

## SOCIALIST-ZIONISM: THE UNTENABLE SYNTHESIS

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**“Whenever we come across a contradiction between national and Socialist principles, the contradiction should be resolved by relinquishing the socialist principle in favour of the national activity. We shall not accept the contrary attempt to solve the contradiction by dispensing with the national interests in favour of the Socialist idea.”**

—*Y. Ben Zvi*

In recent years various histories of socialist-Zionism and studies of the historical factors which shaped its ideology have appeared.<sup>1</sup> My intent in this essay, however, is to critique the basic assumptions and claims of socialist-Zionism.<sup>2</sup> Why such a critique at this time? The answer is simple: as a set of beliefs still prominent in Israel and popular among many leftist Jews in this country, socialist-Zionism continues to deserve critical attention. Whether proffered by Peace Now activists in Israel or Jewish leftists in the United States, socialist-Zionist arguments remain a challenge for all Jewish socialists.

Socialist-Zionism is an ideology which asserts that for the Jew, true and progressive socialism must inevitably be linked with Jewish nationalism. “The basic advantage of gaining the independence of Israel in the name of socialism,” states Allon Gal, a leading socialist-Zionist writer, “is that only in the Jewish state can Jewish socialists pursue a complete and direct ascent towards socialism.”<sup>3</sup> Many Jewish socialists, however, cannot accept this assertion. It is not only a matter of rejecting the claim that a “complete and direct ascent to socialism” is possible “only” in the Jewish state. Much more, they repudiate the very notion that one can support the principle of an exclusively Jewish state in Palestine *and* be a socialist. In the view of most socialists — Jewish as well as non-Jewish — the existence of the Palestinian people has always necessitated the abandonment of true socialist principles on the part of those Jews

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I am grateful to the editorial collective for their critical comments on this essay. I wish to thank Debra Reuben for her editorial assistance.

attached to Zionism. A plan for a Jewish state in Palestine, conceived in 1880-1900, could only have been realized in one of two ways. Palestine being incontestably an Arab country at that time, there were only two means of turning it into a Jewish country: either expelling or subjugating the indigenous population. This is not a moral judgment, it is simple logic. Moreover, as it happened, most Palestinians were expelled and some of them subjugated. And if it is a question of maintaining the exclusively Jewish character of the state in 1980-2000, this too will inevitably involve the domination — or worse — of Palestinians. In short, the oppression of the Palestinians — which stems from acting according to the tenets of Zionism — is incompatible with the ideals of socialism.

The fact that certain Zionist beliefs have gained hegemony among American Jews — including among many Jewish socialists — must be addressed by those who challenge them. That aspects of Zionist ideology have penetrated the consciousness of American Jews — especially since World War II — is not simply a function of its political success. Its staying power has a great deal to do with the emotional processes of Jewish identity. For what Jew is not affected by the psychological boundaries created by the wounds of centuries of anti-Semitism, the incredible scale and horror of the Holocaust, and by the belief that a national homeland is the only place where Jews can ever expect to be fully secure?

These psychological realities necessarily affect our relationship to Israel and Zionism. But we simply cannot afford to be paralyzed by the deep emotional currents that flow through these issues. If we can reject the myth that it is inappropriate for Jews to criticize Israeli policies, we must then move on to a sober analysis of Zionism. In doing so, we are neither betraying ourselves as Jews nor the Jewish people as a whole. The truth is that to challenge thoughtfully and honestly basic Zionist tenets and practices — including those of socialist-Zionism — is not a malicious process. Rather, it is an endeavor which reflects the utmost concern for the fate of the Jews of Israel.

#### Is Zionism a National Liberation Movement?

“Until the nature of Zionism, as the liberation of the Jewish people which is part of the liberation movement of all oppressed peoples, is understood, nothing else really matters.”

—Jewish Liberation Project<sup>4</sup>

Some Marxists have believed that nationalism, in all its manifestations, is an irrational superstition. This attitude is a remnant

of the era when Marxists were devoted to proletarian internationalism. They viewed nationalism as interfering with the class struggle. During this century, however, the national liberation movement has become the most logical, if not the only, means of resisting colonial and semicolonial oppression. As a result, Marxists today agree that nationalism — in the form of the national liberation struggle — is clearly rational.<sup>5</sup>

But what about Zionism? Is it, as socialist-Zionists insist, the “national liberation movement of the Jewish people”?

One thing beyond question is that Zionism is a nationalist movement. But what is debatable is the kind of nationalist movement Zionism has been historically. From a Marxist perspective the issue is whether Zionism has played the role of a reactionary or a progressive force in the life of the Jews as well as in international terms.

At the turn of the century antisemitic oppression and Zionist agitation instilled among many Jews, mainly in Eastern Europe, a desire to become a nation, with a land of their own. Yet the massive emigration to the United States, England, Argentina, and elsewhere indicates that whatever their subjective desire, objective conditions led to the dispersal of Eastern European Jews among other nations. Even those elements of potential nationhood that existed among them were weakened.

Early Zionist leaders were well aware that their movement lacked essential elements of nationhood. That is why the political Zionists<sup>6</sup> deliberately set out in 1897 to obtain them. Zionism represents the case, it has been said, of “a government that acquired a state.”

From the time of the 1897 Basle Congress, the Zionists had a government (the Zionist executive committee). They had a House of Representatives (the Zionist Congress) with a left and right wing, moderates and extremists, progressives and conservatives, religious and secular parties. They collected annual taxes (the *shekel*, whose payment granted the right to vote in the elections of the Zionist congress). Yet they had no state to govern and no citizens. The Congress was a federation of political parties which shared one common objective — to create a Jewish state in Palestine — yet quarreled on almost every other issue, including the means to achieve this common objective. All this activity was taking place in Europe while the Jewish population in Palestine numbered less than 10 per cent of the Arab population, and had nothing to do with the Zionist movement.<sup>7</sup>

It is easy to understand why Zionism originated and acquired its principal strength in Eastern Europe. Only there did the Jews have the characteristics of an oppressed minority people: they were oppressed by the upheavals caused by the rapid development of capitalism and the state-sponsored antisemitism that accompanied this development. In Western Europe the national question had, except for Ireland, already been solved. Only in the czarist Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires, where feudal institutions had survived the feudal era, were there nationalities which had not developed rapidly enough to form independent states. These nationalities had fallen under the subjugation of the absolutist states created by the Great Russian and Austro-Hungarian nations.

Various peoples of central and eastern Europe, e.g., the Poles, Ukrainians, and Czechs, struggled for freedom from Hapsburg or Russian imperial domination. Their nationalist movements concentrated on liberating their territory from foreign control in all its forms — military, political, social, economic, and cultural.

Zionism, however, was *not* a national liberation movement in the sense of these other movements. As Ben Halpern, a leading Zionist historian, observes:

Other nationalist movements arose among peoples occupying the land where they wished to be free. Consequently, the nationalist myth of freedom, with its call to expel the foreigner, could appeal to powerful popular feelings of rage and envy arising from the continual frictions that mark the relations between peoples when one rules and the other is forced to be subject. Zionism, however, could not evoke an overpowering wave of popular emotion by a simple outcry against the foreign tyrant, for it proposed not to free the Jews in the countries where they were oppressed but to bring them into a new country.<sup>8</sup>

It is precisely because Zionism sought to transfer Jews to a territory already inhabited by another people that it was not simply a nationalist movement like those that emerged in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Speaking of Zionist demands at the time of the Balfour Declarations, Halpern declares:

The Zionists had a claim which made more than ordinary demands upon the imagination as well as the conscience of the world. They asked to be restored to a land on the basis not of effective occupation but of ancient historic title. The doctrine of self-determination, on the face of it, opposed rather than

supported such a demand; unless, of course, one were prepared for the effort of imagination required by the extraordinary case of a landless people whose opportunity for self-determination depended on being restored to a country of which not they but others were in effective occupation.<sup>9</sup>

In a political sense then, Zionism has not been the national liberation movement of the Jewish people; rather, it has been the *national transfer movement of some of the Jewish people*.<sup>10</sup>

### Zionism and Imperialism

“The most pervasive and pernicious fabrication extant today is that Zionism is inherently an ideology of imperialism and colonialism and that Israel is its historical embodiment.”

—Jewish Liberation Project

Many socialists frequently reduce the Arab-Israeli conflict to a clash between Western imperialism and Third World anti-colonialism. This is an incorrect view in so far as it ignores key aspects of Zionism’s historical roots — political and racial antisemitism and capitalist oppression of Jews.

On the other hand, socialist-Zionists claim that the conflict is merely one between two national movements. This argument, however, is equally superficial. It fails to acknowledge that the Zionist movement, in its struggle to gain access to Palestine and then to overcome Arab resistance to Jewish immigration and settlement, necessarily required the support of English imperialism.

It is not cricket to argue, as does the socialist-Zionist Shlomo Avineri, that “both Zionism and Arab nationalism have, in their checkered histories, relied on British imperialism: in 1917 the British supported the Arab revolt against the Turks at the same time that they issued the Balfour Declaration. The association with British imperial interests, which characterized *both* movements, cannot be taken out of its historical context and used as an argument solely against *one* of these movements.”<sup>11</sup>

True, the Arabs too managed to acquire a basis for their future independence only because of British support. The same events that laid the basis for the Jewish state freed them from Turkish control. But they were bitterly disappointed. As Maxime Rodinson puts it: “Instead of the great, united independent state they had been promised, Arab territory in Asia was divided, subjected to the protectorate of two great European powers under the hypocritical cloak of the mandate, and saddled with numerous restrictions

limiting their freedom to decide their own affairs in favor of the 'rights' of a third party."<sup>12</sup> The British had therefore managed, for a time, to divide the Arab nationalist movement by buying off its weakest element, the desert chieftains whom the urban bourgeoisie had thought it necessary to call in as their "kings."<sup>13</sup>

But none of the Zionists had to be bought off by the British. On the contrary, *all* the Zionist leaders — whether they were representatives of capitalists, the petite bourgeoisie, or the workers — saw their essential task as cementing an alliance with British imperialism. As Rodinson points out:

There was a mortgage [to British imperialism] on both sides. But the conditions for lifting it were very different. The demands raised by the Arab nationalist organizations were backed up by indigenous masses who were practically unanimous in what they wanted (except, to a degree, in Lebanon). The Zionist organizations, in contrast, had against them the majority of the country in which they wanted to set up a sovereign state. In order to change this situation, they would have to increase the proportion of Jews in the country, a proportion that was only growing slowly (11.1 percent in 1922, 17.7 percent in 1931, 28 percent by the end of 1936); and to accomplish this, they would have to seek out the good offices of the mandatory power.<sup>14</sup>

So while it *is* unfair to say that Zionism alone has been linked to imperialism, Avineri is evading the central point: only one of these nationalist movements — Zionism — had to maintain its links with imperialism in order to attain its goal — the establishment of "an autonomous Jewish national entity."

This fact is either denied or explained away by socialist-Zionists. They argue that critics of Zionism are guilty of accepting the "official Zionist view that there is indeed only one Zionism."<sup>15</sup> They insist that only bourgeois Zionists such as Theodore Herzl wished to link Zionism with British imperialism. Labor Zionists, they claim, did not share in this ideology of imperialism.

Let us examine the evidence presented by Simcha Flapan, one of the few socialist-Zionists to admit that the Zionist movement *necessarily* had to seek favor and protection from imperialist countries. Flapan affirms that "there is substantial continuity in Zionist strategy before and after statehood. Not only was Ben-Gurion in full agreement with Weizmannist strategy during the Mandatory period, differing only on questions of tactics, but some of the basic tenets of Weizmannism have remained the guidelines for Israeli foreign policy to the present day."<sup>16</sup>

According to Flapan, Weizmann's strategic concepts rested on the following first principle: "The Jewish Commonwealth would become an integral part of the British Commonwealth and guardian of Britain's strategic interests in the Middle East." (p.19) He elaborates:

As early as 1915, Weizmann suggested that Jews would finance a fleet for Great Britain to be based in Palestine in return for her [sic] support of Zionism. . . . With the weakening of the British position in other Middle Eastern countries, especially in Egypt, Weizmann saw the strategic importance of Palestine to the British Empire. Weizmann believed that the Suez Canal could be defended from Palestine and that it was of paramount interest to Britain to have 'a friendly Jewish people in Palestine which should remain friendly when the time comes for the withdrawal of the British Mandate and its setting-up as an independent state.' (p. 25)

Socialist-Zionists would no doubt argue that it is unfair to single out Chaim Weizmann — who lived and operated in the center of the British political elite — as representative of Zionist attitudes toward British imperialism. After all, his support for the Zionist labor movement<sup>17</sup> does not merit identifying his view with its position. So let us turn to David Ben-Gurion, the "militant trade unionist and labour politician who rose to prominence through sharp conflicts both with Jewish bourgeois parties and a colonial administration hostile to the modern and democratic structure of Zionism, and even more so to its socialist-inspired labour movement." (p. 137)

But this leader of Zionism's "socialist-inspired" labor movement also recognized the vital necessity of preserving British support in order to allow the practical work of immigration and settlement to go forward. When asked in 1921 why he, a leader of the workers, followed Weizmann and insisted on co-operation with the British, he explained: 'that so long as we were few and weak, co-operation with the Mandatory Government was thus of vital importance for increasing our numbers and strength in the country.'<sup>18</sup> Like Weizmann, Ben-Gurion regarded co-operation with the British as far more important than co-operation with the Arabs. (p. 132)

After outlining their "contrasting personalities," Flapan observes:

Yet, despite their differences, Ben-Gurion agreed with Weizmann's basic strategic concepts. Ben-Gurion, like Weizmann, believed that an alliance between the Zionist movement and a great power was the *sine qua non* for its



success. Ben-Gurion foresaw the decline of Great Britain as the decisive factor in the Middle East, and the emergence of the United States as a global superpower, and eventually switched the alignment of the Zionist movement from Great Britain to the United States. (p. 131)\*

#### Has Zionism Been a Colonialist Movement?

"The thesis that Zionist colonisation in Palestine was a product of the surge of European imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century, and that Israel therefore originated as a colonial settler state, is inaccurate."

—Simcha Flapan

Socialist-Zionist writers usually employ two types of arguments to counter the charge that Zionism is a colonialist enterprise. Their first line of defense is to stress the "socialist" character of the Zionist movement. Herzl, Weizmann, and the official Zionist Organization are shoved under the rug and everything that derives from socialist ideologies are put on display. The ideas of the "Marxist Zionist" Ber Borochov and the Tolstoyan socialist A.D. Gordon are cited as essential to the powerful socialist-Zionist parties that had a great impact on the thousands of Jewish pioneers in Palestine. Israel's cooperative settlements are presented as models of socialist achievement. The implicit idea here is that a political movement that is so strongly marked by "socialist" influence cannot be termed colonialist.<sup>19</sup>

Their second line of defense is to point to certain secondary criteria used to describe colonialism, and then to demonstrate that these criteria do not fit Zionism:

Not one of the traits that characterize colonialism — the military lending a strong hand to missionaries in order to open up a path for merchants and to make it possible to exploit the labor of the colonized — can be found in the Jewish immigration movement in Palestine. In place of a mother [sic] country — Jews chased from one country to another in Europe;

\*Ben-Gurion, at one time leader of both Mapai and the Histadrut, best exemplified the hegemony of nationalist ideology among socialist-Zionists. As Amos Perlmutter observes: "Ben-Gurion regarded all Jews as the same. He held that the Jews constituted a nation (*am*) and not a class (*ma'amad*) and that Mapai, as the party responsible for the 'state on the way', represented the nation and not an individual class" (*Military and Politics in Israel*, p. 28). And Michael Bar Zohar, Ben-Gurion's Israeli biographer, affirms: "The subjugation of socialist and party ideology to national and political objectives was to characterize David Ben-Gurion all along his political path" (*Ben-Gurion*, 1978, p. 18).

in place of soldiers — proletarians and intellectuals armed with pickaxes; merchants — there were none; as for missionaries, it would be well to recall that Zionism was a lay movement inspired by socialism.<sup>20</sup>

A more sophisticated version of this argument, one put forward by Flapan, is that the relationship between Jews and Arabs in Palestine before 1948 was not that of colonizers and natives. In North African countries subjected to French colonialism, the structure of employment and land ownership reduced the native population to dependence and prevented its autonomous development. In Palestine, however, the Arab sector of the economy developed. Relatively few Arabs had their surplus labor appropriated by Jewish landowners or industrial capitalists. (pp. 194-5)

This argument, however, ignores the essential aspects of Zionist colonization in Palestine. The development and then success of the Zionist movement occurred within the framework of European expansion into the underdeveloped areas of the world. As Edward Said observes, "although it coincided with an era of the most virulent anti-Semitism, Zionism also coincided with the period of unparalleled European territorial expansion in Africa and Asia, and it was as part of this general movement of acquisition and occupation that Zionism was launched."<sup>21</sup> Given the initial aims of Zionism, it could not have been otherwise. Wanting to create a purely Jewish, or predominantly Jewish, state in Arab Palestine in the twentieth century could not help but lead to a colonial-type situation.

I say "colonial-type" because although Zionism shares a number of common traits with other Western-supported colonial-settler ventures, its historical origins and specific situation have combined to give it distinctive features that set it apart as a colonialist form. The most distinguishing feature of Zionist colonization is that Jewish settlers did not come to settle in the land merely to exploit its natural and human resources; they desired the land itself *without its population*.\* Most varieties of settler-colonialism — the ones to which Flapan refers — involve usurpation of land, settlement by an alien demographic element, and exploitation of the indigeneous

\*Joseph Weitz, for many years head of the Jewish Agency's colonization department, commented in September 1967 that in 1940 he had made the following notation in his diary: "It should be clear that there is no room for both peoples to live in this country. . .

If the Arabs leave, it is a large and open country; if they stay, it is small and poor. Up to this point, Zionists have been content to 'buy land,' but this is no way to establish a

inhabitants of the land. Zionist settler-colonialism, however, consists of usurpation of the land, settlement of an alien demographic element, and a “transfer” of the indigenous population.<sup>22</sup>

Here we come to the specific feature of Zionism which distinguishes it from all other modern colonization movements. The European settlers in other colonies sought to exploit the riches of the country (including the labor potential of the “natives”) and invariably turned the former population into an exploited class in the new colonial society. But Zionism wanted not simply the resources of Palestine (which were not very great in any case) but the country itself for the creation of a new national state which, through immigration, would provide its own classes — including a working class. The Arabs were, therefore, not to be exploited, but totally replaced.<sup>23</sup>

The “replacement” of the Palestinians, it should be stressed, had much the same result as direct economic exploitation: the total deformation of the Palestinians’ economic and social structure. For the socioeconomic transformation of Palestine brought about by Zionist colonization (and the infrastructure investments of the British Mandatory government) led to landlessness among the Palestinian peasants and underemployment among the fast-growing urban masses. Surely the development of an exclusively Jewish economy through (1) land purchases from absentee landlords and the dispossession of the Palestinian peasantry,<sup>24</sup> (2) denying Arab employment in industries working with capital under Zionist control, and (3) a tightly enforced Jewish boycott of Arab-produced goods must be regarded as the implementation of an oppressive colonialist policy. As Flapan himself admits: “Landlessness was the major cause of the flow of population to the cities, more than could be absorbed by employment there. This ultimately provided the social base for the most extreme opposition to Zionism.” (p. 212)

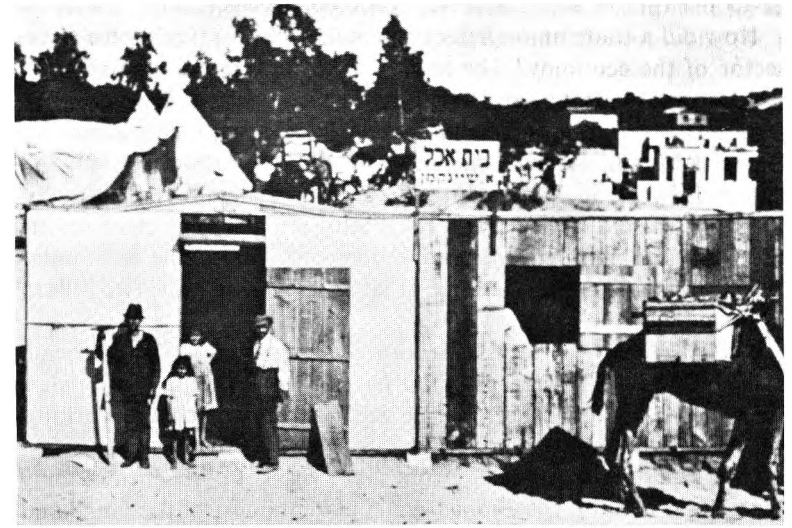
Zionism was in fact a *colonization of displacement*. In addition to the systematic economic and social displacement of the Palestinians, it involved the physical displacement of the population. As Berl Katznelson, the leader of Mapai before Ben-Gurion, once attested: “Situations are possible in which the transfer of population will

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country for the Jews. A nation is created in one move. . . and in that case, there is no alternative to moving the Arabs to the neighboring countries, moving them all, except, perhaps, those living in Bethlehem, Nazareth, and the Old City of Jerusalem. Not one village, not one tribe must remain. They must be moved to Iraq, Syria, or even Transjordan.” (In Sabri Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel*, p. 73)

become advisable. . . We do not assume the right to force anybody out. This is a basic Zionist assumption. . . But was not Kibbutz Merhavia built on a transfer? Without many such transfers, the Hashomer Hatzair would not today be sitting in Kibbutz Merhavia, nor in Kibbutz Mishmar Ha’emeck, nor in any other places. . .” (in *Bober*, p. 13)

Israel Galili, Premier Golda Meir’s top advisor, responded with disbelief and presumption when confronted with demonstrations against the expulsion of 6000 Palestinians from the Gaza Strip in 1972. Their houses and wells had been destroyed and 10,000 acres were fenced off for the purpose of the establishment of a group of Jewish settlements. “Our right on Gaza,” Galili argued, is “exactly like our right on Tel-Aviv. We are colonizing Gaza exactly in the same manner in which we colonized Jaffa. Those who doubt our right on Gaza should doubt our right on Tel-Aviv as well.”<sup>25</sup> And when he says “right” he means what is central to Zionist colonization: an a priori privileged position and Jewish monopolistic control over available resources.\*



\*After participating in the protest, which he helped to organize, the leading Israeli columnist Amos Kenan wrote that if “one who believes that he has no right to Gaza must also doubt his right to Tel-Aviv,” then he, Amos Kenan, “would begin to doubt if indeed I have a right to Tel-Aviv — at least to Tel-Aviv as it now is: a Jewish city, in a Jewish state with a million Arabs deprived of rights.”<sup>26</sup>

Misconceptions about the "socialist" nature of socialist-Zionism and the role of its cooperative and collectivist institutions are widespread in the West. This is largely due to official Israeli dissemination of what can only be called blatant falsehoods. Our critique of socialist-Zionism must therefore include an examination of its economic base — the two major "socialist" institutions of Israel, the Histadrut and the kibbutz.

### The Histadrut

"The Histadrut and Hevrat Ovdim<sup>27</sup> have served as a powerful stronghold for the socialists of Palestine and Israel."

—Allon Gal, *Socialist-Zionism*

Israeli workers seem to be in an enviable position, since the Histadrut promotes the notion that it is a progressive and powerful workers' union. And indeed, in terms of influence and power in the economy, the Histadrut and its institutions are impressive: it has 1.3 million members out of a total population of over 4 million; a quarter of Israeli wage earners work in enterprises belonging to the Histadrut; and for many years the Histadrut accounted for around 22-25 per cent of the Israeli Net National Product.

How did a trade union federation manage to capture such a large sector of the economy? The answer is to be found in the specific conditions of Palestine and in the fact that the Histadrut is primarily a Zionist institution and only secondarily a labor organization. As Gerhard Mueunzer, the historian of the Jewish "labor economy" in Palestine, wrote in 1947: "*Histadrut's main task is the realization of Zionism.* Histadrut identifies itself with the primary elements in Zionist work: immigration and settlement. The whole economic, trade union and cultural edifice of labor is built on these two pillars of its ideology."<sup>28</sup>

The Histadrut was not the creation of a mass workers' movement; rather it was always an essential part of an avowedly nationalist movement. As we will see, its role was not only to subvert working class struggles, but to remove an entire sector from the working class — the Palestinian Arabs — from labor market competition. Only then could it fulfill the Zionist goals of "conquest of the land" and "conquest of labor." As Flapan affirms:

The struggle for "100 per cent of Jewish labour" in the Jewish sector of the Palestine economy occupied the energies of the labour movement for most of the Mandatory years and contributed more than any other factor to the crystallisation of the concept of territorial, economic, and social separation

between Jews and Arabs. The principle itself of the exclusive right of the Jewish worker to the Jewish economy implied the complete separation between the two economic sectors. (p. 199)

The Histadrut was a crucial factor in the development of a capitalist state in Israel. In incorporating and organizing immigrant labor, the Histadrut did not regard its main function as supporting the imported workers' class interests. All class struggle, it held, took a back seat to the task of building a Jewish state.<sup>29</sup>

When Israel was established in 1948, the merger of the Histadrut with the ruling Zionist system<sup>30</sup> became total. The economic sector of the Histadrut, with its business establishments and vast financial resources, formed part of the public sector. This became increasingly important with the rise in immigration and the large amounts of capital flowing into the new state.<sup>31</sup> According to the myth elaborated by Histadrut leaders, the Histadrut economic sector represented the foundation for the construction of socialism. Another specious claim was that the Histadrut economic sector belonged to the workers. Both of these mystifications dissolved with the emergence of the state of Israel. Haim Gvati, one-time Minister of Agriculture and a member of the Histadrut leadership, had to concede during the 1964 Histadrut conference:

We have not succeeded in transforming this immense wealth into socialist economic cells. We have not succeeded in maintaining the working-class nature of our economic sector. Actually there are *no* characteristics to differentiate it from the rest of the public sector, and sometimes even from the private sector. The atmosphere, work relations and human relations of our economic sector are in no way different from any other industrial enterprises. (*Bober*, p. 128).

A look at the official description of a key Histadrut corporation — Tadiran — shows that the economic structure of what is often hailed as the nucleus of the so-called socialist effort in Israel is in fact a multi-national, profit motivated capitalist venture, which follows the pattern of equivalent concerns in other countries.

Tadiran, now a leading international industrial enterprise and Israel's largest electronics manufacturer, barely exceeded workshop size only a short dozen years ago when it was founded, in 1961, through the merger of two small Israeli companies, Tadir and Ran. Tadir, producing quartz crystal products for communications, was owned by Koor Ltd., the industrial concern of the general federation of labor, whereas



Ran, producing batteries for civilian and military use, was owned by the Ministry of Defense. Through this merger they became equal partners in Tadiran. Tadiran, under Mr. Caspi's continuous leadership, has since expanded into other products and new markets, and has achieved an ever increasing sales volume and continuous profitability. . . .

Growth has continued especially in international operations and in foreign sales around the world. Tadiran's exports now approach 25% of its total sales.

With this international trend, Tadiran's ownership itself became increasingly international. In 1969 the Ministry of Defense sold 35% of Tadiran's shares to General Telephone and Electronics International Incorporated (GTEI), an international USA corporation, with whom Tadiran had previously concluded significant know-how agreements. In 1972 GTEI acquired the remaining shares held by the Ministry of Defense. Thus, Tadiran's shares are now held as follows:

Voting shares — 50% by Koor Industries Ltd., Tel Aviv, and 50% by GTE International Inc., New York. Preferred non-voting shares — IL 7.7 million by GTEI; Employee shares — partly paid 280,000 shares of IL10 each.

Principal officers of the Company are: Board Chairman — since 1970, Meir Amit, general manager of Koor; Managing Director — since 1961, Elkani Caspi.

Tadiran produces four major product lines: tactical communication systems, telecommunication equipments, electric & electronic consumer products, and power sources & electronic components.<sup>32</sup>

As Davis' research shows, Tadiran's ownership structure and business history is typical of the Histadrut Worker's Company-owned corporations.<sup>33</sup>

What about claims that the Histadrut copes perfectly well with the real needs of the worker and that labor and management (in Histadrut affiliated firms) exist in great harmony? Consider the response of Georges Friedmann, the French sociologist who has extensively studied Histadrut operations:

The claim that conflicts between labor and management in a Histadrut factory are essentially different from those in the private sector, because in the former there can be no opposition of interests, but only a "temporary failure in the federal machinery of the Histadrut" cannot be taken seriously. Such claims are an irritating reminder of Soviet propaganda in the Stalin era, which held that there could never be economic

conflicts for workers in Soviet factories, or human problems resulting from technical changes, because "they were the masters now."<sup>34</sup>

But most revealing is what Israeli workers themselves say about the Histadrut. According to the 1966 Histadrut Yearbook: "A very considerable number of workers are hardly aware of the Histadrut's trade union activities and they believe that nothing would change if there were no union."<sup>35</sup> An enquiry undertaken for the Histadrut demonstrated that a growing number of workers believe that the local trade-union branches in their shops (called "workers committees" in Israel) should be independent of the Histadrut. Twenty percent of all wage earners reported that strikes have broken out in their workplaces against the advice of the Histadrut; 47 per cent thought that in certain situations it was worthwhile for the workers to strike without Histadrut sanction.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, how does the champion of Israeli "socialism" relate to the Arabs from the occupied territories? After 1967 reliance on low-paid Arab labor from the West Bank and Gaza Strip steadily increased throughout the Histadrut economic sector. The following report on the Histadrut-owned *Hishulei ha-Karmel* — the largest forging plant in Israel — is enlightening:

Hishulei ha-Karmel, at Tirat ha-Karmel near Haifa is owned by the Koor Industrial concern jointly with a Finnish Company. It is one of the plants which expanded after the Six Day War because of orders from the Ministry of Defense. Its smooth running and its increased production are possible, to a large extent, because of the relatively large increase of workers absorbed from the West Bank who have succeeded in integrating the plant.

At the beginning the Jewish workers objected to the employment of Arabs at the plant, and there were some slight scuffles. The local (trade union) Labour Council significantly assisted in changing the Jewish workers' attitude and they came to realize that the Arab workers do not replace them, and in reality even relieve them to some extent, in that they do the unskilled, hard and dirty jobs. This is largely because they still lack a sense for industry, except for a few who worked in Germany. . . . But in fact this is only one of the reasons that the West Bank Arabs are employed exclusively in "black jobs." They are very disciplined, says the management. They are obedient, there is no truancy from work. One can assume that an important reason for this is that they have no trade union



defense and backing and they can be dismissed from their job today or tomorrow. . . The overhead on their wage with social benefits just slightly exceeds half of the overhead on Jewish workers wages. . . Nevertheless, their wage is by far higher than the wage they used to get in the past. This is the labor pool that the plant can expect to have in the future (excluding the possibility of political changes), and the plant's continued development depends on these workers. But by all indication, if this situation becomes permanent, it will not be possible to maintain for long the different (wage) levels; one for Jewish workers and one for the workers from the (occupied) territories.<sup>37</sup>

### The Kibbutz

The kibbutz is not and has never been, as Martin Buber claimed, an "all-out effort to create a Full Co-operative which justifies our speaking of success in the socialist sense."<sup>38</sup> The truth is that the Jewish rural collectives did not and indeed could not escape the fate of all utopian communal schemes: incorporation into the dominant capitalist environment.

While the co-operatives in Israel have certain unique characteristics, in principle they resemble those in other countries. Co-operatives originated in England during the rise of industrial capitalism at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. They were established by workers or small producers in order to resist high prices and market domination by private capital. Successful in augmenting consumers' real income, co-operatives become subject to reformist illusions that the contradictions of capitalism could be surpassed without overthrowing the system. Since they represented, in the words of Engels, "practical proof that the merchant and the manufacturer are socially quite unnecessary," they fed utopian illusions that through the mere expansion of co-operatives, capitalism could be eliminated and socialism established.

The co-operatives in Jewish Palestine differed from those in other capitalist countries in two main respects. First, they arose not as a result of the advance of capitalist industry, but, on the contrary, because of its absence. The lack of private capital for the development of agriculture and industry (especially the former) and for the employment of Zionist immigrants required the mobilization of public capital and its co-operative use by groups of workers and

workers' organizations. The funds were contributed mainly by Jews in other countries. Second, rather than being formed to ease some of the burdens of capitalism, the purpose of the co-operatives in Palestine was to develop and settle an economically underdeveloped country. They therefore in fact served to *introduce* capitalism into Palestine.

In short, the kibbutz

proved to be the cheapest, quickest, most efficient way of settling immigrants on the land — and settling them where Zionist plans required, without regard for profit or loss. This type of farm also proved most suitable for defensive purposes. At the same time the most idealistic elements among the settlers, those who sought a synthesis of Zionism and socialism, welcomed the opportunity to work in a setup which conformed to their own petty-bourgeois socialist concepts.<sup>39</sup>

Martin Buber, ignoring totally the concrete conditions in which the kibbutz developed, regarded it as "a signal non-failure" in the history of socialist settlement. In fact, however, its essential accomplishment lies not in socialist practice but in the fulfilment of nationalist aims. As the founding elite institution of the envisioned state of Israel, its signal non-failure was precisely in its success in aiding the establishment of the Jewish state. As Magil asserts:

It is no exaggeration to say that those co-operative farms planted the seed of Jewish nationhood in Palestine. They fixed its territorial framework and created the domestic market for its future history. In other words, they became the foundation on which a *capitalist nation* arose in an area characterized by semi-feudal backwardness. This is the objective role they played. Subjectively, however, in the minds of the co-operative farmers and their ideologists, this has appeared as a process of building socialism.<sup>40</sup>

Let us examine concretely the "socialism" built by the kibbutzim. Ninety-two percent (548 out of the total of 597) of the co-operative agricultural farms (kibbutzim and moshavim) are affiliated to the Histadrut Workers' Company. The Kibbutz Federation industries make up a substantial segment of Israeli industry. From 1960-1972 the number of kibbutz-owned industrial plants increased from 108 to 197 and the number of employees in these industries increased from 4,860 to 9,944. Around 30 percent of kibbutz productive manpower is currently employed in industry. In some kibbutzim industrial production constitutes 80 per cent of total kibbutz production.

When we examine the financial structure of specific kibbutz industries we find that they do not depart from the general Histadrut pattern, typified by the ownership structure of Tadiran. As Davis notes, "We are literally facing a Utopia Incorporated. In fact, the legal identity of the spearhead of labour Zionism — the kibbutz — is registered with the Israel Register of Companies as none other than 'A Group of Workers for Cooperative Settlement Ltd.!' (p. 90)

A revealing account of the patterns of kibbutz industry ownership and an example of their corporate nature is offered by Eliezer Levin, the economic analyst of *Ha-aretz* (Israel's most prestigious newspaper). In an article entitled "Mapai and the Labour Party Properties" he writes:

The Kor-Oz refrigerator factory produces thousands of refrigerators every year. Its turnover in 1973 was IL9 million, and it has since increased considerably. . . Who is the owner of this successful plant? It is not easy to answer the question, because the ownership is held by companies, whose shares are owned by companies and so on several times. But the person who will have the patience to examine the files of one company after the other will finally discover that Kor-Oz is owned by. . . 71 kibbutzim of the Ihud ha-Kevutzot ve-ha-Kibbutzim Foundation. The properties of the 70 kibbutzim include. . . other businesses as well. The Foundation owns 18% of the shares of the plywood factory Taal. . . 34% of the shares of a company called "Yitzur u-Pituah" which owns a plant for vegetable dehydration, Deco, at Kibbutz Brur Hayyil. . . and 25% in the canned good factory Pri ha-Galil at the Hatzor development township in the Galilee. . .<sup>41</sup>

What about the question of hired labor employed by the kibbutz? Fifty-two percent of the labor force employed in kibbutz industries is hired labor. Most of the kibbutz hired labor force is found in industry: 21% in the Ha-Kibbutz ha-Artzi Federation and 76% in the Ihud Federation. But kibbutz agriculture employs hired labor as well: 6.5% in Ha-Artzi and 20% in Ihud.<sup>42</sup>

As for labor conditions for hired employees in kibbutz industries, the evidence shows they are in no way better than those prevailing in the private sector. In fact, they are sometimes worse. Atallah Mansour writes of labor conditions in Pri ha-Galil:

The director of the plant admits that the workers do not have a decent dining hall. . . half of the workers in the plant are members of minorities [Arabs]. Most of them are recruited to the place through labour contractors, but one does not get the

impression that the manager of this Histadrut publicly owned plant, or the Histadrut officials. . . mind in any way that these workers are exploited by "middlemen" who suck their blood and take a share of their meager income. On the contrary, I got the impression that the manager is satisfied with the arrangements with the labour contractor since the latter is under obligation to supply a regular number of hands, and when a woman workers is sick or pretends to be sick he is under obligation to provide a substitute. These women labourers receive after the subtraction of legal and illegal deductions from their income a net daily wage of some IL20.<sup>43</sup>

Other problems confronting kibbutz socialism arise from having a non-Jewish volunteer labor force on the kibbutzim. As we noted, the kibbutz volunteer labor force is concentrated in undesirable jobs. But some kibbutzim have discovered that their presence is problematic. In 1976, *Yediot Aharonot* (a conservative daily) reported:

By tacit agreement concluded some years ago at the kibbutz Netzer Sireni General Meeting it was decided that the kibbutz will not accept non-Jewish volunteers or Ulpan students. The kibbutz which was then in favour of promoting "common understanding" was badly affected by a number of instances where kibbutz members married Danish (non-Jewish) girls [sic] and left the kibbutz. The "Danish trauma" moved the majority at the General Meeting to decide in effect on introducing prior selection of foreigners coming to the kibbutz, the guiding criterion being whether or not they are Jewish.<sup>44</sup>

It must be acknowledged that kibbutzim have established a communalist life style — one with many attractive features. Even on the least egalitarian kibbutzim — those which permit a relatively greater amount of personal property — all production and ninety percent of total consumption is collective. And during the early years of Jewish settlement, the kibbutz way of life served as an ideal. But as Israel developed along capitalist lines, the kibbutzim, too, followed the bourgeois path. As David Mandel summarizes:

Even for those kibbutzim that do not hire outsiders, material well-being is the mark of success. This requires intelligent production and consumption decision-making within the national and international market places, clearly fostering a bourgeois mentality, albeit for the good of the community as a unit. The Kibbutzim's relatively high standard of living, their elitism, favored treatment and, in many cases, capitalist relations vis-a-vis hired workers, have caused resentment on the

part of the masses of urban Jewish workers and many of Afro-Asian background (kibbutzim are still Euro-American dominated). And when the kibbutz is labeled as the best example of "Israeli socialism," then socialism becomes unpopular among these sectors too. The Likud made very effective demagogic use of this resentment in its 1977 election victory.<sup>45</sup>

### Socialist-Zionism and the Palestinians

"The Arab peasants in Palestine and those from surrounding countries found the newly evolving economic relations and conditions of production a basis for their own development. . . The Zionists organized Jews and Arabs into trade unions and helped forge a class consciousness among Arab fellahin (peasants)"

—Jewish Liberation Project

The socialist-Zionists did not see themselves as colonialists in a foreign land; they thought of themselves as pioneers returning to their homeland to build a new society for their people. Nevertheless, Zionism, by virtue of its goal, was compelled to be a colonizing movement, seeking to establish a Jewish entity in a land already inhabited by another people. Like every colonizing society, then, the Zionist settlers had to forge a definite policy toward the indigenous population. They chose the path of separate development.

The creation of a Jewish community in Palestine that would be as independent as possible of the existing Arab community (in terms of land, labor, and production) required a struggle on three fronts: for "conquest of the land" — establishing Jewish ownership and use of as much of the land of Palestine as possible for "conquest of labor" — forcing Jewish employers to hire only Jewish workers, rather than cheaper Arab labor, and thus creating a Jewish-working class; and for "produce of the land" — boycotting cheaper Arab-made goods in order to promote Jewish agriculture and industry.

These Socialist-Zionist policies certainly conflicted with the widely-held socialist principles of class solidarity and opposition to national discrimination.<sup>46</sup> But Mapai and other socialist-Zionists defended them by pointing to the special circumstances of the Jewish situation. David Hacohen, a major Mapai figure, detailed the practical implications of "socialist-Zionism":

I remember being one of the first of our comrades [of Ahdut Ha'avoda] to go to London after the First World War. . . There I became a socialist. . . When I joined the socialist students —

English, Irish, Jewish, Chinese, Indian, Afridan — we found out that we were all under English domination or rule. And even here, in these intimate surroundings, I had to fight my friends on the issue of Jewish socialism, to defend the fact that I would not accept Arabs in my trade union, the Histadrut; to defend preaching to housewives that they not buy at Arab stores; to defend the fact that we stood guard at orchards to prevent Arab workers from getting jobs there. . . To pour kerosene on Arab tomatoes; to attack Jewish housewives in the markets and smash the Arab eggs they had bought; to praise to the skies the Keren Kayemet [Jewish National Fund] that sent Hankin to Beirut to buy land from the absentee effendi [landlords] and to throw the fellahin [peasants] off the land — to buy dozens of dunams [one dunam = .23 acres] from an Arab is permitted, but to sell, God forbid, one Jewish dunam to an Arab is prohibited; to take Rothschild, the incarnation of capitalism, as a socialist and to name him the "benefactor" — to do all that was not easy. And despite the fact that we did it — maybe we had no choice — I wasn't happy about it.<sup>47</sup>

In 1920 the Histadrut, or General Federation of Jewish Workers in Palestine, was founded. It excluded Arab workers and was in fact as much an institution for colonization as it was a trade union. It fostered the various plans to replace Arab with Jewish labor.<sup>48</sup> After all, the argument ran, the unorganized and low-paid Arab workers were a threat to the organized Jewish workers, and a trade union must protect its members. Aharon Cohen, a long-time member of the socialist-Zionist Hashomer Hatza'ir (The Young Guard) movement, states what these Histadrut policies meant for Arab workers:

Arab workers, the great majority of whom came from a rural society, found themselves at a double disadvantage in their contract with Jewish employers. For the same work, the Jewish employer paid the Arab less than he paid organized or even unorganized Jewish labor;\* and on the other hand, the Jewish worker regarded employment in his sector as his exclusive patrimony, to the exclusion of the Arab worker.<sup>49</sup>

Yet the concept of "Jewish labor" did not seem to be inconsistent with the outlook of the socialist-Zionists. As Flapan explains:

As class-conscious socialists and as Zionists, the Third Aliyah immigrants believed it was their duty to eliminate the exploitation of cheap unorganized Arab labour by Jewish settlers; otherwise Zionism would become a socialist phenomenon. The exploitation of cheap Arab labour was incompatible with their vision of a socialist society. They



thought that by forcing Arab workers to seek employment in the Arab sector, they would stimulate the class conflict in Arab society and prevent the Jewish-Arab national conflict from attaining as well a class dimension (p. 201).

But Cohen rejects these rationalizations:

However eloquent the explanation of the moral, nationalistic, and socialist motives that impelled the Jewish labor movement to take this stand it could not remove the sting from the fact that the Jewish Labor Federation made no effort to organize the Arab workers, even those who worked in the Jewish sector. Jewish labor developed no sort of trade union association or solidarity with the Arab workers in order to improve their working conditions.<sup>50</sup>

Cohen's sharp words clearly reflect Hashomer Hatzair's opposition to Mapai's Jewish labor policy. "As early as 1927," Flapan tells us, "Hashomer Hatzair demanded the joint organization of Jewish and Arab workers during its electoral campaign to the Histadrut" (p. 185). But neither Cohen nor Flapan reveal Hashomer Hatzair's true position vis-a-vis the "conquest of labor" policy.

Since the rank and file membership of Hashomer Hatzair lived on kibbutzim, and was therefore spared direct competition with Arab labor, it risked little in attacking the anti-Arab practices of the social-democratic Mapai. It appealed for but rarely practiced joint organization of Arab and Jewish workers in urban and rural areas. Its relationship to the "conquest of labor" policy was ambiguous, and even hypocritical: a resolution of the 1934 conference of *Hakibbutz Ha'artzi* declared that the fight for "Jewish labor" should be carried out "on the basis of the principle of the priority of the Jewish worker for work in the Jewish sector — on condition that this does not damage the rights of permanent Arab workers (maximum Jewish labor as opposed to the Mapai slogan of 'one hundred percent'). . ." Obviously, the differences between Hashomer Hatzair and Mapam on this issue concerned tactics more than principle. As Flapan is forced to admit:

In the years of wage labour, members of the Hashomer Hatzair kibbutzim were the chief carriers of the attempt to set up joint Arab-Jewish trade union and supported and encouraged the few Arab strikes. But once in the collective farms, facing a hostile environment and harassed by problems of security and self-defense, the actual possibilities of creating contacts with Arab villages were very limited. Hashomer Hatzair tried to

solve this dilemma by an intense ideological indoctrination of its members and a courageous struggle for the defense of the bi-national idea, in the realm of politics, but was unable to match this ideological struggle in the Jewish community with efforts in the field of contacts with the Arab population (p. 186).

For a period of two decades prior to the establishment of Israel, Hashomer Hatzair called for a policy of socialist bi-nationalism in Palestine. The cornerstone of this position was the right of the Jewish people to return to their homeland and the equal right of its Arab inhabitants. Yet the Hashomer Hatzair also stressed the necessity of advancing the Zionist task, of allowing unlimited Jewish immigration and settlement. Here lies the basic contradiction in its bi-nationalism: it criticized the Mapai goal of a Jewish majority, but it obviously assumed that the Jews would become a majority when it called for the concentration of the majority of the Jewish people in Palestine. In Flapan's words: "Hashomer Hatzair professed 'maximal Zionism': the ingathering of the majority of the Jewish people to their homeland and the creation of a Jewish majority in Palestine. What distinguished it from the Revisionists was that it combined this belief with the vision of a 'bi-national socialist society in Palestine and its environs.'" (pp. 183-84).

Khalil Nakhich draws the following conclusion from Hashomer Hatzair's bi-national policy:

The question of the sovereignty of the Palestinian people then, even though it was under British colonial and capitalistic rule was not raised. At the time, therefore, the lowest common denominator for the precursors of the contemporary Zionist Left was *not* a Zionist state for the Jews. The preoccupation was in reconciling ideologically the waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine with the desires of the indigenous population. Since Hashomer Hatzair refused to consider limitation on Jewish immigration to Palestine, a bi-national policy became a "progressive" stand.<sup>51</sup>

When the United Nations voted in November 1947 to approve the partition of Palestine into an Arab state and a Jewish state, Hashomer Hatzair abandoned its bi-national platform and championed the creation of the Jewish state.

With the establishment of Israel in 1948, the various socialist-Zionist movements in Palestine realigned themselves to form Mapam — the United Workers Party. Mapam was composed of the Hashomer Hatzair Workers' Party, the left wing of Mapai, and the



left Poalei-Tzion. For the first time, the Zionist workers' movement to the left of Mapai was united in one party. With considerable urban and kibbutz support, its prospects appeared good. Its program attempted to synthesize Zionist and revolutionary socialism:

A. The party is united in seeing Zionism as the solution to the Jewish question by means of the ingathering of the exiles of the Jewish people and their territorial concentration, national revival, social renewal and political, social and cultural independence in Eretz-Yisra'el. . .

B. The party is united in seeing the historic task of the revolutionary-class struggle and of the establishment of a workers' regime as the elimination of capitalism and of all forms of national and social slavery, the creation of a classless socialist society and a world of brotherhood among peoples. (Lockman, p. 10)

The record of Mapam between 1948 and 1967, however, shows its constant shift to the right. On the one hand, the party opposed the military administration over the Israeli Arabs that lasted from 1948 to 1966; it admitted Arabs as members, as long as they accepted the party's Zionist program; it advocated a non-aligned Israeli foreign policy, and a conciliatory attitude towards the Arabs; it claimed to oppose Mapai's reformism and trade-union policies and its failure to carry out its socialist principles. But, on the other hand, when key actions had to be taken, Mapam chose its commitment to Zionist nationalism over its loyalty to "socialism and the brotherhood [sic] of peoples." Mapam kibbutzim do not hesitate to take over and use land expropriated from Palestinian Arabs who fled or were expelled in 1948.<sup>52</sup>

The 1967 war produced three major developments which became problematic to socialist-Zionists in Mapam and to the left of Mapam: (1) military occupation of densely populated Arab territory, (2) establishment of Jewish settlements on occupied Arab territory, and (3) the rise in the prestige and influence of the PLO. As Nakhleh argues, the response to each of these developments by the socialist-Zionists demonstrates that their stance is "situationally and tactically 'left' and ideologically 'right'." (p. 92).

To determine their position on the occupied territories, some members of *New Outlook's* <sup>53</sup> editorial council met in September 1967. The position which emerged from this meeting on "Peace and Security" were as follows: (1) The June 1967 war was a defensive one for Israel. (2) A position was adopted against the annexation of

territories, but also against their return until there were assurances for secure borders and real peace. (3) The Palestinian refugees should be settled in the Arab countries. (4) Annexation of the territories would create two problems: (a) the "demographic problem," and (b) a colonial image. (5) The State of Israel existed by right and should be recognized as such. (6) The only possible solution for Palestinian statehood was through the "Jordanian solution," namely an Arab state combining the West and the East Banks of Jordan.

For several years following the occupation, socialist-Zionists failed not only to recognize that the Palestinians had the right to self-determination, but they published streams of comments and editorials against the legitimacy of the PLO. Flapan for example, described Fateh as representing "the most intransigent, reactionary, and chauvinistic trend within the Palestinian people" (1969:36). Three years later, Matty Peled (1972:5) challenged the mass following of the Palestinian revolution. "What masses?" he asked. "There are none. If it had mass support perhaps the 'Palestinian revolution' would be a political movement. It has no pretensions of being one; it is a terrorist movement."

In recent years, numerous socialist-Zionists have changed their attitudes toward the Palestinian question. They not only recognize Palestinian rights to self-determination, but openly call for a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Some even insist that Israel negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization. And on the question of Israeli security, Socialist-Zionists — Meir Pa'il for one — share the rational view forcefully expressed by Noam Chomsky: "it must be stressed that security for Israel lies in political accommodation and creation of bonds of unity and solidarity with the Palestinian population, not in military dominance, which will at best only delay an eventual catastrophe, given the historical, political, and economic realities."<sup>54</sup>

Now surely socialist-Zionists who advocate a two-state solution deserve support. For this proposal — despite all its defects<sup>55</sup> — has, as its paramount principle, the survival of both peoples, and not of one at the expense of the other. And this possible outcome — an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel — may well be the least intolerable under present circumstances. Nevertheless, essential contradictions remain in the socialist-Zionist position, all of which can be attributed to their unwillingness to question basic Zionist tenets.

The key non-negotiable ideological premise for socialist-Zionists is the exclusively Jewish nature of the State of Israel.\* This ideological premise has become very troublesome to the socialist-Zionists for two reasons: (1) they must reconcile ideologically the presence of an Arab population which, formally at least, comprises a segment of the state's citizens; and (2) they must acknowledge the relationship between the Arabs in Israel, whose Palestinian identity cannot be denied, and Palestinians elsewhere, especially in the occupied areas after 1967. The socialist-Zionists' response to these problems is explicit. It is that (1) the Arabs in Israel are a cultural minority which should be integrated fully in the political body of Israel through equal treatment. (2) In any discussion of the general Palestinian problem, attempts are made to separate the Arabs in Israel from the Palestinian problem, and to discourage links between them and the Palestinians in the territories, and elsewhere.

My view here [writes Nakhleh] is that the Zionist Left in Israel attempts to partition the Palestine question by focusing their efforts only on certain segments of the Palestinian people. At present, and in my discussions with certain well-entrenched members of this camp, the mere suggestion on my part that Palestinian identification of the Arabs in Israel had to be considered in any discussion of a Palestinian state was rejected on the grounds that it would play into the hands of the Israeli

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\*The following critique of the Zionist nature of Israel is offered by Abdelwahab Elmessiri, an Egyptian professor: "Israel, founded as a state for the Jews and determined to maintain and perpetuate this Jewish identity, has incorporated discriminatory laws into its very legal framework. Israeli-Zionist discrimination as such is not merely a matter of personal bigotry or *de facto* segregation; it is primarily a matter of *de jure* discrimination. . . . One of the most discriminatory Israeli laws is the Law of Return. Promulgated on July 5, 1950, it grants automatic citizenship to any Jew upon his arrival in Israel, even though he may never have set foot in the Middle East. This same right is denied to a Palestinian Arab born and raised in Palestine who wishes to return to his homeland. This law has no parallel in any other country; it is based on the unique Zionist concept of pan-Jewish peoplehood and can be construed as racist in that it denies non-Jews their inalienable rights in their own homeland" (*The Land of Promise: A Critique of Political Zionism*, p. 147). And Noam Chomsky has written: "To be sure, Israel is not white Africa. Far from it. But the principle of exclusive rights for the settlers who displaced the native population, and now form a majority, is deeply embedded in the institutional structures of the state, almost to the point of lack of awareness. This is a serious matter. The actual record, and the failure to comprehend it, indicate that far-reaching and quite radical changes will be necessary if the system of discrimination is to be dismantled" ("Israel and Palestinians," *Socialist Revolution*, no. 24, pp. 72-73).

Right. Such a suggestion, it was claimed, created unnecessary hurdles in the path to the solution of the problem. Further, it was claimed, whatever problems the Arabs in Israel have can be solved within the framework of a Zionist-Jewish Israel. (p. 94).

Finally, socialist-Zionists fail to realize that a nationalist solution to the Palestinian question is ultimately inadequate. Many socialists — including many Jewish socialists — believe that Zionism as an ideology and an exclusively Jewish state as its political expression can never allow a just solution to the Palestinian problem. As Sabri Jiryis explains:

[The] anti-Palestinian Israeli attitude is not merely emotional or theoretical; it has extremely practical implications. To recognize the existence of a Palestinian people with national rights and legitimate representatives could lead to old files being reopened and the Palestine problem being raised from its earliest origins. There is nothing to guarantee that the representatives of the Palestinians, once they were recognized as such, would not bring up the problem in all its aspects including, for example, the right of the Palestinian refugees to return or to receive compensation.<sup>56</sup>

But the intransigence of the Israeli position masks increasingly complex attitudes towards the Palestinians. Many Israelis who cannot yet overcome their hostility toward them are beginning to understand the Palestinian condition. This shift in awareness is exemplified in the words of a young Israeli woman on military service in Upper Galilee: "Arafat is a murderer. I hate the Palestinians and everything they're doing, but their cause is just."<sup>57</sup> It is also apparent in a recent poll showing that while 89 percent of Israelis are against the creation of a Palestinian state, 50 percent of Israel's population believes its eventual existence "inevitable."<sup>58</sup> That more and more Israelis are beginning to question the Zionist "ritual of nonrecognition of the existence of a Palestine national entity" (Flapan, p. 19) is a significant omen for Zionism.

Another indication of change in Israeli attitudes is the emergence of the Peace Now movement. This movement — until now made up mostly of middle-class Jews of western origin — acts as a pressure group against the political and ideological objectives of Begin and Likud government. It has carried out a number of massive demonstrations against West Bank settlements and has even assisted the Palestinians against Gush Emunim harassment. Moreover, the fact that Black Panther and other Oriental Jewish leaders in Israel are

now urging their followers to participate in Peace Now rallies against West Bank settlements is significant.

Nevertheless, the limitations of Peace Now must be acknowledged. Most of its members support the Labor Party program — basically a “territorial compromise” on the West Bank creating a number of Palestinian “Bantustans” under Jordanian jurisdiction. And the pragmatic, “nonideological” leadership of Peace Now is unwilling to employ the militant tactics of Gush Emunim. As Uri Davis declares:

In order to be a counterbalance, the Peace Now movement would have to make precisely the same kind of statement that was made by a hundred or so of its members recently, that they will not defend Gush Emunim settlements in times of war and publicly refuse to obey orders to that effect. The hundred people who made this statement were immediately ostracized and officially “excommunicated” by the Peace Now leadership, and they now represent a group of a hundred individuals. They have no public echo whatsoever within the movement or support within the general Israeli body politic. And that shows you the asymmetry: Peace Now will not go to the barricades in order to defend even its own objectives. It might be an embarrassment to the Begin government, but it is not a factor that has to be taken into serious consideration.<sup>59</sup>



Socialist-Zionists in Israel never fail to stress that the ideological locus of their position is Zionism. They repeatedly point to their Zionist credentials in order to counter attacks from the right and to distinguish themselves from the anti-Zionist socialists in Israel. The determinant aspect of their stance is the factor of Zionism, rather than socialism. Characterizing Zionism as a Jewish national liberation movement, they support the Law of Return and the *de jure* provisions which guarantee exclusive rights to Jews in Israel. Their commitment is to Jewish domination in the Jewish state.

As a result, socialist-Zionists who support a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip envision it as the *permanent* solution to the Palestinian question. They refuse to consider the establishment of a socialist republic in Palestine as an ultimate answer to the problems of both the Israeli-Jewish people and the Palestinian-Arab people.<sup>60</sup> But commitment to such a long-term solution is necessary if one seeks socialist aims: the internal democratization and further integration of both peoples. Paradoxically, it is unrealistic to dismiss such long range proposals as “utopian”: “They may provide the only basis for the “simpler and more immediate steps that will reduce tension, permit the growth of mutual trust and the expression of common interests that cross national lines — specifically, class interests — and thus lay the groundwork for an eventual just and peaceful settlement.”<sup>61</sup>

The inescapable conclusion, then, is that socialism and Zionism cannot be reconciled. To embrace one necessarily means rejecting the other. If Jewish socialists eschew Zionism, however, it does not at all follow that they do not recognize the legitimate rights of Israeli Jews. Nor does it mean they are insensitive to ethnic group rights for Jews in the United States or elsewhere. As Chomsky observes:

In many parts of the world, socialist movements must seek a way to combine a commitment to socialist revolution with a recognition of national and ethnic bounds within complex multinational societies. In the advanced industrial societies as well, ethnic and racial conflicts stand in the way of movements for social change, and are often manipulated and exacerbated for the purpose of preserving privilege and oppression. Ultimately, socialist movements must be internationalist in their orientation, but “internationalism” does not imply opposition in principle to national ties or to other forms of voluntary association among individuals.<sup>62</sup>



## Notes:

1. For an excellent historical overview of socialist-Zionism from a Marxist perspective, see Zachary Lockman, *MERIP Reports* 49 (July 1976).
2. Although this paper discusses some of the basic issues concerning Zionism in general, my aim is not to deal with *all* its essential aspects. For a provocative debate on key questions regarding Zionism, including the claim that the Jewish people as a whole form a nation, and the relationship between antisemitism and Zionism, see Roger S. Gottlieb, "The Dialectics of National Identity: Left-Wing Antisemitism and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," and "Ahistorical Dialectics: A Response to Roger Gottlieb," *Socialist Review* 47, September-October 1979.
3. Of course, socialist-Zionists — like all other Zionists — also argue that a Jewish state is a necessary condition for ending antisemitism.
4. The Jewish Liberation Project was formed by a group of radical Jews in 1968. The quote is taken from *Arab-Israeli Debate: Toward a Socialist Solution* (New York: Times Change Press, 1970). At the time of the debate, the JLP felt closest to SIAH Israeli New Left, a socialist-Zionist group to the left of Mapam.
5. Actually, as Christopher Hill reminds, Marx backed movements for national independence in Europe in the nineteenth century: "So long as a national movement would have the effect of freeing a people from foreign oppression, Marxists supported it: thus in the nineteenth century Marx was an advocate both of German and Italian national unity, and of the independence of Poland and Ireland. *Lenin and the Russian Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 103.
6. Those Zionists, like Herzl, who sought political recognition for Jewish nationalism from the great powers and from the Turks.
7. Arie Bober, ed., *The Other Israel: The Radical Case Against Zionism* (New York: Doubleday, 1972), p. 55.
8. *The Idea of the Jewish State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 23.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 283.
10. It is necessary to point out that only in recent years have the socialist-Zionists — in an obvious attempt to make Zionism more appealing to the international left — called Zionism a "national liberation movement." As Edward Said notes: "it is important to remember that in joining the general Western enthusiasm for overseas territorial acquisition, Zionism *never* spoke of itself unambiguously as a Jewish liberation movement, but rather as a Jewish movement for colonial settlement in the Orient." And Paul Jacobs observes that "the socialist movement *never* perceived Zionism as a movement of national liberation, as that concept was generally understood during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, since in the formative years of the Zionist movement its adherents did not seek to justify it as such a movement." Response to Shlomo Avineri, in *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era? Reflections on the Holocaust*, ed. Eva Fleischner (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1977), p. 258.
11. "Radical Theology, the New Left, and Israel," *Auschwitz*, p. 250.
12. *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?* (New York: Monarch Press, 1973), p. 57.
13. But the British were unable to suppress Arab nationalism for long: "Within the Arab kingdom or republics placed under mandate, political organizations were able to develop with greater or fewer restrictions depending on the period and the area. Their national character, and their call for independence in a more or less

- distant future, were acknowledged. This also provided a basis on which a struggle around the demand of total independence could be built." *Rodinson, Israel*, p. 57.
14. *Ibid.*
15. JLP, *Arab-Israeli Debate*, p. 35.
16. *Zionism and the Palestinians* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1979), p. 18. Hereafter all page references will appear in the text.
17. According to Flapan, "Weizmann encouraged the labour movement to build a society unique in its innovative organization of economic activity. In turn, the labour movement acceded to Weizmann's political strategy for achieving this aim." (p. 18)
18. Of course, Zionist co-operation with the British — in pursuit of "increasing our numbers and strength in the country" — benefitted the British as well. As Glenn Yago elaborates: "Throughout the Yishuv, the pre-Statehood period, Jewish investment and immigration were continuously related. Furthermore by taking the form of infrastructural investment (services, communication, and transportation), the development not only aided immigration but also mirrored the economic plans developed by the British Empire. Palestine was rapidly becoming of critical importance to the British colonial defense system. With growing independence movements in Iraq and Egypt, Palestine became for the British a crucial location for bases from which operations could be launched. Not only new immigration, but the British military strategy favored infrastructural investments. There was a commonality (not an identity) of interests between the British Empire and the Zionist state-building effort. The Mandate occupation sheltered and directed Jewish interests. Hence, during the boom period, 1932-39, construction and infrastructure development represented 46.6% of all Jewish investments." "Whatever Happened to the Promised Land," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XXI, 1976-77, p. 122.
19. This is a favorite ploy of Shlomo Avineri whose constant complaint is that "The suppression of the socialist aspect of the dominant element in Zionism and Israeli politics is a recurring theme in many of the left-wing writings on Israel." *Auschwitz*, p. 250.
20. This is part of a reply written by the Union of Jewish Students in France (UEJF) to a talk given by Maxine Rodinson (at the Mutuality on March 5, 1964). Quoted in Rodinson, *Israel*, p. 31.
21. *Palestine*, p. 69.
22. In his extremely revealing discussion of "The Debate on Transfer," Flapan writes: "The concept of transfer was as old as the beginnings of Zionist colonisation. Even before the First World War, leading Zionists had toyed with the idea. . . . In 1912, Leo Motzkin suggested that the Arab-Jewish problem was soluble if considered in a wider framework; if the Arabs would be willing to resettle in the uncultivated lands around Palestine, using the money they had received from the sale of land to the Zionists." (p. 259) Far more telling, however, are the following words of Ben-Gurion (which Flapan takes from *New Judea*, Aug.-Sept. 1937, p. 220): "if it was permissible to move an Arab from the Galilee to Judea, why is it impossible to move an Arab from Hebron to Transjordan, which is much closer? There are vast expanses of land there and we are overcrowded. . ." (p. 261) Flapan asserts: "In private debates over partition in 1936-37, and at the Eighteenth Zionist Congress at Zurich in August 1937, Ben-Gurion emerged as one of the most energetic advo-



- cates of transfer, which he justified morally and ethically as nothing more than a continuation of a natural process already taking place. Ben-Gurion secretly but actively promoted the idea of transfer with the Peel Commission and participated in securing Abdullah's support for the plan." (p. 261) For Flapan's entire discussion of Zionist transfer proposals, see pages 259-266.
23. Bober, *The Other Israel*, p.
  24. Noam Chomsky observes: "it may be true that the absentee landlords and feudal proprietors were willing to sell their land, but there is no lack of evidence that peasants were forcibly displaced. The Zionist leadership always understood this. Arthur Ruppin, who was in charge of land purchase. . . wrote in 1930 that it was illusory to believe that Jewish settlement could be carried out without damaging Arab interests, if only because 'there is hardly any land which is worth cultivating which is not already being cultivated, [so that] it is found that wherever we purchase land and settle it, by necessity its present cultivators are turned away, whether they are owners or tenants. . . The advice we tend to give Arabs — to work their land more intensively, in order to manage with a smaller allotment of land — may appear as a joke at the expense of the poor' since the peasants have neither the requisite capital nor agricultural knowledge." "Israel and the Palestinians," *Socialist Revolution* 24, June 1975, pp. 73-74. For a discussion of the various scholarly estimates of displaced Palestinians, see Elia T. Zureik, book review of *The Palestinians*, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol VI, No. 3, Spring 1977, p. 122. Zureik's conclusion is that "In spite of the fact that land was sold mostly by Arab landowners, and not peasants, to the Jewish National Fund, this resulted in a sizeable strata of displaced peasants."
  25. Quoted in Uri Davis, *Israel: Utopia Incorporated* (London: Zed Press, 1977, p. 15).
  26. Quoted in *ibid.*
  27. The "Workers' Company" — the Histadrut holding company. Every Histadrut member is automatically a member of this co-operative association, and its directing bodies are identical with those of the Histadrut.
  28. Quoted in A.B. Magil, *Israel in Crisis* (New York: International Publishers, 1950), p. 86.
  29. Bober says of the Histadrut and its "Labor Bureaucracy": "It actually functioned as a state mechanism, continuously and directly intervening in all aspects of the colonization process and subordinating 'sectoral' interests and short term considerations to the 'general' long term interests of the Zionist colonial movement as a whole. . . . Moreover, the 'Labor Bureaucracy' used the embryonic state machine to make long-range investments, particularly in infrastructure, that no private capitalist would have made. It established banks and other credit and distribution facilities, subsidized private capitalists and farmers, and employed Keynesian instruments as early as the beginning of the thirties to protect the Yishuv's economy." Quoted in Yago, "Promised Land," p. 127. In short, the Histadrut fit into the classic pattern of a "state capitalist" structure. For an important discussion of state capitalism, see Karen Pfeifer, "State Capitalism and Development," *MERIP Reports* 78, pp. 3-11.
  30. I use "Zionist system" in the sense of a practical system "for accumulation (of power, land, ideological legitimacy) and displacement (of people, other ideas, prior legitimacy)." Said, *Palestine*, p. 57. As difficult as it is for Zionists — who

- naturally perceive it in utterly different ways — Zionism, from the standpoint of its victims, the Palestinians, can only be seen as a political, juridical, and ideological system intent on displacing them from their homeland. For a brilliant — and sensitive — presentation of the Palestinian point of view, read Said's chapter, "Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims," *ibid.*, pp. 56-114.
31. See Yago, "Promised Land," pp. 132-143.
  32. Davis, *Israel*, pp. 81, 84.
  33. See Davis, *ibid.*, pp. 78-84.
  34. *The End of the Jewish People?* (New York: Anchor Books, 1968), p. 100.
  35. Bober, *The Other Israel*, p. 128.
  36. *Ibid.*
  37. Davis, *Israel*, pp. 93, 95.
  38. *Paths in Utopia* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), p. 141.
  39. Magil, *Israel in Crisis*, p. 89.
  40. *Ibid.*
  41. Quoted in Davis, *Israel*, p. 90.
  42. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
  43. Quoted from *Ha'aretz*, 10/27/75, in *Israel*, p. 95.
  44. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 96.
  45. "Making the Connections: Ideology, Consciousness, and the Left in Israel," *Socialist Review* 39, May-June 1978, p. 103.
  46. The practice of "Jewish labor" only, in particular, made inevitable the surrender of any socialist convictions they might once have sincerely held.
  47. *Ha'aretz*, 11/15/69 quoted in Bober, *The Other Israel*, p. 12.
  48. "In 1933," writes Flapan, "the Histadruth launched, for the first time, a campaign to remove Arab workers from the cities. Specifically formed mobile units moved from place to place to identify and evict by force, if necessary, Arab workers from construction sites and other Jewish enterprises. This campaign in the cities, especially in Haifa and Jerusalem, which had a mixed population, assumed dramatic dimensions and had a devastating effect on public opinion. Every single case of removal of Arab workers — and in many cases the operation took the form of ugly scenes of violence — was reported in the Jewish press and reverberated in the Arab media creating an atmosphere of unprecedented tension." (p. 206)
  49. *Israel and the Arab World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 4. In her study on *Arab Politics in Palestine, 1917-1939*, Ann Mosely Lesch writes: "the British government in 1931 explicitly sanctioned 'the principle of preferential, and indeed exclusive, employment of Jewish labor by Jewish organizations.' In fact, the policy negated Zionist claims that Jewish immigration and economic projects would directly benefit the Arabs, and it deeply embittered Arabs against Jewish residents. The secretary of the Arab Labor Federation of Jaffa asserted resentfully in 1937: 'The Histadrut's fundamental aim is 'the conquest of labour' . . . No matter how many Arab workers are unemployed, they have no right to take any job which a possible immigrant might occupy. No Arab has the right to work in Jewish undertakings. If Arabs can be displaced in other work, too. . . that is good. If a port can be established in Tel Aviv and Jaffa port ruined, that is better.'" (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 45.
  50. *Israel and the Arab World*, p. 4.

51. "Israel's Zionist Left and 'The Day of the Land,'" *Journal of Palestine Studies* vol VII, No. 2, Winter 1978, p. 91.
52. For an interesting discussion of MAPAM's position vis-a-vis Palestinian Arabs in Israel, see Sabri Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel*, (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1976), pp. 172-177.
53. *New Outlook* is the English-language journal of Israel's doves. It describes itself as "dedicated to the search for peace in the Middle East and to co-operation and development of all the area's peoples."
54. Chomsky, "Israel and the Palestinians," p. 82.
55. For a brief, but pithy analysis of the pitfalls involved in the two-state solution, see *ibid.*, pp. 56-57.
56. "On Political Settlement in the Middle East: The Palestinian Dimension," *Journal of Palestine Studies* Vol. No. 1, Autumn 1977, p. 15. This article documents the change in the PLO position from that of advocating a "secular, democratic state" in all of Palestine to the "demand for their own independent state." Since Jiryis is the head of the Israel section of the PLO Research Center in Beirut, this article deserves serious attention.
57. Quoted in Frederic Jameson, "But Their Cause is Just," *Seven Days, Vol. III, Number 11, September 28, 1979, p. 19.*
58. *Ibid.*
59. "Settlements and Politics under Begin," *MERIP Reports* 78, June 1979, p. 18.
60. See the debate in Fouzi el-Asmar, Uri Davis, and Naim Khadr eds, *Towards a Socialist Republic of Palestine* (London and Israel: Ithica Press and Miftah Publishers, 1978), pp. 1-139.
61. "Israel and the Palestinians," p. 83.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

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