

REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISM



English language Journal of the Revolutionary
International Communist Tendency (RCIT)

www.thecommunists.net

Issue No. 10

June 2013

Palestine:

- **Al-Nakba and the 1948 War**
- **Permanent Revolution today**



WORKERS AND OPPRESSED UNITE!

Price: €5 / \$7 / £4,5

Revolutionary Communism

Special Issue on Palestine, No. 10, June 2013

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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), Israel/Occupied Palestine (Internationalist Socialist League, ISL), USA (Revolutionary Workers Collective, RWC) and Austria (Revolutionary Communist Organisation for Liberation, RKOB)

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Israel's War of 1948 and the Degeneration of the Fourth International

By Yossi Schwartz

Preface of the Editorial Board: The following document from comrade Yossi Schwartz is a major contribution in two respects. First it outlines the Marxist position on the colonial settler state Israel, its emergence and its reactionary war in 1948 – called by the Zionists in true Orwellian-speak “*Independence War*”. Additionally, the document is also important for understanding the history of the Fourth International’s position on Zionism and the national liberation struggle in Palestine. In particular comrade Schwartz demonstrates that the small Trotskyist forces in Palestine under the leadership of Tony Cliff (who later became the founder of the centrist *International Socialists* tendency respective the *Socialist Workers Party* in Britain) never understood the national question in Palestine and failed to take a revolutionary stand. It was one of the first expressions of the process of its centrist degeneration that the Fourth International failed to take a revolutionary defeatist position against Israel in its War in 1948 and a revolutionary defensist position for the Arab countries.

The author, Yossi Schwartz, is certainly one of the most suitable Marxists to deal with these subjects. He is an Israeli-Jewish Trotskyist and Anti-Zionist who has been politically active for several decades and has always sided with the Palestinian liberation struggle in words and deeds. He is a long-time leader of the *International Socialist League* which recently joined the RCIT and became its section in Occupied Palestine/Israel.

Comrade Yossi Schwartz is currently working on the Marxist position on Israel’s numerous wars in its history. This document is the first in a planned series of articles on this subject. We hope that this document encourages a discussion amongst serious revolutionary forces both in Occupied Palestine/Israel as well as internationally.

* * *

The war of 1948 between the Zionist armed forces against the Palestinians and the Arab states was a war not between an imperialist state (Israel was not yet an imperialist state) and colonies or semi-colonies. It was a war between Israel that was a semi-colony built by settlers colonialists on one side while the Palestinians who were an oppressed colonized people and the Arab states that were semi-colonies on the other side. For those who use formal logic it was not easy to choose a side. Today most people that support the Palestinians would agree that it was necessary to stand in the war with the Palestinians and the Arab states. However they will have some difficulties to explain why to side with the Arab states that were “ruled” by kings who clearly were serving the British and French imperialist masters. The argument that many supporters of the Palestinians just cause advance that it was necessary to stand against Israel in the war because Israel was an oppressor settler colonialist society has a flaw. When Britain fought against the 13 American colonies in the American war of indepen-

dence (1775–1783), the progressive and revolutionary part of humanity were on the side of the American settler colonialists even when these colonialists oppressed the native Indians. It was necessary to defend the Indians against the white settlers and to defend the colonialist settlers against the British Empire because the British Empire was the worse enemy. No one can think that the British Empire fought on the side of the Indians. Those who refused to stand with the American colonialist against imperialism did not help the Indians but the “imperialists”.

The question whether to support or oppose Israel in 1948 relates of course to the question: Do Marxists support the right of self-determination for the Israelis?

Only the working class internationalist outlook that sees the unity of the world through the revolutionary perspective of the workers in the unequal but combined parts can offer the theoretical answer to the war of 1948.

The war of 1948 was situated in the epoch of decay of capitalism. Thus while the American war of independence was the first stage of the democratic revolution that would be completed with the victory of the North against the South in the Civil War of 1861-1865, Israel, even though it is an imperialist state, never went through nor can it go through a democratic revolution because of the nature of this period and the nature of Zionism. Israel cannot give the Palestinians equal rights because it would not be a state with Jewish majority of citizens any more. It would lose its legitimization for existence and its whole political and military state apparatus would be threatened. It would therefore mean a suicide of Israel which the beast is of course not willing to do. This is the reason why the demand of one democratic state from the river to the sea can not be achieved without a socialist revolution.

The Zionist’s Aim in the 1948 War

If Israel was a progressive society and if it was fighting a revolutionary anti-imperialist war in 1948 as the Stalinists claimed at the time, the outcome in the region would be the weakening of the imperialist control over the region. In the real world the opposite happened.

It is sufficient to read the articles, diaries, speeches of the leading Zionists including the left wing Zionists, to realize that the Zionists aim in the war of 1948 was to crash and force the Palestinian to flee their homeland. It also demonstrates that the Zionists were made in the same mold of the South African Afrikaners. This becomes evident from the leading Zionists own words. Let us quote first Vladimir Jabotinsky, the leader of the Revisionist Zionists:

“Zionist colonization, even the most restricted, must either be terminated or carried out in defiance of the will of the native population. This colonization can, therefore, continue and develop only under the protection of a force independent of the local population – an iron wall which the native population cannot break through. This is, in toto, our policy towards the Arabs. To

formulate it any other way would only be hypocrisy.” 1

Later Jabotinsky proclaimed the *“iron law of every colonizing movement, a law which knows of no exceptions, a law which existed in all times and under all circumstances. If you wish to colonize a land in which people are already living, you must provide a garrison on your behalf. Or else – or else, give up your colonization, for without an armed force which will render physically impossible any attempts to destroy or prevent this colonization, colonization is impossible, not “difficult”, not “dangerous” but IMPOSSIBLE! ... Zionism is a colonizing adventure and therefore it stands or falls by the question of armed force. It is important to build, it is important to speak Hebrew, but, unfortunately, it is even more important to be able to shoot – or else I am through with playing at colonialization.” 2*

Joseph Weitz, head of the Jewish Agency's Colonization Department, said: *“There are some who believe that the non-Jewish population, even in a high percentage, within our borders will be more effectively under our surveillance; and there are some who believe the contrary, i.e., that it is easier to carry out surveillance over the activities of a neighbor than over those of a tenant. [I] tend to support the latter view and have an additional argument (...) the need to sustain the character of the state which will henceforth be Jewish (...) with a non-Jewish minority limited to 15 percent. I had already reached this fundamental position as early as 1940 [and] it is entered in my diary.” 3*

David Ben Gurion, future Prime Minister of Israel, already wrote in 1937 in a letter to his son about the Zionist plans for the expulsion of the Palestinian people: *“We must expel Arabs and take their places.” 4*

Other quotes from Ben Gurion underline the Zionist expansionist plans: *“We should prepare to go over to the offensive. Our aim is to smash Lebanon, Trans-Jordan, and Syria. The weak point is Lebanon, for the Moslem regime is artificial and easy for us to undermine. We shall establish a Christian state there, and then we will smash the Arab Legion, eliminate Trans-Jordan; Syria will fall to us. We then bomb and move on and take Port Said, Alexandria and Sinai”. 5*

Yitzhak Rabin reported in his memoirs: *“We walked outside, Ben-Gurion accompanying us. Allon repeated his question, What is to be done with the Palestinian population?’ Ben-Gurion waved his hand in a gesture which said ‘Drive them out!’” 6*

Later Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin would express Zionist racism in its most brutal frankness in a speech to the Knesset (Israeli Parliament): *“Our race is the Master Race. We are divine gods on this planet. We are as different from the inferior races as they are from insects. In fact, compared to our race, other races are beasts and animals, cattle at best. Other races are considered as human excrement. Our destiny is to rule over the inferior races. Our earthly kingdom will be ruled by our leader with a rod of iron. The masses will lick our feet and serve us as our slaves.” 7*

The small selection of quotes demonstrates unequivocally the reactionary nature of Zionism as it was planning the creation of the Israeli state and the war of expulsion necessary for it. As reactionary as Israel's wars are, as progressive are the effects of its defeats. Today we can see this very clearly that the latest defeats of Israel in Lebanon when it had to escape in the middle of the night in 2000, in the second war of Lebanon when it was defeated by Hezbollah, in the war of the Palestinian Authority backed by Israel against Hamas in 2007 and in the last war against Hamas in 2012 were important factors in the break out of the Second Intifada in September 2000 as well as the Arab revolution

since 2011. These defeats of Israel have convinced the Arab masses not only that Israel can be defeated but the Arab dictators as well. If Israel was a progressive society than its victory in 1967 would cause an Arab mass uprising. In the real world following the 1967 war the Arab masses felt humiliated and weak.

Revolutionary Wave after the Second World War

The war of 1948 took place a few years after the end of the Second World War. Towards the end and following the end of WWII, the imperialists ruling classes feared a new revolutionary wave like the one which spread across Europe and beyond, following World War I. It was a wave that opened the doors for the victory of Bolshevism. A leading conservative politician in Britain, Quintin Hogg, expressed the capitalist's fear and their readiness to do everything possible in order to contain the working class revolution, in 1943 in the following words: *“We must give them reforms or they will give us revolution.” 8*

Indeed a working class revolutionary wave erupted in Europe and in the colonies and semi-colonies in Africa and Latin America at the end of WWII. The revolutionary Fourth International understood the contradictions and difficulties of the revolutionary struggle in Europe. Such wrote George Novack, one of the leading US-Trotskyists:

“The final stage of the war gave rise to a mighty offensive of the masses beginning in Italy and extending to all the occupied countries. The workers of Italy, France, Belgium, Greece, Holland acquired arms and created their own military formations; took possession in many places of the factories, means of transportation, etc.; established popular control over the distribution of food, the dispensing of justice, the administration of local affairs. These embryonic elements of dual power, if coordinated, developed and expanded, could have provided the basis for the complete overturn of capitalist rule and the institution of the sovereignty of the toiling masses in these countries.

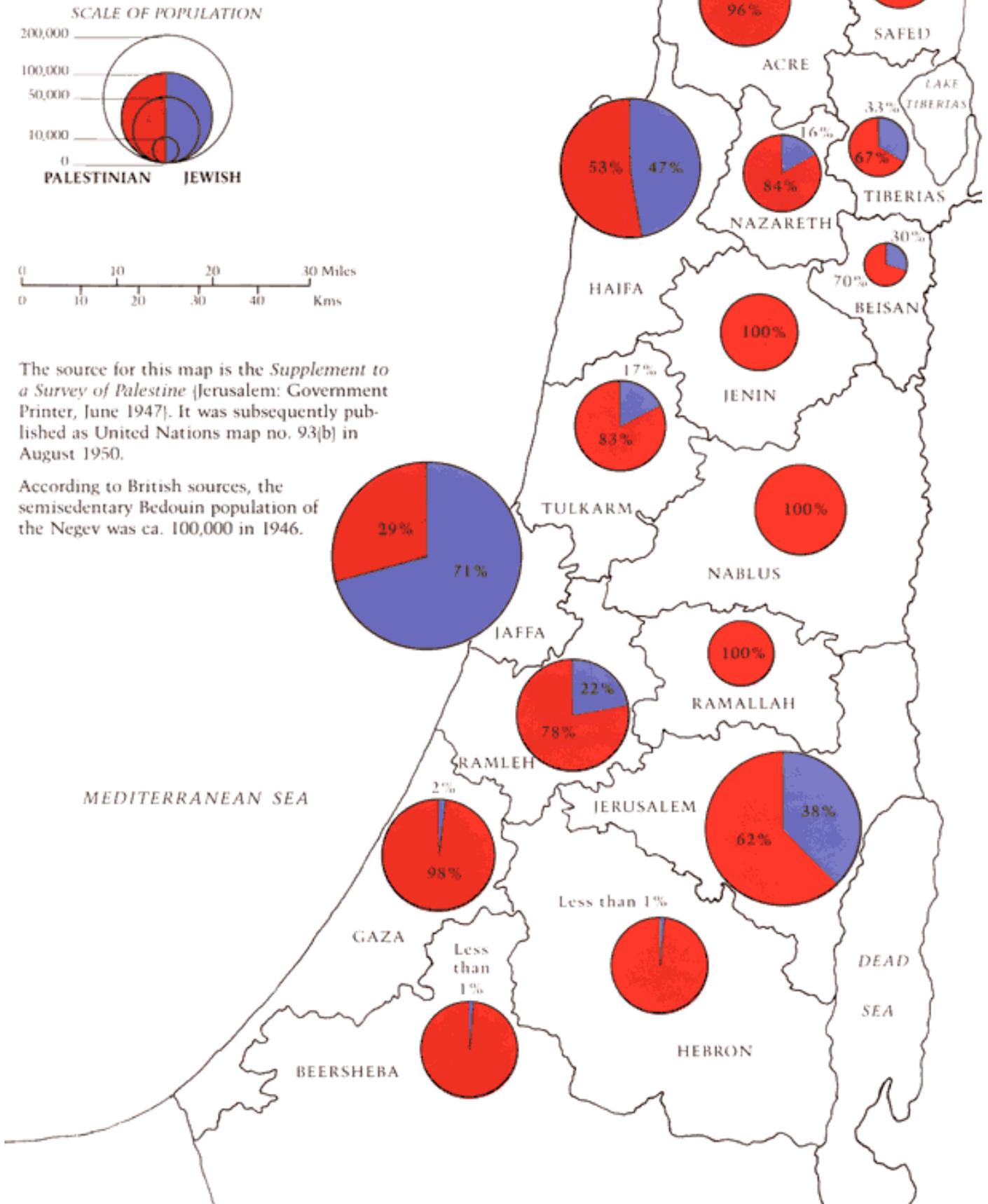
Three main factors prevented the victorious consummation of the uprising of the workers. First, the full weight of the preponderant military forces of the Anglo-American invaders in counter-revolutionary alliance with the Kremlin was flung against the insurgent masses to arrest their struggles. The Big Three conspired to set up puppet regimes obedient to their will. Second, the Stalinist and Socialist parties which commanded the allegiance of the working masses worked hand in glove with the Allied powers to save capitalist rule by disarming the workers militarily and politically. Third, the Trotskyist groups and parties were too weak and immature to intervene as a decisive force and head off this disaster.

For these reasons the first wave of revolution fell short of its goal throughout Western Europe. The bloody crushing of the ELAS-EAM in Greece, combined with the cowardly capitulation of its Stalinist leadership before the British-backed capitalist monarchist counter-revolution, marked the close of this first period. Since then a marked recession in the revolutionary tide has set in. The repulse of the proletarian offensive has afforded the capitalist rulers a breathing spell and enabled them to regain a transitory and precarious equilibrium.

Aided by Anglo-American imperialism and the complicity of the Stalinist and Socialist misleaders, the Western European bourgeoisie are utilizing this pause to strengthen their shaken positions, to further undermine the power of the proletariat, and to prepare for the launching of their own counter-offensives. The

Distribution of Palestinians and Jews in Subdistricts in 1946

Distribution of population by subdistrict, with percentages of Jews and Palestinians, 1946.



The source for this map is the *Supplement to a Survey of Palestine* (Jerusalem: Government Printer, June 1947). It was subsequently published as United Nations map no. 93(b) in August 1950.

According to British sources, the semisedentary Bedouin population of the Negev was ca. 100,000 in 1946.

capitalists, the church, the army are mobilizing their forces to fortify and reestablish their dictatorial rule. In Belgium they are plotting to bring back King Leopold. In France they support de Gaulle's drive to legitimize and buttress his Bonapartist aspirations. Under British tutelage in Italy and Greece the monarchists and other reactionaries are displaying growing impudence and activity." 9

The repression of the revolutionary uprisings in the colonies and the semi-colonies was very severe. In some cases the imperialists managed to defeat the working class revolutionary uprisings. In other countries like in China they were able with the help of the Nationalists and the Stalinists to prevent a working class revolution but could not totally defeat the revolution and this explains the victory of the Stalinist peasantry-based revolution in 1949. The victorious revolution in China led to the formation of the degenerated workers state. This means a state where it was necessary for the working class to overthrow by a political revolution the Stalinists in order to open the road to socialism. As this did not happen China today is a capitalist-imperialist state. 10

The reactionary results of the war of 1948 in Palestine were part of the defeat of the revolutionary tide in the "Third World". Any attempt to understand this war in isolation and outside the historical context is a blind alley.

Stalinism supported Israel's reactionary War in 1948

At the time of the 1948 war the Stalinists presented the Zionist war as an anti-imperialist war and thus the creation of Israel as a progressive event. In reality it was a victory for the imperialists and a counter revolutionary event.

Already in 1943 the *Palestinian Communist Party* (PKP) was moving toward integration within the organized Jewish *Yishuv*. While opposing partition and calling for an independent democratic state, it increasingly upheld a bi-national vision, based on "the principle of equal rights of Jews and Arabs for free national, economic and cultural development, without artificial interruptions and in mutual cooperation and brotherhood of nation." 11 This motion toward political support for Zionism caused a split of the PKP and the left wing that consisted more of Palestinian patriots known as the *National Liberation League* emerged in opposition to the motion of the PKP.

Despite their differences, both factions agreed on one core principle of the bi-national approach: the need to treat members of both national groups equally, whether as citizens in a joint state or as members of national collectives enjoying the same rights within a federal state, or as groups entitled to the right of national self determination. The Soviet Stalinists recognized the right of self determination for the Zionists for the first time in May 1947 in a speech delivered by the USSR's ambassador at the United Nations, Andrei Gromyko:

"It is essential to bear in mind the indisputable fact that the population of Palestine consists of two peoples, the Arabs and the Jews. Both have historical roots in Palestine. Palestine has become the homeland of both these peoples, each of which plays an important part in the economy and the cultural life of the country. (...) Thus, the solution of the Palestine problem by the establishment of a single Arab-Jewish State with equal rights for the Jews and the Arabs may be considered as one of the possibilities and one of the more noteworthy methods for the solution

of this complicated problem. Such a solution of the problem of Palestine's future might be a sound foundation for the peaceful co-existence and co-operation of the Arab and Jewish populations of Palestine, in the interests of both these peoples and to the advantage of the entire Palestine population and of the peace and security of the Near East. (...) "If this plan proved impossible to implement, in view of the deterioration in the relations between the Jews and the Arabs--and it will be very important to know the special committee's opinion on this question--then it would be necessary to consider the second plan which, like the first, has its supporters in Palestine, and which provides for the partition of Palestine into two independent autonomous States, one Jewish and one Arab." 12

It is interesting to read the account of the Stalinists support for the creation of Israel by Norman Berdichevsky, a fanatic supporter of Israel:

"The most famous and colorful personality of the Spanish Republic in exile, the Basque delegate to the Cortes (Spanish Parliament), Dolores Ibarruri, who had gone to the Soviet Union, issued a proclamation in 1948 saluting the new State of Israel and comparing the invading Arab armies to the Fascist uprising that had destroyed the Republic. Just a few months earlier, the hero of the American Left, the great Afro-American folk singer, Paul Robeson had sung in a gala concert in Moscow and electrified the crowd with his rendition of the Yiddish Partisan Fighters Song...

The leaders of the *Yishuv* (Jewish community in Palestine), already in the summer of 1947, intended to purchase arms and sent Dr. Moshe Sneh (the Chief of the European Branch of the Jewish Agency, a leading member of the centrist General Zionist Party who later moved far leftward and became head of the Israeli Communist Party) to Prague in order to improve Jewish defenses. He was surprised by the sympathy towards Zionism and by the interest in arms export on the side of the Czech Government. Sneh met with the Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Clementis, who succeeded the non-Communist and definitely pro-Zionist Jan Masaryk. Sneh and Clementis discussed the possibility of Czech arms provisions for the Jewish state and the Czechs gave their approval,

In January, 1948 Jewish representatives were sent by Ben-Gurion to meet with General Ludvik Svoboda, the Minister of National Defense, and sign the first contract for Czech military aid. Four transport routes were used to Palestine all via Communist countries; a) the Northern route: via Poland and the Baltic Sea, b) the Southern route: via Hungary, Yugoslavia and the Adriatic Sea, c) via Hungary, Romania and the Black Sea, d) by air, via Yugoslavia to Palestine.

At first, a "Skymaster" plane chartered from the U.S. to help in ferrying weapons to Palestine from Europe was forced by the FBI to return to the USA. By the end of May the Israeli Army (IDF) had absorbed about 20,000 Czech rifles, 2,800 machine-guns and over 27 million rounds of ammunition. Two weeks later an additional 10,000 rifles, 1,800 machine-guns and 20 million rounds of ammunition arrived. One Czech-Israeli project that alarmed the Western intelligence was the, so called, Czech Brigade, a unit composed of Jewish veterans of "Free Czechoslovakia", which fought with the British Army during WWII. The Brigade began training in August 1948 at four bases in Czechoslovakia.

Czech assistance to Israel's military strength comprised a) small arms, b) 84 airplanes — the outdated Czech built Avia S.199s, Spitfires and Messerschmidts that played a major role in the demoralization of enemy troops; c) military training and technical maintenance. On January 7, 1949, the Israeli air-force, consist-

ing of several Spitfires and Czech built Messerschmidt Bf-109 fighters (transferred secretly from Czech bases to Israel), shot down five British-piloted Spitfires flying for the Egyptian air-force over the Sinai desert causing a major diplomatic embarrassment for the British government.

Even with Czech weapons and Soviet aid, Israel would undoubtedly have been unable to halt the Arab invasion without a massive inflow of manpower. The United States, Canada and Europe provided no more than 3000 volunteers, many of them combat hardened veterans from both the European and Pacific theaters of war plus a few score idealistic youngsters from the Zionist movements with no combat experience or training.

But their numbers were a drop in the bucket compared to more than 200,000 Jewish immigrants from the Soviet dominated countries in Eastern Europe, notably, Poland, Bulgaria (almost 95% of the entire Jewish community) Romania, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, the former Baltic States and even the Soviet Union who emigrated to Israel arriving in time to reach the front lines or replenish the depleted ranks of civilian manpower. Without both the arms and manpower sent from the "Socialist Camp", to aid the nascent Israeli state, it would have been crushed.

In 1947, when Stalin was convinced that the Zionists would evict the British from Palestine, the Party Line turned about face. Following Soviet recognition and aid to Israel in 1948-49, both the *Daily Worker* and the *Yiddish language communist daily in the U.S. Freiheit (Freedom)* outdid one another to explain the new party line in that....

'Palestine had become an important settlement of 600,000 souls, having developed a common national economy, a growing national culture and the first elements of Palestinian Jewish statehood and self-government.'

A 1947 CP-USA resolution entitled 'Work Among the Jewish Masses' berated the Party's previous stand and proclaimed that 'Jewish Marxists have not always displayed a positive attitude to the rights and interests of the Jewish People, to the special needs and problems of our own American Jewish national group and to the interests and rights of the Jewish Community in Palestine' The new reality that had been created in Palestine was a "Hebrew nation" that deserved the right to self-determination. Remarkably, the Soviet propaganda machine even praised the far Right underground groups of the Irgun and "Stern Gang" for their campaign of violence against the British authorities."¹³

As a result the Soviet Union was the first country to legally recognize de jure, the Israeli state.

This Stalinist counter revolutionary policy of giving the Zionist political as well as military support determined the outcome of the war. It enabled Israel to expel most of the Palestinian people from their country while the Zionist robbed their properties. Stalinism – despite its "communist" rhetoric – proved to be a major counter-revolutionary force and an enemy of the international working class and the oppressed masses. It discredited communism for decades in the whole Middle East. It is in the same reactionary logic that most Stalinist forces today sided with the Gaddafi dictatorship in Libya in 2011 and still support the Assad regime in Syria which is waging a counter-revolutionary civil war against the rebellious popular masses. An authentic revolutionary working class party as part of the Fifth International will have to fight relentlessly against the Stalinist policy.

Shachtmanite Right-Wing Centrism supports Israel's reactionary War in 1948

The political programs of some of the centrists who call themselves Trotskyites on the question of the socialist revolution in Palestine are rooted in the positions of the Fourth International (FI) and of the Shachtmanites split from the FI in that period. The FI was already making one centrist failure in 1941, conducted by the SWP during the Minneapolis trial in October 1941 when Cannon expressed concessions to Defensiveness and Social Patriotism. Although the Fourth International followed by and large a revolutionary course during the WWII, its degeneration developed later on to the extreme. This degeneration process towards centrism became strongly apparent – in addition to the shameful failure in the Israel-Palestine War in 1948 – in the "Open Letter" to Tito and the political support to Mao Zedong, while denouncing the Chinese Trotskyists in 1948. The position of others who call themselves Trotskyists is influenced by the Shachtmanites who stood to the right of the FI. 14

The FI did not take a position on the war when it broke out. This by itself is a symptom of degeneration. It took months before the FI came up with a political position and it was wrong. Clearly as a fast degenerating organization, an organization transforming into a centrist organization, it was already unable to examine the war from the perspective of the revolutionary international working class. It defended the right of self-determination of the Israelis though it opposed the partition and it took the position of revolutionary defeatism both for Israel and the Arab states.

In the real world it is impossible to support the right of self-determination for both the Israelis and the Palestinians. One has to choose a side either for the settler colonialists or for the oppressed colonized Palestinians. To support the right of self-determination means to support the right to set up a state. A Zionist state even in parts of Palestine could be formed only by the stealing of Palestinians lands. Not only this but any Zionist state with a majority of Jews meant to expel most Palestinians from the Zionist territory. This was clear already in 1937 with the recommendation of *Peel Commission* calling for the partition plan that at the same time called for the removal of a quarter of million Palestinians. Those who support today the existence of Israel oppose the full right of the return of the Palestinian refugees whom Israel expelled in 1947-48. The Shachtmanites, who split from the FI in 1940, elaborated their position on the emerging Zionist state in their theoretical journal *New International* (which they appropriated after the split with the Fourth International in 1940). They supported the right of self-determination for Israel and opposed the Arab states in the war. The FI on the other hand opposed the partition and took the position of revolutionary defeat for the Zionists and the Arab states. Let us examine more closely the positions of the FI, the Trotskyists in Palestine – the *Revolutionary Communist League (RCL)* – and of the Shachtmanites.

Hal Draper, a Shachtmanite, wrote in July 1948 in the *New International*, which by then was already a right wing centrist organ, that it would be better if the partition plan was rejected. However since it was not rejected, Draper continues, it is necessary to defend Israel's right to exist as a

reflection of the principle of the right of self-determination to all nations. In light of this right it is necessary to defend Israel against the reactionary Arab states that want to prevent the implementation of this right. This was – according to the Shachtmanites – also the Bolshevik policy in the case of Finland. Then he turned against the FI and writes: “What, however, shall we say of self-styled socialists who do not make even this beginning? We are thinking of the Socialist Workers Party group (Cannonites), which finally had a few words to say about the Palestine situation in the May 31 issue of its *Militant*. They argue for supporting neither side. The result is pitiful and is worthwhile taking up only for the purposes of a Marxist lesson on how not to approach the question.

This lesson is simple enough: Marxists do not decide to support or oppose a war merely on the basis of whether they like or do not like the politics of the leaders of the state. Marxism has made this clear often enough: in supporting China’s war against Japan, the Spanish loyalist government’s war against Franco, the Negus’ war against Mussolini.

The question which we have asked, following Lenin’s method, was: What politics does this war flow from? War – so goes the platitude – is the continuation of politics by other, forceful, means. In the case of every concrete war, we try to analyze concretely the politics of which that war is the continuation. The Spanish loyalist government was an imperialist government; it exploited Morocco and oppressed the peasants (and shot them down when they revolted!). But when the Franco fascists sought to overthrow even this miserable government, we called for its defense – in our own way, by revolutionary means, and without giving the slightest political support to the bourgeois People’s Front leaders – because our analysis of the concreteness of events showed that the anti-Franco war did not flow from the loyalist government’s imperialist character but from the fascists’ attack upon its democratic base.

This was ABC once. But the Cannonites’ views seem to be founded solely upon an easy proof of the reactionary character of the Zionist leadership of the Jews: it “threatens to provoke new pogroms against the Jews and involve them in new calamities,” it “must inevitably become a tool of American imperialism,” it “solidifies the position of the reactionary Arab rulers and enables them to pervert the social struggle in their own countries into a communal struggle between the Arab and Jewish peoples.” All very true, and precisely the reason why defense of the Jews’ right to self-determination cannot mean support to these Zionist leaders or their policies. It was just as true that Chiang Kai-shek’s war against Japan was used by him to try to gloss over and sidetrack the social struggle behind his own lines.

But don’t the Jewish people have “the right to self-determination and statehood as other peoples?” Their full answer:

Yes – but even if we abstract this question from its aforementioned social reality, the fact remains they cannot carve out a state at the expense of the national rights of the Arab peoples. This is not self-determination, but conquest of another people’s territory.

A dishonest reply. (1) It means that the Jews have a right to self-determination but no right to exercise it. This does not make sense. One may, as we said, advise against its exercise in favor of a different course; but it is pure fakery to grant the right and in the same breath denounce its exercise as “conquest of another people’s territory.” (2) If the Jews have the right to self-determination, what territory can they “self-determine themselves” in without infringing upon the national rights of the Arab people? Is there any? Obviously none, it appears from the argument.

What then does the “Yes” mean?

The only honest answer would be to deny that the Jews have any right to self-determination in Palestine – and to explain why they thus differ from other peoples. The SWP cannot do the latter and so they wisely, if hypocritically, refrain from asserting the former.

If the setting up of the Jewish state was “conquest of another people’s territory” and an attack on the “national rights” of the Arab peoples, then, who have the right to defend themselves against this unprovoked aggression. How can this conclusion be avoided? Certainly not by arguing that the leaders of these (attacked) Arab peoples are no-goods! Yet this is exactly how our subjects evade the responsibility of coming out four-square for the Arab invasion:

They (the Arab rulers), are, by their anti-Jewish war, (what? isn’t it a war of defense against an unprovoked attempt at conquest? – H.D.) trying to divert the struggle against imperialism, and utilizing the aspirations of the Arab masses for national freedom, to smother the social opposition to their tyrannical rule.

Of course, of course – but in a war of defense against conquest by “tools of American imperialism,” it would be the duty of socialists to fight the Arab rulers by demanding, not merely prosecution of the war, but consistent, uncompromising prosecution of the war ... opposition to a rotten compromise with the Israelis, for example, opposition to any cessation of the conflict short of complete reconquest of the whole territory of Palestine, war to the bitter end ... just as our Chinese comrades advocated, as against the compromising bourgeois leaders, in the war against Japan.

Our subjects shrink from this conclusion, for unaccountable reasons. This, however, is the only consistent alternative to our own consistent policy.” 15

The question to ask people who argue along the line of Hal Draper is very simple: Where do you take the lofty absolute principle of defense of the right of self-determination to all nations from? Can you find it in Marx? Definitely not. Marx is on the record for opposing the demand for self-determination of the Slave owners in the South during the American civil war. In 1848 Marx and Engels refused to support the right of self-determination of the Southern Slaves because it would have served the interests of the Russian Tsar that with British imperialism were the pillars of reaction. Did you take it from Lenin? Definitely not. Lenin was for smashing the independence of Poland under the right wing nationalists who joined the imperialist attack on the Russian revolution in 1920. Marxists do not defend the right of self-determination of the imperialists that oppress nations but only of oppressed nations. 16

Once we remove the nonsense about holy principles and look at every question from the perspective of what policy advances the interest of the international working class we must conclude that the right position in 1948 was for revolutionary defeat for Israel and for revolutionary defense of the Arab states. “Support them in the military confrontation without giving them any political support as we could not trust them to lead the struggle against the imperialists and against the Zionists!” This would have been the correct slogan. Only the revolutionary working class can be trusted to carry out this task. This is also the position which both the ISL and the RCIT (respectively its predecessor organization) always took. 17

Draper was right of course to argue that the only answer to his pro-Zionist position was a revolutionary position

that denies the right of self-determination to the reactionary side and that the Cannonites were unable at that time to hold to revolutionary perspective and position.

The increasingly centrist Fourth International remains neutral in the 1948 War

Only more than a year later Munier (Gabriel Baer) of the RCL and the FI replied to Draper. He insisted and correctly so that it is an illusion to think (1) that imperialism was defeated by the creation of a new independent state in an anti-imperialist struggle; or (2) that the existence of this Jewish State has a progressive influence on the working-class and the labor movement in the Arab countries of the Middle East; and (3) that it is important to make clear to every socialist in the world that without the support of Anglo-American imperialism the State of Israel could not have been founded. He writes:

*"Had not the US delegation to the UN influenced and bribed a certain number of delegations of small states, Haiti, Philippines and others; had not the US government allowed Israel, to be supplied with money and materials so it could pay in dollars for Czechoslovakian arms; had it not given the new state recognition within a few hours of its creation; had not the British army tolerated the opening of the road to Jerusalem by conquest and evacuation of the Arab villages along this road (on March 2, 1948, British troops joined the Hagana to break up an Arab block at Bab al Wad, then early in April it failed to intervene when military actions along the road began, then on April 6 the British brought some supply trains into the city, etc.); had the British army not come to the rescue of the Jewish settlements Dan and Kfar Szold in Upper Galilee on the 9th of January; and last but not least, had not the first truce which was imposed by the UN in June 1948 saved Jewish Jerusalem from starvation and military collapse – had not all this happened the State of Israel could not have come into being."*¹⁸

Yet, instead of pointing to the military role of Zionism that acts to terrorize the Arab masses to force them to submit to imperialism, he argues a strange and weak argument that reflects the pressure of Zionism on the RCL: Instead of seeing the hate of the Arab masses against the Zionist state as a form of anti-imperialist resistance, he saw it as misdirected chauvinism manipulated by the imperialists:

"The aim of Anglo-American imperialism was to create a force which would play the same role in the framework of the Middle East as a whole that Zionism had played for 30 years in Palestine. As a focus for chauvinist hate it would serve to divert the revolutionary struggles of the Middle Eastern Arab masses from anti-imperialist into racial or religious channels."

He continues and he points out to the anti-imperialist mass pressure in the Arab states:

"But something went wrong with the plan in its initial stage in most of the Arab countries: demonstrations were directed mainly against foreign companies and establishments, including the Soviet Union because of its support of partition, and the Communist Party, whose offices in Damascus were wrecked."

This pressure of the Arab masses was the reason the rulers of the Arab states went to war with Israel. Today this is even recognized by Zionist historians like Benny Morris:

"The massacre and the way it was trumpeted in the Arab media added to the pressure on the Arab states' leaders to aid the embattled Palestinians and hardened their resolve to invade Palestine. The news had aroused great public indignation – which the

*leaders were unable to ignore."*¹⁹

To avoid this conclusion Munier argues:

"Only where they ruled directly did the British succeed at the time in turning these riots against the Jewish minority, e.g., in the British Crown-Colony of Aden anti-partition demonstrators killed 75 Jews and wounded many more."

He goes on and claims that the Arab states were tools of imperialism against Israel:

"The fighting between Jews and Arabs in Palestine early in 1948 showed clearly that, on the Palestinian scale, the Jews were militarily stronger. The cause for Arab weakness was not only because of the feudal structure of Arab society in general, but also the reactionary Arab leadership which had deliberately prevented the growth of any mass movement similar to that of 1936-39 in fear of the working class which had emerged during World War II. The question was now: Will the Arab governments of the surrounding countries intervene?"

On January 12, 1948, British diplomatic sources in London confirmed the report that Great Britain was supplying arms to Egypt, Iraq and Trans-Jordan according to "treaties," but still the will and ability of these governments to invade Palestine remained doubtful. They needed new encouragement which came in the form of the American declaration at the UN in March 1948 renouncing partition and favoring trusteeship. This declaration, together with the conspicuous helplessness of the UN apparatus to implement its own decision, induced the governments of the Middle East to make a bid for the position of sole agent of Anglo-American imperialism in the Middle East to the exclusion of the Zionist leadership."

Then to avoid the full implication of his narrative which leads to the defense of Israel against the Arabs he turns around and argues:

"But in the course of their invasion, after May 15, when the Trans-Jordan Arab Legion threatened to defeat Jewish Jerusalem and the Egyptian army reached the southern Jewish colonies on the gateway to Tel Aviv, the first truce was imposed giving the Jews a needed respite to organize their army, to import weapons and to supply Jerusalem. The aim of the truce was to create a balance of power, not to create the opportunity for a decisive military victory of the Jews over the Arab armies. British officers continued to serve with the Arab Legion, and Egypt and Syria continued to buy arms in several European Marshall Plan countries."

New truces were imposed as the need arose to maintain this balance of power.

The last one was imposed when Israeli forces moved into Egyptian territory and threatened the annihilation of the whole Egyptian force in Palestine, whose collapse would have had serious social repercussions in Egypt. In the meantime the creation of the Arab refugee problem, together with quarrels over bound-



aries, resulted in enough tension between Israel and the Arab countries for American diplomacy to undertake the "pacification" of the Middle East for the time being by the conclusion of a "permanent truce" in Rhodes."

As a result of this wrong analysis, the RCL in Palestine had a wrong perspective and a program and as result the wrong strategy and tactics from its inception. If prior to WWII there were forces within the FI that opposed their pro Zionist line the FI was unable to do so in 1948.

The Birth of Palestinian Trotskyism

Hitler's rise to power in 1933 had a cataclysmic effect on the workers' movement, both in Germany itself and internationally. The Social Democrats' failure to combat it seriously, combined with the Stalinists' stubborn refusal to use united front tactics to defend against the fascist danger, resulted in a tremendous defeat. Following this defeat the Communist International (CI) under the Stalinist leadership shifted from bureaucratic ultra leftism to class collaboration – the popular fronts. In response to the CI's failure to learn from the German catastrophe, Trotsky declared it in 1933 dead as a revolutionary organization, and argued for the building of a new, Fourth International.

For Jewish workers, the impact of the rise of Nazism to power on their physical well-being and their political consciousness was especially sharp. The defeat helped the Zionist nationalist propaganda that most politically conscious Jews had rejected: that anti-Semitism among non-Jews was inevitable and futile to confront. For a much smaller number, Trotsky's prescient prediction of the catastrophe that would result if the Communists failed to correct their methods resulted in a greater interest in and sympathy for Trotskyism.

Both trends had an impact within Palestine. On the one hand, among far-left Zionists, whose sympathies for the Soviet Union had previously inclined them towards Stalinism, it became increasingly common to read Trotsky's writings. Within parties such as the Left "Poale Tsiyon" (Workers of Zion), it was not unusual to find youth who proclaimed themselves Trotskyists one moment, and loyal, though questioning, Zionists the next. Yet, alongside this leftward polarization, Jewish immigration and Zionist settlement increased dramatically during the 1930s.

Of course, not all Jewish immigration to Palestine in this period was voluntary and Zionist in character. For all but the wealthiest and most famous refugees from Nazi terror, imperialist countries such as the U.S. and Britain offered only a closed door. For many desperate Jews, immigration to Palestine was an unfortunate necessity. From among these numbers, a small number of Trotskyist Jews from Germany settled in 1933. These exiles engaged in modest ventures, printing Trotsky's writings in German and Yiddish, and making the first attempts to translate them into Hebrew.

Among the young left-Zionists who were won to Trotskyism, the most significant was Ygael Gluckstein. In English-language publications of the FI, he was known as "L. Rock," and later in life he would be known as Tony Cliff, founder and leader of the British SWP. Cliff himself participated in the *Chugim Marxistim* (Marxist Circles), a youth organization led by Zeev Abramovitch and Yitzhak Yitzhaki, associated with the *Poalei Tziyon Smol*. His writing of that

period reflects this fact. When the Communist Party took their ultra-left turn after 1929 while the RCL continued with their politics reflecting the Zionist pressure on the organization, their road to the Arab workers was blocked. The Communist Party politics of the Popular front, which led them to politically supporting the reactionary leadership of the revolutionary Palestinian mass uprising in 1936-39, was an open betrayal of the working class.

However, the RCL was incapable of challenging the PKP influence amongst the Arab workers because it did not possess a revolutionary understanding and program for Palestine. It was blinded by a superficial understanding of the "Jewish-Arab conflict" as a confrontation between two equally reactionary nationalist camps. They failed to see the colonial settler nature of Zionism, the subsequent real national oppression of the Arabs by the Zionists and hence the justified national liberation struggle of the Arab masses against the Zionists (which was betrayed by the Arab bourgeoisie and landlords).

This programmatic failure of the Trotskyists in Palestine – which reminds us of Lenin's polemics against "imperialist economism" – became completely evident in an article by the RCL leader Tony Cliff in November 1938. In a chapter entitled "The Jewish-Arab conflict", Cliff wrote:

"What are the causes of this conflict? Two answers are advanced in Palestine. The Zionist groups say that the conflict is simply the collision of feudalism and reaction with the progressive forces of capitalism. The Arab nationalists and their Stalinist supporters claim that the collision is between the Arab liberation movement and Zionism.

But the first explanation is wrong because the fact of the conflict between feudalism and capitalism does not explain the Arab national movement in Palestine. There are parallel manifestations of nationalism in the adjacent countries (Syria, Egypt). Moreover it does not explain how a clique of effendis succeeded in getting control over a militant national movement of hundreds of thousands. It is clear that the basis of the antagonism of the Arab masses to the Jewish population does not arise from the fact that the latter have brought in a higher standard of living and have created a modern labour movement. Their principal opposition arises from the fact that they see in the Jewish population the bearers of Zionism, that political system based upon national exclusivism, and hostility to the aspirations of the Arab masses to independence and democratisation of the political regime.

The second view, the claim of the Arab nationalists, is likewise erroneous. It does not take into consideration that there really is a conflict between feudalism and capitalist development, secondly, that inside the nationalist movement there is an Arab bourgeoisie which in competition with the closed Jewish economy develops exclusivist Arab tendencies, and thirdly, that the Jewish population is no integral part of the imperialist camp.

*What follows therefore is that the collision in the Arab-Jewish conflict is between two national exclusivist movements (between Zionism and the feudal, semi-bourgeois Arab leadership on the one hand, and on the other the struggle of the Arab masses against Zionism). The consistent struggle for the easing up of this conflict is therefore only possible on the basis of the struggle against Zionism, against Arab national exclusivism and anti-Jewish actions, against imperialism, for the democratisation of the country and its political independence."*²⁰

So we see the RCL leader adhering to an idealist, not dialectical-materialist method, which equates both Zionism and Arab nationalism or "national exclusivism" without

understanding the difference between an oppressed nation and a colonial settler oppressor nation. Consequently, Cliff could not see the important difference between the nationalism of an oppressed nation and the nationalism of a colonial settler oppressor nation.

However, as Lenin explained at the Second Congress of the Communist International, recognition of this difference – which is so essential in the imperialist epoch – is a precondition to understand and act as a Marxist:

„First, what is the cardinal idea underlying our theses? It is the distinction between oppressed and oppressor nations. Unlike the Second International and bourgeois democracy, we emphasise this distinction.“ 21

As a result of its failure, the RCL saw in the Arab Uprising 1936-39 mainly a pogrom against the Jews and remained on the sidelines of history. It failed to assimilate the revolutionary position of the Fourth International which supported the Arab Uprising in 1936-39:

“The struggle against war and its social source, capitalism, presupposes direct, active, unequivocal support to the oppressed colonial peoples in their struggles and wars against imperialism. A “neutral” position is tantamount to support of imperialism. Yet, among the announced adherents of the London Bureau congress are found ILPers who advocate leaving the courageous Ethiopian warriors against marauding Italian fascism in the lurch on the grounds of “neutrality,” and “Left” Poale Zionists who are even at this moment leaning upon British imperialism in its savage campaign against the legitimate, even if confused, struggle of the Arab peasantry.“ 22

But when the Fourth International degenerated after the Second World War as a revolutionary Marxist International, this meant the political end of the RCL. Had the Fourth International not degenerated, it would have been possible that the RCL or some of it would be saved for the working class revolution. However this was not the case. In 1948 the FI, among other political mistakes, refused to give military support to the Arab armies in the war of 1948. In 1952 the FI finally crossed the Rubicon when the Bolivian section supported the Popular front almost without any opposition.

There is no doubt that Cliff and his comrades tried to break away from Zionism, but they could not make the break. Facing repression by the British military government, social ostracism and physical attack by Zionists, and understandable mistrust by Arab workers, the small and entirely Jewish initial core of Palestinian Trotskyists grew modestly over the years and gradually gained a hearing among Arab workers and intellectuals. They left behind documents that reflect the efforts of a young and inexperienced Marxist organization to come to grips with a difficult, almost unprecedented, political situation. Yet some of their mistakes would later be picked up and magnified by renegades from and pretenders to Trotskyism. This makes the criticism all the more necessary.

Tony Cliff's Autobiography

On the question of Palestine and Israel and especially the war in 1948 one can see very clearly the contradiction between a revolutionary program and a centrist program. So let us take a look at the Autobiography of Tony Cliff, the leader and founder of the *Internationalist Socialist Tendency* (today best known by its strongest group – the *Socialist*

Workers Party in Britain).

According to his autobiography, Tony Cliff was born in Palestine in 1917 to a capitalist right-wing Zionist family well connected to the Zionist leadership.

“My father was a big contractor who built sections of the Hedjaz Railway. His building partner was Chaim Weitzman, the first president of Israel. Friends of my family were among the leading Zionists. Moshe Sharet (later foreign minister), a frequent visitor at our home, was a kind of political teacher to me. When I stayed with my uncle Kalvarisky in Rehavia, David Ben Gurion would sometimes come to ask him for something, or to Paula (his wife) to ask for a folding bed. Dr Hillel Yoffe (a leading Zionist) was another uncle of mine. My family was implanted at the core of the Zionist community. This probably made it more difficult for me to break from Zionism.“ 23

He himself admitted that it took him years to break away from Zionism.

“It took me a few years to make the transition from being an orthodox Zionist to being a semi-Zionist with a pro-Palestinian position, and then to making a complete break with Zionism.“

This transition from a semi-Zionist with sympathy for the Palestinians to an anti Zionist albeit Arab nationalist, did not happen in Palestine but only after he left Palestine in 1946. The main reasons for that are the general circumstances – the Apartheid system was already strongly developed in that time so that Israeli Jews and Palestinians were strictly separated at the workplaces and their living areas. So to get rid of any Zionist influence it would have been necessary for Cliff and the Trotskyists in Palestine to build close links in their political work with the Palestinian masses. They would have had to take up the program of permanent revolution which includes the national liberation of the Palestinians, the struggle against Zionist colonialism and for socialist revolution. They would also have to break with their ghettoisation in the Jewish-Zionist milieu and to build roots amongst the Palestinian people. This includes learning about the Palestinian's culture and to coalesce to a certain degree with them. This means also to dedicate their life to the liberation struggle of the Palestinian masses. And in the end it would have meant to build up a joint revolutionary organization of Palestinians and Israeli Jews. All of these steps are very hard to take, especially if someone comes from a wealthy Zionist family like Cliff – mainly because they go hand in hand with a complete break with the family and the Israeli society itself. Only a revolutionary communist with a proletarian, Bolshevik conviction can fulfill all of these tasks.

The articles Tony Cliff wrote while in Palestine reflected his inability to make a definite break with Zionism. According to his autobiography he became a socialist because of the discrimination against the Arabs:

“The specific spur that pushed me to become a socialist was the wretched conditions of Arab kids that I witnessed. While I was always shod, I saw Arab kids running barefoot all the time. Another issue was that there were no Arab kids in my class at school. It seemed unnatural to me that it should be like that. After all, my own kids, born and educated in England, never came home to tell us there were no English kids in the school (though I would not have been surprised if they said there were no Dutch, Danish or French kids). After all, we live in England. At the age of 13 or 14 I wrote a school essay, as all the kids were asked to do, but the subject of my essay was: ‘It is so sad there are no Arab kids in the school’. The teacher's comment was short and clear:

she wrote, 'Communist''

The story is very similar to the manner many intellectuals in Russia started to become revolutionaries. Alexandra Kollontai, for example, wrote in her autobiography about the children she saw in factories as one important trigger to join the revolutionary movement although she was coming from a wealthy family background. (See e.g. Alexandra Kollontai: *The Autobiography of a Sexually Emancipated Communist Woman*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1926/autobiography.htm> as well as another autobiography of her: *Ich habe viele Leben gelebt... Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen*. Dietz, Berlin, 1981, pp. 90-97.) To learn about the living circumstances of the workers and oppressed and to draw the correct conclusions from it – i.e. breaking with his or her class background and joining the camp of the working class liberation struggle – is one of the biggest challenges for everyone not coming from a working class or oppressed layer background, who wants to become a communist.

Cliff wrote as well:

"The exclusion of Arabs was not confined to education. They were also excluded from Jewish-owned houses. This segregation meant that throughout the 29 years I lived in Palestine I never lived in a house with Arabs. As a matter of fact the first time I lived with a Palestinian Arab in the same house was in 1947 when I stayed in a small boarding house in Dublin".

He was greatly influenced by his uncle Chaim Margalit-Kalvarisky. He wrote about this with great sympathy:

"There was another factor which focused my attention on the issue of the exclusion of Arab kids from the school. There was one small school in the country where Arab and Jewish kids were together. This school came into being and was financed by an uncle of mine, Chaim Margalit-Kalvarisky. He was very well off, being head of Rothschild's organisation in Palestine. He also founded a minuscule group of liberal Jews and Arabs called Brit Shalom (Peace League). This uncle was the butt of my father's and mother's derision as they thought he was mad. He was so single minded that he hardly talked about anything else except peace with the Arabs. When he met Chanie for the first time he did not ask her about anything but barged straight into the subject of peace with the Arabs. Chanie (Tony cliff's wife) thought there was a great similarity between him and me – both a bit deranged. She said to me, 'There must be a blood relationship explaining it.' I told her Kalvarisky was not related by blood but through marriage: he married my father's sister. His actions probably concentrated my attention on the issue of the exclusion of Arabs from my school even more. I identified myself with the underdogs "

Anyone who knows the history of Chaim Margalit-Kalvarisky (1868-1948) must be aware of the fact that this uncle was a known agronomist whose job included purchasing land for the Jewish Colonization Association: He believed that it was possible for the Palestinians to accept the colonization of Palestine without a struggle by patronizing them. He had come to Palestine in 1895, aiding the agricultural settlement of Lord Rothschild. He was one of the first Zionists to establish close links with some Arabs. He founded *Brit Shalom* in 1925, and *Kedma Mizraha* in 1936, and he was President of the *League for Jewish-Arab Rapprochement and Cooperation* since 1939.

Writing to the Executive on 5 March 1939, Chaim Margalit-Kalvarisky suggested an increase of the Jewish population to 50% within ten years, after which independence

would be given to Palestine. As soon as an Arab Federation would be formed, Palestine would join it as an autonomous part. 24

An autobiography of someone who calls himself a Trotskyist should be able to make criticism on such figures like Chaim Margalit-Kalvarisky clear beside personal feelings he maybe had because of family ties. The war against the Palestinians was and is fought not only openly with guns but also with hypocritical "peaceful" solutions like the strategy of Margalit-Kalvarisky which is nothing else than a strategy of displacement of the Palestinians.

In his autobiography Cliff was aware of the fact that the Zionist project was very similar to the white colonization of South Africa. He wrote:

"The Zionists who emigrated to Palestine at the end of the 19th century wanted its whole population to be Jewish. In South Africa, by contrast, the whites were the capitalists and their hangers-on while the blacks were the workers. In Palestine, with the very low standard of living of the Arabs compared to Europeans, and with widespread open and hidden unemployment, the means of excluding the Arabs was by closing the Jewish labor market to them. There were a number of methods used to achieve this."

In addition, according to his autobiography, he was aware of the fact that the British and the Zionists were deeply racist toward the native Arabs.

"While Zionism dug a wide and deep trench to separate Jews from Arabs, imperialism colluded. When the British administration in Palestine did employ both Arabs and Jews to do the same jobs, they paid the Arab workers about a third of what they paid Jewish workers. The policy of 'divide and rule' dominated everything, even prison."

Cliff testified that the Jewish workers in Palestine had a material interest in supporting the colonization of Palestine. He himself wrote:

"The working class of Palestine was deeply divided between Arabs and Jews. Arabs and Jews used different languages – only a tiny minority of Jewish workers understood Arabic, and an even smaller minority of Arabs understood Hebrew. In a few workplaces there were both Jews and Arabs. Thus of the 5,000 or so railway workers in the early 1940s some four fifths were Arabs and a fifth Jews. The oil refinery in Acre employed both Arabs and Jews, again the majority Arabs. The lowest echelon of the civil service also employed workers from the two communities. But these were exceptions. Some nine tenths of all workers were in segregated workplaces."

One should expect from Cliff that he knows how important it is to fight inside the Israeli-Jewish working class to break with Zionism and to fuse with the Palestinian resistance. There is no other chance to liberate the whole working class in Israel than the road to break with the bonds of Zionism and the Israeli state itself.

He even wrote:

"The Zionist socialists were trapped ideologically. They believed that the future belonged to socialism, that in the kibbutz we could see the embryo of a future socialist society (rather than a collective unit of colonists). But in the meantime Arab resistance to Zionist colonization had to be overcome so they collaborated with Zionist moneybags and rich institutions as well as the British army and police. The Zionist socialists held the Communist Manifesto in one hand and a colonizer's gun in the other."

So every real communist would say: Give both – Manifestos and guns to the Palestinians! Demand from the so-called socialists who understand themselves as Zionists to

break with Zionism in favor of being real socialists!

Cliff knew that the Zionists relied on the bayonets of British imperialism as he wrote:

"Knowing that they would face resistance from the Palestinians the Zionists were always clear that they needed the help of the imperialist power that had the major influence in Palestine at the time."

Based on all this information one would expect Cliff, as a socialist who believed himself to be a Trotskyist, to side with the Arab workers and peasants against imperialism and the Zionists colonialists. Yet his policies in Palestine were different. He drew a parallel between the colonial settlers backed by British imperialism and the Arab resistance to imperialism and Zionism. Cliff was, during the period of his political activity in Palestine, never able and willing to break consistently with the Zionist influence. It is one of the most important proofs of the lack of consequent revolutionary method and therefore a breeding ground for a centrist degeneration.

Even in his autobiography written years after he left Palestine he blamed the Arab workers. How ridiculous to blame the oppressed masses to be guilty of not influencing the Israeli workers to the positive! If this is the Marxist way than Marx himself and everybody standing in his tradition are not Marxist. No real communist would blame working class women not to be militant enough and therefore not helping enough to open the eyes of working class men for women's oppression! No real communist would blame the working class youth, would blame the working class immigrants guilty for not making clear to their oppressors to stop their oppression in the ranks of the labor movement! It is the chauvinist elements, the non-proletarian influences which are to blame and not the oppressed themselves! It is a shame that one has to explain this to a leading figure of a movement which sees itself as a legitimate follower of Leon Trotsky! Tony Cliff was far away from understanding the role of Communists in their approach towards oppressed masses by blaming the Arab workers.

On this he wrote in his autobiography:

"I have already referred to Zionism trapping the Jewish workers of Palestine. A strong and dynamic Arab working class in Palestine could have got rid of the cul-de-sac in which Zionism trapped the Jewish working class. Alas, it was the same Zionist expansion (threatening the Arabs with what was later called 'ethnic cleansing') that prevented Arab workers from separating themselves from the most reactionary Arab leaders.

The Zionist colonization frightened the mass of Arabs. It put their opposition to Zionism at the top of their agenda, making them ready to unite with the feudal landlords and religious parties who preached accommodation with imperialism while aiming to stop Zionist expansion. Naturally the Arab masses had only a pale picture of the impact of the future of this expansion. The ethnic cleansing of the Arabs following the founding of the state of Israel was still to come. (...)

The mass of the Palestinian proletariat felt entrapped into facing the strong expansion of Zionist settlement aided and abetted by British imperialism. They were therefore prey to the influence of feudal reaction.

Heading this reactionary trend was the mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin el-Husseini, the top cleric among the Muslims, and head of a rich land-owning family. He was appointed to his position with the consent of the British authorities. In 1936-39 there was an uprising of the Arabs against the expansion of Jewish settle-

ments. It was brutally repressed by the British army and Zionist volunteers. At the time of these riots A Liwa, the paper of Haj Amin el-Husseini, wrote in a leading article, 'It is the Jewish influence which has infiltrated into the very heart of British politics in Palestine, that does harm to the authorities and prevents them from doing the duty that human feeling puts upon them.

Proclamation No.3 of the leadership of the Arab revolt, made on 4 September 1936, says, 'It is regrettable that Britain suffers this number of casualties in a holy part of the Arab countries, their allies of yesterday and today, in order to serve Zionism and erect a national home for it in Arab Palestine. They were not fighting British interests, as the Arabs do not fight Britain, and do not wish to damage her interests, but fight against the Jewish settlement and Zionist policy alone. If not for these two, the Arabs would live in friendship and peace with the English.'"

The bureaucratic leaders of the labor movement in Israel are to blame for the developments! It was and is the task of the Israeli working class to organize itself against the Apartheid state Israel in order to educate all workers in the meaning of real international solidarity. It means that for the Israeli workers the slogan *"The main enemy is at home!"* stood and stands on the top of their agenda in order to fight Zionism. It means that it is the main task of all communists in Israel and of course the Arab world to build a multinational revolutionary party which has on its banner: *Down with the Apartheid state Israel! For a Workers and Peasants Republic from the River to the Sea! For a free, red Palestine!* Without such a party, without the struggle for a revolutionary orientation of the workers movement, forces like the reactionary Nationalists and Islamists will appear as the only possibility to fight back the Israeli aggressors! Lots of people are to blame for the defeat of the Palestinian resistance but really not the Arab workers! Tony Cliff prefers this very easy way of blaming the oppressed for accepting reactionary leaders in their resistance because of the lack of alternatives.

And so he continued:

"On 13 December 1931 Al-Jami'a Al-Arabiya, the paper of the Muslim Council of the Husseinis, printed a section of the notorious forgery Protocols of the Elders of Zion which 'proved' the connections of the Jews with Communism. Similar documents were printed frequently by the same paper and the Arab press in Palestine generally. (...)

For the Arab feudal lords and bourgeoisie Zionism was the sole source of discord with imperialism. The Arab leaders unceasingly strove to prove that they could be allies of imperialism which could therefore safely dispense with Zionism as a pillar in the East. Constantly they repeated the refrain: the British policy of support for Zionism is due to the influence of the Jews but is against the interests of the empire.

The impasse facing Arab workers and Jewish workers could have been broken only by a strong and dynamic Arab working class movement. Alas, the Palestinian working class was far too small and weak to deliver this."

This proves of course that the reactionary Arab elites betrayed the struggle of the Arab workers and peasants in the 1936-39 uprising. However, history is not only the actions of kings and reactionary religious leaders. The political problem in 1936-39 in Palestine was that the Palestinian Communist Party, acting on its popular front policy, subordinated the Arab workers and peasants to the reactionary leadership. The group Cliff was leading, the RCL, instead of struggling together with the Arab masses for

national liberation and a socialist revolution (while exposing the reactionary role of the Arab elite), saw the uprising as a pogrom against the Jews. This is in the end a Zionist explanation for a Palestinian mass uprising which was thoroughly justified.

In his autobiography Cliff discussed how hard it was to build a Trotskyist party in Palestine: a small group of 30, most of them Jews, struggling against isolation and persecution.

"The fact that we were getting nowhere was becoming more and more frustrating. Formally we said the right things: Arab workers should fight Zionism and imperialism and break with the reactionary Arab leadership; Jewish workers should join the Arab masses in the struggle. We repeated the word 'should' again and again. One expression of this was a series of three articles I wrote for the American Trotskyist monthly New International: British Policy in Palestine (October 1938), The Jewish-Arab Conflict (November 1938), and Class Politics in Palestine (June 1939). I used the pseudonym L. Rock."

The Palestinian Revolt in 1929

These articles did not call on the Jewish workers to join the Arab workers in the struggle against British imperialism and Zionist colonialism, as Cliff claimed in his autobiography. In these articles he blamed the British for inciting national hatred between the two peoples in Palestine, while characterizing the Arab masses' uprising against the British and the Zionists as a pogrom against the Jews.

On the British Policy in Palestine Cliff wrote:

"British policy in this country is based on a system of divide and rule, the system of inciting national hatreds between the two peoples in the country in order to assure itself the position of arbitrator. The facts which indicate the extent to which the British provoke national antagonisms are too numerous to recite here. We must content ourselves with a few typical instances. From the beginning of British rule in Palestine to the present there have been four bloody attacks on the Jews – 1920, 1921, 1929 and 1936-38. (...)

In 1928 the government began to proclaim the provocative decrees concerning the juridical status of the Wailing Wall (sacred to orthodox Jews) thereby opening the door to the chauvinistic religious propaganda of a gang of effendis and leading to the pogroms of 1929 under the slogan of "Defend the Holy Places." Simultaneously the government by this means strengthened the influence of the religious chauvinist element among the Jews (at that time there arose the "Commissions for the Defense of the Wailing Wall")." 25

This account was very different from reality. It was fed by the Zionist press and political pressures. The Western Wall is a holy place for the Moslems and the Orthodox Jews. In September 1928, Zionist Jews decided to change the status quo and for their Yom Kippur prayers at the Western Wall, they placed chairs and erected (screens) between the men and women present. The Muslims saw it, and rightly so, as a provocation and a move by the Zionists to control the Wall and turn it into a synagogue. The Mufti of Jerusalem turned to the British and demanded that the government keep its obligation, according to Balfour's declaration, to protect the religious rights of the Moslems. The Zionists indeed violated the status quo that had existed during the Ottoman rule that forbade Jews from making any construction in the Western Wall area. The Commissioner

demanded the removal of the screen and the chairs. When the Zionists refused, police officers were sent in, and a scuffle took place between the Zionist and the police.

Haj Amin al Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem who was elected to this position by the First High Commissioner, and the Zionist Herbert Samuel believed, and for good reason, that the Zionist Jews were planning to take over the Western wall as a step towards taking over al Aqsa Mosque. On 15 August 1929, during the Jewish fast of *Tisha B'Av*, several hundred members of the right-wing Revisionist Joseph Klausner 's movement and of the *Betar* youth organization, modeled after Mussolini Blackshirts, assembled at the Wall shouting "*the Wall is ours.*" They raised the Zionist flag and sang *Hatikoah*, the Zionist anthem. The British authorities had been informed by the Mufti of the march in advance and provided a heavy police escort in an attempt to prevent any incidents. Rumours spread that the youths had attacked local residents. On Friday, August 16, a demonstration organized by militant Muslims ignored the Mufti attempts to pacify the Muslims, marched to the Wall and beat Jewish worshippers and returned to attack the next day. The next day a young Jew named Abraham Mizrahi kicked his ball into an Arab peasant woman's home and without permission entered the garden to get the ball. He was stabbed by an Arab man, and died the evening of the following day. His funeral was turned into a political demonstration demanding the Western wall, and was suppressed by the police.

On August 20, Hagana organized 600 armed Jews. The next day thousands of Arab villagers armed with sticks and knives streamed into Jerusalem from the surrounding countryside to pray on the many. Harry Luke, the local Commissioner, telephoned the Mufti to come and calm a mob that had gathered under his window. The Mufti attempt to pacify the crowd failed. Inflamed by rumors that two Arabs had been killed by Jews, Arabs started an attack on Jews in Jerusalem's Old City. The violence quickly spread to other parts of Palestine. British authorities had fewer than 100 soldiers, six armored cars, and five or six aircraft in the country. The British police had 1,500 men, the majority of whom were Arabs. Militant Muslims killed unarmed Non-Zionist Jews in Hebron and Safed while many other Jews were saved by their Muslim neighbors. In the clashes 133 Jews and 116 Arabs were killed.

Show Commission

A commission of inquiry headed by Sir Walter Shaw published its findings on these events in 1930. The British politically supported the Zionist goal of establishing a Zionist state in Palestine but they had to calm the Arab masses and the report reflected these two aims.

It stated: *"The outbreak in Jerusalem on the 23rd of August was from the beginning an attack by Arabs on Jews for which no excuse in the form of earlier murders by Jews has been established.*

The outbreak was not premeditated. A general massacre of the Jewish community at Hebron was narrowly averted. In a few instances, Jews attacked Arabs and destroyed Arab property. These attacks, though inexcusable, were in most cases in retaliation for wrongs already committed by Arabs in the neighborhoods in which the Jewish attacks occurred.

In his activities (connected to the dispute over the Holy Places)

the Mufti was influenced by the twofold desire to confront the Jews and to mobilize Moslem opinion on the issue of the Wailing Wall. He had no intention of utilizing this religious campaign as the means of inciting to disorder.

In the matter of innovations of practice (at the Wailing Wall) little blame can be attached to the Mufti in which some Jewish religious authorities also would not have to share. ...no connection has been established between the Mufti and the work of those who either are known or are thought to have engaged in agitation or incitement. ... After the disturbances had broken out the Mufti co-operated with the Government in their efforts both to restore peace and to prevent the extension of disorder.

The fundamental cause ... is the Arab feeling of animosity and hostility towards the Jews consequent upon the disappointment of their political and national aspirations and fear for their economic future. ... The feeling as it exists today is based on the twofold fear of the Arabs that by Jewish immigration and land purchases they may be deprived of their livelihood and in time pass under the political domination of the Jews.

In our opinion the immediate causes of the outbreak were:

The long series of incidents connected with the Wailing Wall... These must be regarded as a whole, but the incident among them which in our view contributed most to the outbreak was the Jewish demonstration at the Wailing Wall on the 15th of August, 1929. Next in importance we put the activities of the Society for the Protection of the Moslem Holy Places and, in a lesser degree, of the Pro-Wailing Wall Committee." 26

In his article Cliff wrote:

"Jewish immigration represents a basic factor in the process of accelerating capitalist development. The growth of a Jewish and Arab working class which, considered historically, represent a serious anti-imperialist force is bound up with Jewish immigration into the country" 27

And in addition he wrote:

"(It) is evident that the British know full well how to exploit the elementary needs of the Jewish worker, namely immigration and colonization, neither of which contradicts the real necessities of the Arab masses, in order to raise a barrier of hate between the producers of both peoples and to assure itself of the dependence of the Jewish population"

Furthermore Tony Cliff shows in the same article political sympathy to some Palestinians who were pro Zionist element and he writes in the same article:

"The government has systematically prevented all attempts at effecting a reconciliation of the two peoples. An Arab party was organized in Haifa, which raised the slogan of "Peace between the Jews and Arabs" (it was a bourgeois liberal party) and counted among its members even the Arab mayor of the city. The British government together with the feudal Arab leadership and the Zionist organization were responsible for the defeat of this party in subsequent elections, and brought such pressure to bear on its members that it was dissolved".

In fact, the Mayor of Haifa, Hasan Shukri, was a Zionist collaborator. In his article Cliff walked in his uncle Chaim Margalioth Kalvarisky's shoes. We can learn who was Hasan Shukri, from *The Canadian Jewish News* that carried this information:

"It goes without saying that Palestinian Arabs were opposed to Zionism. But from the moment they mounted a concerted campaign to fight it, the Palestinians split into two warring camps, much to the benefit of the Yishuv, the Jewish community in Palestine. The mainstream camp, led by Mohammed Amin al-Husseini, the grand mufti of Jerusalem, could not reconcile itself

to the Zionist project, whose ultimate goal was Jewish statehood. The accommodationist camp, which was identified with his bitter rival, the Nashashibi family, was pragmatic and open to coexistence with the Zionists, believing that they were simply too strong to be defeated. (...)

The Balfour Declaration, issued by the British government on Nov. 2, 1917, galvanized the Palestinians, prompting them to form nationalist organizations, mount anti-Zionist demonstrations and carry out attacks against Jews. In response, Zionist leaders – spearheaded by Chaim Margalioth Kalvarisky, a land purchaser for the Jewish Colonization Association, and Col. Frederick Kisch, a retired British intelligence officer and head of the Zionist executive's political department – devised a counter-strategy. Chaim Weizmann, the president of the World Zionist Organization, was also involved in this campaign. (...)

The Palestinians who chose co-operation were driven by various motives. Some assumed that the Zionist movement was an arm of the British Mandate and, therefore, should be cultivated. Still other Palestinians, particularly land dealers and job seekers, were animated by personal gain. Palestinians who considered themselves nationalists but who were opposed to the Husseini leadership were also targeted by Zionist strategists. Palestinians who had Jewish friends and who were repelled by the violence of Palestinians also tended to favour co-operation.

With this in mind, Kalvarisky established the Muslim National Associations, a loose network of Palestinian political parties. But the concept did not work, and after more than a decade, he abandoned the idea altogether. (...)

Zionists tried to shape Arab public opinion by subsidizing Palestinian newspapers in Jaffa and Jerusalem and by recruiting writers who would sing the praises of Arab-Jewish co-operation and brotherhood. But as Cohen suggests, this strategy was only partially successful. (...)

On another front, the Zionist movement tried to recruit Palestinian public figures and informers. The first Palestinian Arab accused of collaboration, a village elder from the Mt. Hebron area, was murdered in 1929. The mayor of Haifa, Hasan Shukri, a symbol of coexistence, survived an attempt on his life". 28

The Arab Uprising in 1936-39

As we already saw above, the Fourth International took a revolutionary position on the Arab Uprising in 1936-39 and condemned the "Left" Poale Zionists who are even at this moment leaning upon British imperialism in its savage campaign against the legitimate, even if confused, struggle of the Arab peasantry." As we saw already too, this differentiated the Fourth International from Cliff, who saw in the 1936-39 revolt a pogrom against the Jews.

Compared with Cliff, the Palestinian revolutionary left-wing nationalist Ghassan Kanafani – a leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, who was assassinated by the Mossad – provided a much better understanding of the uprising in his pamphlet "The 1936-1939 Revolt in Palestine":

"Between 1936 and 1939, the Palestinian revolutionary movement suffered a severe setback at the hands of three separate enemies that were to constitute together the principal threat to the nationalist movement in Palestine in all subsequent stages of its struggle: the local reactionary leadership; the regimes in the Arab states surrounding Palestine; and the imperialist-Zionist enemy.

The intensity of the Palestinian nationalist experience, which

emerged since 1918, and was accompanied in one way or another with armed struggle, could not reflect itself on the upper structure of the Palestinian national movement which remained virtually under the control of semi-feudal and semi-religious leadership. This was due primarily to two related factors:

1. The existence and effectiveness of the Zionist movement, which gave the national challenge relative predominance over the social contradictions. The impact of this challenge was being systematically felt by the masses of Palestinian Arabs, who were the primary victims of the Zionist invasion supported by British imperialism.

2. The existence of a significant conflict of interests between the local feudal-religious leadership and British imperialism: It was consistently in the interest of the ruling class to promote and support a certain degree of revolutionary struggle, instead of being more or less completely allied with the imperialist power as would otherwise be the case. The British imperialists had found in the Zionists "a more suitable ally. (...)

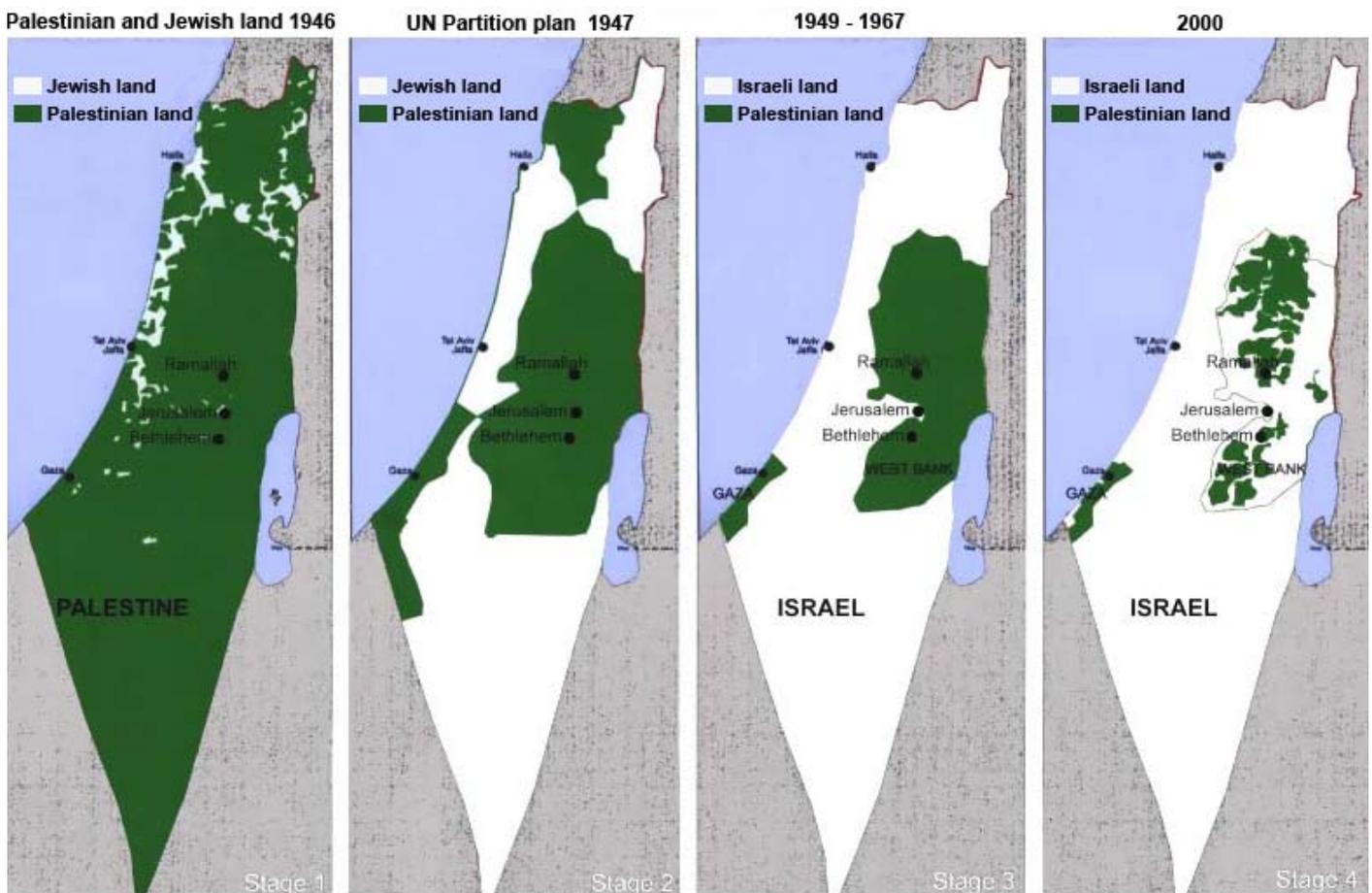
The change from a semi-feudal society to a capitalist society was accompanied by an increased concentration of economic power in the hands of the Zionist machine and consequently, within the Jewish society in Palestine. It is significant that Palestinian Arab advocates of conciliation, who became outspoken during the thirties, were not landlords or rich peasants, but rather elements of the urban upper bourgeoisie whose interests gradually coincided with the expanding interests of the Jewish bourgeoisie. The latter, by controlling the process of industrialization, was creating its own agents.

In the meantime, the Arab countries surrounding Palestine were playing two conflicting roles. On the one hand, the Pan-Arab mass movement was serving as a catalyst for the revolutionary spirit of the Palestinian masses, since a dialectical relation between the Palestinian and overall Arab struggles existed, on the other hand, the established regimes in these Arab countries were doing everything in their power to help curb and undermine the Palestinian mass movement. The sharpening conflict in Palestine threatened to contribute to the development of the struggle in these countries in the direction of greater violence, creating a revolutionary potential that their respective ruling classes could not afford to overlook.

The Arab ruling classes were forced to support British imperialism against their counterpart in Palestine, which was in effect leading the Palestinian nationalist movement.

Meanwhile, the Zionist-Imperialist alliance continued to grow; the period between 1936 and 1939 witnessed not only the crystallization of the militaristic and aggressive character of the colonial society that Zionism had firmly implanted in Palestine but also the relative containment and defeat of the Palestinian working class; this was subsequently to have a radical effect on the course of the struggle. During that period, Zionism, in collaboration with the mandatory power, successfully undermined the development of a progressive Jewish labor movement and of Jewish-Arab Proletarian brotherhood. The Palestine Communist Party was effectively isolated among both Arab and Jewish workers, and the reactionary Histadrut completely dominated the Jewish labour movement. The influence of Arab progressive

Palestinian loss of Land 1946-2000



Source: Exeter Palestine Solidarity Campaign Website www.exeterpsc.org.uk

forces within Arab labour federations in Haifa and Jaffa diminished, leaving the ground open for their control by reactionary leaderships that monopolized political action.

The issue of Jewish immigration to Palestine was not merely a moral or national issue; it had direct implication on the economic status of the Arab people of Palestine, affecting primarily the small and middle-income farmers, workers and certain sectors of the petty and middle bourgeoisies. The national and religious character of Jewish immigration further aggravated the economic repercussions.

Between 1933 and 1935, 150,000 Jews immigrated to Palestine, bringing the country's Jewish population to 443,000 - or 29.6% of the total - from 1926 to 1932 the average number of immigrants per year was 7,201. It rose to 42,985 between 1933 and 1936, as direct result of Nazi persecution in Germany. In 1932, 9,000 German Jews entered Palestine, 30,000 in 1933, 40,000 in 1934 and 61,000 in 1935,(2) nearly three quarters of the new immigrants settling in cities. If Nazism was responsible for terrorizing the Jews and forcing them out of Germany; it was "democratic" capitalism, in collaboration with the Zionist movement, that was responsible for directing comparatively large numbers of Jewish migrants to Palestine, as illustrated by the following: of 2,562,000 Jews that fled Nazi persecution, the U.S.A. accepted only 170,000 (6.6%), Britain 50,000 (1.9%), while Palestine received 8.5% and 1,930,000 (75.2%) found refuge in the U.S.S.R. The severe economic impact of the immigration into Palestine can be realized when it is considered that a comparatively large percentage of Jewish settlers were basically capitalists: In 1933, 3,250 of the latter (11%) were considered as capitalists, in 1934, 5,124 or 12%, and in 1935, 6,309 or 10%. According to official statistics, of the Jewish immigrants who entered Palestine between 1932 and 1936, 1,370 (with 17,119 dependents) possessed PL 1,000 or more: and 130,000 were officially registered as seeking employment, or dependents of previous immigrants. In other words, the immigration was not only designed to ensure a concentration of European Jewish capital in Palestine, that was to dominate the process of industrialization, but also to provide this effort with a Jewish proletariat: The policy that raised the slogan of "Jewish labor only" was to have grave consequences, as it led to the rapid emergence of fascist patterns in the society of Jewish settlers.

Another result was the development of a competitive struggle between the Palestinian Arab and Jewish proletariats and between Palestinian Arab peasants, farmers and agricultural laborers and their Jewish counterparts. This conflict also extended to higher classes, in as much as the Palestinian Arab small landowners and urban middle bourgeoisie realized that their interests were being threatened by growing Jewish capital.

In 1935, for example, Jews controlled 872 of a total of 1,212 industrial firms in Palestine, employing 13,678 workers, while the rest were Palestinian Arab-controlled and employed about 4,000 workers: Jewish investment totaled PL 4,391,000 compared to PL 704,000 Palestinian Arab industrial investment; Jewish production reached PL 6,000,000 compared to PL 1,545,000 by Palestinian Arab firms: In addition, Jewish capital controlled 90% of the concessions granted by the British Mandate, which accounted for a total investment of PL 5,789,000 and provided labor for 2,619 workers.

An official census in 1937 indicated that an average Jewish worker received 145% more in wages than his Palestinian Arab counterpart: (As high as 433% more in textile factories employing Jewish and Arab women, and 233% in tobacco factories. "By July 1937, the real wages of the average Palestinian Arab worker

decreased 10% while those of a Jewish worker rose 10%."

The situation resulted in an almost total collapse of the Arab economy in Palestine, primarily affecting Palestinian Arab workers. In his report to the Peel Royal Commission, George Mansour, the Secretary of the Federation of Palestinian Arab Workers in Jaffa, indicated that 98% of Palestinian Arab workers had a "well below average" standard of living. Based on a census covering 1,000 workers in Jaffa in 1936, the Federation had found that the income of 57% of Arab workers was less than PL 2.750 (the average minimum income required to support a family being PL 11); 12% less than PL 4.250, 12% less than PL 6, 4% less than PL 10, 1.5% less than PL 12 and 0.5% less than PL 15.9

When the Mandatory Government refused to allow nearly 1,000 unemployed Jaffa workers to hold a demonstration on June 6, 1935, the Federation of Workers issued a statement warning the Government that unless their problems were solved, "the government would soon have to give the workers either bread or bullets." With the conditions of workers continuing to deteriorate, an uprising seemed imminent

George Mansour (who had been previously a Communist Party member) came out with striking illustrations in his report to the Peel Commission: by the end of 1935, 2,270 men and women workers were unemployed in the city of Jaffa alone, with a population of 71,000. Mansour pointed out five reasons for the high unemployment rate, four of which were directly connected with Jewish immigration: 1) the settling of new immigrants; 2) urban migration 3) dismissal of Arab workers from their jobs; 4) the deteriorating economic situation; 5) the discriminatory policy of the Mandatory Government in favor of Jewish workers.

In a period of nine months, the number of Histadrut workers increased by 41,000. According to an Article published in the issue No. 3460 of the newspaper *Davar*, Histadrut workers numbered 115,000 at the end of July 1936; the official 1936 government report (p. 117) had showed their number at the end of 1935 to be 74,000.

The policy of dismissal of Palestinian Arab workers from firms and projects controlled by Jewish capital initiated violent clashes. In the four Jewish settlements of Malbis, Dairan, Wadi Hunain and Khadira, there were 6,214 Palestinian Arab workers in February 1935. After six months, this figure went down to 2,276, and in a year's time, went down to 617 Palestinian Arab workers only. Attacks against Palestinian Arab workers also took place. On one occasion, for instance, the Jewish community forced a Palestinian Arab contractor and his workers to leave their work in the Brodski building in Haifa. Among those who were systematically losing their jobs were workers in orchards, cigarette factories, mason's yards, construction, etc.

Between 1930 and 1935, Palestinian Arab pearl industry exports fell from PL 11,532 to PL 3,777 a year. The number of Palestinian Arab soap factories in Haifa alone fell from 12 in 1929 to 4 in 1935. Their export value fell from PL 206,659 in 1930 to PL 79,311 in 1935.

It was clear that the Arab proletariat had fallen 'victim to British colonialism and Jewish capital, the former bearing the primary responsibility.'" 29

To conclude, the positions expressed in Cliff's article are pro Zionist positions. Revolutionaries at that time called to open the gates of the West for the Jews, but not to support Jewish settlers' colonization.

In the year 2000, the SWP admitted that in their journal: "In the year of the 1936 events, when the Arab uprising took place, corpses of victims were lying in the streets, and difficult

questions were burning. Gluckstein wrote an article in the Chugim paper *Eamifneh* (*At the Turning Point*) in which he argued that Zionism from a class standpoint brought blessings to the country and the Arab fellah. This article was brought to England 30 years later by Professor Yehoshua Porat, who used it in sharp debate with Tony Cliff, who by then would not have dreamt of saying such a thing. In 1936 he was still torn between Zionism and socialism, and looked to Marx for the answers to the shocking phenomenon of a people returning to its country because of real and difficult suffering, who in their turn imposed suffering on other people: 'I was then for the Arab right of self-determination and also for the right of the Jewish refugees to come to Palestine.' 30

Cliff began his article *Class Politics in Palestine* (June 1939) by referring to the revolutionary Marxist positions on the national question. He wrote:

"All wings of the Zionist movement hold firmly to the theory that no anti-imperialist liberation movement exists in Palestine and that the existing Arab movement is the product of the propaganda of the Arab feudalists, and the agents of German and Italian fascism. This is said not only by the fascist Zionists and the liberal bourgeoisie, but also by the reformists and even the members of the London Bureau – "Poale Zion and Marxist Circle" and the "Hashomer Hatzair". As grounds for this view they use three arguments: (a) at the head of the Arabian movement stand feudalists for the most part, hence the movement is reactionary; (b) a movement that practices terrorism against the Jewish population, and is mainly against Jewish workers, is nothing but a pogrom movement; (c) a movement supported by Hitler and Mussolini is necessarily reactionary and fascistic. These arguments are wrong from the ground up and distort the reality, inasmuch as they are calculated to cover up more or less Zionist aspirations and an alliance with oppressive British imperialism.

Have not many national movements been led by feudalists (e.g. Abd-el Krim in Morocco, the Syrian and Egyptian national movements in their inception, etc.)? Were not national liberation movements at the beginning of their development, when they were under feudal leadership, often directed against members of other nationalities in their land (Ireland, formerly also India, the Boxer uprising in China, etc.)? And are not national liberation movements exploited largely by other imperialist forces that are hostile to the imperialism against which the movement is directed? There is no doubt that the Arab national movement in Palestine, like its parallels in other colonial countries, is historically essentially an anti-imperialist movement" 31

The Debate with the South African Workers Party (WPSA)

But then Cliff continued in this article not by supporting the Palestinian anti-imperialist movement, not even by calling at least for a section of the Jewish workers in Palestine to join the Arab anti-imperialist struggle. Instead he referred to the racist settlers workers as the revolutionary subjective of history, and he called for an imaginary unity between the Arab and the Jewish settlers. He rejected the position of the Trotskyists in South Africa and wrote:

"Palestine cannot emancipate itself from the imperialist yoke unless a unification of the Arab and Jewish masses takes place, for the latter represent a third of the population, the Jewish workers are half of the Palestine working class, and Jewish economy is decisive in many branches of industry. The Jewish toiling masses

will not, however, support the anti-imperialist movement if no class differentiation takes place in the Arabian national movement. What is so terrible in the situation in Palestine is that, on the one hand, there is a strong national differentiation between Jews and Arabs and, on the other, the national unity in the Arab camp is very firm. (...)

(An) attempt has been made to compare the position of the Jews in the country with that of the whites in South Africa. This analogy was drawn in order to show that the Jewish worker must not unite with the Arab, as an argument against the international organization of the workers in Palestine. The analogy was then of course seized upon by the CPP in order to show the "imperialistic character" of the Jews in Palestine. We wish to test this analogy in order to show clearly that the Jewish worker in Palestine is not an integral part of the imperialist camp and that his objective interests will lead him to unification with the Arab worker."

As a result Cliff fully supports Jewish-Zionist settlement in Palestine as a supposedly "anti-imperialist" demand:

"Since the World War, two hostile camps face each other in Palestine, an Arab and a Jewish. The former demands the stopping of Jewish immigration and identifies this demand with the struggle against Zionism. The latter demands the opening of the doors of the country to immigrants and sees therein the essence of Zionism.

Against both these camps there appeared directly after the World War a section of the Comintern which for a number of years adopted an independent internationalist position. The members of the Comintern in Palestine, up to the great turn in the colonial question at the time of the Chinese Revolution, while absolutely opposed to Zionism (against the national boycott, against slogans like the Jewish majority and the Jewish state, alliance with England, etc.), declared at the same time that the Jewish population is not to be identified with Zionism and hence demanded the maximum freedom of movement for Jewish immigration into Palestine. Not only this, but they demanded from the government also material aid for the establishment of the Jewish immigrants in the country. They declared plainly that the struggle of the Arab national movement against Zionism, the Jewish majority, does not require the demand of stopping Jewish immigration, and they justified the unconditional maintenance of the Arab majority. They declared that the struggle against Jewish immigration shifted the anti-imperialist struggle to anti-Jewish rails, and that this was profitable only to English imperialism. They declared plainly that any struggle against Jewish immigration would only strengthen Zionist chauvinism among the Jewish masses.

With the turn to the right in the colonial policy of the Comintern, however, which was also manifested in Palestine, the Communist Party of Palestine, submissive to Stalinism, began the struggle against Jewish immigration, asserting that it was an immigration of conquest, and that the struggle of the Arab national movement was a defensive struggle. But is the correct answer to Jewish aggressive chauvinism, Arabian defensive chauvinism? Unfortunately, there is a similar error in the article from the *Spark*: the struggle of the Arabs against Jewish immigration is a defensive struggle against the conquering Zionist movement, and therefore, even though we are, as socialists, generally in favour of free immigration, it is not necessary in Palestine. The "Hashomer Hatzair", of the London Bureau, argues similarly: the struggle we are conducting against the political independence of Palestine is a defensive struggle against the aggressive Arab national movement and therefore, even though

we are, as socialists, generally in favour of the independence of the colonies, it is not necessary in Palestine.

Without taking a clear internationalist position on the question of Jewish immigration, without a sharp struggle against any oppression of the Arab population by imperialism and Zionism, without a sharp struggle against attempts to suppress Jewish immigration, the establishment of a broad anti-imperialist front is impossible."

A very different position from what he claimed he held in Palestine in his autobiography!

The Trotskyists in South Africa in the WPSA criticized him in their magazine *The Spark* for very good reason. They compared the position of the Jewish settlers in Palestine at that time with the position of white workers in South Africa. They drew the correct conclusions from their analyses – they opposed Zionism, Jewish immigration to Palestine and supported the native Arabs liberation struggle:

"But the Jewish immigration into Palestine is something entirely different. It is an immigration with the avowed aim of trampling upon and destroying the rights of the native population in that country. It is an invasion under the protection of imperialism and for the strengthening of imperialism. Zionism – and by this we mean all the Zionist parties, from the Revisionists to the so-called socialists – has openly proclaimed that the aim of this immigration is to attain a majority in Palestine and reduce the Arabs to a minority in a then Jewish State. Against this aim to defeat them politically and economically the Arab people, the natives in Palestine, have waged this war for two and a half years. The immigration question was and still is the pivotal point in their struggle. Not to support the Arabs in this just, defensive demand means to side with British imperialism and its tool, Zionism, against a native oppressed people." 32

In reply to another semi-Zionist article of Tony Cliff the WPSA leaders correctly wrote:

"Comrade Rock has to admit that the Arab National movement in Palestine is, like its parallel in other colonial countries, an anti-imperialist movement. He has further to admit that the Revolutionary Marxists are in duty bound to support the national liberation movement with all their strength even if the bourgeoisie or the feudalists stand for the time being at its head. The Marxists will of course preserve their party independence and will always point to the proletarian road, etc. So far so good – in theory. But when Comrade Rock comes to practice, he not only does not support this admittedly anti-imperialist movement, but he turns his wrath upon the "Spark" for expressing its great satisfaction with the anti-imperialist struggle of the Arabs, and their united will to attain national liberation.

We regret having to repeat here what we have already said in that article, but it is obviously necessary: 'Nothing will blind us or distract us from the fundamental issue, namely, the Progressive revolutionary struggle of a colonial people against imperialism. We had and we have no illusions concerning this struggle, whatever the outcome of the present political maneuvers in Palestine may be. Whether British imperialism will succeed by its new move for a round-table conference in breaking the Arab united front (as it succeeded before by a similar move in India), and by corruption succeed in side-tracking the national movement, or whether the present struggle will go on, we are under no illusions. We have no doubt that, so long as the national movement is led and dominated by the Arab national bourgeoisie and clergy, the struggle for liberation cannot be crowned with success. It will terminate in a foul compromise between the national bourgeoisie and imperialism. Time and again this has been proved

by history. But, so long as the fight is progressive we have to support it, while at the same time warning the Arab workers of their treacherous bourgeoisie.' (...)

Unfortunately Comrade Rock is not an internationalist, and nothing could illustrate it more clearly than this last article, where after much juggling with Marxist phraseology and centrist sophistry he comes out openly for the All-Zionist National slogan of unrestricted Jewish immigration! He is not in a position to refute a single one of our arguments against this immigration, which we maintain is not immigration but invasion under the protection of, and for the strengthening of Imperialism, with the avowed aim of trampling upon and destroying the rights of the native population of that country, with the aim of reducing the Arabs to a minority in a then Jewish State." 33

The Workers Party in South Africa took Trotsky's position on South Africa where he called for a *Black workers state*. 34 The WPSA in South Africa understood that the Zionists are the Afrikaaners in Palestine, while Cliff denied it.

In summary we can say that the WPSA held a basically revolutionary and internationalist position in this conflict, while Tony Cliff and the RCL rather gave in to the Zionist pressure, took a reactionary position (on Jewish colonial migration) and failed to take the side of the Palestinian resistance.

Trotsky's struggle against Cliff and the RCL on the question of revolutionary defeatism before WWII

This tendency of the Tony Cliff/RCL towards centrism became also transparent in their position towards the approaching imperialist war. While in his autobiography Cliff improved upon his actual positions he held in Palestine, in the Tony Cliff archive we can not find the exchange of letters the RCL had with the Russian Left Opposition and with Trotsky that proves that the RCL took a reformist position on the coming second imperialist world war.

Just before the war the RCL in Palestine wrote to Trotsky to express concern over the traditional Bolshevik strategy of 'revolutionary defeatism' according to which the main enemy of the proletariat is always at home and revolutionary activity is to be carried on in wartime even though that may cause the defeat of one's own country.

Trotsky replied to the RCL in a document, dated November, 1938, and which is signed by "Group of Palestinian Bolshevik-Leninists". The RCL's letter appeared in the Editorial Board Bulletin of the Russian Opposition:

"The members of the RCL stated: The general schema is defeatism in all imperialist countries ... Defeatism, according to Lenin's definition, and as it has been generally understood, signifies a desire for defeat and giving aid to the latter. Is that slogan applicable to any imperialist country in any war?

In the opinion of the authors, it is no longer applicable.

Two hypothetical warring camps are envisaged: on the one side – Germany, Italy and Japan, and on the other – Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, Spain, China, France, England and the United States.

True, such a combination is least likely, but it is not excluded, and therefore the working class must be prepared for it. What are the differences between the last world war and the one we presuppose?

(a) The last war was wholly imperialist ... The specific weight of the Serbian question was far too insignificant ... The war we presuppose is not imperialist on all sides. The difference between

Serbia and the Soviet Union is far too obvious. (b) Even if we were to assume that the international reactionary significance of the then monarchy and of modern fascism are equivalent for the world proletariat, with the composition of the warring camps during the last war, there were no particular reasons, for example, among the French workers, for striving precisely for the overthrow of the Hohenzollern monarchy ... (c) However, there is an enormous difference between the historical role of the monarchy in the epoch of ascendant capitalism and the role of fascism ... (d) In the period of the first world war there existed in all countries a revolutionary movement and the objective possibility of conducting a defeatist policy. Fascism has introduced a radical change. It so strangles the working class as hardly to make it possible to comply with Lenin's third condition for defeatist policy, and it is not excluded that the question of revolutionary intervention may arise.

We thus see that the establishment of the bare fact that a given country is imperialist is not sufficient for conducting the necessary revolutionary policy in any war precisely by the methods and slogans of defeatism.”³⁵

The Left Opposition in Russia replied to them extremely harsh and unequivocally:

“Our Palestinian Friends have made an obvious and extremely dangerous concession to the social-patriots. (...)

The main tendency of the authors of this document is apparently the following: to hold that “defeatism” is obligatory for the leading fascist countries (Germany, Italy), whereas it is necessary to renounce defeatism in countries even of doubtful democratic virtue, but which are at war with the leading fascist countries. That is approximately how the main idea of the document may be worded. In this form, too, it remains false, and an obvious lapse into social-patriotism. (...)

We consider as erroneous to the core the idea of the document that of the three conditions for “defeatist” policy enumerated by Lenin, the third is presumably lacking nowadays, namely, “the possibility of giving mutual support to revolutionary movements in all warring countries”. Here the authors are obviously hypnotized by the reported omnipotence of the totalitarian regime. As a matter of fact, the immobility of the German and Italian workers is determined not at all by the omnipotence of the fascist police but by the absence of a program, the loss of faith in old programs and old slogans, and by the prostitution of the Second and Third Internationals. Only in this political atmosphere of disillusionment and decline can the police apparatus work those “miracles” which, sad to say, have produced an excessive impression also on the minds of some of our comrades.”³⁶

In the Manifesto against the imperialist Second World War Trotsky wrote:

“But isn't the working class obliged in the present conditions to aid the democracies in their struggle against German fascism? That is how the question is put by broad petty-bourgeois circles (...). We reject this policy with indignation. Naturally there exists a difference between the political regimes in bourgeois society just as there is a difference in comfort between various cars in a railway train. But when the whole train is plunging into an abyss, the distinction between decaying democracy and murderous fascism disappears in the face of the collapse of the entire capitalist system.”³⁷

The RCL and the 1948 War

In the article “Against the Stream” (1948) the Revolutionary Communist League of Palestine took the following posi-

tion:

“Each side is “anti-imperialist” to the bone, busy detecting the reactionary – in the opposite camp. And imperialism is always seen – helping the other side. But this kind of exposure is oil on the imperialist fire. For the inveigling policy of imperialism is based upon agents and agencies within both camps. Therefore, we say to the Palestinian people, in reply to the patriotic warmongers: Make this war between Jews and Arabs, which serves the end of imperialism, the common war of both nations against imperialism!

*This is the only solution guaranteeing a real peace. This must be our goal which must be achieved without concessions to the chauvinist mood prevailing at present among the masses. How can that be done? The main enemy is in our own country!” – this was what Karl Liebknecht had to say to the workers when imperialists and social democrats were inciting them to the slaughter of their fellow workers in other countries. In this spirit we say to the Jewish and Arab workers: the enemy is in your own camp! Jewish workers! Get rid of the Zionist provocateurs who tell you to sacrifice yourself on the altar of the state! Arab worker and fellah! Get rid of the chauvinist provocateurs who are getting you into a mess of blood for their own sake and pocket. Workers of the two peoples, unite in a common front against imperialism and its agents! (...) The only way to peace between the two peoples of this country is turning the guns against the instigators of murder in both camps”.*³⁸

This was not a revolutionary position but, like the RCL's earlier positions, a semi-Zionist position. The Zionists were fighting to cleanse the country from the Palestinians. Revolutionaries should have called for military support for the Arab armies that went to war against the Zionists under the pressure of the Arab masses. At the same time revolutionaries should have refused any political support for the Arab rulers, demanded them to arm the masses, while at the same time organizing workers militias and doing revolutionary work in the Arab armies. This combined with raising transitional demands and the full Marxist program could have led to a workers revolution that would change the history of the Middle East and beyond.

Today left wing organizations repeat the same kind of mistakes the RCL did in Palestine. It is not because they try to imitate the RCL but rather because the leaderships of these organizations see the world from the same perspective the RCL saw it in Palestine; trying to sit in the space between two chairs: The super-exploited Arab workers and the settler labor aristocracy on the other. Revolutionary Marxists act in this world very differently because they see the world through the eye glasses of the revolutionary international working class, the lower and middle layers of the class not the labor aristocracy and from the eyes of the most oppressed not the colonial settlers oppressors.

Israel will continue to fight imperialist wars which it cannot win until one day it will suffer a major defeat. For this reason we say that Israel is not only the oppressor of the Palestinians but also a death trap for the Jewish masses. The only way the Jewish working class or at least part of it can be free is by joining the revolutionary struggle of the Arab Workers and Fallahins. The RCIT and its section in Israel/Occupied Palestine, the ISL, are fighting for such a perspective and for the building of revolutionary party in these countries as well as internationally. ■

Notes

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On some Questions of the Zionist Oppression and the Permanent Revolution in Palestine

Thoughts on some exceptionalities of the Israeli state, the national oppression of the Palestinian people and its consequences for the program of the Bolshevik-Communists in Palestine

By Michael Pröbsting

The Palestinian Revolution has been a central issue of the international class struggle for more than half a century. The reason is that it constitutes one of the biggest crimes of imperialism in the 20th century. It symbolizes the barbarism of the imperialist Great Powers who expel a whole people from its historic homeland by the artificial creation of a colonial settler state in order to control a geo-strategically highly important region – the Middle East.

Not surprisingly, Palestine and Israel have been the focus for a number of wars – 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, 1982, 2006, 2008/09 and 2012. In addition to this we have already seen two popular Palestinian Intifadas which started in 1987 and 2000 respectively and lasted each for several years. The Arab Revolution which started in early 2011 has even more increased the centrality of the Palestinian Revolution.

For us Bolshevik-Communists the Palestinian question has always played a central role both in theory and practice. One can not be a revolutionary in any meaningful way without consistently fighting against Zionism and the Israeli Apartheid state and for its replacement by a single workers state from the River to the Sea with the right of all Palestinian refugees to return.

This was and is the position of those who stand in the tradition of authentic Marxism. Such a common revolutionary approach to the Palestinian Revolution forms an important element in the fusion between the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) and the *Internationalist Socialist League* (ISL) in Israel/Occupied Palestine. Both organizations defended in the past a revolutionary perspective against Zionism, for the unconditional support for the Palestinian liberation struggle and for a single workers state from the River to the Sea with the right of all Palestinian refugees to return. However, the discussions around this fusion process were very fruitful and helped us to deepen our common understanding. An important result of this has been the draft for an *Action Program for National Liberation and Socialist Revolution in Palestine*.

In the following document we intend to outline a number of important questions for the strategy of Permanent Revolution in Palestine.

Trotsky's Theory of the Permanent Revolution

Let us begin with a brief summary of Trotsky's concept of Permanent Revolution. It is based on the dialectical concept that the revolution cannot be divided schematically into stages which are separated from each other. This does not mean that there are not different stages in the development of the revolution. This is of course the case. But in all stages of the revolution it is one and the same class which must lead the struggle in order to win the democratic as well

as economic goals of the revolution: the working class. Naturally the working class must seek allies amongst the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie. But it is the proletariat and only the proletariat which can lead the struggle to victory. The reason for this is that the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie – regardless of their numerical size – are not classes that can act independently and therefore they cannot play a leading role. They must rather subordinate themselves sooner or later under one of the two main classes of capitalist society - the proletariat or the bourgeoisie.

From this follows that in all stages of the revolution the strategic goal is to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat and not the power for any other class. While temporary blocs with sectors of the bourgeoisie cannot be excluded, it would be criminal for the working class to subordinate its goals and interests in order not to wreck a potential alliance with such bourgeois forces. It would be even more criminal to support the taking of power by bourgeois forces. Every sector of the semi-colonial bourgeoisie will look for a compromise with imperialism and betray the working class and the popular masses.

The theory of permanent revolution assumes that if the revolution is not continued up to the socialist seizure of power, it will inevitably end with the victory of the ruling class and a counter-revolution. Similarly, the theory of Permanent Revolution considers that the revolution cannot last victoriously in a single country (as Stalin claimed), but must be spread internationally. The modern economy, especially in the age of global capitalism, makes all countries dependent on the international exchange of goods, technology and knowledge. Moreover, sooner or later the imperialist powers would not tolerate a victorious revolution in a single country. Marxists therefore support the strategy of permanent revolution not because it is more radical or "exciting", but because it represents the only realistic way to overcome the capitalist system and establish a truly socialist society.¹

In his book "The Permanent Revolution", written in 1929, Trotsky explained the three basic elements of this theory:

„The permanent revolution, in the sense which Marx attached to this concept, means a revolution which makes no compromise with any single form of class rule, which does not stop at the democratic stage, which goes over to socialist measures and to war against reaction from without: that is, a revolution whose every successive stage is rooted in the preceding one and which can end only in the complete liquidation of class society.

To dispel the chaos that has been created around the theory of the permanent revolution, it is necessary to distinguish three lines of thought that are united in this theory.

First, it embraces the problem of the transition from the democratic revolution to the socialist. This is in essence the historical origin of the theory. (...)

The theory of the permanent revolution, which originated in

1905, declared war upon these ideas and moods. It pointed out that the democratic tasks of the backward bourgeois nations lead directly, in our epoch, to the dictatorship of the proletariat and that the dictatorship of the proletariat puts socialist tasks on the order of the day. Therein lay the central idea of the theory. While the traditional view was that the road to the dictatorship of the proletariat led through a long period of democracy, the theory of the permanent revolution established the fact that for backward countries the road to democracy passed through the dictatorship of the proletariat. Thus democracy is not a regime that remains self-sufficient for decades, but is only a direct prelude to the socialist revolution. Each is bound to the other by an unbroken chain. Thus there is established between the democratic revolution and the socialist reconstruction of society a permanent state of revolutionary development.

The second aspect of the 'permanent' theory has to do with the socialist revolution as such. For an indefinitely long time and in constant internal struggle, all social relations undergo transformation. Society keeps on changing its skin. Each stage of transformation stems directly from the preceding. This process necessarily retains a political character, that is, it develops through collisions between various groups in the society which is in transformation. Outbreaks of civil war and foreign wars alternate with periods of 'peaceful' reform. Revolutions in economy, technique, science, the family, morals and everyday life develop in complex reciprocal action and do not allow society to achieve equilibrium. Therein lies the permanent character of the socialist revolution as such.

The international character of the socialist revolution, which constitutes the third aspect of the theory of the permanent revolution, flows from the present state of economy and the social structure of humanity. Internationalism is no abstract principle but a theoretical and political reflection of the character of world economy, of the world development of productive forces and the world scale of the class struggle. The socialist revolution begins on national foundations – but it cannot be completed within these foundations. The maintenance of the proletarian revolution within a national framework can only be a provisional state of affairs, even though, as the experience of the Soviet Union shows, one of long duration. In an isolated proletarian dictatorship, the internal and external contradictions grow inevitably along with the successes achieved. If it remains isolated, the proletarian state must finally fall victim to these contradictions. The way out for it lies only in the victory of the proletariat of the advanced countries. Viewed from this standpoint, a national revolution is not a self-contained whole; it is only a link in the international chain. The international revolution constitutes a permanent process, despite temporary declines and ebbs."²

Such is the theoretical concept of revolutionary Marxism for the inner mechanic of the revolutionary process. Let us now move to discuss specific problems of the permanent revolution in Palestine.

The uniqueness of Israel as a colonial settler and oppressor state

The national oppression of the Palestinian people has a special character which is the consequence of the special character of the oppressor state Israel. It is not a "typical" state which oppresses another nation. This is a wrong assumption which is widely held by many centrists like the IMT, the CWI, the various groups in the Spartacists tradition (ICL, IBT, IG), etc. In fact, Israel is – as both the ISL, the RCIT, and its respective predecessor organizations have stated for many years – a *colonial settler state*. It is based on the expulsion of the huge majority of the original population – the Palestinians – from their homeland and their replacement by a settler people. This settler people had to be transferred with the help of Zionist

institutions and imperialist Great Powers – mostly from Europe – during the 20th century to Palestine. Only by this displacement of the Palestinians were the Zionists capable to build a "Jewish State" in a country where the Jews were historically a tiny minority. According to the official statistics of the Ottoman Empire they originally formed only 4% (in 1880) and respectively 5% (in 1914) of the total population.³ Even at the time of the creation of the Israeli state in 1947/48 – after decades of systematic expulsion of Palestinians and the waves of Jewish settler immigration – did the Jews constitute only 1/3 of the total population.

So, we see already three important differences to other capitalist states which oppress another nation:

The Israeli-Jewish oppressor "nation" always constituted a minority compared with the nation it oppressed. Today the relation between Israeli Jews and Palestinians is 1:2.

* Secondly, it oppresses the Palestinians not where they originally lived but expelled the majority of them from their homeland.

* Thirdly, it is an oppressor nation and state which has been artificially created via a systematic population transfer policy. (Nevertheless it still doesn't possess all characteristics of nation as we will discuss below.)

True, if we consider the whole history of capitalism, Israel is not the only colonial settler state in the world. The USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand have a similar history. These states also expelled and murdered the Native Americans, Aborigines and Maoris. There are indeed strong similarities which, by the way, show the hypocrisy of these imperialist "democracies" and which are the reason why we fully support the struggle of the Native Americans, Aborigines and Maoris for their national rights.

However, from a historical-materialist point of view there are also important differences. Colonial settler states like the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand have all been formed in the ascending epoch of capitalism in the 16th to the 19th century. In opposite to these examples, Israel and the Israeli-Jewish "nation" have been formed in the imperialist epoch in the 20th century, i.e. in the epoch of capitalism's decline.

This had important consequences. The white majority nation in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand could nationally integrate and develop over a long historic period and at the same time they could successfully reduce and imprison the aboriginal people into small enclaves. Hence the aboriginal people in these countries today form only small minorities and have been denied, to a larger or smaller degree, the possibility to develop themselves as proper nations.

Israel and Zionism on the other hand came – historically speaking – "too late". As a result the Israeli-Jewish "nation" itself has important deficiencies in its national formation as they still constitute only a minority in Palestine while the Palestinians, on the other hand, are a fully developed majority nation (with the support and sympathy of the whole surrounding Arab and Muslim world).

For all these reasons the RCIT and our Arab and Jewish comrades in the ISL consider Israel as a unique colonial settler state and hence we recognize the special form of the national oppression of the Palestinian people. It can only exist and reproduce itself as a state and nation by permanent brute force and wars of aggression. Only by this it can continue to expel the Palestinians from their homeland and grab their land as well as rob their water reserves. Thus for example half a million Israeli-Jewish settlers in the West Bank grab 85.7% of its water reserves while 2.6 million Palestinians have to make ends with the

rest. It is worth noting that Israel is also – together with the USA, Britain and China – one of the biggest global land grabbers.⁴

The ruling class of Israel knows that it must permanently attack, humiliate and put down the Palestinians and the Arabs in the region since otherwise its days are numbered.

Various centrists use a formally correct but abstract criticism against Arab nationalism as a pretext to ignore the specific problems in the revolutionary struggle against the Israeli colonial settler state. Let us take the example of the centrist IMT of Alan Woods. They claim that it is the Palestinians and Arabs fault that the Israeli-Jewish working class has not rose up against their ruling class:

“We understand that the Israeli Jews fear being literally killed and destroyed by the hostile neighbouring Arab states. This is what drives them into the arms of Netanyahu and co. And so long as groups such as Hamas until recently and the PLO in the past raise the idea of driving out the Jews, rather than weakening the Zionist state, the bulk of the Jewish population is pushed into rallying around the Israeli ruling class, thus strengthening and not weakening Zionism.”⁵

It is certainly true that a revolutionary party and a Workers and Peasants Republic in the Arab world would have conducted systematic internationalist propaganda and appealed to the poorer Jewish workers to break with Zionism. It is also true that revolutionaries all over the world have to fight systematically against all forms of Anti-Semitism. But the centrist leaders of the IMT reduce the problem of Zionist loyalty of the Israeli-Jewish workers only or mainly to the existence of Arab nationalism. This is utterly wrong and betrays a lack of dialectical-materialist understanding! The main reason for the Zionist loyalty of the Israeli-Jewish workers is not Arab nationalism but the huge material privileges which they gain as a result

of the imperialist colonial settler status of the state they are living in (more on this below). But as the IMT (and most other centrists) refute the Leninist conception of labor aristocracy and their relative privileges paid from the super-profits of the imperialist monopolies and states as the material basis for their backward consciousness, so do these centrists ignore the ideological consequences of the material factors of an imperialist settler state on the consciousness of its privileged population.⁶

The Israeli Jews as a nationality or an “almost nation”

Exactly for the reason of its late, artificial and brutal formation, the Israeli Jews did not experience a full nation-formation process. True there a number of important elements of a nation-formation process. In addition to having a common territory as well as a common economy, the use of a common language made important progress. At the beginning of the state of Israel only a minority spoke Hebrew. However a conscious effort by the Zionist state to create a national consciousness led to the situation, where today a majority of Israeli Jews speak this language.

However the limitations of this nation-formation process become obvious from the fact that despite the most determined efforts of the Zionist state, still today a significant minority of Israeli Jews doesn't speak Hebrew. According to the latest official statistics of Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, only 49% of the country's total population report Hebrew as their mother language, 18% Arabic, 15% Russian, 2% Yiddish, 2% French, 2% English, 1.6% Spanish and 10% other languages.⁷ This means that still today – after 65 years of Israel's existence as a state – only about 3/5 of Israel's Jews use Hebrew as their mother language.

Additionally, the Zionist self-conception of Israel as a state

Expulsion of the Palestinian People 1947-49

Palestinian refugees

In September 1949
x 1,000

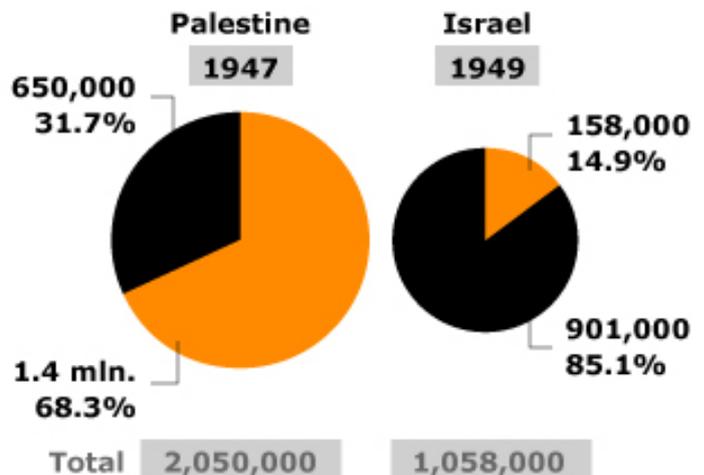
Total 726,000



Source:
UN Economic Survey
Mission for
the Middle East (1950)

Palestinian and Jewish population of Palestine (in 1947) and of the State of Israel (in 1949)

■ Palestinians ■ Jews



of all Jews world-wide – which they claim to be a nation – is an obstacle for a national identity of the Israeli Jews.

The ISL comrades wrote on this some years ago: *“The Israelis have many objective attributes, which characterize a nation: territory, common economy; a state and common culture. However, there can be no nation where there is no national consciousness, i.e. a bourgeois consciousness of a common interest separated from other nations (reflecting the reality of national economy which has unified local markets). The Israelis however have a Zionist consciousness not an Israeli national consciousness.”*⁸

Related to this is the fact that the Israeli Jews are sharply divided not only by class lines – as it is the case in all nations living in capitalism – but also along ethnic and religious lines. Hence we have the traditional Ashkenazi Jews coming from Europe, the Russian Jews who came after 1991 from the former Soviet Union, the Sephardic Jews and Mizrahi Jews from North Africa and the Middle East. And more recently there has been a new wave of Jews coming from Ethiopia. There are various forms of discrimination against the Jewish communities coming from poorer countries. In addition we see the increasing discrimination of the poor ultra-orthodox Jews – the Haredim – who are a growing minority of about one million.⁹

These deficiencies in the Israeli-Jewish nation-formation process are another important factor which explains the permanent Israeli expansionism. Only by permanent war against the Palestinians and the whole Arab and Muslim world can the Israeli ruling class hope to unite the Israeli Jews.

Finally, one has to take into account that because of the unique character of Israel, the national consciousness of the Israeli Jews is necessarily interwoven with reactionary chauvinist attitude towards the Palestinians and the Arabs in general.¹⁰

For all these reasons we come to the conclusion that the Israeli Jews are a group which possesses important elements of a nation. But they have been prevented to develop into a full nation because of specific characteristics which are related to the Zionist project (claims that not the Israeli Jews as such but the all Jews in the world are a nation, permanent waves of immigration which cause international ethnical divisions). Thus we can characterize them as a pre-form of a nation – a nationality or an “almost nation”.

Can Marxists support the right of national self-determination for the Israeli Jews?

The Bolshevik-Communists reject the right of national self-determination for the Israeli Jews. For this question it is not decisive if Marxists consider the Israeli Jews as a nation or an “almost nation”. The RCIT and the ISL oppose the right of national self-determination for the Israeli Jews because the realization of such a right automatically implies the denial of the right of national self-determination for the oppressed majority nation – the Palestinians.¹¹

On the other hand many centrists support the right of national self-determination for the Israeli Jews. Let us give a few examples for this. Already in 1973 leaders of Matzpen, A. Said and Moshe Machover, raised it in an article published by the centrist *“United Secretariat of the Fourth International”* of Ernest Mandel.¹²

A similar approach is repeated by the Spartacists school who call explicitly for *“the right to self-determination for Palestinians and Hebrews”*¹³ Similarly the International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT), who split from the Spartacists: *“For Leninists, all nations, including the Jews in Israel, have a right to self-determination”*¹⁴ The same idea is repeated

by another Sparts split, the Internationalist Group of Jan Norden who calls for *“recognizing the right of self-determination for both Hebrew speakers and Arabs in Palestine”*.¹⁵ Consequently the crude Spartacist school of “internationalism” defends the right of the Israeli Jewish colonial settler people to form their own state after the socialist revolution: *“Nevertheless, if the level of hostility is such that by democratic means one or the other people wishes to lead a separate national state existence, a revolutionary workers government would recognize this as their right, which, unlike under capitalism, could be accomplished (with difficulty) in a way that is not discriminatory toward one or the other community, in the framework of a socialist federation of the Near East.”*¹⁶

We note in passing the funny fact that the Spartacists demonstrate their ignorance of the situation in Israel by consistently referring to the “Hebrew-speaking” people instead of the “Israeli Jews”. They seemingly do not even know that many of those, whose “right to self-determination” they advocate, do not use Hebrew as their mother language.

While more hidden, the International Marxist Tendency (IMT) of Alan Woods and the late Ted Grant argues in a similar direction. They call for *“autonomous homelands and full respect for all national rights”* for Arabs and Israeli Jews which is a concealed support for a separate “socialist” Israeli-Jewish state: *“Nevertheless, Israel now exists as a state, and the clock of history cannot be turned back. Israel is a nation and we cannot call for its abolition. The solution of the Palestinian national problem can only be achieved through the establishment of a socialist federation of the Middle East in which Arabs and Israelis can co-exist with their own autonomous homelands and full respect for all national rights.”*¹⁷

The most consistent “Socialist” Zionist amongst the centrists is the Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI) which has a section in Israel (Maavak Sotzyalisti). For many years they have called *“for a socialist, democratic Palestine and a socialist Israel, as part of a equal and voluntary socialist confederation of the Middle East.”*¹⁸ The CWI leaders are aware that this is against the wishes of the oppressed Arab people: *“We accept that many Arab workers have the hope that the Israeli state must be destroyed. It is an imperialist wedge against the Arab Revolution.”*¹⁹

Nevertheless, the CWI calls for a continuation of the Israeli state (on a “socialist basis”) and therefore the continuation of the collective expulsion of the Palestinian people from their home territory. How does the CWI leadership justify such an awful ignorance of the wishes of the oppressed Palestinian people? By referring to the wishes of the oppressor nation, the Jewish-Israeli people, as the following quote shows:

*“They will come to nothing as the Palestinian masses will not give up their demands for a separate state. Equally, the Israeli population will not accede to the demand that they form a possible minority in a ‘common state’. To do so would mean that they would take the place of the oppressed Palestinians; this would be inevitable on a capitalist basis. Our demand for a socialist, democratic Palestine and a socialist Israel linked to a socialist confederation of the Middle East retains all its validity.”*²⁰

We consider such a position as reactionary and a capitulation towards Zionism. The right of national self-determination implies naturally the right of separation to form an independent state. Any such right would constitute a denial for millions of Palestinian refugees to return in their homeland. Let us not forget that out of (officially) 11.6 million Palestinians, 5.8 million live in the Diaspora (mostly in Arab countries). Of the 4.4 million Palestinian living in the West Bank and Gaza, 44% are refugees. Add to this a number of those 1.6 million Palestinians who live inside the 1948-occupied Palestine but who are refugees

too. All in all about 3/4 of all Palestinians are refugees living in the enforced Diaspora.²¹

Naturally this violation of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people would be closely related to economic discrimination since Israel – i.e. 1948-occupied Palestine – is industrially much more developed than the Palestinian inhabited areas. Any two-state solution would automatically mean a rich Israel exists beside a poor Palestine – and would therefore continue the massive gap and hence oppression.

This does of course not mean that the Israeli Jews would have no rights in a single Palestinian workers state, as we will see below.

A favourite argument of the centrist supporters of the right of national self-determination for the Israeli Jews is their claim that Marxists apply this right to all nations and thus also for the Israeli Jews. In fact this is a caricature of Marxism. The right of national self-determination is not a juridical right in the abstract realm but a tool of an oppressed nation (or ethnic group) to liberate itself from the oppressor nation.

Thus the right of national self-determination is a right for *oppressed nations*, not for all – oppressed and oppressor – nations. This becomes clear if one considers the various tactics which flow from this right. In a conflict between oppressed nation and oppressor nation we defend the former against the later. Marxists defend the right to separate and form an independent state of oppressed nations. But which sense would it make to defend the right to separate and form an independent state of an oppressor nation?! Shall we call for the right of Spain to separate from Basque Country or of the Sinhala majority population in Sri Lanka to separate from the Tamils?!

Supporting the right of national self-determination and

thus the right to separate and form an independent state of an oppressor nation would not only be absurd but is potentially reactionary. It could form a pretext for the ruling class of an oppressor nation to get rid of and ghettoize an oppressed people under its conditions. This is exactly what happened when Israel exercised such a “right to separate” in 2005 when it withdrew from the Gaza strip and transformed it into an open prison camp. Or it can be a pretext for the formation of a reactionary vendee in order to keep the privileges of the old oppressor minority. The fascist *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging* of the late Eugène Terre’Blanche in South Africa, which calls for secession and the creation of an independent Boer-Afrikaner republic (“Volkstaat/Boerestaat”) in parts of South Africa, is an example for such a reactionary, aristocratic application of the “right to separate” for an oppressor nation.

Similarly Marxists defend the right of oppressed nations to protect its economy against the domination by imperialist multinationals. But at the same time we oppose any protectionist barriers of imperialist economies against products of the semi-colonial countries. To give another example: Only a reactionary chauvinist – like the right wing parties, social democracy, Stalinism or centrists like the Spartacists – can defend the right of oppressor nations to close its borders for migrants from the poor, semi-colonial countries. On the other hand, oppressed nations have a right to defend themselves against reactionary settlements projects which have the purpose to undermine their national existence. The justified opposition of the Palestinians against the Zionist settlement policy in Israel is such a case.

Our rejection of a “right of national self-determination” for the Israeli-Jewish nationality is not a denial of a revolutionary democratic right. It is the refusal of their

Employed Persons Aged 15-74 in High-Tech Field (2005-2011)

EMPLOYED PERSONS AGED 15-74 IN THE HIGH-TECH FIELD, OUT OF ALL EMPLOYED PERSONS AGED 15-74, BY SEX

מועסקים בני 15-74 בתחום ההייטק מכלל המועסקים בני 15-74, לפי מין

Percentages

	Females										Males										Total										סך הכל
	2011	2010	2009	(2)2008	2008	2007	2006	2005	2011	2010	2009	(2)2008	2008	2007	2006	2005	2011	2010	2009	(2)2008	2008	2007	2006	2005							
ISRAEL(1)	6.6	6.6	6.9	7.0	7.0	7.0	6.8	6.4	11.8	11.8	11.4	12.0	12.0	11.8	11.9	11.2	9.4	9.4	9.3	9.7	9.7	9.5	9.6	9.0							
Austria	2.3	2.6	2.5	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.8	4.6	4.6	4.7	4.4	5.2	5.0	5.3	5.6	3.5	3.7	3.7	3.5	4.0	3.9	4.1	4.3							
Italy	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.7	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.4	3.8	3.7	3.8	3.8	4.9	4.8	4.8	4.5	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.3	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.1							
Iceland	3.6	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.0	3.7	4.1	4.3	6.7	6.3	6.2	5.3	5.2	5.0	4.8	5.7	5.2	4.9	5.0	4.6	4.2	4.4	4.5	5.0							
Ireland	5.1	4.9	4.8	4.9	4.9	4.8	5.3	5.1	8.9	8.9	8.4	7.3	7.4	7.2	7.3	7.2	7.0	6.7	6.2	6.2	6.3	6.2	6.4	6.3							
Estonia	3.1	3.1	3.5	3.4	4.7	3.7	3.2	3.6	5.1	3.7	3.5	3.0	3.2	3.5	4.0	3.7	4.1	3.4	3.5	3.2	3.9	3.6	3.6	3.7							
Bulgaria	3.1	2.6	2.7	3.1	..	3.1	3.2	3.5	3.1	2.9	3.1	2.9	..	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.1	2.8	2.9	3.0	..	3.1	3.1	3.2							
Belgium	3.2	3.4	3.1	3.1	2.9	3.1	3.2	3.0	5.8	5.8	5.6	5.4	5.8	5.9	5.7	5.6	4.6	4.7	4.5	4.4	4.5	4.7	4.6	4.5							
Germany	3.1	3.1	3.0	3.1	3.6	3.9	3.7	3.7	5.1	5.1	5.4	4.9	6.5	6.3	6.4	6.2	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.1	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.1							
Denmark	3.6	3.8	3.6	3.8	3.6	3.8	3.9	4.1	7.0	7.3	6.8	6.4	6.6	6.6	6.3	6.2	5.4	5.6	5.3	5.2	5.2	5.3	5.2	5.2							
Netherlands	1.9	1.9	2.1	2.3	3.0	2.4	2.5	2.7	5.2	5.5	5.6	5.7	6.7	6.9	6.0	6.6	3.7	3.9	4.0	4.2	5.0	4.9	4.5	4.8							
Hungary	4.8	4.6	4.3	4.7	5.5	5.7	5.8	5.7	5.7	5.4	5.1	5.4	5.9	6.0	6.0	5.7	5.3	5.0	4.7	5.1	5.8	5.9	5.9	5.7							
United Kingdom	2.6	2.5	2.6	3.1	2.9	3.0	2.8	3.0	6.2	5.7	5.5	6.3	6.9	7.2	7.3	7.4	4.5	4.2	4.1	4.8	5.1	5.3	5.2	5.4							
Turkey	0.9	0.9	0.9	..	0.9	0.9	0.7	..	1.2	1.1	1.0	..	1.2	1.2	1.2	..	1.1	1.1	0.9	..	1.1	1.1	1.1	..							
Greece	2.0	1.9	1.7	1.9	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.5	2.2	2.4	2.4	2.2	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.2	2.1	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.2	2.2	1.9							
Luxembourg	2.4	3.1	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.9	2.4	2.8	4.8	5.1	4.3	4.5	4.7	4.4	4.4	4.5	3.7	4.2	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.5	3.8							
Latvia	2.5	2.2	1.9	2.2	2.8	3.0	2.6	3.4	3.6	4.3	3.2	2.8	3.1	2.5	2.7	2.3	3.0	3.2	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.7	2.7	2.8							
Lithuania	1.9	1.5	1.6	1.7	2.6	2.8	2.9	3.0	2.6	2.4	2.5	2.0	2.6	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.2	2.0	2.0	1.9	2.6	2.5	2.7	2.8							
Malta	5.1	5.2	5.4	5.2	5.9	6.2	7.1	6.1	6.1	5.1	6.2	7.0	6.8	5.8	5.8	6.4	5.7	5.1	5.9	6.4	6.5	5.9	6.2	6.3							
Norway	2.2	2.4	2.4	2.3	3.0	2.9	3.5	3.0	5.2	5.0	5.2	4.7	5.7	5.5	5.2	5.5	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.6	..	..	..	..			
Slovenia	3.7	4.3	3.8	3.6	..	2.8	2.9	3.4	6.0	5.7	5.7	5.2	..	4.9	4.7	5.0	5.0	5.1	4.8	4.5	4.0	3.8	4.3						
Slovakia	3.9	3.6	3.2	3.5	5.1	5.2	5.0	4.9	4.2	4.0	3.7	3.7	4.0	4.2	3.8	4.0	4.1	3.8	3.5	3.6	4.5	4.7	4.3	4.4							
Spain	2.7	2.5	2.8	2.6	2.4	2.8	2.7	2.6	4.2	3.9	4.0	3.6	3.9	3.8	3.9	3.6	3.5	3.3	3.5	3.2	3.2	3.4	3.4	3.2							
Poland	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.3	..	2.8	2.7	2.5	3.0	3.0	3.1	2.9	..	3.6	3.2	3.1	2.7	2.7	2.6	..	..	3.2	3.0	2.8					
Portugal	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.1	1.8	1.4	1.7	1.9	2.5	2.6	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.6	2.1	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.3	2.3							
Finland	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.5	5.2	4.9	4.7	4.6	7.1	7.3	7.1	7.4	8.2	8.4	8.5	8.4	5.6	5.8	5.7	6.0	6.8	6.7	6.7	6.6							
Czech Republic	3.9	3.7	3.4	3.4	4.9	5.0	4.8	5.1	5.1	4.8	4.5	4.1	4.8	4.7	4.5	4.3	4.6	4.3	4.0	3.8	4.8	4.8	4.6	4.6							
France	3.1	2.9	2.7	2.7	3.7	3.7	3.9	4.2	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.8	5.8	5.6	6.0	6.1	4.1	4.0	3.9	3.8	4.8	4.7	5.0	5.2							
Cyprus	2.1	1.6	1.8	2.1	1.6	1.6	1.4	1.9	2.9	2.6	3.1	3.5	2.9	3.2	2.7	2.4	2.6	2.2	2.5	2.9	2.3	2.5	2.1	2.2							
Croatia	1.8	2.1	2.2	2.8	2.6	2.8	2.4	2.1	3.5	3.3	3.0	2.9	3.3	3.5	2.8	3.2	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.9	3.0	3.2	2.6	2.7							
Romania	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.6	2.1	1.8	1.9	1.8	2.3	2.0	2.0	1.9	2.3	2.0	2.0	1.7	2.0	1.8	1.8	1.7	2.2	1.9	1.9	1.7							
Sweden	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.2	..	4.0	4.0	4.2	6.6	6.5	6.6	6.4	..	7.7	7.7	8.0	5.0	4.9	5.0	4.9	..	5.9	6.0	6.2							
Switzerland	4.0	..	4.0	4.1	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.3	7.1	..	7.3	6.9	7.7	7.4	7.3	7.8	5.7	..	5.8	5.6	..	..	..	..			

Source: Eurostat.

1. Source: CBS, Labour Force Surveys.

2. According to the new classification of economic activities: NACE Rev. 2 (Excl. Israel).

תקריב כוח אדם.

לכלכלה חדשה: NACE Rev. 2 (לא כולל ישראל).

right to oppress the Palestinians, to continue their expulsion from their homeland. It is the refusal to continue the inherently racist political project of Zionism.

The Marxist classics and the right of national self-determination

“Socialist” Zionists like the Spartacists school claim that the right of national self-determination applies both to oppressed nations and oppressor nations: “Basic to the Leninist position on the national question — the only consistently democratic position — is that all nations have a right to self-determination.”²²

This is of course complete nonsense. 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“.²³

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.

We shall give just a small selection of the numerous quotes from major works of Lenin on the national question:

„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.“²⁴

“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.”²⁵

“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.”²⁶

“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.”²⁷

“The right of nations to self-determination implies exclusively the right to independence in the political sense, the right to free political separation from the oppressor nation. (...) It implies only a consistent expression of struggle against all national oppression.”²⁸

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 overcome the distrust felt by the working masses of oppressed countries towards the proletariat of states which used to oppress those countries, it is necessary to abolish all the privileges enjoyed by any national group, to establish complete equality of rights for all nationalities, to recognise the right of colonies and dependent nations to separation.”²⁹

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.”³⁰

Revolutionary Defeatism against Israel in its Wars and Revolutionary Defensism for the Arab countries

Israel’s inherent reactionary character entails that revolutionaries supported the Palestinian guerillas and the respective armies of its neighboring Arab countries in all wars which took place in 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, 1982, 2006, 2008/09 and 2012. Both the ISL and the RCIT and its respective predecessor organization did and do take a revolutionary defeatist position in relation to Israel – this means we call for its defeat and for actions of the working class and the oppressed both inside Israel and its army as well as internationally to foster such a defeat. At the same time we are revolutionary defensist in relation to the Palestinian guerillas and the respective Arab armies – this means we support their military struggle and call workers and oppressed in these countries as well as internationally to support their struggle by proletarian methods of struggle.

However, this support is unconditional but critical. We call to support the Palestinian and Arab struggles with the working class methods. We warn against any illusions and reliance on the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois leaderships. We call for independent mass organization of the working class as well as the formation of a revolutionary party in order to replace the non-revolutionary leaderships.³¹

It is not accidental that those who wholehearted defend the “right of national self-determination” for the Israeli Jewish oppressor nation have often failed in the past to side unconditionally with the Palestinian resistance and respective Arab countries in their wars against the Zionist state. As we have shown with a number of examples in our recently published book “The Great Robbery of the South”, centrist organizations like the CWI or the IMT have failed to call for the victory of the Palestinian resistance, of Hezbollah, of Iraq or of Afghanistan and for the defeat of the imperialists or of Israel in their wars in the Middle East in the past two decades.³²

Surely, the centrists like to cover their betrayal by radical sounding denunciations of Palestinian (petty-)bourgeois nationalists. Such the IMT recently wrote “The idea that the fundamentalists are somehow “anti-imperialist” is absurd. The Islamic fundamentalists are utterly reactionary and play no progressive role whatsoever.”³³ It is certainly true that Hamas is reactionary. However, because of their roots amongst the Palestinian masses and the pressure of the later, Hamas is forced to fight (inconsistently) against the Israeli aggression. This is not a lot but certainly much more than the Western middle class centrists of the IMT ever managed to do! They did not even support the Palestinian and Arab military struggles against Israel in the wars in the last decade in their agitation in mass demonstrations in the West! Sure, the Hamas leadership is ready to betray the Palestinian liberation struggle. But how can socialists

gain the confidence of the Palestinian and Arab workers and oppressed if they don't support their resistance even if it is under a non-revolutionary leadership and if they justify this absence with pseudo-radical sounding phrase-mongering?! And, by the way, it is hypocritical to the extreme to state that Hamas is not anti-imperialist in any way and "utterly reactionary" while at the same time the IMT tail and work inside the social democratic labor parties and even the bourgeois, popular frontist PPP in Pakistan. These parties which the IMT supports and has helped to build for decades certainly undertook much less "anti-imperialist" actions than Hamas!

Characteristically such organizations like the CWI, the IMT or the Spartacists equally failed to side with Argentina in the Malvinas War against British imperialism in 1982. One of the favourite arguments of the CWI to justify their capitulation towards British imperialism was the "right of national self-determination" of the 1,800 colonial British settlers on the Malvinas islands in front to the Argentine coast.³⁴ One can easily recognize the same aristocratic logic in the case of Malvinas and Israel: Imperialism uses its dominance to send settlers in this or that region in order to expel the native population respectively to gain control over a territory. Once it has succeeded in this and the colonial people rebel against this blatant act of robbery and expansionism, the imperialists invoke the "right of national self-determination" for their colonial settlers. Unfortunately they find supporters in the camp of centrist "Marxism"!

In fact the settlers "right of national self-determination" invalidates the authentic right of national self-determination of the oppressed nation. This is why Marxists can only support the right of national self-determination of oppressed nations.

Israel's development into an imperialist state

Israel has become a small imperialist power. We hope to deal with this issue more in detail in a future document.³⁵ We limit here ourselves to a brief overview.

Israel has developed a powerful monopoly capital in the last decades. It has developed into a highly industrialized economy which is superior to all other countries in the region. In addition Israel has a very powerful military. It is – despite the small size of the country – the eighth largest nuclear power in the world as well as the number 10 of the world's arms exporters.³⁶

Israel's monopoly capital controls the country's economy. According to the Bank of Israel "some twenty business groups, nearly all of family nature and structured in a pronounced pyramid form, continue to control a large proportion of public firms (some 25% of firms listed for trading) and about half of market share."³⁷

These monopolies do not only dominate the domestic economy, they also lead a massive surge of capital export. Many of the top Israeli multinationals are based on High-Tech industries, pharmaceutical etc. The Top 20 Israeli Multinationals have foreign assets of nearly 16 billion US-Dollars and their foreign sales were just over 35 billion US-Dollars. They have 667 affiliates abroad and their employment abroad exceeded 87,000 (Figures from the year 2010).³⁸

Reflecting a strengthening of Israel's imperialist character, the stock of foreign direct investment abroad has risen much stronger in the past two decades than inward foreign investment in Israel. While FDI in Israel grew from 4.5 to 66.8 billion US-Dollars between 1990 and 2011, Israeli FDI abroad rose from 1.2 to 71.6 billion US-Dollars in the same period.³⁹

Another reflection of the Israel's imperialist character is the increasing global role of its monopoly capital. In *The Forbes Global 2000* – a ranking of the biggest, most powerful companies in the world – 10 multinational corporations from Israel are listed. This is similar to other smaller imperialist countries which have a much longer history of imperialist development like Austria or Belgium (each 11 corporations) or Finland (12).⁴⁰

Israel's Gross domestic product per capita is 28,611 US-Dollars which is above the level of Greece and Portugal and slightly below the level of Spain (30,222).⁴¹ According to another calculation by the United Nations, Israel Gross National Income Per Capita was slightly above the level of Italy in 2012.⁴²

Certainly, Israel is a rich, imperialist fortress in the poor region of the Middle East. It's GDP per head is double as high as Turkey, five times as high as Egypt's, six times of Jordan's and seven times of Syria's.⁴³

Is Israel a fascist state?

Some left-wing organizations – like various Maoists or the comrades from the FLTI (the International Leninist Trotskyist Fraction led by Carlos Munzer) – call Israel a "fascist state".⁴⁴ While it is understandable if such a characterization comes from a political uneducated person as a spontaneous expression of outrage, it is utter unscientific nonsense if it comes from political organizations which raise the banner of Marxism.

Fascism as a specific form of bourgeois class regime does not differ in essence from other forms of bourgeois rule by the brutality of its suppression of another nation. It rather differs by the fact that it mobilizes the petty-bourgeoisie and the lumpenproletariat in order to totally smash the working class and its organizations and to annihilate all forms of democratic rights. Trotsky explained this in the following way:

"The Social Democracy, which is today the chief representative of the parliamentary-bourgeois regime, derives its support from the workers. Fascism is supported by the petty bourgeoisie. The Social Democracy without the mass organizations of the workers can have no influence. Fascism cannot entrench itself in power without annihilating the workers' organizations. Parliament is the main arena of the Social Democracy. The system of fascism is based upon the destruction of parliamentarism. For the monopolistic bourgeoisie, the parliamentary and fascist regimes represent only different vehicles of dominion; it has recourse to one or the other, depending upon the historical conditions. But for both the Social Democracy and fascism, the choice of one or the other vehicle has an independent significance; more than that, for them it is a question of political life or death.

At the moment that the "normal" police and military resources of the bourgeois dictatorship, together with their parliamentary screens, no longer suffice to hold society in a state of equilibrium – the turn of the fascist regime arrives. Through the fascist agency, capitalism sets in motion the masses of the crazed petty bourgeoisie, and bands of the declassed and demoralized lumpenproletariat; all the countless human beings whom finance capital itself has brought to desperation and frenzy. From fascism the bourgeoisie demands a thorough job; once it has resorted to methods of civil war, it insists on having peace for a period of years. And the fascist agency, by utilizing the petty bourgeoisie as a battering ram, by overwhelming all obstacles in its path, does a thorough job. After fascism is victorious, finance capital gathers into its hands, as in a vise of steel, directly and immediately, all the organs and institutions of sovereignty, the executive, administrative, and educational powers of the state: the entire state apparatus together with the army, the municipalities, the universities, the schools, the press, the trade unions, and the

cooperatives. When a state turns fascist, it doesn't only mean that the forms and methods of government are changed in accordance with the patterns set by Mussolini – the changes in this sphere ultimately play a minor role – but it means, primarily and above all, that the workers' organizations are annihilated; that the proletariat is reduced to an amorphous state; and that a system of administration is created which penetrates deeply into the masses and which serves to frustrate the independent crystallization of the proletariat. Therein precisely is the gist of fascism." ⁴⁵

Using the term "fascist" to characterize Israel is simply wrong and radical phrase-mongering. It doesn't help to clarify an understanding of the specifics of the Israeli state but rather confuses it.

Israel built a bourgeois-parliamentary regime with democratic rights for the Israeli-Jewish population including trade unions, the right to strike, even the right to express Anti-Zionist viewpoints, etc. It also knows limited democratic rights even for the Israeli-Arab citizens. Thus it has not smashed and annihilated trade unions and democratic organizations. This is possible because Zionism expelled most of the native Palestinian population from their homeland. As a result it is a totally aristocratic rich oppressor nation which can afford a limited amount of democracy. The Israeli ruling class in the last decades did not need fascism because it was strong enough to bribe a huge Israeli-Jewish labor aristocracy and middle class and

rule via parliamentary means.

Of course it killed many Palestinians and continues to do so. But let us not forget that all bourgeois – including "democratic" – regimes oppress the working class and (semi-)colonial nations. Such oppression often includes brutal killings and expulsions. It would amount to a dangerous and naïve praising of imperialist bourgeois democracy if Marxists would conclude that a regime must be fascist if it is killing and oppressing. Such people stop being Marxists and turn to become petty-bourgeois moralists. No, bourgeois democracy is killing and oppressing too!

Finally, let us not forget that the fascist states – in Germany, Italy, and Spain etc. – did not only brutally oppress other nations, it also smashed all organizations and democratic rights of the working class in its domestic countries. Only a fool can ignore the fact that the Israeli-Jewish working class has much more rights than the German, Italian or Spanish workers had in the 1930s and 1940s.

Naturally this can change in the future and Israel can become a fascist state in a period of sharp crisis. But this has not been the case in the past 65 years and it is therefore wrong to characterize Israel as a "fascist state".

As a side note we remark that such a mistake is similar to the characterization of Turkey as a fascist state by most Turkish Maoist groups. Despite the existence of a bourgeois-bonapartist regime with a limited parliamentary

Israel: Top 20 non-financial multinationals, by foreign assets, 2010 (in US \$)

Rank	Name	Main industry	Status (% of state ownership)	Foreign assets
1	Israel Corporation	Conglomerate	Listed (0)	4,805
2	Teva	Pharmaceuticals	Listed (0)	3,130
3	Elco Holdings	Conglomerate	Listed (0)	2,345
4	Ormat	Power stations	Listed (0)	1,639
5	Checkpoint	IT services	Listed (0)	734
6	Nice	IT services	Listed (0)	578
7	Strauss Group	Food products	Listed (0)	497
8	Frutarom	Food products	Listed (0)	400
9	Tower Jazz	Electronic and optical equipment	Listed (0)	322
10	Elbit	Electronic and optical equipment	Listed (0)	315
11	Amdocs	IT services	Listed (0)	218
12	IDB Holdings	Conglomerate	Listed (0)	216
13	Avgol	Unwoven fabric	Listed (0)	190
14	Ketter	Plastic products	Unlisted	160
15	Delta Galil	Wearing apparel	Listed (0)	107
16	Plasson	Plastic products	Listed (0)	56
17	Palram	Plastic products	Listed (0)	54
18	Retalix	IT services	Listed (0)	47
19	Lumenis	Electronic equipment - laser technologies	Listed (0)	42
20	Gilat	Electronic equipment - satellites	Listed (0)	29
Total				15,884

Source: Israeli multinationals back on track after a difficult year (See for details footnote 38 of this document)

democracy these groups continue to denounce the state as fascist. Such a characterization is only confusing for the working class and serves as a pretext for a combination of popular-frontism and ultra-left guerillaism.

Who will the vanguard of the Revolution in Palestine?

The massive historic support of the Western imperialist powers and the emergence of Israel as an imperialist state have given the Zionist ruling class massive resources to bribe huge sectors of the Israeli Jewish working class. The living standard of the Israeli Jewish working class is not far away from workers in some Western European countries. For example Israeli Jewish people have a similar level of actual individual consumption to people in Spain. The OECD in an international comparison of social developments came to the conclusion that the average Israeli household income is above the level of Portugal and about 18% below the level of Italy.⁴⁶ Another indicator for the Western standards of living for Israeli Jews is the so-called *Human Development Index* which the *United Nations* regularly measures and which calculates income, poverty, education, health etc. According to the latest reports, Israel is ranked on place 16 amongst 186 states, before countries like Belgium, France and Austria.⁴⁷

One has to bear in mind that this comparison is distorted insofar as the figures for Israel in these statistics include the Arab Israeli citizens as well as the Haredi Jews who are both massively poorer than the majority of the Israeli Jews. Hence in reality Israeli Jewish workers (except the Haredi Jews) have a living standard equal to countries like Italy or Spain.

The average wages of the Palestinian and migrant workers as well as of the Arab workers in the region is ways below those of Israel. The average wage of male Arab Israeli worker is about half of the male Israeli Jews.⁴⁸ While about 57% of the Arab Israeli citizens are living in poverty, it is only about 12% of the Israeli Jews (except the Haredi Jews of whom about 62% are living in poverty).⁴⁹

This gap is much worse compared with the Palestinians living in the 1967-occupied territories. For example per capita income in the West Bank is less than 2,000 Dollars a year, while Israel's is just above 30,000!⁵⁰

Furthermore one must recognize that all these relative material privileges of the Israeli Jewish workers are closely related to the Israeli oppressor state and the national expulsion of the Palestinians on which it rests. Without their expulsion no Israeli state, no appropriation of the Palestine land and no Israeli wealth would have been possible.

For all these reasons it is obvious that the Israeli Jewish working class can never play a vanguard role in the revolution. The vanguard will be those who have to rise up not only to overthrow their capitalist class enemy but even to achieve their democratic demands. It will be the Palestinian working class and their class brothers and sisters in the neighboring Arab and Muslim countries. The heroic Intifadas as well as the Arab Revolution since 2011 are the living proof for this perspective.

Does this mean that the Israeli Jewish workers will play no role in the revolution? Of course, this will not be the case. But they will not be its vanguard. They will be rather in the tow-rope of the Palestinian and Arab working class. This of course does not mean that smaller groups of revolutionary Jewish workers and supportive intellectuals can not play an important role. In fact this has already been the case several times as one can see in the history of the Palestinian Communist Party in the 1920s as well as today where individual Jewish revolutionaries play

an important role not only in the Trotskyist movement but also in the revolutionary democratic, Palestinian nationalist movement (like in Abnaa al-Balad). But such cases will be more the exception than the rule.

Furthermore it is unlikely that the Israeli Jewish working class will support the revolution in its totality. It is much more likely that a large section of its aristocracy will oppose the revolution and the Marxists will fight hard to win over a significant section to join the revolution or at least to remain neutral. This is clear not only from a theoretical point of view but also from the actual experience both in South Africa as well as in Israel. In South Africa only few white workers supported the struggle against Apartheid. Similarly, only few Jewish workers in Israel supported the Intifada or the national resistance of the Palestinians and Hezbollah.

However one has also to recognize the differentiation within the Israeli-Jewish society. The lower strata of the Israeli working class as well as specially discriminated layers like the 130.000 Ethiopian Jews or sectors of the poor Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews are certainly more likely to break with the Zionist state than the majority of the population. It is an important task for revolutionaries in Israel/Occupied Palestine to advance such a class differentiation and to win as many Jewish supporters for the socialist perspective as possible.

The Palestinian Revolution must begin as a national, democratic revolution leading to the socialist revolution

The extreme character of the national oppression, i.e. the expulsion of the whole Palestinian people, and its constitutive character for the Zionist state and hence the Israeli-Jews, has important consequences for the revolutionary strategy. The Palestinian national liberation must be *the starting point* for any revolutionary development in Israel/Occupied Palestine. This democratic question totally overshadows all other questions. The RCIT and the ISL are therefore convinced that the permanent revolution in Palestine can only begin as a democratic revolution which means the national liberation struggle of the Palestinian people.

Naturally there can and indeed have been several economic class struggles of the Israeli Jewish working class against the government. However the Israeli Jewish working class is not able to raise the struggles to a political level because this would immediately put into question its loyalty to the Zionist state and therefore its own privileged position. Exactly for this reason the Israeli ruling class has been able to integrate the lower strata of the Israeli Jewish population (first the Sephardic Jews and Mizrahi Jews, later the Russian Jews) into the Zionist project. To break out of this trap, Israeli Jewish workers must break with Zionism and join the struggle for national liberation of the Palestinians. This is what revolutionaries in Israel/Occupied Palestine are fighting for.

Does this mean that revolutionaries in Israel/Occupied Palestine should ignore economic class struggles of the Israeli Jewish working class? Certainly not! They support every minimal struggle against the Zionist ruling class. But they will connect such a support with the perspective of solidarity with the Palestinians liberation struggle and the permanent revolution.

For all these reasons, the primary orientation of Arab and Jewish revolutionaries in Israel/Occupied Palestine must be towards the Palestinian liberation struggle and hence towards the vanguard of the Palestinian workers and oppressed. The revolutionary party and its pre-party organization must be primarily composed of Palestinian

fighters. Naturally Israeli-Jewish revolutionaries who join the struggle have an equal place in such an organization.

Oppression of Women

As in all parts of the world, women face specific oppression, earn less than men and bear the brunt of domestic work. According to the latest available official statistics, the average daily wages of Palestinian female employees were 13.2% lower in 2012 than of their male counterpart. The gap is particularly high in the mining and manufacturing as well as the commerce and hotel sector while it is below the average in the transportation, storage and communication as well as the service sector. In the agricultural sector, women earn a higher daily wage than men.⁵¹

As a side note we remark that this gap between male and female wages is lower than in most – so-called enlightened – Western imperialist democracies where arrogant sneering about the “backward Muslims” is wide-spread both amongst the liberal intelligentsia as well as the right-wing reactionaries.

However the extremely oppressed and poor living conditions of the Palestinian people reinforce a patriarchal division of labor which intensifies the discrimination of women. Since there are hardly any facilities for public childcare and the technical domestic conditions for cooking, washing etc. are very backward, domestic labor forms a central and time-consuming element of daily life. Given the patriarchal social structures most of this domestic work falls on women. As a result most women are housewives and therefore not part of the labor force. While 69.1% of men are part of the labor force, it is only 17.4% of the women. Amongst those in the different age-

groups between 25 and 54 years, 84 to 88% of the Palestinian men are part of the labor force, but only 20 to 28% of the women.⁵² In addition 32.9% of all women laborers are unemployed, it is “only” 20.5% of the men.⁵³

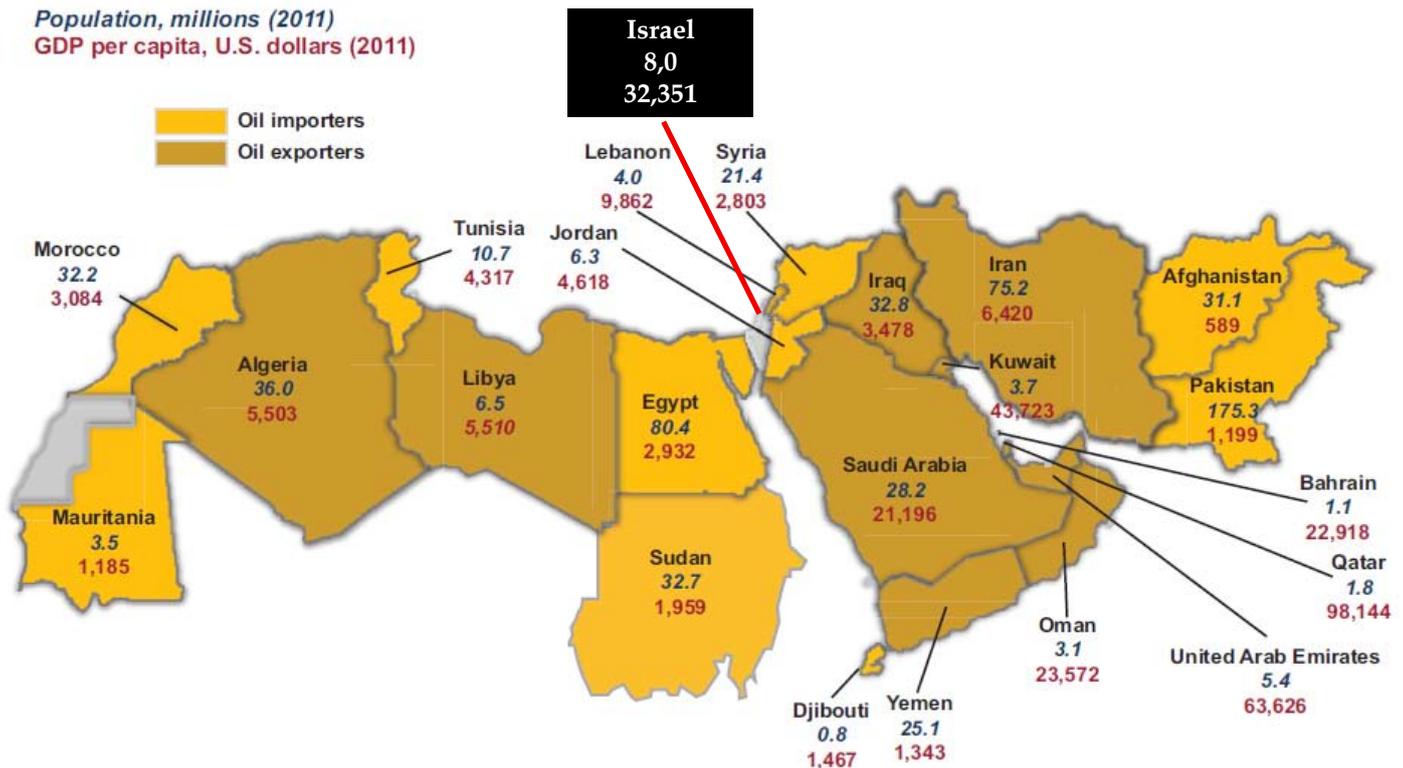
Women workers also play a very significant role amongst sectors of migrants who are employed in Israel. Nearly all of the migrants working in domestic care are women. This explains why migrants from some countries are mostly female – like those from the European part of the former USSR (93%), the Philippines (87%), Nepal (81%), Romania (79%) and India (60%). On the other hand migrant workers who are mostly exploited in the construction sector come from other countries and are nearly all men – e.g. 97% of Turkish migrants who arrived in 2011 are male as are 96% from China and Thailand. Taking all migrants arriving in 2011, 51% of them were female.⁵⁴

The role of Women in the national liberation struggle

Women are however not only oppressed; they also play an important role in the liberation struggle against the oppression. The heroic role of women in revolutions in history is well known: the fisher wives in the French Revolution 1789-94, the militant women clubs during the Paris Commune 1871 or the revolutionary women during the Russian Revolution 1917 – symbolized in the names of leading Bolsheviks like Nadezhda Krupskaya, Inessa Armand, Alexandra Kollontai, Ludmila Stal, Elena Stasova, Evgenia Bosh or Larissa Reissner.⁵⁵

The Palestinian liberation struggle has its famous women fighters too. *Fatmeh Khalil Ghazal* was one of the first women combatants who was killed in action on 23.6.1936 at the battle of Wadi Azzoun during “*The Great Uprising*”

Middle East: Population and GDP per capita, 2011 (in US-Dollars)



Source: IMF: Economic Prospects for the Middle East and North Africa Region 2012; World Economic Outlook Database 2012

– as the Arabs call the mass insurrection in 1936-39 which was led by the revolutionary nationalist Sheikh 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam and directed against the Zionist expansionism as well as the British occupation. *Leila Khaled* – a famous airplane hijacker and later a leader of the PFLP – is the best known of today's women activists. Recently women like *Wafa Idris*, who was the first *shahidat* – or successful female suicide bombers – on 27.1.2002, have become famous.⁵⁶

However the role of Palestinian women is not limited to a few famous activists and leaders but finds its reflection in the broad mass movement. This is a response to the specific role of women in the oppression and exploitation of the Palestine people. Particularly in the *First Intifada* 1987-93, women played a major role in the popular committees – the central underground structures which coordinated the resistance as well as daily life in the towns and villages. During this Intifada, the number of Palestinian women active in women's committees also rose massively from only several hundred women before 1987 to near five thousand.⁵⁷

Sai'da Nusseibeh summarized the experience of Palestine women in the resistance in the following way:

“Palestinian women played a major role in the Uprising from the beginning. They actively participated in the demonstrations and in the stone throwing. They broke the taboos of women being physically involved in the political arena. They were beaten, imprisoned, tortured, and killed. The Palestinian home, which has been the place of seclusion and sanctity for women, became violated on daily bases by army searches and demolitions.

This brought the issue of female sexuality, from the private domain to the public sphere. Female sexuality, which is so sacred to the honor of the Arab family and clan, was threatened by the Israeli soldiers, through sexual harassment in the home and the prison. But this did not intimidate these women neither it prevented them from further participation in the struggle. On the contrary, it made them more determined to fight and this in turn accorded them a lot of respect and regard from the male population, who by now have come to depend on them, for much more than participation in the political struggle. (...)

It was a heavy burden on the Palestinian woman, who has lost children, husbands' father of other close relative/family members. Not a single Palestinian home was untouched by tragedy. Women became the guardians of the family, and took over the responsibility, previously held by men.

The grassroots committees which were formed before the uprising, now created these structures. Which sustained this uprising. Women's organizations assumed a major role in these committees and they came to the forefront helping with every aspect of daily life. They taught the children when schools were shuts, they protected the teenagers from the Israeli soldiers pretending every young one is their own child surrounding the soldiers, and they started home production to boost the economy and many other countless services.

*Palestinian men were showing signs of accepting the more active role of women in the struggle and the social life.”*⁵⁸

The high level of militarization in the *Second Intifada* 2000-2004 – the so-called *Al-Aqsa Intifada* – prevented women initially to play a similar central role in the resistance. However they later started to join in increasing number the armed units of the resistance organizations and some even became *shahidats*. This is reflected in the fact that since the start of the *Second Intifada* in 2000, over 300 Palestinian women have been arrested as part of the struggle against the occupation. Rula Abu Daho reports:

“In 2008, approximately 126 women prisoners remain incarcerated, including 12 children (under the age of 18). This number reflects a significant rise in the participation of Palestinian women in the national struggle. Ninety percent of the female prisoners are affiliated with one or other Palestinian

*political faction. This is a new phenomenon; during the First Intifada only three percent of the women arrested resisting the occupation had a factional affiliation. It is also notable that some of the affiliated women prisoners were members of their faction's military wings. They took part in activities that exceeded merely aiding resistance fighters; this had never happened before. Finally, the majority of these prisoners, approximately 70 percent, are affiliated with Islamic organizations (Hamas, Islamic Jihad) indicating that the Islamic movements were able to incorporate women in the resistance. This was non-existent in the past among the Islamic movements.”*⁵⁹

In addition a number of women were elected as deputies in local elections in the West Bank and Gaza in 2004 and 2005. *“The first phase of elections in the West Bank that included 26 local councils had 139 women candidates and 748 men; 52 of the women won seats by direct voting while only 19 women won through the quota system compared to 255 male candidates. The second phase included 76 local councils in the West Bank and eight in the Gaza Strip. The number of women candidates was 397 compared to 2124 men. One hundred and five women won through direct voting and 59 won through the quota system; 748 male candidates won seats.”*⁶⁰

Such a level of women deputies of course still reflects the inequality between the genders. However it should be noted it is clearly above the share of women amongst parliamentary deputies in such modern capitalist democracies like Japan (7.9% of all deputies) and Ireland (15.1%) and is on a similar level like Luxemburg (21.7%) or Britain (22.5%).⁶¹

The new wave of mass resistance which started with the beginning of the Arab Revolution in early 2011 had massive repercussions for young women. Particularly, young women played a central role in the mobilizations and committees:

“The real rising of the new youth movement was influenced by the Arab Spring in the early 2011. Women had an active role in this new movement. As it remains currently not politicized, the movement has attracted large number of women. On the street, it was the women's role that was more dominant than the men's role this time. The chanting and demonstrations were led by young female activists either against the occupation or against the local leadership. The new generation of women seemed more determined to challenge the social restrictions of the Palestinian society. (...)

Every week in the different villages of popular resistance, you can clearly see the women standing in the front line of the demonstrations. Most of these young women leave their houses secretly to attend these demonstrations.

Being a woman, a 48-Palestinian and person with disability has, in many ways, imposed extraordinary difficulties on my political activism in general,” said Budour Hasan, a law student and woman activist. *“The biggest challenge I continue to face is the staunch opposition of my family. My family's opposition means that I have to carry out the bulk of my political activities under the radar.”*

*In the organizational meetings of the new youth groups, the numbers of women are mostly larger than those of the men. With the dominant role of women on streets, women have an equal role to that of men in the decision making within the new youth groups. Nonetheless, many challenges remains, and the fear of the repetition of the scenario of the first Intifada exists.”*⁶²

Thus we can summarize that on one hand Palestinian women face detrimental factors for their liberation struggle insofar as the Palestinian society is characterized by a low level of industrialization and urbanization as a result of the long history of imperialist oppression and exploitation. As a result patriarchal structures remain very strong. On the other hand, the particularly brutal national oppression by the Israeli state pushes women at a certain point into a

very active and prominent role in the liberation struggle. Revolutionaries fight for the massive organization of women. The already existing women's committees are an important starting point. They could become the basis for a revolutionary working class women's movement as part of a revolutionary workers party and the Fifth International. Naturally the goal is not to separate the women's movement from the working class and resistance movement but rather to strengthen the role of women inside the liberation movement and to overcome the manifold obstacles for women caused by the patriarchal structures and traditions. A revolutionary working class women's movement will be based on a program which struggles for the complete liberation of women as part of the permanent revolution, i.e. the program of the combined national liberation and socialist transformation of the whole society.

The role of Migrants

Since the first Intifada and the treacherous Oslo Agreement in the early 1990s, Israel has systematically replaced Palestinian workers with migrant workers coming mostly from Asia and Africa. As a result non-Israeli workers today number between 250,000 to 400,000, more than half of whom are in the country illegally.⁶³ This is a significant proportion out of 3.1 million wage laborers in Israel.⁶⁴

Most migrants work in three sectors of the economy: agriculture, construction and domestic care.⁶⁵ Today the majority of new migrants come from Asian countries (India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Thailand, Nepal, China as well as Turkey) and Eastern Europe.⁶⁶

They are – like migrants from poorer countries in general who live in imperialist countries – nationally oppressed and economically super-exploited.⁶⁷ They have only very limited rights or none at all (if they are living illegally in the country). Migrants are increasingly victims of mass deportations and fascist attacks.⁶⁸

Migrant workers in Israel get an average wage of 4,622 NIS while the average wage for all workers (i.e. Israeli-Jewish, Palestinian and migrants) is 8,563 NIS (2011).⁶⁹ From these figures it is easy to conclude that Israeli Jewish workers have at least double as high wages as the Palestinian and migrants workers.

Thus migrant workers constitute a sizeable minority of the working class in Israel which – in opposite of many Israeli Jewish workers – don't have any privileges. Furthermore they have no national loyalty to the Israeli Zionist state. For these two reasons they can be an important ally of the Palestinian working class – the vanguard of the coming revolution. Arab and Jewish revolutionaries will do their best to build links to these layers of the working class.

What should be the slogans for power in the Permanent Revolution in Palestine?

After outlining several specifics of the permanent revolution we can now move to summarize central aspects of the Transitional Program for the Palestine Revolution.

The comrades from the ISL have repeatedly raised the slogan of a "Workers and Fallahin Government from the River to the Sea". By this they emphasized the correct transitional slogan for power – i.e. for a government where the working class in alliance with the peasants takes power on the basis of councils and armed militias in order to expropriate the bourgeoisie and opens the door to socialism. They also – by using the Arab word *Fallahin* for the peasantry – emphasize the Palestinian character of the government as well as the need to integrate the poor peasants into the

revolutionary transformation.

Finally the slogan correctly points out the need to fight for power in the whole of historic Palestine ("from the River to the Sea"). Of course, giving the fragmented character of Palestine today – 1948-occupied Israel, West Bank, Gaza – it is possible that the revolution advances unevenly, i.e. that the struggle for power advances more in one part before reaching another part. However, even if the Workers and Fallahin take power first in let us say Gaza they must immediately strive to extend the revolution to the whole of Palestine.

Such a Workers and Fallahin Government has to fight for a single state from the River to the Sea that is a

* *Democratic, Palestinian and multinational Republic as well as a*

* *Workers and Fallahin Republic*

Let us explain this more in detail. The slogan of a single *Democratic State in the whole of Palestine* is a historic and progressive one. It expresses the desire of the Palestinians and all progressive Jews to smash the Zionist state and to replace it with a single state. In this state all privileges for the Israeli Jewish oppressor nation – which they automatically have in the present Apartheid State – will be abolished. All Palestinian refugees will have the right to return and will – given the fact that they form a 2:1 majority and that it is their historic homeland – shape the character of the future state.

Such a Democratic State will be a *Palestinian State* since the Palestinian people are historically and actually the majority population. In addition, the driving force of the Revolution will be Palestinian workers and peasants and their Arab brothers and sisters in the region, not the relatively privileged Israeli-Jewish workers. This will undoubtedly imprint the character of the future state.

Our attitude is the same as Trotsky's when he developed the revolutionary perspective for the Revolution in Apartheid South Africa. Given the national oppression of the black majority, he stated that the future state coming out of the liberation struggle will be a "Black Republic":

"Under these conditions, the South African republic will emerge first of all as a "black" republic; this does not exclude, of course, either full equality for the whites or brotherly relations between the two races- depending mainly on the conduct of the whites. But it is entirely obvious that the predominant majority of the population, liberated from slavish dependence, will put a certain imprint on the state.

Insofar as a victorious revolution will radically change the relation not only between the classes but also between the races and will assure the blacks that place in the state that correctly corresponds to their numbers, thus far will the social revolution in South Africa also have a national character.

*We have not the slightest reason to close our eyes this side of the question or to diminish its significance. On the contrary, the proletarian party should in words and in deeds openly and boldly take the solution of the national (racial) problem in its hands."*⁷⁰

It is in this spirit that we define the future state we are fighting for in Palestine as a "Palestinian Republic".

The new state will have a *multinational* character for several reasons. First we take into account that migrant workers constitute a sizeable minority of the working class in Israel. Even more important they are not part of the huge and privileged Israeli-Jewish labor aristocracy. Thus in opposite of them, these migrant workers have nothing to lose but their chains. For that reason the revolutionary slogan of power must reflect that the migrant workers

shall play a role a future state in Palestine if they wish to stay. Hence the revolutionary Action Program recognizes their full and equal rights like equal wages, full citizenship rights, equality of languages etc.

Secondly we have to take into account smaller minorities like the approximately 130,000 Druze as well as the Bedouins.

Thirdly the Jews will form an important minority in the future Workers and Fallahin Republic. We have said that the Jews will lose any privileges which they got in the Zionist Apartheid state. They will have equal citizenship rights like all others. For reasons we explained above they will have no right of national self-determination. But this does not mean that they have no special rights at all. They shall have full citizenship and cultural rights – like equality of the Hebrew language in all spheres of the public (education sector, media, administration etc.), public restaurants with kosher food, respect for Shabbat and other holy days, etc. In addition it is important to commemorate to the Marxist concept of *local self-government* to which Engels and Lenin attached so much importance.⁷¹ Such local self-government will give all people – including the Jews – the possibility to organize their life according to their needs.

It is however equally important to understand the following limitations. As we already said Marxists defend the full national right of self-determination of the Palestinian people. This includes their right to return to their homeland. Their wish to return to their houses, villages and towns are superior to the Israeli Jewish settler “right” to continue living where they currently stay. Naturally a future workers state has no interest in any chaotic expulsions. But if a Palestinian family wants to return to their home, they must have this right. Of course it is also possible that they prefer to live in new houses in areas close to their former homes. In both cases a *massive public housing program* is urgently necessary – to build alternative houses either for the Jewish or the Palestinian families – and will be a major project of the future workers state.

If one takes into account the extraordinary privileges which the Israeli Jewish population enjoy by the Zionist Apartheid state, it is very likely that a significant proportion of them will not accept a democratic state and equality with the Palestinians. We have seen the developments in Africa after the end of the European colonial empires. Many of the white colonial settlers left the country since they didn't want to accept being a minority in a (formally) independent country in which the black population dominates. For example, at the end of the 1970s, Portugal's withdrawal from Mozambique and Angola spurred a great exodus, in which 95% of whites in both countries left. In Zimbabwe, this exodus was also huge where the white population dropped from a peak of around 296,000 in 1975 to 120,000 in 1999 to just 30,000 today.

⁷² In South Africa this development was less dramatic. Nevertheless even here and even despite the fact that the white population could retain their privileged material position, some 800,000 out of a total white population of 4 million have left the country since 1995.⁷³ Bear in mind that these developments did take place despite the fact that all these countries remained capitalist and therefore the wealthy white settler population could keep their material privileges. Obviously in a Workers State the rich will lose their wealth which will be put to the use of the whole society.

On the other hand, Israeli Jews will get a life in peace and security, without the permanent danger of wars and terrorist attacks. In short, a future Palestinian Workers State will offer a peaceful life and equal rights to all Jews

who accept the loss of their Apartheid privileges and the implementation of the democratic rights for the Palestinian majority population.

Such a democratic revolution can only be successful if it is combined with the socialist revolution leading to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Therefore a democratic republic must be a *Workers and Fallahin Republic*.

For Marxists a *Workers and Fallahin Republic* is another name for what scientifically should be called a *Palestinian multinational Workers State from the River to the Sea*. The RCIT and its section in Israel/Occupied Palestine are fighting for this goal.⁷⁴

The tasks of this *Workers and Fallahin Republic* will be manifold. It has to expropriate the big capitalists which are mostly either Israeli-Jewish or foreign. This expropriation is essential to plan the economy according to the society's needs. In particular such a planned economy will be necessary in order to organize the massive rebuilding projects which will enable the Palestinian people (many of them refugees) to come back and to live under decent conditions as well as to end the extreme gap in living standards between the Jews and the Palestinians.

This shows once more the close relationship between the Palestinian democratic revolution and the socialist revolution. The democratic tasks of giving the Palestinian homeland back to its people can only be realized if the new Workers State takes over the economy. Only by this, the economic means can be made operative for the purpose of the (Palestinian-majority) society instead of the Israeli Jews capitalist class and the Israeli Jewish oppressor nation.

The same is true for the question of control over the land. Currently the Zionist state or by quasi-state agencies owns an estimated 93% of the country's total land area (excluding the West Bank and Gaza). About 3/4 are directly state-owned, about 13% are owned by the Jewish National Fund and the rest is controlled by the Development Authority.⁷⁵ In the West Bank too, Israel has granted Jewish settlements control of 43% of the land. In addition, it has designated 18 to 20% of the West Bank as closed military zones and another 10% as park land.⁷⁶ All this land must be nationalized and taken over by the Palestinian Workers State. It will be given for use to the poor Palestinian peasant families who have hardly any land or who were expropriated and expelled in the past. Naturally voluntary cooperatives shall be promoted in order to organize efficient large-scale agricultural production.

The struggle for such a Workers and Fallahin Republic is part of our perspective of a *Socialist Federation of the Middle East* which would be the unity on equal base for all people of the region.

For all these reasons we can summarize our perspective in the slogan: “*For a Democratic, Palestinian, Multinational and Socialist Workers and Fallahin Republic from the River to the Sea*”. Its agitational short version is “*Free, Red Palestine!*”

On the slogan of a “single democratic state in Palestine”

A number of left-wing forces share our perspective of fighting for a single state in the whole of Palestine and the right of return for all Palestinian refugees but they differ from the revolutionary Marxists on the question of the class character of such a future state. While we clearly state that it must be a *Workers and Fallahin Republic*, i.e. a Workers State, they prefer to call – in different but similar formulations – for a “*United Palestine, secular, democratic and non-racist*”. Such a perspective is only natural for left-wing petty-bourgeois nationalist Palestinian forces like the PFLP and DFLP or revolutionary democratic movements like Abnaa al-Balad.

It is however absurd if such a perspective is called for by organizations who claim to be "Trotskyist". This is particularly true for those who come from the centrist tradition of Nahuel Moreno. They raise the slogan of a "United Palestine, secular, democratic and non-racist" as an independent slogan, without inextricably linking it with the slogan of a Workers and Peasants Republic.⁷⁷ But only a clear statement about the class basis of a democratic state can avoid the petty-bourgeois trap of following the Menshevik two-stage concept of fighting first for (capitalist) democracy and later for a socialist revolution. If the working class, in alliance with the peasantry and the poor, will not erect its socialist dictatorship, other classes will automatically rule. In other words, the bourgeoisie – in combination with the upper strata of the petty-bourgeoisie – will unavoidably constitute the ruling class, if the working class does not consciously and systematically smash their state apparatus (army, administration etc.) and take over the economy. This is why Trotsky denounced the Stalinist use of the old pre-1917 Bolshevik slogan "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" and developed the strategy of Permanent Revolution. In his writings on the lessons of the Chinese Revolution in 1925-27 and the betrayal of the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois Kuomintang Trotsky wrote:

*"To advance now the slogan of a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry after the role not only of the Chinese bourgeoisie, but also of Chinese "democracy" has been put to a thorough test, after it has become absolutely incontestable that "democracy" will play even a greater hangman's role in the coming battles than in the past -- to advance this slogan now is simply to create the means of covering up the new varieties of Kuomintangism and to prepare a noose for the proletariat."*⁷⁸

However one has to say that the Stalinists in the 1920s at least spoke about the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry". The Morenoites are even worse and speak only about a "democratic Palestine" without even mentioning the proletariat!

A more left-wing version of this Morenoite deviation can be found in the program for Palestine of the comrades from the FLTI. They raise the slogan: "For a secular, democratic and non-racist Palestinian state of the workers and poor farmers government defended by the self-organised and armed Palestinian masses!"⁷⁹

While such a slogan which raises the workers and poor peasant government is certainly more left-wing than the LIT Menshevism, it fails to overcome the failure of the 1920s right-wing centrism of the Stalinist-Bukharinist Comintern. It does not exemplify the *class character of the state* which such a workers and poor peasant government should build. As such it is open to the Menshevik two-stage concept.

However, despite all these programmatic failures, one has to state that the Latin American-based Morenoite tradition at least knows which side to take in Israel's wars and calls for the victory of the Palestinians and the Arab people. This differentiates them positively from the imperialist economist and aristocratic currents based in Europe and North America like the CWI, IMT, the Spartacist school, etc.

The Arab Revolution and its consequences for the Palestinian Liberation Struggle

In our recently published document *Thesis on the World Situation and the Tasks of the Bolshevik-Communists* we noted: "For obvious historic and geostrategic reasons, Palestine remains a most central issue of the Arab Revolution. Already in November 2012 we could see the strength of the Palestinian

*Resistance when it heroically defended the Gaza strip successfully against the Zionist army. Given the background of this political and military victory and strengthened by the wave of the Arab Revolution, it is possible that the Palestinian liberation struggle could culminate into a new Intifada."*⁸⁰

Historically speaking the Arab Revolution has opened a new chapter of the Palestinian Revolution. Until now the Arab dictatorships were – in addition to the imperialist Great Powers – the most important pillars of stability in the Middle East which secured both the Western Great Powers' control over the region as well as Israel's privileged position.

The revolutionary wave which brought several dictatorships down since early 2011 will have inevitable massive consequences for the Palestinian liberation struggle.

Surely the Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood of Mursi is already showing its pro-imperialist character and it is also possible that Hamas will follow the path of Arafat's and Fatah's capitulation and sign an Oslo II agreement. While such agreements will constitute setbacks in the struggle, it remains a fact that these bourgeois regimes in the semi-colonial Arab world are much less stable than the reactionary dictatorships of Nasser/Sadat/Mubarak, of Gaddafi, of Assad, of Ben Ali etc. who ran the Arab world for decades.

However, the decisive question is if the vanguard of the working class and the oppressed in the Middle East can build a revolutionary party in time. Such a party must fight against the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois Islamists. These forces are fake alternatives which are radical in words but which serve either directly the imperialists (like Mursi, Erdogan or Ennahda) or which reactionary mislead the struggles with sectarian, anti-working class perspectives and tactics (like al-Nusra in Syria, various Salafists in Egypt). The revolutionary party must consistently support the workers and oppressed to advance independent mass organizations – independent trade unions, popular committees and action councils, armed self-defense committees etc. It must defend the right of women, youth and national minorities. And it must link the struggle for democratic rights with the perspective of the socialist revolution.

The struggle for the Permanent Revolution in Palestine is closely linked with the fate of the Arab Revolution. A successful revolution in an Arab country, bringing the working class to power, would have tremendous effects for the Palestinian masses. Similarly, after the fall of the Arab dictators it might be easier to organize mass support in the Arab world for the Palestinian resistance – including weapons and volunteers. It is therefore understandable why the Israeli ruling class is frightened by the Arab Revolution.⁸¹

New wars of Israel against the Palestinian resistance and/or the Arab countries are inevitable and the Zionist state could face defeats in these wars. This could have important effects for the self-confidence of the Arab masses and the Palestinian masses in particular as well as demoralizing effects for the supporters of the Zionist state.

Revolutionaries in Palestine should intervene in the coming struggles with a program for a "Democratic, Palestinian, Multinational and Socialist Workers and Fallahin Republic from the River to the Sea" and seek to organize Palestinian and anti-Zionist Jewish workers and oppressed around it. The RCIT and its section in Israel/Occupied Palestine, the ISL, are fighting for such a program and for the building of revolutionary party in these countries as well as internationally. ■

Notes

1 We have taken this summary from the chapter "The Theory of Permanent Revolution and its Program for the Working Class Struggle" in our recently published book 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. (for details see www.great-robbery-of-the-south.net)

2 Leon Trotsky: The Permanent Revolution, *The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects*, Pathfinder Press, New York 1969, pp. 131-133

3 See Gudrun Krämer: Geschichte Palästina, München 2002, p. 164-165

4 See Israel at forefront of 'land grab' in poorer countries, 29 January 2013, <http://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/middle-east/5110-israel-at-forefront-of-land-grab-in-poorer-countries>

5 International Marxist Tendency: Perspectives for Revolution in the Middle East, 18 February 2013 <http://www.marxist.com/perspectives-for-revolution-in-the-middle-east-part-1.htm>

6 On the question of the Labor Aristocracy see also our new RCIT book: 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, pp. 228-240

7 Yaron Druckman: CBS: 27% of Israelis struggle with Hebrew. Central Bureau of Statistics finds that Hebrew is native tongue of only 49% of Israelis; 12% of Arabs, 26% of Russians don't speak any Hebrew at all, 21.1.2013, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4335235,00.html>

8 ISL: On Zionism, August 2009, <http://www.the-isleague.com/on-zionism>. This article gives an excellent overview of the reactionary history of Zionism and the Israeli state.

9 See on this the article of our comrade Yossi Schwartz: What is the meaning of the Zionist's Offensive against the Haredi Jews? 25.3.2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa/israel-haredi-jews>

10 We observed this phenomenon in the *Theses on Palestine* which we elaborated in our predecessor organization (MRCI/LRCI/LFI): "But an important element of the national consciousness of the Israeli Jews is its chauvinist and oppressive attitude to the Arabs. The Israeli Jews, while they have forged a national consciousness in the last forty years which is distinct from their sense of themselves as part of world Jewry, are part of an oppressor nation; their national consciousness has been forged only by a simultaneous denial of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians to self-determination." (MRCI: Theses on Zionism, Israel, Palestine and Arab nationalism, September 1988, in: Trotskyist International No. 2, p. 12, <http://www.fifthinternational.org/content/theses-zionism-israel-palestine-and-arab-nationalism>)

11 The ISL comrades stated correctly in a document in 2009: "Whether the Israelis are a nation or not, we as Marxists do not support the right of self-determination for imperialist states. Our position is in sharp contradiction to the Middle class Marxists who claim that Marxists support the right of self-determination of all nations, including the imperialists." (ISL: On Zionism, August 2009, <http://www.the-isleague.com/on-zionism>) A similar

position was expressed in the MRCI Theses on Zionism, Israel, Palestine and Arab nationalism from 1988 mentioned above: "Consequently Israel is an oppressor nation and as such we do not recognise its right to exist as a nation state."

12 A. Said and Moshe Machover: Arab Revolution and National Problems in The Arab East, Matzpen, The International, Summer 1973, <http://98.130.214.177/index.asp?u=101&p=revolution>. In German language in: die Internationale, March 1974. Irrespective of these political failures we appreciate the important role which Matzpen played in the late 1960s and early 1970s as the only, predominantly-Jewish, Anti-Zionist organization in Israel. They stood against the stream in words and deeds. Revolutionaries in Israel today can build on their courage and achievements and at the same time overcome their political weakness. It is worth noting that our comrade Yossi Schwartz was an active member of Matzpen at that time and is one of the extremely few who still continue the struggle against Zionism and for revolutionary Marxism. Most others have either left politics or, like Michel Warschawski, developed towards social democratic left-liberalism.

13 Spartacists: Zionist Cops Murder Arab Strikers. For a Socialist Federation of the Near East! in: Workers Vanguard #105, 16 April 1976, <http://www.regroupment.org/main/page/wvpal.html>

14 IBT: For a Socialist Federation of the Middle East! Israel Out of the Occupied Territories! in: 1917 No.5 (Winter 1988-89) <http://www.bolshevik.org/1917/no5/no05pala.html>

15 IG: For an Arab-Hebrew Palestinian Workers State in a Socialist Federation of the Near East, June 2010, <http://www.internationalist.org/palestineworkersstate1005.html>

16 IG: Defend the Palestinian People! For an Arab/Hebrew Workers Republic in a Socialist Federation of the Near East! February 2001, <http://www.internationalist.org/palestineintifada0201.html>

17 Alan Woods and Ted Grant: Marxism and the National Question, 25 February 2000, <http://www.marxist.com/marxism-national-question250200.htm>

18 CWI: The crisis of capitalism and the naked role of imperialism are graphically manifested in the Middle East. Document No. 3, CWI 10th World Congress, 28.12.2010 <http://www.socialistworld.net/doc/4736>

19 Peter Taaffe: Marxismus heute. Antworten auf Krieg, Kapitalismus und Umweltzerstörung (2006), p. 40; We are quoting and translating from the German translation since we don't possess the English-language original of „Marxism in today's World“.

20 CWI: World Relations. Document No. 1, CWI 10th World Congress, 26.12.2010 <http://www.socialistworld.net/doc/4735>

21 See Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics: Palestine in Figures 2012, Ramallah 2013, p. 10; Elior Levy: Report: Palestinians to outnumber Jews by 2020, 01.01.13, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4327295,00.html>; Asher Zeiger: Israel at 65: Population tops 8 million, April 14, 2013, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-at-65-population-tops-8-million>

22 Spartacists: Zionist Bloodbath in Jenin, in: Workers Vanguard No. 779, 19 April 2002, quoted by the Spartacists in their article: LRP: Apologists for Arab Nationalism, Workers

Vanguard No. 796, 31 January 2003, <http://www.icl-fi.org/english/wv/archives/oldsite/2003/LRP796.htm>

23 V. I. Lenin: The revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination (1915); in: LCW 21, p. 409. On the issue of the contradictions and struggles between imperialist and semi-colonial countries, oppressed and oppressor nations we refer readers to our new RCIT book: 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

24 V.I. Lenin - Socialism and War (1915); in: CW 21, pp.316-17

25 V. I. Lenin: The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination (1916); in: LCW 22, p. 143

26 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

27 V. I. Lenin: The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination, in: LCW 21, p. 409

28 V. I. Lenin: The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination, in: LCW 22, p. 146

29 Programm der Kommunistischen Partei Rußlands (Bolschewiki) (1919); in: Boris Meissner: Das Parteiprogramm der KPdSU 1906-1961, Köln 1962, p. 128; in English: Program of the CPSU (Bolsheviks): adopted March 22, 1919 at the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party

30 Leon Trotsky: On the South African Theses (1935); in: Trotsky Writings 1934-35, p. 251

31 See on this various articles from the ISL. For example *The ISL Position on Wars*, August 2009, <http://www.the-isleague.com/wars>. ISL: The Zionist State Tries to Break Gaza Again – and Fails Again, <http://www.the-isleague.com/gaza-war-2012-english.php>. The RCIT respective its predecessor organization (MRCI/LRCI/LFI) expressed the same position e.g. in MRCI: Theses on Zionism, Israel, Palestine and Arab nationalism (1989), in: Trotskyist International No. 2, <http://www.fifthinternational.org/content/theses-zionism-israel-palestine-and-arab-nationalism>; RCIT: New Wave of Israeli Terror against Gaza: Support the Palestinian Resistance! Defeat the Zionist killing machine! Statement from 15.11.2012, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa/defend-gaza>. Comrade Yossi Schwartz is currently working on a series of historical article about Israel's wars which we intend to publish it the near future.

32 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, Chapter 13.

33 International Marxist Tendency: Perspectives for Revolution in the Middle East, 18 February 2013 <http://www.marxist.com/perspectives-for-revolution-in-the-middle-east-part-1.htm>

34 Such e.g. CWI leader Peter Taaffe wrote in his book on the history of Militant: *"The democratic rights of the 1,800 Falklanders, including the right to self-determination, if they so desired, was a key question in the consciousness of British workers. (...) Marxists could not be indifferent to the fate of the Falklanders, particularly given the consciousness of the British working class as it developed over this issue."* (Peter Taaffe: *The Rise of Militant*, London 1995, Chapter 20 "The Falklands/Malvinas War", <http://socialistalternative.org/literature/militant>)

35 In our old *Theses on Palestine* from 1988 (which we quoted above) we stated that Israel is not an imperialist

country, but is rather a "special type of semi-colony", a unique, reactionary and highly privileged state which is dependent of the imperialist powers. The comrades from the ISL however convinced us that this has changed since then and that Israel has become a small imperialist power.

36 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security, 2012, Summary, pp. 13-14

37 Quoted in Daniel Doron: Breaking Israel's Monopolies, Wall Street Journal, October 8, 2010, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703440604575495710079605480.html>

38 Israeli multinationals back on track after a difficult year. Report by the Manufacturers Association of Israel, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Tel Aviv University and the Vale Columbia Center, 12.12.2011, pp. 1-2

39 UNCTAD: World Investment Report 2012, p. 173

40 The World's Biggest Companies, The Forbes Magazine, 18.4.2012, <http://www.forbes.com/global2000>

41 Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel): Statistical Abstract of Israel 2012, p. 1025

42 United Nations Development Programme: Human Development Report 2013. The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World, p. 144

43 CIA: The World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2004rank.html>

44 See e.g. FLTI: Palestine: An Internationalist Revolutionary Position, International Workers' Organizer, Brochure # 2, July 2009

45 Leo Trotzki: Was Nun? Schicksalsfragen des deutschen Proletariats (1932); in: Schriften über Deutschland, Band 1, Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1971S. 193f.; in English: Leon Trotsky: What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat (1932), <http://marxists.org/archive/trotsky/germany/1932-ger/index.htm>

46 OECD: Society at a Glance 2011: OECD Social Indicators, 2011, p. 43 (Panel A: Annual median equivalised disposable household income in USD at current prices and current PPPs in 2007)

47 United Nations Development Programme: Human Development Report 2013. The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World, p. 144

48 Phil Hemmings, Peter Jarrett, Charlotte Moeser: OECD Israel Economic Survey, 2010, p. 27

49 OECD Economic Surveys: Israel, December 2011, Overview, p. 20

50 The Growing Income Gap between Israel and Its Closest Neighbor, November 11, 2011 <http://knowledgetoday.wharton.upenn.edu/2011/11/the-growing-income-gap-between-israel-and-its-closest-neighbor>

51 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics: Labour Force Survey 2012, Ramallah 2013, p. 110

52 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics: Labour Force Survey 2012, Ramallah 2013, p. 62

53 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics: Palestine in Figures 2012, Ramallah 2013, p. 18

54 Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel): Statistical Abstract of Israel 2012, pp. 247. The figures are for migrants which arrived in the year 2011. The figures for 2010 are nearly identical.

55 See on this e.g. Nina Gunić: Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung und ihre Klassendifferenzen, in: Unter der Fahne der Revolution Nr.5 (2010), www.thecommunists.net/theory/klassenkampf-frauenbewegung

- 56 On Wafa Idris and other *shahidats* see Meredith E. Ebel: My Body is a Barrel of Gunpowder: Palestinian Women's Suicide Bombing in the Second Intifada (2012). Dietrich College Honors Theses, Paper 147, <http://repository.cmu.edu/hsshonors/147>
- 57 See Sarah Levene: What was the Role of Palestinian Women in the First Intifada? 3 October 2011, <http://sarah-levene.blogspot.co.at/2011/10/what-was-role-of-palestinian-women-in.html>
- 58 Sai'da Nusseibeh: Palestinian culture and identity and the role of Palestinian women, Women's NGOs annual meeting-1997, <http://www.mideastweb.org/palestinianwomen.htm>; see also Marianne Torres: Women in the Intifada, Palestine Papers, Issue: August, 1989, <http://www.sonomacountyfreepress.com/palestine/women2.html>
- 59 Rula Abu Dah: Palestina: The Second Intifada. The Women's Movement at a Crossroads, 12 March 2008, <http://www.cetri.be/spip.php?article385&lang=en>
- 60 Rula Abu Dah: Palestina: The Second Intifada. The Women's Movement at a Crossroads, 12 March 2008, <http://www.cetri.be/spip.php?article385&lang=en>
- 61 Inter-Parliamentary Union: Women in national parliaments (April 2013), www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm
- 62 Maath Musleh: Women's Activism in Palestine. From the Disappointment of the First Intifada to the Hope of a New Movement, April 16th, 2012, www.deliberation.info/women-activism-in-palestine; see also Interview with Khitam Saafin (Chairwoman of the *Union of Palestinian Women's Committees*): Why Hana al-Shalabi's hunger strike is the focus of Women's Day in Palestine, Jillian Kestler-D'Amours, The Electronic Intifada 7 March 2012 <http://electronicintifada.net/content/interview-why-hana-al-shalabis-hunger-strike-focus-womens-day-palestine/11036>
- 63 See e.g. Yehudah Mirsky: Illegal Immigrants in Israel, http://www.myjewishlearning.com/israel/Contemporary_Life/Society_and_Religious_Issues/Illegal_Immigrants_in_Israel.shtml; 260,000 Foreign Workers in Israel, 11.1.2012, <http://www.theyeshivaworld.com/article.php?p=114087>
- 64 Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel): Statistical Abstract of Israel 2012, pp. 602
- 65 Adriana Kemp: Reforming Policies on Foreign Workers in Israel (2010), *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 103, OECD Publishing, p. 9. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5kmjnr8pbp6f-en>
- 66 Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel): Statistical Abstract of Israel 2012, pp. 247; see also Adriana Kemp: Reforming Policies on Foreign Workers in Israel (2010), *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 103, OECD Publishing, p. 10. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5kmjnr8pbp6f-en>
- 67 See on this Michael Pröbsting: Marxism, Migration und revolutionäre Integration (2010); in: *Der Weg des Revolutionären Kommunismus*, Nr. 7, <http://www.thecommunists.net/publications/werk-7>. We have published a summary of this study in English-language: Michael Pröbsting: Marxism, Migration and revolutionary Integration, in: *Revolutionary Communism*, No. 1 (English-language Journal of the RCIT), <http://www.thecommunists.net/oppressed/revolutionary-integration>. See also the sub-chapter "Value Transfer from the Semi-Colonial South to the Imperialist North: Migration" in our book 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*, pp. 179-188
- 68 See Yossi Schwartz: Fight against Zionist Racism and Fascism in Israel, 5.3.2013, www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa/fight-zionist-racism
- 69 Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel): Statistical Abstract of Israel 2012, pp. 604-606
- 70 Leon Trotsky: On the South African Theses (1935); in: *Trotsky Writings 1934-35*, p. 249
- 71 See e.g. V. I. Lenin: *The State and Revolution. The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution*; in: *LCW Vol. 25*, pp. 452-454
- 72 Joshua Hammer: (Almost) Out of Africa: The White Tribes, *World Affairs*, May/June 2010 <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/almost-out-africa-white-tribes>
- 73 Scott C. Johnson: Fleeing From South Africa, *Newsweek*, 13.2.2009 <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2009/02/13/fleeing-from-south-africa.html>
- 74 In our predecessor organization, the MRCI/LRCI/LFI, we used the slogan of an "Arab-Jewish Workers State". While meaning essentially the same (for the right of all refugees to return, no right of self-determination for the Israeli Jewish settler people, etc.), this slogan has a disadvantage compared to the slogan of a "Palestinian multinational Workers State". It expresses less precisely the national, democratic aspect of the permanent revolution – i.e. the fact that the revolution can only succeed, can only be democratic, if it ensures the right to return for the Palestinian people to their homeland which as a result will form the national majority of the new, multinational workers state.
- 75 See Israel Lands: Privatization or National Ownership? http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/land.html; Anshel Pfeffer and Yoav Stern: High Court delays ruling on JNF land sales to non-Jews, 24.9.2007 <http://www.haaretz.com/news/high-court-delays-ruling-on-jnf-land-sales-to-non-jews-1.229946>
- 76 Equal Rights for Palestinians. Apartheid and Occupation, www.seamac.org/EqualRights.htm
- 77 See e.g. International Workers League-Fourth International (LIT-CI): One State – Palestine. For a secular, democratic and non-racist Palestinian state; in: *New Epoch*. Number 139, May 2008, <http://internationalsocialistleague.org.uk/ileague-fourth-international/international-courier/foe-a-secular-democratic-and-non-racist-palestinian-state>
- 78 Leon Trotsky: *The Third International After Lenin* (1928), New York 1970, pp. 193-194, <http://marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1928/3rd/ti09.htm#p3-03>.
- 79 FLT: Appeal Of The Leninist Trotskyist Fraction: Let's build a revolutionary internationalist Bloc, in: *International Workers' Organizer* No. 1 (2008), p. 8; see also FLTI: Palestine: An Internationalist Revolutionary Position, *International Workers' Organizer*, Brochure # 2, July 2009
- 80 RCIT: *The World Situation and the Tasks of the Bolshevik-Communists* (March 2013). Theses of the International Executive Committee of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency, March 2013, www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-march-2013
- 81 As an example for Israel's rulers fear we quote from a document written by former IDF Major General Danny Rothschild and Tommy Steiner for the 2012 Herzliya conference: "Thus, a year after the beginning of the popular uprising across the region, not only is there no progress in addressing the two major Middle East challenges – under-development and radicalism – the region has regressed." (Maj.-Gen. (Res.) Danny Rothschild and Tommy Steiner, 'The 2012 Herzliya assessment: Israel in the eye of the storms', working paper for Twelfth Annual Herzliya Conference, 2012, p. 5, <http://www.herzliyaconference.org/en/g/?CategoryID=477&ArticleID=2358> ■

Announcement of a new Book 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 new book. It's 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.

The Author

Michael Pröbsting is a revolutionary activist since 30 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). He is the *International Secretary* of the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency*.

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.

You can view more details of the book as well as excerpts at the special website which we have created for this book:

www.great-robbery-of-the-south.net

You can order the book via

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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



By Michael Pröbsting

Published by the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency

From the Archives of Marxism

The Spark (South Africa): Zionism and the Arab Struggle (1938)

For over two and a half years there has been war in Palestine, a war waged by an imperialist oppressor against a colonial people. All the devastating measures employed by British imperialism, the aerial bombardments, the razing of villages to the ground, the imposition of fines, the taking of hostages, the enactment of martial law, the establishment of concentration camps, along with the old-time methods of bribery, intrigue, corruption, all these failed to break the determined will of a united people to attain national liberation. After two and a half years of this oppression imperialism finds the Arab people more united and more determined in the fight than ever before. And all the indications go to show that this time British imperialism will have to give in to the Arab demands, will have to agree to a compromise. It should be kept in mind that the demands of the Arab bourgeoisie were very modest. They did not even ask for complete national and political independence. All they asked was: (a) that immigration should be stopped; (b) that further sale of Arab land should be prohibited; and (c) that there should be established a national government responsible to a representative Legislative Assembly.

And yet for more than two and a half years British imperialism waged war against the whole people, refusing to extend to them the principle of self-determination. This is the very principle which Britain the other day so joyfully proclaimed for Czechoslovakia (imperialism has different standards for "colonial" countries) and, what is more, so readily promised to the Arabs in 1915. Two years ago British imperialism tried to frustrate the national aspirations of the Arabs by the partition scheme of the Peel Commission – a most ingenious and deceitful scheme. But it did not succeed, and now another Commission has come to the conclusion that the acceptance of partition by British imperialism and the Zionist leaders is not enough, that the scheme will not work because of its indignant rejection and condemnation by the whole Arab population. In spite of the fact that British imperialism would greatly like to have in Palestine a strong outpost in the form of a Jewish State and has done everything possible to facilitate it during the twenty years of the "Mandate," nevertheless the present war and the determination of the Arabs to fight it to a finish, the support the Arab cause is receiving from all the Near East, the unwillingness of British imperialism to antagonize these Arabian countries in view of the present precarious world situation, all these considerations have forced British imperialism to drop the old partition plan and through the recommendations of a new Commission (the Woodhead Commission) to arrange a compromise.

From the short summary of the Woodhead Commission Report and from the vague declaration of the new British policy in Palestine and the press comments thereon, it seems that this compromise will not give the Arabs national and political independence, but will retain for British imperialism the military, political and economic grip on

the country. It will, however, meet the Arab demands concerning immigration and land. It seems that Britain has definitely had to give up the cherished idea of a Jewish National Home as her safest outpost. The Mandate will be "modified" and the Balfour Declaration will receive a "new Interpretation."

This incidentally puts an end to the Zionist dream of a Jewish State in Palestine. Zionism stands or falls by these two conditions: (a) unrestricted Jewish immigration leading to an eventual Jewish majority, and (b) unrestricted Jewish land buying. No duping of the Jewish petty bourgeois masses all over the world, no collection of tribute from them and maintenance of a huge world-wide parasitic bureaucracy would be possible if these two conditions disappeared. And those who have put their faith in the imperialist "solution" of the Jewish question would be bitterly disillusioned to see this part of the Versailles system disappear together with the rest. That the reformists, who have always supported the colonial policy of imperialism and who have now become the most ardent champions of the Versailles Treaty, should use all the arguments of the Zionists against the Arabs, need not surprise us. That Sir Stafford Cripps should employ the imperialistic pleas of the Jewish fascist Jabotinsky is not at all astonishing. But it is very regrettable that some confusion has also crept into the ranks of Marxists. From their casual remarks and even from their articles in the revolutionary press it is evident that the authors have been swept off their feet by the widespread anti-Semitic wave and have fallen victims to nationalism. A clear, unambiguous stand in support of the colonial people in their struggle against imperialism is the first duty of revolutionary socialism. We must not be parties to imperialist machinations, to Versailles, to mandates. We must strongly demarcate ourselves from the Stalinists, who have betrayed the colonial people for the sake of People's Fronts, for the sake of placating imperialism in France and Britain. Let them, if they will, throw spanners into the wheels of the Arab revolt and advocate moderation and a compromise that would leave British imperialism and Zionism masters of Palestine.

So far as we are concerned, we have made quite clear our position in regard to the struggle in Palestine. (See *The Spark*, Nos. 16, 33, 41). Nothing will blind us or distract us from the fundamental issue, namely, the progressive revolutionary struggle of a colonial people against imperialism. We had and we have no illusions concerning this struggle, whatever the outcome of the present political maneuvers in Palestine may be. Whether British imperialism will succeed by its new move for a round-table conference in breaking the Arab united front (as it succeeded before by a similar move in India) and by corruption succeed in sidetracking the national movement, or whether the present struggle will go on, we are under no illusions, we have no doubt that, so long as the national movement is led and dominated by the Arab national bourgeoisie and

clergy, the struggle for liberation cannot be crowned with success. It will terminate in a foul compromise between the national bourgeoisie and imperialism. Time and again this has been proved by history. But, so long as the fight is progressive, we have to support it, while at the same time warning the Arab workers of their treacherous bourgeoisie.

The struggle of two years has not been in vain. It has weakened British imperialism; it has weakened the imperialist grip upon Palestine. It has also shown to the Orient and to the colonial people that British imperialism is not so all-powerful as they thought. The fact that after twenty years of rule in Palestine British imperialism has to re-conquer the country is of great importance. This vulnerability and weakness must give tremendous encouragement to all the colonial people. Of special importance is this lesson of Palestine to the national liberation movement in India, showing that the way is not in Gandhism and *passive* resistance, but in *active* revolutionary mass struggle. This lesson will not be in vain.

It was the precarious position of the Jewish masses, the petty bourgeois, the handicraftsmen, the declassed elements, in Eastern Europe during the second half of last century that drove the Jewish intelligentsia to all kinds of Utopias and fantastic schemes. Except for the small section that turned to socialism and Marxism, the favourite dream of the majority was territorialism. Later this found expression in the colonial schemes of Baron Hirsch and of Baron Rothschild, in the Angola and Uganda projects. Zionism eventually amalgamated all the various territorialist tendencies in one political movement.

It was by no means a coincidence that the Zionist movement should appear on the scene at the time when Africa, Polynesia and the Near East were being carved up among the Great Powers and the world was divided into spheres of influence among the great monopoly trusts. Zionism was a direct product of imperialism and logically became a play ball in the hands of imperialism. The end of the World War, the redistribution of the colonial world at Versailles gave the opportunity for Zionism to step in and demand its promised share. British imperialism, which had made the promise for financial and military service rendered during the war, would not hesitate a moment to forget this promise, as it forgot so many others, if the fulfilment did not suit her own interests and schemes. British imperialism realized the great strategic value of Palestine for the Empire, beside its economic value for trade and investments. It came in most conveniently for Britain to acquire a strong outpost in the Near East in the form of the Jewish National Home. Such a community or State would always serve as a policeman for British interests, simply because, surrounded by a hostile Arab world, it would always have to look to Britain for protection. British imperialism took up the Zionist cause and Zionism became a servant of British imperialism.

To blame British imperialism now for the present state of affairs in Palestine (as comrade Rock has done in a recent article in *The New Internationalist*), to accuse the British of sinister machinations and of the international sowing of hostility between Arab and Jew, is both futile and incorrect. Firstly, because one does not blame the shark for having the characteristics of a shark. To expect British imperialism

to act as a peacemaker, bringing the two peoples together and laying the foundation of cooperation and peace and mutual respect for each other's rights, is more than simple foolishness. It is a complete misunderstanding of imperialism, as well as of the Zionist aim – a Jewish State in Palestine. And, secondly, it is incorrect. For British imperialism did everything it could to bring about a Jewish State. The fact that, in spite of Arab opposition, protest, revolts, Britain fostered and encouraged Jewish immigration, the fact that there are already today 400,000 Jews in Palestine, goes to prove that Britain was just as interested in a Jewish State as Zionism was, even if Britain's interest was for the furtherance of her own ends.

From the day of the Zionist rejoicing over San Remo, the day of proclamation of a Jewish National Home, revolutionary socialists all over the world have declared open hostility towards this scheme as an imperialist venture. We have warned the Jewish workers against the great Zionist bluff of the solution of the Jewish problem, against their unity with capitalism and imperialism, and have warned them of the bitter disillusionment that is in store for them. From the beginning it was clear to us that Zionism meant not a National Home in Palestine, not a place of refuge, not an outlet for emigration on a small scale, not the building up of some agricultural communes, but that it meant a Jewish capitalist State as a part of British imperialism. It was clear to us that *any such scheme must be at the expense of the native Arab population*. For there are no empty spaces in the world today, and any colonial development under imperialism means the enslavement, oppression and exploitation of the native population. No camouflage, no ingenious device on the part of the Jewish bourgeoisie and their chauvinistic petty bourgeois supporters can suppress this basic fact. The imperialist invaders everywhere find hundreds of good excuses for plunder and robbery and then cover up this with the most "noble" ideals and motives imaginable. The Jewish bourgeoisie moreover was not slow to find such ideals and motives.

We need not waste time and space in refuting the commonplace argument of the historic "right" of the Jews to Palestine by reference to the similar "historic" right of the Roman Empire to the British Isles. We turn rather to the "moral" right of the suffering Jews to a State. This has been one of the main planks of Zionist propaganda all along, but since Hitler has let loose his bestial, sadistic persecution of the Jews in Germany and Mussolini has followed suit, this argument has taken the dominant place. Zionism is trying to cash in on the sufferings of the persecuted Jews in Europe. Zionism is endeavouring to exploit the natural and world-wide sympathy of every decent man for the oppressed German and Italian Jews, in order to further its own predatory aims in Palestine. But these two things have no connection whatsoever. Sympathy for an oppressed minority has nothing to do with the cravings of a bourgeoisie for a State wherein they themselves shall be able to exploit their own workers and still more the Arabs, the cheap native labour and the land. The sufferings of oppressed and exploited Jewish minorities stand in no connection with the Jewish bourgeoisie, with Zionism in Palestine, with the oppressors, exploiters, and plunderers. Zionist writers and journalists, apologists for imperialism, have been telling the world for the last twenty-five years that a Jewish State will be something different, that it will

be a model to the world. No classes, all for the welfare of the community, for the "Jewish" ideal of righteousness and justice. What Jewish petty-bourgeois heart did not throb before this picture of "hope and beauty?" Now for eighteen years these fools have had the chance of seeing this hope and beauty at work. Indeed, the paws and claws of the Jewish bourgeoisie were not in any way inferior to the same weapons wielded by any greedy bourgeoisie. There was the same policy of grabbing, of squeezing out the native population from the land, and so the production of a landless peasantry as a reservoir of cheap labor. The same speculation in land, the same over-capitalization, polarization of wealth and poverty, pauperisation. The same greed for more territory – Transjordan. The same chauvinism in language and persecution of the language of the bulk of the Jewish workers – Yiddish. And the same arguments: The Arabs are inherently lazy; the Arabs can go somewhere else; the Arabs are on a lower level of civilization. The same arrogance on the part of the invaders: We have brought you culture, social services; we, of a higher civilization, have made the waste land fertile; we must have a higher standard of living. And even the same white, civilized labour policy as in South Africa! Oh, no! The Jewish bourgeoisie has not produced anything different from what any other bourgeoisie produces. Even in producing a Jewish fascism in Palestine they were not original; they were only imitating the bourgeoisie in other parts of the world.

Yet this is quite natural and logical. But the whole hideousness and real harm of Zionism is revealed when we hear the arguments, claims and apologies of the Socialist-Zionists in and out of Palestine. The *Poalei-Zion* (at one time the main Zionist-Socialist party) were going to build socialism in Palestine, "in spite of British imperialism and Jewish capitalism". "We," they said, "are going to build a socialist core in this capitalist shell. The main thing is the *Kvutza*, the agricultural communes, the *kolhozes*. This is the real thing." With this idea of building communism in Palestine they seduced and misled thousands upon thousands of boys and girls. This was the mainspring of the *Halutzim* movement, the pioneers for Palestine. With the sweat and bones of these young idealists the agricultural colonization has been accomplished – for capitalism, to be sure, not for communism. The cemeteries of Palestine are filled with these *Halutzim*, these pioneers. But where are the communist colonies, the socialist core of Palestine? They have shared the fact of all the other schemes for building socialism on islands or on chosen spots in South America – all the utopian schemes of the last hundred years, beginning with Robert Owen. But even if some *Kvutzot* had been nurtured and preserved like a plant in a conservatory, how could this be today a factor in the life of Palestine? So much for the empty talk of the *Poalei-Zion* outside Palestine.

Within Palestine all the Jewish labour and trade union organizations accepted the political programme of Zionism, that is, Palestine as the Jewish National Home and eventually a Jewish State relying on British imperialism with its bayonets and power, uncompromising hostility to the national aspiration of the Arabs and their struggle for national independence. Also in the economic sphere an out-and-out imperialist and chauvinistic policy. Laws providing for the eviction of Arab tenants from their

landholdings, and then the barring of these landless peasants from the labour-market in the towns in accordance with the policy of "100% Jewish labour in Jewish enterprises" – The speeches of these labour and trade union leaders of the *Histadrut*, of the *Hashomer Hatzair*, etc., the speeches of Ben-Gurion and Burgin, make the most shameless reading even in the annals of chauvinistic labour parties. Their actions correspond with their speeches. During the present ruthless war waged by British imperialism during two and a half years, in the course of which innocent people are bombed, villages are razed to the ground, families are left destitute and homeless, not a word of protest has been forthcoming from these labour and "socialist" organizations. Just the opposite: Support and spurring on of the imperialist oppressors by word and action. Open scabbing and strike-breaking in every political strike declared by the Arabs in protest against British brutality, martial law, cruel humiliations. This is the record of the Jewish labour and trade unions, the *Histadrut*, who barred Arabs from membership.

And then the apologetic critics of Zionism from the "left," so-called socialists and communists, who are fond of talking about Marx and dialectics, but whose socialism goes no deeper than their skin, are shocked that the wrath of the Arabs is directed not only against British imperialism, but also against the Jews in Palestine. These liberals are unable to understand why, on meeting with a united Zionist front of bourgeoisie and labour, a hostile united front, siding with their enemy, British imperialism, and supporting it, the Arabs should come to the conclusion that all Jews in Palestine are Zionists and therefore their enemies. This conclusion is, to be sure, a wrong one, but where are the signs that would make this clear to the Arabs?

The other argument employed by these apologetic critics of Zionism is that the Arabs make use of weapons supplied by fascist countries. The "moral feelings" of socialists like Sir Stafford Cripps are shocked by the Arab disregard for their democratic sensibilities, and therefore they cannot support the Arab cause. These philistines would like to prescribe special laws and special weapons by means of which the slaves might break their chains! Trotsky has answered these philistines in his article, *Learn to Think* (*New International*, July 1938).

But their main and most dangerous argument is that the Jewish immigration into Palestine is in the interests of the Arabs and therefore should be supported. Such a Marxist writes: "If many Jews have benefited from Zionism, a large number of Arabs have benefited equally and at no expense to themselves. Such momentum as the Jewish revival of Palestine has given renaissance of its Arab population must inevitably continue to re-vitalize and repopulate this section of the community." (*The Intelligent Man's Guide to Jew-Baiting*, p.103), and further: "Palestine has served to absorb refugees from countries unable to absorb them. It will continue to do so, and in this it has justified itself." (*Ibid.*, p. 115.) Here the usual argument of imperialism concerning its beneficent work, an argument used by imperialism in China, India, South Africa and any colonial or semi-colonial country, is cleverly connected with the immigration question. Unfortunately the same sort of argument is used by comrade Rock in his article in *The New International* (October 1938), where he says: "From all this it is evident that the British know full well how to exploit the elementary needs of the Jewish workers, namely,

immigration and colonization, neither of which contradicts the real necessities of the Arab masses." Indeed! Mr. Weitzman could not say better. It is the immigration question which is the main cause of the Arab struggle. This point requires careful examination.

International socialists, beginning with Marx and Engels, were always for free, unrestricted immigration and for complete freedom of movement as a part of our democratic rights. It was the reformist labour leaders and the trade union bureaucrats who opposed the rights of free immigration for the sake of their narrow craft interests and to the detriment of the interests of the working class as a whole. Now it is capitalism in decay that is doing away with all the democratic rights that it formerly proclaimed and fought for. In the post-war period all countries, one after another, have closed their doors to immigration. The working class in retreat after the defeats was not in a position to resist this abolition of its democratic rights. And it is precisely for this reason that the fight for democratic rights, as the urgent task of today, stands in the forefront of the program of international revolutionary socialism (Fourth International). It would therefore be ridiculous to assert that we are against free immigration.

But the Jewish immigration into Palestine is something entirely different. It is an immigration with the avowed aim of trampling upon and destroying the rights of the native population in that country. It is an invasion under the protection of imperialism and for the strengthening of imperialism. Zionism – and by this we mean all the Zionist parties, from the Revisionists to the so-called socialists – has openly proclaimed that the aim of this immigration is to attain a majority in Palestine and reduce the Arabs to a minority in a then Jewish State. Against this aim to defeat them politically and economically the Arab people, the natives in Palestine, have waged this war for two and a half years. The immigration question was and still is the pivotal point in their struggle. Not to support the Arabs in this just, defensive demand means to side with British imperialism and its tool, Zionism, against a native oppressed people.

Palestine as a solution of the Jewish question was never even a Utopia. It was a big Zionist bluff. Palestine, as a Jewish capitalist State and outpost of British imperialism, was a product of Versailles, and it failed together with the rest of Versailles. In so far as Zionism, against the express wish of the native population, fostered this imperialist venture, relying on the force of British bayonets, Zionists took the risk and must blame themselves for the failure. The sooner the Jewish people in Palestine realize this, the better. For the continuation of the old Zionist-imperialist course will drive deeper the wedge of hatred and chauvinism, will widen the gulf between Arab and Jew, and will foster perpetual strife and civil war, endangering the very existence of the Jewish community. And in saying this, it is not the Zionists we have in mind. We mean the great mass of the Jewish workers and small peasants. They can solve the Jewish problem of Palestine very easily. What is needed is solidarity and cooperation of Jewish and Arab workers and peasants, and a united struggle for an independent free Palestine of workers and peasants, liberated from the shackles of imperialism-capitalism. But for this they must first break with their chauvinistic leaders, who have chained them to the chariot of Zionism-imperialism. It will then be easier for the Arab workers

to free themselves from the influence and leadership of the equally chauvinistic effendis and mullahs. Once class unity is achieved, the solution of both the Jewish and the Arab question is assured.

The same confusion that exists regarding the Jewish problem in Palestine is also evident in connection with the general Jewish question. The anti-Semitic wave and bestial persecution, which is today stronger and more universal than at any other time in modern history, makes the problem more acute and urgent. But its solution cannot be found in any panacea. The solution of the Jewish problem lies in socialism. Lenin saw this thirty-five years ago, and history since then has proved it conclusively. The national problem in Russia found its solution through the October Revolution of 1917. If the Thermidorian period has brought retrogression in this sphere, as in any other, such retrogression does not in the least invalidate the fundamental proof of Leninism tested in practical life during the years 1917-1924. At the same time the various solutions offered by the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, including that of Austro-Marxism and that of the Jewish Bund, proved their bankruptcy under test. Since Versailles, Wilson's self-determination, the minority status of the League of Nations, etc., etc., the position of the national minorities has become intolerable and is going from bad to worse.

Scattered throughout the world there are from sixteen to eighteen million Jews. Everywhere they are a national minority. Everywhere, except for the three million in the Soviet Union, the bulk of them are suffering from oppression and persecution. As a result of the universal cancer of anti-Semitism, fostered by the ruling classes, their suffering is greater than that of any other national minority. Since Hitler's coming to power and the growth of fascism in every country, their sufferings and anxieties have enormously increased. For fascism, crushing the working class wherever it advances, destroying the workers' organizations, crushes the Jews at the same time. This proves again Lenin's truism that the fate of the Jews in every country is intrinsically bound up with the fate of the working class. Even in the Soviet Union their fate is bound up with the victory or defeat of socialism. Restoration of private ownership of the means of production as a result of external defeat in war, which would mean of course a fascist regime, would bring in its wake massacres of Jews by the "White" bandits.

As has been proved by the latest events in Germany and Italy, capitalism in decay has become cannibalistic. In any case, there is no longer any place for liberalism and bourgeois democracy, to which the Jewish petty bourgeoisie along with reformism might look for salvation. The sole form of rule for decaying capitalism is fascism. Just as there is no special remedy to bring about the deliverance of the working class from under the iron heel of fascism, except the road of revolution, so for the Jews there is no special remedy except the advance in union with the working class along the revolutionary road. Only the emancipation of the working class from the yoke of capital, only socialism can bring emancipation to the Jews.

From *The New International*, Vol.5, No.2, February 1939. Originally published in *The Spark*, the organ of the Workers Party of South Africa (Fourth International), November 1938. www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/ni/vol05/no02/spark.htm ■

Revolutionary Communist International Tendency:

What does the RCIT stand for?

The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) is a fighting organisation for the liberation of the working class and all oppressed. It has national sections in various countries. The working class is the class of all those (and their families) who are forced to sell their labour 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, exploitation, are part of everyday life under capitalism as are the national oppression of migrants and nations 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 lead by the working class, for she is the only class that has nothing to lose but their chains.

The revolution can not proceed peacefully because never before has a ruling class voluntarily surrendered their power. The road to liberation includes necessarily the armed rebellion and civil war against the capitalists.

The RCIT is fighting for the establishment of workers' and peasant republics, where the oppressed organize themselves in rank and file meetings in factories, neighbourhoods and schools – in councils. These councils elect and control the government and all other authorities and can always replace them.

Real socialism and communism has nothing to do with the so-called "real existing socialism" in the Soviet Union, China, Cuba or Eastern Europe. In these countries, a bureaucracy dominated and oppressed the proletariat.

The RCIT supports all efforts to improve the living conditions of workers and the oppressed. We combine this with a perspective of the overthrow of capitalism.

We work inside the trade unions and advocate class struggle, socialism and workers' democracy. But trade unions and social democracy are controlled by a bureaucracy. This bureaucracy is a layer which is connected with the state and capital via jobs and privileges. It is far from the interests and living circumstances of the members. This bureaucracy's basis rests mainly on the top, privileged layers of the working class - the workers' aristocracy. The struggle for the liberation of the working class must be based on the broad mass of the proletariat rather than their upper strata.

The RCIT strives for unity in action with other organizations. However, we are aware that the policy of social democracy and the pseudo-revolutionary groups is dangerous and they ultimately represent an obstacle to the

emancipation of the working class.

We 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. We fight 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.

In a war between imperialist states we take a revolutionary defeatist position, i.e. we don't support neither side and advocate the transformation of the war into a civil war against the ruling class. In a war between an imperialist power (or its stooge) and a semi-colonial country we stand for the defeat of the former and the victory of the oppressed country.

The struggle against national and social oppression (women, youth, sexual minorities etc.) must be lead by the working class. We fight for revolutionary movements of the oppressed (women, youth, migrants etc.) based on the working class. We oppose the leadership of petty-bourgeois forces (feminism, nationalism, Islamism etc.) and strive to replace them by a revolutionary communist leadership.

Only with a revolutionary party fighting as its leadership can the working class win. The construction of such a party and the conduct of a successful revolution as it was demonstrated by the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky in Russia are a model for the revolutionary parties and revolutions also in the 21 Century.

For new, revolutionary workers' parties in all countries!
For a 5th Workers International on a revolutionary basis!
Join the RCIT!

*No future without socialism! No socialism without a revolution!
No revolution without a revolutionary party! ■*



