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The Labor Palestine Pamphlets

The  
**COMMUNISTS**  
and the  
**ARAB PROBLEM**

by

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**FOR INFORMATION  
On Labor Zionism**

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## I. COMMUNIST TACTICS

**T**HERE is no need to overestimate the influence of the Communists in the present disturbances in Palestine. They are only one factor, and far from the most important, in the tension in the country. But the question at issue is not the degree of their effectiveness or the measure of their responsibility. Be their direct blood-guilt large or small, the fact remains that they are systematically engaged in instigating the ignorant Arab peasantry against the Jewish population.

To properly understand the manner in which they advance the cause of the proletariat, one must realize that their present attitude is not new. They are following a consistent party-line, which dictates that Arab murders of innocent Jews are to be glorified as "revolution"—which is to be encouraged in so far as provocative proclamations and appeals are able to do so. The Communist reaction to the Arab riots of 1929 outraged the Jewish world. The ruthless and irresponsible fanaticism of their position has not deviated one inch since then. If anything, the Communists have become more firmly entrenched in their determination to propagandize the Arabs against the Jews regardless of the consequences of such propaganda. For a complete picture of their activities one must review the situation since 1929, when the "correct" direction was apparently first announced.

During the outbreaks of 1929—outbreaks in which helpless children and old men were slaughtered—the New York Communist newspaper, the *Freiheit* hailed the massacre as a "revolutionary uprising". It is interesting to note that the *Freiheit* did not see so clearly and so correctly at once. From August 20 to August 28 it indicated a natural sympathy for the Jewish victims. On August 26, it even praised the heroic resistance of the Jews to attacks. "When a pogrom breaks out there is no other choice"; those were the words of the *Freiheit*. On August 28, the "pogrom" became a

“revolutionary uprising”. On August 29, the *Freiheit* made a clean breast of its change of heart 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.” On August 31, the nature of the apocalypse vouchsafed the editors of the *Freiheit* was revealed. They had gotten the party line. They published a resolution of the political bureau of the Communist party which explained that the first viewpoint expressed by the paper was “a counter-revolutionary viewpoint characteristic of social democrats and the bourgeoisie.” And so, purified by the right doctrine, the murderers of the children of Hebron became “revolutionaries.”

That same year—1929—the West European Bureau of the Executive Committee of the Communist International issued a circular entitled “The significance of the events in Palestine.” The circular contains the sentence “It is the duty of all our parties to fight against Jewish immigration into Palestine.”

Fighting against Jewish immigration has become the special task of the Jewish Communists in Palestine. Instigating the ignorant Arab population against the Jewish settlers has become their “revolutionary activity”. One of the strangest unions in history is that of the Communists and the feudal Mufti nationalists. The United Front in Palestine means not a united front with the Jewish Socialist workers but with the blackest reactionary elements of the Arab nationalists — the Pan-Islam — Pan-Arab groups. Why the imperialism of Pan-Islam or Pan-Arabistan slides so easily down the Communist palate is another mystery of their revolutionary zeal.

In practice, Communist activity in Palestine means creating a pogrom-psychology against the peaceful Jewish population—hand-in-hand with the terrorist band, the Arab feudal reactionaries.

The text of the proclamation they issued in November is worth quoting, even though it has already appeared: “You

prising". On August 29, the *Freiheit* made its change of heart in the following terms: "A few days, the *Freiheit* failed to perceive the revolutionary character of the uprising—that it pointed to the Jewish self-defense as a necessity—that was an error." On August 31, the apocalypse vouchsafed the editors of the paper. They had gotten the party line. A resolution of the political bureau of the party which explained that the first viewpoint of the paper was "a counter-revolutionary viewpoint of social democrats and the bourgeoisie." "By the right doctrine, the murderers of the revolution became "revolutionaries."

April—1929—the West European Bureau of the Communist International issued a circular entitled "The significance of the events in Palestine." The circular contains the sentence "It is the duty of the parties to fight against Jewish immigration."

Against Jewish immigration has become the main theme of the Jewish Communists in Palestine. In the ignorant Arab population against the Jewish immigrants is their "revolutionary activity". One of the main lines in history is that of the Communists and the Mufti nationalists. The United Front in Palestine is not a united front with the Jewish Socialist Party but with the blackest reactionary elements of the Arab world — the Pan-Islam — Pan-Arab groups. The Pan-Islamism of Pan-Islam or Pan-Arabism slides into the Communist palate is another mystery of the Arab world of every zeal.

Communist activity in Palestine means creeps and psychology against the peaceful Jewish population. On the other hand with the terrorist band, the Arab revolutionaries.

The proclamation they issued in November is even though it has already appeared: "You

have seen the shamefulness of Zionist occupation. They (the Zionists) have succeeded in seizing the largest part of your community land. They were not satisfied with the establishment of their national home with the support of British imperialism and a large number of illegal Zionist immigrants. They began to strengthen it with ammunition, with large quantities of weapons aimed solely at Arab hearts to exterminate them completely."

The proclamation goes on to remind the Arabs "that the government armed the Jews several times. It provided them with ammunition and instructors in the years 1920, 1929 and 1933, under the pretext of self-defense."

The second part of the proclamation is an emotional appeal pointing to two paths before the Arab nation: a life of cowards or a death of honor. "He who chooses the second path must fight the way your fathers and forefathers fought, shedding their blood for their fatherland. Now you have the opportunity—the day of the Arab strike, which should assume a mass character and be spent in revolutionary demonstrations instead of in sleeping in houses or cafes."

"Don't stop the strike unless the government stops Jewish immigration and the purchase of land—unless they disarm the Jews and arm the Arabs."

"Fight for searches in Tel Aviv and the Jewish colonies, for confiscation of ammunition whether secret or openly kept; for the appointment of committees to guard and inspect the borders and customs houses and for the permission to arm the Arab masses." Propaganda so unscrupulous in tone, hardly requires comment! Even the New York *Freiheit* was outraged by the brazen, provocative tone of this document. It promptly characterized the text as a clumsy forgery.

Unfortunately for the *Freiheit* however, the Palestine Communists admitted authorship. However, they cabled that it was an "error of judgment." How did they rectify this error of judgment? The original proclamation was published in Arabic. They published a new one in *Hebrew* in which they substituted the word *Zionists* for *Jews*. Since,

the Palestine Arabs are Hebrew scholars, and so few Jews in Palestine are Zionists, the effect of the correction may be gauged.

One must remember that the Communists are not instigating Marxian scholars. Phrases like the "class-struggle" mean very little to the illiterate *fellah*, the Arab peasant. But he does understand phrases like the "Zionists have succeeded in seizing the largest part of your community land or words such as *"don't stop the strike unless they disarm the Jews and arm the Arabs."*

We have a "strike" in Palestine today. We have murder in Palestine today. We have the burning of forests and fields. We have the shooting down of helpless men. The Communists alone are not responsible, but they have helped. And they are continuing to help.

In the midst of the present murder and wanton destruction, have they remembered their "error of judgment"? How have they made amends? They have issued another proclamation which appeals to Arabs and Jewish youth to fight Jewish immigration and British imperialism in the approved Communist phraseology. It also makes another appeal. "It (the Communist Party) appeals at the same time to the Jewish youth urging it to abandon its participation in the bloody Zionist attack and not to support the army and the police in their suppression of activities against the revolting Arab masses."

"The bloody Zionist attack" and the "revolting Arab masses"! Who dares visualize the effect of such a phrase on an ignorant "revolting" Arab peasant, whose "revolt" is inflamed by such revolutionary forces as the Grand Mufti clericals, the fascists and the Hitler emissaries?

The heroic restraint of the Jewish community despite Arab terrorism becomes a "bloody Zionist attack." Nor is this nomenclature the specialty of the Palestinian Communists. Mr. Olgin, editor of the *Freiheit*, has occasion to comment on an article on Palestine by Alter Brody which appeared in the *New Masses*. It seems, according to Mr. Olgin, that though Mr. Brody gave a "correct formulation"



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of British imperialism, he had an "erroneous explanation"  
of the immediate causes of the Arab clashes. Mr. Olgin has  
the right explanation: It is "the Zionist policy of conquest."  
(*Freiheit*, May 16)

The same *Freiheit* (May 12) reported the burning of  
fields in the Emek as follows: "In the Emek, members of  
the *Kvutzahs* looked on from the distance as their harvest  
burned and made no attempt to extinguish the fire. They  
feared an armed attack on the *Kvutzahs* because the Arabs  
bear a special hatred to this region where they were driven  
off the soil."

Even in a supposedly objective piece of reporting the  
animus of the paper is revealed. The reporter cannot with-  
stand the temptation of putting in that bit of fiction about  
"this region where they were driven off the soil." Is there  
any one who pretends to information about Palestine who  
does not know that the Emek is, of all places, the most  
extraordinary example of reclamation in Palestine—recla-  
mation which made room and opportunity to live, where no  
one, neither Jew nor Arab could live before?

But what are considerations of truth when the party line  
is at stake?

## II. HOW ZIONISM AFFECTS THE ARAB

THE Arabs involved in the present general strike are  
agitating for the stoppage of Jewish immigration and  
the prohibition of the further sale of land to Jews. In other  
words, they demand that the attempt to rebuild Palestine  
according to the terms of the Balfour Declaration be aban-  
doned. No intelligent Zionist would presume to under-  
estimate the force of this movement. It appeals not only  
to its instigators but to a number of Jews and non-Jews  
who believe that justice to the Arab excludes the possibility  
of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, no matter how desirable  
or necessary such a homeland may be. A public with nerves

still raw from Italy's seizure of Ethiopia is responsive to accusations of "imperialism" and particularly sensitive to the rights of "exploited natives". Few phrases are as distasteful as pratings about the "white man's burden" or the "blessings of civilization". Mussolini's bombs have not made them more palatable. On the basis of experience the world may well be sceptical of claims that have the ring of familiar imperialist slogans.

How is the Arab native affected by Jewish immigration? The question is legitimate and should be answered without regard for merely emotional aspects of Arab and Jewish nationalism. In connection with the present disturbances in Palestine, the charge is heard that the Jewish settler is driving out or "displacing" the Arab peasant. That the loudest outcry is raised by so ill-assorted a pair as the reactionary Arab chauvinists and the Communists does not lessen the need for an honest answer. Assuming the Jewish need and the century-long Jewish attachment to the soil of Palestine to be irrelevant, there remain perfectly objective factors by which to measure the effect of Jewish colonization.

If Zionist colonization is imperialistic, it is so with a difference. In the first place, the Jewish settlers came to Palestine long before the Balfour Declaration or the English Mandate was dreamt of. Jewish pioneers began reclaiming the land as early as 1882. From that time on young Jews from various countries have dedicated themselves to the task of making Palestine habitable. Oratory about "deserts that bloom like the rose" and the heroism of draining malaria-ridden swamps should not cause the public to forget the actual significance of the words. Every inch of soil in Jewish hands has been acquired not only through money payments but through an unparalleled expenditure of labor and self-sacrifice. When the shout is raised that Zionism is based on British bayonets, the uninformed visualize victorious English troops turning fertile territory over to Jewish capitalists for a consideration. One should remember that Jewish workers have been settling on the wastes of Palestine long before the World War. The British mandate merely gave an impetus to what was already an established movement.



Italy's seizure of Ethiopia is responsive to imperialism" and particularly sensitive to exploited natives". Few phrases are as disingenuous about the "white man's burden" or the "civilization". Mussolini's bombs have not been palatable. On the basis of experience the general sceptical of claims that have the ring of empty slogans.

Arab native affected by Jewish immigration? The question is legitimate and should be answered without any emotional aspects of Arab and Jewish connection with the present disturbances in Palestine. The charge is heard that the Jewish settler is "displacing" the Arab peasant. That the charge is raised by so ill-assorted a pair as the reactionaries and the Communists does not lessen the need for an honest answer. Assuming the Jewish need for Jewish attachment to the soil of Palestine, there remain perfectly objective factors to measure the effect of Jewish colonization.

If Jewish colonization is imperialistic, it is so with a vengeance. In the first place, the Jewish settlers came to Palestine before the Balfour Declaration or the English Mandate. Jewish pioneers began reclaiming Palestine as early as 1882. From that time on young Jews from all countries have dedicated themselves to the making of Palestine habitable. Oratory about "deserts that have become a rose" and the heroism of draining swamps should not cause the public to forget the real significance of the words. Every inch of soil in Palestine has been acquired not only through money but through an unparalleled expenditure of labor.

When the shout is raised that Zionism is a bayonet, the uninformed visualize vicarious bayonets turning fertile territory over to Jewish hands without a consideration. One should remember that Jewish settlers have been settling on the wastes of Palestine long before the World War. The British mandate gave an impetus to what was already an estab-

However, Zionism has improved the economic and cultural level of the Arab, and instead of displacing the Arab population, it is directly responsible for its sudden growth. Nothing is a better indication of the actual conditions obtaining in the country than the vital statistics given in the last census published by the government in 1932. It is obvious that if Jews through their labor drain mosquito-infested swamps, the surrounding region becomes more healthful for the Arab as well as for the Jew. It is equally clear that the higher level of sanitation introduced by the Jew, and the general development of the country is bound to react favorably on all its inhabitants. The educational campaigns conducted by the Jewish health agencies mean less trachoma, the curse of the Orient, for Arab babies. But more specifically, what does the census show?

In the first place, it refutes the charge that the Arab is being driven out by the Jew. If the Arab were being displaced by the Jew, there should be a diminution in his numbers. The contrary is true. There are at present approximately 400,000 Jews and 900,000 Arabs. According to the figures the Moslem population of Palestine increased 28.6% between 1922 and 1931. In the neighboring country of Egypt, also with an Arab population, the increase for a ten year period was only 11%. In other Arab lands, such as Transjordan and Irak, the population remained stationary.

That the increase of 28% still obtains at the present time may be inferred from the fact that in the debate on Palestine held in Parliament this winter, the government spokesmen and members of the Labor Party stressed this striking figure as evidence of the well-being of the Arab. The increase in Jewish immigration since 1932 has been offset by the steady influx of non-Palestinian Arabs drawn by the prosperity of the country.

The birth rates and death rates are equally indicative. The rate of natural increase (the number of births over deaths) of Palestine Moslems is 30.7 per 1000. In Egypt and Transjordan the rate is 16.5 per 1000. The infant mortality rate of Christian and Moslem Arabs has shown

a great reduction since Jewish colonization. In fact, the infant mortality of a given Arab community is lower in proportion to its proximity to a Jewish settlement. Moslem Acre, situated near Haifa and the Emek, had the lowest infant mortality rate of any Moslem area—110 per 1000.

Furthermore, the rate of Arab emigration from Palestine was shown to be three to four times smaller than before the war. In other Arab countries, such as Syria, no such condition obtains. Not only do the favorable living conditions in Palestine keep the Palestinian Arab from emigrating in the same numbers as before the war, but they attract Arabs from adjoining countries. It is estimated that in addition to legal Arab immigrants 64,000 Arabs from Syria and the Sinai desert were smuggled into Palestine within the last few years,—this at a time when every Jewish immigration certificate was contested.

The census also disposes of the myth of the “dispossessed Arab”,—that is to say, the Arab driven off the soil. In this connection it would be well to take note of the laws governing the sale of land in Palestine. The land legislation is extremely favorable to the Arab because it contains a provision according to which not only the land owner but the tenant or squatter is reimbursed. The net result of this legislation is that the Jewish purchaser frequently pays twice—once to the owner, and again to the tenant, to enable him to establish himself elsewhere in Palestine. The government report for 1934, the best source available, showed that only 634 “dispossessed” Arabs could be found. That is to say, for all the years of Jewish colonization only a few hundred Arabs had failed to re-establish themselves on the land. Furthermore, according to the census,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the Arabs are in villages and one-fourth in the cities, the same proportion that obtained in 1922. In other words, the 28% Arab increase has held good for the agricultural as well as the urban community. Obviously, if there had been any “displacement” of the Arab, the increase should have been greater in the cities and less in the villages.

The Jews at present own less than 10% of the soil of Palestine. At least half of the land acquired by Jews was

since Jewish colonization. In fact, the rate of a given Arab community is lower in proximity to a Jewish settlement. Moslem areas near Haifa and the Emek, had the lowest rate of any Moslem area—110 per 1000.

The rate of Arab emigration from Palestine is three to four times smaller than before the war. In Arab countries, such as Syria, no such thing happens. Not only do the favorable living conditions keep the Palestinian Arab from emigrating to other countries as before the war, but they attract immigrants from other countries. It is estimated that in 1922, 64,000 Arabs from Syria and Iraq were smuggled into Palestine within the year, at a time when every Jewish immigrant was contested.

This dispels the myth of the "dispossessed" Arab, say, the Arab driven off the soil. In this regard, it is well to take note of the laws governing land in Palestine. The land legislation is favorable to the Arab because it contains a provision which not only the land owner but the tenant is reimbursed. The net result of this is that the Jewish purchaser frequently pays twice as much for the land, and again to the tenant, to enable him to live on it elsewhere in Palestine. The government's 1934, the best source available, showed that "dispossessed" Arabs could be found. That is to say, years of Jewish colonization only a few Arabs failed to re-establish themselves on the land. According to the census,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the Arabs live in the country, one-fourth in the cities, the same proportion in 1922. In other words, the 28% Arab population is good for the agricultural as well as the urban. Obviously, if there had been any "dispossessed" Arab, the increase should have been greater in the cities and less in the villages.

The present own less than 10% of the soil of the country, but half of the land acquired by Jews was

actually "waste land". This means that one-half of Jewish colonization took place where no Arab lived, because the locality was either marsh or barren desert. The Vale of Esdraelon, now one of the show places of Palestine because of its flourishing collective farms, was uninhabited twenty years ago. Arabs lived on the surrounding hills rather than in the malaria-ridden valley. The Jewish pioneers who settled in that valley suffered a great loss of life in reclaiming land made barren through centuries of neglect and indifference. Certainly no Arab has been displaced by the fact that uninhabitable territory has been made habitable or that a fever-breeding marsh has been made salubrious.

The report of the High Commissioner for 1920-1925 on the administration of Palestine described the Vale of Esdraelon as follows:

"When I first saw it in 1920, it was a desolation. Four or five small, squalid Arab villages, long distances apart from one another, could be seen on the summits of the low hills here and there. For the rest the country was uninhabitable. There was not a house nor a tree."

Now, after fifteen years, this "desolation" is occupied by some 10,000 Jews.

But what happens when Jews purchase land on which Arab tenants live? It has already been pointed out that when an Arab landowner sells a parcel of land, cultivated by Arab peasants, the tenants, in some cases merely squatters, are provided with funds to settle elsewhere. There are few countries where a provision so radical in its regard for the social welfare of the tenants obtains. The recently acquired Huleh concession, a tract of marshy land just purchased by Jews, is a good illustration of how Jewish colonization proceeds. The Huleh concession is a tract of 57,000 dunams of land on which several hundred Arabs grazed. Jewish pioneers will drain the land and make it habitable. They will return to the Arab tenants 15,000 dunams of drained and arable land (this over and above the original purchase price). In other words, through Jewish purchase

and reclamation, a disease-breeding area on which a few hundred Arabs grazed will support with a higher standard of living, some thousands of Jews and Arabs.

Furthermore, it must be remembered that the Arab *fellah* (peasant) cultivates land in the most primitive fashion. Since the introduction of intensive agriculture by Jews, he finds it advantageous to sell a portion of his land at the high prices to be had in order to improve the remainder with the capital received. For instance, in 1913 the Arabs had only 20,000 dunams of orange plantations, all in the hands of *effendis*, the wealthy landowners. Ten years after the war 45,000 dunams of orange plantations were owned by Arabs, of which 25,000 belonged to *effendis* and 20,000 to *fellahs*. That is to say, the Arab peasant who had not owned one dunam of orange plantation land, managed to acquire some after Jewish colonization had begun on a larger scale.

Hayim Greenberg ("Arab Nationalism")—*Jewish Frontier*, June, 1936) gives some informative statistics which illustrate this point with particular force:

"The advanced methods of agriculture introduced by Jews make the country larger as well as richer. The following statistics are instructive: A dunam of land cultivated by Arabs in their usual fashion brings in 48 *kilo* of wheat; a dunam in a Jewish *Moshav ovdim* yields 85 *kilo*; a dunam in a *kvutza* produces from 115 *kilo* up; in Daganian B it gives 165 *kilo* (in Soviet Russia the yield for the same area is 66 *kilo*). This means that Jewish immigration increases the economic capacity of the country. Palestine is actually roomier *with Jews* than it was without Jews. It also means that the Arab peasant is gradually beginning to learn more progressive and profitable methods of cultivating his land.

"The chief problem of the *fellah* is not how to acquire more land, but how to cultivate a smaller area intensively. For this he needs a larger amount of initial capital and easier credit. Land, in itself, does not solve his difficulties. For instance, forty years ago

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Baron Rothschild's representative purchased 120,000  
dunams of fertile land in Hauran (Syria) for Jewish  
colonization. For a variety of reasons — opposition  
first of the Turkish, then of the French government,  
Jewish settlement did not take place there. The land  
was rented out for a pittance to some 1100 Arabs  
who have been living there for years. *Per capita* each  
Arab has approximately 120 dunams of fertile soil in  
a temperate, salubrious climate. No workers' colony  
in Palestine has so much land *per capita*. However,  
the methods of agriculture employed are so primitive  
that the Arabs live wretchedly. Within the last three  
years 40% of the able-bodied population emigrated  
from Sacham Djulan, the largest village of the region.  
They went to Palestine, the 'roomless' land of Zion-  
ist exploitation where they entered the employ of  
Jews and rich Arabs."

Recently Colonel Wedgewood stated, in the House of  
Commons:

"The Labor Party would be the last body in the  
House to urge the colonization of Palestine by Jews  
if that colonization would result in the same destruction  
of the native races as followed the colonization of  
Mexico and Peru by the Spaniards, or of North Amer-  
ica by the British or of the Congo by the Belgian  
Government. If it meant a repetition of the exploita-  
tion of the aboriginal inhabitants of that place, if it  
meant even a deterioration of their status, then you  
would have on these benches a very different speech  
and a very different attitude from what you have  
today."

However, the fact that Jewish colonization aids the  
Arab economically does not dispose of Arab nationalism.  
Arab nationalist sentiment, now aroused by agents as di-  
verse as the Grand Mufti clericals, the Fascist chauvinists,  
the Communists, and Hitler's and Mussolini's emissaries,  
is a force to be reckoned with. But the nationalist im-  
pulse behind Jewish immigration into Palestine is as gen-  
uine and legitimate an emotion as that of the Arab patriot.

It would cease to be legitimate only if it conflicted with the actual interests of the Arab. The peaceful reclamation of barren and useless soil by Jewish workers, the introduction of new cultural and social concepts into a backward country, despite the hostility of feudal Arab landlords, violates no element of justice. We hope that the attempts of the Jewish Labor movement to organize and enlighten the Arab masses will, in time, result in the friendly collaboration of both peoples.

The unholy alliance of the Palestine Communists with Arab terrorists and fascists is a stigma which the Communist movement should seek to wipe out, instead of white-washing with further "doctrine." To the honor of the French Communists be it said, that they protested against Communist incitement in Palestine. Apparently there are some Communists who feel a closer kinship with the peaceful Jewish worker settling in cooperative farms than with the reactionary forces behind the present attacks. In the meantime, the "pogrom" talents displayed in such abundance by the Jewish Communists is creating a gap in the proposed United Front which becomes increasingly difficult to bridge. One cannot forget that when a Jew, escaped from Poland or Germany, is shot down by an Arab murderer, the fire behind that shot may have been fed by a Communist proclamation.



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