

# Part 1/ Jewish Colonization in Palestine

## A Marxist Analysis

# The Birth of the Zionist State

While the "Yom Kippur" war of 1973 is the direct result of the defeat of the Arab states by Israel in the 1967 war, it is more fundamentally the product of the conflict between Zionism and Arab nationalism which has torn apart Palestine since the demise of the Ottoman Empire in World War I. To determine what position to take in the present war it is useful to look at the whole process of Balkanization in the Near East which resulted in the formation of a Zionist state side by side with a series of artificial royal states and "republics" led by petty-bourgeois military cliques, all of them (to different degrees) subject to imperialist domination. In particular, we must look at the 1948 war which led to the present state of Israel and the simultaneous expulsions of several hundred thousand Arabs from their homes and lands.

For the Zionists the 1948 war was an "anti-imperialist" war of "national liberation," the creation of a haven for a people decimated by fascist genocide. For the Palestinian Arabs 1948 was the origin of their "diaspora," the destruction of their nation, the deprivation of their means of livelihood and their relegation to the wretched refugee camps where they are imprisoned in an enforced state of idleness and subsist on ten cents of UN rations a day. This has resulted in one of the most difficult national conflicts in recent decades with both a Hebrew and an Arab nation competing for the same small territory. The fact that Israel emerged victorious in the first three wars (1948, 1956 and 1967), and thus bears direct responsibility for the tragic plight of the Palestinian Arab refugees, must not blind us to the need to recognize the right of self-determination on both sides as a necessary guarantee against genocide. The struggle for a truly democratic bi-national Palestinian workers state, as part of a socialist federation of the Near East and the product of a united struggle of Hebrew and Arab workers and peasants, cannot simply ignore the national question.

### Origins of Zionism

Zionism as a political movement is as much a product of the epoch of imperialism as is its counterpart, fascism. Jews as a "people-class," to use the expression of the Belgian Trotskyist theorist on the Jewish question, A. Leon, as money lenders and merchants, provided the yeast for the development of capitalism. Those Jews able to transcend the obscurantism of the synagogue and the parsimony of the marketplace were often the leaders of cultural enlightenment. But capitalism in its decline and death agony has no

place for the merchant caste of the Middle Ages. Like the proletariat the Jews "were without a country," and it was partially because they entered the 20th century unshackled by nationalism that Jews played such a leading role in the proletarian movement, especially its left wing.

Only with the world historic defeat of the German proletariat in 1933 was Zionism transformed into a mass movement. Prior to 1933 Zionism was a tiny sect of petty-bourgeois Jewish intellectuals who were emancipated but not assimilated. The Jews of the Eastern European ghettos, if they identified with any political movement at all, were either Communists or members of the Bund, an anti-Zionist Jewish socialist group with Menshevik policies.

At the end of World War I there were 60,000 Jews in Palestine, many of these living in ancient orthodox communities which were hostile to political Zionism, and 644,000 Arabs of whom 574,000 were Moslem and 70,000 Christian. In order to encourage an Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire Britain armed and equipped Hussein, the Sherif of Mecca, to wage "Holy War" on the Turks. The Levant was carved up in the secret Sykes-Picot Treaty (1916) between Britain, France and tsarist Russia, a treaty which was made public only by the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution. This treaty gave Lebanon and Syria to France while Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq went to the British.

The Zionists early realized that they could accomplish their aims of creating a Jewish state in the Arab East only under the sponsorship of somebody's imperialism. Theodor Herzl, the originator of modern Zionism, had first approached the Ottoman Sultan and German Kaiser where he was rebuffed. After the tsarist Minister of Interior Plehve had organized the Black Hundred pogrom of Kishinev in which hundreds of Jews were massacred, Herzl had an audience with Plehve where he offered him the Zionist method of "getting rid of the Jews." As Nathan Weinstock says in his *Le sionisme contre Israel* (Paris, 1969): "The Zionist course and anti-Semitic reasoning are symmetrical."

Indeed, the Zionists finally got a sympathetic ear from that notorious anti-Semite, Lord Chamberlain, who was at the time British Colonial Minister. Chaim Weizmann, the leading British Zionist and the future first president of Israel, had already succinctly stated the Zionist case for the British bourgeoisie in his November 1914 letter to the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, C.P. Scott, which stated:

"We can reasonably say that should Palestine fall within the British sphere of influence and should Britain encourage Jewish settlement there, as a British dependency we could have in twenty to thirty years a million Jews out there or more; they would develop the country, bring back civilization to it and form a very effective guard for the Suez Canal."

This argument was not lost on the British branch of the Rothschild banking family, which was the largest holder of Suez bonds and had become also the most prominent contributor to the Zionist financial arm, the Jewish National Fund. Immediately following the Bolshevik Revolution and the Russian withdrawal from the war the British, both in order to mobilize Jewish support behind the war effort and Zionist support behind Britain's imperial ambitions in the Arab East, issued on 2 November 1917 the Balfour Declaration which promised a "Jewish national home" in Palestine.

Prior to the smashing of the Ottoman Empire, no Palestinian nation existed as such, at least in the modern sense of a nation. Instead Arab nationalists living in Palestinian towns considered

themselves part of Syria and attended the Syrian National Congress of July 1919. On the basis of Wilson's fourteen points and promises made to the Arabs by both France and Britain this Congress proclaimed political independence for a united Syrian state (Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan) which was to be a constitutional monarchy ruled by Hussein's son, Faisal.

Thus the "promised land" was simultaneously promised to British imperialism, the Jews and the Arabs. The Sykes-Picot treaty was reaffirmed at the San Remo conference and implemented as French troops occupied Damascus chasing away "King" Faisal. The British gave Faisal the throne of Iraq as a consolation prize, severed Transjordan from Palestine and recognized Faisal's brother, Abdullah, as the Emir of Transjordan.

### Zionism and Colonialism

Prior to World War I Jewish colonization in Palestine was by religious communities which were hostile to political Zionism. Later colonization by Jewish entrepreneurs, who wished to colonize Palestine in order to exploit Arab labor in the tradition of the French colonization of Algeria and Tunisia, was sponsored by the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association. The PJCA was backed by the Rothschilds, was hostile to political Zionism and soon to come into conflict with the latter.

Zionism was motivated by a sophisticated and even "Marxist" understanding of the "Jewish question," recognizing Jews as a "people-class" whose economic function as merchants and money lenders had become antiquated. But it sought the solution to the "Jewish question" not from the assimilated Jew, Marx, but from the anti-Semite, Proudhon. The Jew was to be liberated from the stigma of the ghetto through the creation of his own ghetto-state. The transformation of the Jew from money lender and merchant to proletarian and farmer would come about in a racially-exclusionist closed economy.

Zionism went to Palestine under the slogans of "conquest of labor" and "conquest of land," well knowing that labor and land were to be conquered from the Arabs. As early as June 1895 Theodor Herzl wrote in his diary:

"The private lands in the territories granted us we must gradually take out of the hands of the owners. The poorer amongst the population we try to transfer quietly outside our borders by providing them with work in the transit countries, but in our country we deny

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them all work. Those with property will join us. The transfer of land and the displacement of the poor must be done gently and carefully. Let the landowners believe they are exploiting us by getting overvalued prices. But no lands shall be sold back to their owners."

—quoted from Theodor Herzl's *Selected Works* in "The Class Nature of Israel" by the Israeli Socialist Organization

This was an accurate prognosis of the next 55 years of Zionism in the Arab East except that the conquest was neither gentle nor peaceful, nor was the bulk of the land which constitutes the modern Israeli state "purchased," much less at "overvalued prices," but it was stolen through outright terror, intimidation and military force. Unlike classical colonialism and imperialism which established settler-colonies to exploit native labor, Zionism colonized in order to *displace* native labor. The

effects of the Zionist "conquest of labor" on the indigenous Palestinians were much more vicious and devastating than the role of the British in Rhodesia, the Portuguese in Angola or the French in Algeria, depriving them not only of national independence but, eventually, of any ties to social production whatsoever.

The so-called twin pillars of Zionist "socialism," the Histadruth and the kibbutz, were the pride of the "left" Zionists, the old Poale Zion, which at one time actually applied to the Comintern for membership, and the Hashomer Hatzair (Young Guard). However, these were the institutional embodiments of the reactionary racist slogans, "conquest of labor" and "conquest of land." The Histadruth was founded in 1920 as the "General Confederation of Hebrew Workers in the Land of Israel" by 4,500 of the 5,000 Jewish workers in Palestine. At the time there were ten times as many Arab workers in Palestine but they were excluded from the Histadruth.

In fact, the Histadruth was not even created to defend the Palestinian Jewish proletariat, but to *destroy* the Palestinian Arab proletariat! Its first activities were the boycott of businesses (both Jewish- and Arab-owned) which hired Arab labor and the physical intimidation of Jews who shopped in the Arab marketplace and Arab workers who worked for Jews.

The kibbutz was originally set up to make the Jewish community agriculturally self-sufficient but increasingly it more closely resembled a U.S. Army fort in the "Wild West" than an agricultural settlement. As pointed out by Amos Perlmutter in his book, *Military and Politics in Israel*, the kibbutz provided the foundation for Israel's modern army and the kibbutzniks provided both the elite for the General Staff and the core of the Defense Ministry. The Haganah was originally the defense arm of the kibbutz, a kind of farmers' militia.

Prior to the 1948 war most of the land occupied by the kibbutz movement followed the dictum of Herzl and was purchased, generally from absentee landlords at "overvalued prices." The Jewish Agency, the shadow Jewish government set up under British mandate, stated before the Shaw Commission of 1929 that 90 percent of the lands purchased up to that time came from absentee landlords. While some of this land represented heretofore uncultivated desert and swampland, on much of it, especially in the coastal plain near Haifa, thousands of Arab tenants were evicted to make way for Jewish settlements.

On the one hand this created land speculation and inflation leading to the boom/bust of the 1925-27 period, and on the other hand it created a disenfranchised peasantry and lumpenproletariat in the cities. In the absence of a strong proletarian movement, or even a republican bourgeois nationalist movement, these declassed elements were easily incited by Moslem religious leaders like the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem into intercommunal strife against the Jewish communities. Thus the 1929 riots were not between the Palestinian Arab and Hebrew nationalities, but between Moslem and Orthodox Jewish communities. The precipitant to the 1929 riots was a struggle over, of all things, the old "Wailing Wall" in Jerusalem.

### Zionism and the Workers Movement

Where Arab and Jewish workers were forced to work together as on the docks of the port city of Haifa, intercommunal strife was held to a minimum, and Arab and Jewish workers often crossed racial/religious lines and gave a deaf ear to their respective

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Chaim Weizmann, head of the World Zionist Organization, in 1942.

clericalist-chauvinist "leaderships" in order to engage in common strike action. But the overall impact of Zionism, in collaboration with British imperialism, was to prevent the development of a united Arab-Hebrew working-class movement, but also to retard the development of a Palestinian proletariat or even a Palestinian bourgeoisie.

Arab Palestine was overwhelmingly rural consisting of poor peasantry or fellahin, a rich landlord class or effendis and a tiny middle class. The effendis were more often than not like the Mufti, Haj Amin el Hussein, also religious leaders, and were divided among themselves along family lines. Each family organized its own "political party." Thus the Mufti organized a "Palestine Arab Party"; another rich prominent effendi clan called the Nashashibis (traditional antagonists of the Husseinis) organized a "National Defense Party," etc. In pursuance of family vendettas they tried to play off the British and the Zionists, but were usually unsuccessful.

Another obstacle to Arab-Hebrew proletarian unity was the treacherous role of Palestinian Stalinism. In its early years the Palestine Communist Party (PCP) had a modest but real influence among Jewish workers. However, it was unable to build up an organization because it correctly told those Hebrew workers it won over to return to their countries of origin and join the revolutionary movement there. (A significant number of Comintern agents in inter-war Europe were former members of the PCP who had followed this advice. Among them was Leopold Trepper, head of the famous "Red Orchestra" Soviet intelligence network in World War II.)

The party from its inception recognized the need to reach the Arab workers and fellahin, but under Stalin's Comintern "Arabization" came to mean something else. During the 1929 riots the PCP played an essentially correct role, trying to quell the intercommunal strife, putting the blame on the mandate, defending the Jewish quarters and pointing to the situation in Haifa (where the most conscious workers, both Arab and Hebrew, refused to get caught up in the riots) as a model. However the Stalinist denounced the role of the PCP in the 1929 riots and demanded a purge of all party members who did not "accept the view that the August uprising was the result of the radicalization of the masses."

This was obviously not popular with the Hebrew workers so the PCP began to publish separate propaganda. For the Hebrew workers they stressed Arab-Hebrew class unity, and to the Arab worker the PCP essentially became a more radical mouthpiece of the Mufti. This laid the basis for the later split in the party into its Jewish and Arab components, the former be-

coming pro-Zionist, the latter pro-Arab nationalist. Such is the logic of Stalinism and nationalism.

### Large-Scale Jewish Immigration

Between 1919 and 1931 some 117,000 Jews immigrated to Palestine. But the harsh life, the hostile environment, the racial/religious tensions, the unemployment and economic crisis of the late 1920's, caused many to leave after a short stay. Between 1924 and 1931, for every 100 immigrants who arrived, 29 departed. By 1931 the Jewish population was 175,000 out of a total population of 1,036,000 or 17.7 percent.

Without Hitler's victory in 1933 and the subsequent closing of all borders to Jewish immigration—especially those of the U.S., Britain and the Soviet Union, where Eastern and Central European Jewry would have been most assimilable—Zionism would never have become a mass movement and the "Jewish National Home" in Palestine would never have become a state. The Jewish Agency which purported to represent all Jews, not just the Jews in Israel, did not lobby for opening the borders of the U.S., Britain and the USSR to Jewish immigration. Quite the opposite, it wanted "its" Jews for colonization to Palestine. And this is not only where Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin wanted them, but also Hitler.

Before World War II the Jewish Agency and the Nazis came to a meeting of minds on how Eastern and Central Europe were to "get rid of their Jews." The most "responsible," "respected," "prominent" Zionists are only too willing to brag about their collaboration with the Nazis to "save" a few thousand Jews with enough money and the right connections while millions went to the gas chambers. For example, the leading British Zionist Jon Kimche and his brother David (who joined the Israeli diplomatic corps after "independence") co-authored a book entitled *The Secret Roads: The "Illegal" Migration of a People, 1938-1948* (London, 1954) from which it is worth quoting extensively:

"... the only road to large-scale immigration from Austria led through the Gestapo Headquarters and the S.S.

Office for Jewish Affairs for which the sumptuous mansion of Baron Rothschild had been requisitioned. There in charge of the 'Central Bureau for Jewish Emigration' sat Captain Carol Adolph Eichmann.

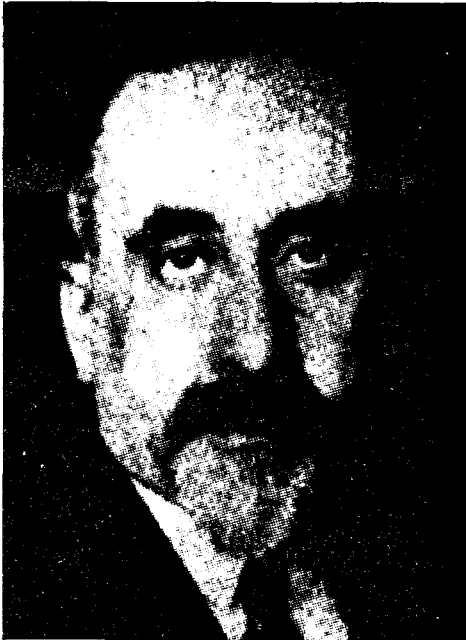
"Bar-Gilad [a kubbutz leader] explained that he wanted permission to establish pioneer training camps to train young people for work in Palestine and to arrange for their emigration as quickly as conditions permitted. Bar-Gilad could not know that the man he was talking to was the prime mover behind the plan of 'Jewish emigration for money.' Eichmann's Central Bureau was designed originally for this very purpose. It would receive all Jewish applications for permission to leave Greater Germany. For all those who could pay for the services—and his charges were adjusted to the anxiety of his well-to-do Jews—Eichmann would sweep aside bureaucratic formalities and delays and issue passports and visas and provide the passage. . . . It was a lucrative business for the Gestapo.

"... [Eichmann] supplied the farms and farm equipment. On one occasion he expelled a group of nuns from a convent to provide a training farm for young Jews. By the end of 1938 about a thousand young Jews were training in these Nazi-provided camps."

The sense of arrogance and Realpolitik, the supreme qualities of the Zionist self-image of the "new, tough soldier-Jew" which pervades this book were certainly needed "virtues" for members of a Zionist intelligentsia who were soon to become apologists for "their state" born from the cadavers of six million Jews and from the wretched multitude of one million Arab refugees.

### The Second World War

Although the leadership of the 1936-39 Arab revolt was clericalist and middle class, nonetheless it was a genuine expression of the Palestinian



Henryk Erlich, leader of the Bund

democratic aspirations. The three demands raised by the revolt were an end to Jewish immigration, the end of land sales to Jews and self-government. The Zionists had always opposed self-government in Palestine for they realized a genuinely democratic regime would place control of immigration in the hands of the Arab majority. The 1936-39 revolt was primarily launched against the British and not against the Jewish communities. Nonetheless, the Zionists were only too willing to aid the British in order to maintain the protection of the mandate. During this period the Zionists strengthened their economy during the extended Arab un-

rest. (The revolt started with a middle-class-led shutdown of Arab businesses in protest against Britain's pro-Jewish policies. This was later followed by guerrilla warfare waged by Arab workers and fellahin.) They also strengthened their army, the Haganah, under the protection of the British in order to collaborate with the British police actions against the Arabs. The Haganah, for example, was assigned by the mandate authorities to guard British pipelines. The strike could not have been broken and the revolt suppressed without the collaboration of the Zionists.

Twenty years of British imperialism in the Near East had, on the eve of World War II, turned many Arab governments pro-Axis. In order to shore up their shaky Arab support the British were quite willing to jilt their faithful Zionist servants. In 1939 they issued another "White Paper" which restricted Jewish immigration to 75,000 for the next five years and thereafter made it conditional on the consent of the Arab majority. Further, the Jews from European displaced persons camps, who had been promised a "haven" in Palestine, were not only surrounded by hostile British forces, pro-Axis Arab governments and coups, but Palestine itself was threatened with German occupation.

At the end of the second imperialist war, Britain, while militarily "victorious," was in ruins and bled white. A Labour government headed by Atlee was swept into power in the General Elections of 1945, assigned by the British bourgeoisie with the thankless task of trying to put back the pieces of the British Empire with as little dismantling as possible. Although the Labour Party was in the same "International" as the Zionist "socialists" and for 11 past conferences had voted for Jewish statehood, nonetheless Palestine was the British "fallback" position in the Arab East, and Atlee and his Foreign Secretary Bevin were determined to hold on with bulldog determination.

Bevin ordered the commandeering of wretched vessels like the *Exodus*, 1947 of Zionist moviemaking legend, whose overcrowded "cargo" were the desperate survivors of German concentration camps, and this "cargo" either shipped back to Germany or "stored" in specially prepared concentration camps on Cyprus. At the June 1946 annual Labour Party conference, its first since the electoral victory of the previous year, Bevin had a ready response to the waves of vociferous and self-righteous indignation that swept across the Atlantic from the U.S. The U.S. wanted the Jews in Palestine "because they did not want them in New York." This was, of course, true but equally hypocritical in the mouth of Bevin, for the Labour Government did not want the Jews in London either. At this conference Bevin made it quite clear why he also did not want to admit the remaining 100,000 Jews in displaced persons camps to Palestine: it would cost Britain another army division and 200 million pounds. As Sir John Glubb put it, in his *Soldier With the Arabs* (London, 1957): "It was a question of how many divisions of troops would have been necessary to fight a three-cornered civil war against Jews and Arabs simultaneously."

Just as the U.S. rushed in to replace the crumbling empires of the British and French in Asia and the Arab East, so the center of imperialist patronage for Zionism switched from London to

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### Debate

## The Coup in Chile

Speakers from:

SPARTACIST LEAGUE  
COMMUNIST PARTY  
NEW AMERICAN MOVEMENT

Friday, November 30  
7:30 p.m.  
1100 Broadway

**New Orleans**

## Which Way Forward for the Women's Liberation Movement?

Speaker: SUE MCKINLEY, RCY National Committee

Tuesday, November 27  
7:30 p.m.  
Hillberry A, U.C.B.  
Wayne State University

**DETROIT**

Wednesday, December 5  
7:30 p.m.

Michigan Union—Anderson Room A  
University of Michigan

**ANN ARBOR**

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# **Birth of the Zionist State**

Washington. Truman became the champion of the "100,000" not only because he did not want them in New York, but because he knew that Britain could indeed not afford another army division and 200 million pounds for Palestine. It could not even afford having one fifth of its army and the 35 million pounds it required to hold on to Palestine after World War II.

The U.S. wanted to get into the Arab East fast. It was afraid that the USSR was about to pull off another Czechoslovakia in Persia. Furthermore, the British had joined Chaim Weizmann at the White House welfare line, and the U.S. was able to apply enormous economic pressure to England. By the beginning of 1947 the Atlee government had decided to wash its hands of Palestine and turned the question over to the UN. Stalin, motivated more by irrational Anglophobia than narrow conservative bureaucratic Realpolitik, lined up with Truman and co-sponsored the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. (The price of Thermidor is that the personal whim of The Leader may sometimes be even contrary to the interests of the bureaucratic caste he represents.) Thus Stalin, who in 1929 purged and denounced the Palestinian Communist Party for not supporting the Arab pogroms and in 1936 made the PCP line up behind the Mufti, in 1947-48 was the most vigorous ally of Zionism. Marshall Plan bribery combined with Stalinist betrayal led to the UN partition resolution passed on 29 November 1947. Britain then agreed to end the Mandate by the coming May 14.

[TO BE CONTINUED]