a series of laws were established by the Monarchy determining where Jews could settle in the Empire, these regions later were called the Pale of Settlement. The Pale included all regions of former Poland, Ukraine and others.



*Mordechai Anielewicz (1919-1943), Commander of the Jewish Resistance Organization ZOB during the Warsaw Uprising in 1943*

The region of Latvia only partially belonged to the Pale), and subject to bloody pogroms. This however was not a reason, in Lenin's opinion, to split the working class on national lines. The opposite was actually the case. The struggle against all forms of oppression demanded the unity of all workers, including those that belonged to the oppressed nations and those that belonged to the oppressor nation - the Russians. As for the Bund invoking the idea of a Jewish nation, Lenin wrote: "Unfortunately, however, this Zionist idea is absolutely false and essentially reactionary."

Karl Kautsky, one of the most prominent Marxist theoreticians at that time, said: "The Jews have ceased to be a nation, for a nation without a territory is unthinkable," (see No. 42 of *Iskra* and the separate reprint from it, *The Kishinev Massacre and the Jewish Question*, page 3). Examining the problem of nationalities in Austria, the same writer endeavoured to give a scientific definition of the concept nationality and established two principal criteria of a nationality: language and territory (*Neue Zeit*, 1903, No. 2). A French Jew, the radical Alfred Naquet, says practically the same thing, word for word, in his controversy with the anti-Semites and the Zionists. "If it pleased Bernard Lazare," he writes of the well known Zionist, "to consider himself a citizen of a separate nation, that is his affair; but I declare that, although I was born a Jew... I do not recognise Jewish nationality.... I belong to no other nation but the French.... Are the Jews a nation? Although they were one in the remote past, my reply is a categorical negative. The concept nation implies certain conditions which do not exist in this case. A nation must have a territory on which to develop, and, in our time at least, until a world confederation has extended this basis, a nation must have a common language. And the Jews no longer have either a territory or a common language.... Like myself, Bernard Lazare probably did not know a word of Hebrew, and would have found it no easy matter, if Zionism had achieved its purpose, to make himself understood to his co-racials [cong-n-res] from other parts of the world" (*La Petite R~publique*, September 24, 1903).

Furthermore in *Iskra* one can find the following:

"German and French Jews are quite unlike Polish and Russian Jews. The characteristic features of the Jews include nothing that bears the imprint [empreinte] of nationality. If it were permissible to recognise the Jews as a nation, as Drumont does, it would be an artificial nation. The modern Jew is a product of the unnatural selection to which his forebears were subjected for nearly eighteen centuries. All that remains for the Bundists is to develop the theory of a separate Russian-Jewish nation, whose language is Yiddish and their territory the Pale of Settlement" (*The Position of the Bund in the Party*. First Published: October 22, 1903 in *Iskra*, No. 51)

Clearly, Lenin followed Kautsky in defining the Jews in Eastern Europe not as a nation but as a special oppressed urbanized caste: "The same applies," he wrote, "to the most oppressed and persecuted nation, the Jews. Jewish national culture is the slogan of the rabbis and the bourgeoisie, a slogan of our enemies. But there are other elements in Jewish culture and throughout the history of the Jews. Of the ten and a half million Jews throughout the world, a little over half live in Galicia and Russia, backward and semi-barbarous countries, which forcibly keep the Jews in the position of a caste. The other half live in the civilised world, and there the Jews are not segregated as a caste. There, the great world-progressive features of Jewish

culture have clearly made themselves felt: its internationalism, its responsiveness to the advanced movements of the epoch (the percentage of Jews in the democratic and proletarian movement is everywhere higher than the percentage of Jews in the population as a whole)." (LCW 20. *Critical Remarks on the National Question*, October-December 1913.)

After the October revolution, the Bolsheviks offered self-determination to the Jews, granting them Birobidjan as a homeland to which they could emigrate if they so wished. This was in line with their policy toward all ethnic groups, even those that had not reached full nationhood. However, the project in Birobidjan failed. This had to do with 3 main factors. First, the Jews were urbanized and unlikely to move from the centers to an agrarian region. Secondly, the rise of Stalinism brought with it among other things the old anti-Semitism, and thirdly, there was a lot of Zionist pressure against the project. All of these combined put an end to this project.

On this question Trotsky wrote: "*The Friends of the USSR are satisfied with the creation of Birobidjan. I will not stop at this point to consider whether it was built on a sound foundation, and what type of regime exists there. (Birobidjan cannot help reflecting all the vices of bureaucratic despotism.) But not a single progressive, thinking individual will object to the USSR designating a special territory for those of its citizens who feel themselves to be Jews, who use the Jewish language in preference to all others and who wish to live as a compact mass. Is this or is this not a ghetto? During the period of Soviet democracy, of completely voluntary migrations, there could be no talk about ghettos. But the Jewish question, by the very manner in which settlements of Jews occurred, assumes an international aspect. Are we not correct in saying that a world socialist federation would have to make possible the creation of a "Birobidjan" for those Jews who wish to have their own autonomous republic as the arena for their own culture? It may be presumed that a socialist democracy will not resort to compulsory assimilation. It may very well be that within two or three generations the boundaries of an independent Jewish republic, as of many other national regions, will be erased. I have neither time nor desire to meditate on this. Our descendents will know better than we what to do. I have in mind a transitional historical period when the Jewish question, as such, is still acute and demands adequate measures from a world federation of workers' states. The very same methods of solving the Jewish question which under decaying capitalism have a utopian and reactionary character (Zionism), will, under the regime of a socialist federation, take on a real and salutary meaning. This is what I wanted to point out. How could any Marxist, or even any consistent democrat, object to this?" (Trotsky: *Thermidor and Anti-Semitism*, 1937)*

Naturally, national rights do not and cannot exist if they involve the oppression of another nation. This is why Marxists reject the assertion by many reformists and centrists that the Jewish people in Israel possess the "right of national self-determination." Such a notion is contrary to the principles of national justice as well as those of Marxism.



### The Marxist classics and the right of national self-determination

Marxists understand the right of national self-determination as a revolutionary democratic right of oppressed nations. This was also always the meaning and understanding of the Marxist classics on this question. Lenin underlined again and again that it is the „division of nations into oppressor and oppressed which forms the essence of imperialism“ (V. I. Lenin: The revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination (1915); in: LCW 21, p. 409.)

For Lenin and Trotsky it was clear that the right of national self-determination applies for *oppressed nations* and not for oppressor nations. In every major document on the national question, they made this clear as the following selection of quotes demonstrates.

*„Socialists cannot achieve their great aim without fighting against all oppression of nations. They must, therefore, unequivocally demand that the Social-Democratic parties of the oppressor countries (especially of the so-called “Great” Powers) should recognise and champion the oppressed nation’s right to self-determination, in the specifically political sense of the term, i.e., the right to political secession. The socialist of a ruling or a colonial nation who does not stand for that right is a chauvinist.“* (V.I. Lenin: Socialism and War (1915); in: CW 21, pp.316-17)

*“Victorious socialism must necessarily establish a full*

*democracy and, consequently, not only introduce full equality of nations but also realise the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination, i.e., the right to free political separation.“* (V. I. Lenin: The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination (1916); in: LCW 22, p. 143)

*“As regards the right of the nations oppressed by the tsarist monarchy to self-determination, i.e., the right to secede and form independent states, the Social-Democratic Party must unquestionably champion this right.“* (V. I. Lenin: Resolution on the National Question. Resolution of the Summer 1913 Joint Conference of the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P. and Party Officials (1913); in: LCW 19, p. 428)

*“That is why the focal point in the Social-Democratic programme must be that division of nations into oppressor and oppressed which forms the essence of imperialism, and is deceitfully evaded by the social-chauvinists and Kautsky. This division is not significant from the angle of bourgeois pacifism or the philistine Utopia of peaceful competition among independent nations under capitalism, but it is most significant from the angle of the revolutionary struggle against imperialism. It is from this division that our definition of the “right of nations to self-determination” must follow, a definition that is consistently democratic, revolutionary, and in accord with the general task of the immediate struggle for socialism.“* (V. I. Lenin: The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination, in: LCW 21, p. 409)

*“The right of nations to self-determination implies exclusively the right to independence in the political sense, the right to free*



*Jews arrested during the Uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto in April-May 1943*

political separation from the oppressor nation. (...) It implies only a consistent expression of struggle against all national oppression." (V. I. Lenin: The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination, in: LCW 22, p. 146) In its program, the Bolshevik Party also spoke about the right of national self-determination and thus the right to separate in connection with the oppressed people:

"In order to remove mistrust felt on the part of the working class masses of the oppressed countries towards the proletariat of those states which oppressed them, it is necessary to abolish all privileges of any national group, to proclaim the full equality of nations and to recognize the rights of colonies and dependent nations to state separation." (Program of the RKP(b): adopted March 22, 1919 at the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party; in: Robert H. McNeal and Richard Gregor: Resolutions and decisions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Vol.2, The Early Soviet Period: 1917-1929, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1974, p.61)

This is also how Trotsky understood the Bolsheviks and his own approach towards the national question:

"But the very conjuncture of the national movements with struggle of the proletariat for power was made politically possible only thanks to the fact that the Bolsheviks during the whole of their history carried on an irreconcilable struggle with the Great Russian oppressors, supporting always and without reservations the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination, including separation from Russia. The policy of Lenin in regard to the oppressed nations did not, however, have anything in common with the policy of the epigones. The Bolshevik Party defended the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination with the methods of the proletarian class struggle." (Leon Trotsky: On the South African Theses (1935); in: Trotsky Writings 1934-35, p. 251)

### Stalinism and Anti-Semitism

Lenin and the Bolsheviks fought anti-Semitism before the revolution as well as after the workers took power. Whereas the Soviet Government under Lenin not only repealed all the discriminatory laws against the Jews and made anti-Semitism a crime, under Stalin the old anti-Semitism that had been suppressed, raised its ugly head again. It was part of the reactionary political counter-revolution. In his war with the Left Opposition, Stalin exploited the anti-Semitic tendencies in the country.

In "Thermidor and Anti-Semitism", written in 1938, Trotsky explained the roots of anti-Semitism in the former USSR:

"The October Revolution abolished the outlawed status of the Jews. That, however, does not at all mean that with one blow it swept out anti-Semitism. A long and persistent struggle against religion has failed to prevent suppliants even today from crowding thousands and thousands of churches, mosques and synagogues. The same situation prevails in the sphere of national prejudices. Legislation alone does not change people. Their thoughts, emotions, outlook depend upon tradition, material conditions of life, cultural level, etc. The Soviet regime is not yet twenty years old. The older half of the population was educated under Czarism. The younger half has inherited a great deal from the older. These general historical conditions in themselves should make any thinking person realize that, despite the model legislation of the October Revolution, it is impossible that national and chauvinist prejudices, particularly

anti-Semitism, should not have persisted strongly among the backward layers of the population.

"But this is by no means all. The Soviet regime, in actuality, initiated a series of new phenomena which, because of the poverty and low cultural level of the population, were capable of generating anew, and did in fact generate, anti-Semitic moods. The Jews are a typical city population. They comprise a considerable percentage of the city population in the Ukraine, in White Russia and even in Great Russia. The Soviet, more than any other regime in the world, needs a very great number of civil servants. Civil servants are recruited from the more cultured city population. Naturally the Jews occupied a disproportionately large place among the bureaucracy and particularly so in the lower and middle levels. Of course we can close our eyes to that fact and limit ourselves to vague generalities about the equality and brotherhood of all races. But an ostrich policy will not advance us a single step. **The hatred of the peasants and the workers for the bureaucracy is a fundamental fact of Soviet life.** The despotism of the regime, the persecution of every critic, the stifling of every living thought, finally the judicial frame-ups are merely a reflection of this basic fact. Even by a priori reasoning it is impossible not to conclude that the hatred for the bureaucracy would assume an anti-Semitic color, at least in those places where the Jewish functionaries compose a significant percentage of the population and are thrown into relief against a broad background of the peasant masses."

National and chauvinist prejudices, particularly anti-Semitism, continued to exist after the revolution. Not only this, but under the Stalinist bureaucracy anti-Semitism among the masses was based once again on the particular characterization of the Jewish population on one hand, and the attitude of the privileged layer of the bureaucracy toward the Jews on the other. The Jews, being urbanized and educated, disproportionately became members of the bureaucracy, particularly so in the lower and middle levels. The hatred of the peasants and the workers for the bureaucracy, as a fundamental fact of Soviet life, was focused against those bureaucrats they faced daily, many of whom were Jews. The privileged bureaucracy, fearful of its privileges, exploited the most ingrained prejudices of the masses in order to protect itself. And if this was not bad enough the Soviet regime under Stalin initiated a series of judicial frame-ups after the Second World War against the Jews. Soviet life was characterized by bureaucratic abuse, similar to the suffering of the Palestinians under the Israeli occupation who require the service of the Israeli bureaucracy set up to deal with them. Bribery, corruption, embezzlement, the violation of women and the like are daily events. From time to time the top bureaucrats feel the need to protect themselves by demonstrative trials. In the case of the Soviet Union, Jews comprised a significant percentage in such trials. For self-preservation, the leading cadre of the bureaucracy in the main centers and in the provinces diverted the indignation of the working class away from the bureaucracy.

In the struggle against the Opposition, the top bureaucrats used any weapon they could. Not only was Trotsky's son Sergei Sedov accused of a massive poisoning of working people, but Trotsky himself was accused of being behind all the crimes that were committed in the Soviet Union. Stalin's propaganda machine fostered the prejudices and anti-Semitism of the masses against the 'cosmopolitan' Jews that were in the camp of Trotsky and his son, who

were Jews themselves. Fostering the anti-Semitism of the backward masses began after Zinoviev and Kamanev joined the Left Opposition. The Stalinists shamelessly spoke of the three "*dissatisfied Jewish intellectuals*". To reinforce the point Jews were removed from positions. The slogan "*Beat the Opposition*" often took on the colors of the old slogan "*Beat the Jews and save Russia.*" Stalin himself came out with a printed statement which declared: "*We fight against Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev not because they are Jews but because they are Oppositionists.*" For every thinking person it was clear that while Stalin himself formally spoke against the excesses of Anti-Semitism, the message he was getting across was that the Oppositionists were Jews.

After the assassination of Trotsky by a Stalinist agent, anti-Semitism continued in the former Soviet Union. There were two known trials against the Jews. The first one took place between 1948 and 1952, and was precipitated by Stalin's growing paranoia about Soviet Jews. All the victims were members of the so-called Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, set up with Stalin's approval during World War II to rally financial support, mainly from wealthy Americans, for the Soviet war effort. Stalin felt the need to repress the Jews because he himself fostered Jewish nationalism in the former USSR by supporting the partition of Palestine.

With the birth of the state of Israel and the start of the Cold War, he felt he could no longer rely on Jews as loyal citizens. He believed that they held loyalty both to the state he controlled and to the state he helped to create. A state-sanctioned trip by Committee members to the United States in 1943 was presented during the trial as espionage, because sending propaganda material to the West was deemed as divulging classified information. A request to resettle displaced Holocaust survivors in the Crimean peninsula was labeled a sinister plot to declare the region independent from the Soviet Union.

In 1953 Stalin alleged the existence of a "Doctors' Plot," masterminded by Jews, to poison the top Soviet leadership. Stalin died before a trial could be called, but he had been planning to forcibly deport two million Jews to Siberia. The dictator died soon after and it was possible that his non-Jewish assistants who feared for their lives poisoned him. The executions for "economic crimes" of the early 1960s were directed largely against Jews.

Thus the situation had come full circle. The 1917 socialist revolution had laid the basis for the eradication of anti-Semitism. It had also laid the basis for the eradication of all forms of discrimination. Had the revolution spread to other countries there could have been a harmonious movement towards genuine socialism. On the basis of the planned economy everyone could have had a guaranteed job, decent housing, good health care, good quality education, etc. In the long run racism and all forms of discrimination can only be eradicated by removing the economic conditions upon which it flourishes.

As the revolution was isolated in one backward country, it degenerated and a bureaucracy usurped political power. This became a fetter on the development of the Soviet Union. With growing social problems the bureaucracy reverted to some of the dirty methods of the old Tsarist regime, including anti-Semitism.

However, the short period in which a relatively healthy workers' state existed in the Soviet Union (early 1920s) we had a glimpse of what would be possible under genuine socialism. Anti-Semitism still exists today, together with all the other forms of discrimination. Our task today is to continue the struggles of the Bolsheviks. Once socialism becomes a world system, then all the material conditions will be established through which all forms of racism and discrimination will be eradicated once and for all.

## NEW RCIT PUBLICATIONS ON RUSSIAN IMPERIALISM!

### Russia as a Great Imperialist Power

By Michael Pröbsting, March 2014



#### Introduction

#### I. What are the Criteria for an Imperialist State?

Imperialism and Super-Exploitation

#### II. Russia: The Nature of its Monopoly Capital and Empire

Monopolization

State Capitalism

Excuse: The Breakdown in the 1990s

Russia's Rise as an Economic Power

Capital Export of Russian Monopolies

Russia as a Great Political and Military Power

#### III. Rebuilding the Empire

Russia's Internal Colonies

Putin's Eurasian Union and the Semi-Colonies

Migration and Super-Exploitation

#### IV. The Distinguishing Characteristics of Russian Imperialism

#### V. The Arguments of Our Critics

WIVP (South Africa): Russia is a Semi-Colony of German Imperialism

LCFI: From "Imperialist" to "Pre-Imperialist" China and Russia

The LCFI's Schematic Understanding of Imperialism

The Great Imperialist Powers before 1914

Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks on Russia as an Imperialist Power

An Ultra-Left Version of Kautskyianism

Inverted Social-Imperialists

#### VI. Appendix: The Capitalist Restoration in Russia (2001)

### Lenin's Theory of Imperialism and the Rise of Russia as a Great Power

By Michael Pröbsting, August 2014



#### Introduction

#### I. Four Currents in the Workers' Movement

#### II. Lenin's Theory of Imperialism and its Revisionist Distortions

Marx and the Centrality of the Production Process

Imperialism is Based on the Capitalist Value of Production

Is There a Capitalist Country Not Dominated by Finance Capital?

Monopolism as the Essence of Imperialism

The Role of the State in Monopoly Capitalism

Disparity between the Imperialist Powers

Can Only the Richest Countries be Imperialist?

The Disparity between the Great Powers in Lenin's Time, before 1917

Are the US and British Models of Imperialism Pure Robbery?

Explaining Eastern Imperialist Power before 1914

A Brief Overview of the Imperialist Powers Today

The Theory of the "Transitional" or "Sub-Imperialist" State

Is Inter-Imperialist Rivalry Intensifying or Minimizing?

Excuse: The Maoist Origin of the Super-Power Theory

Modern Apologists for Karl Kautsky's Theory of Ultra-Imperialism

Explaining Eastern Imperialist Power before 1914

#### III. Social-Imperialism as a Caricature of "Anti-Imperialism"

"Third Campism" and the "Anti-Imperialist United Front

with Putin and Xi" in the Struggle between Imperialist Rivals

Inverted Social-Imperialism as a Variation of Class-Collaboration

#### IV. Again on Russia as an Imperialist Power

Russian and Foreign Monopolies in Banking

Who Controls Russia's Monopolies?

Russia's Foreign Investment and Foreign Policy

Excuse: Eurasianism and Putin's Bourgeois Allies in Western Europe

#### VI. Summary

# Books from the RCIT

## Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism

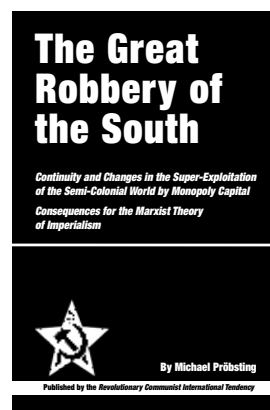
The RCIT is proud to announce the publication of a book called *THE GREAT ROBBERY OF THE SOUTH*. The book's subtitle is: *Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital*. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism. The book is in English-language. It has 15 chapters, 448 pages and includes 139 Tables and Figures. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who is the International Secretary of the RCIT.

In *The Great Robbery of the South* Michael Pröbsting analyses the super-exploitation and oppression of the semi-colonial world (often referred to as the "Third World") by the imperialist powers and monopolies. He shows that the relationship between the small minority of rich capitalist countries and the huge majority of mankind living in the semi-colonial world forms one of the most important elements of the imperialist world system we are living in. The Great Robbery of the South shows that the past decades have been a complete confirmation of the validity of Lenin's theory of imperialism and its programmatic conclusions. *The Great Robbery of the South* demonstrates the important changes in the relationship between the imperialist and the semi-colonial countries. Using comprehensive material (including 139 Tables and Figures), Michael Pröbsting elaborates that never before has

such a big share of the world capitalist value been produced in the South. Never before have the imperialist monopolies been so dependent on the super-exploitation of the semi-colonial world. Never before has migrant labor from the semi-colonial world played such a significant role for the capitalist value production in the imperialist countries. Never before has the huge majority of the world working class lived in the South – outside of the old imperialist metropolises.

In *The Great Robbery of the South* Michael Pröbsting argues that a correct understanding of the nature of imperialism as well as of the program of permanent revolution which includes the tactics of consistent anti-imperialism is essential for anyone who wants to change the world and bring about a socialist future.

Order your copy NOW! \$20 / £13 / €15 plus p+p (21\$ for US and international, £9 for UK, €10 for Europe) ■



Look for details of the books at [www.great-robbery-of-the-south.net](http://www.great-robbery-of-the-south.net) and [www.cuba-sold-out.net](http://www.cuba-sold-out.net)

## Michael Pröbsting: Cuba's Revolution Sold Out? The Road from Revolution to the Restoration of Capitalism

The RCIT is proud to announce the publication of a book called *Cuba's Revolution Sold Out?*. The book's subtitle is: *The Road from Revolution to the Restoration of Capitalism*. The book is in English-language. It has 5 chapters plus an appendix, 108 pages and includes 19 Tables and Figures. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who is the International Secretary of the RCIT.

In *Cuba's Revolution Sold Out?* Michael Pröbsting analyses the character of the Cuban Revolution 1959-61, its bureaucratic degeneration, and the recent march of the Castro leadership towards capitalism.

The author demonstrates how the Cuban Revolution, despite the initial modest intentions of its leaders, was spurred forward to more radical policies by grass roots struggles of Cuban workers and peasants. In fact, the very abolishment of capitalism by the Cuban regime was no part of the original game plan of either Castro's Movimiento 26 de Julio or of the official Cuban communist party (PSP), but rather was a product of precisely such pressures from below.

*Cuba's Revolution Sold Out?* describes in detail how a number of relatively recent political, economic, and social measures were

purposely taken by the Cuban government to open the road back to capitalism. Pröbsting elaborates the key role of the world's new great imperialist power, China, in Cuba's state policy as exemplified in the June 2011 Sino-Cuban agreement for a first Five-Year Plan of cooperation between these two states.

*Cuba's Revolution Sold Out?* examines these developments from the viewpoint of Marxist theory, the nature of the ruling bureaucracy in Stalinist states, and the process of restoration of capitalism under such regimes.

In conclusion, the book proposes a socialist program for political and social revolution in Cuba to halt the advance of capitalism and to eradicate the country's bureaucratic dictatorship.

Price: 8 Euro / 12 US-Dollars / 7 British Pound  
(plus delivery charges) ■



The Author: Michael Pröbsting is a revolutionary activist since 34 years. He is the author of many articles and pamphlets in German and English language. He published books or contributed to books on Rosa Luxemburg (1999), on the World Economy (2008), on Migration (2010) and the Arab Revolution (2011). In addition to *The Great Robbery of the South* and *Cuba's Revolution Sold Out?* he also published in 2014 the book *Building the Revolutionary Party in Theory and Practice. Looking Back and Ahead after 25 Years of Organized Struggle for Bolshevism*. He is the International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency.

# What the RCIT Stands for

The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) is a revolutionary combat organisation fighting for the liberation of the working class and all oppressed. It has national sections in a number of countries. The working class is composed of all those (and their families) who are forced to sell their labor power as wage earners to the capitalists. The RCIT stands on the theory and practice of the revolutionary workers' movement associated with the names of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky.

Capitalism endangers our lives and the future of humanity. Unemployment, war, environmental disasters, hunger, and exploitation are all part of everyday life under capitalism as are the imperialistic oppression of nations, the national oppression of migrants, and the oppression of women, young people, and homosexuals. Therefore, we want to eliminate capitalism.

The liberation of the working class and all oppressed is possible only in a classless society without exploitation and oppression. Such a society can only be established internationally.

Therefore, the RCIT is fighting for a socialist revolution at home and around the world.

This revolution must be carried out and led by the working class, for only this class has the collective power to bring down the ruling class and build a socialist society.

The revolution cannot proceed peacefully because a ruling class never has nor ever will voluntarily surrender its power. By necessity, therefore, the road to liberation includes armed rebellion and civil war against the capitalists.

The RCIT is fighting for the establishment of workers' and peasants' republics, where the oppressed organize themselves in councils democratically elected in rank-and-file meetings in factories, neighbourhoods, and schools. These councils, in turn, elect and control the government and all other state authorities, and always retain the right to recall them.

Authentic socialism and communism have nothing to do with the so-called "socialism" that ruled in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and which continues to do so in China and Cuba, for example. In these countries, the proletariat was and is dominated and oppressed by a privileged party bureaucracy.

Under capitalism, the RCIT supports all efforts to improve the living conditions of the workers and oppressed, while simultaneously striving to overthrow this system based on economic exploitation of the masses.

Towards these ends, we work from within the trade unions where we advocate class struggle, socialism, and workers' democracy. But trade unions and social democracy are controlled by a bureaucracy perniciously connected with the state and capital via status, high-paying jobs, and other privileges. Thus, the trade union bureaucracy is far from the interests and living conditions of

its members, based as it is on the top, privileged layers of the working class – a labor aristocracy which has no real interest in replacing capitalism. Therefore, the true struggle for the liberation of the working class, the toppling of capitalism and the establishment of socialism, must be based on the broad mass of the proletariat rather than their "representative" from the upper trade union strata.

We also fight for the expropriation of the big land owners as well as for the nationalisation of the land and its distribution to the poor and landless peasants. Towards this goal we struggle for the independent organisation of the rural workers.

We support national liberation movements against oppression. We also support the anti-imperialist struggles of oppressed peoples against the great powers. Within these movements we advocate a revolutionary leadership as an alternative to nationalist or reformist forces.

While the RCIT strives for unity of action with other organizations, we are acutely aware that the policies of social democrats and pseudo-revolutionary groups are dangerous, and ultimately represent an obstacle to the emancipation of the working class, peasants, and the otherwise oppressed.

In wars between imperialist states we take a revolutionary defeatist position: we do not support either side, but rather advocate the transformation of the war into a civil war against the ruling class in each of the warring states. In wars between imperialist powers (or their stooges) and a semi-colonial countries we stand for the defeat of the former and the victory of the oppressed countries.

As communists, we maintain that the struggle against national oppression and all types of social oppression (women, youth, sexual minorities etc.) *must* be led by the working class, because only the latter is capable of fomenting a revolutionary change in society. Therefore, we consistently support working class-based revolutionary movements of the socially oppressed, while opposing the leadership of petty-bourgeois forces (feminism, nationalism, Islamism, etc.), who ultimately dance to the tune of the capitalists, and strive to replace them with revolutionary communist leadership.

Only with a revolutionary party fighting as its leadership can the working class be victorious in its struggle for liberation. The establishment of such a party and the execution of a successful revolution, as it was demonstrated by the Bolsheviks in Russia under Lenin and Trotsky remain the models for revolutionary parties and revolutions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

For new, revolutionary workers' parties in all countries!  
For a 5<sup>th</sup> Workers International to be founded on a revolutionary program! Join the RCIT!

*No future without socialism!*

*No socialism without revolution!*

*No revolution without a revolutionary party!*



