

# **The Communist Movement in Palestine and Israel, 1919–1984**

**Sondra Miller Rubenstein**

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**Westview Special Studies on  
the Middle East**



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# **The Communist Movement in Palestine and Israel, 1919-1984**

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The Communist Movement  
in America and World  
1919-1954



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## About the Book and Author

This book traces the origin and development of the communist movement in Palestine and Israel, examining in detail the problems affecting it in the years preceding Israeli statehood in 1948. Focusing on these problems within the context of events in the *Yishuv* (the Jewish community in Palestine) and the international communist movement, Dr. Rubenstein analyzes unpopular positions advocated by the Communist party, its efforts to remain loyal to Moscow's dictates, and the succession of rifts within the movement. Concluding with an overview of the communist movement in Israel today, Dr. Rubenstein explains the virtual extinction of party influence on the current Israeli political scene.

Sondra Miller Rubenstein has a Ph.D in political science from Columbia University. She is an assistant professor of communication theory at Hofstra University.

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# The Communist Movement in Palestine and Israel, 1919-1984

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**Sondra Miller Rubenstein**

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Because the transliteration of Hebrew and Arabic varies widely among writers, slightly different versions of the same names may be found in this study.

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**This book is dedicated to the memory of  
the dearest man I have ever known,  
my friend, Teddy Hirsch.**



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*Sondra Miller Rubenstein, Ph.D.*



## Introduction

In On the Jewish Question (1843), published five years before his Communist Manifesto, Karl Marx touched upon, but did not fully comprehend, the Jewish national problem. The youthful Marx wrote that for the Jews, a "historyless" people, nationality was an illusion. At that time, he mistakenly saw them only as an economic class, as merchants and moneymen. He dismissed Judaism as an entirely negative phenomenon, equating it with "huckstering" and with the evils of capitalism:

What was, in itself, the basis of the Jewish religion? Practical need, egoism.

The monotheism of the Jews is, therefore, in reality, a polytheism of the numerous needs of man, a polytheism which makes even the lavatory an object of divine regulation. Practical need, egoism, is the principle of civil society, and is revealed as such in its pure form as soon as civil society has fully engendered the political state. The god of practical need and self-interest is money.

Money is the jealous god of Israel, beside which no other god may exist. . . .

The chimerical nationality of the Jew is the nationality of the trader, and above all of the financier.<sup>1</sup>

In 1845, Marx rethought the Jewish question in his The Holy Family: A Critique of Critical Criticism. Here, the emphasis is less on "Jews" than on "Judaism" and its laws. The laws of Judaism were now explained as representing a stage in political development and the Jewish question was now seen also as a religious question. Marx spoke of the need to emancipate humanity from Judaism because civil society is "Jewish to the core," being dedicated to the "money system." Thus, Judaism was now seen as part of the historical process which also consisted of class and national antagonisms.

National antagonisms, Marx would write in the Communist Manifesto, "are daily more and more vanishing"<sup>2</sup> due to the expansion of free trade, the growth of the world market, and the

growing uniformity of the modes of production. And, with the resolution of class conflicts within the individual nation-states, national differences and antagonisms will vanish completely. The national question was, therefore, to be subordinated to the question of revolution, which was the central preoccupation of Karl Marx.

Marx and Engels, witnessing the 1848 revolution in Europe, accepted the right of the Germans, Hungarians, Poles and Italians to their national independence, while denying the same right to those peoples in southern and eastern Europe "whose historic duty it was to be absorbed by the more progressive civilizing influence of the big nations in Europe."<sup>3</sup>

Hence, the independence movement of the South Slavs, with their Pan-Slavic pronouncements, was portrayed as only serving Tsarist expansionary ambitions in the Balkans and was, therefore, to be opposed. The Polish struggle for national independence, on the other hand, was to be supported because it weakened Tsarist Russia. The measuring rod used to judge national movements was to be their anticipated impact on the feudal-absolutist empires of central and eastern Europe. Only those movements which would speed the disintegration of such systems were to be supported. Others would later apply this criterion to the Jews, who were not considered to have one language, and who had no territory. And, the Jewish national movement for a homeland in Palestine would then be seen as having strictly chauvinist aims, without the indispensable revolutionary impact. Thus, it was to be branded as counterrevolutionary and denounced by Marxists.

Although Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels later distanced themselves from their earlier writings (which were tainted with anti-Semitism) and ultimately did not bequeath to European socialists a legacy of anti-Semitism, their views did become the basis for anti-Zionism among later communists and the source of antagonism between the communists and the Zionists not only in Russia but in Palestine as well. This study, which begins with an examination of the ideological roots of Jewish communists, traces the development of the communist movement in Palestine and Israel and analyzes its interaction with Zionism, an ideology which it abhorred but whose political product, *i.e.*, the state of Israel, it was forced to accept in 1947 because of a change in Soviet policy. Professor Alexander Erlich of Columbia University

correctly noted in his comments to the author that, "While the Soviet attitude to Israeli policies became increasingly hostile after the initial political and military support, the Soviet leaders never retreated from their 1947-1948 recognition of Israel's right to exist--a position which constituted a major departure from original Communist views."

#### NOTES

1. Robert C. Tucker, Editor, The Marx-Engels Reader (N. Y.: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1972), p. 48.
2. Ibid., p. 350.
3. Robert S. Wistrich, Editor, The Left Against Zion: Communism in Israel and the Middle East (London: Valentine, Mitchell, 1979), p. 3.



## **Part 1**

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### **Ideological Origins**

**The Poale Zion and the  
MPS in Palestine**



# I

## Ideological Origins: Nineteenth Century East European Roots

### I

The earliest members of the Palestine Communist Party (PCP) had come from Eastern Europe and Russia where they had grown up in a milieu of radical movements whose origins dated back to the second half of the 19th century. They were the product of a curious matrix of influences and ideologies. Those who had begun as Marxists had found it necessary to deal with a number of contradictions in Marxist theory and to adapt particularistic rationalizations to a doctrine that had held little appeal to the mass of Jews in the Pale.

Coincident with the development of Marxist-Socialism during the turbulent 1880s<sup>1</sup> were two additional, related socio-political movements which attracted many Jewish intellectuals and which influenced the evolution of their radical ideology: Populism and the People's Will. Populism (Narodnichestvo), which counted many Jews among its members and teachers, advocated a regeneration of society through a non-Marxist socialism and placed its major emphasis on the large agrarian sector. At its philosophical core, Populism was based on the perfectability of man, with reliance on education as the means of reforming society. Major themes included self-improvement through study, the obligation to teach others, and hatred for the Tsarist regime and its injustices.

While Populism was a broad movement, the People's Will (Narodnaia Volia) was more a political organization and an outgrowth of Populism. The Populists' failure to achieve concrete gains through moral and educational reform spurred some to advocate direct political action--including acts of terror--in order to achieve a social revolution.<sup>2</sup> The assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881 was the high point of their activities. This act of violence succeeded in attracting many, including members of the Jewish intelligentsia who were impressed by the courage and daring of the young revolutionaries.

On the other hand, the pogroms which followed in the wake of the assassination came as a rude shock to the Jewish intelligentsia of Russia. A further shock ensued with the issuance of a proclamation by the Executive Committee of the Narodnaia Volia, calling upon the Ukrainian peasants "to continue their pogrom activities because the Jews were guilty of all their sufferings."<sup>3</sup>

Popularization of the message carried by this proclamation occurred in 1882 when the official organ of the movement stated that "we have no right to be negative or even indifferent to a pure folk movement." It was impossible, the statement continued, to avoid the fact that "the revolution would begin with the beating up of the Jews."<sup>4</sup>

Although later the attitude of the leaders of this movement would change, many embittered Jewish revolutionaries thereupon abandoned socialism for Jewish nationalism. For the purpose of this study, our interest lies mainly with those who did not abandon socialism. Of these, some even justified the rationalization of the pogroms; and some remained indifferent. The latter continued to deny the existence of a Jewish people, a Jewish language, and a Jewish working class. Still others, who did not reject socialism, recognized their previous neglect of the Jewish masses and began to think about the relevancy of the People's Will for Russia's Jews.<sup>5</sup>

Like the Populists, the People's Will also advocated and relied on the importance of education. However, rather than concentrate on the peasantry as the Populists had done, the People's Will sought a broader base, directing its advocacy to the public at large.

The Russian Social Democratic Workers Movement, as it later became known,<sup>6</sup> reached into the Pale of Poland in the early 1890s, where it soon competed with the Polish nationalist movement, the Polish Socialist Party (PPS)<sup>7</sup> and the infant Jewish nationalist movement. The youthful Jewish organizers in the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party (RSDWP) preached an internationalist Marxist doctrine, trying, at first, to convince the Jewish workers that their interests were the same as those of other proletarians. "The essence of contemporary history," Sh. Gozhansky, one of the Jewish leaders, wrote in his Letter to Agitators, ". . . is not the national, but the class struggle."<sup>8</sup>

To Joseph Pilsudski, a major figure in the rival Polish PPS,



these Jewish revolutionaries, with their conscious policy of Russification of the Jewish movement, "gave aid and comfort to the enemy," and, at best, were "misguided,"<sup>9</sup> because any policy which included "Russification," by its very nature, detracted from the efforts of the Polish socialist movement.

## Z

In Vilna, Lithuania, where there was a large Jewish population, the Jews within the Social Democratic movement encouraged Jewish workers to place the unity of the proletariat above race and creed and to renounce Jewish holidays and other practices as "useless to human society."<sup>10</sup> It is difficult to pinpoint the exact date when the Vilna Social Democrats acknowledged the failure of this approach and began to think of new methods to reach Jewish workers. The first indication of change came in April 1893 when Yiddish, instead of Russian, became the language of instruction within the Vilna workers' circles, the organizational vehicle for the dissemination of Marxist ideology. With the adoption of the name the Jewish Social Democratic Group<sup>11</sup> in 1894, it was possible to discern an additional sign of change. These were the first hints of acceptance that the Jewish workers required a particularistic approach.

In 1895, Julius Martov,<sup>12</sup> speaking at a post-May Day<sup>13</sup> meeting of the Vilna Group, called attention to the fact that the workers' movement had adapted itself to the realities of the Jewish condition. Speaking of the necessity of establishing an organization which would unite all Jewish workers, Martov noted that, although the movement had become more democratic and practical,<sup>14</sup> its scope having grown beyond the restricted intellectual achievements of small groups, "the Jewish proletariat must not await liberation. . . either from the Russian movement or from the Polish movement."<sup>15</sup> Martov advocated the creation of a bund, a union of Jewish workers' groups. Its aim, later contained in the statement of the Bund's Central Committee, was to lift from the shoulders of the Jewish worker the "double yoke" of suffering as a worker and as a Jew.<sup>16</sup>

With the expansion of industry and commerce, the number of Jewish workers in Russian and East European towns grew

considerably. By 1897, the Jewish Social Democratic Group had spread from Vilna throughout the Pale. In October of that year, the Group disbanded and formally established the Bund (Der Algemeyner Idisher Arbeter Bund in Rusland un Polin), the Socialist and Trade Union Organization of the Jewish Workers in Russia and Poland.<sup>17</sup> The Bund developed two functions: to mobilize and raise the consciousness of the Jewish working class from within and to advance the cause of class solidarity by making the non-Jewish workers aware of the plight of their Jewish brothers.

Whatever problems were inherent in the second (the universalist) function, the first (the particularist), and more immediate, aim proved to be exceedingly difficult. Listing them from particularistic to the universal-internationalist issues, the following problems confronted the Bund. They are here listed together with the Bund's recommended solutions.

(1) Self-awareness: The basic social and psychological attitude of the Jewish worker had to be changed. The struggle for civil equality, best led by the Jewish worker himself, had to commence. By raising the issue of equal rights for Jews, the Bund's leadership implicitly raised the whole issue of Jewish national culture.

(2) Class consciousness: To achieve this, it was necessary to break down the isolation of the Jewish worker. The cause of that isolation was seen to be rooted in Jewish religious and cultural traditions, and reinforced by a long history of legal discrimination. Jewish workers were to be taught to view non-Jewish workers as their natural allies.

(3) Proletarian unity: To create a sense of common purpose among all workers, it was necessary to end the mutual distrust and hostility between non-Jew and Jew within the working class. Welding class unity, therefore, would also entail an end to anti-Semitism--at any rate among non-Jewish workers.

(4) Revolution: The class warfare which, it was hoped, would lead to the eventual overthrow of the Tsar's regime and of capitalism, was to begin within the Jewish community. Since most Jewish workers were employed by other Jews, class warfare was to begin within the historically united Jewish community.

Interestingly, later in Palestine, the Jewish communists, dealing with both Jews and Arabs, would follow a similar line of reasoning. As we shall see, the theoretical baggage brought to

Palestine by committed Marxists would then have to be reevaluated and adapted to the new circumstances created by political Zionism and Arab nationalism.

### 3

As for the Bundists in Eastern Europe and Russia, however, they realized that they had to devise a formula that, while compatible with their Marxist beliefs, would provide an alternative to both assimilation and exclusiveness. The Bundists knew that the Jewish worker could not be separated completely from the cultural heritage that had been nurtured in the ghetto and the *stetl*. The universalist movement, therefore, had to wait upon the delicate development of a new world consciousness by the Jewish worker. And this had to be achieved without destroying those aspects of his cultural life which he most treasured.<sup>18</sup>

The Jewish critics of the Bund charged it with assimilation, while the non-Jewish critics charged it with parochialism. Thus, in what appeared to the Bundists as contradictory arguments, they were branded on the one hand as Russifying secularizers and, on the other hand, accused of building walls between Christian and Jewish workers.

The PPS decried the Bund's activities within the Pale of Jewish settlement which overlapped territorially with the Polish regions--the western guberniyas of the Tsarist Empire. In particular, the PPS resented the Bund's rejection of Polish independence as an objective. According to M. K. Dziewanowski, the PPS saw in this "one more proof of the unfriendly attitude of the so-called 'Litwaks,' or Jews from Lithuania, Byelorussia, and the Ukraine, who were considered by the PPS as instruments of Russification."<sup>19</sup> The PPS also criticized the Bund for its membership in the All-Russian Social Democratic Party and condemned the Bund as undermining the unity of the proletarian movement in Poland. The Jewish proletariat, according to the PPS, "could not possibly have interests separate from those of the country in which it lived and worked,"<sup>20</sup> i.e. Poland, and more specifically, the Polish regions of the Tsarist Empire. To counter Bund influence, the PPS organized a special Jewish section of its party and published propaganda material in

Yiddish. The Jewish position, the PPS stated, was that of a state within a state. The Bund was portrayed as objectively allowing itself to be used for Russian aggrandizement. However, such attacks on the part of the PPS often had the reverse effect. Many Jews felt that Polish nationalism, including even that of the PPS, was potentially as anti-Semitic as Russian nationalism.

4

Jewish criticism of the anti-Zionist Bund increased with the dissemination of Theodore Herzl's Judenstaat, published in 1896. The First Zionist Congress at Basel, in 1897 also heightened Jewish political consciousness. John Mill, a pioneer Bund figure, noted: "Before Herzl came out with his Judenstaat, the Zionist. . . movement had no roots in Jewish life in Russia and Poland. "Zionism had, according to Mill, "remained absolutely dead among the Jewish workers," and significantly, the question of Zionism had not appeared on the agenda of the first three congresses of the Bund. Mill continued:

After Judenstaat appeared and the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine began to spread gradually . . . it became clear that the Bund could no longer ignore the new movement. If not today, then tomorrow [Zionism] would appear among the Jewish masses in socialist dress to express the new aspirations among the Jewish petit bourgeoisie.<sup>21</sup>

Although the question of Zionism was not on the agenda of the Third Congress of the Bund in December 1899,<sup>22</sup> the national question was. The discussion dealt with the allegedly deleterious effects which a nationalist emphasis could have on international socialist solidarity. But Zionism was not yet seen by the Bund as a serious ideological challenge.

Mill had been impressed by Karl Kautsky's article on the national question, in which Kautsky, then the chief ideologist of German and, indeed, of European Marxism,<sup>23</sup> recognized its importance to all classes and peoples. "The proletariat is not only not an enemy of such national movements," Kautsky, a non-Jew, had written, "it is very much interested in having such

movements continue to develop."<sup>24</sup> According to Kautsky, the cultural development of diverse ethnic groups living within one state did not necessarily have to lead to conflict. He offered Switzerland as an example. On the other hand, problems inevitably arose when various nationalities tried to claim exclusive control over territory. Here, he offered the example of the Austrian Empire. To avoid such difficulties, Kautsky's recommended solution was to recognize the cultural and linguistic autonomy of a people without granting it territorial independence. The proletarian, wrote Kautsky, "stands on the principle of internationalism," but "this does not mean that he rejects national identity; it means he seeks the freedom and equality of all peoples."<sup>25</sup>

Others in the Marxist camp either had written or would soon write about the national question. Such well known Marxist Jews as Leon (Lev Davidovich Bronstein) Trotsky,<sup>26</sup> Paul (Pavel Borisovich) Axelrod,<sup>27</sup> Julius Martov, Rosa Luxemburg,<sup>28</sup> Leon Jogiches,<sup>29</sup> Victor Adler<sup>30</sup> and Otto Bauer<sup>31</sup> would completely reject the very principle of Jewish national self-determination. They wrote on the national question not as Jews but as internationalist-socialists. Typical of this group would be the assimilationist theories of Otto Bauer, the Austrian social democrat and later foreign minister. Bauer rejected the idea of Jewish autonomy as being contrary to the interests of the proletariat, and he described the role of Jews as mediators of trade and commerce in the pre-capitalistic era. Like Marx, Bauer believed that, with the advent of capitalism, Christians had been "Judaised."<sup>32</sup> The Jews, having thus fulfilled their historic role, should assimilate, culturally and economically, with their host societies.

Thus, Herzl's message raised a potent challenge. His message was as clear to the Marxist internationalists as it was to the Jews of the Pale. It told the Jews that they should work to create their own state. To the Marxist-internationalists, this was perceived as divisive and as undermining class solidarity.

Though the general membership of the Bund did not fully perceive the significance and ultimate impact of Herzl's

Judenstaat and the First Zionist Congress, such was not the case with the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, which lasted two days (April 6 and 7). The pogrom was all the more shocking because it was the first violent anti-Jewish riot in the Tsarist Empire in twenty years. It far surpassed the anti-Semitic outbreaks of the early eighties in terms of numbers of victims and savagery.<sup>33</sup> Years later, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, Israel's second president, wrote: "This event inscribed and underlined with the blood of its victims the contradiction between the idealistic theory of cosmopolitanism and the reality of the Jewish national problem."<sup>34</sup>

Immediately after the Kishinev pogrom, the antagonisms between the Jewish movements intensified. While the Bund called for the destruction of the Tsarist regime for having inspired the pogrom, the reaction of the Zionists generally followed the lead of Theodore Herzl, who rejected both socialism and revolutionary activities. During a meeting with the Russian-Jewish revolutionary Chaim Zhitlovsky, Herzl told of his discussion with V. K. von Plehve, Russia's Minister of the Interior and the man accused of fomenting the pogrom.<sup>35</sup>

I have just come from von Plehve. I have an absolutely binding promise from him that he will procure a charter for Palestine for us in fifteen years at the outside. There is one condition, however: the revolutionaries must stop their struggle against the Russian government. If at the end of fifteen years von Plehve has not obtained the charter, [the revolutionaries] will then be free to do whatever they deem necessary.<sup>36</sup>

Zhitlovsky, believed by Herzl to be a leader of the Bund, was actually one of the founders and leading spirits of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. He had, since the late 1880s, stressed culture as an element in Jewish survival and the use of Yiddish as a vehicle to create a secular, mainly agrarian, society. As a "diaspora nationalist"<sup>37</sup> and social revolutionary, Zhitlovsky was angered by Herzl's account of the von Plehve meeting. Concluding that Herzl was simply naive,<sup>38</sup> Zhitlovsky continued to work with other Jewish revolutionaries.

Still another of those roused by the Kishinev Pogrom, the new Zionist movement and the apparent failure of the Bund's emphasis on international class solidarity was Dov Ber Borochof, a young Marxist intellectual who was considered a "zionist deviationist."<sup>39</sup> He had worked briefly in the RSDWP and had been expelled for, as he would later explain, "teaching them [the workers] to think for themselves."<sup>40</sup> Borochof, born in a small town in the Ukraine, was raised in the city of Poltava which had been chosen by the Russian government as a place of exile for revolutionaries. The city was also one of the first in which a branch of Hibbat Zion (Love of Zion)<sup>41</sup> was founded, and Borochof's father had been active in this early Zionist organization. Thus, socialism and Zionism were very much a part of Borochof's upbringing.

Despite Herzl's initial support of the plan as a temporary solution, Borochof strongly opposed the British government's offer in August 1903 of a large tract of land in Uganda for a Jewish self-governing settlement.<sup>42</sup> In fact, Borochof's Zionism made him a consistent opponent of non-Palestinian Territorialism<sup>43</sup>--the name given to various programs proposing Jewish autonomy wherever Jewish communities were found or could be established outside Palestine. In opposition to growing attacks against Zionism,<sup>44</sup> Borochof advocated Jewish national independence and socio-economic rehabilitation in the Jews' ancient homeland.

While the theoretical bases of Borochof's program will be discussed in Chapter 2, it is appropriate, because of their impact on the Bund, to note here his efforts to expand the Poale Zion (Workers of Zion) which, at the time, was a relatively new organization, founded in 1901.<sup>45</sup> Borochof traveled widely to Jewish communities in Poland, Lithuania and South Russia. He organized branches of the Poale Zion in Vilna, Warsaw, Odessa, Minsk, Crimea, Ekaterinoslav, Rostov and elsewhere. In the next few years, the Poale Zion would first draw many members from the Bund, and then, itself torn by factions, would split into left and right wings.

As for the Bund, although it continued to attract members--reaching its peak during the first decade of this

century with a membership of some 34,000<sup>46</sup> --it was clearly on a collision course with Zionism. In this regard, Vladimir Jabotinsky<sup>47</sup> wrote in his pamphlet Bund i sionizm (The Bund and Zionism):

The real struggle was waged from the moment when the strengthened Zionist movement was taking heed of the ever increasing weight of the Jewish workers' movement and darting its first and as yet inexperienced arrows at this position in which the Bund ruled almost exclusively.<sup>48</sup>

The perceived strength of the Bund prompted Lenin to write the following comments in his article, The Bund's Position Within the Party, which appeared in the Social-Democratic periodical, Iskra, dated October 22, 1903:

The idea of a separate Jewish people, which is utterly untenable scientifically, is reactionary in its political implications. . . . Everywhere in Europe the downfall of medievalism and the development of political freedom went hand in hand with the political emancipation of the Jews, their substituting for Yiddish the language of the people among whom they lived, and in general their indubitably progressive assimilation by the surrounding population. . . .

The Jewish question is this: assimilation or separateness? The idea of a Jewish 'nationality' is manifestly reactionary, not only when put forward by its consistent partisans (the Zionists), but also when put forward by those who try to make it agree with the ideas of social democracy (the Bundists). The idea of a Jewish nationality is in conflict with the interests of the Jewish proletariat, for directly or indirectly it engenders in its ranks a mood hostile to assimilation, a 'ghetto' mood.<sup>49</sup>

For Lenin, the national question was tied to an important doctrinal issue and to the organizational structure of the Russian Social Democratic Party which had been founded in 1898 by nine people, of whom five were Jews. Three of the five Jews were



delegates from the Bund, which was described as an autonomous section of the Party. The Bund's original function was seen as concentrating on the Jewish workers. At that time, the Bundists were satisfied with this formulation.

By the time of the Second Party Congress in 1903, however, Bund delegates were demanding party recognition of the Bund as the sole representative of the Jewish proletariat within the RSD Party. In addition, the Bund delegates advocated that the party should be a federation of national organizations.

Harold Shukman gives us the perspective of the Bund:

... as far as the Bund was concerned, the Congress consisted of two groups, the party and the Bund, and that the main aim of the anti-Bund campaign was to reduce the Bund from its allegedly inflated status of a 'national' party to that of a temporary local or regional committee: temporary because eventually the Jewish workers were expected to free themselves of their racial prejudice and join the ranks of the international, i.e. Russian, social democracy.<sup>50</sup>

While it was the structural question (i.e., the demand that the party should be a federation of national organizations) which was of greater importance to Lenin, he also attacked the Bund on the doctrinal issue, stating that only the united force of the proletariat could overthrow Tsarism and guarantee full political and economic emancipation. The struggle against autocracy, according to Lenin, was undermined by the isolation of the different national working classes: "We must not legitimize that isolation, or sanctify that infamy with any so-called principle of party 'federation' ... as the Bund wants to do."<sup>51</sup>

Without going into Lenin's tactical machinations,<sup>52</sup> we can note that the Congress rejected the Bundist claim to be the sole representative of the Jewish proletariat, and the five Bund delegates walked out in protest. Their departure, followed by the withdrawal of the delegates from an Economist-dominated organization, the League of Russian Social Democrats,<sup>53</sup> left Lenin and his Iskra group in control of the Congress' rump majority and enabled them to identify themselves as the Bolsheviks (the majority) and their defeated opponents as the Mensheviks (the minority).

The Bund, thus under attack from various quarters, was destined to lose many members and sympathizers. Initially, Zionism would prove to be the main cause of divisions within the Bund. In addition, the following new Jewish socialist organizations, active during the Russian Revolution of 1905-1906, were in the process of evolving out of the Poale Zion movement:

(1) The Palestinian Poale Zion: They were members of the Poale Zion who advocated the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine.

(2) The Socialist-Zionists (SS, the Russian initials for Zionist Socialist): The SS was an outcome of a rift between conflicting tendencies in the Poale Zion. It organized after the rejection of the Uganda offer, holding its founding conference in January, February 1905 (the interruption was the result of the arrests of its participants in Odessa). The SS soon became the strongest group within proletarian territorialism. Abraham G. Duker noted:

The SS adopted the name Zionist Socialists and not Social-Democrat Territorialists and continued to participate in the Zionist Congress for a short period of time because of two very practical reasons. By retaining the name 'Zionists' and being counted as such, they hoped to gain more adherents. By calling themselves Socialists and not Social-Democrats, they hoped to gain adherence to their movement of an outstanding group of intellectuals which was then in the process of formulating the ideology of a new movement, the 'Vozrozhdenye' (Renaissance).<sup>54</sup>

Both the SS leaders and the intellectuals from the Vozrozhdenye group<sup>55</sup> preached a national renaissance, an awakening of Jewish national consciousness. When the SS rejected the purely autonomist principle of "Sejmism," (see below) the supporters of the Vozrozhdenye rapidly seceded from the SS. The influence of the SS reached its peak during the revolution of 1905-1906, and it became a factor second in importance only to the Bund, which viewed the SS as a serious rival. The SS also struck roots in Poland and eventually claimed to have 27,000 members.<sup>56</sup>

(3) The Sejmists (J.S., Jewish Socialist Workers' Party): This

was the successor of the Vozrozhdenye group. Since it, too, evolved out of the Poale Zion, its ideology was based on a synthesis of national and socialist ideas. The Sejmists claimed that the basis for Jewish autonomy should be the Jewish community, whose supreme institution, a Jewish national Sejm (parliament), would be endowed with binding authority and would represent the collective affairs of the whole of Jewry. A Jewish constituent assembly would define its functions, which would include cultural and educational matters, medical and health concerns, mutual aid, assistance in work, agricultural training, organization of emigration, and the settlement of emigrants in a "free, unsettled territory." Thus, the acquisition of autonomy was seen as a prerequisite for a Jewish territorial center to be established "anywhere." Unlike the SS and the Poale Zion, the Jewish Socialist Workers' Party did not adhere to Marxism. Its main stronghold was in the Ukraine, with some adherents in Lithuania and none at all in Poland. The Sejmists took part in the revolutionary events of 1905-1906, joining in the series of strikes and in the "self-defense" organized by socialist parties against pogroms. Although in general matters, the Sejmists considered themselves part of the international socialist movement, they claimed the unique condition of the Jewish proletariat made the national question of primary importance.<sup>57</sup> These organizations would draw some of the Bund's members,<sup>58</sup> as well as impact on the Poale Zion movement itself. Of particular concern to this study is the effect of this divisiveness on the group identified as the Palestinian Poale Zion and on their efforts to save their movement.

#### NOTES

1. For discussions on socialist movements among Jews prior to 1880, see: S. M. Dubnow, History of the Jews in Poland and Russia, Vol. III (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1920); Jacob Frumkin, Gregor Aronson and Alexis Goldenweiser, Russian Jewry (1860-1917), (N.J.: Thomas Yoseloff, 1966); Arthur Liebman, Jews and the Left (N.Y.: John Wiley & Sons, 1979); Nora Levin, While Messiah Tarried: Jewish Socialist Movements: 1871-1917 (N.Y.: Schocken, 1977); Robert S. Wistrich, Revolutionary Jews from Marx to Trotsky (London:

Harrap, 1976); Louis Greenberg, The Jews in Russia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951). Peretz Merhav has two chapters of relevance to this topic: "The Jewish Labor Movement in the Diaspora," and "Labor Zionism," Chapters 1 and 2, respectively, in The Israeli Left: History, Problems, Documents (N.Y.: A. S. Barnes & Co., Inc., 1980). Also see "The Jewish Labour Movement: Some Historiographical Problems" by Chimen Abramsky in Soviet-Jewish Affairs, No. 1, June 1971 (London: Narod Press, Ltd.) and S. Eisenstadt's Chapters in the History of the Jewish Labor Movement, Vol. I (Merhavia, Israel: Sifriat Poalim, 1954), in Hebrew.

2. In his notes to the author, Professor Alexander Erlich of Columbia University adds: "Populists never expected to achieve such gains under an absolute monarchy. It was the failure to arouse the peasants which pushed the Populists toward terrorism."

3. Nationalism and the Class Struggle by Dov Ber Borochoy, with an introduction by Abraham G. Duker entitled "Beginnings of Labor Zionism" (N.Y.: Poale Zion-Zeire Zion of America and Young Poale Zion Alliance of America, 1937). The quoted material also appears in an undated, loose copy of Duker's Introduction to the Writings of Ber Borochoy, p. 2, located in the Poale Zion Archives of the Zionist Archives in New York.

#### 4. Ibid.

5. For example, in his pamphlet, "About the Tasks of the Jewish Socialist Intelligentsia," P. B. Axelrod criticized the Jewish socialists for their neglect of the Jewish masses, calling on them to recognize the fact that "the Jews as a nation occupy in Russia an exceptional position." Until persuaded by the opinions of a noted geographer that Palestine was not fit for mass settlement, Axelrod had given serious thought to this Turkish province as a place of immigration for Russian Jewry. Ibid.

6. The founding conference of the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party was held March 1-3, 1898, in Minsk. See Chapter 2, "Bolshevism before 1917" in Merle Fainsod's How Russia is Ruled (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 34. Nine delegates, representing four cities (Kiev, Moscow, Ekaterinoslav and St. Petersburg) and the Bund, attended.

7. The PPS was founded in Vilna in 1892. Joseph Pilsudski, one of the PPS founders, began the Robotnik (The Workman) in 1894. This was a secret paper with radical tendencies. Pilsudski

edited, printed and distributed the paper himself. Speaking of the PPS in her piece entitled In Memory of the Proletariat Party, published January-February 1903, Rosa Luxemburg termed it a party "... whose goal is to usurp the past of the Polish labor movement for the use of today's nationalism in the guise of socialism." See Selected Political Writings - Rosa Luxemburg edited and introduced by Dick Howard (N.Y.: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 168.

8. Henry J. Tobias, The Jewish Bund in Russia From its Origins to 1905 (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1972), p. 50.

9. Ibid., p. 51.

10. Ibid., p. 50.

11. In his comments to the author, Professor Erlich noted: "This was the name of the Vilno group which was indeed the strongest and most influential; parallel groups with different names existed in other cities prior to 1897."

12. Martov (1873-1923) was born Iulii Osipovich Tserderbaum in Constantinople where his father Osip, a "conscious assimilationist," represented the Russian Steamship Company and a St. Petersburg newspaper. Martov was, however, also the favorite grandson of Alexander Tserderbaum, the Hebrew writer and founder of Ha-Meliz, and this accounted for his Jewish consciousness. Following Martov's arrest in St. Petersburg, where he had been active in revolutionary student circles, he was exiled to Vilna. From 1893 to 1895, he worked in the Jewish Social Democratic Organization, which in 1897 became the Bund. Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1971, Vol. 11.

13. Rosa Luxemburg's "What are the Origins of May Day" traces the proletarian holiday to Australia in 1856 and explains that American workers decided in 1886 to make May 1 a day of universal work stoppage to emphasize their demand for an eight-hour work day (Selected Political Writings, pp. 315-316). Also see HaEhod beMai HaReshon beVilna (The First May 1st in Vilna), by Hillel Katz in Youth and Nation (published by Hashomer Hatzair Youth Organization), May 1946, p. 39, describing the excitement of that day. Although Youth and Nation is in English, the article is in Hebrew.

14. Professor Erlich adds: "Martov argued that the Jewish labor movement was becoming more democratic, more materialistic and more national."

15. Tobias, p. 55.

16. Ibid., p. 84.

17. The Bund's founding congress, held in Vilna in September 1897, was secret. At the time, Arkady Kremer, noting the growing number of Jewish workers' groups, remarked "that the cities are already tied together in fact, and that it remains only to pour this existing unity into a mold so that it will have a definite form." He recommended creation of a central organization to link the cities so as to prevent them from becoming isolated. The congress, following Kremer's recommendations, created a Central Committee to direct the organization "without becoming involved in local work and its attendant dangers." The Committee was to publish the new organization's official journals and literature, as well as direct its operations. Ibid., pp. 66-69.

18. In his notes to the author, Professor Erlich comments: "While it is very true that the Bund had to face formidable problems, it should be kept in mind that spontaneous workers' strikes which fractured the unity of the Jewish society started in the late 1880s, and that Jewish workers who did not want to assimilate had a choice between religious orthodoxy and Yiddish secular culture which developed independently of the Bund, although Bundist activists strongly contributed to its diffusion even before 1897.

19. M. K. Dziewanowski, The Communist Party of Poland (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976, p. 37).

20. Ibid. In turn, the PPS was criticized by the SDKPiL (Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania) founded in 1893 and led by Rosa Luxemburg, Leo Jogiches, Karl Radek, among others. Anti-nationalist, opposing the Polish Socialist Party line on Polish independence, SDKPiL later became the Communist Party of Poland.

21. Tobias, p. 108.

22. There had been massive arrests throughout the Pale in 1898 which had greatly disrupted the work of the Bund. A slow period of recovery and growth followed. The Third Congress, held in December, 1899 was, therefore, all the more significant.

23. Karl Kautsky (1854-1938) was the founder of the Neue Zeit in 1883. A popularizer of Marxism in Germany, he wrote the theoretical part of the Erfurt Program and led the "left" wing of the party until after 1905; he was then leader of the

center--though his political position had not changed. He was one of the dominant theoreticians of the Second International.

24. Tobias, ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Trotsky, born in 1879, was the son of a Jewish farmer who became part of the well-to-do Kulak class of propertied peasants. The Bronsteins showed little feeling for the religious pieties which provided the framework for the lives of most East European Jews. Joseph Nedava notes Trotsky's varying denials and affirmations of, and his ambivalence toward, his Jewishness. See Trotsky and the Jews (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publications Society of America, 1972), passim. Both Nedava (p. 167) and Joel Carmichael in Trotsky: An Appreciation of His Life (N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1975), p. 249, refer to an incident which occurred in 1921 when Jacob Mazeh, Chief Rabbi of Moscow, appeared before Trotsky to plead for the Russian Jews. Trotsky is said to have remarked, "I am a revolutionist and a Bolshevik, and I am not a Jew," to which the Rabbi is reputed to have replied, "The Trotskys make the revolutions, and the Bronsteins pay the bills." Both authors were citing as their source S. Melamed's "St. Paul and Leon Trotsky" in The Reflex, Vol. I, No. 5, November 1927, pp. 7-8.

27. Axelrod (1850-1928), one of the founders of the Liberation of Labor Group, began his revolutionary activity among Jewish students in Kiev in 1872. Forced to flee abroad in 1874, he later joined with George Plekhanov to found the Chorny Peredel which favored distributing the nobility's landholdings to the peasants. The anti-Jewish pogroms in 1881 in southern Russia briefly attracted him to Hibbat Zion (Love of Zion). Ultimately he became a Marxist internationalist, an opponent of both the Bund and Zionism. Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1971, Vol. 3, pp. 991-992.

28. Luxemburg (1871-1919), born in Russian Poland, emigrated to Germany in 1898. In the early 1890s she helped found the Social Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania which, for a time cooperated with the Marxist Russian Social Democratic movement. She was active in the left wing of both the Polish and German labor movements and was a prominent figure in the Socialist International. Along with F. Mehring and K. Liebnicht, she founded the Spartakusbund, a revolutionary organization which, at the end of 1918, was transformed into the Communist

Party of Germany. She saw socialism and nationalism (meaning national self-determination) as conflicting ideas, and therefore opposed Poland's independence. "Fatherland" meant the international working class, and the socialist revolution was her primary aim. She was indifferent to the frequent anti-Semitic attacks against her and acknowledged that she had no interest in a specifically Jewish labor movement. Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1971, Vol. 11, pp. 592-593.

29. Jogiches (1867-1919), born in Vilna, joined Narodnaia Volia in 1885 and was subsequently arrested and exiled. From 1890 to 1893, he worked with Plekhanov's Osvobozhdeniye Truda. He was a founder and leader of the Social Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania, and he considerably influenced Rosa Luxemburg, with whom he edited such publications as Red Banner, Social-Democratic Review, People's Tribune and Trybuna. Active in the Spartakusbund and in the subsequent German Communist Party, Jogiches shared Luxemburg's views on a "Jewish" labor movement. Ibid., Vol. 10, p. 143.

30. Adler (1852-1918) was born in Prague and was taken as a child to Vienna where his father embraced Catholicism. Adler was a victim of anti-Semitic agitation and converted to Christianity after his marriage "to save his children from embarrassment." A member of the Austrian parliament from 1905-1918 and foreign minister in the Socialist government of 1918, Adler devoted his life to the cause of the working class. Conscious of his origin, he avoided taking a clear stand on Jewish issues. He opposed a debate on anti-Semitism at a Congress of the Socialist International in Brussels in 1891 and consistently opposed the idea of Jewish nationhood. Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 289.

31. Bauer (1881-1938), the son of a Jewish industrialist, joined the socialist movement, as did many young Jewish intellectuals, and in 1907, together with Karl Renner and Adolf Braun, he founded the monthly Der Kampf, a forum for socialist discussion. In The National Question and Social Democracy (1907), he provided an original definition of the nation: "The totality of men united through a community of fate into a community of character." He advocated granting cultural autonomy to every national group in the Austro-Hungarian Empire; and he praised the Jewish role in history, arguing, however, that Jews could not be regarded as a nationality, especially in Western Europe. Erlich adds: "Bauer noted (and



warmly praised) the role of the Jewish workers in the Russian revolutionary movement; and he mentioned with obvious sympathy 'the revolutionary young-Jewish literature.' His prognosis of assimilation was based on [the] assumption that Jews were thinly spread among non-Jews and that their relations with the latter tended to be, in modern capitalist setting, more pervasive than their relations with other Jews." Despite his overall position in the "Jewish question," he was concerned about the fate of Austrian and German Jews. And, coincidentally, on the day of his death in 1938, the London New Chronicle published his appeal to world conscience to save the 300,000 Jews of Austria. Encyclopaedia Judaica, Vol. 4, pp. 331-332.

32. Julius Carlebach, Karl Marx and the Radical Critique of Judaism (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 201.

33. Frumkin, pp. 28-29.

34. Studies of Ber Borochov (N.Y.: Young Poale Zion Alliance, undated), p. 13. This is a collection of short articles and includes Ben-Zvi's "The Young Borochov." It is part of the Poale Zion Archives stored at the Zionist Archives in New York.

35. Frumkin, *ibid*. During earlier pogroms, von Plehve had been head of the Department of Police. Plehve's instigation of the Kishinev pogrom was intended to discourage Jewish participation in the revolutionary movement. "Plehve had never missed an occasion to complain to Jewish leaders about the growth of the revolutionary movement among Jews. If his listeners argued that the cause of this lay in the legal restrictions aimed at the Jews, Plehve would quote a French minister's comment on the demand for abolition of capital punishment: 'Que messieurs les assassins commencent' (It's up to the murderers to make the first step). By 1903, Plehve had evidently decided that an anti-Jewish pogrom was the best means of weakening the revolutionary movement."

36. Tobias, p. 248. Also see Joseph Nedava's "Jabotinsky and the Bund," in Soviet Jewish Affairs (London: Institute of Jewish Affairs, Ltd.), Vol. 3, No. 1, 1973, p. 44. Nedava discusses the controversy surrounding Herzl's meeting with von Plehve and Jabotinsky's defense of Herzl.

37. Zhitlovsky (1865-1940) was a founder of the socialist-Yiddishist movement in Jewish life. Solomon Grayzel, A History of the Jews (N.Y.: New American Library, 1968), p. 586.

38. According to Professor Yosef Gorni, this was Herzl's

modus operandi. Herzl also went to the Kaiser using the same approach, namely, that a homeland for the Jews was in Germany's interest because it would eliminate the problem of Jewish revolutionaries. Chaim Weizmann, according to Gorni, later used the same approach. Gorni is the author of Ahdut Ha'avodah - 1919-1930 (Tel Aviv University: Institute for Zionist Research, 1973), among other books and articles. The interview was conducted at the Zionist Archives (winter 1981), when Professor Gorni was teaching and researching in New York.

39. Arthur Hertzberg, Editor, The Zionist Idea (N.Y.: Atheneum, 1973), p. 354.

40. Paul Novick, "Nationalism and the Class Struggle," quotes Borochov in a scathing criticism of Borochov and his work. See Jewish Life, a publication of the American-Jewish Communist Party (Vol. II, No. 2, February 1938, p. 19). Jewish Life was published during the late 1930s and 1940s. An incomplete collection is available at YIVO in New York.

41. Hibbat Zion was the name given to the movement founded by Leo Pinsker. This group came into existence in Russia soon after the pogroms of 1881. Pinsker, a Russian-Jewish physician, had believed in assimilation, but the pogroms and repressive May Laws of 1881-1882 disillusioned him. As a result, he wrote a pamphlet entitled Auto-Emancipation, calling on the Jews to gain freedom through their own efforts. In 1884, Pinsker convened the founding conference of the organization, and he later traveled throughout Europe to organize branches and to raise funds for colonization in Palestine. Grayzel, pp. 575-576.

42. Dov Ber Borochov, "The Question of Zion and Territory--Nationalism and Class Struggle," in Essays in Zionism and Socialism, a pamphlet published by Young Mapam-Marxist Zionists, 1971 (at the Zionist Archives, N. Y.), pp. 78-80. Herzl, in his disappointment over the lack of progress in his negotiations for a charter from Turkey, turned to Joseph Chamberlain, England's Secretary for Colonies. Chamberlain suggested the possibility of establishing a Jewish commonwealth in some part of the British Empire. The island of Cyprus and a portion of the Sinai Peninsula capable of supporting habitation were mentioned. Because of its proximity to Palestine, Herzl was willing to consider territory in that part of the world. From the British point of view, they were interested in having a friendly people near the Suez Canal. A third suggestion was Uganda.

Although not very enthusiastic about the Uganda offer, the others having been withdrawn, Herzl agreed to present the proposal to the Sixth Zionist Congress, scheduled to be held in Basel on August 23, 1903. In presenting the Uganda offer, Herzl referred to it as an "asylum for the night," and pointed out that this was not meant to be a substitute for Palestine. Opposition, especially from the Russian Jews, was immediate, and a bitter debate followed. Grayzel, pp. 581-582.

43. When the Uganda offer divided the Zionists and the offer was finally rejected, Israel Zangwill organized the Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO) with others of like mind who believed in the object of settling Jews in any territory that might be available to them. Most of these people did not oppose Palestine, and most believed in the revival of a Jewish nation. However, they were considering the reality of Jewish life in Eastern Europe and Russia, and they felt the immediate need to provide a safe haven for those who were being persecuted. They also had little faith in the prolonged political and diplomatic maneuverings proposed by the Zionist leadership. Grayzel, p. 587, and Ber Borochov, pp. 78-80.

44. The Bund's report to the International in August 1904 contained a statement describing Zionism as "the most evil enemy of the organized Jewish proletariat fighting under the Social Democratic flag of the Bund." Tobias, p. 25.

45. Around 1899, various groups broke away from the general Zionist Organization and from the Bund. Scattered Socialist-Zionist groups thereafter arose in Russia and in the Pale under the name Poale Zion. There was no organizational unity holding them together and, initially, the only distinction between them and the General Zionists was their working-class membership. Believing that revolution could not solve the problems of Jewish poverty and anti-Semitism in the diaspora, they rejected any connection between the Jewish proletariat and the socialist and revolutionary movements. The Bund's resolution of 1901, declaring membership in the Zionist Organization incompatible with membership in the Bund, acted as a catalyst for many who were attracted to the new Zionist movement. From that point on, these different groups began to come together in the form of a federation, ultimately reaching into many of the European countries, the United States, and Palestine. Labor Zionist Handbook--The Aims, Activities and History of the Labor

Zionist Movement in America (N.Y.: Poale Zion-Zeire Zion of America, 1939), p. 7.

46. Nedava, p. 39.

47. Jabotinsky (1880-1940) was born in Odessa, a great center of Jewish life. He became an active Zionist in 1903, "when he helped organize a Jewish self-defense corps in Odessa, in the face of a threatening pogrom." His profession of journalism enabled him to travel widely all over Russia and Europe. He believed that only by a bold, political struggle could the Jews achieve their own state. He had no faith in negotiations with the Turks, who then ruled Palestine, nor did he feel that the Arabs would accept a Zionist presence in Palestine with political motives of statehood. Jabotinsky criticized those who called for a deemphasis of Zionist aims, and he repeatedly called for rapid, mass immigration to Palestine, with the clear aim of making a Jewish presence there a fact. Hertzberg, pp. 557-558.

48. Nedava, p. 42.

49. This excerpt also appears in "Russian Jewry on the Eve of the Revolution," an article by S. Levenberg in Bulletin on Soviet and East European Jewish Affairs, the forerunner of Soviet Jewish Affairs (London: Institute of Jewish Affairs, Ltd., December 1969, No. 4), p. 28.

50. Harold Shukman, "Lenin's Nationalities Policy and the Jewish Question" in Bulletin on Soviet and East European Jewish Affairs, May 1970, No. 5, p. 46.

51. Ibid., p. 45.

52. Ibid., pp. 45-48; also Merle Fainsod, How Russia is Ruled, pp. 56-57.

53. The movement which became known as "Economism" was led by an influential group of Social Democratic leaders, who, along with a number of workers, began to call for the cessation of revolutionary activity and political agitation. Greatly influenced by Eduard Bernstein (Evolutionary Socialism) and the reformist and revisionist currents running through the socialist movement in Europe around the turn of the century, the Economists called for trade-union activity aimed at winning immediate material gains for the workers. Dubbed by its orthodox Marxist critics as Russian Bernsteinism, its leading doctrines (expounded in the "Credo" drafted by Madame E. D. Kuskova in the late nineties) had considerable attraction for the Marxist intelligentsia of the day. Indeed, Lenin's pamphlet What Is to Be

Done? (1902) was an attempt to demolish Economism. Ibid., pp. 28-29.

54. Duker, Introduction, Writings of Ber Borochov, pp. 6-7.

55. The ideology of the Vozrozhdenye group resembled that of Zhitlovsky and those who were indifferent to Palestine as the territory for the Jewish homeland. They followed a Marxian approach and their chief activity consisted in aiding Jewish immigration. They believed that the course of Jewish immigration would automatically determine the "territory" of the Jewish mass concentration.

56. Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1971, Vol. 16, pp. 1179-1181.

57. The party boycotted the elections for the First Duma (1906), nominating candidates in six districts for the Second (1907). Zhitlovsky, whose ideological orientation played a large role in this organization, was one of the six candidates. Ibid.

58. Professor Erlich downplays the impact of the Socialist Zionist groups on the Bund, commenting in his notes to the author: "After the final defeat of the revolution of 1905, all Socialist groups, Jewish and non-Jewish, suffered heavy losses in membership." In fact, according to Professor Erlich, "The only splits in the Bund which did occur (in 1921 in Russia and in 1922 in Poland) were related to attitude toward Communism."



## 2

# From the "Palestinian" Poale Zion to the Poale Zion in Palestine

### 1

Yitzhak Ben-Zvi described the divisions in the Poale Zion movement (the Palestinian Poale Zion, the Socialist-Zionists and the Sejmists) and the competition among the emerging groups, the Bund, the PPS, Iskra<sup>1</sup> and the Social Revolutionary Party, as follows:

... The Territorialists were the first to organize. They were known as Socialist Zionist Territorialists (SS). The speedy organization of the SS led the 'Palestinian' Poale Zion to speed their organizational work. The latter formed groups in the regions of Poltava, Poland, Lithuania, Crimea and Southwestern Ukraine. The Palestinian Poale Zion had a most difficult task, for they had to carry on a battle along several fronts. In Lithuania they had to battle the 'Bund' and the Minsk faction<sup>2</sup>; in Poland, the Polish Socialist Party and the 'Bund'; in Southern Russia, the 'Iskra' and the Social Revolutionary Party. In addition, a new enemy appeared which had to be fought along all fronts. This was the Zionist Anti-Palestinian Party, the SS. . . . The Sejmists were even a greater menace than the SS for the latter openly opposed Palestine, whereas the Sejmists never publicly proclaimed their opposition, but maintained that both 'Palestinian' and 'anti-Palestinians' were welcome in their organization.<sup>3</sup>

By attacking the assimilationist policies of the Iskra and the PPS, as well as the Bund's willingness to cooperate with non-Jewish socialists, the Sejmists were winning the support of nearly half of the Poale Zion membership. The "Palestinian" Poale Zionists were not only faced with the danger of a split but with annihilation.

Ben-Zvi credits Borochof with the theory of "territory" as a "new strategic base for proletarian Palestinism" which helped the Palestinian Poale Zion in their ideological "war with the Sejmists."<sup>4</sup> With the publication of The National Question and the Class Struggle (1905) and Our Platform (1906)<sup>5</sup>, Ber Borochof emerged, not only as the Poale Zion ideologue and as the one who saved the Poale Zion movement, but as the first Jewish Marxist to attempt to mesh Marxist-Socialist theory with Zionism:

The national struggle is waged not for the preservation of cultural values but for the control of material possessions, even though it is very often conducted under the banner of spiritual slogans.<sup>6</sup>

... If the general base and reservoir of the conditions of production, the territory, is valuable to the landowning class for its land resources and as a base for its political power; if this territory serves the bourgeoisie as a base for the capture of the world market, and serves the middle classes of society as the consumers' market; and if the organs of preservation of the national wealth have for each of the above-mentioned classes their respective worth, then the territory also has its value for proletariat, i.e., as a place in which to work.<sup>7</sup>

... The fact that the Jewish people possess no territory is the primary cause for the abnormality of the working place of the Jewish laborer and of the strategic basis of the fighting Jewish proletariat.<sup>8</sup>

Emigration to other lands, according to Borochof, would not solve the problem of anti-Semitism because wherever the Jew would go, he would be thrust into strange surroundings. Jewish immigrants, therefore, "tend toward compact settlements," and this "accelerates the rise of national competition," which has led to anti-Semitism. In addition, the problem continues to be aggravated because the Jews tend to settle into compact masses in many different places. Thus, Borochof wrote, "The Jewish problem . . . becomes more acute and evolves into a world problem." The only solution is: "Jewish migration must be transformed from immigration into colonization."<sup>9</sup>

Secondly, emigration to other lands would not solve the



problem of the "abnormality of the working place" for the Jewish worker. This was so because new immigrants in general tended to "fall between the cracks" of a developed economy, becoming mainly absorbed in the nonprimary branches, in small enterprises, thereby perpetuating the already abnormal social structure of the Jewish people.

In this regard, Borochof is often credited with formulating the principle of the "inverted pyramid" which states that contrary to the pyramid of social layers which is commonly found in other nations, in the Jewish case there were very few peasants and proletarians. On the other hand, there were many lawyers, doctors, intellectuals, and other middle-class occupations.<sup>10</sup>

The following chart, showing (by percentage) the occupational distribution of the Jewish population and the total population of Russia in 1897, seems to support the "inverted pyramid" analysis:

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Jews</u>	<u>Total</u>
Trade	38.65%	3.77%
Manufacture	35.43	10.25
Day labor, servants, etc.	6.61	4.61
Indefinite	5.49	2.48
Free professions, gov't, etc.	5.22	2.04
Transport	3.98	1.55
Agriculture <sup>11</sup>	3.55	74.31
Army	1.07	0.99

Source: Henry J. Tobias, The Jewish Bund in Russia From Its Origins to 1905 (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1972), p. 5, citing B. D. Brutskus, Professional'nyi sostav yevreiskago naseleniia Rossii (St. Petersburg, 1908), Part 2, p. 11.

Borochof felt that this concentration of Jewish workers in nonprimary and nonbasic branches of production limited their ability to engage in class struggle. This, added to the fact that many of those enterprises in which Jews were engaged were destined to vanish as a result of modernization trends in the

capitalist economy, was a serious weakness in the strategic base of the Jews in the diaspora. In order to rectify the existing social structure and to create a new strategic base for the Jewish people, Borochov claimed the Jews must first establish a national state and therein become peasants and proletarians. This was presumably possible only in Palestine, which, not only held special meaning for the Jews, but also did not have a developed capitalist economy. Borochov believed that the structure of the then Palestine economy would permit Jewish penetration into the primary branches of production. Productivization of the Jewish masses would mean their being able to establish themselves among peasants, workers, craftsmen, middlemen, and the free professions. Only after this has been accomplished, could they proceed to the next step of revolution, leading to the transformation to socialism.

Thus, to Borochov, Zionism was seen as a forerunner of the social revolution which Marx had predicted, the necessary, intermediate step between the present and the future. Zionism and the process of immigration to Palestine thereby assumed a Marxist-like inevitability. Initially, Borochov identified both as parts of a "stychic"<sup>12</sup> process--an unorganized, undirected force working within society. He believed that certain objective conditions and circumstances would impel Jewish migration, without the need for any overt action on the part of anyone. Guidance, education or subjective preparation were all unnecessary. Borochov, himself, realized the weakness of his theory of the "stychic"<sup>13</sup> process. In his last speech before his premature death at age 36, he told the delegates to the Russian Poale Zion Congress in Kiev in 1917:

In the past we thought that Zionism was a stychic process and that our main work was in removing the hurdles piled in our way. With this in mind we thought to leave all the work of construction to the bourgeoisie. Afterwards it was revealed that we were mistaken. There are mechanical stychic processes and there are organic stychic processes. Our mistake was in thinking that the mechanical process had begun when in reality only the organic one had begun.<sup>14</sup>

Later communist critics would attack not only Borochov's notion of stychic process but also his theories of the role of the Jewish proletariat, the derivation of Jewish national consciousness, and "non-proletarianization" (the theory that basic industries are closed to the Jewish worker). Paul Novick, for example, reviewing Nationalism and the Class Struggle in 1938, criticized Borochov's theories as "synthetic 'Marxism.'"<sup>15</sup> Noting that "Borochov developed his theories to suit both his 'Marxist logic' and his Zionist emotions," Novick focuses on Borochov's denial of the possibility of Jewish workers to 'proletarianize,' to gain access to large-scale industry, and on his claim that there was a "natural tendency" of Jewish capitalists towards small-scale production. "Jewish capitalists," Novick wrote, "do engage in large-scale production (even in Poland)."

His major criticism, however, is reserved for the advocacy of Palestine, a "thinly populated" country, as a strategic base. Here, the reviewer quotes from the introduction written by Abraham Duker, in which Duker admits that "Borochov, like most of his contemporaries in Europe, was not so well acquainted with the Arab problem."<sup>16</sup> Novick further notes that while Borochov acknowledged Jewish nationalism and attempted to formulate theories pertinent thereto, he erroneously held that "the Arabs are not a nation, not an independent type, neither economically nor culturally."<sup>17</sup> This, according to Borochov's communist critics, pointed to discernible "streaks of Zionist imperialism."<sup>18</sup> Despite these criticisms from a later era (1938), in 1917, addressing the Russian Poale Zion Congress in Kiev, for the last time, Dov Ber Borochov appeared to many as a Marxist when he claimed: "The class interests of the Jewish proletariat are our starting point; our final goal is socialism. Zionism is the maximum point in our minimum program. The way to realize our program is class struggle." (Emphasis mine.)<sup>19</sup>

## 2

These views were already evident in the "Ramle Platform" (1906) of the Poale Zion branch which had come into existence in Palestine in December 1905 as a result of the Second Aliya<sup>20</sup> of the first decade of this century. It brought many Russian and Polish Jews into Palestine. The Kishinev pogrom, the Uganda crisis, the failed revolution in Russia in 1905, the constant

factional struggles within the Poale Zion movement in the diaspora, and the apparent inability of the Zionist leadership to change the reality of Jewish life there, convinced many members of the Russian Poale Zion of the need to immigrate into Palestine (or "Eretz Israel" as they called it). Their decision was based on their belief that they could and should contribute their share toward the territorial concentration of the Jewish people, so as to immediately begin a real class and national struggle. The Poale Zion immigrants first attempted to organize the workers in Palestine in the summer of 1905. Almost immediately, it was clear that there were at least two distinct streams: the Poale Zion and the Zeire Zion (Youth of Zion).

The Zeire Zion had developed out of Zionist youth circles consisting of students and young intellectuals. It, too, had been a reaction to the seeming sterility of the official Zionist organization and its policy of diplomatic or "declarative" Zionism, with its narrow range of activities consisting of meetings, debates and discussions of ultimate aims. In reaction, these young Zionists preached "practical" Zionism, that is building a Hebrew-speaking, democratic and progressive Jewish society in Palestine. They also wanted to "democratize"<sup>21</sup> the Zionist organization and to deepen Hebrew cultural activity and Zionist education. From an ideological point of view, their immigration was national-democratic, non-class oriented and, in spirit, akin to the Haskala movement<sup>22</sup> and Hibbat Zion, discussed earlier. On the other hand, the Poale Zion immigration was ideologically proletarian-Marxist, supportive of internationalism and committed to the class struggle. The Poale Zion cadres were by and large Yiddishists--believing in the primacy of the Yiddish language and in a secular Yiddish culture.

While the Zeire Zion rejected what they felt were Galut (diaspora) theories and wanted to concentrate on the immediate and pragmatic problems of day-to-day living conditions in Eretz Israel, the Poale Zion at first clung to their Marxist terminology and saw their mission as tied to the international Poale Zion World Union. This, along with their emphasis on class struggle and the use of Yiddish, alienated a certain segment of Jewish Palestinian workers. This latter segment rejected the Poale Zion initiative of 1905, and some of them founded Hapoel Hatzair (The Young Worker),<sup>23</sup> which viewed the agricultural workers as the decisive element in the realization of the Zionist dream.

Thus, they opposed dealing with urban workers, as well as establishing any connection between them and the Federalism of Agricultural Workers. Hapoel Hatzair members focused on the absorption of new immigrants, making their priority the acceleration of the construction of the Yishuv's<sup>24</sup> infrastructure to meet the newcomers' needs. Class struggle and class consciousness ranked very low on their agenda.

In October 1906, the Poale Zion in Palestine set out its own priorities in what became known as the Ramle Platform. This document, consistent with the Borochovist platform formulated in Poltava in the spring of 1906, and with the general ideological orientation of the "mother" party in Russia, contains familiar Marxist phrases about the history of humanity making national and class warfare inevitable, about the natural and historical conditions of the means of production dividing mankind into separate classes, and about the creation of privileges for the benefit of the ruling classes which makes inevitable class warfare between the rulers and the oppressed. "The former," the document states, "want to strengthen their existing privileges, and the latter want to abolish them." There are repeated references to Palestine's "feudal" condition and to the role to be played by investment capital. It suggests that capitalists in search of new investment opportunities will transfer their capital from the already developed and investment-saturated industries in the West to the newly developing economy of Palestine. This capital will ultimately be instrumental in the "overthrow" of Palestine's feudal structure of authority, and then, in turn, it will be "proletarianized" by the Jewish workers whose numbers will be increased by immigrants from lands where they have suffered economically and socially as Jewish workers.<sup>25</sup> If one were to remove from the document the adjective "Jewish," one would be left with a clearly Marxist document, a document which thus further alienated Hapoel Hatzair, with its agriculturalist commitments.

To summarize: two workers' parties had come into existence in Palestine in the years preceding World War I: Hapoel Hatzair, which consisted mainly of agricultural workers, and the Poale Zion, a branch of the World Federation of Poale Zion, interested primarily in strengthening the urban proletariat. However, as time passed, many active members of the Poale Zion moved into new agricultural settlements. They could find no

outlet for their left-wing political inclinations in the cities where the old religious Yishuv was dominant<sup>26</sup> and where the authorities of the Ottoman Empire kept a watchful eye for overt political activities.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the building of Jewish agricultural settlements became, for them, an attractive alternative.<sup>28</sup> When many Poale Zion members moved to the farming settlements in disregard of a decision to the contrary at the party convention of 1907, the local Palestinian leaders were forced, over a period time, to reevaluate and change the party's program in defiance of the Poale Zion World Union, as the Federation came to be known.

### 3

The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 roused the Poale Zion Party to national political activity in the Ottoman Empire. The party became increasingly concerned for the Jewish communities in the empire, and it soon muted the call for class struggle. It endorsed forming a non-party professional organization of agricultural workers, and it favored cooperative settlement under the auspices of the World Zionist Organization.

The World Union of the Poale Zion began to function in Palestine in 1912 when it created the Palestine Workers' Fund and the Labor Office, which established an employment information center. These activities soon led to differences of opinion concerning the spheres of responsibility of the Palestine Poale Zion and its World Union, as well as between the Palestine Poale Zion and other workers' organizations within Palestine. Thereafter, a split developed within the ranks of the Poale Zion in Palestine. The major cause of the split was a difference in perception on the part of various members as to the best road to socialism and/or to the fulfillment of Jewish national aspirations. Which of the two aspirations was to have priority? In Western and Central Europe, meanwhile, the Poale Zion was becoming the socialist sector of the World Zionist movement, whereas, in Russia, on the other hand, the Poale Zion became absorbed in the revolutionary atmosphere and activities.

These differences would ultimately cause the World Union of the Poale Zion to split into two distinctly separate Right and Left organizations. In Russia, following the successful Bolshevik Revolution, many Poale Zion members formed what they called the Jewish Communist Party--Poale Zion. This soon became the

Jewish Section of the Communist Party, the Yevseksia (YKP). Eventually, its members devoted themselves to the creation of an autonomous Jewish entity in Birobidzhan, in eastern Siberia, near the border with China. Its efforts to undermine the Zionist cause in Palestine will be discussed later.

Those of the Left Poale Zion in Russia who opposed joining the Bolshevik movement formed themselves into the Jewish Socialist Democratic Party--Poale Zion. They were more Palestine-oriented and militantly anti-liquidationist.<sup>29</sup> Ultimately, in 1922, they would be expelled from the ranks of the Left World Union.

#### 4

As for the Poale Zion in Palestine, it too would later suffer splits out of which would come the forerunner of the Palestine Communist Party. In the meantime, in the years prior to the First World War, the Poale Zion in Palestine appeared to be overcoming its initial difficulties. During those years, the Poale Zion gradually showed signs of adjusting to conditions in Palestine. The members decided in favor of the Hebrew language. They participated in the Zionist Congress, established HaShomer<sup>30</sup> and Kapai (the Eretz Israel Workers' Fund) in the interests of all Jewish workers (not only those of the Poale Zion), and participated in HaHoresh.<sup>31</sup>

To a great extent, these accommodations were the result of a corresponding decrease in the influence of the Russian members of the Poale Zion, whose numbers leveled off with the slowdown of Russian emigration during the years of World War I. Another factor in the gradual shift in orientation on the part of the Poale Zion in Palestine was the increasing influence of a Western-oriented group led by David Ben-Gurion and Yitzhak Ben-Zvi and others who were spending more and more time on Zionist activities in the United States and who were, therefore, increasingly influenced by the American (Zionist-dominated) Poale Zion.

In addition to Hapoel Hatzair and the Poale Zion (the first two parties in Palestine), there was a third group led by B. Katznelson, D. Remez, S. Yavnieli, and Y. Tabenkin. These people had come out of Jewish socialist circles, as opposed to having Hapoel Hatzair's Zionist intellectual roots, and they preferred to

remain unaffiliated. They differed from Hapoel Hatzair members in their socialist background and from the Poale Zion members in their Marxist orthodoxy. Initially, they preserved the terminology of the Marxist-oriented, proletarian-Zionist movements of Eastern Europe and Russia and continued to think and function as though they were still in the diaspora. This unaffiliated group, or "non-partyites" as G. Z. Israeli called them, denied the justification for two parties.<sup>32</sup>

They expended much of their time and effort in building a network of joint regional committees and agricultural organizations working for the establishment of a country-wide organization of agricultural workers. These efforts were not only instrumental in laying the early foundations of the Histadrut, the General Federation of Jewish Workers, but also served to influence and spur the Poale Zion in Palestine to make the accommodations discussed earlier.

## 5

With the outbreak of war in August 1914, the Poale Zion in each country was left to find its own answers to the momentous questions which now confronted it. Political orientation--the need to choose between loyalty to the Ottoman regime and support for the Allies (with enlistment in the British-sponsored Jewish Legion)<sup>33</sup> became the crucial question for the Poale Zion in Palestine. Most of the Palestine members advocated enlistment in the Legion and support for the Zionist efforts of Chaim Weizmann.

In the optimism which followed the issuance of the Balfour Declaration of November 1917 and the closing days of World War I, the Poale Zion leadership and the leaders of the unaffiliated group united in 1919. The earlier revolutionary Marxist jargon, along with the central principle of class struggle, which had been so pronounced in the Ramle Platform of 1906, were now laid aside.

The new organization founded in 1919 was the Ahdut Ha-Avoda (Unity of Labor).<sup>34</sup> In an attempt to unite all labor in Palestine, the "Unity Committee" (elected at the Agricultural Workers' Congress in Petah Tikva in 1919), which included Berl Katznelson, David Remez, Shmuel Yavnieli and Yitzhak Tabenkin



for the unaffiliated group and Ben-Zvi and Ben-Gurion for Poale Zion, decided to leave two committee seats open for Hapoel Hatzair. Although this committee suggested no precise theoretical formulation and articulated only general, broad principles, the ever-suspicious and doctrinally cautious Hapoel Hatzair sent no representatives to the committee and refused to join Ahdut Ha-Avoda when its founding convention was held.

6

When the Ramle Platform principles were jettisoned, and when it became evident that the "sacred" Marxist principle of class struggle was to be abandoned, a small minority of Poale Zion members chose not to join Ahdut Ha-Avoda. This dissident group soon split into two factions. One, the Left Poale Zion, continued to profess the principles of Zionist-proletarianism. It was led by loyal Borochovists such as Yaacov Zerubavel,<sup>35</sup> Avraham Revusky,<sup>36</sup> Nahum Nir,<sup>37</sup> and Moshe Erem,<sup>38</sup> among others. Zerubavel would eventually be credited with representing the "Red Russian" version of Poale Zionism in Palestine.<sup>39</sup> It is the second faction which is of particular interest to this study, because it was this group, led by Yitzhak Meirson,<sup>40</sup> M. Khalidi,<sup>41</sup> and Gershon Dau,<sup>42</sup> among others, which would evolve into the Communist Party of Palestine. First, however, it constituted itself as the Mifleget Poalim Sotsialistim (the Socialist Workers' Party, the MPS) at a regional congress held October 17-19, 1919.<sup>43</sup> At the October congress, M. Khalidi, the opening speaker, discussed the tense atmosphere and the difficult situation in which the participants found themselves. He continued:

The leaders who have preceded us, and who left the Party [the Poale Zion] with the great majority of its members, are absent. Only a small minority is left. But this minority is faithful to our principles and aspirations.<sup>44</sup>

The split in Poale Zion was described as similar to those splits which either had occurred or were occurring within all socialist

parties--between right and left, between the Bernstein types who, preaching evolutionary socialism, wished to reform, gradually and democratically, the capitalist system and the true socialists who continued to advocate change through class struggle and revolution. The First World War and the Russian Revolution were portrayed by Khalidi as the test of a socialist party. Those who attacked the Bolshevik regime, and who advocated its downfall, were themselves to be seen as enemies of socialism.

Meirson, whose opinions were dubbed anarchistic,<sup>45</sup> warned that "the parliamentary system offered no hope for the proletarian movement."<sup>46</sup> He then outlined the MPS principles:

Our party openly declares that proletarian Zionism links the realization of the Zionist ideal to the success of the Socialist revolution, because this success constitutes the unique guarantee of all ideals, progressive and Zionist. Our party is sure that Zionism will be realized in the form of Socialism or not at all. Hence our party will fight all other forms of Zionism--bourgeois Zionism as well as compromise proletarian Zionism.<sup>47</sup>

Meirson's inherent qualification to Zionism--"proletarian" Zionism as opposed to "bourgeois" Zionism--and his consistent opposition to participation in elections, together with his rejection of anything to do with parliamentarism, marked him as the most radical among the members of the MPS, most of whom continued to think of themselves as Zionists and a part of the Poale Zion. Meirson's radicalism, in fact, was the type which would, in a few months, be decried by Lenin as infantile.<sup>48</sup> It would soon prove to be an embarrassment to the MPS in its efforts to deal with both the Zionists and the Communist International.

For the time being, though, the participants at what some consider the founding conference, not only of the MPS but of the Palestine Communist Party itself, were optimistic about the course of the world socialist revolution. According to Israeli, who quotes from a Yiddish-language account entitled The Communist Movement in Palestine (published in Warsaw in 1930), the founders of MPS "dreamed that the mighty Red Army would cross

the Caucasus and the Taurus and bring them a Soviet Palestine."<sup>49</sup>

From its initial program, as laid out by Meirson, it appears that the MPS assumed the impossible task of merging Zionist-proletarianism with (or, rather, into) liquidationist anti-Zionism. Israeli explains: "Initially points were added to the Zionist principles, and in a later period, the anti-Zionist foundation was increased."<sup>50</sup> The policy followed by the MPS was meant to be one of incrementalism, gradually moving away from the Zionist element (the Borochovist addition to Marxist-Socialism), toward an anti-Zionist, anti-Jewish nationalism orientation. It would appear, therefore, that the further away the MPS would move from Zionism, the more limited would be its appeal among Jews, and, presumably, the greater would be its appeal among the Arab inhabitants of Palestine. As we shall see, despite every effort to attract Arab workers, this strategy failed.

While the reasons for the failure to attract Arab workers will be discussed later, it can be stated here that the liquidationist aims of the MPS, and the later Communist Party in Palestine, were as contrary to the general beliefs, values, thoughts and hopes of the Jewish Yishuv as were the Marxist precepts of Borochovism, with its emphasis on class struggle, revolution, and internationalism. Thus, neither the MPS nor "orthodox" Borochovism<sup>51</sup> was able to withstand the appeal of a Jewish homeland and the possibilities inherent in such a phenomenon for the Jewish people.

As noted earlier in this chapter, Borochovism, and the Poale Zion fashioned around that ideology, had great appeal in its initial phase in Russia and eastern Europe, where the Zionist element attracted Jews who yearned for their own land, while the Marxist-socialist component seemed, at the time, to explain, to some degree, the economic condition of the working man. It seemed then that there was really a compatibility between the two doctrines.

While the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution were seen as the "test" for socialism, the test for Borochov's socialist-Zionism was the reality of the conditions facing the developing Jewish Yishuv in Palestine. Once there, few Jews were able to relegate their dream of a Jewish homeland to the status of a "minimum" program, ultimately meant to be a throwaway for the sake of creating a new international society purged of its exploitative capitalist class.

## NOTES

1. Iskra (The Spark) was founded in 1900, largely on Lenin's initiative and initially also included Martov, A. N. Potresov, and G. V. Plekhanov, as well as other members of the Emancipation of Labor group. Lenin retained control over the agents who smuggled Iskra into Russia and maintained close connections with the underground organizations which distributed the journal. In 1903, the Iskra group fell apart over the differences between Lenin's advocacy of a narrow, closed party of dedicated revolutionaries and Martov's proposal of a broad, open party. When Plekhanov agreed with Martov, Lenin withdrew and "at one stroke Iskra was transformed into an organ of Menshevism." Merle Fainsod, How Russia is Ruled (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 41-43.

2. The Minsk faction negated political struggle in the diaspora, limiting itself to economic struggle. Its appeal was thus narrowed, and it had no following as large as that of the other organizations which favored political struggle. Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, "The Young Borochoy" in Studies of Ber Borochoy (N.Y.: Young Poale Zion Alliance, undated collection of short articles), a part of the Poale Zion Archives, p. 14.

3. Ibid., p. 15.

4. Ibid., p. 16.

5. Our Platform was not published as a complete work. Chapters appeared in three issues of the Jewish Workers' Chronicle and were continued in the second issue of The Hammer. It appeared first in Russian. A problem arose when a Yiddish translation was needed for the Poale Zion in Poland and Lithuania. An editorial committee was formed in Lodz, and Zalman Rubashov (later, Zalman Shazar, Israel's third president) undertook the translation. The plan, however, was not realized, and only the last part of Our Platform appeared in Yiddish in the Vilna Forward. Not until after WW I did the first translations, in Yiddish and English, appear, published by the American branch of the Poale Zion. Ibid., p. 18.

6. The National Question and the Class Struggle in From the Writings of Ber Borochoy (N. Y.: Young Poale Zion Alliance of America, 1937), p. 141.

7. Ibid., p. 157.

8. Vos Villen de Poale Zion? (What Does the Poale Zion

Want?), 1906, in Poale Zion Shriften, I, p. 96, as quoted in A Social and Religious History of the Jews, Salo Wittmayer Baron (N. Y.: Columbia University Press, 1937), Vol. II, pp. 343-344. Also see Why Poale Zionism? The Economic Development of the Jewish People (1916) in Ber Borochoy--Selected Essays in Socialist Zionism, edited by Dr. S. Levenberg (London: Eversholt Printing, 1948), p. 24.

9. Our Platform in Selected Writings by Ber Borochoy (N. Y.: Poale Zion-Zeire Zion of America, 1937), p. 190.

10. Arthur Hertzberg, The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader (N. Y.: Atheneum, 1973), p. 360.

11. The small percentage of Jews engaged in agriculture was the result of laws which restricted Jews to specific areas and which prevented them from owning land. Some books of interest on this subject are: Judd L. Teller, Scapegoat of Revolution (N. Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954); Salo Wittmayer Baron's Social and Religious History of the Jews and S. M. Dubnow's History of the Jews in Poland and Russia (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1916-1920), 3 Vols.

12. "Styctic," the term used by Borochoy to describe an inevitable process by which the Jews, scattered across Europe and elsewhere in the world, would emigrate to Palestine, was derived from the Greek word, Styx, recognized as the River of Hades, which all dead souls had to cross. Greek mythology tells us that Hermes, the God, pushed reluctant souls onto Charon's ferry, which carried them across the river. Dr. Arthur Hertzberg traced the etymology of "styctic" to the Greek language, giving it the meaning of "fateful, inevitable." Professor D. B. Pollack, a Greek scholar formerly of Hunter College, helped clarify for the author Borochoy's choice of this word.

13. In his notes to the author, Professor Alexander Erlich indicates his preference for the word "spontaneous."

14. Peretz Merhav, The Israeli Left: History, Problems, Documents (N. Y.: A. S. Barnes & Co., Inc., 1980), pp. 85-86.

15. Paul Novick, "Nationalism and the Class Struggle" in Jewish Life, Vol. II, No. 2, February 1938, pp. 18-22.

16. Ibid., and see Abraham Duker's introduction to Nationalism and the Class Struggle.

17. Novick, ibid.

18. Ibid., p. 19.

19. Palestina in unser program un taktik (Palestine in our

program is a tactic), as quoted in S. W. Baron's A Social and Religious History of the Jews, Vol. II, pp. 343-344.

20. Aliya (ascending), is the Hebrew word for immigration to Israel, used in the sense of returning to Jerusalem which, from a spiritual (and geographic) point of view was an uplifting experience. The First Aliya took place during the 1880s; the Second occurred under early Zionist inspiration from 1900 to 1914.

21. Merhav, p. 32.

22. The Haskala (enlightenment) represented an effort on the part of intellectuals to "enlighten" the Jewish masses in Russia. Solomon Grayzel, A History of the Jews (N.Y.: New American Library, 1968), states: "As in Germany so in Eastern Europe, the movement for enlightenment traced its origin to the intellectual impetus given the group about him by Moses Mendelssohn. Several of his co-workers started publishing Ha-Meassef, the magazine whose contributors aimed to transmit to the Yiddish-speaking but Hebrew-reading Jews the thought and literature of the non-Jewish world." The Hebrew language sounded artificial after so many centuries of disuse, "but at least these originators of Haskalah made a valiant effort towards the integration of Hebrew culture with the culture of Western Europe." See pp. 522-528.

23. The spiritual leader and philosopher of Hapoel Hatzair was A. D. Gordon, who came to Palestine at a late age during the Second Aliya. Gordon became an agricultural laborer and then member of the first kvutza (commune) of Degania. He emphasized the need for Jews to return to physical labor, which came to be called "the religion of labor." He opposed Marxism and its emphasis on the class struggle and revolution. Hertzberg, pp. 368-386, which contains some of Gordon's essays, such as "People and Labor" (1911) and "Our Tasks Ahead" (1920).

24. Yishuv refers to the Jewish community in Palestine.

25. The Ramle Platform (October 7-9, 1906) appears in Hebrew in a collection of Poale Zion documents and records compiled by Yehuda Slutsky, entitled Poale Zion be Eretz Yisrael (1905-1919), (Tel Aviv University, 1978), pp. 17-18.

26. Israel Kolat discusses their frustration as politically-minded party members in his unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Ideology and Reality in the Labor Movement of Eretz Israel, 1905-1919 (Dept. of History, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1964).

p. 262. Kolat is quoted in Yonathan Shapiro, The Formative Years of the Israeli Labour Party--the Organization of Power 1919-1930 (London: Sage Publishers, 1976), p. 13.

27. A case in point is the experience of Yaacov Zerubavel (also identified as "Vitkin"), a leader of Poale Zion dating back to the founding convention in 1906, when he was elected to the Central Board. Zerubavel settled in Palestine in 1910 and became a member of the Editorial Board of the Poale Zion's newspaper, Ha-Ahdut. Because of his sharp criticism and published exposés of the persecution of the Yishuv by the Turkish authorities, he was sentenced to prison. He succeeded in escaping, but was sentenced in absentia to 15 years of hard labor. Encyclopaedia Judaica, Vol. 16, p. 999.

28. Shapiro, Ibid.

29. This means that they opposed the "liquidation" of the Zionist enterprise in Palestine, as the communists later called the Zionist endeavor.

30. HaShomer (The Guard) was a self-defense force, an organization set up to take over the protection of the Jewish settlements.

31. HaHoresh was a contracting organization whose purpose was to perform agricultural tasks and thereby introduce Jewish workers into agriculture. The Hebrew word "horesh" means a plougher or ploughman.

32. G. Z. Israeli, A History of the Israeli Communist Party: From the MPS to PKP to MAKI (Tel Aviv: Om Oved, 1953), in Hebrew, p. 15. In this particular area, Israeli's book is weak. However, Elkana Margalit, in HaAnatomia shel HaSmol: Poale Zion Smol be-Eretz Yisrael (The Anatomy of the Left: The Left Poale Zion in Israel)--1919-1946 (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, I.L. Peretz Publ. House, 1976), pp. 65-66 and Alain Greilsammer in Les Communistes Israéliens (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1978), pp. 20-21, provide more information. Israeli relies heavily on Yehiel Halperin's earlier Israel VebaCommunizm (Israel and Communism), (Tel Aviv: Miflegit Poalei Eretz-Yisrael, 1951), and, in turn, is a major source for Greilsammer, who identifies Israeli as the pseudonym for Walter Z. Laqueur. Dr. Yosef Gorni supported this claim, and the Encyclopaedia Judaica (Vol. 5, p. 807) confirmed it.

33. The Jewish Legion consisted of regiments of Jewish volunteers from the United States, the British Empire and Palestine. These soldiers participated in the British conquest of

Palestine. Many opposed the creation of the Jewish Legion, some for pacifist reasons, others for tactical reasons, and still others because they opposed Zionism altogether. The Zionists, themselves, were divided. The Central Committee of the Poale Zion remained neutral, even though many Poale Zion members joined and supported the Legion. It is believed that the large participation of the Poale Zion in the Legion molded it. "It prevented the formation of a reactionary militaristic spirit and stirred the national and social sentiments of the Legion." The Labor Zionist Handbook, pp. 71-72.

34. Ultimately in 1929, Ahdut Ha-Avoda united with Hapoel Hatzair to form MAPAI, later the dominant Labor party in Israeli politics until the victory of Menachem Begin's Likud coalition in May 1977. In the July 1984 Knesset elections, the Labor coalition won a slim victory over Likud. For the early history of Ahdut Ha-Avoda, see Yosef Gorni, Ahdut Ha'avoda--1919-1930: The Ideological Principles and the Political System (Tel Aviv University: Institute for Zionist Research, 1973).

35. Zerubavel (1886-1967), born in Poltava in the Ukraine, joined the Poale Zion in his youth and with Ben-Zvi later participated in organizing the self-defense effort that succeeded in preventing a pogrom in Poltava. Elected to the Central Board at the Poale Zion founding convention (1906), he assisted Borochof in publishing an illegal newspaper. He was imprisoned for a year and a half. When released, he left Russia for Austrian Galicia where he joined the Editorial Board of Der Yidisher Arbeter, a Poale Zion paper. In 1910 he settled in Palestine (see n. 27). Escaping from Turkish authorities, he went to the United States where he remained until the outbreak of the Russian Revolution, at which point he returned to Russia and was active in the National Jewish Council of the Ukraine. When the Poale Zion split in 1920, Zerubavel was the head of the Central Office of the Left Poale Zion. Encyclopaedia Judaica, Vol. 16, p. 999.

36. Revusky (1889-1947), a Poale Zion leader, was also the Minister of Jewish Affairs in the nationalist Ukrainian government in 1919. He was sent to Palestine in 1920 by the World Union Poale Zion of the Left. Initially, he worked with Yitzhak Meirson as co-leader of the Mifleget Poalim Sotsialistim. As the gap in their ideologies widened, Revusky came more and more to represent, along with Zerubavel, the Borochovist principles in Palestine. Enclopaedia Judaica, Vol. 14, p. 133.

37. Nir (Rafalkes), (1884-1968) was born in Warsaw,



qualified as a lawyer and practiced in St. Petersburg. He joined Poale Zion in 1905 and represented it in 1917 during the Russian Revolution at the All-Russian Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. In 1918 he moved to Warsaw and was elected to its City Council. After the Poale Zion split in 1920, he became Secretary of the World Union Poale Zion of the Left, retaining the post till 1935. He settled in Palestine in 1925. Nir continued to practice law and represented the Poale Zion in the Histadrut and the Va'ad Leumi (National Committee or Council, the administrative and executive body of the organized Jewish community in Palestine). Enclopaedia Judaica, Vol. 12, p. 1172.

38. Erem was born in Ladi, Russia on July 8, 1896. During 1915-1922 he served as teacher and headmaster in several schools in Russia and Lithuania. He also served as Commissar for Labor under Soviet rule in Poland during the early 1920s. In 1924 he came to Palestine where he became a journalist and communal leader. He was one of the most notable figures in the left wing of the General Labor Federation. Among other works, Erem authored The Palestine Riots (1929), in Yiddish. Who's Who in Israel (Tel Aviv: The "Who's Who in the State of Israel" Publishing House, 1952), p. 235.

39. Merhav, p. 35.

40. Meirson (often called "Professor") came to Palestine during the Second Aliya, leaving in 1921 following the British clampdown. Nahum List tells us about Meirson's life on his return to Russia: ". . . [I]n Odessa, in 1928, I was told. . . that [Meirson] was a successful professor of Yiddish literature. . . and that he avoided any connection with any Palestinian who happened to come to Odessa. After the war (i.e., World War II), [I learned] that the professor applied to return to Eretz Israel. Someone met him in Turkistan or in Kazakhstan and told how Meirson had approached his friends from the past, Ben-Zvi and Ben-Gurion, with words to the following effect: 'In the last days, I sent you my blessings. I came to this land (i.e., the Soviet Union) as my punishment. What I have suffered. . . was coming to me. I was wrong, and I was wronged. Your work and your loyalty will be blessed. If there is hope for humanity, and if there is a new way for the world, it is not in the place to which I came, but in the place which I had left.'" Keshet, Winter, 1964 (Tel Aviv), No. 22, p. 162. Tzadek Ha-Komintern (The Comintern was Right). This series of articles by N. List, a former Communist, is a rich source of information about the early communist

movement in Palestine. The articles are in Hebrew. Also see G. Z. Israeli, p. 15, citing similar remarks by Meirson and attributing the source to Davar an Israeli newspaper, dated May 25, 1952.

41. Khalidi came from the Caucasus and settled in Palestine during the period of the Second Aliya. He was an agricultural worker and then a bank clerk in Haifa. He was a loyal Borochovist, became the First Secretary of the MPS and was one of their chief spokesmen. The British expelled him in 1921, and he disappeared.

42. Dau (Bogen) was born in Poland and came to Palestine in 1920 from France. Dau, also called Admoni, had been a spokesman for the Poale Zion Left in Poland. Once in Palestine, he became very active in the radical faction, ultimately following in the "spirit of Meirson," and was extremely critical of the Histadrut leadership. He blamed them, Ahdut Ha-Avoda and Hapoel Hatzair, for the terrible economic conditions in the Yishuv during the early 1920s. He, too, left Palestine after the May Day clashes in 1921. Israeli (p. 16) tells us that Dau went to Russia and died there in 1926. His source is a communist newspaper, Der Kemfer (The Militant), September 26, 1926. On the other hand, List (Ibid., p. 163) picks up Dau's trail in Spain, during the Spanish Civil War, follows him on his return to Poland, and then to Cuba, where Dau apparently ran into difficulties. List states that Dau then made his way back to Russia, and then, after the war, to Poland, where he became the head of a Jewish Communist organization. Commenting on Dau's "strange" movements, List notes Dau's death in Moscow in 1948.

43. There is some confusion over the date of the MPS founding, just as there is little agreement over the exact date of the founding of the group designating itself as "Communist." Walter Z. Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), p. 73, gives the year as 1919 and specifies no month. He adds: "The small groups which had split away from the Jewish labour parties in Palestine and Eastern Europe (Poale Zion) established themselves as a political organization, at a conference on the Jewish New Year in September 1920. Marver H. Bernstein, The Politics of Israel: The First Decade of Statehood (N.Y.: Greenwood Press, 1967), p. 67, gives the party's foundation date as the early 1920s. Most authors place the date during 1919-1920. Dunia Habib Nahas, The Israeli Communist Party (London: Portico Publications, 1976), p. 99, states that she ascertained "the correct foundation date by

communication with a member of the Israeli Communist Party Politburo, who forwarded a . . . copy of a lecture delivered in Arabic on March 28, 1970, by the Secretary General of the RAKAH, Meir Wilner, on the occasion of the Fiftieth anniversary of the Party." Wilner reviewed the history of the party, "for the first time," and noted that the anniversary had actually fallen in 1969, but the pressures of preparing for the party's Sixteenth Congress, and later, for the Knesset and Histadrut elections, had precluded celebration that year.

44. Margalit, pp. 66-67; Israeli, p. 16. Israeli notes that MPS existed only from "the summer of 1919 until. . . May 1921."

45. Israeli, p. 17.

46. Ibid.

47. Nahas, p. 14. Her sources do not include major Hebrew works in this area. See Margalit, ibid., and Israeli, ibid.

48. Lenin on Politics and Revolution - Selected Writings, edited and introduced by James E. Connor (N. Y.: Pegasus, 1968), pp. 295-296, "Left-Wing" Communism, An Infantile Disorder (April-May 1920).

49. Israeli, p. 18.

50. Ibid., p. 16.

51. Actually, it is difficult to define "orthodox" Borochovism when one considers that Borochov was in the process of redefining his own theories when he prematurely died of pneumonia. Duker comments on some of the apparent changes, such as Borochov's use of "the entire Jewish people," or "the Jewish masses," instead of the "proletariat" which he had previously always used. Duker states: "He looked upon the stern and mechanistic expressions of his younger days as a product of a period during which 'no one believed in romance, ornaments, or adornment.' He called for an abandonment of the 'naively realistic' view on life. Most characteristic is his return to the ancient name, Eretz Yisrael (Land of Israel), for Palestine. . . . The later Borochov openly returned to the 'emotional terminology'; and to the dismay of his Borochovist comrades, he exclaimed, 'Now we can and must proclaim: Eretz Yisrael--a Jewish home!'" (See p. 16, the undated copy of Duker's introduction, or see Borochov's Selected Writings, 1937.) Perhaps Borochov may have been coming to the conclusion that his original synthesis was unworkable.



### 3

## The MPS: From Vienna in 1920 to the May Day Riots in 1921

### 1

Despite the rift in the Poale Zion's Palestine branch, members of each group continued to think of themselves as the Poale Zion spokesmen in Palestine. Those in Ahdut Ha-Avoda and those who belonged to the fractured left wing of the organization looked to the forthcoming Fifth Conference of the World Union to clarify the situation, that is, to resolve which was the official Poale Zion affiliate in Palestine. Indeed, the Palestinian Poale Zion members were not the only Poale Zion members who were having such problems.

Following the issuance of the Balfour Declaration, which coincided in time with the Bolshevik ascendancy in Russia and about which more will be said in the next chapter, the World Union of the Poale Zion faced two major divisive issues: Whether or not to join the Communist International, and whether or not to participate in the World Zionist Organization. The Fifth Conference of the World Union of the Poale Zion held in Vienna in August 1920 became the arena in which these issues were fought out. Moshe Braslavsky, in his comprehensive study entitled Te'nuat Ha-poalim Ha-aretz Israelit (The Workers' Movement in Eretz Israel) described the conference, which ended by splitting the party, as "one of the most stormy in the history of the Jewish labor movement."<sup>1</sup>

The delegates represented various streams within the Socialist-Zionist movement. The right wing of Ben-Gurion, Ben-Zvi, Zalman Rubashov (Shazar) and Yitzhak Tabenkin advocated participation in the World Zionist Organization and cautioned against blind adherence to the Communist International on the grounds that the Jewish socialist movement had an obligation to support the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, where Jewish workers should join with Arab workers to eliminate the imperialism of the effendis, the Arab landowners. This right wing enjoyed majority support within the parties from the United States, Argentina, Great Britain and

Palestine. Its diaspora leaders were Shlomo Kaplansky, Marc Yarblum, Berl Locker and Zalman Rubashov, while Ben-Gurion, Ben-Zvi and Tabenkin were the Palestinian right-wing leaders. In the eyes of the left-wing delegates, it was nationalist to a fault and scarcely different from the imperialists against whom the organization was dedicated to struggle.

The Left opposed any connection with the Zionist Organization and held that only by cooperation with the world revolution would Zionism stand a chance of realization. The Poale Zion parties which supported this stand were those of Russia, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Poland, the last being the largest. The left-wing leaders from Palestine were Nahum Nir, Yaacov Zerubavel and Yitzhak Meirson. As we have seen, the left wing of the Palestine Poale Zion had already split into the loyal Borochovist faction and the far more radical Meirson-Khalidi faction known as the MPS. Despite their differences in Palestine, the left wing of the Poale Zion held together in its advocacy of immediate acceptance of Lenin's twenty-one conditions for affiliation to the Comintern (see Appendix A), conditions assailed by the Poale Zion Right as tantamount to a Moscow dictatorship.

Indeed, as Edward H. Carr explains, the twenty-one conditions were "defended by the Left as the only safeguard against a return to the inefficiency and opportunism of the Second International."<sup>2</sup> The issue, from the Comintern's point of view and from the point of view of those who advocated acceptance of the twenty-one conditions was, as Zinoviev had said at a July session of the Third (Communist) International, related to "the question of world revolution, democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat."<sup>3</sup> Just as independent, national trade unions were unacceptable in themselves<sup>4</sup> and were perceived by the Bolsheviki as incompatible with international proletarian solidarity,<sup>5</sup> so too were parties and movements such as the World Zionist Organization perceived as potential allies of the enemies of the Soviet Union and hence as obstacles to the international revolutionary movement based in Moscow.

The lines were drawn almost immediately on the question of the agenda for the Vienna conference: Whether to deal first with questions relating to Eretz Israel and Zionist activities, or with the subject of the socialist revolution and the Communist International. Alexander Heshen<sup>6</sup> and Yaacov Meirson presented

the position of the Left Poale Zion. Heshen had been in Palestine during the days of the Second Aliya and had spent time in Russia during the war and the revolution. He argued that the interests of the Jewish workers were tied to those of the international proletariat. Hence, Jewish participation in the Communist International was a necessary part of the coming socialist revolution in the East.<sup>7</sup> In turn, Meirson denied that Zionism offered the only solution to the Jews. He warned of the consequences of settlement at the expense of the Arab peasant whose "feeling of hatred will intensify" because of "our non-cooperation with the Arab toiling masses. . . ." Meirson foresaw a strengthening of Jewish "links with the foreign imperialist rule." He advocated a Jewish-Arab workers' federation, and called for a struggle against colonialism and British rule.<sup>8</sup> Much of what he said was a repetition of his earlier remarks at the MPS meeting in October 1919.

The negative reaction to Meirson's remarks was such that the MPS felt forced to issue a retraction. The party, still entirely Jewish, was not then in a position to break completely with the Zionist left, from which it still hoped to recruit additional members. From the opposite end of the ideological spectrum, David Ben-Gurion summarized the position of Ahdut Ha-Avoda on the question of joining the Communist International. His remarks were repeatedly interrupted by noisy outbreaks from the communists. Ben-Gurion opposed creating a Jewish revolutionary center in the East in accordance with the dictates of the Communist International. Rather, he spoke of developing a "Jewish workers' center." Ben-Gurion's general attitude was contained in the following statement: "To the extent that the International is ready to support the creation of a Jewish socialist center in Eretz Yisrael, it [Jewish socialist strength] is prepared to move closer to the International."<sup>9</sup>

Years later, Berl Locker on the Zionist right of Poale Zion noted that at the time of the Vienna conference in 1920, the Left Poale Zion had already begun to identify itself as the Jewish Section of the international communist movement and had attempted to gain recognition as such from the Comintern. Moscow's answer was, as noted earlier, that before it would give such recognition, the Poale Zion would have to accept the twenty-one conditions for affiliation and would have to disassociate itself completely from the "reactionism" and

"chauvinism" of the Zionist movement. When Locker questioned Zerubavel on the details of Moscow's position, Zerubavel's answer was that "If we accepted the Third (Communist) International, they would accept us." Zerubavel's subsequent remark that "From our point of view, we are already an integral part of the Third International," drew a caustic response from Locker, who saw Zerubavel's comments as extremely naive. Locker, by way of making a point in his own speech before the Vienna conference, then related a conversation he had had with a Haifa Technion student during a walk together. The student, on seeing a lovely young lady, told Locker that he was engaged to her. When Locker replied that she, however, did not yet know this, the student responded: "In truth, she does not yet know that I am her betrothed, but from my point of view, I am engaged to her." Locker concludes: "Everyone burst into laughter, and even Zerubavel understood the significance of the story."<sup>10</sup>

In order to demonstrate a conciliatory attitude, Ben-Gurion's forces abstained from the vote. However, the bitter exchanges preceding the vote, and the vote itself, sealed the fate of the World Union of Poale Zion. When the vote was finally taken, it became clear that the forces at the conference were balanced: 178 voted to accept the conditions of the Comintern and to join, while 179 abstained and one delegate voted against.<sup>11</sup> Among the 178 supporting votes were 45 from Russia, 67 from Poland, and 19 from East Galicia, while among the abstentions were 21 from East Galicia and 43 from Poland.<sup>12</sup> Thus the issue had divided regional delegations as well as the conference as a whole. The original fault line in the organization's structure had become a discernible fracture, splitting the Poale Zion into left and right wings. The tone and tenor of the debate and the vote not only signaled the unravelling of an unworkable synthesis (given the left-wing hostility to Zionism), but also anticipated what would be a continuing controversy in Palestine.

As for the Left Poale Zion, its attempt to join the Third International failed in 1920. In fact, as we shall see later, this initiated a period of playing "cat and mouse," as Nahum List called it<sup>13</sup>--the "cat" being Soviet Russia, the "mouse" being the communists within the Yishuv. Comintern recognition would be withheld until 1924. It would take the Palestinian communists that long to meet the conditions of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI).



In the meantime, and for a while after the Fifth International Congress of the World Union, the MPS shared with the Zionist-Socialists the basic tenet of the need to create a Jewish proletariat in Palestine. This, of course, merely echoed Ber Borochov's principles. Support for Jewish proletarian immigration was therefore made part of the resolutions of the Second MPS Congress held in Haifa, October 2-4, 1920.

Of the twenty-two delegates who attended, four had only consultative powers; the remainder, representing 300 members, had full power of decision.<sup>14</sup> At that point, the MPS was still considered part, albeit a radical part, of the Yishuv's political life. It had not yet assumed the anti-immigration, pro-Arab stand which would later alienate it from the Yishuv.

When, in December 1920, the Histadrut was founded, the MPS even went so far as to add the word "Hebrew" to its name, making it the Mifleget Poalim Sotsialistim Ha-Ivriyim (the Hebrew Socialist Workers' Party, the MPSI). The name change was made before the Histadrut's First Congress and was made in response to the demand of the small leftist group which united with the MPS and which conveyed a general feeling that the MPS should avoid alienating itself from the Yishuv as a whole. The MPS gained six out of eighty-seven seats (7%) at the Histadrut's First Congress, the largest percentage it was ever destined to achieve.<sup>15</sup> Difficult moments for the MPSI arose at this Congress when the six MPSI delegates were again pushed to repeat their disassociation from Meirson's Vienna remarks. They not only distanced themselves from those remarks, but they announced Meirson's expulsion from the party. However, their radical ideology--radical for the time, even though they still supported "proletarian" Zionism--was held against them; and, they were struck a heavy blow when, despite their denial that they opposed Zionism, the MPSI delegation was refused affiliation with the Histadrut on the grounds that it was an organization unknown to the Histadrut. Ben-Zvi, speaking for the Histadrut, justified the rejection in the following way:

If we had to take up a position on the MPS before this congress, we would have chosen a negative one since the party had been spurned by both left and

right wings of the Poale Zion. We would not have allowed it to participate in this congress. But the Hebrew Socialist Workers' Party appeared only a few days ago, and we knew nothing about it.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, whether the MPS had come to the Histadrut as the MPS or as the MPSI, it really would not have mattered. Its delegation was not to be permitted to take its seats.

While it may be true that "nothing" was known about the Hebrew Socialist Workers' Party at that time, the reasons for the negative attitude toward the MPS are clear: The MPS had gone beyond attempting to reach unemployed Jewish workers, circulating literature among the Arab workers. These pamphlets pictured Jewish immigrants as rivals for Arab jobs, land and country. This became a contributing factor to the deterioration in Arab-Jewish relations during this early period in Palestine. An Arab national consciousness, still in an infant stage, was given impetus, and Jewish immigrants were rapidly becoming the focus of Arab attention.

### 3

During October and November 1920, there were outbreaks of labor trouble among the Jews in Jaffa. It was a time of strained economic conditions; unemployment among recently arrived immigrants was very common. As a later report by the Commission of Inquiry appointed by the British High Commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel, states: "... the MPS, who were able to work upon the feelings of these dissatisfied men, aggravated the trouble where they did not originate it."<sup>17</sup> On November 7, 1920, the MPS placarded Jaffa and Tel Aviv with posters calling on all laborers in Palestine to take part in social revolution, not to support "the slaves of the British bayonet," and to celebrate November 7, the anniversary of the victorious people's revolution in Soviet Russia. The poster concluded with the following: "Long live the 7th of November, the Proletarian International. Long live the Soviet Russian Republic. Long live the Communist Third International. Long live Socialist Palestine."<sup>18</sup>

The MPS had tried to hold a demonstration, in which thirty

to forty persons, carrying red flags, and headed by a woman from Alexandria named Carlotte Rosenthal, had forcibly endeavored to compel Jewish laborers to join. MPS members, in trying to organize a strike to commemorate the day, had come to blows with a number of Jewish workers who had refused to comply. The strike organizers had even entered a manufacturing establishment and assaulted the manager. Machinery was broken, and the police had to call for reinforcements. When the police raided the MPS headquarters in a building known as the "Borochov Club," they found quantities of communist literature, MPS membership cards, and other printed matter. The MPS membership was estimated at nearly 300.

Following its exclusion from the Histadrut, the MPS leadership decided to recruit Arab workers to the party. MPSI, soon derisively identified as "Mopsi," (a pun based on its consonantal initials and the German word for "pug,") began to import communist literature in Arabic from Vienna.<sup>19</sup> Yet the attempt to attract Arabs to join the MPSI failed completely and even provoked an Arab backlash. The Moslem-Christian Society addressed a letter to the High Commissioner, stressing the danger of such a movement in Palestine. The Governor of Jaffa therefore urged that MPSI activities should be curtailed, "not so much because of the intrinsic importance of a few extremists as on account of the powerful incentive which they gave to anti-Jewish feeling in the country."<sup>20</sup>

By the spring of 1921, the MPSI was numerically fading. In an attempt to increase membership, the leadership decided to open a branch in Petach Tikvah, but the local residents promptly expelled it.<sup>21</sup> At the beginning of March, MPSI was blamed for street fights which erupted in Tel Aviv, and the District Commandant of Police closed its meeting place, the Borochov Club. However, it was the events of May 1, 1921, which finished off the MPSI in the Yishuv and which sent its members and leaders scurrying for shelter from the wrath of the British authorities. Although the police had closed the MPSI club on March 5th, it was still being used by the party as a meeting place. On May Day 1921, it became the assemblage point for MPSI members wearing red rosettes and carrying banners which bore the following inscriptions in Yiddish: "Long live the Communist International" and "Long live the free women of the Communist society."<sup>22</sup>

Literature confiscated the evening before May Day was signed by "the Executive Committee of the Palestine Communist Party." It called upon the proletarians of all nations to unite in the fight for social revolution and upon Jewish and Arab laborers to join in overthrowing their oppressors and in "beating down your torturers and the tyrants among you." The Yiddish and Hebrew appeals included: "All power to the Workmen's and Peasants' Council of Palestine! Long live the Palestine Communistic Party! Long live the international solidarity of the Jewish and Arab Proletariat." The Arabic version ended with the words: "Down with the British and French bayonets! Down with the Arab and foreign capitalists! Long live Soviet Palestine!"<sup>23</sup> The Arabic slogans were more specific, attempting to focus Arab frustration on the British presence in Palestine.

The events of that day traumatized the British authorities. While in European countries May Day had, by 1921, become a day of general anxiety for those who feared Bolshevism, in Palestine nothing had previously happened to mark it as a day of trouble. Therefore, no particular police precautions had been taken. The initial clash occurred between some fifty-five unauthorized MPSI demonstrators and members of Ahdut Ha-Avoda, who had been given permission to demonstrate. That clash, primarily of a verbal, pushing-and-shoving nature, lasted a short time, the police quickly succeeding in dispersing all demonstrators. At that point, a number of Arabs from Menshieh, an Arab quarter adjacent to Tel Aviv, burst upon the scene. Here, as in the story of Rashomon, the reports and interpretations of subsequent events diverge. Dunia Nahas claims that after the police separated the two Jewish groups, British provocateurs went among the Arabs, telling them that the Zionists were going to take their land, and provoking them to attack the Jewish demonstrators who had begun to leave the area.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, Gershon Dau (Admoni), the MPSI spokesman, places the emphasis elsewhere, stressing his claim that the members of the Borochoy Club, the Jewish communists, defended their fellow Jews against the Arab attack, which Dau called a pogrom. He also blamed the British police and British provocateurs, along with the policies of the Zionist leadership which, in his opinion, exacerbated Arab hostility to Jewish immigration.<sup>25</sup> Finally, the commission's report provides yet another perception. It blames the MPSI, explaining that the Arabs "had resented the Bolshevik

demonstration."<sup>26</sup> The "racial passion" which erupted became infectious, and "the [Arab] police were unwilling to make an effort to stem the rage of their own peoples. . . the police became partisan. . . ." <sup>27</sup>

The Jewish market was looted; the Immigration House, under the control of the Zionist Commission, became a target; many were beaten to death, and many others were seriously wounded. The report comments that the Immigration House, which at the time provided shelter for some 100 men and women who had recently arrived in Palestine, was a "perfect symbol." An eyewitness, Reverend A. C. Martin, told the commission that Arab policemen in the street broke through the door of the Immigration House and then led a part of the Arab mob into the yard. Jewish immigrants who sought refuge by running into the street were beaten to death by the crowd. Others were killed inside the courtyard.<sup>28</sup>

4

In the days which followed, the British attempted to understand the significance of what had occurred. One British officer, a Colonel Byron, noted, "As far as the Moslem population is concerned, they were very anxious to receive some declaration on the question of immigration."<sup>29</sup> A temporary prohibition of immigration was instituted. On May 17, 1921, the Steamer Corniolo, carrying 1,000 Jewish immigrants en route to Jaffa, was forced to return to Trieste.<sup>30</sup> As the British tried to comprehend what had happened, disturbances which had begun in the Jaffa-Tel Aviv area spread. For example, there were anti-Jewish raids on the colonies of Kfar Saba, some fourteen miles northeast of Jaffa, and on Hadera, still further north. Altogether five Jewish settlements were attacked by armed Arabs. The total number of casualties (Arabs and Jews) was 385: 95 killed and 290 wounded.<sup>31</sup> The British concluded that the immediate cause of the rioting had been the unauthorized MPSI demonstration and its clash with the legal Ahdut Ha-Avoda procession: "The Bolshevik demonstration was the spark that set alight the explosive discontent of the Arabs, and precipitated an outbreak which developed into an Arab-Jewish feud."<sup>32</sup>

The riots led to a reevaluation of British policy. It shocked

the British that the non-Jewish witnesses who appeared before the commission were by and large opposed to the increasing number of Jews in Palestine. The report stated:

Moslems, Orthodox Christians, Catholics, Maronites and other Uniates,<sup>33</sup> Anglicans have been represented by witnesses, who include priests of the above Christian bodies. . . . Practically the whole of the non-Jewish population was united in hostility to the Jews. . . . During the riots all discrimination on the part of the Arabs between different categories of Jews was obliterated. Old established colonists and newly arrived immigrants, Chalukah [orthodox] Jews and Bolshevik Jews, Algerian Jews and Russian Jews, became merged in a single identity, and former friendships gave way before the enmity now felt towards all.<sup>34</sup> (Emphasis mine.)

In listing the grievances of the various witnesses, the commission noted that Great Britain had been unduly influenced by the Zionists to adopt a policy which was mainly directed towards the establishment of a National Home for the Jews. Such a policy had overlooked non-Jewish Palestinians. There was, the commission advised, an undue proportion of Jews in the government service, and they had exercised too great an influence on behalf of Jewish interests over the interests of everyone else.

For the first time, the immigrants were identified as an "economic" danger to the Arab population because of their competitiveness and because "they are favoured in this competition." The MPS aggravated these tensions: "Owing to insufficient precautions, immigrants of Bolshevik tendencies have been allowed to enter the country, and that these persons have endeavoured to introduce social strife and economic unrest into Palestine and to propagate Bolshevik doctrines."<sup>35</sup>

The MPS actions up to and during the May Day events, and the subsequent clashes which continued even into June, became the catalyst for a number of attitudinal and policy changes. These changes were, however, clearly way out of proportion to MPS numbers. This was definitely a case where the impact of a small organization was strong enough to force important

changes. It is important to remember that the attitudinal and policy changes which followed were directly in line with the aims of the communists: curtailment of immigration and the undermining of Zionist influence.

While the causal relationship--an MPS demonstration to counter one being held by Ahdut Ha-Avoda, an Arab mob unleashing its pent up anger and frustration, a series of attacks against Jewish settlements, great damage to life and property, a commission to study what had occurred, a reevaluation, and, finally, new attitudes and new policies--seems clear, it is less clear whether or not the communists really understood the degree to which the Arab population had come to resent the Jewish immigrants (including the Jewish communists). The report tells us that the Arab mobs lumped all Jews together and did not differentiate between the old and the new settler, the religious and non-religious Jews, the Zionist and the anti-Zionist, or Bolshevik. It appears that the MPS suffered from tunnel vision and had no awareness of the depth of communal passions that its "class action" would trigger. The British not only reevaluated their policy toward Jewish immigration, but toward political activists in Palestine, in particular toward the Palestinian communists. Many members of the MPS were arrested and 15 non-Palestinian Jews, convicted of having belonged to the group, were deported. Elkana Margalit gives us the following arrest figures: 30 in Jaffa, 4 in Haifa, and 7 in Jerusalem. Among the arrested were Khalidi, Moshe Meish and Yehuda Hasson. They were known to the British because of their prominence in the party at the time MPSI attempted to participate in the First Congress of the Histadrut.<sup>36</sup> Among those who were either expelled or fled were Meirson and Dau. Khalidi, too, was soon expelled.

Margalit, quoting from the diary of Moshe Lewin (Elysha)<sup>37</sup> dated July 22, 1921, conveys the Yishuv's anger toward the MPSI for its provocateur role. The Histadrut and Ahdut Ha-Avoda saw to it that MPSI members were dismissed from their jobs. Attacked from within the Yishuv itself, banned by the British who began an intensive search for the remaining MPSI activists, and rendered ineffective by disarray in their communications links with each other, a number of MPSI members fled Palestine to regroup in Egypt.

Within Palestine, the remaining communists, temporarily

silenced, were forced underground. They, too, would regroup; and, although the name of Mifleget Poalim Sotsialistim Ha-Ivriyim would no longer be used, the communist presence in Palestine would be revived by the arrival of specially trained organizers, sent by Moscow. The remnants of MPSI would quickly split into the "official" PCP (the Palestine Communist Party) and the KPP (the Komunistishe Partey fun Palestine), which consisted of a small group of extremists who broke away when MPSI reconstituted itself as the PCP. More will be said about both the PCP and the KPP at a later time.

The demise of the MPSI and the creation of the PCP and the KPP delineate the end of one period and the beginning of another. It therefore provides a convenient place to pause in order to look back over our shoulders, so to speak, for the purpose of understanding why the events of May-June 1921 so shocked the British. Hence, the following chapters will provide an opportunity to examine the evolution of British attitudes and policies toward Zionism in general, and toward Jewish communists in particular.

## NOTES

1. Moshe Braslavsky, Te'nuat Ha-poalim Ha-arets Israelit (The Workers' Movement in Eretz Israel). 4 Volumes, in Hebrew (Tel Aviv: Kibbutz Hameuhad, 1955-1963); see Vol. I, p. 239.

2. Edward H. Carr, A History of Soviet Russia, 3 Volumes (N.Y.: Macmillan Company, 1953); see Vol. III, p. 218.

3. Ibid., p. 219.

4. The Bolsheviks, committed to creating a Third International to replace the defunct Second, were also intent on creating a new trade union organization to replace what they felt was the defunct International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU). They were furious when the IFTU became involved in organizing the Washington conference at which the International Labor Organization (ILO) was founded. Thus, the IFTU, the "Amsterdam International," became the target of Zinoviev's bitter denunciation. He referred to "social traitors," who were attempting to rebuild the "yellow" Amsterdam International to compensate for the collapse of the Second International. These people were, Zinoviev said, obeying the



dictates of the capitalists. Ibid., p. 205.

5. Karl Radek put it succinctly: "We are going into the trade unions, not in order to preserve them, but in order to create that cohesion among the workers on which alone the great industrial unions of the social revolution can be built." Ibid., p. 203.

6. Heshen was Wolf (Daniel) Auerbach's brother. More will be said of both later.

7. Braslavsky, p. 240. Chapter 5 of this study will discuss Soviet efforts to launch the "socialist revolution in the East."

8. Ibid., pp. 240-241 and Nahas, p. 16, quoting M. Wilner.

9. Yosef Gorni, Ahdut Ha'avoda--1919-1930: The Ideological Principles and the Political System (Tel Aviv University: Institute for Zionist Research, 1973), p. 123.

10. Berl Locker, Mikitov ad Yerushalayim (From Kitov to Jerusalem), in Hebrew (Jerusalem: Histadrut Publishing House, 1970), pp. 252-253.

11. Elkana Margalit, HaAnatomia shel HaSmol: Poale Zion Smol beEretz Yisrael (The Anatomy of the Left: The Left Poale Zion in Israel) 1919-1946 (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, I. L. Peretz Publ. House, 1976), pp. 48-49.

12. Ibid. Also see Braslavsky, ibid.

13. Nahum List, "Tzadek Ha-Komintern" (The Comintern was Right) in Keshet (1963-1967), (Tel Aviv), Winter 1963, No. 18, pp. 146-147.

14. Dunia Habib Nahas, The Israeli Communist Party (London: Portico Publications, 1976), p. 14.

15. G. Z. Israeli, A History of the Israeli Communist Party: From the MPS to PKP to MAKI (in Hebrew), (Tel Aviv: Om Oved, 1953), p. 17. The membership of the Histadrut in 1920 was 4,443. Its aims as expressed by Ben-Gurion were: "The functions of the Histadrut are not merely those of a federation of trade unions whose main task is the improvement of the labor conditions of its members. It is the aim of this organization not only to organize the worker, train him, and settle him on the land; not only to improve existing labor conditions, but to multiply labor possibilities, extend the interest of Labor in the general economy, and build its own enterprises, especially in the field of agriculture. The Histadrut is--in aspiration and essence--an organization binding together the founders of a National Home, the builders of a country, the liberators of a people." Labor Zionist Handbook--The Aims, Activities and History of the

Labor Zionist Movement in America (N.Y.: Congress for Jewish Culture, Inc., Martin Press, Inc., 1956), p. 240. Margalit states that the MPS(I) membership of about 300 was the result of an influx of immigrants mainly from Poland and the Ukraine during 1920. This figure, when compared to membership numbers at the founding about a year earlier, 60-100, is misleading because the new members, unaware of the inherent radicalism of MPSI leaders, believed the MPS would join Ahdut Ha-Avoda. It is worth remembering that the Polish and Ukrainian immigrants came out of the same socialist-Zionist background as the loyal Borochovists who then dominated the MPS. Also, there is some confusion as to whether the MPSI won six or seven seats at the Histadrut's Founding Congress. Israeli gives the quoted 6 out of 87 (7%); Walter Z. Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), p. 75, gives 7 out of 87. Nahas (*ibid.*) uses Laqueur's figure. In light of subsequent events, it is unimportant whether they won 6 or 7 seats, although one wonders why Laqueur changed the number he had used when writing under the name Israeli.

16. Nahas, quoting Wilner, p. 100. Space does not permit a retelling of the vitriolic exchanges at the Histadrut Founding Congress, between the Ben-Gurion/Ben-Zvi group and the MPSI. Suffice it to say that the Vienna exchanges were repeated so as to link MPSI with the radical Meirson followers who were trying to tone down their earlier rhetoric. Margalit and Gorni provide some insight, other sources merely make reference to the presence and rejection of the MPSI.

17. Thomas W. Haycraft, Chairman of the Commission of Inquiry appointed by Samuel, along with H. C. Luke and J. N. Stubbs produced a report, Palestine: Disturbances in May 1921, hereafter referred to as "Haycraft Report." This report contains eyewitness testimony and correspondence relating to the commission's work (October 1921, Cmf. 1540, London, pp. 19-22).

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid. Reference to "free women of the Communist society" is interesting, but there is no further reference to "women" as a target group.

23. Ibid.

24. Nahas, pp. 16-17.
25. Margalit, p. 87.
26. Haycraft Report, pp. 19-22.
27. Ibid., pp. 30-34.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.

30. American Jewish Yearbook, Vol. 23 (Phila.: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1921), p. 182. A few days earlier, on May 12, two steamers with Jewish immigrants from Europe had not been permitted to disembark their passengers. Ibid.

31. Haycraft Report, p. 59, states that Joseph Chaim Brenner, "an author of some repute," was living with five other Jews in an isolated house off the Ramle Road. Brenner and four others were found beaten or stabbed to death; the sixth was found about 100 meters away, hands tied behind the back. When the searchers returned to remove the bodies, the sixth was gone, "and has not been seen since." Ibid., p. 32. Brenner was a much-loved symbol of Jewish creativity in the Yishuv. He once wrote: "The idea of 'assimilation' in itself does not frighten me; but when I see our assimilationists and I see their degradation, I see how detestable they are and how pitiable they are, then--I abhor assimilation," and "Why do we play hide and seek? Why is everything, all that happens to us, unexpected? Why don't we ever know enough to forestall approaching evils?" For Brenner, these last remarks proved prophetic. Arthur Hertzberg, Editor, The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader (N.Y.: Atheneum, 1973), containing Brenner's Self-Criticism (1914); also see his novels (Ba-Horef, "In the Winter"; Mi-Kaan Umi-Kaan, "From Here and There"; and Shanah Ahat, "One Year," among others). These are often autobiographical, discussing his fears, hopes, and life experiences, first in the diaspora (for example, in the Russian Army--in Shanah Ahat) and then in Palestine (as when he wrote about Aryeh Lapidot, drawn in the image of A. D. Gordon, in his first novel about Palestine, Mi-Kaan Umi-Kaan).

32. Haycraft Report, p. 43.

33. The Uniate Churches retain Eastern Orthodox rituals and liturgy, but are affiliated to the Roman Catholic Vatican.

34. Haycraft Report, pp. 44-50.

35. Ibid., pp. 50-54.

36. Margalit, p. 87.

37. Ibid., and see Nahum List's articles, passim.



## **Part 2**

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### **Evolving Perceptions: 1917–1922**

**From the Balfour Declaration  
to Britain's Palestine Mandate**



## 4

# Evolving Perceptions I: The Issuance of the Balfour Declaration—Expectations

### I

Graham T. Allison, in the Essence of Decision, has provided a rational-actor model which postulates: "Governments select the action that will maximize strategic goals and objectives."<sup>1</sup> This obviously assumes that decision-makers, as they evaluate policy options, have a clear perception of their country's interests. Allison includes some questions which are appropriate and helpful to this study of evolving British perceptions with regard to Jewish communists in Palestine. He first poses the basic question about the nature of the problem and the options available, and then suggests focusing on the strategic costs and benefits, as well as on the pressures in the international strategic marketplace.

Herbert Simon, in his Administrative Behavior, discusses the evolution of policy-making and gives us the useful "premise of decision,"<sup>2</sup> from which David Curzon derives his "premise of reality." As Curzon states: "A premise of reality is an assumption about the world outside the decision-making circle."<sup>3</sup> Since it is a proposition about fact, we are told, it may be wrong.

These two concepts--that decision-makers base their choices on a rational evaluation of their interests and how these can best be served, and that they bring to the process certain preconceived notions, premises of reality--provide the framework for the following analysis of the objective-subjective factors involved in the evolution of British attitudes vis-à-vis Zionism and the spread of Bolshevism by Jewish communists. The British fears, motivations and perceptions with regard to the issuance of the Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917, were complex because of the number of factors, both objective and subjective, involved. These included:

(1) The overall, continuing need to protect British imperial interests, through control of the Suez Canal.

(2) French and Italian ambitions in Syria and Palestine pending the hoped-for defeat of the Turks.

(3) The desire, once the Russian Revolution of March 1917 was under way, to keep Russia in the war so as to prevent the German forces from being transferred to, and reconcentrated on, the western front.

(4) The need to prevent Ukrainian grain from falling into German hands and the belief that Ukrainian Jews controlled the grain trade.

(5) The perception that Jewish names were prominent among the Bolshevik revolutionaries who appeared to be growing in strength.

This last issue cut two different ways; that is, it gave rise to two different perceptions, each based on the incorrect premise that world Jewry had the will and the capacity to act as an internationally-linked political force.<sup>4</sup>

(1) The ideological dominance: This was the perception that Russian and East European Jewry were the ideological, as well as the religious, brothers of Russia's revolutionary Bolshevik Jews. This gave rise to an inordinate fear of a growing Jewish (and potentially revolutionary) presence in Palestine which could interfere with British interests. For example, the British Illustrated Sunday Herald of a somewhat later date, February 8, 1920, published an article mentioning Trotsky's schemes "of a world-wide communistic state under Jewish domination."<sup>5</sup>

(2) The religious dominance: Here a different logic prevailed. The operative assumption was that the British promise of a Jewish homeland in Palestine would unite all segments of Russian Jewry, or, at least, most segments of Russian Jewry. It was expected that, in gratitude, they would support British war aims, regardless of their various ideological persuasions, or degree of assimilation. This perception also occasionally led to the mistaken secondary expectation that international Jewry, or at least most of international Jewry, including British and American Jews, being of one Jewish "national" mind, would emigrate to Palestine, thereby ensuring a western enclave sympathetic to Great Britain. As we shall see shortly, Chaim Weizmann fed the expectation that issuing the Balfour Declaration would rally world Jewry behind British war aims. His unsuccessful adversary was Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India and a cousin to Herbert Samuel.



Edwin Montagu fought the evolving British pro-Zionist policy in every possible way, although he clearly identified himself as a Jew. Writing to Lloyd George just after a meeting of the War Cabinet, at which the pro-Zionist declaration had been considered, Montagu warned: "You are being misled by a foreigner, a dreamer and idealist, who. . . sweeps aside all practical difficulties."<sup>6</sup> After the issuance of the Balfour Declaration, Montagu, "beaten but not reconciled," wrote in his diary (November 11, 1917):

I see from Reuter's telegram that Balfour has made the Zionist declaration against which I fought so hard. It seems strange to be a member of a Government which goes out of its way, as I think, for no conceivable purpose that I can see, to deal this blow at a colleague that is doing his best to be loyal to them, despite his opposition. The Government has dealt an irreparable blow at Jewish Britons and they have endeavoured to set up a people which does not exist; they have alarmed unnecessarily the whole Moslem world; and, in so far as they are successful, they will have a Germanised Palestine on the flank of Egypt. Why we should intern Mahomed Ali in India for Pan-Mohammedanism when we encourage Pan-Judaism I cannot for the life of me understand.<sup>7</sup> (Emphasis mine.)

Montagu even questioned Lloyd George about the effects of the Declaration on his ability to represent his government in India "if the world had just been told" that Palestine was his national home.<sup>8</sup> While Balfour was given momentary pause by Montagu's opposition, his own mind had gone through the decision-making process over a long period of time. Balfour and Lloyd George were looking at the larger picture, at the strategic costs and benefits to be derived from the issuance of the Declaration.

The concern with French ambitions in Syria and Palestine was quieted to some degree by the Sykes-Picot Agreement which

foresaw a division of Palestine, leaving Tiberias and part of the Galilee in French hands.<sup>9</sup> The Italian ambition to seek control over both Syria and Palestine once the Turks had been disposed of remained to be dealt with.

When Rome became aware of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, its Ambassador to St. James, the Marquis Imperiali, was instructed to ask for a clarification and to request assurances that Italy would receive its desired share of Ottoman territory. Following attempts to resolve apparently overlapping claims by the French and Italians, a formal agreement was drafted which incorporated Italian claims in a broadened Sykes-Picot agreement. According to the terms of the draft, the governments of France and Great Britain would "cede to Italy. . . the green and 'C' zones" which included Smyrna, which Italy promised to make a "free port for the commerce of France. . ." <sup>10</sup> The British, French and Italian governments endorsed the draft formula, and it remained only for the Russian government to do likewise.

As is indicated by the following statement made some time earlier, during the 1915-1916 period, there is little doubt that Chaim Weizmann had played on British fears of Palestine falling under the control of another great power:

If Britain does not wish anybody else to have Palestine, this means it will have to watch it and stop any penetration of another power. Such a course involves as much responsibility as would be involved by a British Protectorate over Palestine, with the sole difference that watching is a much less effective preventive than an actual protectorate: viz. the Jews take over the country; the whole burden of organization falls on them, but for the next ten or fifteen years they work under a temporary British protectorate.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, Weizmann, who was aware of divisions of opinion among the Jews, nevertheless fed the perception that it was up to the British to choose the path which would enable a nearly united Jewry to ally itself with Great Britain and to identify itself with British interests.

Lord Balfour, who had earlier been unable to grasp the significance of the Zionist refusal to embrace the Uganda offer in the light of the persecution from which East European Jews

suffered,<sup>12</sup> had been concerned with the influx of Jews into Britain. In 1904-1905, as Prime Minister, he had even spoken in the House of Commons of checking this alien immigration:

A state of things could easily be imagined in which it would not be to the advantage of this country that there should be an immense body of persons who, however patriotic, able and industrious, however much they throw themselves into the national life, remained a people apart, and not merely held a religion differing from the vast majority of their fellow-countrymen, but only intermarried among themselves.<sup>13</sup>

Although Balfour denounced anti-Semitism,<sup>14</sup> it was under his premiership that the Aliens Bill restricting immigration became law in 1905 following the report of the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration set up in 1902. In the following years he came to know the Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann, who impressed him with the "unique" form of Jewish patriotism and with the Jews' "love of their country."<sup>15</sup> As long as the Turks remained in control of Palestine, there was little the British could do to support Jewish national aspirations. Indeed, after World War I had begun, even Weizmann cautioned against action until the military situation had clarified.

3

With the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in March 1917, Weizmann alternated between hope and despair as to the possibility of Russian Jewry playing an effective role in supporting the World Zionist Organization's efforts to gain a Jewish homeland in Palestine. As time passed, he became increasingly concerned about the leftward swing of events in Russia. On September 13, 1917, Weizmann wrote Charles P. Scott,<sup>16</sup> a former Liberal M. P. and a journalist with the Manchester Guardian, expressing his understanding that "everybody" is preoccupied with the "grave" situation in Russia, but adding that he feared there was "very little hope that the reasons for this preoccupation will cease in the near future," things having "gone out of bounds there." He predicted Kerensky's inability to

maintain "a semblance of order" because of the fact that "the Soviets are the real government and possess executive power without responsibility," and because "the elements constituting the Soviets are not constructive, they are narrow-minded and fanatical." Weizmann continued:

... The misfortune of Russia is that it possesses a small group of intellectuals inexperienced in statecraft and a huge mass of inert peasants who can be swayed by political demagogues. . . . The so-called maximalist tendencies have demoralized not only Russia but threaten to undermine the state of things even outside Russia. I felt that in a minor degree in my own organization. Being constituted as it is chiefly of Russian Jews, they began to introduce Soviet tactics into the Zionist movement. . . . (Emphasis mine.)

Weizmann then states that his hands "would be very much strengthened if the declaration of which I spoke in my last letter could be obtained as soon as possible." Weizmann, establishing a clear link between his ability to influence Russian Jews and the issuance of the declaration, concludes his letter to Scott:

... It would be of very great value not only here but in Russia and in America, and therefore I think that it is of importance not to postpone it if possible.<sup>17</sup>

4

The British government was aware of the leftward swing in Russia, which began soon after the March Revolution and was gaining daily in momentum by the fall of 1917. In October, Lord Balfour, the Foreign Minister, swayed by Weizmann's persuasiveness but actually convinced by international circumstances, brought the matter before the British Cabinet.

According to Leonard J. Stein, "At the hour of decision, what mainly preoccupied the British Cabinet was the rapidly deteriorating situation in Russia. . . ." <sup>18</sup> Britain's Prime Minister David Lloyd George wrote that Russia's Jews had become the "chief agents of German pacifist propaganda in Russia" and that "by 1917 they [Russia's Jews] had done much in preparing for

that general disintegration of Russian society, later recognized as the revolution."<sup>19</sup> The Cabinet debated the Declaration's efficacy in terms of influencing Russia's Ukrainian Jews not to sell their grain to the Germans and to continue to encourage their government to remain in the war. Again, Lloyd George:

It was believed that if Great Britain declared for the fulfillment of Zionist aspirations in Palestine under her own pledge, one effect would be to bring Russian Jewry to the cause of the Entente.<sup>20</sup>

... The Zionist leaders gave us a definite promise that, if the Allies committed themselves to giving facilities for the establishment of a National Home for the Jews in Palestine, they would do their best to rally to the Allied cause Jewish sentiment and support throughout the world.<sup>21</sup>

Lloyd George then discussed how the Zionist leaders kept their word "in the letter and in the spirit. . . ." He explained:

Immediately the Declaration was agreed to, millions of leaflets were circulated in every town and area throughout the world where there were known to be Jewish communities. They were dropped from the air in German and Austrian towns, and they were scattered throughout Russia and Poland.

He then pointed to what he considered "substantial and in one case decisive advantages derived from this propaganda amongst the Jews." His example: ". . . the Bolsheviks baffled all the efforts of the Germans to benefit by the harvests of the Ukraine and the Don, and hundreds of thousands of German and Austrian troops had to be maintained to the end of the war on Russian soil, whilst the Germans were short of men to replace casualties on the Western front." Despite Lloyd George's disclaimer that he does not "suggest that this was due entirely, or even mainly, to Jewish activities," his next statement is revealing of his true perceptions with regard to the influence of the Jews, as well as with regard to their "international" unity:

... we have good reason to believe that Jewish propaganda in Russia had a great deal to do with the

difficulties created for the Germans in Southern Russia after the peace of Brest-Litovsk. The Germans themselves know that to be the case, and the Jews in Germany are suffering today [1937-1938] for the fidelity with which their brethren in Russia and in America discharged their obligations under the Zionist pledge to the Allies. (Emphasis mine.)<sup>22</sup>

This statement is, of course, preposterous, but it does illustrate the illusions of British leaders about the power of Russian Jewry to influence Russian policy in 1917-1918. Lloyd George even concluded that the Balfour Declaration might have been more effective in influencing Russia's Jews if it had been issued earlier.<sup>23</sup> It is difficult to refrain from being judgmental toward Lloyd George's remarks, which were tainted by anti-Semitism as well as incorrect. Russian Jews were simply not as potent as Lloyd George suggests.

After the issuance of the Balfour Declaration of November 2, the Bolshevik coup on November 7, and the subsequent Bolshevik attempts to influence the "peoples of the Near and Far East" at the Baku Conference in September 1920, concern began to be expressed in Britain about the possibility of the Declaration facilitating the creation of a "Bolshevik" outpost in Palestine. Having examined, to some extent, the fears, motivations, perceptions and international setting which helped the British Cabinet formulate certain individual premises upon which was based the decision to issue the Balfour Declaration, we turn in the next chapter to an examination of various Soviet actions which affected British perceptions of the Bolshevik threat to British interests in the Near East in general, as well as perceptions of the Communist movement in Palestine in particular. There was a widespread belief that the Jews were capable of acting as an internationally-linked political force. This belief had influenced the decision to issue the Balfour Declaration and continued to impact on British policy in the Palestine Mandate era after the war. Although British interests were "rationally" considered, along with the "strategic costs," many aspects of British policy were based on faulty perceptions of international Jewry. Thus, Allison's rational-actor model, combined with Curzon's premise of reality, provided a helpful framework for analysis of Britain's evolving Palestine policy.<sup>24</sup>

## NOTES

1. Graham T. Allison, Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), p. 32, and p. 257.

2. Herbert A. Simon, Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-Making Processes in Administrative Organization, Third Edition (N.Y.: Free Press, 1976), p. 50. It is worth bearing in mind, as Simon states (p. 51), that "The process by which judgments are formed has been very imperfectly studied."

3. David Curzon, "The Generic Secrets of Government Decision Making," in Government Secrecy in Democracies, edited by Itzhak Galnoor (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 94.

4. This theory is usually tied to the belief that Jews have international financial power and are working to take control of the world. This nonsense forms the basis of the notorious Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

5. Martin Gilbert, Winston S. Churchill, Vol. IV, 1917-1922 (London: Wm. Heineman, Ltd., 1975), p. 484.

6. Leonard Jacques Stein, The Balfour Declaration (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1961), p. 500.

7. Ibid., pp. 500-501.

8. David Lloyd George, The Truth About the Peace Treaties (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1938), p. 1134.

9. Ibid., pp. 1023-1025, and see J. C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record: 1914-1956, Vol. II (Princeton, N. J.: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1956), pp. 18-22, for the text of the "Agreement for the Partition of the Ottoman Empire: Britain, France and Russia," the Sykes-Picot Tripartite Agreement.

10. Hurewitz, pp. 23-25, for text of the "Tripartite (Saint-Jean De Maurienne) Agreement for the Partition of the Ottoman Empire: Britain, France and Italy"; also see Lloyd George, Ibid., and map on p. 1024.

11. Kenneth Young, Arthur James Balfour (London: G. Bell & Sons, Ltd., 1963), p. 390.

12. Ibid., p. 255.

13. The Maccabaeon, Vol. VI, No. 5, May 1904 (N.Y.: Maccabaeon Publ. Co.), pp. 245-246 for a discussion: "A restrictive measure has been introduced in Parliament, and the House of Commons has listened. . .with something akin to general satisfaction. Time was, when such a measure, or rather the theory of

it, met with the golden voiced indignation of Gladstone. . . ." Young, p. 257 for Balfour's statement.

14. Young (p. 257) writes that Balfour told Weizmann of a long conversation with Cosima Wagner at Bayreuth. He admitted that he "shared many of her anti-Semitic postulates." Weizmann's reply: "I pointed out that we, too. . . had drawn attention to the fact that Germans of the Mosaic persuasion were an undesirable and demoralising phenomenon, but said we wholly disagreed with Wagner and [Houston Stewart] Chamberlain both as to diagnosis and prognosis."

15. Ibid., p. 256.

16. Scott (1846-1932) was strongly radical. A member of Parliament from 1895-1906, he met Weizmann in September 1914. With Turkey's entry into the war, Scott proclaimed identity of British and Zionist interests in Palestine. His journalistic and political influence proved invaluable to Weizmann, especially with regard to Lloyd George. Biographic section, The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann (hereafter called Weizmann Papers), Series A, Letters (August 1914-November 1917), Vol. VII (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1975).

17. Ibid., p. 509, item 501.

18. Leonard J. Stein, Weizmann and the Balfour Declaration (Sixth Chaim Weizmann Memorial Lecture in the Humanities: Weizmann Science Press of Israel, 1961), p. 31.

19. Lloyd George, p. 1122.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., p. 1139. In a letter to Louis D. Brandeis in Washington, dated London, December 21, 1917, Weizmann wrote that, with the issuance of the Declaration and with the news that the Germans were preparing to establish purchasing committees to obtain needed produce and petrol, Russia's Ukrainian Jews had a "splendid opportunity to show their gratitude to England and America." See Weizmann Papers, Vol. VIII (November 1917-October 1918), pp. 30-31, item 37.

22. Lloyd George, pp. 1139-1140.

23. Ran Marom, "The Bolsheviks and the Balfour Declaration," in The Left Against Zion: Communism, Israel and the Middle East, Robert S. Wistrich, Editor (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1979), p. 17, citing "Notes on Zionism," Great Britain, War Office.

24. Allison presents two other models on organizational processes and government (bureaucratic) politics.



## 5

# Evolving Perceptions II: The Growing Bolshevik Menace

### I

On November 8, 1917, the day after the Bolshevik coup, the new Russian government issued a decree announcing its intention to annul, "immediately and unconditionally, the secret treaties [concluded by the Tsarist regime with other powers], in so far as they have for their object. . . to give benefits and privileges to the Russian landowners and capitalists, to maintain or to increase annexation by the Great Russians."<sup>1</sup> There followed, shortly thereafter, the publication of the Allied secret agreements, including those relating to the division of the spoils of war on the expected demise of the Ottoman Empire. This was followed at the end of November by an appeal from the Council of the People's Commissars to "the people of the belligerent countries" to join the new Soviet socialist government in calling for and negotiating an armistice and a "peoples' peace."<sup>2</sup> Soon, a Bolshevik campaign was orchestrated to arouse Russia's southern neighbors to revolt against European imperialism. In line with this, a declaration addressed exclusively to the Muslim world was issued on December 3, 1917. It began with what would become a familiar salutation, "Comrades! Brothers!" and appealed to the "toilers and dispossessed Mohammedan workers in Russia and the East. . ." to "Support this revolution and its representative Government!" The appeal continued:

Mohammedans of the East! Persians, Turks, Arabs and Indians! All you whose bodies and property, freedom and native land have been for centuries exploited by the European beasts of prey! . . . The Russian Republic, and its Government, the Council of People's Commissars, are opposed to the annexation of foreign lands: Constantinople must remain in the hands of the Mohammedans. . . . Overthrow these robbers and enslavers of your lands. . . . You must yourselves be masters in your own land! . . .<sup>3</sup>

As yet there was no direct reference to Palestine in this appeal, but Ran Marom<sup>4</sup> suggests that the Bolsheviki viewed the Balfour Declaration as intended to disrupt Russo-German peace contacts. Thus the Bolsheviki may have feared the very process for which the British were hoping, namely, that Russian Jewry would attempt to block the peace process with Germany. While the British also initially hoped to influence the Bolshevik party through its Jewish leaders, these Jewish leaders, such as Leon Trotsky and Adolph Joffe,<sup>5</sup> opposed the Zionist idea of a national home in Palestine on at least two grounds: a "Jewish National Home" in Palestine, especially under a British protectorate, contradicted their ideological position on the colonial question; and the Bolsheviki feared the impact of the Declaration on Russian Jewry<sup>6</sup> and on its status as a national minority, seen in the context of Marxist-Leninist pronouncements on national minorities in general and on the Jewish question in particular. Bolshevik hostility to the Balfour Declaration should thus be seen as a product of (1) Lenin's ideological stand vis-à-vis national minorities, particularly the Jewish national minority; (2) the crises being faced by the struggling Bolshevik regime, stemming in part from its isolation in Europe and in part from domestic opposition and civil war conditions; and (3) Lenin's evolving foreign policy, which was tied to the situation in Russia itself.

## 2

When one recalls that the Balfour Declaration coincided with the beginning of the British conquest of Palestine and with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, it is easier to understand Bolshevik (and Russian) concern with Great Britain's encroachment into an area adjacent to Soviet Russia. Also ideologically, Great Britain had always been perceived by Marxist-Leninists as a major bastion of capitalism and imperialism. In this context, the British conquest of Palestine was seen as a challenge to the revolutionary struggle to destroy international capitalism: "When Great Britain takes African colonies, Baghdad and Jerusalem," Trotsky said, "then that is certainly not a defensive war. . . . That is a struggle for the partition of the globe."<sup>7</sup>

The Bolsheviki, therefore, treated the Balfour Declaration as intended to prepare and to justify the dismantling of the Ottoman

Empire and the expansion of British imperialism. As for the Zionist leaders, they were portrayed by Jewish Bolsheviki in the Ukraine as tools of the British imperialists and as bourgeois counterrevolutionaries:

... The aim of the Palestinian idea in the present international conditions. . . makes. . . the Zionist bourgeoisie and the Zionist party one of the branches of the imperialist counterrevolution. The Zionist party had linked its fate to the Entente, which gave the Zionists certain promises at the time the division of Turkey was considered. This causes the Zionists to support the Entente. . . .<sup>8</sup>

Hence the Bolshevik actions discussed earlier: the publication of such secret documents as the Sykes-Picot Treaty, the appeal to the Muslim world, and the overall attempt to distance Soviet Russia from the imperialist powers and to move closer to the peoples of the colonial world. On March 3, 1918, the separate peace treaty so feared by the British was signed between the Soviet and German governments at Brest-Litovsk. It was preceded and followed by Soviet efforts, in the face of civil war and the need to consolidate power over the peoples of Russia, to neutralize threats from Russia's neighbors. On January 14, 1918, Trotsky had denounced the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 which had divided Persia into British and Tsarist spheres of influence. Six months later, on June 26, 1918, Soviet Foreign Commissar Georgi Vasilyevich Chicherin formally announced Moscow's voluntary nullification of concessions and special privileges which the Tsarist government had extracted from Persia. While a detailed recounting of British activities in Persia is not appropriate to this study, it is necessary to point out that Lord Curzon's attempt "to profit by the impotence of Russia in order to establish a veiled form of British protectorate over the whole of Persia,"<sup>9</sup> was seen as a "provocation" by the Bolsheviks, who, as stated above, had renounced Russia's special position in Persia. As one of the British financial advisers to the Persian government appointed under the new British treaty put it:

Had we been content to rest satisfied with our position and prestige, it is improbable that Bolsheviks would have been provoked to action as they were. . . .

That the Foreign Office should seize upon the moment when Russia was in the throes of revolution to repudiate the convention [of 1907], and should enter upon a policy avowedly aimed at supplanting Russian influence, could only be regarded from the Bolshevik point of view as an act of deliberate aggression. (Emphasis mine.)<sup>10</sup>

On June 26, 1919, the Soviet government, apprised of the scope of the projected new Anglo-Persian Treaty, issued a statement to the Persian government in which it recounted its own recent concessions to Persia, in contrast to the on-going imperialist actions of the British. A few weeks after the signature of the Treaty on August 9, 1919, Chicherin attacked it as "shameful" and appealed to the Persian masses to accept the "fraternal hand" of Russia's working people. "The hour is near," said Chicherin's declaration, "when we shall be able in deed to carry out our task of a common struggle with you against the robbers and oppressors, great and small, who are the source of your countless sufferings."<sup>11</sup> E. H. Carr credits these promptings, at least in part, for Persia's failure to ratify the treaty. The Persian public was sufficiently aroused that the convocation of the Mejlis for purposes of ratification had to be delayed.<sup>12</sup>

To the British, these Bolshevik appeals to the Persians and Muslims appeared to menace their interests. It seemed to them that Colonel Edward House (Woodrow Wilson's key adviser) had been correct when, earlier in the spring of 1919, he had said, "Bolshevism is gaining ground everywhere."<sup>13</sup> Lloyd George, during the same period, echoed: "The whole of Europe is filled with the spirit of revolution."<sup>14</sup> These observations seemed valid at the time. March 1919 saw the Comintern's founding congress. Shortly thereafter, Bela Kun's Soviet republic was proclaimed in Budapest. Even though both were short-lived, Trotsky's subsequent prediction of August 1920, that within a year all Europe would be Bolshevik,<sup>15</sup> nevertheless so frightened many British leaders that they began to view each and every communist party--no matter how small and ineffective--as a potential threat.

Shortly after the Second Congress of the Third International, which partly overlapped in its timing with the

Fifth Conference of the World Union of the Poale Zion discussed in Chapter 3, the First Congress of the Peoples of the East was held in Baku, capital of Azerbaijan S.S.R. in September 1920. The Soviets had reoccupied Baku, on the Caspian Sea, in April 1920, following the British departure. The decision to hold a Muslim congress in Baku was part of Moscow's anti-imperialism strategy. At the Second Congress of the Comintern it had been decided: "to instigate strikes, riots, subversion in Europe and America, especially in those countries that had led the foreign intervention. . . ." This was supposed to "discourage any repetition of the invasion of Russia." It had also been decided that imperialism's "colonial periphery" would be attacked. This attack against "the Achilles' heel of imperialism" was intended to deprive the Entente Powers of their sources of raw materials and fuel; and of their political authority.<sup>16</sup>

The choice of Baku as the site for the Muslim congress<sup>17</sup> was, therefore, no accident. The aim of the congress was to enlist the support of the Muslim people in a counterattack against the foreign invaders of Russia, so as to expel them from Turkey, Iran, Armenia, and Mesopotamia--lands adjacent to the Soviet republics. Karl Radek, Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, addressing a meeting of the Baku Soviet of Deputies and the Azerbaijan Congress of Trade Unions on August 31, 1920, on the eve of the congress, explained:

It is no accident that we chose the city of Baku. . . . Here in Baku, where for many years Persians, Turks, and Tatars worked, here in Baku where capitalism ravished and exploited them, and where, at the same time there came to them the socialist idea, and it found a general response in their hearts. . . . We are convinced that this city of workers, in which there existed unheard-of bourgeois luxury on the one hand and the darkest life of the workers on the other--that this city will become the arena of international revolution, that from here will emanate an electric current of political consciousness, that here will be installed the banner of the struggle for the liberation of the East, which the Communist International entrusts to the Baku proletariat, experienced fighters for the liberation of the workers of mankind.<sup>18</sup>

According to Bolshevick claims, 1,891 delegates attended. Of these, 1,273 claimed to be communists, 266 were nonparty, 100 listed no affiliation. There were 55 women in attendance; there is no breakdown of their affiliations. From Turkey had come 235 delegates; from Persia, 192. There were 157 Armenians, 8 Chinese, 8 Kurds, 3 Arabs, and 100 Georgians.<sup>19</sup> The most incongruous thing about the congress was that the three official delegates of the Third International, Grigory Zinoviev, the head of the Comintern who also served as Baku Congress Chairman, Karl Radek, Secretary and prominent Bolshevick intellectual, and Bela Kun, former leader of the short-lived communist regime in Hungary (March-August 1919) were all Jewish. As Ivar Spector states: "Apparently the Comintern at that time saw nothing anomalous about sending three Jews on a mission to win the Muslim and Armenian peoples to the Soviet cause!"<sup>20</sup>

Zinoviev delivered the keynote speech, issuing a fiery summons of the Muslims to Jihad, holy war, primarily against English imperialism. Spector speaks of the "stormy applause" and "prolonged hurrahs" which punctuated and followed Zinoviev's speech. But one of the Comintern delegates, a certain Skatchko, committed a faux pas by labeling the Muslim clergy "parasites and oppressors" as well as "hypocrites," also saying they "hide behind a white turban and the Holy Koran the fact that they are parasites and oppressors."<sup>21</sup> Many delegates, and the Muslim world in general, were not ready for such ideological-political attacks on their traditional leaders.

4

The Baku Congress did not accomplish what Moscow had hoped. It did not arouse the Muslim peoples to join the revolutionary cause of the Bolsheviks. Indeed it did awaken in many of them suspicion that Bolshevism was actually a threat to Islam. "Even the most ignorant mullahs, who had been comparing Lenin and Marx with Mohammed," feared the anti-religious propaganda that emanated from the Baku Congress. In particular, they could point to the "Manifesto," the "Appeal to the Peoples of the East," which was not passed by the delegates or included in the official records of the congress, but which had supposedly been approved "in principle" by the

congress. The document was directed entirely against England, calling on all Muslims, once again, to launch a holy war against the British subjugators and exploiters. Foolishly, the authors of the manifesto had included an attack on Islam, making the document itself more hostile than the addresses heard by the assembled delegates. Had they been given the opportunity to hear and discuss its text, it is extremely doubtful that the delegates would have given their stamp of approval to such a document. For example, one passage proclaimed:

. . . Many times you have heard from your governments the summons to a holy war; you have marched under the green banner of the Prophet; but all these holy wars were deceitful and false, and served the interests of your selfish rulers; but you, peasants and workers, even after these wars remained in serfdom and destitution; you won the blessings of life for others, but you yourselves never enjoyed any of them.

Now we summon you to the first genuine holy war under the red banner of the Communist International. (Emphasis mine.)<sup>22</sup>

A Council of Propaganda and Action, created by the Baku Congress, was scheduled to convene every three months. In December 1920, the council announced the first issue of a journal, The Peoples of the East, to appear in Russian, Turkish, Persian and Arabic. Carr tells us that no copies of this journal have been traced and that there is little other record of the council's activities, although Stalin's notes claim that the council "continued to exist for about a year."<sup>23</sup> In any event, the council went into oblivion after March 1921, when the Soviets signed a trade agreement with Great Britain. Although the Baku Congress had been called the "First" Congress of the Peoples of the East, there would never be another under Soviet auspices.<sup>24</sup>

## 5

March 1921 marks the point at which Soviet foreign policy retreated in Europe from what had been a constant and active promotion of world revolution. But while the Soviets thereafter

try to establish "amicable trading relations"<sup>25</sup> with west European countries, their Eastern policy becomes increasingly aggressive. Thus Moscow followed a dual policy: accommodation and consolidation in the West and the promotion of revolution in the East. The former was designed to deal with Soviet Russia's domestic needs (which were formidable). Trade and foreign investments were crucially needed. The Bolshevik leadership had finally come to accept that the anticipated European revolutions were simply not going to occur in time to save Communist Russia from disintegration. Lenin's N.E.P. (New Economic Policy) of 1921 signaled the "retreat," as he, himself, called it. Pragmatism would now mark the domestic and Western policies. In the East, however, the Soviets continued to pursue their ideological interests: working to build communist parties in anticipation of the appropriate time, when they would be strong enough and when conditions would be right for another effort at revolution.

What did all of this mean to the British and their involvement in Palestine? What did it mean to the infant communist movement within Palestine? Finally, what did it mean in relation to British perceptions of the Palestinian communists? As noted, the various propaganda activities of the Russians, whether in Europe or in the East, did have an effect on the thinking of the British leaders. For a long time they believed that Bolshevism was on the move and was a genuine threat to them and to their interests in other parts of the world. Even when they ceased fearing an imminent revolution, they still maintained their hostile attitude toward Bolshevism. The British initially interpreted the Soviet overtures of 1921 for trade as a clear signal that the communist system could not work. Occasionally they hoped that the Soviet leadership would "settle down" and become like other states' leaders. As time passed, however, the British became increasingly alarmed by communist activities in Egypt, in Iran, and elsewhere in the Near East, as well as in Palestine. These activities undermined the British hope that the Soviets would eventually respect the status quo. Instead, there was a growing conviction that their initial fear and suspicion of Bolshevism had been correct. Their original premise of reality, that Bolshevism was directly opposed to their interests, was reinforced.

The reaction, therefore, to the May Day clashes of 1921 in Palestine should be seen in the context of the British realization



that Bolshevism in the Near East was virulently anti-British. Although there had already been attacks in the British press against the Jewish Bolsheviks in Palestine, attacks which Chaim Weizmann was forced to deal with,<sup>26</sup> after the May Day and subsequent rioting, a still more critical eye would be turned to Palestine.

As we approach the Parliamentary discussions on the incorporation of the Balfour Declaration into the Palestine Mandate given to Great Britain by the League of Nations, we increasingly see a hesitancy on the part of certain prominent Englishmen to continue what they feel has been a misguided pro-Zionist policy. We will next examine some of these discussions with a view to understanding the degree to which the fear of Bolshevism in Palestine became entangled with incorrect premises of reality with regard to "world" Jewry. A subsequent chapter will respond to the remaining question: What did it mean to the infant communist movement within Palestine?

#### NOTES

1. J. C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record: 1914-1956, Vol. II (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1956), p. 27.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ran Marom, "The Bolsheviks and the Balfour Declaration," in The Left Against Zion: Communism, Israel and the Middle East, Robert S. Wistrich, Editor (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1979), pp. 17-18.

5. Adolph Abramovich Joffe (1883-1927) was a Russian revolutionary and diplomat. A Menshevik until he met Trotsky, he then joined the Bolshevik movement. He led the Soviet delegation to peace talks with Germany at Brest-Litovsk in 1918 and later served as a Soviet diplomat. After Trotsky's expulsion from the Soviet Communist Party, Joffe committed suicide. Encyclopaedia Judaica, Vol. 10, p. 140 and Vol. 5, p. 794.

6. Marom, pp. 17-18.

7. Ibid., p. 19.

8. Ibid., pp. 19-20. Marom is quoting from a Memorandum from the Central Committee of the Jewish Communist League 'Komfarband' of the Ukraine to the Commissariat for Internal Affairs of the Ukraine, July 4, 1919.

9. Edward H. Carr, A History of Soviet Russia, Vol. III, p. 240.

10. Ibid., p. 241. See Carr's fn. 2.

11. Ibid., pp. 241-242.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., p. 128.

14. Ibid.

15. Carr (Vol. III, p. 271) explains: "The summer of 1920 was the last period during which belief in the imminence of the European revolution was a dominant factor in Soviet foreign policy. The war with Poland and the interruption which it entailed in the incipient rapprochement with western Europe provided a fresh stimulus to revolutionary propaganda; and the spectacular victories of the Red Army opened up... what seemed an immediate prospect of revolution in Europe."

16. Ivar Spector, The Soviet Union and the Muslim World--1917-1958 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1959), p. 46.

17. A. Zeki Velidi Togan (Velidov), a prominent Bashkir from Muslim Central Asia conceived the idea of holding a Muslim congress. Togan was with Karl Radek and a group of Turkish officers in Moscow, in 1919. Togan claims that the congress was to have been summoned by the Muslim peoples themselves and not by the Russians or the Third International. He was the one to have suggested Baku. However, General Ali Fuat Cebesoy, the first ambassador of the Turkish Republic in the Soviet Union, credits Radek with a plan to hold a Muslim congress in Moscow. Radek's plan turned into a debacle when the Bolsheviki tried to use the former Turkish leaders of the Sultanate, including Enver Pasha and Jamal Pasha, to entice Muslim delegates to Moscow. For his part, General Cebesoy convinced Enver Pasha that the congress should be held far from Soviet pressure, suggesting Ankara, Turkey. The Bolshevik leaders, grown impatient, went ahead with Radek's plan and summoned Muslim delegates to Moscow. Some responded; Enver Pasha was not located; and the congress accomplished nothing. Radek's next plan was for the Third International to summon the Muslim peoples to a congress in Baku. An angry Togan not only did not participate officially, but went incognito and managed to shake things up a bit by writing out various proposed resolutions which others submitted. Zinoviev, Radek, and Bela Kun, the three official delegates of the Third International, realized someone was providing resolutions, but could not identify the source. Ibid., pp. 47-54.

18. Ibid., p. 53.

19. Carr, pp. 260-261 and Spector, p. 52.

20. Spector, ibid.

21. Ibid., p. 57.

22. Ibid., p. 60.

23. Carr, p. 268, fn. 3.

24. The next congress of the peoples of the East--the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, held in April 1955, would bring together delegates of twenty-nine independent nations, and they would not be summoned by the Communist International. Thus, thirty-five years would pass before another such congress would be convoked. In Bandung there would be no attack against religion. Even Chou En-lai, the Premier of Communist China, would express the hope that "those with religious beliefs will respect those without." Spector, p. 61.

25. Carr, Chapter 29, "To Genoa and Rapallo," discusses Soviet efforts to sign trade agreements with the British and then with the Germans.

26. On June 23, 1920, Weizmann wrote to the Editor of The Yorkshire Post, Leeds, drawing attention to a piece entitled "Palestine and Bolshevism" in their issue of June 11. The article had stated that Weizmann had informed Lord Allenby that "unless my race had absolute dominion in Palestine, Bolshevism would at once be let loose over all Western Europe and through every British colony." Weizmann denied that he had ever said anything to that effect. See Weizmann Papers, Vol. VIII, p. 379, item 354. However, Weizmann's words to Gilbert F. Clayton, G.H.Q., Palestine, in a letter dated November 27, 1918, may have been taken out of context and found their way into the newspaper: "If the Jews are disappointed this time, there will be too much bitterness produced in the new world and instead of making out of the Jews one of the most valuable constructive elements, especially in the Near East, they will be driven into anarchy and Bolshevism. It is our last chance, and we must not lose it." Ibid., pp. 40-43, item 38.



# Evolving Perceptions III: Palestinian Bolshevism in the Parliamentary Debates on the Incorporation of the Balfour Declaration into the Mandate

## 1

As noted in Chapter 3, the Haycraft Report on the May Day riots in 1921 placed the blame squarely on the MPS. In a subsection entitled "The Jewish Labour Situation," the report states:

Early in 1920 they [MPS members] were reinforced by several communists newly arrived from Russia. . . . They continued their efforts to capture the 'Achduth Ha-Avodah,' but, when these failed, determined, as a Left Wing of the 'Poale Zion,' to prepare the soil of Palestine for the Social Revolution.  
(Emphasis mine.)<sup>1</sup>

These were ominous lines in the eyes of the members of the British government<sup>2</sup> who had to deal directly with the question of incorporating the "Zionist [Balfour] Declaration" (as Lloyd George and other Britishers called it) into the Palestine Mandate. They believed that "Mopsi took orders from Trotsky in the course of personal visits by its leaders to Moscow,"<sup>3</sup> and Lord Curzon protested to the Soviets about their anti-British activities in Asia, actions which were contrary to the Anglo-Soviet agreement signed in March 1921.<sup>4</sup>

On February 10, 1922, The New Palestine, an American Zionist weekly, quoted the remarks of General Prescott Decie speaking before a London audience:

The trail of the Bolsheviki runs through Ireland, New York and Moscow, and leads to Frankfurt-am-Main, the center of the Jewish financier group. . . . Jews everywhere are opposed to the British Empire. The Jewish state in Palestine will

only be formed with the help of British bayonets--the Palestine inhabitants never consenting.

The article also noted that a certain Lady Moore, who presided over the London meeting, said that Palestine "was flooded with aliens" who were influencing politics and menacing the country more acutely than during the pre-war period.<sup>5</sup> Similar to these remarks was an editorial in the British Morning Post attacking the renewed movement for free trade and charging Jews with the leadership of the movement. "All parties," the Post stated, "depend upon German Jews providing the funds out of the profits made by the destruction of the British industries."<sup>6</sup>

What makes these remarks interesting is their perception of the Bolshevik menace as intertwined with the Jewish-conspiracy menace. The New Palestine of March 17, 1922, gives an example from an important provincial paper, The Yorkshire Herald, which accuses the Zionists of an attempt to "swamp Palestine with Jewish immigrants of the worst class, who are infected with Bolshevist ideas."<sup>7</sup>

Retired Colonel Josiah Wedgwood, a Labor leader in Parliament wrote in the Westminster Gazette of February 28, 1922:

... The military on the spot [i.e., in Palestine] have done their utmost to produce a different solution [from the one intended by the Balfour Declaration]. ... They did not like the Jews; they were not their sort. They read the Morning Post and knew that all Jews were Bolsheviks in disguise. ... So the military pulled one way, and the Government pulled the other way, and the military were on the spot and the Government at a distance. So it has gone on for three and a half years.<sup>8</sup>

## 2

On March 17, 1922, just a few months before the Parliamentary debate on the Palestine Mandate question, The New Palestine reported on a House of Commons session held three days earlier. Replying to a question, Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, said that the data on Jewish

immigrants to Palestine from September 1920 to December 1921 indicated the following breakdown:

35 %	from	Poland
15	"	Russia
5	"	Roumania
11	"	Ukraine
2	"	America
3.5	"	Great Britain

Thus, only the 15% from Russia and the 11 from the Ukraine could have been briefed by Bolshevik instructions. Mr. Churchill "took occasion to shatter the Bolshevist 'bogy' which is given such currency by the Morning Post and its associates," The New Palestine reported, quoting Churchill:

It is a mistake to think that the bulk of Jews is saturated with Bolshevism. Bolshevism is foreign to Zionism. On the contrary, it is violently denounced and persecuted by Bolshevists.<sup>9</sup>

As Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Churchill was expected to deal with the problem of regulating future immigration into Palestine. How was he going to do this? The government, he said, was considering the establishment of a joint board composed of Jewish and Arab representatives which would have control over immigration.<sup>10</sup> The discussion and Churchill's statements are indicative of the general sense of unease which pervaded both Houses of the British Parliament as a result of the actions of a rather small group of communists in Palestine. A reading of these discussions provides an understanding of the degree to which the Palestinian communists jeopardized the Zionist cause in the corridors of the British Establishment. Even Winston Churchill, the man who had read "British interests" into the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, was now telling the House of Commons that Jewish immigration to Palestine would be subject, at least partially, to Arab approval. Obviously, the Zionists saw this as signalling incipient British interference in Jewish immigration.

In noting the Haycraft Report's statement that the Palestine Civil Service was swamped by Jews, the Communist M. P. Mellon declared this assertion to be "a travesty on truth." He denounced the Morning Post for preaching the notorious doctrine of the Jewish peril and then added, surprisingly, the judgment: "If we abrogate one jot of the Balfour Declaration, it will be a terrible blow to the millions of Jews in the European ghettos."<sup>11</sup>

Mellon's support so surprised the Zionists that they were unsure of his motivations. Perhaps the communists, faced with a possible British withdrawal from Palestine and an American presence in its place, preferred the British. Alternatively, perhaps the communists wished to present a more moderate image in Great Britain. As for reaction to Mellon's remarks in Palestine, we have the word of The New Palestine that the Zionists there were also surprised. The reaction of the communists in Palestine is not known.

The debate on the incorporation of the Balfour Declaration into the Mandate was opened in the House of Lords on June 21, 1922. Lord Sydenham reviewed events in Palestine and noted:

... we have dumped down 25,000 promiscuous people on the shores of Palestine, many of them quite unsuited for colonising purposes, and some of them Bolsheviks, who have already shown the most sinister activity. The Arabs would have kept the Holy Land clear from Bolshevism.<sup>12</sup>

Speaking about Pinhas Rutenberg, a well-known hydraulic engineer who was applying for a concession to generate and sell electrical energy and power in Palestine,<sup>13</sup> Lord Sydenham commented:

Surely, some British or Palestinian citizen could have been found to tender. It could not have been



necessary to give this contract to a revolutionary Russian Jew, who really, of course, hails from Germany. The point is that the people of Palestine, the people for whom we are responsible, strongly object to this contract.<sup>14</sup>

There were strong undercurrents of anti-Semitism in the debate. Many old shibboleths and prejudices were resurrected. In the end, the House of Lords voted against accepting the Mandate "in its present form." The following was moved and adopted:

... the Mandate for Palestine in its present form is unacceptable to this House, because it directly violates the pledges made by His Majesty's Government to the people of Palestine, in the Declaration of October 1915, and again in the Declaration of November 1918, and is, as at present framed, opposed to the sentiments and wishes of the great majority of the people of Palestine; that, therefore, its acceptance by the League of Nations should be postponed until such modifications have therein been effected as will comply with pledges given by His Majesty's Government.<sup>15</sup>

Lord Balfour had stood his ground, staunchly advocating the British Zionist policy as it had been enunciated in the Declaration of 1917. In addition to a moral commitment, he stressed British interests as reasons for incorporating the Declaration into the Mandate.<sup>16</sup> Despite his arguments, and the arguments of his supporters, the vote went against his policy and for the motion's adoption: 60 to 29.<sup>17</sup> It appears that the Bolshevik menace had succeeded in convincing a substantial sector of the British elite that this ideological taint, *i.e.*, communism, went hand-in-glove with a religious one, *i.e.*, East European Jews were potential Bolshevik revolutionaries who, in Palestine, subverted British interests.

In July 1922, the matter came before the House of Commons. Winston Churchill denounced those in the House of Lords who had attacked Rutenberg, the commitment to a Jewish homeland,

and the British Palestine policy in general: "If Rutenberg had been a Bolshevik and come around to the Colonial Office for concessions, I should have told him to go to Genoa." (The reference here was to the Italian city where the Bolsheviks had come seeking a trade agreement with the British a year earlier.) Churchill warned the House of Commons that if the government were defeated on the question of its Palestine policy, Lloyd George and his Cabinet would resign. Finally, Churchill said: "... if we are to inscribe over the portals of the new Jerusalem, that no Israelite need apply here allow me to confine my attention to Irish matters and to be released of my responsibility for Palestine."<sup>18</sup>

In the House of Commons (unlike the Lords) the government's Mandate policy was sustained 292 to 35.<sup>19</sup> While Zionists generally praised Churchill's support for their cause, Churchill's measuring rod was the extent to which a Jewish presence in Palestine furthered British interests. His final appeal in the debate had been on economic grounds: The cost of administering Palestine had fallen from £8,000,000 in 1920 to £4,000,000 in 1921, and to an estimated £2,000,000 for 1922. Even further reductions, he had declared, "would be possible if the Colonial Office were allowed to develop the resources of Palestine by means of the Rutenberg scheme." He had explained that such a scheme could help the government "recoup" the money it had spent, and that he hoped to reduce the annual cost of Palestine to £1,000,000 by 1924.<sup>20</sup>

In contrast to the Judeo-Communist myth-makers, Churchill was convinced that a Jewish presence in Palestine would thwart communistic aims. Hence, he found no difficulty in supporting Jewish immigration into Palestine and simultaneously combatting communism there. When Sir Herbert Samuel reported a movement among extremist immigrants to disrupt the administration's work, Churchill noted, in a Colonial Office Minute dated March 31, 1921: "In my view the High Commissioner should collect and deport all the leaders of this movement, and he should be asked to state by telegraph what action he proposes."<sup>21</sup> Those deportations, as noted earlier, duly took place.

For the communists in Palestine, the institutionalization of the Mandate meant that the British were there to stay, that their own activities would be proscribed, and hence that their tactics

would have to be altered. Moscow, as we shall see, responded by changing the leadership of the Palestinian communists. The new leadership's qualities, tested by extremely difficult circumstances, will be discussed following an examination of the difficulties of rebuilding the communist party in Palestine.

## NOTES

1. Thomas W. Haycraft, Palestine: Disturbances in May 1921 (Haycraft Report), Commission of Inquiry (October 1921, Cm. 1540, London), pp. 19-20.

2. Lord Balfour, having second thoughts about Britain's Palestine policy, had begun to urge during the Peace Conference that it would be best, "in all circumstances," for the Palestine Mandate to be assigned to the United States. The New Palestine, Vol. XIV, January 27, 1928, p. 65, quoting from the then recently published U. S. "State Papers" on Palestine.

3. Christopher Sykes, Crossroads to Israel (London: Collins, 1965), p. 69.

4. Edward H. Carr, A History of Soviet Russia, (N.Y.: Macmillan Company, 1953), pp. 344-345. Lord Curzon's "long memorandum of protest" to the Soviets and to the Comintern noted actions which the British declared to be "contrary to the undertaking in the Anglo-Soviet agreement to refrain from propaganda 'against the institutions of the British Empire.'"

5. The New Palestine, Vol. II, February 10, 1922, p. 86.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., March 17, 1922, "English Press on Palestine," p. 166.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., p. 170.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, Vol. 50, No. 47, Wednesday, 21st June, 1922, p. 1022.

13. Pinhas Rutenberg was a fascinating character. He was the leading pioneer investigator of irrigation and electrification problems in Palestine. In 1920 he prepared a report, "The Water Resources of Palestine," which led to his recognition as an expert on these matters. Chaim Weizmann, in his autobiography, Trial and Error (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949, Vol. I, pp. 168-169), tells how Pinhas (or Peter) Rutenberg

first came to him in connection with the founding of a Jewish legion in the First World War. "He turned up at our house, in Manchester, in the late of autumn of 1914. . . a dark night . . . I saw standing in the doorway a dim, bulky figure. . . . I had no idea who the man was. . . his name. . . conveyed nothing to me. I was not well versed in the history of the Russian Revolution. I did. . . know of the famous affair of Father Gapon, the agent provocateur of the first Russian revolution, 1905, who had been caught by the revolutionaries and strangled; but I did not know of the part which Rutenberg had played in it."

From Churchill we learn a bit more about Rutenberg: "He was one of those Social Revolutionaries who combated that tyranny of the then despotic Tsarist Government, and who, after the revolution, did their best to combat the still worse tyranny of the Bolshevist rulers who succeeded to the power of the Tsar. His attitude has been perfectly consistent. If I am told that he took part in the murder of Father Gapon, who was an agent provocateur, an agent for the Russian police, to obtain secrets of the revolutionaries with whom he was working--if I am told that he was a party to the murder of the priest Gapon and also knew that he recommended to Kerensky, when he was an official of his [Kerensky's] Government, to hang Lenin and Trotsky, then it seems to me that he has been entirely consistent." See The New Palestine, Vol. III, July 21, 1922, p. 52.

The Rutenberg Concession was granted in 1926 to the Palestine Electric Corporation, organized by Rutenberg and financed by both Jewish and British interests. The concession was important since this project was the first endeavor in the Middle East to develop the resources of a seemingly unpromising area. Thus, this was a pilot project which was responsible for the first consequential hydro-electric development in the Middle East. See Hedley V. Cooke, Challenge and Response in the Middle East--The Quest for Prosperity: 1919-1951 (N.Y.: Harper & Brothers, 1952), pp. 215-219, for a costs-benefits analysis of the Concession. Cooke was a U. S. Consul in Palestine and Turkey as well as a Consultant for the Middle East Planning Staff, Economic Cooperation Administration.

14. Parliamentary Debates, ibid., p. 1023.

15. Ibid.

16. Balfour, now convinced the American government (supported by American public opinion) would not accept the assignment of the Palestine Mandate, set aside his earlier doubts. The

New Palestine, Vol. XIV, January 27, 1928, p. 65, and note 2 above.

17. Parliamentary Debates, ibid.

18. As quoted in The New Palestine, Vol. III, July 7, 1922, pp. 19-22, which carried the highlights of the debate.

19. Ibid.

20. Martin Gilbert, Winston S. Churchill (Vol. IV: 1917-1922), (London: Wm. Heineman, Ltd., 1975), pp. 659-660.

21. Ibid., p. 647.



## **Part 3**

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### **The PCP and the KPP**

**Frictions and Fractions;  
the Tools, the Dupes, the Cat, the Mice . . .**





## 7

# The PCP and the KPP: Frictions and Fractions

### I

The mighty Red Army never did cross the Caucasus and Taurus mountains. Nor did it bring to the Palestinian communists the gift of a Soviet Palestine. Nevertheless, despite unfulfilled hopes, and despite internal frictions, the small group of Palestinian communists, seeing themselves as part of the fabric of a larger tapestry, remained committed to Moscow's Middle Eastern policy. During the period 1921-1941, that policy aimed to undermine British influence and interests in the Near East, to inculcate pro-Soviet attitudes, and thus to enhance Soviet influence and interests in the region.

The Arab worker now became the favored target of the communist recruiters implementing the prevailing Moscow-directed, anti-British policy. Propaganda intended to attract the Arab worker was directed against the effendis (the Arab land-owners), the Zionists, who were blamed for Arab labor dislocations,<sup>1</sup> and the British, who continued to permit Jewish immigration, albeit at reduced rates.<sup>2</sup>

As we shall see, the Moscow-directed policy of "Arabization" of communist propaganda would fail. Few Arabs would join the party because they did not trust the communists. They needed only to recall what they had heard of the Baku congress. There was a suspicion among the Arabs that, regardless of communist propaganda, the Soviets were no friends of Islam. Furthermore, their own self-awareness as Arab nationalists was increasing.

The communist movement within Palestine also needed to be rebuilt organizationally, to recover from the aftermath of British suppression. Following the outlawing of the party in 1921, the remaining members tried to return to the Poale Zion Left, the organization from which they had earlier broken away. Within this still legal party, a new bloc emerged which called itself the Workers Fraction. In reality, this was a front for a new, clandestine Palestine Communist Party, the PCP, successor to the outlawed MPSI. In addition, in the Jaffa-Tel Aviv area, former members of the MPSI (as part of the Poale Zion Left) organized a

workers' club, using the familiar name, the Borochov Club, although its ideological tendencies were incipiently anti-Borochovist.<sup>3</sup> This nucleus of the new communist party was not yet ready to espouse completely anti-Zionist pronouncements. However, the tendency was already present.

In a sense, the leadership of the PCP

... actually conducted something like a double set of books. It presented itself as the 'Jewish Section of the Palestinian Communist Party,' although there was no non-Jewish section; that is--toward Moscow it appeared as a non-Zionist territorial organization, while at the same time it presented itself to the Jewish public and the Poale Zion immigrants as a 'Left' Poale Zion party.<sup>4</sup>

As for the Poale Zion Left in Palestine, at this point it contained three distinct trends:

(1) The still disguisedly liquidationist anti-Zionist trend (which would soon break away to form the KPP).

(2) The majority orientation, which was loyal to the Palestine program. This group was led by Yaacov Zerubavel, Nahum Nir, and Moshe Erem, among others. They fought the liquidationist trend and tried to maintain the unity of the Left World Union of the Poale Zion, attempting to avoid any schism during the negotiations with the Comintern. By way of concession to the liquidationists, they concentrated mainly on the negotiations with the Comintern, neglecting practical "constructivist" activities in Palestine. This group also contained the so-called "appeasers" of the PCP, the Menachem-Elysha group which was also known as the Moshe-Menachem tandem.<sup>5</sup>

(3) The militantly anti-liquidationist trend, which demanded constructivist activities, acceleration of Poale Zion immigration and renewed efforts to achieve unity with the Labor Zionist parties.<sup>6</sup> This group still hoped for unity with Ahdut Ha-Avoda.

The Left World Union of the Poale Zion pursued its negotiations with the Comintern during the period 1921-1922. Upon the eventual failure of these negotiations, the liquidationists were expelled from the Left World Union. In 1923, the Left World Union sent a delegation to Palestine to organize a Palestinian branch which would be loyal to itself and which was

meant to replace the PCP, which had until then been recognized as its official Palestinian affiliate.<sup>7</sup>

In the meantime, however, the Palestinian communists concentrated their ideological efforts within the Left Poale Zion. Quoting from The Communist Movement in Palestine, an "official attempt to write the history of the party," Walter Z. Laqueur explains that this was done "both to gain a legal front and to disrupt the [Poale Zion] party from within."<sup>8</sup> However, while within the Poale Zion the anti-liquidationists continued to debate the liquidationists and the appeasers (the Menachem-Elysha group) as to whether or not the Left World Union of the Poale Zion should adhere to the Third International, the communists continued to quarrel among themselves. At the PCP's Third Party Congress in January 1922, the communists were provided with an opportunity for self-examination and mutual recrimination. What had gone wrong? Was the illegal demonstration of May 1, 1921 a mistake, after all? Was Lenin correct in his attack on left-wing communism?

## 2

Some time before the PCP's Fourth Party Congress in September 1922, a small group of communists decided that the PCP and its Workers Fraction did not hold the answers for "true" communists. Three out of the twenty-one delegates to the PCP's Third Party Congress, Josef Berger-Barzilai, Stark and Kotik,<sup>9</sup> had begun to talk about leaving the PCP because they were ready to accept the twenty-one conditions of the Comintern, while their fellow communists were still debating the question.<sup>10</sup>

Thus the issues which had been discussed at the PCP's Third Party Congress were revived at the Fourth. The debate revolved again about two fundamental issues: whether to collaborate with the Poale Zion Left, which considered itself an organization of "proletarian Zionists," and whether to join the Communist International. At the PCP's Fourth Party Congress, the resolutely anti-Zionist minority numbered 150 out of a total of 450.<sup>11</sup> Its main political slogan was, "Leave the Zionist hell!" This group now broke away to set up a rival communist party giving itself the Yiddish (and hence symbolically anti-Zionist) name of the Komunistishe Partey fun Palestine (KPP), establishing the Proletarian Fraction as its front organization.

This new KPP succeeded in attracting a number of new members. The time was the beginning of the period of immigration known as the Third Aliya. This aliya was composed of many immigrants from Russia, among whom were a good number who believed in the October Revolution. They were ideologically Marxist, extremely idealistic, close to utopianists.<sup>12</sup> These were the people who, along with the few men sent as agents by Moscow, provided the new blood for the communist movement in Palestine.

The influx of immigrants might have provided opportunities for a growth, both in numbers and in influence, of the communist party. But this was not to be, even though 1922 was a year of grave economic crisis in Palestine.<sup>13</sup> Instead of profiting from these two conditions, the party expended its energies on internal quarrels. We will look first at the key issues which separated the groups. Chapter 8 will then examine the leadership and Moscow's role in directing it. Chapter 9 will discuss Moscow's policy of Arabization and its implementation within Palestine.

### 3

The KPP opposed the Zionist enterprise, as it called the Jewish national movement. It insisted on the complete liquidation of all the movement's manifestations in Palestine. It did, however, make a distinction between the earlier Yishuv which was not politically motivated (*i.e.*, they were not determined to create a Jewish state) and those settlements developed by the post-Balfour Declaration immigrants (whose professed aim was the creation of a Jewish state). In effect, the KPP was telling newcomers to pack up and leave. By extension, it was, in effect, advocating its own liquidation, because at that time it had not succeeded in attracting an Arab membership. Indeed, some KPP members believed so strongly in the concept of liquidation that they did pack up and leave, primarily going to Soviet Russia. Those who stayed continued to oppose the policy of Binyan ha-Eretz. They called for wildcat strikes, at the risk of dangerous clashes with the British police; and they endeavored, through their pamphlets and newspapers, to make things difficult for the British and for those Jews who preached what they considered a reactionary ideology, Jewish nationalism.

The larger PCP, on the other hand, was more conciliatory towards Zionism, immigration and Binyan ha-Eretz. This group advocated a transitional period, during which the communist movement would be moved, gradually, towards a liquidationist stand. This difference between the KPP and PCP was a question of timing, and not of ultimate aims. Both groups were in agreement on what had to be accomplished. They both opposed a Jewish homeland under a British protectorate. More important, they both looked to Moscow and to the Third International for guidance, although they interpreted such guidance differently.

The KPP was closer to Lenin's resolution at the Second Congress of the Comintern which defined the conditions of membership. The KPP had, indeed, broken with the "reformists and supporters of the Centre,"<sup>14</sup> just as Lenin's conditions had dictated. However, Lenin had responded to changing circumstances. He initiated the N.E.P. and, with it, a new conciliatory policy which had as its major aim the safeguarding of the socialist revolution in Russia. The KPP, however, continued to represent an extreme position on the order of permanent revolution, what would soon be known as a Trotskyite orientation. To Moscow, the KPP was, as Meirson had been earlier, an uncomfortable and embarrassing manifestation of the "infantile disease" of left-wing communism, now denounced by Lenin.

On the other hand, the PCP was portrayed by Moscow as "progressive" because it was working to develop a revolutionary consciousness among the Jewish workers, not only in Palestine but through the Middle East. Nahum List states that F. Raskolnikov<sup>15</sup> and Karl Radek knew that the PCP's ultimate participation in the Comintern would bring the Jewish comrades in the Palestine party into opposition with the Jewish Yishuv, making this in practice a revolution.<sup>16</sup> For the time being, however, the PCP's more moderate approach was commended, while the extreme position of the KPP was seen as alienating them from the Jewish community as a whole. In addition, the actions of the KPP did not even provide an incentive to Arab workers to participate in the party. The Arabs, increasingly, regarded them with suspicion and incomprehension.

As a result, excepting the Tel Aviv area where the KPP specifically targeted the unemployed, non-Hebrew speaking immigrant, it soon lost all influence among a wider circle. At the same time, the PCP, equating "participation" with "opportunity,"

became active within the Histadrut, thereby providing Moscow with a link into a larger Jewish labor organization which continued to have a socialist outlook. In making its choice, Moscow did not choose the purist group; rather, as recommended in the new Leninist line, it chose the more pragmatic of the two Palestinian communist parties.

It should be recalled that from the time of the Vienna conference in 1920, the communists, first within the framework of the Left World Union of the Poale Zion, then as the MPS, then once again within the framework of the Left World Union (although secretly constituted as the PCP), and then finally as the PCP and the KPP, continued to appeal to the ECCI (the Executive Committee of the Communist International) for recognition and admission. But this was withheld until the two factions, complying with Moscow's non-negotiable demand, reunited in 1924. In the rivalry between the PCP and the KPP for the Comintern's nod, the PCP, in its correspondence with the ECCI, referred to the KPP as "repulsive," "despicable," and "loathsome," and the KPP responded in kind,<sup>17</sup> calling the PCP "rascals" and "servants of the imperialists and the bourgeoisie."<sup>18</sup>

Of course, the front organizations, mirroring the ideological orientation of their parties, also differed in their approaches. The Workers Fraction (a PCP front) decided to participate in the 1923 elections to the Histadrut and to the City Councils, while the KPP's front, the Proletarian Fraction, boycotted the Histadrut elections, but participated in the City Council elections. According to G. Z. Israeli, the Workers Fraction received 250 votes out of a total of 6,000 in the Histadrut election.<sup>19</sup> Alain Greilsammer, using as his source an anonymous paper which was prepared by the PCP's opposition and which was part of the Collection of the Publications of the PCP--1923-1924 (published in Tel Aviv in August 1950), states that the Workers Fraction obtained 200 out of 6,000 votes, a little over 3%.<sup>20</sup>

Since both groups participated in the municipal elections of August 1923, it is possible to see their comparative strengths in the three cities in which these elections were held.<sup>21</sup>

	<u>Haifa</u>	<u>Tel Aviv</u>	<u>Jerusalem</u>	<u>Total</u> <sup>22</sup>
Proletarian Fraction	--	115	26	141
Workers Fraction	81	137	70	288

Obviously, neither group did well in either set of elections. Their programs were unappealing to the wider Yishuv. However, the figures do illustrate the relative strength of the two communist factions. The relative closeness of the Tel Aviv figures is probably due to propaganda efforts of the Proletarian Fraction among the unemployed immigrants, who, as noted earlier, did not yet know the Hebrew language and who appreciated the efforts made to reach them in Yiddish. Nahum List, about whom more will be said in the next chapter, tells how warmly he felt when, shortly after his arrival in Palestine, he was invited to a workers' club where the talking and singing were in Ukrainian, Russian, and Yiddish.<sup>23</sup>

The two front organizations were able to disassociate themselves from statements made in the various publications of the KPP and the PCP. Thus, when the PCP publications encouraged the Arabs to armed opposition against the Zionist Jews, the Workers Fraction was able to disclaim any connection, saying that the PCP and the Fraction were two separate bodies and that the Fraction was not responsible for the actions of the PCP. The same was true in the case of the KPP and its front, the Proletarian Fraction.

4

That the differences between the KPP and the supposedly more moderate PCP were more a matter of timing than of substance is suggested by the behavior of the PCP's Workers Fraction within the framework of the Histadrut. The Workers Fraction opposed the Histadrut's involvement in international affairs, claiming that it should concentrate its efforts on alleviating economic conditions in Palestine. This was the period when the Histadrut was attempting to link itself to Jewish labor movements in various countries. In particular, during the late spring and early summer of 1923, the Histadrut was appealing to the United Hebrew Trades for support and was expressing a desire to create a permanent bond between it and the Jewish labor movement in America.<sup>24</sup> Since the Jewish labor movement in the United States was a target for communist recruiters, permanent ties to the Histadrut would have limited and contained such communist infiltration. Opposition to Histadrut influence spreading beyond Palestine was, of course, unrealistic when one considers the ties of the Histadrut leadership and membership to

Zionists abroad. The Ben-Zvis and Ben-Gurions of the Histadrut were known by the leaders of the American Jewish labor movement who had Zionist ties to Palestine. As unrealistic as it was to consider limiting Zionist influence among Jews abroad, it was even more unrealistic for the PCP's Workers Fraction to oppose establishment of a public works agency, a contractor's office, which was supposed to organize work opportunities through the Histadrut. Opposition to the establishment of such an agency was actually in contradiction to the professed concern of the Workers Fraction for unemployed Jewish workers. However, because their real concern was limitation of Histadrut influence, such was their stand during a period of extreme economic crisis in Palestine. In these two instances, therefore, the PCP's Workers Fraction assumed radical positions, more in keeping with the KPP's orientation, and indicative of the fact that the differences between the two communist parties were reconcilable.

In addition, the Workers Fraction was a constant critic of the Histadrut, blaming it for the economic conditions in Palestine and for the lack of work among both Jews and Arabs. A common phrase of the Workers Fraction was that the Histadrut leadership "was bankrupt," the policy of Binyan ha-Eretz "was bankrupt," in fact, the entire Zionist effort "was bankrupt."<sup>25</sup> Throughout the years, the communists would repeat this phrase.

## 5

The PCP and KPP were formally reunited at the Fifth Party Congress in July 1923, following a ten-month period of destructive rivalry. The unification was due to the efforts of Wolf Auerbach, who had been expelled by the British in 1921. Auerbach, known as Daniel and by various other aliases,<sup>26</sup> had, at that time, returned to Russia. He reentered Palestine in November 1922, as one of the Comintern's agents, perhaps its most important one. At the time Auerbach became the leader of the PCP, the KPP leader was Josef Berger-Barzilai. In addition, within the PCP faction, there was the so-called Menachem-Elysha appeasers who retained a sympathy for the Zionist cause and who appeared to be a growing anachronism in the communist movement in Palestine. To the other members of the PCP, it was the "Zionist" intransigence of the Menachem-Elysha group which stood in the way of a reunification of the two parties on a



thoroughly anti-Zionist platform. Working together, Berger-Barzilai of the KPP and Daniel (Auerbach) were able to resolve the "differences" between the two factions. Though this reunification would prove to be short-lived, it satisfied the ECCI in Moscow for the time being. The Palestinian communists could now claim to be a "militant unified organization," "out for international mass action," and not "dominated by the national aspect."<sup>27</sup> The lack of these supposed virtues had kept the Palestinian and several other communist parties from being accepted earlier by the ECCI for membership in the Comintern.

The ECCI had been watching events in Palestine for some time. On July 25, 1922, it had reviewed the efforts of the Poale Zion to join the Communist International. The ECCI noted that at its meeting on September 21, 1920, the ECCI had approved the work of the Poale Zion (Socialist Labor Party of Palestine) but had affirmed that it was not quite free of bourgeois nationalist prejudices. The ECCI resolution on the question had suggested that "the Poale Zion put into operation the decisions of the Second Comintern Congress and change its name,"<sup>28</sup> after which the ECCI would reconsider the application to join. In 1921, the Poale Zion had reported that it had expelled its reformist and centrist members. It had again requested admission to the International. In its review of July 25, 1922, the ECCI also noted that it had stipulated, after the Third World Congress, that

the Poale Zion should call a congress to decide on the dissolution of the organization, and that within two months of the congress its members should join their national sections of the Comintern. The congress was also to make a radical break with Zionist tendencies and theories, and to disavow Zionist colonial aspirations in Palestine, which served the interests of British imperialism.<sup>29</sup>

By the time of the Fourth Comintern Congress, the communists in the Poale Zion had resigned and had enrolled individually in their national communist parties (Polish, Czechoslovakian, etc.). Thus, on July 25, 1922, the ECCI had issued the following statement:

A condition of admission to the Communist International is the abandonment of the nationalist

opportunist Palestine programme and the dissolution of the world federation [of Poale Zion] and the entry of the Jewish proletarian communist elements into the national sections, the communist parties.<sup>30</sup>

One year later, in July 1923, as a result of the efforts of Daniel and Josef Berger-Barzilai, the communist party in Palestine was finally unified; it had become a recognizable "national section." However, the ECCI was still not ready to admit the PCP to membership in the International Comintern. Nahum List, in his Keshet articles, bitterly refers to this as the beginning of the "cat-and-mouse game," with the cat being the Comintern and the mice being the Palestinian communists.<sup>31</sup>

## 6

Two final points are worth mentioning before turning to a discussion on the leadership of the reunified PCP: (1) The continuing perceptions of the Yishuv with regard to the PCP, and (2) The role of the PCP in the Afula incident.

(1) Yishuv perceptions: Whether they called themselves the PCP or the KPP, to the members of the Yishuv, they were still Mopsim. For example, on April 29, 1924, the retired British Lt. Colonel F. H. Kisch, a Jew by now working for the Political Department of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, noted the following in what became his Palestine Diary:

Last night, after a meeting which lasted until 4 a.m., the Histadruth (. . . or General Federation of Labour) expelled the Mopsim (communist group) from the Labour Federation. In the long run I think this will prove all to the good, but I wish this radical step had not been taken two days before May 1st.<sup>32</sup>

Of course, the memory of May Day, 1921 was still strong, as was the hatred of the Bolsheviks. On May 18, 1924, Kisch again noted in his diary:

In the morning there was a disturbance in the office caused by the arrival of some 40 unemployed, half of them Mopsim and the other half Sephardic

Jews from the Old City whom the former had persuaded to join them with attractive promises of work. I informed the men that I would receive a delegation of three if the demonstrators would first evacuate the precincts. This proposal met with a definite refusal, and it was necessary to call in the police to clear the premises. No doubt there will be many protests against my use of force, but if the Mopsim are to have their way, there will be no National Home.<sup>33</sup>

Although the incident described was trivial and the number of people involved was insignificant, Kisch's comments do convey the concern of those who resented the "Mopsim."

(2) The Afula incident: In 1924 the Workers Fraction issued a proclamation opposing the expulsion of Arab fellaheen from lands purchased by the Jewish National Fund in the Yezre'el Valley.<sup>34</sup> The PCP's first proclamation, "On the War within the Zionist Histadrut's Policies of Plunder," dated November 29, 1924, blamed "the Jewish bourgeoisie,"<sup>35</sup> for bloodshed that had occurred (one person killed and several wounded) when the Arabs who lived on land newly purchased by the JNF near Afula resisted their expulsion. Inprecorr, the Comintern organ, blamed the Zionists; and the Palestinian communists followed suit with their own proclamation, which stated:

Once again the Jewish bourgeoisie has dipped its hand into the blood of Jewish and Arab workers. This is not the first time that the Zionist Histadrut used Jewish workers as cannon fodder for its aims of plunder.<sup>36</sup>

The proclamation further attacked the Socialist Ahdut Ha-Avoda for supporting the policy of Kibush Ha-karka and the followers of the Left Poale Zion who were silent. They were, according to the statement, "always silent because of their fear," and, "through their silence, they again demonstrated their nationalist chauvinism." According to the authors of the proclamation, only the PCP had the courage to oppose the Afula adventure:

We have cried out and now cry out again against the overt war inherent in the Zionist Histadrut's policies of plunder. In truth, money is available to the

bourgeoisie which it can use to fulfill its aims. However, to purchase the land is a small matter. They must conquer it. In short, they must evict the Arab fellaheen....<sup>37</sup>

The PCP's Workers Fraction had been expelled from the Histadrut on April 28, 1924. The party's subsequent role in the Afula Affair<sup>38</sup> merely provided further justification for the Histadrut's action. Nahum List was deeply saddened by the events which followed. He witnessed arrests, beatings and ultimate expulsions from Palestine of some of his friends who had demonstrated against the actions of the Histadrut.

#### NOTES

1. Actually, Arab employment had been growing, which is why many Arabs immigrated into Palestine during the 1920s.

2. To some extent the reduced rates of Jewish immigration in the 1920s were due to Jewish unwillingness to immigrate and not just to British regulations. Also many Jews left Palestine at that time--not because the British deported them, but because America and Europe seemed more attractive.

3. G. Z. Israeli, A History of the Israeli Communist Party: From the MPS to PKP to MAKI (Tel Aviv: Om Oved, 1953), p. 21.

4. Peretz Merhav, The Israeli Left: History, Problems, Documents (N.Y.: A. S. Barnes & Co., Inc., 1980), p. 64.

5. Nahum List, Keshet, Winter 1964, No. 22, p. 167. "Menachem" was Menachem Finkelstein and "Elysha" was Moshe Lewin, brother-in-law of Yitzhak Tabenkin. Elysha was, for a time, the PCP's main spokesman. Menachem Finkelstein had been sent to Palestine by the Jewish Communist Party-Poale Zion (YKP, the Yevsektzia) in Russia. Israeli, pp. 22-23, calls them the Menachem-Elysha group and notes their uncompromising commitment to Zionism.

6. In Russia, these conflicting trends led to the existence of two separate Left Poale Zion parties: one, the Jewish Communist Party-Poale Zion (YKP); the second, the Jewish Socialist Democratic Party-Poale Zion. The more Palestinian-oriented and

militantly anti-liquidationist wing that had been organized as an "organizing committee" (in Berlin) was expelled from the ranks of the Left World Union in 1922. Merhav, pp. 64-65.

7. The Palestinian Left Poale Zion was destined to suffer a number of splits and reunifications: 1928--split; 1931--reunification; 1933--split; 1942--reunification. The causes of the splits usually centered on the recurrent themes of class struggle, revolutionary socialism, and the need to adapt the aims and values of the world movement to the particular needs of the Palestinian party. Ibid.

8. Walter Z. Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), p. 76.

9. List, ibid., No. 22, p. 166. A good deal more will be said about Berger-Barzilai in the next chapter. However, Stark is not identified further. Kotik, on the other hand, is mentioned in List's articles as well as in Kele b'lee Sugar (Prison Without Bars), by Esther Feldman, Barzilai's wife (Tel Aviv: Am Hasefer Publishers, Ltd., 1964). Feldman's book is filled with fascinating details which other writers seem to have ignored. She states that Kotik was a regular visitor to her home in Moscow, in the years following her return to Russia from Palestine. Kotik was a young worker with very little formal education, but he loved discussing Hegel and Feuerbach. Their conversations were "philosophical exercises" which he enjoyed enormously. Finally, in 1938, he stopped visiting the family because he was fearful. By then, her husband had long since been declared an "enemy of the state" and was serving what became a twenty-two year sentence. As for Kotik, he was to be killed in Stalin's terror not too long after. See Feldman, pp. 42-43.

10. Israeli, pp. 21-23, and List, ibid., pp. 166-167.

11. Laqueur, p. 77.

12. List, Keshet, Winter 1963, No. 18, passim; Israeli, passim.

13. Israeli, p. 25, describes the economic situation which seemed to worsen daily. Also see Greilsammer, pp. 26-27; List, ibid., p. 140; and Braslavsky, Vol. II, pp. 274-276. Braslavsky quotes from Berl Katznelson on the smashed dreams of those who had hoped for a productive life in Eretz Israel, on their hunger, and on their hopeless unemployment.

14. Edward H. Carr, A History of Soviet Russia, Vol. III (N.Y.:

Macmillan Company, 1953), p. 193.

15. Raskolnikov was "the hero of the descent on Enzeli and the eviction of the British from northern Persia." He succeeded Y. Surits as the Soviet representative in Afghanistan and later served as the head of the Comintern's Eastern Department. See Carr, p. 468, and Josef Berger-Barzilai, Hatragedia shel Hamahaphaha HaSovietit (The Tragedy of the Soviet Revolution), (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1968), pp. 16-19. Barzilai discusses his dealings with Raskolnikov, who introduced himself as "Petrov."

16. List, Keshet, Summer 1964, No. 24, p. 105.

17. Israeli, p. 23.

18. List, Keshet, Winter 1964, No. 22, p. 166.

19. Israeli, p. 24.

20. Greilsammer, p. 29.

21. Information for the chart was derived from Israeli, ibid., and Greilsammer, ibid. It should be noted that the Arabs boycotted these municipal elections.

22. Israeli does not include the total number of votes cast in each of the three municipalities. However, The New Palestine (September 7, 1923, p. 213) provides information for the Jerusalem election: Over 3,000 votes were cast, representing nearly half the number of eligible voters. The 1922 census reported the following Jewish population figures for the three cities: Tel Aviv--15,065; Jerusalem--33,971; Haifa--6,230. Statistical Handbook of Middle Eastern Countries (Jerusalem: Jewish Agency for Palestine, Economic Research Institute, 1944), p. 4.

23. List, Keshet, Winter 1963, No. 18, pp. 137-138.

24. Labor Zionist Handbook--The Aims, Activities and History of the Labor Zionist Movement in America (N.Y.: Poale Zion--Zeire Zion of America, 1939), pp. 148-149.

25. List, Keshet, Summer 1964, No. 24, p. 112. The article begins with a discussion on the "disappointment, despair, and despondency" which the workers experienced.

26. Auerbach had many pseudonyms in addition to "Daniel" (after his son Dani) e.g.: Abu-Siam, Pinhas Katz, Arbuziam. List discussed Auerbach's pseudonyms in Keshet, Summer 1964, No. 24, pp. 106-107.

27. Inprecorr (International Press Correspondence), June 28, 1923, p. 455.

28. Jane Degras, The Communist International--1919-1943 Documents, Vol. I (1919-1922), (London: F. Cass, 1971), p. 365.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. List, No. 22, p. 154, and see his other articles.

32. Lt. Colonel F. H. Kisch, Palestine Diary (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1938), p. 117.

33. Ibid., p. 120.

34. The Jewish National Fund (JNF) was established in 1901 as the land purchasing agency of the World Zionist Organization. In 1908, seven years after its inception, the Fund began its practical work by acquiring the land of Degania (3,000 dunam--a dunam equals one-fourth of an acre). By 1939 it had acquired 440,000 dunam of land. Labor Zionist Handbook, p. 254.

35. Yehiel Halperin, Israel vehaCommunizm (Israel and Communism), (Tel Aviv: Mifleget Poalei Eretz-Yisrael, 1951), p. 277.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. For a recounting of the Afula incident see The New Palestine, as well as the Palestine papers of the period. The incident was well reported. Greilsammer makes brief reference to it and to the Histadrut reaction (pp. 36-38).





## The Tools, the Dupes:<sup>1</sup> Their Functions and Their Fates

Frederick Herman Kisch was correct, of course, when he concluded, "... if the Mopsim are to have their way, there will be no National Home." Such was the aim of this small group of dedicated communists, who also seem to fit Max Nomad's description of the early communist parties as small sects of enthusiasts or fanatics. This brings to mind a remark made by Seweryn Bialer,<sup>2</sup> who suggested that the Palestinian communists be thought of as a "sect," rather than as a political party. The biographies of the communist leaders in Palestine do indeed give one a sense of dealing with followers of a cult or sect. Barzilai, Auerbach, List, and others in the party leadership showed that kind of commitment, often to the dismay of their own families.<sup>3</sup> They were hounded from place to place by the British police in Palestine. When caught, if fortunate, they were put on trial so that all would know they were communists and thereafter shun them, and they were forced to pay stiff fines. If not fortunate, they were beaten, thrown into prison, and if they did not succeed in escaping, were deported. In addition, even if the British did not find them, they never knew when the order would come from Moscow recalling them, or directing them to one or the other Arab country, where risks of detection were also great.

Almost all of the PCP leaders who returned to Russia in the service of the Comintern were caught in the same web of terror which eliminated many Bolshevik leaders and lower-level activists. We are fortunate that two of the survivors, Nahum List and Josef Berger-Barzilai, as well as Barzilai's wife, Esther Feldman, wrote accounts of the early years, the work, and the often tragic end of several of these individuals. From these accounts and from other sources we learn that the leadership of the PCP was predominantly Russian-born and Russian-educated. All of them had been at one time associated with Zionist labor movements, yet during the Bolshevik revolution, or soon thereafter, they became attracted by communist ideals.

The following sketches will focus on some of the key members of the PCP and will shed light on the quality and dedication of the party's leadership. In addition, where sufficient

information provides a basis for reasonable analysis, the following crucial question will be asked and answered: Considering their earlier association with the Zionist movement, what motives prompted them to join and remain loyal to communist ideology, despite changing circumstances and growing Soviet hostility to Zionism?

(1) Daniel Wolf Auerbach: He was the brother of Alexander Heshen (Zvi Auerbach), the Russian Poale Zion activist whose friends included Ber Borochoy, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi and David Ben-Gurion.<sup>4</sup> Daniel was born in Russia in 1890, and by the age of fifteen was involved in revolutionary activities, taking part in the demonstrations of 1905. He became the Secretary of the Yiddisher Kommunistischer Partii, the Jewish Communist Party-Poale Zion (YKP), in the Ukraine; and in that capacity he participated in the Sixth Conference of the World Union Poale Zion Left, held in Danzig in June 1922. Daniel, as one of those who openly opposed the "Zionist enterprise," was dubbed "the liquidator." Yet, when the negotiations between the Left World Union and the Comintern failed, "Daniel, the liquidator, did not return to the Soviet Union, but went instead to Palestine, arriving there in November 1922."<sup>5</sup>

Barzilai writes that Daniel was sent to Palestine by the YKP and that, soon after his arrival, participated in the Second Congress of the Histadrut, as one of the delegates representing the Workers Fraction. His speech provoked outrage among the delegates from Ahdut Ha-Avoda, particularly David Ben-Gurion. Immediately after the congress, he went underground. The Mandatory police sought to find, arrest and expel him but failed. Daniel never again appeared in public and all of his actions were carried out within the party.<sup>6</sup> He would take periodic trips back to Russia, or would send an emissary to consult with the Comintern, or would receive emissaries from Moscow bringing Comintern instructions. According to List, those who knew Daniel "know that he would not have left Eretz Israel had it not been for strong Comintern pressure following the events of 1929, when Arab communists were placed at the head of the party in administrative positions, taking the place of the elected Jewish leaders."<sup>7</sup>

Daniel was brilliant, eloquent, loved debating and is said to have "intoxicated" his listeners.<sup>8</sup> He was a romantic revolutionary who relished arguing about Marxist theories and the conditions of workers, as well as discussing Jewish literature and

history. From an ideological point of view, Daniel was a "cultural" Jew, the old internationalist Bundist type who never had a "territorial" orientation, although some say he was really a "closet" Zionist.<sup>9</sup> List notes that this was part of his problem, for "Daniel loved the Jewish nation."<sup>10</sup> Over a period of time, the Comintern came to suspect him of being a "Zionist," and there are those who say, as did Yaacov Tsur that there was an element of truth in this allegation.<sup>11</sup> Because he was somewhat older than the others in the party, and mostly because of his more extensive party experience than theirs, his comrades called him "der alter" ("ha zaken," the old man). He is credited with successfully bringing Josef Berger-Barzilai into the PCP from the rival KPP and with the unification of the two Palestinian Communist groups.

Following this unification, Daniel again set out for Moscow in 1923 to discuss the PCP's acceptance by the Comintern. He was arrested en route and spent the next six months in a Latvian jail. His release coincided with the Comintern's acceptance in February 1924 of the PCP for membership. At that point, Daniel returned to Palestine to resume his work, which now included orders to "Arabize" the party. Extensive efforts were now made to attract Arab members. Arab-speaking Jewish communists were sent to cafes frequented by Arabs. They were also sent to work in factories and elsewhere, wherever Arabs were working. In the summer of 1928, Daniel and List traveled to Moscow for the Sixth Comintern Congress, where the pressure to intensify the "Arabization" of the PCP was unrelenting and Daniel and List were under much tension. "Daniel suffered a great deal from the guilt and suspicion which members of the Comintern's Eastern Department heaped upon the party and its leaders. . . ."<sup>12</sup>

It was not easy for Daniel to convince the Comintern to accept the PCP. He faced an internal and an external struggle. He first had to convince the members of the KPP of the necessity for unification with the PCP, as merger was a categorical Comintern demand. The negotiations with the KPP were long and bitter, but finally, Josef Berger-Barzilai, leader of the KPP, accepted Daniel's arguments and was soon joined by some of the other KPP leaders and members. Others were so convinced of the futility of trying to build a communist movement in Palestine that they left the country, or else formed themselves into an opposition (e.g., the Menachem-Elysha group). Such was Daniel's internal struggle. The external struggle was with the Comintern itself,

and was also difficult. The problems were of such a complex nature and so dependent on Moscow "line" fluctuations, that any resolution of issues was inherently unstable and unenduring.

After the Palestine riots of 1929, Daniel became a Comintern functionary and was sent on various European assignments. During the early 1930s he managed a large tractor factory in Rostov.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, as in the case of Othello, Daniel "loved not wisely, but too well." After years of service to the party, Daniel was arrested during the purges of 1936. He was tried and found guilty of reactionary Zionist activities which supported British imperialist aims in Palestine. When Barzilai, also sentenced to prison, begged Daniel to accept his rather mild sentence of five years, Daniel, ever the idealistic believer, determined to set things right. "There must be a mistake," Daniel told Barzilai. Against Barzilai's advice, Daniel appealed, was granted a new trial and a new sentence--death by execution--which was carried out some time in the early 1940s.<sup>14</sup>

What was the motivational mix in Daniel's case? Apparently, he never believed in a Jewish state, being first and foremost a Marxist, an internationalist, completely loyal to the socialist revolution. Yet, as a "cultural" Jew, he saw no incompatibility between his opposition to a Zionist state and his self-identification as a Jew. In addition, he was a political pragmatist. Whereas he had supported adherence to the twenty-one conditions of the Comintern and liquidation of the Zionist enterprise in Palestine during his participation in the Danzig Left World Union Poale Zion Conference in June 1922, once having arrived in Palestine, in November 1922, he assumed a patient, more moderate, and conciliatory stance in order to work within the larger segment of the Palestinian communist movement. Daniel was ideologically close to Barzilai, facilitating their cooperation. But more difficult than winning Barzilai to his political agenda was the task of weaning the PCP away from its Zionist orientation. Daniel achieved both goals. His ideology, his actions, and his goals were in consonance, making a total commitment possible. Therefore, he went to his death a loyal communist, convinced that his own purge was an error. Yet, his obvious love of Jewish culture, including Jewish literature and history, render Daniel's political conduct difficult to understand. Among those who have written about him, there appears to be a consensus that he hated to leave Palestine and that his love of Jewish culture also screened some Zionistic feelings.

(2) Josef Berger-Barzilai: From Barzilai's wife, Esther Feldman, we get some insight as to what life was like living with a "convinced" sectarian. Barzilai<sup>15</sup> was born in Cracow in 1904. Raised as an orthodox Jew and as a Zionist, he went to Palestine at age fifteen as the leader of a group of young immigrants. He worked on road construction and then as a translator in an engineering firm. Gradually moving closer to communism, he helped found the Communist Party of Palestine in 1922, becoming its Secretary. When the PCP was admitted to the Comintern in 1924, Barzilai was sent to Moscow to meet with Comintern leaders. Esther Feldman described the intense young man she met at a YKP meeting, held the evening of December 31, 1924. He spoke enthusiastically about Palestine, and since much of her family was there, she was very interested. Nevertheless, he told her nothing of his work in Moscow, his meetings with Zinoviev,<sup>16</sup> Raskolnikov, or anyone else. His secretiveness lasted beyond courtship and into marriage. According to Esther Feldman's nephew, Yaacov Tsur, "She knew very little about his work, and what she did know, she kept to herself, always protecting him."<sup>17</sup> Before Barzilai married Esther Feldman, he warned her that he could promise her very little because his work for the party would always come first. He would, he told her, no doubt disappear for days on end, and she would never know where he was. Most of his work was undercover, illegal and dangerous. If he caught by the British, he warned her, he could disappear for as long as five years. In a note of irony, Esther Feldman adds, parenthetically: "He was so young; he could not have known that dafka he would disappear for twenty-two years--in the Socialist State."<sup>18</sup>

Josef Berger-Barzilai provides the clearest link between the communist movement in Palestine and the international communist movement. His writings and the writings of his wife following their return to Israel, after his long imprisonment in Stalin's Gulag, prove his work on behalf of the Comintern in Moscow, in Europe, in Palestine, and in certain neighboring Arab countries. As noted earlier, Barzilai arrived in Moscow from Palestine toward the end of 1924. He spoke no Russian, but he had been assured by Daniel that language would not be a problem because the Comintern people were "internationalists." They spoke German, French, even English; and many spoke Yiddish. The first problem Barzilai did encounter, however, was in locating the Eastern Department of the Comintern. The security

measures were extreme, and Barzilai sensed a general feeling of conspiracy which enveloped the nondescript building housing the particular department he sought. The "Eastern Department," an office at the rear of a long corridor on the building's third floor, was filled with bureaucrats, working over various papers, books and maps. Barzilai noted that a number of former Bundists from the Ukrainian region worked in that office and used Yiddish to communicate with him.

After being questioned about the situation in Palestine and in Syria, he was told that Comrade Petrov, the Head of the Department, awaited him. Petrov, speaking to him in English, proceeded to ask him the same series of questions. Sometime later, in order to establish contact between the editors of the PCP papers and the CPSU, Petrov introduced Barzilai to the editor of Izvestia. From him, Barzilai learned that Petrov was Raskolnikov, the man credited with thwarting British influence in Persia.<sup>19</sup>

Despite his record as a "hero," Raskolnikov had insufficient experience for his task as Head of the Comintern's Eastern Department, which was responsible for Africa, Asia and Australia. Chinese matters, significantly, were handled directly by the Central Committee of the Russian party and not through Raskolnikov's Eastern Department of the Comintern.<sup>20</sup> Raskolnikov's task was to establish contacts in India, Indonesia and Indo-China, as well as in the countries of North Africa and the Near East. To Barzilai's amazement, the "Eastern Department" personnel lacked appropriate expertise. Not only did he find himself telling them the most basic facts, but he was increasingly disturbed to learn that these functionaries viewed all Near Eastern countries as they did the European countries. In general, they did not understand the unique nature of the problems confronting communist movements in the Middle East; and, in particular, they had no conception of difficulties faced by Palestinian communists. Barzilai was further surprised at Raskolnikov's reaction on learning of his desire to return to Palestine as soon as he had fulfilled the function set out for him by the Central Committee of the PCP, namely to transmit the current situation and to receive directives. Raskolnikov informed Barzilai of his responsibility to the Comintern, not only for Palestine and Syria, but for Egypt as well. Barzilai was told that he was expected to remain in Russia until the Comintern determined that he had learned all he could, so that on his return to Palestine, he could inform his comrades.

He soon learned that matters handled by the Eastern Department of the Comintern were also handled by the Soviet Foreign Ministry and by the Department of the Army. He was therefore questioned, throughout the month of January, by many individuals, representing different offices and different departments, all of whom were in the process of helping the Comintern prepare for the Fifth Plenum of the ECCI to be held in March 1925. This would be the first Comintern meeting since its Fifth Congress held in the summer of 1924. Barzilai was informed by Raskolnikov-Petrov that he, Barzilai, would be present at the Plenum, that he would be given a place on the agenda if he wanted to speak, and that it was important for him to meet the delegates from the British and French communist parties, because their countries had direct connections with the Middle East. He was also expected to meet with the representatives of the Russian Communist Party and was impressed by the "Eurocentric" nature of the Comintern:

I, as a representative of a small party, participating for the first time in a full congress [an ECCI plenum] of the Comintern, essentially, listened to the discussions and did not take part in them. In addition, questions of colonialism and questions of the Middle East were not at all on the agenda.<sup>21</sup>

He spoke with Zinoviev, and although Zinoviev expressed his pleasure that the influence of the Comintern had reached into a region so far away, Barzilai soon realized that Zinoviev had no real interest in the Near East or in the PCP. Zinoviev's first question to Barzilai was whether there were many proletarians in those countries of the world. This was followed by other simplistic questions.<sup>22</sup>

Of all the people Barzilai met, Bukharin made the greatest impression on him because, unlike Zinoviev, Bukharin sat with and spoke to the various delegates from the many different countries. When Raskolnikov introduced Barzilai to him, Bukharin commented that even the small, distant parties were important. His questions probed, dealing with social and economic matters. Later, Bukharin commented:

Indeed, there is another problem which is, of course, most interesting in your country; and you

must deal with it. It is the national question. But, for this question, we have an expert of the first order, Comrade Stalin.<sup>23</sup>

Bukharin then told Raskolnikov to take Barzilai to meet Stalin, so that they could discuss the national question, adding, "He will, of course, give him [Barzilai] some good advice on this matter."<sup>24</sup>

At that time, early 1925, Barzilai knew only that Stalin was a member of the Politburo of the Soviet party and that he had, for some time, been its General Secretary. Now Barzilai first heard Stalin address the representatives of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party. He recalls that, although his newly acquired Russian did not permit him to understand everything, he was extremely impressed--especially when a nearby listener whispered to him: "Here now, the real leader is speaking."<sup>25</sup> In that speech, Stalin warned his listeners about the dangers of parliamentarism within the Party. Everyone listened intently to a speech which went on for some hours. In the end, they all applauded with great enthusiasm. Barzilai notes that even the Czechs, "who naturally did not agree with him, applauded."<sup>26</sup>

In retrospect, Barzilai was struck by the degree of freedom of movement and of speech which existed in 1925. He tells us that there was "no sign" of the repression which would follow.<sup>27</sup> Barzilai did meet Stalin, by chance, during one of his trips to the Kremlin with Raskolnikov, who introduced him as "a delegate from a land far away, from Palestine and Syria." Raskolnikov added that he had recommended a conference with Stalin in order to discuss the bitter national question which existed in Palestine. With great cordiality, Stalin commented<sup>28</sup> that he was always very happy to meet delegates from the Eastern countries, particularly when they came from the Middle East and especially from lands which had been part of the Ottoman Empire. At the time, their conversation on the national question was interrupted and would not be resumed until March 1929, when Barzilai would have a five-hour personal discussion on the Palestine question with Stalin.

As short as the initial contact with Stalin had been, it reinforced Barzilai's wish to believe that even the small communist movement in Palestine was part of a larger picture and could contribute to the struggle of the international proletariat movement. It also reinforced his view that that struggle had necessarily to be directed from Moscow. Although



Barzilai's commitment to Marxist ideology and international communism was firm before his initial trip to Russia, his "pilgrimage" reinforced his beliefs, and he returned to Palestine more convinced than ever that the work to be done among the Arab and Jewish workers was part of a larger endeavor to weaken the capitalist-imperialist hold in the colonial world. An interesting point in his wife's book was her surprise at his anti-Zionist stand when she rejoined him in Palestine. When he had spoken before the YKP-Poale Zion in Moscow, he had encouraged the already anxious members to immigrate to Palestine. Once she had joined him in Palestine, she learned of his opposition to Zionist policies and of his commitment to Arabize the PCP.<sup>29</sup>

She admits that this created problems in their relationship, when she tried to personally distance herself from the party. Since her husband was one of the PCP's leaders, this placed her in an awkward position. Although she states that no one in her family knew that Barzilai was a communist until he was arrested by the British, her nephew, Yaacov Tsur, disputes this point. Reading aloud from his own book, Shaharith Shel Etmol (Yesterday's Sunrise), Tsur recalled his father's first meeting with Josef Barzilai, freshly returned from his mission to Moscow. The elder Tsur, a respected member of the Yishuv and the Secretary-General of the Va'ad Leumi (the National Committee or Council),<sup>30</sup> was delighted to meet his new brother-in-law. When he praised Barzilai's erudition and charm to a group of neighbors, one of them responded: "Barzilai? . . . Do you know who he is? He is a leader of the Mopsim, the Communist Fraction, troublemakers. . . who have struggled to destroy everything we are doing here!"<sup>31</sup> Yaacov Tsur continued reading from his book:

Little by little it became clear to him [the elder Tsur] . . . that Josef had been summoned to Moscow by the communists to learn their methods, and that he had now returned to fulfill his function as a leader of the party in Eretz Israel.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, long before Esther Feldman arrived from Moscow to join her husband in Palestine, his identity was no secret. Once Barzilai was arrested, the neighbors openly showed their disapproval by completely ostracizing her. Barzilai was placed on

trial and used the opportunity to make a speech against the Zionist-imperialists, the alleged tools of the British capitalists. He was fined heavily and then released. On Moscow's orders, Barzilai left the country, leaving his wife to endure the isolation to which she had not yet become accustomed. Their son was born during the time Barzilai was prevented from disembarking, following his return to Palestine by ship on August 16, 1926. For three months Barzilai sailed back and forth on the Italkit until Nahum List managed to organize a legal defense which succeeded in gaining Barzilai's release. At that point Barzilai went into hiding, again leaving Esther to cope with her loneliness and her new son.

She describes a heartbreaking experience which occurred sometime later when she decided to join Barzilai, who was then living (hiding) in a small Arab village, near Jerusalem. She had taken a cab from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and sitting next to her and her son was Yitzhak Altermann, the father of the poet, Natan Altermann, a friend of her family and her own beloved teacher in Moscow. She describes her agony:

The entire trip, Altermann sat next to us, but he never uttered a word, nor gave any sign, not even to wish us shalom when he left the car. . . . I tried to justify his deed in terms of the general hatred of the communists, but it weighed heavily on my heart. . . .<sup>33</sup>

Following the riots of August 1929, Barzilai sought a new hiding place. The British kept both the Barzilai home and family under constant surveillance. "Did you ever learn where Barzilai had hidden during that period?" I asked the Tsurs and General Avidar.<sup>34</sup> "No," responded both Yaacov Tsur and General Avidar. "Yes," said Vera Tsur. "He hid not ten minutes from this apartment."<sup>35</sup> "Had I known then," Yaacov Tsur immediately responded, "I would have gone to the British and led them to him." "And, I," said General Avidar, "would have taken my gun and put a bullet through his head!" Such was the anger after 53 years towards a member of their own family who had been a leader in the communist movement in Palestine.

Barzilai remained in hiding until some time in 1930 when word came from Moscow ordering him to Germany. Eventually, Esther got word to follow her husband, and reluctantly--very reluctantly, according to her relatives--she packed her bags and left. Barzilai was subsequently arrested by the German police and

spent two months in a Berlin prison.<sup>36</sup> In the meantime, Esther returned to Russia. Shortly after they were reunited, and things appeared to have settled down with Barzilai's appointment as Head of the Comintern's Eastern Department in Moscow, they were called before a party tribunal. They were questioned about their work in Palestine, dubbed enemies of the state, dismissed from the party and their jobs and evicted from their apartment.<sup>37</sup>

Again, Barzilai's wife provides us with a moment of irony when she tells of how her son frequently rode his little bicycle, a present from Barzilai's parents when they had all been together in Europe. One evening during that tension-filled period following in the wake of their disgrace, the newspaper carried a photo of their son riding his bicycle. The caption beneath the photo read: "The happy life of a Soviet child."<sup>38</sup>

Thus, Barzilai's years of service to the party in Palestine, in Europe and then in Russia did not save him from falling victim to Stalin's purges. He was forced to face the humiliation of having his work in Palestine questioned before a large meeting of party workers:<sup>39</sup> his party membership was taken from him; he lost his job, his comfortable Moscow apartment (even his furniture was confiscated), and many of his friends, who were afraid to associate with the family after suspicion had been cast on Barzilai. Through it all, and through his trial and subsequent imprisonment in the Soviet Union,<sup>40</sup> Barzilai "still believed in Soviet justice."<sup>41</sup>

Emerging from a labor camp after twenty-two years, Barzilai approached Josef Avidar, Israel's then Ambassador to the Soviet Union (and Esther's nephew through marriage). "He wanted to return to Eretz Israel," General Avidar said. "I told him I would help on one condition--that he promise to refrain from all political action once he was back in Israel." Did Barzilai keep his word? It seems he did, spending much time writing about the victims of the Soviet revolution<sup>42</sup> and providing great quantities of information, on Comintern activities and the personalities involved, to the Israeli government. He also became religiously pious in his later years, after his wife's death.

Did he ever regret his involvement with the communists? Did he ever repent for his role in instigating the bloody Arab riots of 1929? These were some of the questions asked of Esther's nephew Yaacov Tsur, who conceded that "Barzilai never repented." Indeed, Vera Tsur, who spoke of Barzilai's frequent visits to their apartment in the last years of his life, remarked that

during one such visit, Barzilai reminisced about his involvement with the Palestinian communists during the late 1920s. When she asked him what he thought about his own role in the riots of 1929, he replied, "In a small way, we gave the Arabs an outlet for their feelings."<sup>43</sup> When Yaacov Tsur was asked how his aunt was able to explain her husband's involvement with the communists, he replied, "Esther always said that Josef believed in a communism which never was."<sup>44</sup> And, perhaps that is the answer to Barzilai's motivation: He was a true believer.

(3) Nahum List: List dates the origin of his sympathy for the Bolsheviks to his experiences in the Red Army. He writes that he was born a Zionist, became a socialist, and at age sixteen became Secretary in the Zeire Zion branch near Ekaterinoslav (today called Dniepropetrovsk). As a soldier in the Red Army, aged nineteen, he witnessed pogroms in the Ukraine, where the Red Army was fighting against the forces of Denikin. List heard shouts of "Beat a Jew; save Russia" and "Down with Russia; live Ukraina." He tells us that the Bolshevik forces for whom he fought never attacked Jewish communities.<sup>45</sup> A Zionist but not yet a communist, List nevertheless perceived the Bolsheviks as not openly anti-Semitic. On his release from the Red Army, he determined to travel to Palestine, his ideological baggage consisting of Zionist-Socialism and a non-hostile attitude toward the Bolsheviks, who were equated in his mind with those who would protect Russia's Jews from Tsarist and White pogroms.

When List arrived in Tel Aviv, via Beirut, he found little opportunity for employment, and accepted any kind of construction work, when it was available. He was one of many idealistic young immigrants who were filled with a romantic pioneering spirit. At first he held back from joining any particular group. Then Eisenberg,<sup>46</sup> a fellow worker from "a neighboring tent,"<sup>47</sup> convinced him to join the Borochof group of the Poale Zion Left. Through the Borochof group, List was brought closer to the Fraction and to the PCP. List admits, however, that he was still ideologically closer to the Poale Zion Left than were most of the other Fraction and PCP members. His Zionism kept him from opposing immigration and the absorption policies of the Histadrut. However, he was deeply opposed to their policies of Kibush Ha-avoda and Kibush Ha-karka (conquest of labor and conquest of land).<sup>48</sup> One gathers that he sympathized with the Arabs, who were losing their jobs because Jewish employers were being pressured to hire only Jewish workmen,

and who were losing their homes because the effendis were selling the land on which they lived to the JNF.

Although List wanted immigration to continue and the Jewish homeland to become a reality, he could not reconcile himself to policies designed to achieve these goals at the expense of the Arabs. He was also in disagreement with the Borochov group's negative attitude toward the Yiddish language. When he joined the Workers Fraction, his first task was to head its list for election to the Workers' Council in Jaffa-Tel Aviv. However, finding himself without work, he was soon temporarily forced to concentrate on his own situation. When he finally settled into the position of Secretary to the Citizens Committee for the Opera, he was able to resume his political activities.

Toward the end of 1924, Barzilai invited List to join the Central Committee of the PCP. List writes of his hesitation to become embroiled in the ideological battles between the communist factions. He believed that the extremists who preached liquidation were not only hurting the position of the Marxist movement among the Jewish workers in Palestine, but were also undermining the Zionist movement, which he still favored. He also resented the name calling, such as "Lumpen-Zionistisha," used against the chalutzim.<sup>49</sup>

To convince him, Barzilai spoke about the national liberation struggles in India and in China, the revolutionary situation in Germany, the workers' movement in England, and the Sacco-Vanzetti case in the United States. Barzilai argued that what was happening in Palestine was part of a larger picture: the international working class was fighting for its survival against the international bourgeois forces which were using their financial power and influence to attack the gains made by the successful socialist revolution in Russia. List was finally convinced, and joined Barzilai and Daniel, committing himself to "the cause."

By 1926 the Palestinian communists had succeeded in giving their May Day demonstrations the character of a revolutionary gesture. List, who had been charged with devising the necessary strategies, speaks of the successful "maneuvering" to hold these demonstrations. In one case, he arranged that small groups of four or five persons would mingle with the crowds leaving an athletic field; they would raise their red flags or placards and burst into song with the "International." As the crowds would thin out, they too would leave. When such demonstrations were

held, the mounted police would try to pick out the demonstrators to arrest them. At times they succeeded, arresting as many as possible and taking them to police headquarters, where they were sometimes jailed for a few days.<sup>50</sup>

In cases where Palestinian communists were held for longer periods of time, or where they were threatened with expulsion, assistance sometimes came from the Zionist community determined to protect fellow Jews,<sup>51</sup> albeit ideologically inconvenient ones. By and large, the leaders of the Jewish Yishuv opposed the British policy of political arrests and united in opposition to the expulsion of Jews. List relates that David Ben-Gurion, then the Secretary of the Histadrut Workers Committee, told him: "We will fight against the Workers Fraction [of the PCP] to the bitter end, but we will oppose with all our might the expulsion of Jews from Eretz Israel, even if they are criminals."<sup>52</sup>

Another function of Nahum List was to help those PCP members caught by the British. He built a network of contacts for this task. Professor David Shorr and Uni Abd el-Hadi were two who proved cooperative. Professor Shorr, a unique type, who according to List, "simply could hate no one," assisted the "arrested of Zion" when he was in Moscow, and the arrested communists when he was in Palestine.<sup>53</sup> Abd el-Hadi, a member of the Arab Workers Committee and a lawyer, also assisted List in the negotiations to legalize a local branch of the international Red Help Organization (see Appendix C), which aided leftist political prisoners. Their plan called for the creation of a legal organization to help political prisoners--not only Jewish and Arab communists, but members of the Arab national movement as well. Abd el-Hadi was mainly concerned with the many Arab political prisoners in Syria, but List tried to convince him of the need to influence Jewish and Arab workers in Palestine to work together for the sake of all political prisoners. List writes that there were many prominent Jews involved in these efforts and that, from the party's point of view, it was more important to involve prominent, influential Arabs. In the end, Abd el-Hadi directed his efforts to assisting only Arab political prisoners, and List concentrated on establishing legal contacts in Tel Aviv and in Jerusalem.

List was also charged with the preparation of weekly reports on the Arab movements in Palestine and in neighboring Arab countries. His information came from Arab newspapers,

members of the party who returned from missions to neighboring countries, and from conversations with Palestinian Arabs. Each week, List was to carry the report personally from Jerusalem to Daniel in Tel Aviv. He once mistakenly mailed the "secret" report. The situation was saved by an Arab member of the party who, working in the Central Post Office in Jerusalem, managed to locate the envelope and return it to List. The report was finally hand carried to Daniel by List, as usual.<sup>54</sup>

In 1927, List and eleven other communists were imprisoned in Jerusalem. A number of Arab political prisoners were held in the same jail. Eight of the twelve communists were in one cell, with the others dispersed to different cells with convicted criminals. When one of the communists was whipped by a guard, the others agreed to a hunger strike in order to enforce their demands, which stressed their right to treatment as political prisoners, as opposed to common criminals. They demanded greater freedom of movement, exemption from hard labor, the right to receive books and newspapers without restrictions, to write and to exchange such writings within the cell, and guarantees against further beatings by the prison authorities.

The communist hunger strike aroused public sympathy. Dr. Judah L. Magnes, the president of the newly founded Hebrew University and a respected leader in the Yishuv, interceded with the British administration. On the tenth day of the hunger strike, List and the other communists, by now extremely weak, halted their strike. What had they accomplished? The British then, as in the case of the Irish political prisoners today, did not give in to their demands. Indeed, in later years physical punishment of political prisoners worsened.<sup>55</sup>

The Tsurs and General Avidar agreed that List had the most compassion for the Jewish people and for his fellow communists who did not survive Stalin's Gulag. List, Yaacov Tsur commented, "gives you his own feelings; he was a warmer, more human person than most of the others."<sup>56</sup> In his Keshet articles, Russian-born Nahum List describes his work for the party in Palestine, in Syria, in Lebanon and in France, and he talks about serving his party with all his "heart and soul," working undercover most of the time. "For the sake of the party," he sat in jails in Jerusalem, in Jaffa, in Beirut, and in Tripoli. He slept in the fields, lived in the mud on the borders of Syria and Turkey, took part in a hunger strike in a Jerusalem jail, and when the Comintern ordered him to leave Palestine, did so.<sup>57</sup>

Throughout his years of service to the communist movement, and in his various functions as a party member, Nahum List showed a high level of commitment and self-sacrifice. His motivational mix included an assumption that the other Palestinian communist leaders more or less believed in the same things in which he believed, namely, the same kind of social, political and economic justice. Further, List saw a compatibility between the aims and policies of the communists and those of the Jewish workers who, he was convinced, were part of an international proletariat. List's initial decision to join the party, and then his subsequent decision to remain a member, were, to a great extent, influenced by the respect he held for Barzilai and, especially, for Daniel. In addition to his admiration for Daniel's intellectual and leadership abilities, there was also a personal friendship between them.<sup>58</sup>

According to General Avidar, List left Palestine for the Soviet Union and spent some years there. Unlike Barzilai, List admitted that under the impact of a series of discordant events, he finally experienced doubts about his ties to the communist movement, and regret over the damage which the party had caused.<sup>59</sup> On his return to Israel, List and his wife settled in Tel Aviv, where she continued to live following his death.

(4) Nahum Leshchinsky: He was still another tool of Moscow about whom Barzilai wrote. Known within the party as Nadav (or Nadab), Leshchinsky had been born into a wealthy Jewish family in Kirvoy-Rog, in the southern part of Russia. Highly studious, having deeply imbibed Russian culture, he was more at ease in Russian than Yiddish. Leshchinsky came to Palestine during the early 1920s as a young pioneer. Convinced by Daniel to join the PCP in 1924,<sup>60</sup> he soon became the party's chief theoretician. He loved to read and to analyze Lenin, became an expert on propaganda, and was soon put in charge of foreign affairs, which ultimately brought him to the attention of the Comintern. Bohumil Smeral, the Comintern's emissary to Palestine, praised Leshchinsky in his report on the PCP's role in the Palestine riots of 1929.<sup>61</sup> Leshchinsky was also very effective within the Gdud Ha'avoda (the Labor Brigade, about which more will be said later), where he was a very strong influence on the left wing.

Elected to the PCP's Central Committee in 1926, Leshchinsky became a member of its Secretariat, in which capacity he was assigned several missions abroad. When the British caught him



in 1930, he was expelled from Palestine and made his way to Egypt, where he worked to organize the Egyptian Communist Party. A British police agent who had infiltrated the party disclosed Leshchinsky's identity, and he was again arrested. At that point, he returned to Russia where he became an executive member of the NIA (Scientific Research Association), a part of the University of the Toilers of the East in Moscow. Using the pen name of Nadav, he published several articles dealing with the situation in the Middle East.

When Arab-Jewish communal rioting erupted in Palestine in 1929, beginning with a clash at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem on August 23, the Comintern supported the Arabs and defined them as a potentially revolutionary force. This provoked some discussion in the communist press on the nature of the forces involved. The official Comintern assessment was disputed by some Jewish members of the PCP, who denied the existence of any Arab revolutionary movement. An article in Novy Vostok, written by Arbuziam (identified, parenthetically, as "Averbakh," that is, "Daniel") commented:

. . . the fellaheen and the Beduin masses were waging an active political struggle against British imperialism. They did not, however, submit easily to class political discipline and might therefore become the tools of imperialist agents. The basic question of the revolutionary movement in the Arab East is to use the immense revolutionary energy of the Beduin tribes for the revolutionary class struggle against imperialism, against the native bourgeoisie and feudalists, and to link it with the movement of the impoverished fellaheen and proletariat.<sup>62</sup>

Another article by "Nadab," that is, Leshchinsky, was published four years after the riots, in Revoliutsionny Vostok, and stated that those members of the PCP who had insisted that "the 1929 events were a pogrom, and not a rebellion, had been expelled."<sup>63</sup> In other words, the official Comintern line was maintained and its critics punished.

Perhaps Leshchinsky's fate was determined by his attributing the 1929 riots to the "most reactionary elements within the Arab community."<sup>64</sup> This brought him into conflict with the official Comintern position as set forth by Jacob Tepper,

also known as Shami, chief organizer of the Communist Party of Egypt and a Comintern emissary to the Middle East. The Comintern position on the riots of 1929 was summed up by its sending "Cardinal Greetings to all fighters for Arab national emancipation" (emphasis mine).<sup>65</sup> Leshchinsky was arrested in 1936 in the Soviet Union, sentenced to a long term in a labor camp, and died en route.<sup>66</sup>

(5) "Eisenberg": List mentions a PCP activist named Eisenberg, who came to Palestine from Sevastopol in the Crimea. It was Eisenberg who convinced List to join the Poale Zion Left. Eisenberg studied Hebrew and worked on the PCP's underground press. At some point he was caught by the British, expelled and then returned to Russia. There, he, along with many others, was arrested and killed during one of the Stalinist purges of the 1930s, despite his confessions and damaging testimony against his fellow members of the PCP.<sup>67</sup>

(6) Jacob Tepper ("Shami"): Tepper, mentioned earlier, was another member of the PCP's Secretariat until January 1926, when, during the Druze rebellion, he was ordered to Syria to work with the rebels who, led by Sultan al Atrash, were attacking French forces in various parts of the country. Caught in Beirut, Tepper was accused of maintaining contact with the rebels, sentenced to death, and almost executed. Expelled from Syria at the last moment, he reached Moscow from where he became a Comintern trouble shooter for the Middle East. List explains that when Tepper returned to Moscow, he became one of the PCP's worst critics, blaming its leadership for failure to Arabize the party. An important organizer for the Egyptian Communist Party, Tepper was more fortunate than most, as he survived Stalin's purges and became a professor at the University of Moscow and later the Head of the Department of Studies of the East.<sup>68</sup>

(7) Joseph Galach ("The Priest"<sup>69</sup>): He was the only member of the PCP Secretariat of proletarian origins. Active in various missions abroad, he also traveled to Moscow as the representative for the Workers Fraction to Profintern meetings (the International Communist Trade Union Organization, see Appendix C). Arrested and expelled from Palestine, he managed to return there on Moscow's orders in 1928. Two years later, he was recalled to Moscow and was subsequently arrested during the purges along with most other PCP members who had the misfortune to be in Russia during those years. He succumbed

around 1936.<sup>70</sup>

(8) Moshe Kuperman (known within the party as "Emek"): He was the organizational manager of the PCP, responsible for the crucial functions of communication and security, which included the task of finding "safe" housing and meeting places for communist agents.<sup>71</sup> Kuperman had been born in Austrovitz, Poland, and had come to Palestine as a pioneer in the early 1920s at the age of twenty. Like List, Kuperman worked on construction of roads and later on projects connected with the Rutenberg electrification and irrigation schemes. He joined the Borochov Club and then the MPSI in 1922, about the time of its transition into the PCP. He exercised a strong influence on members of the Poale Zion Left. According to Barzilai, Kuperman believed in communism with all his heart and soul, and he blindly followed the party line. Discussions did not always interest him; the important thing for him was the decision itself and its implementation.<sup>72</sup>

Kuperman soon became a member of the PCP's Central Committee, charged with implementing its decisions and maintaining security. His primary responsibility was to protect party leaders and to spirit them into hiding when threatened with detection by the British police. Kuperman managed to save Barzilai on one such occasion in Jerusalem. Daniel was also under his protection.<sup>73</sup>

(9) Yerachmiel Lukacher-Horazo: He was Kuperman's assistant. He had been born in Russia, immigrated to Palestine before World War I as a youth, and graduated from Herzlia Gymnasium in Tel Aviv. Lukacher, or "Luka" as he was known to his comrades in the Left Gdud,<sup>74</sup> had served as an officer in the Ottoman Army,<sup>75</sup> and was later sent to Germany on behalf of Ha-Shomer, the clandestine Jewish paramilitary organization.<sup>76</sup> Barzilai claimed that Lukacher "received lessons from a German General."<sup>77</sup> While in Germany, he was drawn into communist circles by revolutionary Jews, as the inflation and overall situation in Germany in 1923-1924 were converting him into a communist. Barzilai tells us that during the period 1925-1927, "Lukacher-Horazo fulfilled the instructions given him from the 'Center' in Berlin, and the go-between was Heshen [Daniel's brother]." Barzilai also discussed Lukacher's espionage in Palestine on behalf of the Comintern, noting that as a PCP member, Lukacher was charged with special assignments re-

lating to the Haganah.<sup>78</sup> He was involved in the Druze uprising in Syria in 1925,<sup>79</sup> and seems to have incited some Bedouins in northern Palestine in 1929:

An officer in Haganah, Lukacher announced at the outset of the Mufti-directed distemper in 1929 that he would travel north to check on reports that a Bedouin tribe, traditionally friendly to the Jews, had begun showing evidence of restiveness. Soon reports seeped back, through trusted Arab couriers, that the northern country had been customarily peaceful until a few days ago, when a communist agent began visiting with tribal elders and inciting them to raid neighboring Jewish settlements. The description fitted Lukacher. It seemed incredible, and it was reluctantly in his absence that Haganah searched Lukacher's room. A secret panel was discovered and, behind it, a punctilious duplicate of the headquarters map of Haganah's arsenals, and also a plan, in code, to wipe them out in a single sweeping assault. A patrol was sent north to summon him to a Haganah courtmartial. He could not be found.<sup>80</sup>

Lukacher was arrested by the British and expelled from Palestine in 1932. He thereupon returned to Russia and disappeared: "Some say that he was a general in the Republican Army in Spain, or a colonel in the Red Army in World War II."<sup>81</sup> Barzilai met him in Naril'ska Camp, a broken man.<sup>82</sup> During some of his years of incarceration, he and Barzilai were together, but he died during the war. Lukacher was the "most mysterious personality among the PCP functionaries," and even today, "all of his activities have not yet been revealed."<sup>83</sup>

General Avidar commented that stories about Lukacher were, indeed, confused.<sup>84</sup> He said Israel Beer, later identified as a Soviet agent, claimed that Lukacher had been seen in Spain during the Spanish Civil War and had died there. Avidar also said that on his return to Israel, Barzilai had given much information to Israeli Intelligence, ticking off "hundreds of names" and telling their fate. During one session, Barzilai had discussed Lukacher, noting that Lukacher had survived the Spanish Civil War, returned to Russia, was arrested, spent time in a labor camp, and perhaps died during World War II.<sup>85</sup>

Barzilai, Auerbach, List and all the other important members of the Palestine communist movement shared an ability to rationalize their extreme dedication to the cause and their obedience to Moscow. This ability was based on their faith in the socialist revolution, socialist justice, and the historic inevitability of proletarian victory. They had no difficulty in seeing their movement as part of a larger picture. Indeed, this provided additional justification and rationalization for their anti-Zionist actions. They sincerely believed that British imperialists were in league with Jewish Zionist-capitalists, who were exploiting both Jewish and Arab workers. From there, it was a small step to the conclusion that improvement in the lives of Jewish workers could only be achieved within the framework of a general class struggle. The result of these beliefs was a "tunnel vision," which precluded serious consideration, understanding and questioning of Moscow's directives. Through their anti-Zionist activities and their unquestioning pro-Soviet sympathies, they became Moscow's tools for the implementation of its Middle East foreign policy aims.

#### NOTES

1. Max Nomad, Political Heretics--From Plato to Mao Tse-tung (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1968), p. 272.
2. Professor Seweryn Bialer of Columbia University is an expert on Soviet affairs.
3. Esther Feldman, Kele b'lee Sugar (Prison Without Bars), (Tel Aviv: Am HaSefer Publishers, Ltd., 1964), passim.
4. Josef Berger-Barzilai, Hatragedia shel Hamahaphaha Ha-Sovietit (The Tragedy of the Soviet Revolution), (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1968), pp. 62-89, wherein Barzilai has written extensively about Alexander Heshen, discussing his involvement with the communists and his tragic end. This material also appears in Molad, July-August 1965, pp. 213-220, under the title "Aharito shel Alexander Heshen" (The End of Alexander Heshen).
5. Nahum List, "Tzadek Ha-Komintern" (The Comintern was Right) in Keshet, No. 24, pp. 106-107.
6. Barzilai, Hatragedia, p. 91.
7. List, p. 107.
8. Ibid.
9. The author interviewed Yaacov Tsur, his wife Vera, and

their brother-in-law, General Josef Avidar, in the Tsurs' Jerusalem apartment during April 1982. Tsur was the nephew of Barzilai's wife, Esther Feldman, and one of Israel's former Ambassadors to France. Barzilai, in his later years, was close to the Tsurs, spending much time talking about his comrades.

10. List, p. 107.

11. Jerusalem interview.

12. List, p. 109.

13. Jacob Hen-Tov, Communism and Zionism in Palestine: The Comintern and the Political Unrest in the 1920s (Mass.: Schenkman Publ. Co., 1974), p. 32.

14. List, ibid.

15. According to Yaacov Tsur, Barzilai's original family name in Polish was Zelisnik. Barzilai (barzel in Hebrew means "iron") simply translated his Polish name into Hebrew. He adopted the name Joseph Berger in 1933, when he was given Soviet citizenship. His writings appear under Berger, Barzilai, and Berger-Barzilai.

16. Esther Feldman writes of her first meeting with Zinoviev in the Kremlin. She records her excitement and her impressions of this Soviet leader and notes that in 1936, when Zinoviev was put on trial and denounced, she told her young son about her own meeting with this former leader who so greatly impressed her. Feldman, pp. 20-21.

17. Tsur encouraged his Aunt Esther to write her memoirs. He suggested the title and read the original Russian manuscript.

18. Feldman, pp. 22-23. "Dafka" has no English equivalent. Perhaps the closest would be, "just so."

19. Barzilai, Hatragedia, pp. 16-19.

20. Ibid., p. 19.

21. Ibid., p. 22.

22. Ibid., p. 23.

23. Ibid., p. 24.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., p. 26.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid. One can dispute this perspective; but, nonetheless, that is what Barzilai wrote.

28. Stalin spoke only Russian and Georgian. Raskolnikov acted as Barzilai's translator. Ibid. It is interesting to note that although Barzilai asked Raskolnikov for an opportunity to meet with Trotsky, the meeting never materialized. At that time,

Trotsky, still a member of the Central Committee, no longer served in any position in the Soviet government, and the bitter debate which would engulf him was already in its early stages. Trotsky did not appear at the Plenum. He was the only Soviet official Barzilai did not meet during that trip to Bolshevik Russia.

29. Feldman, pp. 24-27.

30. The Va'ad Leumi was the administrative and executive body of the organized Jewish community in Palestine.

31. Yaacov Tsur, Shaharith Shel Etmol (Yesterday's Sunrise), (Tel Aviv: Am Hassefer Publishers, Ltd., 1965), p. 162.

32. Ibid.

33. Feldman, pp. 32-33.

34. General Josef Avidar, the brother-in-law of Yaacov Tsur, had been the Haganah Commander in the Old City of Jerusalem during the riots of 1929. He later served as one of Israel's ambassadors to the Soviet Union.

35. The Tsurs live near Palmach Street which is "not ten minutes" from Agron Street, where Barzilai hid after the riots of 1929 until he left Palestine in 1930. Judd Teller tells us that sometime after the riots in 1929, "intuition led Haganah to become curious about Reb Yitzchak Zlesnik's credentials. It seemed that he had been accepted on his charm and competence and that none had . . . inquired into his references. Sensing . . . Haganah was closing in, Reb Yitzchak Zlesnik skipped the country. It was established that he had not been a divine at all but a graduate of the Comintern's training school and had, under the name of Isaac Barzilai, functioned as its liaison officer with the Palestine Party." The Kremlin, The Jews and The Middle East (N. Y.: Thomas Yoseloff, 1957), p. 158.

36. Feldman, pp. 35-38; Barzilai, pp. 105-106.

37. Feldman, pp. 48-71.

38. Ibid., p. 51.

39. Ibid., pp. 48-49.

40. Yaacov Tsur tells how Barzilai, originally sentenced to death, managed to survive. He had been sentenced to be shot, the Russian word for which is "Rastrelyats." The death sentence was recorded by the first letter of the word. In Russian, "R" is written as a "P." According to Tsur, someone sympathetic to Barzilai, because of the stories he had heard about Barzilai's work as a Palestinian communist, changed the letter "P" to an "8" by adding another loop at the bottom of the letter. Thus, Barzilai was "sentenced" to eight years, later resentenced, and then sentenced

once again, for a total of 22 years. During 1934-1956, he was moved from camp to camp. Also see Joseph Berger, Shipwreck of a Generation (London: Harvill Press), pp. 7-10.

41. Berger, Shipwreck, p. 24, where he wrote: "I myself still believed in the integrity of Soviet justice, so from the moment of my arrest I adopted the policy of speaking nothing but the truth."

42. See his Shipwreck of a Generation (under "Berger"), Soviet Jews and Their Fate (1958), articles in Davar and Molad, and a number of books on people he knew in the camps.

43. Jerusalem interview. This remark was received with dismay by both Yaacov Tsur and his brother-in-law General Avidar (who uttered the Hebrew equivalent of "What stupidity!").

44. Yaacov Tsur further explained that Esther was somewhat older than her husband and tended to be very protective and maternal. "She was a wonderful wife and mother to him and to their child," her nephew said.

45. List, No. 18, pp. 133-134. Also see Melech Epstein, The Jew and Communism--1919-1941 (N. Y.: Trade Union Sponsoring Committee, 1959), pp. 200-201, for the background of Abraham Tabachnick, who was born in Mogilev-Podolsk, Russia, and who was drawn to the communist movement in the U.S., although he never joined the party. Tabachnick dates his affinity to communism to the Civil War period in Russia and to the pogroms committed by Petlura's bands. He, too, saw that "Red troops on the whole protected Jews."

46. List, p. 138. Eisenberg is the fifth PCP member discussed in this chapter.

47. Ibid. List conveys the difficult conditions under which these new arrivals lived.

48. Ibid., p. 140.

49. Ibid., p. 143.

50. List, No. 20, pp. 155-157.

51. Ibid., p. 166.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., p. 167.

54. List, No. 20, p. 157.

55. Ibid., pp. 168-171.

56. Yaacov Tsur, Jerusalem interview.

57. List, Keshet, Winter 1963, No. 18, p. 132.

58. Barzilai, passim; Feldman, passim; List, passim; and the Tsurs' interview.

59. List, passim.



60. Barzilai, Hatragedia, p. 92.

61. Barzilai, as will be discussed later, spent a good deal of time with Moscow's emissary, Bohumil Smeral, the Czechoslovakian communist leader who had been "replaced" by younger members of the party. Smeral had been sent on a "fact-finding" mission by Stalin, who according to Barzilai really wanted to get Smeral out of the way. As it happened, the Arab riots of 1929 erupted while Smeral was in Palestine. Barzilai, ibid., pp. 93-96, and Hen-Tov, pp. 34-45.

62. Jane Degras, The Communist International--1919-1943: Documents, (London: F. Cass, 1971), Vol. III, pp. 76-77.

63. Ibid.

64. Hen-Tov, ibid. Yet, Degras shows "Nadab" as being close to the official line when he argues that since "Zionism was counterrevolutionary, anti-imperialism in Palestine must be directed against the Jewish national minority as being overwhelmingly Zionist. . ." Degras, ibid.

65. Hen-Tov, p. 100. Also see The New Palestine, November 1, 1929, pp. 344-345, "Communists Claim Credit--Declare They Brought Outbreaks," in which the author cites "evidence" linking the communists to the riots. A letter from the West European Bureau of the Executive of the Communist International contains the following statement: "The struggle in Palestine is no sporadic or isolated event; it is an integral part of the powerful revolutionary wave which is sweeping over the whole of Asia."

66. Hen-Tov, p. 35.

67. List, No. 18, p. 138.

68. List, Keshet, Spring 1965, No. 27, pp. 89-90.

69. "Galach" means "priest" in Hebrew.

70. Hen-Tov, p. 37, and List, No. 20, p. 153.

71. Barzilai, p. 92; Alain Greilsammer, Les Communistes Israéliens (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1978), p. 57.

72. Barzilai, ibid.

73. List, No. 22, pp. 152-153.

74. The Left Gdud refers to the Left within the Gdud Ha'avoda which was also known as the Joseph Trumpeldor Labor Brigade. Anita Shapira, "The Left" in the Gdud Ha'avoda (Labour Brigade) and the Palestine Communist Party until 1928, in Zionism: Studies in the History of the Zionist Movement and of the Jewish Community in Palestine (Tel Aviv University: Massada Publ. Co., Ltd., 1975), pp. 127-155. Also see List, No. 20, pp. 158-164.

75. Although List does not say, we may assume that Lukacher served in the Ottoman Army during World War I.
76. List, No. 20, p. 162, and Shapira, ibid. Also see Barzilai, p. 73, for details on Lukacher.
77. Shapira, ibid.
78. Barzilai, p. 73.
79. Ibid.
80. Judd L. Teller, Scapegoat of Revolution (N. Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. 157.
81. List, No. 20, p. 162.
82. Ibid.
83. Hen-Tov, p. 36.
84. For example, see Teller, p. 157: "During the Spanish Civil War he appeared with communist commissars there and the last word was that the comrades had disposed of him in one of their many fratricidal purges."
85. General Josef Avidar, Jerusalem interview.

## 9

# The Cat-and-Mouse Game I: Arabization and the "Agrarian Revolt"

### 1

By the time the Comintern recognized the PCP and accepted it for membership in February 1924, Nahum List was deeply involved with the communist movement in Palestine. He discusses the efforts made by the PCP's leadership to comply with Moscow's demands both before and after receiving the Comintern's recognition. To List, the Comintern played a destructive and dangerous game with the Jewish leadership of the PCP, even to the extent of exploiting the PCP and the Palestine riots of 1929 as levers in Stalin's struggle for power and his need to discredit Bukharin and the so-called "Right deviationists."

Stalin's "game," according to List, included the demand for Arabization, unqualified support for the Arab worker, and unmitigated antagonism toward the Zionist movement. It was dangerous and destructive because it often led to bloodshed. It rendered well nigh impossible the communists' hopes to attract a wider membership among the Jewish population. It led to the arrest, imprisonment and, often enough, expulsion from Palestine of some of the party's best people. It failed to attract more than a handful of the more educated Arabs, who insisted on working only among Jews. In sum, it led to the party's failure in every possible way. Failure meant that suspicion would be cast upon those who had sincerely tried to follow Moscow's orders but who did not and could not succeed.<sup>1</sup>

### 2

With the unification of the Palestine communist factions during the summer of 1923,<sup>2</sup> tension within the organization had subsided temporarily, and the attention of the leadership was directed by Karl Radek<sup>3</sup> to programmatic matters. On orders from Moscow, Daniel and others began to focus on the Arab national movement, seeing it as a significant lever against British imperialism. Yet, despite Moscow's urgings, the PCP leadership

was reluctant in 1923 to make support for the Arab national movement the party's sole function. It also wished to pursue other policies as well, such as active opposition to Zionist policies directed toward political development of the Jewish Yishuv, support for the Yiddish language (since Hebrew was seen as a nationalistic symbol), and the necessity "to struggle for the expulsion of the British army. . . and for the cancellation of the British Mandate."<sup>4</sup>

Moscow instructed the Palestinian communists to work toward the establishment of a federation of all communist parties in the Near East. The importance which Moscow assigned to this goal was brought home to Josef Berger-Barzilai on his first visit to Russia in the early months of 1925, when he was asked by Raskolnikov, the then Head of the Eastern Department, to remain in Moscow for the duration of the ECCI's plenum. He and the other PCP leaders were then charged not only with organizing and strengthening the party in Palestine, but in Syria and Egypt as well.<sup>5</sup>

To attract support in the Arab world, in order to create the Comintern-ordered "anti-colonial" united front, the PCP leadership found it necessary to assume a position closer to the KPP's anti-Zionist position. Zionism, as distinguished from Yishuvism which will be discussed shortly, was now increasingly portrayed as the chief vehicle of the reactionary, counterrevolutionary Jewish bourgeoisie in its quest to create a market for its own benefit. Secondly, British imperialism, the ultimate target of the united-front strategy, was stated to be in collusion with Zionism. Hence, the failure of Zionism would also undermine British imperial interests in the Middle East as a whole.

When the Comintern recognized the PCP as its representative "section" in Palestine early in 1924, the number of party members according to an "official" source was only twenty to thirty percent the number it had claimed during the summer of 1923.<sup>6</sup> Membership had begun to fall off as the "honeymoon" period for the unified PCP had begun to wane, as awareness of the new Moscow directive to Arabize the party increased, and as economic conditions in Palestine continued to deteriorate. Once again, the party experienced internal dissension as a small group of members began to identify themselves as a distinct "Workers' Council." This group consisted of former KPP members who not only rejected Zionism, but Yishuvism as well and were known as the "liquidationists." In addition, there was still the

Menachem-Elysha group of "appeasers" which clung to its own principles. Both these factions ended by leaving Palestine for Russia, Europe, or the United States. The former interpreted its principal function as leaving the "Zionist hell," while the latter left because of lack of work, personal disappointments including anger over having been pushed out of the leadership of the party, and the feeling that the concept of the Jewish homeland lacked viability.<sup>7</sup> Prior to their leaving Palestine, the Menachem-Elysha group had tried a last-ditch effort to influence the orientation of the party. In March 1924, shortly after the PCP had received the Comintern's recognition, the Menachem-Elysha group attempted to restructure the ideological orientation of the party to one based on cultural propaganda,<sup>8</sup> but it was defeated by the so-called Emek group.<sup>9</sup>

With control of the party in new hands, a new slogan came into existence: "Out from the Ghetto,"<sup>10</sup> *i.e.*, away from the Jewish clientele. Now, the future success of the PCP was clearly tied to the degree to which the PCP succeeded in becoming an Arab party. It was also clear to the new leadership, that even the PCP's attempted participation in the Histadrut had not enabled the party to establish contact with the "decisive majority in Palestine and in the Near East as a whole,"<sup>11</sup> *i.e.*, the Arabs. It was recognized that to reach this majority the party had to organize a propaganda effort specifically targeting Arab interests and concerns. This then, marks the beginning of the period of "Arabization" which would continue for many years. Moscow would soon train Arab cadres for future leadership positions. These young people would be sent to the University of the Toilers of the East, where they would be indoctrinated in Marxism-Leninism, taught the meaning of "democratic centralism,"<sup>12</sup> and prepared to return to their own countries to assume leadership positions in communist parties which often had originally been organized by Jews.

Stalin's influence was strongly felt at the University of the Toilers of the East by the mid-1920s. In 1924 he made an important speech there in which he maintained that the dominant bourgeois class in the East consisted of two factions: one revolutionary, the other counterrevolutionary.<sup>13</sup> The revolutionary faction was seen as progressive, presenting the possibility of an alliance strategy, a united front, with the communist parties of the East. Thus, Arab feudal effendis were denounced as a reactionary class for selling land to the Zionists

and for compromising with the British, while the Arab peasants and workers were praised and encouraged in their quest for Arab nationalism. They were to be recruited wherever they could be found: working the land, in the factories, in the cafes, in their villages, even in the jails.<sup>14</sup> As for the "progressive" Arab bourgeoisie, at the time they were more difficult to identify, but were nonetheless believed to exist. Later during the late 1930s and 1940s, they would be found among youthful Arab intellectuals who had socialist leanings as well as nationalist aspirations.

3

The first time an Arab delegate actually took part in party discussions had been at the Fifth Party Congress of the PCP in July 1923. This was a big event in party history to that point, and, to some extent, it catalyzed the subsequent unification which permitted Moscow, in 1924, to recognize the PCP. Some KPP members were so impressed by the fact that an Arab delegate had participated in the proceedings, that they returned to the united PCP soon after the congress. In their perception, the presence of this delegate finally signaled an acceptance of the ideas that they had urged two years earlier. The delegate himself was a railroad worker from Haifa. He spoke about the conditions of the Arab workers and how the PCP leadership could attract Arabs to the party.<sup>15</sup>

Once the PCP openly assumed a pro-Arab line, it was on a collision course with the Histadrut. On April 29, 1924, the Histadrut Council, reacting to the various anti-Zionist actions of the PCP, expelled its front organization, the Workers Fraction, from the Histadrut. The anti-Zionist actions of the PCP took the form of anti-Histadrut demonstrations, demands on the part of the Fraction for the Histadrut to end its policies of Kibush Ha-avoda (Jewish labor in place of Arab labor) and Binyan Ha-Eretz (development of Jewish settlements) and propaganda efforts in communist newspapers directed at undermining the influence of the Histadrut and awakening Arab opposition to the Zionist movement.

The Afula incident of November 1924, when Arab peasants had been evicted from land sold by Arab effendis to the JNF, was followed in August 1929 by similar clashes at Wadi Hawarit (or

Havaras), located halfway between Haifa and Tel Aviv. The Comintern used the second incident to argue that the Zionist "act of conquest" had brought serious "agrarian" disturbances. It noted that some 12,000 Arab fellaheen were evicted from their land after they had put up a desperate resistance.<sup>16</sup> Israeli cites a proclamation issued by the PCP's Central Committee, dated September 1930, warning "Great danger can be expected by the Jews" as a result of their actions in August 1929 at Wadi Hawarit.<sup>17</sup> Three years later, in 1933, the communists, then under Arab leadership, resurrected the Wadi Hawarit land issue: "For four years the Zionist colonizers have been conquering, step by step, the Wadi Hawarit under the protection of British bayonets and the Haganah soldiers; the Bedouins retreat only after stubborn, heroic resistance."<sup>18</sup>

The PCP praised the fellaheen, whose women and children joined in the struggle; and the Comintern's Inprecorr praised the fact that the Arabs had succeeded in inflicting casualties on the invaders.<sup>19</sup> By that time, the Comintern had long since taken a stand regarding the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine: Early in 1925 it had denounced Zionism, the occupation of Palestine, the British administration, and the Jewish Labor Party, Ahdut Ha-avoda.<sup>20</sup> It had also protested against the maltreatment of communists in Palestine,<sup>21</sup> while simultaneously the Soviet government accelerated its own offensive, begun in the fall of 1923, against the Zionist movement in Russia.

To tighten its control, the Comintern reorganized the leadership of the PCP during the late 1920s. At this same time Arab cadres were being trained in Russia to assume leadership roles in Palestine. According to Barzilai, the PCP inner core consisted of three people--"Secretaries of the Party"<sup>22</sup>--who took their orders directly from Moscow. The main "theoretical" problem with which they were obliged to cope was lingering "Yishuvism" (as distinct from "Zionism") within the party.

4

Zinoviev, in his opening remarks to the Sixth Enlarged ECCI Plenum in February 1926, had spoken of "fusing" the national-revolutionary and proletarian movements so as to win the "colonies for socialism before a strong native bourgeoisie had grown up." If this were done, Zinoviev said, "these countries

could skip the capitalist stage of development."<sup>23</sup> This speech carried strong implications for the Palestinian communists who were still seeking to justify their doctrine of "Yishuvism."<sup>24</sup> The PCP's doctrine of Yishuvism was merely a restatement of Borochovism, "early" Borochovism to be precise. Thus, immigration was supported on the grounds that it resulted from "objective" historical and economic conditions in Europe, unrelated to organized Zionism or to any other ideology. This is, of course, reminiscent of Borochov's stychic process which took into account various social and national pressures tending to accelerate immigration. Immigration of this type, made up as it was of people "on the run" from religious persecution and economic discrimination should not be stopped because it was not politically motivated.

As for the influx of Jewish capital, Yishuvism (and Borochovism) explained this as a natural phenomenon, with no connection to Zionism. Capital was attracted to Palestine in the same way in which it would be attracted to any new, potentially profitable area, with a sizable, cheap labor pool. In Palestine, investment capital was expected to undermine the feudal social and economic order. Yishuvism held, however, that Zionist capital, because of its subservience to British imperialism, was inherently dangerous. It was therefore necessary to separate the Jewish community in Palestine from the Zionist ideology which undermined the natural bonds between Jewish and Arab workers.

Yishuvism's economic model was consistent with the Comintern's ideological pronouncements on economic development in underdeveloped countries. The key here was the role of that segment of the national bourgeoisie currently identified by Stalin and Zinoviev as revolutionary and progressive in social, economic and political terms. Accordingly, this faction, unlike its European counterpart, was to play a "progressive" role in the development of the country. However, there would inevitably come a time, the Yishuvist theory held, when the interests of the "progressive" national bourgeoisie would clash with British colonial interests.

The key theoretician behind the Yishuvist doctrine was Daniel, thereby revealing his own Poale Zion roots.<sup>25</sup> List claims that Yishuvism provided the PCP leaders with hope for the revolutionary potential of the Yishuv in Palestine.<sup>26</sup> In his analysis of the PCP's motivation in adhering to Yishuvism, Jacob Hen-Tov states:



Through its doctrine of Yishuvism, the PCP both sought to retain its membership in acceptable standing in the Comintern and simultaneously to achieve a limited degree of respectability within the Jewish-Zionist community in Palestine.<sup>27</sup>

To the PCP leaders, Zinoviev's speech in February 1926, with its emphasis on "fusing" national-revolutionary and proletarian movements, provided an added rationale or even alibi for their adherence to the doctrine of Yishuvism ("neo-Borochovism").

5

It was the defeat of the Chinese communists by their supposed Kuomintang allies in China that precipitated an extensive reevaluation of Comintern thinking with regard to the anti-colonial united front. On April 12, 1927, Chiang Kai-shek dissolved all communist and left-wing organizations in Shanghai and in Nanking. ECCI's outraged comment on this "anti-communist coup" states:

In agreement with the foreigners, Chiang Kai-shek executed a coup in Shanghai and dissolved the Shanghai city council. His generals have disarmed the workers' corps and, on the orders of the foreign marauders, have shot down hundreds of proletarian men, women, and children. . . . With the utmost indignation and the greatest hatred we declare Chiang Kai-shek a traitor to the revolution, an ally of the imperialist robbers, an enemy of the revolutionary Kuomintang, an enemy of the labour movement, and an enemy of the Communist International.<sup>28</sup>

What were the implications of the Chinese anti-communist, nationalist coup for the Palestinian communists? As a result of the events in China, the Comintern adopted a new policy line toward the so-called anti-colonial united front in the underdeveloped countries, which included Palestine. The Comintern abandoned its previous yardstick of revolutionary potentiality, used to measure the progressiveness of the national bourgeoisie. A new pattern of revolutionary struggle had to be

undertaken, which was actually a return to an old one--Lenin's earlier model of the conspiratorial elites forced to operate in a hostile environment. Therefore, included in a list of actions considered essential by the Comintern were:

Every means must be used to intensify party work among the proletarian masses. . . . In view of repressions and sentences, [communists are] to build a fighting illegal party apparatus.<sup>29</sup>

These and other new directives to the Chinese communists were soon extended into a general set of directives to be followed by all communist parties operating illegally under colonial governments. The Comintern and its sections were to take a lesson from the pre-1917 Bolshevik Party; they were to be "Bolshevized."<sup>30</sup> The PCP was ordered to abandon its doctrine of Yishuvism, now seen by the Kremlin as camouflaged Zionism.<sup>31</sup> The leaders were ordered to reorganize themselves into a more tightly knit conspiratorial organization and to rededicate themselves to the policy of Arabization.

6

List describes the efforts of the PCP leadership to Arabize the party. He speaks first of an "Arab" who turned out to be a Sephardic Jew, whose family had lived in Palestine for six generations. The young man spoke Arabic both at work and at home; he dressed like an Arab, wore an Arab head-dress and appeared to be an Arab in every way. When the young "Arab" expressed his desire to go to Russia to study, List was very pleased, and provided a tutor to help him learn Russian. After problems with two tutors, the young man disappeared. However, before doing so, he introduced List to another young man. This time, the man was, indeed, an Arab. His name was Ahmed, and he, too, expressed a desire to study in Russia. List spent time with Ahmed, discussing Marxism. Since Ahmed already knew Russian, there was no need for a tutor, and he was sent off to Moscow. List then explains that some time after Ahmed returned from Moscow, he went over to the British side and "did not hesitate" to testify in court against members of the PCP.<sup>32</sup> Thus, Ahmed, too, proved to be a failure.

Still, Ahmed had brought two young Arabs to List before he

left for Moscow. One was a postal worker who turned out to be useful to the party at the time List mistakenly mailed the secret report.<sup>33</sup> This was the Arab who retrieved the report and returned it to List. The second Arab who had been brought by Ahmed turned out to be an interesting case. He was a teacher in the Old City of Jerusalem who was filled with enthusiasm. He spoke of organizing a "club" in the Old City and was given party funds to do so. He wrote out reports detailing his activities and spoke about the strikes he was planning and organizing. However, no news of his actions ever found its way into the Arab papers, and after some time, List and the other leaders of the party began to ask specific questions. When they asked for the address of the club, he spoke of the danger to a Jewish comrade entering the area. When he was questioned about his work at the club, he acted as if he were insulted that List did not believe him. Sometimes he would ask List what type of strike List wanted--a "quiet one or a revolutionary one."<sup>34</sup> List told him to be patient and to build toward the day when the party would call a general strike.

As time went on, List became increasingly suspicious. Finally, he located the "club" in a narrow alleyway in the Old City. There he learned of the teacher who came regularly to teach the Koran. There are other stories about other attempts to find Arab comrades for the party. There were some successes, and a few young men were sent off to Moscow to be properly trained to take their places in the party.

List, himself, had occasion to address the students and faculty at the Communist University of Toilers of the East when he was in Moscow for the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in the summer of 1928.<sup>35</sup> There he met the first group of Palestinian Arabs who had been sent to Moscow in 1927, enticed by offers of free scholarships. Nahum Leshchinsky, Ze'ev Birman and other members of the PCP who had been expelled from Palestine by the British became lecturers at the Kutvo, as the university became known.<sup>36</sup> It was closely linked with the Comintern, the Communist Academy in Moscow, and most importantly, with the Soviet Foreign Ministry.<sup>37</sup>

In an article celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Russian revolution, B. A. Vasiliev, a Comintern functionary, had

written that the "whole world" knew of the existence of Kutvo and that its students held important posts in the Chinese revolution. "There are many such 'Moscow agents' now in the capitalist and colonial countries."<sup>38</sup>

How ever many "Moscow agents" there were in the capitalist and colonial countries, their numbers tended to be exaggerated. The London Daily Mail called for action against the Bolsheviks in Palestine, causing Gershon Agronsky to respond to the claim that "Palestine is the headquarters of Russia's new communist movement in the Near East." Agronsky noted that "unfortunately. . . isolated facts correspond to the truth," but when everything is considered, "such alarms give a thoroughly unsupportable impression."<sup>39</sup> Communist leaders claimed not more than 300 members, with estimates of the government and of the Jewish Labor Federation being at perhaps 200. The British police, Agronsky said, knew who the leaders of the PCP were "by the amounts of cash they receive through Egypt," but permitted them to "circulate and establish as many 'contacts' as they wish . . . apparently the better to catch them at it."<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately for the people of Palestine, the "it" turned out to be bloody riots which resulted in many deaths and injuries and which severely damaged the already strained relations between Arabs and Jews.

## 8

The first group of Palestinian Arab students returned from Moscow after the riots of 1929, when the PCP again went through a reorganization which, this time, left the leadership in Arab hands. More will be said about this shortly, in the context of the discussion on the "Agrarian" revolt of 1929.

The second group of young Arab students left for Moscow in 1931, returning to Palestine in 1934, at which time a third group was sent. A number of Kutvo graduates subsequently left the party or were expelled, such as Būlos Farah, one of the party's main pillars during the late 1930s. Another graduate, 'Abdul Ghani al Karmi, returned to Jordan, rejected communism, and went on to represent the Hashemite Kingdom in Madrid.<sup>41</sup> Two other Moscow-trained leaders were Simha Tsabri and Meir Slonim, both of whom were Jewish and both of whom helped organize the Communist Educational Association, subsequently called the Communist Union, and then called the Hebrew

Communists,<sup>42</sup> about whom more will be said later.

Sidqi Najāti and Ridwān al Hilu<sup>43</sup> were among the first to be sent to Moscow. Not long after his return from Moscow and his assumption of a leadership position in the PCP during the winter of 1930, Sidqi Najāti was arrested by the British police. According to Hen-Tov, Najāti left the party after his arrest and became a strong opponent of communism.<sup>44</sup> While the party protested the arrests of its Arab leaders, it also proclaimed that Arabization had become a fact, the Arab public having now been shown that the party was no longer in Jewish hands.<sup>45</sup>

As for Ridwān al Hilu, better known as Mūsa, he was appointed Secretary-General of the PCP in 1934. Under him "party affairs became somewhat more stable."<sup>46</sup> Mūsa and his Jewish deputy Shmuel Mikunis,<sup>47</sup> along with Simha Tsabri and others, were arrested in the late spring of 1941 and charged with obstructing the anti-Nazi war effort. When the international situation changed with the Nazi attack against Soviet Russia, they were released. Mūsa and his strongly anti-Jewish line were heard from again during 1943, when he and the other Arabs in the party refused to support a strike called by the Histadrut, on the grounds that a strike was "contrary to the war effort."<sup>48</sup> While Mūsa was in the process of expelling the Jews from the party leadership, they were publishing leaflets announcing the expulsion of Mūsa and his supporters and pointing out that the Arab leadership of the party had consistently supported strikes when Arab workers were concerned.

Finally, there was Ahmed Sedky, the "Ahmed" about whom List had written.<sup>49</sup> Ahmed proved to be very damaging to the PCP and to Comintern operations in general because he revealed to the British the extent of "military and propaganda training extended to foreign students," particularly to the communist Arab recruits from Palestine.<sup>50</sup> He "laid heavy emphasis upon the connections of the school [the Moscow University of the Toilers of the East] with the Soviet security organ of the G.P.U. and the Comintern. . . ."<sup>51</sup>

Following the Sixth Comintern Congress in August 1928, Daniel and List returned to Palestine, firmly apprised of Moscow's

new policy of Arabization, the rejection of Yishuvism (which had included support for Jewish immigration), the Bolshevization of the PCP, and support for "agrarian" revolution (which the Arab peasants were to be encouraged to initiate against the Arab effendis and the Zionists). If 1924 is considered to have marked the beginning of phase one of Arabization (during which time Arabs were brought into the party while the party still worked to form a "united front" with the so-called progressive elements among the Jewish bourgeoisie), then 1928 may be considered as marking the beginning of phase two. The new Kremlin line considered the Arabs as the only political factor capable of shaping events to produce a revolutionary solution in Palestine, which could spill over to other Middle Eastern countries. Arab nationalism, as far as the Comintern was concerned, was now to be evaluated as a progressive force. It was to be seen as the major weapon against imperialism in Palestine. As such, Arab nationalism deserved the PCP's complete support and attention. It should be noted that the members of the Comintern who dealt with the question of the importance of Arab nationalism in relation to the Arab fellaheen had no first-hand experience or knowledge relevant to this issue.

When the Central Committee of the PCP convened during March-April 1929, it took under consideration the "New Course," as it was called, of the Sixth Comintern Congress of the previous August. Israeli discusses the self-criticism which ensued:

What was the meaning of the "New Course"? What were the mistakes which they had made in the past? We do not receive a clear answer to these questions. . . . Within the [Central] Committee, the suspicion grew that the PCP's participation with the leaders of the Arab national movement could end in a similar manner [to that of the Chinese communists who had participated in the Kuomintang and who had been slaughtered by Chiang Kai-shek's armed forces].<sup>52</sup>

Quoting from the Yiddish-language communist paper Forojs (Forward) of May 19, 1929, Israeli includes the following, which reflects the direction and tone of the discussion during that meeting of the PCP's Central Committee:

Nahās Pasha in Egypt, Hāshim al Attāsi in Syria, and Jamāl Husaini in Palestine, they are the students of Chiang Kai-shek. They have crossed into the reformist camp. The Arab Workers Committee in Palestine, the Wafd in Egypt and the Istiqlāl [Independence Party] in Syria are nothing but the stooges of the reactionaries. The Arab national movement has surrendered; it is frightened by the shadow of the agrarian revolt and rise of the proletariat.<sup>53</sup>

Up to this point, the PCP had used one slogan for the Arabs: "Expel the British army, abolish the Mandate, cancel the Balfour Declaration, evict the Jewish invaders."<sup>54</sup> Now, as a result of events in China and the anticipatory fear that the leaders of the Arab national movement in league with the effendis would (like Chiang Kai-shek) also turn on the Palestinian communists, new slogans directed toward stressing class differentiation within the Arab community of Palestine and the class struggle among the Arab fellaheen would be used. The new, more revolutionary slogans would call for agrarian revolt, land distribution, war against the bourgeois and clerical leaders of the Arab national movement and the establishment of a workers' and peasants' government.<sup>55</sup>

The new slogans were introduced on August 1, 1929, the day hailed as "Comintern Day" by the PCP and as "Red Day" by the Comintern press.<sup>56</sup> The party demonstrations on that day were said to have inaugurated a new revolutionary era.<sup>57</sup> In the weeks following, Josef Berger-Barzilai would write the "Arab" proclamations stressing the PCP's new approach to the leaders of the Arab national movement, land distribution and agrarian revolt against the "treacherous" effendis and the Zionist lackeys of imperialism.<sup>58</sup> The fact that a Jew was drafting the proclamations of the supposedly Arabized PCP speaks volumes about the party's "Arabization."

At that time, Barzilai was living in the Arab village of Beit-Safafa, in the southern part of Jerusalem.<sup>59</sup> Lukacher-Horazo had placed him there for security reasons. The party's printing press was housed nearby, and important meetings of the PCP leaders were held around Barzilai's table.<sup>60</sup> Barzilai describes one such meeting which took place on August 23, 1929,

on the morning riots erupted at the then-called "Wailing Wall" in Jerusalem.<sup>61</sup> It was early morning and all the doors and window shutters were latched because of the secret nature of the discussion. Around Barzilai's table were Moshe (Meir) Kuperman (also known as "Emek"), loyal to the party line; Nahum Leshchinsky (Nadav or Nadab), who loved to debate the "best" line for the party; and Barzilai himself, who saw his function as "public relations" for the party.<sup>62</sup> He was responsible for communications within the party, with other communist parties and between the party and the Comintern. In this function, Barzilai was sent from time to time on various missions outside Palestine. He had just returned from an extended visit abroad, bringing back to Palestine the "protocol of a long conversation" which he had had with Stalin in March of that year (1929). Stalin's instructions to Barzilai touched upon questions dealing with the communist movement in Palestine, including questions pertaining to the attitude of the PCP toward the Arab national movement. The results of the conversation with Stalin had begun to take effect as fundamental changes in the party's relations with the Arab Workers Committee were made: All ties were severed with the "reactionary leadership of the Arab national movement."<sup>63</sup> Barzilai had been instructed to begin a campaign of denunciation against the leadership of the Arab national movement and to strengthen the PCP's anti-imperialist attacks. He had already initiated a new propaganda offensive.

A few days before the meeting described by Barzilai, a special Comintern emissary arrived in Jerusalem. He was one of a series of Comintern emissaries, mentioned by List, who showed up from time to time to deliver directives and to gather information specifically for Stalin.<sup>64</sup> Barzilai was the only one who knew the actual identity of the visitor, Bohumil Smeral, a Czech communist, having met him a number of times in Moscow.<sup>65</sup>

Barzilai describes the security arrangements for Smeral, noting that the PCP leadership tried to restrict his movements to the immediate area in which Lukacher-Horazo had given him "secure" housing and to Barzilai's house, where Smeral was brought every day just before dawn. He would sit in on the various discussions, taking notes on everything which transpired. To some he spoke in Russian, to others in German. He tried to speak to some Arab workers from Gaza and Jaffa, as well as those he met in and around Beit-Safafa. Having no language



in common with the Arabs, he had to rely on someone else to translate for him. Often Smeral would question Barzilai, trying to determine the feasibility of the new policy of focusing on the fellaheen and their supposed revolutionary potential. He would ask such questions as: "Doesn't the backwardness of the Arab fellah (peasant) prevent him from understanding the progressive slogans of the communist movement?" and "Will the communist party be able to overcome the influence of the clerical element within the Arab population?"<sup>66</sup> Barzilai would answer such questions; Smeral would write everything in his notebook.

At the early morning meeting described by Barzilai, Smeral and the party's printer were also present. The discussion dealt with the printing of a proclamation calling on Jewish and Arab workers to "rise together against British imperialism." Below the statement was printed, "The Central Committee of the Communist Party."<sup>67</sup> This turned out to be the last proclamation printed by the PCP immediately prior to the outbreak of riots that very day.<sup>68</sup>

After approving the proclamation, the meeting disbanded, and Barzilai was left alone. Some time later, he received the first indication that something was wrong. The printer returned and told Barzilai that he had seen a number of Arabs passing the house in which the printing press was kept. He had overheard some of their remarks and was certain that they suspected something. There was, he said, danger that the press would be discovered. Barzilai told him to return to the house, close and lock the shutters and doors, prepare the press to be moved and remain with it until they could determine what was happening.

A little after that, one of Lukacher's men rode to Beit-Safafa on his bicycle to inform Barzilai that the Haganah had gone on alert since early morning. This man was not known to the police and had connections with a number of Haganah members. He had been told to follow a group of Arab demonstrators and to report back to Beit-Safafa as soon as possible.

It seems the demonstrators had left their mosque after their morning prayers and had become "inflamed" by speeches they had heard "along the way." They were shouting about going to the Wailing Wall. The police were not interfering.<sup>69</sup> News began to filter in to Barzilai: Forty young Jewish students of an Orthodox yeshivah in Hebron were killed and further violence was spreading.

Later in the day, Barzilai and the others were assembled in Barzilai's house discussing the situation when Kuperman arrived, pale and out of breath. Barzilai records Kuperman's words, and Smeral's nervousness on hearing the following:

I was there. . . I saw with my own eyes. . . cut by knives. . . bleeding. . . . They brought them by car straight to Hadassah [Hospital]. . . killed. . . seriously wounded. . . .<sup>70</sup>

Kuperman told of the efforts of the Haganah to protect Jews, while the "non-involvement of the police encouraged the aggressors." He had seen the victims of the massacre in Hebron brought to Jerusalem. Leshchinsky translated Kuperman's Yiddish into Russian for Smeral, who began to ask for details. Kuperman, completely stunned and panic-stricken, responded: "Riots. . . it's a pogrom."<sup>71</sup> And that also was the assessment of the party Secretariat when, later that same day, the members met to evaluate what had happened. They also concluded:

The authority over the Arab population was in the hands of the Majlis (the Muslim Supreme Council) and the Mufti, the Muslim religious leader, who had called the faithful to  Jihad  (holy war) against the Jews.<sup>72</sup>

At some point during the discussion, news was brought that an Arab mob was descending on Beit-Safafa and that it was necessary to rescue the party's printing press. Before too long, it became apparent that their own lives were in danger. As Barzilai tells the story, members of the Haganah, hearing that a group of Jews was trapped in an Arab village, came to their aid. Brought to Jerusalem, they promptly found secure quarters and resumed their discussions: What should their position be? Should they support the Haganah? Should they turn over to the Haganah their small arms cache?

Smeral was present during all of the discussions and he concurred with their conclusions, even to the point of agreeing that the PCP members should give their arms to the Haganah and should fight alongside Haganah soldiers to defend the Jews, seen as victims of a "pogrom."<sup>73</sup>

The first indication of Stalin's position was found in a letter which Daniel, then in Moscow, sent to the PCP Secretariat, in which he hinted that the Comintern leaders saw things differently from the PCP Secretariat: "The impression here. . . is that what happened in Eretz was an anti-imperialist uprising."<sup>74</sup> As Barzilai notes, that decision was premature since Smeral, the Comintern emissary, had not yet returned to Moscow to present his report. In fact, Smeral had, before leaving Palestine,<sup>75</sup> contributed the following to a proposed statement:

. . . to emphasize the harmful and destructive influence of the clerical elements in the Arab nationalist movement, and to especially note that there can be no agreement or united front with the Mufti and his people.<sup>76</sup>

In the months which followed, confusion over the "correct" interpretation of the riots spread to other communist parties. Laqueur points out that the Rote Fahne, the official press organ of the German Communist Party, published in Berlin, took a "favourable" view (meaning: an Arab uprising against British imperialism), adding that "the anti-Jewish concomitant of the revolt was a natural development which should not be regretted."<sup>77</sup> However, a Profintern (see Appendix C) spokesman, Smolenski, expressed concern over the methods used by the "objective revolutionary" who sometimes uses "reactionary means not unlike the Narodniki." Smolenski added that eventually the movement would progress to a "higher stage" and these questionable means would be abandoned.<sup>78</sup> The period of confusion was ended when the Comintern eventually issued its definitive interpretation:

Our parties have not sufficiently understood that the struggle in Palestine must be regarded from the standpoint of the general revolutionary struggle against imperialism, that it is a continuation of the same anti-imperialist movement which was powerfully expressed in the Chinese revolution and that it is the forerunner in the coming revolution in India. The struggle in Palestine is no sporadic or

isolated event; it is an integral part of the revolutionary wave which is sweeping over the whole of Asia. It is therefore of first rate importance that our parties should conduct a campaign in connection with the Arabian insurrection in Palestine similar to the campaign conducted in connection with the Chinese revolution. (Emphasis mine.)<sup>79</sup>

Thus, while the PCP leadership was calling the riots "pogroms," and disclaiming responsibility for what it felt were Mufti-instigated, anti-Jewish attacks, Moscow was angered by the PCP's lack of adherence to the "correct" line. Hen-Tov cites a "rare" document composed by the party and published hastily, lamenting the innocent Jewish victims who were killed during the first days of the riots. The document, entitled Milhemet Hadamim Ba-aretz Uma-amad Ha-po'alim (The Bloody Struggle in Palestine and the Position of the Working Class), supported the party's participation in "the defense of poor, innocent Jewish workers against their attackers," and, at the same time, asserted that the riots' causes stemmed from "genuine agrarian revolutionary sources."<sup>80</sup> Clearly, the PCP leadership was trying to find the most viable theoretical construction to explain what had happened, as well as to maintain some degree of credibility in both the Jewish and the Arab communities. And, taking the hint from Daniel in Moscow, they were trying to accommodate to the Comintern "line."

The New York Freiheit, the organ of Jewish communists in America, signaled a similar theoretical difficulty. At first, it indicated sympathy for the Jewish victims, whose numbers reached 113 dead and 330 wounded.<sup>81</sup> On August 26, 1929, it even praised the heroic resistance of the Jews to attacks: "When a pogrom breaks out there is no other choice."<sup>82</sup> On August 28, however, the "pogrom" became a "revolutionary uprising," and on August 29, the Freiheit made its turnabout in the following terms:

During the first few days, the Freiheit failed to perceive the national-revolutionary character of the uprising--that was an error. It pointed to the Jewish self-defense as a progressive necessity--that was an error.<sup>83</sup>

By August 31, it was clear that the editors of Freiheit had gotten the party line. They published a resolution of the political bureau of the American Communist Party, explaining that the first viewpoint expressed by the paper was a "counter-revolutionary viewpoint characteristic of social democrats and the bourgeoisie."<sup>84</sup>

Barzilai tells us that he and the other PCP Secretariat members learned about the Comintern debates over the true meaning and causes of the riots from Daniel, after his return to Palestine. Daniel was present when Smeral, just returned to Moscow, gave his report which was sympathetic to the Jews and critical of the Mufti-led Arabs. Still shaken, Smeral presented his report at a "top secret" session of the ECCI.<sup>85</sup> But the ECCI members were unmoved by Smeral's account and questioned him as to the underlying causes of the "uprising": "Say something about the struggle against British imperialism. . . . What was the political meaning of the events?"<sup>86</sup>

Two men who pressed the ECCI toward its condemnation of the PCP's handling of Arabization and the so-called "Agrarian Revolt" were Jacob Tepper (mentioned earlier) who, on his return to Moscow following his release from a Beirut prison, denounced the PCP leadership for its failure to Arabize the party, and Georgi Safarov, the next head of the Comintern's Eastern Department, who criticized the PCP for not understanding the deeper meaning of the uprising. Laqueur notes that Safarov had been closely associated with Lenin and had accompanied him on his return to Russia from Switzerland in the famous "sealed" train in April 1917.<sup>87</sup>

Smeral was overruled and the ECCI adopted its interpretation of the Palestinian riots, less as a result of what had actually happened than out of a political need to conform to Stalin's concept of the so-called "Third Period." Georgi Safarov formulated the Stalinist interpretation that the Palestine riots were a spontaneous uprising, consistent with expected developments in the Third Period.<sup>88</sup>

What was meant by the "Third Period"? Why was the interpretation of the Palestine riots caught up in the theoretical gymnastics of the Comintern? In the end, what was the impact of

this interpretation on the PCP and its leadership? To answer the first question, it is necessary to explain that "periodization" has consistently been used by the Soviets to rationalize shifts in the party "line." Periodization provides the Soviet leadership with a tool to explain why certain anticipated events (such as the international revolution in the first period) had not occurred and why certain new policies (such as Lenin's N.E.P. and Stalin's "reconstruction period"<sup>89</sup>) were instituted. There is some debate as to when the so-called first period ended. From The Theses of the Sixth Comintern Congress on the International Situation and the Tasks of the Communist International, dated 29 August 1928, we learn:

The first was the period of extremely acute crisis of the capitalist system and of direct revolutionary action on the part of the proletariat. This period reached its highest point in 1921, culminating on the one hand in the victory of the USSR over the forces of intervention and internal counter-revolution, and in the consolidation of the proletarian dictatorship and the establishment of the Communist International; and on the other, in a series of severe defeats for the Western European proletariat and the beginning of the general capitalist offensive. This period ended with the defeat of the German proletariat in 1923.<sup>90</sup>

However the adoption of the New Economic Policy by the Tenth Congress of the All-Russian Communist Party in March 1921, followed by the acknowledgment of the Third Comintern Congress in mid-1921 that the "first 'round' of world revolutionary actions that had been initiated by the revolutions of 1917 in Russia"<sup>91</sup> had come to an end, seems to have signaled a "significant change in Comintern expectations and strategy." Mid-1921 has therefore been used by some--Kermit E. McKenzie,<sup>92</sup> among others--to mark the end of the first period and the start of the second period in Comintern history.

The second period was seen by the Comintern as a period of "gradual and partial stabilization of the capitalist system."<sup>93</sup> According to the "Theses" of the Sixth Comintern Congress, this was "the starting-point of. . . the 'restoration' of capitalist economy, of the development and expansion of the capitalist offensive, and of the continuation of the defensive battles fought

by the proletarian army weakened by severe defeats." Then, too, it was a period of "rapid restoration in the Soviet Union, of important successes in the work of building socialism, and also of the growth of the political influence of the communist parties over the broad masses of the proletariat."<sup>94</sup>

The third period began in 1928, and was unveiled at that year's Sixth Comintern Congress, with its essential characteristics described in the Comintern's The International Situation and the Tasks of the Communist International.<sup>95</sup> Included in the analysis of the international situation were: the failure of the Kuomintang-Communist collaboration, the rise of Fascism in Italy, the "shift of the economic centre of gravity to the United States," the "expansion of monopolist capitalism in Germany" which will lead to "an ever more decisive 'Western' orientation (that is, imperialist and anti-Soviet)," in German policy, and the growth of discontent in the colonial world, indicating revolutionary potential.<sup>96</sup>

Among the Comintern predictions for this period were:

-Capitalist production, which already exceeded pre-war levels, would be further stimulated by new and rapid advancements in technology.

-The very success of capitalism, with its tendency toward "cartelization" and "trustification" (occurring both nationally and internationally), as well as toward "state capitalism" and "fascization," would result in the extreme exploitation, antagonization, and radicalization of the proletarian masses (both nationally and internationally).<sup>97</sup>

-Increased production would inevitably lead to competition for markets and spheres of investment, thereby heightening the potential for large-scale war between and among the capitalist states.

-The contraction of markets, the growth in colonial movements, the increase in Soviet economic power and influence, and the growth of the inherent contradictions of capitalism and imperialism will lead to the disintegration of the capitalist economies, which had achieved only a temporary and partial stabilization during the second period.

One can easily discern a Hegelian-Marxist analysis resulting in the synthesis, here called the Third Period. If the first period, the "thesis," was seen as the advance of the revolution, and the second period, the "antithesis," was seen as the "ebbing of the post-war revolutionary tide,"<sup>98</sup> with the

concomitant partial stabilization of capitalist economies, the third period represents the synthesis, containing the best of the two previous stages of development: disintegration of capitalist economies, increased radicalization of the proletariat, increased revolutionary potential of the colonial movements, and the advancement of the Soviet economic and ideological system.

Our discussion of the third period must, of necessity, include two more elements: Stalin's First Five-Year Plan and his struggle for dominance within the Russian Communist Party and within the Comintern. Stalin's First Five-Year Plan, initiated in 1928, was strongly opposed by Bukharin and the so-called Right Opposition.<sup>99</sup> This plan for the economic development of the Soviet Union was based on the assumption that a program of rapid industrialization was imperative and could only be accomplished if the State harnessed the agricultural resources of the country. This meant collectivization, which was bound to come up against the opposition of both the peasantry and the kulaks (the well-to-do farmers). The poor and middle peasants would oppose collectivization and the forced requisitioning of "surpluses" because, under Lenin's N.E.P., they had grown accustomed to consuming their own output and selling any surpluses on the open market. The kulaks who had survived the revolution had prospered as producers for the market. Now, Stalin determined that the agricultural population would be herded onto state-controlled farms, which would produce the goods to pay for a "powerful industrial structure which would render the Soviet citadel impregnable."<sup>100</sup>

Bukharin, M. P. Tomsky and A. I. Rykov disagreed with Stalin over his policy toward the peasantry and the pace of industrialization:

The Bukharin group was prepared to offer price concessions to the peasantry in order to encourage production for market. As long as the Party maintained its control of the instruments of power, the right wing believed that the road to socialism was safeguarded. It saw no danger in tolerating and even encouraging the emergence of strong peasant holdings which would direct larger proportions of their output to the market.<sup>101</sup>

While willing to squeeze the kulak by forcing him to pay higher



taxes, Bukharin's slogan, according to Nahum List, was "Peasants, enrich yourselves!"<sup>102</sup>

List, who was present at the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928, discusses the differences which existed between Bukharin and Stalin. Bukharin, then editor of Pravda, had published an article entitled Notes of an Economist, in which he took issue with the policy of rapid industrialization at the expense of the peasants.<sup>103</sup> In addition, Bukharin did not believe in the major thesis of the third period that capitalist economies would disintegrate; and he was not at all optimistic about the revolutionary potential of the urban working class in the capitalist world. These opinions, among others, were included in Stalin's list of Bukharin's "errors."

Bukharin's "heretical" interpretation of the ability of capitalist countries to resolve the "contradictions" inherent within their own individual economies, thereby making revolution preventable, implied that "contradictions" would continue only in the international sphere among capitalist countries and between them and the socialist state. The communist-led revolution could then only come about as a result of wars among these capitalist states, or between them and the Soviet Union. In effect, this raised questions about the inevitability of the Marxist-style revolution which was supposed to be the product of unresolvable internal contradictions and the "law of increasing misery."<sup>104</sup> Bukharin's analysis thus seriously restricted revolutionary possibilities. Revolution would now be dependent on the prior condition of an international conflagration, instead of flowing naturally from the increasing instability of the capitalist economic system, regardless of whether there was peace or war.

## 12

Given Stalin's notion of the third period, it was inevitable that the Palestine Arab riots of 1929 would be declared a clear manifestation of the heightened revolutionary potential of colonial movements, generally. Or, as Barzilai put it:

Wasn't this a sign to renew the revolution? Does it not confirm that Bukharin was wrong? . . . From this the [Comintern's] conclusions: 'The events in

Palestine in 1929 were Arab uprisings against British and Zionist imperialism. . . . The [Palestine] Communist Party was obliged to support this uprising. . . .<sup>105</sup>

On October 16, 1929, the following appeared in a Resolution of the ECCI Political Secretariat on the Insurrection Movement in Arabistan:

The uprising of the Arab masses in Palestine and the events in Arabistan as a whole have by and large fully confirmed the correctness of the analysis made by the sixth CI congress and the tenth plenum of the sharpening of the struggle between imperialism and the working masses of the colonial countries, of the new surge of the national liberation movement in colonial and semi-colonial countries. . . .<sup>106</sup>

The "theoretical gymnastics" of the Comintern were thus linked to Stalin's struggle for control, for his need to prove his interpretation of the third period correct at Bukharin's expense, and for his need to justify the political destruction of Bukharin by being able to cite his blatant "errors."

This brings us to the actual impact on the PCP and its leadership. Included in the ECCI Resolution of October 1929, was a section on the Achievement and Defects of the Party, which contained the following:

The uprising took the party by surprise; this was because it is composed in the main of Jewish elements; it has no contact with the Arab masses as a whole, and in particular lacks any kind of contact with the peasantry.

The uprising has shown in practice how right the ECCI was in its repeated instructions about the need to Arabize the party. The deficiencies and errors of the Palestine CP, revealed in the course of the uprising, are a result of the party's failure to steer a bold and determined course towards the Arabization of the party from top to bottom. . . .

Particularly in the first days of the movement, when it was almost exclusively influenced by events in Jerusalem and some other cities (Safed and Hebron,

where religious Jews were attacked), the party failed to notice that the religious national conflict was turning into a general national anti-imperialist peasant action. (Emphasis mine.)<sup>107</sup>

A section entitled The Tasks of the Party followed. Here, the party was told it had to:

- steer an energetic and bold course towards Arabization;
- make every effort to establish Arab or Joint Arab-Jewish trade unions, and to capture and extend those already in existence;
- expose the "Majlis [the Muslim Supreme Council] Islam. . . as a direct agent of English imperialism";
- campaign for an active boycott of the commission appointed to investigate the events;
- form a federation of communist parties of the Arab countries;
- eradicate attitudes which led to the appraisal of the rising as a "pogrom" and to the concealed resistance to Arabization; and
- wage a "bold and energetic struggle" against the "right deviation in the party, which is bound to become stronger under the pressure of white terror and the impact of the temporary defeat of the uprising."<sup>108</sup>

As Israeli notes, this was the period when all opposition to Stalinist policy was identified as a "Right" deviation, in much the same way as three years earlier, all critics were identified as the "Left Opposition."<sup>109</sup> Whereas in the Soviet Union the Bukharin-Tomsky group was identified as the "Right" because it failed to signal its support for the interpretation of the third period as one of heightened revolutionary potential and, more importantly, it refused to accept Stalin's economic policies of rapid industrialization based on collectivization, in Palestine the right deviation was said to be

. . . expressed in an underestimation of revolutionary possibilities, open or concealed resistance to Arabization of the party, pessimism and passivity in regard to work among the Arab masses, fatalism and passivity on the peasant question, failure to understand the role of Jewish comrades as subsidiary forces, but not as leaders of the Arab movement, exaggeration of the influence of the reactionary

bourgeoisie, large landlords, and priesthood on the Arab masses, a . . . failure to understand the need for courageous and vigorous self-criticism of the mistakes committed by the party, a tendency to emigrate without the permission of the CC [Central Committee], that is, to desert, resistance to the slogan of a workers' and peasants' government.<sup>110</sup>

Daniel, returning to Palestine shortly after his and Smeral's closed session with the ECCI and his subsequent meeting with the members of the Eastern Department of the Comintern for purposes of formulating policy, gave Barzilai a detailed report of Safarov's criticisms. When Daniel had tried to explain the developments of the kibbutz settlements and the growth of the Jewish Trade Union, Safarov had interrupted:

Here you are repeating the idealistic arguments of the Poale Zion, and I am asking you about the political meaning of the Zionist colonies in Palestine. Is it not clear to you that from an objective point of view, the Jewish community in Palestine is the spearhead of British imperialism?<sup>111</sup>

Following the ECCI resolutions, many of the Jewish leaders of the PCP were ousted and replaced by Arabs who had studied at the Moscow University of the Toilers of the East.<sup>112</sup> Several of the Jewish leaders were ordered to leave Palestine, some being sent on various assignments in Europe, eventually returning to the Soviet Union. Most of them were caught up in Stalin's purges during the 1930s, receiving long sentences or being executed.

## NOTES

1. Josef Berger-Barzilai, Hatragedia shel Hamahaphaha HaSovietit (The Tragedy of the Soviet Revolution), (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1968), p. 68. Soon after Barzilai returned to Russia in the early 1930s, he learned that Moscow was suspicious of those PCP leaders who had once belonged to Zionist-affiliated groups such as the Poale Zion.

2. G. Z. Israeli, A History of the Israeli Communist Party:

From the MPS to PKP to MAKI (in Hebrew), (Tel Aviv: Om Oved, 1953), p. 28. Israeli notes that the leadership of the united party remained in the hands of the PCP, which had five representatives to the KPP's three on the party's newly formed Central Committee.

3. Ibid., p. 29. Israeli clearly identifies Radek, Head of the Comintern's Eastern Department at that time, as the one who gave policy directives to the PCP leaders.

4. Ibid. On the PCP's preference for the use of Yiddish, Gershon Agronsky wrote on June 8, 1928, "The use of Yiddish by the Palestine Communist Party is no accident. It is part of the policy of negation of Jewish nationalism." The New Palestine, June 8, 1928, p. 598.

5. Barzilai, p. 20; Israeli, p. 28. By the summer of 1923, the KPP had established contact with the Socialist Party in Egypt which soon became the Communist Party of Egypt.

6. Israeli, p. 28. At the time of the Fifth Congress of the Comintern (June-July 1924), there were in the "whole of Asia" (excluding Outer Mongolia, which was de facto a Soviet protectorate) nine sections of the Comintern: in China, Java, Persia, Egypt (while located in North Africa, it was included as one of the Asian parties because of its proximity), Palestine, Turkey, also in Japan and Korea, where small illegal groups existed, and in India, where the party was not yet structured on the national scale and there were only some scattered cells with few members. Fernando Claudin, The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform, Part One (N.Y.: Monthly Review Press, 1975), p. 271.

7. Nahum List, Keshet, No. 18, pp. 139-140.

8. "Cultural propaganda" referred to ideological indoctrination through the use of Yiddish. Israeli notes the similarity of this suggested approach to one actually taken in 1944 when the Communist Educational Association was formed (see Chapter 12 in this study). Israeli, p. 28.

9. Ibid., p. 29. Israeli includes the following individuals who joined a counter-group to the dissenters: Nahum and Litvak, who were joined by Galach, Bnei, Freur and Moshan. Unfortunately, we know little about these people, other than Nahum (probably this was Leshchinsky, mentioned earlier) and Galach (probably Joseph Galach, also mentioned earlier).

10. List, No. 18, pp. 139-140, and Israeli, p. 29.

11. Israeli, ibid.

12. "Democratic centralism" is supposed to be "the guiding

principle of the organizational structure of the Party." Merle Fainsod, How Russia is Ruled (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 209-210, tells us that it is defined in the party rules: "(a) election of all Party executive bodies from bottom to top; (b) periodic accountability of Party bodies to their Party organizations and to higher bodies; (c) strict Party discipline and subordination of the minority to the majority; (d) the absolutely binding character of the decisions of higher bodies upon lower bodies." While the official definition certainly sounds democratic, the reality was quite different. As Fainsod points out, the word "centralism" is most important. Party leaders are actually designated from above; they are not elected. Discussions do occur on lower levels, but they are not discussions which will establish policy or change any decisions made above. Kermit E. McKenzie has written: "Comintern materials as a whole leave no doubt that democratic centralism meant centralized control exercised by a small party leadership over a well-disciplined rank-and-file membership." McKenzie, Comintern and World Revolution: 1928-1943 (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 96.

13. Israeli, p. 39, and Jane Degras, The Communist International--1919-1943: Documents, Vol. II, pp. 182-183.

14. List, No. 27, p. 90. List explains that communist party members who were arrested were told to use the time in jail to make contact with as many Arabs as possible and to try to influence them to think of the PCP as a friendly and supportive organization.

15. Israeli, p. 29.

16. Jacob Hen-Tov, Communism and Zionism in Palestine: The Comintern and the Political Unrest in the 1920s (Mass.: Schenkman Publ. Co., 1974), p. 93.

17. Israeli, p. 52.

18. Ibid., and List, No. 27, pp. 85-86.

19. Yehoshua Porath, The Palestinian Arab National Movement, Vol. II: 1929-1939--From Riots to Rebellion (London: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1977), "On the Land Problem," pp. 80-108; Israeli, p. 52 and Hen-Tov, pp. 92-93.

20. The American Jewish Yearbook: September 19, 1925 to September 8, 1926, Vol. 27 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America), p. 125.

21. Ibid.

22. Barzilai, p. 90. One gathers from Barzilai's recounting of an important meeting held in his home in the Arab village of

Beit Safafa that the three members of the Secretariat at that time were himself, Kuperman and Leshchinsky. The members of the party chose representatives to the party congress and the party congress elected a Central Committee, which designated the Secretariat from among its members. The Secretariat implemented the decisions of the Central Committee and the party leadership.

23. Degras, Vol. II, pp. 247.

24. Yishuvism, as will be further explained in the text, attempted to differentiate between Zionism, a political movement, and the rise of the Jewish community in Palestine, seen (in Borochovist terms) as a natural and progressive outcome of conditions in Europe. List makes mention of Hamdi Hussein, an Arab from the "left wing" of the Arab national movement, who felt that both Jewish and Arab workers were being exploited by the Zionists. He, too, differentiated between the Zionists and the members of the Yishuv. Thus, the PCP was inclined to believe that this doctrine allowed it to maintain a foot in each camp. List, No. 27, p. 85 and No. 30, pp. 100-101; also Hen-Tov, pp. 110-115.

25. List, No. 27, p. 93.

26. Ibid.

27. Hen-Tov, p. 113.

28. Degras, Vol. II, p. 363.

29. Ibid., p. 395.

30. Ibid., p. 542, "The Immediate Tasks of the Communists." Also see p. 122 which states: "The bolshevization of communist parties. . . does not mean the mechanical adoption of measures taken by the RCP, but the concrete conditions of each country in the given historical epoch." The Fifth Comintern Congress set forth the requirements: "the 'bolshevized' party must be closely linked with the masses; it must be centralized, factionless, monolithic; it must be able to maneuver, responding to the particular events confronting it unhampered by dogmatism or sectarianism; it must regularly conduct propagandistic and organizational work in the military forces. 'Essentially revolutionary,' Marxist and dedicated to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the Party must 'unhesitatingly' advance the goals of the Communist International. McKenzie, pp. 55-56.

31. List, No. 27, pp. 80-81 and p. 93.

32. Ibid., p. 88. It does seem, from these and other cases, that these were British agents and that the PCP was infiltrated by British counterintelligence.

33. The incident was discussed in the previous chapter. Also see List, No. 20, p. 157 for his description.
34. List, No. 27, pp. 88-89.
35. List, No. 34 (Winter 1967), pp. 134-135.
36. Hen-Tov, p. 60.
37. Ibid., and List, No. 34, pp. 134-135.
38. Degras, Vol. II, pp. 182-183.
39. The New Palestine, June 8, 1928, p. 598, "Laying the Bolshevik Ghost--the 'Ramifications' of Communism in Palestine" by Gershon Agronsky.
40. Ibid.
41. Israeli, p. 79, and Walter Z. Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), p. 320.
42. Laqueur, ibid.
43. Ibid., p. 322, n. 49, Yosef and Musa were pseudonyms of al Hilu. In 1952 the party established that al Hilu had been a British spy and provocateur all along (ibid., p. 323, n. 26). Also see Hen-Tov, p. 60.
44. Hen-Tov, p. 64, n. 65.
45. Laqueur, p. 87.
46. Ibid.
47. Shmuel Mikunis, as we shall see, later becomes a major figure in the communist party of the post-statehood period, ultimately breaking away to lead RAKAH, the Arab communist list, and to represent it in the Knesset.
48. Laqueur, pp. 108-110.
49. List, No. 27, p. 88.
50. Hen-Tov, p. 61.
51. Ibid. Hen-Tov is quoting from Inprecorr, May 28, 1931.
52. Israeli, pp. 61-62.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid., p. 63; also see Hen-Tov, p. 116, citing Inprecorr, August 23, 1929, p. 899, "The 1st of August in Palestine" by "Bob."
57. Israeli, p. 63.
58. Yaacov Tsur, Jerusalem interview. Tsur and his wife claim that Barzilai admitted to them that he had written the Arab proclamations in the period leading up to the riots in 1929.
59. Barzilai, p. 90.
60. Ibid.



61. Ibid. The "Wailing Wall" is now referred to by Jews as the "Kotel," (the Wall) or as the Western Wall of the Second Temple.

62. Barzilai, p. 93.

63. Ibid.

64. List discusses the following Comintern emissaries:

**Ernst:** He was a German who had been sent by the Comintern at the time of the Druze uprising (1925) in Syria. He was to meet with some of the rebels, using Daniel and the local PCP leaders as intermediaries. (Unfortunately for the Comintern's strategy, help did not reach the Druze rebels in time, and they blamed the Soviets for their losses.) Ernst later became an assistant to the Soviet General Bluecher in China (in 1927), and still later, in the fall of 1928, List met him again in Berlin (when List was returning to Palestine from Moscow). List writes that Ernst served as a colonel with the Republican forces during the Spanish Civil War. He subsequently held several posts in the East German government and died a natural death in 1962. List, No. 27, pp. 86-87.

**Thompson:** He was an official emissary of the Anglo-Russian Committee, representing the opposition wing within the British Trade Union movement. His purpose was to organize a pro-Profintern bloc within the Histadrut. (The Profintern was the Red International of Trade Unions, also known in English as the Red International of Labour Unions, RILU, and in German as Die Rote Gewerkschaftsinternationale.) At that time (1925) Thompson believed it was possible to establish a united revolutionary front between the PCP's Fraction and the Poale Zion movement in Palestine. This was an unsuccessful attempt to break the isolation of the PCP and to establish a communist foothold in the Zionist labor movement for purposes of revolutionary agitation. List, No. 18, pp. 143-144. Also see Appendix C.

Hen-Tov mentions Herkle (also called Mischle), a member of the Comintern and a French labor leader. See Appendix C for a discussion on Herkle's mission on behalf of the Profintern.

Barzilai mentions Alexander Heshen, Daniel's brother, and his involvement with Yevseksia. Heshen made a number of trips to Palestine to convey information and to carry back reports. Barzilai discusses Heshen's mixed feelings about his own role in relation to the communist movement and the Yishuv in Palestine. Barzilai, pp. 62-89, and his Aharito shel Alexander Heshen (The

End of Alexander Heshen), in Molad, July-August, 1965, pp. 213-220.

65. Bohumil Smeral had once been a Czech Social Democrat and, before the First World War, a Parliamentary representative in Austro-Hungary. In 1920, when communist influence grew among the Czech Social Democrats, Smeral was at the head of the left faction of the Social Democratic Party, and he became one of the leaders of the Czech Communist Party, as well as a member of the Workers' Committee of the Comintern. However, Smeral was soon pushed aside by a group of young leaders. Stalin, who had encouraged youthful leaders to take control of their parties, could not support Smeral under those circumstances, but nevertheless protected him by bringing him to Moscow and sending him on an "information-gathering" mission to the Near East for the Comintern. For Stalin, this served the dual purpose of sending a trusted and respected envoy to report on the situation and progress of the Party in areas under colonial rule and of getting Smeral beyond the boundaries of Europe to an area which was believed to be quiet. Barzilai asks, "Was there any place quieter than Palestine in those years under the Mandate?" Hatragedia, p. 94. He notes that on Smeral's arrival in August 1929, the PCP leadership determined to keep things as quiet as possible to enable Smeral to fulfill his task.

66. Barzilai, pp. 94-96.

67. Ibid., p. 90.

68. Although Barzilai wrote provocative proclamations in Arabic, and members of the PCP distributed these throughout Arab communities, we cannot equate this with direct instigation of the riots of 1929. However, it can be said that while not a "direct cause," PCP actions were definitely a contributing factor, heightening the already existing hatred and tension.

69. Ibid., pp. 97-101, and Palestine: A Study of Jewish, Arab, and British Policies by the Esco Foundation for Palestine, Inc. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947), pp. 603-609, for a detailed discussion of the disturbances. For a summary, see Appendix D in this study.

70. Barzilai, pp. 97-101.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid., p. 98.

73. Ibid., pp. 98-101. Barzilai states that representatives of the PCP reached Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, then charged with Haganah operations, placing at his disposal the Party's small arms cache

and assisting in the Jewish defense effort.

74. Ibid., p. 103, and Alain Greilsammer, Les Communistes Israéliens (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1978), p. 57.

75. Barzilai, pp. 100-101. Barzilai tells of Smeral's decision to return to Moscow, following stepped-up efforts on the part of the British police to locate the PCP leaders. Smeral was escorted to the railroad station, enabling him to reach Qantara, near the Suez Canal, where he boarded a boat for Europe. From there he returned to Moscow.

76. Ibid., p. 101.

77. Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism, pp. 83-84; Israeli, pp. 66-67; Barzilai, p. 101.

78. Laqueur, ibid.

79. The New Palestine, November 1, 1929, pp. 344-345, "Communists Claim Credit--Declare They Brought Outbreaks."

80. Hen-Tov, p. 121.

81. Maria Syrkin, The Communists and the Arab Problem (N.Y.: League for Labor Palestine, undated pamphlet), pp. 3-4. Ms. Syrkin was the Associate Editor of Jewish Frontier. Her pamphlet is part of a collection of The Labor Palestine Pamphlets, available in New York at the Zionist Archives. Laqueur, p. 83, cites these figures, but the Shaw Commission Report (on the Palestine Disturbances of August 1929), Cmfr. 3530 (London, 1930, p. 65) cites: Jewish casualties: 133 killed, 339 wounded. Arab casualties: 116 killed, 232 wounded. Isaac Levitats, writing in Palestine: A Study of Jewish, Arab, and British Policies, op. cit., p. 596, states: "The majority of the Arab casualties were inflicted by the troops or the police."

82. Syrkin, ibid.

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid.

85. Barzilai, p. 103.

86. Ibid., p. 104.

87. Laqueur, The Soviet Union and the Middle East (N.Y.: Praeger, 1959), p. 13. Safarov was a Soviet expert on Asian affairs and was credited with having created the theory that Russia was designated to bring communism to Asia because of her semi-oriental character. Safarov adhered to Lenin's position of self-determination for national minorities. When he later realized the power of nationalism and its appeal to the workers in the East, he admitted that nationalism could obstruct the

penetration of communism in the East. In the 1920s Safarov was active in the Leningrad Komsomol as a member of the "Leningrad Opposition," which included Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bakayev and Yevdokimov. Politically isolated for some years, he was reinstated with his appointment as a deputy director to the Eastern Department of the Comintern in charge of the Near East (Laqueur, p. 43). According to Barzilai (pp. 120-124), Safarov, then in his late twenties, chose to interpret the rioting in Palestine in a manner consistent with the Comintern's analysis of the Third Period.

88. Barzilai, p. 104; Israeli, p. 66-67; Hen-Tov, pp. 122-125.

89. Degras, Vol. II, pp. 455-457, deals with the "phases of development." Also see McKenzie, pp. 44-57.

90. Degras, *ibid.*

91. McKenzie, p. 44.

92. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

93. Degras, p. 456.

94. *Ibid.*

95. *Ibid.*

96. *Ibid.*, p. 457.

97. Bukharin was one of the few leaders of the Comintern who thought about fundamental problems connected with the structure of capitalism, the changes taking place in the working class, the colonial question, etc. Bukharin states: "The concentration and centralization of economic life is advancing with seven-league boots. We might even affirm that there is taking place a 'trustification of the state power itself,' i.e., that the state of power of the bourgeoisie is becoming more and more dependent on the great and powerful capitalist concerns or combinations of concerns." Fernando Claudin, The Communist Movement--From Comintern to Cominform (N.Y.: Monthly Review Press, 1975), Part One, p. 97. See Degras, pp. 456-459, wherein is quoted: "The characteristic feature of fascism is this, that the bourgeoisie, faced by the breakdown of capitalist economy and by particular subjective and objective circumstances, exploit the discontent of the small and medium urban and rural bourgeoisie, and even of certain strata of declassed proletarians, to form a reactionary mass movement to bar the road to revolution. Fascism resorts to the direct use of force to break up the workers' and poor peasants' organizations and to win power. . . ." Also see McKenzie, p. 119-121.

98. McKenzie, p. 52.

99. Fainsod explains that the Right Opposition (Bukharin, Tomsky and Rykov) of 1928-1929 advocated the avoidance of repressive measures in dealing with the peasantry. They also disagreed with Stalin's plan for rapid industrialization. See pp. 100-101 and pp. 155-158 on Stalin's elimination of the Right Opposition.

100. Ibid., pp. 102-103. Fainsod, quoting Stalin adds: "The Party whipped up the country and spurred it onward. . . . so as not to lose time, so as to make the utmost use of the respite to create in the U.S.S.R. the basis of industrialization, which is the foundation of her power. The Party could not afford to wait and manoeuvre; it had to pursue the policy of accelerating development to the utmost."

101. Ibid., p. 101.

102. List, No. 34 (Winter 1967), p. 130.

103. Ibid.

104. This is described by Karl Marx as the necessary and inevitable precondition to revolution. The growing competition among the bourgeoisie, the resulting commercial crises, and the deteriorating condition of the proletariat lead to increased misery and a growing consciousness on the part of the proletarian masses that the system must be overturned and destroyed. See The Communist Manifesto by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

105. Barzilai, p. 104.

106. Degra, Vol. III, p. 79.

107. Ibid., pp. 82-83.

108. Ibid., pp. 83-84

109. Israeli, pp. 66-67.

110. Degras, ibid.

111. Barzilai, p. 122.

112. Ibid., pp. 104-105. As a matter of fact, the future Arab leaders of the PCP were designated on the spot, from among the Arab students in attendance at the Moscow University of the Toilers of the East.



## The Cat-and-Mouse Game II: The Gdud Ha-Avoda and Chalutzim in . . . Russia (?)

### I

While the PCP was the Soviet anti-Zionist tool within Palestine, as well as an auxiliary to the communist parties in the surrounding countries, the Soviets were also determined to destroy Zionism within the Soviet Union and to undermine its influence on the international level. As noted earlier, the Russian Revolution initially freed the Zionists to work among the Jewish masses. Despite the growing efforts of the Yevseksia (YKP), the Jewish section of the communist party in Russia, to undermine the Russian Zionist movement, the early optimism of the Zionists, although tempered, can still be seen in the following comments from Ben Mose Zevi's article, "Zionist Work in Bolshevist Russia," which appeared in The New Palestine issue dated October 26, 1923:

The Chalutz (pioneer) movement has assumed a newer, more vital form. . . . An army of Zionist Pioneers is growing up in Russia, which is ready to sacrifice everything for the realization of the Zionist ideal in Palestine. They work on despite all persecutions from the Jewish section of the Communist Party in Russia, preparing themselves by labor on the land for their future life in Palestine.

The author's enthusiasm carried him on into pure wishful thinking:

They [the Chalutzim] have impressed the Bolsheviks. . . . Even in the highest Government circles, the Chalutzim are respected. . . . The Government has declared itself ready to legalize the organization [of Chalutzim]. . . but owing to the opposition of the Jewish Communists, no legalization has yet been effected.<sup>1</sup>

One could conclude from the above that, but for the Yevseksia the Soviets were ready to recognize and legalize the Zionist movement. This would be an absurd conclusion because, had the Soviet leadership wanted to do so, it would have been done. The structure of the Soviet system dictated that policy-making decisions were made at the topmost level. An interesting parallel can be seen here between the relationship of the Yevseksia to the Soviet government and the relationship of the Workers Fraction to the PCP. Just as the Fraction was the front for the PCP, the instrument of the PCP, so it should be understood that the Yevseksia, as a section of the Soviet Communist Party, was also a tool of the Bolshevik decision-makers. Ben Mose Zevi continues his article:

It is true. . . that young Jews in Russia are to an ever-increasing extent becoming Communists. The best among them, however, join the general Communist Party and avoid association with the Jewish Section.

This is understandable when one considers that the Yevseksia members were extremely anti-Zionist and very effective in preventing "every form of Jewish cultural efforts."<sup>2</sup> In addition, there was, at that time, a prevailing myth that the Soviet government was sympathetic to the nuances of the "Jewish question"--supposedly more sympathetic than the leaders of the Jewish section.

On November 2, 1923, The New Palestine announced: "Hechalutz Legalized in Russia." The article stated that the Soviet government had legalized the organization of Jewish workers who had banded together for the purposes of "personally participating in the erection of the Jewish working center in Palestine."<sup>3</sup> But the episode was a provocation. Legalizing the Palestine pioneer organization in Soviet Russia simply enabled the government to identify its members, who, by October 1924, were being arrested, imprisoned and exiled. The New Palestine reported on October 31, 1924, that "From almost every part of Russia" Zionists were being taken away by the authorities.<sup>4</sup> The arrests "caused surprise because the Soviet government had previously displayed appreciation and understanding of the Chalutz and the Hashomer Hatzair, whose aim of transforming the Jews into a productive, agricultural class conforms with Soviet principles."<sup>5</sup>



On July 24, 1925, Dr. S. Eisenstadt's article entitled "Misrepresentation: Palestine and Russian Jewry," in The New Palestine, noted that the Jewish section of the Russian Communist Party (the Yevseksia) used, "political censorship to keep all Jewish and particularly Zionist newspapers out of the country." This Yevseksia, Eisenstadt said, used its own press, "to which the Jewish population is willy-nilly limited, to spread the most absurd tales concerning Palestine and Zionism. . . . They also wrote of mass emigration out of Palestine." Eisenstadt further noted: "Hebrew schooling is forbidden. . . . In school and in scout troops, the Jewish children are taught to hate and to despise Zionism and Palestine."<sup>6</sup>

2

From Barzilai we learn of efforts to publish a Hebrew language anthology in the U.S.S.R. in 1925. While he was still in Moscow, working in the office of the Eastern Department of the Comintern, Barzilai was approached by two nervous young men, one of whom wore the uniform of the Red Army and worked in the Commissariat on Military Affairs. They began carefully by asking Barzilai his own and the PCP's position toward Hebrew.<sup>7</sup> When Barzilai told them that neither he nor the PCP opposed the use of Hebrew, they asked Barzilai's help in getting permission to print a new Hebrew language anthology in Russia to be entitled Bereshith (In the Beginning).<sup>8</sup>

Stressing their loyalty to the Bolshevik regime and their abiding commitment to communism, they reassured Barzilai that there was nothing negative toward the Bolshevik cause in their proposed publication, but that the Yevseksia opposed all efforts to promote the Hebrew language. When Barzilai asked to see the anthology, they were extremely nervous and concerned about leaving a copy with him. He reassured them that if nothing in it conflicted with the "Soviet line," he would pursue the matter on their behalf.

On reading the material and finding nothing untoward in it, Barzilai approached Roskolnikov's assistant, called "Brika." Brika immediately asked the names of the two men who had visited Barzilai's office. He warned Barzilai that this was an "internal matter" of the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet government. Brika obviously reported the matter to the G.P.U.,

the secret police.<sup>9</sup> There followed a long conversation between Barzilai and his interrogator, who repeated the demand for the names of the men. Barzilai did not cooperate.

In the end, Barzilai recommended to Tarbokov (Shimon Haboneh, as Barzilai later learned<sup>10</sup>), one of the young men, that the anthology be published outside Russia and that permission be requested to bring it in to the country.<sup>11</sup> Before he returned to Palestine, Barzilai did go to Raskolnikov,<sup>12</sup> and some time later he heard that a Hebrew anthology had appeared in the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup> When Barzilai returned to Russia on a mission for the PCP in 1929, he tried in vain to find Tarbokov. In the 1930s, he learned that Tarbokov had been arrested and that Hebrew-language publications were forbidden in the Soviet Union.

### 3

In August 1925, the Soviet policy-makers launched a new program to undermine the Zionist movement internationally, as well as domestically. The Soviets planned a settlement in the Crimean region of approximately 12,000 families by the end of 1932.<sup>14</sup> As a first step in the process, the Soviets established Comzet, a board for the colonization of Jews. The chief instigator of this project was the Jewish Soviet economist, M. Larin, who visualized a Jewish center with a population of 400,000.<sup>15</sup> Not long after the initiation of the Crimean scheme, the American Joint Distribution Committee decided to give this project financial assistance. The New Palestine called attention to these efforts to resettle Russian Jews in the Crimea. On November 13, 1925, an editorial quoted a recently adopted resolution of the Central Committee of the communist party to counter Zionist influence in Russia. The resolution made the following points:

(1) The "appalling" economic position of the Jews provides conditions favorable to the Zionists.

(2) Zionism is playing an "anti-revolutionary" role in Russia and abroad.

(3) Zionism can be weakened by:

(a) improving the economic conditions of the Jewish population in Russia;

(b) reinforcing the Central Committee's fight against Zionism;

(c) educating the communist party and the

Comsomol, communistic youth organization, as to the character of Zionism; and

(d) settling Jews on Russian land, in order to "destroy the Jewish idea."<sup>16</sup>

Walter Duranty, The New York Times Moscow correspondent, in an article dated November 15, 1925, helped put things into perspective when he wrote:

Any system of Jewish land colonization in Russia will be approved by the Soviet Government if for no other reason than [that] it tends to counteract Zionist colonization in Palestine. The Soviet Government regards the Palestine scheme as a cunning move by England to gain the sympathy of Jews throughout the world and at the same time to establish a firm grip on an area whose strategic and political importance to Britain is of inestimable value in the Near East.

Duranty subsequently refers to talk of a "Jewish national home on Russian soil," and he quotes from a speech by V. Chubar, President of the Ukrainian Council of Commissars:

'Have we in view the formation of a Jewish Republic? . . . [I]t would not be a bad thing if we should decide to form separate Jewish counties or even departments. It goes without saying that we should not admit to the administration of said counties the Zionists, who are misleading the Jewish masses by calling them to Palestine, where they hope to rule them under the orders of England.'<sup>17</sup>

On December 3, 1925, at Yevseksia's Sixth Annual Conference, Alexandre Tshemeriski,<sup>18</sup> the organization's leader, declared Jewish colonization in Russia a "temporary relief measure," not intended to solve the Jewish problem. Its principal object was "to fight Zionism, which is spreading too rapidly among the Jewish masses all over the world." (Emphasis mine.)<sup>19</sup>

Organization of America (ZOA), reacted with concern to the Crimean colonization program, seeing it as a clever attempt to undermine their efforts in Palestine. For instance, at the ZOA's Twenty-ninth Annual Convention in Buffalo, New York, on June 27, 1926, ZOA Chairman Louis Lipsky referred to Soviet "propaganda to displace Palestine from the focal point of Jewish attention," stressing the significance of the communist design:

The Russian colonization project began to sprawl over the American map, disturbing the placid waters. Like a giant, careless of the smaller things, this project was pushed into the very center of American Jewish activity. The ideals we had fostered, the position we had acquired, were to be crushed under [the giant's] boots.

The speaker warned that although "every Jewish instinct dictated cooperation in relief," giving free play to this instinct, "meant... closing our eyes to a propaganda calculated to undermine the Zionist position." It meant, in effect, placing "a rival in the field against Palestine and Zionism."<sup>20</sup> In addition to creating a "rival" and drawing off time and resources needed to develop the Jewish homeland in Palestine, the Soviet colonization scheme also created a threat to the unity of American Jewry which soon became divided over the issue of whether or not to channel funds into the Soviet Union's colonization project.

In the meantime, according to The New Palestine, the Yiddish communist press in the Soviet Union published an unconfirmed report that Ozet, the society for settlement of Jews on the land in Soviet Russia,<sup>21</sup> "has been informed that a 'society to support the settlement of Jews on the land in Soviet Russia' was formed in Tel Aviv." (Emphasis mine.)<sup>22</sup> It is not far-fetched to assume that the PCP was somehow involved in the creation of an organization in Palestine which had as its purpose the support for settling Jews on Russian lands.

The northern section of the Crimea was initially selected as the region for Jewish agricultural colonization. Contrary to a widely held opinion that the Crimea is a choice area, this is only true of the southern strip of shoreland, often called the Crimean Riviera and occupying approximately one percent of the Crimean peninsula. Beyond this area, there are favorable agricultural conditions in the adjacent hilly regions, making up some nineteen percent of the Crimea. However, the remaining eighty

percent north of the hilly section becomes increasingly unsuited to agriculture as one moves to the northern and northeastern portions.<sup>23</sup> It was to these latter Crimean lands that the Jewish settlers were directed.<sup>24</sup>

When the settlement of Jews on Crimean lands caused grumbling among local peasants, Soviet President M. Kalinin replied in an article on "The Jewish Question and the Jewish Colonization of the Crimea," which appeared in *Izvestia* and which emphasized fifteen reasons why the Soviet government had encouraged Jews to settle on those lands (see Appendix B). In addition, Kalinin noted that the Jews received only 60,000 dessiatines out of 2,360,000 dessiatines of vacant Crimean lands (a dessiatine is equal to 2.702 acres). The 60,000 dessiatines, Kalinin remarked, represent "a less amount than the former property of the rich Jewish landlord, Baron Guenzburg,<sup>25</sup> which was confiscated by the Soviets and distributed among the Russian peasants."<sup>26</sup> Explaining why the land being set aside for the Jews had been unoccupied, Kalinin quoted the figures of the Agronomic Commission showing that it costs an average of 200 rubles per dessiatine to sink wells, which neither the Soviet government nor the population could afford. However, "these amounts can be collected only abroad and the Jews do just that."<sup>27</sup>

Indeed, a substantial amount of money was collected by foreign Jews,<sup>28</sup> particularly from within American-Jewish working-class circles, both for the Crimean settlements and for the subsequent Birobidzhan project:

Toward 1929 the total sum of expenditures on the agricultural settlement of the Jews in the Soviet Union came to 22.5 million rubles, of which 16.7 [74.2%, or nearly three-fourths] were provided by organizations abroad and about 5.8 million rubles [25.8%, or just over one-fourth] by the Soviets.<sup>29</sup>

The "destructive role" played by the Yevseksia in deluding Kalinin and other Soviet leaders was discussed in an editorial in *The New Palestine* (July 30, 1926), entitled "Propaganda." Created during the period of "military communism," the Yevseksia became a "veritable plague for the Russian Jews." The editorial continues: "Its only activity was to imprison Zionists and Rabbis, teachers of Hebrew and teachers of religion, to confiscate synagogues, and to combat 'counterrevolutionary' movements

among the Jews. . . ."30 The Yevseksia's influence among Jews, as well as with the Soviet government, was waning until the Crimean colonization plan became its "anchor and refuge."<sup>31</sup> Then, the YKP represented itself to the Soviet government as having both the sympathy and the dollars of American Jewry behind it. As for American Jews, they were told by some well-meaning leaders, who were unwitting collaborators of the YKP: "All guarantees have been given that not a cent will fall into the hands of the Jewish Communists. Our work is independent and autonomous." The editorial concludes with a pointed statement to the effect that this was merely self-deception; and only "the very naive can believe that a huge social movement like mass colonization in Russia can be conducted without the control and direction of the Third International."<sup>32</sup>

Kalinin's remarks at that time about establishing a Jewish Republic in Russia are of particular interest when taken together with Moscow's efforts to destroy the Zionist movement in Russia while encouraging emigration from Palestine to the Soviet Union. Back in April 1926, Menachem Elkind and two other members of the Gdud Ha-Avoda,<sup>33</sup> a Jewish labor group which will be discussed shortly, had arrived in Moscow to study Soviet collective farms. Anita Shapira has written:

... It was no mere coincidence that at the time of Elkind's trip to Russia in April 1926, Hehalutz, which had been countenanced until then, was being repressed together with other Zionist pioneering groups.<sup>34</sup>

On August 20, 1926, The New Palestine reported on an interview of President Michael Kalinin by Elias Tobenkin, on behalf of The New York Herald-Tribune, in which Kalinin discussed at length the prospects of Jewish colonization in Russia. He spoke favorably of the idea of a Jewish Republic, "the purpose of which would be to preserve the Jewish race and culture." Kalinin stated: "I understand that there is a movement on foot in certain countries in Europe and America to settle Jews on land in Mesopotamia." The interviewer, Elias Tobenkin, commented that "M. Kalinin did not seem familiar with the word Palestine, and regularly substituted the word Mesopotamia for it."<sup>35</sup>

On September 3, 1926, The New Palestine headlined an article with "New Zionist Arrests in Russia Reported." The article stated that "Mass arrests of Zionist Socialists have taken place in the provincial towns of Russia" and that the particular target for arrest are members of the Hechalutz, the Palestine pioneer organization.<sup>36</sup> At the beginning of October 1926, The New Palestine again reviewed the Jewish situation in Russia and said, in part:

The Communist dailies in Kharkoff (Ukraine) received numerous letters from their readers expressing hostile surprise at the admission of Jewish apprentices to vacancies in the state mills and factories. The Soviet government felt it necessary to apologize for this action and to explain that there was no favor to the Jews in this case, but that this action was dictated by the desire to give them their proportional share among the apprentices in the mills and factories.

The article then noted that recent editorials in Pravda (Truth), the official communist organ, and Emes (Truth, in Yiddish), the YKP's organ, proved that the growth of anti-Semitism among the working masses in the Soviet republics is not local but characterized the general attitude of the population. Emes even protested against "The super-internationalism of some Jewish communists who are ignoring this glaring fact," and asked, "How can we fight Zionism if we do not fight anti-Semitism?"<sup>37</sup>

Despite these statements of concern on the part of the Emes editors over popular anti-Semitism, the Soviet government declared an embargo on Jewish religious articles coming in from Palestine and ordered the confiscation of the well known Kiev Great Synagogue, the largest in the Ukraine and "the beauty and pride of Kiev Jewry." On the eve of the High Holy Days of 1926, the synagogue was converted into a workingmen's club. To celebrate the occasion, the Kievian Jewish communists organized a demonstration in which they expressed their gratitude for the action of the Soviet authorities.<sup>38</sup> In the eyes of the Soviet leaders, that synagogue, indeed every synagogue, was seen as a "hot bed" of Zionist activities. The Soviet analysis was, of course, correct in that the return to "Zion" is an integral part of Judaism,

and if the aim is to destroy Zionism, it must follow that Judaism, as a religion, must also be attacked.

Toward the end of October 1926, there were again reports of arrests and persecutions of Zionists within the Soviet Union.<sup>39</sup> This time the target was the Zeire Zionists in Kiev, Odessa, Cherson and Astrachan. Despite these arrests and persecutions of their fellow Jews, Jewish communists in America focused their attention on the Crimean colonization scheme. They praised it and, much to the annoyance of the Zionist Organization, they managed to gain the support of a number of well-known Zionist journalists whose names were attached to an appeal on behalf of Crimean colonization. The appeal was issued to the Jewish population in New York by Peretz Verein, a trade union of all Jewish journalists in the New York area. Commenting on this in their issue of December 3, 1926, the editors of The New Palestine expressed their shock at the Peretz Verein's actions, noting that it was "not yet affiliated with the Communist Party." The editorial continued:

Both the Peretz Verein and the Zionist journalists referred to owe some explanation to the public. Those . . . journalists who are members of the Executive Committee of the Zionist Organization owe an additional explanation to the Zionist public.<sup>40</sup>

While suppression of Zionism within the Soviet Union continued, international Zionism also continued to be attacked. Dr. Arnold Margolin, in The New Palestine (December 17, 1926), wrote of a "Jewish assembly" in Russia which acclaimed the views of M. Kalinin to the effect that he saw "no reason for the Jews of Soviet Russia to go to Palestine," which he felt held "only the promise of exploitation and poverty, while they have all the opportunities and possibilities to build their fatherland in Russia." The assembly also supported a plan presented by a certain Abraham Bragin, to settle 100,000 Jews in the northern Crimea and 200,000 Jews in the Azov region. Bragin and his group of delegates insisted that "a Jewish republic" be made the goal of the colonization movement.<sup>41</sup>

The New Palestine also reported that M. Larin, the Jewish communist who had conceived of the Crimean settlement "threatened the Zionist Organization that if it hindered the colonization movement in Russia, the Soviets 'will brand it as a shameful and dangerous action toward the Jewish poor.'"<sup>42</sup> This was a threat to discredit the Zionists not only among the Jewish



masses in Russia, but among the Jewish working class in America, England and elsewhere. The Soviets thus conducted their brand of warfare against Zionism on many different levels.

Even the communist party in Great Britain did its share. Two incidents are noteworthy. Both occurred in December 1926, during the period in which M. Elkind of the Gdud Ha-Avoda in Palestine was deliberating about emigrating and settling in the Crimea. In the first incident, the British Communist Party vowed to support the Palestine Arab Executive in its struggle against Zionism and "in the great historic mission of establishing a united workers and peasants republic from Morocco to Syria." Next, S. Saklatvala, a communist member of the House of Commons, introduced a resolution rejecting the Palestine Loan Bill, which was meant to ease the terrible economic conditions in Palestine. Saklatvala seized upon the provision in the bill which provided funds for Jewish employment in public works.<sup>43</sup>

## 6

The economic crisis in Palestine was daily increasing the numbers of unemployed, disillusioned and frustrated people. It was enabling the PCP's Fraction to enhance its influence within the Gdud Ha-Avoda, and it was enabling the "liquidationist element" within the Gdud itself to present an increasingly appealing case for leaving the "Zionist hell" and resettling in the socialist state of the Soviet Union.

More than anything else, it was the difficult economic circumstances which permitted the communists in Palestine to achieve a major victory over Zionism. In fact, the outstanding success of communism in Palestine during the late 1920s was, according to Israeli, the split in the Gdud Ha-Avoda and the subsequent emigration of some of its members to the Soviet Union.<sup>44</sup> Once in the Soviet Union, the emigrants formed a commune called "Vojo Nova" (Esperanto for "the New Way"). The existence of the Crimean settlement scheme at that time made this "success" possible because it provided the chalutzim an alternative to Palestine.

How had this come about? How had the Fraction infiltrated what was supposedly a Zionist organization? What can be learned from this experience about the way in which Moscow coordinated its policies with its "sections," in this case the PCP?

Before answering these questions, it would be helpful to provide some background material on the Gdud itself. The Gdud,

also called the Joseph Trumpeldor Labor Battalion, was founded in 1920 by some Russian pioneer immigrants who had come to Palestine as part of the Third Aliya. At its peak, the Gdud had about 600 young members, mostly from Russia and falling between the ages of 18 and 22.<sup>45</sup> These people had witnessed the Russian Revolution but had emigrated before experiencing the negative manifestations of Bolshevism. They had brought with them an admiration and an enthusiasm for that historic revolutionary event of 1917-1918.<sup>46</sup>

During 1923, the PCP began to infiltrate the Gdud, which had also attracted members from Hashomer Hatzair from Poland (another group making up the Third Aliya) and individuals who had been a part of the Second Aliya. The two latter groups joined the Gdud because they saw it as a vehicle to achieve their aim of creating large communes, the small ones now seen as lacking in economic viability as well as being socially and culturally confining. At the time, their aim of establishing large communes appeared compatible with the Gdud aims which included: agricultural settlement, the "conquest of labor," communal life, and the establishment of an egalitarian standard of living. However, differences of opinion soon arose between the partisans of the large commune (primarily Second Aliya immigrants) and the original founders of the Gdud<sup>47</sup> (the "orthodox" faction):

<u>Attitude toward:</u>	<u>Partisans of the Large Commune</u>	<u>Orthodox Gdud Faction</u>
The settled kibbutz	One kibbutz at a time--each being developed and stabilized before another is founded.	<u>Plugot</u> (branches, a network of kibbutzim) to be established as quickly as possible.
Kibbutz labor	Stabilized personnel.	Should be subject to national, centralized manpower organization. Labor can be transferred, according to need and availability.
Planning and management	Kibbutz autonomy.	Centralized, country-wide management for Gdud as a whole.

<u>Attitude toward:</u>	<u>Partisans of the Large Commune</u>	<u>Orthodox Gdud Faction</u>
Management of funds	Should be used for development of kibbutz farmstead. Preference in funding to be given to settled kibbutz.	One centrally controlled treasury; funds used for maintenance and to offset deficits where needed, as determined by organization leadership.
Relations between the Gdud and the Ahdut Ha-Avoda Party	Ahdut partisans wanted to separate politics from pioneering, distinguishing between Gdud and Party functions. Politics should be left to the Party. Opposed independent Gdud action within Histadrut.	Saw politics as inseparable from their aim: to make the Gdud an independent political force which would guide the Histadrut, socially, morally and politically, toward a radical ideology.

Among those who favored the one-settlement-at-a-time approach were Y. Tabenkin and S. Levi,<sup>48</sup> while Menachem Elkind appeared as the spokesman for those who supported the plugot concept. As a result of the differences in attitudes, there followed the first of three splits within the Gdud. The first occurred when the Ahdut Ha-Avoda partisans of the large commune left the Gdud completely, founding Kibbutz Ein Harod. The orthodox Gdud faction remained at Tel Yosef, and at Kfar Giladi and Ramat Rahel, both settled kibbutzim, where the debate over the relationship of the Gdud to Ahdut Ha-Avoda and the Histadrut continued. In addition, increasing polarization began to occur within the Gdud itself between those who were now becoming disillusioned because of the economic crisis, the unemployment and the perceived hostile attitude of the Histadrut and those who retained a pioneering spirit, supported immigration and continued ties to the Histadrut. Fierce ideological arguments, tensions and a leftist trend within the Gdud, reaching a peak in 1925, created an opportunity for the

PCP, some of whose members joined the Gdud and became known as "Ha-fraktionarim" (the Fraction members).<sup>49</sup>

The year 1925 marked the period of the Fourth Aliya, during which the greater percentage of immigrants, unlike those of earlier periods, were urban oriented, tending to settle in Tel Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem. The Gdud responded by establishing urban branches, thereby increasing opportunities for contact between Gdud and PCP members. Shapira notes that during 1924-1925 about 20 members of the Gdud, mostly from Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, "drew closer to the PCP and some joined its ranks."<sup>50</sup>

When the Histadrut Council expelled the communist Workers Fraction on April 28, 1924 (see Chapter 7), the Gdud had to consider its own attitude towards the Fraction members within its ranks. Then came the Afula affair and the PCP's distribution of leaflets supporting the "evicted" fellaheen and denouncing the Zionist "conquest." The Zionist wing of the Gdud, angered by the PCP's position, discussed ousting Fraction members and formed a bloc to oppose the leftist leadership of the Gdud. The Gdud leadership was opposed both because it advocated presenting an independent platform within the Histadrut and because it opposed ousting Fraction members. Having been expelled from the Histadrut, the Fraction attempted to use the Gdud for its own purposes, working through the sympathetic Gdud leadership which included Menachem Elkind, David Horowitz and Mina Haskel, and which wanted to emphasize the Gdud's political orientation. The pro-Zionist "Right" opposition included Hanokh Rokhel and Eliezer Kna'ani.<sup>51</sup>

The following brief comparison of the Left and Right of the Gdud (gleaned from the writings of Halpern, Braslavski, Israeli and Shapira) illustrates the degree of emphasis each placed on Socialist and Nationalist (Zionist) goals:<sup>52</sup>

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Left Gdud</u>	<u>Right Gdud</u>
Political action/the Histadrut Platform	Wanted independent platform calling for Histadrut to join Anglo-Russian Committee. Tried to organize "Histadrut Minority Movement." <sup>53</sup> Stressed class struggle/class warfare to hasten realization of the general commune.	Saw itself as an integral part of the Histadrut, supporting its policies advocating the upbuilding of the land.

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Left Gdud</u>	<u>Right Gdud</u>
Constructionism	Opposed this as a primary objective, gave "rebuilding the land" as a secondary position, since it undermined true goal of socialism.	Supported "Constructionist Socialism," stressing this as a national goal requiring pioneering acts and sacrifice.
Ousting of PCP's Fraction by Histadrut	Denied right of Histadrut to take such action. <sup>54</sup>	Seeing them as communists, did not oppose ousting.
Fraction members within Gdud itself	Elkind and his comrades needed Fraction support to maintain their dominance in the Gdud.	Supported their expulsion because they were anti-Zionists and they bolstered Elkind's leadership.
Economic crisis of 1926	Histadrut, as a Trade Union, should demand more employment and improvements in workers' standard of living, <u>even if this hurt economic expansion and absorption capacity.</u>	"National" interests of primary importance. Said program of "Minority Movement" was anti-Zionist.
Immigration during economic crisis	<u>Immigration should be tied to absorption capability.</u> <sup>55</sup>	Immigration should be encouraged <u>regardless of economic situation.</u> <sup>56</sup>
Creation of the "general commune"	Agreed with the ultimate goal of Marxist Socialists.	This was an "ideal." Were willing to settle for "commune within capitalist world." <sup>57</sup>
Gdud's role	The <u>avant garde</u> of revolution to bring the general commune.	Gdud was merely a "way of life." <sup>58</sup>

As the economic situation worsened, the disputes within the Gdud intensified. It is interesting to note that during 1926 both the Right wing of the Gdud and the PCP's Fraction gained in strength, the latter primarily because the Left, weakened as a result of defections because of its anti-Zionist stand, relied more and more on the Fraction members in order to retain its dominance.

Commenting on PCP involvement in the Gdud, Israeli notes the communist inability to give clear answers to questions raised by non-communist members of the Left Gdud, such as:

... Are all [Gdud] members obliged to work in the city [so as to create an urban proletariat with revolutionary potential]? Should international kibbutzim be established, that is for Jews and Arabs? Are there Arabs who are prepared to do this? And, if not, what framework should be given to the class struggle and revolutionary strategy in the village?<sup>59</sup>

While the debate within the Gdud raged, Menachem Elkind and two other Gdud delegates, as mentioned earlier, traveled to the Soviet Union in April 1926 to inspect collective farms. Shapira explains the controversy which ensued over Elkind's motives:

Some--primarily ex-members of Hashomer and of the Right Gdud--claim that Elkind made his trip with the definite intention of renouncing Zionism and arranging for the transfer of the Gdud to Russia.

As Shapira points out, however, this cannot explain Elkind's activities following his return to Palestine, when, during the period of the split, he worked to establish the Left Gdud and the "Minority Movement" within the Histadrut.<sup>60</sup> That is, he expended tremendous efforts which would have appeared unnecessary if he had, all along, intended to leave Palestine to settle in Russia. Shapira, therefore, maintains that:

Elkind did not go to the Soviet Union in April 1926 with the clear intent of suggesting to the Soviets that the Gdud be transferred to Russia, but rather for the

purpose of soliciting support for the concept of the commune in Palestine and for the Left Gdud in place of the PCP.<sup>61</sup>

There appears to be no problem in accepting Shapira's first statement regarding the solicitation of support for the concept of a socialist commune in Palestine; the latter statement, as to the acceptance of the Left Gdud "in place of the PCP," does raise questions. It is left unexplained by Shapira and is particularly puzzling in light of her contention that Elkind would have accepted money from the "Zionist Executive for one large communal settlement."<sup>62</sup> It would seem from this that Elkind and his group were primarily committed to establishing a commune in Palestine. It was their inability to do this (in light of the economic situation and the Histadrut's refusal to channel funds to them) that prompted them to look to the Soviet Union (supposedly ideological cousins with regard to "communalism") for assistance.

List seems to confirm the view that Elkind's group was "communalist" and not "communist." He states that many Left Gdud members had come out of a Left Poale Zion background, insisted on speaking Hebrew, and were committed to kibbutz life. List explains that "because of this, they were not well looked upon by veteran members of the Fraction and the PCP."<sup>63</sup> According to Shapira, Daniel had tried to convince Elkind to join the PCP but did not succeed. Elkind therefore merely wanted to use the PCP's Fraction within the Gdud to sustain his own leadership.<sup>64</sup>

Elkind made a second trip to Moscow during the summer of 1926 to continue the negotiations for moving the Gdud to Russia. In the meantime, Fraction members exploited the discontent of vulnerable Gdud members. As polarization within the organization intensified, those who still retained Zionist sympathies began to favor forming closer ties to Hashomer Hatzair. This Zionist-oriented group, soon dubbed the "Rightest Gdud,"<sup>65</sup> joined Hashomer Hatzair in 1926 and together they formed the "Kibbutz List" for the elections to the Third Histadrut Congress held that year.<sup>66</sup>

Thus, during this period, two splits were in the making within the Gdud: (1) a split between the Left and the Right; and (2) a split within the Left. While the reader interested in the details of the split between the Left and the Right can turn to Anita Shapira's article, "The Left" in the Gdud Ha'avoda, to G. Z. Israeli and to Moshe Braslavski's chapter on the Gdud, suffice it to

say here, that the rural branches in the kibbutzim<sup>67</sup> joined the Right Gdud, and the urban branches<sup>68</sup> joined the Left Gdud. This particular split was more the result of economic conditions than of ideology: The cities felt the brunt of the economic recession and the slowdown in construction work far more than the kibbutzim. Those within the kibbutzim who were sympathetic to the Left either adjusted to the reality of the split or abandoned the kibbutz and joined the urban branches. Because of the severe economic conditions in the cities, Gdud members unable to raise funds to start a commune and unable to find work in the cities became increasingly radicalized and susceptible to PCP propaganda. In addition, the situation was aggravated by the hostility of the Histadrut. As a result, the urban branches became isolated, thrown back on their own limited resources and resentful of those who continued to call for more immigration. A sectarian debate within this urban Left now ensued, focused on: (1) the viability of communal life in Palestine; (2) the prospects for assistance from the Histadrut; and (3) the prospects for improving their lives by resettling in Russia.

## 8

Some Gdud members organized a committee of five to probe the possibilities of settling in Russia. These people were aware of the Crimean agricultural settlements and either knew, or had heard of, others who had left Palestine for Russia in hope of finding better conditions. They also knew that Jewish groups outside Palestine were raising funds for the Crimean settlements. Perhaps, this knowledge lessened whatever guilt they may have felt over abandoning the Jewish homeland in Palestine. Shapira comments that Elkind became discouraged with the economic prospects for a successful commune in Palestine, but was unwilling to abandon this way of life. He therefore decided "not that he should leave the Gdud, but . . . that the whole Gdud should transfer to the Soviet Union where it could find a firm base and integrate into the general social and political fabric."<sup>69</sup>

Once again the PCP was to find itself at odds with Moscow which recognized the political capital to be made from resettlement of Gdud members in the Crimean lands in Russia. The PCP, still intending to use the Gdud in a renewed attempt to infiltrate the Histadrut, opposed its departure. However, when



Elkind obtained Moscow's approval over the head of the PCP, the Party accepted Moscow's decision and assisted in the arrangements. Elkind finally agreed to Moscow's conditions for the transfer of his Gdud faction in the summer of 1927, and Barzilai was placed in charge of the logistical arrangements. According to Barzilai,<sup>70</sup> four conditions had to be met by Elkind:

(1) As a test of his loyalty, he was to carry out a mission for the party.<sup>71</sup>

(2) All Gdud members would stay together in Russia, no one dropping out.

(3) There must be total acceptance of Soviet authority by each member of the group.

(4) All ties with Zionist organizations in and outside Palestine must be severed; all former Zionist activities must cease.

Elkind left for Russia in October 1927, followed soon thereafter by other Gdud members, with most leaving Palestine at the beginning of 1929. Shapira estimates that in all some fifty to sixty Gdud members went to settle in the Crimea, establishing a commune called "Vojo Nova."<sup>72</sup> List, who was in Syria when they left, writes about visiting them when he was next in Russia and about his negative impressions. Their living conditions--especially food and housing--were very bad; their neighbors were resentful towards them, feeling that the government had given undue assistance to this colony of Jews.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, Elkind sent a glowing letter back to Palestine, praising the Soviet government for its assistance in setting up the "commune."

We have established here a farm much better and larger than we had in Palestine and in a lot less time, thanks to the great help given by the Soviet Union. . . and thanks to this we have been freed from the pressure on the commune in Palestine from the side of British imperialism and Zionism. Each day I am more and more convinced about the rightness of the national solution of the communist party of the Soviet Union. I have decided to join the communist party.<sup>74</sup>

The truth was quite different. From the beginning, the Gdud settlers were politically suspect and were harassed by the Yevseksia. At first the settlers tried to speak Hebrew and to teach it to their children. Soon, the Hebrew was gone. When conditions went from bad to worse, some became discouraged and

left. Elkind moved to Moscow, joining the editorial board of Emes. Most of those who remained, including the PCP members within the group, were to be killed or exiled in the great Stalinist purges of the 1930s. Elkind, exiled from Moscow, disappeared without a trace. When the Crimea was overrun by the Nazis in World War II, the remaining members of the Vojo Nova commune were slaughtered with the assistance of their Tatar neighbors.<sup>75</sup>

9

Already at the time Elkind was making his decision to settle in the Crimea in 1927, Soviet interest in the Jewish Crimean settlement scheme was fading. It was clear to the Soviets that the Crimea was not an effective counter to the draw of Palestine. Also, Soviet policy makers may have been influenced by the growth of anti-Semitic feelings in the country in connection with rumors that "the Crimea was being handed over" to the Jews.<sup>76</sup> From 1927 on, Soviet interest in the Crimean project was replaced by the idea of developing a Jewish settlement on an almost uninhabited territory along the Amur River, near China, soon called Birobidzhan.<sup>77</sup> This territory, annexed by Russia in 1858, contained under 30,000 people.<sup>78</sup> The Soviets genuinely feared an expansion of the Manchurian Chinese population and decided that rapid Jewish colonization--paid for by a substantial influx of Jewish capital from abroad--could not only have the desired effect of undermining the Zionist endeavor in Palestine, but could also stabilize the Amur region.

Despite the contrary recommendations of the scientific expedition sent into the region as a result of a decision in 1927, the Soviet government launched a hasty colonization program. As a result of inadequate preparation for the project, most of those who came to settle Birobidzhan in 1928 left the region by the end of that year. During the first phase of the colonization program (1928-1934) little success was achieved,<sup>79</sup> with only slightly over 8,000 settlers as opposed to the hoped for 150,000. For their part, the communists in Palestine, through a special agency, Agro, endeavored to recruit settlers for Birobidzhan. Agro published leaflets containing such statements as:

We are leaving Palestine because Zionism cannot solve the Jewish question because the whole Zionist

camp, up to the very left, is one black reactionary force. Under the cover of Zionist and socialist ideals, the Jewish worker is turned into a Tsarist Cossack, a weapon against the toiling masses.<sup>80</sup>

Claiming that they would not be "accessories to such a crime," those who left Palestine for Birobidzhan said they would build a Jewish state with the help of 160,000,000 Russians in the Far East.<sup>81</sup> In fact, their numbers were minute. In all, "no more than forty or fifty families migrated from Israel to Birobidzhan, and organized emigration ceased altogether in 1933."<sup>82</sup>

In the second period (1934-1941) the so-called Jewish Autonomous Region witnessed a greater influx of settlers because the Soviet government changed from a policy of encouraging voluntary settlement to a policy of "recruitment." Soviet public opinion was mobilized with tracts calling for "every conscious participant in socialist construction" to understand the "significance of the defence of the Far East. . . ."<sup>83</sup> The new plan for Jewish colonization of Birobidzhan envisaged 50,000 settlers in four years. However, by 1937, the Jewish population there came to only 20,000.<sup>84</sup>

Abraham G. Duker estimated in 1939 that the Jewish population of Birobidzhan then stood at 18,000-25,000 out of a total population in the region of 70,000.<sup>85</sup> During the war years, the Jewish population of Birobidzhan diminished even further.<sup>86</sup> The author recalls hearing talk of the "Jewish Republic in Russia" during her childhood (the late war years and the post-war period). There were those within the family who actively worked to raise funds for the Birobidzhan settlers, who, having fled Hitler, were supposedly finding refuge among their own people in the Amur region of the Soviet Union. Others in the family, who were Zionists, argued against support for what they saw as a Bolshevik hoax.

The death sentence [for a Jewish republic in Birobidzhan] came from Stalin himself: In his famous speech "On the Draft Constitution of the USSR," delivered on November 25 [1936], Stalin ruled that for any autonomous region to become a republic it must have a population of more than one million. Not even the most optimistic believer could hope that Birobidzhan one day would be a Jewish state.<sup>87</sup>

Despite this, Jewish communists, fellow travelers, and even apolitical Yiddishists continued hope that Birobidzhan would bring salvation to the Jews and that Yiddish culture would be preserved there. These people, active in organizing Jewish workers, raised substantial sums for what they only later learned had very little to do with actually helping their Jewish brethren but had more to do with Soviet national interests in drawing off financial support and the energy and time of the Zionist leaders.

Thus, Elkind and the Gdud members taken in by the Crimean scheme (with PCP help) were not the only Jews victimized by Bolshevik propaganda. On one hand, the Soviets encouraged the belief that the Jewish "desire to settle their own land"<sup>88</sup> could best be satisfied in Russia, and on the other hand, they denied that Jewish national longings even existed.

When discussing the Birobidzhan Jewish Autonomous Region as the "Jewish migrants' home," the Soviets would include in their publications the "many beautiful poems about Birobidzhan" by the Jewish poet Lyubov Vasserman, such as:

And I said to myself,  
Enough of this wandering,  
I have reached my goal.  
Look, there is my home.<sup>89</sup>

and, at the same time, they were liquidating Jewish leaders in Birobidzhan for their ideological origins in Poale Zion.

## 10

This brings us, finally, to the third question asked earlier: What can be learned from this recounting of the Gdud, Crimean, and Birobidzhan experiences about the way in which Moscow coordinated its policies with its sections, in this case the PCP? Actually, the coordination went beyond the PCP, reaching across to American Jewish communists and to the British Communist Party. Thus, the cat-and-mouse game described by Nahum List was, as we now understand it, played out in a far larger arena than merely in Palestine and merely with the Palestinian Jewish communists. Indeed, Moscow's instructions to the PCP and the PCP's ultimate compliance were linked to a complex web of Soviet

perceptions, strategies and goals. Perceived threats from the Jewish Yishuv serving as an "imperialist" base of attack against the Soviet Union and from the "expansionist" aims of the Chinese were combined with the strategy of weakening world Zionism (seen as the spearhead of capitalist encroachment into the Near East--adjacent to the U.S.S.R.) in order to undermine British imperialism and to gain the friendship and, beyond that, the adherence of the Arab world (as well as the other peoples of the East).

In the next section of this study, we return to the aftermath of the Palestine riots of 1929 in order to examine PCP behavior following removal of the Jewish leadership and its replacement with Arabs. As we approach the years of growing international crisis, beginning with Hitler's rise to power in 1933, it is necessary to bear in mind that Moscow's attention was then, to a great extent, drawn away from the Near East to Europe. We thus enter a new phase during which the Soviet Union focuses more and more on the perceived threat of Nazi German expansionism. What is of particular interest is the way in which the PCP, soon cut off from direct communication with Moscow, found itself forced to "flip-flop" on a number of important issues. In addition, the still predominantly Jewish membership of the PCP was often at odds with its Arab leadership, a condition conducive to much friction and fragmentation.

#### NOTES

1. The New Palestine, October 26, 1923, Vol. V, p. 311.
2. Ibid.
3. The New Palestine, November 2, 1923, Vol. V, p. 330.
4. The New Palestine, October 31, 1924, Vol. VII, p. 277.
5. Ibid.
6. The New Palestine, July 24, 1925, Vol. IX, pp. 83-84.
7. Josef Berger-Barzilai, Hatragedia shel Hamahaphaha HaSovietit (The Tragedy of the Soviet Revolution), (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1968), p. 37. Barzilai had more feeling for Hebrew than for Yiddish which he learned only after he had begun to work with Yiddish-speaking Palestinian communists. He had even used Hebrew when addressing a meeting of the Fraction in Herzlia. Considering that most Fraction members preferred Yiddish, this

said something about Barzilai's feelings for the language he learned as a teenager, when he first came to Palestine.

8. The name was meant to signify the beginning of Hebrew publications in the Soviet Union.

9. Barzilai, p. 44. On February 8, 1922, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee issued a decree transferring Cheka functions to the new State Political Administration (G.P.U.). Among tasks assigned to it: "Taking measures to prevent and combat espionage." One can assume suppression of a Hebrew-language anthology fell under this function, since Hebrew, itself, was seen as a symbol of counterrevolutionary actions. Merle Fainsod, How Russia is Ruled (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1970) pp. 427-428, discusses the secret police during the Stalin era.

10. Barzilai learned about Tarbokov from Chiam Lensky, the Hebrew poet Barzilai met in prison in 1935 (Hatragedia, p. 44). Also see Shipwreck of a Generation, (London: Harvill Press, 1971), where Barzilai, under the name of Joseph Berger, discusses Lensky and others whom he met in the various camps.

11. The difficulty in Russia was not just in acquiring permission to publish, but in acquiring paper and in finding printers capable of printing in Hebrew, a language they did not know. Jewish printers, who knew the Hebrew letters, printed in Yiddish and were controlled by the YKP. Barzilai, unable to help Tarbokov, suggested that he emigrate to Palestine (which seems inconsistent with liquidationist aims of the PCP). Ultimately, the G.P.U. interrogated Tarbokov about his friends who were connected with the Zionist Socialist Party (Ahdut Ha-Avoda) in Palestine. The G.P.U. wanted to know which of his friends were members of the Chalutz movement, which by then had been made illegal in the Soviet Union. Barzilai, Hatragedia, p. 44.

12. As for Raskolnikov, in 1940 Barzilai learned that he had been in Sofia, Bulgaria. Raskolnikov, knowing about the extensive purges, saw the danger of returning to Russia. He therefore went to Belgium and then to France on August 17, 1939, a few weeks before World War II broke out. He published an article in Kerensky's paper, Dni, the Paris paper of Russian emigrants. He wrote an open letter to Stalin announcing that he was severing all connections with the Soviet government. Denouncing Stalin's rule, Raskolnikov said that those who had been loyal socialists have found their place "only behind prison walls, as far from real socialism as your dictatorship is from the dictatorship of the proletariat." He died a month later (September 12, 1939). Twenty-five years after his death, in 1964, an article in Izvestia, the official organ of the Soviet government,

rehabilitated him as a "revolutionary hero." Barzilai, p. 53.

13. Jehuda Slutski, "The Fate of Hebrew in Soviet Russia," in Russian Jewry (1917-1967), edited by Jacob Frumkin, Gregor Aronson, Alexis Goldenweiser and Joseph Levitan (N.Y.: Thomas Yoseloff, 1969), pp. 396-405 (hereafter cited as "Frumkin"), states: "In 1925 a group of writers got permission to put out in Hebrew an anthology, Bereshith. But no printshop could be found that would dare to accept an order of this kind. The manuscript was sent to Berlin and 300 copies of the book were let into Moscow. But the second anthology, ready for the presses, was no longer permitted by the authorities to appear."

14. In that year, however, only 9,273 families were reported by the Soviet press to have settled there, with only 4,000 of these remaining. Further colonization in this region was abandoned mainly because of the substitution of Birobidzhan. Abraham G. Duker, "Jewish Territorialism: An Historical Sketch" in Contemporary Jewish Record (N.Y.: The American Jewish Committee), Vol. II, March-April 1939, pp. 24-25.

15. Ibid.

16. The New Palestine, November 13, 1925, Vol. IX, p. 375.

17. The New York Times, November 15, 1925 and The New Palestine, November 20, 1925, Vol. IX, p. 409.

18. Tshemeriski (also known as Sasha, Shlomo, Solomon), (1880-?) was active in socialist circles. As a result of his activities in the Bund, he was imprisoned by the Tsarist authorities in the 1898 suppression of that organization. After that, he was arrested a number of times. He joined the communist party at the time of the revolution. In 1930 he was arrested and given a death sentence, which was changed to life imprisonment. He disappeared in prison. Leksikon fun der Nayer Yidisher Literatur (Biographical Dictionary of Modern Yiddish Literature), (N.Y.: Congress for Jewish Culture, Inc., Martin Press, Inc., 1956), p. 1417.

19. The New Palestine, December 4, 1925, Vol. IX, p. 461.

20. The New Palestine, July 9, 1926, Vol. XI, pp. 4-6.

21. Ozet held its first congress on November 17, 1926. Frumkin, Russian Jewry, p. 344, "Birobidzhan: An Experiment in Jewish Colonization" by Solomon Schwarz.

22. The New Palestine, ibid., p. 53.

23. Frumkin, ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. The Guenzburg family was active in Jewish causes during the years preceding the revolution. See Encyclopedic Dictionary of Judaica, edited by Geoffrey Wigoder (N.Y.: Leon

Amiel Publisher, 1974), p. 228.

26. The New Palestine, July 23, 1926, Vol. XI, p. 65.

27. Ibid., and Frumkin, p. 346.

28. Judd Teller, The Kremlin, The Jews, and The Middle East (N.Y.: Thomas Yoseloff, 1957), pp. 23-25, discusses the efforts to entice Jewish "capitalists" to contribute. He quotes Kalinin to the effect that the Soviet government would have no objection if "Jewish capitalists abroad offered financial assistance to the Jewish settlers since the masses' interest in their preservation as a nation coincides with the national feeling of Jewish capitalists who, although they are capitalists and enjoy all advantages, still can't sleep easily when they know that the people of whose blood they are, suffers and is miserable. . . ."

29. Frumkin, ibid.

30. The New Palestine, July 30, 1926, Vol. XI, p. 75.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Anita Shapira, "'The Left' in the Gdud Ha'avoda (Labour Brigade) and the Palestine Communist Party Until 1928" in Zionism: Studies in the History of the Zionist Movement and of The Jewish Community in Palestine (Tel Aviv University: Massada Publ. Co., Ltd., 1975), discusses the origin of the Gdud. The two members who accompanied Elkind to Moscow were Shohat and Mekhonai. Shohat remained there. See p. 148 and p. 151, fn. 54.

34. Ibid., p. 150. Actually, such repression, begun earlier, increased.

35. The New Palestine, August 20, 1926, Vol. XI, p. 116.

36. Ibid., September 3, 1926, p. 140.

37. Ibid., October 8, 1926, p. 183.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid., October 22, 1926, p. 239. The New Palestine also reported on the "continually increasing" volume of business between Palestine and Soviet Russia, consisting mainly of timber and grain imports and conducted by the Russian Eastern Company. A representative of the Russian Trading Cooperative was quoted: "In order to strengthen business relations between the two countries, an exposition of Russian products will be arranged in Palestine shortly." There is nothing inconsistent in these Soviet actions. Soviet trade with Palestine obviously benefited the Soviet Union in various ways and also provided cover for Comintern emissaries to Palestine.

40. The New Palestine, December 3, 1926, Vol. XI, p. 379.

41. Ibid., December 17, 1926, No. 21, p. 438. The Azov region



is near the Sea of Azov, which has an outlet to the Black Sea.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., p. 447. The Palestine Loan Bill was passed by the House of Commons on December 13, 1926. It authorized the British Exchequer to endorse a loan of £4.5 million (\$22,500,000) for Palestine. Saklatvala's arguments appealed to Captain C. T. Foxcroft, a non-communist, who objected to "favoring the imported Zionist Jew at the expense of the native Jew and Arab in Palestine." It was a rare case of a Conservative M. P. agreeing with a Communist M. P.

In addition to supporting the Soviet Union's anti-Zionist campaign, Saklatava also addressed the House of Commons on behalf of arrested Palestinian communists. On June 1, 1927 he accused the Palestine police of reprisals against labor on May Day. He questioned why activities which were legitimate in Great Britain (i.e., May Day demonstrations) were prohibited in Palestine. He asked what charge had been brought against Arie Kart, sentenced to fifty days imprisonment and recommended for deportation. A government representative replied that the police had acted to prevent illegal demonstrations which would have embarrassed the government. The result: "no demonstration was held in Haifa and only minor incidents occurred in Jerusalem." As to why demonstrations permissible in Great Britain were banned in Palestine: conditions in Palestine were "different." The charges against Kart: participation in an illegal demonstration, interference with the police and membership in an illegal organization. Ibid., Vol. XII, June 17, 1927, p. 558.

44. G. Z. Israeli, A History of the Israeli Communist Party: From the MPS to PKP to MAKI (in Hebrew), (Tel Aviv: Om Oved, 1953), p. 26.

45. Shapira, pp. 127-128.

46. Ibid.

47. See Peretz Merhav, The Israeli Left: History Problems, Documents (N.Y.: A. S. Barnes & Co., Inc., (1980), pp. 168-169), for a discussion on causes of the split within the Gdud as well as between the Gdud and the Ahdut Ha-Avoda Party, to which a considerable part of the Gdud membership belonged. Also see Israeli, p. 43, and Moshe Braslavsky, Te'nuat Ha-poalim Ha-aretz Israelit (The Workers' Movement in Eretz Israel), 4 Volumes (Tel Aviv: Kibbutz Hameuhad, 1955-1963), Vol II, pp. 75-86 and pp. 91-99, on the internal struggles of the Kibbutz movement.

This author's comparison of the partisans of the large commune and the orthodox Gdud factions is based on the writings of Shapira, Braslavski, Israeli, Merhav, and Yehiel Halperin,

Israel vhaCommunizm (Israel and Communism), (Tel Aviv: Mifleget Poalei Eretz Yisrael, 1951).

48. Braslavsky, Vol. II, pp. 326-328, containing Y. Tabenkin's "On the Road to Ein Harod." Tabenkin and Levi founded Ein Harod which became a cornerstone of the Kibbutz Hame'uhad Federation.

49. Halperin, p. 171 and Shapira, pp. 130-132. On the Histadrut's hostile attitude see Merhav, pp. 168-169.

50. Shapira, pp. 132-134.

51. Ibid.

52. Halperin, pp. 168-173 and pp. 189-191; Braslavski, Vol. II, pp. 75-83 and pp. 127-129; Shapira, ibid., Israeli, ibid.

53. Shapira, p. 139.

54. Shapira, p. 134, tells us that a Gdud member had written: "Our attitude to members of the Fraction" must not "confound us into handing over a dangerous weapon... to one bloc within the Histadrut...."

55. Ibid., p. 138. Shapira quotes Levi Kantor in Mehayenu (From Our Lives), No. 68: "At this period of unemployment and conflict, the Histadrut leadership should stop worrying about the Jewish people and Zionism and vigorously demand work and bread for the population."

56. Ibid. Shlomo Lipsky, in Mehayenu, No. 71: "... never, even in the most difficult circumstances shall we give up immigration...."

57. Ibid., p. 136.

58. Ibid., p. 135.

59. Israeli, p. 46.

60. The "Minority Movement" platform had many points in common with the program of the Ihud (Unity) Committee, a communist front organization (see Appendix C). Shapira, p. 140, lists Ihud Committee demands which figured in the platform of the "Minority Movement." These are: "(a) that the Histadrut join the Anglo-Russian Committee and insist that the Second International accept this Committee's recommendations; (b) that there be no further expulsions from the Histadrut and that those previously expelled be reinstated; (c) that Arabs, Yemenite Jews and other unorganized workers be drawn into the Histadrut; (d) that apathy and bureaucracy should be combatted."

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid., p. 150.

63. Nahum List, "Tzadek Ha-Komintern" (The Comintern was Right) in Keshet (Tel Aviv), Summer 1953, No. 20. p. 159.

64. Shapira, p. 148.

65. Merhav, p. 169.

66. Braslavski, Vol. II, p. 80. See Appendix C for more on Hashomer Hatzair, another organization used by the communists.

67. Tel Hai, Kfar-Giladi and Tel-Yosef. Shapira, p. 146.

68. Tel Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem. Ibid. Israeli notes (p. 47) that in December 1926, the majority of the Gdud (238 as opposed to 204) voted to oust Fraction members, splitting the organization.

69. Shapira, ibid.

70. Shapira, p. 151.

71. Ibid. Nothing specific is mentioned, but the reference is most likely to intelligence missions.

72. Shapira, p. 152, explains the use of Esperanto (Vojo Nova, the New Way). The settlers could not use Hebrew and did not want to use Russian for the name of their commune.

73. List, ibid., pp. 160-161.

74. Israeli, p. 48.

75. Shapira, p. 154.

76. Kalinin wrote in Izvestia (July 11, 1926) that there were "a great many letters. . . signed as well as unsigned, on the Jewish question in general and on the colonization of the Crimea in particular. . . . Some of these are plainly Black Hundred and anti-Semitic. . . ." However, others attempted "an honest explanation of why the Soviet government is favoring the Jews." Frumkin, pp. 347-348.

77. The name Birobidzhan was derived from the two Amur tributaries: the Great Biro in the east and the Bidzhan in the west of the territory. See Frumkin, p. 348.

78. Ibid.

79. The following indicates the Birobidzhan drop-off rate:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Arrived</u>	<u>Left</u>	<u>Remained</u>
1928	950	600	350
29	1,875	1,125	750
30	2,560	1,100	1,560
31	3,250	725	2,525
32)			
33)	<u>11,000</u>	<u>8,000</u>	<u>3,000</u>
Six-Year Total:	19,635	11,450	8,185*

(Source: Ibid., p. 361)

\*Compare this six-year figure with the "official" Soviet figure of 12,000 Jewish inhabitants in 1930. There were no Jewish inhabitants in this region originally. For the "official" figures see: The People and Land of Birobidzhan: The Jewish Autonomous Region by Vyacheslav Kostikov (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1979), p. 8.

80. Walter Z. Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), p. 81.

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.

83. Frumkin, p. 364.

84. Ibid.

85. Duker, "Jewish Territorialism: An Historical Sketch" in Contemporary Jewish Record, op. cit. On March 28, 1928, a decree called for the discontinuance of non-Jewish migration to Birobidzhan because it was increasing too rapidly. Despite the decree, the growth of the non-Jewish population continued to exceed that of the Jewish population. The following figures indicate this trend:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Population</u>	<u>Total Increase*</u>	<u>Increase of Jews</u>	<u>Increase of Non-Jews</u>
1928**	34,000	--	--	--
30	38,000	5,755	2,672	3,083
31	44,574	6,574	2,453	4,121

(Source: Frumkin, p. 342)

\*Figures include settlers as well as natural increases.

\*\*This is the base year; there were no Jews at all in Birobidzhan at that time.

It is interesting to note that census figures of January 1959 (published in 1962) showed a total population of 162,856, with the following breakdown:

Russians	127,281	=	78.2%
Ukrainians	14,425	=	8.9
Jews	14,269	=	8.8
			95.9%*

\*The balance consisted of other nationalities (Frumkin, p. 394).

86. Frumkin, p. 381. Solomon Schwarz states that during the war years "rumors were circulating widely to the effect that large numbers of Jewish refugees from the districts occupied by the Germans were directed to Birobidzhan and that the Jewish population of Birobidzhan... had grown substantially. In reality, nothing of the sort took place."

87. See Michael Stanislawski's introduction (pp. vii-xvii) to Israel Emiot's The Birobidzhan Affair: A Yiddish Writer in Siberia (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1981). Stanislawski continues: "... Stalin's purges began to take their toll on the Jewish Autonomous Region. In August 1936, Yoysef Liberberg, Chairman of the Birobidzhan Soviet, was arrested, accused of being a 'nationalist Trotskyite and a former member of the Po'alei Zion.' By mid-1937, the purges were in full swing. The

entire Far East was declared out of bounds for security reasons, and immigration to Birobidzhan was placed under the control of the NKVD. The next year, the committees and organizations supporting Birobidzhan were abolished, and nearly all their leaders, as well as the local officials in Birobidzhan, were liquidated. All these arrests and murders were, as Emiot testified, common knowledge"; nevertheless, the Jewish Autonomous Region continued to survive. . . . Also see Chimen Abramsky, "The Birobidzhan Project, 1927-1959" in The Jews in the Soviet Union Since 1917, edited by L. Kochan (Oxford, 1970) and Ya'akov Levavi, Ha-hityashvut ha-Yehudit be-Birobidzhan (The Jewish Settlement in Birobidzhan), (Jerusalem, 1965), which is cited by Stanislawski as "The most reliable study of the question. . . ." According to Levavi, "between 1928 and 1938, 43,200 Jews moved to Birobidzhan and 19,000 stayed there," (as quoted in Emiot, p. xiii).

88. Kostikov, People and Land of Birobidzhan, p. 8.

89. Ibid., p. 9. Lev Shapiro, First Secretary of the Regional Committee of the CPSU was frequently quoted as saying: "We have in the USSR a national home; over the past forty-five years, we have built everything--plants, factories, housing, schools and theatres." The photographic section in this publication strives to convince the reader that Birobidzhan in 1979 was the Jewish homeland.



## **Part 4**

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### **The PCP Under Arab Leadership**

**More Frictions, Fractions, Shifts  
and Reversals; The War Years and  
Plus ça change, plus ça reste le même**





# 11

## The 1930s: A Decade of Frictions, Fractions, Shifts and Reversals

Having made the decision to replace the Jewish leadership with Arabs, and having already appointed new leaders for the PCP from among the Palestinian Arab students at Kutvo, the Moscow University of the Toilers of the East, the Comintern, in the aftermath of the riots of 1929, next attempted to weed out the pro-Zionist sympathizers from the Palestine party. The party's membership was ordered to answer individual questionnaires. Questions consistent with the Comintern's analysis of radicalization during the Third Period included:

Do you accept the view that the August uprising was the result of the radicalization of the Arab masses?<sup>1</sup>

Are you entirely and totally in agreement with the slogan: "For a revolutionary government of workers and peasants"?<sup>2</sup>

Josef Berger-Barzilai recalls the party's difficulties during this period.<sup>3</sup> Shunned by the Jewish Yishuv, hunted by the British, and under attack by Moscow, the party membership engaged in self-criticism and self-laceration. A debate raged, centering on whether the correct interpretation of the riots was a pogrom or, as Moscow had determined, an Arab anti-imperialist uprising.

The September plenum of the PCP, at which the party's reorientation was begun, was followed in December 1929 by another plenum, at which twenty-two delegates participated, among whom were six Arabs. They decided unanimously to oust those who refused to adopt the pro-Arab line.<sup>4</sup> As noted in Chapter 9, those party members who refused to accept Moscow's interpretation of the events of August 1929, were labeled as part of the "rightist" (Bukharinist) opposition. In Haifa, the majority of the local membership refused to go along and therefore left the party, some returning to the ranks of the Poale Zion, while

others, disillusioned by the turn of events, either left the country or abandoned political involvement. There were also defections from the other (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv) branches of the party, as well as a number of expulsions of those suspected of pro-Zionist sympathies.<sup>5</sup>

Two pamphlets were published by the PCP during December 1929.<sup>6</sup> The first was entitled The Arab Revolutionary Movement and the Tasks of the Proletariat, and the second, meant for a youthful Jewish audience, was called The Mufti Matityahu (Mattathias) and the Peasant Uprising 2,000 Years Ago, a Hanuka story.<sup>7</sup> The latter, a "Hanuka story," compared the recent Arab uprising under the Mufti Hadj Amīn al-Husayni with the Maccabean revolt against the Greeks. In this comparison, the Jews of the Yishuv were compared to the Greek conquerors and the Arab leader of the uprising, the Mufti, was compared to the heroic Matityahu. These pamphlets, and particularly the "Hanuka story," marked a new low for the Jewish Palestinian communists, to be surpassed only in 1935-1936 by the PCP's publication in Haifa of proclamations in German, calling on the refugees from Nazi Germany to join in protesting against immigration to Palestine.<sup>8</sup>

Were the Jewish leaders, as Israeli claims, really of one mind in their support for Moscow's pro-Arab line? Barzilai, writing many years later, gives a clue to the inner feelings of these people: "Only the closest friends who trusted each other expressed their dissatisfaction with this policy [Moscow's pro-Arab line], others did so [only] through hints. . . ."<sup>9</sup> In his last conversation in Palestine with Barzilai in 1930, Daniel admitted his negative feelings toward Stalin, but argued that the PCP should not oppose the Comintern's decision.<sup>10</sup> All the repressive and terroristic acts of the Stalinist regime would not change Daniel's opinion of the governmental authority established by Stalin. While Daniel may have disagreed with Stalin's brutal methods, he accepted the need to follow the Moscow line, respecting Stalin's rule, as well as endorsing Stalin's aims.<sup>11</sup>

Between 1930 and 1932, the Jewish PCP leaders were recalled to Moscow one by one, and the Moscow-designated Arab leadership took over. Under orders to provide a smooth transition, out-going Jewish leaders assisted the new Arab leadership. There followed an intense effort to Arabize the rank and file. The reorganization and redirection of the PCP brought

changes to the way in which the party functioned. In Haifa, Jaffa and Jerusalem, the operation of party clubs was taken over by Sidqi Najāti and a number of other Arabs who extended the Party's activities in Jerusalem to the neighboring Arab villages. On market days, the party distributed leaflets demanding the release of those arrested during or after the riots.

When the British arrested a number of the new Arab leaders during the winter of 1930, the PCP was enabled to proclaim that this proved to the Arab public that the party was no longer the party of Jewish immigrants, but, rather, that it had been Arabized. The Comintern reported in a dispatch dated May 8, 1930, that 1500 Arabs were arrested, as compared to 150 Jews, and claimed that these were mostly innocent people who happened to be caught with arms, while "the true pogromists from the Arab side, as well as the Jewish social fascists, who were responsible for the violence, were undetained." The Comintern dispatch ended with: "needless to say. . . the justice practiced here is imperialist class justice."<sup>12</sup> Sidqi Najāti (Sadi) and Mahmud Mograbi Dshesaiarli were among those arrested and tried in a Jaffa court. They were declared the leaders of Arab communism and were given two-year sentences.<sup>13</sup>

The PCP's Central Committee convened a plenum in May 1930 and adopted the slogan "Arabization plus Bolshevization"<sup>14</sup> in accordance with the Comintern's directive. The party soon had occasion to show its support for the Arabs. On June 17, 1930, three Arabs charged with playing a role in the bloody events of August 1929 were executed.<sup>15</sup> The PCP issued leaflets in Arabic, martyring the executed trio. Two years later, in June 1932, the anniversary date of the August 1929 riots was changed as a party memorial occasion to that of the execution date, June 17th. Leaflets issued for that day proclaimed PCP support for the Arab cause and urged Arabs to oppose Jewish immigration. The communists appealed to the Arab populace "to guard the ports, prevent Jews from landing and force the ships carrying Jewish immigrants to go back where they came from."<sup>16</sup>

## 2

When the Seventh Congress of the PCP met in December 1930, the participants consisted of an equal number of Jewish and Arab delegates. The PCP's new central committee had an

Arab majority which interpreted the word "Arabization" to mean:

(1) the necessity to change the party's image in the eyes of the Arab masses, by purging itself of its Jewish image.

(2) reaffirming the Comintern's interpretation of the events of 1929 as an Arab uprising and encouraging the Arab masses to strengthen their anti-imperialist struggle.<sup>17</sup>

Changing the party's image from a Jewish to an Arab party did not mean excluding all Jewish members, which would have been impractical, as there would then have been no party to speak of. But the Jewish element was directed to consider itself in the service of the working-class Arab's interests. In addition, the Jewish element, after purging itself, was to assist in the radicalization of the Arabs. The role of Jewish communists within the party from this point on was supposed to be secondary.<sup>18</sup> Reaffirming the Comintern's view of the events of 1929 and its analysis of the Third Period, the congress called for recognition of the "fact" that "imperialism is in a phase of profound instability," and the party was now allegedly presented with an opportunity to assist the Arab masses in their struggle against Zionism and the Mandatory government. The congress was heavily punctuated with criticism of the Jewish Yishuv and the Jewish communists who had attempted to undermine the party's Arabization. A resolution warned that any manifestation of Jewish chauvinism within the party would be mercilessly eradicated.<sup>19</sup>

Also in December 1930, elections were held to the Yishuv's Assefat Hanivharim (representative assembly, the prototype of the Israeli Parliament). The results showed that the PCP "had lost about half of its adherents compared to 1925--and many more, taking into account that the population of the country had grown considerably since then."<sup>20</sup> Thus, as a result of the PCP's pro-Arab, anti-Jewish activities, party membership declined during this period. Jews, identifying the PCP as "pogromist," shied away. Many Jewish members either quit or were expelled, and Arab workers in the cities remained uninterested, viewing Arab nationalism as a more appealing ideology. The urban Arabs were not attracted to communist ideology nor were the fellaheen, whose preference was for the Istiqlal (the party of the Arab nationalist movement). Despite the conservative character of

Istiqlal, the PCP, following Moscow's orders, supported it, turning away from the General Federation of Jewish Labor, the Histadrut, and soon dubbing it "the Nazi Histadrut."<sup>21</sup>

The 1930s marked a "Palestinian Communist rapprochement not only with the Arabs of Palestine, but with the Communist parties of the neighboring countries."<sup>22</sup> Delegations were exchanged between Syrian-Lebanese and the Palestinian communists. N. Litvinski, for example, attended a congress in Beirut in 1931 at which he advised the Syrian-Lebanese communists to oppose bourgeois national parties and groups that showed no understanding of the class struggle.<sup>23</sup>

Another wave of arrests hit the PCP during 1931, as a result of police informers who had infiltrated the party. All the Arab members of the new central committee were arrested. They were replaced by Sail Tarsisi, Kemal Ouda and Itaman Zarour.<sup>24</sup> That year, the party also ceased publication of its Yiddish monthly, Forward, but continued publishing the Arab monthly by the same name ('Ala'l Amām). When a Moslem conference was held in Jerusalem during 1931, the party showed considerable interest and used the opportunity to further publicize its new slogan calling for an Arab federation (which will be explained shortly). The PCP was among the first to protest the deportation by the British of an Egyptian delegate to the conference who had made certain virulently anti-Jewish and anti-British declarations.<sup>25</sup>

### 3

When representatives of the Palestinian and Syrian communist parties met in 1931, they adopted a resolution entitled The Task of the Communists in the All-Arab National Movement which, consistent with "Third-Period" guidelines, analyzed the "revolutionary" struggle in the Arab world, advocated the creation of a number of Arab states united on the basis of federal principles (the Arab federation, referred to above), and set out the following points with reference to Palestine, Syria and Egypt.<sup>26</sup>

(1) On the Arab National Question and Imperialist Domination: The solution to the Arab national question was one of the most important tasks of the revolutionary struggle for liberation against imperialism. Imperialist domination over the Arab peoples, who are held in a state of "feudal fragmentation," is based on:

- their outright enslavement and subjugation;  
- the fact that the Arab peoples have been arbitrarily split up among the English, French, Italian, and Spanish imperialists; and

- the fact that arbitrary political boundaries are maintained forcibly by the imperialists, "who thus carry out the principle of 'divide and rule.'"

Imperialism preserves the medieval feudal monarchies (Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia), creates new semi-feudal monarchies (Iraq and Transjordan) or creates imperialist colonial regimes without monarchial agents (Palestine, Syria, Tripoli, Algeria), where "oppression and plunder" are combined with Mandatory governments "in the name of the League of Nations."

(2) Structural Imperialism.<sup>27</sup> All key political positions are occupied by the imperialists; foreign and financial capital controls all decisive economic positions in the banks, factories, railroads, mines, irrigation systems, etc. Foreign trade and the best lands are controlled by these imperialists, who, in Palestine, "have employed counterrevolutionary Zionism to seize and plunder the lands of Palestine." As a result, various areas of Arab countries are at different stages of economic development and class struggle. In Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, the Arab quest for national independence and national unification is fused with the struggle for agrarian reforms as a result of an agrarian peasant revolution, "directed against the imperialist usurpers and their agents (Zionists in Palestine) and simultaneously against the local feudal landowners."

(3) Spill-over Effect: The struggle for liberation has enveloped all the Arab countries. In Palestine "mass indignation against British imperialism and its agency, counterrevolutionary Zionism, has more than once resulted in armed uprisings against the British imperialists and Zionism." In spite of the artificial political boundaries and feudal fragmentation, the national struggle in any one Arab country tends to reverberate "in all the Arab countries from Palestine to Morocco." As a result, "lively response and sympathy" are evoked throughout the Arab world whenever Arabs hear of efforts to struggle against imperialism and for Arab nationalism. This enthusiasm, combined with the Arabs' common language, history and recognition of a common enemy, must necessarily lead to their "fusion in the revolutionary struggle." The process will first include the creation of a number of independent Arab states and then,

thanks to positive feelings and choice, unification on the basis of federal principles.

(4) Retardation of the Normal Historical Process and Creation of the All-Arab Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist Front: The normal, historical, evolutionary processes of class formation in capitalist society and the development of elements of national sovereignty are retarded, proceeding slowly and irregularly, as a result of the conversion of the Arab countries into "agrarian and raw material appendages to the metropolis."<sup>28</sup> A counter-revolutionary process, by which the interests of the feudal landowners have merged with those of the Arab bourgeoisie, has resulted in capitulation, "national reformism," and acceptance of "limited pseudo-constitutional concessions," all of which "only disguise the imperialist domination." In Egypt, Syria and Palestine the "traitorous essence" of national reformist leaders has been exposed:

- In Egypt: In the summer of 1930, the Wafd removed the slogan of "independence" and "tries only to obtain a constitution, which demonstrates that it fears the awakening of the peasant masses more than complete capitulation to imperialism," and agrees to sign an Anglo-Egyptian treaty.<sup>29</sup>

- In Syria: The leaders of the uprising of 1925 "are now sitting quietly at the feet of the French generals." The Kutlat el Watani (the National Bloc, the National Reform Party of Syria), refusing to take part in any revolutionary activity and preferring the role of "opposition" party, is "preparing a deal with the French oppressors."

- In Palestine: The Arab Executive Committee now competes with Zionism in "bargaining for concessions from English imperialism in exchange for a guarantee of 'peace and quiet' for the Arab masses."

A distinction is made between the leaders of this national capitulation and the masses of workers and peasants who are supposedly not yet aware of the "traitorous" acts of their leaders. As a result, the "peculiarity of the present stage" is that the masses, concerned about their day-to-day interests, are drawn into the national liberation struggle in the belief that they will triumph, at the same time as counterrevolutionary national reformism, not yet exposed, poses a dangerous threat to the revolutionary process. The recommended response is the creation of an "all-Arab revolutionary anti-imperialist front" of the broad masses of workers, peasants, and urban petit bourgeoisie, a front which relies on the development of the

workers' and peasants' movement, and which draws from it its strength."

(5) Increased Revolutionary Potential as a Result of the World Industrial and Agrarian Crisis: Despite the destruction in some Arab countries of trade union organizations, and despite the fact that the national reformists are playing the leading role, there seem to be clear signs that the "young Arab working class has entered upon the struggle for its historic role in the anti-imperialist and agrarian revolution, in the struggle for national unity." The major factor for the increased involvement of the workers and peasants is the worsening world industrial and agrarian crisis, which drives the working class "along the road to revolutionary class struggle."<sup>30</sup> A differentiation is made between the more backward countries (Iraq, Tunisia, Tripoli and Morocco), and those countries (Palestine, Syria and Egypt) in which "the peasant movement has reached an appreciable degree of maturity...." In the former, the task of the communist parties is more basic, pertaining to the efforts to organize an anti-imperialist movement and to connect it with the struggle against the most reactionary elements among the feudal lords and national reformists, as well as with the struggle of the Arab workers and peasants for their basic everyday needs. On this level, the party must encourage the struggle "against starvation, colonial norms of pay... and... colonial plunder of Arab lands." In the second group of countries, with a higher degree of political maturity, the communist parties have as their immediate and urgent task a "consistent and systematic struggle against national reformism." The communist parties in these countries must be in the forefront of an agrarian peasant revolution, striving for:

... an eight-hour working day... social insurance of workers at the expense of capitalists... annulment of the indebtedness of poor and middle peasants to usurers, landowners, and banks... withdrawal of all the armed forces of the imperialists... and a workers' and peasants' government.<sup>31</sup>

(6) Consciousness Raising: The communist parties must recognize the importance of slogans. The setting forth of the slogan of the national liberation of all Arab peoples is crucial. The masses must be made aware of the dangers of "rightist opportunism." Rightist opportunism is seen as a major handicap



to the development of the communist movement in Arab countries because it "capitulates before the great powers and the national bourgeoisie on the national question."

At this point in this joint resolution of the PCP and the Syrian Communist Party, the "Arab Uprising in 1929" was recalled:

. . . . In Palestine, the Communist party experienced its gravest crisis. . . when the party found itself isolated from the Arab masses as a result of Zionist deviation, which hampered the Arabization of the party.<sup>32</sup>

Also noted was the fact that it had taken one-and-a-half years to acquire the "indispensable prerequisites for the Bolshevization of the Party." These prerequisites included: the elimination of those responsible for the "Zionist deviation," a purging of the general membership of the party, and a new Arab-dominated leadership.

Finally, the resolution listed the steps necessary to strengthen the communist parties in all Arab countries and to create an Arab federation. The parties were required to:

(1) develop a mass anti-imperialist campaign which must be tied in broadly with the usual tasks of the workers' and peasants' movement in corresponding countries;

(2) hold meetings and demonstrations, issue special leaflets, organize anti-imperialist committees of peasants and workers from factories and foundries to assume the initiative in the struggle;

(3) establish a general press organ for the communist parties in Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and for the communists in Iraq; and

(4) secure the "over-all collaboration" of the communists in Tripoli, Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria. The future aim must be to "detach the organization of all these countries from the French Communist Party and make them independent units."<sup>33</sup>

The PCP, as well as the other communist parties, was exhorted to assist in the process of developing an Arab federation responsive to Moscow's needs. This joint resolution is important because it

(1) provides an overview of the problems and challenges confronting Middle East communist parties in the early 1930s;

(2) analyzes these issues within the broad framework

provided by Moscow's "world view" and by the particularities of "Third-Period" guidelines;

(3) enables us to understand the tactics intended to achieve the desired results of strengthening the communist parties in all Arab countries and creating an Arab federation responsive to Moscow's needs;

(4) provides proof of the ideological links between Moscow and its satellite parties; and

(5) reaffirms the thesis set forth in this study that regardless of the size of the PCP (and its neighboring counterparts), it was a tool of Moscow.

4

1930 and 1931 were years of reorientation for the PCP. As a result of a world-wide economic downturn, the economic situation in Palestine again deteriorated, giving rise to further Arab discontent. The year 1930 proved to be particularly disastrous for Palestinian agriculture, with the unusual coincidence of a fifty percent fall in the winter crop prices and a severe harvest failure. This adversely affected the Supreme Moslem Council (SMC) whose other sources of income (mainly urban Waqf properties and various court fees) also diminished with the worsening economic situation. The total income of the SMC fell as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Palestine Lira (Pound)</u>
1929	94,087
1930	81,697
1931	62,251

The SMC's important source of income was the tithes of the Waqf agricultural land collected by the government of Palestine and remitted to the SMC, minus a six percent collection charge. This arrangement had been provided for in the Order of December 1921 (Article 16), establishing the SMC, but with the deteriorating economic situation, the SMC now pressed to change the arrangement.<sup>34</sup> Incidentally, quite apart from its diminished total income, the SMC was accused by the Nashāshībī Opposition<sup>35</sup> of mismanaging or embezzling Waqf funds, and of using such funds for political purposes.<sup>36</sup>

Be that as it may, the Arab leadership presented its demands for a change in the 1921 arrangements to the Mandatory government in May 1932. A new agreement was concluded on October 21, 1932, which was important for two reasons:

(1) It served to defuse the resentment of the religious leaders toward the Mandatory government.

(2) It provided the PCP leadership with "proof" of the reformist tendencies of certain Arab leaders, who were now portrayed as ready to "capitulate."

In return for the new, more lucrative arrangement, the SMC agreed "to limit its expenditure, to submit its accounts to a licensed auditor, to adopt an accounting system recommended by the government and to submit its annual estimates to the HC [High Commissioner] for his information."<sup>37</sup>

Related to the financial needs of the SMC was its wish to have funds to purchase Arab lands in three villages in the coastal plains area which were expected to be put up for sale, so as to prevent purchase of these lands by Jews. Hadj Amīn al Husayni, the Mufti, accepted the new agreements and attempted to prevail upon his followers to avoid direct clashes with the government so as not to alienate the British. Instead, he advocated that the struggle for Arab nationalism be directed against the Jews, arguing that "it was much easier to attack Jewish settlements than [British] Police stations."<sup>38</sup>

Indeed, the two major issues preoccupying the Palestinian Arab leadership during the early 1930s were the financial situation and Jewish immigration. Having just worked out a financial arrangement with the British authorities, the Arab leaders were now ready to focus on immigration. While the PCP's Arab leaders had denounced the financial agreement as Arab elite capitulation to the British authorities, they were nevertheless ready to cooperate with the SMC on the issue of opposing Jewish immigration. Other issues that then agitated the PCP leadership were the "reformism" of the Arab leaders, the directive to move the parties of the neighboring Arab countries toward a federation, and the continuing effort to Arabize their own ranks. In October 1932, the PCP's Central Committee, consisting of a majority of Arab members, set forth a platform defining "a precise relationship between the number of Jews and the number of Arabs to be admitted [into the party]."<sup>39</sup>

### Central Committee Directives

<u>Branch Affected</u>	<u>Increase Membership by</u>	<u>Breakdown</u>	<u>Other Instructions</u>
Haifa	90	Of which at least 50 must be Arabs: from the port--20; from the railroad--15; others--15.	Establish branches in Naplas, Djenine, Toulkarem, Nazareth. Enlarge/reinforce lines with neighboring Arab villages, particularly in Wadi Havarit, with view to constituting at least 10 cells there.
Tel Aviv/ Jaffa	60	Arabs--20; Jews--40 (to be recruited preferably from among long-time settlers).	Establish contacts with at least 5 Arab villages.
Jerusalem	50	Arabs--25 Jews--25	Reinforce/enlarge lines with neighboring villages (up to at least 12 villages). Develop activities up to the Dead Sea and establish there a section of at least 15 members: Arabs--9, Jews--6.

Although the numbers are not particularly large, specific points of interest here are:

(1) Recruitment in Haifa must come from the port and the railroad, both considered to be of regional strategic importance.

(2) A network of cells in the neighboring Arab village would enable the coordination necessary to effectuate propaganda and guerrilla operations in the countryside.

(3) New Jewish members in the Tel Aviv/Jaffa branch were to be recruited from among those most likely to oppose further immigration, that is, from among those who were finding economic conditions trying and likely to resent the influx of immigrants who added to the competition for jobs.

(4) The Dead Sea was an important source of minerals. Hence, the economic importance of the area dictated the establishment of a network, however small.

## 5

In October 1932, during anti-Zionist demonstrations by Arabs throughout Palestine, the PCP moved closer to the left wing of the Istiqlal (Independence) Party led by Hamdi al-Husayni. The relationship between the two parties was summed up by the slogan: "March separately, strike together!"<sup>40</sup>

Though the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations reported that "1932 had been a period of calm and prosperity in Palestine,"<sup>41</sup> the year had actually seen some sporadic clashes. They were a prelude to the disorders of 1933, which had a different character from both the earlier riots of 1929 and the subsequent revolt of 1936. The clashes of 1932-1933 were shorter, not spread throughout the country, and did not involve Jews--occurring primarily between the Arab demonstrators and the British police.<sup>42</sup>

A protest strike against Jewish immigration, called by the Arab Higher Committee for October 13, 1933, was the immediate cause of the disorders. The AHC was protesting that in the first eight months of 1933,<sup>43</sup> 14,905 Jewish immigrants had entered Palestine.<sup>44</sup> Compared to the figures of 3,841 for 1932 and 3,049 for 1931,<sup>45</sup> the immigration of 1933 seemed to signal a new British policy which would eventually permit an even greater influx. The position of the PCP, even though, according to Israeli,<sup>46</sup> the leaders saw the connection between Hitlerism and the increasing Jewish immigration to Palestine, was that every Jew must struggle, together with other workers of the country in which he was born, "for the sake of the Communist revolution because it and only it will solve the Jewish question."<sup>47</sup> Thus, the PCP clearly opposed immigration and lent its support to the AHC.

The Arab protest strike of October 13 led to a series of attacks against government buildings. Contrary to the wishes of the

Mufti, who wanted Jews to be attacked but who was out of the country at the time,<sup>48</sup> these riots were focused against the British authorities and resulted in the death of 27 people (including the Police Constable) and the wounding of 243 (including 56 policemen).<sup>49</sup> Insofar as the protest had been against the government's leniency toward Jewish immigration which created competition for Arab labor, it was successful. Under a new Immigration Ordinance (No. 38, dated August 31, 1933)<sup>50</sup> the government had lowered quotas for all Jewish immigration<sup>51</sup> and listed a number of categories, including, "Category C," "Persons Coming to Employment." The quota in this category was to be tightly regulated, with quota figures to be announced semi-annually<sup>52</sup> in a special "Labour Schedule."<sup>53</sup> The figure announced on October 23, 1933, for the period September 1933-March 31, 1934, was 4,500,<sup>54</sup> representing a substantial decrease from the original anticipated quota of 20,000 "Category C" immigrants.<sup>55</sup> With the government appearing to fulfill its promise to reduce immigration figures, particularly in this category, tension subsided and the riots ceased.

The PCP portrayed the demonstrations of October 1933 as a "revolt." The party line claimed that "the 1933 revolt was a natural and desperate reaction of the exploited masses against their Zionist oppressors who wished to drive them from their land."<sup>56</sup> The PCP further claimed, consistent with the joint resolution of the Syrian and Palestinian communist parties, that "only strong and sudden pressures from below had compelled the hesitant Arab leadership to act."<sup>57</sup> Following the disturbances of October 1933, relative calm descended on Palestine as the party continued its efforts to establish strong links with Istiqlal. Mūsa, the new Moscow-appointed Secretary General of the party, picked up the reins of party leadership, stepping into the vacuum created by the absence of the Jewish leaders who had been recalled to Moscow and those who had been arrested by the British.

Beginning some time in 1933, there was a growing guerrilla/bandit movement in the countryside, organized by Shaikh 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam.<sup>58</sup> It was encouraged by the AHC, which was preparing to launch a country-wide campaign of peasant resistance to Zionism, the transfer of land to Jews, and the British Mandate. Although it is not accurate to say that the "initiative for the resistance came solely from the feudal-clerical

forces represented by the Arab Higher Committee," this leadership indeed dominated the movement, giving it a distinct political tone.<sup>59</sup>

The PCP made contact with the guerrilla bands late in 1935. As a gesture of support, the communists formed one guerrilla unit of party members. By this time, the PCP's former differentiation between the Zionist capitalist and the Yishuvist worker was gone, as was clear when the Palestinian delegate "Yussuf" (Mūsa) addressed the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, convened in August 1935, as follows: "The Jewish national minority in essence is really the colonizing and ruling nation with the support of English imperialism."<sup>60</sup> Though another Palestinian delegate code-named "Tajar" (reportedly A. Liebling) still argued, in a manner reminiscent of the old differentiation, that it was "our task to show the Jewish workers that their national and class interests are connected with the victory of the Arab liberation movement,"<sup>61</sup> the new line prevailed because the lumping together by the PCP's Arab leadership of all elements of the Palestinian Jewish Yishuv as the "colonizing and ruling nation," rationalized subsequent Arab attacks against the Jewish community. It was also intended to encourage the perception by Arab workers and peasants that the PCP understood, sympathized, and supported their struggle for national liberation--though whether in fact the Arab workers and peasants took the PCP seriously is doubtful.

Beginning in April and continuing until October 1936, widespread attacks were launched on both British and Jewish targets, with the British authorities being initially the major focus. PCP members were instructed to support what was called the "resistance movement."<sup>62</sup> Two Arab party members, Nimr 'Uda and Fu'ad Nassar, were attached to the general staff of the guerrilla organization. The PCP supported and encouraged the Arab violence of 1936, seeing in it the vehicle by which the British and the Zionists could be driven from Palestine.<sup>63</sup> The PCP Central Committee resolved that:

The task of the Arab members of the PCP is to actively participate in the destruction of Zionism and imperialism. The task of the Jewish members is to assist in this effort by weakening the Zionist Yishuv from within.<sup>64</sup>

Dissenters from this party line would be expelled. However, when the initial uprising against the British authorities turned into an assault on the Jews, the Jewish members of the PCP who had until then supported the violence were put to the test.

Arieh Lev, the General Secretary of the Tel Aviv branch of the PCP, urged the Central Committee to issue a proclamation supporting the so-called revolt, but he also urged that it be confined to the struggle against the British. For its part, the Arab-led Central Committee called on the Jewish community to fight side by side with the Arabs. The Central Committee ordered the Tel Aviv branch to direct a number of its members to set fire to the buildings of the Near East Fair in the northern part of the city. The Tel Aviv branch refused. Thereupon its Executive Committee was disbanded, and its members expelled from the party. Such opposition of Jewish PCP members to party orders was, however, confined to the Tel Aviv branch. When ordered to do so, other Jewish PCP members did throw "scare bombs" at Jewish public institutions.

Shmuel Dothan, writing about the Jewish Section of the PCP during this period, points out that

The bomb-throwers, who were Jews, probably wished to avoid bloodshed; they simply tried to prove to the Arab public that the Party was fighting, and not merely preaching, on behalf of the Arab cause.<sup>65</sup>

Reports of violence in Palestine soon reached Jewish communists in the United States. Uninformed as to the actual PCP attitude and anxious to avoid the damaging flip-flops of 1929, the American Jewish communists were hard pressed to formulate a policy line which would be acceptable to their supporters and sympathizers within the American Jewish community. Thus, early in May 1936, the party secretly dispatched Melech Epstein, editor of the American Jewish communist newspaper Morgenfreiheit, to conduct a confidential investigation in Palestine. Once apprised of what was happening, Epstein warned the PCP leadership of the adverse effect of the party's involvement in several cases of bomb-throwing in Tel Aviv.<sup>66</sup> The PCP's Arab leadership, however, wished to leave no doubt of its position. On June 10, 1936, the PCP issued an appeal to the Arabs: "The everspreading imperialist-Zionist occupation of the country demands speedy and effective resistance, or Zionist



robbery will deprive the Arab people of Palestine."<sup>67</sup> The PCP's proclamation of July 10, 1936, told the Arabs that:

By destroying the economy of the Zionist conquerors by means of acts of sabotage and partisan attacks, the Arab movement of liberation seeks to make the continuation of Zionist colonisation impossible.<sup>68</sup>

As a result of these developments of 1936, Jewish membership in the PCP declined. This led to a reevaluation within the party's Central Committee. In the fall of 1936, the Central Committee had second thoughts about its having compelled Jews to fight for the Arab cause against the Jewish community. Deciding to try a new approach, the Central Committee established a "Jewish Section." Simha Tsabri (a Jewish woman born in Tel Aviv and trained in Moscow<sup>69</sup>), Halil Shanir (a Jaffa-born Arab) and several other members of the Central Committee who had managed to avoid arrest were instrumental in creating the section, whose purpose was to keep in touch with the Jewish community.<sup>70</sup> The precedent for the establishment of a Jewish section was found in the Soviet Yevseksia, although this had been disbanded by Stalin in 1930.<sup>71</sup>

## 7

In addition to establishing the Jewish section, authorized in 1936 and organized in 1937, the PCP also worked through the League Against Imperialism (see Appendix C). Toward the end of 1936, the League published a pamphlet entitled Palestine: An Authoritive Survey, which reviewed the economic and strategic importance of Palestine. The pamphlet began with a recounting of the disorders of April 1936, stating that the Arab leaders had called the general strike in support of the establishment of a democratic government, the complete cessation of Jewish immigration, and the prohibition of the sale of land to Jews.

The problem, the pamphlet continues, "is not a religious problem, but economic in origin, and the demands of the Arabs place the problem definitely on the political plane. . . ." <sup>72</sup> There follows a telegram addressed to the League Against Imperialism, dated June 22, 1936:

65 DAYS STRIKE THE STRUGGLE IS FOR OUR  
NATIONAL FREEDOM AGAINST ANY SORT OF IM-  
PERIALISM WE ARE FIGHTING WITH ALL MEANS AT  
OUR DISPOSAL WITH YOU AGAINST THE COMMON ENEMY  
THE BRITISH IMPERIALISM

It was signed by Ahmad Dabbagh, the Arab Strike Committee Secretary.<sup>73</sup> Commenting that the "Question of the Palestine Mandate confronting the British government cannot be separated from the cognate question of the Syrian Mandate," the League's pamphlet noted the centuries' old economic and cultural unity of Syria and Palestine and went on to discuss a number of Palestine's specific assets, among which were:

- The chemical content of the Dead Sea, "now thought to be an inexhaustible mineral reservoir," and already yielding one-tenth of the world's production of pure potash. Three-quarters of the bromide consumed in Britain comes from the Dead Sea Potash Company, which is controlled by the Imperial Chemical Industries.

- Haifa, "the most important port," where "the pipeline for Mossul oil from Iraq terminates." To prove its point, the pamphlet quotes from the Zionist bulletin, Palestine: "The value of Haifa to the system of Imperial defence will not be solely in its future use as a naval base. It is destined to be the great airport of the East."<sup>74</sup>

- Palestine, itself, the "bridge between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, the strategic key to the whole of the Near and Middle East." Control of Palestine is strategically important in the control of the whole of Arabia, which "dominates the eastern Mediterranean, the Isthmus of Suez, and the Red Sea from the fortified naval base of Akaba to the stronghold of Aden."

Perhaps the most interesting point of this pamphlet was its linkage of Hitler with the Zionist leadership, an overtly stated convergence of interests which implied a cooperation between "German capitalism" and Hitler on the one hand, and British imperialism and Zionism on the other, aimed at the destruction of Soviet interests and ultimately at the destruction of the Soviet state:

. . . imperialism and its Zionist agents do not  
propose to relax their efforts until the whole Jewish

population of Germany is settled in Palestine. . . .

In this policy of British imperialism, which is in the interests of German capitalism, Hitler himself is prepared to co-operate. In November 1933, the Haavara (Transfer) Company was established to overcome the difficulties to the Jewish emigrant of the German foreign currency regulations. The Haavara Company, a subsidiary of the Anglo-Palestine Bank, has come to an arrangement with Germany by which German Jews are allowed to transmit their capital to Palestine through the medium of the Haavara in the form of German goods.<sup>75</sup>

This theme of "collaboration" between the Jews and the Nazis was not new. It was heard as early as August 17, 1933, when an article in Ha'or (The Light) claimed: "Only two parties exist in Germany--the Nazi party and the Zionists."<sup>76</sup> Party propaganda at that time noted that the Zionist newspaper published in Germany did not attack Hitler's regime and that the Zionists were exploiting the persecution of Jews in Germany by painting too grim a picture.<sup>77</sup> In May 1934, Icor<sup>78</sup> spoke of "the open support which the Zionists are giving to the murderous Hitler regime in its brutal policy of suppression against the German working class."<sup>79</sup> This theme would be repeated at various times by the PCP until the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939. For example, an editorial in Kol Ha'am during the Spring of 1939 stated:

The Arabs know that the illegal [Jewish] immigration is in fact a legal joint action of the regime of Hitler, which prepares passports and visas, the Revisionists who organize the voyages, and the British army, which prevents anybody from seeing how the landing takes place.<sup>80</sup>

## 8

The guerrilla war waged in the late 1930s by the Arabs, with the support of the communists, was directed not only against the government and the Jewish community but against part of the Arab population itself. Indeed, "The dominant Husseini clan, led

by the Mufti, took advantage of the situation to settle accounts with its Arab political opponents, and its gunmen killed more Arabs than Jews."<sup>81</sup> The concomitants of this guerrilla warfare were arson, deforestation, and destruction of wells and pipelines. There was an abortive general strike, suppressed by the British. However, insurrection was kept alive sporadically until 1939, with active propaganda and financial support from Nazi and Fascist sources, long after the Arab communist leaders were arrested and the remaining Arab members and the Jewish faction had backed away from supporting the guerrilla attacks.

Gradually, the communists tried to distance themselves from support for the guerrilla bands, as can be seen from the following:

... despite the exhortations of all progressive elements in the Arab Nationalist camp--the Arab Communists, the urban workers, intellectuals and the Arab press--against the continuation of the guerrilla warfare and terror, recruiting in the Galilean villages to the guerrilla bands went on steadily.<sup>82</sup>

While considering themselves part of the "progressive" element opposed to continued guerrilla warfare, the communists were prepared to recognize the cause: the "oppressive regulations" of the British, which had been "spurred on by the Jewish Agency." Therefore, "there is no turning back for the Arab fighter."<sup>83</sup>

In July 1937, the British Royal Commission (known as the Peel Commission) recommended that Palestine be partitioned into Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem under perpetual Mandate.<sup>84</sup> While the Arabs rejected the proposal outright, the Jews were divided. Most Zionists who were willing to accept "half a loaf" supported the plan, while the Revisionists, the Left Poale Zion, the left-wing Hashomer Hatzair and the Jewish communists opposed the plan. Typical of the communist attitude, both within Palestine and elsewhere, was: "As for peace, day by day as the Government's reprisals become more and more oppressive, it becomes clearer that there can be no peace until the British Government, the Histadrut and other Zionist leaders give up the Imperialist plan for partition."<sup>85</sup> Also typical of the communist attitude was the analysis presented in a Jewish Life article entitled "What Next in Palestine?" which was meant as a response to the Zionist argument that an undivided Palestine will mean the

end of using Palestine as a refuge for the oppressed Jews in Central and Eastern Europe. The article set forth the following analysis:

(1) It is true that an independent Palestine government, in which Arabs were a majority, would restrict further Jewish immigration for the present. This is so because the Arabs have come to recognize the political significance of Jewish immigration during the last eighteen years. However, once Jews and Arabs began to live in "common citizenship" in an independent Palestine, the political significance of Jewish immigration would gradually disappear. There would then be no reason to prevent immigration of Jewish capitalists or workers, dependent upon the "limits of the real absorptive capacity of the country, provided. . . such immigration did nothing to interfere with the standard of living of the existing inhabitants--Arab and Jew."

(2) The removal of antagonism between Jew and Arab would lead to the removal of obstacles to Jewish immigration into other Arab countries--Transjordan, Syria and Iraq, "the aim of whose peoples is to be linked in closer economic and political unity with one another and with Palestine. . . ." (This statement is consistent with the Moscow directive to move the Arab countries toward federation.)

(3) There is room for settlement and need of development in the other Arab countries, and Jewish capital and workers would be welcome, once the Jews abandon their political aspirations for a Jewish state in Palestine.

(4) The partition plan, if implemented, will result in political tension both inside and outside the frontier. Jewish energy and funds will be dissipated in the struggle for security and defence.<sup>86</sup>

(5) There is a likelihood of prohibitive tariffs being imposed by the Arab states on imports from the Jewish state, thereby rendering trade and economic development more difficult to achieve.

(6) A partitioned Jewish state can only be established by a policy of wholesale repression.

The analysis concludes:

Even if partition appeared to offer fair prospects to the Jewish community inside and outside Palestine, could you or anyone believing in the importance of

maintaining democratic methods of rule honestly continue to advocate such a policy, when it is plain that it is only by methods of arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, by overriding civil liberties and by inflicting widespread poverty and suffering upon the Arab masses, that partition can be obtained?<sup>87</sup>

9

Mūsa was arrested by the British in 1937, along with most of the Arab leaders of the party. Since their arrest lasted until the middle of World War II,<sup>88</sup> the "Arab Section" of the PCP collapsed, while a rejuvenated "Jewish Section" survived due to the efforts of Chanoch Bzoza (known as "Zaken," old man). Bzoza, identified as the "deputy" of Mūsa,<sup>89</sup> had not played a vivid role in the party in 1936, simply following the Central Committee line. His obedience made him a good choice for Secretary of the Jewish section when it was created in 1937 by delegates of the committees representing the various Jewish branches. The Jewish section operated primarily in Jerusalem, where a number of active Jewish students bolstered its ranks.

At the time Bzoza accepted the section leadership, it was faced with the disintegration of the PCP's Jewish membership. There had been defections due to opposition to the party's unreservedly pro-Arab policy, and there had been expulsions. Also, "whole party branches (including the largest one in Tel Aviv) had been dissolved for insubordination [of the Jewish members], and [Jewish] members, insofar as they did not leave the party altogether, were sent to Spain."<sup>90</sup> Others chose to go, either because they were disgusted with the policies of the Central Committee, or because they wanted to be part of the "good" fight against Franco and his Fascist supporters:

Many of them had warmed the prisons of Palestine for their activities in the illegal communist party. Many of them had come directly to Spain upon the termination of their prison sentences. . . . Hounded by the agents of British Imperialism, tortured in the prisons of Palestine, these men and women are continuing their fight in Spain.<sup>91</sup>

Whatever the motives of those who went to fight in Spain, their going further depleted the already diminished ranks of the PCP's Jewish section. Remaining Secretariat members Bzoza, David Wilder ("Fritz"), "Arieh" (the Secretary of the Jerusalem branch) and "Yehuda" sought to moderate their party's attitude toward the Jewish community in the hope of avoiding further membership losses, yet without explicitly repudiating the Moscow dogma. To some extent, the Section Secretariat was assisted in this endeavor by a concurrent decline in the authority of the Arab-dominated Central Committee, which was in some disarray. Neither Mūsa nor the other Arab members arrested in 1937 had yet been released from prison. Within the small Arab cadre, there was "whole-hearted identification with the Arab nationalists."<sup>92</sup> In short, the PCP Central Committee was ideologically bankrupt.

Bzoza, seeking to blunt the constant threat of arrest by the British, urged the Jewish cadre to join legal organizations and parties as a cover. This tactic, known among communists as the "Trojan Horse" method, was initially opposed by some who argued that "it would be extremely trying to pretend to be Zionists."<sup>93</sup> In response to this hesitation, the Secretariat issued a circular to the membership that claimed "Our illegal position is an ethical question." The communists, the Secretariat stated, had not created the conditions which now forced the party to operate in this manner. In the end, most Jewish communists were persuaded to join Zionist organizations where they attempted to work among the Jewish masses, "to guide them, educate them, and free them from the influence of the bourgeoisie and its Zionist henchmen."<sup>94</sup>

Members of the Jewish section were encouraged to seek and accept office in the organizations which they joined. These communist party members now masquerading as Zionists attempted to intensify the struggle of the unions and to initiate constructive programs.<sup>95</sup> This approach succeeded. The membership of the party increased, again reaching about 300: "The 'Trojan Horse' method had obviously prevented the dissolution of the party in the Jewish sector."<sup>96</sup>

With renewed strength, the Jewish section soon came to the point where it questioned the party's official view that Zionism was a "single homogenous front" and that the Jewish community in Palestine was a "colonizing minority."<sup>97</sup> A new round of splits was beginning. When the guerrilla bands

renewed their attacks in the summer of 1937, under the slogan, "One dead Jew is better than ten dead Englishmen,"<sup>98</sup> the Section Secretariat assumed a stance of sympathy with the Yishuv. Contrary to the position of the Central Committee, the Section Secretariat argued:

- It was permissible for the Yishuv to protect itself.<sup>99</sup>
- Arab terror had created a diversion from the anti-imperialist struggle.
- The Arab struggle had turned into an anti-Jewish campaign.
- The guerrilla attacks had further divided Arabs and Jews.
- Arab actions have had the negative effect of helping the Zionist leadership unify the Yishuv under its authority.
- As a result, Zionism has been strengthened, while the anti-imperialist cause has been weakened.<sup>100</sup>

This new understanding of the Yishuv's position represented a turnabout in the thinking of the Jewish leadership, which the Section Secretariat attempted to justify on the basis of the new Comintern policy announced at the Seventh Comintern Congress held during July-August 1935. At that congress, Georgi Dimitrov called upon the communist parties to seek cooperation with other elements in order to combat the Fascist menace. He had said that the parties were not expected to follow any specific plan in pursuing these "reconstructed policies and tactics." However, in all cases they were expected to find a "common language" with the masses, so as to end their isolation.<sup>101</sup>

The Resolution of the Seventh Comintern Congress on Fascism, Working-Class Unity, and the Tasks of the Comintern stated:

In the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the most important task facing the communists consists in working to establish an anti-imperialist people's front. For this purpose it is necessary to draw the widest masses into the national liberation movement against growing imperialist exploitation. . . .<sup>102</sup>

The Comintern directive to establish an anti-imperialist people's front thus served as an ideological justification for the Jewish section's return to the former Yishuvist doctrine. These Palestinian communists were again differentiating between the



settled Jewish community and the Zionist leadership. This enabled them to benefit from a dispute within the Jewish community regarding the Peel Commission's partition plan. The plan had been rejected by the Arabs, the Revisionists, and the left-wing groups among the Jews. The Jewish section was now able to draw closer to those on the left who rejected the British plan, while justifying these efforts as part of the anti-Fascist popular-front strategy set forth by the Comintern itself.

This assumed tactic was, in important respects, contrary to the PCP's Central Committee policy line which continued to demand the Yishuv's abandonment of Zionism and its recognition of the national rights of the Arab majority. The PCP's Central Committee did not acknowledge "national rights" for the Jews, nor did it call for a change in Arab policy toward and treatment of the Jews. In addition, while the Central Committee claimed that the British White Paper of 1939 would foster Jewish-Arab understanding, the Section Secretariat viewed the White Paper differently. Thus a serious rift developed between the PCP's Arab-led Central Committee and its Jewish Section Secretariat.

## 10

The White Paper of 1939 restricted Jewish immigration at a time of extreme danger to the physical survival of European Jewry. Hence it aroused strong opposition by the Jewish community. The Jewish section of the PCP saw in this an opportunity to drive a wedge between the Jewish public and the Zionist leadership, whose reliance on the British would now be discredited. The Jewish Yishuv, according to the Jewish section, need no longer be seen as a completely negative and monolithic element; and the Arab national movement, with its increasing tendency to lean toward the Rome-Berlin Fascist axis, should no longer be viewed as a completely positive element.

The question of immigration was so important to all concerned that it warrants further discussion. The Arabs rejected all Jewish immigration, fearing that it would lead to a Jewish majority in, and a legitimation of Jewish claims to, Palestine. The British, anxious to neutralize German and Italian influence on the Arabs and fearing Axis instigation of an Arab revolt styled on the model of the earlier Arab revolt against the Turks in World War I, restricted Jewish immigration, in the hope

of placating the Palestinian Arabs. The PCP's Central Committee, still committed to supporting the Arab national movement, approved every means of deterring immigration, even to the point of firing on ships carrying "illegal" immigrants. The Jewish Section Secretariat also opposed immigration but condemned British firing on "illegal" immigrant-carrying ships as well as the Zionists who organized the "illegal" immigration, but not the immigrants themselves. Furthermore, the Secretariat rejected the Central Committee's attempt to make opposition to immigration the principal theme of the party's propaganda.

The thinking of the Secretariat had begun to undergo some change with the Nazi annexation of Austria in 1938. For the first time, the Jewish members of the PCP acknowledged that the Jews of Germany and Austria had to leave the countries in which they had been born. Still, the same Kol Ha'am article (December 14, 1938) which carried that acknowledgment also spoke of an alternative to immigration to Palestine. The article discussed the possibility of an understanding with the Arabs which would "open the gates to Arab countries for Jewish refugees. . . ."103 Iraq had, according to the article, invited Jewish doctors from Austria to immigrate, and Egypt had made the same offer for forty Jewish craftsmen. While praising Iraq and Egypt for their invitations, the article heaped criticism on the Jewish Agency which had announced that it was "prepared to receive 100,000 of Germany's 800,000 Jews."104 The article's author asked: "What will be the fate of the other 700,000?" Commenting that the Nazis are oppressing not only Jews, but Czechs, Catholics, Protestants and others who oppose the Nazi rule, the author then asks: "Must they too emigrate? And must three and a half million Polish Jews also emigrate?"105 Though the acknowledgment that Austrian and German Jews had to emigrate represented a change in the thinking of the Jewish section, it proved to be a limited change. The Jewish section, and the PCP as a whole, never identified Palestine as the logical refuge for the European Jews fleeing the Nazis and opposed immigration to Palestine even after the Germans invaded Russia in June 1941. Nevertheless, following Anschluss (March 1938), the Jewish section resisted making the party's anti-immigration position the central theme of the PCP's propaganda. While conceding that doing so could attract wider Arab support, the Secretariat argued that such an approach would not only intensify Arab-Jewish animosity, but would completely alienate all elements of the Yishuv, including the

left-wing groups with whom there now existed some possibility for cooperation. The Secretariat also argued that "outright opposition to Jewish immigration was unnecessary if the achievement of democratic rights, meaning majority rule, was posed as a precondition for further immigration."<sup>106</sup>

These disagreements were compounded by differences of interpretation of the Comintern's directive to establish a popular front. According to the Central Committee, Dimitrov had made forming a united front of the working class (i.e., with socialists) dependent on the existence of a strong and influential communist party and then the creation of a popular front (i.e., with Liberals, etc.) dependent on the prior formation of a united front of workers. Thus, the order of priorities was: (1) build a strong, influential PCP, which will (2) create a united front of the working class, which will (3) establish an anti-Fascist, anti-imperialist popular front. The Central Committee claimed, in 1939, that the conditions for this sequential development did not yet exist in Palestine and that the Jewish section, particularly its Jerusalem branch, was guilty of "Zionist deviation."<sup>107</sup> Specifically:

(1) Jewish members had participated in certain organizations as feigned Zionists.

(2) In that capacity they had failed to voice an independent communist line in the press and public media when opportunities had presented themselves.

(3) By following the Zionist line, they were guilty of a "schematic application of the European concept of a Popular Front."<sup>108</sup>

About the same time as relations between the section Secretariat and the Central Committee were drastically deteriorating, the Comintern became aware of contacts between Arab leaders and the Axis powers. The section Secretariat thereupon demanded that the PCP break with the Axis-oriented Mufti of Jerusalem. The Central Committee retorted that the Mufti was a popular religious leader and that the party could not oppose him without risking its acceptability to Arabs. What the Central Committee did do, however, was to issue a warning on August 1, 1939 that "International Fascism wants to occupy the Middle East and Palestine," and that "There is no room for neutralism [because] neutralism means assistance given to the Fascists."<sup>109</sup>

The Soviet-German non-aggression treaty of August 23, 1939 exacerbated the tensions within the PCP and between the PCP and the Jewish Yishuv. Indeed, it proved to be the supreme test for all

communist parties and particularly for the Jewish members within the various parties. While non-Jewish communists in France, Great Britain, America, and elsewhere might argue that the pact was intended to be a non-aggression treaty, that it symbolized Soviet neutrality in what was deemed an imperialist war, and that it would be an error to side with one imperialist power against another, Jewish communists had to confront the reality that this time the all-important difference between the two allegedly imperialist camps was that one side, Nazi Germany, was committed to the annihilation of the Jewish people.

For the Arab-dominated PCP Central Committee, rationalizing the Hitler-Stalin pact was easier than it was for the Jewish Secretariat. Hitler was to be portrayed as the ally of the socialist fatherland. In October 1939, the Central Committee declared:

The Hitler against whom Chamberlain is fighting, is not that same Hitler whom he guided towards war against the Soviet Union. This Hitler, who is unable to launch a campaign against the Soviet Union, must follow its instructions, is no longer the gendarme of Chamberlain and Daladier.<sup>110</sup>

For the PCP Central Committee the pact was merely a maneuver of Soviet foreign policy and hence was endorsed. The section leadership, however, found it a difficult pill to swallow and could not accept the Central Committee's version of a new Hitler, obliged to follow Moscow's instructions.

As relations between the section Secretariat and the Central Committee were reaching the breaking point, Mūsa, freshly returned from prison to his role as party Secretary, expressed a willingness to explore the differences and offered to arrange a dialogue between the Central Committee and the Secretariat. He wished to avoid a crisis and to maintain control over the party members as a whole. Bzoza, leader of the Jewish section, was eager to avoid charges of divisiveness, as well as a split in the party. Yet Bzoza knew that many Jewish communists, having accepted the principle of Arabization and the dogma of absolute obedience to Moscow, now found it difficult to accept the Secretariat's pro-Yishuv orientation. He knew, also, that there was a good deal of confusion within the ranks regarding Moscow's pact with the Nazis.

Given the willingness of both Mūsa and Bzoza to work out their differences, it appeared that a split could be avoided.

However, Būlos Farah ("Amin"), just returned from Moscow, convinced the Central Committee to harden its attitude against what he depicted as a Zionist deviation, and to adopt an uncompromising stance. Claiming to represent the Comintern's official line, he convinced others to go along with his belittling of the contributions of the Jewish communists.

During September 1939, acrimonious exchanges took place between the two groups. The Central Committee adhered to its contention that the Arabs represented the only progressive force in Palestine; the section Secretariat countered that the party was ignoring a necessary and important task: to prove to the Jewish Yishuv that the Zionist demands were destructive, not advantageous to the Yishuv's interests. Arieħ, from the Jerusalem branch, argued that the PCP had to prove to the Jewish Yishuv that it was a progressive force which was willing to fight for the nationalist goals of both Jews and Arabs.

In response, the Central Committee dredged up Stalin's opinion of the Jews as a "paper" nation, written in 1911:

What sort of a nation is a Jewish nation that consists of Georgian, Daghestinian, Russian, American and other Jews, the members of which do not understand each other (since they speak different languages), inhabit different parts of the globe, will not see each other, will never act together, whether in time of peace or in time of war?

No, it is not for such paper 'nations' that the Social Democratic Party [from which the Bolsheviks seceded] draws up its national program. It can reckon only with real nations, which act and move, and therefore insist on being reckoned with.<sup>111</sup>

A nation, according to Stalin's definition, was a permanent community which developed historically on the basis of a common language, territory, economic structure and culture. Stalin assumed the ultimate assimilation of the Jews since they lacked these attributes. The PCP's Central Committee, citing the above as dogma by 1939, claimed that "there is no Jewish nation here." If there were a Jewish nation in Palestine, every Jewish group in every country would have to be regarded as a Jewish nation, and this was absurd. It would mean that there was validity to the Zionist concept. The Central Committee argued that not only was the development of the Jewish community not a

historical process, but Zionism was hostile to Jewish interests--proof was the way in which the Zionists fought against the national language, Yiddish.<sup>112</sup>

The Central Committee proceeded to charge that the unstable conditions (a reference to the riots of 1936-1939) in Palestine had enabled the section, particularly the Jerusalem branch, to evade party supervision. It noted that, as a result of the earlier arrests of the Arab leadership, there had been almost no Arab cadre during the 1937-1938 period. In effect, the section had constituted itself as the party, although the Central Committee had never authorized this. After the Arab revolt had ended during 1939, the Arab communist cadre revived. The party was now ready to resume its activities under a strengthened Arab leadership, and the Secretariat was expected to follow the party line and to correct the errors which it had committed. Specifically those errors were:

- The Secretariat had ignored the achievements of the party under an Arab leadership.

- It had ignored the achievements among Arabs.

- It had incorrectly identified the Arab nationalist movement as pro-Fascist.

- It had failed to understand the significance of the White Paper as an anti-Zionist document and had not sufficiently opposed immigration.

- Having misapplied the concept of the Popular Front, the Secretariat had compounded its errors by encouraging its people to participate in Zionist organizations, thereby risking the danger of communists being converted to Zionism.

- It had failed in its struggle against Zionism; it had failed to persuade leftist Zionists, as well as Jews who were not steadfastly Zionist, that Zionism was an imperialistic tool, exploitative and not in their interest.

What Bzoza, Wilder and Arieah had hoped would be a political debate, with participation from both sides, ended by being a one-sided denunciation of their record as leaders of the Jewish section. The Central Committee permitted no exchanges which questioned the party's pro-Arab, anti-immigration, anti-Yishuv line. Bzoza was removed from the editorial board of Kol Ha'am and two members of the section Secretariat were dismissed: David Wilder, on a procedural pretext, and Arieah, supposedly because he had taken some Histadrut-sponsored courses in labor law, social legislation and the history of the Histadrut.<sup>113</sup>

The Jewish leaders refused to accept the verdict of the

Central Committee and demanded an election to determine the makeup of a new Central Committee. The Jewish leaders claimed that Moscow had designated the leadership following the riots of 1929, and that there had been no election since, with changes in the Central Committee being made in an arbitrary manner by the Arab leaders who simply co-opted those loyal to them. The Secretariat questioned the competence of the Central Committee leadership on the grounds that new conditions had been established in Palestine as a result of the rise of Fascism in Europe which had caused the influx of Jewish immigrants. The Jewish population, they concluded, could not be ignored if the PCP was to influence the masses in Palestine. Finally, they maintained that the Arab leaders had not practiced "democratic centralism," but rather had imposed centralization without democracy.

Bzoza and Arieih sent a memorandum to the Central Control Committee of the Comintern in September 1939, appealing the decisions of the PCP Central Committee. They were confident that, on hearing the "truth," the Comintern would set things right. But their emissary, according to Dothan, was intercepted<sup>114</sup> and forced to return to Palestine. It is doubtful, though, that the section would have been able to influence the Comintern, which considered the Arabization of the PCP's leadership a major achievement.<sup>115</sup>

Stating that the separate existence of a Jewish section that had succumbed to a "nationalist deviation" was no longer warranted, the Central Committee dissolved it in December 1939. Although the Secretariat members, by and large, did not recognize the dissolution of their group, they were eventually forced to secede. About one hundred of them formed an independent group of communists which lasted approximately two years. During that time, most of the PCP's Jewish members remained faithful to the Central Committee.<sup>116</sup> With the German attack on the Soviet Union, in June 1941, the situation changed, and the PCP was once again unified, albeit temporarily.

## NOTES

1. Walter Z. Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), p. 84.

2. Alain Greilsammer, Les Communistes Israéliens (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1978), p. 74.

3. Josef Berger-Barzilai, Hatragedia shel Hamahaphaha HaSovietit (The Tragedy of the Soviet Revolution), (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1968), pp. 105-106.

4. G. Z. Israeli, A History of the Israeli Communist Party: From the MPS to PKP to MAKI (in Hebrew), (Tel Aviv: Om Oved, 1953), p. 71.

5. Greilsammer, *ibid.*

6. Israeli, p. 69; Greilsammer, p. 67.

7. Israeli, *ibid.*; Greilsammer, *ibid.*

8. Israeli, *ibid.*

9. Josef Berger-Barzilai, "Aharito shel Alexander Heshen" (The End of Alexander Heshen) in Molad, July-August 1965, p. 214.

10. Barzilai continues: "... this was the only opportunity in which Heshen's brother could express his opinion on Stalin's repression. That opinion was completely negative." *Ibid.*

11. This is reminiscent of Arthur Koestler's description in Darkness at Noon of Rubashov's continued loyalty to the aims of Stalinism.

12. Jacob Hen-Tov, Communism and Zionism in Palestine: The Comintern and the Political Unrest in the 1920s (Mass.: Schenkman Publ. Co., 1974), p. 146.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Israeli, p. 81.

15. For details see The New Palestine, June 20, 1930, Vol. XVIII, p. 379. According to the article, petitions calling for a reprieve had been signed by many prominent Jews, among them Judah L. Magnes and Albert Einstein. The anonymous author of the piece noted that the British had sentenced over 20 Arabs to be executed, but public opinion convinced them to make an example of only the three seen as the leaders. The article expressed concern lest there be Arab reprisals against the Jews, thereby embarrassing Magnes and Einstein.

16. Charles Bezalel Sherman, The Communists in Palestine: The Mufti's Moscow Allies (N.Y.: League for Labor Palestine, c. 1939), p. 11.

17. Greilsammer, pp. 72-73.



18. Ibid.
19. Hen-Tov, p. 148.
20. Laqueur, p. 88.
21. Ibid.
22. Dunia Habib Nahas, The Israeli Communist Party (London: Portico Publications, 1976), p. 21.
23. Nahas (p. 21) identifies the PCP delegate as "Listvinski," however, I have not come across that name before and believe she meant Litvinski. The name is of less importance than the fact that there was such a congress out of which came the resolution discussed in the text.
24. Greilsammer, p. 73, citing Historical Archives of the Hagana, Dossier 30/8.
25. Laqueur, p. 89.
26. Ivar Spector, The Soviet Union and the Muslim World--1917-1958 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1959), p. 129. While the resolution is larger in scope, examining the situation in all of the Arab countries, I have culled from the document only that which is relevant to this study.
27. I have borrowed this term from J. Galtung's "A Structural Theory of Imperialism," in Journal of Peace Research, 2 (1971), pp. 81-117.
28. This analysis has become extremely popular among recent Marxist-oriented political scientists who have analyzed the problems of underdevelopment. For example, see James D. Cockcroft, André Gunder Frank and Dale L. Johnson, Dependence and Underdevelopment: Latin America's Political Economy (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1972).
29. J. C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record: 1919-1956, Vol. II (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1956), p. 203, "Treaty of Preferential Alliance: Britain and Egypt," dated August 26, 1936.
30. Spector, pp. 134-136.
31. Ibid., pp. 136-139.
32. Ibid., p. 139.
33. Ibid. This is an interesting provision, indicating Moscow's desire to strengthen these sections, making them independent of the French CP, and then to move them toward an Arab federation. What it may imply about the French CP itself, is beyond the scope of this study.
34. Yehoshua Porath, The Palestinian Arab National Movement (London: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1977), Vol. II, 1929-1939--From Riots to Rebellion, p. 114.

35. Ibid., pp. 47-48 and Chapter 3, "Factional Struggle and the Emergence of Parties."

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., p. 115.

38. Ibid., p. 117.

39. Greilsammer, p. 75, is translating from an unidentified Yiddish source, providing the information used by this author to form the chart, entitled "Central Committee Directives."

40. MERIP Report (Middle East Research and Information Project Report) No. 55, March 1977 (Washington, D. C.), entitled: Communism in Palestine by Joel Beinen.

41. The New Palestine, February 3, 1933, Vol. XXIII, p. 1.

42. A Survey of Palestine, Vol. I (Palestine: Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, 1946), p. 32 (at the Zionist Archives, N.Y.).

43. From 1920-1932, the average annual Jewish immigration had been 10,000. After Hitler's rise to power in 1933, there was a sharp increase. See Israel's Struggle for Peace (N.Y.: Israel Office of Information, 1960), which cites the following figures for the years indicated: 1933--30,927; 1934--42,359; 1935--61,854. In addition, about 5,000 "illegal" immigrants, unable to obtain Mandatory-issued certificates, entered the country each year (p. 23).

44. The New Palestine, December 11, 1933, Vol. XXIII, p. 5.

45. Ibid.

46. Israeli, p. 105.

47. Ibid.

48. The Mufti was then in India to raise money from the Moslem population for his proposed Islamic University. Porath, Vol. II, p. 117.

49. The Palestine Gazette, No. 420, February 7, 1934, Supplement: J. W. Murison-H.H. Trusted "Report to the Commission of Inquiry," dated January 4, 1934, p. 104.

50. The Palestine Gazette, No. 385, August 31, 1933, pp. 1181-1205.

51. However, the over-all immigration figures actually increased (see figures in n. 43 above). In 1936, though, the British cut immigration to 29,727. A Survey of Palestine, Vol. I, p. 171.

52. The figures were often announced well into the period they were meant to cover. Sometimes, an entire six-month period passed, with no quota announced. The following figures were taken from The Palestine Gazette of the date indicated:

Period Covered	Total Category C	Date Announced (Gazette No.)
9/33 - 3/31/34	4,500	10/23/33 (397)
4/34 - 9/30/34	5,600*	5/3/34 (437, Supp. 2)
10/34 - 3/31/35	--	Never announced**
4/35 - 9/35	8,000	4/18/35 (505, Supp. 2)
9/35 - 3/31/36	3,250	1/9/36 (561, Supp. 2)

\*Laqueur, p. 89, cites this figure to illustrate the cuts made by the British in Category C, following the Arab protest on October 13.

\*\*We may assume, as Laqueur does, that the figure of 5,600 continued to apply.

53. This schedule set the maximum number of persons by "sex, trades, industries and callings" who may be admitted.

54. The Palestine Gazette, No. 397, 10/23/33, p. 1552.

55. Laqueur, p. 89.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. MERIP, p. 12.

59. Ibid., p. 10.

60. Inprecorr, October 17, 1935, p. 1344. Also see Elkana Margalit, HaAnatomia shel HaSmol: Poale Zion Smol beEretz Yisrael (The Anatomy of the Left: The Left Poale Zion in Israel) 1919-1946 (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, I. L. Peretz Publ. House, 1976), pp. 273-274; Jane Degras, The Communist International--1919-1943: Documents (London: F. Cass, 1971), Vol. III, pp. 350-378; and Kermit E. McKenzie, Comintern and World Revolution: 1928-1943 (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1964), pp. 151-165 on the Seventh Congress of the Comintern at which "Yussuf" discussed conditions in Palestine.

61. Laqueur, p. 97. There is confusion as to the identity of the second speaker. Shmuel Dothan, "The Jewish Section of the Palestine Communist Party, 1937-1939," in Zionism, Vol. II (Beth), (Tel Aviv University: HaKibbutz HaMeuchad Publ. House, Ltd., 1970), p. 259, identifies the second speaker as Yusef Hajar and quotes a part of Hajar's speech: "We hate the Zionist bourgeoisie, but we stretch out a brotherly hand to Jewish workers for the common war against imperialism and Zionism." In a footnote, Dothan explains: "When 'Mūsa' returned to Palestine, he told his Jewish friends that he had made both speeches, and they believed him (the reports on the speakers at the congress gave their underground names). When Hajar returned to Palestine on the conclusion of his studies at the University of the Peoples of the East, he contradicted 'Mūsa.' Nevertheless, some Jewish

communists are still inclined to believe the version of 'Mūsa' who repeated it in a conversation with Dothan.

62. MERIP, p. 10.

63. Israeli, p. 120.

64. Ibid.

65. Dothan, p. 245.

66. Melech Epstein, The Jew and Communism--1919-1941 (N.Y.: Trade Union Sponsoring Committee, 1959), p. 299.

67. Inprecorr, June 27, 1936, p. 805.

68. Digest of Press and Events, Supplement No. XV, September 20, 1944 (Jerusalem: Jewish Agency for Palestine, Information Section), p. 3 (available at the Zionist Archives, N.Y.).

69. See Chapter 9, §8 of this study.

70. Dothan, p. 245.

71. Judd L. Teller, The Kremlin, The Jews and The Middle East (N.Y.: Thomas Yoseloff, 1957), p. 63.

72. Palestine (author unidentified), published by the International Secretariat of the League Against Imperialism and For National Independence (London, 1936), p. 3 (available at the Zionist Archives, N.Y.).

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid., p. 10.

75. Ibid., pp. 17-18. According to the pamphlet, the "scheme" works as follows: "The Jews emigrating from Germany transfer their capital to the 'Haavara's' account in the Reichsbank in Berlin. The 'Haavara' sells the Marks which it has to credit to Palestinian importers, who pay with this money for the goods bought by them in Germany. The equivalent of the amounts paid by the importers in Palestinian currency remains in Palestine, where it is credited by the 'Haavara' to its clients the German immigrants." In this way, the author explains, Jewish immigration into Palestine is facilitated and "German Fascism finds a profitable market for its goods which provides it with foreign currency to provide war material."

76. Laqueur, p. 93.

77. Ibid.

78. Icor was the monthly of the communist front organization which encouraged Russian Jews to settle in the Crimea and later in Birobidzhan. See Chapter 10.

79. Sherman, p. 10.

80. Ibid., p. 27.

81. Israel's Struggle for Peace, p. 23.

82. Jewish Life, February 1938, Vol. II, p. 15. Yehuda Almoni

is writing one of his "Letters from Palestine," entitled "Who Wants Peace in Palestine?" Jewish Life was a publication of the American Jewish communists.

83. Ibid., p. 16.

84. The Peel Commission Report advocated: (1) One-tenth, including Jerusalem and the Christian Holy Places, to be under permanent British Mandate; two-tenths, including the Galilee and most of the maritime plains, to be reserved for a Jewish state; seven-tenths, including most of the mountainous districts, to be joined with Transjordan to form an Arab state. (2) The British mandated territory will be connected to the Mediterranean Sea by a "corridor," ending in the Arab city of Jaffa and dividing the proposed Jewish state into two parts. (3) Haifa, Tiberias, Safed and Acre, which contain Arab populations and which are located in the Jewish region, will be administered provisionally by England and not kept under Jewish control. (4) The customs in the whole of Palestine will (for an undetermined number of years) remain in British hands. The revenues will be divided on a proportionate basis among the three parts of Palestine by the British authorities. (5) Following partition, the Jewish state will have to pay an (as yet undetermined) annual subsidy to the Arab state. (6) A treaty of non-aggression between the two states will be signed. Great Britain will assume the guarantee for its fulfillment. Avraham Revusky, Partition or Zionism? The Fate of Palestine and the Jewish National Home (N.Y.: The Zionist Committee for an Undivided Palestine, May 1938), pp. 3-4 (available at the Zionist Archives, N.Y.). Also see p. 48, n. 36, of this study for some brief comments on Revusky.

85. Jewish Life, November 1937, Vol. I, p. 14, "A Letter From Palestine," by Yehuda Almoni (October 3, 1937, Tel Aviv). Almoni also discussed the illegal communist Hebrew organ, Kol Ha'am (Voice of the Nation), which he states "has been very well received by the workers and surreptitiously passed from hand to hand to achieve a large circulation," (p. 18).

86. Jewish Life, June 1938, Vol. II, pp. 6-12 and p. 16, "What Next in Palestine?" by an unidentified "British Resident," who continues the theme that the Jewish state will become merely a garrison state: "In these circumstances there is a real danger of such a state developing into a second Ulster, spending its resources upon drums instead of butter, with the needs of people perpetually subordinated to the issues of no revision of frontiers and loyalty to the British connection."

87. Ibid., p. 16.

88. Mūsa was released from prison early in 1939, along with some of the other Arab cadre. Others were kept under arrest until the middle of the war.

89. Laqueur, p. 349, n. 1. Chanoch Bzoza was born in Lodz, Poland, in 1910. He received a Hebraic and Zionist education in Poland and came to Palestine with a Hashomer Hatzair group when he was 18. He worked at Karkur and helped found Ein Shemer. On joining the PCP, he left the kibbutz and studied at Hebrew University during the late 1930s, ultimately becoming a distinguished biochemist. He died in 1964. Also see Dothan, p. 246.

90. Laqueur, p. 99. Some Palestinian Jewish communists had left for Spain even earlier. They had supported Moscow's effort to organize Olympic games in Spain alternate to the ones in Berlin. These Palestinian Jews were mostly from the old KPP faction. They had decided that the communist movement in Palestine was a lost cause. However, on the eve of the games, the Civil War erupted and these Palestinians fought on the side of the Republic against Franco. Nahum List mentions some of his comrades who fought with the International Brigade in Spain, see Keshet, No. 20, Summer 1963, pp. 153-154.

91. Jewish Life, January 1938, Vol. I, p. 16, "Jewish Fighters in Spain," by David Levine. The author notes that Jewish women who came from Palestine worked in the hospitals alongside those Jewish women who had come from France, Germany, Poland and elsewhere. They were, by and large, communists. When they fell, they were memorialized in communist papers. Kol Ha'am, September 1937 (No. 2) listed six of its party members who had been killed in the fighting. Zvi Loker, "Balkan Jewish Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War," which appeared in Soviet Jewish Affairs, 1976, Vol. 6, No. 2, p. 71, notes: "The Palestine volunteers formed, relative to each country's Jewish population, the largest of all Jewish contingents. . . ." When an article in Ha'aretz (The Land), the paper of the General Zionists in Palestine, criticized American Jewish men for fighting in Spain, instead of building in Palestine, Jewish Life, February 1938, responded by calling all the fighters heroes and especially mentioning the Palestinian volunteers who were trying to fight against Fascism in Spain. This war against the Fascists in Spain was tied to "basic Jewish interests." In the light of the PCP's concurrent efforts to thwart Jewish immigration, this concern with "Jewish interests" is somewhat ironic.

92. Dothan, p. 249.

93. Ibid., p. 247.

94. Ibid.

95. See ANTIFA (Anti-Fascist League) Or Left Poale Zion in a New Guise, a pamphlet published by the Poale Zion-Zeire Zion (undated, available at the Zionist Archives, N.Y.). It includes a reprint of a piece which appeared in the Yiddisher Kaempher on February 19, 1937, titled "Too Serious for a Masquerade," by Shlomo Grodzensky. The article deals with the tactics of the Left Poale Zion delegation, which the author identifies as communist: "It is true that they are not an official section of the Communist International [referring to the Left Poale Zion, as a whole]. . . but that is not their fault. . . . For almost twenty years, they [the Left Poale Zion] had been pleading before the International and attempting to prove their loyalty to the communist dogma in spite of their positive attitude to building a 'Jewish Labor Center' (in Palestine). . . . The Left Poale Zion are boycotting and fighting against every constructive Zionist activity. Not only are they fighting against the Zionist Congress and the Zionist funds, but also against the League for Labor Palestine, and the Hechalutz. . . . The Left Poale Zion want to achieve a place in Jewish political life by means of a panacea for the Arab problem. . . . They have borrowed this method from the communists--the method of the united front, of a political masquerade." In another section of the pamphlet, David Wertheim, Secretary of the Poale Zion-Zeire Zion of America, writes: "The Left Poale Zion hold lengthy orations at every convention of the Histadrut. There, they have proportional representation; there, they have the opportunity of swaying opinions."

96. Dothan, p. 248.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid., p. 249.

99. Dothan, ibid., explains that the Secretariat based this belief on Leninist theory, claiming that it was permissible for Jews to defend themselves, especially against individual assault.

100. Ibid.

101. Degras, Vol. III, p. 356.

102. Ibid., p. 367.

103. Israeli, p. 112.

104. This figure is an exaggeration, since there were only an estimated 550,000 Jews in Germany before Hitler, and tens of thousands had managed to flee by 1938. Leo Katcher, Post-Mortem: The Jews in Germany Today (N.Y.: Delacorte Press, 1968), p. 3.

105. Israeli, p. 112.

106. Dothan, p. 253.

107. Ibid., p. 256.
108. Ibid., p. 255.
109. Laqueur, p. 104.
110. Dothan, p. 255; Israeli, pp. 153-160; Margalit, pp. 308-310.
111. As cited in Sherman, p. 6. The quotation is from Joseph Stalin's Marxism and the National and Colonial Question (N.Y.: International Publishers), pp. 11-12.
112. Dothan, p. 256, n. 19.
113. Ibid., pp. 259-260.
114. Dothan, p. 261, does not tell who intercepted the Jewish section's emissary to the Comintern.
115. Ibid.
116. Ibid.



## The 1940s: The Palestinian Communist Movement Splinters

### I

Whereas immediately prior to the signing of the German-Soviet pact the Party Executive had denounced neutralism on the grounds that it assisted the Fascists,<sup>1</sup> immediately after the signing of the pact, it rallied to the now neutralist Soviet line. This line claimed, on the one hand, that Hitler had changed his character and was now to be seen as an ally of Soviet Russia,<sup>2</sup> and, on the other hand, that the pact signified Moscow's neutrality in yet another war among capitalist powers.

However, many members of the Jewish section found it difficult to accept this analysis. Chanoch Bzoza was typical of those who could not reconcile themselves to the Central Committee's acceptance of this line. Bzoza was also typical of those Jews who had been attracted to the PCP in the late 1930s and were part of the Jewish section. He had arrived in Palestine during the late 1920s as a member of the Socialist-Zionist Hashomer Hatzair. As he tells it,<sup>3</sup> he was expelled from his kibbutz because he showed too much sympathy for the Arabs. He joined the PCP in the mid-1930s but never fully accepted the Central Committee's determination that all Palestinian Jews, insofar as they were influenced by Zionism, were reactionary.

Following the Soviet occupation of Eastern Poland, Bzoza and his supporters continued their anti-Fascist line. They purported to see the Soviet action as a "stab into the face of the Hitlerite bandits,"<sup>4</sup> and they actively supported Zionist mobilization efforts. Between September 10 and 21, 86,770 men and 32,253 women from the Jewish Yishuv registered for national service in compliance with the policy of the Jewish Agency and National Council of Executives. The Zionist leadership had resolved that their contribution to the Allied war effort be made "as a distinctive national entity, as the corporate representative of the entire Jewish People."<sup>5</sup> Support for such Zionist mobilization put the Bzoza group at odds with the PCP Executive which, in accordance with Comintern policy, advocated neutrality and denounced Yishuv enlistment.

When the first Palestinian Jewish soldiers were sent as part

of British units to reinforce the Maginot Line, the Central Committee claimed they had been sent on behalf of international finance not to fight Hitler but to menace the Soviet Union.<sup>6</sup> Those Jewish section members who disagreed with this view and advocated a pro-enlistment policy argued that Hitler was, indeed, a greater evil than the British and French governments.

The decision of the Central Committee to dissolve the Jewish section and to reassert its direct control over all PCP members came in December 1939. The Central Committee simply declared that, since the revolt of 1936-1939 had ended and communication links between the different Palestinian branches had been reestablished, the division of the party into two distinct ethnic sections was no longer warranted. This was seen by Bzoza and the other Jewish dissidents as an attempt to camouflage what had, in effect, become an ideological controversy.

On January 16, 1940, Bzoza received a harsh letter demanding that he immediately submit to the Central Committee all party memoranda, reports, archival and other materials in his possession.<sup>7</sup> Towards the end of the month, Bzoza appeared to submit to the authority of the Central Committee. However, this submission was to be fleeting; the Central Committee's initial impression, that all opposition at the heart of the Jewish membership had ceased, would be proved incorrect.

The PCP leadership was content to accept Dimitrov's analysis which was given in his article, The War and the Working Class of the Capitalist Countries, and which concluded that the war in Europe was in essence an imperialist and unjust war, in spite of the "fraudulent" slogans being used by the dominant classes of the belligerent capitalist states.<sup>8</sup> The Dimitrov analysis prevailed as the basic Comintern line until the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, and until the Arab-dominated Central Committee of the PCP adhered to it. Accordingly, between September 1939 and June 1941, the Central Committee used Kol Ha'am to try to dissuade the Jewish population from enlisting in the British Army.<sup>9</sup>

"Down with the war" became the party slogan, and the Haganah became the party's main target because it was offering "Jewish soldiers as cannon fodder."<sup>10</sup> The party advocated that Palestine be declared an "open country," so as to safeguard the lives and property of its people. Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain and even what appeared to be the imminent defeat of Great Britain, failed to move the party Executive from its campaign against the war effort and the defense of Palestine. These PCP

efforts to neutralize the Jewish Yishuv were consistent with Moscow's policy following the Molotov-Ribbentrop non-aggression pact.

The conflict between the Central Committee and the leaders of the old Jewish section came into the open with the appearance in June 1940 of a bulletin entitled Dapei Spartakus (Pages of Spartakus), which provided a vehicle for anti-war sentiments. It was the organ of the clandestine, anti-war front organization called "Brit Spartakus" (Spartakus Alliance).<sup>11</sup> This group concentrated on three themes: the war effort; the allegedly deteriorating economic and social situation, following the rupture of international trade; and the hostility between Jews and Arabs, which was to be bridged by the creation of a League for Jewish-Arab Rapprochement and Cooperation.<sup>12</sup>

Bzoza and his group opposed this anti-war front and called on the Jewish cadres to attend what they were calling the "Eighth Congress of the Palestine Communist Party"<sup>13</sup> scheduled in August 1940. This action, which appeared to many PCP members as "audacious," seems to have been encouraged by the Comintern's silence on the Palestine question and the general loss of contact with Moscow. The resolutions of this congress of the Jewish section called for the recognition of the political, social, economic and demographic importance of the Jewish Yishuv. The major points were:

(1) The development of the Jewish Yishuv to a population of half-million people was accompanied by social differentiation. This differentiation was tied to the development of certain economic branches such as industry, handicrafts, citriculture and transportation.

(2) The development of these economic sectors could benefit all segments of the Palestine population and the populations of neighboring countries.

(3) Economic development which caused class differentiation at the heart of the Jewish Yishuv must lead to major changes in the PCP's evaluation of the imperialist forces in Palestine.

(4) The Arab national movement, although it remains the principal factor in the struggle for the independence of the country, is not the sole factor of this struggle.

(5) The Jewish Yishuv has become an "anti-imperialist potential and, at the same time, a potential ally of the Arab national movement."<sup>14</sup>

This congress also made the important decision to publish a

new journal entitled HaEmet (The Truth) to compete, in effect, with the Central Committee's Kol Ha'am. The congress thus marked the reversion to a situation of two communist parties in Palestine, such as had existed in 1922-1923. Because both groups identified themselves as the PCP, each became known by the name of its major publication. Thus, there was the Kol Ha'am group, led by two of Moscow's students from Kutvo, Mūsa and Mikunis, and there was the Emet group led by Bzoza and the leaders of the old Jewish section.

The struggle between them lasted two years. The Kol Ha'am group labeled its rival as provocateurs in the service of imperialism: "Provocators at work. . . a small group of scum of the working class has committed a shameful crime and a mean provocation."<sup>15</sup> The Emet group charged Kol Ha'am with liquidating Marxism-Leninism.<sup>16</sup> During the next two years, the issues separating the two factions, from the point of view of the Emet group, were:

(1) The recognition of past errors. The Central Committee had never submitted itself to self-criticism regarding its errors during the Arab revolt of 1936-1939. And in 1940 it again refused to condemn the Mufti, its alibi being that he was a recognized religious leader.

(2) The future of the country. Since 1936, the Central Committee (Kol Ha'am) had based its actions on the slogan "For the immediate independence of the country." This was the slogan of the Arab nationalists. This slogan was an error because it pitted the Jewish proletariat against the Arab proletariat. Worse than that, it placed the party in a position subservient to reactionary Arab leaders. In place of this slogan, a new one should be advanced: "For the democratization of the country and for the union of the progressive forces of the two communities."<sup>17</sup>

(3) Achieving an understanding between the Jewish Yishuv and the Arab Community. This idea occupied a secondary place in the thinking of the Kol Ha'am group (at least until 1941). However, in the appeals of the Emet group, it would be given a primary position.

(4) Ending the "imperialist war." Until the German attack on Russia, Kol Ha'am called for an "immediate peace" between the two belligerent camps. HaEmet criticized this slogan, claiming that an immediate peace would leave the reactionary Churchill and Hitler in place. Rather, the party should support a settlement which would benefit the working classes of the countries at war.

(5) The Anti-war Front. Kol Ha'am refused all cooperation with the Zionists (until June 1941), while HaEmet claimed that the war required a change in the party's tactics. The party needed to create an anti-war front with Zionists and non-Zionists.<sup>18</sup>

These differences between the Emet group and the Kol Ha'am group continued until the PCP's reunification in May 1942. Yet, from the moment of Germany's attack on Russia in June 1941, the two groups engaged in dialogue aimed at reunification. This was achieved in May 1942 and was in conformity with Comintern advice.

On August 24, 1941, Stalin had called on "representatives of the Jewish people" to meet in Moscow.<sup>19</sup> Here Ilya Erenburg, David Bergelson, Solomon Michaels, among other Soviet Jewish celebrities, appealed "to our Jewish brothers" throughout the world to come to the aid of the Soviet Union.<sup>20</sup> This appeal had broad repercussions among the Jews in the free world. In the United States, a Jewish Council to aid the Russian war effort was established with Albert Einstein as its president, and in Palestine a "Public Committee to Help the Soviet Union in its War Against Fascism" was constituted.<sup>21</sup> This organization was later known as the "V-League."

The Moscow announcement came in the midst of discussions between Emet and Kol Ha'am on a protocol to clarify the issues for the party cadre, and it tended to favor the position of the Emet group. Taken together with Stalin's call to Soviet Jews, the Erenburg appeal to world Jewry implied that the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine had a special role to play in the war effort.

Disagreement and confusion during August 1941 led to the first of three breakdowns in the reunification talks. The second derailment occurred during the spring of 1942 and arose from ideological differences. The third break in negotiations in May 1942 was resolved in June, with the party Executive adopting some of the Emet demands. For example, the slogan of "Independence for Palestine," which had been the demand of the Arab nationalists, was dropped.<sup>22</sup> The reunification of the PCP in August 1942 was tacitly accepted by the British.

## 2

Soon after, a number of communists or pro-communist groups appeared among the Arabs in some of the Arab-populated areas of Palestine. For example, the Arab Anti-Fascist League

appeared in Jerusalem and the Rays of Hope Society, founded by young Arab intellectuals in Haifa, attracted communist support. The Rays of Hope Society was one of a number of clubs, along with the League of Arab Intellectuals and the People's Club, which had been formed during the late 1930s and early 1940s by young Arabs who represented a new class of urban literate Arabs. The increased number of Arab high school graduates, the result of the cumulative effect of Ottoman and British educational reforms, benefited the communist movement.<sup>23</sup> These young Arabs founded clubs which attracted other educated Arabs and provided a forum through which many of them were drawn to Marxist ideology and communist policy. They tended to come from Christian families. Included in this group were Emil Habībi, Emil Tūma, Fu'ad Nassar, Būlos Farah, Abdullah Bandak, Tewfik Tūbī, 'Amīl Tūbī, a graduate of Cambridge. Such young, educated activists improved the image of the Arab communists and eventually replaced the veteran Mūsa and some of those close to him.<sup>24</sup> They were active both in the formation of intellectual associations and in the trade union movement.

The expansion of the Arab proletariat now provided the communists with an opportunity to build support in the Arab population. During the early 1940s, the Palestinian Arab proletariat grew to an estimated 130,000.<sup>25</sup> Much of this increase was tied to the expansion of war-related production, particularly oil refining and textile manufacturing in Palestine. As the Arab proletariat increased, so did its trade union activity.

A Palestine Arab Workers' Society had been in existence since 1925. Its leadership was conservative and it was not a militant union. In 1942, therefore, the Arab communists, now able to operate more openly, established the Federation of Arab Trade Unions, which by the end of 1942 had a paid-up membership of 1,600. The Mandatory government, estimated that it probably spoke for some 3,000 Arab workers.<sup>26</sup> This organization became active in organizing workers in the Shell Oil Refinery, Royal Chemical Company and other foreign-owned industries around Haifa. In the meantime, communists were active in the Nazareth and Jaffa branches of the Palestine Arab Workers' Congress which consisted of eleven local branches that the communists had succeeded in luring away from a rival nationalist-sponsored union. In 1945, the Paris International Labor Conference would recognize this organization, the Workers' Congress, as the sole representative of Palestine Arab labor.<sup>27</sup> Fu'ad Nassar and Halīl Shanīr of the communist

leadership worked in this organization, representing some 20,000 workers.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the Arab Workers' Congress became the largest and most important trade union for Palestine's Arab workers and a vehicle for the dissemination of communist propaganda.

3

Thanks to the war-time Soviet-British alliance, restrictions on communist activity were relaxed, and the communist party in Palestine was able to emerge from underground for the first time in its history. In addition to trade union activities, the communists sought to aid the Soviet war effort. They were joined in this endeavor by the left-wing Zionist groups, including the Left Poale Zion, Hashomer Hatzair, and a considerable group of leftists in the majority Labor Party, MAPAI. The communist party raised money and purchased medical supplies which were sent to the Soviet Union. Delegations were sent to Teheran in April and December 1943, and again in November 1944, to hand over ambulances, field operating rooms, medical equipment and medicines to the Soviets, then occupying northern Iran. Even the Histadrut participated in the drives to collect money and purchase medical instruments for the embattled Soviet Union.<sup>29</sup>

In July 1942, Stalin permitted the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in Moscow<sup>30</sup> to publish a new Yiddish review named Einigkeit (Unity). It appeared three times a month and was directed to the international Jewish community. The committee also organized radio transmissions in Yiddish to give information on Nazi atrocities against Jews. These gestures coincided with the participation of two Soviet delegates at the first convention in Jerusalem, August 24-27, 1942, of the Palestinian Committee to Help the Soviet Union, known as the V (for Victory) League. The convention, organized by the PCP, was attended by two representatives from the Soviet Embassy in Ankara, S. S. Mikhailov and N. A. Petrenko.

A prominent Jewish journalist named Yeshayahu Klinov, who also attended, had the impression that the Russians were careful not to meet with the communists, who also remained inconspicuous at this V-League convention. None of the communists were scheduled speakers, although Misha Al-Roy, Weizmann's nephew and (reputedly) a member of the PCP,<sup>31</sup> had gone to the platform and announced that he would speak on behalf of the PCP. Klinov reports that there was a "storm," with

shouts of "Get down! The Mufti's men will not speak here." The Russians, sitting at the presidium table, did not intervene in the incident. They were told by others who the Palestinian communists were and what part they had played in the events of 1936-1939, as well as about the PCP's connection with Mufti supporters and Italian agents. Klinov continues his report to Moshe Shertok (Sharett), then head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency:<sup>32</sup>

The Communists, for their part, also wanted to clarify their views. But they did not have much success. The following incident occurred: [Gershon] Svet<sup>33</sup> was speaking to Petrenko about a press conference. This same Al-Roy heard this, went over to Petrenko and said: "The Central Committee of the Communist Party objects to this meeting." Petrenko looked at him for a moment, said nothing, then turned to Svet and said in Al-Roy's presence: "And so, we shall meet the Hebrew press tomorrow."

It appears that the PCP, having founded the V-League and having been instrumental in organizing the League's first national convention, was upstaged by "Jewish official organizations which more or less took the arrangements for their reception out of the hands of the V-League and made every effort to impress [the Russians] with Zionist achievements in Palestine."<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the Soviet delegates perceived the PCP as bothersome. When some Arab student communists told the two Russians that "for the duration of the war we have declared a truce with imperialism and Zionism, [but] we hope that after the war we will continue in the traditional way," Mikhailov reportedly appeared uncomfortable and terminated the conversation.<sup>35</sup> Rather, the Russians repeatedly expressed admiration for Jewish achievements in Palestine. This impressed Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, who appreciated that the Russians stood at attention for the singing of Hatikva and in honor of the Jewish flag.<sup>36</sup> In short, Mikhailov and Petrenko played their roles well.

The Zionists sought to impress the Russians with Jewish accomplishments in Palestine and to push for greater contacts with Russia's Jewish population. Ben-Zvi asked if it were true that there was discrimination toward Hebrew and its teaching in the Soviet Union.<sup>37</sup> He urged them to allow Hebrew literature and the Hebrew-language press into the Soviet Union.<sup>38</sup>



The two Soviet representatives' distancing themselves from the PCP helped to nourish certain illusions among leftist Zionists, as is illustrated by the following Hashomer Hatzair statement:

A new Communist stand on Zionism and Palestine developed during the war years. There was a growing desire to strengthen Jewish world unity, and given this desire, it was impossible to refuse recognition to the fast-growing Jewish National Home. It was this approach that enabled the Communists in Palestine to join the V-League, which had two chief purposes: (a) to further sympathy and support on the part of the Yishuv for the Soviet Union, and (b) to create and further sympathy and support on the part of the Soviet Union towards the Zionist enterprise. (Emphasis mine.)<sup>39</sup>

But despite the goodwill generated by the visit of the two Russians, a preview of the subsequent Soviet attitude toward Jewish emigration from Russia was evident in Mikhailov's statement to the British High Commissioner, Sir Harold MacMichael, to the effect that "never, never"<sup>40</sup> would the U.S.S.R. let the Jews or anyone else leave Russia without very adequate and exceptional reasons. MacMichael's summary of his conversation with Mikhailov noted that the Russian showed considerable sympathy with the Arabs' disinclination either to be subjected or crowded out, and no real sympathy with Jewish nationalist objectives.<sup>41</sup>

V-League delegates would meet with Soviet representatives from time to time during the war and in the early post-war period. For instance, on September 18, 1945, a V-League delegate, M. Oren, on his way to a trade union congress in Paris, met the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires in Cairo, M. Sultanoff. Oren discussed the V-League's projected reorganization and the possibility of Soviet participation in a forthcoming medical and scientific conference to be held in Palestine. Sultanoff revealed considerable interest in the reorganization of the V-League and touched upon the political aspects of the Palestine problem and the Soviet attitude to the Zionist endeavor.<sup>42</sup> In October 1945 the V-League arranged the first exhibition of Russian art in Palestine, at the Tel Aviv Museum. M. Chiborin of the Soviet Legation in Cairo, along with two aides, mingled with the other visitors at the opening. Later, the Russian visitors "unofficially"

toured a number of Jewish settlements.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the V-League, founded by members of the PCP, served an important function, providing a vehicle for communication and enabling the Russians to establish, and benefit from, friendly relations with the Yishuv.

4

The reunification of the PCP, based more on expediency than on a true resolution of the differences between the two groups, was highly precarious and contentious. The Emet members, who had earlier been a minority, convinced other Jewish party members to join them in the following demands upon the Central Committee:

(1) The party must gain a better comprehension of the Yishuv's problems.

(2) It must acknowledge the political development and the socio-economic growth of the Jewish community.

(3) It must oppose the British policy of deporting Jewish refugees who make it to the shores of Palestine.

(4) It must support unambiguously the creation of a common front with all elements of the Yishuv.

Less than a year after formal reunification, the PCP again split in May 1943. At that time, the Zionist Histadrut had called a strike against British Army bases in Palestine.<sup>44</sup> Mūsa and the other party leaders denounced the strike as harming the war effort. This sparked renewed debate within the party Executive, as Jewish members retorted that Mūsa had supported similar strikes called by Arab workers. Things heated up when Jewish members refused to accept the position of the party's General Secretary. Although Mūsa did not intend to cause a split, a group of younger, better educated Arabs led by Emil Habībi favored a more explicit pro-Arab national line than even Mūsa was prepared to follow. Habībi, one of Mūsa's lieutenants, published a provocative leaflet denouncing the Jewish communists for nationalist deviation. He stated: "The truth is that the Palestine Communist Party is a national Arab party, though it contains individual Jews, who accept its national programme."<sup>45</sup>

Habībi welcomed the dissolution of the Comintern, which had also occurred in May 1943, as making it possible for the party to approach previously hesitant Arab national elements. The Jewish communists reacted angrily. Shmuel Mikunis, who had

remained close to Mūsa throughout previous disputes, now organized an opposition faction which eventually declared itself the "official" communist party. Although the record is somewhat confused as regards the exact sequence of events in this PCP split, it appears that Mūsa was pushed to expel the Jews from the party's leadership and that Mikunis and his supporters reacted by counter-expelling Mūsa and his supporters. Letters were sent to party cadres by the Mikunis faction insisting that the "cancer of Mūsa'ism" had to be removed.<sup>46</sup>

In the months that followed most of the Arab communists reorganized themselves, turning the Rays of Hope Society, originally founded in Haifa, into a political party named the National Liberation League (NLL). Its social base was among intellectuals and urban workers and it sought to wed communism to a left-wing democratic, Arab nationalist movement. The younger Arab leaders of the PCP, such as Emil Habībi, Emil Tūma, Būlos Farah, Mūsa Dajāni, Tewfik Tūbī and Fu'ad Nassar<sup>47</sup> had always resented the domination of the Palestine Arab national movement by the traditional families. Through the NLL they sought the democratization of the Arab Higher Committee. However, democratization was not the only issue which separated these young Arab communists from the old traditional nationalist leaders. The NLL retained the communist distinction between Zionism as an ideology and the Yishuv as a social entity.<sup>48</sup> It explained the support given Zionism by the Jewish working class and petit bourgeoisie as resulting "from the negative stand which our [Palestinian Arab] national movement is taking towards the Jewish minority."<sup>49</sup> Hence, the NLL demanded that the Palestine Arab national movement recognize the democratic "civil" rights of the Jews in Palestine, as opposed to "national" rights. The NLL also rejected the use of terrorism and guerrilla warfare against the Yishuv. Contrary to other Arab leaders, the NLL later proposed that the Palestine problem be placed before the United Nations.<sup>50</sup>

These positions led to the NLL's exclusion from the Arab Higher Committee when the latter was reformed in June 1946. Until then, however, the PCP-NLL gave the communist movement its greatest success ever in the Arab community.<sup>51</sup> One of the NLL's achievements was its sponsorship of the League of Arab Intellectuals, mentioned earlier. This organization enjoyed a substantial following in northern Palestine among students and teachers.<sup>52</sup>

Over time, the NLL became more explicitly communist, and

it also became the first communist party in Palestine to receive recognition by the Mandatory government as a political party.<sup>53</sup> It soon absorbed the various Arab communist splinters, and became the "political arm" of the Federation of Arab Trade Unions and Labor Societies at Haifa. This labor federation was granted government permission to publish the weekly Al Ittihad, in May 1944, which also served as the organ of the NLL. Initially, the Arab communists used this journal cautiously to foster friendly relations with the Soviet Union. They also promoted the organization of Arab workers. Al Ittihad's editorials pleaded for elected municipal councils, compulsory education, labor representation of any coalition executive which might be formed by the old-guard Arab leaders.<sup>54</sup>

The NLL branched out, establishing affiliates in Jaffa, Jerusalem and Nazareth, which had large Arab populations. These new branches soon formed expanding cells within the local branches of the conservative Palestine Arab Workers Society. Though the NLL could probably count on the backing of some 4,000-5,000 workers by early 1945,<sup>55</sup> that is, more than the Jewish "official" PCP, still it received no general recognition either from Moscow or among the Arab working class. It is, however, worth reflecting on the growth of communist influence among the Arab intellectual class. The movement of young Arab intellectuals toward the communist party contained a logic of its own. Political life in traditional Arab society was essentially a struggle among leading families, and these intellectuals could not integrate themselves into this constricted political framework without abandoning their newly acquired democratic beliefs and modern party principles. Perhaps, more telling:

... they did not belong to the leading families whose power was based on landowning or religious prestige. These intellectuals moved towards the left to find a common language with the insurgent working class which was also excluded from the traditional social framework.<sup>56</sup>

Commenting on "Communist Trends in Arab Public Life," the Jewish periodical Mishmar, noted on May 15, 1945, that Soviet Russia and socialism in general were more and more becoming the favored topics of discussion in wide Arab circles. The article pointed to two conflicting trends noticeable in these discussions:

(1) a socialist trend, prevalent in working class circles, and (2) an anti-socialist trend, evident in the propertied class. The article then quoted from the Arab communist weekly, Al Ittihad, as follows:

"Certain irresponsible people have engaged in anti-Soviet propaganda. They fear the liberating forces which are to keep reactionaries at bay. . . .<sup>57</sup>

"As against this hatred of communism [on the part of the reactionary, propertied class], there is a more friendly attitude in other nationalist circles [among those who recognize the potential of Soviet power]."

What explains this mesmerization with the Soviet Union? Al Ittihad suggested that nationalist leaders, opposed to any revolutionary or progressive social change, were beginning to realize with apprehension that "Soviet Russia will henceforth occupy a very important place in international policy," and that it was in their interest to neutralize her.

Thus the PCP-NLL was attributing to Arab nationalists a sophisticated awareness of the likely post-war international power configuration, at a time when most in the West were concerned simply with fighting and winning the war. After quoting from the Al Ittihad article, Mishmar confirms that Arab nationalist leaders went out of their way to invite NLL members to a meeting in Jaffa to recruit them into the Arab "National Front."<sup>58</sup> This Front, newly formed in Haifa by all Arab parties excepting the Arab Communist Party, wished to attract the latter. The NLL soon joined the National Front, but made its adherence conditional on the Front's adopting a more democratic constitution.<sup>59</sup> Within a few months, however, differences of opinion caused a break.

## 5

When the PCP split occurred in the summer of 1943, the Jewish communists in Palestine entered a very confusing period, much more difficult to trace today than the story of the Arab communists, since the Mūsa group disbanded and the NLL soon emerged as the semi-official Arab communist vehicle. Splinters and factions were non-existent among the Arab communists. The

Jewish communists, on the other hand, were soon confronted with a number of small and ineffective splinter groups.

A first step toward reunification of the Jewish party was taken during the winter of 1943-1944. At that time two factions were brought together through negotiations among Meir Wilner and Esther Wilenska, representing one small faction, and Shmuel Mikunis, representing another.<sup>60</sup> Simha Tsabri and Meir Slonim, both of whom had played considerable roles in the PCP during the second half of the 1930s, momentarily disappeared from the political scene, while Chanoch Bzoza led his own small unreconciled group called Am VeOlam (The People and the World), which saw itself as a "Socialist Society."<sup>61</sup>

During 1944-1945, some coherence was achieved when the number of Jewish communist groups was reduced to two: (1) the "official" communist party led by Mikunis, Wilner, and Wilenska, and (2) the Communist Educational Association, which would soon call itself the Communist Union and still later, the Hebrew Communists. This group was led by M. Slonim, S. Tsabri, Kalman Gelberd, Eliezer Preminger and Shmuel Ettinger. More will be said about this organization shortly. For now, however, it should be noted that this group began with an anti-Zionist, pro-Arab nationalist line, and later changed its line to one which was more closely attuned to the Yishuv. After this change, it would eventually be joined by Bzoza and his Socialist Society.

In March 1944, Kol Ha'am again appeared as the organ of the PCP, the Mikunis-Wilner group. The paper explained that the split in the party had occurred as a result of anti-democratic tendencies on the part of certain individuals, thereby making cooperation with them extremely difficult.<sup>62</sup> At the end of May, the PCP held the "official" Eighth Party Congress<sup>63</sup> in Tel Aviv. Though representing no more than a few hundred workers, this congress was portrayed as being composed of the representatives of the "Soviet Army in Palestine."<sup>64</sup>

Capitalizing on the prestige of the Soviet Union and the Red Army, the party did remarkably well, all things considered, in the elections to the Jewish National Assembly held on August 1, 1944, in which it participated under the label "Popular Democratic List."<sup>65</sup> The central theme in that election was the Biltmore Program<sup>66</sup> which espoused a Jewish state and which was opposed by the communists who polled 3,948 votes out of 202,488 votes cast, winning three seats.<sup>67</sup> In its campaign, the PCP opposed three basic ideas set forth in the Biltmore Program:

- (1) The idea of a Jewish state.

(2) The privileged role given to the Jewish Agency, which was treated as the principal Zionist organization.

(3) The integration of such a Jewish state in the World Organization of Nations<sup>68</sup> then envisaged as being located in New York, which they saw as the center of world capitalism.

Although the PCP participated in these Yishuv general elections of August 1, 1944, the party was barred by the Histadrut Executive Committee from the elections to the Sixth Convention of the Histadrut of August 6-7, 1944. The Jewish communists had tried earlier, at the end of 1941, to submit a list of candidates for the elections to the Fifth Histadrut Convention, also to no avail.

On June 6, 1944, Meir Wilner and two other PCP members met with David Remez of the Histadrut's Executive Committee. The communists put forward two demands: (1) The Histadrut should renew the membership of those who had been expelled for their political views and their membership in the Communist Party or the Proletarian Group, or because they sympathized with those organizations. (2) An end to the discrimination against communist workers, such as special difficulties being placed in their way whenever they tried to arrange for the payment of their dues and the renewal of their membership. It was essential that "there should be general remissions with regard to the payment of dues, so that numerous workers who could not pay regularly should enjoy full and active membership."<sup>69</sup>

Following the meeting, these demands were included in a letter dated June 16, 1944, from the PCP's Central Committee to the Executive Committee of the Histadrut. The PCP's letter also contained the following additional points:

- The PCP had never become "reconciled" to the anti-democratic methods of the Histadrut and to its "political persecutions."

- These Histadrut actions were in "glaring contrast" to the war being waged against anti-democratic tendencies in social life and to achieve the national and international unity of the working class.

- Expulsion of workers from the Histadrut because of their political views contradicts the stance of the Histadrut delegation to the International Trade Union Congress in London. That delegation demanded "the establishment of international workers' unity, which should be complete in all its parts."<sup>70</sup>

- Before international unity can be achieved, it is necessary to achieve the unity of the workers' movements in the individual countries.

- Therefore, the Histadrut should accept the PCP's demands and restore the party's members and sympathizers to their rightful place in the workers' movement.

The Histadrut Executive Committee took its time before responding. Over a month later, on July 23, 1944, Remez replied with a litany of Histadrut grievances against the PCP. He began by stating that political views have never constituted a barrier between the Histadrut and the PCP. What did constitute a barrier was the PCP's "calumniation of the Yishuv and acquiescence in shedding its blood."<sup>71</sup> To support that statement, Remez cited excerpts from various PCP memoranda and proclamations, as follows:<sup>72</sup>

(1) From a memorandum of the Secretariat of the Jewish section of the PCP to the Comintern, September 1934: Two armies were at war, "the one Arab and progressive, the other Zionist and imperialistic." It was the duty of the Jewish comrades to assist the progressive camp and "Jewish comrades were called upon to participate in this war by placing bombs among the Jewish population. . . ."

(2) From a PCP proclamation dated July 10, 1936: The Arab movement of liberation "seeks to make the continuation of Zionist colonisation impossible" by destroying the economy of the "Zionist conquerors. . . ."

(3) From a communist youth publication, Kol Hano'ar (Voice of Youth), March 1942:

The period between the slogan of 'Down with the White Paper Government' up to the demand for immigration at the present moment represents one black chain of development of contemptible and treasonable activity on the part of the Fifth Column within the Zionist camp which is serving Fascist interests by sabotaging recruiting.

The Remez letter pointedly quoted Section 5 of the Histadrut Constitution which lists the organization's fundamental activities:

To organise and increase the immigration of workers from other countries; to receive immigrants; to organise them and provide them with work; and to maintain contact with the Hechalutz movement abroad.



The upbuilding of the Jewish workers' society in Eretz-Israel "by means of unrestricted Jewish immigration and settlement," Remez noted, "is the basic foundation" of the Histadrut, and "anyone who seeks to undermine it places himself de facto outside the Jewish workers' movement in Eretz-Israel."<sup>73</sup> Remez asked that the PCP inform the Secretariat of the Histadrut's Executive Committee as to its attitude on the basic tenets of the Histadrut.

There followed a long letter from the PCP's Central Committee dated July 29, 1944, to the effect that the Histadrut had misrepresented certain PCP positions, focusing on the "mistakes made by the leadership of the party in the past which were never approved by the masses of its members." These mistakes and those responsible for them were "swept away" as a result of a "protracted political struggle within the party." This struggle and its success were only made possible by the "new legal conditions" under which the party has been able to operate. The letter recalled the PCP's Eighth Party Congress held earlier that year (May 26-28) at which "in a spirit of Bolshevik self-criticism" the party had reviewed its policies and actions and had concluded that many errors had been made. As for the differences between the communist party and the recognized parties of the Histadrut, these were said to be the "fundamental differences between the Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin outlook on the national and Jewish questions, and that of the Zionists." These differences were expressed in the following points:

(1) The source of Jewish persecution: The PCP places the blame for anti-Semitism and Jewish persecution on the "capitalist regime." The exploiting classes use chauvinistic provocation, the policy of "divide et impera," especially during times of social ferment and particularly against the Jews.

The communists, in accordance with the teachings of Lenin and Stalin, therefore see the solution to the Jewish question in the establishment of a socialist regime. For example, the Soviet Union has thus solved its Jewish problem, in all specifics. Jewish national culture flourishes and the Jewish masses, who previously had been engaged in "unproductive occupations," have been converted into workers in industry, agriculture, transport, art, science and letters. Also mentioned was the courageous fight of Soviet Jewry against Fascism and its relief activity on behalf of European Jews. All of this, the Central Committee claimed, had come about thanks to the full national and social emancipation of the Soviet Jews.

The issue of immigration, significantly not treated as a separate issue by the communists, was dealt with by the following statement: "If we look at the Jewish problem and its solution from this Leninist-Stalinist viewpoint, we can see no solution to the Jewish question by means of immigration to any country whatever and colonisation."<sup>74</sup> As for the question of rescuing Jews from the Nazi hell, the PCP demanded, together with all communists and anti-Fascists, that the allies speed up military operations to end the destruction, and that Jewish refugees saved from the "clutches of the Nazis" be brought into all the countries fighting Fascism, "and also into this country. Housing and employment should be provided for them." The party's position on immigration to Palestine was thus somewhat clouded.

(2) The PCP's political program: This has as its starting point the "common interests" of the Jewish and Arab masses and the free national, political, cultural and social development of the Jewish population in a democratic and free Palestine. The PCP said it was fighting for:

- a democratic and independent Palestine;
- full equality of rights for the Jewish population in Palestine;
- freedom of development for all national cultures;
- full democratic rights for all the inhabitants, equality of rights, irrespective of race, nationality, creed or sex;
- protection of the interests of the workers, petit bourgeoisie, and working intelligentsia;
- extensive autonomy for local authorities and their democratization; and
- the free economic development of Palestine.

Considering the Biltmore Program's call for the creation of a Jewish state, the PCP was obviously at odds with the Zionist leadership of the Histadrut. The letter reiterated the PCP's demand for the restoration of PCP members and sympathizers expelled by the Histadrut and it called attention to the fact that the party had submitted lists of candidates for the approaching elections to the Sixth Histadrut Convention and to the Workers' Councils of Haifa and Tel Aviv.

This time Remez responded quickly (August 3, 1944). He asked for a precise statement of the party's attitude toward immigration, noting that the Histadrut opposed any limitation of the right of Jews to immigrate to, and settle in, Eretz Israel "which you [the PCP] prefer to call 'Palestina.'" The Remez letter must have been hand delivered because the PCP's response,

signed by Meir Wilner, was also dated August 3, 1944. Wilner again summarized the PCP's position on the need to destroy Fascism, fight for democracy, emancipate the Jews, ensure the welfare and national, economic and cultural development of the Jewish population of Palestine, etc. Again left unclarified was the PCP's position on immigration.<sup>75</sup> With only two days remaining before the election, Wilner requested an immediate decision and voiced his objection to "connecting the question of the clarification of political views with that of approving the [party's candidate] list."<sup>76</sup> The following day, August 4, 1944, Remez responded:

We found no attempt [on your part] to examine our attitude, which was adopted in 1922, and to which we have adhered ever since. . . . It will . . . not be difficult to grasp the fact that opposition to the right of Jews to immigrate to, and settle in, Eretz-Israel means, from the point of view of the General Federation of Jewish Labour in Eretz-Israel, not an 'opposing view,' but the negation of the fundamental essence of its existence.<sup>77</sup>

Thus closed yet another attempt by the PCP to move tactically closer to the main stream of the Jewish labor movement in Palestine.

6

On April 9, 1945 the Jewish Agency Press Digest reported the founding of a new communist group, the Communist Educational Association (CEA) which initially differed from the Mikunis group (the Jewish PCP) in aligning itself more closely with normative Yishuv organizations (including the World Zionist Organization) and in its recognition of the Jewish people as a national entity. The PCP retorted that the CEA was chauvinist, and the CEA portrayed itself not as a party, but as an ideological body to propagate communist ideas in the Yishuv.<sup>78</sup> Yet, it emphasized that it was part of the world communist movement, and it sent emissaries to various international communist meetings,<sup>79</sup> to which the PCP also sent representatives. Moscow remained above the fray, recognizing

neither group. In fact, with the absorption of the Soviet regime's energies by the war and its dissolution of the Comintern in 1943, Moscow temporarily lost organizational control of several communist parties—including the Palestinian and American ones. Therefore, between 1943 and 1947 (when the Cominform was founded) these non-Soviet parties developed independent strategies, heresies, splits, etc. Not until 1948 did Moscow acknowledge the existence of splits in the communist movement in Palestine.

At the inaugural meeting of the CEA in Tel Aviv (April 6-7, 1945), the Moscow-trained M. Slonim said that the Jewish communists had made an error in failing to adapt communism to the conditions of the country. They had ignored the national interests of the Jewish people, recognizing only those of the Arabs.<sup>80</sup> Slonim claimed that the communists could defend Jewish national interests without prejudicing those of the Arabs. Interestingly, he said that the CEA favored Jewish immigration into Palestine.<sup>81</sup> Shmuel Ettinger also addressed the inaugural meeting and spoke on "Our National Future," commenting that the communists "now regard the Yishuv as a crystallised national unit," with the right to "press its claim to an independent national existence." Ettinger reiterated the new line that the Arab question and Jewish national interests did not necessarily conflict. He said that the Arab question was "bound up with the fight of the Arab democratic forces for their economic, cultural and national development."<sup>82</sup> A third speaker called for the unification of the Jewish working class in order to create a class hegemony that would make the national fight of the Yishuv more effective.

How successful was CEA's new conciliatory approach as far as changing attitudes toward the PCP? One week later on April 16, 1945, the Digest reported that even sworn communist opponents of Zionism are "soft-peddalling their views. . . . The Jewish communists [both inside and outside Palestine] have become transformed into ultra-Zionists."<sup>83</sup> Some weeks later, on June 6, 1945, the Digest was able to report that the PCP members were now permitted to join the Histadrut, the ban on their admission having been removed. The letter of May 17, communicating this good news to the PCP membership, commented:

We do not wish to hide from ourselves the fact that your attitude regarding the right of Jews to immigrate freely into Palestine constitutes a denial of

the underlying basis of our national endeavor. Moreover, the ideological conflict between you and the Palestinian workers' movement, and the parties it represents, is deep-seated.<sup>84</sup>

However, the letter also made the following points and acknowledgements:

- The PCP had abandoned its policy of giving "moral encouragement and physical assistance to the 'heroes' of the 1936-1939 riots."

- The PCP, in its own letter of July 29, 1944, had admitted that those mistakes "have been swept away, together with those responsible for them."

- Although previously opposed to any attempt at securing the abolition of the White Paper, the PCP now declared itself prepared to fight for the paper's abolition.

The Kol Ha'am (Mikunis-Wilner) group's response to the Histadrut's decision was that the party would fight together with others opposed to the White Paper and its "anti-democratic and racial laws (i.e., the provisions regarding immigration and the sale of land to Jews) in order to secure the free development of the Jewish National Home in Palestine."<sup>85</sup> Why was the PCP now calling for war on the British White Paper and now urging support for the continued upbuilding of the Jewish National Home? These changes in its line corresponded to recent resolutions of the International Trade Union Conference in London. But since the PCP had not fully "come around" to a Zionist point of view, why the change of policy by the Histadrut?

... Possibly the positive attitude of the party towards the continued upbuilding of the Jewish National Home derives, not from a new evaluation of the needs of the Jewish people and of the mission of the Jewish working class, so much as from a desire to fall into line with the stand taken by the World Labour Movement, which represents all shades of working-class opinion.<sup>86</sup>

Within the Yishuv, the decision of the Histadrut Executive was received with consternation because it was known that the PCP was "in the habit of frequently changing its attitude and declared policy," and that its declarations of principle were often due to a desire to synchronize its line with outside [i.e., Moscow-directed]

requirements. Thus the conciliatory line begun by the CEA and picked up by the PCP yielded results. Improved relations between the Yishuv and the communists followed.

7

On July 20, 1945, the CEA organized a public discussion in Tel Aviv on "The New Communist Policy in Palestine." Its new communist line was signaled by Zionist and socialist flags hanging side by side; yet above the platform itself hung pictures of Lenin and Stalin. One of the speakers, D. Rabinovitch, explained that communism was now bringing socialist theory into line with conditions in various countries and claimed that it was the only political system that could solve the Jewish national problem.<sup>87</sup> S. Ettinger stressed that the communists in Palestine wanted to use communism for the benefit of the Jewish people. He attempted to head off criticism of communist pre-war policies by noting that communist policy before the war "had to be based on contacts with democracy. But there were some leaders. . . who built up our future on friendship with the Chamberlain brand of reaction that supported Fascism."<sup>88</sup>

What was the reaction of the Arab communists to the new line of the Jewish communists? Al Ittihad commented on August 5, 1945, in an article entitled "Arab-Jewish Understanding--What the Zionists Fear Most," that the paper had always urged the Arab national movement to adopt a practical policy calculated to acquire the support of the Jewish community for the Arab national struggle. Commenting on a reader's question as to which of the Jewish parties might be regarded as likely to come to an agreement with the Arabs, the article stated:

We must first exclude all Zionist parties which are aiming at the establishment of a Jewish state on the ground that it is impossible to live together with the Arabs. . . . It will be equally impossible to collaborate with those Jewish parties who have inscribed socialistic slogans on their banners.<sup>89</sup>

The article noted that an understanding with the latter would only be possible if their rank and file were to adopt true and democratic principles, repudiate their leaders and join cause with those Jewish inhabitants who oppose Zionism. However, an exception was the Jewish communist party whose guiding

principles "warrant its being regarded as representative of the wishes of the Jewish population." The Jewish communists were willing to join the Arabs in the struggle for liberation. Having extended the olive branch, the Arab communist paper then mentioned its "deep regret. . . that the Jewish communist party had adopted certain principles which are in contradiction to the true spirit of communism." The PCP leaders were criticized for having become "opportunists." Nevertheless, the Jewish communist party represented the only Jewish element which sought an understanding with the Arabs. In short, the Jewish communists were seen as the only progressive Jewish force in Palestine.

8

In September 1945 the Communist Union, as the CEA was now called, published a new monthly, Achdut (Unity)<sup>90</sup>; the Arab communists in the NLL continued to enlarge their base of support among the Arab working class; and the PCP held its Ninth Congress in Tel Aviv, September 6-8. Except for the ceremonial opening, all meetings took place behind closed doors. However, some details found their way into both the communist and the non-communist Hebrew press. Meir Wilner discussed changes in Palestine since the PCP's last meeting in May 1944. He noted that Palestine had developed on bi-national lines and suggested that this should form the basis of party policy. Shmuel Mikunis made the principal speech, emphasizing the PCP's new approval of a Jewish National Home in Palestine and condemnation of the White Paper. He predicted that Jewish-Arab cooperation would materialize as soon as its desirability is appreciated by Jews and Arabs alike, but, significantly, there was no greeting from any Arab individual or body. Mikunis regretted that "the Jewish communists have secured no satisfactory cooperation with their Arab comrades, let alone the establishment of a united party which remains their paramount aim."<sup>91</sup>

The PCP's Ninth Congress resolutions were published in Kol Ha'am on September 23, 1945. Of particular interest for the future was Resolution 17 which stated: "The Communist Party fights for a democratic and independent Arab-Jewish State." The party thereby committed itself to bi-nationalism, which would put it at odds with both the Zionists and, eventually, the Soviets. Though the Palestinian communists had moved far from their original opposition to any concept of a Jewish National Home, they still

had some distance to go before accepting a Jewish state, and then, when they did so in 1948, it was only on Moscow's express orders.

9

Soon after the Second World War ended, it became clear to the Jewish Palestinian communists that the remnants of European Jewry were in dire need of resettlement and that many were anxious to immigrate to Palestine. It was also clear that the new Labor government in Great Britain was highly sensitive to Arab objections to large-scale Jewish immigration into Palestine. Also, a new world organization was being founded, and the British soon turned the Palestine question over to this organization. On the one hand, the United Nations might turn out to be dominated by anti-Soviet forces. On the other hand, the Soviet Union and the Red Army were enjoying a new prestige, with the Russians perceived as a powerful actor on the international stage.

These matters were discussed at a meeting of the Communist Union (CU) in Tel Aviv on December 14, 1945. The main focus of the session was the "imperialist declaration" of British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin, who had recently announced a Commission of Inquiry on Palestine, with a view to turning the matter over to the new United Nations for resolution. In the meantime and until the matter was resolved, Bevin proposed to continue the White Paper's restrictions on Jewish immigration. In response to Bevin, the CU's Slonim sounded almost like a Zionist: "In unison with the entire Jewish people both in Palestine and abroad we fight against the decrees of the White Paper, demand the repeal of all emergency legislation and press censorship, insist on our right of self-defence, and advocate Jewish democracy in Palestine and free immigration for every Jew." And, Ettinger sounded very much like the Wilner-Mikunis group when he called for recognition of the "legitimate national rights of the two peoples living in this country." A number of resolutions were passed reiterating support for international cooperation to prevent another world war and to "safeguard the existence of rights of our people, in particular the national independence of Palestine Jewry."<sup>92</sup>

The partition of Palestine became the major subject of concern among all Palestinians in the following months, and the CU met again on September 20, 1946, to discuss it and the London Conference which had opened on September 10. Neither the Zionists nor the Palestinian Arabs were represented in London.



although the various Arab states were. Soon after it began, the British suspended the conference on the grounds that time was needed to study a plan presented by the participating Arab states.<sup>93</sup> At their Tel Aviv meeting, the CU members argued that:

(1) The Zionist institutions must stop all negotiations based on a partition of Palestine.

(2) The Zionist leaders must demand that the issue be brought before the U.N. because only the U.N. could guarantee the "undisturbed progress of the two peoples of this country towards full independence," and only the U.N. could ensure the Yishuv's right of immigration and settlement.

(3) Opposition groups within the Histadrut must immediately form an "actions committee" of all persons and organizations opposed to the Biltmore program.<sup>94</sup>

In turn, the Mikunis-Wilner-Wilenska PCP organized a demonstration in Tel Aviv on October 26, 1946, at which the following slogans were used:

- Shift the Problem of Palestine to UNO!
- Jewish Agency Leaders Stop Negotiations With Imperialism in London!
- For a Jewish-Arab Democratic and Independent State!
- Against Deportation of Refugees!
- Halt Persecution of Refugees Who Reach Our Country!
- The Blood of Amram Rudenberg and Yechiel Schwartz, As Well As of All the Victims in the Yishuv, Demand the Immediate Withdrawal of British Troops from Our Land!
- The Way to Victory Over Imperialism is Through Jewish-Arab Unity!<sup>95</sup>

The demonstrations proved to be a warm-up for a PCP meeting on November 16, 1946, which marked the twenty-ninth anniversary of the Bolshevik October Revolution. Here the PCP, consistent with its slogans, stressed:

(1) The first step towards a bi-national state would be the achievement of Jewish-Arab unity.

(2) Jews and Arabs must mount a common fight against Jewish and Arab reactionaries and British and American imperialism.

(3) The PCP must endeavor to build Palestinian friendship for the Soviet Union.

(4) The British must evacuate Palestine, hand the issue over to the U.N., and accept a U.N. Trusteeship over Palestine.

Shortly after this meeting, which had been attended--rather impressively--by several hundred young people,<sup>96</sup> the PCP held its Tenth Congress from November 30-December 2, 1946.

This congress demanded immediate evacuation of British troops and establishment of an Arab-Jewish state. The main address was given by Meir Wilner who charged David Ben-Gurion and Jamal al-Husayni<sup>97</sup> with serving the interests of British imperialism. He also protested against the undisciplined behavior of British troops in the country and proposed that the United Nations be asked to send an investigative committee. Wilner pointed out that the Soviet representative to the U.N. had been the only diplomat there to denounce the treatment meted out to Jewish refugees off the shores and in the camps of Palestine. Wilner separated the Jewish refugee problem from the Palestine issue, commenting that agreement was possible with the Arabs on the subject of Jewish immigration to Palestine.<sup>98</sup> The congress thus called for an end to the Mandate and turning the Palestine problem over to the U.N. This was, of course, by now also the Soviet position. The Communist Union and the Palestine Communist Party now seemed to be drawing closer, as their pronouncements more and more echoed the new Soviet line.

10

The Arab communist NLL also favored placing the Palestine matter before the U.N. The NLL convened a meeting in Haifa on February 16, 1947 to hear a report on recent developments. The main speakers were: Mohammed Moussa Salim, the League's Haifa Chairman; Issam Abbassi, the Secretary; and Fu'ad Nassar of Nazareth, a member of the NLL's National Executive and editor of Al Ittihad. Several hundred Arab workers and fellaheen from Haifa and nearby villages attended. It was decided to set up a council other than the Husayni-directed Arab Higher Executive to "initiate true democratic representation." The speakers decried the Arab national leadership's remoteness from the people and their interests.<sup>99</sup> The Haifa NLL meeting was soon followed, on March 1, 1947, by another NLL-sponsored meeting in a Jaffa cinema, where 1,500 people<sup>100</sup> crowded to hear the demands of the Arab communists: Immediate evacuation of the British Army; Palestinian independence; elections to a representative Palestinian government with power to decide on immigration and land sales; submission of the Palestine case to the U.N., since Great Britain "as an interested party could not be expected to bring about a just solution of the problem."

Andrei Gromyko's speech before the U.N. General Assembly on May 14, 1947 proved to be a turning point for the Palestinian communists--both Jewish and Arab. Kol Ha'am, now a daily,<sup>99</sup> reported Gromyko's main arguments, but omitted reference to his proposal of partition, should a bi-national state be found impractical. Significantly, the paper, stressing Gromyko's call for an "independent and democratic Arab-Jewish State," noted that his fundamental thesis was that "equal national rights be granted to Jews and Arabs alike." As the spokesman of "that mighty State which has brought full national equality to all its member-nations and eliminated the complicated national conflicts inherited from the preceding regime," Mr. Gromyko was said to have advocated the same application of democratic tenets in other countries suffering from racial strife and colonial oppression. All progressive forces were called upon to rally behind the Soviet policy in order to lift the "yoke of foreign domination" in Palestine.<sup>102</sup> In the long run, it proved impossible for Kol Ha'am to ignore Gromyko's proposal of partition as a possible solution, and on May 23, 1947, the paper rather daringly, albeit indirectly, opposed it. Omitting mention of Gromyko, the paper warned that the creation of a "Jewish puppet state, comparable to the 'Kingdom' of Transjordan" would produce serious conflicts. In an attempt to rationalize the Soviet position, the PCP's paper emphasized: "Anyone who understands the Soviet attitude to Palestine will easily appreciate that from the Russian point of view the basis for a just solution of the national problem of this country can only be the liquidation of British imperialist rule."<sup>103</sup>

Gromyko's speech has since gone down in history as the most sympathetic speech any Soviet representative to the U.N. has ever made on the subject of the Jews and a national home for them in Palestine. It is therefore not difficult to understand that Palestinian communists were confused by this sudden change from traditional Soviet hostility to Jewish nationalism, and they were not alone. Since it apparently had not yet gotten the message, Jewish Life, dated May 1947, carried material which directly conflicted with Gromyko's new tilt. The American communist magazine was reporting on the Conference of Communist Parties of the British Empire which had met in London, February 26-March 3, 1947. The Declaration on Palestine, issued by the conference and reported on in Jewish Life, made the usual demands for a bi-national state and raised the old shibboleth of

Zionism being a tool of British imperialism. All Jews were warned that Zionism diverts the Jewish people from the real solution of the problem of anti-Semitism: "It is in the interests of Palestinian Jewry to oppose the Zionist conception which seeks to put them in the position of being an instrument of imperialism in the Middle East. . . ." Zionism was responsible for placing the Jews in opposition to the struggle for national liberation in Palestine, "in opposition to the progressive forces in the democratic countries in Europe, and against the Soviet Union."

The Declaration acknowledged the "burning memories of Maidanek and Belsen" and the fact that there remained an enormous refugee problem because most of the survivors did not wish to return to their former homes. However, it called on Britain, Australia, Canada, the United States and other free countries to accept the victims of Fascism. As for immigration to Palestine, Emil Tūma, a leader of the NLL, with the support of Khalid Bakdash, head of the Syrian Communist Party, secured adoption of the following resolution:

No democrat would wish to force immigration on Palestine by an imperialist power against the wishes of its people. We believe that the question of immigration into Palestine can only be determined by the people of an independent and democratic Palestine.

The Declaration concluded that this was the way forward for Palestine and this was the way forward to help European Jewry.<sup>104</sup> Thus, Jewish Life readers of the May issue must no doubt have been as confused as the communists in Palestine, for the Gromyko speech represented a striking departure from previous Soviet policy.

12

Prior to the Gromyko statement, Mikunis and Wilner had sought to negotiate with the Arab communist NLL. This organization, however, refused to cooperate with the PCP on the grounds that a combined party would isolate the Arab communists from the Arab national movement. Portraying themselves as "progressive" nationalists, the NLL had worked hard to change the communist image among the Arabs. Since the beginning of 1945, their organ, Al Ittihad, had increasingly included Marxist

slogans, and by the end of 1946, the NLL leaders, also basking in the Red Army victories, portrayed their League as the communist organization in Palestine. Though the PCP and the NLL displayed "identical attitudes" toward Anglo-American imperialism, British troops in Palestine, Zionist leadership, etc.,<sup>105</sup> they did not actively cooperate.

At the beginning of April 1947, PCP leaders, Mikunis and Wilner, again approached the NLL leaders, inviting them to make a joint PCP-NLL statement to the U.N. General Assembly. Wilner and Mikunis were shocked to learn that the NLL was submitting to the discipline of the Arab Higher Committee on United Nations matters and therefore would not accept the PCP's invitation.<sup>106</sup>

This led the PCP to make a separate approach to the U.N., with its case prepared in cooperation with the Yugoslav delegation.<sup>107</sup> Appearing before the U.N. Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), Mikunis was questioned by the Yugoslav delegate as to "details of restrictions on freedom in Palestine." Mikunis cited martial law in Natanya, the four-day siege of Tel Aviv after the explosion at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, and censorship in general, which was especially strict on the communists' daily paper.<sup>108</sup> He proposed some sort of a bi-national state and avoided being specific when other members of UNSCOP tried to elicit details, especially on the subject of immigration. Mikunis clung to the party position that a full solution would come only with British withdrawal from the country.<sup>109</sup> When asked how many members his organization had, Mikunis claimed a party membership of 3,000.<sup>110</sup> Following his appearance before UNSCOP, Mikunis agreed to have Wilner again try to establish contact with the NLL but again, it was to no avail.

The PCP's appearance and statements before UNSCOP were denounced by the Histadrut "as an act of treachery tending to undermine the discipline of the Jewish community and the authority of its leaders."<sup>111</sup> PCP members were threatened with the loss of Histadrut medical and recreational privileges which they had been enjoying.<sup>112</sup>

Gromyko's speech of May 14, 1947 created problems for the NLL, whose leadership split over the Soviet policy. Two groups formed: a minority group led by Fu'ad Nassar and Emil Habibi initially supported the Soviet position; while the other, the majority of the Central Committee, headed by Emil Tūma, Būlos Farah and Mūsa Dajāni, opposed partition.<sup>113</sup> At this time the Arab communist movement, consisting of the NLL and the League

of Arab Intellectuals, claimed approximately 1,000 active members. But thanks to their control over the Arab Workers' Congress, the Arab communists could count on the support of the Arab trade union's 25,000 members.<sup>114</sup> In contrast, the Jewish communists' influence on the Jewish labor movement was negligible.

By the end of 1946, the PCP claimed 1,500,<sup>115</sup> members, while the rival Palestine Communist Union (CU) claimed 900 members and "some thousands of followers."<sup>116</sup> The CU based this latter claim on its presumed influence within leftist groups in the Yishuv, such as Hashomer Hatzair with its close to 10,000 members, now constituted as the "Labor Party of Hashomer Hatzair."<sup>117</sup> Hashomer Hatzair was very left-wing and pro-Soviet, though free of Soviet control. It was theoretically Marxian, rather than Stalinist, while loyal to the idea of a Zionist state. Hence, Hashomer Hatzair supported only those CU actions which it believed to be in the interests of Palestinian Jews.<sup>118</sup>

### 13

During October and November 1947, the U.N. debated the future of Palestine. For the communists, it was also a time of continued debate. Although by now the Soviet position clearly indicated support for partition, elements within both the Arab and the Jewish communist parties were unwilling to accept this new reality. While the prestigious independent paper Ha'aretz was praising the Russian proposals,<sup>119</sup> and Hashomer Hatzair was sending congratulations to Stalin on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the October Revolution,<sup>120</sup> the Arab communist Al Jamahir<sup>121</sup> was attempting to reinterpret the Gromyko speech of May 14, 1947. According to this paper, the Soviets clearly favored a unitary state in Palestine, and would accept partition only as a last resort if a unitary state seemed impractical "owing to the unfriendly relations between the Arabs and the Jews. . . ." Therefore, the Arab and Jewish masses should fight the policy of their own leaders. That policy tends "to provoke racial conflict between the two communities and makes the establishment of a unitary independent Palestine impossible at the moment."<sup>122</sup>

By the beginning of December 1947, Al Ittihad was moving away from the Arab Higher Committee and was urging the masses to maintain peace and to avoid clashes with the Jews "at any

price." The article stated: "The union of Palestine will never come through racial fights and religious slaughter. It will be achieved by removing the economic differences between Arabs and Jews."<sup>123</sup>

For its part, the PCP was finally willing to recognize the idea of a Jewish state. On December 1, 1947, it called on its members to support the Mobilization Fund and register for national service. Significantly, it even changed its name to the Communist Party of Eretz Israel, "a phrase it had consistently refused to employ."<sup>124</sup> The PCP's recognition of and support for the Jewish state led it to an alignment with the Irgun Zvai Leumi, the military arm of the Revisionists, and with the Stern Gang. Rumors of this reached the British and American governments, who were once again becoming obsessed with the possibility of Soviet expansion because of the on-going communist takeover of Eastern Europe. A United States Congressional Study published in early 1948, just before the State of Israel was declared, analyzed the Strategy and Tactics of World Communism, with particular emphasis on communism in the Near East. The report placed Irgun membership at some 5,000 men, characterized it as "right-wing Zionist," and noted: "The Irgun is rumored to have officially made a deal with the Communists last September [1947]."<sup>125</sup> The Stern Gang was said to be 1,000 strong, "a vicious offshoot of the Irgun Zvai Leumi whose anti-British frenzy is fairly old. . . ." <sup>126</sup> The report cited "evidence" which strengthened suspicion that the "Communists last fall established a practical working basis with, if not control of, this ruthless gang." The communist influence on the Stern Gang was supposedly apparent from the following, quoted in the report from the Stern Gang Bulletin:

There is a huge difference between the United States of America of Truman and the United States of America of Wallace. The first spells war and atomic destruction, and the other peace and . . . welfare of the whole human race.

Comparing this statement to previous Stern pronouncements, the report concludes that the Stern Gang has suddenly developed a social consciousness. This was to be seen from another statement appearing in the Stern Bulletin:

Objective conditions have forced us to turn our eyes to the eastern democracies. . . . Progressive

forces are in opposition everywhere. Here we are called "dissidents." Wallace is a dissident in America. Russia's is a dissenting voice in the councils of the nations.<sup>127</sup>

Had the communists really taken over these two right-wing organizations?<sup>128</sup> Probably not, but they may have had some contacts within these groups because once again the PCP had instructed its members to join and work within the various Jewish organizations which were mobilizing in anticipation of an Arab offensive once the new State of Israel was to come into existence. The Jewish communists had tactically opted for Jewish statehood--in synchronization with the Soviet policy of the moment.

#### NOTES

1. Walter Z. Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), p. 104.

2. Ibid.

3. Chanoch Bzoza, Drachim Reshonot (First Roads), (Tel Aviv: Am HaSefer, 1965), p. 45

4. Laqueur, p. 105, quoting from a leaflet of the Jewish section, September 1939.

5. J. C. Hurewitz, The Struggle for Palestine (N.Y.: Greenwood Press, 1968), p. 125.

6. Laqueur, ibid.

7. Alain Greilsammer, Les Communistes Israéliens (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1978), p. 106.

8. Kermit E. McKenzie, Comintern and World Revolution: 1928-1943 (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 170.

9. G. Z. Israeli, A History of the Israeli Communist Party: From the MPS to PKP to MAKI (in Hebrew), (Tel Aviv: Om Oved, 1953), pp. 161-169.

10. Laqueur, p. 105, quoting from Kol Ha'am, June 1940.

11. Greilsammer, p. 107.

12. Ibid. Greilsammer is quoting from the Department of Manuscripts, Kadech 1272, A. B. No. 21. He explains that the Spartakus Alliance adopted a secret code for its internal correspondence. Some of its more interesting choices of coded words were: Comintern = Grand Rabbinate; police = grandfather;



Moscow = Ein Harod; Stalin = Socrates; prison = hospital; The International = the Zionist Congress; the party = the family; Marx = Borochoy; and Soviet = Kibbutz.

13. Greilsammer, p. 108. In May 1944, the PCP under the leadership of Mikunis and Wilner, would call the "official" Eighth Party Congress.

14. Ibid., p. 109, quoting from HaEmet, No. 1 (1940).

15. Laqueur, p. 300, quoting Kol Ha'am, October 1940.

16. Greilsammer, p. 109.

17. Ibid., p. 110.

18. This indicates that HaEmet was as out of touch with Yishuv reality as Kol Ha'am.

19. Greilsammer, p. 112.

20. Ibid.

21. Documents: The Soviet Union and the Jews During World War II, introduced and annotated by Lukasz Hirszwowica, in Soviet Jewish Affairs, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1974, p. 73.

22. Israeli, pp. 187-189 and Laqueur, p. 301.

23. MERIP, p. 13.

24. Clinton Bailey, "The Communist Party and the Arabs in Israel," Midstream, May 1970, p. 39.

25. Hurewitz states: "At the end of 1942 an estimated 85,000 to 100,000 Arabs were employed in manual and some 30,000 in non-manual work, although the permanently urbanized manual workers probably did not exceed 35,000 to 37,000" (p. 121).

26. Ibid., p. 122.

27. Bailey, p. 39.

28. MERIP, p. 13. According to Laqueur, Halil Shanir was the first Arab communist to be sent to the Moscow Comintern school. He later became party secretary of the Jaffa district, and during World War II became party expert on trade union questions (p. 110 and p. 324, n. 30).

29. Jacob Hen-Tov, "Contacts Between Soviet Ambassador Maisky and Zionist Leaders During World War II" in Soviet Jewish Affairs, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1978, p. 50.

30. Greilsammer, p. 115.

31. Al-Roy was a civil engineer in the Jerusalem municipality, and as a member of the PCP, he was active in the V-League as a member of its principal organs. Documents, p. 79, n. 7.

32. Ibid., p. 78.

33. Svet was a prominent Jewish journalist on the staff of Ha-Eretz. He was also, at that time, the Chairman of the Union of

Journalists in Jerusalem and a member of the pro-Weizmann General Zionists "A" Group. Ibid., p. 79, n. 11.

34. Documents, pp. 86-87. This is a British Colonial Office Document Ref. No. CO 733/437, letter from J. M. Macpherson (not identified further) to E. B. Boyd, who served at the time in the General Department of the Colonial Office.

35. Ibid.

36. Documents, pp. 84-85 (Memo to Shertok from Ben-Zvi).

37. Documents, p. 82 (Memo to Shertok).

38. Ibid.

39. Youth and Nation, January 1947, p. 10; also see Digest of Press and Events, June 27, 1945, "V-League Sponsors Red Army Forest." On the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the German invasion of Russia, the V-League announced that it was going to sponsor "Red Army Wood" on Jewish National Fund Land, as a tribute to Russian soldiers. This type of activity was typical of the V-League's efforts to strengthen ties between the Yishuv and the Soviet Union.

40. Documents, p. 88 ("Secret" note of conversation with M. Mikhailov, First Secretary, U.S.S.R. Embassy at Ankara, August 27, 1942, recorded by Sir Harold MacMichael). These are Mikhailov's words.

41. Ibid.

42. Digest, October 3, 1945, p. 13.

43. Ibid., October 17, 1945, p. 18.

44. MERIP, p. 10.

45. Laqueur, p. 110.

46. Ibid.

47. Greilsammer, p. 124.

48. Digest, October 10, 1945, pp. 39-40, summarized an article in Hatzofeh (October 1, 1945), entitled "Arab Communist Activities in Palestine."

49. MERIP, p. 11, quoting from Yehoshua Porat, "The National Liberation League 1944-48," Asian and African Studies (Vol. 4, Jerusalem, 1968), p. 4.

50. Laqueur, p. 111.

51. MERIP, p. 13.

52. Bailey, p. 39.

53. That is, it became a legal party. MERIP, ibid.

54. Hurewitz, p. 122. In the fall of 1942, the Labor Department under the Mandatory government gave permission for the founding of this labor federation. For a discussion on Al Ittihad's editorials see ibid., p. 189.

55. Ibid., p. 189.

56. MERIP, Ibid.

57. The quote from Al Ittihad continued: "One of the religious leaders and extreme nationalists in Haifa, Nimr Al Khatib, in a speech delivered a week ago, emphasized the superiority of [Islamic] doctrine over every other doctrine. He said: 'Had the Moslems practised the tithe in accordance with the injunctions of Moslem religion, the wave of Communism would not have swept over the country and carried with it many workmen and the poor. Communism destroys the Moslem faith and must, therefore, be combatted.'" Al Ittihad countered by reminding the reader that the Soviet Union was a growing power, whose influence should be courted by the Arabs. Digest, May 16, 1945, p. 24.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Israeli, p. 190.

61. Ibid., p. 189.

62. Ibid., p. 190.

63. See n. 13 of this chapter.

64. Israeli, p. 190.

65. Dunia Habib Nahas, The Israeli Communist Party (London: Portico Publications, 1976), pp. 24-25.

66. Hurewitz, p. 202.

67. The breakdown was: MAPAI, retaining its lead, won 63 seats; The Leftist Front--21; New Immigration Party--18; Mizrahi Labor Party--17; Labor Unity Movement--16; Democratic Center--11; Mizrahi Party--7; Communists--3. Of the total electorate, 77% (202,488 voters) went to the polls. Hurewitz, p. 202.

68. It would soon be clear that in this regard they were out of step with Stalin.

69. Digest, September 20, 1944, Supplement No. XV: The Interchange of Correspondence between the Executive Committee of the Histadrut and the Palestine Communist Party regarding the Submission of a Communist List for the Elections to the Sixth Convention of the Histadrut, p. 1.

70. Ibid., p. 2.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid., pp. 2-3.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid., pp. 4-5.

75. Ibid., pp. 5-6.

76. Ibid., p. 8.

77. Ibid.

78. The CEA was patterned after, and has been compared to, Earl Browder's Communist Political Association in the United States. When Browder ran into difficulties with Moscow and lost the leadership of the American Communist Party, the CEA in Palestine took the hint. They dropped the word "Educational," calling themselves the Communist Union, until they again changed their name to the Hebrew Communists. Israeli, pp. 190-191, draws this comparison. For a discussion on the Browder Communist Political Association see Joseph R. Starobin, American Communism in Crisis, 1943-1957 (Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972).

79. Israeli, p. 191.

80. Digest, April 9, 1945, p. 13.

81. The CEA supported immigration but opposed the view that only Palestine should be thought of as the ultimate destination of the survivors of Nazi Germany. Ibid.

82. Ibid.

83. Digest, April 16, 1945, p. 13.

84. Digest, June 6, 1945, p. 10.

85. Ibid., p. 11.

86. Ibid.

87. Digest, July 25, 1945, p. 14.

88. Ibid.

89. Digest, August 15, 1945, p. 32.

90. Achdut became a bi-monthly in 1947. The CU also published several pamphlets, including: Ol Atidanu Ha-Leumi (On Our National Future), Mul Pnei HaGizira (In the Face of the Decree), Tafkidai HaStudent HaEvrie (Tasks of the Jewish Students), LeDarchai Ma'avaknu (Paths of Our Struggles), Israeli, p. 191.

91. Digest, September 19, 1945, p. 14. Also see p. 13 for a discussion on the PCP's approval of a Jewish National Home; also Youth and Nation, December 1945, p. 24, which quotes from Kol Ha'am, September 23, 1945.

92. Digest, December 23, 1945, p. 9.

93. Hurewitz, p. 264.

94. Digest, October 6, 1946, p. 8.

95. Jewish Life, January 1947, p. 15.

96. Digest, November 20, 1946, p. 20, quoting from the Palestine Post, November 17, 1946, "Communist Platform."

97. Jamal al-Husayni was the Mufti's cousin and most intimate aide. He was the titular president of the Husayni faction,

which was also known as the Palestine Arab Party, founded in March 1935. The Palestine Arab Party's platform, the "National Pact," reiterated the objectives of the Arab national movement (Hurewitz, p. 61). For excerpts from the report, "The Road to Freedom," see Jewish Life, July 1947, Document, pp. 27-29, prepared by Meir Wilner. Also see Digest, December 15, 1946, pp. 10-11, for a discussion on the Party Congress itself.

98. Digest, December 15, 1946, pp. 10-11.

99. Digest, March 2, 1947, pp. 28-29, quoting from the Palestine Post, February 24, 1947.

100. Digest, March 9, 1947, p. 31 (Palestine Post, March 3, 1947).

101. The decision to make the party paper a daily had been announced at the PCP's Tenth Party Congress (November 30-December 2, 1946), Digest, December 15, 1946, pp. 10-11.

102. Digest, May 23, 1947, pp. 7-8 (Kol Ha'am, May 15, 1947).

103. Ibid.

104. National and International Movements: Report--The Strategy and Tactics of World Communism, Committee on Foreign Affairs (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), p. 28. Also see Jewish Life, May 1947, p. 28 for the Declaration.

105. National and International Movements, pp. 28-29.

106. Ibid., p. 29.

107. Ibid.

108. Digest, July 27, 1947, p. 17, "More Questions to Communists--On the U.N. Committee."

109. National and International Movements, p. 29.

110. Digest, December 14, 1947, p. 23.

111. National and International Movements, ibid.

112. Ibid.

113. Laqueur, p. 111.

114. National and International Movements, p. 27.

115. Ibid.

116. Digest, July 27, 1947, p. 18. Preminger testified before UNSCOP on July 17, 1947: "It seems to us that the best means of using national sovereignty for the good of both nations in order to ensure success and the absorption of Jews wishing to enter Palestine, consists in the creation of an independent, democratic, united state common to both Jews and Arabs, built on full national and political equality for both nations and on full democratic rights for all its inhabitants."

117. National and International Movements, p. 27. Also see Youth and Nation, March-April 1946, pp. 4-5.

118. National and International Movements, p. 29. Hashomer Hatzair favored a bi-national state until the Soviet Union came out for partition because it, like the CU, believed this to be in the best interests of the Jewish community in Palestine. When partition became inevitable, Hashomer Hatzair joined with the communists in following Moscow's lead.

119. Digest, November 16, 1947, pp. 3-4 (Ha'aretz, November 4, 1947).

120. Ibid., p. 11.

121. Ibid., p. 17 (Al Jamahir, October 19, 1947).

122. Ibid.

123. Digest, December 7, 1947, p. 22. Except for Al Ittihad, the entire Arabic press militantly denounced the U.N. vote to partition.

124. Digest, December 14, 1947, p. 23.

125. National and International Movements, p. 28.

126. Ibid. The statement in the report continues: "as can be seen from its [the Irgun's] collaboration with the Italians in 1940."

127. Ibid.

128. While this type of alignment is puzzling, especially because both the Haganah and the Palmach were also extremely anti-British, the communists believed that the right-wing groups were more effective in the methods they used. It should also be noted that the communists had infiltrated the Palmach to the point where Ben-Gurion feared the "bolshevization" of his future army. See Jacques Derogy and Hesi Carmel, The Untold History of Israel (N. Y.: Grove Press, Inc., 1979), pp. 85-89, for a discussion of the MAPAM (then pro-Soviet) background of many of the Palmach members.

# 13

## Plus ça change, plus ça reste le même

### 1

As the British mandate unravelled in the fall of 1947, the Palestinian communists--both Jews and Arabs--were in disarray, divided in their interpretation of the new Soviet policy. They debated the partition plan and struggled to fall into line with Moscow's position. What was the Soviet motivation in its about-face regarding support for a Jewish state? As their minimum goal, the Soviets sought to eject the British from Palestine, thereby depriving them of a major strategic position in the Middle East. At the time the issue came before the U.N., the Soviets perceived the Jews in Palestine, as well as Jewish influence in the West (particularly in the United States), as the most likely force capable of achieving this aim.

Moscow's perception of American-Jewish influence is significant in that the Soviets were convinced that American Jews could move their government to support the termination of the British mandate and the creation of two independent states in Palestine. Such a policy, it was initially believed, would not only alter the status quo and drive a wedge between the United States and Great Britain, but would draw the United States closer to the Soviet Union. This, in turn, would create an opportunity for the Soviet Union, as a primary supporter of U.N. decisions on Palestine, to work with the United States to implement those decisions, thereby enhancing and legitimizing the Soviet Union's status as a world power entitled not only to a voice on the Palestine question, but to negotiating other "global" issues with the United States on a level of parity.

Malcolm Mackintosh believed that whatever the initial reasons may have been in November 1947, it was the actual creation of the State of Israel "by the efforts of her own people," that aroused Stalin's interest. This allegedly convinced the Soviet leader that a breakdown of British power had begun in the Middle East:

To the Soviet Union, Britain had been defeated on the battlefield in Palestine, in the "heart" of her own area, and the subsequent defeat of the Arab forces in 1948-1949 was treated in the Soviet press as a

military-political defeat for Britain of the first order.<sup>1</sup>

It was this conviction that Israel had succeeded in initiating the breakdown of Britain's Middle East system, Mackintosh claimed, which led the Soviet Union to be one of the first countries to recognize her statehood. Also, Russia desired to forestall American power then making itself felt in Europe and Asia. Stalin had already declared the United States to be the "leader of the imperialist camp."<sup>2</sup>

Moscow's motives, complex as they were, also probably took into account the fact that 1948 was a presidential election year in the United States. Since the Soviets had an inordinately high estimation of Jewish political influence in America, they may even have hoped that their position would influence American-Jewish voters to support the progressive presidential ticket, headed by Henry Wallace.

As regards the Arab world, Moscow misinterpreted Arab nationalism and misjudged Arab reaction. Desiring to weaken the conservative regimes in the Arab world, the Soviets had tried to support Arab national liberation movements, portraying them as a progressive force. Yaacov Ro'i argues that Moscow expected these Arab national liberation movements to reach their full potential when the new, technologically advanced Jewish state would, by comparison, make the conservative Arab regimes appear ineffective.<sup>3</sup> Domestic discontent would then precipitate their collapse. This actually did occur (in Egypt, Iraq, and Libya, for example), albeit at a somewhat later date.

Finally, another Soviet motive for supporting the Jewish state may have been a belief that it was possible to initiate a leftward swing in Israeli politics, which might neutralize what was seen as the right-wing socialism of MAPAI, the leading party in the Yishuv. Such neutralization could lead to an Israeli foreign policy leaning toward the Soviet camp, or at least to non-alignment. In the zero-sum game which characterized the years of the Cold War, even nonalignment represented a plus for the Soviet Union, merely because it deprived the Western bloc of additional support.

Thus, for all these reasons the Soviets supported the decisions to partition Palestine. Suddenly, Palestinian Jews were hailed for their efforts in their own "national-liberation war" which Radio Moscow compared to the Spanish Civil War.<sup>4</sup> This euphoria, however, did not last long. The Soviet authorities reacted swiftly and negatively to the enthusiastic response of



Russian Jews to the creation of the Jewish state. Zionism was again attacked, and the campaign to attract Jews to Birobidzhan was renewed with the aims of undermining Zionism in Russia and abroad and of creating a distraction from the Jewish state they were then helping to create. The American-communist Jewish Life carried an article entitled "A Jewish State Arises in Birobidzhan," stressing the area's resources, use of Yiddish, and richness of Jewish culture. It sounded like something written during the 1930s, except that the publication was dated November 1947. Within a year, a shift in policy and attitude toward the Jewish state was discernible, and by the early 1950s, Moscow was again portraying the Jews in Israel as a hostile tool of Western imperialism.

## 2

While communism had always been a concern of the Arab League, the issue was raised openly in December 1946, at the League's Fifth Congress. It was then proposed that the Arabs organize a broad offensive against communism.<sup>5</sup> However, the issue then remained dormant until Soviet support for the United Nations' decision to partition Palestine brought about a resurgence of the communist scare. Thereafter, the Syrians and the Lebanese banned their communist parties, and the Lebanese even went so far as to outlaw the communist front organization, The Lebanon Society for Cultural Relations with Soviet Russia.<sup>6</sup> Lebanese police searched the Society's premises and the homes of members of a delegation which had visited the Soviet Union the preceding year. In Syria, there were demonstrations against Soviet premises and sympathizers.<sup>7</sup>

Within Palestine, too, there was a resurgence of concern over what appeared to be the growth of communist influence. In late 1947, the British authorities again believed that communist agents were infiltrating Palestine by way of the Cyprus camps, where thousands of Jewish refugees, survivors of Hitler's camps, awaited permission to enter Palestine. All Russian-speaking refugees were immediately suspect, their luggage was searched, and they were interrogated. In February 1948, the British claimed some 1,000 communists had entered the Cyprus camps.<sup>8</sup> British interrogators were said to have brutalized many refugees, demanding information about the number of Soviet agents in Bulgaria and Rumania.<sup>9</sup>

The Arab national leadership encouraged this perception.

General Safwat Pasha, Commander of the Palestine Liberation Army, commented in Al Ahram on March 23, 1948,<sup>10</sup> that it was not the Arabs who threatened the peace of Palestine:

The source of this threat is the 40,000 Jews who are waiting in the ports of the Black Sea under Russian supervision to enter Palestine on the 15th May [the termination of the British mandate]. They have been preceded by thousands of Communists from Red Europe and have established a bridgehead in Palestine for the spread of Communism. There is no doubt that the moment the Jews are allowed to enter Palestine, Communism will overwhelm Greece, Turkey and the entire Middle East. In this lies the real danger that threatens the peace of the world.<sup>11</sup>

Although obviously ridiculous, such Arab pronouncements served to increase British anxiety. The British therefore sought details on the number and nature of Soviet vessels in the Black Sea. In the end, neither the interrogations nor the searches produced evidence to substantiate Arab and British claims.

### 3

Before moving on to the last section of this study, it is worth recalling that the Palestine milieu created a number of unique and complex problems for the communist movement. These problems included:

(1) dealing with two national liberation movements--Arab and Jewish--when Moscow recognized only one, the Arab movement, as worthy of support.

(2) dealing with the entrenched leadership of the Arab national movement which consisted of the effendis and the religious leaders, neither group being "progressive" and both hostile to communism's emphasis on revolutionary class struggle.

(3) competing with other left-wing Jewish elements which professed the ideological synthesis of Zionism and socialism, a far more appealing ideology than that of the Palestinian communists seeking to liquidate the Zionist enterprise.

(4) advocating the following unpopular positions at inopportune times:

- liquidation of the Zionist endeavor--when,

following the Balfour Declaration, most Jews dreamed of a homeland.

- Arabization--when most Arabs were unsympathetic to the appeals of Jewish communist leaders, and most Jews viewed such appeals as proof of the pro-Arab, anti-Zionist nature of the communist party.

- termination of Jewish immigration--when Jews escaping from Hitlerism had nowhere else to go.

- neutrality (until Germany attacked the Soviet Union)--when most Jews saw no choice but to support the British against the Nazi threat.

- bi-nationalism (meaning one Arab-Jewish state)--when the fruits of political Zionism appeared achievable.

(5) remaining loyal to Moscow's dictates which were based not on Palestinian realities but on Moscow's global assessments, which were often bi-polar, sometimes popular-frontist, but always extracted primarily from developments in regions of the world other than Palestine.

As we have seen, through much of its history the communist movement in Palestine was dominated by extremely dedicated and highly intelligent Jewish leaders and cadres who were willing to sacrifice themselves and their families for the sake of Moscow's brand of revolutionary socialism. And, at the close of the pre-statehood period, we see the communist advocacy of federation (some type of economic-political union of the two states) as a continuation of their unrealistic pattern of assuming consistently unpopular positions. At the very moment when neighboring Arab states, rejecting partition and seizing Gaza and the West Bank (territory designated as part of Arab Palestine), had begun to wage war to destroy the Jewish state and when the Jews, seeing the threat to their existence, were attempting to secure their own territory and whatever else could be captured, the communists were calling for federation.

## NOTES

1. Malcolm Mackintosh, "Soviet Policy Towards the Middle East," in Bulletin on Soviet and East European Affairs, No. 4, December 1969, pp. 31-36.

2. Ibid.

3. Yaacov Ro'i, "Soviet Policies and Attitudes Toward Israel,

1948-1978--An Overview" in Soviet Jewish Affairs, 1978, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 36.

4. Ibid., p. 37, citing BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Part I (May 28, 1948), Radio Moscow, May 22, 1948.

5. Digest of Press & Events (Jerusalem: Jewish Agency for Palestine, Information Section), January 25, 1948, p. 35 (available at the Zionist Archives in N. Y.).

6. Ibid. Also see Appendix C (Front Organizations) in this study. In Palestine, the counterpart of this Lebanese Society was "The League to Foster Friendly Relations with the Soviet Union."

7. Digest, January 25, 1948, p. 35.

8. Ibid., February 15, 1948, pp. 13-15.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., April 4, 1948, p. 38.

11. Ibid.

## **Part 5**

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### **Toward Statehood**

**Reunification, Renewed Splits;  
Domestic and Foreign Policy Challenges;  
Elections, Wars and the end of MAKI**



## Toward Statehood and a Reunified Communist Party

### I

For a long time Moscow had remained aloof from the factionalism which characterized the Palestine communist movement, recognizing no one group as the "official" party. As statehood approached each group functioned separately and adapted to the new realities in its own way. Among the Jewish communists, the Communist Union (formerly the Communist Educational Association) again changed its name. At a "founding" meeting in Tel Aviv's Mograbi Theater on October 3, 1947, the group's leaders announced the formation of the "new" Hebrew Communist Party. While few older workers were present in the meeting hall (various groups had gathered outside and were shouting at and arguing with each other), the gathering was well attended by prominent individuals from Hashomer Hatzair and other left-wing groups and by many new young people who were unaware of the party's tainted past.

The blue and white flag representing the soon-to-be-proclaimed Jewish state and the red flag of the communist party had been placed side by side and pictures of Lenin and Stalin hung next to those of certain "worthy" Zionist leaders. The singing of the Jewish national anthem, Hatikva, was followed by that of the Internationale. Recalling the hostility of the PCP to Jewish national aspirations, Rifka Katznelson remarked that although some of the leaders were known veteran communists, they were now promising "to fight to the last drop of their blood for the freedom and independence of the nation." Palestine, she concluded, had never seen a communist party like this one.<sup>1</sup>

The new party soon proved to have a greater influence among academic youth and the younger generation in general than the PCP led by Mikunis, Wilenska<sup>2</sup> and Wilner. However, it was the Mikunis group which retained control of the party apparatus. Since Moscow recognized neither as the communist party in Palestine, both groups continued to send their own delegations to the Soviet satellite countries.

In the meantime, two factions had also developed within the Arab NLL over the issue of partition. When fighting began in November 1947, the two NLL factions reacted differently.<sup>3</sup> One

faction led by Fu'ad Nassar and Emil Habībi was active in those areas occupied by the Arab armies. Still supporting the Soviet position on partition, they tried to convince Arab workers to accept the U.N. decision. Many of these Arab communists were arrested by Egyptian authorities who detained them in a Sinai camp until the Israeli offensive in the winter of 1948-1949. On their return to Israel, they joined those who had, since August 1948, been engaged in talks with the Jewish communists which ultimately led to reunification of the party.<sup>4</sup>

The other NLL faction, led by Emil Tūma and Mūsa Dajāni, opposed partition, joining the Haifa National Committee which organized a struggle against the Jewish state. Later, many of these communists escaped to Lebanon. Some returned and agreed to collaborate with those who were working toward a unified Arab-Jewish communist party.<sup>5</sup> Reunification talks, which had begun during August 1948, finally led to a meeting in Haifa on October 22, 1948, at which the communists announced the formation of the "New All-Israel Communist Party," the result of a merger of the PCP and the NLL.<sup>6</sup> They were also soon joined by the Hebrew Communists and the Arab communists returning from Lebanon and the Sinai. The various groups, including the Hebrew Communists, were given representation on the new party's Central Committee. The unified party, known as MAKI, issued the following statement:

The renewal of the international unity of the Israeli Communist Party [MAKI] will strengthen the State of Israel's fight for independence, and will intensify the struggle to ensure a democratic regime in our state and to protect the interests of the working class and masses of the people.<sup>7</sup>

MAKI announced the aim of securing the implementation of the U.N. Resolution of November 1947, calling for the establishment of a Jewish and an Arab state in Palestine. The merger was said to restore the communists to their "international status." The MAKI statement continued: "While the war continues, and the Israeli Army is hammering at the invader in the Negev and Jerusalem, Haifa is the scene of a fusion between Jewish and Arab workers." Supposedly, this showed that the war being fought "at the instance of British and American imperialists and Arab reactionaries runs counter to the true interests of the peoples involved." The Arab communists, the



statement concluded, are "bravely fighting the reactionaries who are striking at the Jewish state and are preventing the establishment of an independent and democratic Arab state."<sup>8</sup>

Despite MAKI's much heralded beginning, the reunification did not endure. Early in 1949, the Hebrew Communists were expelled, some joining the pro-Soviet MAPAM, others completely retiring from the political scene. The Arabs, too, would break away and ultimately they would again form a separate communist party, RAKAH.

## 2

The communists in Israel apparently achieved an aura of respectability when on May 14, 1948, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion invited Meir Wilner, the PCP Secretary General, to co-sign Israel's Declaration of Independence. However, this show of solidarity was nearly ruined by Wilner's last minute refusal to sign because the document's last paragraph invoked "the God of Israel." Only when the text was altered to "the Rock of Israel," did the communists agree to sign.<sup>9</sup>

Israel's independence ushered in a new era for the country's communists, who were now able to utilize all political channels open to recognized parties in a parliamentary democracy. In their campaign for seats in the First Knesset, they called on workers to support the communist party against the "reactionary forces in Israel," described as property owners and the right-wing and center parties which "aimed at lowering the [workers'] standard of living."<sup>10</sup>

In the election held January 28, 1949, the communists won four Knesseth seats (out of 120), receiving 3.5% (15,148) out of a total of 505,567 eligible votes cast.<sup>11</sup> MAKI polled second in popularity with the Arabs (after MAPAI's two allied Arab lists),<sup>12</sup> taking 22.2% of approximately 33,000 eligible Arab votes.<sup>13</sup> The communist seats were won by Meir Wilner, Shmuel Mikunis, (from the PCP), Eliezer Preminger (from the Hebrew Communists), and Tewfik Tubi (a Haifa journalist, who, at age 27, had the distinction of being the youngest member of the Knesset).<sup>14</sup>

The communist members of the Knesset were now ready to openly and freely express their opposition to MAPAI policies. On the conclusion of the Rhodes Peace Talks, Kol Ha'am voiced the communist objection to the creation of neutralized strips of

no-man's land between Egypt and Israel on the grounds that this "could only be interpreted as the granting of military bases to the Imperialist Powers."<sup>15</sup> Another article stated: "Since the agreement to restrict the number of troops in certain areas again calls for outside supervision, an opening has been granted to America, under the camouflage of a U.N. Commission, to exercise control over Israel's Army."<sup>16</sup> Thus, even the Armistice Supervision Commission, set up to function near the border with Lebanon, was repeatedly criticized as providing a "foothold" for an "American-dominated body in the Middle East," and the party warned against "future manoeuvres of America in this sector."<sup>17</sup>

On April 4, 1949, the Armistice with Trans-Jordan (as it was then called), leaving the conquered territories of Sumaria and Judea on the West Bank in Jordanian hands, also came under attack. The communists joined forces with MAPAM on a motion to repudiate the agreement<sup>18</sup> on the following grounds:

(1) The Armistice Agreement referred to "the Hashemite Jordan Kingdom," implying recognition of King Abdullah's expansionist aims.<sup>19</sup>

(2) The Agreement makes possible the establishment of British bases on Palestinian soil (a reference to Jordan's origins on Palestinian territory).

(3) This was not a move toward peace, but rather a perpetual threat of war.<sup>20</sup>

The Knesset debate heated up when Tewfik Tūbī and Meir Wilner charged that Ben-Gurion's government had sought treaties with "reactionaries" but would not support the "progressive democratic forces" in the Arab world. Many of these democrats, they said, were in prisons in Arab countries. The next day's Kol Ha'am continued the attack against the agreement with Jordan saying: "The conditions of the Agreement place the Arab parts of Palestine under British rule and the establishment of British military bases in the vicinity of our borders."<sup>21</sup>

The first anniversary of Israel's independence provided further occasion for attack. Kol Ha'am criticized Ben-Gurion's Independence Day speech, claiming he and MAPAI lacked concrete plans for solving the country's problems. The "Austerity Program" and its plan for housing were raised as

examples of how the Israeli government lacked concern for workers and intended to cut their wages. The paper warned against complacency and the imperialist ambitions of the Western powers, concluding with a call for an alliance with Israel's "true friends."<sup>22</sup>

Israel's application for U.N. membership set off another round of debate focusing on Israel's future alignment. "It is our duty upon entering the U.N.," Kol Ha'am stated, "to adopt a steady and unequivocal policy supporting democracy and encouraging world progress and freedom." At this point, the communist organ saw "no problems on which we can remain neutral," citing as examples: the Indonesian people's war for independence, the question of atomic energy, disarmament, and Israel's relationship with "Fascist" states.<sup>23</sup> In subsequent Knesset foreign policy debates, MAKI representatives continued to denounce Great Britain for opposing Israel and the United States for "trying to extract territorial concessions." By contrast, a warm tribute to the Soviet Union for their "unswerving support" was invariably included, while the United States was blamed not only for the failure of the Lausanne talks on the Arab refugee problem, but for Israel's budgetary problems as well.<sup>24</sup>

However, Knesset debates also provided an opportunity to sense a renewing split in the Israel Communist Party. Eliezer Preminger, a Hebrew Communist, voted with his fellow communists in support of a MAPAM-initiated resolution containing fourteen policy points,<sup>25</sup> but he also disassociated himself from a statement made in Bucharest by MAKI leader Shmuel Mikunis, then touring Eastern Europe. Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett charged that Mikunis had said emigration to Israel from Rumania should be held up until there was a democratic regime in Israel. After Preminger expressed his deep concern over the suspension of immigration,<sup>26</sup> Meir Wilner, representing MAKI, rose to defend Mikunis. He called the Sharett quotations<sup>27</sup> mere lies and noted his resentment of Sharett's warning that defamation of Zionism could not be reconciled with expressions of loyalty to the state. Responding to remarks about the trials of Zionists in Budapest, Wilner said he had no wish to interfere in the internal affairs of Hungary. He recalled that during World War II, the British had tried to discredit Jewish emigration on the pretext that it might be a cover for Nazi agents, while after the war the British charged that emigration was a cover for communist agents.<sup>28</sup>

On his return to Israel, an angry Mikunis refuted the

charges against him and denounced Moshe Sharett and the press that "served Wall Street," by repeating the lies. While denying that he had said the Israeli government was a puppet of the United States, he charged Ben-Gurion with having "hitched its cart to the American wagon."<sup>29</sup>

## NOTES

1. Rifka Katznelson, "Kommunistim Evri'm" (Hebrew Communists) in Beterem, October 15, 1947, pp. 38-39. Ms. Katznelson notes with interest the appearance of Martin Buber's granddaughter Yehudit Buber, as a speaker.

2. Esther Wilenska (Valenska) was soon in a debate over the MAPAM program dealing with domestic and foreign policy issues. See Jewish Life, June 1948, pp. 27-28, "Document: Critique of United Workers Party [MAPAM] Platform" by Esther Valenska. This critique originally appeared in Kol Ha'am, January 23, 1948, and argued, uncompromisingly, for (1) removal of the British military and administration; (2) removal of all military bases and opposition to any future requests for "imperialist" military bases; (3) rejection of American penetration, including outright opposition to the Marshall Plan; (4) opposition to foreign intervention in the internal affairs of the Jewish state under any pretext, including economic aid; (5) the political independence of the Arab nation; (6) federation, "upon which free political unity of the Jewish and Arab states can be based"; (7) complete economic equality "in deeds and not just in words"; (8) the "will to live and to survive" of the Jewish communities of the world in which 95 percent of the Jewish people live. This last position actually represented an anti-immigration position, designed to encourage Jews in the diaspora to remain where they were. For MAPAM's program (which originally appeared in Le Achdut Haavodah, MAPAM's organ) see Jewish Life, March 1948, pp. 27-28, "Document: What Orientation for Palestine?" by Dr. Moshe Sneh.

3. Walter Z. Laqueur Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), pp. 301-302.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Digest of Press & Events (Jerusalem: Jewish Agency for Palestine, Information Section), October 29, 1948, p. 26, quoting from Kol Ha'am, October 22, 1948.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Pinchas E. Lapide, "Hammer and Sickle Over Nazareth" in Jewish Life, July-August 1963, pp. 9-10. N.B.: Since the source of this periodical is the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, it will hereafter be cited as Jewish Life, UOJC, so as to avoid confusion with the communist publication of the same name.

10. Kol Ha'am, January 25, 1949.

11. Moshe M. Czudnowski and Jacob M. Landau, The Israeli Communist Party and the Elections for the Fifth Knesset, 1961 (Calif.: The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University, 1965), p. 12.

12. The Workers' Bloc and the Nazareth Arab Democrats polled 51.7% of the Arab vote. See Jacob M. Landau, The Arabs in Israel (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 110.

13. Ibid.

14. Kol Ha'am, February 18, 1949.

15. Kol Ha'am, February 21, 1949.

16. Kol Ha'am, February 25, 1949.

17. Kol Ha'am, March 24, 1949.

18. Devrai HaKnesset (Minutes of the Knesset), April 4, 1949, pp. 290-291, 297-298.

19. MAPAM's Ya'acov Riftin said the Agreement meant "the coronation of Abdullah in [still another] part of Palestine" and that the monarch was only a "symbol of something more sinister." Ibid.

20. MAPAM's Dr. Moshe Sneh noted that Israel had been rushed into this agreement, implying that Israel had acted on orders from Washington.

21. Kol Ha'am, April 5, 1949.

22. Kol Ha'am, May 4, 1949.

23. Kol Ha'am, May 13, 1949.

24. Devrai HaKnesset, June 29, 1949, p. 862.

25. These expressed MAPAM's views of United States diplomatic pressure, the return of Arab refugees, the future of Jerusalem, Gaza and the "Triangle," the Hungarian and Rumanian ban on emigration to Israel, the peace talks and other questions. Ibid.

26. Devrai HaKnesset, June 20, 1949, pp. 755-756.

27. Ibid., p. 763.

28. Devrai HaKnesset, June 21, 1949, p. 784.

29. Devrai HaKnesset, July 18, 1949, pp. 1053-1054.

Newspapers, other than the opposition-supported press, subsequently blamed Mikunis for the early closing of the Knesset meeting, charging: "Communist Member Causes Uproar."



## Domestic and Foreign Policy Challenges

## 1

These were heady days for MAKI. Freedom to operate within the Israeli political system created opportunities to voice their opinions on various issues; at the same time, their open participation made them a target for criticism. On Army Day, July 17, 1949, Kol Ha'am sang the praises of Israel's "friends in the camp of world peace and progress, headed by the USSR and the Peoples' Democracies," while condemning "the military, economic and political help which our enemies received openly from the British Imperialists and covertly from American capitalists and oil magnates." The article noted that despite the alignment of Israel's elites, the army "drew its strength from its strong ties with the masses."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, when in late July 1949, a number of unemployed immigrants and ex-servicemen in Haifa, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem took to the streets with their demands for work projects, the government condemned the party, despite its denial, for instigating anti-government demonstrations.<sup>2</sup>

In response to the criticism, the communists maintained that the country's serious unemployment situation had been brought about by the actions and attitude of the capitalists who had restricted production instead of increasing it and had undermined the state economy for personal gain. Instead of criticizing the demonstrators, the government should force the capitalists to direct their profits into productive channels, creating public work programs which would employ the now unemployed.<sup>3</sup> The communists also warned against an arms race which would seriously affect Israel's budget and economy. Kol Ha'am drew attention to this issue when Washington lifted the arms embargo against Israel. Somehow the communists made a connection between the American plan for the return of Arab refugees to Israel and the lifting of the embargo:

American propaganda machinery is now endeavoring to convince Israel that armaments are necessary for reasons of her 'internal security,' which will be threatened by the admission of the

refugees. Washington warmongers intend to turn the Middle East into an imperialist military base. This plan is opposed to the interests of Israel and her security.<sup>4</sup>

The communists were also on the side of justice for the working class when they lamented budget allocations for the police and the Department of Religions while insufficient allocations were made for health, education, labor and immigrant absorption. On government tax policy, Kol Ha'am noted that while the income tax, the absorption tax and taxes on imported goods were paid largely by the worker-consumer class, the property tax was ridiculously low.<sup>5</sup>

There was no shortage of issues for the communists to raise and their positions seemed readily predictable on the arms race, unemployment, taxes, the economy. However, the controversy over the internationalization of Jerusalem created problems for them and resulted in another of their customary flip-flops as they struggled once again to fall into line with Moscow. On August 8, 1949, MAKI warned against American pressure to internationalize the city; and Kol Ha'am, in line with the other Israeli newspapers, asked the government to resist all such pressure.<sup>6</sup> A subsequent Kol Ha'am article, commenting on the Palestine Conciliation Commission's (PCC) plan for the internationalization of Jerusalem, repeated the party's belief that the Americans intended to create an "imperialist enclave within the State of Israel."<sup>7</sup> A few days later, on September 17, 1949, the party issued an appeal for immediate government action "to include Jerusalem. . . in the State of Israel."<sup>8</sup> This was followed, on September 20, 1949, by a communist-organized demonstration against the internationalization plan.

Both MAKI members and communist-leaning fellow travelers in MAPAM were therefore shocked by the party's turnabout, which apparently was signaled by Soviet representative M. Semyon Tsarapkin's statements during a U.N. debate on December 9, 1949, when he charged that the PCC plan was the latest Anglo-American imperialist effort to prevent the full implementation of the partition plan. Russia, he said, insisted on the creation of an independent Arab state and on an international Jerusalem under the Trusteeship Council. It was Britain who had provoked the Arab Legion aggression which resulted in the division of the Holy City, and "we are now asked to legitimize this seizure." There was no evidence, he continued, that the



people of Arab Palestine wish to be "subjected to the occupation regime of Transjordan."<sup>9</sup> Tsarapkin also introduced an amendment to the internationalization proposal abolishing the PCC.<sup>10</sup>

When the Australians introduced a resolution giving Jerusalem self-government under the Trusteeship Council (on which the Soviet Union was represented), Kol Ha'am immediately announced its support.<sup>11</sup> The paper now warned against an "Israel-Abdullah-Bevin agreement" and declared that only the eviction of the Jordanian invaders from Palestine and the establishment of a democratic Arab state in the Arab sector would promote peace and security in the country.

During the Knesset debate on December 13, 1949, dealing with the government's decision to transfer the administration's temporary seat at Ha'kiryat to Jerusalem, Meir Wilner spoke in support of the internationalization plan. He said that the plan was not designed against Israel but was intended to eject the Jordanian Arabs "with their British guns from the Old City and the rest of Palestine to assure peace for the people of Jerusalem."<sup>12</sup> Wilner and General Secretary Mikunis were later excoriated by MAPAI's organ Hador (December 20, 1949), which noted the communist party's "complete capitulation to the position of the Cominform regarding Jerusalem," and reported that "a member of the Cominform had arrived in Israel recently to investigate the actions of the party leaders." The change in the party's stand was therefore attributed to instructions brought from Moscow by its envoy.

For their part, the party leadership published a lengthy resolution in Kol Ha'am,<sup>13</sup> regretting the party's previous program which had favored the inclusion of Jerusalem in the state of Israel and which now was recognized as an "opportunistic mistake" because the party had failed to understand "that the rejection of part of the November 29 U.N. partition plan must be followed by the rejection of the whole plan." The party had, the Central Committee explained, neglected to see the connection between this one aspect of the Palestine problem and the problem as a whole, as well as the relationship between the entire Palestine problem and British and American imperialism in the Middle East.

MAKI's leaders were again caught by surprise when the chief Soviet delegate to the U.N. announced on April 19, 1950, in a letter to U.N. Secretary General Trygve Lie, that "It has become clear that the General Assembly's resolution does not satisfy the Arab or Jewish populations of either Jerusalem or Palestine as a

whole." The Soviet Union was therefore withdrawing its support for the now doomed internationalization plan.<sup>14</sup> Ha'aretz (the organ of the Liberal Progressive Party) analyzed the Soviet action succinctly: "... the Russians are realistic and must have come to the conclusion that there were no prospects of implementing the internationalization scheme and their stand could therefore have no consequence but the handicapping of the Israel Communist Party [MAKI]."<sup>15</sup> After taking a deep breath, the Israeli communists again accepted Moscow's lead, and patted themselves on the back with:

The people of Israel will never forget that in the days of the establishment of the State decisive help was extended it by the Soviet Union and the Peoples' Democracies. The masses in Israel will not let the people forget the share which the Israel Communist Party had in the recruiting of help from those countries.

They then warned against Israel joining an anti-Soviet Middle East bloc and permitting the establishment of foreign military bases on Israeli soil.<sup>16</sup>

## 2

While Jewish communists were agonizing over the Jerusalem issue, Arab communist leaders were working among the Arab communities in Israel and among Arab refugees. Tewfik Tūbī tried to represent their interests in the Knesset and Emil Tūma, a well-known Haifa Arab communist assumed the leadership of activity not only among Arab communists in Israel but through all the Middle East Arab countries. Tūma launched a campaign to enlist the collaboration of Arab nationalist groups on the grounds that their interests lie with Russia's. He claimed the authority to speak for Moscow in promising Russian aid. In his messages to the nationalist Arab leaders, he asked them to work with the communists for the good of all Arabs.<sup>17</sup>

By January 1950, the Haifa communist weekly Al Ittihad was able to report that the National Liberation League, together with agents of the ex-Mufti, started a propaganda campaign to boycott elections to the Jordanian Parliament, scheduled for April. Consistent with the MAKI stand against the Jordanian annexation of

Arab Palestine, the NLL warned that "by according Palestine Arabs the franchise in future elections, King Abdullah desires to create the impression that they are willing to accept annexation of Palestine to Trans-Jordan."<sup>18</sup> The communists wanted to deprive Abdullah of that legitimacy by encouraging the Palestinians to boycott the election.

On the other hand, Tewfik Tūbī, working in the Knesset sought MAPAM support for his amendment to legislation regarding elections for municipalities and local councils in Israel. Here, the communist aim was to enfranchise as many Arab voters as possible. The proposed amendment sought to ensure that elections would be held in areas under military rule. Tūbī said, in return for assurances from the Minister of the Interior that elections would be held in the occupied areas, he would withdraw his amendment.<sup>19</sup> When no one from the Cabinet spoke, the matter was put to a vote and defeated, leaving Kol Ha'am to report, with regret, that "areas under military law are not to be allowed to elect their own Councils."<sup>20</sup>

Despite such communist impotence in the Knesset on behalf of Arab issues, their strength in the Arab communities continued to grow. The communist Arab Workers' Congress organized a demonstration on February 2, 1950 of about fifty unemployed workers in Nazareth, where they had a particularly strong following. When the police tried to arrest the Congress leaders (after their refusal to disband and to send a delegation to the military governor), the crowd turned violent.<sup>21</sup> Tewfik Tūbī picked up the issue in the Knesset when he noted that the police had acted "on a level with the Fascists," wounding two Arab men with bullets. In the light of this and previous incidents,<sup>22</sup> Tūbī moved that the Knesset order an investigation of the Nazareth incident. MAPAI's counter-motion proposing a general investigation succeeded in blocking a more focused inquiry.<sup>23</sup>

An issue of extreme importance to the Arab refugees which came up for Knesset discussion from time to time was the Abandoned Property Bill. On March 1, 1950, Tewfik Tūbī, working with Dr. Moshe Sneh of MAPAM and Amin el Jarjura of the Nazareth Democrats, sought to soften the bill by exempting from its jurisdiction property of Arabs who returned lawfully to Israel. In response to this proposal, the chairman of the Finance Committee, Mr. D. Z. Pinkas (from the Orthodox Religious Party), said that the property could not automatically revert to returning Arabs because this "would impose hardship upon people who had developed it for years."<sup>24</sup> Tūbī continued to

oppose the bill and on March 8, 1950, he, Jarjura, Sneh and Eliahu Eliasha (from the Sephardim Party) sought by different formulae, but without success, to exempt the properties of persons who returned to Israel.<sup>25</sup> When the Absentee Property Bill became law on March 14, 1950, the vote was 39-12, with the opposition including MAKI, MAPAM, and Jarjura, the Nazareth Democrat.<sup>26</sup>

3

Among the many issues confronting the new state which attracted communist involvement was the constitutional debate. Kol Ha'am said the absence of a constitution affected the relations between the state and the Zionist movement, resulting in the dominance of Zionism in all aspects of the nation's life. The party's organ advocated supreme state control in all areas, including immigration and absorption. It declared that these were state problems and could not be handed over to "non-national institutions."<sup>27</sup>

The communist attitude toward "non-national institutions" was linked, at least in part, to certain actions of the Jewish Agency Department of Agricultural Settlement. The communists had protested alleged discrimination against them in cooperative settlements. The Agricultural Workers' Union (AWU) had decided on February 9, 1950 that communist members of cooperative settlements (moshavim) had to form a separate village, "as the right of every settlement movement to establish one-party villages, has been traditionally recognized."<sup>28</sup> This decision of the AWU was a reaction to communist attempts to form cells in several villages. A spokesman of the Cooperative Settlements Union claimed that the communists had almost succeeded "in ruining the settlements by constant political strife." The communists were trying to break the hold of the Zionist Organization and the Histadrut. They resented the Constitution of the Cooperative Settlements Union because it required all members to belong to both the ZO and the Histadrut. There were perhaps 40-50 communist families in moshavim. In some places, relations between the communists and non-communists became so strained that the communists received no help from other members of the cooperative and complained about discrimination in the distribution of seed.<sup>29</sup> The communists resented this attempt to isolate them and saw this non-governmental agency's

settlement and absorption policies as directly challenging a traditional left-wing socialist base of communist support--the agricultural settlement. Hence, they sought relief through a national constitution which would formally institutionalize state control in the complex areas of settlement, absorption and political protection.

The constitutional issue, however, was more or less resolved by the Knesset vote (50-38) on June 13, 1950, to adopt a state constitution by evolution over an unspecified period. The Legislative Committee was directed to draft fundamental laws pertaining to matters usually dealt with in a constitution. These laws would receive individual approval, and at some later date, they would be combined to form a constitution.<sup>30</sup> Kol Ha'am's reaction was a stinging condemnation of the coalition vote, seen as a betrayal of the electorate and as merely a "confirmation of the mandatory constitution and a continuation of the emergency regime promulgated in 1936."<sup>31</sup>

#### 4

Four other domestic issues (some with foreign policy implications) are of interest before turning to the communist stand in the foreign policy debates: (1) the law of return, (2) the austerity and rationing program, (3) acceptance of U. S. aid, and (4) German reparations.

(1) The Law of Return: On July 5, 1950, the Knesset unanimously passed The Law of Return, recording the right of every Jew to settle in Israel. Although the MAKI-MAPAM faction expressed support for the principle, they expressed concern that the law was not sufficiently watertight and that it might be abused by the government, seeking to keep dissenters out of the country. MAPAM's proposed amendments (supported by the communists and by Menachem Begin's (Herut coalition) provided that no Jew may be deported from Israel and made the clause affirming every Jew's right to migrate to Israel irrevocable. David Ben-Gurion fought these amendments, arguing that the question of deportation had no place in the Law of Return and would be dealt with through separate legislation. He also warned that the government would not permit the abuse of the Law of Return by criminal and undesirable elements, even if they were Jewish. The proposed liberalizing amendments were defeated.

(2) The Austerity and Rationing Program: The rationing of

shoes and clothing went into effect on July 31, 1950, and brought immediate condemnation in Kol Ha'am and Al Hamishmar. The MAKI and MAPAM papers saw the government policy as hurting the workers' living standard. The restriction of consumption, they said, would cause serious unemployment. They argued the government's contention that the present state of affairs was inevitable and blamed it for having permitted the waste of foreign currency on non-essential commodities. Kol Ha'am interpreted the new policy as a plan to transfer a considerable part of the available supplies to the black market and concluded: "Had imports been nationalized and foreign currency wisely spent, rationing of this kind would not have been necessary."<sup>32</sup>

The Histadrut's organ, Davar, justified the rationing system as intended to save Israel from bankruptcy. The paper warned against a threatened merchants' strike and explained that it had become necessary to bring the standard of living into line with the country's income. Israel's sterling balances and loans from the United States were diminishing and income from various foreign donations had decreased.<sup>33</sup> Kol Ha'am ignored these explanations, calling instead for a government policy of full employment, increased production and the nationalization of foreign concessions and imports.<sup>34</sup> The communist program was clearly designed to appeal to the sympathies of the working class and small business owners who would be hardest hit by the austerity and rationing program.

In the Knesset debate of August 7, 1950, Meir Wilner blamed Israel's economic problems on the fact that "94% of Israel's foreign trade was with the United States and her satellites," who demanded payment in foreign currency and who wanted to suppress the new state.<sup>35</sup> These charges were repeated by Wilner's fellow communist, Esther Wilenska, at a Histadrut council meeting on September 7, 1950. Her accusation that Israel was dependent on foreign powers was hooted down with cries of "fifth columnist" and "troublemaker."<sup>36</sup> Kol Ha'am kept the issue alive with its continuous predictions of lower wages for workers and higher profits for employers.<sup>37</sup>

The economic situation, combined with religious issues, caused a government crisis, leading to Ben-Gurion's resignation on October 15, 1950, and to the scheduling of new elections (to be held in July 1951 and discussed in Chapter 16). In the Knesset debate of October 17, Shmuel Mikunis hurled a long series of charges at the governing coalition. Beyond its damaging foreign

policy alignment (to be discussed soon), it had reduced the standard of living, given rise to profiteering and clericalism, and shown itself incapable of precise economic planning. Mikunis called for a united labor front to deal with Israel's economic plight.<sup>38</sup> Kol Ha'am blamed the economic impasse facing Israel on the coalition's anti-labor internal policy and its anti-Israel foreign policy: the close alliance between MAPAI and the international bourgeoisie had failed to solve Israel's problems--the development of agriculture, the absorption of immigrants and the low living standard of the masses.

(3) Acceptance of United States Aid: On January 2, 1951, Ya'acov Geri, Minister for Trade and Industry, proposed freezing wages.<sup>39</sup> MAKI saw this as part of the manufacturers' attack on the workers' standard of living. In the Knesset debate on Israel's economic plight, Finance Committee Chairman Pinkas raised the subject of U. S. aid under the Truman Point Four Program. The communists and their MAPAM supporters opposed acceptance of funds on the grounds that it would inhabit Israel's political and economic independence. MAPAM objected to the provision in the proposed agreement that the funds should be spent for American goods, and Sneh specifically focused on U. S. Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall's statement that Israel would do its share to combat the spread of communism and therefore deserved help. Pinkas, responding to Sneh and the communists, said nothing in the agreement prejudiced Israel's political and economic independence and if any East European country were to offer Israel credits similar to the Export-Import Bank credits, the Israeli government would willingly sign on.<sup>40</sup>

The Knesset debate on acceptance of Point Four technical assistance was continued when Sharett presented his foreign policy report.<sup>41</sup> MAKI-MAPAM opposition repeated the usual criticisms and charges to which Knesset members had already grown accustomed. And, when the Point Four aid package was signed on February 26, 1951 by Sharett and U. S. Ambassador Monett Davis, the MAKI-MAPAM reaction was predictable: This was "one more step towards Israel's inclusion within the strategic and economic plans for the Western bloc."<sup>42</sup> Israel's acceptance of U. S. aid placed her "at the disposal of the warmongers."<sup>43</sup>

(4) German Reparations: The reparations issue involved a highly emotional and complex blending of domestic economic, political and psycho-social concerns with strong foreign policy implications. The issue brought together the communists,

MAPAM, Menachem Begin's Herut coalition, the religious groups, and many apolitical survivors of Hitler's death camps. The idea that Jews be compensated for their material losses may have grown out of a speech made by Kurt Schumacher, the post-war leader of the German Social Democratic Party. Schumacher was speaking to the delegates of the American Federation of Labor, meeting in San Francisco in October 1947, and he was repeating what he had said to his own people about the moral necessity of admitting the crimes committed against the Jews.<sup>44</sup> The government of Israel picked up on the issue with its note, presented on January 16, 1951, to the governments of the United States, Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union, regarding Jewish claims against Germany. The note dealt with individual claims. To that point, no contact had been made or sought by the Israeli government directly with the Bonn government.

Indirectly, Bonn signaled back that it "would like" to establish direct relations with Israel, adding that the "initiative" must come from Israel, since the Israeli public was still unwilling to end the "moral boycott of Germany."<sup>45</sup> Yet, within days, the Social Democratic wing of the German federal parliament urged the Bonn government to indemnify the Jews dispossessed by the Nazi regime and to pass a law recognizing Israel as the legal heir of unclaimed Jewish property.<sup>46</sup> Soon after, on February 22, 1951, a Socialist bill, giving Israel title to all unclaimed Jewish property in Western Germany, was introduced in the Bonn parliament.<sup>47</sup>

There followed a series of heated Knesset debates over Israel's request for \$1.5 billion in German reparations.<sup>48</sup> Begin charged the Ben-Gurion government with preparing to sell out the Jewish people and with having implied recognition of the Bonn government if the reparations demands were met.<sup>49</sup> While Begin organized emotional anti-reparations demonstrations held on March 25, 1952,<sup>50</sup> the communists also worked the issue. Kol Ha'am saw the opening day of The Hague negotiations as "one of the blackest days" in the history of Israel. The purpose of these talks, the paper stated, was not restitution and compensation, but "an attempt to open the door to Israeli and Jewish recognition of Germany's inclusion in the neo-Nazi aggressive Atlantic Pact." The MAKI organ demanded a halt to the negotiations and the recall of the Israeli delegation.<sup>51</sup>

As The Hague talks dragged on, the Israeli newspapers chronicled the ups and downs of the reparations negotiations,



and the debate continued. In July, Bonn offered \$107 million,<sup>52</sup> setting off another round of debates which resurrected the emotions of holocaust survivors who refused to accept payment for their losses. When Moshe Sharett and Bonn's Conrad Adenauer signed the Reparations Agreement on September 10, 1952, Kol Ha'am claimed the agreement was "a victory for the neo-Nazis who were preparing a new world war." The people of Israel, the paper said, had not forgotten Hitlerism and rejected the Luxemburg pact.<sup>53</sup>

MAKI, as noted, was not alone on this sensitive issue, even though its motivation differed from others opposed to acceptance of German compensation. The party was also not alone on certain other domestic issues. Its stand on jobs and housing for new immigrants began to attract support from those who had come from North African and from other Middle Eastern countries and who felt the European Jews were discriminating against them. Then, too, certain Arab groups took note of the party's position on equal rights for Arabs and its opposition to the Abandoned Property Bill. As we shall see in Chapter 16, these and other domestic issues dominated the election campaigns through the 1950s.

## 5

Despite Israel's self-proclaimed policy of non-identification with either West or East, the new state found itself drawn into the cold war following its first national elections in 1949. Since the American State Department suffered from the same misperceptions as had the British with regard to left-wing, particularly communist, strength in Israel, the general expectation within the Truman administration had been that Israel would be moved to the left and would come to align herself with the Soviet Union. President Truman, aware of Soviet aid to Israel in its struggle for independence, was therefore gratified when MAPAI, the labor party, received a strong plurality and the communists won only four out of 120 seats. Perhaps, Ben-Gurion's reward was de jure recognition and a \$100 million, long-term, low-interest loan,<sup>54</sup> setting off an immediate controversy within the Knesset as to United States motivation for the sudden generosity. MAKI saw ominous designs for American military bases and unrealistically called for the rejection of the loan. Initially, Ben-Gurion tried to maintain a policy of

neutrality, however the Korean conflict forced the Israeli Cabinet to take sides.

When, on July 2, 1950, the Israeli Cabinet adopted a resolution supporting the U. N. Security Council vote to intervene in Korea, a leftist opposition bloc attempted to unseat the government. Although the MAKI-MAPAM motion of non-confidence was easily defeated (79-19), the debate remains of interest because it highlights some major differences between the MAKI-MAPAM bloc and the governing coalition. MAPAM's Yitzhak Ben-Aharon and Ya'akov Riftin agreed with MAKI's Meir Wilner that there were legal grounds on which to dispute the validity of the Security Council decision. The Korean affair, they said, was a civil war and American intervention was aggression. Pinhas Lubianker (MAPAI), responding to MAKI-MAPAM arguments that Israel had, by this Cabinet decision, abandoned its policy of non-identification, said that non-identification never meant that Israel would take no position on controversial issues. Rather, it meant that there should be "no total identification with either bloc in the cold war."<sup>55</sup>

Most Israeli newspapers, including Ha'aretz (Liberal Progressive) and Davar (Histadrut, General Federation of Jewish Labor), endorsed the government's statement in support of the Security Council resolution,<sup>56</sup> while MAPAM's Al Hamishmar interpreted Security Council efforts not as directed towards peace, but in support of U. S. intervention in an internal dispute, and the Kol Ha'am criticism of the Cabinet resolution was even stronger. It denounced the United States, "whose armies, fleet and air force were cruelly attacking the Korean people." Citing Israel's support for the "illegally passed" Security Council resolution, the article said this meant that Israel had decided to join the "camp of the Anglo-United States Imperialists."<sup>57</sup> So consistent with Moscow was MAKI on this issue, that the Kol Ha'am article could have appeared in Pravda.

The Knesset debate on Korea set off an extended debate on Israel's foreign policy and alignment. The communists attacked the American presence in Formosa, calling it an "occupation" and an act of aggression. Noting Israel's "recognition of Republican China," Kol Ha'am drew the conclusion that support for Security Council actions in Korea meant that Israel was betraying that recognition and abandoning its neutralism.<sup>58</sup> Foreign Minister Sharett's response came in a foreign policy address to Hebrew University students on July 11, 1950. Sharett said that "Israel had therefore to choose between becoming a second Albania or a

second Denmark."<sup>59</sup> Kol Ha'am further criticized the government for having failed to cancel British oil concessions and for preparing to grant new concessions to U. S. firms.<sup>60</sup>

Sharett's speech at the U. N. General Assembly in Lake Success on September 27, 1950 provided additional fuel for communist criticism. Kol Ha'am noted the many "non-committal phrases" and said that only on the issue of U.N. membership for the People's Republic of China did Sharett come close to expressing the feelings of the Israeli people. Yet, even on this point, "he tried to hide the fact that it was the U. S. government which was sabotaging the proposal." In response to the remarks on the "reconstruction of neo-Nazi Germany," the paper commented that Sharett had "shilly-shallied," for he had forgotten to vehemently protest U. S. action in the rehabilitation of Nazism in Western Germany. The paper claimed that the menace to world peace and to Jewry stemmed only from the Anglo-American controlled sectors of Germany. On the other hand, the German popular democracy (East Germany) was said to serve as "an important base for peace" and was headed by anti-Nazi leaders.<sup>61</sup>

6

The assassination of Jordan's King Abdullah on July 20, 1951 sent shock waves through the Middle East. The next day, Kol Ha'am had an explanation: political assassination had become the "legal weapon of American and British politicians in the Middle East, with the Americans getting the upper hand." American agents, the paper claimed, "have learned to contact religious fanatics, who under their guidance carried out the assassination." The ex-Mufti, described as responsible for the King's murder, had "entered the services of American imperialism." Explaining the alleged clash of British and American interests in the Middle East, the communist organ said that while the British, with the help of King Abdullah, "had been endeavouring to effect the realization of the Greater Syria and Fertile Crescent plans," America was strongly opposed to those schemes. "It was in order to forestall those plans that the ex-Premier of Lebanon and then King Abdullah were assassinated." But for the tragedy of these events, Kol Ha'am's "additional and most convincing proof," that the murder of King Abdullah was the result of Anglo-American rivalry, would be amusing: President Truman sent his telegram

of condolence to Emir Talal, the eldest son of King Abdullah, while the British sent theirs to the Regent, Emir Naif, the King's second son.<sup>62</sup>

7

The rearming of Germany and the prospect of its being included in the North Atlantic Alliance set off a torrent of criticism from MAKI, as well as a series of Knesset debates. The communists, supported by MAPAM, attacked the government's acceptance of a remilitarized West Germany, while pointing out Soviet restraint in not arming East Germany. Mikunis and MAPAM's Yitzhak Ben-Aharon initiated the protest on December 25, 1950, calling for a full debate and describing the Brussels agreement as a new phase "in the preparations for a Third World War." Mikunis warned that the Germans would betray the Western powers, turning their arms against the West "just as they did against Russia in 1941 after the Soviets armed them."<sup>63</sup>

MAKI-MAPAM coordinated protest meetings were held in Tel Aviv and Haifa on December 30, 1950.<sup>64</sup> In Tel Aviv, Esther Wilenska and three MAPAM Knesset members (M. Sneh, Y. Riftin and I. Bar Yehuda) spoke to a crowd of a few thousand, while MAPAM's Ben-Aharon spoke at a mass meeting in Haifa of the World Peace Movement. Ben-Aharon contrasted the decision of the Brussels conference to rearm Western Germany with the decision taken at Prague by the East European states, calling for the continued demilitarization of Germany. Another Knesset debate held on January 10, 1951 resulted in the passage (54-16) of a resolution protesting the rearmament of both West and East Germany. The communists and MAPAM members who voted against it, objected to the "distortion" and proposed a formula specifically attacking the twelve North Atlantic powers.<sup>65</sup>

8

The MAKI-MAPAM working relationship became strained when the resolutions of MAKI's Twelfth Annual Conference (held in May 1952) signaled the party's return to its traditional anti-Zionist line. The party recognized the existence of Israel, but not its borders, demanding the ceding of that Israeli-occupied territory (something over one-third of the Israeli-held territory)

which was originally designated for an Arab Palestinian state by the U.N. decision of November 29, 1947. MAKI resolved that Arab refugees be readmitted and returned to their former property. The party called for the disbanding of the Israeli Army and, in its place, the creation of a "People's Army," with only a one-year requirement for military service. Female conscription would be abolished.<sup>66</sup>

Typical of the Zionist reaction was the editorial entitled "Communist Call for Dismemberment of Israel."<sup>67</sup> MAKI found itself, once again, on the defensive and was even forced to deny the Mikunis description of East European immigrants as deserters. MAPAM's reaction took the form of an apology, explaining MAKI's failure to understand the application of communism to the peculiar situation inherent in the "territorial concentration" of the Jewish people in Israel.<sup>68</sup> However, within MAPAM, the various factions of the left (the anti-Zionist wing of Hashomer Hatzair, including M. Sneh and Y. Rifting, along with Mishmeret Zeire, the MAPAM youth movement) and the right (the pro-Zionist wing of Hashomer Hatzair) as well as the left Poale Zion group and the more "centrist" Ahdut Avoda, began to debate MAPAM's acceptance of "orthodox" Marxism and its closeness to Stalinism. The Ahdut Avoda group in MAPAM, for instance, argued against MAPAM's support for a movement like the Moslem Brotherhood and its unconditional support for the "People's Democracies" and socialist states established in post-war Europe under Soviet hegemony.

The bitterness of the debate within MAPAM and the doubts many members had over their party's close association with the communists increased when news of Mordecai Oren's arrest in Prague reached Israel. Oren, a leader of MAPAM's extreme left wing,<sup>69</sup> was charged by the Czech communist regime with having "carried out criminal acts against the security of the state,"<sup>70</sup> and with being an agent of Zionist imperialism, a spy for the British Intelligence Service and a "sympathizer of the Fascist gang of Tito."<sup>71</sup> He was labeled an international criminal with "the face of an international Apache."<sup>72</sup> Worse, he was presented as the missing link between Zionism and the Czech "traitors" (including R. Slansky, O. Fischl, R. Margolius--all Jews), who had been high officials in the Czech communist party.

Oren's confession of his "crimes" before a Czech tribunal made matters even worse for his friends on MAPAM's Central Committee who, in a state of shock, had voted in the majority to

issue an immediate call for his release.<sup>73</sup> They had reaffirmed their support for the communist world and had stressed their solidarity against the anti-communist wave of propaganda brought on by the Prague trials.<sup>74</sup>

MAPAI's charge of anti-Semitism, hurled against the Czech leaders, was initially met with silence from the communists and from MAPAM, who tried only to defend themselves by claiming MAPAI's attacks were aimed at discrediting them in the eyes of the Israeli public.<sup>75</sup> The communists, however, soon fell in line with Moscow, accepting the guilt of those on trial in Prague. In the Knesset debate (November 25, 1952), preceding the resolution condemning the Prague trials, Meir Wilner presented a defense of the Czech prosecution. Yet, when challenged to state clearly whether or not Oren was guilty, he did not reply.<sup>76</sup>

And, within MAPAM, the earlier fissure was widening between the all-out pro-Stalinist wing of Sneh and Riftin and the more moderate socialist-Zionist types headed by M. Ya'ari. When MAPAM convened on December 25, 1952, the vote was 232 to 49 in favor of a strong condemnation and rejection of the Prague trial of Oren as an anti-Semitic outrage.<sup>77</sup> Sneh's written justification of the events in Prague were rejected by MAPAM's Al Hamishmar, but did appear in Kol Ha'am and in Hador.<sup>78</sup> He argued that there was no intention at Prague to incriminate working-class Jews, but only those "exploiters" found in the Jewish bourgeoisie whose Zionism was a counterrevolutionary force. Sneh portrayed the Prague trials as an important contribution to world peace. Czechoslovakia, he said, had been threatened by a Titoist coup. The Czech leadership had had no choice but to weed out these dangerous elements.<sup>79</sup> In response, Ya'ari asked: "Was it so necessary for the defense of Czechoslovakia. . . to emphasize the Jewish origin of assimilated Jewish communists who had betrayed their own people and who hated Zionism. . . ?" While Ya'ari was ready to accept the guilt and "treachery of Slansky and his comrades,"<sup>80</sup> he firmly rejected the contention of the communists and Sneh that bourgeois Zionism was somehow different from a national liberation movement of the Jewish people. Therefore, he argued, if Sneh condemns the former, he clearly also rejects the latter.

For Sneh, there was little to do but eventually to leave MAPAM. However, at first, on January 17, 1952, he formed a new Left Socialist Faction within MAPAM. Demanding that MAPAM leave the Zionist Executive and create a united front with the

communists, he continued to astound his former comrades by leading his group in a vote with the communist members<sup>81</sup> during the Knesset debates on Kremlin charges in the "Doctors' Plot."<sup>82</sup> MAPAM expressed no opinion as to the guilt or innocence of the Moscow doctors, taking the position that the matter was an internal Soviet affair. The communists, on the other hand, accepted the doctors' guilt but said that the Soviets had not identified them with the Jewish nation.<sup>83</sup> MAPAM's leadership demanded the dissolution of Sneh's Left Socialist Faction and called for the resignation of their six (out of MAPAM's thirteen) Knesset seats on the grounds that they no longer represented MAPAM policy.<sup>84</sup> While some Zionist publications outside Israel<sup>85</sup> misread Sneh's intentions and predicted that the Sneh-Riftin group would not join forces with MAKI because of the unpleasant, anti-Semitic "new winds blowing from Moscow."<sup>86</sup> Sneh not only threw in his lot with the communists in 1954, but brought to MAKI a level of leadership and intellect which had been missing since the earliest days of Daniel (Wolf Auerbach).

9

The Slansky-Oren trials, the "Doctors' Plot," and the increasing anti-Semitic nature of Soviet propaganda led to a backlash in Israel. The Soviet Embassy in Tel Aviv was bombed on February 9, 1953, and despite a formal apology from the Israeli government which immediately condemned those responsible, the Soviet Union broke relations with Israel three days later. Yaacov Ro'i has attributed the deterioration in relations between Israel and the Soviet Union to domestic problems in Russia and its satellites, rather than to any Israeli action or policy or to any development within Israel.<sup>87</sup>

In fact, Soviet attitudes toward Israel had begun to change as early as the fall of 1948 when, during the Jewish high holy days, the Soviets were astounded and angered by the emotional welcome given Golda Meyerson (later Meir) outside the Moscow synagogue.<sup>88</sup> Within a few weeks, Jewish theaters were closed, the Yiddish press was suppressed, many Jews were removed from positions of influence and the campaign against "cosmopolitanism" was intensified.<sup>89</sup> Israel's first ambassador was quickly warned not to cultivate Soviet Jews, and her subsequent

return to Israel in the spring of 1949 has been linked to rumors of an official Soviet demand for her recall.<sup>90</sup> In June 1949, the Soviet Orientalist, Vladimir Lutsky, addressing a Moscow symposium on the "colonial and semi-colonial countries," set forth his analysis of Israel's orientation toward the West: With Britain's ouster from Palestine, Israel exhausted its anti-Western potential and attention should be redirected towards the Arabs and their latent anti-Western feelings. Thus, while Soviet international support for Israel was initially turned into Soviet impartiality (expressed in Soviet abstentions on Security Council votes concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict), the Soviet domestic approach was uncompromisingly aimed at discrediting Israel, Zionism and Russian Jews who wished to emigrate.

With Stalin's death in March 1953, the new leadership repudiated the allegations against the doctors. On the very day the doctors were declared innocent, MAKI members were distributing pamphlets with extracts of a Mikunis speech praising their trial.<sup>91</sup> Forced to perform an about-face, the party hailed the "excellence of socialist justice."<sup>92</sup> In July, the Soviets resumed relations with Israel. This was followed during 1954-1956 by a number of bilateral trade agreements and the granting of permission to hundreds of Russian Jews to emigrate to Israel. Although these actions during the Khrushchev "Thaw" initially appeared to signal smoother relations, they were soon overshadowed by the Czech arms deal with Egypt in 1955.

## 10

Following the coup and subsequent abdication of Egypt's King Farouk, General Mohammed Naguib, on September 7, 1952, assumed the Egyptian premiership and took over the Ministry of War and Marine. To consolidate the army's power, Naguib swept aside Premier Ali Maher and ordered the arrest of more than 50 prominent leaders. While many appeared confused over political developments in Egypt, Kol Ha'am immediately defended the old Wafd leadership, calling the event a "new coup. . . a fascist-imperialist intrigue ordered by the American Ambassador."<sup>93</sup> MAPAM's Al Hamishmar, sounding as much like a communist organ as Kol Ha'am, said that the Naguib regime had succeeded in suppressing the "peace movement in that country, and therefore General Naguib's initiative had been welcomed in Washington."<sup>94</sup>



In subsequent moves to consolidate his power, Naguib purged the Egyptian political system, eliminated dissidents from the army and had himself proclaimed, by decree of the Egyptian Cabinet, the president and supreme authority in Egypt. On December 9, 1952, the Egyptian Cabinet was reshuffled to contain mainly Naguib-appointed technicians who were to implement agrarian and industrial reforms. The Egyptian Constitution of 1923 was then jettisoned. However, in February 1954, it appeared that President Naguib was in trouble.

Ten months later, on November 14, 1954, Naguib was out, charged by the Revolutionary Command Council with having plotted with the Moslem Brotherhood to assassinate Colonel Gamal Abdul Nasir, then premier. Nasir launched his own cleanup campaign, first against the Brotherhood and other political opponents and then against an "espionage ring" which included ten Jews who were placed on trial December 11, 1954. When two of the ten were sentenced to death, Kol Ha'am blamed the American imperialists: "They want these sentences to expedite their military pacts in the Middle East"<sup>95</sup> aimed against the Soviet Union. Seeking to legitimize his own regime, Nasir focused attention on Egypt's external enemies. The British were criticized for their presence in Suez and the Americans for their refusal to sell arms to Egypt and for the harsh terms tied to loans needed for the proposed Aswan Dam project. And, fedeyeen attacks across Gaza into Israel became an almost daily occurrence.

In the meantime, Israel's communists concentrated on the "Lavon Affair" dealing with a "security mishap" which was somehow connected to the espionage trials just ended in Egypt.<sup>96</sup> Kol Ha'am not only determined the guilt of Defense Minister Pinhas Lavon, but described both him and Ben-Gurion as "military adventurers" who were endangering Israel's existence.<sup>97</sup> In the Knesset debate on the day Lavon resigned, Mikunis announced that his party was most gratified by this resignation, but was just as much opposed to Ben-Gurion, "the most pro-American man in Israel."<sup>98</sup>

The stepped up border attacks (from Gaza and the Golan Heights) and the news on September 27, 1955, that Nasir had signed an \$80 million contract to receive Czech arms, raised Knesset anxiety over Israel's security. On September 29, Sharett met with Soviet Charge d'Affaires Nikolai Klimov to ask for clarification of Soviet Middle East policy.<sup>99</sup> Rumors of the approaching agreement had reached Israel earlier and on

September 12, 1955, Ambassador Josef Avidar<sup>100</sup> had called on A. Zaitzev, Director of the Near and Middle Eastern Department at the Soviet Ministry, to inquire about statements by Syrian and Egyptian representatives regarding Soviet preparedness to supply their countries with arms. Zaitzev's reply was that he was authorized to state that these "publications and statements were devoid of any foundation and were nothing but fantasies." He added that he was not aware of any negotiations conducted by any of the People's Democracies.<sup>101</sup>

The day before it was officially confirmed, Kol Ha'am denounced rumors of the Czech arms deal as "libelous." In the course of 24 hours, the party was forced to do an about-face, admitting and justifying it. Esther Wilenska called the transaction a "commercial agreement for Egyptian self-defence against imperialistic pressure." The sale of arms to Egypt, she said, would "further peace in the Middle East," and Israel, too, could receive arms from the Soviet bloc, "if it would follow Egypt's example."<sup>102</sup>

Wilner had actually opposed the motion calling for the Knesset debate on foreign affairs and security. He said the purpose of the agenda was to get the Knesset "to declare itself in favor of an aggressive war." When he moved that the motion for debate be set aside, he had the support of only his fellow communists.<sup>103</sup> At the conclusion of the foreign affairs and security debate, all the parties, except the communists, joined to express their anxiety and to charge the government to marshal the people and to demand of the powers that weapons for defense be supplied to Israel. When the various parties defined their stand, Wilner read his party's statement attributing the "political crisis of Israel to the government's policy of dependence on the rulers of the U. S., who want to turn Israel into a gendarme against the neutral states in the Middle East."<sup>104</sup>

The recurrent flip-flops, Moscow's emergent pro-Arab policies and the rearming of Egypt unleashed vehement criticism of the Israeli communists. Moshe Sneh, by then a MAKI leader, became the subject of articles questioning his ability as a former member of the Jewish Agency Executive to draw off large masses of followers and to "poison many souls with the venom of

communism."<sup>105</sup> Other articles asked "Will MAKI go underground?" and reported on the party's "feverish preparations" in anticipation of it being outlawed as a subversive enemy agent. Supposedly, the communists had "already commenced the destruction of all 'bulk records,'" including membership lists, address registers, subscription lists, correspondence files and minutes of meetings.<sup>106</sup> The party, it was explained, consisted of four groups of people: the "Rap-Takers" (Sneh, Mikunis, Wilenska, Tūbī and other "first stringers"); the "Parallel-party Members" (who are prepared to resume party work through various front organizations, see Appendix C); the "Apparatus Members" (trusted communists engaged in "espionage, sabotage and psychological fields" but not linked to the parallel-party system), and the "Sleepers" ("crack agents" who have infiltrated into rival political parties, police and security services, commerce and industry, army, etc. at some prior date).<sup>107</sup> And, there were more articles recounting MAKI's tarnished past and evaluating its power and influence, while reassuring the reader that the party's numerical strength was small. Still, the danger, readers were told, was in the party's "semi-conspiratorial" character and in the precarious nature of Israel's security.<sup>108</sup>

As a result of the mounting criticism against MAKI, there was a decrease in party activity, marked by MAKI's reticence on the cost-of-living struggle and the absence of communist organized demonstrations. However, there was an increase in internal party rumblings, which led to the paralysis of MAKI's propagandist machinery. And, finally, there were defections in almost all branches, including defections of such old-timers as Chanoch Bzoza and Senya Frishberg in Tel Aviv and Shmuel Padua in Jerusalem.<sup>109</sup>

## 12

The Israeli communists were again forced to recant their "error" when they initially supported Israel's Sinai operation which began on October 29, 1956.<sup>110</sup> Kol Ha'am first spoke of "a police action against bloodthirsty marauders and the Pharaoh on the Nile" (an obvious reference to Gamal Abdul Nasir), and forty-eight hours later said the operation was "an imperialist collusion."<sup>111</sup> They were echoing the Moscow line which, when published in Pravda on November 1, would charge the British,

French and Israeli leadership with "premeditated aggression" conceived "with the object of crushing the national-liberation movement of the Arab peoples and restoring the colonial system throughout the Middle East and North Africa."<sup>112</sup> These events were used to justify the Soviet bloc's continued arms aid to Egypt as necessary to help Egypt "prepare for self-defense against British and French colonial aggression" with the ultimate hope of establishing a "neutralist" Middle East.<sup>113</sup>

How did these events affect MAKI's Jewish and Arab supporters and the party's electoral prospects? In the following chapter, we will examine the party's performance among Jewish and Arab voters in the Knesset elections during 1951-1961. We will also look briefly at the party leadership and structure before examining the circumstances of the final breakup of the bi-national Communist Party of Israel.

#### NOTES

1. Kol Ha'am, July 17, 1949.
2. Digest of Press & Events (Jerusalem: Jewish Agency for Palestine, Information Section), August 5, 1949, pp. 35-36. The following numbers of demonstrators were reported: Haifa -- 300, Tel Aviv--200, and Jerusalem--60.
3. Kol Ha'am, July 28, 1949.
4. Kol Ha'am, August 5, 1949.
5. Kol Ha'am, September 2, 1949.
6. Kol Ha'am, August 8, 1949.
7. Kol Ha'am, September 14, 1949.
8. Kol Ha'am, September 17, 1949.
9. Digest, December 16, 1949, p. 445.
10. Digest, December 16, 1949, p. 498.
11. Kol Ha'am, December 11, 1949.
12. Devrai HaKnesset, December 13, 1949.
13. Kol Ha'am, December 20, 1949.
14. Digest, April 28, 1950, p. 1247.
15. Ha'aretz, April 20, 1950.
16. Kol Ha'am, April 23, 1950.
17. Digest, June 24, 1949, pp. 42-43, discusses a dispatch from The New York Times correspondent Sam Pope Brewer in Beirut who wrote: "Communists in the Arab states are intensifying their activity, in spite of all efforts to suppress them."

18. Digest, January 20, 1950, p. 775.
19. Devrai HaKnesset, January 17, 1950.
20. Kol Ha'am, January 19, 1950.
21. Digest, March 10, 1950, p. 1024.
22. In early February 1950, Meir Wilner had protested police handling of communist strikers in Tel Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem. Supported by MAPAM's Yitzhak Ben-Aharon, Wilner had called for an investigation of the police, who he claimed were being used as a political weapon. The motion was defeated. Digest, February 17, 1950, pp. 914, 949, 950.
23. MAPAI's proposal was adopted by a vote of 55 to 19, with 2 Herut members supporting MAKI and MAPAM. Digest, March 10, 1950, p. 1024.
24. Devrai HaKnesset, March 1, 1950.
25. Devrai HaKnesset, March 8, 1950.
26. Devrai HaKnesset, March 14, 1950.
27. Kol Ha'am, April 19, 1950.
28. Digest, February 17, 1950, p. 914.
29. Digest, February 3, 1950, p. 839, and February 10, 1950, p. 880. On January 22, 1950, some twenty communist members of five cooperative villages, as a protest against alleged discrimination, staged a sit-in strike in the Jewish Agency building in Tel Aviv. They were finally evicted on February 5, 1950. See Digest, February 17, 1950, p. 914.
30. Devrai HaKnesset, June 13, 1950.
31. Kol Ha'am, June 14, 1950.
32. Kol Ha'am, August 1, 1950. Also see Al Hamishmar, August 1, 1950.
33. Davar, August 2, 1950.
34. Kol Ha'am, August 6, 1950.
35. Devrai HaKnesset, August 7, 1950.
36. Digest, September 22, 1950, p. 14. Dr. Moshe Sneh, the MAPAM leader, advocated the compulsory use of surplus private capital for the absorption of immigrants, but said that MAPAM would not demand immediate socialization of the country. He also said that "whatever happens," MAPAM would not leave the Histadrut.
37. Kol Ha'am, October 1, 1950.
38. Devrai HaKnesset, October 17, 1950.
39. Devrai HaKnesset, January 2, 1951.
40. Devrai HaKnesset, January 9, 1951. Also see Kol Ha'am, January 3, 1951.

41. Devrai HaKnesset, January 23, 1951 and January 24, 1951.
42. Al Hamishmar, February 26, 1951.
43. Kol Ha'am, March 23, 1951.
44. Inge Deutsch Kron, Bonn and Jerusalem: The Strange Coalition (Phila.: Chilton Book Co., 1970), p. 18.
45. Digest, February 2, 1951, p. 774.
46. Digest, February 16, 1951, p. 852.
47. Digest, March 2, 1951, p. 919.
48. Devrai HaKnesset, March 13, 1951.
49. Devrai HaKnesset, April 2, 1951.
50. Michael Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion, A Biography (N.Y.: Delacorte Press, 1977), pp. 196-198, for a brief description (from Ben-Gurion's point of view) of a demonstration held on January 7, 1952 and Digest, April 4, 1952, p. 891, for one held on March 25, 1952.
51. Kol Ha'am, March 23, 1952.
52. Digest, July 25, 1952, p. 1421.
53. Kol Ha'am, September 11, 1952.
54. Chaim Heller, "America, Israel and the Cold War" in Youth and Nation, January-February 1973, p. 18.
55. Devrai HaKnesset, July 2, 1950.
56. Ha'aretz, July 3, 1950 and Davar, July 3, 1950. The Davar piece stated that Israel regarded the U.N. "as essential to the preservation of world peace," and that "support for the world organization is one of the mainstays of Israel's foreign policy."
57. Al Hamishmar, July 3, 1950, noted that large numbers of South Koreans refused to fight the North Koreans and that the U. S. forces were sent to defend "a reactionary and corrupt regime against a people in revolt against it." Also see Kol Ha'am, July 3, 1950.
58. Kol Ha'am, July 2, 1950.
59. Digest, July 21, 1950, p. 1695.
60. Kol Ha'am, July 15, 1950.
61. Kol Ha'am, September 29, 1950.
62. Kol Ha'am, July 21, 1951.
63. Kol Ha'am, December 24, 1950, called upon the Knesset to voice the feelings of horror and concern of Israel at the "criminal decision of the Brussels conference to revive the Nazi Army. . . ." For the Knesset debate, see Devrai HaKnesset, December 25, 1950.
64. Digest, January 12, 1951, p. 667.
65. Devrai HaKnesset, January 10, 1951.

66. "The Communist Party in Israel" in Jewish Vanguard, August 29, 1952, p. 4.

67. Jewish Frontier, July 1952, p. 3. The editorial stated: "The Jewish state is to be deprived of Jerusalem, the corridor of land that unites this city with the rest of the country, the bloc of territory which includes Ramleh and Lydda, Ber Sheba and a part of the Negev, and Western Galilee."

68. Digest, July-August 1952, passim.

69. Oren (previously Orenstein) was briefly mentioned earlier in this study, in Chapter 12.

70. Digest, April 4, 1952, p. 882.

71. C. Gershater, "The Confessions: A Study of Official Communist Reports of the Prague Trial," in The Zionist Record, January 30, 1953, p. 4.

72. Ibid.

73. Digest, April 4, 1952, p. 882. On March 26, 1952, the MAPAM Executive, in its first statement on the arrest, said it had caused "grave concern in the camp of progress and peace" in Israel. "We are convinced that Mr. Oren did not commit. . . any premeditated act against the Czechoslovak People's Republic." There had been, the statement concluded, a "tragic misunderstanding." Ibid.

74. Mark Alexander, "Israel's Left Reels to the Shock of 'Prague,'" in Commentary, April, 1953, pp. 379-389.

75. Devrai HaKnesset, November 24, 1952, and see Kol Ha'am, November 25, 1952, stating that Mr. Sharett's statement was intended as a psychological preparation of public opinion to participate in the aggressive bloc and in a war against the socialist camp.

76. Devrai HaKnesset, November 25, 1952. Also see Kol Ha'am, November 24, 1952, which described reports of the Prague trial as "the meanest agitation against Czechoslovakia by the propaganda trumpets of American imperialism and the reactionary press."

77. The resolution, however, said nothing about the broader implications of the trials. Digest, January 2, 1953, p. 306.

78. "Sneh's Defection from MAPAM," in Israel Horizons, March 1953, p. 10.

79. Alexander, . . . Shock of Prague, p. 381. Also see Kol Ha'am during this period.

80. M. Ya'ari, "Logic of Our Time," in Israel Horizons, March 1953.

81. Kol Ha'am, January 14, 1953, on the accusations against the Jewish doctors, said that "it was incredible that despicable Jews have been found willing to serve the American and the British intelligence service and their devilish instructions."

82. A group of Jewish doctors in the Soviet Union were charged by Stalin with conspiring to murder him. The "Doctors' Plot" unleashed a wave of anti-Semitism which only abated after Stalin's death in March 1953. See "How Soviet Sources Played up the 'Doctors' Conspiracy,'" in Congress Weekly, February 16, 1953, p. 8.

83. Devrai HaKnesset, January 19, 1953.

84. "Sneh's Defection. . ." in Israel Horizons, March 1953, p. 10.

85. For example, see the Zionist Record (Johannesburg, South Africa), "Stalin's Sweet Music for Arab Communists," January 30, 1953, p. 7. The trials in Prague and Moscow chilled the international Jewish community and led to a spate of articles on communism. See "The Communist Threat to Israel" by I. L. Kenen in Congress Weekly, February 16, 1953, p. 4; "Sakanata Shel MAKI" (The MAKI Danger) by M. Zait, in Hapoel Hatzair, February 3, 1953, p. 7 (in Hebrew); "The Jews Versus Communism" by Charles I. Glicksberg in Congress Weekly, February 23, 1953.

86. Zionist Record, "Stalin's Sweet Music. . ." *ibid.*

87. Yaacov Ro'i, "Soviet Policies and Attitudes Toward Israel, 1948-1978--An Overview" in Soviet Jewish Affairs, 1978 (Vol. 8, No. 1).

88. For a description of the crowd's reaction see "Notes and Comments" in Zion, February 1953, p. 2.

89. *Ibid.*

90. Ro'i, *ibid.*

91. Aryah Rubinstein, "Communist Party in Israel," in The American Zionist, October 1954, p. 9.

92. "How Strong Is MAKI," in Here & Now, August 15, 1956, p. 8.

93. Kol Ha'am, September 9, 1952.

94. Al Hamishmar, September 9, 1952.

95. Kol Ha'am, January 28, 1955.

96. Defense Minister Pinhas Lavon, despite his denials of involvement, was held responsible and was forced to resign. Prime Minister Moshe Sharett ordered an investigation, the conclusions of which were contained in the Olshan-Dori Committee's report, which was never made public. J. L. Talmon,



"Lavon Affair--Israeli Democracy at the Crossroads" in New Outlook, March-April 1961, pp.22-30. Also see Decline of Honor (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1976), the controversial account of Avri (Seidenberg) El-Ad, the former Israeli officer and intelligence operative involved with the effort to establish an Israeli spy network in Egypt.

97. Kol Ha'am, February 18, 1955.

98. Devrai HaKnesset, February 21, 1955.

99. Digest, October 7, 1955, p. 58.

100. The reader will recall that Josef Avidar was the Hagana commander in the Old City of Jerusalem during the riots of 1929. During the interview with this author in April 1982, he expressed his abiding hatred of the Israeli communists and their Soviet mentors.

101. Digest, September 30, 1955, p. 32.

102. Devrai HaKnesset, October 18-19, 1955.

103. Devrai HaKnesset, October 12, 1955.

104. Devrai HaKnesset, October 24, 1955.

105. Aizik Remba, "The Communists in the Knesseth," reprinted in The Brooklyn Jewish Center Review, February 1956, p. 5.

106. "Will MAKI Go Underground?" in Here & Now, February 1, 1956.

107. Ibid.

108. "How Strong Is MAKI?" in Here & Now, August 15, 1956, p. 7.

109. Ibid., p. 9. At that point, Bzoza and Frishberg were attempting to organize a new communist party free of Moscow's pressure.

110. There are many books and articles on what is often called the Suez Crisis of 1956. Some suggestions are: Michael Adams, Suez and After - Year of Crisis (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958); Simcha Dinitz, "The Legal Aspects of the Egyptian Blockade of the Suez Canal" in The Georgetown Law Journal, Winter 1956-1957; Herman Finer, Dulles Over Suez: The Theory and Practice of His Diplomacy (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964); J. C. Hurewitz, Soviet-American Rivalry in the Middle East (N. Y.: Praeger, 1969); Terence Robertson, Crisis: The Inside Story of the Suez Conspiracy (N. Y.: Atheneum, 1965). The memoirs of those involved are also of interest: Anthony Eden, Memoirs - Full Circle (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1960); Dwight D. Eisenhower, The White House Years - Waging Peace (1956-1961)

(N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1965); Nikita Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1970); Anthony Nutting, No End of a Lesson (N.Y.: Clarkson N. Potter, 1967).

111. As quoted by Pinchas E. Lapide, "Hammer and Sickle Over Nazareth" in Jewish Life (UOJC), July-August 1963, p. 10.

112. As quoted in O. M. Smolansky, "Moscow and the Suez Crisis, 1956: A Reappraisal" in Political Science Quarterly, December 1965, p. 581.

113. Scott D. Johnson, "Communist Party Politics in Israel" in Studies on Asia (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1964), p. 115.

## The Communists in Israel's Knesset Elections: 1951-1969

## 1

In 1951, MAKI's share of votes rose to 4% (from 3.5% in 1949), giving it five Knesset seats. The party's platform dealt mainly with domestic issues, but also included the following demands: a firm foreign policy that would strengthen peace; a Big Five agreement against German rearmament; cancellation of the "aggressive Atlantic Nazi Pact"; denial of economic and strategic bases to warmongers and abrogation of all concessions.<sup>1</sup> It sought Jewish votes in the ma'abarot (tent camps) of dissatisfied immigrants awaiting jobs and housing. To attract Arab voters, MAKI touted its bi-national character, pointing to Tewfik Tūbī (second on its candidate list) and Emil Habībi (fourth) as proof of its commitment to Arab interests and its opposition to the government's Arab policy.

In the elections to the Third Knesset (July 1955), the party maintained its second place standing with the Arabs (after the MAPAI-affiliated Arab lists) although its actual share of votes decreased. Issues in this election divided the new Yishuv and the old, providing much grist for the communist propaganda mill. While the European immigrants had mostly been settled, newer immigrants from North Africa and from other Middle Eastern countries had grown resentful over ma'abarah conditions, the continued lack of full-time employment, the attitude of European-born bureaucrats, the queues at government offices, and the perceived discrimination which placed them at a distinct disadvantage. Further, they resented those who sat in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv and told them to settle in the Negev.<sup>2</sup>

Analysis of the election results of 1955 was complicated by an increase of almost 21% over the total votes cast in the previous Knesset election. The communist gain of a mere .5% was explained by Uri Ra'anān as "their 'natural increase' sufficing only to maintain their previous position."<sup>3</sup> Still, the small increase was translated into an additional communist seat.

In 1956, the MAKI membership was estimated at 3,500.<sup>4</sup> Approximately one-third of its vote in 1955 came from the Arab sector and one-quarter of its organized members were Arabs, mostly from Nazareth and its environs, the Triangle, and to a lesser degree from Haifa, Jaffa, Lydda and Ramle. Very few Arab members could have been termed pure ideological communists; rather, they were primarily fellaheen and workers who were moved by economic and social grievances and were angered by the Israeli military presence in their areas. Their support for MAKI attested to their resentment and their desire to make a clear statement of protest against the state of Israel.

As for MAKI's Jewish membership, 80% were new immigrants, mainly from Bulgaria, Iraq, Rumania and Poland. There were few Germans among them. Except for members of the Iraqi intelligentsia, including a number of university students, the majority could have been classed as lumpenproletariat. They lived mostly in tent cities, were easy prey for communist anti-government propaganda, but were non-ideological (and, indeed, non-intellectual). The remaining 20% of the Jewish membership was the party's important core. Their backgrounds had much in common with earlier MPS leaders: labor Zionism, East European, from petit bourgeois families who practiced strict religious adherence. Some had come to Palestine as youngsters during the late 1920s or 1930s, and many had acquired a solid education which made them articulate leaders. However, their extreme positions still made it unlikely that they would attract many followers.

During the mid-1950s, MAKI, like communist parties elsewhere, was built on cells, some of up to twenty members. Generally, the cells were much smaller, facilitating work of a conspiratorial nature. The cells were grouped in local branches, which were then included in seven regional organizations. The party's policy-making body remained the central committee, which adhered to the old Leninist principle of "democratic centralism." It had fifteen members (eleven Jews, four Arabs) and eight candidate members who, in strict accordance with the Soviet model, lacked voting rights. The central committee met on a regular basis, once or twice a month, to review any instructions from the political committee and to supervise the work of the party. The political committee (the local version of the Soviet Politbureau) consisted of seven members (five Jews, two Arabs).

Decision-making power was vested in this small group. MAKI's day-to-day affairs were handled by the secretariat, then composed of Tewfik Tübī and Ruth Lubitch (Mordechai Oren's sister-in-law).<sup>5</sup> The MAKI organbureau, which had generally dealt with organizational matters, was eliminated in 1953, when the Kremlin abolished the Soviet equivalent. As noted, the real power of the party was exercised by MAKI's political committee (or politbureau). The number of its members varied from time to time. The leaders were deeply committed ideologically and were highly intelligent. Few details are known about their lives because they avoided publicity. Some of these leaders were:<sup>6</sup>

(1) Shmuel Mikunis: He was born in Russia in 1903, arrived in Palestine at age 18 and first supported himself as an actor and as a worker in road construction, citrus groves and building trades. He attended the Polytechnic Institute in France, becoming a civil engineer in 1934. He was also a graduate of Moscow's Kutvo, where he most likely was a good student of ideological theory and organization. When he returned to Palestine, he was active amongst workers and intellectuals. Mikunis was a member of the communist party delegation appearing before the U.N. Commission on Palestine in 1947 and then worked in East European countries, gaining support for Israel's struggle in 1948. He wrote numerous articles and pamphlets for the party, served in the party's highest echelons, and was often accused of "personality cult."<sup>7</sup>

(2) Moshe Sneh, M.D.: Born in Poland in 1909, Sneh was educated at Warsaw University. He was chairman of the General Zionist Organization in Poland and a delegate to several Zionist congresses, beginning in 1933. After serving in the Polish army as a captain in 1939, he made his way to Palestine in 1940, where he joined the Haganah. From 1945 to 1946, Sneh was chief of the Haganah, leading that Jewish resistance movement against the British. In June 1946, he was about to be arrested by the British, but he escaped to Paris from where he helped organize transports for "illegal" immigrants. He also made a number of important contacts and negotiated with several European governments for arms transfers to Israel. He served as an executive member at the World Jewish Congress (Montreux, 1948). Sneh began his political life as a General Zionist and gradually moved to the left, into the MAPAM leadership and then into MAKI, where he became the party's leading theorist. He edited the party's paper and authored many articles. Not long after his switch to MAKI, he was made a member of the politbureau.<sup>8</sup>

(3) Meir Wilner: He was born in 1918 in Vilna, where he attended Hebrew high school. He came to Palestine in 1937 and attended Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Wilner wrote many articles and pamphlets for the party and, along with Mikunis, he was often accused of "personality cult." In 1965 he became the leader of RAKAH, the new Arab communist party, and he continued to retain his Knesset seat following the elections in July 1984.

(4) Esther Wilenska: She was born in Vilna in 1918 and came to Palestine in 1938. After attending Hebrew University, she taught in Jerusalem and was a member of the executive committee of the General Federation of Labor. She became a member of the PCP's central committee in 1944, later rising to the politbureau. For some time, she also served as the editor of Kol Ha'am and wrote articles on the class struggle, political and economic topics. After divorcing Wilner, she married Breitstein.

(5) Zvi Breitstein: He came to Israel in 1935, was also an editor of Kol Ha'am, and served as a member of the central committee and as the chairman of the control commission. After he was dropped from the control commission in 1972, he and his wife, Esther Wilenska, left MAKI to form a more radical group.

(6) David "Sasha" Hirin: He is believed to have been born in Eastern Europe. In 1963, he studied in the Soviet Union on a one-year program, and perhaps, because of this, was considered a conservative communist, a "Stalinist" who "was guided by Soviet interests alone." However, his devotion to the Soviet Communist Party may have been manifest even earlier, when "he . . . burst into tears after the Twentieth CPSU Congress [in February 1954], when his idols had been destroyed"<sup>9</sup> by Khrushchev's exposure of Stalin's brutal crimes and cult of personality.

(7) Tewfik Tūbī: He was born in Haifa in 1922, attended the Bishop Gobut School in Jerusalem, served as a mandatory official in Haifa and was the youngest person to win a Knesset seat at that time. He was an editor of the twice weekly Al Ittihad and a member of the World Peace Council. Tūbī served as a member of the presidium of the National Committee for Peace while also serving on MAKI's central committee and politbureau. He wrote many articles on political problems and on the Arab minority in Israel. His Christian upbringing and his perceived "pro-Jewish" tilt earned him the reputation of a "moderate."

(8) Emil Habībi: He was born in Haifa in 1922 and was also a Christian. He had a university education and because of his nationalist leanings was suspected for a time of "nationalist

deviation." He was a journalist, a member of the central committee and the politbureau.

3

Funds for the party's use were raised primarily through front organizations both in Israel and in the United States. In 1956, it was reported that:

For the past three years campaigns have been conducted. . . (in the U. S., for instance, by a Polish Landsmannschaft, under the direction of a certain Mr. Vendi, by a Borison Landsmannschaft, and by the Emma Lazarus Women's League) for the ostensible purpose of building a Reuben Breinin Dispensary in Israel. The moneys collected. . . amounted to some \$60,000 in the past year alone--are transmitted to Shimon Cohen ("Shimmek"), Secretary of the Tarbut La'am (People's Culture) Society, an Israel front organization, who is at the same time Treasurer of MAKI.<sup>10</sup>

The report noted that no sign of the dispensary could yet be seen in Israel. Other fund raising techniques included subscriptions to the party's press and periodicals and special campaigns for party conferences, to which "a full fortnight's wages must be contributed by every member."<sup>11</sup> The party also operated commercial ventures, including a bookbinding workshop in Jaffa, a metal and souvenirs enterprise in Tel Aviv, a distribution agency for books and periodicals in Tel Aviv and another in Haifa.<sup>12</sup> These enterprises also provided employment for party members.

4

Israel's Fourth Knesset election was held in July 1959. Participation of both Jews and Arabs was high--81% (representing 969,337 valid votes cast). One of the most important events to affect this election was the riots which broke out in Haifa's Wadi Salib quarter and later spread to Beersheba and Migdal Ha'emek. The riots were of a distinct communal character and had their origin in the economic distress and lack of

integration of newly-arrived immigrants from Asian and North African countries. This became a central issue in the campaign, resulting in changes in some party lists--"Oriental" or Sephardi candidates being added to attract votes.

A second issue was the question of French-Israeli ties. As a result of Arab pressure, France's nationalized Renault decided to cut its ties with Israel. This raised questions of Israel's "over-dependence" on France. There was also the issue of Israel's arms deal with West Germany. While this issue had led to the resignation of Israel's government only a few months earlier, it receded in importance as election day approached.

While MAKI used these issues to attract Jewish voters, there were other issues specifically affecting Arab voters. But, here MAKI miscalculated. The Iraqi revolution in August 1958 deposed the Hashemite monarch, a British legacy, and brought to power 'Abd al-Karim Qāsim. Because this followed the Syro-Egyptian union of February 1958 so closely, it unleashed dreams of Arab unity and liberation from Israeli rule. Many Israeli Arabs believed that Qāsim would join the United Arab Republic under Nasir's leadership. Thus, when MAKI followed Moscow's line in supporting Qāsim in his subsequent conflict with Nasir, Israeli Arabs became alienated. While they approved of MAKI's anti-Zionist stance, denial of communist support for Nasir was tantamount to betrayal of the promise of pan-Arabism.

Under Moscow directives, MAKI attempted to organize youthful Arab nationalists into a popular front. This effort coincided with the brief honeymoon between the United Arab Republic and the Soviet Union. Together, Al 'Ard (The Land) Nationalists and MAKI staged protest meetings against the Israeli Nationality Law,<sup>13</sup> the appropriation of Arab land and the military administration. Cooperation between the two groups was short-lived, as the young, pro-Nasir leaders of Al 'Ard broke away from the communists in the wake of the split between the U.A.R. and Iraq. Increased politicization of Israel's Arabs came about as a result of a number of factors, including Egypt's defeat in 1956, the tragic Kafr Kasseem incident,<sup>14</sup> and the activities of the Al 'Ard group. When this group broke away from MAKI, its leaders began to urge non-participation for Arabs in the election. The communists, in the meantime, continued to stress Arab non-cooperation with the Zionists, using the slogan "6 against 114"<sup>15</sup> (referring to the number of communists in the Knesset against all the other members). Thus it appeared the Arab electorate was confronted with the choices of non-participation/boycott



advocated by the nationalists and participation in the election but non-cooperation with MAPAI, advocated by the communists. The result was surprising to both nationalists and communists. Approximately 85% of the eligible Arab voters exercised their franchise despite the call to boycott,<sup>16</sup> and MAPAM nudged aside MAKI, taking second place to MAPAI with Arab voters.<sup>17</sup> MAPAM stole the show from MAKI among Arab voters by, among other efforts, its call for full Arab membership in the Histadrut, in line with the recent Histadrut decisions for which MAPAM had pressed. A comparison of results taken from purely Arab polling places shows the shift:

	1951	1955	1959
MAPAI	67.9	64.7	49.0
MAKI	15.1	15.6	11.2
MAPAM	5.6	7.3	14.0

Source: Based on information provided by Yosef Waschitz, "Arabs in Israeli Politics" in New Outlook, March-April 1962 and Atallah Mansour, "Israel's Arabs Go to the Polls" in New Outlook, January 1960, pp. 23-26.

The Soviet loss of prestige resulting from continued disclosures of Stalinist atrocities, suppression of the popular will in Poland and Hungary, and Moscow's intimidation of the Ben-Gurion government during the Suez Affair hurt MAKI among its potential Jewish supporters. In addition, after ten years of election experience, the Israeli Arabs were learning to differentiate between the various Zionist trends. They now chose to encourage one, by increasing the strength of MAPAM, and to desert the other, by not voting MAPAI. In this election, MAKI was not the beneficiary of Arab grievances and the party emerged more than a bit scathed: it lost three of its six seats, representing a decrease in electoral support from 4.5% to 2.8%

## 5

MAKI ran three campaigns for the Fifth Knesset elections on August 15, 1961. The first was aimed at the Jews and focused on:

- (1) the trial, then nearing conclusion of Nazi war criminal

Adolf Eichmann. Tied in to this was Israel's relations with West Germany, portrayed as the equally wicked heir of the Nazi regime.

(2) the demand for wage increases for skilled workers. Such raises were said to be justified by the existing conditions of full employment and shortages of skilled workers. The party identified itself with all workers, skilled and unskilled, in all industries and branches of the economy, supporting all calls for strikes (including that of the Rabbis<sup>18</sup>).

(3) the continued dissatisfaction of new immigrants awaiting full absorption.

MAKI ignored the revived issue of the Lavon Affair, as well as the controversy dealing with the Histadrut's power and influence. Its second campaign was aimed at the Arab voters and included:

(1) the issues of Arab nationalism and political equality, with the party portraying itself as the Arab's ultimate voice in Israel.

(2) a demand for the abolition of military administration.

(3) opposition to the expropriation of Arab lands either for reasons of security or national irrigation works.

(4) support for Moslem and Druze religious autonomy.

(5) demands for health and sanitation facilities, better roads and schools, and generally improved working and living conditions for Arab peasants and workers.

(6) the advocacy of the right of all Arab refugees to return. The party was "out front" on this issue, which proved to be a vote getter among Israeli Arabs.

MAPAM was left behind even though it disassociated itself from the official line of "not a single refugee shall return." Instead MAPAM advocated an Arab-Israeli agreement on repatriation of a specific number of refugees, within the framework of a peace settlement.<sup>19</sup>

MAKI's third campaign was aimed at both communities and focused on issues of interest to both Jews and Arabs:

(1) tax reduction.

(2) an increase in the real wages of workers at the expense of company profits.

(3) abolition of social polarization.

(4) concern for the problems of working women, such as the availability of state-supported child care centers.

In both communities, the party also emphasized the recent

Soviet successes in space as scientific achievements of a progressive and peaceful nature.

MAKI made an enormous organizational effort, opening new branches in immigrant areas, holding rallies in various locations, launching a special fund-raising drive, and using every front organization and other means available to them to reach voters. The results were impressive when compared to the losses of 1959: MAKI won five seats, representing a 4.2% share of the 1,006,964 valid votes cast.<sup>20</sup> The party took 22.5% of the Arab votes cast in purely Arab localities.<sup>21</sup> This moved the party back into second place, after MAPAI (49.2%) and ahead of MAPAM (11.7%).

6

While the party had made impressive gains in the Fifth Knesset elections, internal strains relating to Stalinism, neo-Stalinism and the Sino-Soviet dispute caused a small group of the party's younger members to form a dissident group within MAKI. In the early 1960s, cliques of disaffected young members, impressed by the radical revolutionary lines of Maoism and frustrated with Moscow's apparent turn from Marxism, met in parlors and coffee houses, formed cells of their own, and soon identified themselves as the Israel Socialist Organization (ISO). They called their paper Matzpen (Compass), and, in turn, they were so identified. Matzpen has been compared to the New Left groups which appeared in Europe and the United States during the 1960s.<sup>22</sup>

Their commitment to Marxism and its basic tenet dealing with the inevitability of revolution combined with the Trotsky-Maoist belief in permanent revolution made them balk at the slogan "peaceful coexistence" and at the Soviet resolution to open relations with the capitalist world. Their main thesis regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict was that national coexistence was impossible because the Arabs could not agree to the existence of a Zionist state linked to the Jewish communities of the world. Their solution: "De-Zionization."<sup>23</sup> This meant that Israel would exist as a local phenomenon, without ties to Jews elsewhere. Israel would return to the borders designated by the U.N. partition plan. It would be socialist and part of a socialist Middle East. What was the reaction of MAKI's leaders? They ejected the Matzpen group from the communist party.<sup>24</sup>

In the meantime, MAKI was having other internal problems. In December 1963, Meir Wilner submitted to MAKI's politbureau his draft of a proposed speech for the upcoming national convention. Wilner had been asked to speak on organizational questions, but his draft deviated from this topic, dealing instead with Arab Israeli relations and attacking Kol Ha'am's position as too sympathetic to Jewish nationalism. The politbureau rejected Wilner's draft, reassigning the main address to Mikunis.<sup>25</sup> When Mikunis spoke at the convention in Haifa a month later, he condemned both Jewish and Arab nationalism and attacked Israel's government and political system with the usual litany of criticisms. He differentiated between MAKI's program and those of the other political parties. Wilner, given ten minutes, spoke for an hour, attacking the Mikunis conclusions and repeating the anti-Israel arguments he had included in his rejected draft. To avoid exacerbating the situation, Mikunis did not respond. He merely summarized the arguments heard.

This "Haifa controversy" was subsequently discussed and, uncustomarily, the political bureau decided to permit both Mikunis and Wilner to present reports on the Arab-Israeli question at the central committee session scheduled for July 1964. The resultant resolutions of the plenary session were vaguely formulated so as to satisfy both factions, whose differences were difficult to conceal. Mikunis and Sneh, satisfied that the party's "moderate" line would hold, left for Moscow to attend the International Youth Forum, scheduled to convene in September. In the meantime, Wilner consolidated his position and increased his support among Arab party members. He was initially assisted by the appearance of Mikunis' article "A Word in Ahmed Ben Bella's Ear," in which the author criticized the Algerian president's anti-Israel attitude:

... we firmly reject... [Ben Bella's] total negation of Israel. In all his references to this topic he has denied her right to existence as an independent state. This view... contains not a grain of realism and has not the least prospect of acceptance. It serves only Western imperialism, the Israeli militarists, the reactionary and militarist Arab statesmen, such as the

former Mufti of Jerusalem and Ahmed Shukeiri, who themselves played a far from minor role in promoting the tragedy of the Palestine Arab people.<sup>26</sup>

Wilner was next helped by an incident in Moscow. The Arab representatives to the Youth Forum submitted a draft resolution proposing that delegates express solidarity with the Palestinian Arab struggle for "return to their homeland" and "full restoration of their rights" and condemn "imperialism and its continuing support of existing aggression, which is hindering the march of Arabs of the Middle East towards true democracy and freedom. . . ." <sup>27</sup>

Unwilling to see passage of the Arab proposal because it did not call for "mutual recognition and respect for the just rights of both sides," Mikunis instructed the head of the Israeli Young Communist League delegation to support a counter-proposal submitted by delegations from MAPAM and Ahdut Ha-Avoda youth organizations,<sup>28</sup> to vote against the Arab proposal and even to walk out of the meeting. These instructions, Wilner later argued, exceeded Mikunis' authority because they were in direct contradiction to the MAKI political bureau decision that its delegation not vote against Arab proposals and not support the left-wing Zionist resolution (prepared before the Israeli delegations left for Moscow). The Wilner faction and the Arab members of MAKI also argued that, because it expressed a fundamental political stand, the Ben Bella article should have been submitted to the party's politbureau for approval.

On his return from the Soviet Union, Mikunis discovered that MAKI's seven-member politbureau was now split four to three. Wilner, Tūbī, Habībi and Hinin were aligned against Mikunis, Sneh and Wilenska. The hardbitten debate continued for months, dividing first the central committee and then the membership. In January 1965, Sneh, as editor of the party's paper, again tried to unify the party by walking the ideological tightrope in his editorial:

The source of the [conflict] lies in the refusal of each side to recognize the rights of the other--in the refusal by Israel's rulers to legitimate the rights of the Arab people of Palestine and in the refusal by the Arab leaders to legitimate the State of Israel and its rights.<sup>29</sup>

Wilner and his supporters argued that Kol Ha'am, with Sneh as editor, no longer reflected the party line. In February 1965, Túbí submitted a proposal that Sneh be replaced by Zvi Breitstein (from the Mikunis faction) and Ruth Lubitch (from the Wilner faction) and that the secretariat of Kol Ha'am's editorial board be expanded with three Wilner supporters. Wilner's advantage of one vote in the politbureau passed the resolution, sending it on to the central committee for their approval. However, Mikunis and Sneh turned to the larger MAKI branches in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, where their supporters rallied and convinced Wilner to avoid a confrontation. Despite efforts to find a common denominator and efforts on the part of Sneh to keep a balance in the party's organ by publishing both sets of views, the Wilner group continued to attack the Mikunis faction for their "nationalist-Jewish" deviation--shades of the old PCP-KPP and Ha Emet-Kol Ha'am disputes of the Twenties and the late Thirties early Forties.

When the central committee met in April 1965, Wilner and his supporters failed in their attempt to gain a central committee condemnation of the Mikunis faction. In May, however, Wilner succeeded in obtaining a majority vote in the central committee for a resolution providing for the publication of the two points of view. This public airing of an internal ideological dispute (long opposed by Moscow, where such disputes were supposed to be settled definitively), while unusual for an "orthodox" communist party, appears to have been a characteristic of the communist movement in Palestine and Israel.

The two points of view, later known as "Opinion A" (Wilner-Túbí) and "Opinion B" (Mikunis-Sneh), appeared in Kol Ha'am on May 19, and set off a series of debates at regional conventions, as well as on the pages of the party organ. Since both sides knew that the issues would only be decided by the delegates to the Fifteenth Party Conference scheduled for July 1965, an argument arose as to the basis of delegate selection.<sup>30</sup>

At this point, the CPSU delegation arrived, unaware of the depth of the differences between the two factions. They assumed a neutral attitude (probably aided by their lack of understanding), and expressed their hope that the propaganda value of a bi-national Israeli Communist Party could be maintained.<sup>31</sup> When CPSU delegates Georgi Franzeyev and Yuri Mitin met with members of each faction, they stressed the harm a

split would cause to the world communist movement, and they succeeded in convincing both sides to concentrate on the coming Knesset elections, postponing the solution to MAKI's problems.<sup>32</sup> Soviet pressure for a compromise resulted in equal representation in all central party institutions and was followed immediately by the departure of the Soviet delegation, under the impression that unity had been preserved. However, as Mikunis later explained: "... from 23 June [the day of the compromise] to 2 August [the last joint session of the central committee], the factions continued their acts of deviousness, pressure and factional intervention wherever possible,"<sup>33</sup> in order to determine the choice of conference delegates. In other words, the CPSU delegates, because of their continuing inability to understand the issues peculiar to the Jewish state, accomplished nothing. Finally, on August 3, 1965, Kol Ha'am admitted that the central committee had failed to resolve the delegate selection dispute, leaving no alternative but for each faction to hold its own conference. This signaled the end of Israel's bi-national communist party.<sup>34</sup>

8

Two separate and distinct communist parties presented lists for the Sixth Knesset elections of November 2, 1965: MAKI, headed by Mikunis and Sneh, and RAKAH (the Hebrew acronym for the New Communist List), headed by Wilner, Tübī and Habībi. The two communist parties agreed on the following: support for peoples' liberation movements against colonialism and neo-colonialism; an end to the policy of friendship with the "neo-Nazi" rulers of Bonn; abrogation of the arms deal with "German militarism"; support for initiatives to make the Middle East a nuclear-free zone. They differed on the following: MAKI called for an independent Israeli foreign policy, described by the term "non alignment." RAKAH called for the abolition of relations of dependency upon NATO, and used the term "positive neutrality" to describe their ideal of an Israeli foreign policy. MAKI called for an improvement of Israeli relations with the Soviet Union, while RAKAH was more explicit, calling for an expansion of political, economic and cultural ties with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. MAKI wanted the abrogation of the decision forbidding the government to conduct

negotiations on the refugee issue on the basis of the U.N. resolution. RAKAH demanded that Israel first recognize the right of Arab refugees to choose between returning to their homeland or receiving compensation. Israel's recognition of Palestinian rights, RAKAH said, will lead to recognition by the Arab states of the state of Israel and its rights. The new party also supported an international agreement to end the Middle East conventional arms race by ending all arms shipments to all Middle East countries, from both the Western and Eastern blocs.<sup>35</sup> During the election campaign, MAKI's leaders accused RAKAH of "Arab chauvinism" and reaffirmed Israel's right to exist beyond question, stating that mutual recognition was the only way to peace. With Arab recognition, MAKI said, must come abrogation of the boycott and free passage through the Suez Canal. RAKAH responded with charges of "Jewish chauvinism."

With the outlawing of the Nasirite Al 'Ard, RAKAH's leaders concentrated on organizing Arab cadres. Tubi and Habibi, Saliba Khamis, Hana Naqqara and Emil Tuma expended enormous energy, moving among the Arabs on a daily basis to establish personal contacts.<sup>36</sup> When the Al 'Ard leaders requested an alliance, they were rejected out of RAKAH's fear of giving the Israeli authorities any excuse to bar RAKAH's participation.<sup>37</sup>

The New Communist Party could now claim a monopoly on Arab nationalism. They were even supported by Cairo Radio whose broadcasts reached Israel's Arab population. The ninth anniversary of the Kafr Kassem tragedy on October 29 provided RAKAH with an opportunity to issue a call to Arabs to vote "against the murderers" so that there would never be another Kafr Kassem.<sup>38</sup> The appeal seemed to work. When combined with the disappearance of the nationalist Al 'Ard, the emergence of RAKAH as an Arab party and the new voter eligibility of some 4,000-5,000 young, educated Arabs, the party's organization and election propaganda efforts succeeded in winning three seats, representing 2.27% (or 27,413 out of 1,206,728 valid votes cast). MAKI, on the other hand, barely won Mikunis' seat with 1.1% of the vote, as even more votes were drawn off by the New Force, another new party formed by the editors of the weekly Ha'olam Haze: "... thousands of Arabs, mostly young people, gave their votes to a Jewish group that they didn't know personally and from which they couldn't hope for any personal favors." The journalist, A. Mansour, believes these votes were a "reward" for a newspaper which was popular among Arabs. According to



Mansour, although it was "sensationalist and pornographic," it was never guilty of catering to the taste for chauvinism or hatred of the Arabs.<sup>39</sup> That may or may not be true, but the "peace caravan" sent into Arab villages is probably what attracted the support of young, first-time Arab voters and others who were either impatient with MAPAM's restraint or uncomfortable with the extremism of RAKAH. The result: The New Force won almost 3,000 Arab votes (out of its total 14,124), giving it one seat, which might have gone to MAKI, whose positions on Jewish-Arab issues were actually quite close to Ha'olam Hazeq's new party.<sup>40</sup>

Arab voters again followed the pattern of giving about half their votes to MAPAI (or the Alignment in this case), with the communists placing second, followed by MAPAM. Voting was very heavy, with 83% of the electorate casting valid votes. Of approximately 120,000 eligible Arab voters, almost 100,000 (83.3%, slightly more than the national average) went to the polls. While the Arab communists won 22.6% of the Arab vote, the Jewish communists attracted only 5%. In subsequent elections, RAKAH's share of the Arab vote would steadily grow: 1969 - 29.6%; 1973 - 36.6%; 1977 - 49.3%. Thus, in 1977, RAKAH, with close to 50% of the Arab vote, forced MAPAI and its Arab lists into second place among Arab voters.<sup>41</sup>

## 9

The split in Israel's bi-national communist party was made absolute by the Six-Day War in 1967. The Soviet bloc (except for Rumania) broke relations with Israel and took the Arab side. RAKAH followed the Soviet line, demanding Israeli withdrawal, and Meir Wilner voted against a bill calling for an emergency tax, on the grounds that it would finance military action not in Israel's interest.<sup>42</sup> RAKAH's Al Ittihad touted Arab military successes until it was clear Israel was winning. Then they condemned the "Eshkol-Dayan-Begin" government and its "adventuristic undertaking," its "policy of force," and its denial of Palestinian nationalism.<sup>43</sup> In July, they were rewarded for their hard line when Moscow recognized RAKAH as the Communist Party in Israel.<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand, Sneh opted for Jewish nationalism, supporting the government's actions and subsequently justifying Israel's position on the occupied territories in terms of

self-defense. Mikunis also supported the government: "It was and still is our opinion that unconditional Israeli retreat from the occupied territories would be tantamount to retreating to the situation and conditions which forced the Six-Day War on us; it would be tantamount to inviting another war."<sup>45</sup> He added an important qualifier: "... we firmly believe that any attempt to annex the occupied territories to Israel also means inviting an Arab war of revenge against Israel." Mikunis supported a readiness to begin direct negotiations with the "democratic representatives" of the Palestinian people, noting that "the government of Israel should reveal such readiness even if there are still no signs of a readiness for peace on the other side of the ceasefire lines."

Thus, almost six months after Moscow had stripped the party of its "legitimacy" by awarding recognition to RAKAH, MAKI's leaders were still trying to walk the tightrope. When MAKI was excluded from preparations for an international conference of communist parties in Moscow, Mikunis appealed, to no avail. Their places were taken by RAKAH delegates, and MAKI's leaders suffered the isolation of other "revisionist" parties. However, with the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, the world communist movement split over the issue of Soviet domination. This led to an improvement in MAKI's relations with both the Rumanian and Yugoslavian parties.

MAKI's leaders also reassessed their party's position in Israel. And, when Arab guerrillas launched a series of attacks in the fall of 1968, MAKI's leadership approved Israel's retaliatory raids. This set off a protest from Esther Wilenska and her husband, Zvi Breitstein. They argued that MAKI had strayed from the communist line, gone too far in its support for the "hawkish" government, not made sufficient effort to understand the Arab point of view and been too critical of the Soviet Union. These charges were pressed at MAKI's Sixteenth Congress, held in October 1968. Despite her failure to alter the party line at the Sixteenth Congress, Wilenska represented MAKI at "The Berlin Peace Congress" in July 1969. She still spoke of mutual recognition and admitted to being surprised "when the organizers of a meeting devoted to peace allowed the 'Palestine Liberation Organization' to distribute propaganda material even denying Israel's right to have been established or to exist."<sup>46</sup>

The elections for the Seventh Knesset were held on October 28, 1969, in a general atmosphere of pessimism regarding peace prospects. Economic and social issues therefore ranked first, with "peace policies" relegated to a secondary position. This showed up in the results when three groups identifying themselves with the peace issue had poor showings:<sup>47</sup>

(1) The Peace List: A group of university professors and other intellectuals set up an election platform based on only the peace issue. This list drew 0.37% (5,138 votes) and did not qualify for a seat.

(2) Ha'olam Hazeh: Uri Avneri's list received 1.23% (16,853 votes) and barely qualified for two seats (one more than it previously held).

(3) MAKI: Headed by Sneh, the party polled 1.15% (15,712 votes) and qualified for only one seat.

The Arab voters virtually ignored the three peace lists, which attracted only a total of 1,524 Arab votes: The Peace List - 350; Ha'olam Hazeh - 444; MAKI - 730.<sup>48</sup> RAKAH ran an anti-Israel campaign and concentrated on the party's natural base, the Arab villages and towns. Significantly, its campaign propaganda ignored the theoretical and ideological aspects of the class struggle, focusing, instead, on the realities of life on the West Bank. They emphasized the humiliation of the checkpoints and the communal tension and suspicion in Jewish towns where many young Arabs worked. Their pamphlets advocated immediate and unconditional withdrawal from all occupied areas.<sup>49</sup>

Of the approximately 150,000 valid Arab votes cast, RAKAH received 29.6%<sup>50</sup> (39,000, showing an increase of 15,000 votes), compared to its previous share of 22.6%. They attracted some 10,000 new voters of whom about 1,000 were Druze.<sup>51</sup> Analysts are generally in agreement that the change in the Arab vote in 1969 was among "the most significant findings" in the statistical analysis of that election. Clearly RAKAH's anti-Zionist campaign had attracted many Arab voters away from the Zionist labor parties and their affiliated Arab lists. The party, now overwhelmingly Arab, again won three seats, but its potential seemed greater. MAPAI, faced with the RAKAH challenge, opened its membership to Druze and other Arab veterans of the Israeli Army and moved their Arab Knesset members to prominent positions in the Knesset and on various committees.

## NOTES

1. Aryah Rubinstein, "Communist Party in Israel" in The American Zionist, October 1954, p. 9.

2. Misha Louvish, "Why Did MAPAI Lose Ground?" in Here & Now, August 4, 1955, pp. 4-5. Also see Avraham Schenker, "The Issues in Israel's Elections" in Israel Horizons July-August 1955, p. 7.

3. Uri Ra'anani, "Who Voted For Whom?" in Here & Now, August 4, 1955, p. 13. An amusing footnote to the election coverage appeared alongside Ra'anani's article (p. 14), under the title "Pepper & Salt," signed "Salmonides": "Last Thursday was a red-letter (or, rather, Red figure) day for loyal Communists who read nothing but Kol Ha'am. While nobody was looking (not even the proofreader), the man who set the election returns for Kol Ha'am that morning made the Reds' representation in the Knesset no more and no less than 40.1%. . . The let-down came the following day, when the paper's editors sadly admitted that the figure should read 4.01%. . . Don't take it to heart, comrades. We all have our ups and downs."

4. "How Strong Is MAKI?" (author unidentified), Here & Now, August 15, 1956, p. 8.

5. Ibid.

6. The sketches of MAKI leaders were culled from various sources, including the Encyclopaedia Judaica, Who's Who in Israel, and "How Strong is MAKI?"

7. The Mikunis obituary in The Jerusalem Post, May 21, 1982, contained some interesting comments: "Mikunis quit the MAKI leadership in 1975, claiming that it had turned Zionist. As a true Communist, he said, he could never be a Zionist. Thus he refused to join the formal merger between MAKI and Thelet Adom, which formed MOKED."

8. For Sneh's thoughts as a MAPAM leader see Youth and Nation, November 1948, pp. 6-9. For his opinion on the application of the Truman Doctrine to Palestine, see "Document: What Orientation for Palestine?" in Jewish Life, March 1948, pp. 27-28.

9. See M. Edelstein, "The 1965 Split in MAKI," in Soviet Jewish Affairs, 1974, p. 36, n. 18, for some material on Hinin.

10. "How Strong is MAKI?" Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Citizenship was automatically granted all Jews living in Israel or "returning from exile in the Diaspora" (under the Law of Return), while non-Jews could become citizens by: (1) virtue of residence, (2) naturalization, or (3) birth. The problem for the Arabs living in Israel was their dependence on the interpretation and application of these conditions for citizenship. For example, nationality/citizenship based on residence meant that the Arab had to prove former Palestinian citizenship, continuous presence in Israel from May 14, 1948, and registration as an inhabitant as of March 1, 1952. Many claimed they were unable to prove they met these requirements because the applicable documents were lost, destroyed, or confiscated during the war of 1948.

14. Hal Draper, "The Origins of the Middle East Crisis" in The Israel-Arab Reader, edited by Walter Z. Laqueur (N. Y.: Bantam Books, Inc., 1971), p. 299, calls the incident a pogrom and tells of the Kafr Kasseem tragedy which resulted in the death of 46 Arabs at the hands of Israeli soldiers. The incident occurred on October 29, 1956, the day Israel attacked Egypt.

15. Ze'ev Schiff, "Israel's Fourth Elections" in New Outlook, January 1960, p. 24.

16. This represented 81,764 out of 96,608 eligible Arab votes. Majid Al-Haj and Avner Yaniv, "Uniformity or Diversity: A Reappraisal of the Voting Behavior of the Arab Minority in Israel" in The Elections in Israel: 1981, edited by Asher Arian (Tel Aviv University: Ramot Publishing, 1983), p. 143.

17. MAPAM won its place by its programs and activities in Arab villages and cities. They offered something positive and concrete, as opposed to the negativism of MAKI and Al 'Ard. Arab acceptance of MAPAM's earlier invitation to join as full members had led to the involvement of hundreds of Arab youth who came to MAPAM kibbutzim to participate in training and education in agriculture and other areas. These youths later maintained MAPAM party branches established in Arab villages and cities, taking advantage of the MAPAM-initiated publishing house and cooperatives to gain support for the party. MAPAM's Arabic publications announced the party's campaign for the abrogation of the military administration, the neutralization of the Middle East and an Israeli initiative to solve the Jewish-Arab dispute.

18. Moshe M. Czudnowski and Jacob M. Landau, The Israeli Communist Party and the Elections for the Fifth Knesset, 1961 (Calif.: The Hoover Institution, 1965), p. 38.

19. Yosef Waschitz, "Arabs in Israeli Politics" in New Outlook, March-April 1962, p. 40.

20. 81.6% of the general electorate voted. Czudnowski and Landau, p. 42.

21. In purely Arab localities, 87% of the eligible population voted, 76, 918 valid ballots. Ibid., p. 43.

22. David J. Schnall, Radical Dissent in Contemporary Israeli Politics: Cracks in the Wall (N. Y.: Praeger Publishers, 1979), p. 91.

23. Peretz Merhav, "The Compass Astray" in New Outlook, October 1969, p. 49.

24. This did not deter Moshe Machover, who became one of Matzpen's leading intellectuals and organizers. He co-authored the New Left Review article, "The Class Nature of Israeli Society" (1971). Matzpen groups sprang up in various places, including London, England. In September 1972, Matzpen published its "Fundamental Principles," which were uncompromisingly anti-Zionist. Henry Srebrnik, "Matzpen: Anti-Zionism in the 70's" in Youth and Nation, Summer 1978, pp. 14-16.

25. Edelman, ibid.

26. "ICP Leader Attacks Ben Bella," in New Outlook, November-December 1964, pp. 76-68 (a reprint of the major part of the Mikunis article). Also see New Outlook, January-February 1965, "Letters," pp. 66-67, where Mikunis chides the magazine for omitting certain paragraphs.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Kol Ha'am, January 17, 1965.

30. Wilner, in control of the central committee secretariat, proposed a change in the election system from branch to cell representation. Under the existing branch system, Wilner supporters would have been outvoted, while under the proposed cell system, Wilner (in control of the party apparatus) would have been able to rearrange the cells, strategically spreading his supporters for maximum effect. See Edelman, pp. 28-29.

31. The Soviet party had enjoyed being able to cite MAKI support when criticized by Western communists (either Jewish or non-Jewish) for their position on Jewish issues.

32. Edelman, p. 32, states: "The discussion became emotional; at one point one of the Soviet delegates burst into tears while describing the harm which the split would cause to the world Communist movement."

33. Ibid.

34. Significantly, when the Mikunis-Sneh faction opened its conference in Tel Aviv on August 4, 1965, Hatikvah (the Israeli national anthem) was sung before The Internationale, while at the opening of the Wilner-Tubi conference in Jaffa on August 6, 1965, it was sung after The Internationale with many of the Arab members remaining silent. The CPSU dispatched greetings at the opening of both conferences, but the Mikunis-Sneh congress also received greetings from thirty-three other fraternal parties. Kevin Devlin, Communism in Israel (N. Y.: Columbia University, 1969), p. 11.

35. For MAKI's position see "Documents: Israeli Parties on Foreign Affairs" in New Outlook, October 1965, pp. 58-59. For RAKAH: "Documents: Israeli Parties on Foreign Affairs," in New Outlook, November-December 1965, pp. 64-65.

36. Al 'Ard had been outlawed because it was opposed to the existence of the state. Its "Socialist List" was then declared invalid and their court appeal also failed. See Ze'ev Katz, "The Elections--A Defeat for Activism" in New Outlook, November-December 1965, p. 17. They subsequently disappeared from the Israeli political scene, leaving the way clear for RAKAH's growth. See Atallah Mansour, "How the Israeli Arabs Voted" in New Outlook, November-December 1965, p. 24.

37. Mansour, p. 24.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. In the Israeli political world beyond the two small communist factions, the election became a referendum with voters choosing between "military activism," as represented by RAFI (Ben-Gurion's new Israeli Workers' List) and GAHAL (the new Herut-Liberal Party bloc) and "anti-activism," as represented by the Alignment (MAPAI and Ahdut Ha'Avoda), MAPAM, the Independent Liberals and the two communist parties. Voters were deciding whether to reopen the Lavon Affair investigation, as Ben-Gurion demanded and whether Levi Eshkol was personally unfit to be Prime Minister, as Ben-Gurion charged. The Alignment won 45 seats, MAPAI's Arab Lists won 4, giving Eshkol an impressive 49 seats.

41. Rael Jean Isaac, Party and Politics in Israel: Three Visions of a Jewish State (N. Y.: Longman, Inc., 1981), p. 177.

42. Clinton Bailey, "The Communist Party and the Arabs in Israel" in Midstream, May 1970, p. 50.

43. Ibid.
44. Bailey, p. 15.
45. New Outlook, January 1968, "Questions & Answers," p. 52.
46. Esther Wilenska, "Israelis and Palestinians at a Peace Meeting" in New Outlook, October 1969, p. 46.
47. The figures for the three "peace" lists were cited by Simha Flapan, "After the Elections" in New Outlook, November-December 1969, p. 18.
48. Ibid.
49. "Elections in Israel" in Youth and Nation, p. 23.
50. Isaac, Party and Politics, p. 177.
51. Bailey, p. 55.



## The End of MAKI

### I

Danny the Red arrived in Israel in May 1970, at a time when many Israeli youths questioned the slogan "ein breira" (no choice). France's Daniel Cohn-Bendit,<sup>1</sup> the leading representative of the European New Left, came at the invitation of the Hebrew University Student Union to speak at their first "peace-in." Seventy high school students had written the Prime Minister questioning the "seriousness" of the government's efforts to establish peace.<sup>2</sup> Many university students (former soldiers), intellectuals and kibbutz members were raising the same question. Cohn-Bendit's presence in Israel coalesced these individuals and a number of small leftist groups into a New Left movement.

Among those drawn in were two radical groups, Matzpen and Siach. While the former, Matzpen (the Israel Socialist Organization), was a spin off from MAKI during the early 1960s, the latter had begun to take shape after the Six-Day War. The first Siach group developed in Tel Aviv, formed by disillusioned members of Kibbutz Artzi-Hashomer Hatzair who opposed MAPAM's decision to remain in the Alignment, which was part of the government. They were joined by some ex-MAKI members and other previously unaffiliated individuals. Around the same time, another Siach group, composed mainly of students, developed in Jerusalem. The two groups decided to cooperate, while maintaining their independence. Eventually, similar groups emerged in Hadera, Haifa and the Negev. There was also an autonomous group of sympathetic high school students.<sup>3</sup>

Through his friend Haim Hanegbi, a leader of the Matzpen group, Cohn-Bendit was invited to speak at a kibbutz. His remarks not only unleashed a volatile controversy, but served both to split Matzpen and then to unify Matzpen elements and Siach elements. It initiated, in short, a coming together of a new leftist alignment which ran its own list under the name MOKED (Focus), in the Eighth Knesset election held on December 31, 1973. MOKED is seen as MAKI's direct ideological descendant. Although MAKI continued to exist, after the rift of 1965 it grew

increasingly weak. This was due initially to further factioning and rifts and then to the party's loss in early 1972 of Moshe Sneh,<sup>4</sup> its most formidable theoretician and spokesman.

When the party met for its Seventeenth Congress in April 1972, it experienced further problems. Esther Wilenska again raised the issue of MAKI's support for the "hawkish" government. She criticized the government's policy of launching retaliatory raids, its failure to conduct negotiations for peace and its policy of expansionism. Sneh's disciples defeated the Wilenska-Breitstein group which obtained about 21% of the delegate support.<sup>5</sup> Condemning MAKI's "moderate" tendencies, Wilenska called for an alliance with all radical elements. The result was a Left Forum leading to negotiations with representatives of Ha'olam Hadash (The New World), Brit HaSmol (The Left-Wing Alliance) and Siach.<sup>6</sup>

In the meantime, Sneh's group opened negotiations with a new leftist socialist-Zionist group called Tchelet-Adom (the Blue-Red movement, blue for Zionism and red for socialism). The resulting coalition in July 1973 also included "the Zionist half"<sup>7</sup> of Siach. It was this coalition which took the name MOKED, under the leadership of Dr. Meir Pa'il, a colonel in the reserves and an expert on military history. Later, in 1974, the more radical Wilenska-Breitstein group would splinter off to join MERI (the Israel Radical Camp), consisting of Ha'olam Hazeh (led by Uri Avneri) and the radical faction from Siach.

## 2

The outbreak of war on Yom Kippur 1973, the holy Day of Atonement, at first shocked and silenced all critics of the Israeli government. The elections originally scheduled for the end of October were rescheduled for December 31. Before long, both the right-wing LIKUD and the Israeli Left launched their own attacks. LIKUD assailed the government for not pursuing the war more aggressively and for permitting non-military supplies to reach Egypt's trapped Third Army. The Leftists claimed the government's status quo policy of "no peace, no war" had failed. The people, they said, had been deceived by the false security inherent in the concepts of "strategic depth" and "natural boundaries." The government's policies of expropriation, settlement and annexation had conveyed "the impression that it

wanted territories, not peace." The government had failed to recognize the existence of a Palestinian people and to accept that "the territory of Israel belonged to two peoples--Jews and Palestinians." The government had also failed to realize the necessity for compromise.<sup>8</sup> In the Knesset debate soon after the start of war, Meir Wilner spoke on behalf of RAKAH:

The government closed its ears to all suggestions of peace and relied on Israel's military superiority and on American backing. . . . In contrast. . . the Soviet Union repeatedly suggested a political solution in the direction of a stable and just peace. . . .

Is [the war] really, as the Prime Minister has said, being fought for our lives and our existence? That is not correct; it is not true. . . .<sup>9</sup>

Shmuel Mikunis spoke for MAKI:

Most of our people, except for militaristic right-wing circles and those who crave territorial annexations. . . have realized that political victory can be had by achieving peace, a just peace. . . . We do not ignore the grave significance of the one-sided policy of the Soviet Union in our region which expresses itself these days in a very sharp manner, but we look forward to days to come and therefore we dismiss the extreme remarks of M.K. Begin against the Soviet Union.<sup>10</sup> (Emphasis mine.)

Despite his reference to (and implied criticism of) the Soviet Union's "one-sided policy," Mikunis' presence on the candidate list would prove to be a burden to MAKI's offspring, MOKED. The issues of peace and war were expected to dominate the election, but the question of the Labor government's competency intruded. MAPAM members argued the viability of the Alignment and MAPAM's place in it. On election day, MAPAM defectors turned to the five "peace" lists,<sup>11</sup> including RAKAH and the new MOKED party headed by Pa'il a non-communist. Altogether the peace movement, as a whole, gained two Knesset seats giving it a new total of twelve. MOKED won 1.4% out of a total of 1,566,855 valid votes cast, seating only Pa'il.<sup>12</sup> Later, when asked why MOKED had not lived up to expectations by

winning two or three seats, Pa'il mentioned the "strongly nationalistic mood" in the country, intensified by the Yom Kippur War, and "the alignment Tchelet-Adom made with MAKI." He explained that the name Shmuel Mikunis was especially damaging. "I am sure that if not for Mikunis [a known communist and sympathizer of the Soviet Union], we would have two seats in the Knesset."<sup>13</sup>

Clearly, the Jewish communist party had lost its raison d'etre. As noted earlier, MAKI's submersion in MOKED under Thelet-Adom and its drift away from communist ideology had been more than the radical Wilenska and Breitstein could accept. Then, in late 1974, it was Mikunis, who, criticizing MAKI as Moscow had done for "nationalistic deviation" and saying it had turned Zionist, abandoned the remnant of the party he had helped build. As a communist, he said, he could never be a Zionist.<sup>14</sup> Finally, in June 1975, MAKI fulfilled the hopes of Meir Pa'il and dissolved itself,<sup>15</sup> formally passing out of existence. With the 1973 election, therefore, we come to the end of the line in the history of the Jewish communist party in Israel. Before the next Knesset election of 1977, MAKI's offspring, MOKED, would be even further submerged in still another coalition, "SHELLI."

However, RAKAH, the Arab communist party, did well in the elections following the Yom Kippur War. Headed by Wilner and Tūbī, RAKAH's list won four seats with 3.4% of the total vote and 36.6% of the Arab vote.<sup>16</sup> Its increase from 29.6% of the Arab vote in 1969 was highly significant as an indicator of the change in the Israeli Arab's perception wrought by the recent war. It proved, as Moshe Shokeid noted:

The Arab voters were loosening old bonds-- either those which obligated them to the Arab lists sponsored by the establishment, or ties which had deterred them from supporting opposition and anti-establishment parties. They were ready to take part in the "entertainment" and pocket the money offered by the Arab lists, but they did not feel committed to casting their ballots for them.<sup>17</sup>

One of RAKAH's four Knesset seats went to Tewfik Zayyad, later called the "Kremlin Communist" and the "Red Mayor" of Nazareth. Zayyad was born in Nazareth in 1929, went to school there and, under the influence of some of his teachers, became an active communist while still in high school. He later worked on the construction of British military camps and joined the NLL, which he identified as the Arab counterpart of the Jewish-dominated PCP. In 1949, he was arrested for his participation in a demonstration against unemployment and was forbidden to leave Nazareth without a special permit. Despite that administrative order, in 1962 MAKI sent him to Russia where he spent two years studying communist ideology and political economy.<sup>18</sup> Zayyad, a Democratic Front candidate, was elected the mayor of Nazareth in December 1975. Claiming the Democratic Front was not a political party, he announced the limited goal of bringing equal rights to Nazareth: "Our struggle is a defined one, a local one, a struggle for the application of Israeli democracy to Nazareth municipal matters."<sup>19</sup>

Yet, on April 2, 1976, Zayyad was "authoritatively" reported "agitating in West Bank cities" just before the outbreak of violence.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, the violence on the West Bank, and in the Galilee on March 30, 1976, was attributed to RAKAH instigation, and the party was accused of organizing demonstrations against the government's policy of building Jewish settlements in densely populated Arab areas. Earlier in March, the heads of Arab local councils in the Galilee had signed a statement voicing opposition to government takeover of lands and further Jewish settlement in the Galilee. This was followed by "Earth Day" demonstrations, as they became known, with RAKAH being blamed for unleashing a new spirit of confrontation. Thus, the party was now seen as more openly anti-Israel than ever before (since statehood, that is). Some even traced links to the PLO through the underground Palestinian National Front (in Judea and Samaria), "which is affiliated with the outlawed Communist Party of Jordan, and RAKAH in Israel."<sup>21</sup>

In 1977, in preparation for the Ninth Knesset elections,

RAKAH reached out to the Black Panthers<sup>22</sup> in an effort to regain legitimacy in the Jewish community. Panther leader Charley Biton was given third place (a safe spot) on the RAKAH list, after Wilner and Tübī. This move brought Cochani Shemesh and other Black Panthers together with RAKAH to form a new coalition, HADASH<sup>23</sup> (Hazit Democratit Le-Shalom U'le Shivyon, Democratic Front for Peace and Equality). Also part of HADASH was Hanna Mo'is, a non-communist Christian Arab who was the chairman of the organization of Arab local council heads. Mo'is was given the fifth spot.

The elections held on May 5, 1977 brought momentous change to Israel as the Alignment suffered a resounding defeat, bringing Begin's LIKUD coalition to power. RAKAH's Democratic Front took 49.3% of the Arab vote (comprising about 90% of its total), clearly ranking it first among Arab voters. This almost completely reversed the party's position relative to MAPAI, which took 27% of the Arab vote, electing only one Knesset member from its Arab affiliated list.<sup>24</sup> Out of 1,747,820 valid votes cast, HADASH won 80,118 (4.6%), giving it five Knesset seats.

Its peace platform called for Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories, recognition of the Palestinian-Arab people's right to self-determination and establishment of an independent state alongside the state of Israel. The platform also called for the respect of Israel's and all the Arab states' rights to "sovereign existence and development in conditions of peace and security." It recommended the "immediate reconvention of the Geneva Conference... with the participation of all parties to the conflict including the PLO..."<sup>25</sup> While RAKAH's Democratic Front election success was impressive, the bi-national/class emphasis of its campaign had failed to attract significant Jewish support. In totally Jewish areas, only 888 voted for the Front out of a total 80,118 votes.<sup>26</sup>

SHELLI, the small political alignment which included Ha'olam Hazeh, elements of the Black Panthers and MOKED, had completely swallowed Mikunis' MAKI. It won only 1.6% of the total vote, representing two seats for Arie Eliav<sup>27</sup> and Meir Pa'il. Uri Avneri had been ranked third, with Sa'adia Marciano, a Black Panther founder, in the fourth slot. The party won 2% in large urban centers, less in outlying areas, but polled well on some kibbutzim. However, although its platform was very similar to that of RAKAH's HADASH, it polled only 1% among Arabs.<sup>28</sup>

Differences between SHELLI and HADASH were found in

SHELLI's qualified call for Israel to return to the pre-war lines of June 1967: "... except for changes agreed upon by the parties and after settlement of the Jerusalem problem." On this issue SHELLI stated that Jerusalem would remain united and the capital of Israel, but the Arab part could, after the establishment of peace, become the capital of a Palestinian Arab state. Calling themselves the SHELLI Camp (to emphasize their alliance with various groups dedicated to peace), their campaign was directed toward the leftist supporters of the Alignment (both in MAPAM and in MAPAI). The party was supported by intellectuals advocating an Israeli-Palestinian entente and others who believed negotiations would succeed where military successes had failed to establish peace.

5

The leftists were devastated by the Menachem Begin victory in 1977 and were dismayed by his popularity among Israel's "oriental" Jews. When elections to the Tenth Knesset were held on June 30, 1981, the results were a disaster for Israel's small parties. Begin, still enjoying the prestige which accompanied the signing of the Camp David Accord, had tapped into the Sephardic/Oriental Jewish community, the "Second Israel," swallowing the potential base of SHELLI and other groups. Two large political blocs--LIKUD and Labor (MAPAI) emerged. Voter participation dropped from 79.2% in 1977 to 78.49%, with 1,937,366 valid votes being cast. SHELLI, successor to Ha'olam Hazeh, MOKED (MAKI) and elements of the Black Panthers, was wiped out, receiving only .45% (8,691) of the valid votes cast. RAKAH's Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (DFPE) was also hurt with a drop from 4.6% (five seats) in 1977 to 3.4% (four seats). Their loss was primarily due to a decline in Arab participation in the election, with the Arab abstention rate reaching a record of 31%.<sup>29</sup> Their share of Arab votes fell from close to 50% in 1977 to 37%, while, surprisingly, LIKUD more than doubled its strength in the Arab sector from 4,500 votes in 1977 to 10,800. Labor, too, made impressive gains, despite its own history of repressive policies against Israel's Arab population.

Majid Al-Haj and Avner Yaniv argue that the DFPE had outlived its usefulness as a vehicle for Arab dissent<sup>30</sup> and had undermined its own position among Arab voters by continuing to

preach communist ideology while upholding Israel's legitimacy.<sup>31</sup> The DFPE had lost credibility in its professed role of supporting Arab nationalism, its place being taken by the new Arab nationalist groups which had succeeded the old Al 'Ard. Increased interest in Arab nationalist groups had been sparked by the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement, escalation of West Bank tensions, intensification of the Jewish settlements policy and the dramatic rise in PLO status. In addition, the number of Arabs attending Israeli universities had taken a quantum leap from a few hundred to several thousand, thereby considerably raising the level of education among Israel's Arabs. Other factors mentioned in connection with a revival of nationalism among the Arabs in Israel include restoration of links between Arabs in Israel and their relatives and friends in the West Bank and Gaza territories.<sup>32</sup> In addition, the ramifications of the Yom Kippur War "especially the fact that, while boosting Arab morale," the war seemed to have caused "a serious decline in Israel's international position."<sup>33</sup>

While these factors help us to understand the increase in Arab nationalism, it is also necessary to point out that RAKAH's Front did little to change its strategy to counter these phenomena. The party was hesitant to abandon totally its appeal for Jewish votes, but its list did include one more Arab in a safe position, formerly filled by a Jewish member. This changed the balance of Arabs and Jews in the first six places on the list (from three-three) to four Arabs and two Jews. However, Wilner still occupied the number one spot; Tewfik Tūbī was second. As part of the communist effort to show support for the Arab cause, Tūbī had held a much publicized meeting in Bucharest with PLO leader Yasser Arafat, and the DFPE had initiated an Arab congress in Shafa Amer in September 1980. Its purpose was to prepare for the upcoming Arab Masses' General Congress to be held in Nazareth. Although the Nazareth Congress was banned, the communists still hoped to benefit from their efforts. They did not, however, because the overriding Arab perception of RAKAH was that the party had been too content to play a permanent role of opposition within the Israeli establishment.

As for the decline in Arab voter participation, it was primarily due to a PLO call on election eve to boycott the election. This definitely hurt RAKAH's Front. A more interesting question is raised by the increase in Arab votes for LIKUD and MAPAI. This can be attributed to the particularist interests of those



educated Arabs who accepted minority status in Israel's political system and hoped to benefit through their political involvement. The Arab voter who had been politically socialized during the 1960s and who was now voting for LIKUD or MAPAI was, in effect, expressing hope for integration and rejecting RAKAH's confusing signals of simultaneous acceptance of and opposition to the Israeli establishment. In addition, this educated voter was ignoring the appeals of the "nationalist/rejectionist" and "abstention/denial" approaches.<sup>34</sup>

Uri Avneri saw the Tenth Knesset as more hawkish than the Ninth. From a parliamentary standpoint, the peace camp had been destroyed, and Avneri feared the consequences.<sup>35</sup> In light of Israel's subsequent invasion of Lebanon, the losses it sustained and its subsequent occupation of southern Lebanon (with the obvious hazards to Israeli military personnel), Avneri's fears were realized. As Israel went to the polls on July 23, 1984, the Israeli political scene was far different from any time in its previous history. All the old leaders were gone. A despondent Menachem Begin retired, leaving his party to stand judgment for LIKUD policies which had led to an Israeli presence in Lebanon, a gloomy economic situation with an inflation rate of 400%, and heightened tensions on the West Bank.

Suddenly, the Arab, Druze and Bedouin voters (numbering some 250,000) became very important. In early July, Labor's Shimon Peres trekked to Jisr al-Zarqa, a poor Arab village north of Tel Aviv, to persuade several hundred Arabs to vote Labor. "Is there anyone here," he asked, "who wants the LIKUD?" The reply was a unified "No."<sup>36</sup> But, the Israeli Arabs had set their own agenda and the party which attracted a good deal of their support was the new Arab list, The Progressive List for Peace (PLP). Researcher Avner Regov traces the PLP's origins to the Committee of Heads of Arab Local Councils, established in 1972. It was a reaction, according to Regov, to the government's refusal to permit the establishment of any nation-wide Arab political body. The PLP pulled very strongly in the purely Moslem towns and villages of the Little Triangle and Wadi Ara. Its impressive showing in Kafr Kassem, Tira and Jatt was at RAKAH's expense. And, in many other large Arab villages, even in the Galilee, the new Arab party did well, placing second to RAKAH's DFPE among Arab voters. The PLP won two Knesset seats with 1.8% (38,012) of the total votes and with 18% of the Arab votes. Together, the PLP and RAKAH won 52% of Israel's Arab votes. This was the first

time in Israel's history where more than half of Israel's Arabs supported distinctly non-Zionist parties.<sup>37</sup>

The PLP's two seats were filled by Mohammed Miari, an Arab lawyer from Haifa, and Matti Peled, a former Air Force general and a member of Israel's General Staff in the Six-Day War. There is a glaring irony here. The PLP had criticized RAKAH for always presenting an ethnically balanced list with one Jew for every Arab. Meir Wilner always led the RAKAH ticket. The PLP's election propaganda had focused on this, claiming that this had been done on Moscow's orders, and that the communist party was therefore not a truly Arab party. Whatever the PLP strategy which resulted in the positioning of a prominent Jew in the second slot,<sup>38</sup> his presence probably cost the new party many Arab votes.

## 6

Israel's Eleventh Knesset election resulted in a deadlock. Neither the Labor Alignment of Shimon Peres (with 44 seats) nor the LIKUD coalition of Yitzhak Shamir (with 41 seats) was able to gain the support of a majority (61) of the Knesset's 120 members. Lengthy negotiations finally led to a "unity" government, initially led by Labor's Shimon Peres, with the understanding that he would step down in favor of Yitzhak Shamir after two years.

For Israel's Arab communist party, 1984 seemed to portend an even greater loss of party influence among Israel's Arab population than at almost any time in its previous history. With the emergence of the PLP, as a new focal point for Arab discontent in Israel, RAKAH appeared to have lost its raison d'être. According to Elie Rekhess, the PLP clearly represents a formidable challenge to the future of the surviving, small Israeli Arab communist party.<sup>39</sup>

However, the success of communists anywhere in the world outside the Soviet bloc has never been measured by the number of members their party attracted, but rather by their ability to set the policymaking agenda by shaping the issues and focusing the public's attention. As we have seen in this study, the communist party in Palestine and Israel was often successful in doing just that, despite its small numbers. We can conclude, therefore, that in the case of an ideological party, operating in a

hostile environment, there are aspects far more important than membership size. Rather, commitment of the members to the organization's basic ideology or espoused principles and quality and dedication of the leadership are of great consequence and of greater intrinsic interest. In this case study, these latter aspects--commitment of the membership and quality of leadership--were crucial because of the inherent conflict between communism and Zionism which inevitably rendered the party's very existence problematic and precarious. It is hoped that this study has shed some light on those qualities of endurance and survival necessary in any organization but particularly so when, as in this case, a political group, itself torn by ideological disputes, must function in such difficult circumstances.

In addition to the above, this study yields the following conclusions of general interest to political scientists and of specific interest to those interested in the study of communist movements and Soviet foreign policy:

(1) Although special strains were imposed on them by tensions between communism and Zionism, these communists, typically, were not permitted to resolve their problems autonomously. Except for a brief period (during the late 1930s and the early 1940s), they were generally obliged to take their lead from Moscow's agents who carried specific instructions, based on Moscow's own "world view." Thus, Moscow used the party as its own tool to justify and rationalize events which occurred elsewhere, far from the Middle East. In the pre-statehood period, events in Palestine were used to explain and legitimize Soviet policies more relevant elsewhere than to the situation there. And, when Israel came into existence with Soviet backing, the communists and their left-wing supporters in the Knesset were instrumental in neutralizing the strong pro-United States element in the Israeli government (at least until the outbreak of the Korean War), encouraging a policy of non-alignment.

(2) This study also enables us to examine the ways in which Moscow attempted to exercise control over its various communist sections, which together make up the international communist movement. In this connection, the communist movement in Palestine and Israel emerged as a near microcosm of the communist world, reflecting to some degree the broader divisions of opinion, frictions and splits.

(3) This study again disproves the myth of communism as a

monolithic movement. Despite Moscow's pronouncements to the contrary, there never has been one world-wide, Lenin-style, tightly knit party. Still, a comparison of this movement's modus operandi with the Comintern's Twenty-One Conditions (see Appendix A) shows how closely the PCP, in particular, came to reaching Moscow's standard.

(4) The myth of communist unity has too often led to a Western obsession with, and over-exaggeration of, the Bolshevik menace. This, in turn, has led to a distraction from problems within Western societies, to a dissipation of Western energies, and, to a certain extent, to many missed opportunities to capitalize on communist weakness caused by the movement's own internal dissension and fragmentation.

(5) The tendency to judge the success of a political organization by its membership numbers has obscured small accomplishments. For example, after all was said and done, this particular communist movement was in place and operative when the Soviets most needed to enlist that group's help during the difficult period following the German attack. The communist-founded V-League gained legitimacy in the eyes of the Yishuv and successfully channeled aid to the Soviets. And, more recently, the vocal peace movement in Israel derived some of its initial impetus from communist and left-wing support.

Through the presentation of this long history, we have seen how a faction-ridden, communist-internationalist party fought to survive and to operate--to whatever degree possible--in an increasingly cohesive nationalist environment, where Western democratic ideology as well as religion (Judaism, and, among the Arabs, Islam and Christianity) remained pervasive.

The following incident illustrates our final point. While the major parties set about forming a government toward the end of August 1984, HERUT's Transport Minister Haim Corfu and Health Minister Eliezer Shostak challenged Abba Eban for the position of Knesset Speaker on the grounds of their seniority. This led to speculation as to who would be next in line. To the surprise of many, the third and fourth in line for the "longest serving" Knesset members were the two veteran communist leaders Meir Wilner and Tewfik Tūbi.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the Party's success should, perhaps, be judged by the mere fact of its survival; and, with that as a measuring rod, we can conclude that there remains a place for RAKAH in Israeli politics, despite its recent weakening.

## NOTES

1. At age 17, Cohn-Bendit spent a summer at Kibbutz Hazore'a. See Helen Epstein, "New Arrivals on the Israeli Left" in Midstream, October 1970, p. 10.

2. Ibid., p. 12.

3. The Siach groups ran open weekly discussions. There was no such thing as membership.

4. Philip Hochstein, "Can U.S. afford to hurt Israel? Analysis of mutual helpfulness" in The Jewish Week--American Examiner, June 14, 1981, p. 4.

5. Perez Merhav, The Israeli Left: History, Problems, Documents (N.Y.: A. S. Barnes & Co., Inc., 1980), p. 281.

6. David J. Schnall, Radical Dissent in Contemporary Israeli Politics: Cracks in the Wall (N.Y.: Praeger Publishers, 1979), p. 109.

7. "Israel Notes: Another Left Group Emerges," an interview with Meir Pa'il, in Youth and Nation, October 1973, pp. 6-9.

8. Yaron Garmaise, "Our Left on the War" in Youth and Nation, January 1974, pp. 20-23.

9. "Document: The Knesset Debate," in New Outlook, October-November 1973, pp. 39-45.

10. Ibid.

11. The four winning lists were: (1) Independent Liberals (Gideon Hausner) - 4 seats; (2) Citizens Party (Shulamit Aloni) - 3; (3) RAKAH - 4; (4) MOKED - 1.

Uri Avneri's MERI drew only 10,469 votes, too little to qualify for a seat. No doubt his chances for returning to the Knesset were hurt when Ha'olam Hazeh party member Shalom Cohen left the MERI coalition to form the Black Panther List which drew 13,332 votes. However, taken together, these two lists drew only 23, 801, still missing the one percent minimum. See Nathan Yalin-Mor, "Elections, 1973 -- The Confusing Elections: Post-Mortem" in New Outlook, February 1974, p. 33.

12. Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1981 (Israel: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1981), p. 557.

13. Richard Streitfield, "An Interview With Meir Pa'il, An Israeli Socialist, A Socialist-Zionist Party" in Youth and Nation, September-October 1974, p. 16.

14. See the Mikunis obituary in The Jerusalem Post, May 21, 1982.

15. In an interview with Richard Streitfield in March 1974

(published in Youth and Nation, September-October 1974, op. cit.), Pa'il said: "... we hope that during the next two or three years, MAKI will be dissolved and MOKED will be... the radical movement."

16. Statistical Abstract, ibid., and also see Rael Jean Isaac, Party and Politics in Israel: Three Visions of a Jewish State (N.Y.: Longman, Inc., 1981), p. 177.

17. Moshe Shokeid, "Strategy and Change in the Arab Vote: Observations in a Mixed Town" in Elections in Israel, 1973, Asher Arian, Editor (Israel: Jerusalem Academic Press, 1975), p. 164.

18. See Moshe Kohn's interview with Tewfik Zayyad in The Jerusalem Post Magazine, December 19, 1975, p. 10, on the eve of his election as Nazareth's first communist mayor. Zayyad wrote about his experiences in Russia in A Nazarene in Red Square.

19. Kohn, ibid.

20. Yosef Goell, "Shattered Illusions" in The Jerusalem Post Magazine, April 2, 1976, p. 7.

21. Ibid.

22. The Black Panthers were a group of disaffected "oriental" (non-Western) Jewish youths of deprived background.

23. The acronym "HADASH" means "new."

24. Isaac, Party and Politics in Israel, ibid. The Democratic Front polled especially well in large Arab towns, where it often received 60-90% majorities. Also see "Election Results--The Ninth Knesset" in New Outlook, June-July 1977, p. 6.

25. "Elections 1977--Who, What and Why" in New Outlook, April-May 1977, p. 22.

26. Majid Al-Haj and Avner Yaniv, "Uniformity or Diversity: A Reappraisal of the Voting Behavior of the Arab Minority in Israel" in The Elections in Israel: 1981, Asher Arian, Editor (Israel: Ramot Publishing, Tel Aviv University, 1983), p. 154.

27. Arie Eliav was a deputy minister in two Labor governments, as well as a secretary general of the Labor party. Prominent in many vital fields (including immigration and development of new settlement areas), he left the Labor party in the 1970s over an ideological dispute with Golda Meir's cabinet. He then briefly joined Shulamit Aloni's group. In 1977, he agreed to head the new SHELLI list.

28. "Elections 1977--Who, What and Why" in New Outlook, April-May 1977, pp. 21-23, which includes a comparison of RAKAH and SHELLI platforms.

29. There was a steady decline in the percent of Arab voter participation as follows:

<u>1959</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1965</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1973</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1981</u>
- 15	- 17	- 18	- 20	- 23	- 26	- 31

For a complete analysis see Al-Haj and Yaniv, *ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 151, citing K. Ammon, "Land Day on Both Sides of the Green Line," Al Hamishmar, April 3, 1981.

33. *Ibid.*, citing Kalman Benyamini, "Israeli Youth and the Image of the Arab," The Jerusalem Quarterly, No. 20 (1981), pp. 87-95, and Elie Rekhess, The Israeli Arabs Since 1967: The Issue of Identity (Tel Aviv: The Shiloah Center, Sekirot No. 1, 1976) in Hebrew.

34. Al-Haj and Yaniv, p. 161.

35. Uri Avneri, "Elections, 1981--The Great Draw" in New Outlook, July-August 1981, pp. 6-7.

36. Thomas L. Friedman, "Israeli Politicians Court Long-Ignored Arab Voters" in The New York Times, July 9, 1984, p. 1.

37. Ezer Weizmann's YAHAD list drew 6% of the Arab vote, "an indication of the importance of hamula voting in the Little Triangle, where the head of the Kafr Kara local council, Mohammed Massarwa, ran on the YAHAD list." Yosef Goell, "Minority majority" in The Jerusalem Post Magazine, August 10, 1984, p. 6, and The New York Times, "Shamir and Peres Plan to Meet Today in Israeli Election Deadlock," August 1, 1984, p. 4.

"Hamula" voting refers to voting based on the extended family, the traditional structure of the village, wherein the hamula heads can influence voting either through inducements or coercion. See Al-Haj and Yaniv, p. 157, for a further discussion.

38. Goell, *ibid.*

39. The comment was made during the author's telephone conversation (in Israel, January 1985), with Dr. Rekhess who is preparing a study on RAKAH.

40. Mark Segal, "The turning point," in The Jerusalem Post, August 24, 1984, p. 7.





# Appendix A

## The Twenty-One Conditions

In August 1920, the Second Comintern Congress approved the following conditions of admission to the Communist International:

1. All propaganda and agitation must be of a genuinely communist character and in conformity with the programme and decisions of the Communist International. The entire party press must be run by reliable Communists who have proved their devotion to the cause of the proletariat. The dictatorship of the proletariat is to be treated not simply as a current formula learnt by rote; it must be advocated in a way which makes its necessity comprehensible to every ordinary working man and woman, every soldier and peasant, from the facts of their daily life, which must be systematically noted in our press and made use of every day.

The periodical press and other publications, and all party publishing houses, must be completely subordinated to the party presidium, regardless of whether the party as a whole is at the given moment legal or illegal. Publishing houses must not be allowed to abuse their independence and pursue a policy which is not wholly in accordance with the policy of the party.

In the columns of the press, at popular meetings, in the trade unions and co-operatives, wherever the adherents of the Communist International have an entry, it is necessary to denounce, systematically and unrelentingly, not only the bourgeoisie, but also their assistants, the reformists of all shades.

2. Every organization which wishes to join the Communist International must, in an orderly and planned fashion, remove reformists and centrists from all responsible positions in the workers' movement (party organizations, editorial boards, trade unions, parliamentary fractions, co-operatives, local

government bodies) and replace them by tried communists, even if, particularly at the beginning, 'experienced' opportunists have to be replaced by ordinary rank and file workers.

3. In practically every country of Europe and America the class struggle is entering the phase of civil war. In these circumstances communists can have no confidence in bourgeois legality. They are obliged everywhere to create a parallel illegal organization which at the decisive moment will help the party to do its duty to the revolution. In all those countries where, because of a state of siege or of emergency laws, communists are unable to do all their work legally, it is absolutely essential to combine legal and illegal work.

4. The obligation to spread communist ideas includes the special obligation to carry on systematic and energetic propaganda in the army. Where such agitation is prevented by emergency laws, it must be carried on illegally. Refusal to undertake such work would be tantamount to a dereliction of revolutionary duty and is incompatible with membership of the Communist International.

5. Systematic and well-planned agitation must be carried on in the countryside. The working class cannot consolidate its victory if it has not by its policy assured itself of the support of at least part of the rural proletariat and the poorest peasants, and of the neutrality of part of the rest of the rural population. At the present time communist work in rural areas is acquiring first-rate importance. It should be conducted primarily with the help of revolutionary communist urban and rural workers who have close connexions with the countryside. To neglect this work or to leave it in unreliable semi-reformist hands, is tantamount to renouncing the proletarian revolution.

6. Every party which wishes to join the Communist International is obliged to expose not only avowed social patriotism, but also the insincerity and hypocrisy of social-pacifism; to bring home to the workers systematically that without the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism no international court of

arbitration, no agreement to limit armaments, no 'democratic' reorganization of the League of Nations, will be able to prevent new imperialist wars.

7. Parties which wish to join the Communist International are obliged to recognize the necessity for a complete and absolute break with reformism and with the policy of the 'centre', and to advocate this break as widely as possible among their members. Without that no consistent communist policy is possible.

The Communist International demands unconditionally and categorically that this break be effected as quickly as possible. The Communist International is unable to agree that notorious opportunists, such as Turati, Modigliani, Kautsky, Hilferding, Hilquit, Longuet, MacDonald, etc., shall have the right to appear as members of the Communist International. That could only lead to the Communist International becoming in many respect similar to the Second International, which has gone to pieces.

8. A particularly explicit and clear attitude on the question of the colonies and the oppressed peoples is necessary for the parties in those countries where the bourgeoisie possess colonies and oppress other nations. Every party which wishes to join the Communist International is obliged to expose the tricks and dodges of 'its' imperialists in the colonies, to support every colonial liberation movement not merely in words but in deeds, to demand the expulsion of their own imperialists from these colonies, to inculcate among the workers of their country a genuinely fraternal attitude to the working people of the colonies and the oppressed nations, and to carry on systematic agitation among the troops of their country against any oppression of the colonial peoples.

9. Every party which wishes to join the Communist International must carry on systematic and persistent communist activity inside the trade unions, the workers' councils and factory committees, the co-operatives, and other mass workers' organizations. Within these organizations communist cells must be organized which shall by persistent and

unflagging work win the trade unions, etc., for the communist cause. In their daily work the cells must everywhere expose the treachery of the social-patriots and the instability of the 'centre'. The communist cells must be completely subordinate to the party as a whole.

10. Every party belonging to the Communist International is obliged to wage an unyielding struggle against the Amsterdam 'international' of the yellow trade unions. It must conduct the most vigorous propaganda among trade unionists for the necessity of a break with the yellow Amsterdam International. It must do all it can to support the international association of red trade unions adhering to the Communist International, which is being formed.

11. Parties which wish to join the Communist International are obliged to review the personnel of their parliamentary fractions and remove all unreliable elements, to make these fractions not only verbally but in fact subordinate to the party presidium, requiring of each individual communist member of parliament that he subordinate his entire activity to the interests of genuinely revolutionary propaganda and agitation.

12. Parties belonging to the Communist International must be based on the principle of democratic centralism. In the present epoch of acute civil war the communist party will be able to fulfill its duty only if its organization is as centralized as possible, if iron discipline prevails, and if the party centre, upheld by the confidence of the party membership, has strength and authority and is equipped with the most comprehensive powers.

13. Communist parties in those countries where communists carry on their work legally must from time to time undertake cleansing (re-registration) of the membership of the party in order to get rid of any petty-bourgeois elements which have crept in.

14. Every party which wishes to join the Communist International is obliged to give unconditional support to any Soviet republic in its struggle against counter-revolutionary forces. Communist

parties must carry on unambiguous propaganda to prevent the dispatch of munitions transports to the enemies of the Soviet republics; they must also carry on propaganda by every means, legal or illegal, among the troops sent to strangle workers' republics.

15. Parties which still retain their old social-democratic programmes are obliged to revise them as quickly as possible, and to draw up, in accordance with the special conditions of their country, a new communist programme in conformity with the decisions of the Communist International. As a rule the programme of every party belonging to the Communist International must be ratified by the regular congress of the Communist International or by the Executive Committee. Should the programme of a party not be ratified by the ECCI, the party concerned has the right to appeal to the congress of the Communist International.

16. All the decisions of the congresses of the Communist International, as well as the decisions of its Executive Committee, are binding on all parties belonging to the Communist International. The Communist International, working in conditions of acute civil war, must be far more centralized in its structure than was the Second International. Consideration must of course be given by the Communist International and its Executive Committee in all their activities to the varying conditions in which the individual parties have to fight and work, and they must take decisions of general validity only when such decisions are possible.

17. In this connexion, all parties which wish to join the Communist International must change their names. Every party which wishes to join the Communist International must be called: Communist party of such and such a country (section of the Communist International). This question of name is not merely a formal matter, but essentially a political question of great importance. The Communist International has declared war on the entire bourgeois world and on all yellow social-democratic parties. The difference between the communist parties and the old

official 'social-democratic' or 'socialist' parties, which have betrayed the banner of the working class, must be brought home to every ordinary worker.

18. All the leading party press organs in all countries are obliged to publish all important official documents of the Executive Committee of the Communist International.

19. All parties belonging to the Communist International and those which have applied for admission, are obliged to convene an extraordinary congress as soon as possible, and in any case not later than four months after the second congress of the Communist International, to examine all these conditions of admission. In this connexion all party centres must see that the decisions of the second congress of the Communist International are made known to all local organizations.

20. Those parties which now wish to join the Communist International, but which have not radically changed their former tactics, must see to it that, before entering the Communist International, not less than two-thirds of the members of their central committee and of all their leading central bodies consist of comrades who publicly and unambiguously advocated the entry of their party into the Communist International before its second congress. Exceptions can be made with the consent of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. The ECCI also has the right to make exceptions in the case of representatives of the centre mentioned in paragraph 7.

21. Those members of the party who reject in principle the conditions and theses put forward by the Communist International are to be expelled from the party.

The same applies in particular to delegates to the extraordinary congresses.

Source: As cited by Jane Degras, The Communist International--1919-1943: Documents, Vol. I (1919-1922), pp. 168-172.

## Appendix B

### The Reasons for the Crimean Colonization Scheme

In July 1926, M. Kalinin listed the following reasons why the Soviet Government decided to embark on the Crimean colonization scheme for Jewish settlers:

1. Anti-Semitism is an evil relic of Czarist times, deliberately fostered by the Imperial Government for political reasons.

2. The position of the Jews in those days was so intolerable that with few exceptions they were practically without rights.

3. This is contrary to the spirit and practice of the Soviet Government, which gives equal rights and autonomy to all nationalities in Russia.

4. Though their numbers justify an autonomous State for the Jews, like other nationalities, this is now impossible, because they live in different areas.

5. Therefore the Committee formed in their case was only to supplement this lack of autonomy by helping them to settle on the land.

6. The Jewish population was never allowed to work the land before the revolution, for then it was almost wholly composed of artisans and small traders.

7. It [the Jewish population] occupies areas that suffered particularly from imperial and civil wars and fell prey to the most hideous pogroms during that period.

8. Having no land, the Jews suffered worse than the Russians during the "hungry years."

9. The spread of cooperative and State business tends to take away the livelihood of the artisans and small traders.

10. It is therefore necessary to settle the Jews on the land, to which they have a right no less than the other peoples of Russia.

11. Although the Jews did good service in the Communist cause, because the larger proportion of them were driven into the revolution by the

intolerable Czarist oppression, it is untrue--for the reasons given above--that the Soviet Government is favoring them by granting Crimean land.

12. The factories, buildings, money, etc., of rich Jews were confiscated by the revolution no less than such property of the rest of the bourgeois.

13. Jewish Communists living among the Jewish population feel strongly that their people should be settled on the land in Russia rather than become 'the tools for capitalistic exploitation' in Palestine.

14. The Soviet Government shares this view.

15. The reason why the Jews settled in Soviet Russia rather than in Siberia, which is now being actively colonized by Russians, is that they were used to a warmer climate and were unfitted for the rigors of the Siberian cold.

Source: As cited in The New Palestine, July 23, 1926, Vol. XI, p. 65. Kalinin's "reasons" originally appeared in his article, "The Jewish Question and the Jewish Colonization of the Crimea," in Izvestia.



## Appendix C

### Front Organizations and Fellow Travelers

Wherever communist parties have been organized, front organizations have also proliferated. These organizations spring up at various times and then disappear, their particular function having been fulfilled or their failure assured. Sometimes these groups consist of a few persons, who attempt to influence public opinion and government policies; at other times they are mass organizations. Throughout its history, and particularly when it was illegal, the PCP utilized front organizations. They provided a cover for the party's underground activities--enabling it to work within the Poale Zion or the Histadrut. Both organizations had large followings and both remained legal under the Mandatory government. Front organizations also encouraged trade with the Soviet Union and were generally used to arouse sympathy and encourage aid, particularly following the German attack in June 1941. Aid for Russia during the war years included medical instruments, supplies, ambulances, etc.

In connection with this study, front organizations can be separated into two categories: (1) the Moscow-controlled international organizations, and (2) organizations peculiar to Palestine. The former provided Moscow with a bridge to the working class in many countries, including the colonial world. These international fronts provided an arena in which communists worked to discredit the Zionist movement as a Jewish national liberation effort. This was done by labeling it a "tool of British imperialism." Following the German attack on the Soviet Union, the same organizations were used to enlist sympathy and help. Moscow then muted its criticisms of Zionism, denounced German anti-Semitism and endeavored to attract Jewish support. The second category of front organizations, those operating specifically within Palestine, affected a more moderate stand than the PCP. When the party was illegal, they provided a forum for communist ideas and cultivated trade, aid and good relations with the Soviet Union.

Even after the Soviet Union had become a war-time ally of Great Britain, and the Communists in Palestine could operate openly, they still used certain established left-wing organizations, fellow travelers. Communists were instructed by their

leaders to join these Zionist-oriented groups and to move into positions from which they could influence policy.

### I. International Front Organizations:

(1) The Red International of Labor Unions (The Profintern--RILU): Zinoviev proposed this international organization in March 1920, and it came into existence the following August. It was meant to be an alternative to the Western International Federation of Trade Unions (referred to as the Amsterdam International<sup>1</sup>). The Histadrut, a member of the Amsterdam International, became a frequent target of the Profintern. The Profintern's stated purpose was revolutionary, and it called upon all workers to wage a "resolute struggle against those who are distorting the workers' organization into instruments of bourgeois policy." It advocated the "overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship, the creation of a world republic of Soviets."<sup>2</sup>

In an attempt to break the influence of the Histadrut, a Profintern emissary, Thompson,<sup>3</sup> was sent to Palestine in 1925. He was instructed to work with the Fraction, the communist front which was then operating within the Histadrut. The aim was to build a pro-Profintern bloc inside the Histadrut. This bloc was to include the Leftist Poale Zion movement in Palestine. However, Thompson faced difficulties because the Poale Zion insisted on Zionist immigration to Palestine, and its representatives demanded recognition of the Zionist labor movement in Palestine as an anti-imperialist and revolutionary force. Thompson hedged, telling the Poale Zion representatives to join the pro-Profintern bloc led by the Fraction and to argue later. He even promised that the Profintern would dispatch a special study commission to examine the Palestine immigration issue.

A French labor leader and Comintern member, "Herkle" (also known as Mischle)<sup>4</sup> was later sent to negotiate with the Poale Zion. The mission was a failure<sup>5</sup> and the Profintern met with no direct success in Palestine because it was unable to dislodge the entrenched Histadrut. In the following years, PCP members maintained contact with the Profintern, attending Profintern meetings and congresses abroad and returning with information and directives which encouraged the belief that Palestinian communists too were part of a worldwide workers effort to end capitalist exploitation.

(2) The Red Help Organization (Mezhdunarodnaya Pomoshch Revolutsioneram, MOPR): This organization was especially active during the early 1920s, when the Soviet Union was still recovering from the period of civil war and famine. Later, it was redefined as "an international public organization for helping victims of the bourgeoisie terror."<sup>6</sup> In Palestine, N. List used the Red Help Organization to arouse sympathy among Zionists for communists deported by the British. The Zionists, despite their dislike of communism, found the expulsions unacceptable. Distinguished Zionist leaders, including Dr. Judah Magnes, David Ben-Gurion and Norman Bentwich among others, protested these expulsions.

The MOPR not only obtained legal aid for those arrested and threatened with deportation, it organized demonstrations and secured signatures on petitions to aid the "victims." It disseminated information on prison conditions and on the prisoners' hunger strikes. Its primary aim was to galvanize support and sympathy in the Yishuv for those accused of political crimes. Through the MOPR, the communists also tried to secure Arab collaboration by assisting Arabs who had been detained, regardless of the charges. Thus, to gain Arab good will, the Palestine MOPR often demanded the release of Arab saboteurs and criminals, whom it identified as "freedom fighters."

N. List attended an MOPR meeting in Moscow in 1928, at which it was decided that new MOPR chapters would be established in Beirut and Damascus. List was ordered to coordinate their activities, as well as those of the MOPR chapter in Egypt. The Palestinian chapter of the MOPR was directly linked to Moscow. It was, by far, the most active in the Middle East and it kept in close touch with the new neighboring MOPR chapters.

(3) The League Against Imperialism: This international organization was born in February 1926 as the "League of Oppressed People." It held its first worldwide congress in Brussels one year later. At that time, Dr. Albert Einstein was elected president of what was, in effect, a large gathering of trade union representatives, including both communists and socialists. The Comintern sent a large delegation, and there were also representatives from the colonial world. Opposing Arab and Jewish delegations came to represent Palestinian labor. Jamal al-Husayni headed the Arab delegation, representing the Arab National Congress of Palestine. The Poale Zion sent M. Erem to represent Jewish labor in Palestine. Confrontations between

these two delegations disrupted this and subsequent congresses.<sup>7</sup> These confrontations also included the PCP, which supported the Arab delegation's demand to oust the Poale Zion delegation.

When the League's Council again met in Brussels in December 1927, Wolf Auerbach (Daniel), the PCP spokesman, demanded that the Poale Zion delegation be expelled. He also submitted a strongly worded resolution labeling Zionism as "very dangerous, because of its misleading humanitarian facade."<sup>8</sup> Daniel and the Comintern were using this forum to discredit Zionism and to isolate it from the trade union movement.

In Palestine, the League established contact with Arab nationalists. At a time when Arabization of the PCP was moving too slowly to satisfy the Comintern, this organization provided PCP members with an opportunity to work with Arab leaders.

## II. Palestine-based Front Organizations:

(1) The Workers Fraction and the Proletarian Fraction: The Workers Fraction of the PCP and the Proletarian Fraction of the KPP, discussed in the text, were the two earliest communist front organizations operating during the 1920s, after the British had declared the communist movement illegal in Palestine.

(2) The Left Poale Zion: The left wing of the Poale Zion not only was the point of origin for the earliest communist party (MPS) in Palestine, but it also continued to provide a point of retreat, a "safe haven" for those communists who rejoined when conditions required both the submergence of their communist identities and their continued political activism within the Jewish labor movement.

(3) Ihud ("Unity") Clubs: Leopold (Leib) Trepper, a Galician Jew who emigrated to Palestine in 1926, conceived the idea of the Ihud Clubs.<sup>9</sup> Ostensibly designed to provide a nonpartisan meeting place for workers to discuss current socio-economic and political problems, they also provided neutral ground for special Fraction and PCP emissaries to engage in ideological dialogue with the many dissatisfied workers who came from the ranks of the various Zionist worker organizations. These dialogues exploited dissatisfaction among the Zionist workers and spread anti-Zionist propaganda. Palestine was then experiencing grave economic conditions with high unemployment. Ihud Club leaders played on the workers' feelings of frustration and resentment and urged pressure on the Histadrut and other Jewish workers'

movements to dissociate themselves from political Zionism which aimed at increasing immigration. This approach appealed to some unemployed workers because it did not appear to threaten their basic Zionist orientation. Conciliatory gestures were made by the use of Hebrew, thereby helping to conceal the Ihud's ultimate anti-Zionist political aims. In general, therefore, the economic orientation of the discussions, carried on in Hebrew, made the Ihud ideology more palatable to the average unemployed and disillusioned Jewish worker. These clubs thereby provided an opportunity for the communists to recruit the workers as members or sympathizers.

(4) The V-League (originally called the "Public Committee to Help the Soviet Union in its War Against Fascism"): The V-League, discussed in Chapter 12, continued to exist for a while after the war ended. Its new name, "The League for Fostering Friendly Relations with the U.S.S.R.," bespeaks its function.

Some front organizations have become mere footnotes in history, with little more than their names being recalled:

- Flavruss (The Association for the Promotion of Trade with the U.S.S.R.): This organization was founded in 1943 and seems to have duplicated the efforts of the V-League.

- The Palestine-Polish Association: This organization was founded in April 1946 with the help of Jonah Tempkin.<sup>10</sup>

- The Palestine Progressive Youth Organization: Founded during World War II, this organization was represented by Meir Wilner (Dov Kovner, Ber Kowner) at a Youth Anti-Fascist Congress in London in November 1945, which was billed as a World Youth Conference.<sup>11</sup>

- Tarbut La'am (People's Culture) Society which was used as a front to collect funds for party activities. Shimon Cohen was the secretary (see p. 343).

- The Democratic Teachers' Organization which aimed at winning Arab teachers to the party cause.

- The Democratic Women's Organization.

- The Committee for the Defence of Children.

- The British Anti-Fascist Soldiers' League.

- The League for the Defence of Arab Minority.

- League of Arab Jewish Rapprochement.

It is interesting to note the following prominent communists and their involvement in some of these organizations:<sup>12</sup>

- Meir Wilner--the Palestine Progressive Youth.

- Esther Wilenska--the League for Fostering Friendly Relations with the U.S.S.R.

- Jonah Tempkin--the Palestine-Polish Association; the V-League, directing his attention to the improvement of Palestine-Slavic cultural and educational relations; the League of Arab-Jewish Rapprochement.

- Shmuel Mikunis--the League for Fostering Friendly Relations with the U.S.S.R., serving as general secretary.

- Dr. Marcus Biletsky--formed the British Anti-Fascist Soldiers' League. He was a member of the PCP's Central Committee and an editor of Kol Ha'am.

Finally, two other organizations are of interest here, although they do not meet the specific definition of front organizations. They fall under the category of "fellow travelers": MAPAM and Hashomer Hatzair, both of which were repeatedly used and influenced by the Palestinian communists.

MAPAM (Mifleget Ha'poalim Hameuchedeth, United Workers Party): MAPAM came into existence in 1944 as a union between Hashomer Hatzair and Achduth Avoda, an offshoot of MAPAI, the dominant labor group in Palestine. In 1946, a group from the Left Poale Zion joined the MAPAM coalition, which followed a pro-Stalinist line. Later in 1950, MAPAM adhered so closely to the Moscow line that there were those who said MAPAM was trying to convince the Israeli communists that "MAPAMniks" were also good communists.<sup>13</sup>

Particularly in its early years, MAPAM considered itself part of the world revolutionary camp. It supported, without reservation, the socialist states and People's Democracies "in their struggle against internal and external enemies. . . ."<sup>14</sup> Among MAPAM's most pro-Soviet leaders were Mordechai Oren<sup>15</sup> and Moshe Sneh.<sup>16</sup> They may have used their contacts in Russia and in Eastern Europe to acquire arms for the fledgling Jewish army on the eve of statehood.<sup>17</sup>

MAPAM was useful to the PCP and its successor the Israel Communist Party (MAKI). Together MAPAM and MAKI advocated a policy of "ihizdahout" (non-identification, non-alignment) between the United States and the Soviet Union. MAPAM shared the communist position opposing acceptance of German reparations and supporting the recognition of the People's Republic of China.<sup>18</sup> From time to time some communist members would join MAPAM and at other times they would migrate back to the communist party. Members of the communist party often

gave their votes to MAPAM candidates in municipalities where no MAKI candidates appeared on the ballot.<sup>19</sup>

Hashomer Hatzair: Many Jewish communists who emigrated from Eastern Europe and Russia to Palestine during the 1920s and 1930s had been active in this organization's pioneer youth movement.<sup>20</sup> Hashomer Hatzair, with branches in many different countries (including the United States), was pro-Soviet and ideologically Marxian rather than Stalinist. Its publications echoed this line, as well as the organization's principal loyalty to the idea of a Zionist state.<sup>21</sup> In Palestine, it was used from time to time by communist members who joined and attempted to manipulate its policy-making apparatus. In the late 1940s, membership of the organization was placed at about 10,000.<sup>22</sup>

It is interesting to note that although both MAPAM and Hashomer Hatzair are not true front organizations, a United States government report on the strategy and tactics of world communism placed them in that category.<sup>23</sup>

#### NOTES

1. So named because the organization was headquartered in Amsterdam. See Edward H. Carr, A History of Soviet Russia, (N.Y.: Macmillan Company, 1953), Vol. III, p. 205, for a discussion on the "yellow" Amsterdam International.

2. Jacob Hen-Tov, Communism and Zionism in Palestine: The Comintern and the Political Unrest in the 1920s (Mass.: Schenkman Publ. Co., 1974), p. 49.

3. Thompson was the British representative to the Anglo-Russian Committee, representing the opposition wing within the British Trade Union movement. See p. 177, n. 64, in this study.

4. Hen-Tov, pp. 50-51.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Y. Peterziel, Yelkut Poale-Zion: Hama'avak Bazirah Ha-proletarit Habein-Leumit (Anthropology of Poale Zion: The Struggle in the International Proletarian Arena), (Jerusalem: Cooperative Publishers, 1954), Vol. I, 1907-1927, pp. 276-283.

8. Ibid., p. 283, quotes Daniel's resolution in its entirety.

9. Trepper, jailed by the British in 1930, called a hunger strike, attracting publicity in the London papers. Questions raised in the House of Commons caused his release. He later

organized and led a 290-member spy network for the Soviet Union that was known to the Germans as the "Red Orchestra." The Nazis smashed the network in 1942-1943, after losing some 200,000 German lives to Trepper's espionage ring. The Russians "rewarded" him with a ten-year prison sentence in the Soviet Union. Released in 1955, Trepper returned to Poland and was finally permitted to emigrate to Israel in 1974. He died in Jerusalem in January 1982. Gilles Perrault, The Red Orchestra (N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 1969).

10. National & International Movements: Report on the Strategy and Tactics of World Communism (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, Committee on Foreign Affairs, 1948), p. 35.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ichud Information Bulletin Number 26 (Tel Aviv: November 7, 1950), pp. 1-2, from the Poale Zion Archives, available in New York at the Zionist Archives. The article is entitled MAPAM's One-Way Street.

14. Mark Alexander, "Israel's Left Reels to the Shock of 'Prague'" in Commentary, April 1953, p. 380.

15. See n. 20 below, referring to Orenstein (Oren).

16. After the Six-Day War in 1967 and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Sneh vigorously attacked Soviet "hegemonism" in the international movement, neo-Stalinist repression of dissent in Eastern Europe and anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and Poland. For his thoughts as a MAPAM leader, see Youth and Nation, November 1948, pp. 6-9. For his opinion on the "application of the Truman Doctrine to Palestine" see Jewish Life, March 1948, pp. 27-28, Document: What Orientation for Palestine? For a discussion on his life see The Jewish Week--American Examiner, June 14, 1981, p. 4.

17. See p. 341 in this study. Sneh and Oren made important contacts while in Europe after the war. Oren met with Soviet representatives in Cairo during the war and in Eastern Europe afterward. For a discussion on Soviet aid see Munya M. Mardor, Strictly Illegal (London: Robert Hale, Ltd., 1964), pp. 196-197; Yaacov Ro'i, "Soviet-Israeli Relations, 1947-1954" in The U.S.S.R. and the Middle East, edited by Michael Confino and Shimon Shamir (N.Y.: John Wiley and Sons, 1973), p. 128.

18. Michael Brecher, Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), p. 58 and pp. 112-113.

19. Ichud Information Bulletin Number 30, November 22,



1950, "The Lesson of the Municipal Elections" by M. Noy (Neustadt), from the Poale Zion Archives. In the elections held on November 14, 1950, a communist list appeared in only 17 out of 43 municipalities; elsewhere they gave their votes to MAPAM.

20. Former Prime Minister Menachem Begin joined Hashomer Hatzair at the age of twelve, in 1925. "But at the end of 1926, Hashomer Hatzair took a turn that repelled the young Menahem. The first signs were a brochure written by Mordechai Orenstein [Oren], which said that the road for the Zionist youth movement was that of communism. Many years later this same Orenstein would be sent on a mission from Israel to Prague, where the Czechoslovak authorities arrested him for anti-Communist activities. He was tortured into a false confession, sentenced to a long term of imprisonment, then finally released after being cleared of all guilt. Ironically it was this man's communism that drove Begin away." Eitan Haber, Menahem Begin - The Legend and the Man (N.Y.: Delacorte Press, 1978), pp. 23-24.

21. Elkana Margalit, Hashomer Hatzair - From Youth Community to Revolutionary Marxism (1913-1936), (Tel Aviv University, 1971), in Hebrew. This is a comprehensive study for the period covered.

22. National & International Movements. . . ibid.

23. Ibid.



## Appendix D

### Summary of Incidents

#### Preceding Rioting in August 1929

The following summary is based on material presented in Palestine: A Study of Jewish, Arab, and British Policies, ESCO Foundation for Palestine, Inc. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947), pp. 603-609; Moshe Braslavsky, Te'nuat Ha-poalim Ha-aretz Israelit (The Workers' Movement in Eretz Israel), (Tel Aviv: Kibbutz Hameuhad, 1955-1963), Vol. II, pp. 143-147; Josef Berger-Barzilai, Hatragedia shel Hamahaphaha HaSovietit (The Tragedy of the Soviet Revolution), (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1968), pp. 97-101.

August 14, 1929: The eve of Tisha b'Av, a fast day, a huge demonstration in Tel Aviv attended by members of Haganah and Brith Trumpeldor (the general and Revisionist Jewish defense forces), passage of resolution against "Wailing Wall outrage," demands that the government "restore to us our full rights to the Wall."

August 15: Procession of Jewish youths unfurled Zionist flag, one of the leaders made a short speech and read resolutions of previous day, singing of Hatikvah, some cries such as "The Wall is ours," "Shame on those who profane our Holy Places," and "Shame on the government." That evening Moslem leaders sent telegram in name of "Protection of the Mosque Al-Aqsa Association" to two newspapers and to the Young Men's Moslem Association, Jaffa, as follows: "The Jews at 3:30 on this day, at the Wailing Wall itself, held a severe demonstration against the Moslems. . . . Do what should be done of protest and disapproval."

August 16: Mr. H. C. Luke, acting High Commissioner, received information that Moslems were planning counter-demonstration at Wailing Wall. He tried to use the good offices of the Mufti to prevent or at least to limit the demonstration. Moslem demonstrators, numbering about 2,000, headed by Sheikhs of the Mosque of Aqsa, set out about mid-day, following route prescribed by the government. Cries of "There is no God but Allah; the religion of Mohammed came with the sword." The Shaw Commission Report states: "At the Wall an inflammatory speech was made by Hassan Abou Seoud, one of the Sheikhs of

the Mosque of Aqsa, a table belonging to the . . . Jewish beadle was upset and broken, petitions which had been placed in the crevices of the Wailing Wall by Jewish worshippers were taken out and burnt by the crowd, as were also some prayer books and prayer sheets. . . ."

August 17: Some Jewish boys playing football in Bukharin quarter of New City of Jerusalem, ball fell into a tomato garden belonging to an Arab; one of the boys went to retrieve the ball, argument ensued; the boy was stabbed. Jews and Arabs in neighborhood fought; 11 Jews, 15 Arabs wounded. Police called, one British policeman severely injured.

August 20: Funeral procession, consisting of large crowds, diverted from usual route to cemetery by the Jaffa Gate in order to avoid neighborhood of Arab shops. Crowd broke through the cordon of police; when police charged with their batons, a number of Jews were injured.

August 21: Zionist Executive and the Vaad Leumi issued statement rebuking crowd for lack of restraint and charging that the police had been unnecessarily harsh.

August 22: Letter purporting to be signed by Mufti delivered to headman of village near Nablus: "Fighting will take place on Friday next. . . [August 23] between Jews and Moslems. All who are of the Moslem religion should come to Jerusalem to help." The Arab paper Falastin: "In Jerusalem there is great excitement. The atmosphere is tense, and it is apprehended that tomorrow (Friday, August 23) when many fellaheen assemble for prayers in Jerusalem, a substantial answer will be given to these incidents." That evening "multitudes of Arabs began arriving in Jerusalem armed with heavy sticks and clubs."

August 23: Continued arrival of more Arabs. "Police testimony later showed that many also carried pistols and knives." There was an "almost entire absence of women among the fellahin, which was unusual and indicated that they were prepared for trouble."

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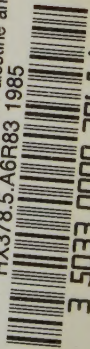






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