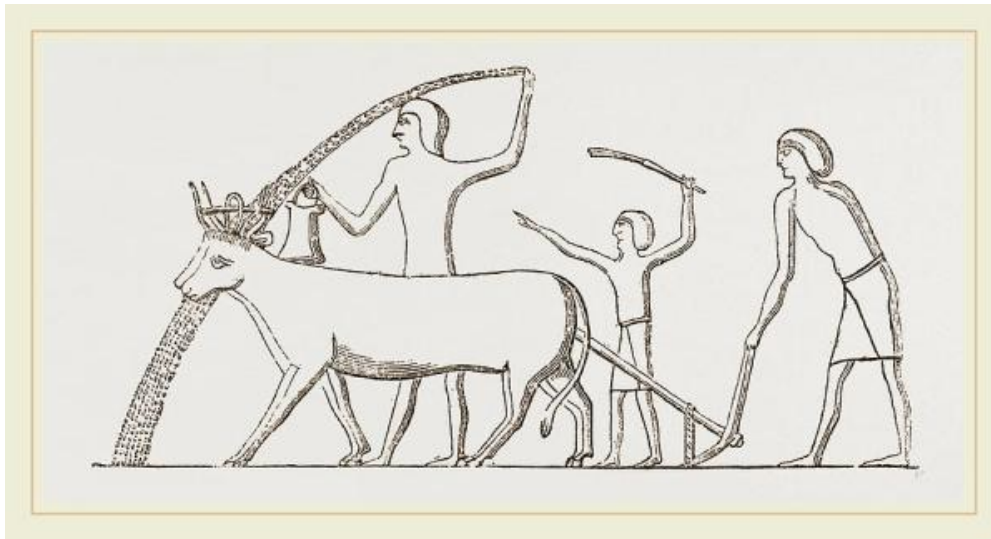


# WORLDWIDE



# INTIFADA

Beginnings are always the hardest. If we wish to find the beginning of this so-called civilisation we must look to the dawn of time—as a measure of labour time expropriated—which is the start of society riven between appropriator and producer. What is taken, appropriated, from the latter is our labour power, in the form of a portion of the product of that labour, *'the wages you kept back from the labourers ploughing your fields'*. We can deduce that this beginning occurred in the Mesopotamian Basin some 12,000 years ago. The innovation that led to the divide of humanity was the innocuous damming of waters resulting in surplus product expropriated by a priestly caste. Beavers dam rivers but do not exploit their fellow beaver and accumulate the fruits of their activity as capital, as one beaver's private estate.

*'Indigenous African agriculture is based on the hoe, not the plow.'* Jack R. Harlan, on the origin of the beast of burden.

This region, the Middle East, is the origin, the beginning, of classical civilisation (class society); and it is the beginning of the end of class society. Prior to intifada—"shaking off" the bourgeois yoke—whilst *'the bourgeoisie had already lost, the working class had not yet acquired, the faculty of ruling the nation.'* That ending is the subject of this reissue of an old pamphlet published in England in 1992. The names of some players have changed but the protagonists have not. They are the mercantile class, the bourgeoisie; we are the class of our own labour power, the proletariat.

## **Palestinian autonomy or the autonomy of our class struggle**

It has to be stated early on in our bulletin that we do not wish to see the creation of a Palestinian state in preference to the Zionist state of Israel. We neither back the peace talks, nor wish to see Palestinian autonomy: the only autonomy worth fighting for is the autonomy of our class struggle against capitalism.

All over the world the bourgeoisie portrays the intifada in terms of a nationalist struggle between Palestinians and Israelis or Arabs and Jews. From Tel Aviv to Algiers to Rome to New York, the international bourgeoisie through its media describes the struggle in the same terms. The conflict is not between Palestinians and Israelis; it is between two classes with conflicting interests: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

The uprising of the Palestinian working class has been used by certain bourgeois factions as proof of the desire for a Palestinian state; one that will be dominated by the ‘official spokesperson’ of the Palestinian people — the bourgeois Palestinian Liberation Organisation. National liberation struggles are traditionally supported by anarchists, Maoists, Stalinists... and other parties on the left-wing of the bourgeoisie. Usually, the argument rests on the false idea that socialism can be built in one country. History shows us the folly of this idea: even if governments are set up with the aim of defending workers’ interests, they cannot hope to given the imperialistic nature of capital. Nation states have to function according to the rules of the world market. The only answer to worldwide exploitation is worldwide communism.

Within what are termed national liberation struggles, or within struggles that are hijacked to become them, there is always a class struggle occurring: in Northern Ireland, as in Kashmir, as in Israel. The creation of a new state offers nothing for the working class but the chance to be governed by a ruling class that shares a part of their cultural and linguistic heritage.

Leftists, the world over, champion the PLO and its “progressive” national liberation policies. In the same way they championed the African National Congress, the Khmer Rouge and the Viet Cong. Where you do find criticism of the PLO it is on the basis of its ‘statism, hierarchy, vanguardism, terrorism’ — the fact that the PLO are the proletariat’s class enemy is overlooked. Leftists argue that an alliance of the working class with “progressive” elements of the bourgeoisie is necessary against the greater evil of the state of Israel. We reject this dangerous and spurious notion. An alliance with any faction or element of the bourgeoisie, far from strengthening the intifada, disarms it irrevocably. For example, in 1979 a massive wave of class struggle in Iran swept away the Shah. Within a year, the “alliance with progressive elements of the bourgeoisie” disarmed the class struggle: strikes and workers’ councils were disbanded and suppressed. The result was a massacre of militants and the establishment of a virulently anti-working class Islamic republic.

Why can’t there be an alliance between the bourgeoisie and the working class? Because the class interests of the bourgeoisie and the working class are diametrically opposed. The only way the working class can defend itself is through autonomous class struggle independent of all forces which would attempt to divert it or restrict to

capitalist goals; autonomous class struggle is at war with all divisive forces such as trade unions, leftist parties, national liberation fronts or religious movements.

History has proven that state building offers nothing to the working class. New states offer only a new faction of the ruling class a chance to exploit us instead of the old lot, but our interests are opposed to all governments.

### **Arafat and Sharon are on the same side: against the working class**

Within the geographical confines of historical Palestine, there is a strong tradition of class struggle which entered a militant stage in December 1987 with a wildcat general strike. Shops, streets and workplaces in the occupied territories were deserted and 120,000 workers did not turn up for their jobs in Israel. This was the first general strike since 1936. The Palestinian and Israeli bourgeoisie were stunned.

The 1936 general strike was the culmination of three years of intense class struggle against the landowners: British, Zionist and Palestinian. The ports and Haifa oil refinery were paralysed for six months. The world bourgeoisie was alarmed: the British state sent 30,000 troops to crush the struggle. It armed and organised local Zionist settlers and jointly they set about terrorising the working class into submission. Meanwhile Zionists organised Jewish labour to break the strikes. The local Arab bourgeoisie of Jordan and Iraq appealed to the working class to surrender. When they did not the struggle was finally

suppressed by the execution of 5,000 strikers and the arrest of 6,000 by a combined effort of British, Arab and Zionist armies.

Today the Palestinian working class again faces a world bourgeoisie united in its opposition to the intifada. The strategies of the bourgeoisie have been twofold: to divert the struggle, and to suppress it.

The Palestinian bourgeoisie have attempted to assume leadership of the intifada by diverting it into nationalism or Islamic fundamentalism and by confining it to the “occupied territories”, even at times to the refugee camps. Always it has defended its own interests — attempting to restrict the number of strike days to protect the capitalist infrastructure it hopes to inherit. [1]

The aim of the Palestinian bourgeoisie is to portray the intifada as a movement for national liberation. The bourgeois press have obliged the world over. The Palestinian bourgeoisie needs a state; it needs the intifada as long as it provides it with enough corpses to keep that possibility on the agenda in the UN. It has its own police, its own terror gangs, its own prison camps; it just requires official recognition in the international bourgeois family — the UN.

The Israeli bourgeoisie and its armed forces bear the brunt of the intifada. Their response has been to adopt fascist repression techniques: collective punishment, curfew, house demolitions, desecration of farmland, forced closure of schools and hospitals and mass imprisonment, many in concentration camps in the Negev desert (for example Ansar, nicknamed “the camp of slow death” by the inmates). In the streets, unarmed workers — men and women, young

and old — are shot with rubber bullets. Tear gas is shot into homes, schools and hospitals. Equally, in its attempt to disguise the nature of the intifada, the Palestinian bourgeoisie has sent countless deluded or desperate people on suicide bombing missions. Thousands have died.

The Jordanian bourgeoisie was also alarmed by the intifada. A few weeks after it began, King Hussein met secretly with Israeli leaders and demanded that it be crushed immediately. Hussein was worried that the intifada would spread to the East bank of the River Jordan where the working class live in similar sprawling poverty to their brothers and sisters on the West bank.

King Hussein's reaction is typical of that of the bourgeoisie throughout the Arab world. Support for the intifada amongst the Arab working class has forced the Arab ruling class to publicly state their support. Arab heads of state have donated millions to help run the intifada. In reality, this money has been squandered by the PLO, buying limousines and embassy-style consulates in the world's capital cities; and much of it has been channeled into the "occupied territories" in an attempt to buy off the militancy of the working class. This policy has failed for two reasons: firstly, because of the personal corruption of the PLO backed officials and secondly, because much of the money has dried up since the PLO's fall from favour since the Gulf War. The Palestinian bourgeoisie are crying out for cash and warn the Arab countries that they must, 'underwrite an economic aid programme aimed at alleviating conditions in the West Bank... This would reduce the chances of further infectious radicalising of popular thinking, which threatens the stability of the whole Middle East.' [2]

The Arab bourgeoisie has tried to channel popular support for the intifada into hatred of their Israeli counterparts. However, this policy has failed too. Several times the intifada has burst out of its geographical confines. In Jordan in 1988, during riots, demonstrations and strikes against austerity measures, workers adopted the methods of their Palestinian comrades, using slingshots and wrapping their faces with keffiyas.

Similarly, in Algeria, Sultan Ben Jahid crushed his own intifada in November 1988, just in time to host the Palestinian National Council and bathe his tarnished regime in revolutionary, anti-imperialist rhetoric.

If the Israeli bourgeoisie does concede territory it will be because it wants to rid itself of an uncontrollable militant working class. For the same reason King Hussein of Jordan has given up his claim to the West Bank.

Whichever bourgeois faction (or factions) inherits the territories, the first task will be the destruction of the autonomous working class. It will need strong brutal repression and the fast assimilation of the Palestinian working class into the world market:

'We will need an industrial sector capable of absorbing 6,000 workers, and must concentrate on industries with high quality. We must concentrate on using local raw materials, and take note of the Japanese way of rapid production.' [3]

\* \* \* \* \*

Here we are publishing a translation of an article first published in Arabic in El Oumami (The Internationalist), issue 10, July 1980, by the Bordigist group, the International Communist Party. Due to our difficulties in translating Arabic to English certain parts of the text may be difficult to understand. The text is unedited.

Translating, reproducing and making available such documents is an important part of the work of our group.

This article is an account and assessment of the generalised class struggle in Lebanon in the 1970's and, in particular, the battle Tel-al-Zatar.

## **In memory of the proletarian uprising in Tel-al-Zatar**

Around the 22nd June 1976 the occupants of Tel-al-Zatar were living courageously in a tense situation. The evil actions of the Syrian and Lebanese bourgeoisie brought tears to the eyes of the masses — these tears recorded their courage and led to their strong opposition over fifty-two days, fighting against the right-wing Lebanese and Syrian armies, and what was left of the Royalist/Monarchist army of Lebanon. The masses of workers were overcome by hunger but in spite of their dissatisfaction with their military strength, in spite of the hunger, thirst and diseases which overwhelmed them for two months there was no movement from the Palestinian Opposition [4] which left the workers dying in front of their very eyes, silent even though they were beating down the doors of Riyadh and Cairo, taking those who were advising them to follow the path to help the people in their difficult situation.

Before we enter into a deep analysis we must take a quick look at the history of the refugee camps. The years of the 1975-76 civil war is but one chapter from the chapters of the daily class struggle between those who lived in the refugee camps and the Lebanese ruling class. This struggle began to strengthen and nurture from 1968-69 onwards with the entrance of the Palestinian Opposition into Lebanon. In 1950 the size of Tel-al-Zatar posed no threat to the Lebanese bourgeoisie because there were as few as 400 Palestinian refugees in the camp. The Palestinian refugees were concentrated in the heart of the poorest industrial areas; in 1972 they numbered 14,000 and by the time the 1975-76 war began there were 300,000. Sixty percent of the camp inhabitants were Palestinian and the rest were Syrian and Lebanese workers. The area of Tel-al-Zatar is situated in an industrial area containing twenty-nine percent of Lebanese industry, twenty-three percent of productive resources and twenty-two percent of productive companies. These industrial forces were focused there because of the large potential workforce; the work was of the most economically exploitative. This workforce was made up of mainly “foreign” workers. Palestinian workers were not permitted to work in the largest companies without official authorisation. This authorisation cost them a month's salary every year and restricted them to one company. They were not allowed social security or any other benefits, even if they had paid the relevant insurance. Conflicts began to develop in the small companies between employers and workers. These conflicts concerned the bosses' failure to pay compensation or to grant holidays.

Syrian workers worked under the same conditions; most of them had fled from Syria to Lebanon, crossing the border without working visas. They were given twelve months work then fired and handed over to



Syrian border authorities who would jail them for a few months for breaking the bosses' law. As for the conditions of the refugees: open sewers ran through the camps; six to eight people lived in each tent and one tent was a children's play area. Outside the refugee camps was another world of big buildings and grand palaces.

Over the twenty years leading up to 1969 the refugees were under the authority of the Lebanese secret police. Talking about politics, having visitors without permission, moving tent without permission, a meeting of more than five people and being out after 9 o'clock at night were all forbidden by law.

In 1969, the history of the refugees greatly changed. It began with the military crushing of the ruling dogs and their laws and Tel-al-Zatar began to breathe more easily as the refugees obtained weapons during daily street battles. The most famous was on 23rd June 1969 when huge numbers of Lebanese were killed defending their weapons when fighting against the refugees. It became obvious from the start that it was in the interests of all factions to use violence. The leaders of the Palestinian Opposition, not wanting to officially side with the bourgeois leaders and their laws, said:

‘...the fighting has moved from in Israel to inside the neighbouring countries to create problems between the brothers and sons of the united people of Lebanon.’

The workers moved their weapons inside the factories in order to destroy the evil confines of work. The combat began. The bosses could no longer sack workers randomly — in fact the bosses had lost control of the factories. The violence spread to other areas. The bourgeoisie

demanded that the refugees give up their power and return to former conditions. The Lebanese radio played into the hands of the bourgeoisie demanding all power be restored to the Lebanese ruling class:

‘The country is in chaos. There are now unofficial armies whilst the official army is not recognised. Even worse is the fact that there are places on Lebanese land, in both suburbs and cities, without any kind of rule which is giving more power to those operating outside the law.’

The leader of the new army, Bashir Al-Jameel, gave his reasons for the upsurge in revolutionary activity in Tel-al-Zatar:

‘The army of Tel-al-Zatar wanted to create a safe area, a no-go zone safe from the Lebanese army and state. Tel-al-Zatar is a thriving industrial area which should benefit the Lebanese working class. Forty percent of Lebanese industry is found in Tel-al-Zatar.’

The workers did not stop at merely fighting the bosses but aimed to destroy all laws; not only in the refugee camps but in other areas. In ‘Hazam-al-Ba's’, the workers refused to pay any tax to the bourgeoisie. The workers wanted to use state funds to build a new tent which would transmit water and electricity to other houses.

Throughout the 1970's the state tried to destroy the strength of the working class and make them return to obedience of their (state) laws. In 1970 they destroyed all the houses built by militants in Al-Maklis, Al-Mahathya, and in Tel-al-Zatar. (The Lebanese interior minister at the time was Kamal Jumblat — a close friend of the Lebanese left). Rasheed Karami issued plans to destroy all the housing built by the

revolutionaries, ordering the rebuilding of the area using state funds in order that the state would get all the tax and money from water and electricity bills. Also this gave the state the power to watch and control the area by placing their men in all official positions. They made claims that the houses were a danger to state security.

In 1974, several attempts to cut off the electricity from the area resulted in 'Kalashnikov' battles which many of the 'workers' wives took part in. There were plans to destroy all traces of workers' autonomy. At first these plans failed due to the increasing anger of the armed residents of Tel-al-Zatar. These residents benefited from Palestinian militant intervention in the area. The result was a heightened state of class struggle.

It was the use of weapons which won the social victory for the fighting proletariat. They remained resilient despite the strength of the state, weapons shining in the hands of every refugee and worker, weapons hanging behind the door of every house. In an article written by a left-wing writer, he arrived at the conclusion that there were: '306,000 armed fighters in Tel-al-Zatar, as well as 2,471 in Al-Naba'a, and 7,000 militia in the camps...the presence of arms allowed for strikes which brought about the destruction of Lebanese industrial life.'

The explosion of civil war brought about a crackdown by the bourgeoisie on the workers. They vented their anger through the complete destruction of the lives of the workers in all areas: Sabniya, Hara Al-Ghawarim, Al-Sabahya, Hay Al-Tank, Al-Naba'a, Burj Al-Hamood, Al-Maklus, Harsh Thabat, and finally Tel-al-Zatar, until no life was left.

In the light of the power of the ruling class and its destructive measures, it was inevitable that the state would take control in order to defend its own interests' which were threatened by evidence of arms amongst the workers. The Syrian government saw Tel-al-Zatar as an indication of the power Palestinian workers had over the Lebanese state. The situation of the refugees and workers, who were now reliant on the use of weapons, worsened as a stronger Lebanese state was built. The official solution to the political problems in Lebanon was to unite the bourgeoisie of the whole country. Hafez Al-Assad 'ordered his military army to enter Lebanon' to solve the problem of Tel-al-Zatar. He justified this intervention to the bourgeoisie by saying: 'there is no longer a state governing Lebanon. Our role will be to crackdown on the areas that the Lebanese state cannot.' The official view of the Syrian regime on intervention was the opposite however: 'Involvement in Lebanese internal affairs is against the sovereignty laws which advise against entering the affairs of any other Arab country'.

Class struggle was now overpowered by the military in the battle for Tel-al-Zatar. Although the Syrian regime entered using rockets to hit residential areas, the people of Tel-al-Zatar vowed to keep fighting till the last drop of blood. They wrote a letter to the operating room of the Opposition saying:

'We have made a decision, and it is a final decision, to fight until the last drop of blood. We have two choices: we can fight till our death or we can destroy the enemy. We will continue fighting till we have used our last bullet and to our greatest capability. Our people have great hope that you will fight to destroy their enemy, Lebanese or Syrian.'

The leaders of the Palestinian nationalists, Arab nationalists and the right-wing all believed that the war was a ‘...dirty war. It is not in our interests as it stops us from fighting the real enemy, Israel. We must stop this at any price; even if we stop physically shooting, the journalists must not stop their war.’ When the strugglers asked for military aid against the occupation of Tel-al-Zatar, the leadership of Fatah answered: ‘Al Naba’a and Sala and Harash are not similar to Jaffa, Haifa and Jerusalem which are occupied.’

The people of Tel-al-Zatar were now drowning in a sea of tears facing the enemy. They endured fifty-two days of military occupation. There was no nourishment except for lentils, water and tears. The leadership of the Palestinian Opposition continued to collude with the Arab ruling class as they had done throughout history; they became involved with imperialist world powers such as Khalid in Saudi Arabia and Sadat in Egypt; they were constantly at the doors of the Syrian state playing into the hands of Hafez Al-Assad, who was up to his ears in the blood of the martyrs of Tel-al-Zatar.

This is a simple example of workers using weapons to fight, without return, for the good of their class. What happened in Tel-al-Zatar was not just the loss of a military battle but but an effort to break away from the leadership of the Palestinian Opposition and a refusal to live under Syrian rule. Some testimonies of fighters who came out of Tel-al-Zatar point to this: ‘After the residents of Tel-al-Zatar broke away from the Opposition they organised workers councils of 200 people.’ The answer of the Palestinian Opposition to the refugees was: ‘There is no need to repeat demands. The important thing is union organization which will bring the situation on your side.’

The people realised that the leadership was in the wrong. What does this position mean in the face of a strong military defeat? The battle does not end with the disarming of workers and refugees. The fighters asked various organisations to make clear their positions on the question. The answers from these organizations were expressions of their embarrassment; they could not cover up their betrayal: ‘The situation is dangerous so we cannot organize links with you... Our position in front of the people is embarrassing and difficult.’ They attempted to show concern by offering free housing to those who came out alive from Tel-al-Zatar. They were also heard to have said on the 11th April: ‘The situation is very bad. Make your people find a quick solution.’

The betrayal of the workers of Tel-al-Zatar by the Opposition loses significance if we look at the strength of this experiment. It strengthens our belief that the battle for Tel-al-Zatar was worth the blood of the workers which was spilt and proves the only solution is class struggle in its special programme and with its special leadership which revolves around the working class.

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## **Intifada: uprising for nation or class?**

The intifada began on the 8th December 1987. It started in Jebalya refugee camp in Gaza, the poorest area in the “occupied territories” and the most densely populated area on Earth. It was sparked off by the killing of workers at an Israeli army checkpoint. It had no immediate aim but to smash the police forces of the Israeli bourgeoisie



who for twenty years had abused, beaten, tortured and routinely killed the refugees. It took the form of riots and a wildcat general strike.

Analysing the intifada at the beginning of 1988 it was easy to see it as a homogenous proletarian movement against the poverty of everyday life; a violent attack on the natural, immediate enemy — the bourgeoisie.

The Israeli Defence Force (IDF) interrogated the first hundred rioters they arrested; the findings shocked the world bourgeoisie:

‘...hardly any of the detainees were familiar with the clauses of the Palestinian National Council or knew of its existence. They were unable to repeat the most common slogans used in the PLO’s routine propaganda and even the central concept of the Palestinian struggle — the right to self-determination — was completely alien to them. None of them listened to the evening broadcasts of the PLO radio from Baghdad. They were unaware and unconcerned that the Palestinian issue had been left off the agenda of the Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Washington. For the most part they were labourers, employed to do the dirty work in Israel. Throughout Gaza the detention centres were filling with sullen young men who saw themselves as the victims of governments and politicians of all persuasions. They did not see themselves as foot soldiers of the Palestinian national struggle and it was not from this class of instinctive rebels that the PLO drew support.’ [5]

But now in 1992, after five years of continuous struggle and five years of opposition to the intifada from the Israeli, Palestinian, and world bourgeoisie, what is the potential of this movement? Has the intifada

been “submerged in the quicksand of nationalism”? Is the proletariat still militant and enraged? We must listen to the intifada because within it are sown the seeds of tragic and bloody defeat as well as the seeds of victory and progress for the world working class and its struggle.

## **Seeds of victory**

The intifada began as a totally autonomous struggle. It broke the boundaries that the Palestinian bourgeoisie had set and began with an open hostility to all bourgeois factions. It was sparked off by class polarisation, not racial polarisation. Between 1977 and 1985 the PLO had pumped half a billion dollars into the territories; workers had seen their bourgeois neighbours — the mayors, entrepreneurs, and self-styled leaders — get rich from this bribery.

‘As the hell of Gaza turned into pandemonium, the frenzy was not directed against the Israelis alone. From Al-Bourej, Nuseirat and Ma’azi thousands descended on the fields of the areas’ landed residents, trampling and looting their crops. Jebalya rang with cries of “first the army, then Rimal”, Rimal being one of the more affluent neighbourhoods of Gaza.’ [6]

Landlords were also the target of the mob, leading many to publish public statements to announce dramatic rent reductions. The local Palestinian bourgeoisie urged the IDF to set up road blocks to contain the riots and to protect their own property from looting and the excesses of the mob. [7]

Traditional low intensity forms of social control usually capable of smoothing over class antagonisms — the family, patriarchy and schooling — have lost their power. Children of twelve years of age, sometimes younger, defy their mothers and fathers and go out and riot; in one incident in Ramallah a group of girls stoned their own parents for trying to curb their intifada activities. Teachers are dragged out to riot areas by their pupils, handed stones and pushed out in front of the Israeli soldiers. Working class women have been at the forefront of the struggle: two fifths of the first three months fatalities were women despite the fact that the IDF try not to shoot women demonstrators.

The intifada began free of nationalist demands, trappings or character. The PLO's nationalists and leftists in the territories stayed in their homes as the intifada raged, awaiting orders from Tunis (headquarters of the PLO at the time); their only function on the streets was to appear before the TV cameras to distort the nature of the events. When the orders came they were clear: where are the Palestinian flags? Where are the posters of Arafat? Where is the PLO graffiti? Whilst the fighting proletarians were expressing their need for weapons, the PLO were handing out flags and posters and sabotaging the funerals of the dead.

For the intifada to succeed in terms of real gains for the working class, it must not only outflank this bourgeois nationalist carnival, it must declare war on it. Admittedly the credibility of the PLO has never been more laughable in the territories, but this suspicion and mistrust must be focused and directed forcibly. The PLO knows this is a real possibility. It has repeatedly held back arms in the territories fearing they will be turned against their own local representatives.

The Palestinian nationalist struggle was born in exile, in the bourgeois suburbs of European cities and the universities of the Arab world. Palestinian refugees have been dumped in camps with other unwanted surplus workers from all over the East: Lebanon, Iraq, and Pakistan. They recognise that their enemy is the world bourgeoisie and all its governments. The idea of dying for a nation is not what fuels the intifada. The hostility to nationalist perspectives is a real strength of the movement but nationalism is not the only ideological weapon of the bourgeoisie.

### **Seeds of defeat**

The Palestinian bourgeoisie has been forced to adopt many new faces in its attempts to accommodate the intifada: left, right, Islamist, Christian, pro-Iraq, anti-Iraq — as many diverse factions as any bourgeois parliament. The internationalist perspective of Islam has proved capable of winning support amongst many young refugees in Gaza.

The Palestinian bourgeoisie has also proved itself capable of consolidating its control recently in the territories: leftist PLO gangs are a Palestinian police force; they keep the class antagonisms from developing into open class war, guarding the property of the bourgeoisie from the looters and hungry proletarians. Those who steal from the rich and get caught, or class struggle militants, are branded “collaborators” and publicly flogged, kneecapped, hung or shot dead.

The bourgeoisie also attempt to disguise class antagonisms; sometimes they even try and disguise themselves! Rich merchants

trade in their Mercedes for battered jeeps. All the time they are organising in their own interests.

Just as the intifada threw up worker's committees to organise the struggle, the bourgeoisie in response created their own committees: merchant's committees, shopkeeper's, etc. They meet together to discuss how to dampen the struggle and defend their own interests. These committees are relatively powerless without the support of the leftist gangs who have the arms to defend them.

A new Arabic proverb has arisen in the territories: walad bisaqa'a bilad, 'a child can close down a city'. Children stand outside shops, open in defiance of strike days, striking matches in view of the shopkeeper until the shop closes. During the eight week curfew of the Gulf War, youths attacked shops that were overcharging. Shopkeepers had a choice — either to lower their prices to what people could afford or be looted then burnt out. A fear of the proletariat and its power far outweighs a fear of the Israelis amongst the Palestinian bourgeoisie.

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The experience of the proletariat is international. In Sudan squatters were evicted from camps on the outskirts of Khartoum and marched at gunpoint to "refugee camps" where they now live controlled by soldiers with electric cattle prods and machine guns. Workers in the cynically named "Al Salem" (peace) camp get up at four o'clock in the morning to walk twenty kilometres to work in their jobs in the city.

If a Palestinian state were granted, the material conditions and class antagonisms that created the intifada would not change. The exploitation of capitalism would continue under a different flag.

The intifada has shown itself to be capable of developing class autonomy; the antagonisms of class society are a matter of everyday life, constantly flaring up into visible class struggle with the lynching of a landlord or two.

In struggle the two classes of society are wrenched apart. Arafat cannot sell the lie that "we are all Palestinians equal in struggle" when in the course of the intifada the opposing class interests of landlord and tenant, boss and worker, are exposed so graphically.

As the intifada rages on, the movement must develop this autonomy to sweep away all who stand opposed to it, to intensify its attack and to ensure its defence.

The intifada contains, within its struggle, perspectives which threaten the fragile social peace of the whole world. As the intifada becomes increasingly autonomous the response of the bourgeoisie will be predictable — to unite in their efforts to crush it. Only a generalising of the struggle can counter this threat.

## Glossary

Intifada (Arabic) — anarchy, chaotic, shaking off, a rumbling from below, uprising. The word implies a sound. It was adopted by those inside and outside of the “occupied territories” to describe the uprising against the Israeli army; an uprising for the transformation of the situation of the Palestinian proletariat, in particular; to shake off the bourgeois yoke worldwide, in general.

Hafez Assad — President of Syria

Sultan Ben Jahid — President of Algeria

Ariel Sharon — Prime Minister of Israel

King Hussein — King of Jordan

Fatah — ‘conquer’, largest nationalist faction within the PLO

Zionism — nationalist movement of the “Jewish People”. Although Israel is described as the Zionist State of Israel in our bulletin we do not see the Israeli state as simply the offspring Zionist ideology for “it has functioned throughout according to the logic of capitalism”. For example, the expulsion of Palestinians from the land and their transformation from peasants to proletarians is best understood as a form of primitive accumulation. This process of looting and land grabbing has been a feature of capitalist development everywhere (see, for instance, the highland clearances in Scotland in the nineteenth century). It is not enough, however, to attack particular frameworks for exploitation such as Zionism. We need to attack the whole basis of these phenomena — capital and its state.

Palestinian National Council — a Palestinian parliament in exile, consisting of various bourgeois factions: religious, nationalist and leftist.

## Postscript

Revolution and counter-revolution in Palestine: This is a short account of the events of September 2000 onwards in Palestine, as recalled by a combatant in the class war, with no reference to any source material aside from a paltry, immiserated, worker’s memory.

On 28th September 2000, Ariel Sharon — a godless man — and then Prime Minister of the State of Israel, made a calculatedly provocative visit to Al Aqsa Mosque atop of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Some workers that were present at the time of the visit took offence to the presence of the butcher Sharon at the Holy of Holies. They expressed their anger by throwing projectiles at the guards protecting him. This fairly mundane occurrence had that day an astounding repercussion. Instead of abating after a few cracked heads and arbitrary arrests by the forces of Order, the skirmishes transformed into full-blown uprising by the working mass of Palestine (Israel).

For several months, the working class of the region fought tooth and nail to shake off the yoke of its immediate exploiter, Israeli capital, and its henchman the Israeli Defence Force. Their fight was the most valiant ever witnessed for the fact that the armed power available to the two competing sides was the most uneven: sticks and stones versus nuclear weapons.

After three or four months, the insurgent proletarians were exhausted and virtually isolated from their class brothers and sisters abroad. They unilaterally declared a ceasefire of hostilities. This opened the way for the reaction of the capitalist forces, which primarily took the form of suicide bomb attacks on bystanders to the conflict, thus

portraying to the world the national basis of the revolution and thereby transforming it into its opposite, counter-revolution. The conclusion of this counter-revolution is the wholesale massacre of the proletariat of Gaza and beyond and destruction of its habitat.

'So it was. The civilization and justice of bourgeois order comes out in its lurid light whenever the slaves and drudges of that order rise against their masters. Then this civilization and justice stand forth as undisguised savagery and lawless revenge. Each new crisis in the class struggle between the appropriator and the producer brings out this fact more glaringly.'

### **Footnotes**

1. April 1992 — the PLO appeals to the occupied territories that “the number of strike days be reduced forthwith”.
2. K. Aburish, *The Path to a Sane Future: Cry Palestine*.
3. Dr Mahmoud Abu AI-Rab, associate economics professor at An-Najah University; quoted in *Palestine Post*, #57, November 1991.
4. The Palestinian Opposition, as mentioned in the text, refers to the Palestinian nationalist movement, which opposed the uprising and ignored the workers' cries for help.
5. The IDF report is quoted from *Intifada*, by Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari — two Israeli left-liberal journalists. The book is useful for information.
6. Same as above.
7. An example of this occurrence was in the village of Dir al-Balah in the first days of the uprising.