

desolate and rough open terrain of the Wadi Araba region between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba.

"Most of the deportations were carried out between 1969 and 1971. The political and professional figures were usually taken directly from their homes, often in the middle of the night, and summarily deported with the charge that they were a 'security risk,' the study says. The majority of deportees, however, were detained or jailed before being sent out, often on the same 'security' charge, which was frequently left unspecified.

"The extent of this forced exile of leading West Bank and Gaza figures has been largely responsible for the apparent leadership vacuum in these regions. The threat of deportation which hangs over the heads of Palestinians in the occupied territories is serious enough to thwart the emergence of any effective and open substitute political leadership there.

"The exiled Palestinians, most of whom remain in the East Bank of Jordan, have usually continued to play the leadership role they had at home. Numerous deportees have been, or are, members of the Palestine National Council, or the Central Council or Executive Committees of the PLO.

"The most prominent of the deported Palestinians include such figures as the PLO official spokesman, Mr. Abdul-Muhsin Abu Maizer, and Mr. Kamal Nasser, the former PLO spokesman who was murdered in Beirut by an Israeli assassination team several years ago. Others are Mr. Rauhi al-Khatib, the former Mayor of Arab Jerusalem, Sheikh Abdul-Hamid Sayih, the highest Muslim religious figure of the West Bank and a lawyer, Mr. Ibrahim Bakr, current President of the Jordanian Lawyers' Association."

A comment on the Quaker report from David Lennon in Tel Aviv was included in the same *Financial Times* report:

"Israeli officials say privately they believe that the number of people listed in the report is grossly exaggerated. One senior official, who was closely involved with military

affairs before the 1973 war, said that to the best of his knowledge the number of deportees did not exceed 200.

"This official stressed that all those deported had been involved in subversive activities. The action of many of them since had only served to prove the point, he said.

"There have been no deportations during the past year and a half, he said, explaining that this was because of the decline in terrorist and subversive activity.

"However, the Israeli lawyer, Mrs. Felicia Langer, who acted on behalf of many deportees and their families, said that in her experience the AFSC figures were not exaggerated at all. 'The deportations started immediately the war ended in June, 1967,' she told the *Financial Times*. 'The main criteria for those deported appears to have been their leadership talents,' she said, and cited lists of names to substantiate her point.

"The volume of deportations slowed down after 1974, and stopped after the widespread protests over the deportation in February 1976 of two candidates in the West Bank local elections, Mrs. Langer said. To the best of her knowledge, the only deportations today were people who have completed jail sentences for illegal infiltration."

## EARLY COMMUNISM IN PALESTINE

There is no absence of argumentation on the Palestinian issue, but the situation of original research is somewhat different. A German work, *Kommunismus in Palästina: Nation und Klasse in der anti-kolonialen Revolution*, has recently appeared dealing with the history of Palestinian communism up to the late 1920's. In *Merip Reports* (no. 56) Fred Halliday surveyed the information, issues and analysis provided by the book.

"Mario Offenberg's study of the early communist movement in Palestine is one of the very few works published in recent

years around the Arab-Israeli question that breaks decisively new analytic and political ground. Although its subject matter is restricted, and takes the story only up to the late 1920's. Offenbergs' account contains within it the material for discussing broader, contemporary, political and theoretical issues. Everyone concerned with the future of the Palestinian question and with the future of socialism in the Middle East should read it, and one can only hope that an English language translation will rapidly make the contents available to a much wider audience.

"The origins of Palestinian communism lie in two distinct situations: that of Palestine itself in the aftermath of the Russian revolution and of the establishment of the British mandate on the one hand; and that of the communist trend within the Jewish workers' movement in Europe on the other. The book begins with two brief background chapters on the context in which Palestinian communism arose. The first sketches the socio-economic structure of Palestine before World War I; it identifies the different classes present within Palestinian society under the Ottomans, and the decomposition of the pre-capitalist Palestinian economy in the nineteenth century. The second chapter analyses the policy of British imperialism in Palestine and the strategic reasons for the occupation of the region after 1917.

"In his third chapter Offenbergs gives a detailed account of the split between Zionists and anti-Zionists that was generated in Europe. The main protagonists of a proletarian Zionism were in the Poale Zion organization; after the Russian revolution they tried to affiliate to the Communist International and to get Bolshevik backing for Zionist colonization in Palestine as well as for a separate Jewish workers' organization in Europe. They tried to portray the Zionist movement as a progressive workers movement that was taking socialism to the

Middle East and to deny the legitimacy of the Arab nationalist forces that were developing after World War I. At first, the Comintern tried patiently to win Poale Zion away from its positions, to argue that Jewish workers should join Communist Parties like other workers and should not see emigration to Palestine as a solution to the problem of anti-Semitism. The only way out was for a joint fight by Jewish and non-Jewish workers. These discussions lasted for four years until in 1922 relations were broken; the Comintern then officially condemned Poale Zion.

"Offenbergs' account of Poale Zion identifies many of the deceptively 'socialist' arguments that have misled Jewish and non-Jewish socialists alike outside the Middle East, and which are still prevalent today. Of special interest is his discussion of the founder of 'workers' Zionism,' Ber Borokhov. Borokhov argued that Jewish society was marked by two anomalies: the absence of a territory and the absence of a working class (the theory of the inverted pyramid). The task was to remedy these two deficiencies by building a Jewish working class in a Jewish land — in this case, Palestine. Yet Borokhov was far-sighted and undiplomatic enough to see that this involved a colonialist programme: to justify this he argued that the indigenous Palestinian people had no culture of their own and were 'incapable of waging a nationalist struggle.' They would 'easily adopt any imported culture that is superior to their own' (p. 54). The necessarily colonialist and discriminatory character of Zionism was stated clearly by, of all people, the founder of the most left-wing Zionist current.

"Later Zionists tried to obscure the fact that Arabs were to be found in Palestine, and it is fascinating to read Offenbergs' account of those workers who went to Palestine and, confronted with the facts of the situation, were then forced to question their Zionist assumptions. One such militant was Yaakov Meiersohn, a

Ukrainian Jew who had gone to Palestine in 1912. At the Poale Zion Congress in Vienna in July 1920, Meiersohn had aroused the anger of the delegates by denouncing the Zionist project in Palestine because it was discriminating against the 'Arab masses.' For his pains, he was expelled as a 'traitor.' Another instance is that of Joseph Berger, later one of the leading Comintern officials in the Middle East, who tells Offenbergs how surprised he was on his arrival in 1920 to find himself in an Arab country: even before he had left Haifa harbour, he had begun to turn against Zionism.

"In the remaining six chapters of the book, Offenbergs provides a detailed account of the growth of an anti-Zionist left within the Jewish community in Palestine, and of its relations with the Comintern headquarters in Moscow on the one hand and with the Arab nationalist movement on the other. The first identifiable organization was the MPS (*Mifgeget Poalim Sozialistim* or Socialist Workers Party), which was formed in October 1919 after a split within the Palestinian branch of Poale Zion. The MPS became the MPSI and in 1921 renamed itself the Jewish Communist Party. This itself split into a Palestinian Communist Party on the one side and a Communist Party of Palestine on the other in 1922, the latter being more militantly anti-Zionist and refusing to retain the lingering involvement in Zionist activities which the PCP preserved. In 1923 the two reunited to form the PCP and in 1924 this party was recognized by the Comintern as its branch in Palestine.

"It therefore took five years of splitting and reforming for an identifiable Communist Party to emerge from the divisions within Poale Zion. The birth of this CP was much less clean than in the case of other parties which either formed by straight splits inside socialist parties after 1917 (the case in France and Italy) or through the coming together of previously disunited elements to constitute a

communist nucleus (as occurred in the US, Britain and China). The other defining feature of this party was that it was formed by an evolution within the Jewish community, even if this evolution was a reflection of the community's place in a predominantly Arab Palestine. The construction of this anti-Zionist grouping was carried out through a number of identifiable disputes in which one Zionist or half-Zionist illusion after another was cast aside.

"The first such illusion was perhaps the simplest: the belief that in the aftermath of the Russian revolution the Red Army would break through the Caucasus and descend on the Middle East to establish a socialist state in Palestine. Ideas of this kind soon faded, as they did in Europe, but it was then believed that the Jewish workers coming to Palestine would inject a progressive or socialist element into the situation there. There was talk of a 'dictatorship of the Jewish intelligentsia over the Arabs,' or of a communist-Jewish workers centre in Palestine (the latter being a slogan of the JCP in 1921, p. 214). In 1922 and 1923 the PCP (before reunification) was affected by a theory known as Yishuvism, according to which the Jewish community (the Yishuv) would begin to develop class differences as it grew, and that a Jewish proletariat would therefore emerge and ally with the Palestinians against Jewish capital, and against British imperialism. (pp. 282ff.) Offenbergs clearly demonstrates that this theory, defended by some as 'Zionism without Zionism,' was an illusion which ignored the fundamental conflict between the Zionist enterprise and the indigenous Palestinian population as a whole.

"This uncertainty among Jewish militants was evident in the practical positions many adopted. Some of them called for a common struggle by Jewish and Arab workers, and denounced the Zionists for betraying socialism and not allying with progressive Arabs. A specific point of dispute was language: the

Zionists insisted on reviving Hebrew, while the anti-Zionists fought to retain the language of the Jewish workers in Europe, Yiddish. In so far as they still tried to engage with the followers of Zionism, they tried to fight within the Histadrut and to get it to admit Arab workers. At the Histadrut founding conference in December 1920 MPS members tried to call for a joint struggle with the Arab masses against the Zionist bourgeoisie. While this showed a commendable attempt to counter the dominance of Zionism, it also testified, like the theories discussed above, to a misunderstanding of what the character and strength of the Zionist movement were.

“Even when the reunited PCP was formed in 1923 it seems not to have drawn the final conclusions from its anti-Zionism and from its rejection of residual justifications for the Zionist enterprise. For if, in the 1920’s, Zionism was in essence a colonizing venture then it was mandatory for anti-Zionists to oppose the central activity of Zionism, namely immigration and settlement. It was not enough to oppose the discriminatory relations being established in Palestine. Yet it does not appear, except for a brief period on the part of the CPP, that a clear stand on this was taken up. Offenber (p. 247) criticizes the CPP for advocating that Jewish immigrants should leave Palestine again, on the grounds that this, like Zionism in Europe, did not confront the political necessity of fighting discrimination where it was found. But even if one concedes that it would have been self-defeating to mobilize support that would then have been sent out of the country, there was no justification for the failure to oppose all further immigration.

“The greatest practical weakness of the PCP was that it was formed exclusively from among Jewish immigrants and had at first no ties with the Arab population. There were cases of joint action by Jews and Arabs: as early as 1907 Jews helped a

strike of Arab citrus-workers, and in 1924 there was a famous incident at al-Fula where the PCP supported the resistance of the 8,000 peasants who were being ousted from their land after a Lebanese family, the Sursuqs, had sold the land to the Zionists.

“But these were individual incidents, and did not mean either that permanent links between Arab and Jewish forces were forged, or that the anti-Zionist Jews were able to organize serious resistance to the colonization process. Against them one has to take note of the riots on May Day 1921 when a clash between rival Histadrut and MPSI demonstrations was followed by an attack on a Jewish quarter of Jaffa by Arabs. Two PCP militants were killed as they engaged with others in the defence of the Jewish area. As Offenber points out, the British tried to blame these incidents on the communists and this forced the latter onto the defensive for some time to come. But perhaps more important is how this incident illustrates the brutal realities of such conflicts: the enraged Palestinian masses, urged on no doubt by chauvinist elements, did not distinguish between Zionist and anti-Zionist Jews. The anti-Zionist militants were trapped by a situation from which, in a time of crisis, they could not escape and which allowed them no political room for maneuver.

“It was only in the middle 1920s that the PCP began to recruit some Arab members. Offenber, quoting British intelligence sources, reports that the first Arab joined in 1924, that there were 8 members in 1925 and that in 1927 4 Arabs were sent to receive political training in Russia. In 1925 the PCP established contact with some members of an “Arab-Palestinian Workers Organization” and was at the same time able to engage in discussions with some of the more established leaders of the Palestinian community. One ironic source of interest came from among those Palestinian Orthodox Christians who had previously sympathized with Russia because they were followers of the Russian Orthodox Church. This sym-

pathy continued after 1917 and, since both these Palestinians and many of the anti-Zionist immigrants spoke Russian, it was possible for understanding to develop more rapidly (p. 353).

“The culmination of the move towards the Arab population came in the late 1920s. In 1928 the Sixth Congress of the Comintern made a general turn away from alliances with nationalists in the colonial world, and the effect of this in Palestine was that the PCP broke off its contacts with Arab notables. Instead it tried to present itself as the champion of the Arab cause. Then, in 1930, the Comintern decreed that the leadership of the PCP should be ‘Arabized,’ i.e., the existing Jewish functionaries should be replaced by Palestinians. Offen-berg (p. 363) criticizes this on the grounds that it was a concession by the PCP to Zionism. The PCP felt itself incapable of mobilizing Arab support so long as it had a Jewish leadership, and this reflected the success of Zionist attempts to deny any difference between Zionist and anti-Zionist Jews. Unfortunately, Offen-berg’s account ends here: he does not provide us with enough material on the cadres available to lead the PCP for us to evaluate his argument on Arabization, nor does he take the story further so that, in practical terms at least, the success or failure of the Arabization can be judged.

“One of the most striking conclusions to emerge from Offen-berg’s account is that there were in essence two distinct reasons for opposing Zionism, and that the history of the emergence of an anti-Zionist movement in Europe is concentrated on the first reason, while the anti-Zionists in Palestine based themselves on the second. The first reason is that Zionism provides an incorrect answer to the problem of anti-Semitism in Europe. It divides the workers’ movement, and prevents the establishment of a common front of Jewish and non-Jewish workers. The second reason is that Zionism is colonialist, because it drives the Palestinian people from their land and establishes a colony in the Middle East.

“It is interesting to see how, in the period after the Russian revolution, the communist movement haltingly shifted from the first to the second argument. Lenin’s polemics with the Bund in 1903, and his later writings on the national question in Russia, concentrated on the first issue. He never analysed the effects of Zionism in Palestine itself. Even in 1920, while there was a condemnation of Zionism at the Second Comintern Congress, this was phrased in what was essentially a secondary objection — the fact that the Zionists were handing the Arab population of Palestine over to British imperialism. Even in the final condemnation of Poale Zion in 1922 the main accusation was still that Poale Zion was trying to divert Jewish workers away from the class struggle. In Palestine too the hesitations of some of the earlier socialists and theories such as Yishuvism indicated a similar inability to grasp clearly the colonial character of the whole Zionist enterprise.

“Today, of course, the critique of Zionism is based firmly on the second reason. While anti-Semitism persists in both advanced capitalist and in communist countries, the issue of Zionism within the European workers’ movement is not a live one. British imperialism has long since departed from Palestine and the dominant oppression is that of Zionism over the Palestinian people.

“In this context the question arises on the status of the earlier Marxist and communist positions on the Jews and Zionism, especially since it is quite common for those engaged in solidarity work with Palestine in Europe and the US to justify their positions with reference to these texts. Offen-berg makes clear that his work is a historical investigation; as such he leaves open the question of how these earlier debates relate to the Palestine problem as it is today. My own view would be that it is politically helpful to invoke the arguments of Marx, Lenin and the Comintern in a context where one is trying to establish the fundamental point that anti-Zionism is not equivalent to anti-Semitism. Elementary as this point

may be, it is one that has to be re-established time and again. But in other ways such an invocation is quite misleading, especially as some of those who quote bits of Lenin and Marx on the Jewish question in the Arab world are in fact straightforward nationalists who are noticeably reluctant to quote Marx and Lenin on other issues of equal importance to the Arab world such as materialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

“I would argue that in terms of a *contemporary* analysis of Zionism as represented in the State of Israel the writings of Lenin and Marx on the Jewish question are in many ways *irrelevant*. One reason is the shift in character of Zionism as a problem, which I have discussed. But there is a more fundamental reason: the theoretical objects of their writings were not ‘Jews’ in abstract but two other problems: in the case of Marx, the question of religion and the state in bourgeois society, and in the case of Lenin, the solution to the problems faced by an ethnic group which had no territorial concentration. Neither Marx nor Lenin produced a general analysis of the Jewish question; it was not their prime concern to do so. In so far as their writings are relevant today they apply to analytic objects comparable at the theoretical level to those they confronted: Marx’s work relates to the study of ideology and religion, Lenin’s to that of non-territorial ethnic groups — perhaps to the national question in the contemporary US.

“Secondly, Lenin’s writings on the Jewish question, like his writings on all other political issues, were conjunctural, i.e. related to specific issues facing the workers’ movement at that time. If one consults the standard collection of his writings (*Lenin on the Jewish Question*, International Publishers, New York, 1974) one can see that of the 122 pages of Lenin’s writings 31 pages were written in 1903, and another 59 in 1913, i.e., three-quarters are concentrated in two years when the question of Jewish organization and nationality was most acute within the Russian workers’

movement. This alone should make one cautious about abstracting from the context in which they were written, and this caution is all the more necessary since, precisely because they were conjunctural, shifts in Lenin’s position can be seen. Whereas in 1903 he advocated a straight assimilationist line, he altered his position in 1913 and implied that the ghettoized Jews were a nation, indeed ‘the most oppressed and persecuted nation.’ Finally, after the Russian revolution, the Bolshevik Party did set up a specific Jewish section, while at the same time fighting Poale Zion’s call for a separate Jewish organization. The conventional pietistic and ‘un-Leninist’ way in which Lenin’s views are presented, as if they were a thorough and coherent analysis of the Jewish question in general, ignores the partial and changing character of Lenin’s positions.

“Moreover, while facile anti-Zionism and orthodox Leninism alike conspire to exalt Lenin as a faultless authority, it is evident that some of Lenin’s views were, quite simply, wrong. Offenberg (p. 61) points out that Lenin misunderstood the character of Jewish culture. Lenin in his fight with the Bund assumed that where a Jewish culture existed it was of a bourgeois character; but, while this may have been true in the lands of relative assimilation (e.g., Germany, France) it was not true in the more ghettoized world of eastern Europe, where a proletarian Jewish culture, based on Yiddish, did exist. Offenberg’s discussion of this is unfortunately too truncated; one would need to know in what ways this culture was proletarian and, as he claims, genuinely free of clerical-obscurantist strains. But he is right to point out that after the Russian revolution this distinct Jewish proletarian culture was recognized in the cultural rights given to Jews along with other nationalities, and that this implicitly corrected Lenin’s views.

“There is a further reason for qualifying the relevance of Lenin’s writings on the Jewish question, one that is so stark it is often passed over. This is that Lenin’s work

rested on certain political assumptions, one of them being that in capitalist societies the European workers' movement would be able to defend Jews against anti-Semitism, and the other that after the socialist revolution the workers' states would liquidate all forms of national prejudice, anti-Semitism included. From the vantage point of the mid-1970s, it is inescapable that both of these assumptions have proven mistaken. The European workers' movement was unable to protect anyone, Jew or gentile, from the rise of fascism, and today anti-Semitism is rampant in the Soviet Union. Lenin is not to be blamed for his failure to foresee these developments, and for hoping that things would turn out better; but we should be blamed if we naively transpose Lenin's arguments without taking these facts into account. There is no more justification for this than there would be if we suddenly revived Lenin's equally mistaken expectations of a revolution in western and central Europe after World War I or his semi-anarchist views on the state produced on the eve of the Russian revolution and immediately shelved thereafter.

"The writings of Lenin that are more relevant to this problem are those on *the general problem of the national question*. Although Lenin never discussed a problem like that of Zionist colonization in Palestine, he was well aware from the Russian example of the problems of national oppression. At the same time he struggled relentlessly against all forms of national chauvinism both on the part of *dominant* and *dominated* peoples, and against the tendency of nationalist movements in third world countries to adopt a socialist or communist label when it was opportune to do so. This issue of the precise relevance of past Marxist and Leninist writings to contemporary or new theoretical questions, is a more general one. For example, it is by now well-established that Marx's writings on pre-capitalist societies were not *about* pre-capitalist societies and that it is a forlorn endeavour to extract from them an adequate theory of such social

formations. These texts were written in the context of his investigations into the *capitalist* mode of production, and he wrote about pre-capitalist modes only to investigate the *preconditions* for the emergence of capitalism — land and labour as commodities, etc. The theoretical writings of Marx that *are* most relevant to the study of pre-capitalist formations are not therefore his works on the alleged Asiatic mode of production or on feudalism, but the sections of *Capital* on ground rent and on the general theory of a mode of production. Similarly, within contemporary writing on the role of domestic labour in capitalism, it is eminently clear that it is the general theoretical writings of Marx on value and productive non-productive labour, and not his scattered remarks about housework and the family, that provide a possible theoretical framework for investigating this phenomenon. I would argue that a similar consideration applies to the writings of Marx and his successors on the Jewish question.

"To say this is in no way to detract from the relevance of Offenberg's work, but rather to register the question of in which way the past is relevant to the present. The great contribution of this book is that for the first time we have a reliable and comprehensive account of the origins of the communist movement in Palestine, and of the debates that occurred at this time — in the Comintern, in the Jewish workers' movement in Europe, and in Palestine itself. Offenberg uses Hebrew, Arabic, Yiddish, German and English materials; he has talked to as many of the survivors who were available to him in the early 1970s, when he did his research. But this is also a highly political book: in the introduction Offenberg states that it is the aim of 'internationalist socialists on both sides of the geographical boundaries' to solve the Arab-Israeli dispute not through diplomacy but through the 'common struggle of the popular masses against all those factors that are trying to perpetuate the domination of reaction in the Middle East.' It is the

purpose of his work to show that internationalists of this kind are not a new phenomenon, but are the heirs of the earlier socialists of the 1920s. The study of the historical origins of the present situation is therefore for Offenbergl not academic but part of the development of a socialist politics today. In particular, Offenbergl hopes that his book will help to break the identification of all Jews with Zionism; he shows how the latter tried to enforce this identity but how some socialists broke away

and adopted an anti-Zionist position. It is on the basis of such a position that it is possible today for Israeli militants to ally, in an internationalist manner, with the Palestinian movement for national liberation. In the 1920's as now, this need not necessarily involve complete agreement between Arab and Jewish militants on all questions; but it is only on such a basis that a co-operation can be built that breaks through the national and nationalist barriers that have kept the two communities divided for so long."