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# Editorial

The central theme of this issue of *Khamsin* is the communist parties in the Middle East. The history of revolutionary socialism is our area begins with the foundation of the communist parties. However, over the years these parties have degenerated. Subordinating themselves to soviet state interests in the area, the parties became subservient to various bourgeois nationalist regimes. Where, how and why did the communists go wrong? Those who aspire to rebuild the revolutionary socialist movement in our area cannot afford to ignore the lessons of communist history.

The foundation of the first communist party in Asia and the first socialist revolution in the Middle East occurred with the establishment of the soviet republic of Gilan in northern Iran in 1920. It lasted for sixteen months and was destroyed after the withdrawal of soviet support in the wake of an agreement between the USSR and the Persian government. The Gilani experience raises some very pertinent questions which have not lost their relevance today: the responsibility that can be expected from an already established revolutionary state for the struggle in other countries; the proper class alliances in the struggle for revolution in semi-colonial countries; the place of the agrarian question in the revolutionary programme; the transformation of a regional revolt into a nation-wide movement; the relation of the revolution to Islam and to the clergy. These questions are discussed in a review of recent literature and related to problems facing socialists in Iran today.

A critique of the historiography of the Lebanese communist party is the subject of another review article. It stresses the inter-country influence in the early period of Eastern-Arab communism — in particular the triangle Lebanon-Syria, Egypt and Palestine — and the role of non-Muslims and non-Arabs in the formative years of the party. The article defends the communists against unjustified accusations by Arab nationalists of national betrayal.

In the balance between national independence and social revolution communists actually underplayed their special task as social revolutionaries. The article concludes with a series of revolutionary criticisms of party line, its conduct and the detrimental effects on the party of its subordination to the Soviet Union.

All the major problems of the revolutionary movement in the Mashreq find their concentrated expression in the Palestine question. Internationalism versus nationalism; national liberation versus social transformation; a regional perspective versus a separate country approach;

loyalty to soviet policy versus revolutionary socialism; the nature of zionism and its relation to imperialism. One article in this issue analyses the attitudes of the Jordanian, Lebanese and Syrian communist parties to the Palestine problem and the evolution of these attitudes since 1967. Another article surveys recent research on the history of the Palestine CP.

The list of publications on the history of the communist movement in the Arab East is quite substantial but a good critical overall view which is not anti-socialist is still lacking. Much of the Arabic literature is tainted by a nationalist bias while communist writers tend to be uncritical. For the benefit of our readers, we have compiled an extensive, but in no way exhaustive, annotated bibliography of books in five languages.

The topic of the communist parties in the Middle East will be pursued in future issues of *Khamsin* and we invite members of the communist parties as well as other revolutionary socialists to take part in the discussion. *Khamsin* is part of the effort to rekindle revolutionary socialism in the Mashreq. We continue in the footsteps of the early period of communism in the area. We share some basic beliefs, with the communists of that early period: that in the struggle for socialism the whole of the Arab East must be regarded as one unit: that the struggle against imperialism and its local agents, the struggle for national independence and the struggle of the exploited classes are inseparable and must be fought simultaneously, and not be divided into separate historical stages. Socialism is neither 'Arab' nor 'Islamic' and the struggle for socialism must unite Muslims and non-Muslims, Arabs and non-Arabs by respecting the individual and national rights of these minorities.

In addition to the central theme, this issue also includes two articles which deal with the reserve army of labour in the Israeli economy. The first is an important statistical research which describes the development and the present characteristics of the Arab labour force in the Israeli economy. It emphasises the rapid growth of this labour force and its disproportional concentration in the productive sector. Mobility and lack of security expose the Arab Worker, more than his Jewish counterparts, to the fluctuations of the market. Their wages and conditions of work are also shown to be generally inferior. The second article deals with Jewish women. It demonstrates how the requirements of zionist colonisation affected the inequality of women. Women have been used as a strategic reserve force whenever the shortage of manpower threatened to hamper zionist goals. However, the shortfall in immigration to Israel creates insoluble contradictions between the role that women are expected to play in the labour force and their role as mothers.

Current developments in the nature of the Arab ruling classes and their integration in the capitalist world market affects the whole perspective for revolutionary change in the area. The significance, magnitude and implications of these developments were explored in a discussion held in a *Khamsin* conference in London last year. We published in this issue the introductory lecture to that discussion. We also continue in this issue the discussion on the Palestinian resistance movement; we shall welcome further

contributions by our readers.

The publication of this issue was delayed by the change of publisher and we wish to apologise to our readers. By way of compensation, this issue is somewhat larger than usual.

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# Eli Lobel

*Khamsin* is bereaved. Eli Lobel, editor and founder of our journal, has died tragically on Thursday, October 4th 1979.

The life-story of this outstanding revolutionary socialist and great internationalist is, in more than one way, the story of a whole generation, the tragedies and noble struggles of a whole epoch.

Born in Berlin in 1926 to a family of Polish-Jewish refugees, Eli spent his early childhood in the Germany of the late Weimar Republic and the early years of Nazi power. Then the family was forced to flee back to Poland. But Poland too was unsafe; and in 1939, just in the nick of time, the family managed to leave for Palestine. There Eli soon joined the left-zionist youth movement Hashomer Hatza'ir, and in 1946 was one of the founders of kibbutz Nirim in the northern Negev.

A few years later, he went to Paris as a journalist for the daily paper '*Al Hamishmar*', organ of MAPAM, the political party of Hashomer Hatza'ir. There, in Paris, he studied statistics and economics; one of his teachers was the socialist economist Charles Bettelheim. There too the seeds of his political radicalisation had germinated.

Hashomer Hatza'ir — like all left-wing zionists — was a living contradiction: it claimed to combine zionism with marxism. Throughout the history of that movement there were always individuals and small groups within it who took marxism more seriously than the left-zionist leaders had intended, and who resolved the contradiction by jettisoning zionism. Just as, in the years immediately after the Russian Revolution, it was dissidents from the older left-zionist Po'alei Zion who founded the Palestinian Communist Party and helped to spread marxism in the Arab East, so from the 1930s onwards the revolutionary marxist movement — in Europe and Latin America as well as in Palestine and later in Israel — was drawing to itself a continual if small stream of dissidents from Hashomer Hatza'ir. (One of the most notable figures among them was Abran Leon, author of the brilliant marxist analysis of the Jewish Question, who was murdered by the Nazis in 1944.)

Back in Israel, Eli joined the left opposition inside MAPAM. In 1953 the opposition was expelled from that party and formed itself into the Socialist Left Party which developed in an anti-zionist direction. Like other adherents of this new party, Eli was expelled from his kibbutz, Nirim.

At the end of 1954 the Socialist Left Party joined the Israeli CP. Eli would most probably had done the same, but by that time he had left Israel again: at the invitation of Charles Bettelheim he joined a team of

economists in India (including Bettelheim himself and Joan Robinson) who were working on that country's problems of under-development. From then on, Eli was passionately involved in the economic and social problems of the third world and eventually became an authority in his own right on the economics of colonialism and under-development.

Returning to Paris, he devoted much of his energy to work in support of the Algerian revolution of national liberation. As a result of this activity, it was necessary for him to leave France, and he joined a team of economic advisers in Mali, which, under Modibo Keita was then one of the more progressive states of black Africa. In Mali Eli fulfilled tasks of great responsibility and represented that country at the World Bank.

During all this time he kept up his interest in Israeli politics and established contacts with the Socialist Organisation in Israel (Matzpen) which had been formed in 1962.

After a brief stay back in France, Eli left for Cuba as a member of a team of left-wing economic experts. Not long after his return from Cuba, the Paris events of May 1968 broke out. Eli was passionately involved in these events, which marked the happiest period of his life. At the same time, as a member of Matzpen, he developed an intensive activity in France (as well as in other countries) against zionism and in support of the rights of the Palestinian people. It is in large measure due to his internationalist activity as a speaker, journalist and writer that the revolutionary left in France and in many other countries has been able to understand the true nature of zionism and adopt a revolutionary socialist attitude towards the problems of the Middle East.

Eli was profoundly committed to the struggle against zionism. But he was not a simplistic anti-zionist: he did not reject zionism merely to exchange it for support for some other nationalism, no matter how 'progressive', but in order to transcend all nationalism in the struggle for a united socialist Middle East and a socialist world. In particular, while being wholly committed to supporting the struggle of the Palestinian people against social and national oppression and for emancipation and self-determination, he was highly critical of, and deeply greived by, recent regressive developments within the Palestinian movement.

His great and fruitful political activity is widely known to the revolutionary left in many countries. But his personal friends and close comrades also knew his purity of heart, his noble simplicity. Socialism for him was not a mere abstraction or an alienated 'purely political' activity. It was a deeply felt moral commitment of a man who hated all privilege and oppression and identified with the deprived and oppressed.

With his death, the socialist movement in the Middle East and elsewhere has lost an outstanding torch-bearer, and we who knew him have lost a dear and beloved comrade. His memory will illuminate our struggle for the ideals in which he believed.

# The early history of Lebanese Communism reconsidered

## Alexander Flores

Yusuf Ibrahim Yazbek, *Hikayat awwal nuwwar fi al-'alam fi lubnan* (*The Story of May Day in the World and in Lebanon*), Dar al-Farabi, Beirut 1974.

Muhammad Dakrub, *Judhur al-sindiyyana al-hamra'; hikayat nushu' al-hizb al-shuyu'i al-lubnani 1924-1931* (*The Roots of the Red Holm Oak; the Story of the Rise of the Lebanese Communist Party*), Dar al-Farabi, Beirut 1974.

Khalil al-Dibs (Introduction), *Sawt al-sha'b aqua: safahat min al-sihafa al-shuyu'iyya wa al-'ummaliyya wa al-dimuqratiyya fi 50 'amam* (*The People's Voice is Stronger; Pages from the Communist, Workers' and Democratic Press in 50 Years*), Dar al-Farabi, Beirut 1974.

Dahir al-'Akkari (ed.), *Al-sihafa al-thawriyya fi lubnan 1925-1975* (*The Revolutionary Press in Lebanon 1925-1975*), Dar al-Farabi, Beirut 1975.

In dealing with the problems facing any socialist endeavour in the Arab East, we have to study the history of the socialist movement in this part of the world, beginning with the emergence of a socialist trend within the modern 'Arab awakening'. Why did such a trend evolve at all? What were its origins and motive forces? How did it come into being? What were the reasons for the slow pace of its development and for the difficulties that it encountered?

### Early beginnings

More than in other national liberation movements, in the national awakening movement of the Arab East there was — and to a certain extent there still is — a dissociation between two principal elements of national awareness and emancipation: the *conservative* element of defence against foreign aggression and domination, which is rooted in a domestic tradition; and an *innovative* element, which questions this very tradition and adopts foreign methods when this seems necessary for enhancing its own fighting capability.

In the Arab East the conservative-defensive element was largely confined to the Sunni Muslim majority of the population. It was based on a Muslim, rather than Arab, identity which before the first world war was accompanied by a degree of loyalty to the Ottoman Empire. This led to a rejection of virtually all European values and achievements. The innovative

trend, on the other hand, was carried largely by religious and ethnic minorities. These groups – Oriental Christians, Jews or various ethnic minorities under European ‘protection’, as well as expatriate Europeans such as the Italians and Greeks in Egypt – naturally had a closer affinity to Europe than their Muslim compatriots. This, as well as their social status as minorities which drove them to seek for ways to emancipation and secularisation, accounted for their readiness to accept European values. The striving for emancipation led some of these European-oriented intellectuals of the minorities to look for egalitarian or even socialist remedies for the evils of their own societies. Generally speaking they did not give much thought to the feasibility of transferring European models into a different social context. But the majority of the population shunned these ideas just because they were adopted by members of a despised minority linked with Europe, at the very moment when the European threat began to be felt throughout the Arab East. This applied also to the socialist endeavour of certain intellectuals. Before the first world war, all indigenous socialist thinkers in the Arab world were Christians. (In Palestine – even worse – socialism was represented by left-wing zionist settlers.) Socialism was therefore perceived by the majority as associated with the minorities and as part of the foreign threat.

In Lebanon too the early socialists were isolated; or rather they were not even living in the country. Given the meagre opportunities for political expression in Ottoman-ruled Syria, the pre-first world war Lebanese-Syrian socialists (Shibli Shumayyil, Farah Antun and Niquila Haddad) lived and worked in Egypt. Their teaching – for they did not engage in any socialist practice – was not purely socialist but a mixture of socialist ideas of a reformists character together with the great ideals of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment, conceived in a romanticist manner. This brand of socialist ideology is perhaps most typically expressed in the writings of Frah Antun.

After the first world war, the still few and dispersed Lebanese socialists adhered to a similar romantic socialism mixed with liberalism. But if we consider the beginnings of the Lebanese communist party,<sup>1</sup> we find that it was not, as in all other Arab countries, set up by minority groups but was nearly purely Arab (with the exception of the Armenian communist group *Spartak*, which merged with the CP only after the first of May 1925). The Lebanese Christians, a minority in the Ottoman Empire, had become a majority in the Greater Lebanon created by the French mandatory administration for this very purpose. So the pioneers of Lebanese communism brought with them the ‘Christian’ heritage of enlightenment and social rebellion, but could now work in a mainly Christian environment regardless of confessional strife. (By ‘Christian’ we do not of course mean anything to do with the religious essence of Christianity, but are merely referring to the situation described above.) The beginnings of the Lebanese CP were thus Arab.

The early history of the Lebanese CP remained until recently a rather inaccessible subject, since the sources were not readily available. Despite



some of the original sources of that early period, as well as two semi-official books drawing heavily on documents and eye-witness accounts.

Yusuf Yazbek is one of the founders of the Lebanese CP. His book, *Hikayat awal nuwwar*, contains a historical survey of May Day celebrations around the world and personal recollections of the founding of the Lebanese People's Party. It also has a useful documentary appendix. Since most of the contents of Yazbek's book concerning Lebanon is repeated by Dakrub, we shall not deal here specifically with the former.

M. Darkub's *Roots of the Red Holm Oak* does not pretend to be a scientific history of the rise of the Lebanese CP. It is rather a narrative aimed at readers unfamiliar with the history of the party and its origins. This explains its somewhat naive style; but this in fact is an advantage, insofar as the contents are less filtered than is usual in scientific history.

Darkub starts with the first public demonstration of the party, the celebration of May Day 1925 in the Crystal cinema in Beirut. Then, in a series of flashbacks, he tells the story of each of the speakers at that meeting, thus tracing the party's history up to that date.

One of the speakers, Khairallah Khairallah, not belonging to the party, represented nevertheless one of the traditions on which it relied: The Lebanese liberal intellectuals inspired by the ideas of the French Revolution who developed a strong anti-Turkish nationalism (and some of whom were actually hanged by the Turks during the first world war) but who had also some illusions about the post-war French rule in Syria. Khairallah himself had taken part in the first celebration of May Day in Lebanon which took place in a half-clandestine way near Raoushe at Ras Beirut in 1907, and he had also taken part in the First Arab Congress 1913 in Paris where he used to live and work as a journalist. His participation in the 1925 meeting did in fact nothing more than remind the audience of this tradition.

Yusuf Ibrahim Yazbek, another speaker, while inspired by the same intellectual tradition, belonged to another generation and played a far more active role in the founding of the party. With Fu'ad Shimali, he must be considered one of its two founders. Born in 1901, he was impressed by the wartime misery and cruel Turkish tyranny in Syria, but was disappointed to see the Turkish rule merely replaced by a French one after the war. In this he — and some other radicals — differed from the pre-war liberals whose illusions of the French 'democratic mission' did not fade immediately after the war and in some cases did not fade at all. (This was another result of the creation of the Greater Lebanon: the loyalty of a considerable part of the Christian population to the French mandate out of fear of Muslim supremacy in a Greater Syrian or Arab framework.) The conspicuous misery of the population accounted for some of the more radical of the liberals turning in a socialist direction. Their ideas were at first less elaborated than those of the pre-war Arab socialists (Dakrub, p83f). Yet they resembled the latter in their romantic outlook. Yazbek was the leading voice expressing this tendency and slowly clarifying its socialist character and the need for action. This he did in a series of letters and articles which appeared during 1922-24 mainly in the Zahle newspaper *Al-sihafi al-ta'ih* (*The Wandering*

*Journalist*). He signed his contributions as follows: *The Weeping Ghost: from the Red Hut; in the City of the Rich; 8th October of the Sixth Year of the Third International*. Although this date was not correct (he counted from 1917), it indicates Yazbek's bolshevik sympathies — in this period a mere confession of faith.

### **Role of Jewish communists from Palestine**

Further crystallisation of bolshevik thought and an orientation towards organisational practice came in 1923 when Yazbek met Fu'ad Shimali and began to collaborate with him. Shimali was a Lebanese tobacco worker who had worked in Egypt and had gathered experience in the trade-union movement already developed there. Having become a communist and as such an 'undesirable', he was expelled from Egypt and deported to Beirut in August 1923, where he met Yazbek. In Bikfayya, a tobacco manufacturing centre, he began to organise the workers for trade-union activities. Some of them soon began to share his communist sympathies.

At first this small nucleus of communist sympathisers had no connection with the Communist International, despite their efforts. The connection was finally made via the Palestinian CP, which was then exclusively Jewish and had a rather close contact with Moscow. Joseph Berger, one of its leaders, charged with the task of observing the Arab countries and politics, noticed a socialist undertone in an article by Yazbek on Anatole France's death. He went to Beirut, met Yazbek and got in contact with Shimali and several communist workers from the Bikfayya region. In a meeting on 24 October 1924 at Hadeth near Beirut, these men decided to form a legal party, the *Lebanese People's Party* with some communists, among them Yazbek and Shimali, as its leading circle. Yazbek was elected its first president, soon to be replaced by Shimali. This date is now rightly considered the birthday of the Lebanese communist party.

It is highly symbolic that the three men who prepared this meeting represented three important components in the formation of the party: Yusuf Yazbek, the romantic Lebanese liberal with a radical socialist streak; Fu'ad Shimali, the worker who had gathered his trade-union experience in Egypt, by this time the only Middle Eastern country with a sizeable working class and Joseph Berger, the Palestinian Jewish communist of Polish origin who provided the relations with the Comintern.

It should be noted here that the origins of Palestinian communism were indeed very different from those of the Lebanese. We have seen that the early Lebanese communists — deeply influenced by the French Revolution — understood bolshevism as a more radical brand of the West European humanistic socialism of, say, Jaures. They had very little marxist culture, let alone knowledge of Lenin (as confessed by Yazbek, p68-70); the October Revolution meant to them a moral stimulus rather than a meaningful teaching. With the exception of Fu'ad Shimali, they had no experience in organising the working class. Yet they were Arabs in an Arab environment

and their intellectual outlook had its genuine Lebanese tradition.

The early Palestinian communists were all Jewish; they had been among those Russian and Polish Jewish socialists who came to Palestine under the impact of zionism. Only a small minority of those remained faithful to their socialist conviction, lost their zionist illusions when confronted with the Palestinian reality, and broke away from zionism. They formed the CP. Largely isolated from the zionist-dominated Jewish population, and mistrusted by the Arabs who continued to regard them as Jews who had come to deprive them of their homeland, the Palestinian communists had great difficulties in fulfilling their revolutionary projects. On the other hand, they had brought with them from the fertile revolutionary soil of Russia and Poland a rich experience of working-class politics. They were versed in marxism and had a knowledge of the principles of the Comintern unmatched by any other revolutionaries in the Middle East. Since Palestine offered much less fertile ground than the other countries of the region for the application of these talents, there was, as it were, a 'surplus revolutionary capability' ready to be deployed elsewhere. The Palestinian communists willingly helped in setting up and developing CPs in the neighbouring countries. They felt a regional responsibility for the communist movement, and out of this there developed the idea of establishing a communist federation of the whole Middle East. For a long time this policy had the approval of the Comintern. Whether this noble striving was linked, in the mind of some Palestinian leaders, to ambitions of domination, is a moot question. After the Comintern had rejected the Palestinians' claim to regional responsibility (about 1930), Arab communists often made such accusations, which in turn are also hinted at by Yazbek and Darkub, but without substantial evidence and without providing any insight into the situation of the PCP itself.

We have already mentioned that in most Arab countries, and especially in Palestine the origins of the CPs were not purely Arab but rooted in the minorities. This was through no personal error on the part of the leaders, but an inevitable consequence of the prevailing political and social conditions. To overcome the adverse effects of this fact, it is necessary at least to analyse thoroughly its historical causes. But such analysis is lacking in Dakrub's book. Yazbek goes even so far as to say that the Jewish leaders of the PCP 'slipped out of your hands like eels', but then abandons the reader with 'but this is another story' (p71). This is not to say that Yazbet is antisemitic, but that he seems to lack any understanding of the Palestinian communists' national problems.

The aid given by the Palestinians to the Lebanese CP in the early days was considerable: they delegated a leading member, Ya'aqov Tepper (Eliahu Teper) to its first central committee; they helped to support the Syrian revolt; and in 1929-30 another leading member, Nahum Leshchinski (Nadav) was placed at the disposal of the

Lebanese-Syrian CP.

### **From the Third Period to the Popular Front**

After founding the party in October 1924, the leading Lebanese communists tried to recruit new members, mainly through Shimali's trade-union activities and by attracting liberal intellectual sympathisers. This process and the preparations for May Day 1925 are described in detail in the two books, especially by Dakrub. Only after May 1925 did the party reach a level of real organised activity. It gave support to a bloodily suppressed demonstration in July 1925 and to the Syrian revolt of 1925-27. As a result, nearly all leading cadres were arrested and sentenced to prison, which meant a serious decline and even interruption of party work for two years. Activities were resumed only in 1928 and then in a very cautious and clandestine way. The party came again into the open with a widely distributed manifesto on July 1st, 1930. The following year brought a very serious attempt by the CP (which by now had assumed an all-Syrian dimension) to gain adherents by all means of activity. Again some leading cadres were arrested and jailed. Yet these measures did not have such a devastating effect as the first blow; the party was able from time to time to print legal and illegal newspapers (*Saut al-Ummal*, *Al-Ummal*, *Al-Fajr al-Ahmar*). But still more important was the elaboration of the first party programme (the records of the first party congress in December 1925 had been destroyed, see Dakrub, pp373-376). The new document was not officially called a programme but a programmatic document. It was issued precisely one year after the public manifesto, that is, in July 1931. This document is republished in the annex of Dakrub's book, together with a call for May Day 1925, a protest by the central committee of the 'Communist Party in Syria and Palestine' against repression by the French authorities (August 1926, taken from *Inprecorr*), and the famous joint declaration of the Syrian and Palestinian CPs on the 'Tasks of the Communists in the Arab National Movement', also from 1931.

The programmatic document is a very ambitious and detailed text in the mood of the Comintern 'third period', i.e. it stresses the role of the working class without taking into consideration its ability to fulfil this role, and it condemns the 'reformism' of the national bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the text gives a clear picture of the party's aims: in principle, overthrow of the capitalist system and building up a socialist one; but, as the first goal — liberation of Syria (including Lebanon) from the French yoke and a number of measures to improve the lot of the workers, peasants, women, youth etc. To fulfil this programme a workers' and peasants' government must be set up. The national question is seen on its different levels — ending of the interconfessional and intercommunal strife in Syria, attaining Syrian independence, anti-imperialist solidarity of the oppressed peoples on an Arab and world-wide level. The national question is not artificially counterposed to social emancipation in a scheme putting the solution of the

former as a pre-condition for the latter.

Today, the communists criticise this program for concentrating on the slogan of a workers' and peasants' government, which allegedly watered down the emphasis on the immediate demands — independence, Syrian unity, evacuation of foreign armies (Dakrub, p447f).

In my opinion, the shortcoming of this programme is not an underestimation of the purely national issue or the criticism of the bourgeois nationalist leadership but the overestimation of the real weight of the working class and of its capacity to implement the role assigned to it. In a situation like the one we are dealing with, it is important not to restrict the fight to its national — as opposed to social — dimensions. This in any case can be done better by a bourgeois leadership, which by the way was not lacking in the Arab case. Rather, the fight for national liberation must be linked to a thorough social mobilisation. This link is certainly not excluded by the text in question but it was not conceived in a consistent manner and even less was it put into practice.<sup>2</sup>

Yet it is important to note that the communists — in that period — did not underestimate the fight for complete independence, out of regard to their French or Soviet brother-parties; nor did they sacrifice their eagerness to fight for social improvements and to stress their socialist goal on the altar of 'national unity'. This can clearly be seen from the heavily documented narrative by Dakrub and from the texts he cites in full. Moreover, he gives a striking picture of the intellectual background and the different fields of experience which contributed to the formation of the Lebanese CP. But however valuable the book may be from this point of view, it does not prevent the reader unfamiliar with the events — and it is precisely to this sort of reader that the book is addressed — from forming a somewhat erroneous view of the party's history. This history is treated as if it took a more or less straight path from modest beginnings to ever greater successes. In such a rendering, sharp turns in the political line of the party or critical points of its history are either omitted from the picture or glossed over. Thus an innocence is shown or pretended that is no longer credible after so many turns and setbacks. This way of thinking and writing is quite usual in communist parties, and Dakrub's book is one of the better examples of its products; but it is clearly not a case of 'marxism applied to itself'. Analysis is lacking for the most part.

True, the book deals with a period that by its very character lends itself to such a treatment: as a founding period, it was full of great hopes for the future; the gap between the far-reaching aims and the difficult circumstances could only be bridged with a considerable dose of heroism; the radicalisation from above, with the 'third period', seemed to coincide with the party's own experience (namely the weak performance of the bourgeois-national leadership); the sacrifices of the 'popular front line' were still ahead. So the historical faithfulness of the book is not marred too seriously by its character.

The following period, which begins with the turn of the communist

movement from the hard line of the third period to the popular front policy, has been the subject of a much more lively controversy. The Syrian-Lebanese CP has had to face grave accusations by Arab nationalists because of its position in this period. It is accused of not having pursued the aim of Arab unity any longer (or not having professed its dogma any longer), of having sabotaged the fight for Syrian and Lebanese independence out of loyalty to the French popular front government, it is accused of silence over the French cession of the (formerly Syrian) district of Iskenderun to the Turks, and of alleged neglect of the Palestine question; in one word: it is accused of national treason. These accusations are put forward either from a purely nationalist point of view, as in Darwaza's book, or by leftist Arab nationalists like Naji 'Allush and Ilyas Murqus. Sometimes they are linked to a criticism concerning the insufficient emphasis given to socialist aims by the CP. These accusations are sometimes 'proven' by short quotations from original communist sources. And there is a great deal of material which can be cited to suggest a certain 'unreliability' of the communists regarding national questions. But the fact is that most of the critics render the quotations and relate the deeds of the communists in such an incomplete and disjointed manner that the uninformed reader must believe the underlying assumption that those attitudes are the result of sheer treason. Yet the attempt to explain this or that deed or attitude of a political group by 'treason' is usually made by those who are either unable or unwilling to give a more satisfactory explanation. In any case, we must first see to what extent the accusations are true, and get a correct picture of the party's policy at the time concerned, and we must then try to understand the background which led to this policy. By this method alone shall we be able to assess this policy in accordance with the historical reality.

Now, in addition to the two books we have mentioned already, the Lebanese CP has recently published two documentary volumes which offer us glimpses into the real attitude of the party at different periods from 1925 to 1946. One is a sample of reproductions of Lebanese communist or sympathising newspapers and journals from 1925-1974 with a stress on the early period. It is called 'The People's Voice Is Stronger'. The other volume, edited by Dahir al-'Akkari, is a documentation of the contents of that press for the period 1925-46, arranged by themes. Some of the chapters of this latter volume are headed as if to reject the afore mentioned accusations: 'In the heart of the fight for independence and national sovereignty'; '*Saut al-sha'b* (the party organ) leads the fight for the evacuation (of the foreign armies)'; 'For an Arab unity on a democratic basis'; 'In defence of Arab Palestine against British imperialism and the Zionist conspiracy'. Even if the items in these chapters have most probably been selected according to the national mood prevailing today, one can draw from them abundant evidence to the effect that the accusations of national treason are, at least in their crude form, false. Not only does this documentation correct the exaggerated picture given by the critics' short quotations, but it provides also the context and argumentation leading to this or that position of the

party, at least as far as they are given in the original texts. Indeed, from 1934 the communists spoke less about Arab unity than before, but they did *not* drop the subject altogether. They did *not* oppose Syrian independence but advocated it vigorously, if in a form open to criticism. They did *not* acquiesce in the ceding of Iskenderun but protested sharply against it. They did *not* neglect the Palestine problem but until 1947 advocated a unitary democratic solution to it. The book edited by 'Akkari shows this in a very consistent way, as it shows how the communists treated many other questions, like the liberation of women, the defence of the USSR, the anti-fascist struggle, cultural questions, and so on.

### **National liberation and social emancipation**

Yet if we have defended the Syrian-Lebanese CP against a purely nationalist, inexact or even totally false criticism, there is still a great deal in its politics that may rightly be criticised. Some of Murqus's criticism in the conclusion of his book *History of the CPs in the Arab World*, for instance, is fundamentally just, although he tries to support it — for the period concerned — by the distorted evidence we mentioned earlier.<sup>3</sup> He is right in reproaching the communists for the schematism of their political conceptions, for their disregard for the domestic realities, for their changing political lines without any substantial discussion, for their oscillation in the definition of the Arab nation, for their postponing of socialist aims, and so on. Yet these phenomena, taken in isolation, cannot explain the ups and downs of the Lebanese CP in a satisfactory way.

Therefore it may be useful to recall the evolution of the political line of this party from its inception up to the second world war, and look at the two main themes around which it centred, namely national liberation and the struggle for social progress and the final socialist goal. As we have seen, the party developed ideologically out of the radical wing of socialist-liberal circles which, by virtue of a humanistic universalist outlook, gave priority to social progress — perhaps influenced by the cruel sufferings of the people of Syria in the famine during the first world war. This, together with Shimali's purely proletarian experience in Egypt and ensuing practice in Lebanon, as well as the endeavour to work legally under the French mandate, account for the early communists' stress on the social issue and their relative neglect of the national one, as laid down e.g. in the *Principles of the Lebanese People's Party*, written in 1925 (text in Yazbek, pp103-105, and in 'Akkari, p410). These principles are conceived more in a spirit of domocratic social reform than of revolution.

The Founders of the party knew of course that even those moderate aims could not be attained under the mandate. Therefore they hinted at their enmity towards the French administration, at first very cautiously, then more forcefully (as shown by 'Akkari, p31ff). The banning of *Al-Insaniyya*, the first legal party organ, in June 1925, and the arrest of the communist leaders later in that same year showed that the French authorities would not

tolerate even such cautious nationalist propaganda, especially when infused with socialist principles. So the communists saw themselves free to take a more radical stand on both social and national issues, which they did in the following years, in accordance with the radicalisation of the Comintern line. When they came again into the open after the imprisonment of their leaders and two years of voluntary clandestinity, they expressed a view of the two issues much more consistent than before. This view contained a more radical conception of the national *and* of the social issue (namely, agrarian revolution) and was aware of the necessity of linking the two issues without neglecting the realities of each country. We have already mentioned the texts expressing this view (the manifesto of 1 July 1930, the 1931 Syrian 'programme', the joint resolution of the Syrian and Palestinian parties). The error of this conception was an unrealistic, over-optimistic evaluation of the capacity of the workers and poor peasants to fulfil the tasks assigned to them by the communists. Those tasks were indeed given by the objective situation, and there was no other social force capable of tackling them, but the programmes envisaged too short a time for this process. Nevertheless, this orientation might have contributed to a solid entrenchment of the CP had it been put into practice and corrected by experience for a sufficiently long time; because the orientation was basically sound.

But there was no opportunity to do so, for this was also the period when the CP came under closer control of the Comintern. This control had already accounted for the application of the 'hard line', against domestic reluctance;<sup>4</sup> and in the following, 'popular front' period was to have far graver consequences. The Comintern advised the CPs of the colonial countries to have a certain regard to the interests of their respective colonial powers whose governments were seen as possible allies against the fascist powers. At the same time they were given a free hand to set up alliances with other political forces in their own countries. So the Syrian-Lebanese communists advocated moderation in the fight for national liberation, especially after the popular front assumed power in France, and at the same time tried to be accepted as allies by the Syrian bourgeois nationalist leadership, the *kutla wataniyya* (national bloc), which they had so vigorously denounced a few years earlier for not pursuing the national emancipation struggle at all. On this issue they now took nearly the same stand as the *kutla wataniyya*, and in addition they put off their socialist aim, so that a *de facto* alliance became indeed possible. Under these circumstances, the communists played the role of a mediator between the French popular front government and the Syrian leadership. In this they were indeed helping to achieve independence (a process that was completed only in 1946 but in every stage of which the communists played a considerable role). The accusations of national treason are therefore unfounded. But they failed to assume in this process the specifically communist task that they themselves had envisaged a few years earlier: that of profoundly mobilising the masses, that of linking the anti-imperialist struggle with an agrarian revolution (as demanded by the 1931 joint declaration) or at least a social mobilisation guaranteeing the continuation



of the struggle. Their actual conduct allowed them to work publicly through their organ *Saut al-sha'b* and gave them a certain respectability. This respectability, among other things, accounted for their gaining a large audience during and immediately after the war. (The political turn during the Hitler-Stalin pact went largely unnoticed because of the illegality and harsh repression under the *drole de guerre* and Vichy administrations. In June 1941, Syria was occupied by British and Free French forces who restored the legality of the CP). The unreliability of this audience appeared when the next grave blow came after the partition of Palestine: it crumbled away.

Through the documents reprinted in the two volumes, one can of course perceive the general orientation of that period — expressed most outspokenly and officially in the National Charter of the party approved by the party congress of December 1943/January 1944 (text in 'Akkari, p425). Quite naturally, although deplorably, the most compromising documents have not been chosen for re-publication.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, there is ample material concerning two other fields of communist literary activity: cultural work and the anti-fascist struggle. The former was done mainly through the journals *Al-Duhur* (1943), *Al-Tali'a* (1935-1939), and *Al-Tarig* (started 1941, still appearing). Non-communists (among them Amin al-Rihani and Michel 'Aflaq) contributed a great deal to these journals that were indeed conceived as a means to influencing broad circles of intellectuals. Their purpose was to revive the progressive heritage of Arab history and to spread knowledge of scientific socialism and 'other outstanding achievements of modern world culture'; that is, they tried to provide two necessary elements of a modern and progressive Arab culture. This was surely an important step in the attempt to overcome the deep alienation of modern Arab culture.

The other activity, anti-fascist propaganda, in spite of the questionable political conduct sometimes ensuing from it, was in itself a highly meritorious undertaking. Many Arab nationalists at the time had sympathies for the fascist powers out of enmity against France and Britain, and colonising powers in the Levant, and against the Zionist project in Palestine, an enmity that often took an antisemitic form. These people harboured illusions on an eventual German or Italian domination which they preferred to the actual French or British one. Under these conditions, the uncompromising anti-fascist stand of the communists<sup>6</sup> was at first — until the allied powers gained the upper hand in the war — rather unpopular. So much the more praise to the communists for this attitude. However, it is doubtful whether anti-fascist considerations really necessitated such a great measure of restraint in the fight for independence. But this question must be discussed in the context of the general political outlook of the CP during this period.

## **A bad old tradition**

There remains the question of the responsibility for the political conduct of the CP that led to its defeats and setbacks. We maintain that the main reasons lie in the traditional structure and functioning of the international communist movement:-

1 The political freedom or action of every single party was – and in many cases still is – considerably restricted by the existence of a leading centre entitled to give instructions to the parties.

2 The internal structure of the parties, their ideological obligation towards the centre, and the sincere emotional loyalty of all communists towards the USSR, the ‘bulwark of world revolution’, rendered difficult any resistance of a party against instructions from above.

3 The instructions from the centre were insufficiently, if at all, oriented towards the situation of the country in question, but were too often dictated by global conceptions formulated in a European context or, more precisely, according to what were considered the state interests of the USSR.

4 There was the custom of changing political lines – sometimes by 180 degrees – from one day to the next, without any broad discussion, without any explanation other than accusing a scapegoat of having committed all the mistakes of the previous period. A change of line which might have been fruitful for one part of the world, was applied indiscriminately on a global scale.

All this accounts partly for the lack of success of communist parties, especially in the colonial world. Only those parties that managed to gain de facto independence from the leading centre and its schemes and models succeeded in assuming a revolutionary role in their respective countries. We have outlined the grave consequences of these factors for the Syrian-Lebanese CP. They were perhaps the inevitable result of the then prevailing conditions of the communist movement. One cannot reduce all this, in the final analysis, to the responsibility of one person. Yet the lion’s share of such personal responsibility as can really be found has justly been put on Stalin’s shoulders. In a similar way, perhaps any communist leadership in Syria and Lebanon would have been forced to apply this policy. But the man who actually did it – and in a particularly machiavellistic way – was Khalid Bakdash, Syrian party leader from 1934 until now. Although one cannot hold him responsible for all that happened, he has become a symbol for the party traditions as a whole, and especially for the adverse conditions we have described. He was always ‘Moscow’s eye in the Arab world’.<sup>7</sup>

In the Lebanese CP, there has been a discussion on these and other critical points of party history. As far as we know, this discussion has not ended yet. It has led to a critical (and for that matter self-critical) account of party history.<sup>8</sup> Naturally, one cannot expect a very deep public discussion at a time when the party is heavily dependent on Soviet support, for the relations with the CPSU are closely connected with all the crucial issues. On the other hand, since the late fifties or early sixties, the Lebanese CP is

independent of the Syrian, so that it can criticise Bakdash, at least implicitly.

This is not the case with the Syrian party, of which Bakdash is still leader. Here the discussion led to a serious clash in the leadership and after prolonged debates ended with the splitting up of the party.<sup>9</sup>

Central to these recent discussions are subjects subsequent to the period we have dealt with here. Nevertheless, this early period is still full of lessons for contemporary revolutionary socialists in the Arab East. Therefore we can only welcome the fact that the Lebanese CP has published some books which give much useful source material concerning its own early history. The questions we have raised here are by way of plea for further research and discussion on the history of Arab communism and its lessons for the present.

## References

- 1 The beginnings of the party discussed here were Lebanese, under the name 'Lebanese People's Party'. When, after a period of repressions, it re-emerged into the open, it assumed an all-Syrian dimension under the name 'Syrian CP'. From then on it called itself according to circumstances either Syrian or Lebanese CP. At its congress of winter 1943/44 it took the name 'CP of Syria and Lebanon', consisting of a Lebanese and a Syrian CP. After the second world war, when Syria and Lebanon became separate independent states, it was decided that the two regional branches of the CP should also separate and set themselves up as two parties. However, this decision remained on paper until the early 1960s.
- 2 The joint declaration of the Palestinian and Syrian CPs mentioned above does indeed lay great stress on the need for this link. This declaration is rightly regarded by Dakrub (p449) as completing the Syrian programmatic document. Below we shall try to explain why this conception was not put into practice.
- 3 Ilyas Murqus, *Tarikh al-ahzab al-shuyu'iyya fi al-watan al-'arabi*, Dar al-Tali'a, Beirut 1964, pp141-175. This does not mean that we agree with all his views. For a rejection of these see Maxime Robinson, *Marxisme et monde musulman*, Seuil, Paris, 1972, pp412-425.
- 4 See Jacques Couland, *Le mouvement syndical au Liban*, Editions Sociales, Paris 1970, p149f. This line seems to have been enforced by Nahum Leshchinski whom we mentioned earlier. See Couland, *ibid.*
- 5 Some of these documents can be found in Murqus, *op cit*, pp195-229; and in Ahmad Fayeze Fawwaz' contribution to the extraordinary conference of the Syrian CP held in late 1971 to discuss the differences in the party, in *Quadaya al-al-khilaf fi al-hizb al-shuyu'i al-suri* (*Questions of the difference in the Syrian CP*), Dar Ibn Khaldun, Beirut 1972, pp374-404.

- 6 In principle of course this anti-fascist stand was suspended during the period of the Hitler-Stalin pact, but as explained above this interruption had no great consequences in the Syrian context.
- 7 See Robinson, *op cit*.
- 8 See 'Report of the CC before the second congress of the Lebanese CP, July 1968, in *Nidal al-hizb al-shuyu'i al-lubnani min khilali watha'iqihi* (*The struggle of the Lebanese CP, through its documents*), Part I, Lebanese CP Publications, Beirut, pp105-234. This report covers the period from 1944 (when the first congress was held!) to 1968.
- 9 For all this see the book on the differences in the Syrian CP cited in note 5, and the article on the Arab CPs' position on the Palestine problem in the present issue of *Khamsin*.

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# The Arab CPs and the Palestine Problem

Alexander Flores

Like many CPs in the third world, the Arab CPs have been unable to win wide influence and truly strike root among the broad popular masses. Yet there are quite a number of conditions favourable to their political success: they are the oldest, most continuous and best organised parties in the Middle East; they have close relations with the Soviet Union, whose prestige — at times quite considerable — they can therefore exploit; and they have at their disposal a theoretical system which, even in its extremely schematised stalinist form, is superior to the other ideologies current in the Middle East in matters of social analysis. Their evident failure has both objective and subjective causes: on the one hand, certain unfavourable political and social conditions (a social structure which is rather unpropitious for the formation of an autonomous proletarian movement, an aristocratic and bourgeois elite which has occupied and managed to maintain the leading position in the national struggle, the Middle East's proximity to Europe and its importance for the imperialist powers. . .) and, on the other hand, these parties' own political mistakes. The latter can mostly be traced back to two inter-related factors.

*First*, the tradition of the communist movement since the 1930s, characterised ideologically by a gross schematic mutilation and deformation of marxism, and, on the organisational level, by an equally schematised and deformed conception of the leninist model of the party. The party's policy was no longer based on a precise prior analysis of the situation of the country in question, but on the 'application' to that situation of certain universally valid 'principles'; and these principles prevailed even when they were incompatible with the actual situation. In the matter of organisation, or so-called democratic centralism, the centre was given preponderance (information and directives flowed 'downwards') — which facilitated the application of the said principles. With such a method, the elaboration of a policy taking due consideration of the realities of the country concerned — a pre-condition for striking real roots among the popular masses — became virtually impossible.

The *second factor* is the direct linkage of the policy of the CPs to that of the Soviet CP, and hence to that of the Soviet Union as a state, at least in strategic matters, but most frequently even in the fine details of tactics. During the existence of the Comintern, this linkage was institutionally secured by the prerogative of the Executive Committee of the Comintern

(ECCI) to hand down instructions to each member party. Later on, other mechanisms (similarity of views, loyal sentiments of solidarity with the Soviet Union, material dependence etc) were no less effective in producing similar results. Concord and solidarity with the Soviet Union do not necessarily bring discredit on a party, particularly in view of the popularity which the Soviet Union enjoyed at times — due to the direct effects of the October revolution, to its general anti-colonialist attitude and later on, to its pro-Arab position on the Middle East conflict. But the blind tailing behind the CPSU impaired still further the CPs' concentration on the reality of their own countries, and had catastrophic consequences whenever the Soviet state took a step against the national interests of the peoples concerned. In the Middle East, the most notable step of this kind was the USSR's support of the UN resolution on the partition of Palestine, and its diplomatic and military aid (in the form of arms supplied through Czechoslovakia) to Israel in the 1948 war. The more or less hesitant acquiescence of the Arab CPs in this Soviet policy cost them the sympathy of the Arab peoples.(1)

The Arab defeat in the war of June 1967 and its aftermath have entailed a certain change in the attitude of the Arab CPs. In the present article we would like to document this process, which in turn reflects the change of direction of the Arab liberation movement as a whole. In doing so, we shall confine ourselves mainly to the CPs of Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, which are particularly affected by the problem, due to the fact that their respective countries are adjacent to Israel and have many Palestinian refugees within their borders. We have few documents on the attitude of the Iraqi CP which, moreover, is smitten by splits. The Egyptian CP, whose history is equally rich in splits, dissolved itself in 1964. It is true that inside the party there had been strong opposition to this decision, and some small communist groups survived very deep underground; but there was no longer a united party until July 1975, when these groups reconstituted themselves as an Egyptian CP.(2) At the time of writing, we have not yet got any documents on the attitude of the new party to the Palestinian question.

### **The question of the partition of Palestine**

During the lifetime of the Comintern, the position of the CPSU — and accordingly of all the Arab CPs — was strictly anti-zionist. There was a clear conception of the class nature of zionism and of its necessary link with imperialist interests in the region, and for this reason everything was done to defeat the zionist project. Towards this end, the leadership of the Palestinian CP supported the Arab national movement during the revolt of 1936-39, and even went a bit far in accepting the reactionary leadership of that movement. This support for national aspirations helped to root the parties among the Arab masses. During the latter years of the

second world war, their membership increased remarkably. The Soviet position on the partition resolution therefore came as a surprise, since it was directly contrary to the previous policy. Whatever the true motives for the Soviet turn-about — and a certain amount of opportunism undoubtedly played a part in this, as the USSR wished to avoid a total confrontation with the US as well as to weaken British influence in the Middle East — the Soviet Union itself only gave the following two reasons: its support for the principle of the right to self-determination, irrespective of circumstances, and the suffering of the Jews under fascist terror during the war, for which they ought to be compensated.

In any case, the new situation meant a serious reverse for the Arab CPs. They felt obliged to toe the Soviet line — not so much because of some '*Diktat*' from Moscow, but by virtue of the weight of communist tradition, which did not allow deviations from the Soviet line. However, they produced a different argument to justify the new line, because the argument used by the Soviet Union itself was totally unacceptable in the Arab environment. Until 1947 they had demanded a democratic state for Arabs and Jews in Palestine, a demand directed against the zionist project of a 'Jewish national home'. Now, in adopting the new Soviet position, they pointed at the balance of forces in the region, which in their view made it impossible to decisively eliminate the imperialist and zionist presence. In these circumstances, one had to accept the partition of Palestine, and build an independent and democratic state in the Arab part. This would be the most one could expect to achieve, and at the same time it would provide a favourable starting point for a future struggle for the creation of a federal socialist state in Palestine. Therefore they condemned the Arab intervention of May, 1948, as an act of the Arab regimes dependent on British imperialism, designed to bring the Arab part of Palestine under the domination of Trans-Jordan and Egypt, and hence under that of Britain.<sup>(5)</sup> This part of the argument is certainly valid, but the strategic evaluation of the situation was false; it regarded British influence in the Middle East as the main enemy, and called for the struggle against it, whereas the danger of zionism and the growing influence of the US were underestimated. Moreover, it saw only the reactionary aspect of Arab nationalism and of its demands, but not the progressive and revolutionising germs in that movement, which were to unfold in the following years (overthrow of the reactionary regimes in Egypt, Syria and Iraq).

In accepting partition, the Arab CPs thus put forward a different shade of justification than the Soviet union; but it can nevertheless be assumed that their respect for the Soviet Union played the most crucial part. Because of this attitude they were strongly attacked, and it was easier for the various regimes to repress them. It would however be wrong to regard this attitude of the parties as the sole, or even principal, cause for their failure. It was rather the totality of the parties' policy, in all its various aspects, which, in the given objective conditions, led to that result. In this the Palestinian question played an important

part, but only as one among other issues, such as the 1958 union between Egypt and Syria.

From about 1952, the attitude of the USSR changed in favour of the Arabs, notably after the 1955 Czech arms deal. This enabled the Arab CPs to denounce Israel more and more vehemently for its pro-imperialist position. But even in this they were subject to a double constraint: they had to take into consideration the policy of the Soviet Union as well as that of the regimes in their own respective countries. For the USSR's pro-Arab turn assumed the form of a slant towards the Arab states and their regimes. In case of conflict between these and the CPs in question, the USSR hardly ever came out in the latter's favour, let alone exercise pressure on their behalf. Thus the parties felt obliged to pay exaggerated deference to the policy of these regimes, in order not to disown the Soviet Union. Here too the constraint was not necessarily conscious, but could equally assert itself through habit of political thought. This led the parties to inflate in their propaganda the significance of every progressive step, no matter how slight, of an Arab regime; they were driven to a rearguard policy, which culminated in the self-dissolution of the Egyptian CP in 1964.

The limit which Soviet policy imposed on the Arab CPs even after 1955 was the recognition of Israel as a state: 'From the 1948 war until the aggression of 1967, the Arab CPs adhered to the slogan "implementation of the UN resolutions"'. The 1967 aggression, however, brought about an abrupt change in the positions of these parties, which now differed sharply with one another.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Arab defeat in the June 1967 war and its repercussions**

In accordance with its pre-1967 line, the USSR strongly condemned the Israeli aggression of June 1967, broke off its diplomatic relations with Israel and pledged its support for the Arab countries concerned, but confined its demands to the restoration of the *status quo ante* by the implementation of the UN resolutions, and thus did not call in question the State of Israel as such. Not that the Soviet Union was unaware of the Zionist nature of Israel; it was indeed perfectly aware of this, and had repeatedly condemned it. What it failed to recognise — or perhaps did recognise, but failed to draw conclusions from — was the very dynamics of Zionist ideology which, in association with Israel's inevitable alignment with imperialist interests, must result in an aggressive and expansionist policy so long as Israel is dominated by Zionism.

In the short term, the Soviet Union advocated the implementation of resolution 242 of the UN Security Council (under the slogan 'liquidation of the consequences of the aggression') as a first step towards a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict. Like some Arab communists, the Soviet Union believed that the class struggle inside Israel itself would eventually lead to the de-Zionisation of Israeli society, if only the Arabs refrain from overt attacks against that state. At first the USSR severely



disapproved of the Palestinian resistance, which it labelled 'adventurist'. For its part, the Palestinian resistance criticised the Soviet position for ignoring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people; to demand moderation from the Arab masses most grievously hit by expulsion and aggression was asking too much. One cannot but agree with this criticism, even though it is true that the Palestinians themselves have not so far developed a strategy that would connect their own objectives of liberation with Israeli reality as such.

Since 1970, there has been a *rapprochement* between the USSR and the Palestinian resistance movement, and the two sides have toned down their mutual criticism. Nevertheless, the difference of views still persists, at least officially, though unofficially the leadership of the PLO seems ready to recognise Israel *de facto*. As far as the Soviet position is concerned, one explanation (among others) lies in the very fact that in 1947 the Soviet Union declared itself in favour of partition, and does not wish to repudiate that attitude completely.

It goes without saying that the Soviet attitude has played a considerable role in determining the position taken by the Arab CPs. The CPSU may no longer be the 'directing centre' of world communism, but it would still like to be that movement's tutor, and it does in fact play that role for the weaker parties, among which are also the Arab CPs. We shall see an example of this later on.

Immediately after the 1967 war, all Arab CPs except two<sup>7</sup> took a position similar to that of the USSR. They spoke about 'liquidating the consequences of the aggression', and in this context approved of Resolution 242 of the UN Security Council. But the defeat in that war triggered off a number of mental processes in Arab society: the aggressive and dangerous nature of Israel came to be seen more clearly and was put in the foreground of the analysis, the weakness of the Arab regimes in facing the aggression was recognised, and there got off the ground a new Palestinian resistance movement which adopted the guerrilla form of organisation and the theory of protracted people's war. All this had its own effect upon the CPs and forced them to react to this development. In so doing, they adopted contradictory positions. Some held on firmly to the old line, either by virtue of their unconditional loyalty to the USSR or because they were incapable of drawing a lesson from the changed situation; others took pains to try and achieve a deeper understanding of the state of affairs and changed their attitude to the problem, whose national dimensions were recognised at long last. The principle issues in that controversy were:-

1 The former attitude to the partition of Palestine — was it wrong or not?  
2 Resolution 242 and the 'liquidation of the consequences of the aggression' — is this a strategic goal of the entire present stage, or a demand raised for tactical reasons?

3 Should one, going beyond this demand, already envisage as an objective the liquidation of the Zionist State of Israel?

4 The attitude, in principle as well as in practice, towards the Palestinian resistance.

## **The Jordanian CP**

The 'tendency for rigidity' is most clearly expressed in an article written by Fahmi Salfiti, then secretary of the CC of the Jordanian CP, for the journal *Problems of Peace and Socialism* published in Prague.<sup>8</sup> In this article he adheres unbendingly to the formula of the liquidation of the consequences of the aggression. His lack of understanding of the Palestinian national problem is seen from the fact that he regards the (occupied) West Bank simply as belonging to Jordan, rather than as a part of Palestine annexed by Jordan in 1950. Thus he remains faithful to the idea which is clearly incompatible with an autonomous Palestinian identity. Salfiti nowhere mentions the Palestinians as such, but refers to them as 'Jordanians' or simply as 'Arabs'. Thus he writes: 'More than 400,000 Jordanian inhabitants found themselves compelled to leave the West Bank of Jordan'.<sup>9</sup>

The following quotation shows how Salfiti schematically separates the national and social aspects of the liberation struggle, and to what extent the then leadership of the party was committed to the idea of a peaceful solution:

'Without directing its main attention to the current problems of economic and social development, the programme confirms and verifies the need for forming a government of national unity, where the participation of representatives of the big bourgeoisie and the land-owners will not be excluded, provided they turn against the occupation. It calls for a peaceful settlement and condemns the adventurist tendencies which have appeared after the defeat'.<sup>10</sup>

The article moreover grossly over-estimates the capability of the Arab regimes to fight against the aggression. This applies even to the Jordanian regime, and in 1968 of all times! 'The existence of such a contradiction (between imperialism, Zionism and the reactionary elements on the one hand and the broad strata hit by the aggression on the other — AF) creates great possibilities for influencing the ruling circles of Jordan, and even the king himself; it accelerates their turning away from imperialism'.<sup>11</sup>

Consequently Salfiti reaches a stern verdict on the Palestinian resistance movement. He points out that its founders originate politically from the Muslim Brotherhood and that the reactionary regimes give them money, and he also asserts that conditions in the Arab countries are not ripe for guerrilla war. He then goes on to say:

'The majority of the members of this sort of organisation are not Jordanians. Since their kernel consists of Arabs from Palestine, these organisations have limited practical possibilities and their goals are unrealisable'.<sup>12</sup> (In an Arabic version of the same article — we do not know whether this was in fact the original text — the last sentence reads as follows: 'These circumstances narrow their scope and cause them to choose goals which are in fact unrealisable'.<sup>13</sup>)

Thus the fact that an organisation is made up for the most part of Palestinians apparently makes a discussion of the content of its politics quite unnecessary! By the way, Salfiti himself is of Palestinian origin, as his name

indicates.

He concludes: 'The activity of these organisations should in most cases be evaluated as negative. True, to some extent they cause damage to the enemy and get some publicity for themselves, but the price for this is paid in many sacrifices, in the expulsion of the Arab population from territories whose soil is most fertile.'<sup>14</sup>

In the whole article one would search in vain for a single allusion to the character of the State of Israel, the exact nature of its ties with imperialism or the reasons for its aggressiveness; missing too is any idea on the long-term perspectives of the struggle.

Unfortunately, this article had a vast circulation and was regarded as the last word of the Arab communists on the Palestinian problem. Nevertheless, it met with lively opposition not only in fraternal Arab parties but especially inside the Jordanian CP itself. Thus Karim Muruwwa, a leader of the Lebanese CP, replied in the following way to a question concerning the article quoted above:

'As far as the Jordanian CP is concerned, I tell you that what was published in its name in an international journal (*Problems of Peace and Socialism*) does not convey the point of view of the Jordanian CP. An official delegate of that party has come to Lebanon, to the Lebanese CP, in order to say this and also to say that there is sincere collaboration between the Jordanian CP in the occupied territories and the fedayin organisations. He said; "The Jordanian CP has gained credit for many actions. I would not speak of this unless I were compelled to, because that would be to boast and brag in front of a fraternal people and a fraternal party."'<sup>15</sup>

The opposition to Salfiti's views inside the Jordanian party was in fact so great that the CC, which was not wholly on his side, published a contrary statement (March 1969). In this document it expressly affirms the right of the Palestinian people to struggle by every means against Israeli oppression and to continue the struggle after the liquidation of the consequences of the aggression:

'The liquidation of Israeli occupation will open the way for the continuation of the struggle for a just solution of the Palestinian problem in accordance with the interests of the Palestinian Arab people and the Arab liberation movement.'<sup>16</sup>

In the June 1969 International Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties, held in Moscow, the Jordanian delegate Fu'ad Nassar said: 'The struggle of the Palestinian Arab people is legitimate and sacred, because its aim is the expulsion of the conquerors and occupiers, the regaining of the territories usurped by Israel since 1948 contrary to United Nations resolutions, the return of those who were expelled, and the implementation of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination on the territory of its homeland. The Jordanian CP, together with the Jordanian people, with other progressive peoples and all Arab peoples, will continue the struggle against the Israeli aggression. It supports the struggle of the Palestinian Arab people and its legitimate resistance against the occupiers and for the restoration of unsurped rights.'<sup>17</sup>

The debate inside the Jordanian CP went on, and towards the end of 1969 led to the election of a new CC. Salfiti, who was unable to have his own way, left the party at the beginning of 1971 together with a small group of supporters.<sup>18</sup>

In November 1969, the party's paper in the occupied territories, *Al-Watan*, wrote: 'For our people, there is no other way to the liberation of its country and the defence of its existence but the intensification of the resistance and the use of higher forms of struggle.'<sup>19</sup> This indicated that the party not only approved of armed struggle in principle – as even Salfiti had done – but was preparing to practise it.

In March 1970, the Jordanian CP announced the creation of a commando organisation for the liberation of Palestine, called *Ansar* (= 'partisans' or 'adherents'), in which the Syrian, Lebanese and Iraqi CPs also soon took part. The importance of this lies not so much in the combat power of the new organisation, which remained small and was at first disowned by most other resistance groups, but more in the new attitude of the CPs towards the Palestinian resistance: no longer merely verbal approval, but actual participation in the armed struggle. Nevertheless, the Ansar forces, as well as the CPs themselves, still adhered to certain points which were rejected by the Palestinians in general: acceptance of Resolution 242, stress on the need for *all* forms of struggle, etc.<sup>20</sup> This naturally entailed a certain degree of incoherence in the party's new position: on the one hand, it moved closer to the resistance, but on the other hand it kept on to positions rejected by the latter. The Ansar forces were well aware of this and made an effort deliberately to omit all mention of the controversial points such as Resolution 242. The other resistance groups were slow to welcome the new organisation, and its representative was only co-opted onto the National Council in his personal capacity and against the opposition of some Fatah leaders. In 1972, the Ansar forces were dissolved by the CPs – presumably in order to further the unity of the resistance and with a view to influencing the movement as a whole, if need be by individual affiliation to the various organisations.<sup>21</sup>

In accordance with the Jordanian CP's newly adopted view that the Palestinian people has a national identity of its own and that the status of the West Bank as part of Jordan can only be provisional, the communists of the occupied territories separated themselves organisationally from the party and formed themselves into the *Palestinian Communist Organisation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip*, which however retained a close collaboration with the parent party.

Despite the party's political *rapprochement* with the Palestinian resistance, there remained some sharp differences: the party continued to stress its advocacy of the implementation of Resolution 242 as an important tactical step (though no longer as a strategic goal). It admits that the Palestinians reject the resolution because it does not take their national rights into consideration, but it believes that a point-blank rejection gives rise to a needless split among the progressive Arab forces. The party does not explicitly challenge the existence of the State of Israel, although it is

difficult to see how the right of the refugees to return and to self-determination in their country can be implemented in that state as it is. This shows an inconsistency which is perhaps dictated by deference to the Israeli CP, but undoubtedly above all to the USSR.

Finally, a particularly thorny issue is the question of the 1947/8 partition of Palestine. The party certainly condemns the actual outcome of the 1948 partition, but not the 1947 UN resolution:

'Because of its subjugation to colonialist and reactionary domination, Jordan was used as a base for the conspiracy against the Palestinian people and its cause, which culminated in the imperialist-zionist plot of 1948 against Palestine. This plot prevented the implementation of the UN resolution of 29 November 1947 and led to the Palestinian Arab people being deprived of its right to self-determination. This, in turn, resulted in the carving up of that people's state and in the expulsion of the people itself, part of the territory of its state falling under Israeli occupation and another part being annexed by Jordan.'<sup>22</sup>

While this account correctly renders the factual development, it skirts round an evaluation of the partition resolution and of the communist stand towards it, thus avoiding discussion of a crucial point that has caused grave tension between communists and Arab nationalists.

On the other hand, in talking with party members, one can hear an entirely explicit and quite frank criticism of the 1947 positions, but this does not easily find its way into official documents, where due respect must be paid to various 'diplomatic' consideration. However, in this connection it is significant that the party has re-published pre-1947 documents of '*Ushbat al-taharrur al-watani* (= *National Liberation League*) which are being circulated and arouse lively discussions among the membership. The NLL was, in 1943-48, the organisation of Arab communists in Palestine, which was strongly opposed to partition; until the early 1970s its documents had been taboo in the Jordanian CP. '<sup>23</sup>

## **The Lebanese CP**

Immediately after the defeat of June 1967, the Lebanese CP took a position similar to that the USSR. In an article published in 15 October 1967 in its weekly *Al-Akhbar*, it speaks above all about liquidating the consequences of the aggression and stresses the importance of the UN resolutions in this respect. But the argumentation and language are quite different from those used by Salfiti, to take an extreme example. Thus the article begins with a call for a solution of the Palestinian problem 'in accordance with the interest of the Palestinian people and its incontestable right to its soil and homeland.'<sup>24</sup> There follows a general discussion of the nature of the State of Israel and its importance for imperialism, which is completely absent from Salfiti's article though it is essential for a proper discussion of the problem. The *Al-Akhbar* article, then shows that even at that early stage, immediately after the war, some thinking was done on the nature of the

aggression, ie on the inherent logic of zionism and Israel's organic ties to the interests of imperialism in the region, which had led inexorably to the aggression. Consequently, the demand raised is not merely for the restoration of the *status quo*, but for a solution in the interest of the Palestinian people. On the other hand, the article makes no mention of the Palestinian resistance in the proper sense, as at that stage it had not yet acquired its reputation.

The discussion inside the Lebanese CP led eventually to a critical revision of the party's entire policy since its first congress (December 1943 — January 1944). At its second congress, held in July 1968, the CC report contained a detailed summary of the party's policy in the intervening twenty-five years and a criticism of certain 'deviations'. On the national problem, the report says:

'In point of fact, the party took a narrow view of the Palestinian cause and the colonial-zionist conspiracy against it. It did not grasp that in the first phase Palestine itself was the target in the plans of colonialism and zionism, and that the motivation for achieving this target in the first place was to make the Palestine issue a point of departure for damming up and suppressing the Arab national liberation movement, which had grown vigorously after the second world war and was beginning to endanger the positions of colonialist domination in a region whose soil contains more than half of the world's known oil reserves, a region which constitutes a strategically important position as a junction connecting the colonialist West with South-East Asia and the Far East, and which borders on the south of the Soviet Union. That is to say, the party was incapable of evaluating properly the real political and national dimensions, which in the long run were to result in the success of the conspiracy against Palestine — the erection of an artificial structure on its soil.

*'The dogmatic view of the national problems'*

'It must frankly be admitted that this came about because for a long time we had under-estimated and neglected and national problems and failed to understand them in an objective way and to see their revolutionary character. This was due to our having viewed the national problems wrongly — that is, from the outside — and taking them to be only the concern of the bourgeoisie, as if the workers, and the peasants and the popular masses have no national sentiments and are untouched by national questions.' [There follows a short explanation of the difference between European and Arab nationalism which the party had not seen earlier, hence its disregard for national problems, and the report goes on to say:] 'If we were confronted with a fundamental problem of a national nature, such as the Palestinian problem, it assumed in our eyes the form of Nuri Sa'id, of King 'Adballah, of Faruq and the other puppets; and we did not see the deep popular current which was powerfully propelled by national motive forces and which would eventually lead to the expulsion of the puppets or to their removal in one way or another. On the other hand, we must not pass in

silence over certain chauvinistic trends that predominated the thoughts and concepts of several nationalist organisations, and anti-communist tendencies they displayed, which helped to reinforce our emotional positions on the national question.<sup>25</sup>

But despite the criticism of its own attitude to the partition of Palestine, the Lebanese CP still defends the USSR's position on that issue: 'The fundamental position of the Soviet Union on this question aimed at the independence of Palestine in the framework of a unitary state. But the interwoven aspects of the problem, the aggravation of the situation and the continual conspiracy of the colonialists threatened to frustrate completely the realisation of this aim. These circumstances made it necessary to take in practice a position which would foil the conspiracy of the colonialists and guarantee peace and quiet in the region, while at the same time stressing the need to work toward a unified state.'<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, the Lebanese communists were not entitled to take such a 'practical' position; being directly involved, and not subject to the exigencies of world-wide political responsibility, they ought to have stuck to their principled opposition to the partition of Palestine.

One can see the difficulties involved in the need to defend Soviet policy on all important points. Still, let us note that the Lebanese CP did clearly dissociate itself from its old dogmatic position, and the explanation it offered in doing so was essentially correct.

The programme adopted by that same congress expresses the party's current views on the Palestinian problem. Its treatment of this subject begins with a historical outline of zionism and its fight against the Arab national movement, in order to elucidate the political content of zionism. The programme rejects the 1947 partition resolution, but here too an attempt is made to justify the Soviet position. It reaches the conclusion that Israel is, externally, the truncheon and gendarme of imperialism in the region for suppressing the Arab liberation movement and an instrument of neo-colonialist penetration into Africa and Asia; and that, internally, Israel is a capitalist and clericalist state based on the oppression of workers and racist discrimination of Arabs and Oriental Jews. As for the party's views on the way to a solution of the Palestinian problem, they are contained in the following quotation:

'The just and realistic way, which opens up a real possibility for solving the Palestinian problem, passes through strengthening the progressive Arab regimes, which will be the main force in solving the problem, and through undermining those Arab countries which are still dominated by feudalism and reaction, because they are allies of colonialism and zionism and an obstacle in the road to the solution of each and every problem in the sense of liberation, progress and Arab unity.

'The present resistance movement, part of which is the armed resistance of the Palestinian people in Israel and in the occupied territories, is the revolutionary movement of a people robbed of its land and all its rights. All patriotic and progressive forces, including the communists, participate in this struggle; it receives the backing and support of all the forces of progress

around the world and of their vanguard, the socialist countries and the world communist movement.

'The complete solution of the Palestinian problem must be based on principled positions and must begin with the recognition of the inalienable right of the Palestinian Arabs to their soil and their homeland, hence the recognition of their right to return to that homeland and their right to self-determination there. One cannot justify anything founded upon violence and robbery; and the presence today of Jews in Palestine cannot prejudice the historical and natural right of the Palestinian Arabs to their country.'<sup>27</sup>

This passage shows that in the confrontation with Israel the Lebanese communists attach principal importance to the 'progressive' Arab regimes, at least during the present phase. In this they follow the tradition of Arab communists. However, the far-reaching recognition of Palestinian rights is not grounded on that tradition; and it is moreover incompatible with the guarantees which the Soviet Union is prepared to give to the Israeli *state*.

The third congress of the party made no essential changes in this position; but it made more explicit reference to the Palestinian resistance, which in the mean time had won greater popularity. The 'national movement of the Palestinian Arab people' is regarded as part of the liberation movement on both Arab and world scale. The party therefore 'has been working for the support of the resistance by all political, moral, material and human means, including participation in armed actions. Together with other progressive forces, it has concentrated its struggle on the defence of the resistance against the conspiracy and the attempts at liquidation to which it has been exposed.'<sup>28</sup> The reference to participation in the armed struggle is an allusion to the *Ansar* forces mentioned above in connection with the Jordanian CP.

The Lebanese party has not however abandoned its criticism of the Palestinian resistance movement and the concepts relating to it:

'The party has vigorously opposed the false opportunistic conceptions of the right and "left" of this movement which amount to separating between it and the Arab liberation movement, either by viewing it in isolation from the basic anti-imperialist and progressive content which the Arab national movement possesses at its present stage, or by trying to burden it with more than it can carry and by arbitrarily making it out to be the vanguard of, and sometimes even a substitute for, the entire national liberation movement, rather than regarding it as part of the latter. . . . From this principled and firm point of view, the party has looked at the mistakes of the resistance and expressed its opinion frankly and clearly; whether it was a matter of structural defects resulting from the basically petty-bourgeois class structure of the movement, from the anti-communism which was widespread in some of its groups and among many of its leading elements, and from the fact that it succumbed to the material enticements of Arab reaction and has relied on it; or whether it was a matter of mistakes resulting from a series of wrong strategic and tactical practices. However, the party has always stressed that these shortcomings and mistakes should



not conceal the progressive and anti-imperialist content embodied in the resistance movement.

Similarly, the party has always noted the difficult and complicated conditions which confront the struggle of the Palestinian people and the resistance groups, and which are the objective cause of many mistakes in the practice of the resistance, just as it has courageously stressed the responsibility of the communists, who did not assume a more active role in this movement right from the beginning, for had they done so they might perhaps have strengthened it and reduced its mistakes and weaknesses.<sup>29</sup>

The Lebanese CP's criticism of the Palestinian resistance relates to the fact that the latter does not have a clear view of its own social character and of its relationship with the Arab liberation movement in general, and is therefore incapable of elaborating a programme which would, *first*, indicate the goals of the present stage (stating their *social* character) and, *second*, deduce from a realistic analysis the correct relationships of the resistance to political forces in the Arab and international arenas.

This criticism is expounded systematically in an essay by Karim Muruwwa in the special issue of *Dirasat 'Arabiyya* from which we have already quoted above.<sup>30</sup> He criticises the view of the Fatah theoreticians, according to which the Palestinian refugees constitute a class apart, and their exile situation justifies deferring the social issues in the liberation struggle till after the return to Palestine.<sup>31</sup> Muruwwa insists on the fact that the Palestinian people is for the most part integrated into the relations of production — deformed though they may be — of the host Arab countries, where the petty-bourgeoisie preponderates but where there are also elements of all other, mutually opposed classes. The resistance movement is influenced by all class forces interested in national liberation, albeit conceived by some of them merely as restoration of the old class society. Hence — according to Muruwwa — the vague and hazy character of the ideology of the resistance, which obstinately clings to nationalist dogmas and makes them the sole touchstone of correct political position, thereby making it easier for very dubious elements to attach themselves to the movement.

Muruwwa calls for clear strategy and tactics, which above all would take more consciously into consideration the social nature of the struggle and would put the relationship of the resistance to the Arab peoples and regimes on a more realistic basis. Here too he gives much credit to the 'progressive' regimes; but taken as a whole his criticism poses correctly the problem of the weaknesses of the Palestinian resistance.

Since then the position of the CP has not changed in any essential way. But it is important to state that on this basis there developed a practical collaboration between the Palestinian resistance and the Lebanese CP. Both sides opened their press organs to each other; and in particular Muruwwa often writes in *Filastin al-Thawra* and *Shu'un Filastiniyya*, respectively the central organ and theoretical journal of the PLO. His essay discussed above originated as a lecture delivered in the cadre school of the PFLP. The

Lebanese CP belongs to the *Arab Front for Participation in the Palestinian Revolution* which in the general Arab arena is mostly a forum for declamation, but which has played in *Lebanon* an important role in defending the resistance and enhancing its political influence. This process has only rarely been properly recognised, because the Palestinians for their part have been rather reserved in the matter of practical solidarity with the Lebanese left.<sup>32</sup>

As we have seen, the support of the Lebanese CP for the resistance was combined with criticism. While certain points of this criticism were unacceptable to the resistance, it was nevertheless an important factor in the process of theoretical clarification. At present this clarification process is to some extent put in abeyance because of the Lebanese events. The need for it, however, is underlined by the course of these very events.

Naturally, the CP has particularly close relations with the left-wing guerrilla organisations. Thus at first only the PFLP and the DFLP came forward in favour of recognising the Ansar forces as part of the PLO. But later on the other organisations also developed good relations with them, in parallel with the improvement of relations between the PLO and the Soviet Union.

### **The Syrian CP**

The tendency of changing the traditional attitude, which we have traced in the other parties, operated also in the Syrian CP — but in different circumstances and with different results. Khalid Bakdash, secretary general of the party and a great authority among all CPs in the Arab East, remained attached to the traditional position. His partisanship of the USSR is so unconditional, that he does not allow himself the slightest deviation from its conceptions.

The third congress of the Syrian CP, held in June 1969, resolved that a draft programme be drawn up; and such a document was indeed approved by the CC in 1970 and circulated inside the party for discussion. This draft was inspired by the Lebanese CP's programme mentioned above, but went even further in its attacks against Israel and its support of the resistance:

'The essence of the Palestinian problem lies in the following:

'1 The Palestinian Arab people has the right to liberate its homeland, usurped by colonialism and zionism, to return to it, to exercise self-determination in its territory and to set up its own state in the form it wishes.

'2 The enemy of the Palestinian Arab people in this struggle is the same one that has deprived it of this right, namely imperialism and zionism.

'3 The struggle of the Palestinian Arab people is a just liberation struggle and forms an inseparable part of the Arab national liberation movement and therefore of the world revolutionary movement.

'4 In order to enable the Palestinian Arab people to achieve its goal regarding the liberation of its homeland, zionism and its aggressive and

and expansionist institutions must be liquidated.

'5 The Palestinian Arab people has the right to employ various forms of struggle, including armed struggle, for achieving its goals. The Arab nation is duty bound to work for the creation of all conditions facilitating the achievement of the just goals of that people.

'6 The realisation of the national rights of the Palestinian Arab people does not contradict but is consistent with the interest of the Jewish masses to live together with it in a just and democratic peace, free from colonialism and zionism, and to decide their own future as they please.'<sup>33</sup>

On the party's attitude to the actions of the guerrillas, the document says: 'The Arab masses in general, and in particular their progressive forces, are called upon not only to intensify their material and moral support of the resistance movement, but also to step up their practical participation in this great patriotic and national activity, because the Israeli occupation of Arab territories affects the interests of all the Arab peoples.'<sup>34</sup> It also states explicitly that the guerrilla struggle should not come to an end with the liberation of the territories occupied in 1967.<sup>35</sup>

All this would later be said by the Jordanian and Lebanese communists as well, but as communist party programmes go it is very explicit, and it shows how strong the pressure must have been at the party's roots, given that the secretary general, Bakdash, had a quite different view. During the general discussion of the draft programme, he therefore came out against the passages in question. His position was in minority in the Politbureau, but he controlled the party's apparatus.

By the beginning of 1971 the party had virtually split, and it was no longer possible to patch it up by internal discussion. Having the apparatus at his disposal, Bakdash managed to win over to his side a substantial part of the membership, which the opposing faction was unable to neutralise (as the analogous tendencies in the Jordanian and Lebanese parties had been neutralised), particularly as in this case the Secretary General had the ideological and material support of the CPSU.

In May 1971, a joint delegation of both factions left for Moscow in order to discuss with Soviet leaders and officials how the conflict might be resolved. In the course of these talks, members of the Soviet team made strong objections to the statements on the Palestinian question in the draft programme. In their view the programme should have confined itself to demanding the liquidation of the consequences of the 1967 aggression, and the right of the Palestinians to return to their country and exercise self-determination there. It should not have specified what must be done with the State of Israel in order to achieve these aims, but should have left this to a future collaboration with Israeli democrats. Anything said in the programme beyond these demands would not be a class position and would be inconsistent with proletarian internationalism — assertions upon which the Soviet experts did not further elaborate.

It is not possible to enumerate here all the points of the criticism, which in any case consisted of disjointed remarks on various formulations and was not meant for publication.<sup>36</sup> It reveals very clearly the pretension of the

Soviet communists to direct the whole of the world communist movement, as well as their sensitivity to the slightest or most implicit criticism.

As a result of these talks, the Syrian communists promised to re-unite. For this purpose they called a conference, which met in November 1971 and in the course of which Bakdash, claiming that strategic differences with the USSR are inadmissible for communists, demanded an unconditional acceptance of the Soviet position:

'They [Bakdash's opponents — A.F.] set themselves another objective, which they call a strategic objective — the elimination of Israel as a state, under the slogan either of the "liberation of Palestine" or the liberation of "their usurped homeland", or under the slogan of the "liquidation of Zionist institutions" or something of the kind.

'Such talk is not only at variance with the decisions of the seventh congress of the Communist International, which called for an identity of objectives; it is also at variance with proletarian internationalism; it is at variance with the class attitude and consequently with the interests of the Arab people and our interests as a party.

'Such talk, the employment of such extremist, unrealistic and non-class slogans, whatever is intended by them, can only serve the aims of colonialist Zionist propaganda.

'If you will permit me, I want to say in a completely brotherly way that all talk to the effect that we are friends of the USSR, but that we differ from it as regards the strategic objective, is not communist talk.'<sup>37</sup>

This conference too failed to lead to any reconciliation of the two positions. Since then the situation has solidified, so that to all intents and purposes there are two Syrian CPs, of roughly equal political weight,<sup>38</sup> differing sharply with one another on various issues, among which the Palestinian question is the most important. Officially, for the purpose of representation outside, they do not appear as separated, but in current usage they are distinguished from each other by the designations 'Syrian CP — Bakdash group' and 'Syrian CP — Riad al-Turk group' (the names of their respective leaders). Nevertheless, Bakdash has to some extent kept the privileged position of mediator between the CPSU and the CPs of the Mashriq, so that he still has close relations with the parties that on the political level are much closer to his opponents.

## **Conclusions and prospects**

Let us sum up. The Arab CPs dealt with here have sharply changed their attitude toward the Palestinian problem after the 1967 defeat. Immediately after the war they retained their traditional conception of the problem, did not truly grasp the deep connection between imperialism and Zionism in the expansionist and aggressive policy of Israel, confined themselves to the demand for the liquidation of the consequences of the aggression and left the rest to the class struggle inside Israel or to future stages of the confrontation. They also retained their wrong and rather unpopular old

evaluation of the 1947 partition resolution, which had provided justification and legitimation for the creation of the Zionist state. But even as these positions were being articulated, they met with a growing opposition which eventually overcame them.

The exponents of this other position have examined more precisely the character of the Israeli state, and have concluded that the Arab liberation movement ought to direct its struggle against the very existence of that state machine, in a prolonged confrontation, in which the implementation of the UN resolutions would only be the first phase. Consequently, the CPs have gone beyond merely ideological support for the Palestinian resistance and have taken some active part in the armed struggle. This change of position, which also takes the national interest into consideration, was certainly brought about by the 1967 aggression itself, which made the character of Israel stand out more clearly, *as well as* by its repercussions on the Palestinian and Arab levels and above all by the rise of the armed resistance movement, which won a great deal of popularity in all the Arab countries after the battle of Karameh (21 March 1968).

This new attitude has enabled the CPs to collaborate with the resistance and to exercise ideological and political influence over it. Thus it has created for the CPs the preconditions for coming out of their isolation, which had resulted (among other causes) from their negative attitude toward certain national questions. The possibility therefore exists for a closer relation between the national and social factors in the ongoing Arab liberation struggle.

But the process described here has been a contradictory one, inasmuch as it has changed in a positive sense certain subjective factors of political success, but has by no means eliminated all the errors and weaknesses of the parties in question. There still remain the close ties with the Soviet Union *and its policies*, which can be harmful in certain respects. There remains also the traditional party schematism, which restricts their freedom of political action and their ability to react; they still grossly overestimate the so-called progressive regimes, etc. To this one should also add the insufficiently clear and partly false definition of the class nature of the national liberation movement. We cannot elaborate here on this subject, but merely mention for example the theory of the non-capitalist road of development, the democratic-national state, etc.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, the Arab CPs have neither large numbers of members nor great influence on the masses. In a word: they can in no way claim to be revolutionary vanguard organisations. They have taken a step in a direction which may after all enable them to become effective political factors. Will the CPs manage to transform their new chances into political success, and if so what might be the nature of this success? At the present moment one cannot clearly predict this.

### *Postscript*

*This article was written in autumn 1976. Unfortunately, I have too little recent first-hand knowledge and documents to deal appropriately with the*

intervening period. My evaluation of certain views and actions of the CPs was influenced by the conceptual framework of Palestinian nationalism to an extent I find exaggerated today. This is above all the case with the communists' stand towards the partition issue which certainly would have merited a more thorough analysis. Nevertheless I preferred to leave the article in its original form since after all its stress lies on more recent developments and I still believe that in this respect it is of a certain documentary value.

A. F.

## References

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- 2 On this new CP see *Al-Safir*, Beirut 4 August 1975 (in Arabic).
- 3 Cf Arnold Krammer, 'Soviet motives in the partition of Palestine', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 6 (II,2), p102-199.
- 4 See the speeches of the Soviet representatives at the UN, reproduced (in French) in *Partisans* no 52, March-April 1970, p64-73.
- 5 See 'Abdelqader Yasin, 'The Arab CPs and the Palestinian problem' (in Arabic), in *The Palestinian Resistance; Realities and Prospects*, special publication of the journal *Dirasat 'Arabiyya*, Dar al-Tali'a, Beirut 1971, p49-65.
- 6 *ibid*, p62.
- 7 These exceptions which we do not discuss here — they have no direct repercussion on the ground — are the Sudanese and Moroccan parties. They have explicitly demanded the liquidation of the State of Israel. On this see documents in Naji 'Allush (ed), *Discussions on the Palestinian Revolution* (in Arabic), Dar al Tali'a, Beirut 1970, p330-6; and Ali Yata (secretary general of the Moroccan CP), 'Liberation nationale et revolution social. L'exemple de la Palestine', in Anouar Abdel-Malek (ed), *La pensee politique arabe contemporaine*, Seuil, Paris 1970, p321-30.
- 8 Fahmi Salfiti, 'Das Wichtigste in der Taktik der jordanischem Kommunisten', in *Probleme des Friedens und des Sozialismus*, no 10/11 (October/November 1968), p1359-1367.
- 9 *ibid*, p1359.
- 10 *ibid*, p1360.
- 11 *ibid*, p1361.
- 12 *ibid*, p1366.
- 13 The Arabic text is in the volume edited by N. 'Allush mentioned in note 7, p354-68. The sentence in question is on p366.
- 14 F. Salfiti, *loc cit* p1367.
- 15 Karim Muruwwa, 'The CP', in Arab Cultural Club (ed), *The Political*

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- 19 Cf Naji 'Allush, 'The Arab CPs and the Palestinian problem after the 1967 aggression' (in Arabic), in *Shu'un Filastiniyya* no 4 (September 1971), p163.
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- 24 For example, National Liberation League in Palestine, *The Palestinian problem and the way to its solution* (in Arabic), published by the Jordanian CP, n.p., August 1973. On the 'Usba see Yehoshua Porath, 'Usbat al-Taharrur al-Watani (The National Liberation League) 1943-1948', in *Asian and African Studies* 4, Jerusalem 1968, p1-21; and Mohammed Hafiz Ya'qub, 'From the history of the revolutionary movement in Palestine: The National Liberation League and the mid-1940s' (in Arabic), in *Dirasat 'Arabiyya* no 1 (November 1972), p39-65.
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- 30 *ibid*, p149.
- 31 Karim Muruwwa, 'On strategy and tactics in the resistance movement' (in Arabic), in *The Palestinian Resistance etc.* (cited in note 5), p223-40.
- 32 Here is an example of this Fatah argumentation: '... [T]he new class of refugees, which has not been taken into consideration by many thinkers, is the class on which the Palestinian revolution depends. ... [Al-Fatah] is the only revolutionary movement which has transcended the Arab movements, Arab parties and the Palestinian regional movements, and it has done this because it has depended on the class.' 'Abu Lutf answers questions', in Leila S. Kadi (ed), *Basic*

*Political Documents of the Armed Palestinian Resistance Movement*, PLO Research Center, Beirut 1969, p102.

- 32 In this respect see Samir Franjeh, 'How revolutionary is the resistance?', in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, I, no 2 (Winter 1972), p52-60; and Sadik Al-Azm. 'The Palestinian resistance movement reconsidered', in Edward Said and Fuad Suleiman (eds), *The Arabs Today. Alternatives for Tomorrow*, Columbus, Ohio 1973, p121-135.
- 33 Draft programme of the Syrian CP, in *Questions of the Difference inside the Syrian CP* (in Arabic), Dar Ibn Khaldun, Beirut 1972, p82f.
- 34 *ibid*, p85.
- 35 *ibid*, p84.
- 36 See notes of this discussion taken by one of the Syrian participants, 'The Soviet attitude to the Palestinian Problem. From the records of the Syrian CP, 1971-72', in *Journal of Palestine Studies* 5 (II,1), p187-212.
- 37 Excerpts from Bakdash's speech to the conference, reproduced *ibid*, p203.
- 38 This refers to the situation before the Syrian intervention in Lebanon, which the Bakdash group supported.
- 39 There are signs that the Arab communists are realising the inadequacy of these conceptions, which are widely accepted in the world communist movement. See for example the books of Karim Muruwwa, the work of the Lebanese communist theoretician Mahdi Amil, and the communist-inspired periodical *Kitabat Misriyya* (= Egyptian Writings) appearing in Beirut.



# Recent studies on the history of the PCP

*Alexander Flores*

For any study of the relationship between nationalism and socialism in the Middle East, the rise and fate of the Palestine Communist Party (PCP) is a focus of interest. If we consider the general and regional levels, there are several reasons for such an interest. Between the two world wars, the PCP was the most important CP in the Middle East. Its endeavour can be understood as an encounter of modern socialism in its leninist form, coming from Europe, with the realities of the Orient. In the Palestinian case, these two sides were personified in the Jewish militants of the party who had come from Eastern Europe — originally for Zionist motives — and in the masses of Arab peasants living in the country. This accounts for the PCP being a case in point not only for the Middle East — where a predominant role of minorities in the communist movement is a common feature — but also for the problem of how socialists tackle national issues in general.

Furthermore, and more specifically, PCP history is of utmost importance for any study of the Palestine problem and its historical roots. For a long time during the mandate, the PCP was the only force in Palestine that did not only fight Zionism but also saw clearly the latter's symbiosis with imperialism and accordingly tried to combine anti-Zionist struggle with a consistent fight against British imperialism and its accomplices among the Arab leadership. Furthermore, it was the only party that had Jews and Arabs as members with equal rights and proposed an internationalist solution to the Palestine problem. Yet the PCP could not, for all its great efforts, preserve its internationalist outlook and organisational unity up to the end of the mandate. In view of its sometimes heroic efforts to avoid this retreat from internationalism, this failure shows the force of national dynamics in Palestine as well as an inherent weakness of the communists' own attitude towards national problems.

An account of the PCP's search for an internationalist solution of the Palestine problem and of the failure of this search may afford a deep insight into the history of this issue and especially into its social aspects. Yet, in spite of its importance, the history of the PCP has not until recently aroused any marked interest. This may be due, among other factors, to the inaccessibility of the sources and to the insufficiency of the older works dealing with the subject.

In the West, the works of W. Laqueur were almost the only ones containing information on the PCP. Laqueur relies on a relatively good knowledge of the original sources, but what he makes of them is seriously influenced by his Zionist and anti-communist outlook and his consequent

desire to slander and ridicule the PCP. Despite this fact, Laqueur's works are still widely used by all writers on the subject, sometimes with a critical remark but seldom in the necessary critical spirit.

The Arab public had until recently to rely on works by I. Murqus, H. Darwaza and A. Yasin. Their factual information is not better than that of Laqueur (from whom they derive much material, by the way); and they inevitably point to the fact that most of the Palestinian communists were Jews and that for this reason they were — in their opinion — unable to serve the interests of the Arab population. By accepting this Arab nationalist point of view, the authors in question subscribe at the same time to a fundamental zionist principle, namely, that zionism and Jewry, in the last resort, are but one.

In Israel, publications on the PCP were limited to some anticommunist works in the spirit of Laqueur and to some reproductions of original documents. The Israeli CP, successor of the PCP, did very little to make known its own early history.

Only the very last few years have brought a change in the interest in PCP history. Without analysing the reasons for this change, which must be sought in the increased interest in the Palestine problem as a whole, we can only welcome it. In this review we shall outline the character, the scope, and the sources of the major studies on the subject that have appeared so far.

**Mario Offenberger, *Kommunismus in Palaestina. Nation und Kalasse in der antikolonialen Revolution*, Meisenheim am Glan 1975 (Ph. D. thesis, West Berlin, 1975).**

This work deals with the social and political conditions of the communist enterprise in Palestine, with the pre-history of the party, ie, its roots in the Eastern European Jewish workers' movement, and with its early history up to about 1925. For the first time, we now possess a reliable account of the background and the early history of the party, for this early period was particularly little known. Yet it is very important because at that time the PCP (formed as MPS in 1919) underwent the critical development from left-wing zionism to anti-zionist internationalism.

Offenberger starts with a chapter on Palestinian social structure emphasising its difference from the European model. This chapter, going far back into history, is perhaps insufficiently linked to the general subject of the study. The second chapter deals with the interests of British imperialism in Palestine and its ensuing policy, the third treats the unsuccessful attempts to bring about a working alliance between the left-zionist Poalei Zion World Union and the Comintern. The World Union rejected the demand of the Comintern to free itself definitely from zionism, so the merger did not take place (1922). The remaining chapters deal with the roots, emergence, and early history of the party in Palestine. It developed out of the Palestinian Poalei Zion party. The latter split in March 1919, and its left wing founded MPS in October of that same year. This party then became MPSI, JCPPZ,

split up into PCP and CPP in September 1922, and re-united as PCP in July 1923, when it became an openly communist party with a clear anti-zionist program. This party performed its mass activities mainly through the 'workers' fraction', its trade union organisation which was expelled from the Histadruth in April 1924.

In his account of party history, Offenberg draws heavily on a wide sample of original party material and on interviews with numerous old party members. The use he makes of his sources is, however, not uncritical: For all important issues, party statements are confronted with contemporary realities. The study treats a variety of issues related to PCP history, but (quite naturally in the case of this party, and especially for its early period) it centres on the CP's stand towards zionism. The treatment of the party's history as a whole ends with the Afuleh events (November 1924) and their aftermath, but for its relationship with the Arab national and workers' movements the account is continued till 1929.

Upholding a clear distinction between developments on the Palestinian and on the international level, Offenberg concentrates on the former, unlike other works that confound both or see the PCP only in terms of global Comintern policies. In another sense, too, he sees the party's history from 'within'; starting from a socialist, internationalist point of view, he tries to uncover the tradition of this attitude in Palestine. Therefore he stresses the early period during which the party gradually gained its internationalist stand. He shows how this development proved the incompatibility of zionism and socialism. Unlike the authors we have mentioned, he strongly argues that zionism and Jewry are not the same and that the PCP was right in distinguishing between them. From this angle, he criticises the Arab leadership in Palestine that took the opposite view, and shows how this and other reactionary characteristics of the Arab national movement precluded a durable co-operation between it and the PCP.

Offenberg's study points to the lessons to be drawn from early PCP history for the search for a just solution to the Palestine conflict still enduring today: There were very early proposals to solve the problem on an internationalist basis; the attempts to follow these lines met with great difficulties; but there is no other way to reach a durable solution to the conflict.

Beside this view and the materialist method, the book is unique in its exhaustive use of original sources. Therefore, one would hope to see it continued beyond 1925.

**Jacob Hen-Tov, *Communism and Zionism in Palestine. The Comintern and the Political Unrest in the 1920s*, Cambridge, Mass, 1974.**

Hen-Tov's book, while dealing partly with the same period as Offenberg's, starts from a completely different point of view. The author, a pro-zionist expert on Soviet studies, wants to explore a 'hitherto relatively unknown chapter in the history of the struggle of Communism against

Zionism' (pVII), namely, the PCP's struggle in the 1920s. As one would expect from a sovietologist setting himself this purpose, the struggle in Palestine is not presented in its own right, but as an extension of the world-wide struggle of the Comintern against world capitalism and zionism. Consequently, the study lays great stress on the various organisational ties of the PCP and its mass organisations with the leading centre in Moscow and gives interesting information on this subject (chapters IV and V). On the other hand, there is little about conditions in Palestine, at least insofar as the background of the PCP is concerned. No wonder, then, that the story of its emergence is completely lacking. To the uninformed reader, it must seem as the work of Jewish communist emissaries from the Soviet Union — a totally erroneous view. Offenberg has shown that the emergence of the party and its move to a consistent anti-zionist stand was primarily influenced by conditions in Palestine itself. In describing these conditions, Hen-Tov deals mostly with political developments, somewhat naively accepting at face value all common zionist statements, myths, and evaluations (so, for instance, the land purchased near Afuleh was 'an uninhabited area of swampland', p91; the Passfield White Paper is characterised as 'clearly an anti-zionist document', p22; and so on). Thus, the Arab grievances are mainly reduced to

'the growing imbalance between the dynamic social and economic development of the *Yishuv* . . . on the one hand, and the inherited backwardness of the Arab community, on the other' (p12), without inquiring into the real nature of this imbalance and its material effects on the Arabs. Hen-Tov's outlook resembles that of Laqueur, but there is an important difference: As a sophisticated zionist, Laqueur quite skilfully uses true and half-true statements to distort the truth, renders his sources inaccurately, and tries to present his own opinion as gospel truth. Hen-Tov, as a somewhat naive zionist, often uses zionist sources quite uncritically, but they are easily discernible as such. As a scrupulous researcher, he renders his quotations exactly and always specifies his sources. Therefore, his chapters VI, VII, and VIII, describing the ideological struggle of communism against zionism, the PCP reaction to the August 1929 events, and the subsequent reassessment of party policy, do not intentionally distort communist argumentation. Where an analysis would have been necessary to grasp the meaning of a certain view or theory, Hen-Tov's assessments sometimes remain superficial. Such is the case with the *Yishuvism* doctrine, where he overrates the implicit zionism of the doctrine, thus accepting Lists's opinion too uncritically.

One further consequence of Hen-Tov's outlook is his overestimation of the ties between Soviet and Palestinian Jewry and the influence they exerted on Soviet policy towards zionism and Palestine:

'The struggle against Zionism . . . was to become a *security* matter of a very high priority.' (p68, see also p84).

While this argument may have played a role in Soviet politics, it did not influence the Palestinian communists in their enmity towards zionism to any noticeable extent. When, in their crusade against the danger of war, the

communists charged the zionists with enrolling themselves in the coming attack on the SU, this was meant for the Middle East and had nothing to do with Soviet Jewry. For Hen-Tov, however, it hardly matters whether an action or a view was taken by the Soviet government, by the Comintern, or by a single CP: They are all seen as integral parts of one homogeneous movement. This over-simplistic view precludes an adequate understanding of the actual relationship between these different bodies. Indeed there was a considerable dependence of CPs on the Comintern and, for that matter, on Soviet foreign policy. But this did not mean that they were completely independent of domestic realities. Disregarding the latter leads to an incomplete and in some regards false picture of the party concerned.

Yet in spite of its idealistic, Soviet-centred approach and its pro-zionist outlook, Hen-Tov's book is a useful and reliable source of factual information if one takes into consideration its character.

**Suliman Bashear, *the Arab East in Communist Theory and Political Practice, 1918-1929*. Unpublished PH D. thesis, Birkbeck College, University of London. May 1976. An Arabic version was published in Jursualem in 1977.**

This work deals not only with PCP history but with the emergence of the communist movement in the whole Eastern Arab region. In part I of his study, Bashear describes the general setting: the situation of the Arab East after the first world war and the Comintern's attitude towards colonial problems. Part II is an account of communist practice in the Arab East during the period concerned; ie, mainly the emergence and early history of the Egyptian and Palestinian CPs, with a chapter on the latter's participation in the creation of the Lebanese-Syrian CP. For each of the first two parties, there are three further sections: historical background and foundation, activity, and repression. As for the PCP, Bashear emphasises its origins in left-wing zionism and points out the grave problems resulting from this fact for its work among Arabs even after the party's 'march off zionism'. Its activity during 1920's was in three main fields: work against zionism among the Jews, striking roots in the Arab population, and regional responsibility for other Eastern Arab communists. Repression was a constant feature of party life from 1921 on.

Bashear's sources are mainly the Comintern periodicals and reports mentioned above and numerous reports and files in British government archives, of which he makes extensive use. Thus he is able to provide a good account of the actual communist practice on the spot. The original PCP material he uses is relatively scanty. On the other hand he cites quite a number of books on the social background of CP activity: the different Arab countries after the war and their respective national movements. So he can confront communist projects and statements contained in the Comintern press with the social reality to which they were supposed to correspond, as well as with the practical outcome of their efforts as judged

by police reports. This facilitates a critical use of the communist sources and a critical assessment of the communist endeavour as a whole.

Part III of the thesis, *communist political theory*, deals with the communists' comments on and explanation of some important questions concerning national liberation in the Arab East: the relationship between national and social features of the anti-imperialist struggle (the example of Egypt), zionism and imperialism (Palestine), the armed uprising in Syria, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula, and Arab unity.

Part IV continues the account of the Comintern's attitude towards the Arab East, begun in part one, from 1921 to 1928. In reality it amounts to a study of the Comintern's colonial policy in this period.

In his conclusion Bashear draws a picture of the role of the Arab East in the Comintern's colonial policy, which was rather limited; of the weight the communists actually had in the Arab East – quite minimal; and of the consequences they drew from their situation, in line with the general policy of the Comintern: setting up a united front with the national bourgeoisie against imperialism. They failed to reach their purpose, most spectacularly so in Egypt. In 1928, with the hardline policy of the Comintern's 'third period', there began a new phase for Eastern Arab communism, too.

**Maher Al-Charif, *L'Internationale Communiste et la Palestine 1919/1939. These de doctorat de 3<sup>eme</sup> cycle. University of Paris I (Sorbonne), 1977.***

This study has for its subject the relationship between the Communist International and Palestine from 1919 to 1939, ie, from the founding of MPS to the outbreak of the second world war. Its purpose is to examine whether and how the Comintern acquired a correct view on the Palestinian problem, and whether the instructions ensuing from this view were right. In the first part of his thesis, Charif discusses the general line of Comintern policy for the colonial world and its stand towards Arab countries, and draws a picture of conditions in Palestine after the first world war. The second part tells the story of the roots of Palestinian communism in the Jewish workers' movement in Eastern Europe and its development up to the admission of the PCP to the Comintern. The third part treats the attempts of the PCP to meet the demands of the Comintern concerning Arabisation and regional responsibility. The fourth part deals with the sixth Comintern congress, the August 1929 events, and the subsequent changes of party policy. The fifth part deals with the seventh CI congress and the PCP's involvement in the Arab rebellion in Palestine from 1936 to 1939.

Charif's sources are, for the early period, mainly Offenbergs' book which he cites very extensively; for the later period his interviews with Mahmud al-Atrash, a former leading Arab member of PCP; and for the whole period Comintern material, especially *Inprecorr*, *The Communist International*, and the RILU journal.

As its title announces, Charif's study focuses on the Comintern's attitude

and relationship to Palestine as reflected in congress discussions, in resolutions, and above all in articles on Palestine for the central press of the Comintern. The interviews with Atrash — who was a member of the ECCI from 1935 to 1943 — complete the picture. The wide use of Offenberg's study, however, renders it rather unbalanced, because it allows Charif to go far more into detail and to concentrate more on the Palestinian level than is possible for him regarding the remaining period.

The first question Charif wants to examine in his study — whether the Comintern developed a correct stand on the Palestine problem — he answers in the affirmative, and convincingly so. As for the second question — whether the Comintern gave the right instructions to the PCP — he also affirms this; he even says that the Comintern's stand was more valid than that developed by the Palestinian communists themselves. His argument on this point, however, is not convincing. A satisfactory answer to this question would require an analysis not only of the Comintern attitude and its instructions — as provided by Charif — but also of social and political conditions in Palestine in relation to the party's efforts. This latter analysis is lacking. Only by virtue of such an analysis, however, would we be able to distinguish the objective reasons for the PCP's failure from the subjective ones, and then judge the validity of its programmes and instructions. The instructions and demands of a distant centre often tend to *look* more correct than the results of party work that faces difficult circumstances; but this does not say anything on the validity of the stands taken. On the contrary, a certain scepticism of the people on the spot, who know the difficulties, may be more justified than an obligatory revolutionary optimism.

Another feature of Charif's study is its sometimes uncritical use of communist sources (as admitted by himself, see p15 of the thesis). In our opinion, this stems also from the relative neglect of the social conditions in Palestine, which is justifiable for a study that deals with Comintern politics only but which does not allow a critical assessment of PCP activities.

Charif's thesis gives an account of the relationship between the Comintern and Palestine. It fails, however, to investigate the social background of PCP activity which would have been necessary to answer his second question. In our opinion, a satisfactory and well-founded answer on this question will only be possible after considerable further research.

**Musa Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party, its Arabisation and the Arab Jewish Conflict in Palestine, 1929-1948*. Ph. D. thesis, London School of Economics, 1977.**

The main interest of Budeiri's thesis is the attitude of the Palestinian communists towards the Arab population and their activity in this direction. After an introductory chapter on the rise of the PCP and its development up to 1929 (when the necessity of Arabisation came to be particularly felt), Budeiri traces the activity of the party from then on, with special emphasis

on Arabisation and work among Arabs (after 1943, there are of course several organisations to be dealt with). He marshals a wide range of source material (party documents, journals, memoirs, intelligence reports etc) in addition to his interviews with numerous old party members or fellow travellers, mostly Arabs. Starting from this material, he presents a very instructive account of the party's history for a period that has not hitherto been seriously studied.

The few authors dealing with the subject have for the most part tended to present the activity of the PCP in the light of their own nationalist convictions. Such is the case with Laqueur on the Zionist side, but also with some Arab writers. The main point of the latter is that the PCP's endeavour at a united Arab-Jewish party and at common prospects for Arabs and Jews was doomed to failure, since under the conditions of Palestine there was no community of interest possible between the two groups.\* A. Farhan, in an article full of errors, with the characteristic title *The PCP was the victim of the twin nationalist extremisms*, tries to argue that the PCP was always torn between a true 'communist' attitude and that of those Jewish leaders who were influenced by Zionist ideas. According to him, the PCP was never able to leave the historical impasse of the Zionist left because of its mostly Jewish membership. In a reply on this article, E. Habibi, a leader of the Israeli CP, tries to refute Farhan's arguments quite fundamentally, without discussing the crucial points of the party history itself, but he makes two valid and important points:

'We (the Palestinian and Israeli communists, A. F.) are victims only to such an extent as our Palestinian Arab people itself and the Israeli Jewish masses are victims.' And: 'The study of a political party is not possible without considering the political circumstances in which this party is working.'\*\*

Both points are disregarded by most Arab authors writing on PCP history: they do not perceive the close connexion between the failure of the PCP and the failure of the Arab national movement to prevent the creation of a Zionist state in Palestine, nor do they see the party and its fate in the context of the political and social conditions of the country.

In relation to those writings, Budeiri's thesis is an exception. True, it does not carry the analysis of social realities in Palestine to a point where a comprehensive critical assessment of PCP policy would be possible. On the other hand it discusses quite extensively the influence of the Arab-Zionist conflict on the party's fate.

Budeiri distinguishes three periods in the history of Palestinian communism during the mandate:

- 1 from 1919 to 1929, when the party was founded by labour Zionists and concentrated its activity on the Jewish population;
- 2 the period from 1930 to 1942, when it assumed more and more an Arab national orientation; and
- 3 the period from 1943 to 1947, when there existed separate communist

\* So for instance N. 'Allush (see list below), p270

\*\* E. Habibi (see list below), both quotations on p48



organisations in the Jewish and Arab sectors, which worked freely amongst the respective populations (p303f of the thesis).

In the first period, Budeiri states that the communists laid the emphasis of their activity on the social struggle and neglected the national one. In the second phase, starting with the August 1929 disturbances and the prescriptions of the Comintern, the communists tried to step up the Arabisation of the party and gradually gave their policy a clear Arab national orientation. Therefore they had to abandon their previous internationalist stand. This is assessed by Budeiri as positive or inevitable (p66f). Yet he criticises the party for the remains of socialism and internationalism in its ideology that led it to take a hostile attitude towards the Arab national leadership and thus 'did slow down the process of Arabisation and the desired penetration of the Arab population' (p103). As he maintains that the communists' 'call for joint activity in pursuit of supposed common interests' was meaningless (p66), Budeiri cannot but welcome the eventual ethnic split in 1943, which gave the Jewish and Arab communists the opportunity to work in their respective sectors unhampered by internationalist considerations. In doing this, the communists gave way to 'two opposing tendencies: support for the aims of the Arab national independence movement, and the crystallisation of the belief that the Jewish community in Palestine was undergoing a process of transformation into a national entity' (p305).

Budeiri makes it quite clear that he sees the split as a result of the development of the Palestinian reality, the building up of a Jewish community dominated by zionism, the widening gap between the two communities, and the ensuing pressure on the communists to withdraw from an internationalist venture. He apparently approves of this development: it was the logical outcome of the changing realities *and* of the choice of the Palestinian communists (made at the beginning of their 'second period', about 1930) to put national considerations above social ones and to take the path of Arab nationalism. Once separated from the Jewish communists, the Arab communists could take this direction much more easily and with a certain measure of success. Here Budeiri, in our opinion, overrates the positive consequences of the split on the work among Arabs, the success of which had also other reasons. Since the 'nationalist' turn of the previously internationalist PCP allowed successful communist work among Arabs, Budeiri seems to be prepared to make allowances for the 'parallel' move of the Jewish communists closer to zionism (they wholeheartedly welcomed and supported the creation of the State of Israel). Support for partition was, in this situation, not a sudden change of position but the logical outcome of a previous choice. It did not 'imply a change in the international communist movement's longterm strategy of supporting the Arab national independence movement' (p306). For Budeiri, the successes of this strategy would have been impossible without the Arab nationalist direction taken by the PCP since 1929. On the other hand, he justifies the internationalist line of certain periods of the PCP, since without this rigid internationalism and insistence on the social

revolution the Jewish communists would not have been able to recruit Arab members and thus to create the germ of an Arab communist movement (p38f, 305).

The general tendency of the thesis is an acceptance and justification of the national course taken by the Palestinian communists, Arabs and Jews alike. This is a stand more sincere than that of the Israeli CP, which in most cases simply denies any deviation from internationalism in the history of Palestinian communism. On the other hand, this treatment can be understood as an implicit justification of the Israeli CP's actual policy that aims at a conciliation or coexistence of conflicting nationalisms more than at a solution based on a fundamental internationalism.

The development traced by Budeiri may indeed have been inevitable under the given circumstances. It is probably also true that by retaining an internationalist and socialist outlook for a certain time and to a certain degree, the PCP slowed down its change into a radical Arab party. Yet from the point of view of social progress and a real solution of the Palestine problem it might have been more important to cling to an internationalist outlook – even without immediate practical results – than to create one more radical Arab party. One may also ask whether support for Arab national *aspirations* really made it necessary to subscribe entirely to Arab *nationalism* and to consider the whole Jewish community as a lost cause.

Budeiri's undertaking to discuss his subject from the aspect of the rise of an Arab national communist movement – which he does on an incomparably higher level than, eg, 'Allush and Farhan – is perfectly legitimate, but we don't deem it sufficient. From our point of view, influenced by the wish to seek an internationalist solution to the problems of today, we would like to investigate more deeply the fate of the internationalist and revolutionary socialist stand taken by the PCP not only from the aspect of the *national* struggle in Palestine but also by taking into consideration the *social realities* of this country. In my own (German) Ph. D. thesis, *Nationalism and socialism in the Arab East; The relationship between the communist party and the Arab national movement in Palestine, 1919-1948*, I made an attempt in this direction.

For a more thorough discussion of all crucial issues of the PCP's undertaking during the mandate, and in spite of the very useful factual information contained in the works we have spoken of, considerable further research is needed. An important step would be the assembling and editing of the mostly Hebrew and Yiddish original party document, so as to facilitate their use by those researchers who do not read these languages or have no access to the Israeli archives. In any case, work on PCP history should go on – preferably in a more cooperative way – for this would greatly enrich the ongoing debate on the character and prospects of the movement for the complete liberation of the Arab East, including its national minorities.

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a marxist analysis of the social sciences

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**ROUTLEDGE & KEGAN PAUL**

# Revolution in Iran: was it possible in 1921?

Fred Halliday

Schapour Ravasani, *Sowjetrepublik Gilan: Die Sozialistische Bewegung im Iran seit Ende des 19. Jh. bis 1922*, Basis-Verlag, Berlin (Postfach 645, 1 Berlin 15), 1973; 638 pp., DM19.80.

*'My "Persian tale"? There were a few hundred of us ragged Russians down there. One day we had a telegram from the Central Committee: Cut your losses, revolution in Iran now off. But for that we would have got to Tehran.'* (Yakov Blumkin, Comintern envoy, quoted in Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, London, 1963, p256.)

## Gilan — more than a symbol

The period immediately following the Russian revolution occupies a special, still emotive, place in the European workers' movement. In the confused conditions following the collapse of the Central Powers, and under the inspiration of events in Petrograd and Moscow, several attempts were made to extend the frontiers of workers' power — in Berlin, Munich and Budapest in 1919, and in the Turin soviets of 1919-20. All were in the end defeated by the resurgent forces of counter-revolution; and the cost of these defeats was, as we now know, so enormous — not only for the individual movements themselves, but also for the evolution of the post-revolutionary regime in Russia.

Yet, if the Spartakists and the Budapest militia retain a special place in the memory of the European movement, the same cannot be said of an important and in some ways comparable episode in the history of Middle Eastern communism, namely the insurgent republic that was established in the Gilan province of northern Iran in June 1920 and lasted for sixteen months until its destruction by the central government in October of the following year. The history of Middle Eastern communism is too often seen as having begun as an atomised, underground process, far removed from the mainstreams of revolutionary politics in Europe or East Asia. This is in part accurate, and for much of the region the main channel of influence was initially the immigration to Palestine of Jewish militants formed in eastern Europe. But this isolation of the Middle Eastern communist movement was a later development, a *product* of the earlier defeat of movements that arose

in the aftermath of the first world war very much as did those in Europe — amidst the collapse of the old empires and in close connection with the Russian revolution. These movements, in Turkey and Iran, were to some extent comparable in the conditions of their formation to the militant vanguards of communism in Europe; and the Iranian movement in particular mobilised a substantial force of Iranian proletarians in these years.

The Gilan Republic initiated a revolutionary movement in Iran; it saw the establishment of the first communist party in Asia and for the first time planted the red flag in the soil of the Middle East as part of an organised bid for state power. It was its defeat, like that of the insurrections in central Europe, which ushered in a period of defensive clandestinity. It thereby dispersed the potential which had earlier been revealed, contributed to the encirclement of Russia and made the Iranian CP so absolutely dependent on the CPSU.<sup>1</sup>

Short-lived and regional as it was, the Gilan Republic is therefore of more than symbolic or antiquarian interest; like its European counterparts it presaged many political questions that were important for the whole later history of the communist movement in the colonial world. Among the questions posed in the Gilan experience were: the place of the agrarian question in the revolutionary struggle, the forms of class alliance appropriate in colonial and semi-colonial countries, the links between anti-imperialist and socially revolutionary struggles, the problem of converting a regional revolt into a nation-wide movement, the relationship to the Islamic religion and to the Muslim clergy. The Gilan experience also raises in a very direct way a problem that goes far beyond the colonial world, namely the relationship between the revolutionary struggle in one country and the policies of an already established revolutionary state. For there is no doubt that the movement in Gilan relied heavily on Russian support, yet that after some time this support was withdrawn and that the Russians reached an accommodation with the central government. This policy shift occurred not in the era of stalinist degeneration nor in that of Mao's Three Worlds Theory, but at a time when Lenin and Trotsky were at the heights of their influence in the Russian party. Whilst this does not necessarily mean that the Russian policy was justified, it raises a very interesting example of the links between revolutionary movements and states and is a test case against which to judge any general conception of what an internationalist foreign policy might be.

Despite its brevity, the Gilan Republic is also important for the history of the revolutionary movement in Iran itself. Whilst it provided the context for the establishment of the Communist Party of Persia in June 1920, it was also the first and so far only time in which Middle Eastern communists were active in a radical rural guerrilla movement of a kind more commonly associated with Latin America or the Far East. Both the communists and their radical nationalist allies were products of the left wing of the constitutional movement that arose after 1906. In this sense the Gilan Republic represented the final, socially revolutionary, potential of that upheaval, and its defeat in late 1921 not only marked the end of the

movement's course, but, as in the analogous cases in Europe, it ushered in a new counter-revolutionary regime. For 1921 marked the advent to power of Reza Khan, the military dictator who was encouraged by the British to seize power precisely in order to crush the revolutionary movement in north Iran. Fifty-eight years later, as we live through the aftermath of the Pahlavi dynasty's overthrow, it is important to remember the proletarian and revolutionary traditions of the Iranian people which the Pahlavi dynasty was created to suppress. Through the suppression of these earlier movements, the Pahlavis not only established their own position but also created a political vacuum in which other, far less progressive opposition currents have been able to grow. Indeed it is an especially important corrective to remember the Gilan Republic at a time when the Ayatollah Khomeini and his associates would have us believe that they represent the sole tradition of valid political opposition in Iran.

### **Rise and fall of the Gilan Republic**

The Gilan Republic represented the combination of two different radical trends in Iranian politics.

The first were the revolutionary socialists who had originally been formed amongst the many thousands of Iranian migrant workers in the Russian Caucasus and who, together with Georgians and local Azerbaijanis, founded the *Hemmat* (Determination) Party in 1904. During the constitutional revolution itself, social-democratic groupings also sprung up in a number of northern Iranian towns, and the one in Tabriz corresponded with Kautsky and Plekhanov as well as maintaining active organisational contacts with the *Hemmat* and other parts of the revolutionary underground in Russia.<sup>2</sup> In 1916 a new all-embracing party, the *Adalat* (Justice) Party, was established amongst the workers in Russia but with underground organisation in parts of Iran itself, and by 1917 it had an estimated 6,000 members in all.

Inside Iran there was a second quite separate current, a radical fraction of the constitutional revolutionary movement, led by Kuchik Khan, the son of a clerical official employed by a land-owning family in Gilan. His *Ittihad-i Islam* group, also known as *Jangal*, set up around 1911, was nationalist in orientation, calling for an end to British and Tsarist Russian influence in Iran, and for the overthrow of the autocratic rule of the Shah. While demanding reforms to benefit 'the poor', it was not too specific as to what these reforms involved.<sup>3</sup>

During the first world war, Kuchik Khan and his followers, numbering around 5,000 men, were able to establish themselves in the wooded, mountainous terrain of Gilan; and when, after 1917, British interventionist and White Russian forces were using northern Persia as a base for attacking the Bolsheviks, the campaign of Kuchik Khan became interwoven with the civil war in Russia, just as the Polish struggle after 1918 was linked to events across the Russian frontier.

The fusion of the two trends came in May 1920, when Bolshevik naval forces operating in the Caspian captured the Gilani port of Enzeli and – after linking up with Kuchik Khan's forces and bringing in about 2,000 *Adalat* party members – declared the establishment of a republic in Gilan on June 5. Thus, although the Bolsheviks stated that they would not play an active role in Persia, they were prepared to support the revolutionary movement there, in view of the shared aim of ousting the British from the country.

In June 1920 the *Adalat* party held its congress in Enzeli and changed its name to the *Persian Communist Party*. Forty-eight delegates represented around 2,000 members, and after considerable dispute a basic programme was announced: land reform, anti-imperialism and support for the Bolshevik revolution. This was seen as a prelude to the 'sovietisation of Iran'. Although the new PCP and Kuchik Khan formed a coalition government, there was no real agreement; problems soon arose, and Kuchik Khan decamped to the mountains in protest at what he considered to be a too radical land reform programme.

The PCP also tried to break out of their Gilani base and to extend the revolutionary movement to the rest of the country, but when they tried to march on Tehran in August 1920 their forces were defeated.

As a result of these setbacks, the Russian party brought pressure to bear on the PCP and the Central committee, headed by Sultan Zade, was replaced by a new central committee in October 1920. This change was executed by one section of the Russian party, under the direction of Stalin who had responsibility for Caucasian affairs, and was neither formally overseen by the rest of the leadership in Moscow nor officially accepted by the Comintern. The new leadership, headed by Haidar Khan Amugli, suspended the radical land reform programme and made overtures to Kuchik Khan, but the latter was only reintegrated into the Gilani government in May 1921 and by this time the revolutionaries were faced by a much more capable central army headed by Reza Khan in Tehran. This new military regime fought off a second Gilani attempt to march upon Tehran in August 1921 and tried to divide the Gilani forces by making separate overtures to Kuchik Khan. But although these attempts to negotiate with Kuchik seem to have failed, he did break again with the PCP and in September he killed the Party leader Haidar Khan. In October, amidst these divisions in the revolutionary camp, Reza Khan's forces reoccupied Gilan and the PCP leadership fled to Russia. Kuchik Khan, unable in the end to reach *any* accommodation with the central government, remained a fugitive in the mountains where he froze to death that winter.

A central element in the changing fortunes of the Gilan Republic was the shifting focus of Russian policy, both in regard to relations with Britain and in regard to relations with the Tehran government. In 1919 and early 1920 the Russians had adopted a militantly hostile attitude towards the Persian government, which they saw as being an instrument of British imperialism. They evidently hoped that it would be overthrown and replaced by one



more sympathetic to them — either nationalist anti-imperialist, or socially revolutionary under the leadership of the PCP. However the main aim was always to remove the British influence from Iran and when this became more possible through negotiation with London and Tehran than through a military offensive they concentrated their efforts on this. By the spring of 1921 they had negotiated agreements with both countries, guaranteeing non-interference in Russia's affairs in return for, among other things, their respecting the neutrality of Persia. The treaty with Britain, which concentrated on trade, included a clause in which the Bolsheviks undertook not to engage in anti-British propaganda in Asia; and under the agreement with Reza Khan's government the Russian troops began to withdraw from Gilan. In so doing, the Russians removed an important support of the Gilan Republic. Whilst they tried to produce some reconciliation of the Gilani movement and the central government, this was a failure; and amid protests from the Baku section of their own party the Russians then accepted the destruction of the revolutionary enclave as a necessary part of their wider campaign to neutralise their southern neighbour.

### **Weaknesses of Ravasani's analysis**

Evaluation of this episode is extremely controversial — as between Iranian nationalists and communists, within the Iranian left, and within Soviet historiography — and the first major study of the Gilan Republic to appear in a western language has a definite emplacement within these controversies. Much of Schapour Ravasani's book is taken up with the history and economic conditions prior to the Gilan period itself, but in the sections on Gilan he lays the blame for the defeat of this movement on two main factors. The first was the policy pursued by the PCP in the July-October 1920 period: this he sees as having been ultra-left and as having involved the mechanical application of Russian political schemas to the very different conditions of Iran. The result was a failure to work with the 'national-revolutionary' current represented by Kuchik Khan (pp267-272). The second reason Ravasani advances for the defeat is that the Russians subordinated their role in Gilan to their overall policy dictates; whilst at first they encouraged the Gilani movement, they later sacrificed it in favour of better relations with Britain (pp354-5).

Ravasani's work is a massive compilation on the situation in Persia during this period and contains nearly 300 pages of documents on the contemporary revolutionary movement. Its arguments are, moreover, phrased in Marxist terms, and he frequently berates the PCP leader Sultan Zade for ignoring Lenin's advice about co-operation with 'national-revolutionary' leaders. Yet despite the weight of narrative argument and documentation there are several aspects of his critique which render it unconvincing, and behind the formally materialist and revolutionary framework of the analysis one can detect significant elements that are rather idealist and, in a negative sense, nationalist.

The first problem with Ravasani's analysis is one shared by most of the other literature on the subject, namely that it treats of the Gilan movement in uniquely political and international terms, and does not provide any analysis of the specific socio-economic conditions prevailing in Gilan itself. This is an essential prerequisite both for understanding the nature of Kuchik Khan's movement and for judging how far the favourable revolutionary conditions in Gilan were common to the rest of the country. Ravasani tells us (p285) that both Kuchik Khan and the PCP believed that 'the objective conditions for a revolution in Persia were present but this cannot be asserted as a mere voluntaristic statement. And the information available from some contemporary sources indicates that, in fact, Gilan was a rather special and anomalous province of the country.

Gilan, at that time with a population of about 350,000, has certain general features distinguishing it from the rest of Persia: it is a thickly wooded area — the word 'jungle' derives from the Persian *Jangal* used for the Gilan undergrowth — and many of its inhabitants speak a distinct dialect of Persian, Gilaki. But more importantly, its economy had been transformed from the 1870s onwards by contact with Russia — by the export of cash crops, especially rice, and by the growing import of tea and other commodities. A dissolution of pre-capitalist rural relations was occurring, the number of landless labourers was growing, and the merchants of the towns had gained a considerable hold on the rural economy. Social differentiation along capitalist lines had therefore gone much further than in the rest of the country. Conversely, because of its close links with Russia, Gilan was by 1920 all the more negatively affected by the rupture of economic links consequent upon the Russian revolution.<sup>4</sup>

One of the major problems of rural movements is that they tend to be localised — not just in consciousness, but in the condition that generate them; and the problem of generalising such struggles into becoming national movements is a difficult one. We have recently seen a striking case of this in Oman where the revolutionary movement, strongly based in the southern Dhofar province, was unable to break through into the more strategically vital northern part of that country. The Huk guerrillas in the Philippines after 1945 faced a similar, and ultimately fatal, restriction, and there have been many other cases in Africa and Latin America. From what we know, the conditions in Gilan exemplify some of the classic conditions for peasant-peasant-based guerrilla war. They explain the genesis of Kuchik's movement, but by the same token such conditions were localised. This aspect of the Gilan movement is not dealt with in Ravasani's study; and whilst it would be unfounded to assert that this movement could not have broken out of its regional context, it is idealist, an abstract assertion, to assume that it could have done so. To prove the assumption made by Kuchik and the PCP would involve some general picture of the socio-political forces at play in Iran at that time, whereas what they, and Ravasani, have provided remains rather schematic.

A second major difficulty with Ravasani's account is his description of

the divisions within the PCP and his critique of the 'ultra-left' line. This critique also has a strong nationalistic undertone, since he holds that the Sultan Zade group made an erroneous analysis as a result of the influence – intellectual and organisational – of the Bolsheviks.

For Ravasani the PCP was 'an alien body in Iranian society' (p267). It certainly seems to be the case that the PCP did make mistaken and schematic analyses of Persian society at that time, and there can be no reason to suppose that all its programme and actions were justified. But his critique goes much further than this and is, on closer examination, rather questionable. Although Ravasani claims that Sultan Zade was a tool of the Russians, he shows in his own account that Sultan Zade was quite prepared to contradict Lenin at the second congress of the Comintern, and was removed under pressure from the Russian Party to make way for the Haidar Khan leadership in October 1920. If this relationship is not so clear in organisational terms as Ravasani claims, it is also not so evident in policy terms. We know from his own account (pp262ff.) that the PCP did not think that the hour of the social revolution had come in Iran and that they were quite conscious of the need to ally with the national bourgeoisie against British imperialism.<sup>5</sup>

Ravasani endorses the policies of Haidar Khan; yet, as he has shown, Haidar was as much the organisational product of Russian influence in the party, and it is not so clear that Haidar's overall evaluation was more cautious than Sultan Zade's. At the Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East in September 1920 Haidar Khan called on the Bolsheviks to arm the Persians against the imperialists, and declared: 'The Soviet regime of northern Iran is planning for a march on Tehran'.<sup>6</sup> And there is one striking point (p326) where Ravasani endorses Haidar Khan's emphasis on creating a 'unitary republic' – in contrast to what he sees as the Russian-influenced call for a republic recognising the existence of different national groups. If ever there was an instance where the supposedly misleading Russian influence was in fact right, and the instinctive Persian nationalist position wrong, this was it; for the failure of the Iranian left to confront the depth of the nationalities issue has plagued it ever since. The explosion of the nationalities time-bomb in the wake of the Shah's departure is an eloquent testimony of the real similarities that link Iran to Russia in this respect.

Ravasani's account of the conflict between the PCP and Kuchik Khan remains rather imprecise. We know the different sides accused each other of, and we know how subsequent Soviet historiography has erected a case against Sultan Zade. But we do not have a detailed account of what did actually occur – for example, of what was the land redistribution policy, how much land was actually distributed, what were the supposedly 'anti-religious' policies of the PCP, etc.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, despite his defence of Kuchik Khan, the latter remains a rather shadowy figure in Ravasani's account. He is obviously a sympathetic character, and the PCP may well have unnecessarily provoked him. But we do know that the main reason for his alliance with the Bolsheviks was his hostility to the British and it is not clear if he had any elaborated analysis that could have been counterposed to

that of the PCP.

Ravasani's account of the overall outcome of the Bolshevik influence on Iran is, at best, one-sided for it ignores certain positive results of this relationship. First of all, there would probably have been no PCP at all but for the previous three decades of migration of Persian workers to Russia and their involvement there in the communist underground. Nor would the Gilan Republic even have been established but for the fortuitous extension of the Russian civil war into northern Iran as a result of the British counter-attacks against the Bolsheviks at that time. Thirdly, by his own account and accepting for the moment his contraposition of the Sultan Zade and Haidar Khan leaderships, it was the Russians who were able to introduce a more cautious note into the PCP's policies. Beyond this considerations, however, there remains the fact that in Ravasani's account the placing of blame upon the Russians is not merely exaggerated but serves as an analytical substitute for the primary question, namely the strength of the revolutionary movement in Iran itself. It is here that the absence of any specific analysis of the conditions in Gilan and the extent to which the were typical becomes such a major vitiating factor. The influence of faulty Comintern ideas and the absence of Russian troops did not prevent the Chinese party from recovering from the debacle of 1927 and from building base areas in this period. If the PCP could not do this then the reason must be found in the internal conditions of Iran as well as in external failure on the part of the Russians.

### **Betrayal?**

Consideration of the Russian role involves another general question, namely whether the Russians 'betrayed' the PCP by withdrawing their troops and signing the February 1921 agreement with the Tehran government. For the assumption underlying Ravasani's critique is that it was incumbent on the Russians to support the Gilani movement unconditionally. If this is so, then the decision to withdraw from Gilan in 1921 is on a par with many of the later 'betrayals' by Russia and China of revolutionary movements – from Stalin's role in Spain, Greece and Poland, to China's role in Sudan, Chile and Iran itself. It raises in an acute form – and, as noted above, in the period prior to any possible 'degenerations' – the question of the relationship between revolutionary states and revolutionary movements.

There are undoubtedly many cases in which revolutionary states have reneged on their responsibilities vis-a-vis revolutionary movements, by failing to provide the internationalist political and material assistance which they should and could have given. Arguments about the need to give priority to the survival of the revolutionary state have been frequently used and misused. But precisely because there has been so much cynical and treacherous behaviour in this regard, an apparently principled idealism is counterposed to such behaviour; it is often forgotten that internationalist assistance can only be given under certain conditions and that it is not

possible for revolutionary states to do everything and on all occasions to assist revolutionary movements. Such assistance depends on what can, in the most general way, be called 'the international balance of class forces': the situation in which the state finds itself and the strength of the local movement in question. Whilst being extremely conscious of the ways in which such arguments can be misused, one can still see that there are objective limits to what revolutionary states can do.<sup>8</sup>

To take an extreme example: it would have been possible in September 1973 for Cuba to have airlifted paratroops to Chile to help sustain the Popular Unity government in the face of the fascist coup. Or to take another example: it would have been possible for the Soviet, or Chinese, navies and airforces to have intervened directly in the Vietnam war. Neither of these things happened, and no-one can soberly claim that they should have happened because, and this is the point, of the balance of international forces at that time, the consequences for Cuba, Russia and China if they had done this, and the balance of forces inside the country concerned.

If we now turn to the Russian decision to withdraw troops from Gilan and to sign a treaty with the Reza Khan government, then there are strong reasons to argue that here too the international balance of forces made it impossible to sustain the Bolsheviks' military role in northern Iran, that it is a false, idealist, form of internationalism to accuse the Russians of 'betrayal' for withdrawing their forces when they did. Russia had gone through seven years of war and civil war, it desperately needed a way out of the economic blockade that Britain and the other countries had imposed on it. At the same time, after two years of counter-revolutionary armed intervention by over a dozen countries, the Bolsheviks were concerned to remove British imperialist interests from the countries bordering them — from Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan. These were not simply selfish, nationalist, aims but were ones that involved the very survival of the Russian revolution; and the failure to withdraw forces from Iran would have prejudiced this aim. The Russian state was simply not strong enough, internally or internationally, to provide the level of assistance to the PCP that it had, momentarily, been able to proffer in 1920.<sup>9</sup>

This brings us back to the Gilani movement itself; for, had that movement been stronger, then it would have been able to take advantage of the impetus given in May 1920 to spread through Iran. And if a genuinely revolutionary situation had existed in Iran, with a realistic possibility of a PCP-led movement coming to power, then the calculations of the Russians could have been rather different. Had they in *that* situation abandoned the movement they would have borne a much heavier responsibility.

The accusation of a Russian 'betrayal' over Gilan appears to be a principled, internationalist, one; yet on closer examination it conceals a nationalist presumption, namely that the fault for the failure of the Gilani experiment lies with external, in this case Russian, influence. In so doing it omits to make an evaluation of the necessarily primary, internal, basis for assuming that a revolution was possible, and it omits to make a proper internationalist evaluation of the situation which would have taken not just

the interests of the Persian movement but of the whole international communist movement into account.

### **Iran — past and future**

The defeat of the Gilan Republic forms part of the overall defeat in the period of the revolutionary initiatives outside Russia — in Germany, Hungary, Italy, in Turkey and Iran. It cannot simply be blamed on some Bolshevik 'betrayal'. It reflected the almost overwhelming disequilibrium in the international balance of class forces at that time, as well as the limitations of the movement in Gilan itself, which was both regionally confined and internally divided. The British were able to promote the coup in February 1921, out of which grew a force capable of overwhelming the Gilanis militarily; and when this new government indicated that it would end British military influence in the country, the Bolsheviks signed a non-interference treaty with it.

The counter-revolutionary regime established at that time lasted until 1979; and whilst Iran today is a very different country in socio-economic terms from what it was in 1921, many of the political issues raised in Gilan are re-emerging. The relations between socialist and nationalist forces, between secular and religious oppositions, between regional and national forces, and, not least, between Iran and its northern neighbour — all these issues will be posed acutely once again in the months and years ahead. The defeat of the PCP in 1921, and the subsequent destruction of the much larger *Tudeh* Party in 1953, have left the field open to the religious opposition, which now occupies a more important place in Iranian politics than at any time since the 1890s. But the paralysis, confusions and the anti-democratic nature of the Islamic movement demonstrate as eloquently as could be that only a socialist programme can solve the enormous problems that Iran now faces.

After so many years of suppression, and despite its many divisions, the Middle East's oldest socialist movement finds itself once again at a point where it may be able to win over the mass of the Iranian workers and peasants; and, with a revolutionary situation on the borders of the Soviet Union for the first time in three decades, the consequences for it too may be considerable.

### **Postscript**

In August 1979, after completing the above review, I was able to visit Iran and to make a brief trip to Gilan. Various small indications showed that the history of the Gilan period is still an actual one for Iranians and that the disputes of that time are, in different ways, appropriated for today's use. In Tehran the former Stalin Street, leading up to the Russian War Memorial, has been renamed Mirza Kuchik Khan Street, and in the main square of the

Gilani administrative capital Lahijan, the plinth formerly celebrating the tenets of the Shah's 'white revolution' was adorned with portraits of Kuchik Khan. The port of Enzeli, known for the past fifty years as Banar (= Port) Pahlavi, has now regained its old name. In the streets of Rasht vendors were selling copies of a radical left paper called *Jangal*, in memory of the earlier movement. Yet it is not just the left which remembers this period. One of the basic tenets of the Muslim radicals is the Islam and communism are mutually inimical: they point to a host of instances where they say 'communists' have persecuted Muslims – Soviet Central Asia, Afghanistan, Eritrea and, of course, Palestine. . . . Iranian history too is seen through this optic and Kuchik Khan is presented as a heroic Islamic radical who was betrayed by the Russian-controlled communists.

## References

- 1 Further background material on the Gilan period can be found in the first chapter of: Sepehr Zabih, *The Communist Movement in Iran*, Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1966. This is the standard work on the subject. On the contemporary movement in Turkey see George Harris, *The Origins of Communism in Turkey*, Stanford, 1967. The Gilan episode is also discussed in the major works on Soviet foreign policy in this period, including: E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923*, vol. 3, London 1953; Louis Fischer, *The Soviets in World Affairs*, London 1930; X. Eudin and R. North, *Soviet Russia and the East: 1920-1927*, Stanford, 1957. Many of the theoretical issues raised by the Gilan experience and the place of the Asian revolution in Soviet strategy at that time are discussed in H. Carrere d'Encausse and Stuart Schram, *Marxism and Asia*, London, 1969.
- 2 Cosroe Chaqueri, *La Social-Démocratie en Iran*, Editions Mazdak (Casella Postale 517, 50100 Florence, Italy), 1979, gives extensive documentation of this early movement, including the letters from the Tabriz revolutionaries to Kautsky and Plekhanov, and the programmatic documents of the *Hemmat* party.
- 3 An early version of the Jangali Programme is given by M. Marthcenko, 'Kutchuk-Khan' *Revue du Monde Musulman*, vol. 40-41, September-December 1920. Ravasani pp585-7 gives a later, 1920 version in English
- 4 Background information on the economic and social conditions in Gilan is given by H. Rabino in *Revue du Monde Musulman*, vol. 32, 1916-17.
- 5 Editions Mazdak have recently reissued a selection of Sultan Zade's writings, *Politische Schriften*, Florence, 1975, with an introduction and biographical note by Cosroe Chaqueri. After retreating to Russia in 1921, Sultan Zade spent several years in obscurity as an official in the state banking system, but re-emerged in 1928 at the sixth congress of the Comintern when, drawing upon his experience in this field of

- employment, he challenged the official theses on the dominance of finance capital in the capitalist world as presented to the congress by Bukharin. He was at the same time challenging the Soviet characterisation of Reza Khan as a progressive force. In the early 1930s he disappeared from political life, to be killed in the purges in 1938. Whatever else, this record of independence does not confirm the picture of Sultan Zade as the pliant tool of the Russian party.
- 6 Quoted in N. Fatemi, *A Diplomatic History of Persia*, New York, 1952, ch. 12.
- 7 The standard left position at this time was to distinguish between a minority fraction of the mollahs who were regarded as reactionary and linked to the land-owners, and a majority who were close to the poorer classes; see Ravasani, pp74-76.
- 8 In such contexts it is important to distinguish between withdrawal or withholding of support by a revolutionary state on the one hand, and an active support given to reaction in material or political terms which endorses repression against a communist movement on the other. The latter, of which there have been many cases in recent decades (the Hitler-Stalin pact, the Chinese endorsement of counter-revolutionary acts in the third world) can never be justified; but the Russian policy vis-a-vis Gilan was not guilty of it.
- 9 The most detailed study of the background to the Soviet-British rivalry in Iran is given in the three-volume work by Richard Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations 1917-1921*. Vol 3, *The Anglo-Soviet Accord*, London 1972, p317-394, discusses British perceptions of the Soviet role in Iran and the Russian policy of attempting to neutralise the Tehran government. For a general survey of changing official Soviet accounts of the Gilan period see *Central Asian Review*, vol. 4, 1956. A vivid example of the censored Russian presentation of this period and of its consequences is found in the recently published volume of the USSR Academy of Sciences, *Lenin and National Liberation in the East*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1978, ch 10: 'Leninist Foreign Policy and the Peoples of Iran in their Fight for Independence and Social Progress'. This omits any mention of the divisions within the Gilan movement or of the fate of the Gilanis after the Soviet-Persian accord, and pretends (p316) that all Soviet forces were immediately withdrawn after the May 1920 landing. It also goes out of its way to commend Lenin's policy of disciplining those in the Baku section of the Russian party who opposed the withdrawal from Gilan and who tried to continue an active solidarity with the Gilanis (p321). Fittingly enough, the article ends with a complacent account of the state of relations between the Shah and the Soviet government, one that, among other distortions, omits any mention of the military supplies which Russia sold to the Iranian government in 1967 and 1975.



# Selected bibliography on the history of the CPs in the Arab East

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# The Arab ruling classes in the 1970s

Mohammad Ja'far

*On 28 April, 1979, a day conference organised by Khamsin was held in Birkbeck College, University of London. The general topic of the conference was Nationalism, Religion or Socialism in the Middle East. The following text is a transcript of the opening talk at that conference.*

## Introduction

Looking back over the last decade or so of Middle-East politics, I think there is at least one thing no observer would disagree about: that is the accelerated pace at which dramatic events of a political, social and economic character have been taking place in that part of the world.

Since 1967, not only have there been two major Arab-Israeli wars, the Lebanese civil war, and the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon, but also we have witnessed the end of pan-Arabism as an important force in Arab politics and the rise and subsequent degeneration of the Palestinian nationalist movement. In addition to a greater frequency of increasingly violent Arab-Israeli confrontations, millions of people have watched on their television sets a major Arab ruling-class politician set out to the Israeli Knesset the terms of an eventual peace treaty. To have gone from the destruction of 1967 to a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, in which the two countries that have been at war for thirty years open up their borders to the free flow of people, goods and services — this surely is a measure of the scope of the changes which are taking place in this part of the world.

But equally as important as the *fact* of change itself is the question of *who* has been in the *leadership* of these changes. I think the answer to this question is indisputable. It is the Arab ruling classes and not the left, or even the collective weight of the Arab masses, who are primarily responsible for the transformations taking place today in the region. This has been true since the October war at the very least, and in some Arab countries even before. In other words, what I am saying can be summed up as follows: Suppose we could plot the revolutionary activity of the masses in the various Arab countries on a graph; then the curve would have reversed some time in the early 1970s from a generally upward swing to a steeply downward one. And that same curve for the Arab ruling classes, representing the extent to which they are able to mould the societies over which they preside after their own image — that curve has been on the rise in the last few years.

Changes of this order of magnitude demand a response from the left. They

do not come frequently in the historical process, and there is certainly nothing comparable to them in the rest of the history of the Middle East. I am referring not only to the Sadat initiative and the Camp David accords, but also to the more general phenomenon of the decline of nationalism as a mobilising political force in the region, as shown not only by the history of Arab nationalism, but for example also by the positive welcome that the Egyptian masses actually gave to the peace treaty.

The least that one can say is that a response has not been forthcoming from the traditional left and left-nationalist organisations of the Arab world. Or, if it has, then it has revealed the total and utter bankruptcy of those organisations. The degeneration of the Lebanese civil war into a sectarian communal slaughter, in which at the end all that separated people from life or death at the hands of any one of the participating organisations was a Moslem or Christian identity card — this surely is a very striking expression of that bankruptcy.

Yet another example is the chorus of calls of 'traitor' that accompanied Sadat on his November 1977 visit to Israel, a chorus in which all the organisations of the nationalist left and the Palestinian resistance outshouted each other in trying to whip up a climate of nationalist and chauvinist hysteria of the most degenerate variety. The very notion that a representative of the Egyptian ruling class could be a 'traitor' to the Arab masses is of course based on the assumption that there is more that *unites* the Arab left to its ruling classes in face of the Zionist state, than *divides* them. Here we have another measure of the extent of the theoretical degeneration of the Arab left in this period. Insofar as it even exists at all, it can be said to have capitulated completely to the policies of so-called rejectionist regimes like Iraq and Syria.

The ascendancy of the Arab ruling classes, on the other hand, is not in this period limited to the political arena. The 1973 oil price explosion has created for the Arab bourgeoisies a *potential for expansion and development as a class* which they have never had before. The Arab economies and societies, in particular the oil-producing ones, are today undergoing a ferment of change and reorganisation which, no matter how you look at it, is unprecedented in the whole of their modern history. It is these aspects of change that I shall be dealing with in the rest of my talk, but before that I would like to make a final introductory remark.

Revolutionary socialists in the Middle East, and Arab revolutionaries in particular, are today faced with a great theoretical, to say nothing of organisational, challenge. They have to lay the ghost of that body of nationalist thought which has stamped their formation throughout the whole of this century; but they also have to face up to *what is actually happening to Arab societies today*. For not only have the Arab regimes and ruling classes successfully appropriated the whole of the ideological terrain of the traditional Arab left — I am referring to nationalism — but also they are now embarking on a course of capitalist development involving large scale industrialisation in countries like Iraq and Algeria, massive infrastructural development in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries, and an

opening up to the international capitalist market of the formerly insular and nationalised economies of countries like Egypt and Sudan. There are important differences between the three categories of countries I have just mentioned: oil producers with large populations, sparsely populated oil producers, and finally the classical backward capitalist economies of Egypt and the Sudan, with large human resources and no oil revenue. Nevertheless, despite these differences, the general direction of development in all three categories of countries, *towards stronger and more deep-rooted ties with the world market*, is the same.

To illustrate this point, let me take briefly the example of Iraq — that great bastion of anti-imperialist rhetoric and erstwhile leading member of 'the rejectionist front' against Sadat and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty.

Looking at Iraq's external trade between 1972 and 1974, we find that the USSR dropped from first to seventh place as supplier to Iraq's growing market. During the same period, Japan quadrupled its exports to Iraq, to occupy the leading position, while West Germany increased its exports more than five-fold. Today even half of Iraq's military purchases come from the imperialist countries.

The Algerian regime is in much the same situation. Between 1973 and 1977, American exports to Algeria increased from \$160 m to \$380 m, while American imports of Algerian oil and gas rose from \$200 m to \$2,200 m. On the other hand, the USSR's exports to Algeria, having undergone only a modest increase between 1973 and 1976, declined absolutely in 1977.

### **Sadat — a trend-setter for the Arab ruling classes**

What then is the main proposition I am arguing? I would summarise it like this. In order to truly understand an event like the Sadat peace initiative — which I think is by the far the most important development on the Arab political arena since a very long time — it is necessary to situate it within this wider context of the social and economic transformations gripping the Middle East today. Furthermore, although the origin of the initiative and peace treaty may very well lie in the particular crisis conditions of the Egyptian economy and the compelling pressure on the Egyptian ruling class to find at least some partial palliatives to ease the real danger of social and economic collapse in Egypt, *nevertheless the ramifications of the process that Sadat has set in motion are regional and international in scope*, and will inevitably draw in other Arab regimes over the coming years. I am prepared to predict that Sadat has signalled the beginning of the end of an epoch in Arab politics that began with the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, and that the rest of the Arab ruling classes will in the coming years learn not only to live with this fact, but to copy it in varying degrees and depending on individual countries' circumstances. The front of rejectionist regimes will *not* be able to hold together or accomplish much in its boycott of Egypt,\* and Saudi Arabia

\*This prediction has since been confirmed with the collapse of the Syrian-Iraqi rapprochement and the general disarray that all the 'rejectionists' are in.

at a pinch will not withhold aid from Sadat as it has threatened to do.

Of course, what I have said should not be taken to imply that the Arab ruling classes are gradually going to do away with the ideological weapon of nationalism and national-chauvinism, which has proved so useful to them in recent years in holding back and inflicting blows on the mass movement. They will continue to wield this weapon in their attacks on any internal threat which may arise. But what I am saying is that it is in the objective interests of the Arab bourgeoisies to come to some sort of 'solution' of the Arab-Israeli conflict, *in order to futher their own economic and social development as ruling classes* with realistic and growing chances for continued and accelerated capital accumulation. I think that from this point of view history will record Sadat's greatest achievement as the fact that, for whatever reasons of his own, he set the precedent in this process.

What are the arguments that have bearing on this proposition that I am putting forward?

I shall present six arguments.

### **An enormous transfusion of money resources**

*First*, it is important to note that the imperialist bourgeoisie, and in particular the American bourgeoisie, has been significantly weakened over the last decade as compared to the position of total dominance which it enjoyed in the aftermath of the second world war. Other imperialist bourgeoisies, in Japan and Western Europe (in particular the West German bourgeoisie), have begun to undercut seriously the position of hegemony enjoyed by the Americans for so long. More important than this, however, is the action of the colonial revolution since the second world war, and in particular the Vietnamese revolution, which has inflicted the first major military defeat the American ruling class has ever experienced. The ongoing crisis of the American political system and its inability to react to a whole series of events in the 1970s must primarily be ascribed to this historic achievement of the Vietnamese revolution. Finally there is the increasingly important factor of the rising combativity of the workers' movement *inside* the imperialist countries, which undoubtedly limits the manoeuvrability of the imperialist bourgeoisie.

The vacuum created by this weakening of the imperialist ruling classes and their diminished ability to intervene internationally has worked in several parts of the world *to the advantage of the bourgeoisies of many of the former colonial and semi-conial countries*.

It seems to me that in very few parts of the world is this generally valid thesis more applicable than in the case of the oil-producing countries. For both the reasons I have just given and for reasons to do with the particular role of oil in the world economy, there has been, with the oil-price explosion of the mid-1970s, *an enormous and unprecedented transfusion of money resources into the Middle-Eastern economies*. These massive increases in the price of oil of the last few years do not of course represent

an increase in cost of production of this commodity. What they do represent is *a transfer of the world aggregate of surplus value from the hands of the imperialist bourgeoisie to those of the Arab ruling classes*. The scale of this transfer is quite without precedent in the history of imperialism. To quote just a few figures: Whereas between 1960-70 Saudi Arabia's oil income totalled \$7.7 billion, it is estimated by MEED that between 1973-83 Saudi Arabia's revenues will reach \$178 billion. If one takes all the major Arab producers, then these same estimates put the total expected oil revenue for the decade 1973-83 at \$459 billion. The revenues for 1974 alone totalled \$50 billion — an increase of 290 per cent over 1973. Taking all the OPEC countries, their collective revenue rose from \$8 billion in 1970 to more than \$105 billion in 1975!

These are fantastically large sums by any standard. To get a sense of the scale of this transfer of resources to the ruling classes of the oil-producing countries, Michael Fields has calculated that, based on figures given by *The Economist*, the income in 1974 of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait alone would have enabled them to buy:

— All the companies on the world's major stock exchanges in about:	25 years
— Britain's entire personal wealth in:	25 years
— The New York stock exchange in:	15 years
— All Britain's industrial assets in:	10 years
— All central banks' gold at 170 dollars an ounce in:	5 years
— All US direct overseas investments in:	3 years
— IBM in:	7 months
— Exxon in:	4 months
— British Petroleum in:	3 weeks
— ICI in:	18 days
— Bank of America in:	16 days
— British Leyland in:	30 hours.

### **Not a freak phenomenon**

The *second* consideration I would like to draw your attention to is that it is wrong to regard this transfer of resources as a freak goldrush type of phenomenon, in which booming cities are within a very short time to be reduced to ghost towns.

In fact, the two massive price increases of 1973 came as the culmination of a process that can be said to have started with the very formation of OPEC in 1960, and more specifically with the Tehran and Tripoli Agreements in 1971, which resulted in increases in the price of oil that were the first signs of an emerging historic shift in the bargaining power of the oil companies and the imperialist governments on the one hand and the ruling classes of the OPEC government on the other.

Even more importantly, most of the studies that have appeared since 1974 dealing with Western reliance on oil as a major energy source in the

## *The Arab ruling classes*

coming decade, and the structure of world demand and supply for oil, seem agreed on the following points:

1 That the Arab oil producers in particular will play an increasingly central role in meeting all the advanced capitalist countries' demands for energy, despite the opening up of new fields like the North Sea.

2 That amongst the Arab countries Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries are likely to play an even more prominent role, due to the enormous size of their reserves.

Very recently also the estimates as regards Iraq's reserves have been increased substantially.

## **The new Arab bourgeoisie**

The *third* argument in support of the proposition I have put to you concerns the manner in which this transfer of resources is fostering the formation of a new, greatly expanded generation of Arab exploiters, businessmen and capitalists. Not only is the number of small, medium and large-scale Arab bourgeois growing, but also the scale of their operations has changed qualitatively. The increase in oil revenues naturally gave rise to an enormous expansion of trade with the imperialist countries. This took the form, in all the Arab oil-producing countries, of a massive expansion of government expenditure, infrastructural investments (ports, roads, telecommunications, power plants, new towns and so on) and active state encouragement to the growth of a private capitalist sector. State expenditure on new projects and contracts is fundamentally the economic mechanism which is facilitating the emergence of new and qualitatively different ruling classes in the Arab region. However, the precise manner in which the new bourgeoisies of the Middle East are emerging differs greatly from one country to the next.

In Iraq, for example, sweeping nationalisations in the 1960s followed the precedent set by Egypt and resulted in the concentration of all economic power in the hands of the state. All the new large investments in mining and industry (especially in petrochemicals and construction materials) are today being made by the Iraqi General Industrial Organization, which is the body created in the 1960s out of the nationalisation of the then twenty-seven largest manufacturing establishments. Wholesale trade, insurance and of course credit and banking are all controlled by the state.

*Fundamentally, therefore, what has taken place in Iraq is a political and economic substitution process by the state on behalf of the very native capitalist class in whose historic interest it is today acting.*

Unlike Egypt, Iraq — despite its growing technological dependence on the imperialist countries — has not yet adopted an outright 'open door' policy towards imperialism. This can be explained by the very simple reason that the country is not yet in need of any foreign investment or additional foreign exchange. In fact Iraq, like Libya, enjoys an impervious financial self-sufficiency, neither generating a surplus like Saudi Arabia, nor having

need to borrow on the world's money markets as even Iran and Algeria have had to do in the last few years. Yet, as we have seen when looking at the Iraqi economy, there is an unmistakable trend away from ties with the Eastern bloc and towards the imperialist countries.

The manner in which private accumulation is developing in an oil-producing country like Iraq, in conditions of near total state domination over the economy and industry, is therefore characterised by:-

1 Corruption, bribery, robbery and chicanery of every conceivable description taking place through ba'thist bureaucrats in privileged positions in the state apparatus. Corruption is today an all-pervasive ubiquitous phenomenon in the public and private life of all the oil-producing countries. It is not accidental that it played such a big role in the Iranian events of last year and was an important factor in bringing the Shah down. Corruption is the principal mechanism of a process of private 'primitive' accumulation that has yet, in a country like Iraq, to be translated on a very large scale into private capitalist investments.

2 Government contracts awarded to local firms, especially in the construction sector, and generous grants with excellent credit facilities for small investors trying to set up medium to small-size modern manufacturing establishments in food-processing, building materials, and consumer products of all types. The policy has generally been to encourage the private sector to grow up to a certain size only, leaving all the large-scale industrial investments for the time being in the hands of the state.

In the Gulf countries, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in particular, the process of the formation of an actual new Arab bourgeoisie — as opposed to simply laying the basis and preconditions for its future emergence on an expanded scale as in Iraq — has gone much further. Traditionally, oil revenues in the Arabian peninsula have been distributed to the ruling families in the following ways:-

1 Stipends paid out regularly to members and relations of the ruling family. The distribution channels and the norms governing how much was given out and to whom closely followed the structure of kinship relations. In Saudi Arabia, for example, there were more than 500 princes of the al-Saud family who regularly received handouts of this sort in the 1950s and 60s and who in turn had to pass on subsidies and payments to the more junior family relations, and so on.

2 Land speculation, actively encouraged by the municipalities or public works departments of the various Gulf countries.

3 Trade and commerce, based on import agencies and having a sales monopoly on Western consumer products. This is how for example the 'Ali-Reza family made huge profits out of its monopoly over the sale of Ford and Westinghouse products. They were to become the first Saudi millionaires outside the ruling family. Other examples could be given: the Olayan family, the Yateems (Bahrain) and, amongst the more traditional maritime trading families of the Gulf, the Sharbatlys, the Rajhi brothers, and many others.

These are the methods by which, even before the oil price increases of 1973, wealth was being 'primitively' accumulated in private hands, not only in the Gulf countries, but also in Syria, Egypt and Iraq before the nationalizations of the 1960s.

Today the situation is changing. Members of families whose original fortunes were made by such means are now in government corporations, banking, investment, construction and even industry. They are the cadre of a new, modern, and far more sophisticated ruling class whose influence is just beginning to be felt, not merely in Arab affairs, but on a world scale.

I shall take two examples of this type of large-scale modern capitalist operator whose scale of economic activity bears very little resemblance to the traditional bourgeoisies of colonial and semi-colonial countries.

*Adnan Khashoggi* is a Saudi businessman who has assembled in less than ten years a personal fortune estimated at \$400m. He started, according to his own account, as a 'sales representative' on a truck deal with the Saudi government. Since these initial transactions, Khashoggi's investments have been grouped under an umbrella company based in Luxembourg, called the *Triad Investment Holding corporation*. The fifty or so companies making up Triad control a large stake in the electric power and construction materials of Saudi Arabia; insurance in London; property interests in France and Germany; meat packing in Brazil; furniture making in Lebanon; banking in California; trucking in Washington state; and ranching in Arizona. Khashoggi's ambition is to create the first Arab multinational conglomerate. In 1974 he organized a loan of \$200m from a consortium of international banks, for economic investments in the Sudan. Also, in partnership with Southern Pacific Properties and with the personal backing of Sadat, Khashoggi initiated and pushed for the well-known tourist resort project in the Pyramids area near Cairo. The Egyptian administration saw this particular project as central to its ability to claim some successes for its *infitah* policy to encourage Arab and foreign capital to come to Egypt. However, criticism mounted heavily in the following years and the regime has had to renege on its promises to Khashoggi.

A second interesting example is that of Mahdi al-Tajir, who is estimated by the *Business Observer* to be worth the fantastic sum of \$4,000m and is possibly one of the richest men in the world. His investments span the whole globe, from the Gulf, to major mining ventures in Africa, property investments in Western Europe and Latin America, and bulk trade in diamonds and precious stones. More than thirty banks deal exclusively with his investments and, according to a report in the same *Business Observer*, he can with a days work on the telephone raise a loan of some \$1,000m.

The examples of Khashoggi and Tajir highlight an aspect of the process of formation of the 1970s generation of Arab exploiters, which is completely new to the region and of potentially far-reaching consequences. When capital whose original ownership is Arab enters the very big league, as it has been doing in this decade, then it of necessity wants to apply itself and continue to expand by doing so on an international scale. The confines and economic horizons of individual Arab countries, especially those of the



Gulf, are simply too restricted for continued accumulation when we are talking about sums of this sort. Even the Arab countries taken as a whole group are proving themselves today, given the political instability of the Mashriq, too limited an economic arena.

### **Arab capital needs peace**

The *fourth* argument I will wish to put forward in support of the thesis that the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty represents the beginning of a whole new epoch in Arab politics and is potentially capable of setting in motion a process of accommodation of the Arab and Israeli ruling classes, barring some major international crisis in the coming period, is the following.

In order to achieve a significant change in the conditions attached to capital accumulation in the Arab region, a change that would eventually enable the Arab ruling classes to go beyond the limitations and confines of their existing economies, it is necessary for them to find a solution to this 'problem' they are faced with: the repeated outbreaks of war with the Israeli ruling class. I believe this point is crucial for understanding why the Arab ruling classes have generally been more or less willing to come to an accommodation with the Zionist state, starting with Nasser's acceptance of the Rogers peace plan in 1970, and leading through to Sadat's November 1977 initiative and the Camp David accords. Even the October 1973 war was viewed by both the Egyptian and Syrian ruling classes as a 'war for peace'. In other words: from the point of view of the Arab bourgeoisies, to further their own development as exploiting classes, the Arab-Israeli conflict requires a 'solution'.

But there is another side to this argument. It is equally true that the Arab regimes *have benefitted in the past, and to a large extent still do*, for the continued exacerbation of the Arab-Israeli conflict. They benefit primarily by using this 'external' conflict to derail the internal mass movement and class struggle. In this they are of course in exactly the same situation as the Zionist ruling class. However, there is one important qualification that must be made here. The ruling classes benefit from the continuation of a state of war between their nations only as long as they are weak or preoccupied with derailing and crushing the internal opposition. (This excludes territorial expansion as a reason for the continuation of a state of war — a reason which may apply to Israel, but certainly not to the Arab regimes.) But this is not the situation today in the Middle East. On the contrary, the potential for economic and social development of the Arab ruling classes has never been greater than it is today, and the internal opposition to their rule has unfortunately never been weaker. In such conditions, the continued exacerbation of the conflict with the Zionist state is not necessarily in the interests of the Arab regimes, whereas it is abundantly clear that it inhibits the transformation of their newly acquired money wealth into solid, dependable and long-term value-producing capital, based on the labour of workers in the Arab countries.

## How will the petrodollar be invested?

My *fifth* argument is very closely related to the last one. It has become a journalistic commonplace to talk of the petrodollar surpluses of the Gulf countries. What is one talking about when referring to these surpluses? Essentially one is talking about that portion of oil revenues left over in public and private Arab ownership, after deducting all that is consumed, imported, invested and hoarded in the Arab region.

These are, as is well known, very large sums. It has been estimated that by 1980 the petrodollar surplus owned by Arab governments (of the Gulf especially) will total at the very least some \$250 billion. This amount, just to put it in perspective, is more than the whole world's monetary reserves were in 1976!

The interesting question from the point of view of our argument is: How are these surpluses being used today by those who control them?

I will not take up the audience's time with figures, but will just summarise the two main points that can be made as regards the general pattern of Arab investments abroad.

1 There has been since 1974 an established tendency for a steady growth in longer-term investments generally, including corporate stock and property. This is more pronounced in the private sector at present, but can be clearly detected even in the deployment surpluses. It can be shown for example that even the investments of the financially conservative Arab states in US equities, property and other long-term projects, have more than trebled in absolute terms between 1974-76, despite cutbacks in the total annual petrodollar surplus. In fact, as a share of the annual surplus, long-term non-liquid investments have risen from 25 per cent in 1974 to 50 per cent in 1976. This includes loans made to Asian and African countries, most of which go into productive investments in the shape of joint ventures. An interesting example of such a joint venture is the estimated one billion dollar Kuwaiti investment in the Kenana sugar production project in the Sudan, one of the largest of its type in the world. This mammoth scheme was conceived and managed by the Lonrho Group, which itself has Arab interests.

*The significance of such a tendency towards long-term steady investments is that it confirms that there is emerging in the Middle East today a new generation of largescale capitalist entrepreneurs who are interested not merely in clipping coupons or collecting rents and being glorified landlords, but also in making capital expand in profitable ventures.*

2 The second important observation that should be made concerns particularly the petrodollar surpluses held by the oil-producing governments abroad. Here we note that these government surpluses, despite the trends noted just now, *are still predominantly in liquid form*, including large foreign currency deposits in the UK, a growing investment in US Treasury bonds and notes, and high bank deposits. What this indicates to us is that in a very basic sense the political leaders of the oil-producing Arab regimes

*have not yet made up their minds as to the eventual deployment of their surpluses.* Many important questions are *still open*, concerning: the extent of the recovery of the imperialist economies and especially the US; the profitability of US industry and the problem of breaking down the barriers to entry; the prospects of a settlement in the Middle East and its potential economic repercussions; how to maintain the real value of their surpluses in the face of inflation; how to create a 'reserve' over the long term to substitute for the depletion of oil; and finally, the imperative need to develop the financial and economic expertise to be able truly to manage the surplus, including the need for experimentation and 'feeling out' the scope of possibilities on the world's markets.

The presence of large petrodollar surpluses still in the form of liquid assets, despite the growing tendency for long-term investments, inevitably raises the question of what is going to happen eventually to these assets. Sitting in Western banks today they are being eaten away by inflation; and the Arab regimes who control them know this. But there are very real problems as regards their deployment, and the Gulf leaders are aware that the extreme backwardness of the economic structures of their societies render them incapable of absorbing these sums. Furthermore, there are problems of profitability and barriers to entry in relation to the imperialist economies. So what will happen to these resources eventually?

The question cannot be answered definitively today. Economics and politics are not exact sciences and there is at every step always a variety of choices that can be made. One thing however can be said. The Arab ruling classes are aware that they are sitting on a finite opportunity created by the peculiar circumstances of oil wealth. Will they attempt to realise this opportunity by forging a social base for themselves in their own societies and transforming their money wealth into more solid long-term investments based on the labour of their own workers? This is a question they are certainly debating amongst themselves today.

### **New type of industrialisation**

The *final* argument that I wish to present in support of the proposition that I have put to the audience is in some respects the most important. It concerns the nature of the industrialisation process currently under way in the oil-producing Arab countries. Summarised briefly, the argument — which I have developed at length in *Khamsin* 4 — goes as follows.

Since 1973 there has been in all the oil-producing countries, with the partial exception of some of the extremely under-developed Gulf countries, a qualitative increase in the level of resources actually committed to industrial investment. This is an indisputable and easily documented fact for countries like Algeria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. This industrialisation is different in character from earlier generations of industries in the Arab region. The new industries are different in four ways:

- 1 Each new project tends to individually huge from the point of view of

the initial investment required to get it off the ground. At any rate, their size is out of all proportion to the existing industrial structure and to what used to be considered large in the Arab countries until the early 1970s.

2 Since 1973 they have been predominantly imported from the imperialist countries, whereas in the 1960s many Arab countries developed ties with the Soviet Union which assisted in their industrial development.

3 The projects are generally highly capital-intensive (petrochemicals especially, which are amongst the most capital-intensive of all industries). This means that they require a relatively small number of highly skilled productive workers to operate them. On the other hand, they require a developed and sophisticated modern infrastructural environment for their profitable operation, including a large number of specialised and unproductive 'service' type of personnel (supervisors, engineers, administrators, technicians, advertising and marketing personnel and so on). Apart from the fact that such a specialised labour force does not yet exist in the Arab countries, the infrastructure of these countries notwithstanding the flood of recent investments, is simply not developed enough to allow for the installation, much less the profitable operation, of such capital-intensive industries. For all of these reasons the operation and maintenance of these industries requires a much deeper long-term association with the imperialist companies that have produced and can service these installations.

4 A very large proportion of the projects are export oriented, especially the ones in the Gulf countries, but even those in densely populated countries like Algeria and Iraq. This means that: (a) the development of industrialisation is being deliberately tied to conditions in the world capitalist market; (b) that once again a major task of the industrialisation of backward economies — the development of an internal market — is being obstructed; and consequently (c) there is a very strong tendency for industrialisation to be reduced in practice to the problem of replacing oil revenues simply with other sources of foreign exchange (for example, refined petroleum and other oil derivatives). Thus in a very important sense it can be said that the nature of the industrialisation is such that while striving to establish an economy that is not wholly moulded by crude oil revenues, it is in fact recreating the conditions — but on a higher level, more in tune with the structure of late capitalism — for its preservation.

These features of the new generation of industries in the Arab region arise out of the combination of conditions of extreme economic backwardness within a competitive framework that necessitates the acquisition of the most advanced industrial equipment that the imperialist countries have been able to produce. In this sense the law of uneven and combined development is governing the process of industrialisation. The capitalist logic behind the investments is in the final analysis the need to maximise the rate of accumulation of exchange value — arising out of the capitalisation of the oil income — in compensation for the eventual depletion of the oil revenues. The ruling classes of the oil-producing

countries are essentially taking advantage of a temporary windfall gain to set themselves up so that their economic and political power base does not erode as the oil revenues begin their inevitable decline.

What is being said, therefore, is that the industrialisation of the 1970s in almost all the Arab countries, more than at any time in the past, is integrated in the world capitalist economy and depends on developing and healthy economic and political relations with the imperialist countries who are the main suppliers of machinery, technology and the highly skilled labour that is so eagerly being sought after in the industrialising Arab countries.

When talking about an upsurge in the level of industrialisation in the Arab countries, it should be emphasised that the comparison is being drawn with the very meagre industries which already exist in these countries and were inherited from previous decades. *Relative to their own backwardness* alone can one talk of an 'enormous' expansion of industrial investment which will undoubtedly shake — indeed is already shaking to its very foundations the traditional non-industrially based social structures of the Middle East. Furthermore, the very nature of the industrialisation that is going on in the oil-producing countries imposes certain limits on the extent to which it can further develop. It also points to the weaknesses and bottlenecks which in the future will no doubt be the cause of many a social and political crisis. Time prohibits me from going into these issues now, but they can be developed more at length in the discussion. In my old *Khamsin* article I have dealt with them at greater length.

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By way of a conclusion of this talk, I wish to make one final comment. I do not think that the six arguments that I have marshalled in support of the proposition that I put to the audience actually suffice to prove it beyond reasonable doubt, so to speak. No most certainly not. However, I think the arguments strongly suggest the proposition I have put forward and the most likely line of development of events in the post-Camp David era of Middle East politics. There are very long-term projections that we are discussing. In fact 'proof' in that immediate sense is most probably not possible at this stage, because we are suggesting trends which would take many years to unfold and drawing out the possible implications of current affairs in the Middle East. Not enough hard facts have yet accumulated to enable us to bring in a definite verdict.

Nevertheless, if the arguments that I have put forward do one thing, it is this: they certainly undermine the hypocritical basis on which the rejectionist regimes have attacked Sadat. And regardless of how the Egypt-Israel treaty eventually fits into the Middle East scene — whether it is the watershed that I have suggested or not — there can be no doubt that the economic restructuring of Arab societies and the new position of the Arab ruling classes is just a watershed in the life of the whole region, of whose implications we are only just becoming aware.

# praxis four

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# Zionism, demography and women's work<sup>1</sup>

Avishai Ehrlich

Some form of sexual division of labour exists in all known social formations. However, its particular forms and the degree of biological influence are socially determined. Each mode of production, indeed each society, has its own mode of sexual division of labour which can only be understood through a study of that specific society. Of the many aspects of the sexual division of labour, two are pivotal. The roles of the sexes in *reproduction* and the socialisation of the young; and their roles in the *production* process.

Although male domination exists across several modes of production, the meaning of contemporary struggles for women's equality is inseparably linked to changes in the sexual division of labour brought about by capitalism — particularly after the industrial revolution. Capitalism transformed the nature of work, taking production out of the private realm of the household and into the public realm of the factory. It separated the hitherto combined functions of production and consumption in the household. Production became, under capitalism, production for the market, production of exchange values. Labour power became a commodity which has its price in wage. Labour comes to stand in direct cash relation to capital. Concomitantly, capitalism created the separate category of domestic labour. Domestic labour power is not involved in the production of commodities, it has no price in wages and does not stand in a direct economic relation to capital. Its relation to capital is indirect, albeit indispensable, and mediated through personal relationships in the family. Under capitalism domestic labour is predominantly concerned with the reproduction and socialisation of the next generation and with the preparation of consumption, which is necessary for the regeneration of spent labour force.<sup>2</sup> This separation of labour into public and domestic, and the relegation of women to the domestic, is one of the revolutions brought about by capitalism and did not exist in other modes. The main demands raised by women for equality are not a-historical but specific to these changes created by capitalism: the struggle for the participation of women in all aspects of public labour; the struggle for equal remuneration for equal work; the struggle to control effectively their reproduction; the transfer of domestic labour from private to public agencies (education, family services); and the participation of both sexes in domestic labour. All these demands would make little sense before the emergence of capitalism. They stem from conditions brought about by capitalism and can be satisfied by new avenues opened by capitalism.

The position of women in Israel and the nature of the sexual division of labour which exists there cannot be discussed in isolation from the Zionist characteristics of the society. The colonisation process, its requirements, its constraints, its internal contradictions and the political conflicts to which it gave birth are reflected in every aspect of life of Israeli society — including the position of women.

In the following pages an attempt is made to outline some of the links between immigration, a central feature of Zionist colonisation, and the roles which women are required to play in the areas of work and in reproduction. It is hoped to show the particular forms that women's work takes, specific to the Zionist society, and the particular considerations which determine the possibilities of development of women's situation in Israel. The article confines itself to Jewish women, although Arab women are no doubt influenced by the transformation of Palestine from an Arab society into a Zionist society and their position is but the other side of the same coin. Space does not permit it to be discussed here. Secondly, this article is not intended as an historical piece: that is why, although it starts with the early Zionist period, it soon turns to the present. We analyse two situations of immigration: when the rate of immigration is high and when it declines. The historical data are used here to illuminate structural problems and not in order to write a chronology of events.

### Early immigration and its character

It was not the productive capability which the Jewish settlers created in Palestine which provided the economic means for the Zionist expansion, but the mobilisation of funds from Jewish supporters abroad. In a similar manner it was not the reproductive fertility of the Jewish population in Palestine which was the cause of the constant increase of the proportion of Jews during the mandate period, but the recruitment of immigrants from abroad. Zionism was uniquely dependent, as it still is, on both the production and the reproduction of external Jewish communities and on its own ability to draw from these external sources.

#### Percentage of Jews in the total population of Palestine, 1922-1948

1922	1925	1930	1935	1940	1945	1948
12.9	16.1	17.9	26.9	31.2	31.7	34.5

(Source: D. Friendlander, in B. Berelson, *Population policy in developed countries*, McGraw-Hill, 1974, p47)

#### Immigration as a percentage of the growth of the Jewish population of Palestine, 1919-1948

1919-23	1924-31	1932-38	1939-45	1946-48
81.9	68.7	82.1	59.2	64.5

(Source: J. Matras, *Social change in Israel*, 1965, pp27-34.)



The patterns of zionist colonisation were pioneered by the immigrants of the second and third *'aliyot* (1904-14, 1919-23). The economic and political organisations which they founded were the embryonic models for the future zionist project in Palestine — the *yishuv*. It was also in that period that the new images of the pioneer man and woman emerged, images which influenced subsequent waves of immigration from Europe. It is in the particular demographic characteristics of these two early waves of immigration and in the conditions with which they were faced, that the new zionist sexual division of labour was rooted.

The demographic characteristics of the early waves of immigration were rather special.<sup>3</sup> To start with, the ratio of men to women was more than two to one. The scarcity of women was even greater in the early kibbutzim and work brigades which spearheaded the zionist effort. In those groups the ratio of men to women was as high as four or five to one. Furthermore, most of the immigrants in those years were young, single or childless couples. The percentage of children under 15 was low and the percentage of old people above the retirement age minimal. What therefore characterised the early zionist population in Palestine is that it was virtually a 'pure labour force'. That is, its sex and age structure minimised the ratio of dependents to economically active. The relative scarcity of married couples with young children meant that for the meanwhile this embryonic society was relatively unburdened with families. Necessary domestic labour was minimal and the reproductive function was left to those who stayed behind in the diaspora. There existed, not in any planned way, an international division of labour: The most able-bodied vanguard was in the front zone of the zionist struggle in Palestine while the auxiliary forces and supply lines were left in the rear abroad.

### **Competition with Arab male labour**

These demographic advantages of the zionist immigrants were of special importance for the ability of the zionists to compete successfully against the indigenous Arab labour force. The pioneers could dedicate themselves to their colonisation tasks. Productivisation and work were to become the highest values in this strongly ideological society. Work was elevated to a religion and the status and worth of the individual in the group was measured by his or her work ability.

Unlike other colonial societies in which the colons became an exploiting class living off the surplus value produced by an indigenous labouring class, zionism aimed at the displacement of the indigenous population. As this could not be done by force under the mandatory government, it had to be done via the market mechanism — slowly gaining control over the means of production by buying up land and replacing Arab labour with Jewish labour. This meant a cutthroat competition with the Arab. The Arab labourer had certain advantages over the European middle-class Jewish immigrant. First, he was used to the hard working conditions and to the

climate. But apart from personal adaptability he had other advantages. In the conditions that existed in Palestine in the 1920s and 1930s, many of the Arab labourers were only part-time seasonal workers and part-time peasants or share-croppers. The Arab worker could fall back on the natural village economy, and thus had the advantage over the Jewish worker, who depended completely on the higher market prices. Furthermore, the extended family structure of Arab society provided the worker with a degree of social security and the advantages of a larger division of labour than could the western-type nuclear family. It is in these conditions of economic competition that the collectivist forms of Jewish settlement evolved and have their explanation.

The collective form of settlement, which was based on horticulture, reduced the dependence of the Jewish settlers on the Arab market for food products. More important however to our topic of the sexual division of labour is the socialisation of most tasks of domestic labour. This arrangement minimised the tasks which under capitalism are normally performed in the private realm of the family. Personal services, which hitherto were provided separately within each family, were now provided by centralised agencies. The creation of a domestic service sector made possible economies of scale, specialisation and mechanisation which resulted in a more rational utilisation of the labour force.

This reorganisation of domestic labour does not explain however why it was mainly women who were employed in the socialised services, while men were employed in production for the market. The usual explanation given to women's involvement in domestic labour is their relative immobility due to childbirth and rearing. However, this could not be the main reason in the early period of zionism, when there were few children. The sexual division of labour in the early period of zionist colonisation was determined by the need to compete in the productive sector with the Arab *male* worker and the belief that women could not successfully compete with men in physically hard occupations such as agriculture and construction. The vital need to prove the economic practicability of employing Jewish labour to those Jewish farmers who employed Arabs, to the Mandatory authorities responsible for public works and road building, and to the zionist funding institutions who doubted the viability of collective experiments, was the main cause for the sexual division of labour. The economic competition between Jewish and Arab labour was the first form of 'war' between the colons and the indigenous population. As we have seen with reproduction, here too a division of roles evolved between 'front' and 'rear'. The 'combat forces' — males, directly involved in competition with the Arab; the women taking over the rear duties, thereby freeing men to the 'front'.

Of course, there were women who objected to their status as socialised domestic labour force; but, as most of them shared the zionist ideas of 'conquest of labour', they could only argue, and try to prove, that women were as productive as male workers in the jobs performed by males. As the main argument for relegating women to services was the fear that 'women's work will cause a deficit' no wonder then that women working alongside

men were always obsessed with the need to prove that 'they do not fall behind the men in productivity'.<sup>4</sup>

Recent feminist writers in Israel (eg. Hazelton) accuse these pioneer women of having tried to negate their femininity and of having identified with the males, or alternatively of relinquishing their dreams of equality.<sup>5</sup> What they fail to see is that there really was no Zionist alternative to this sexual division of labour, which was determined by the conditions under which the struggle was conducted.

This argument does not exonerate the male and female pioneers from sexist attitudes – which they had. What is being argued is that the subordination of women in socialised domestic labour was not *in the main* due to ideological reasons of sexism but had an economic – political basis. Feminists who flinch from questioning Zionism and its effects on the social structure of Israeli society wish to imagine another historical possibility a Zionism which would have had 'equality for women'. It is in order to avoid looking at the conditions under which the 'conquest of labour' took place that sexism is elevated to be the main reason for inequality. This idealised line of argument characterises many left Zionists who refuse to confront the hard Zionist reality by conjuring up hypothetical ideological alternatives: 'if only other values prevailed in Zionism'. . . .

The sexual division of labour which evolved in the early yishuv was based on the fact that during this period reproduction by immigration largely replaced reproduction by natality. Under these conditions of low family formation there was a high rate of participation of pioneer women in the labour force. This high rate refers only to a certain section of the Jewish population in Palestine – while the rest, the more traditional community, continued its traditional Jewish way of life. However, even within the pioneer community, women's work was concentrated in a very narrow range of occupations – mainly in services. The available survey on the topic from that period (1922) included 2,500 women workers of whom 1,600 were in towns and only 900 in agricultural settlements. The main work places of women were: as cooks, in laundries, in kindergartens, in schools, as nurses, as office clerks and as domestic help. This distribution shows a remarkable similarity to the present occupational distribution among Jewish women in Israel. Only 447 women in the 1922 survey worked in the productive sector, of those, only 53 worked in construction.<sup>6</sup>

### **Mandatory restrictions on immigration**

The struggle against the Arab labourer was the main cause for the employment of women in a narrow spectrum of occupations, mainly in services. Another major influence on women's work were the mandatory restrictions on immigration.

The British government soon became aware of the impact of Jewish immigration on the economic and political situation in Palestine. Since 1922 (The Churchill white paper) the government decided to restrict Jewish

immigration in accordance with the economic capacity of the country to absorb newcomers. Immigrants had to prove that they brought capital with them, or that they had places of employment. The restrictions were further tightened after the economic crisis in 1926, which created a major problem of Jewish unemployment. The regulations discriminated against women: immigration certificates were more easily obtainable by men, and men with certificates could bring with them their dependent wives.<sup>7</sup> As the Zionist organisations were eager to maximise the number of immigrants, pressure was applied on potential women immigrants to attach themselves by fictitious marriages to male certificate holders. As men were not seen as 'dependents', this regulation caused an asymmetric situation, where to give a woman an independent certificate was to 'waste' a certificate. The need to show that new immigrants were economically necessary and that there were places of employment for them militated against women's employment. Women workers could be replaced by a newly arrived immigrant male who in any case brought with him dependent women. It was not just unemployment which caused the pressure for men to have priority over women in employment, but unemployment coupled with the Zionist aim of bringing in as many immigrants as possible and as quickly as possible. In a situation of scarcity of available jobs, which were a condition for obtaining immigration certificates, women's work was indeed an obstacle to maximising Jewish immigration. Pressure mounted on women to become dependents and men replaced women in all jobs where the work was acceptable to men. The report of the fourth conference of women workers (1931), the last before the second world war, complained that although there was a big expansion in the economy and in the absolute numbers of employed women there was a negative development in the number of occupations in which they were employed. The report also criticises the fact that women were eased out of all jobs which could be done by males.<sup>8</sup>

It is therefore in the needs and constraints of Zionism that the key to the sexual division of labour which evolved in Israeli society is to be found.

### **The consequence of a decline in immigration**

What would be the repercussions on the Zionist venture if its main source of population growth, immigration, declined? This question forced itself on the Zionist leadership for the first time in the late 1930s due to the declining rate of reproduction of Jews in Palestine,<sup>9</sup> the British white paper of 1939 which threatened to stop immigration, the outbreak of the second world war and later the realisation of the scale of the Holocaust, which combined to bring about a sharp decline in the rate of growth of the Jewish population in Palestine. Grave doubts were raised as to whether Zionism could still fulfil its aims.

Palestine as a Jewish state required a Jewish majority. In view of the size of the then Arab majority and the much higher rate of reproduction among Arabs, a halt to Jewish immigration could only mean one of the following:-

1 Postponement of the creation of a Jewish state for an indenfinite period — an outcome totally unacceptable to the zionists.

2 A Jewish minority state, which, like South Africa and Rhodesia would be based on the denial of an equal vote to Arabs. (This was considered by Arlozoroff in the early 1930s.)

3 Partition — a partial postponement of the zionist aim of the whole of Palestine as a Jewish state, and acceptance instead of a Jewish state in a part of the country where a Jewish majority existed already or could be created.

These alternatives were in the background of the developments in Palestine in the 1940s.

A similar problem, a declining rate of immigration, has been facing the zionist state since the mid-1960s. In the last few years the decline of immigration has been more acute and seems to have become a more permanent feature.

Immigration as a percentage of Israel's Jewish population growth, 1948-76

1948-51	88.3
1952-54	16.6
1955-57	57.5
1958-60	31.6
1961-64	59.1
1965-71	34.4
1972	50.6
1973	52.1
1974	20.4
1975	1.2
1976	11.5
1948-71	60.1
1972-76	31.9

(Source: *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, 1977, p20.)

Some of the reprecussions of the decline in Jewish immigration are the following.

1 *Democracy*. With an Arab rate of reproduction more than double the Jewish rate (and the gap is likely to persist for a considerable period in the future), the proportion of Arab citizens of Israel will grow from the present 15 per cent to 20 or even 25 per cent towards the end of century.<sup>10</sup> This may make a free vote and parliamentary democracy incompatible with continued Jewish supremacy.

2 *Colonisation*. In view of the present distribution of the Jewish and Arab populations in territories under Israel's control (including the areas occupied in 1967), the 'Judaisation' of regions where Arabs are now a majority will become less practicable. This, in turn, is likely to lead to increased pressure for the secession of these regions.

3 *Military superiority*. Assuming the continuation, in one form or another, of a conflict between Israel and the Arab countries, and of the

disparity in birth rates, the ratio between Israeli and Arab young people of military age will decline. If Israel is therefore to avoid an eclipse in its military superiority, it will have to compensate for the relative decrease in population by longer periods of conscription, at the expense of the civilian labour force. Alternatively, a higher rate of military modernisation and labour-saving capitalisation will be needed, which would greatly increase the proportion of military expenditure at the expense of productive utilisation of available resources.

4 *Economic growth.* Immigration has always been an important catalyst of economic growth in Israel, by creating a demand for investment and consumption, thus expanding the market for products and labour. There is in Israel a secular positive correlation between the rate of immigration and the rate of economic growth. A decline in immigration presages a reduction in economic expansion.

5 *From a nation to a class.* As growth of the labour force due to immigration will decline, and as existing Jewish manpower will be increasingly occupied in unproductive activities, shortage of labour is bound to continue, increasing the dependence of the Israeli economy on Arab labour. This will be a reversal of the Zionist aim of building a Jewish society and will instead create a classical colonial situation of a colon class exploiting an indigenous (Arab) labouring class. This in turn will lead to a convergence of national and class conflicts.

The only alternatives open to Israel for countering some of these implications of a decline in immigration are directly related to the role of women. They are to encourage Jewish women in Israel to increase the rate of reproduction as well as their rate of participation in the labour force. It is to these prospects that we shall now turn.

### **A natality policy – not likely**

The most obvious way to substitute for declining immigration is by a compensating increase in internal natality. However, in order to really compensate for an annual loss of 20,000-40,000 immigrants, there would be needed a total transformation of the existing natality patterns in Israel which – as in most developed countries – show a secular downward trend.

Average size of household (including singles) by place of birth of head of household

<i>Birthplace:</i>	<i>Jews</i>				<i>Arabs</i>
	<i>Europe/America</i>	<i>Asia/Africa</i>	<i>Israel</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>
1960	3.2	4.9	3.3	3.8	5.6
1965	3.1	4.8	3.3	3.8	5.6
1970	2.9	4.6	3.4	3.5	6.0
1974	2.8	4.6	3.5	3.6	6.2

(Source: *Hahevera beyisrael, mivhar netunim statistiyim*, 1976, p47.)

This transformation would require a concerted and comprehensive natality policy. Although several attempts were made in the past to set up a natality encouragement policy, it was never seriously started.<sup>11</sup> The reasons for this failure are complex. First, a comprehensive policy of incentives and support for larger families is very expensive. As was calculated by Friedlander, a programme like the French incentives scheme would cost Israel 12 per cent of its GNP (in 1969). Besides, as the French case showed, there is no certainty that despite the heavy investments the plan will prove a success. A natality policy, even if successful, is only a long-term cure whose effects can only be felt in a generation's time. It cannot solve immediate shortages in the military and labour forces; on the contrary, by increasing the number of dependents and by tying down otherwise available labour force it tends to *aggravate* the shortage. A Zionist natality encouragement policy cannot be applied equally to all Israel's citizens, Jews as well as Arabs, as it may backfire and encourage Arab natality. It therefore has to be administered through non-government organisations which can more overtly discriminate against Arabs. As was already shown, encouragement of immigration is a much cheaper, quicker and certain solution to Zionism's human resources shortage.

While recognising the impracticability of a comprehensive natality policy, the government is aware that the rate of immigration is hardly under its control and whatever can be done to increase natality without incurring much costs should be attempted. The fear of a decline of the Jewish population is reflected in some piecemeal and inconsistent measures taken by the government. For example, though a comprehensive health service does exist, there are no family planning clinics or comprehensive sex education. This absence, which was related by experts to government wish to increase the Jewish population, keeps a large proportion of the Jewish working class in ignorance of effective contraception, resulting in many otherwise unnecessary abortions.<sup>12</sup>

Since an easy and certain policy of increased reproduction is not practicable, the only short term answer to labour-force shortages is an increased participation of hitherto under-utilised sections of the population. Since 1965 the annual rate of growth of the Israeli Jewish labour force has been in decline.<sup>13</sup> The causes of the decline are the falling rate of immigration and the lower participation of males, particularly in the military (18-34) age groups. The decline in the participation of young males was quite substantial, from 80 per cent in 1960 to 63 per cent in 1974. This drop is partly explained by longer education but mainly by the higher rate and longer period of military mobilisation. The two declining tendencies (immigration and young males) were somewhat offset by a higher participation of Arabs in the labour force. The second compensating effect, more important in our context, is the steadily growing participation of women of all ages. The declining and compensating tendencies can be seen as a substitution: *Women enter the labour force so as to enable men to be out of the labour force*. If military service is viewed as a 'front' task then the model of the sexual division of labour which was shown to have evolved in

the early vishuv period is still applicable in the present. Men are released the front (army) by women taking over the 'rear' economic activity.

Percentage of women in the civilian labour force					
1955	1960	1965	1970	1974	1978
24.5	25.7	27.7	29.7	32.4	34.7

(sources: *Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1975*, pp290-292; *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics (supplement)*, May 1979, p21.)

It must be made clear that this model of divisions between 'rear' and 'front' is not a 'national plan' or 'government conspiracy' with which the citizens comply. People enter the labour force for their own reasons. The 'rear' and 'front' division is the objective effect which is an outcome of many indirect and subjective determinations.

### **Women replace men in the army**

The sector of Israeli society where this sexual division of labour is most obvious is within the Israeli army. In this sector the conception of 'men to the front and women to the rear' is a conscious policy and not just a side effect. The army has made it clear that *women are used in order to substitute for man who can thus be released for direct combat duties*. The definition of rear and front means that women are restricted to a narrow range of occupations in the army. Until last year women were to be found only in 210 out of about 700 occupations in the army.<sup>14</sup> Jobs unsuitable for women were defined as: 'combat roles, roles which demand particular physical strength or roles which are conducted under *conditions unsuitable for women*'. Another factor which militates against the diversification of women's jobs in the army is that most women are not called up after their conscription period to do annual reserve duty until old age – as men are. This results in the army's reluctance to invest in expensive training schemes which, because of the short period of their service, could not pay for themselves.

The rigidity of this attitude toward women's occupations led to a situation where the army did not know what to do with many of the recruitable women and had no use for them, while at the same time when it suffered from an acute shortage of men. The army has never openly admitted that it has no use for so many women, but its attitude is revealed by the statistics of exempted women. In 1976/7 almost half of the females of conscription age were exempted from service: 19 per cent were released due to insufficient education (no men are released for this reason); 18.5 per cent were exempted by declaring themselves religious (this category has also to do with coalition agreements with the religious parties but the fact that it became easier to be exempted on religious grounds shows that the army did not take a strong stand on the issue on national security grounds); 8 per cent were exempted due to marriage.<sup>15</sup>

Women exempted from the army usually become part of the labour force



or, more likely, soon become mothers. The substitution model can be applied here too. The better educated women serve in the army, releasing men for the front. The economy draws the exempted women who have some qualifications. Motherhood without participation in the labour force is the fate of the least qualified. There is a three tier hierarchy of women here: those good enough to complement and replace men in the army; those not good enough for the first task but good enough to replace men in the economy (see below); the third grade — those who cannot replace men in any sector and are only good as breeders and domestic labourers.

The acute shortage of manpower has recently caused the army to reconsider its definitions of 'front' and 'rear' or apply them less rigidly. Some new avenues were opened for women in the navy and tank corps. Although the declared aim is still to release more men for combat activities, the somewhat greater flexibility is an indication that a growing manpower shortage may be the main reason for an increased participation of women in the army and for the widening of the range of their jobs.

### **Women replace men in the economy**

As in the army, women in the civilian labour force are concentrated in a very small number of occupations.<sup>16</sup> The ten most frequent jobs for women are: secretary-typist, elementary school teacher, cleaning worker, saleswomen, nursemaid, bookkeeper, domestic help, seamstress and needleworker, unregistered nurse, registered nurse. Jewish women are under-represented in the productive sector: less than a quarter of working women against about a half of working men. Most women, as in the past, work in the services sector. *Arab men*, on the other hand, are over-represented, as compared with Jewish men, in the productive sectors — agriculture, industry and construction. These facts provide another example of the substitution thesis which characterises the sexual division of labour in Israel. *The staffing of the services sector in Israel by Jewish women releases Jewish men for the productive sector, where they can replace Arab men.* As in the early yishuv, without this sexual division of labour there would be even more Arabs employed in the Israeli productive sector, with severe strategic and structural implications both in terms of security and of the class nature of the Zionist state. As in the army so in the economy there is an implicit concept in Israel of 'front' and 'rear'. As in the army, where women soldiers release men soldiers for combat duties, so in the economy Jewish women workers in services release Jewish men workers for production sectors.

This sexual division of labour between the services and production, however, also has its drawbacks. Some of these drawbacks became apparent during the 1973 war. The prolonged mobilisation of most of the male population brought the economy to a standstill which was further aggravated by the inability of the unmobilised women to take over temporarily many of the 'male' occupations due to lack of skills.<sup>17</sup> Since

1973 there has been a growing demand that concerted effort be made by the state to diversify women's occupations so that they can better substitute for men during emergencies. As was shown regarding the army, the growing strain on human resources may bring about a less sexually stereotyped division of labour and a redefinition of 'rear' and 'front' in the economy.

Wars have been a major factor in the growing participation of women in the labour force in the 20th century.<sup>18</sup> In the United Kingdom 80 per cent of the total addition to the labour force between 1939 and 1943 consisted of women who had previously not been employed or had been housewives. The proportion of women over fourteen employed in Britain rose from 27 per cent in 1939 to 37 per cent in 1943. A comparative study shows that the increase in participation of women is negatively correlated with the availability of other unutilised sectors of the population: the unemployed, the young, the old, foreigners, etc. Women's participation increased more in places where there were no other labour reserves. In the USA women accounted for only half the addition to the labour force during the war: as Milward observes, 'compared to the UK the USA had greater available numbers of unemployed people and a far larger population at school and college which could be drawn on'.

The war effort also broadened the range of occupations into which women entered. In the USSR, where women's participation in the labour force was high before the war – 38 per cent in 1940 – it continued to grow to 53 per cent in 1942. 'Everywhere women were successfully trained to meet the sudden increase in demand for welders, but in the Soviet Union almost a third of the welders were female in 1942, as well as a third of the lathe operators and 40 per cent of the stevedores. Women tractor drivers, rare in 1940, accounted for almost half of the drivers in the communal tractor stations in 1942.'

The need to change the traditional sexual division of labour prevailing in a society during a war also depends on the nature of the war. In short 'blitz' wars it is possible to stock the military and civilian provisions in advance. If the war is indeed as short as planned there is no need to alter radically the existing division of labour. A long war, or a war which becomes prolonged, calls for production and distribution of provisions under radically altered labour-force conditions. Unless provisions can be procured, shipped or flown in from abroad, (UK, second world war; Israel, 1973) the whole economic system requires reorganisation. The scarcity of men calls for a restructuring of the economically active population by the incorporation of women.

Israel is an interesting case to compare, on this aspect of war, with some other countries. Although officially Israel has been at war since its foundation in 1948, the actual 'all out' fighting periods that it was involved in were short and separated by long intervals. This enabled the Israelis to carry on most of the time with the normalcy of quasi peace. Even the 1969 attrition war and the 1973 relatively prolonged war were not total or long enough to necessitate a long-term restructuring. The problems which faced the Israeli planners were not so much the recruitment of a hitherto

unutilised section of the population, but had more to do with the rigid and restricted sexual division of occupations. The war caused a redefinition of priorities in the society between front, in this case the actual war front, and rear, the economy. This required a redeployment of the *available* workforce according to new priorities. The concentration of women in a few occupations and their lack of skills in alternative occupations became a bottleneck in the redeployment scheme. It was not so much that there was an absolute shortage of workers, but that the women in the workforce were immobile, not swiftly substitutable in other jobs. The suggestions put forward since then intend to rectify this immobility by training women during peacetime to do 'war economy' jobs. This is a beginning of the idea of women doing 'reserve' duty in the economy. More radical suggestions combine this security need with the demand for the equality of women by calling for the opening up of the sexually restricted occupational structure. It is argued that this could help in an emergency by having more women in what now are 'male' occupations, so that the mobilisation of men would not paralyse whole sectors. Both ideas have not yet been implemented. This suggests either that Israeli planners do not see a need for preparation for a long war, as they do not anticipate one; or that broader participation of women in the economy raises too many other problems.

A strong opposition to the recruitment of women into the labour-force during the war was voiced by the Conservatives in Britain. Churchill believed that this would be bad for the morale of the men in the front. He was however overruled by Minister of Labour E. Bevin.<sup>19</sup> Nazi Germany is the best example of a state that objected to the recruitment of women to the war effort. As Hitler put it in Nuremberg in September 1934, it was nice for the men to return from the brutal struggle for survival. . . . to the enclosed warmth of the supportive family: ' . . . the big world rests upon the small world: the big world cannot survive if the small world is not secure. . . '. German women had the task of increasing the Aryan race; so work, especially in men's occupations, could harm their reproductive potential. Domesticity was the role of German women.<sup>20</sup> The result was that the participation of women in the German labour force in 1943-4 was scarcely higher than in 1939. This had detrimental effects on the productive capacity of nazi Germany.

It is highly likely that Israeli planners have studied the case of Germany and it is therefore reasonable to believe that despite strong religious and conservative opposition Israel will not resist the mass participation of women in the labour force should the situation require it. The Zionist view of women, in contrast with Nazi ideology, perpetuates the double image of the pioneer woman: the girl-soldier, a woman also able to do a man's job. It is immaterial whether or not these images are myths. It is precisely these myths which can make it easier to turn women from domestic roles to national duties.

### **Women replace women in the economy**

From a Zionist point of view, the falling rate of immigration requires a

higher rate of internal reproduction and a higher rate of participation of Jewish women in the labour force. However, in most modern societies these two demands, higher birth rate and higher participation, are, *ceteris paribus*, contradictory. The only way in which they can be reconciled is by a comprehensive programme to ease the yokes of housework and child rearing, traditionally born by women, by a concerted effort to change the existing sexual division of labour. It requires huge investments in a national network of nurseries and childcare institutions. It calls for a radical change in domestic patterns which at present still revolve around the private household as a unit of consumption, preparation for consumption and supply of personal services, and its replacement by socialised household services on a mass national scale. Furthermore, it calls for legislation which does not discriminate in terms of a sexual division of labour and for a concerted campaign to change deep-rooted sexist attitudes towards the division of labour. Beside the willingness to undertake such a programme, it requires investment on a vast scale and over a long time. It is abundantly clear that, under Israel's current war conditions there is no way, let alone the will, to embark on such a plan. It is for these reasons that comparisons between Israel and some affluent European countries, such as Sweden, where some attempts in this direction are being made, are misguided and misleading.<sup>21</sup>

A glance at the labour and natality statistics of Israel reveals that the main share of Jewish natality falls on one particular section of women, the 'Orientals', while the main share of women's participation in the labour force falls on 'Occidental' women. The rate of reproduction of Jewish women of Oriental origin is double the rate of those of Occidental origin, while the rate of participation of Occidental women in the labour force is almost double that of the Oriental. What seems to have evolved in Israel is a division of labour between women which is reminiscent of the beehive: the worker women and the breeder women. The key determinant of this division of labour is the level of education. The higher the level of education, the higher too is the participation in the labour force and the lower is the rate of reproduction. Occidental women tend to have a higher level of education than Oriental ones.

All working women in Israel suffer from sex discrimination. Research shows that the median number of years of schooling of working women in Israel is higher than men's (11.1 years compared to men's 9.8).<sup>22</sup> Education is the key variable in women's employability and earnings. Surveys show that the main factor in women's decision to work is their ability to earn. However, despite legislation and the claim that there is no discrimination, official statistics show that women's pay is substantially lower in all sectors of the economy. Furthermore, there is a positive correlation between occupations in terms of pay and their being sex-typed as 'male' or 'female' occupations. In 'male' occupations the pay differential is as high as 40 to 50 per cent.<sup>23</sup> Another factor in the decision of women to go to work is their domestic tasks, mainly those to do with child-rearing. Women's work varies

according to the number of children, the children's age and the age of the smallest child. Education is again, via family planning a key factor in determining the total number of children as well as their age grouping. Inasmuch as education is connected to higher earnings it also enables working mothers to get their housework done by hired domestic help.

Domestic help is one of the most frequent occupations of those Oriental women in Israel who participate in the labour force. It is one of the very few occupations open to uneducated women who lack qualifications. Domestic help is also a more temporary job suitable for women whose participation in the labour force is marginal, that is fluctuating according to their marital status, their pressing short-term financial hardship, their childrens' ages and their ability to find other jobs. In the present society domestic help is in its very nature a *substitutive female occupation*: one woman replaces another, for wages, in doing the latter's domestic labour. If the employing woman participates in the labour force she then buys her freedom from some domestic duties by substituting another woman for herself. Domestic help is also a *class occupation*. It depends on the availability of peasant women, immigrant labour, or natives in a colonial society. In Israel it was particularly widespread in the late 1950s and 1960s, when the large immigration of oriental Jews brought into the labour market a whole generation of unqualified, uneducated women who had no alternative employment. It was the differential between what they paid for domestic help and what they could earn that enticed many Occidental women to participate in the labour force. In the face of the Zionist need for a higher birth rate a higher participation of women in the labour force, what actually evolved in Israel is a division of these tasks between two sections of the Jewish female population. The higher birth rate is supplied by the Oriental women, while Occidental women fulfil the need for participation in the labour force. However, in order to participate in the labour force the Occidental women have to replace in their domestic tasks, a role which falls to Oriental women.

The fact that the participation rate of Occidental women is almost double that of Oriental women has serious social implications. Research has shown that in Israel the wife's work accounts for 35 per cent of the differences in the incomes of wage earners' families.<sup>24</sup> This means that where a married woman is not able to work, this is a main cause for that family's poverty. Moreover, the poverty is much greater if the size of the family is taken into consideration, as women who do not work also have more children. The net result of this is a self-perpetuating cycle of poverty: educated women marry educated men, whose income is on the whole higher; their birth rate is lower, so their income per capita is, again, higher. They educate their offspring better, so their children have higher income, marry better educated etc. . . . Another obstacle, beside inadequate education, to women's participation in the labour force is the lack of nurseries. Until 1973 there were a tiny number of nurseries. In 1977 only 25,000 children were in day nurseries.<sup>25</sup> Kindergartens for children aged 3-4 are available in the big urban centres but not sufficiently so in smaller

development towns, where most of the population is Oriental. Moreover, the prohibitive fees which parents have to pay prevent many poor families from using available facilities. Here too the hardest hit are Oriental children. Most children between the ages 3-4 who are not in kindergartens are of Oriental origin.<sup>26</sup> This is yet again an example of the poverty trap, which perpetuates the division among women between those who work and those who do not work.

The problem of domestic labour is one of the major causes which prevents women from participating in the labour force. In Israel two distinct solutions evolved to this problem; both solutions are not satisfactory from the point of view of the equality of women. The kibbutz socialised many tasks of domestic labour (although the present trend in the kibbutz is to reverse this and to return to more private consumption and services); however, the socialised domestic services sector remained almost entirely women's work. This means that, instead of individual household domestic labour, there is in the kibbutz a collectivised domestic labour sector, where some services are given to the men not by their own spouses but by other women. The majority of working women in towns have another arrangement – domestic help: a woman replaces her domestic work by buying the domestic services of another woman. This is a class solution which is based on the availability of cheap, unqualified and otherwise unemployable labour force of women. In Israel this was possible after the large waves of Oriental immigration but there is at present a growing difficulty in finding domestic help. The second generation of oriental women, having some qualifications, prefer other jobs to domestic services, which are viewed as having low status. Despite the increase in wages for domestic labour there is a growing shortage; oddly enough, the higher fees have attracted into the domestic help market older Occidental women and students, whose status is determined elsewhere. Problems of security and traditional values preclude the replacement of Oriental women by Arab women on a large scale. In the absence of widely available child-care and other facilities which reduce domestic labour, the rate of reproduction and the rate of participation of women in the labour force are soon bound to conflict with one another. This illuminates from yet another perspective the dilemma that Israel faces with the decline of immigration.

## **Conclusion**

Marx pointed out that the changing organic composition of capital in its accumulation tends to create a surplus population. This surplus population is the 'industrial reserve army' for capital's spasmodic growth. '... Periods of average activity, production at high pressure, crisis and stagnation depend on the constant formation, the greater or less absorption and the re-formation of the industrial reserve army or surplus population. In their turn the varying phases of the industrial cycle recruit the surplus population and become one of the most energetic agencies for its reproduction.'<sup>27</sup>

Zionism, like capitalism, also developed in a spasmodic way, with periods of rapid expansion followed by periods of stagnation and crisis. The Zionist project in Palestine has always depended on the emergence of political conjunctures favourable to it and on which it had only partial if not minimal influence. The utilisation of the favourable conjuncture depended on the Zionist leadership's ability to anticipate it correctly and on the availability of reserve resources, financial and human, which could be rapidly mobilised and thrown into battle — military or colonisatory-economic. Jewish communities outside of Palestine have provided the Zionists with these reserves. However, there were periods in Zionist history when immigration was not sufficient; and under such conditions of scarcity of manpower, women were used in a limited way and for short periods as alternative reserves. That they were used as reserves is shown by the fact that they were eased out of 'men's jobs' when there were more men. The significance of early Zionist history is in that it provides us with a case when the logic of Zionism could not permit the use of Arab labour. Under these conditions and when immigration was insufficient, women were allowed more equality in job choice.

The expansion period after the foundation of the state was marked by the large immigration of Oriental Jews who provided the additional labour-power necessary for the colonisation of the newly acquired territories. During that period the participation of Arab labour in the Jewish economy was low. The participation of women in the labour force also grew very slowly. The need for reserves was supplied by the immigrant *manpower*. This phase lasted until the mid-1960s. The second wave of expansion which resulted from the 1967 war was not coupled with mass immigration. It is since the early 1970s that the participation of Arabs and women has grown at a much higher pace. Both Arabs and Jewish women are the labour reserve army of Israel; but there are some differences between their roles. First, the Jewishness of the latter force makes it usable in sectors not open to Arab employment. We have shown that this frees Jewish men to be out of the labour force (in the army), or alternatively to reduce the dependence on Arab labour. The second difference is that as future prospects of mass Jewish immigration are uncertain, Jewish women in Israel are the main Zionist hope for any Jewish demographic increase. This puts the pressure on women for high participation in the labour force *and* high natality — an unlikely combination without major changes in the infrastructure of child rearing and in social attitudes. Either the rate of reproduction will continue to decrease or the growth in participation will not continue. The latter will increase the proportion of the Arab labour force in the *short* term, while the former, *ceteris paribus*, will increase Arab participation in the labour force in the *long* term.

A major recession and contraction of Israel's economy would change the need for reserves, thrusting parts of the Palestinian labour force to look for jobs elsewhere outside of Israel and many women back to domestic labour.

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# **Palestinian workers in Israel— a reserve army of labour**

*Emanuel Farjoun*

*The following is a translation of a survey published in Hebrew as a pamphlet (Dapim Adumim no 5, Jerusalem, May 1978) by the Socialist Organisation in Israel — Matzpen.*

## **Introduction**

In Israeli parlance the term 'Arab', which denotes a member of the Arab society in the areas ruled by Israel, has a dual connotation. First, the Arab is a *person* born and bred in the Palestinian-Arab society, a non-Jewish resident in the Jewish State. Secondly, the Arab is a *worker*, who arrives early in the morning from his village to build houses and roads, clean, do the garden, repair cars and fill them with petrol; and who at night usually goes back home — to the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Galilee or the Triangle.

The Arab as a person is seen as an abomination. His very existence mars the Jewishness of the State of Israel. He belongs to that Arab people with which the Jewish settlers' society has been contending since its very beginning. As the writer A. B. Yehoshua puts it: 'Therefore was this nation severely enjoined to be strictly apart, without the nearby gentile. . . There is nothing more dangerous than allowing the gentile back into our midst (and he is very deep in our midst, entirely woven into our economic infrastructure, but penetrating also into other spheres of our life.)'<sup>1</sup>

Israeli society persecutes the Arab person — and therefore hates him. It makes every attempt to conceal his very existence and even to remove him beyond the pale of its dominion. He cannot join a kibbutz or a moshav, the crowning glory of Israeli society. Most Jewish towns and villages in Israel are closed to him by virtue of local or national regulations (in the whole of Israel there are just *six* towns and townships with mixed Arab and Jewish population). In the evening, after work, he cannot walk about unharassed in the streets of Tel-Aviv, but must huddle in a dark corner behind a locked and bolted door, or go back home to his village. Even the term 'Arab' does not appear in Israeli official statistics, which recognises 'only one national group in Israel — Jews. The rest are 'minorities', 'non-Jews' 'Moslems', 'Christians', 'Druse', and so forth.

The Arab as a *worker* is, on the contrary, an acceptable and welcome member of the household in many quarters of Israeli society — and it is precisely this which enrages 'liberals' like A. B. Yehoshua. He is admitted

into the kitchens and gardens of the Israeli elite, where he cooks, cleans and digs; he is welcome on building sites, petrol stations, timber yards and factories; and he is even allowed into army camps. The gates were opened wide for him in 1966, when structural changes were made in the Military Rule (under which the Arabs inside Israel have been living since 1948) and the daily pass system was waived, allowing masses of Arab workers fairly free movement throughout Israel (except the south of the country). The *Histadrut* (General Federation of Labour), a cornerstone of the Israeli establishment, not only allowed him to join — for the first time since its foundation in 1922 — but even changed its name for his sake: it used to be 'The General Federation of *Hebrew* Workers in Eretz Yisrael', but now the word 'Hebrew' was dropped.

As we shall see, the Arab worker has become a decisive factor in major sectors of the Israeli economy: construction, road building, tourism, agriculture and various branches of industry. He is gradually penetrating typical Israeli industrial production areas: food processing, textile, manufacture of building materials and many other industries.

We shall attempt in this survey to describe the characteristics of the Arab labour force in Israel. In other words, we shall largely ignore the Arab's status as a person, as a citizen and as a member of the Palestinian Arab people, though this is a vitally important aspect of the national and class structure of the emergent Israeli society. We shall try to focus on the role of Arab workers in Israel's economy — workers both from within the 'green line' and from outside it, that is from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The obvious difficulty in trying to distinguish between the two aspects and to isolate the purely economic side of the story is illustrated in the following frank journalistic account, written by Ya'ir Kottler in an article about the Home Guard and its role as guardian of Jewish purity in Tel-Aviv:

'The time is two hours before midnight. In the back seat of the jeep sit two young volunteers armed with guns and ammunition. The mission — combing through Shuq Hakarmel [Tel-Aviv's main market]. They search for Arabs spending the night in Tel-Aviv — in tiny nooks, on building sites, in warehouses, even under greengrocers' stalls. They are not supposed to stay on in the Jewish city beyond 1.00 a.m. unless they have special permits, which most of the workers from the occupied territories, who flood into Tel-Aviv and the neighbouring towns, do not have. . . The Home Guard is helping the police. The frightened Arabs, unaware of the police-like authority of this civil militia, answer questions and show their papers. They are harrassed. They are temporarily detained at a base near a large elementary school. Before 1.00 a.m. they cannot be arrested. They can be harrassed, though. This is precisely what is done. The district police chief, Commander Moshe Tiomkin, states in an interview that in his district, inhabited by 1.1 million people, there are already 70,000 Arabs from the occupied territories — 50 per cent of these in Tel-Aviv proper. This is, by

any standard, an astonishing figure. The police cannot cope with the problem. It seeks the help of the Home Guard. But the volunteers have not joined the Guard in order to become policemen in disguise, hunting and interrogating Arab workers who seek night shelter from the law in dark holes, in locked poulterers' shops, in back yards and in rented rooms in Jewish homes, always for a few dozen liras per bed per night. 'Can we detain thousands? If we do this,' says Tiomkin, 'we would be screwing ourselves. Next morning the big city would lose its workers. They are building the city.' If they are detained there would be no one to clean the streets. . . Somewhere near the beach we stopped three Arabs. One was terrified — he had no papers; he had come to work with a friend from Hebron. The Hebronite, 19 years of age, has been working in Tel-Aviv for the last 5 years (i.e. since he was 14 — E.F.), mostly as a night watchman, earning 70 IL a day, sometimes more. He wouldn't give up his work in Tel-Aviv for a state of his own. He simply fell in love with the Hebrew city, with its girls and its sights. Jews don't know how to work, he says, adding that Shuq Hakamel is full of Arabs from Gaza. Commander Tiomkin is of the opinion that the increase in crime in the district, particularly in Tel-Aviv, is a result, amongst other things, of the presence of tens of thousands of Arabs from the occupied territories. They remind him of a 'slave market'.<sup>2</sup>

The present survey does not, in fact, deal with the overall role of the Palestinian Arabs in the Israeli economy, but examines their contribution as workers, be it labourers, or skilled and self-employed workers; since the Arab labour force in Israel consists mainly of hired or self-employed workers. The capitalist stratum within Arab society inside Israel is very small and there are few Arabs in administrative jobs. Arab society in Israel has a limited economic base: according to official reports<sup>3</sup> there were only three Arab-owned industrial enterprises in Israel in 1976. In Israel's political economy a factory can neither be opened nor continue to exist without active government aid, but the State institutions do not permit even the most consistently collaborationist villages to develop Arab-owned industrial zones (see, for example, an article about the village of Cana, Ha'aretz, 4.11.1977). Two of the above-mentioned enterprises are small sewing shops and the third is a metal works (200 workers) in the village of Yarka in the Galilee. Even if one or two new enterprises have come into existence in the last couple of years, the fact remains that there is no Arab capitalist bourgeoisie in Israel. Moreover, even Jewish-owned enterprises are hardly ever located in Arab villages: according to latest reports there are some fifty small enterprises, mostly sewing shops and carpentries. The bourgeoisie of the Arab sector is a petit-bourgeoisie made up of traders and agricultural producers. More than 70 per cent of the total Arab labour force are hired workers, mostly in production: construction, agriculture, industry; and in private-sector services such as hotels, restaurants and so forth. Only a small proportion work as clerks, or in the public services, in finance or in the professions. Thus the Arabs' almost exclusive contribution to the Israeli economy is as productive workers, from whose labour someone — a

contractor, an industrialist, a businessman — profits directly. Only few of them are self-employed: farmers, sub-contractors and so on.

*The Specific Role of the Arab Worker*

If one follows the development of this labour force, its composition, the sectors in which it concentrates and its socio-economic characteristics, one discovers that there is a *definite regularity* in the development of the Arabs' place and role in the economy.

Throughout the history of Zionist colonisation, the Jewish *Yishuv* tried, on the whole, to create a society based on purely Jewish labour, at least in some focal areas. But the natural development of a capitalist economy as well as the recurrent clashes with the Arab world led to an ever-increasing concentration of Jewish labour in definite 'strategic' sectors of production. At first this meant agricultural production — settling on the land, erecting purely Jewish colonies, *moshavim* and *kibbutzim* on every possible site. (The rules of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) were framed for that very end, forbidding the purchase, lease or cultivation of its lands by non-Jews.) Other such sectors were the diamond industry and the ports.

With the establishment of the State and the mass deportation of Arabs from hundreds of villages, came the expropriation of most of the Arab lands, in order to seize control of the main asset — the soil — and create the pre-condition for Jewish domination of agricultural production. On the other hand, the now largely landless Arab population remaining under Israeli rule increased apace. (More than half of that population was 'acquired' by Israel in 1949 as a result of the Rhodes agreements and the change in the cease-fire line in the area of the Triangle and Wadi 'Ara.) From 160,000 at the end of 1949, the Arab population inside Israel grew to 400,000 in 1967, and reached 550,000 in 1978. This created a heavy pressure of workers willing to work for low wages and in bad conditions.

At the same time, an important change occurred in the Israeli economy with the development of an Israeli armament industry in the sixties, and particularly with the decisive changes both in the geopolitical map of the country and in the balance of power between Israel and the Arab world as a result of the 1967 war — changes which brought about a huge influx of capital into Israel, and turned it from a privileged *protege* of the West into an *ally* having the status of a local power. Following these changes, agriculture ceased to fulfil a strategic role and the accelerated economic development both in agriculture and in industry created an ever-increasing demand for a cheap, mobile and under-privileged labour force: a 'free' labour force in the classical economic sense.

This demand was met by the Arab workers from the new territories acquired by Israel as well as by 'Israeli' Arab workers, who were just beginning to flow into the market in large numbers.

Because of the need to sustain a settlers' society, living on its sword, in constant and expensive conflict with the world around it, it was necessary to grant the Jews special privileges and to try to secure for them at all costs

a relatively high standard of living, in order to prevent Jewish emigration (*yeridah*) and help maintain maximal political stability. These imperatives imposed political constraints upon the Israeli bourgeoisie's freedom of economic action vis-a-vis the Jewish worker. This applies particularly to that part of the bourgeoisie which was then in power, represented by the Labour Party and Mapam — the bureaucratic bourgeoisie of the public sector. Security of employment and income, and a standard of living higher than in the surrounding Arab world, became cornerstones of the Israeli political system. Therefore, while the accelerated economic development after 1967 created the above-mentioned demand for a 'free' labour force — cheap, mobile, without job security, without political representation — this demand could not be met from amongst Jewish workers.

The post-1967 military and political development created also a huge demand for Jewish labour in the armament industry, in the army and in the general administration of the extended colony. The inevitable result was that Arab workers began to form a decisive part of the Israeli economy's *free labour force*, in the above-mentioned sense, which until then had consisted mainly of oriental Jews. We shall show that since 1967 the Arab labour force has become (along with the lowest strata of the Jewish proletariat, made up mainly of oriental Jews) a major and indispensable element. Thus the Israeli civilian economy, particularly in the private sector, is becoming largely dependent on Arab labour. The national division of the population in the territories ruled by Israel is increasingly becoming an economically significant division: on the one hand the privileged group employed in industries and services connected with the State, and army and strategic production — a protected group, enjoying a certain monopoly and virtual security of tenure, and whose working conditions are constantly improving through organised struggles and political pressures (through the Histadrut, the Labour Party etc.); and on the other hand the 'free' part of the working class, which gives the private economy its flexibility, its capacity to adjust to crises. It is the latter group which makes the manpower reservoir into a *labour market* in the classical capitalist sense and constitutes, as the title of this article indicates, the *reserve army of the Israeli economy*.

At the same time, this free labour force gives the private bourgeoisie, both in agriculture and in industry, a degree of independence of the Histadrut, the State institutions and the bureaucracy. This is one of the sources of strength of the private bourgeoisie, as opposed to the state-bureaucratic bourgeoisie (the Histadrut, the kibbutzim etc.). The Histadrut cannot use strikes to pressurise a private businessman employing Arabs, since when it comes to Arabs they are in the same boat; a strike by Arab workers would endanger both sectors. Moreover, due to the relative abundance of Arab workers in the Israeli economy, their manoeuvring space is limited and their bargaining powers almost nil. Thus the Arab labour force has contributed to the historical tendency of the strengthening of the private bourgeoisie in Israel in relation to the state-bureaucratic bourgeoisie, a tendency which has gathered momentum since 1967. This

sometimes gives rise to apparently absurd situations, when representatives of the state-bureaucratic bourgeoisie, like A.B. Yehoshua who is a 'left' Zionist, talk and act more dogmatically, in a harsher and more racist way against the 'Arab presence' in Israel than their counterparts on the right, some of whom would like the two nations to live together — under the iron hand of the Israeli army, to be sure.

### *Scope of this Survey*

This survey is mainly statistical and attempts to sketch the development and present position of the Arab working class in Israel, using mainly official Israeli publications and, to a lesser extent, occasional articles published in the Israeli press. But the figures, though indicating the general picture, tell only a small part of the story of the Arab workers in Israel: in order to tell the whole story a full sociological study would be needed. A short visit to an Israeli town may afford a glimpse into a reality which no figures could ever express.

Take Beersheba, for example — a town 'cleansed' of its pre-1948 Arab inhabitants, like hundreds of other towns and villages captured by the Israeli army during the 1948 war, and which now has a population of about 100,000. Over the years, it has attracted thousands of Bedouin-Arab workers from the whole Negev. Most of these Arabs were peasants, driven off their lands by the kibbutzim and moshavim whose aim it was to 'make the desert bloom'. Those workers cannot, of course, live inside Beersheba; the houses they build are destined not for Arabs but for new Jewish immigrants, or for Jewish workers, for example. As a result, Beersheba is now surrounded by a belt of shanties where the Arab workers reside. These shanty towns, from which the workers emerge each morning in order to build Beersheba and work in its factories, have no running water, sewerage, electricity, or roads. Like the black townships in South Africa, the legality of their very existence is doubtful and with the expansion of the town they will no doubt be bulldozed further away, out of the town's boundaries. Such townships tell more about these workers than cart-loads of figures. They exist round other cities in Israel, like Ramleh and Haderah.

The government and its 'settlements minister', Arik Sharon, keep reminding us that tens of thousands of Bedouins have 'infiltrated the coastal plain' — into the heart of the Jewish state. Mister Sharon forgets that these very same Bedouin 'infiltrators' fill his car with petrol and work on his large farm and that with their 'infiltration' many Israeli firms, including most of the agricultural export sector, would grind to a halt.

This survey hardly touches upon any of these social aspects.

The survey has four chapters. The first deals with the whole working population and with the reserve force of the Israeli economy. It will be seen that the Jewish industrial reserve force in Israel has been greatly depleted — all skilled and semi-skilled Jewish workers are fully, though not always most



efficiently, employed, in spite of five years of deep recession since the 1973 war. The manpower problem is of course related to the general population balance between the two national groups: the Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs. In this chapter we shall see, for instance, that the growth of the Arab labour force is twice as fast as that of the Jewish.

The second chapter deals with the distribution of the Arab labour force, both from the occupied territories and from Israel, between the various sectors and enterprises. It will be seen that in the main productive industries and occupations, where someone makes a direct profit out of the workers' labour, the Arabs' relative contribution is much greater than their proportion in the population and in the general labour force. We shall also try to estimate their relative contribution to the overall output of workers in Israel.

The third chapter reviews an important characteristic of the Arab working class — its mobility, which distinguishes it sharply from the Jewish working class. This very mobility makes it a 'free' labour force economically speaking, subject to the fluctuations of the market. The recent recession, which caused no unemployment in the Jewish sector, reduced dramatically the number of Arab workers, particularly from the West bank, in certain branches of employment.

The fourth chapter deals with wages and working conditions. This chapter is on the border line of statistical research and in order to cover this subject fully one would have to study the social conditions of the Arab working class — which is beyond the scope of this work. We shall see, however, that not only is the average per capita income of the Arab workers half that of the Jewish hired workers, but also that *within each occupation* there is a difference of up to 40 per cent between the wages of Arab and Jewish workers.

## **The Arab Working Class Population**

Even a cursory glance at the population statistics of the two national groups in Israel — Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs — shows that the latter's contribution to the labour force far exceeds its relative size. For the moment let us confine our selves to the population of Israel proper, within the 'green line'. Among the Arabs the median age is 15, whereas the median Jewish age is 22; only 3.4 per cent of Israel's Arab population is above retirement age (65 years), whereas among the Jews the proportion is almost three times as high — about 9 per cent. There are in Israel approximately three million Jews and half a million Arabs — a ratio of 6 to 1. But, as a result of the different age structures, the respective *annual increase* of the economically most active age groups (20 — 65) is in the ratio of less than 3 to 1. In fact, during the last few years Jewish population in this age group increased by about 24,000 annually, while the corresponding figure for the Arab population was about 9,000.<sup>4</sup> This high rate of growth of the potential Arab labour force is less surprising if we remember that despite Jewish immigration the overall annual rate of increase of the Arab population (4 per cent) is twice that of the

Jewish population (2 per cent). Every year there are some 60,000 additional Jews, compared to 20,000 Arabs. Already the number of Arab children (ages 1 to 10) is *one third* that of Jewish children.<sup>5</sup>

To sum up: whereas the number of Arabs in Israel is *one sixth* that of Jews, the size of the *potential* Arab labour force (counting Israeli citizens only) is *one third* that of the potential Jewish labour force: for every three Jews added to the labour force reservoir, one Arab is also added.

In addition to these figures, one has to consider some deeper factors. For example, the data on youth labour show that among Jewish youth (ages 14 – 17) about 23 per cent belong to the labour force (this is, are working or seeking employment); whereas the corresponding proportion among Arabs is considerably higher – 37 per cent.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the part played by secondary education is incomparably smaller among Arabs than among Jews. This, of course, is a result of a deliberate policy. This policy was expressed, long before the famous 'Koenig report', by the then 'Adviser to the Prime Minister on Arab affairs', Uri Lubrani, who wrote in Ha'aretz: 'It might have been better if there were no Arab students. Had they remained hewers of wood and drawers of water it might have been easier to govern them. But there are things beyond our control. We cannot prevent this, but we should think of ways to localise the problem'.<sup>7</sup> This approach manifests itself in the token government support given to Arab education and Arab local authorities, which is totally out of proportion to their numbers. The disproportion can be measured, for instance, by the number of secondary school teachers: 1,800 in the Arab sector as opposed to 24,500 in Jewish schools; so less than 7 per cent of secondary teachers are working in the Arab sector, although its secondary school population constitutes 20 per cent of the total.

But Arab workers resident in Israel constitute only about *half* of the Arab workers employed in Israel. The other half comes from the occupied territories (the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) and several hundred even come from Lebanon. Then there are also the workers from East Jerusalem, officially annexed to the State of Israel and appearing in most official publications as part of Israeli statistics.

Including East Jerusalem, there were about 540,000 Arabs in Israel in 1978, of whom some 110,000 belonged to the labour force, according to official figures. However, for several reasons these figures must be taken with a grain of salt. They are based on surveys and questionnaires and obviously some people do not report that they are working, in order to avoid income tax. Also it seems that only a small part of Arab working women are included in those statistics, according to which only 10,000 Arab women resident in Israel belong to the labour force. In fact, thousands of women do agricultural work on domestic plots or are employed by labour contractors in small spinning mills in their own villages or in seasonal work such as fruit picking – and many of them certainly do not appear in official statistics. But a similar statistical distortion occurs, perhaps to the same extent, in official data on the Jewish labour force; so by ignoring it we

shall probably not distort too much our estimate of the *numerical proportion* between the two national groups. (Note however that among the Jews it is mainly the self-employed in commerce and services who belong to the unofficial 'black' economy; whereas in the case of Arabs it is, on the contrary, mostly workers employed by 'black' employers.)

On the other hand, official statistics of workers from the occupied territories employed in Israel are completely unreliable. Here are the official figures for 1977.

Population and labour force in the occupied territories, 1977<sup>8</sup>

	Population over 14	Labour force	Employed in Israel (thousands)
West Bank	373	125	37
Gaza Strip & Sinai	235	78	25
Total	608	203	62

These figures were derived from questionnaires put to a representative sample of some 2,000 extended families in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. They are not a report based directly on the situation on the ground, since few employers would report accurately how many workers from the occupied territories they employ. There are many reasons for this: for one thing, these workers are legally forbidden to stay inside Israel overnight: also, the employer wants to avoid paying income tax, insurance for the workers, and so forth.

The official statistician, Hanokh Smith, director of the Manpower Planning Authority, has the following to say about workers from the occupied territories employed in the Beersheba region: 'According to official data there are about 5,000 workers from Judea and Samaria, but in reality the number is at least double.'<sup>9</sup> The Tel-Aviv police commander said late in 1977 that in Tel-Aviv alone 70,000 workers arrive every morning from the occupied territories.<sup>10</sup>

The Ministry of Labour itself reports<sup>11</sup> that it has in its possession a card index of 150,000 workers from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip who have at some time worked in Israel. These workers were of course employed officially, through the labour exchanges. (This figure does not seem to tally with the official overall figure of the labour force in the occupied territories, namely 203,000, even if we take into consideration that these are cumulative records of ten years of occupation.) According to the same report, approximately 60,000 workers from the occupied territories are currently registered and employed through the labour exchanges.<sup>12</sup> The labour exchange for the Gaza Strip and the north of Sinai, for example, has reported a steady decline in the number of workers registering with it. Among the reasons given is the red tape involved in the payment of wages, hence the attraction of getting a job through a private labour contractor *ra'is* who pays on the spot. It also seems that official wages paid through the labour exchanges are *lower* than those paid on the open market. They are

also taxed and subjected to all sorts of other deductions such as pension contribution, which no Gaza Strip worker wants to pay, since there is no guarantee he will get anything in return for them when he reaches retirement age.

The following is a sample of the Gaza Strip labour exchange records, giving the numbers (in thousands) of registered workers during the last few years.<sup>13</sup>

1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976
31	25	25	26	23	24	18	20

These figures show a sharp decline, even during the economic boom years 1969-73, when there was actually an enormous increase in the number of workers from the occupied territories working in Israel.

According to the Ministry of Labour report, for every five registered workers, there are four who work unofficially.

In view of all this, there is no doubt that the number of workers from the occupied territories working in Israel averages 100,000 at least – more during the busy seasons in agriculture and in construction, less during other seasons. It follows that the total number of Arabs employed by the Israeli economy is about 210,000 men and women, or some 17 per cent of the total labour force.

The importance of this labour force derives also from the fact that in Israel the rate of participation in the civilian labour force (that is, the percentage of persons employed or seeking employment in the total population) is among the lowest in the world – just 33 per cent. By way of comparison: the corresponding figure for England is 46 per cent, Switzerland – 48 per cent, Holland – 38 per cent, Hong Kong – 45 per cent, Japan – 48 per cent and Rumania – 54 per cent. Israel, in fact, is in the same category as countries like India (33 per cent) and Sudan (29 per cent). Actually, the true figure for Israel must be somewhat higher than the official statistics; but even so, it is quite low for an industrial country. One reason for this is the size of the standing army which sawllows up huge quantities of manpower. Also, in comparison with other industrial countries Israel has relatively few people engaged in agriculture, construction and industrial production.

Israel's accelerated development, the development of the economic infrastructure and the large capital investments in the years 1967-73 would have been impossible without the Arab labour force, and particularly the workers from the occupied territories.

The Bank of Israel Annual Report for 1976 has the following to say regarding the role of Arab labour from the occupied territories:

'The workers from the [occupied] territories, who entered employment in the Israeli economy on a large scale until 1974, have begun to be ejected from it in the last two years. The economic boom in the Arab countries and in the [occupied] territories themselves has made this ejection easier. [But] in spite of attractions outside the Israeli economy, the determinant cause

for their employment or ejection is the volume of the Israeli demand for these workers. This is apparent from the differential development in the various branches: in 1976 about 6,000 workers from the [occupied] territories left the construction industry, which has been contracting rapidly, while in the manufacturing industry and the services the number of employees from the [occupied] territories went up, probably in parallel with the growth of exports and tourism.

These workers, whose wages are lower than those of Israeli workers, and whose real as well as relative wages went down in 1976, have gained an almost exclusive hold on various kinds of labouring jobs in construction, in agriculture and in services (including hotels, which have benefited this year from an increase in tourism). The slow-down of the Israeli economy has not yet harmed them, except insofar as this was unavoidable due to their concentration in some branches (like construction), since competition on the part of Israelis is diminishing constantly both because of the rise in the level of education within the Israeli labour force and because family allowances to Israeli families reduce the incentive to compete for labouring jobs, the wages for which are low and getting even lower. There is a difference between the inhabitants of Judea and Samaria [the West Bank] and those of the Gaza Strip working in Israel. The former find it easier to get work in the Arab countries and their numbers in the Israeli economy have decreased in the last two years. They are being replaced by workers from the Gaza Strip whose numbers have increased in 1976 in all branches of employment in Israel.<sup>14</sup>

This report touches – albeit insufficiently – upon the three most important characteristics of the whole Arab labour force: First, its absolute dependence on market forces. We shall deal with this in the chapter on the mobility of the Arab labour force. Secondly, its concentration in certain sectors; though, as we shall see in the next chapter, it does not limit itself to labouring jobs only. Thirdly, the low price of Arab labour power, with which we shall deal in the chapter on the Arab workers' wage structure.

### **Distribution of the Arab labour force by sector and occupation**

As we have seen, the Arab labour force (including that from the occupied territories) constitutes 17 per cent, or one sixth, of the total in the Israeli economy. In order to assess the real contribution of this labour force and its role in the economy, we shall examine its distribution, compared with that of the Jewish labour force, according to three criteria:

- *Sector* of employment: agriculture, construction, services, finance, etc.
- *Occupation* within each sector: skilled worker in an industry as against service worker in that same industry, teacher, clerk, scientist, etc.
- *Place* of employment, by ownership and size: public or private, large plant or small workshop.

An important feature of the development of the Jewish hired labour

force in Israel is its growing concentration in service sectors such as administration, finance and commerce; and its steady decline in the basic production sectors — manufacturing industry, construction and agriculture — as well as in service occupations within business (cleaning jobs in factories and offices, waiting in restaurants etc.) This trend towards re-deployment can be measured in two ways. First, in absolute figures: for example, we may determine how the *number* of Jewish industrial workers has evolved over the years. Secondly, in relative figures: here we ask how the *proportion* of industrial workers in the total Jewish labour force has varied from year to year. It is of course the latter index which is of greater interest, since in any case the total labour force has grown with the increase in population, and the main question is how the general structure of employment has been evolving.

We shall soon see that there is a very strong long-term trend in the Jewish labour force away from the three key sectors and the occupations mentioned above. This trend exists independently of the economic situation, and is manifest during boom years as well as in times of recession. During the last few years, no doubt because of the economic slow-down, there has even been an absolute decline in the number of Jewish workers in each of these sectors and occupations.

The Arab labour force, on the other hand, has always concentrated in the three main productive sectors — manufacturing and crafts, construction, and agriculture. About 86 per cent of all workers from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and some 70 per cent of the Arabs resident in Israel — or, taken together, 78 per cent of all Arabs employed in the Israeli economy — work in these three main sectors of production. This is roughly double the corresponding figure for Jews in 1976, which was 36 per cent.

Moreover, the Arabs employed in services tend to concentrate in 'productive services' — business services from which a private businessman profits directly. The Jews, on the other hand, tend to concentrate in government services, which are non-profit making and are part of the institutions of power, or services supplied by the state in order to ensure a continuous and smooth economic and social activity. This includes clerks, policemen, teachers, etc.

The next table, taken from manpower surveys, sums up the development of the occupational distribution of the two nationalities in Israel between 1969 and 1976. The occupations are divided into two categories: *A* — material production — including industrial workers, craftsmen, agricultural and construction workers, both skilled and unskilled. *B* — professional and technical services — including academics, clerks, service workers, salesmen, managers and engineers. The second category also includes important production workers, like engineers, though their number is relatively small. Stated otherwise, we may say that category *A* comprises the 'blue-collar' workers, though this is not entirely accurate, as cleaners, who are 'blue-collar' workers, are included in category *B*.

Occupational distribution of Jews and Arabs resident in Israel  
(Selected years between 1969 and 1976; all figures are percentages of the labour force in each nationality)<sup>15</sup>

	<i>Jews</i>		<i>Arabs</i>	
	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>
1969	45.2	54.8	74	26
1970	44.4	55.6	71	29
1971	43	57	73	27
1973	40.5	59.5	65.7	34.3
1975	37	63	72	29
1976	36	64	67.7	32.3

*A* — 'blue-collar' workers — production.

*B* — 'white-collar' workers — services.

The next table, included here for the sake of completeness, gives (in absolute figures) the distribution of the Jewish and Arab labour force according to nine occupational categories. (Here the category *academic-scientific* includes researchers, pharmacists, lawyers, chartered engineers; *professional-technical* includes teachers, accountants, social workers, nurses, technicians, draughtsmen; *services* include cooks, waiters, home helps, cleaners, hairdressers, policemen, janitors.)<sup>16</sup>

Occupational distribution of Jews and Arabs employed and resident in Israel<sup>17</sup>

	<i>Jews</i>				<i>Arabs</i>			
	1971	1973	1975	1976	1971	1973	1975	1976
<i>Total</i>	902.5	981	995.2	1018	94.6	107	107.8	109
<i>Academic-scientific</i>		61	72	75.8		0.8	1.4	1.3
	151.7				6.6			
<i>Professional-technical</i>		115	131.7	135.8		8.2	7.7	7.8
<i>Managerial</i>		34.5	34.3	43.4		0.8	0.5	0.4
	171.9				3.3			
<i>Clerical</i>		168	184.8	187.9		5	4.1	4.5
<i>Tradesmen, agents, salesmen</i>	68.5	78	79.6	82.4	2.5	7.5	6.7	7.5
<i>Services</i>	110.8	122.5	117.4	117	10.3	11.5	9.6	10.2
<i>Agricultural</i>	65.1	60	51.6	54.3	22	15.6	17.4	17.1
<i>Construction and industry — skilled</i>		279	262.6	258.2		38	43.4	44.2
	327.4				45			
<i>Construction and industry — unskilled</i>		55	51.8	55		16.7	13.6	12.5
<i>Unknown</i>					4.9	4	3.4	3.5

These tables show that the Jewish labour force indeed tends to concentrate mainly in 'white-collar' and service occupations — in 1976 these category *B* occupations accounted for 64 per cent of the total, following a steady increase from 54.8 in 1969. On the other hand, the Arab labour force tends to concentrate in the 'blue-collar' productive occupations of category *A* — in 1976 this category comprised nearly 68 per cent of the total. True, here there was a slow decline, but it did not amount to a steady trend; rather, it seems to have fluctuated with the state of the economy.

A more detailed analysis of the data shows that whereas in the Jewish labour force there has been a steady decline in the relative weight of each one of the productive occupations (for example, skilled workers in industry and construction made up 28, 26 and 25 per cent of the total in 1973, 1975 and 1976 respectively), the decline of category *A* among the Arabs derives from a steady downward trend in one occupation only, namely *agriculture*, while in other skilled and unskilled occupations, in industry and construction, the trend is consistently *upwards*.

There are two reasons for the decline in the agricultural Arab labour force. First, *lack of land*: most of the arable land best suited for modern methods of cultivation has been expropriated and given over to Jewish kibbutzim and moshavim. Three quarters of the land possessed by Arab villages in 1948 have by now been expropriated, and this process is still going on. In his book *The Arabs in Israel* Sabri Jiryis shows that the government exercises systematic discrimination against Arab agricultural production and in favour of Jewish agricultural production. The second reason is more general: in every economy undergoing industrialisation and transition to mass production, the weight of agriculture in the labour force tends to decline, while that of industry tends to go up. However, while in the Jewish labour force the proportion of workers in agriculture has also tended to decline, this has not been accompanied by a corresponding increase in the proportion of industrial workers, but rather in that of employees in clerical-managerial jobs, in finance and the professions.

Where does the Arab labour force released from agriculture flow to? According to our tables the answer is clear: it goes to other productive occupations as well as to business services. This latter category includes, according to the official *Uniform job classification*, cleaners, janitors, watchmen and the like. And these are the only category *B* occupations whose relative weight in the Arab labour force is constantly rising.

We can sum up this part of our analysis with the broad statement that among the Arabs the proportion of blue-collar occupations is rising at the expense of agriculture (whose relative weight is declining in the Israeli labour force as a whole), whereas among the Jews this proportion is constantly declining and the proportion of white-collar workers is steadily going up.

But there is yet another interesting development discernible in the last few years (the relevant data for previous years are unavailable): the ratio of skilled to unskilled Arab workers in manufacturing industry and the construction has increased rapidly despite the severe recession in Israeli



industry. The following table gives this ratio (computed by dividing the number of skilled workers by that of unskilled workers) for both national groups.

Number of skilled workers per one unskilled worker  
in industry and construction<sup>18</sup>

	<i>Jews</i>	<i>Arabs (resident in Israel)</i>
1973	5.1	2.3
1975	5.1	3.2
1976	4.7	3.5

(We have no date on the ratio among workers from the occupied territories, but it seems that a similar trend exists to some extent also in their case.) This phenomenon shows that Israel's manufacturing and construction industries are increasingly dependent on Arab labour not only for unskilled jobs.

Obviously, as Arabs resident in Israel move into skilled occupations, they are replaced in unskilled jobs by workers from the occupied territories, about whom we shall have something to say later on.

The dynamic of growing concentration of Arab workers in skilled jobs in production meets some well-known political and social obstacles. A very considerable part of Israel's industry is directly or indirectly engaged in the production of arms, ammunition and components for weapon systems. But engineering and electronics plants connected in any way to the military industry, such as the huge Tadiran complex, are virtually out of bounds to Arab workers. Likewise, there are very few Arab workers in the large enterprises of the public (state and Histadrut) sector, such as the Dead Sea Works, the Kur steel corporation, the ports and even the agribusiness firm Tnuvah. Every day the Israeli papers carry advertisements by firms seeking to recruit skilled workers which specify that only 'ex-servicemen' need apply. The term 'ex-serviceman' has become a euphemism for 'Jews' just as 'member of the minorities' is a euphemism for 'Arab'. Large companies in the services sector, for example in insurance, also advertise jobs for secretaries or switch-board operators who 'have completed their national military service'.<sup>19</sup>

The worst discrimination in the labour market is exercised by the large corporations which mostly belong to the state or the Histadrut and which are virtually closed to Arab workers. They are based on a fairly stable work-force and are not acutely affected by market fluctuations. The military and aviation industry of course also excludes Arab workers. (According to some estimates this industry, with its various ramifications, employs about half of all Jewish industrial workers.) There are also some branches of private business which by tradition exclude Arabs. One example of this is the diamond industry, although a very small number of Arab workers have recently been admitted into it.

Broadly speaking, therefore, the Arab industrial labour force is to be found mainly in small to medium-sized private firms. Such firms pay low

wages (about half of the wages paid in the public sector) and are vulnerable to market pressures. They work for the civilian market and produce consumer goods such as food, building materials, wood and rubber goods, and textiles. It is doubtful whether such enterprises could develop and thrive without Arab labour. Sometimes they suffer such an acute manpower shortage that they are forced to farm out work on a contractual basis to small workshops in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, since it is easier to employ women and girls there. This practice is particularly widespread in the fashion industry:

'The fashion industry suffers from a shortage of skilled manpower, particularly cutters and sample makers. . . . The factories have to compete for manpower by offering better wages. . . . The supply of skilled workers is low. . . . A large fashion manufacturer complained to me of the excessive reliance on sewing workshops beyond the green line. He said that if there was a political change the fashion industry might be harmed and would probably be unable to meet its orders. . . .'<sup>20</sup>

Small sewing workshops have also been set up recently in some Arab villages inside Israel, for instance in Umm el-Fahm. Their owners pay the women half the current wages paid in Tel-Aviv — but, because of the social conditions and the Arab family structure, many women and young girls prefer to work for half the wage near home than for the full wage in Tel-Aviv. (The daily wage in those sewing workshops was about IL40 at the beginning of 1978. See last chapter below.)

With the growing importance of private industry, however, many of the obstacles facing the Arab worker trying to get a skilled job are being removed. The decisive factor here — as always with these workers — is the market. The Israeli economy is still suffering a chronic shortage of manpower in all productive sectors. This shortage is particularly evident in private industry where the average wage is about half that in the public sector. The shift of Jewish labour from production to services necessarily causes an increasing flow of Arab manpower, which is the only reserve force at the disposal of private industry.

### *Detailed occupational distribution*

The foregoing analysis described the general picture. Let us now examine the distribution of Arab workers by detailed occupation. (According to the 1972 *Uniform job classification* there are ten major occupational groups, each of which is further sub-divided into eight to ten detailed occupations.) The data we have quoted so far were based on surveys of samples of a few thousand families. However, the most reliable data can be obtained from the population census.

The following table is based on the last census, taken in 1972. To explain how it should be read, let us take for example the third row, *Primary school teachers*. The table shows that, of the total number of employed Israeli Jews, 4.2 per cent were primary school teachers; and the corresponding figure for Arabs resident in Israel was 5.5 per cent. Jewish primary school

teachers earned on the average IL7.1 per hour, whereas their Arab colleagues earned only IL5.8. Thus the hourly earning of a Jewish Primary school teacher was 1.2 times as much as (or, in other words, 20 per cent more than) that of an Arab colleague. To avoid needless clutter, we have omitted figures which represent less than one per cent of any one national group; and occupations which account for less than one per cent in *both* national groups have been omitted altogether.

From our table, and from the full table<sup>21</sup> (of which ours is a shortened version), the following important conclusions can be drawn.

1 In virtually all occupations, a Jew earns more than an Arab. (This is also the case in the full table.) In fact, the only significant exception is unskilled agricultural work. The typical difference varies around 20 per cent, but since the Arabs are concentrated in lower-paid occupations, the average *overall* difference (see bottom line of our table) is 40 per cent. We shall discuss this in the final chapter of the present article.

2 The full table comprises about one hundred detailed occupations. But nearly 60 per cent of all Arab employees in Israel (in 1972) concentrated in sixteen typical occupations. Even more striking: about 46 per cent — nearly one half — were concentrated in only seven occupations: self-employed farmers, skilled agricultural workers, tinsmiths and welders, carpenters, builders, drivers, and unskilled workers in manufacturing and construction.

3 Jews, on the other hand, are much more evenly distributed among the various occupations: there are only three occupations where their concentration is 4 per cent or more (bookkeepers, general service workers, and tinsmiths/welders). In the case of Arabs there are eight such high-concentration occupations.

4 The full table shows that there are several industries in which there are virtually no Arabs (less than 0.1 per cent). One example of this is the diamond industry, in which 0.8 per cent of all Jewish employees (about 7,000 in all) are concentrated.

5 Service occupations in which Arabs are concentrated are usually those which are productive in the economic sense — waiters, hotel workers etc. Many of these serve Israel's tourist industry.

6 There is a very high concentration of Arab workers in occupations which tend to be pursued in small businesses.

Using this table, we can estimate the total number of workers of either nationality within each occupation, since we know how many people were employed in 1972. This calculation shows that in some occupations Arab workers (including those from the occupied territories) constitute a majority. We shall come back to this at the end of the present chapter.

#### *Workers from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip*

Employment in Israel accounts for about 32 per cent of the total employment of the inhabitants of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.<sup>22</sup> Among employees (that is, excluding the self-employed) the proportion

*Palestinian workers in Israel*

Employed persons resident in Israel, by detailed occupation, hourly earning and nationality, 1972 (figures under one per cent omitted)<sup>2</sup>

	Percentage of total		Hourly earning (IL)		R
	Jews	Arabs	Jews	Arabs	
<i>Engineers (chartered)</i>	1.3	—	7.9	—	
<i>Secondary school teachers</i>	1.7	—	8.4	—	
<i>Primary school teachers</i>	4.2	5.5	7.1	5.8	
<i>Writers, artists</i>	1.1	—	5.8	—	
<i>Nurses</i>	2.3	1.2	4.5	3.0	
<i>Engineering technicians</i>	2.5	—	5.4	—	
<i>Production manager</i>	2.3	—	8.4	—	
<i>Bookkeepers</i>	5.3	—	4.9	—	
<i>Secretaries</i>	3.6	—	3.9	—	
<i>Storekeepers</i>	2.1	—	4.4	—	
<i>Office clerks</i>	1.2	—	4.1	—	
<i>General clerks</i>	2.3	—	4.2	—	
<i>Self-employed in commerce</i>	3.2	3.5	5.1	3.9	1
<i>Salesmen, shop assistants</i>	2.7	2.2	3.4	2.3	1
<i>Waiters</i>	—	1.1	—	2.5	
<i>Home-helps (domestic chars)</i>	2.4	—	2.7	—	
<i>Policemen</i>	1.3	2.5	3.9	3.5	1
<i>General services (cleaners, janitors)</i>	4.1	2.8	2.8	2.5	1
<i>Self-employed in agriculture</i>	1.7	5.1	5.3	3.5	1
<i>Skilled agricultural workers</i>	2.8	5.5	2.9	2.7	1
<i>Unskilled agricultural workers</i>	1.8	2.1	2.6	2.8	6
<i>Tinsmiths, welders</i>	4.2	4.1	4.1	3.2	1
<i>Mechanics</i>	2.1	2.8	4.2	3.0	1
<i>Plumbers</i>	—	1.4	—	3.3	
<i>Electricians</i>	2.4	1.3	4.3	2.8	1
<i>Skilled workers in food industry</i>	—	1.3	—	2.3	
<i>Carpenters</i>	2.6	8.8	3.7	3.3	1
<i>Spinners</i>	1.6	1.7	3.3	2.4	1
<i>Tailors</i>	2.7	1.9	2.7	2.0	1
<i>Builders</i>	2.2	6.9	4.7	3.5	1
<i>Drivers</i>	3.9	5.7	4.2	3.3	1
<i>Porters and stevedores</i>	1.1	1.0	3.6	3.1	1
<i>Workers in mineral industry</i>	—	1.0	—	3.1	
<i>Unclassified building workers</i>	—	1.7	—	2.9	
<i>Unskilled workers in manufacturing and construction</i>	1.4	8.3	3.4	3.0	1
<i>Total</i>	100.0	100.0	4.6	3.3	1.

Note: The occupation descriptions on the left are incomplete and are meant only as an approximate guide.

employed in Israel is obviously higher: even official estimates put it at about 50 per cent. This figure has been increasing steadily since the occupation in 1967, because there is a shortage of jobs in these territories. According to Bank of Israel and Ministry of Labour estimates<sup>23</sup> there are 15,000 industrial workers employed there – a number which has been stagnant since 1967.

Although the proportion of workers from the occupied territories in the total labour force of Israel is not particularly high – seven to ten per cent – there are certain industries and occupations, such as construction, carpentry, and general labouring jobs, where they make up 40 or 50 per cent of all employees. Moreover, they are the most elastic and ‘free’ section of the work-force. For example, in 1970-73, during the great boom in construction, 60 per cent of the *newly recruited* manpower in this sector came from the occupied territories,<sup>24</sup> and another 20 per cent from among Arabs residing in Israel. The importance of this elasticity is often stressed in Bank of Israel reports. For example, in its 1976 report the Bank says:

‘Despite the recession, manpower surveys show outstanding stability in the number of men employed, and a continued increase in the number of women employed in services. The data indicate that the supply of labour has adjusted to the various components of demand, a phenomenon which existed also in the boom years. A change in migration patterns, an adaptation of the propensity to work among the marginal age-groups, *elasticity of the depth of employment and mobility of the employed persons from the occupied territories who move in and out of the Israeli economy* – all these provide an explanation for the unusual phenomenon of slow-down and even stagnation in production without a significant rise in unemployment.’<sup>25</sup> (our italics)

The word ‘men’ in the first sentence of this quotation evidently does not refer to Arab men from the occupied territories. What the Bank is saying is that in times of depression, when workers must be made redundant, the Israeli economy can avoid the political dangers of mass unemployment by dismissing only the elastic part of the work-force: marginal age-groups (the young and the old) and marginal people – workers from the occupied territories.

In a system which is totally dominated by Israeli Jews, there are obviously very few openings in the public services for Arabs with higher education. In a Bank of Israel publication, Bergman writes: ‘Analysis of the rate of employment in relation to the level of education shows that, contrary to the position among Israel’s Jewish population, the rate of employment in the administered [= occupied] territories decreases as the level of education . . . increases. This is probably caused by a shortage of work suitable for educated workers. A similar problem exists also in the case of educated non-Jewish workers in Israel, among whom the level of unemployment is relatively high.’<sup>26</sup>

The sectoral distribution of Palestinian workers from the occupied territories is also very clear-cut: a high concentration in basic production sectors. In particular, there is a movement into manufacturing industry, where these workers fill vacancies created in unskilled jobs.

The next table refers only to workers who are hired through official

channels. It is perhaps reasonable to assume that among the tens of thousands of workers hired through unofficial labour contractors a higher proportion are employed in agriculture and construction, and relatively fewer in industry.

Workers from the occupied territories, by sector of employment;  
selected years, 1970-76

	<i>Total</i> (thousands)	<i>Agriculture</i> (per cent)	<i>Industry</i> (per cent)	<i>Construction</i> (per cent)	<i>Other</i> (per cent)
1970	20	24	11	54	10
1972	52	23	17	50	10
1975	66	14	18	54	13
1976	65	15	20	49	15
<i>Trend</i>	up	down	up	stable	up

In the services sector the proportion of workers from the occupied territories is increasing steadily. Many local authorities depend on them for street cleaning, refuse collection and the like. (One notorious case is that of the municipal council of Holon; in October 1977 it transpired that the council hired, through a labour contractor, twelve year old boys as sweepers in Holon's industrial zones, commercial centres and streets.) They are also employed as maintenance and sanitation workers in private institutions of all sizes. The Hadassah hospital in Jerusalem employed dozens of cleaners from the West Bank in its laboratories and wards; in this case the foremen and supervisors are still veteran Jewish cleaners.

It is well-known that agricultural production in many moshavim and kibbutzim depends on Arab labour. During the fighting in Lebanon, when hundreds of Lebanese workers were unable to turn up for fruit-picking in the Kibbutzim of the Hula valley, an acute manpower crisis developed in this area. Israeli agriculture, which is increasingly export-oriented – about half of the produce is currently exported – could make the transition to labour-intensive crops, such as vegetables, flowers and strawberries, only thanks to the abundance of cheap labour from occupied territories. During the busy season, scores of workers from the territories arrive each morning at every moshav, and it is they who do the various agricultural labouring jobs. The Jewish *moshavniks* have for the most part become capitalist farmers who organise the production process, occasionally operate the heavy agricultural machinery, and do the necessary paperwork. A considerable number of these Arab workers are not registered with any official agency, and neither they nor their employers have any reason to declare the fact of their employment in the surveys upon which official statistics are based.

#### *Age distribution of workers in Manufacturing and construction*

The consistent trend towards the concentration of Israeli Jews in

white-collar occupations and in the services sector comes about in two ways.

First, by Jewish workers actually moving from blue-collar to white-collar occupations, or from jobs in the manufacturing and construction sectors to the services. This occurs particularly in times of economic recession, when there is little new investment, factories are closed down and workers are laid off. In some cases production workers, instead of being laid off, are transferred to white-collar jobs (such as marketing or administration) within the same firm. This happened, for example, in the Jerusalem firm of Friedman, which closed down its production lines of heaters and refrigerators and became an importer and distributor of similar goods.

Secondly, young Jewish workers, entering the labour market for the first time, tend to go to white-collar occupations and to the services sector. This is reflected in the age distribution of workers in the various sectors. For example, while in the total Jewish labour force 42 per cent are under thirty-five years old, the proportion of this age-group among Jews employed in the construction industry is only 36 per cent. This indicates that the proportion of young Jews in this sector are veterans who have by now established themselves, have won job security, seniority pay and various other benefits which make it worth their while to stay there. Thus, while it is true that there are tens of thousands of Jews in this sector, many of them belong to the permanent staff and are employed as clerks and administrators in construction firms; and this number also includes about four thousand contractors. But the younger manpower of this industry – that employed on building sites and engaged in actual construction – is for the most part made up of Arabs.

For example, it is known that the permanent staff of the giant Histadrut-owned Sollel-Boneh, which is basically a construction firm, is made up mainly of Jews. This staff is engaged in maintenance and administration, away from the building sites, in jobs which only slightly depend on the seasonal and economic fluctuations of the construction industry. On the other hand, the temporary workers of Sollel-Boneh, often hired on a daily basis, are for the most part Arabs, who work on the actual building sites; and by now these even include foremen. Since Sollel-Boneh is a Histadrut firm, which regards itself as having a 'mission' beyond mere profit-making, it considers this situation as an abnormal one, a crisis. The firm believes that Jews must work in actual building, and if new Jewish hands do not go into construction, this spells a crisis – a big worry for the Council of the Union of Construction Workers, which is of course totally dominated by Jews, although more than half of all construction workers are Arabs. The council's secretary, Mr Amster, has warned that 'many skilled Jewish workers are leaving the industry [due to the recession] and will not come back even if there is a recovery. The young generation does not go into the industry and the [Jewish] reserves are dwindling yearly.'<sup>27</sup>

Let us therefore examine the age distribution in the various sectors; we shall see that Mr Amster's worry is well-founded. The data are summarised in the following table.

The figures in each column (for either nationality) do not add up to 100

per cent, because we have omitted the older age-groups (50+), which are irrelevant to the trend of the last twenty years.

Age structure of Israeli labour force in 1975, by nationality and sector<sup>28</sup>

	Total	Agri- culture	Industry	Const- ruction	Business services	Public services	(per cent) Personal services
<i>Arabs</i>							
15-24	30	26	40	30	20	19	34
25-34	30	26	30	34	27	32	29
35-49	28	30	22	26	31	30	25
<i>Jews</i>							
15-24	20	23	22	15	26	17	13
25-34	22	20	23	21	26	26	10
35-49	30	25	27	34	24	30	10

The first column, which gives the age structure of the *total* labour force of both nationalities, shows clearly that the Arab labour force is considerably younger than the Jewish, as we have already noted in the beginning of the first chapter (on the Arab working population). But to get an idea of the *differential* rates at which younger workers are absorbed by the various sectors, the figures for each sector should be compared with those in the first column. Thus we find, for example, that the age structure of the Jewish labour force in industry is roughly the same as that of the whole Jewish labour force; but the Arab industrial labour force is 'young' even in comparison with the total Arab labour force. This indicates a differential trend of young Arabs towards industry.

Social scientists Matras and Weentroub of the Brookdale Institute in Jerusalem base the following statement on research which they completed in 1976 and which included wide-ranging surveys:

'The most basic and evident gap in Israel between patterns of occupational and educational advancement is that between Jews and non-Jews. . . . For Jewish men, the patterns of occupation changes as between father and son reflect a process of spreading and penetration into a wide range of occupations in a modern economy, starting from a situation of relatively high concentration in the parents' occupations. This process includes a strong and comprehensive upward mobility — into academic, professional and managerial occupations, as well as lower "white-collar" occupations. There is also a downward mobility into skilled and semi-skilled occupations.

'For non-Jews, the patterns of occupation changes as between father and son reflect an almost exclusive move from agriculture to "blue-collar" occupations, be they skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled, with a very restricted mobility into "white-collar" occupation.<sup>29</sup>



*Overall contribution to Israeli production*

Because of the high concentration of Arab workers in the production of goods and services and because of their relatively low wages, their overall contribution to the total value of commodities and to the surplus value is particularly high; in fact, it is not very much less than that of the Jewish workers, although the latter outnumber the Arab workers in the ratio of five to one.

In trying to estimate the Arab workers' share in the production of value, it is convenient to confine one's attention to material production — that is, to agriculture, manufacture and construction. It is true that this excludes transport, catering and other productive services, but that does not greatly affect the general picture, since the Arab workers' share in these productive services is at least as high as in the production of material goods. In any case, only a crude estimate can be made, for several reasons. One reason is the existence of the 'black' economy, which does not appear in reports and surveys, except perhaps the Shimron report on organised crime and a book by the journalist B. Nadel.<sup>30</sup> But again, there is no reason to suppose that owners of 'black' businesses are particularly reluctant to employ Arab workers. Quite the contrary, there is no doubt that many 'underground' enterprises rely on the labour of Arab workers without rights, without a union and, in the case of workers from the occupied territories, without work permits. Hence the true contribution of the Arab workers must be greater than any estimate based on official statistics.

Moreover, for political reasons big firms tend not to dismiss their Jewish workers even during prolonged recessions. In some cases, for example, the whole economy of a development town depends on one firm. Whenever such a firm announces its intention to make a few hundred workers redundant, public and political pressure is soon mobilised to prevent the dismissals; very often a grant or a subsidy is made available to the firm to enable it to keep its Jewish workers. Firms engaged in military production keep their skilled Jewish workers on the payroll even when business is slack and there is nothing for them to do; for such workers are generally in short supply, and the firm may not be able to replace them when business picks up again. (In firms working wholly or partly for military production Arab skilled workers cannot be used as a substitute!)

On the other hand, an Arab worker will not normally be left on the payroll of a private or public firm unless he or she is actually needed for current production. These workers have no political defence; the Israeli press does not kick up a fuss when, say, Friedman sacks a hundred workers from the West Bank; and they can always be re-hired when required. This applies particularly to unskilled workers — the great majority of the workers from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Comparing the total number of Jewish workers employed in production in manufacturing, construction, agriculture and mining with

the total number of Arab workers in the same occupations, we find that while the former is declining both absolutely and relatively, the latter is constantly increasing, and the two are rapidly approaching each other. This tendency has been particularly evident during the last few years of recession.

The following table shows the number of workers of each nationality in the above-mentioned productive occupations in selected years.<sup>31</sup>

	1971	1973	1975	1976
<i>Total number of Jewish workers in material production (thousands)</i>	392	394	365	364
<i>Total number of Arab workers in material production (thousands)</i>	117	135	144	159
<i>Proportion of Arab workers out of the total (per cent)</i>	23	25	28	30

These figures show that in the basic productive occupations there are nearly half as many Arab as Jewish workers; moreover, this proportion is increasing steadily, and will no doubt increase still further, given the younger age structure of the Arab population and the greater differential tendency of young Arab workers towards productive occupations.

This proportion, of nearly one Arab worker to two Jewish workers, pertains to material production in the aggregate. But the detailed figures for each separate occupation show a great deal of variation because, as we have already noted, there is a high concentration of Arab workers in a few very specific occupations. As a matter of fact, there are already some occupations in which Arab workers are the majority.

Fairly accurate figures can be obtained for 1972, using the census results. The following table gives the number of workers of either national group, for three occupations in which there is a particularly high concentration of Arabs.

Workers in selected occupations, by nationality; 1972 census<sup>32</sup>

	<i>Arabs resident in Israel</i>	<i>Arabs from occupied territories</i>	<i>Arabs (total)</i>	<i>Jews</i>
<i>(thousands)</i>				
<i>Unskilled workers in industry &amp; construction</i>	10	26	36	16
<i>Skilled builders &amp; construction workers</i>	6.2	20	26.2	20
<i>Agricultural workers</i>	5.5	18.5	24	32.5

The data given in this table are the most reliable ones for 1972, being based on the census of that year rather than on statistical estimates. But since, as we have seen, the proportion of Arabs in the basic productive occupations has been steadily increasing, their present contribution to

the production of value and surplus value in Israel is greater, both absolutely and relatively, than is reflected in the last two tables.

## **Mobility**

One of the most important characteristics of the Arab labour force is its high mobility, which has several components and is connected with whole mode of existence of these workers in Israel.

Most Jewish workers in Israel have security of tenure, and cannot be dismissed without considerable severance pay. They are also normally protected against dismissal by the Histadrut and by a whole system of political pressures. Arab workers, in contrast, rarely have job security, and are normally employed on a daily basis. They also lack political muscle, and possess little trade-union and political defence against redundancy. Most Arab workers, who can so easily be dismissed, are employed in the private sector which is therefore able to adjust to changing market conditions, to recessions and rapid upturns in trade.

One component of mobility is geographical, and relates to the distance between the workers's home and workplace. As is well known, most workers work far from their villages. Even in Arab towns there are hardly any factories, and in most Arab villages there are no workshops employing more than two or three workers, not to mention factories. Because of the massive expropriations of Arab lands in the 1950s, young Arab villages have little agricultural employment in their own villages. In fact, it is estimated that about 50 per cent of all Arab workers resident in Israel work away from their own village or town;<sup>33</sup> and this proportion is likely to increase as more young people join the labour force. If we include also workers from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, it follows that about 75 per cent of all Arab workers employed in Israel work far from home – a remarkably high proportion.

We shall not go here into a detailed analysis of the causes of this phenomenon. Let us just point out that in addition to the lack of employment opportunities in Arab villages and towns there are also great obstacles preventing Arabs from moving house nearer their workplace. Most Jewish villages and many towns, such as Safad, Karmi'el and 'Arad, are hermetically sealed against Arabs, who are simply not allowed to reside there permanently. In places like Tel-Aviv or even Haifa, where Arabs can in principle live, it is in practice difficult for them to find a flat in most quarters, since Jewish residents show great resistance to an Arab moving in. Of course, the Arab worker himself is usually not highly motivated to move house nearer his workplace: since he lacks job security, he may in any case need to look for another job before long.

Whatever the reasons, this geographical mobility enables the Israeli economy to exploit Arab labour exactly where it is needed. If a large construction project is started in Jerusalem or, say, in Qiryat Shmonah,

Jewish workers cannot be attracted away from their homes and secure jobs; so the temporary but urgent demand for manpower is satisfied by Arab workers from villages in the Triangle and the Galilee, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Another component of mobility relates to the frequency with which workers change their job or place of employment. (The two components are clearly inter-connected: a worker having a steady job is more highly motivated to move house near his or her workplace; equally, a person working near home is somewhat less likely to seek another job.)

Since 1967 there has been, as far as we know, only one survey dealing with the frequency with which employees (that is, wage or salary earners) change their place of employment. In this survey, conducted in 1971, data were collected on the number of times employees had changed their job during the preceding five-year period (1966-1970). The results are summarised in the following table.

Employees resident in Israel, by number of changes of place of employment during the five years 1966-70<sup>34</sup>

<i>Number of changes</i>	<i>All age groups</i>		<i>(per cent)</i>	
	<i>Arabs</i>	<i>Jews</i>	<i>Age group 20-34</i>	
0	59	72.5	53	62
1	13.5	19.5	13.5	27
2	6	4.5	6.5	6
3+	20.5	3.5	25	5
<i>Total</i>	100	100	100	100

From this table we can deduce two important facts. First, Arab employees change their job much more frequently than their Jewish colleagues. Thus, for example, about 20 per cent of all Arab workers made three or more changes during the five-year period in question, as compared to only 3.5 per cent among all Jewish workers. And in the 20-34 age-group one quarter of the Arab workers made three or more changes, as compared to only 5 per cent of the Jewish workers.

Secondly, it seems that Jewish workers tend to settle down to a steady job as they grow older, whereas Arab workers remain mobile even when they are no longer young, so the difference in mobility between the whole population of Arab workers and its 20-34 age-group is smaller than for Jews.

The mobility of Arab workers and the ease with which they can be dismissed lend a great deal of flexibility to the Israeli economy. This is particularly true of the private sector, but the public bureaucratic sector of Israeli capital benefits as well. This is well illustrated by the following newspaper story:

'Sollél-Boneh has announced the dismissal of 150 workers in the

'Afulah and Valley district, because of a sharp decline in activities. . . . It was promised that every effort would be made to keep a "skilled nucleus" of workers in the region. Senior sources told me that the responsibility for employment in the region has virtually been handed over to the Housing Ministry, which will have to find employment for the Jewish construction workers in the region of the Valley of Jezreel.'<sup>35</sup>

It is well known that the permanent skilled nucleus of Sollel-Boneh, including administrative workers, engineers and technicians, consists almost exclusively of Jews.

A story published in the same newspaper exactly one month earlier contained another example, referring to the Herut lift factory: 'Due to the recession in construction, there will be a controlled reduction in the number of employees. The first to be dismissed will be workers from the [occupied] territories. As for engineers and technicians, an effort will be made to transfer them to jobs abroad.'<sup>36</sup>

The difference in mobility between Jewish and Arab workers is also reflected in the following fact. In the fiscal year 1976/77 there was a sharp decline in construction, as a result of which thousands of workers were made redundant. In fact, about 1,500 Jewish workers and 10,000 Arab workers lost their jobs — a ratio of one to six or seven.<sup>37</sup>

A worker in a factory owned jointly by several kibbutzim put it all very succinctly: 'The permanent workforce [in our factory] are [Jewish] *hired* workers. The seasonal workers are *Arabs*, and the managers are *kibbutz members*.'<sup>38</sup>

### *Mobility of workers from the occupied territories*

Above we have quoted some data on the frequency of workplace changes among Arab workers resident in Israel. As for workers coming from the occupied territories, A. Bergman reports that only about one third of these workers have been working for their present employer for two years or more, and only about one sixth for over four years.<sup>39</sup> These figures indicate, on the one hand, a high degree of mobility; but on the other hand they also reveal a growing dependence of many businesses and farms on labour from these territories. The Ministry of Labour reports that out of 600 workers from the Gaza Strip employed in twenty-seven enterprises in the Erez district, about 430 left their job during the first three years of their employment.<sup>40</sup>

Although workers from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip only make up 7 to 10 per cent of the labour force employed in Israel, their contribution to the immediate supply of labour (that is, to filling current vacancies), particularly in certain key sectors, is extremely high. This is reflected even in the statistics of the official labour exchanges, although only a little over one half of the workers from the occupied territories go through them. The following table gives, for the years 1973-75, the monthly average number of workers who obtained employment through

## *Palestinian workers in Israel*

the labour exchanges, and the proportion of Arabs from the occupied territories among them.

Manpower supplied through labour exchanges; monthly average<sup>41</sup>

	<i>Total number of orders supplied</i>	<i>Of these, supplied by occupied territories</i>	<i>Percentage supplied by occupied territories</i>
		<i>All occupations</i>	
1973	23,500	5,500	23
1974	19,000	4,600	24
1975	17,500	4,000	23
		<i>Construction workers</i>	
1973	1,200	650	54
1974	900	570	63
1975	1,000	600	60
		<i>Unskilled workers</i>	
1973	17,500	4,800	27
1974	13,600	4,000	29
1975	12,600	3,800	30

These figures show that workers from the occupied territories make an important, and apparently growing, contribution to supplying the immediate demand of the Israeli labour market; and in the construction industry their contribution is decisive. Moreover, it is safe to assume that most workers who are hired without the mediation of the labour exchange are also Arabs, either from the occupied territories or from Israel.

## *Mobility and unemployment*

Arab workers, along with 25,000 Jewish workers from the 'development townships' are virtually the only ones to be hired for certain jobs which by their nature are seasonal and require mobility, such as fruit picking, weeding and similar agricultural work, as well as citrus packing and food canning. Such workers hardly ever attain job security or a monthly wage. According to Histadrut regulations, an agricultural worker is entitled to job tenure only after twelve years' continuous employment for the same employer. Of course, employers prefer to lay off workers, even if they have to be re-hired after a short time, precisely in order to prevent them achieving tenure. This trick can be played more easily on Arab workers, and for this reason many employers prefer to have Arab rather than Jewish workers. When the above-mentioned dismissals occurred in the 'Afulah branch of Sollel-Boneh, the redundant Jewish workers appealed to the seventy kibbutzim and moshavim of the district not to use Arab labour for their domestic construction work, and hire Jewish workers instead. But the kibbutzim and moshavim refused to do so, knowing full well the heavy obligations involved in employing a

Jewish worker — fringe benefits, the demand for job security, the difficulty of dismissal. When an Arab worker has finished doing the job he was hired for, he can be sacked; but with a Jewish worker it is a different matter.

Thus, precisely because Arab workers can be dismissed more easily; employers often prefer to hire them, rather than Jewish workers, *for certain kinds of work*. Moreover, the difference in occupational structure between the Arab and Jewish labour force occasionally leads to the result that a firm wanting to trim down its work-force will sack its less essential Jewish service workers rather than Arab workers who do vital production jobs. This happened, for example, in the Kittan-Dimonah textile mill in October 1977, when 200 Jewish men and women workers were dismissed. This was bitterly opposed, since hundreds of families were reduced to the breadline because of temporary difficulties in the factory on which their livelihood depended. But the owners, the Klal firm, were adamant and got their own way. Throughout the period of negotiations, the owners offered to sack Arab production workers instead of the redundant Jewish service workers, provided the latter agree to replace the former at the machines, in conditions of tremendous noise and mental tensions. According to press reports, 'Mr Steingrad, the general manager of Kittan-Dimonah, which employs about 400 workers from the [occupied] territories (one third of the total work-force!) because there are not enough Jewish workers suitable for work at the looms, spinning and finishing machines etc. said that any Jewish worker prepared to work at these machines will be allowed to do so.' This no one agreed to do — certainly not at the going wage rates, which were in the region of IL70-80 per day for Jews. Arab workers were being paid about IL50 per day.

But despite such occasional and almost paradoxical situations, where Arab workers are saved from unemployment precisely because of their greater vulnerability and exploitability, it is they who generally bear the brunt of economic recession. This can be seen from the trend in the employment figures during the crisis of 1973-78. Unlike the 1965-66 crisis, when there was significant unemployment among Jewish workers, the present crisis has had no such effect, and was reflected only in a lack of new investment and a decline in *Arab* employment.

Number of persons employed in Israel, 1973-77

	<i>Total number of employed persons</i>	<i>Of these, Arabs resident in Israel</i>	<i>(thousands) Of these, men</i>
1973	1094	107	94
1974	1096	101	90.5
1975	1112	105	94.8
1976	1126	108	97.3

The last table shows that whereas the total number of employed persons continued to rise steadily, albeit slowly, during the period 1973-76, there was no rise in the employment of Arabs resident in Israel, and in the worst years of the crisis their employment actually decline.

This confirms once again that Arab workers serve as Israel's reserve army of labour. Being politically defenceless, this labour force is employed for purely economic reasons only; that is, just in so far as employers can derive immediate financial profit from it.

## **Wages**

The growth in consumption, and in particular in the construction of houses, in Arab villages both within the 'green line' and in the occupied territories, has created an impression as though the Arab worker is well paid, sometimes even better paid than the Israeli-Jewish worker. In fact, the huge increase in the employment of Arabs in the Israeli economy since 1967 has led to a rise in the overall income of Arab workers. But an examination of the daily or monthly wage and the work conditions of the average Arab worker reveals a far less rosy picture.

### *Wages of workers from the occupied territories*

In analysing the level of wages, certain basic facts must be borne in mind. *Virtually all workers from the occupied territories are employed temporarily, on a daily basis.* Therefore they have no secure monthly wage, and their income depends on the number of days actually worked. For workers from the occupied territories it is estimated that the average number of working days — allowing for Saturdays and religious holidays, rainy days, days of sickness and so forth — is 21 per month.<sup>43</sup>

From the gross pay one has to subtract income tax as well as other deductions such as national insurance and pension contributions, which the worker never gets back in any form, since the present administrative machine is hardly able and still less willing to keep track of the sums that accrue to the credit of a worker hired by the day, who changes his or her place of work about twice a year. In addition, we have to deduct travel expenses, which are very high — about IL20 per working day in 1977 — for workers who generally work very far from home. As to the size of these deductions, we quote the following report from G. Kessler's Ph. D. thesis, *Dynamics of a minority community*.

'In one case I examined in 1971, a labour contractor from Juarish. . . received from an employer IL23.40 per day for a worker employed in pruning orange groves. The contractor in turn transmitted IL21.60 to the labour exchange which, after making deductions, paid the wage through the Gaza branch of Bank Le'umi, where the worker collected his wage to the tune of IL11.35.'<sup>44</sup>

Thus the ra'is and the labour exchange between them deducted about



one half of the worker's wage. This rate of deduction, 50 per cent, is very common. The worker of course gets nothing in return for the huge tax he is made to pay.

The following table, published by the Ministry of Labour, lists wages and salaries paid by some Israeli employers in and around the Gaza Strip to Arab employees from the Strip.

Gross pay of employees from the Gaza Strip, 1975<sup>45</sup>

<i>Employer</i>	<i>Daily pay</i>	<i>Monthly pay</i> (IL)
<i>Banks (Le'umi and Hapo'alim)</i>	50	1000
<i>Moshav Sadot</i>	20	420
<i>Ben-Bassat Carpentry</i>	20	420
<i>Pioneer (cement)</i>	40	840
<i>Avi Erez (metal)</i>	30	630

According to data published by the Central Statistics Office (see refs. 8 and 43), the average gross monthly wage of workers from the occupied territories employed in Israel was IL924 in 1975 and IL1134 in 1976 – an increase of under 25 per cent; in the same year prices, as well as the average wage of Jewish workers, rose by more than 40 per cent. (Indeed, during the period 1970-75 the real average wage of Gaza workers fell by 17 per cent.<sup>46</sup>) By way of comparison: the average gross monthly pay of all employees in Israel was IL2920 in 1976.<sup>47</sup> After deducting taxes and so on, as well as travel expenses, the worker from the occupied territories is left with a truly minimal wage, for which no Jewish worker would be prepared to work. Indeed, as pointed out in the Bank of Israel report quoted above (see ref. 14), the various welfare benefits and other allowances received by 'ex-servicemen' (that is, by Jews) add up to more than the net wage of an Arab worker from the occupied territories.

Workers employed *inside* the occupied territories are on the whole better off: their average gross monthly wage was IL1050 in 1976. This is slightly less than the corresponding figure for those who travel to work in Israel (IL1134); but then they do not pay nearly as much in tax and travel expenses. On the other hand, workers from the occupied territories employed in Israeli *industry* are much worse off: their gross monthly wage was IL840.

All the figures quoted so far are official averages, relating to workers employed through the labour exchanges. Of course, there are many thousands of workers who are employed unofficially, and some of these earn more than the figures quoted above. But it must be borne in mind that they do not enjoy even the few fringe benefits given to those who go through the labour exchanges, such as compensations for industrial accidents. Also they are mostly hired for agricultural and other seasonal work, which implies a higher risk of unemployment during part of the year. In this free labour market, a daily wage of IL100 is considered (in

1978) to be on the high side. These wages are often paid in 'black money' so that no taxes are deducted. To determine the net wage, we therefore only have to subtract travel expenses, say IL20. This leaves a net daily wage of about IL80 (or about £2.70 at the 1978 rate of exchange), which works out at IL1680 for an average month of 21 working days.

How does this compare with the wage of an Israeli worker? In most branches of the Israeli economy, fringe benefits add up to something like 40 per cent of the basic wage. These fringe benefits, which are part and parcel of the effective wage in every modern economy, and particularly in Israel, include payment for holidays and sick leave, production bonuses, presents, a 'thirteenth month' and even 'fourteenth month' salary. The vast majority of Arab workers do not enjoy such extras; from a Ministry of Labour report<sup>48</sup> which contains data on holidays, sick-benefits and compensations, it is evident that an Arab worker from the West Bank or the Gaza Strip receives virtually nothing beyond his or her bare wage. Thus, the average wage of an Israeli worker (which was IL3500 per month in 1977) adds up, together with fringe benefits, to earnings which are twice or three times those of an Arab worker from the occupied territories.

#### *Arab workers resident in Israel*

The wages of Arab workers resident inside the 'green line', while normally higher than those of workers from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, are much smaller than those of Jewish workers. At the bottom end of the scale are women working locally in small village sewing workshops or in agriculture, whose wages are very low indeed — as low as the average wage of workers from the occupied territories. On the other hand, skilled workers in construction and other industries earn as much as they are able to get on the free market; here too a daily wage of IL100 to 120 (that is IL2100 to 2520 per month) is considered (in 1978) to be on the high side. Most of these workers also are hired by the day, and therefore do not enjoy the benefits and extras which are given to regular monthly workers. And they too must spend considerable sums in travel expenses.

There is a fairly detailed and reliable statistical information on the wages of Arab workers resident in Israel. The most reliable data on Israeli society in general are those derived from the last census, conducted in 1972. So far, only a small part of the census results have been published, but fortunately these include data on the earnings of both national groups in Israel.

First, let us look at the distribution of employees (wages and salary earners) by income.

The difference is quite striking. The under IL800 income bracket contained less than one half of all Jewish employees, but nearly three-quarters of all Arab employees.

Distribution of employees  
(Jews and Arabs resident in Israel) by income, 1972<sup>49</sup>  
(per cent)

	Annual income (IL)				
	Less than 4000	4000-7999	8000-11999	12000+	Total
Jews	20	28.5	24	27.5	100
Arabs	32	40	18.2	9.8	100

This huge difference in wages cannot be explained merely by the high concentration of Arabs in unskilled jobs. In the second chapter, dealing with the occupational distribution of the Arab labour force, we presented a long table showing the distribution of Jewish and Arab employed persons by detailed occupation, based on the 1972 census. Turning back to the table, we find that *in every detailed occupation (with one single exception) in which a significant proportion (at least one per cent) of the total labour force of both nationalities is represented, the Arab worker is paid less than the Jewish worker.* Thus, an elementary school teacher earned IL5.80 an hour if he or she happened to be Arab, but IL7.10 if he or she was fortunate enough to belong to the Jewish people. And if this is the case for government employees, so much more so in the private sector: an Arab tinsmith — IL3.20, a Jewish tinsmith — IL4.10; an Arab builder — IL3.50, a Jewish builder — IL4.70; and, of course, an Arab unskilled worker — IL3.00 and his Jewish mate — IL3.40. From the same table we see that the average hourly earning of an employed Jew was (in 1972) about IL4.60, while an Arab only earned IL3.30.

*Therefore, the average earnings of a Jew were 40 per cent higher than that of an Arab, while the mean difference within the same occupation is about 20 or 25 per cent.*

As for the total *per capita* income, including child allowances, which are paid to Jewish families at double the rate given to Arabs (the excuse being that they are 'ex-servicemen's relatives' — in reality merely a euphemism for Jews), we find<sup>49</sup> that in 1972 the average per capita income of a Jewish employee's family was 130 per cent higher (more than double!) that of an Arab employee's family. A similar result is obtained if other components of effective earnings are also taken into consideration.

For more recent years it is difficult to find equally reliable figures. Some less reliable surveys indicate a significant erosion in the Jewish-Arab wage differential in the last few years. This may have been caused by two facts. First, the general decline in real wages during the crisis years may have hit Jews relatively more than Arabs. Another, possibly less important reason is the tendency of Arab workers to move into more skilled occupations. The erosion of the wage differential is reflected in the next table.

According to these figures, the Jewish-Arab wage differential, which in the early 1970s fluctuated around 40 per cent, has been reduced to 18

per cent. However, it must be pointed out that these data, even if correct, refer to the gross wage, without fringe benefits.

Average gross annual income from wages and salaries

	1967	1970	(IL thousands)	
			1972	1974
Jews	9.4	11.9	15.5	17.6
Arabs	7.0	8.1	11.2	14.9
Differential (per cent)	34	47	38	18

The differential in net income (that is, after deducting taxes and so on and adding fringe benefits and welfare allowances) is greater, for two reasons. First, as we have already noted, most Arab workers are hired by the day and are employed by small firms, and therefore do not receive many fringe benefits. Neither do they receive the special welfare allowance granted to Jews under the euphemism 'ex-servicemen's family allowance'. Secondly, Jewish employees in many places — the South, the North, development townships — pay tax at a reduced rate.

The wage differential between Jewish and Arab workers is apparently due to two facts. First, in each occupation Jews are paid something like 20 or 25 per cent more, simply because they are Jews. Secondly, Arab workers are concentrated in the less well paid occupations: as *production workers* and unskilled labourers, 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'. But this second part of the explanation really begs the question, because there is no economic law according to which production workers must be particularly badly paid. For example, in the United States production workers in many factories, as well as construction workers, are on the whole better paid than clerks. It seems that in fact one of the reasons why wages in 'Arab' occupations are so low is precisely the fact that they have a high concentration of Arabs. In occupations from which Arab workers from Israel and the occupied territories are not excluded for social or political reasons, a larger supply of labour is created, an influx of unorganised and politically defenceless workers who do not constitute a significant pressure group in Israeli society. This, together with competition between workers over jobs, enables the employers to keep wages at a low level. Thus wages in these occupations decline both absolutely (in real terms) and relative to wages in other occupations; this is also confirmed by the 1976 Bank of Israel report from which we have already quoted (see ref. 14). As the level of wages declines, more Jewish workers leave these occupations, because they would be better off on welfare allowances which are given to Jews. In this way an increasing concentration of Arab workers is created. We have seen above that about 50 per cent of all Arab workers resident in Israel are concentrated in seven occupations, five of which (agricultural workers, tinsmiths, carpenters, unskilled workers in construction and manufacturing) are particularly badly paid.

We have also remarked that Arab workers tend to be employed not only

in specific occupations but also by a specific kind of employer. There are very few Arab workers in firms employing more than one hundred workers. Such firms, which make up only 2 per cent of all Israeli enterprises but which employ about 50 per cent of the total industrial labour force, are owned by the state (the Chemical Industries, Dead Sea Works, Aviation Industry. . .) or by the Histadrut (such as Kur), or else they are private firms intimately connected to the arms industry, such as Tadiran and other electronics firms.

Arab workers are concentrated in smaller firms which produce mainly for the local Israeli market in branches such as food processing, leather, wood, rubber, textiles, or in private sewing or metal workshops. Most of them — indeed, most workers in this kind of firm, including Jews — are employed on a daily basis. Both wages and fringe benefits are considerably lower than in the bigger firms. The following table shows how big is the difference in wages between small and big firms.

Distribution of wages (1976), by size of firm<sup>50</sup>

<i>Number of employees</i>	1-4	5-19	20-49	50-99	100+
<i>Mean gross monthly wage (IL)</i>	1800	2200	2500	2600	3300

Here we see another reason for the low wages of Arab workers: they tend to concentrate in firms employing less than twenty workers, where the *average* wage is 40 per cent lower than in the big firms. Similarly, privately owned firms pay less well than public (state or Histadrut) enterprises: IL2500 per month as against IL4500.

The large wage differential is also reflected in differences in the standard of living between the Arab and Jewish populations in Israel. For example, although Arabs make up 17 per cent of Israel's population, they own only 5 per cent of all private cars; this is no doubt partly due to other reasons, such as the size of Arab family, but is certainly also connected with their lower level of income. Apart from the wage differential, there are other economic benefits enjoyed exclusively by Jews, and thus contributing to the gap between Jewish and Arab standards of living. We have already mentioned the special allowances paid by the government to relatives of 'ex-servicemen', and the reduced rates of taxation enjoyed by Jews living in border areas and development regions. No Arab village has ever been designated a development or border area for tax purposes. All Jews, especially young couples, are entitled to various housing grants and interest-free loans. Arabs, on the other hand, hardly ever receive any housing subsidies, except when the authorities wish to remove them from existing Arab quarters. Jewish local authorities receive from the central government annual grants which average IL120 per inhabitant, whereas Arab local authorities receive only IL7 per inhabitant.

In conclusion it can be said that the wages paid to Arab workers, particularly those from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, are on the

average much lower than those paid to Jewish workers, especially in the food-processing, textile and packing industries as well as in agriculture and mining. However, in times of economic boom the Israeli economy is very hungry for labour, and this sometimes creates conjunctures in which a skilled Arab worker can get a better return for his labour power. All Arab workers depend far more than their Jewish colleagues on the state of the labour market. Thus, for example, an Arab skilled builder could without great difficulty find a relatively well-paid job in 1972-74; but in 1977 this became much more difficult.

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# Sociology of the Palestinians in Israel

Nira Yuval-Davis

Elia T. Zureik, *The Palestinians in Israel: a Study in Internal Colonialism*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1979; 249pp.

The Palestinians living in the pre-1967 Israeli borders (currently numbering about half a million people) have been relatively neglected, both analytically and politically, in the abundant literature on the Middle East. The few systematic studies that have been written on them mostly approached the issue from an a-historical perspective, either socio-psychological or socio-anthropological.<sup>1</sup> Elia Zureik's book, which broadly uses marxist analytical tools and the model of internal colonialism, therefore constitutes an important contribution on the subject — in spite of the fact that it presents virtually no original research and, more importantly and probably partly as a result of this, in spite of some serious factual and analytical omissions in the book. The most important of these is the absence of any analysis concerning the relationship between the Palestinians living in Israel's pre-1967 borders and the other sections of the Palestinian people, living under Israeli rule (in the occupied territories) and outside it.

The best part of the book concerns the analysis of the Zionist-Palestinian relationship before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Here Zureik, in the tradition of the analysis developed by the Israeli anti-Zionist left,<sup>2</sup> claims rightly that one should not, as do too many other studies, analyse the Zionist colonisation in Palestine either in terms of a national liberation movement, or as a colonialist movement with goals and practices identical to those of other colonialist endeavours like in Algiers or South Africa. The Zionist movement aimed at establishing in Palestine an exclusively Jewish society, and its basic policy towards the Palestinians was that of dispossession — dispossession, which unlike other colonialist endeavours, was not followed by any re-integration in the new economy, even as cheap labour. On the contrary, the Zionist struggle aimed at monopolising not only the land, but also production and the labour market.

The relationship between the Zionist and indigenous sectors in pre-1948 Palestine did *not* follow the classical model of internal colonialism based on the exploitation of the local population. Rather, there developed a dual Jewish-Palestinian society structure, mediated by the British mandatory power — a duality, however, which did not totally separate the two societies, nor did it signify any kind of symmetric relationship. On the contrary: in this duality, the Jewish-Zionist society occupied a dominant place and had a more powerful position than the Palestinian. The dynamics of the development of each sector was greatly dependent, especially on the Palestinian-Arab side, on developments in the other sector. The specific character of political-economic patterns of this dual structure resulted from a combination of factors inherent in the nature of Zionist colonisation, the British mandate and Palestinian society, and Zureik analyses briefly some of them. Although one might argue with various specific points in this analysis (e.g. Zureik's treating the 'economic absorptive capacity' of Palestine as if it

were a physical quantity not relating to the mode of production) the general approach is both useful and valid.

So is the basic point which Zureik makes concerning the change in the Jewish-Arab relationship which took place inside Israel after the establishment of the state in 1948. Unlike the period prior to 1948, the Palestinian society now underwent a process of reintegration in the Israeli system. This was done through the gradual transformation of the Palestinian villagers into wage workers with sub-proletarian status, while at the same time blocking the emergence of a viable bourgeoisie by various state economic and land policies. Thus the model of internal colonialism does apply as a valid description of the relationship between the Jewish and Arab sectors in Israel after 1948. Zureik emphasises that this has been an unintentional result of the establishment of the state and has taken place in spite of Zionist ideology, which is reflected, for example, in mainstream Israeli sociological texts which discuss issues like education or stratification in Israel as if the Palestinian citizens of Israel did not exist as part of the society.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, though, Zureik does not analyse the ways in which this process has taken place beyond making some general comments, mostly based on the study of Rosenfield and Carmi.<sup>4</sup> This has left some crucial omissions in the book, of which we shall mention two. First, Zureik does not discuss the practices (as distinct from ideology) by means of which the state attempted for a while to prevent or at least to limit drastically the integration of Israel's Arab population in the post-1948 period. The main mechanism for this — which Zureik does not mention at all — was the military rule<sup>5</sup> to which the Arab population was subjected and which restricted its members' movements into the Jewish cities up to 1965. The temptation to exploit the Arabs' labour gradually overcame the desire to isolate them, as the social character of the Israeli society evolved. The military administration (but not the emergency regulations on which it was based) was eventually dismantled about two years before the 1967 war and the resulting occupation and internal colonisation of other sectors of the Palestinian population.

I have misgivings also about the way Zureik describes the actual process of transformation of the villages. He is not very careful analytically and uses the terms 'proletarianisation' and 'transformation into a declassé lumpenproletariat' almost interchangeably. One important aspect in this process which Zureik fails to explain is how it came about that the villagers who went to work in the Jewish cities were given not only the type of jobs nobody else wanted to take, but were also exploited economically more than Jewish workers in the *same* type of work. This exploitation was due partly to discrimination concerning unionisation (the Histadrut did not accept Arab members until the early 1960s). But there was also another reason: they could be paid wages lower than their reproduction value because, being largely village-based, they were part of the family collective system in the villages, which remained to some extent outside the capitalist mode of production and served to cushion them against the effects of

unstable work and underpaid jobs.

The above points relate primarily to the Palestinians who were under Israeli rule in the 1948-67 period. Probably the greatest weakness in Zureik's analysis of the situation of the Palestinians in Israel is that he does not differentiate between their position before and after 1967, and regards 1948 as the only watershed in Palestinian history in general in the 20th century (an oversight which is even worse when one considers other sections of the Palestinian people, who did not come under Israeli rule after 1948, but after 1967, or that remained as refugees outside Israeli control even after 1967, but became associated with the PLO.) This creates some technical problems in the text: in the official Israeli statistics which Zureik uses in his book, other Palestinians, at least those from East Jerusalem, are also included in the post-1967 period, and this must bias data which follow developments among Palestinians in Israel over the years. The problem, however, goes beyond these invalid statistics: although as far as I know a systematic study of the subject is yet to be made, it is quite clear that Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and its policy of internal colonialism has also had an economic effect, both direct and indirect, on the Palestinians living inside Israel. Many have become suppliers of goods to the occupied territories; many of the workers have gone up in the occupation scale, in comparison to the Palestinians from the occupied territories; and there is even some evidence that quite a few have become employers of Palestinians from these territories. The extent and specific character of these transformations are still waiting to be studied, but Zureik does not even ask these crucial questions concerning the economic role of the Palestinians in Israel after 1967.

The effect of 1967 has not been limited to economic life. It has been even more far-reaching in the cultural and political spheres in the reality of the Palestinians inside Israel. Zureik rightly emphasises that in order to understand relationships of colonisation one must analyse their effects on culture and politics. But one cannot analyse these aspects of post-1967 Israel without recognising the fact that some contact with the Arab world became possible by virtue of the policy of open bridges; and even more importantly, without considering the political effect that the rise of the Palestinian resistance movement has had on the Palestinians in Israel. For instance, Zureik mentions in passing that of the three major Palestinian poets who grew up in Israel, two eventually moved out to work with the PLO. But he does not analyse the political significance of this. Nor does he see in the rise of the Arab nationalist student movement in the 1970s (he does not mention the important movement of the Sons of the Village) anything but a repetition of the al-Ard movement of the early 1960s, and does not take into account the vast difference that the changed political context has made to Palestinian nationalism in Israel.

To take the Palestinians who have lived under Israeli rule since 1948 as a unit of analysis separate from other sections of the Palestinian people is not only legitimate but also useful — their history in the last thirty years has been politically, economically and socially different from that of other parts

of the Palestinian people, even those who came under direct Israeli control in 1967. However, separation should not mean isolation. In the same way as Zureik insists that one cannot understand the Arab and Jewish societies in pre-1948 Palestine without understanding how each of these societies was affected by their mutual relationship – we must also insist that any valid analysis of the Palestinians in Israel should consider not only their inter-relations with the Israeli Jews but also their relationship to the Arab world in general and the Palestinian resistance movement and the PLO in particular. Not to do so constitutes both an analytical and a political oversight.

To sum up: Zureik's book is an important beginning towards the understanding of the Palestinians in Israel. However, especially when it concerns the post-1967 period, this beginning is still far from being a satisfactory comprehensive analysis of this situation. For that we shall have to wait for another book on the subject, perhaps by Zureik himself.

One final remark. In addition to the specific analysis of the situation of the Palestinians in Israel, Zureik's book also includes review chapters on the model of internal colonialism and on Israeli sociological writings on Israeli Arabs. There is a lot of useful and interesting material summed up here, but one feels the absence of a firm editorial hand, which would have made these chapters more concise and more directly linked with the rest of the book.

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# Discussion forum

## Reaching beyond Palestinian Nationalism—Reply to Salim Tarmari

### Mohammad Ja'far

Salim Tamari's critique (*Khamsin* 6) of my article 'The ideological divide in the Palestinian resistance movement' (*Khamsin* 5) is revealing of a very fundamental political divergence between our two points of view. I shall make this the axis of my reply.

Tamari has understood my article as levelling a criticism at the present leadership of the Palestinian resistance movement, arising out of which he regards me as engaged in 'a call for the substitution of a "bourgeois" programme (for a state) by a socialist slogan (for class politics)'. His criticism of my position, viewed in this framework, is then that I am engaged in a sterile ultra-leftist propagandistic exercise: 'For just as the Palestinian state can be a fetish within the Palestinian movement, so can the call for class struggle by the left opposition' (p127). However, while noting that a Palestinian state can be a fetish, he subsequently argues that 'a Palestinian state will provide the necessary prerequisite for the transformation of the essentially *national* conflict . . . into one in which the conditions for class emancipation can obtain *for the first time* [my italics — M.J.]. This requires . . . that Palestinians have the opportunity to live in a stable community in which their national culture and physical security can be protected; i.e. in a state of their own' (p128).

The problem, as Tamari sees it, is that the Palestinians outside the occupied territories are a declassed community who *cannot* struggle on a class programme which is not that of the Palestinian bourgeoisie until they are 'ingathered', so to speak. Palestinians are therefore 'compelled to seek the social base which establishes the PLO as a viable political force' (p127). Inside the occupied territories and Israel, national oppression submerges 'all forms of class consciousness', forcing the working class even to 'bite the hand that "feeds" it by asking for separation' (p128).

It is interesting to note that Tamari and I appear to agree on at least two fundamental points: *first*, that the project of the PLO is to establish a Palestinian state whose class character is undoubtedly bourgeois; and therefore, *secondly*, that politically and programmatically, if not sociologically, the PLO is a bourgeois organisation representing the historic interests of the Palestinian bourgeoisie, whether already in existence as a fragmented class, in formation on the West Bank, or yet-to-be-formed under the auspices of a future Palestinian state. Where we clearly disagree is on our respective evaluations of the significance of such a state, and its effect on the struggle for socialism in the region.

Let us suppose, just for a moment, that Tamari's theory is correct and that the creation of a bourgeois Palestinian state will, by solving the national question, give rise 'for the first time' to conditions necessary for the class emancipation of the Palestinian workers and peasants. It follows then that Palestinian socialists like Tamari would have to postpone their fight for socialism and struggle alongside a barely existing Palestinian bourgeoisie through, or in alliance with, its political organisation — the PLO — for the purpose of establishing the PLO's objective of a Palestinian state. The creation of this state, solving the Palestinian national question, thereby opens up a new historical period in which, for the first time presumably, Palestinian socialists will start to struggle against their own bourgeoisie, who will now not only be constituted economically as the dominant class (which they were not before), but will also wield all the considerable resources of a state apparatus. Following through Tamari's reasoning, then, we can say: this ascendancy of the Palestinian bourgeoisie will have been achieved by the efforts of the Palestinian masses and the socialists themselves (who else?), who would then be entitled to struggle for liberation from the formidable creature which they themselves will have helped to bring into being!

In the history of the workers' movement, this analysis of the development of revolution in backward countries is known generally as the *two-stage theory*; the first stage being that of the democratic bourgeois revolution, and the second of socialism. Tamari's critique assumes and is based on the validity of a two-stage theory, which he then applies concretely to the conditions of Palestinian society.

The analysis underlying my own article rejected this whole conception of the dynamics of revolution in backward countries, and in fact assumed the *theory of permanent revolution*, which we shall now summarise before returning to the debate.

In the imperialist epoch — that is in the epoch characterised by the export of capital and the formation of an integrated (and not merely interrelated) worldwide capitalist system — the backwardness of all the so-called 'third world' group of countries is structurally prescribed and reproduced by the functioning of the world economy. This is in the very nature of imperialism. It is within such a climate that the bourgeoisies of the backward capitalist countries are not only sustained, but also formed. This stands in complete contrast to the historical formation of the bourgeoisies of the now advanced capitalist countries. Consequently, the perspectives and even prospects for development of the bourgeoisies of the backward countries are inextricably tied up with the fate of the imperialist system. Certainly they may have differences with the imperialist bourgeoisie and will tend to fight for a larger slice of the cake on this or that issue.<sup>1</sup> But in the end all such manoeuvres must be understood to be based on a fundamental acceptance of the workings of the imperialist system, for which there is at present no alternative based on capitalism.

It therefore follows that a number of unsolved tasks in the backward countries, whose solution is not in principle in conflict with capitalism (like

the national question, the agrarian question, economic backwardness, and lack of democratic rights) and which historically were solved more or less by the bourgeoisies of the advanced countries in the course of their bourgeois revolutions, *can no longer be solved by today's bourgeoisies* in the backward capitalist countries. It is not simply a question of these bourgeoisies being incapable of solving these tasks, but even more importantly: they *no longer have an interest* in solving them, because their very existence and sustenance as a bourgeoisie *assumes their non-solution*.

Thus it is clear that with imperialism a whole new historical period has opened up, in which either the problems of backwardness are taken up by the workers' movement on the basis of an intention to break with capitalism and their own bourgeoisies, or they will not be solved at all.

Experience of 20th century revolutions has shown that only those societies that underwent a revolutionary process that broke with capitalism, starting with the Russian revolution, were able to solve radically at least some major problems of backwardness. No other so-called 'third world' country has ever done so. Furthermore, every time that a workers' organisation based itself on a two-stage theory and gave its support to its own bourgeoisie, entering bourgeois parties and subordinating its struggle to that of its own bourgeoisie, the workers have been defeated if not outrightly butchered and massacred. The most notorious early historical example is that of the Chinese Communist Party which on Stalin's orders entered the party of the Chinese nationalist bourgeoisie — the Kuomintang — and was cut to pieces by Chiang Kai-shek. If it had not been for a minority on the central committee led by Mao who opposed the move and was able as a result to survive and lead the CCP to make a comeback almost a quarter of a century later, we might never have had a socialist revolution in China. The list of such examples (China, Indonesia, Iraq, Chile . . . ) in more than sixty years of revolution is endless.

The two-stage theory versus the theory of permanent revolution has been a central issue of debate in the workers' movement since 1905 when Trotsky first formulated the latter in his book on the dynamics of the Russian revolution, *Results and Prospects*. Its importance cannot be underestimated, since a completely different set of strategic and tactical options for militants flow out of each theory. Salim Tamari and myself are at root separated by this great divide. The logic of his position is to think that the establishment of a West Bank Palestinian state by the PLO represents *a major historical gain* for the Palestinian masses that justifies the subservience and even dissolution of the organisations of the Palestinian left (if they existed, which unfortunately they do not) into the organisations of the Palestinian bourgeoisie — the PLO — for a whole historical period. I, on the other hand, think that even assuming such a state can be set up by the PLO in the coming period (a very big assumption indeed!) then it will add just one more backward Arab regime to the list of those that have to be overthrown, and the lot of the ordinary Palestinian worker or peasant will not have improved at all in any qualitative sense.



The removal of direct zionist military rule, *taken by itself*, will of course be a big step forward for the class struggle from many points of view, and it remains crucially important for Arab and Jewish revolutionaries, both inside and outside Israel, to struggle for an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the zionist army from all the occupied territories. However, this is not the same as struggling for an unviable Palestinian state on the West Bank headed by the PLO, which is bound to install a regime at least as obnoxious as those in the other Arab countries. The main point is that even an important gain such as Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank does not constitute in any sense a historical breakthrough which will usher in a whole new period of development of the class struggle. It is a step forward for the Palestinian masses only in the sense in which it represents a weakening of zionism. But that is all. To the extent to which this step forward is identified in the eyes of the masses with the PLO, because a majority of Palestinian militants have either watered down their politics to that of the PLO, or not advanced beyond them, then to that same extent the original gain will be rolled back. Why is this true?

I would put forward the following reasons:

- 1 The PLO is intrinsically incapable of setting up a regime that is any better than those in the surrounding Arab countries. It is already tied by umbilical cords to these regimes, especially the oil-producing ones and Syria, which are obviously only going to finance a West Bank state that behaves according to norms accepted by the rest of the Arab regimes.

- 2 The PLO will be only too happy to crush any left opposition it may have on the West Bank either now or in the future, and it is likely that even the very limited democratic rights enjoyed by the West Bank population today, under Israeli occupation, will be taken away.

- 3 The material standard of living of the Palestinian masses under a PLO regime, cut off from the more advanced Israeli economy, will in all likelihood decline and the Palestinian bourgeoisie will in no way be able to step into the shoes of the Israeli bourgeoisie, notwithstanding all the petrodollars pumped in by the Gulf states.

- 4 For all the above reasons the combativity of the Palestinian masses and their willingness to struggle for a better future will decline and the organisations of the Palestinian bourgeoisie will correspondingly strengthen. The struggle for a socialist future will consequently have been significantly delayed, contrary to Tamari's projection that it will now be on the agenda.

The fact that the establishment of a PLO regime on the West Bank is a step backward, despite the enormous gain of Israeli withdrawal, immediately poses the question of what are socialists to struggle *for* in the positive programmatic sense. Tamari, it seems to me, must disagree with my argument that a PLO regime would be as horrible as say the regime in Iraq or Syria. In this case I hope that we can have a discussion centred on this point and I will of course be referring him to pointers like the mafia-like behaviour of the PLO during the Lebanese civil war and the fact that it stands today as probably the most loathed organisation amongst the Lebanese masses

(Christian and Moslem alike) who after all have had some experiences of the concrete daily practices of the PLO in the course of the war. A balance sheet of the PLO during the Lebanese civil war has yet to be drawn up, as Tamari himself recognises. One thing is sure however. It will not be in any way flattering to the PLO!

If, on the other hand, Tamari would agree with us that a PLO regime in the West Bank is unlikely to be qualitatively different from other Arab regimes, while still maintaining that nevertheless its establishment is a major historical advance that justifies support of the PLO, then his position as we have said completely disarms the Palestinian masses in face of the dangers that are to come, and acquiesces in, if not actually facilitates, the inevitable repression and smashing up of all opposition that might be struggling for an improvement in the lot of the Palestinian masses, more democratic rights, etc.

I put it to Tamari that, in contraposition to a PLO regime on the West Bank coexisting with a Zionist state in Israel, the programmatic goal of revolutionary socialists should be the creation of a thoroughly new socialist order, the like of which has not even a remote parallel in the Arab world. This is the spirit in which cadres and militants have to be ideologically formed. Their horizons and perspectives must be elevated above the putrid narrow limits of nationalism, because what is at stake is after all the very success of the struggle for a better future. Nationalism for the Palestinians, more than for any other sector of the Arabs, is a completely dead end road. The bright future it projects is a myth.

There are unfortunately no models or blueprints that can be dug up for a new socialist order. Certain things however can be definitively said. It must allow for the Palestinian and Jewish masses of Israel to retain their autonomy for each other if they so desire while at the same time increasing extensively their economic interdependence. It is completely illusory to imagine that a viable advanced economic and social order can be established in Palestine, capable of increasing qualitatively the material, cultural and social welfare of the Palestinian masses, without the active participation of the Jewish proletariat. Therefore it is of the utmost importance that Palestinian militants work with Israeli Jewish militants wherever possible — and without them if necessary — to undermine the legitimacy that Zionist institutions hold in the eyes of the Jewish masses. The demand for withdrawal from the occupied territories is a step forward because it tends in that direction. But that is the only positive contribution which the implementation of that demand can generate in the present circumstances. The problem is one of maintaining the unity of the Palestinian masses in the pre-1967 borders of Israel and those in the West Bank, *and increasing — not decreasing — the access of Palestinians as a whole to the Israeli economy* (examples: encouragement of Palestinian trade union work; struggle for improved social amenities and housing; struggle against discrimination in state institutions, etc.), while *simultaneously* building bridges to the Jewish proletariat, to deepen and realise their break with Zionism. The struggle at this stage should be primarily viewed by Palestinian militants as a political

one against all the claptrap of 'armed struggle' and for the hearts and minds of the Jewish working class and the gradual breakup and erosion of the ideological hegemony exercised by the Zionist leadership. This is a tall order. But what makes it necessary is the simple hard fact that it is *the only way* that a major historical advance in the conditions of the Palestinian masses may be (note: we are not saying will be!) achieved. A PLO regime on the West Bank will not only not achieve this, but the abominations it will perpetrate on its own citizenry will ultimately reinforce the hold of Zionism on the Jewish proletariat and therefore in the whole region, thereby nullifying even the initial positive contribution of Israeli withdrawal. This is the deadly harvest of nationalism.

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In conclusion, I wish to make one final remark. There is an uncanny similarity between Tamari's line of reasoning and that of the traditional left theoreticians of Zionism like Borochoy, who used to argue that Jewish sovereignty over a piece of territory was a necessary precondition for the emancipation of Jewish workers. It is only under this condition, Borochoy said, 'the class struggle of the Jewish worker will achieve the necessary political, economic and social impact'.<sup>2</sup>

Tamari is not alone amongst Palestinian intellectuals in formulating, whether consciously or not, these sorts of parallels with Zionist ideology. We draw attention in particular to the important article in the American journal 'Foreign Affairs' (published for State-Department types) by the Palestinian historian R. Al-Khalidi, who explains why a Palestinian West Bank state would be both viable and not a threat to the great powers: because of the stability it would provide. Is there not more than just a little Herzlian overtone to this reasoning, and even to its publications in this manner?

It must surely register as one of history's supreme ironies that a line of intellectual development amongst Palestinians has emerged that projects a future in terms that borrow so heavily the early Zionists themselves! Is there not a logic at work here which no doubt arises from the material conditions of the scattered Palestinians, overlaid as this has become since 1967 with a leadership entrenched in the confines of Palestinian nationalism?

## References

- 1 In the case of the Arab ruling classes and the oil price rises, I have analysed at length the extent to which this phenomenon can develop. See 'The Arab ruling classes in the 1970s' in the present issue.
- 2 Quoted in the excellent article 'Borochovism' by M. Machover, in A. Bober (ed), *The Other Israel*, Doubleday, New York 1972, p151.

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