

Introduction

By John O'Mahony

THIS PAMPHLET contains a large selection of articles and letters about Israel and the Arabs, and how socialists should see the Jewish-Arab conflict, which were published over a number of years in the weekly Marxist newspaper Socialist Organiser.

In the last few years Socialist Organiser has reassessed and revised its attitude. Until mid 1985 — though with decreasing conviction — SO held that socialists should advocate the replacement of Israel with a secular democratic state in the whole of pre-1947 Palestine, within which Jews and Arabs would have equal citizenship. In September 1985 we brought a long process of reassessment to a conclusion by deciding (see page 14) that, desirable though the creation of a joint Jewish-Arab state in Palestine might be, it was impossible that it could come into existence by peaceful agreement in any foreseeable future, and that in practical politics the 'secular democratic state' slogan functioned as a cover for a programme of conquest and subjugation of the Jewish nation in Israel by the Arab states. On any realistic account, the 'first stage' would have to be such a conquest — and after that inevitably bloody conquest of the Jews, there would be no second stage in which Jews and Arabs would live together as equal citizens.

We found ourselves having to go through a prolonged and painful reassessment because, in line with the general drift of would-be Trotskyist opinion in the 1970s, we had too uncritically accepted the 'secular democratic state' programme adopted by the Palestine Liberation Organisation in the late '60s. We did so under the moral pressure to side with the defeated and oppressed. We understood the formula in our own way as meaning complete equality for Jews and Arabs in the new Palestine — this diverged appreciably from the PLO's own version, in which the 'secular, democratic state' would be an Arab state in which the Jews (or some Jews) would have equality of citizenship and religion (see pages 10-11).

The sad truth is probably that we were less concerned with thinking things through rigorously than with adopting a consistently militant and uncompromising stand of support for the oppressed; and we were not too keen to probe beyond the superficial plausibility of the 'secular, democratic state' programme and its seeming promise to do justice to the Palestinians and reconcile Jews and Arabs on a higher plane.

With us, as with many on the left now, something more was involved than mere obtuseness and political and moral cowardice. The Palestinian Arabs are terribly oppressed. Though arguably they have suffered far greater massacres at the hands of Jordan, Syria, and Lebanese Christian and Muslim militias than from the Israelis, the root problem for the Palestinian Arabs has been their displacement by the Israelis.

Therefore it is easy to lapse by way of proper moral indignation into a vicarious Arab revanchism and nationalism. But something more specific was a factor in our (and others') obtuseness on this question: the fact that it is impossible to do full retributive justice to the Palestinian

Arabs without doing a grave injustice to the Jewish nation that has grown up in Palestine. No full restoration of the Palestinian Arab position is possible without driving out the Jews.

Where no satisfying solution exists, there is scope for fantasy and vagueness. The 'secular, democratic state' is a fantasy solution — the promise that the lion will lie down with the lamb, that those who have fought each other for at least seven decades will integrate into a harmonious unit, either by the Israeli Jews voluntarily abandoning their own nation-state in order to share the disputed territory or by the Arab powers conquering the Jews and then instituting the sort of equality of nationalities that exists nowhere in the Middle East.

If you rule out the 'secular, democratic state' as a fantasy, then the only possible and equitable solution is conciliation and division of the disputed territory between the two peoples.

The articles and letters reproduced here look at the Arab-Jewish conflict and its history from a number of radically different viewpoints. They are all reproduced exactly as published. The pamphlet also contains two items not previously published in Socialist Organiser: a contribution (written at the time, by me) to the discussion on whether Socialist Organiser can now be called 'Zionist', which, for reasons of space, balance, and decent editorial restraint was not published in the paper; and a brief comment on a contribution to the SO discussion by Lenni Brenner (author of 'Zionism in the Age of the Dictators' and 'The Iron Wall') which nobody bothered to reply to when it was published.

As is to be expected in a prolonged discussion in which people's ideas evolve, change and develop, the reader will find many ragged edges. One thing that jars with me particularly is the unqualified definition of Israel as simply a 'racist state' in pieces I wrote as recently as two or three years ago (or some five or six years after I personally had begun to argue that Israel had a right to exist). Now Israel's treatment of the Palestinian Arabs is racist, and it deserves to be called racist. The problem is with classifying the entire entity of the Jewish state as 'racist'.

Ideas and attitudes that anywhere else would be readily identified as *nationalist* (and in Israel's case, it is a nationalism surrounded by murderously hostile other nationalisms) are in relation to Israel classified as 'racist'. This misuse of 'racism' to describe Israeli-Jewish nationalism (or chauvinism) is only another way of denying that the Jewish state has a right to exist and asserting that it is an illegitimate nation.

There are other examples of unevenness and confusion, and of residual ideas and attitudes jostling with newer ideas and attitudes which, rigorously worked through, imply their opposite. All this is mortifying. But none of us have denied that we were immersed for a very long time in the general quagmire of confusion on these questions which chokes and distorts the thought processes of the left.

We have been trying to work our way out of it as best we can. We collect these articles under one cover in the hope of helping other socialists to work their way out.

1. 'SECULAR DEMOCRATIC PALESTINE' OR 'TWO STATES'?

The only answer: two states

John O'Mahony, SO 233, 19.6.85

For about seven years Socialist Organiser editor John O'Mahony has held to a minority point of view among SO supporters in that he rejected the call for a secular democratic state in Palestine as unrealistic, and argued that socialists should advocate a solution to the conflict of Arabs and Jews in Palestine on the basis of two states. Here he outlines his views.

We have to support the Palestinians, as the oppressed, against Israel as the oppressor. However, what is our alternative to the existing situation of oppression?

The idea of a secular democratic state as a solution to the Jewish-Arab conflict is a good and attractive one in the abstract, but it is impossible to realise. These are distinct nations which have related to each other with bitter communal-national hostility or unrestrained war for 50 or more years (from the 1936 Syria-Palestine general strike and earlier).

The Jews occupy a distinct national territory (most of the area within the pre-1967 borders of Israel).

The secular democratic state as we have understood it involved the smashing and destruction of the Israeli state, an end to the Law of Return (which gives Jews everywhere in the world a right to Israeli citizenship), the return of the Palestinians to all the territory of Israel. All this was expected to enfold and merge the two peoples into a democratic secular state.

The attraction for us of the idea of a secular democratic state lay in its alleged ability to do justice to everyone concerned. The Jews would cease to be 'Zionists'. The Palestinians could return and either repossess or be compensated. The Jews would

have equal rights to what they have created in the last 40 years.

It is plainly nonsense.

Nothing short of the complete, inevitably very bloody conquest of the Jews, and driving them out or slaughtering them, would be required to enforce it.

At the end of such a process, the last thing you would get would be the intermingling of the two peoples in one secular democratic state.

The idea of the secular democratic state is a mental construction incapable of realisation in our benevolent version of it. Since the PLO was reorganised in the late 1960s and the old 'drive the Jews into the sea' leader Shukairy gave way to Yasser Arafat, the secular democratic state slogan has served fundamentally as just an Arab propaganda weapon in a conflict which could not conceivably, by the victory of the Arabs who supposedly fought for it, lead to the creation of a secular democratic state in Palestine.

A roughly equivalent project would be to amalgamate the German and French nations on the territory occupied by one of them. The difference is in the intense level of fear, grievance, and mutual animosity that exists between Jews and Arabs compared with French and Germans.

In reality, there are only two alternatives in the situation:

1. Drive out the Jews (that is, accept that that is what military conquest - 'smashing the Zionist state' - would mean). Abandon any commitment to defend the rights of the Palestinian Jews. Or:

2. Create two states.

'Drive out the Jews' - most of them born in Palestine from parents the core of whom were refugees from racist persecution - has no place in our programme or world outlook. It is the programme of rampant Arab

chauvinism.

That leaves the two states solution.

It would serve no purpose for us to try to define precisely where the borders would lie, or what precise relationships the two states would have with each other, and with Jordan, the Lebanese communities, etc. (If it could be achieved, some form of federation of Israel, the Palestinian Arab state, Jordan and the component parts of Lebanon would seem to be the best framework within which to solve such problems as economic viability, overlapping and intermingled populations, etc.)

The point of principle here is that there is no way other than the creation of two states in Palestine to express the idea that the Palestinian Jews have the right to stay in Palestine, and at the same time to express and define the demand for the restoration of the national rights of the Palestinian Arabs. Full Arab restoration to all of Palestine is now impossible short of driving the Jews out.

This is a basic outline of my position, so I have not attempted to elaborate on any of the points made or to anticipate objections.

A single state is the best structure

Bruce Robinson, SO 233, 19.6.85

Bruce Robinson argues that a single democratic state in Palestine is the best framework to advocate; the collective rights of both Arabs and Jews can be safeguarded by some form of local autonomy.

The Palestinians suffer three aspects of national oppression. Firstly, they lack a territory in which to live as a nation. The areas from which many of them came in 1948 have since been settled and are now inhabited by an established Jewish population. Many Palestinians wish to return to live in those areas.

Secondly, the West Bank and Gaza Strip have since 1967 been under a military occupation by Israel, which has combined wide-ranging repression of the Palestinians with settlement of these areas by Israelis.

Finally, there is a 650,000 Arab population within pre-1967 Israel, who are discriminated against as second-class citizens. In the northern parts of Israel in which they are concentrated, they form a majority in some areas.

As Marxists we are concerned to find a consistent democratic solution to national oppression which allows both national groups the fullest rights compatible with not oppressing anyone else. This is both because we oppose national oppression as such and because the divisions it causes prevent the development of class unity.

In most cases, we favour the right of the oppressed nation to secede and form its own nation state. In the case of Palestine, this approach is not possible because both nations lay claim to the same territory and if the Palestinians and Israeli Jews were to have a separate nation state it could only be by denying at least some of the national rights of the other group. This is both because of the large degree of intermingling of the population that exists and because the form the national question has taken in Palestine is that of driving out the indigenous population and settling the

same areas.

Given this situation there are three possible approaches:

1) choosing an arbitrary division — such as the pre-1967 Israel border, which either leaves minorities in both states who do not wish to be part of that state or can only come about with transfers of population.

2. Redrawing the boundaries to allow, for example, those parts of pre-1967 Israel with Palestinian majorities to secede and join a Palestinian state.

3) Recognising that a democratic solution cannot be based on a territorial division of pre-1948 Palestine.

The first option would lead to both arbitrary borders and to continued national conflict. Given that Israel would remain the dominant economic and military power in the area and that in this option Israel would remain a Zionist state, a West Bank/Gaza state would either have no room for independent action and be subject to Israeli domination or very quickly come into conflict with Israeli 'national interests', probably leading to war.

While it might provide an immediate solution for the Palestinians in the occupied territories, it is unlikely to lead to a long-term defusing of national conflicts.

The second option tries to solve the problem by giving both Palestinians and Israeli Jews the right to decide on which state they want to belong to. This option does not seem to deal adequately with the wish of many of the Palestinians to be able to live in the areas of pre-1948 Palestine from which they originally came. It is also not clear how the West Bank/Gaza state would be a step towards such a federal solution.

A common state — the third option — seems to me to provide the best structure for a long-term solution. Such a state would have to be based on a recognition and guarantee of the *collective* rights of both Arabs and Jews to maintain their separate identities. Such rights would include freedom of religion and language, control of education, etc. They

could be implemented by a form of local autonomy where communities — whether Arab, Jewish or mixed — would have the power to decide freely on these issues.

A number of objections have been raised to this. Firstly, that it would fail because what both the Palestinians and Israelis want is their own national rights, including the right to a separate territory. However, if that right can only be granted at the expense of the other national group's rights, then part of any process of solving the national conflict would require a recognition of this from both sides. The Palestinians would have to recognise the rights of the Jews in a Palestinian state and at least a large section of the Jewish population would have to break with Zionism and be prepared to give up the privileged position they at present enjoy vis-a-vis the Palestinians.

The overwhelming weight of the concessions required to make this solution work would have to come from the Jewish population — not surprisingly, given that they at present form the oppressor nation.

This may sound a distant prospect but the conditions under which a federal solution which includes a non-Zionist state for the Jews would come about would be very similar, while the short cut of the West Bank/Gaza state option would not come anywhere near to solving the problem.

This seems also to deal with the objection that a single state could only come about by a forcible integration of two nations. Any lasting solution would have as a prerequisite considerable reconciliation of the two peoples. No external force would be able to impose a solution.

Finally, we should re-emphasise that, while we defend the rights of the Jews, it is at present the Palestinians who are suffering national oppression. We have a duty to give them our unconditional solidarity in that struggle, whatever our differences on their tactics or long-term aims.

Merge oppressor and oppressed?

Martin Thomas, SO 233, 19.6.85

Some Socialist Organiser supporters who previously advocated a democratic secular Palestine have been convinced in the recent discussion that this formula is not an answer to

the national conflict in Palestine, but rather a description of something desirable which might be possible after the national conflict has been resolved. Martin Thomas argues this

view.

Generally no situation of serious national oppression can be resolved by proposing to amalgamate oppressor and oppressed nations on the basis of individual equal rights. To propose this in

Palestine is to produce a democratic-sounding formula which actually can only be a gloss for Israeli-Jewish subjugation of the Palestinian Arabs (in a Greater Israel) or Arab subjugation of the Israeli Jews (in an Arab Palestine).

Or else it is advice to the Palestinians to become super-internationalists, and then to wait until the Israeli Jews are also super-internationalists and they can live in harmony.

Paradoxically, the 'democratic secular Palestine' slogan actually denies the Palestinians' national rights as much as the Israeli Jews'. The slogan tells the Palestinian Arabs *either* to wait until the Arab states subjugate the Israeli Jews or to wait until the Israeli Jews become internationalists.

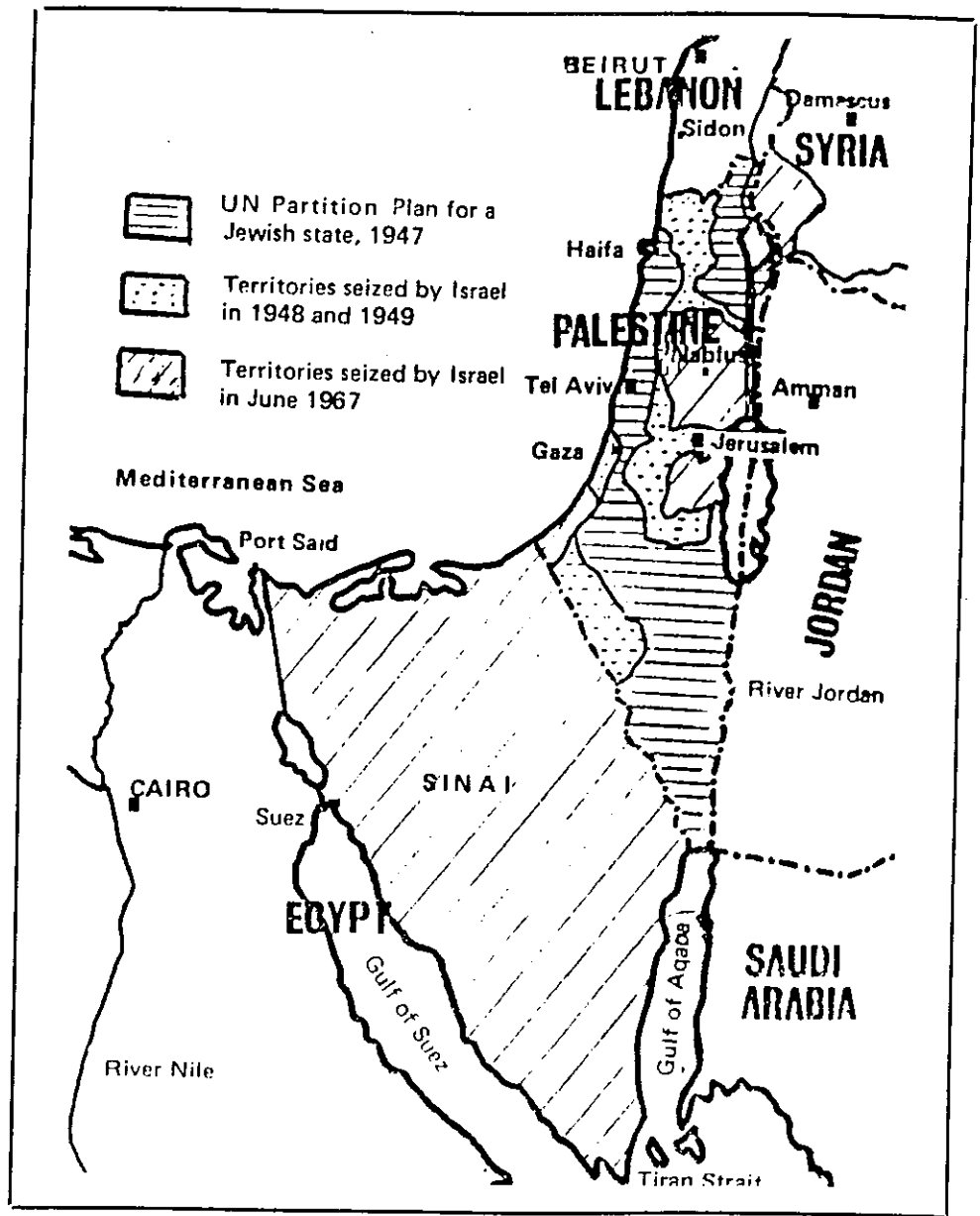
But Marxists should propose objectives for struggle for the Palestinians which they can win without having to rely on dubious external saviours or a miraculous change of heart by their oppressors. That, to my mind, is a crucial argument for a 'two states' position (whether simply 'two states', or coupled with a proposal for federation of those two states, is a secondary matter).

The Palestinians can fight for their own state in part of Palestine, perhaps also linked to a revolutionised Jordan; they can fight for Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza, and for national minority rights (including the right to secession) for the Arabs in Israel.

They can — in principle — *force* such concessions from Israel. They do not have to emancipate themselves in advance from all national prejudice for such a solution to be possible.

The Palestinians could get a democratic secular Palestine — a *real* democratic Palestine, a real merging of the two nations — only by themselves first becoming pure-minded internationalists, and then the Israeli Jews freely agreeing to give a democratic Palestine to them.

Far from being a solution to the national question, the democratic secular Palestine is something which might be possible *after* the national question has (by some other means)



been solved. You could almost say about it what Marx said about the 'labour money' demand popular with socialists

of his day: it can be realised only under conditions where no-one would any longer particularly want to raise it.

Transform Israel from within

Clive Bradley argues that support for an independent Palestinian state can and should be coupled with a political struggle within Israel against its discriminatory structures.

Our position should look something like this:

We are for, here and now, the establishment of a Palestinian state. Such a state could be established on the West

Bank and in Gaza, if Israel was to grant these areas self-determination.

We are for a Palestinian state with no strings. We would be against (and if we had forces there, would fight against) any attempt to restrict or limit the real independence of that state — either by subordinating it to Israel, or to Jordan, or to anybody else.

We would oppose any conditions on the establishment of a Palestinian state

that limited its independence.

To say that we recognise Israeli national rights means one thing: we are not in favour of forcing change on the structures of the Israeli state through external military force. We are not in favour of an independent Palestinian state attempting (assuming — which is a *damn* assumption — that it was capable of it), or any other Arab state attempting, to 'destroy' Israel, to 'smash' the Zionist

Clive Bradley, SO 233, 19.6.85

state from the outside.

Accepting Israeli national rights means that and that only. It cannot commit us to accepting that an inherent-

ly racist, discriminatory state is unchangeable. It cannot commit us to sacrificing the democratic rights of those many Palestinians for whom a West

Bank/Gaza state is no solution.

We are against conquering the Jews. We are not against transforming the Israeli state from within.

Israel the oppressor

Editorial introduction, SO 233, 19.6.85

The Zionist movement began as a Jewish response to anti-semitism in late 19th century Europe. The Zionists — mostly middle-class Jews — hoped to evade anti-semitism by creating a Jewish state elsewhere.

Marxists at the time condemned this strategy as utopian, a cop-out, and realisable only in alliance with imperialism.

But after the horrors of Nazism, Zionism became a mass movement among European Jews.

Over 30 years — 1918-1948 — the Zionists colonised Palestine, under British imperialist protection. Through deals with Arab landlords they pushed Arab peasants off the land. Through a policy of establishing an autonomous Jewish economy (Jewish labour only, Jewish produce only), they excluded the Arabs from employment.

Then in 1947-9 the Zionist settlers kicked off the British harness. The ensuing war, as Britain bailed out, drove out the majority of the Arabs, or panicked them into fleeing and then prevented them returning home. Some 800,000 Arabs were made refugees. A Jewish state was established over 77% of the land area of Palestine — a country where in 1947 Jews had been only about a third of the population.

The Arabs remaining in the Jewish state — a sizeable minority, about 16% today — have been third-class citizens. Most of them lived under military administration from 1948 to 1966. Perhaps 70% of their land was confiscated under various pretexts.

Many state and quasi-state services and benefits are reserved to Jews only: for example, 92% of the land, controlled by the Jewish National Fund, is reserved for Jews only. Arab municipalities suffer discrimination as regards public services (electricity, water, etc).

Militant expression of nationalism — i.e. their actual majority politics — is forbidden to the Israeli Arabs. For example Israeli Palestinians who protested at the Sabra and Shatila massacres were jailed for "demonstrating, inciting, stoning military vehicles, and supporting the PLO".

In 1956, in 1967, in 1973, and again in 1982-5 Israel went to war against the neighbouring Arab states. In between times, Israel pursued a policy of massive

reprisals for any Palestinian action.

In 1967 Israel seized those parts of Palestine which the Jewish forces had not conquered in 1948-9, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Another 350,000 or so Arabs were made refugees, many for the second time. (Another wave of some hundreds of thousands of second-time-over refugees has since been generated by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon). Since 1967 those Arabs who remain in the occupied territories have lived under Israeli military rule, without even the rights of the Israeli Arabs. Some 40% of their economically active population works in Israel proper, but they are not allowed to stay the night there.

Harassment and straightforward deportations have driven over half a million Arabs out of the occupied territories since 1967, but still some two million Palestinian Arabs — out of 4½ million Palestinian Arabs altogether — live under Israeli rule as third-class citizens or fourth-class non-citizens.

The other 2½ million are refugees, many of them still living in miserable refugee camps. Even there they are at risk from the Israeli military machine, as in Lebanon recently.

Yet the Israeli Jews are a nation — a nation whose rights must be taken into account for any progress to be possible. They have a national language, a national economy, a more-or-less defined national territory.

Despite the increasing use of Arabs as menial, low-paid labour, the Israeli Jews are a nation rather than an exploiting caste like the whites in South Africa. Despite the considerable power of Orthodox rabbis within the Israeli state, the Israeli-Jewish identity is national rather than religious.

Many Israeli Jews are atheists or only nominally religious.

Israeli-Jewish national consciousness is generally an oppressor-nation consciousness, usually chauvinist, and often shot through with open racism.

However, these facts do not do away with the reality of the nation. A majority of Israeli Jews — 57% as of December 31 1981 — were born there. A majority of adults — 66% of over-20s — are settlers born elsewhere. But most of them came fleeing persecution — including the persecution under which the Nazis

systematically murdered perhaps one-third of all the world's Jews. Most of them individually have, and certainly the community as a whole has, no other homeland.

Before 1947 the Palestinian Arabs were, in their great majority, peasants. Like peasants elsewhere they were not able to create their own autonomous political leadership. They fell under the leadership of the reactionary Arab landlords and money-men. This gave their resistance to Zionist colonisation the form of wild outbursts of peasant fury, topped by chauvinist rhetoric and stained by anti-Jewish atrocities.

After their desperate and bitter rebellion in 1936-9 was suppressed by British and Jewish force, the Palestinian Arabs were politically exhausted for nearly 30 years.

Between 1947 and the late '60s the Arab states spoke in their name. In 1948-49 they talked bloodthirsty chauvinism — Azzam Pasha, general secretary of the Arab League, proclaimed: 'This will become a war of extermination and an enormous massacre' — while actually fighting to see which state could grab most of Arab Palestine for itself. In 1967, again, the Arab leaders proclaimed that they would 'drive the Jews into the sea'.

Meanwhile these Arab states were mistreating and discriminating against the Palestinian refugees in their territory, sometimes carrying out or sponsoring massacres of them (Jordan 1970, Syria/Lebanon 1976).

Out of this experience the Palestinians emerged as an autonomous political force, with Fateh's takeover of the PLO in 1968-9. The social composition of the Palestinians had changed dramatically, and there was a new leadership.

The old Arab-chauvinist rhetoric was replaced by the slogan of a secular democratic Palestine.

But the new leadership was and is a *bourgeois* leadership, attuned to manoeuvring with Arab states and imperialist powers rather than to any endeavour to unite Arabs and Jews from below. Its guerrilla attacks frequently hit civilian targets in Israel.

Thus the bitterness and despair — and, on the other side, the spiralling chauvinism of Israeli-Jewish society — have not been ended.

What rights for Jews?

SO 233, 19.6.85

In May 1980 the editorial board of *Workers' Action* — one of the groups which founded SO in 1978 — discussed Palestine.

The discussion was summarised in minutes taken by Martin Thomas. The issues now being discussed by SO supporters were spelled out clearly. Excerpts:

John O'Mahony: Think about the concrete implications of the secular, democratic state slogan for Palestine. It has no grip on reality. It's an ambivalent slogan, fundamentally wrong because it proposes the forcible integration of two peoples. The history of Zionist oppression is terrible. But forcible integration means forcible abolition of nationality, which is hardly possible. We're for a socialist united states of the Middle East, but we also need to uphold self-determination. We don't need to question the sincerity of the Palestinians' declaration of not being hostile to Jews as such. But what is the logic of depriving the Jews of the right to their own state? It's inconceivable it will be acceptable to the Jews. Who's going to do the forcible integration? There is no force capable of making it happen. The only even conceivable method is conquest of Israel by the Palestinians and/or Arabs. A socialist revolution is more feasible than the secular democratic state.

The secular, democratic state slogan is not 'algebraic' in a real sense, just ambivalent. It actually means just Palestinian nationalism. But the national rights of the Israelis must be part of our programme. A nation has been created — by terrible means perhaps, but it exists.

Our error: to identify with the oppressed (which is correct) but to go from that to identifying with their nationalist programme (which is wrong).

Our only real answer for the Palestinians consistent with the Israelis'

rights must be some sort of partition. (Though I don't know what dividing line).

We've failed to distinguish between the historic reality of Zionism and Zionism as a political entity now. There is not just Zionism as an ideology but also the vicissitudes [i.e. recent history] of the Jewish people.

The USFI approach, which has coloured our attitude, is woolly sentimental third-worldism.

And what about the Jews in Israel who were born there? We can't visit the sins of their fathers on them. Parallels with South Africa, Northern Ireland, etc., do not hold up. Zionism is not fundamentally about exploiting Arab labour. And, if Northern Ireland were a homogeneous Protestant state, would we advocate military conquest of it?

I don't propose raising self-determination for the Israeli Jews now. But it should be part of our programme. Self-determination for the Palestinian people — does that include the right to determine what happens to the Jews? It seems so, so I'm against it.

Israel is a racist state? Yes it is. But aren't all states racist. What's different about Israel is the hostility to and driving out of the Arabs. But the major racist crime is now a fact of history.

Is a different Israeli state possible? Yes, it is possible: e.g. withdrawal to 1967 frontiers, etc.

Bas Hardy: John's attitude would amount to left Zionism. He approaches it entirely from the Israeli angle, not at all from the Palestinian.

John ignores the evolution of the PLO. Fatah states it "would help Jews anywhere if they faced persecution by racists". It also recommends rights for the Jews and, e.g. Hebrew as an official language in a secular, democratic Palestine.

The PFLP say they don't think Israel is a nation — colonialism cannot be justified just by continuing a bit longer.

Israeli workers, even, gain from their settler-state status.

These positions are completely different from the caricatures presented by John. There is even considerable racism within Israel against Oriental Jews. Yes, Jews were terribly oppressed. But that cannot justify their oppression of the Palestinian nation. If Israel were even curtailed as John indicates, then there would in any case be massive emigration.

Imperialism wants a Palestinian mini-state. John's attitude is similar. And where are the Palestinian refugees to go?

Rachel Lever: The Israeli nation is not just some cultural society, but it has a big state apparatus, an expansionist logic, etc. Crimes of 30 years ago? There have been two wars and a lot of other crimes since. The crimes continue.

But John is contradictory. The Jews are supposed to be so backward that they will quit and go to New York rather than live together with the Palestinians. And at the same time the Israelis are presented as innocents, while the Palestinians are presented as likely to cut the Israelis' throats and drive them into the sea.

If the Israelis want to emigrate because they can no longer oppress the Palestinians, that is up to them.

Bruce Robinson: Is the secular democratic state feasible? Well, is John's proposed reformed Israeli state, e.g. within 1948 frontiers, feasible? And how would repartition help the struggle for socialism? It would increase tensions and conflicts.

The secular, democratic state is not, I think, utopian — it is an algebraic slogan for the national conflicts in Palestine. John seems to confuse the rights of the Jews in the area and their right to a state. And much of what he says about the changes in the nature of Zionism is a myth. Logically, John's position would lead to arguing the PLO should give up their struggle.

What we said in 1973

SO 233, 19.6.85

This is an excerpt from an editorial in the paper *Workers' Fight*, October 20 1973. It contains two political commitments — to the destruction of the Israeli state by external force, and to full rights for the Jewish population who inhabit it. Its author, John O'Mahony, now argues that these two commitments are incompatible, rendering writing such as this politically incoherent.

A DECISIVE and crushing defeat for Israel will be [good] news for revolution-

ary workers throughout the world, and for enemies of imperialism everywhere.

We say this knowing that the working class rules in neither Israel nor in any Arab country, and that on that level there is nothing to choose between them.

Yet the world's working class, including the Israeli working class though it doesn't yet know it, has an interest in the defeat of Israel and in the victory of the Arabs.

Israel is a pro-imperialist policeman in the Middle East, a bayonet permanently pointed at the throat of the Arabs and

their desire to free themselves from imperialist rule.

Israel is also a racist state.

The 'pampered child of imperialism' in the Middle East, the Zionist State of Israel, has by its very existence been the main force militating against the growth of independent working class consciousness in both the Arab and Jewish Middle East peoples. Only the defeat of Israel and the destruction of the Zionist state opens a way through the road block which Israel is for the Arab, and Jewish, masses of the area.

The open support of the British press for Israel has as its centrepiece defence of the "right of Israel to exist". That, for once, takes us to the heart of the question.

We are firmly opposed to the existence of Israel: we say it has no right to exist.

We are opposed to Israel's existence because its existence is inseparable from the oppression of the Palestinians, who have been driven from their homeland because, according to the way the Zion-

ist state is constructed, they are racially unsuitable. Whilst the Palestinians are prepared to participate in a multi-racial state, the Zionist state is racially exclusive and must be destroyed before such a multi-racial state can be built.

The Jewish community has, of course, a right to reach an agreement with the Arabs, and the demand for the defeat of Israel is not at all the demand to expel or drive out her population. The only solution is to create a secular democratic state in which the Palestinians have full

right to return to their homeland with compensation and full equality with Palestinian Jews.

But the existing exclusive Zionist state can only exist at the expense of the Arabs, in alliance with and under licence from their imperialist masters: such a state can never be even a normal capitalist state, because it is based on 'religion' and 'race' and deprives the Palestinians of the right to live in their own country, while every Jew in the world... is automatically a citizen of Israel...

Democracy is possible only in a single state

SO 238, 24.7.85

The Socialist Organiser AGM on June 22-23 decided to continue our discussion on Palestine. Until now SO has supported the mainstream Palestinian Arab slogan of 'a democratic secular Palestine' with equality for Jews and Arabs (Muslims and Christians). Some SO supporters now argue for a separate independent Palestinian-Arab state alongside a modified Israeli-Jewish state; here Bruce Robinson argues for a unitary democratic Palestinian state.

John O'Mahony refers sarcastically to our old position having an "alleged ability to do justice to everyone concerned", contrasting it to his approach, which starts from the real divisions that exist. Our approach, however, should be precisely that of what Lenin described as "consistent democracy".

Our job is not that of acting as diplomatic advisors to the Palestinians or arguing about which policy is most likely to be acceptable to the Israeli working class at present given their present consciousness and attitude to the Palestinians. We are only interested in the national question from the viewpoint of finding a programme that represents a real solution to the national oppression and thus removes it as an obstacle to class unity.

Lenin poured scorn on Rosa Luxemburg (who was opposed to Polish independence from Russia because, as a Polish socialist she was frightened it would strengthen Polish nationalism) for emphasising that what was required was a 'practical' solution to the national question.

"The whole task of the prolet-

ariat in the national question is 'unpractical' from the standpoint of the nationalist bourgeoisie of every nation, because the proletarians, opposed as they are to nationalism of every kind, demand 'abstract' equality; they demand, as a matter of principle, that there should be no privileges, however slight. Failing to grasp this, Rosa Luxemburg, by her misguided eulogy of practicality, has opened the door wide for the opportunists, and especially for opportunist concessions to Great Russian nationalism".

John O'Mahony's position is similar to Rosa Luxemburg's, in that out of fears about the effects of the nationalism of the oppressed — the Palestinians — on the rights of the Israeli Jews, he looks for a 'practical' solution which avoids challenging the privileges of the oppressor nation. It is an attempt to find a short cut to a solution without any fundamental changes in the relationships between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

His position amounts to saying that a solution will be achieved on the basis of the Palestinians giving up their unrealistic demands, so as to avoid having to face the thorny problem of how it is possible to break the Israeli workers from their current attitudes towards the Palestinians.

John O'Mahony claims that any policy of a single state in Palestine must imply forcible integration of the two nationalities. Martin Thomas also seems to accept that the nations will want to hold on to their separation above all else, even if Israel was no longer a Zionist state.

The policy I am proposing is unlikely to recommend itself to

the bourgeoisies of the Arab states, who either want a deal with Israel or are not in any position to impose a solution anyhow. (Even if they were, I would oppose it as there would be no way that they would impose an even remotely democratic solution). It is based on the idea that both sides would have had to move towards a recognition of the other's rights as a pre-condition of any lasting and fair arrangement.

John O'Mahony argues that two elements in the programme of a unitary state make its voluntary acceptance by the Israelis impossible. His first point is that a single state is in itself a denial of Jewish national rights and thus unacceptable. On this basis, however, for the reasons outlined above, no solution will ever be possible if one (or both) nationalities continue to claim an exclusive right to even a part of the territory. If the Palestinians were to give real guarantees of Jewish rights of the type I have already mentioned, such a claim would not be justified.

John O'Mahony's second objection is that the right of the Palestinians to return to any part of pre-1948 Israel means dispossession of the Jews currently living there and would be resisted. However, the right of return does not necessarily require the restoration of every square inch of land to whoever owned it in 1948. Obviously given the length of time that has passed, changes in the economic structure of the country, etc., this would be impossible.

What is at issue is a) the right of Palestinians to return to live in those areas; b) some form of compensation for land taken as part of an overall settlement;

c) removal of some recent settlements. Of these, the third can be called dispossession — and it would also be required to set up a West Bank-Gaza state.

Both communities will have to make concessions for any solution to work. The Palestinians will have to recognise that moving towards their goals requires winning over a large section of the Jewish population. This in turn requires them to recognise the permanence of the Jews in the area and the collective rights which this implies. It probably also requires a change of tactics from one which emphasises guerilla action to one which puts more emphasis on political action and has an active orientation towards winning the trust of the Jews.

However, the main balance of concessions must come from the Israeli Jews as they are at present enjoying privileges as the oppressor nation. The national consensus across classes in Israel is not just maintained by Zionist ideology or an external threat, but also rests on the fact that *all* sections of society benefit from the present discriminatory and oppressive relationship to the Palestinians, e.g. access to better or more secure jobs, land, more extensive political rights. As in the case of Ireland, it is often those sections of the population for whom the relative privilege is smallest who cling to it most — in this case, the working class Oriental Jews.

What forces then will break out of the vicious circle of mutual antagonism between the Palestinians and the Israelis? In the short term, it is difficult to be optimistic, whatever position you hold. It is possible that the

national conflict would only be ended as a result of successful social revolutions elsewhere in the region, though clearly we cannot advocate that all the parties concerned wait around before trying to find a means of coming together.

More positively, a number of developments have begun which undercut the basis on which Israel has been able to maintain 'national unity' in the past. The war in Lebanon has led to some questioning of Israel's claim to act militarily on in its own defence and to a weariness among some sections of the population. The economy is in more or less permanent crisis. The shift in US policy in the region lessens Israel's room for manoeuvre.

None of these developments necessarily mean a progressive shift in general attitudes towards the Palestinians, but perhaps a few cracks are appearing in the general acceptance of the national interest of Israel.

In such a situation it is difficult to assess what the effect of a Palestinian declaration of recognition of Jewish rights would have. It is however a precondition of any long-term progress.

THE BASIC POSITION

1. A democratic solution to the national conflicts between the Israeli Jews and the Palestinian Arabs can only take place within the framework of a single state. The intermingling of the two national groups is such that any territorial division would be unlikely to be democratic or provide a lasting solution to the conflict.

2. Such a unitary state would recognise and guarantee the collective rights and identities of both groups, including freedom of religion, language and education. These would be implemented by devolving powers in these areas to whichever level would assure the two communities best control of their own affairs without imprisoning minorities. The Palestinians would have the right to live in any part of the state (which would cover the area of pre-1948 Palestine).

3. While defending the rights of the Israeli Jews, we recognise that at present it is the Palestinians who are the oppressed nation and give them unconditional support in their struggle against the Israeli state.

4. For a single Palestinian state to be realisable requires that at least a sizeable section of the Israeli population break from Zionism and the 'national consensus' currently existing in relation to the Palestinians. No solution is possible while the Israeli working class enjoys privileges at the expense of the Palestinians. Such a break will only come about if the Pales-

tinians make it clear that they have no intention of suppressing the Jews and are willing to grant them the collective rights in a common Palestinian state.

WHY A UNITARY STATE IS NECESSARY

The normal approach of Marxists to the national question has been to argue for the right of self-determination — that is, for the right of an oppressed nation to secede and form its own nation state. We generally support self-determination, not because we support nationalism or think that the nation state is the best political unit for socialism, but because it provides a democratic solution which ends national oppression and removes a divisive obstacle to developing class unity between the different national groups.

However the right to self-determination cannot be applied where the two national groups are intermingled and both claim the same territory with some degree of legitimacy.

In Palestine there are no borders suited to a democratic solution based on separate states for the Israeli Jews and the Palestinians. Even if the present population were to fall into two distinct territories, there is still the problem of the Palestinians currently living outside pre-1948 Palestine who wish to return.

Of the Palestinian refugees about 10% lived in the areas which became Israel in 1948 prior to that date. Of these about half remain refugees. Many of those born in the camps since 1948 identify themselves as coming from the areas where their families lived before fleeing in 1948.

Return

Whether all of the Palestinians would return to those areas given the choice or whether they would accept a West Bank/Gaza state is a debateable point. However, given that the process of settlement and colonisation of these areas has been the root cause of their national oppression, it seems to be that the demand for the Palestinian right to return to those areas must be granted as part of a democratic solution. (How this could be done is discussed later).

Given this population distribution and the precise form the national question takes in Palestine there are three different ways of dealing with the situation:

a) drawing boundaries which essentially maintain the existing majority-minority relationships using a recognised border, such as the pre-1967 one. This would mean either leaving minorities within the new states or some form of population exchange;

b) drawing new boundaries by allowing pieces of territory with a majority different to that within the pre-67 borders to secede and join the other state (e.g. the areas of pre-67 Israel with Arab majorities);

c) recognising that a democratic solution cannot be based on a territorial division or redivision of pre-1948 Palestine.

The second position at least has the merit of recognising that the pre-1967 borders are undemocratic. If the national question in Palestine was merely one of national minorities wanting to form their own state or associate with another state, it would provide a feasible solution.

However, it does not take account of the odd features of the situation which come from Israel being a state based on settlement of an area, whose previous inhabitants have not disappeared, but still have legitimate claims to rights within the same area.

Status quo

It is also difficult to see how a West Bank/Gaza state would be a step towards this solution. If a West Bank/Gaza state were to succeed in the aim of reducing national tensions, it would have to become the status quo for relations between the two peoples for some considerable period of time. While the Palestinians could 'in principle force concessions', including the right for Arabs in Israel to secede to the other state, who would be able to enforce it? Presumably the Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza. How would this give the breathing space for reconciliation Martin Thomas talks of?

A common state would have to be based on and guarantee the rights of both the Israeli Jews and the Palestinians to maintain their separate collective identities, unhindered by the state and with control over those aspects of political life necessary to require them to do this. This differs from the 'classic' conception of the secular democratic state as advocated by the PLO in giving collective rights to the Jews within a unitary state and offering such rights unconditionally.

Such rights would include freedom of religion and language, control of education, the rights of free political organisation etc. They could be implemented through a form of local autonomy where communities — whether Arab, Jewish or mixed — would be able to decide what provision would be made for these issues in their area.

Local autonomy is not however the cornerstone of my argument. It merely seems to be the

most likely way of guaranteeing to the furthest possible extent the rights of both communities. Some rights, however, such as the right to use either language would have to be guaranteed by the central government. What is crucial is that the means exist for 'justice to be done' within the framework of a single state.

The main argument against this has been that it ignores what is fundamentally at stake — namely, the rights of two nations rather than merely democratic rights.

It is suggested that local autonomy would lead to one or other nation wishing to secede from a united state.

However there is no way that full national rights (which include the right to a territory) can be put into effect for either nation without it oppressing the other.

For what it's worth, I would recognise the Israeli Jews as a nation. However we should remain aware of some of the peculiarities of both national groups.

Firstly, the national consciousness of the Israeli Jews has until now been based on the Zionist ideology of the right to an exclusive Jewish state in Palestine, a state which has been based on settlement of the territory previously occupied by the Palestinians. Whether the Israelis feel themselves to be political Zionists in the full sense is irrelevant. Quite what form a Jewish national consciousness would take if the exclusivist, chauvinist and, usually, racist elements based on this ideology were to disappear (or even begin to break down) is highly problematic.

Secondly, the rights of the peoples of the area and whether they form nations or not cannot be asserted simply by reeling off a set of characteristics (language, culture, economy, territory) à la Stalin of 1912 and seeing how well they fit. On this basis, one would have to reject the Palestinians' claim to be a nation on the grounds that they do not have — and never have had — a distinct national economy or historically well-defined national territory.

It is precisely the fact that the Palestinian question is not a straightforward issue of the rights of nations or national minorities which makes it so intractable. Any programme we put forward must deal with three aspects of Palestinian oppression as well as the rights of the Jews. Firstly, they lack any territory in which to live. Secondly, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip they face a military occupation. Thirdly, within Israel the Arabs are treated as second-class citizens.

Until Israel is smashed racism will remain

Tony Greenstein SO 239, 7.8.85

THE article by John O Mahony and Martin Thomas (July 3) calling for the establishment side by side with Israel of a Palestinian state, fails to understand the specific features of the Israeli state that prevents it from becoming a 'normal' western capitalist state with a working class capable of moving from economic to political struggles.

Over 52% of the land on the West Bank has already been confiscated, hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on settlements and the necessary infrastructure. There are already over 30,000 settlers and the West Bank is an integral part of the Israeli economy and a reserve of cheap labour.

How else than utopian can we term the call for a separate Palestinian state? No Zionist party in Israel, including Mapam — the so-called Marxist Zionists — supports such a state.

Precisely which forces in Israel would push for such a settlement? At least Arafat recognises that only the United States is capable of exerting pressure to achieve such a state as part of an imperialist solution to the Palestinian question, not that they display the least inclination to do so.

Such a state would become an Israeli Bantustan, in which the Jordanian regime held the whip hand. It would be dependent on the Gulf regimes and Israel economically and its first actions would be to crush the Left and Trade Unions in order to guarantee its existence. It would be a state where confessionalism reigned supreme. Surely the example of partition in Ireland demonstrates this?

Far from uniting the Israeli Jewish and Palestinian working class, it would erect state borders between them whilst providing the opportunity for mass expulsions from Israel and the opportunity to remove even the most marginal rights that Israeli Arab workers possess. It would reinforce the feeling of privilege and racist supremacy that Israeli workers possess.

O'Mahony and Thomas demonstrate that they don't really understand the nature of Zionism. Zionist settlement began in earnest after the First World War under the British

Mandate and the alliance between the Zionists and British Imperialism lasted until 1945.

It is factually incorrect to say that the core of the Israeli state when it was founded consisted of refugees from European anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. The latter came to Israel *after* its founding.

Immigration

As Lenni Brenner and others have documented, the Zionists used these people as a battering ram to open the gates of Palestine to Jewish immigration whilst at the same time supporting immigration controls against Jewish refugees in the USA and Britain, just as today they oppose Soviet Jews settling in any other country bar Israel.

But what has this to do with the nature of the Israeli state? Did not the Plymouth Brethren feel oppressed when they colonised America? And the Australian settlers? And what about the *piets noirs* in Algeria, amongst whom there was a far stronger Communist Party than ever existed in Palestine and some of whom had fought against Franco in Spain.

All that this demonstrates is how reprehensible colonialism and Zionism are, in that it creates racists out of the most progressive of people, including socialists. And weren't the Afrikaaners the first victims of (British) concentration camps?

Instead of an analysis of how Zionism created a settler working class which *never* fought for its own independent class interests, we are told of a "chronic national antagonism" between Israeli Jewish and Palestinian/Arab workers. Not a hint of where this comes from nor any attempt to differentiate between the nationalism of the oppressed and oppressor.

Racism

The racism of Israeli workers derives from the settler colonial state they live in, it doesn't magically appear when different peoples come into contact. Until the Israeli state is destroyed, the racism and chauvinism of Israeli Jewish workers will remain, indeed increase if there is a re-partitioning, and they will never

go beyond a rudimentary economic class consciousness.

The same holds true of the South African white working class and the Loyalist working class.

Instead Israeli workers will cling to their privileges and see their main enemy as the Palestinians. It is little wonder that the Israeli working class has been unable to create its own independent trade unions, still less a Party, and instead is contained within Israel's largest employers' federation and economic empire, Histadrut.

I don't accept that a Jewish nation exists in Israel, but even if it did it would still be an oppressor nation like the Afrikaaners. It has no right to a separate portion of territory. What they do have is the right to live in a democratic, secular Palestine and enjoy all the same religious, cultural and individual

rights as others.

The question of 'self-determination' of the Israeli Jews does not arise because they are not an oppressed group. They enjoy a high standard of living precisely because of the role that Israel plays in the Middle East, financed but not exploited by the USA.

Dynamic

The comparison between Israel and the British state is thereby false. Israel is a settler colonial state and has an expansionist and racist dynamic of its own.

In contributing to this debate we hope that Socialist Organiser does not abandon the fight against Zionism and go for a muddle-headed, middle of the road approach that tries to walk a tightrope between the oppressor and oppressed.



A socialist union of the Middle East

Moshe Machover, SO 240, 14.8.85

Moshe Machover, a founder member of the Israeli socialist organisation Matzpen and currently a member of the editorial board of the journal 'Khamsin', will be speaking on Zionism and Palestine at the Socialist Organiser summer school on August 23-26. As a summary of his views he has asked us to print the following article by himself and Abu Sa'id, originally written in 1969 and adopted as a policy document by Matzpen.

THE Middle East is approaching a crossroads. The four great powers are conferring in an attempt to reach an agreed "solution", which they will then proceed to impose on the inhabitants of the region, and which they hope will restore the stability that was shaken by the June 1967 war and its aftermath. Our aim here is to analyse the dangers which wait at this crossroads and which threaten the future of the revolution in the Middle East.

An important new protagonist has appeared on the Middle Eastern political stage: the Palestinians. True, they had taken action into their own hands a few years before the June 1967 war, but the real impetus came only after that war. The positive factor here is that Palestinian action has transferred a struggle formerly between governments into a mass struggle.

Progressive

For nearly twenty years the Palestinians had been an object of history, passively awaiting salvation by the Arab states in general, or by the "progressive" Arab states, in particular Egypt, under the leadership of Abdel Nasser. The 1948 war exposed the bankruptcy of the old middle-class and landowners' leadership of the Arab national movement. As a result, a new leadership – petit bourgeois in its class nature – came to the forefront: it overthrew the old regime in several Arab countries and scored considerable successes in the anti-imperialist struggle. But the June 1967 war revealed the limitations of this leadership; limitations resulting from its class nature and its nationalist ideology. Among other things it proved its total inability to solve the Palestinian question. Despite the Soviet support, Nasserism and Ba'athism are in a state of political bankruptcy.

Against this background the emergence of Palestinian mass struggle can be understood. As mentioned above, the emergence of

this new factor is a positive phenomenon. But one can also discern a negative and dangerous trend in it. Some sections of the Palestinian movement have adopted the view that the Palestinian masses can and should "go it alone" and solve their problem themselves, in separation from the all-Arab revolutionary struggle. Those who hold this view present the problem solely as a Palestinian one, which can be solved in a purely Palestinian framework. The stick has not been straightened, it is being bent in the opposite direction.

Localist

The former passive attitude, hoping for salvation by others, risks being replaced by a narrow localist attitude. The only help which is demanded from the rest of the Arab world is aid to the Palestinian front itself. This attitude disregards the connection between the Palestinian struggle and the struggle in the Arab world as a whole, and it therefore advocates "non-intervention in the internal affairs of the Arab states." The Arab governments encourage this attitude. The very mobilisation of the masses in Arab countries – even if only for the Palestinian cause – threatens the existing regimes. These regimes therefore wish to isolate the Palestinian struggle and to leave it entirely to the Palestinians.

The Arab governments – both reactionary and progressive – are trying to buy stability for their regimes with a ransom to the Palestinian organisations. Moreover, the governments want to use this financial aid to direct the Palestinian struggle along their own politically convenient lines, to manipulate it and to utilise it merely as a means of bargaining for a political solution acceptable to them. The Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian governments are mainly interested in regaining the territories they lost in the June war (and in thereby regaining their lost prestige and consolidating their authority), while the Palestinian cause is, from their point of view, only secondary, a means rather than an aim. This is what the Arab governments mean when they call for "liquidating the results of aggression."

Clearly, if the Arab governments achieve their aim (e.g. through the four great powers), they will be prepared to desert the Palestinians, and even to take an active part in

political and physical liquidation of the Palestinian movement. The four powers will probably insist on this as a condition for a political settlement. As the consequences of the 1948 war provided the background for the downfall of the old national leadership in the Arab world and for the emergence of the petit-bourgeois leadership – so the consequences of the 1967 war have set the stage for replacing this leadership by a new one, representing a new class.

Organisation

Since the propertied classes proved unable to solve the social, political and national problems of the Arab world, it has become apparent that only the exploited masses themselves, under a working class leadership, are capable of solving their historic problems. But the existence of suitable objective conditions does not mean that this new leadership will automatically emerge. For this further requires a subjective factor – a political organisation with a revolutionary theory and a revolutionary all-Arab strategy.

Programme

However, it is precisely this need for political work and for an all-Arab revolutionary strategy that is explicitly rejected by some important sectors of the Palestinian movement. They advocate the confinement of the struggle to the Palestinian front alone and its limitation to armed operations without a political programme. The balance of forces, as well as theoretical considerations, shows the impossibility of solving the Palestinian problem in a separate Palestinian framework.

What is the balance of forces? The Palestinian people are waging a battle where they confront Zionism, which is supported by imperialism; from the rear they are menaced by the Arab regimes and by Arab reaction, which are also supported by imperialism. As long as imperialism has a real stake in the Middle East, it is unlikely to withdraw its support for Zionism, its natural ally, and to permit its overthrow; it will defend it to the last drop of Arab oil. On the other hand, imperialist interests and domination in the region cannot be shattered without overthrowing those junior partners of imperialism

exploitation that constitute ruling classes in the Arab world. The conclusion that must be drawn is *not* that the Palestinian people should wait quietly until imperialist domination is overthrown throughout the region, but that they should rally to the wider struggle for political and social liberation of the Middle East as a whole.

Just as it is impossible *in practice* to defeat Zionism without overthrowing imperialist domination throughout the region, so it is *theoretically* absurd to present formulas for solving the problem within the territory of Palestine alone: If one speaks about the situation existing before the overthrow of imperialism in the entire region – then the de-Zionisation of Israel and the establishment of a Palestine without Zionism is quite impossible. And if one thinks of the situation after the overthrow of imperialism – then what is the sense of a formula which refers to Palestine alone, without taking into account the necessary changes which would take place in the whole region?

Reformist

In the last analysis, the formula that restricts itself to Palestine alone, despite its revolutionary appearance, derives from a *reformist* outlook which seeks partial solutions within the framework of conditions now existing in the region. In fact, partial solutions can only be implemented through a compromise with imperialism and Zionism. In addition, the solutions which are limited to Palestine cannot grapple successfully with the national problem. The formulas which speak of "an independent democratic Palestine all of whose citizens, irrespective of religion, will enjoy equal rights" have two defects.

On the one hand, they imply the creation of a new separate Pales-

tinian nation whose members do not differ from one another nationally but only religiously. The authors of these formulas are themselves aware of the absurdity of separating the Palestinians from the general Arab nation; they therefore hasten to add that "Palestine is part of the Arab fatherland". This looks suspiciously like the old slogan of "Arab Palestine" dressed up in new – and more nebulous – garb.

This attitude results from a misapprehension of the national problem in general and of Israeli reality in particular. It is true that the Jews living in Israel came to settle here under the influence and leadership of Zionism, and that they – as a community – have oppressed and are still oppressing Palestinians. But it is impossible to ignore the patent fact that today this community constitutes a national entity (which differs from world Jewry on the one hand and from the Palestinian Arabs on the other), having its own language and economic and cultural life. In order to solve the Palestinian problem, this community (or at least a substantial part of it) must be severed from the influence of Zionism and attracted to a joint struggle with the revolutionary forces in the Arab world for the national and social liberation of the entire region. But clearly this cannot be achieved by ignoring the existence of that community as a national entity.

Binational?

This problem cannot be solved within the narrow framework of Palestine. If one is thinking of a democratic state pure and simple – "one man, one vote" – then in fact it will be a state with a Jewish majority, and there is nothing to prevent it from being like the present state of Israel, but having a larger territory and a bigger Arab minority. If one is thinking of a binational state, then it will be an artificial

creation separating the Palestinian Arabs from the rest of the Arab world and from the revolutionary process taking place in it. Besides, in a binational structure there are no inherent guarantees that one of the two national groups dominate the other. All this refers to proposed solutions which can be considered feasible within the present condition of the Middle East, i.e., which do not presuppose a comprehensive social revolution.

On the other hand, if one considers the situation which will exist after a victorious social revolution, after imperialism and Zionism are defeated, then there will not exist a separate Palestinian problem, but rather the problem of the various national groups living within the Arab world (Kurds, Israeli Jews, South Sudanese). This problem can be solved only by granting these nationalities the right to self-determination. Of course, recognition of the rights to self-determination does not mean encouragement to separation; on the contrary, it provides the correct basis for integration without compulsion or repression. Moreover, self-determination in the Middle East is impossible so long as that region is under direct or indirect imperialist domination, but is possible only after it is liberated from all imperialist influence, i.e., after a victorious socialist revolution. In particular, this situation presupposes the overthrow of Zionism.

To sum up: The existing objective conditions enable and require the creation of a revolutionary mass movement, led by the working class, guided by a revolutionary Marxist theory and acting according to an all-Arab strategy, which will recognise the national rights of the non-Arab nationalities living within the Arab world and prove capable of attracting them to a common struggle for the national and social liberation of the entire region.

Fatah's line

SO 241, 21.8.85

Pre-1948 Palestine – as defined during the British mandate – is the territory to be liberated, the territory where the democratic progressive state is to be created.

The liberated Palestine will be part of the Arab homeland and will not be another alien state within it. The eventual unity of Palestine with other Arab states will make boundary problems less relevant and will end the artificiality of the present status of Israel, and possibly that of Jordan as well.

The new country will be anti-imperialist and will join the ranks of progressive revo-

Socialist Organiser supporters are debating whether we should continue to back the mainstream Palestinian slogan of a democratic secular Palestine, or instead adopt a policy which would allow for the existence of a modified Israeli-Jewish state alongside a Palestinian state or a wider Arab federation. These two statements (below, from Fatah; right, from the more left-wing DFLP) summarise what the Palestinian movement meant by a 'democratic secular state' when it adopted the slogan in 1969.

lutionary countries. Therefore, it will have to cut the present life-line links with, and the total dependence on the United States. Therefore, integration within the area will be the foremost prerequisite.

It should be quite obvious at this stage that the new Palestine discussed here is not

Israelis since June 1967. The the occupied West Bank or the Gaza Strip or both. These are areas occupied by the homeland of the Palestinians usurped and colonised in 1948 is no less dear or important than the part occupied in 1967.

Besides the very existence of the racist oppressor state

of Israel, based on the expulsion and forced exile of part of its citizens, even from one tiny Palestinian village is unacceptable to the revolution. Any arrangement accommodating the aggressor settler-state is unacceptable and temporary. Only the people of Palestine – its Jews, Christians and Moslems – in a country that combines them all is permanent.

All the Jews, Moslems and Christians living in Palestine or forcibly exiled from it will have the right to Palestinian citizenship. This guarantees the right of all exiled Palestinians to return to their land

whether they have been born in Palestine or in exile and regardless of their present nationality.

Equally, this means that all Jewish Palestinians at the present Israel have the same right, provided, of course, that they reject Zionist racist chauvinism and fully agree to live as Palestinians in the new Palestine.

The revolution therefore rejects the supposition that only Jews who lived in Palestine prior to 1948 or prior to 1914 and their descendants are acceptable.

After all, [Moshe] Dayan [minister of defence] and [Yigal] Allon [deputy pre-

mier] were born in Palestine before 1948 and they – with many of their colleagues – are diehard racist Zionists who obviously do not qualify for a Palestinian status, whereas newcomers may be anti-Zionists and work ardently for the creation of a new Palestine.

Welcome

In the interview referred to earlier [published in *al-Talca*, June 1969], Abu Iyad, one of the officials of Fatah, reasserted that not only progressive anti-Zionist Jews but even present Zionists willing to abandon their racist ideology will be wel-

come as Palestinian citizens.

It is the belief of the revolution that the majority of the present Israeli Jews will change their attitudes and will subscribe to the new Palestine, especially after the oligarchic state machinery, economy, and military establishment are destroyed.

The call for a nonsectarian Palestine should not be confused with a multireligious, a polyreligious or a binational state. The new Palestine is not to be built around three state religions or two nationalities. Rather, it will simply provide freedom from religious oppression of any group by another and freedom to

practice religion without discrimination. No rigidification of religious lines is desired by the revolution. No hard and fast religious distribution of political offices and other important jobs is envisioned.

Furthermore, religious and ethnic lines clearly cross in Palestine so as to make the term binational and the Arab-Jewish dichotomy meaningless, or at best quite dubious.

The majority of Jews in Palestine today are Arab Jews – euphemistically, called Oriental Jews by the Zionists. Therefore, Palestine combines Jewish, Christian and Moslem Arabs as well as non-Arab Jews (Western Jews).

The DFLP's line

SO 241, 21.8.85

THE struggle for a popular democratic solution for the Palestinian and Israeli questions to be based on the liquidation of the Zionist entity exemplified in all the government establishments (army, administration, police) and all the chauvinistic Zionist political and labour organisations.

The establishment of a people's democratic Palestine state in which the Arabs and (Israeli) Jews will live without

any discrimination whatsoever, a state which is against all forms of class and national subjugation, and which gives both Arabs and (Israeli) Jews the right to develop their national culture.

Arab

In accordance with the link of history and destiny that exists between Palestine and the Arab nation, the

people's democratic state of Palestine will be an integral part of an Arab federal state in this area. The Palestinian state will have a democratic content hostile to colonialism, imperialism and Arab and Palestinian reaction.

The democratic solution put forward is capable of liberating the Arab and the Jew from all forms of chauvinistic (racist) culture – liberating the Arab from reactionary

culture, and the Jew from Zionist culture.

The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine calls on all the Israeli and Jewish elements and groupings who are hostile to Zionism and imperialism to support the above solution and participate in the common Palestinian and people's armed struggle for the implementation of this democratic revolutionary solution.

Unite Israel and Palestine?

Arthur Bough, SO 241, 21.8.85

SOME comrades have argued that the 'democratic secular state' cannot conceivably be made a reality. As an alternative they have put forward the idea of establishing a separate Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza, (and maybe some parts of present-day Israel), and a struggle for a modified Israel in which the rights of the remaining Palestinians would be protected.

There are, however, more problems with the two state theory than with the Democratic Secular State. Firstly, the establishment of a separate state would be opposed not only by the Israeli State, but by the Jewish working class.

A basic right of a Palestinian State would be the right of a standing army. Imagine what fears Jewish workers would have about a Palestinian State on their doorstep which would no longer be restricted to launching guerrilla attacks like

Arthur Bough argues a third, minority, view

the PLO so far, but would be tooled up with all the military hardware of a fully fledged state.

Imagine their fears being heightened by the fact that some 700,000 Palestinians would still remain trapped inside Israel, still denied democratic rights, and that such a Palestinian state could hardly be expected to stand idly by when those Palestinians called on it for assistance.

In short whilst *in principle* the Palestinians could fight for the establishment of a separate Palestinian state, in practice there is no more chance of it being achievable than the Democratic Secular State. It also lacks a grip on reality.

On both sides would be capitalist states within which

would be trapped national minorities. In Israel the racist, Zionist State would remain unchallenged, now with a large section of its most radicalised population, the Palestinian workers, hived off. With a new hostile neighbour on its border the Zionist State would be even more able to avert class antagonism by rallying Jewish workers around the flag. Meanwhile, the link between Israel and US imperialism would probably be strengthened.

On the other side of the border would be a feeble bourgeois Palestinian State, economically dependent on neighbouring Arab capital. Such a state could offer nothing to the Palestinian workers, and even less for the minority Jewish population trapped within its borders.

We have a duty to advocate a programme which is aimed not just at the Palestinian workers, but at the Jewish workers too.

The first step in winning Jewish workers away from the Israeli state is to remove their fears. A basic position of any Marxist should be to say that we are opposed to any attack on Israel by the Arab States, and that we are opposed to the military campaign of the PLO other than where it is a matter of it acting purely as a self-defence squad against attacks by the Israeli State.

The military campaign of the PLO, like the military campaign of the IRA, is *an alternative* to political struggle, not an *integral* and *subordinate* part of it. It is a typical petit-bourgeois strategy.

If the Palestinian workers were to approach Jewish workers on the clear basis that they opposed that military campaign

it would open up a powerful opportunity for political dialogue. The Peace Now campaign showed that Israeli workers do not like being in a continual state of war.

That political solution has to be one that is consistently democratic, that provides for the rights of both nations to exercise considerable self-government in those areas where they constitute a majority, and which at the same time protects the rights of minorities. It requires the establishment of a federal United States of Israel and Palestine.

The Israeli state would obviously oppose such a solu-

tion, and so too, probably, would the bourgeois leaders of the PLO. Our job as Marxists, however, is to mobilise the workers of both nations against their respective bourgeoisies in the political struggle for the demand.

It is an algebraic demand — mobilising the workers without limiting in advance the scope and aims of that mobilisation. The demand for a United States of Israel and Palestine would have to be supplemented by other demands.

A Democratic Programme would have to be elaborated which would protect the rights of minorities. In addition we would need to raise various transitional

demands such as the sliding scale of wages, disbandment of the standing army and establishment of workers' militias, a crash house building programme financed by a massive reduction in the military budget, so that the Palestinian refugees could be rehoused, etc.

Put in this way the Jewish workers could see that they did not need a massive military machine, that their living standards could be improved if they were to come to a political settlement with the Palestinians, and that their potential for winning such improvements would be considerably strengthened if the Palestinian working class was

fighting alongside them.

The demand for a United States of Israel and Palestine, therefore, by focusing on the Palestinian and Jewish workers as the only force capable of resolving the problem, establishes the basis for deepening the struggle into one for socialism in accordance with the theory of Permanent Revolution. In contrast, both the Democratic Secular State and Two State solutions mirror the Stalinist stages theory. Both see the necessity of a first stage whereby a bourgeois democratic solution to the national question is achieved before "normal" class struggle can take place.

Israel can't be reformed!

SO 252 14/11/85

Socialist Organiser has been carrying a discussion on socialist programmes for the Israel/Palestine conflict. Here we print a contribution from Lenni Brenner, author of the recent books 'The Iron Wall, and 'Zionism in the Age of the Dictators'.

The Palestine question is of the profoundest importance for revolutionary internationalists. "Israel" and a "democratic secular Palestine" are not squares on an American Monopoly game board. Human equality, legal, economic and social, is at stake. The slightest accommodation to Jewish chauvinism in Palestine will, inexorably, lead to similar capitulations in principle to communalism in other parts of the world.

Classic Zionism was unabashedly colonialist, and never concealed its aim of converting an Arab land into a Jewish state. However, lacking the power to seize Palestine on its own, Zionism perforce developed under the often grudging patronage of British imperialism, until it was able to take advantage of the unusual conjuncture of political factors in the post-World War II period to establish a racist regime. The near-Apartheid system in the territories conquered in 1967 is an extension of, rather than a departure from, the herrenvolk order created in 1948.

Can Israel be reformed? No. The Zionist state also discrimin-

ates against Jews. Jewish women cannot initiate a divorce, testify in such cases, nor sit on the religious judicial benches, which have exclusive jurisdiction over all Jews in marriage matters. Nor can Harry Cohen — Hebrew for priest — marry a convert or divorcee.

For yea, verily, the Lord will yet restore His Temple in His holy city, and Harry, today a butcher-baker-candlestickmaker would be defiled by sexual contact with such unclean creatures and couldn't perform the ritual animal sacrifices on that grand and glorious day. Their children would be bastards, and Zionism's medievalist rabbis will not marry them, year unto the tenth generation.

Anyone who expects a movement so fanatic in its official discrimination against Jews to ever grant legal equality to any mere Arab is a certified idiot.

There are those who would concede that Zionism is both sectarian and racist, but see an Israeli nation in place, and conclude that it has a right to its own state, sans racism.

To be sure, Zionism has created a Hebrew nation, and that nation, as with the Afrikaners, is entitled to linguistic equality. However no right of self-determination is acquired in today's world by conquering another nation, denying it self-determination in any part of its land, dispersing much of it, savagely discriminating against the national development of the remaining natives, and then bringing in middle class Jewish biblebashers from Brooklyn to

usurp their remaining patrimony.

The Palestinian refugees were driven from their homes by rabid Irgun and Stern Gang murders at Dir Yassin, and Haganah war criminals at Lydda. They and their descendants are fully entitled to return to every inch of their homeland and live there as equals.

Further: equality means that Arabs from the surrounding region have as much right to immigrate into the country as any Jew. But a Jewish state, Zionist or otherwise, would only have legitimacy for democrats if Jews are a majority within its borders. Eventually those borders would have only one purpose: to keep the Arabs from demographically annexing the country, which is exactly the situation today.

And in fact a successful revolutionary upsurge in the Arab world, which is an historic inevitability, would find itself in instant conflict with such a racist crusader castle, which cuts the territorial bridge between the Asian and African Arabs, and which is eternally linked to imperialism, because such a state, like the imperialists, will always be the sworn foe of Arab unity.

Those who call for a two state solution do so as a concession to the prejudices of the Jewish population. They forget that it is the oppressed who make revolutions, and that only a portion of the dominant caste in such striated societies as Israel, Ulster or South Africa will ever come over to the side of the

oppressed, regardless of what assurances are given to them.

What demoralizes the oppressed is always to be rejected and it is obligatory to stress that recognition of Israel can never be a Palestinian rallying cry.

The formula for success is an alliance of the majority of the Palestinians and the progressive Jewish minority. Without winning over that minority the Palestinians can never — repeat — never win.

Fanatics

But it must be clear to that minority that they must come over to the Palestinians and not the other way round. That minority must grasp that it is sociologically impossible for them to emancipate themselves from the sectarian and capitalist nature of Israeli society without that alliance.

There can be no illusions: Israeli society is teeming with fanatics. The Hatikvah and Florentine Oriental Jewish slums of Tel Aviv are the Shankill Road of Israel. Only a minority can ever be won over to the revolution from such reactionary "po" white trash" communities. The doctrine of equality is universal, but it is never universally received. Similarly, only a minority of the Ashkenazi intelligentsia — as with any intelligentsia — can be won over. The bulk of the educated will stay loyal to the system that gives them privileges, and the liberals amongst them will stay loyal to the Labour Party as the lesser evil.

About 20% of the Jews are religious fanatics and cannot be won over, except in the rarest cases. Even among the women, only a minority of progressive women can envision anything more enlightened than a Labour Alignment government, sans the Likud. That is to say that most liberal Zionist women are prepared to accept a government of the criminal party that took away the right of civil marriage which the state had inherited from the British Mandatory.

An alliance with the Palestinians, the 17% Arab minority of Israel's citizens, the Palestinians of the territories conquered in 1967, and the progressives of the surrounding Arab states, on a programme of a democratic secular socialist Palestine in a democratic secular socialist Arab Middle East, is the only way forward for the Jewish left.

But, in their July 3 Socialist Organiser article, John O'Mahony and Martin Thomas

maintain that the implications of "the slogan, 'democratic secular Palestine' are: full conquest of the Israeli Jews by the Arab states".

Which Arab states are they talking about? Egypt? Lebanon? Jordan? Morocco? In fact only a few Arab states can be thought of as resisting Zionism.

Libya, for one, does not accept the slogan, it calls for an Arab Palestine, but it has no following among the Palestinians. Syria backs the Amal gangs against the Palestinians, and by now is opposed to Israel only in so far as it holds the Golan Heights. Algeria is nominally opposed to Zionism, but the struggle is hardly a priority for the bureaucrats there.

And South Yemen says nothing that could be thought of as seeking a chauvinist solution.

Contrary to the two writers, in today's Arab world, the democratic secular notion is profoundly revolutionary in its implications, and an indictment of the

bankrupt regimes. Within the PLO, we have seen the same phenomena.

The Arafat clique long ago abandoned the notion of a unitary Palestine, and for over a decade its entire diplomatic effort was on behalf of precisely the sort of mini-state Socialist Organiser's two writers so cherish. Now the full implications of Arafat's retreat on principle are clear: he is completely demoralised and hopes for nothing more than that Reagan will pressure Israel into agreeing to a bantustan firmly attached to the Jordanian police state.

There is no more communally oppressed group on this earth than the blacks of South Africa, yet the ANC is open to whites, unlike the PLO, or even its most left element, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, for all its Leninist pretensions. Everyone who is intimately involved with the Palestine question knows that the entire PLO is ideologically stagnant,

and it said with certainty that it, or even its left wing, will remain stultified until they transcend their reflex nationalism, as have the black comrades within the ANC. All know this — except the two writers.

For they, in their own backwardness, have done nothing more than reinforce the dead end nationalism of both the Jewish and Arab left in Palestine. In so doing they have committed a grave disservice to them both, and not merely to them but to the international revolution. For every word they wrote against democracy and secularism and bi-nationalism was an argument against Marxism.

We are for democracy or we are for nothing. We are for secularism or we are for nothing. We are for the unity of the workers of both nationalities, and all nationalities, on the basis of an uncompromising solidarity with the oppressed — and no one else — or we are for nothing.

Compromise for coexistence

Avraham Shomroni, SO 243, 12.9.85

The discussion in Socialist Organiser has shown a welcome and helpful realisation that the problem of the Palestinians and Israel can be solved only by an awareness of the rights and needs of both contenders. Indeed, only if British socialists maintain an even-handed attitude can they play a constructive role in helping the sides to come together.

It is all the more sad therefore to see in your pages also the oft-rehearsed outpourings of Tony Greenstein calling for the destruction of Israel with the complete denial of Jewish national rights (Socialist Organiser, 7 August).

None are as blind as those who will not see, but for the genuinely-concerned, some points are worth restating.

In complete contradiction to what Tony Greenstein writes, MAPAM's position in regard to the Palestinian question has its roots in the long-held view that the historic Land of Israel is the common homeland of two peoples — the Jewish people returning and the Palestinian Arabs living there.

As socialists, in the '30s the hope was cherished that there might be cooperation with the Arab working class over the heads of their feudal rulers, but of course national solidarity always prevailed. Today, MAPAM fully recognises the rights of the Palestinians to

Avraham Shomroni, UK representative of MAPAM, an Israeli Socialist Zionist party, replies to Tony Greenstein's article in a recent issue of Socialist Organiser.

political, national sovereignty and in the wake of a peace agreement with Jordan and the Palestinians, the Palestinians themselves should decide whether they want an independent state, federation with Jordan, a theocracy, monarchy or what-have-you.

For Tony Greenstein to advocate a concrete solution on their behalf smacks of arrogance.

National liberation movements are, by definition, concerned about solving the problems of their own peoples in a given historical context. As the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, the Zionist movement is concerned with the Jewish problem, and Israel was not chosen arbitrarily by spinning a globe and blindly sticking in a pin.

Similarly, the national liberation movement of the Palestinians is not, primarily, worried about the needs of the Eskimos, Red Indians or Corsicans. This implies nei her indifference nor opposition and has nothing whatsoever to do with racism.

The antagonism of the Jews and Palestinians is rooted in the fact that for close on a century

they have been competing for the same plot of land with *both* sides having been oppressor and oppressed. On this it is worth quoting the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, who said that when two just causes meet there are two possible outcomes — tragedy or compromise.

In order to lessen the great tension which has accumulated, we need to separate; not 'it's all mine', not one *instead* of the other, but two peoples living *side by side*. As the dynamic of national conflict has brought increasing violence and hate, so we may hope that a dynamic of peace will slowly but surely engender co-operation and a feeling of security for all.

One of the proposals glibly propounded is that of a 'democratic secular Palestine' where Jews would also 'enjoy all the same religious, cultural and individual rights as others'. Is the experience of South Lebanon, where the PLO ruled for years over Shi'ites and others, to serve as an example? Where in the Arab world might we see such an example?

In fact this is a code which hides more than it reveals.

Other codes like 'free trade' sound good because anything 'free' sounds attractive. In the case of the democratic secular state, the talk is of Christians, Muslims and Jews; the context makes it clear that here the Jews are considered, like the others, only a religious, not a secular, group.

In other words, it is a cover for another national Arab state instead of the only national Jewish state in the world.

In utterly absurd contradiction of the situation, Tony Greenstein writes that "the Israeli working class has been unable to create its own trade unions, still less a Party". Similarly, to call the Histadruth "the largest employers' federation" is completely ridiculous, it being nothing of the kind.

The Socialist-Zionist movement, as part of the broadly-based Zionist movement, has made great gains in giving the whole movement a socially positive content. New forms of social organisation have been evolved, with great measures of equality, self-management, welfare, mutual solidarity and direct democracy.

The kibbutzim have been strong, leading elements of the Israeli working class and the great economic enterprises created are the inalienable property of the organised working class and both a guarantee of the independence of the working

class as well as a model sought by others the world over.

There is, of course, no totalitarian ideological consensus in the Israeli labour movement but a very vigorous (sometimes bitter) interplay of policies,

which is an expression of the innate democracy of Israel.

Much still remains to be struggled for, and the imperfections are many, but looking at the great British labour movement, who can say of it that all

has already been won? There is still much to be learned from the lessons of the nationalisation of industry and the NHS, and the experience of the Histadruth-enterprise with its bank and its great workers' sick-fund, which

supplies up-to-date health service for the vast majority of Israel's Jewish and Arab population, may also serve British Labour to advance to a socialist society.

Summer school debate

SO 242, 28.8.85

Moshe Machover, a founder member of Matzpen and now an editor of the journal *Khamsin*, spoke in the debate on Palestine. He was against both the 'democratic secular Palestine' and 'two state' formulas.

'Democratic secular Palestine' as an immediate or short-term proposal is sheer fantasy. Moreover, it is not quite what it appears. The term 'secular' implies a definition of the people involved as 'three religious groups (Christian, Muslim, Jewish), and thus denies the national identity of the Israeli-Jewish or Hebrew nation.

In the long term, in the context of a socialist revolution in the whole region, the proposal for a 'democratic secular Palestine' is pointless: for what reason should we insist on the territory of Palestine being a single and separate political unit

in that context?

'Two states' could be a short-term proposal. But both states would be unviable fragments. Socialists cannot advocate this, even if we recognise that Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza, and creation of a Palestinian state there, might ease the situation slightly.

We should have two slogans, Machover concluded: a socialist Arab federation, with the right of self-determination for non-Arab minorities like the Hebrew nation; and, immediately, the right of self-determination for the Palestinians in those areas where they are a majority.

Bruce Robinson argued for a unitary democratic Palestine. He accepted much of what Machover had said against the standard formula of a 'demo-

cratic secular Palestine'; but argued that, given the intermeshing of the two peoples, Israeli-Jewish and Palestinian Arab, no partition could yield justice. A democratic settlement would be possible only in a single state giving rights to both nations.

John O'Mahony agreed with the gist of what Machover had said, but argued that we must guard against putting off answers to national conflicts until after the socialist revolution. A socialist revolution can be made only by the working class; therefore any programme for socialist revolution in the Middle East must include proposals which can unite Arab and Jewish workers before the revolution.

Tony Greenstein of the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine said that O'Mahony's argument was "left Zionist". The

Israeli Jews are an oppressor community, like the South African whites or the settlers in colonial Algeria. There can be no solution "until that colonialist presence is removed". That means not driving out the Jews but smashing the Zionist state and creating a democratic secular Palestine. It is possible only through a socialist revolution in the whole region.

Tom Rigby replied that Greenstein's method was similar to that of Militant: "socialism is the only answer". Except that Greenstein uses the formula "democratic secular Palestine" in place of "socialism", explaining as an answer to objections that the two are in practice the same.

Moshe Machover also spoke in a workshop on Zionism, and Dave Rosenberg of the Jewish Socialists Group did a workshop on anti-semitism.

Changing our view

SO 243, 12.9.85

At a national Editorial Board meeting on Sunday September 8, Socialist Organiser decided to change its long-standing assessment of the Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine and to adopt new proposals for solving that conflict. A motion advocating two states for Jew and Arabs in Palestine was carried against one calling for a single democratic state.

For many years the majority of Socialist Organiser supporters have subscribed to a version of the democratic secular state position - that the answer to the Arab-Jewish conflict is a single democratic state in which all are equal citizens.

Following a long and wide-ranging debate - it began six years ago - Socialist Organiser has decided that the secular democratic state is an unattainable fantasy. The creation of such

a state by amalgamation of the two bitterly warring peoples as equal citizens in a common territory is inconceivable.

Although the democratic secular state appears to offer reconciliation between the two peoples and therefore to point towards working class unity, in fact it does not and cannot do that. In reality it denies the national rights of the Jews.

The socialist revolution itself is much nearer than the merging of the national identities of the Jewish and Arab Palestinians in a common secular state. At best it is a consoling fantasy. At worst it is a propaganda weapon of Arab nationalists, the logic of whose position is the conquest and driving out of the Jews.

In reality there is a stark choice in Palestine. In broad terms only two solutions are

possible. Either drive out (or massacre) the Jews, thus restoring the land to the Palestinian Arabs, or divide the disputed territory. This being so, the choice for socialists must be advocacy of compromise and division or redivision of the disputed territory. Despite the immense practical difficulties no other democratic or socialist solution is conceivable. Rejection of Zionist expansion and condemnation of the Israeli treatment of the Arabs inside pre-1967 Israel and on the West Bank is common ground on the left; so should be rejection of the programme of Arab nationalism and revanchism in all its variants, including the democratic secular state, which is understood by its Arab nationalist advocates as a Palestinian Arab state with no more than religious rights for Jews on a confessional

basis.

Socialist Organiser continues to support the oppressed and displaced Palestinians in their struggle for justice - but we do it from our own class standpoint and programme, not by way of endorsing Arab nationalism and revanchism wrapped up in consoling fantasies. We support those Israelis who are fighting against the expansionism and chauvinism of the Israeli state, and for withdrawal from the West Bank.

But we insist that it is no part of a democratic or socialist programme for Palestine to call for or support the destruction of the Israeli Jewish nation - and this is what is implied in the slogan for the secular democratic state and is in fact its only real political content.

The discussion will continue in Socialist Organiser.

How to unite Arab and Jewish workers

John O'Mahony and Martin Thomas, SO 234, 19.6.85

At the Socialist Organiser AGM on June 22-23, we discussed Palestine.

Until now SO has supported the slogan of 'a democratic, secular Palestine'. Some SO supporters still say we should call for a single state in Palestine, embracing Jews and Arabs; others argue we should propose an independent Palestinian-Arab state alongside a modified Israeli-Jewish state. We published some discussion articles last week.

The AGM felt that we weren't yet ready to take a decision, and so resolved to continue the discussion.

This week we publish a draft statement of the 'two states' position by John O'Mahony and Martin Thomas. Further contributions to the debate are welcomed, and will appear over the coming weeks.

Preamble

The Palestine question mainly presents itself to working-class militants as follows:

a) 37 years ago a new Jewish state, Israel, was created in Palestine by immigrants from Europe, America and the Arab countries. The core of them were refugees from European anti-semitism, including survivors of the greatest racist crime in recorded history, Hitler's massacre of six million Jews. The Jewish state is heavily dependent on outside financial support and it functions as a satellite of US imperialism, though it has autonomous interests and projects of its own.

b) Most of the Palestinian people have been displaced, and transformed into refugees and stateless persons outside Palestine. The remainder are either an oppressed minority within pre-1967 Israel, or under military rule in the West Bank and Gaza.

c) A chronic national antagonism exists between Israeli-Jewish and Arab workers in the region, and between Jewish and Arab workers in Israel and in the Israeli-occupied territories. This antagonism has crippled the working class in the entire region for many decades.

Our problem is to explain and interpret these developments and to answer the question: what programme do socialists propose as a solution to the Jewish-Arab antagonism in Palestine and in the region?

The most widespread left-wing reaction to the Palestine problem states or assumes that the Zionist enterprise was and is a 'conspiracy', and identifies Zionism totally with imperialism. General denunciation of 'Zionism' and 'Zionists' follows, in terms which imply that

the 'Zionists' have no rights in Palestine except possibly individual rights.

Class considerations therefore give way to national/communal categories. The Arab ruling classes have more than once massacred Palestinians, and willingly condemn them to be pawns on the political chessboard; but this outlook puts the Arab states on the 'progressive' side. The whole question is seen as a mere item in the struggle between progressive and reactionary, good and bad, camps on a world scale. The problem is thus defined almost as a conflict of good and bad peoples.

Against this, we assert basic Marxist working-class ideas. Class is decisive. We approach all questions of national and communal antagonisms from the viewpoint of the class struggle, and of the working-class programme for solving such conflicts by way of consistent democracy.

The Palestinian Arabs are bitterly oppressed; but a Jewish nation exists in Palestine and has a right to continue to exist there, with national rights which irreducibly include the right to self-determination on some territory of its own. We champion the Palestinian Arabs' fight against oppression and displacement on a programme not of the implicit or explicit denial of Jewish rights, but of compensation, restitution, division of the disputed territory, and conciliation.

We advocate the immediate creation of a Palestinian Arab state alongside an Israeli-Jewish state (a modified version of Israel). We advocate an end to all discrimination against the Arabs under Israeli rule. We advocate full and equal citizenship for the Arabs, and the right to secede to the Palestinian-Arab state of the majority-Arab districts in Israel.

Revolutionary militants must approach this question from two viewpoints simultaneously, and integrate those two viewpoints. We are against chauvinism and national exclusivism everywhere, whether in Britain, Northern Ireland, or Palestine; and the Palestinian Jews are chauvinistic and exclusive. We support those in Israel and the West Bank/Gaza who fight for Jewish-Arab equality. But the ending of Jewish chauvinism and exclusiveness is not and cannot be, for us, a precondition for accepting that the Jews have rights in Palestine.

The Jews have the right to a certain portion of the territory of Palestine by virtue of the fact that they are there, and most of the Jews now there were born there. Their rights there cannot be made conditional on how they conduct themselves in that territory, any more than the vile racist immigration laws of Britain — which we fight and oppose, as some Israeli socialists fight and oppose the chauvinism of the Israeli Jews —

nullify Britain's right to exist. (Or any more than the openly chauvinist line of the Palestinian Arabs' leaders up to the late 1960s could nullify the Palestinian Arabs' national rights).

Self-determination

We recognise the right to self-determination of the Israeli Jews; we support those in Israel who fight chauvinism and exclusiveness and advocate equal citizenship of Arabs and Jews; we advocate an independent Palestinian-Arab state on the best terms possible which are compatible with Israeli-Jewish national rights. All these elements must be combined into one coherent working-class socialist viewpoint.

Resolution

1... In general we support the oppressed Palestinians against oppressor Israel. We seek a solution which gives both Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews the right to a life as a nation.

Democratic secular Palestine

2... The proposal to amalgamate the two Palestinian nations — Arabs and Jews — into a unitary democratic secular Palestinian state is unfortunately utopian. Such an amalgamation is impossible. National identity, and still less national oppression and conflict, cannot be conjured away; two hostile nations cannot be amalgamated into a single unit.

Where there is national oppression, the demand to 'forget national differences' is usually a cover for the oppressor. A unitary Palestine — in the foreseeable future — would mean a state in which the Palestinian Arabs were oppressed by the Israeli Jews, if there were no outside intervention.

In fact the practical meaning and implications now of the Arab-nationalist slogan, 'democratic-secular Palestine', are: full conquest of the Israeli Jews by the Arab states. It is not a proposal for a democratic solution, but the cutting edge of Arab propaganda which would turn the Jews from oppressors into the oppressed.

A 'democratic, secular Palestine' is not an answer to the national question, but something desirable which might be possible in the distant future after the national question has (by some other means) been solved — indeed, after national identities and prejudices had begun to wither away. As a proposed solution to the Palestinians' oppression, either it tells them that they must themselves shed national prejudice, and then also convince their oppressors to do likewise — or it is an encoded term for

full suppression of the Israeli Jews by the Arab states.

West Bank/Gaza

3... Immediately, we demand an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, in line with the right of self-determination of the people of those territories.

Mini-state

4... A Palestinian mini-state in the West Bank and Gaza could alleviate the situation, but the national conflict of Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews would certainly continue. A solution to that conflict demands a more far-reaching programme.

Considered as a national territory for 4½ million Palestinians, these areas — essentially fringe districts of the Israeli state — are very limited in size and resources. They could not provide an adequate Palestinian homeland.

Right of secession

5... Meanwhile some 600,000 to 700,000 Arabs would remain under Israeli rule.

The Israeli Arabs consider — rightly — that they are part of the Palestinian-Arab nation, that they have rights in the area where they live (and have long lived), and that the territory of Israel cannot be considered the exclusive property of the Israeli Jews. The situation of the Israeli Arabs is thus not a separate 'minority question', but an integral part of the Palestinian-Arab/Israeli-Jewish conflict.

We support the right of secession to the Palestinian-Arab state of the mainly-Arab areas within present-day Israel (western and central Galilee, Little Triangle).

Over one million Palestinians live in Jordan, forming half or more of the population there. They live under the rule of a monarchy artificially created by British imperialism, and propped up militarily and financially in succession by Britain and by the US and oil-rich Arab states. We support the overthrow of the monarchy in Jordan, and federation or merger between a Palestinian mini-state and a democratic Jordan.

Federation

6... If it can be achieved, a federal relationship (in the circumstances, necessarily a loose one) between the Palestinian-Arab state and a modified Israel (or over

a broader area), including agreements to defend the rights of the Arab minority and of Arab labour in Israel, will be preferable to Arab secession from Israel and full-scale repartition.

a) The two nations are at present heavily intermeshed (Arabs living in Israel, West Bank and Gaza people working in Israel, etc.) Full intermeshing is not possible in the short term, given the national hostilities. However, we should seek to minimise the separating-out.

b) Economically, a larger unit is preferable. The present economic isolation of Israel from the surrounding countries is economically irrational and politically leads to dependence on the US, etc. Generally, the division of the Middle East into several, mainly small, nation-states boosts nationalist and communal narrowness, economic underdevelopment, and imperialist manipulation. A West Bank/Gaza state, or even a West Bank/Gaza state united with Jordan, would be extremely weak economically and thus would be forced into dependence on states like Israel (the main employer of West Bank/Gaza labour) or Saudi Arabia (the paymaster of the present Jordanian state).

Though our programme is a socialist federation of the Middle East, with self-determination for national minorities (Israeli Jews, Kurds, etc.), this should not contradict proposals for smaller federations, e.g. in Palestine.

c) Full-scale repartition would be bloody and almost certainly untidy, creating material for fresh conflicts.

For these reasons, advocacy of a federation would be advantageous for Jewish-Arab working-class unity. However, the 'two states' formula is not conditional on federation being possible. It is the irreplaceable first step to peaceful coexistence of Arabs and Jews in Palestine and thus to working-class unity.

Historic Zionism, 1897-1948, was reckless and devastating in its consequences for the Palestinian Arab people.

But we reject the idea that either historic Zionism or modern Zionism (i.e. pro-Israel Jewish sentiment, however defined) can be simply described as racist. The state of Israel is a state pursuing racist policies and heavily based on racist institutions. It was not and is not a racist conspiracy, but rather a product of many circumstances. To try to 'ban Zionists' is to try to outlaw the reflex nationalism of the mass of Jewish people, and it is thus in effect anti-

Jewish.

In terms of political argument, however, we counterpose internationalism to Israeli-Jewish nationalism, and democracy to Jewish sectarianism and Jewish supremacy in Israel (or any modified Israel). Within Israel (or any modified Israel) we argue for full individual rights and national minority rights for the Arabs; for an end to the ban on Arab labour in major industries; for an end to Israel's alliance with US imperialism and its role as a major military supplier to South Africa, Central American dictatorships, etc; for the full separation of religion from the state; for the dismantling of the state specifically 'Zionist' features of the state (in particular, the set-up whereby quasi-state organisations, the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Fund, provide funds and services to Jews only); for the creation of a labour movement independent of the state and the employers.

We demand compensation from Israel and the US to fund the resettlement of the Palestinian-Arab refugees in the Palestinian-Arab state.

The repossession of all Palestine by the Palestinian Arabs is now impossible without suppressing the Jews; and the Israel Jews' national rights cannot depend on them ceasing to be 'Zionists' or agreeing to an unqualified right of resettlement in all of Palestine for Arabs. However, among the Israelis we would argue for immigration laws which would allow individual Palestinian Arabs to move in and out freely or to go and live there. Israeli-Jewish agreement to easy entry for Arabs would be an essential contribution to national reconciliation and working-class unity.

We explain to Israeli Jews that no nation that oppresses another can itself be free or secure, and that they can achieve peace, freedom and security only by a democratic attitude towards the Arab peoples — just as we explain to the Palestinian Arabs that any solution that would oppress the Israeli Jews would be regressive and reactionary.

Arab states

8... While the Arab states have been victims of predatory attacks by Israel, they themselves are bourgeois or bourgeois-feudal states with expansionist and predatory ambitions. They have cruelly oppressed and more than one massacred the Palestinian Arabs. While in some circumstances we side with the Arab states against Israeli attack, we do not support the destruction of Israel by the military forces of the Arab states.

2. ANTI-ZIONISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM

Gerry Healy and the World Jewish Conspiracy

Sean Matgamna SO 127, 14.4.83

Newsline has continued its ridiculous campaign of bluff and bluster against the BBC Money Programme's allegation that it receives Libyan subsidies. But still — litigious though it is — it has not got round to suing the BBC.

Many — solicited — letters from members and supporters have been printed. The campaign continues against Socialist Organiser, linked to the BBC according to the well-tried Stalinist technique of the 'amalgam'. Example from a piece by long-standing member Alex McLarty: "Trade unionists! Members of the labour movement! Be warned! Depending on its substance a small dose of poison can do a lot of harm. What is the substance of Matgamna and 'Socialist Organiser'? We know enough now. Time may tell even more". Much of the denunciation of Socialist Organiser is extremely shrill and hysterical, lynch mob stuff.

It is also extremely sad. People write expressing their faith in charlatans who put out Newsline. Letter after letter testifies to real sacrifices and devotion. People who could not possibly know the secrets of the autocratic and conspiratorial leaders of the organisation write to testify from their own experience of struggling to raise money for the paper that it could have no financial link with Libya. Playwright Tom Kempinski writes in ringing tones, "We are not bought" — rhetoric that rings pathetic and false in the circumstances.

As false has always been the hopes and wishes of the many fine revolutionaries who have devoted themselves to Healey's 'machine for maiming militants'.

We reproduce the editorial in which they responded to our comment last week.

NEWSLINE's editorial uses the code word 'Zionists', but in fact it is talking about a conspiracy of Jews which runs, they say, from 'the centre' of Mrs Thatcher's Cabinet to the commanding heights of the BBC, all the way through to... Socialist Organiser. If a Jew becomes "the youngest-ever chairman" of the BBC, what else can it be but a 'Zionist' conspiracy?

Pre World War 2 anti-semites explained communism and finance capital alike as different aspects of a single World Jewish Conspiracy. So now do these petro-dollar anti-Zionists of Newsline depict 'the centre' of Thatcher's government and Socialist Organiser as secretly linked and bonded — despite ocean-wide class and political differences — by a hidden network of 'Zionists'.

'Zionism' here is not a political reference meaning those who support the right of Israel, or a modified Israel, to exist. That would include the overwhelming majority of the people of Britain.

There are Zionists and... Zionists: there are Zionists and

Jews. It is the latter who are the conspirators. Even an 'anti-Zionist' Jew, this racist logic says, will have ineradicable loyalties and allegiances more basic than politics: some people are congenital 'Zionists'.

Thus Gerry Healy in his dotage seems to have rediscovered the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' — that forgery of the Okhrana, the Tsarist political police, which became a warrant for genocide against the Jews of Europe. Newsline in effect defines Jews as 'agents of Zionist imperialism' — which must be the very heart of imperialism if, as they say, its controlling tentacles reach secretly right into 'the centre' of Mrs Thatcher's Cabinet. The Jews, it would seem, are now the international

janissaries of imperialism.

It easily becomes a matter of Jews — 'Zionists' — against all the rest.

The racist logic breaks through in their account of the Money Programme's 'witch-hunt'. Why is this the work of 'Zionists'? Because a Jew is appointed chairman of the BBC? Because only 'Zionists' are concerned with the Middle East? Because the Jewish Chronicle showed interest in an exposé of people it must regard as at least potential pogromists. Of course, if the Jewish Chronicle was tipped off in advance, that is proof positive that 'Zionists' were in control!

Or it is that all 'witch-hunters' are Zionists?

No: it is that a view of the world in which the Palestinian question is the central pivot of the struggle of two basic camps, the imperialist and the 'anti-imperialist', decrees that within the imperialist countries, 'Zionists', linked by ineradicable ties to the arch-imperialism — Zionist imperialism — are the main enemy, everywhere.

Faced with an earlier left-wing flirtation with anti-Semitism dressed up as anti-capitalism, Frederick Engels said that: "anti-semitism is the socialism of idiots". WRP-style anti-Zionism is the anti-imperialism of idiots. And it is indistinguishable from anti-semitism.

The leaders of the WRP are people whose history must make them ashamed in some part of their minds about what they have become. So, cheaply, they warn that Mrs Thatcher, who now (they say) has Zionist conspirators at 'the centre' of her government, may engage in anti-semitic agitation. But they can't even disavow anti-semitism without linking the Zionists to Hitler, saying that Hitler consciously and deliberately made

forcible conversions to Zionism.

Morally outraged by Israel — and rightly outraged — the more emotional or 'third worldist' left in Britain has sometimes tried to brand all Zionists, that is, the vast majority of Jews, as racists, and (especially during the ultra-left heyday of the early '70s) proposed to treat them accordingly. The slogan 'drive the Zionists out of the labour movement' has been raised — it can only mean: drive the Jews out of the labour movement.

There is simply no way that this sort of anti-Zionism can avoid shading over — despite the best 'anti-racist' intentions — into anti-semitism.

Even if it were true that Jews who support Israel are racist, the evil consequences of 'left-wing' anti-semitism would far outweigh any help it would give to the oppressed Palestinians. But in fact it is hysterical and stupid to think that all Jews who support Israel are racists.

Most of them have the haziest notion of the history of Jewish-Arab relations in Palestine. They do have an understandably vivid awareness that six million Jews were murdered in 20th century Europe. Naturally they give instinctive support to Israel and are inclined to believe its official spokesmen.

Yet the recent outcry against the Begin government by millions of non-Israeli (Zionist) Jews and the vast demonstrations within Israel itself when the facts about Israel's treatment of Lebanon were made known, and it became impossible to shut out knowledge of Israeli complicity in the massacres, prove how far millions of Zionists are from being conscious racists. Most of them can be got to understand that the treatment of the Palestinian Arabs by the Palestinian Jews is a betrayal of the best traditions of the Jewish people.

But idiotic attempts to treat them all as part of a 'Zionist conspiracy' can only convince the Jews that in parallel to what they see as the Arab threat to wipe out the Jews of Palestine, those in Britain who talk of justice for the Palestinian Arabs are a crowd of loony future pogromists. And that won't help the Palestinian Arabs either.

The state of the left on this question is indicated by the fact that Ken Livingstone, in the same issue of Newsline, chattily adds his support to the idea that the Money

From 'Socialist
Organiser' to
Thatcher & Reagan



The Zionist connection

A POWERFUL Zionist connection runs from the so-called left of the Labour Party right into the centre of Thatcher's government in Downing Street. There is no difficulty whatever in proving this.

Top of the list, we have the most recent appointment of Mr Stuart Young, a director of the 'Jewish Chronicle', as youngest-ever chairman of the BBC, having been a governor only since 1981. He is the brother of Mr David Young, another Thatcher appointee who is chairman of the Manpower Services Commission.

This is the key organisation which the Tories are transforming into a 'corporatist front', behind which they seek to mobilise jobless youth from 14 years upwards into a 'slave Labour body to break trade union wages, safety procedures and working conditions... Thatcher has rolled out these appointments with magisterial arrogance while the Labour Party and TUC chiefs have accepted them without a murmur of protest'. (News Line, March 28, 1983).

The Tories know they can rely totally upon Zionist imperialism to produce the most hated reactionaries, in order to transform the situation at a later date into a pro-fascist, anti-Semitic pogrom against all the Jews in general.

Zionism made it possible for a number of rich Jews to leave Nazi Germany with the agreement of the Fuhrer provided they agreed to become Zionists. The Tories know too they have a powerful anti-Semitic trump card up their sleeves, to replay once again as the most reactionary manifestation of racialism, which is anti-Semitism.

From the support and advance publicity which the 'Jewish Chronicle' gave the BBC 2 'Money Programme' on March 20, the reactionary Zionist link was clear for all to see. But it also stretches through Downing Street channels right into the White House and President Reagan.

The latest Reagan military provocation against Libya early in March raises in its sharpest form the central political question. Do Trotskyists defend the Libyan regime of Gaddafi against US imperialism as a matter of principle, or do they

denounce it as 'the reactionary Islamic government of Libya' and seek a 'neutrality' between US imperialism and Gaddafi? This is the position of 'Socialist Organiser', claiming to speak for 'lefts' in the Labour Party.

The same organ supported the Zionist-sponsored 'Money Programme' on March 20. They wrote: 'We ("Socialist Organiser") didn't wait for the BBC to tell us about the WRP's probable links with Libya. The fact that the BBC now says it *doesn't* make it any less likely to be true' (April 7, 1983). (Our emphasis).

Here is unqualified support for the work of Thatcher's appointee as chairman of the BBC, who is also a director of British Caledonian Airways and the British Overseas Trade Group for Israel. 'Socialist Organiser' has landed itself right bang in the middle of Thatcher's hand-picked Zionists as an outright supporter of their policies of witch-hunting the WRP and the News Line for our principled stand against imperialism and in support of the Libyan masses under their leader Muammar Gaddafi.

The question of the hour, we repeat, is the pro-Zionist policies of the Reagan and Thatcher administrations and their hatred of the Palestinians and Libyans alike.

In the background of the 'Socialist Organiser' one can detect a powerful current of anti-Arab racism — also shared by Reagan and Thatcher. This is the substance of their support for the 'Money Programme' and their lying affirmation that Gaddafi finances the WRP with a '£1.5 million subsidy', claimed by the faceless person on the BBC 2 programme.

This is a lie from start to finish. Because the WRP unhesitatingly supports the Libyan and Palestinian people and its leadership against the nuclear war plans of Reagan, Thatcher and the Zionists in their campaign to destroy all national liberation movements in the Middle East. 'Socialist Organiser' has joined the class enemy.

The Zionist connection between these so-called 'lefts' in the Labour Party right through to Thatcher and Reagan's White House is there for all to see in its unprincipled nakedness.

Programme expose on the WRP was a Zionist plot. He hadn't then read the anti-semitic editorial printed on the same page. What does he think of the editorial? Does he think we should just shrug and accept anti-semitism as a feature of the far left?

Perhaps what the Ayatollah Healy has discovered in his political dotage in not the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' but the last will and testament of Joseph Stalin, who during his last years infected much of the Stalinist and quasi-Stalinist left with his own ingrained anti-semitism. At

the time of his death in 1953 Stalin had set the stage for a purge trial of five 'Jewish doctors' from the Kremlin's own hospital, accused of plots, poisonings, etc.

It was to have been the signal for a final act in the vast anti-Jewish campaign, legitimised as 'anti-Zionism', which had raged in most of Eastern Europe and the USSR since 1948 — which, for example, was a prominent feature of purge trials like that of Rudolf Slansky in Czechoslovakia in 1952. The trial of the doctors would have been the signal for the mass deportation of the USSR's Jews — and possibly

for their annihilation.

Stalin's successors cancelled the trial, but anti-semitism remains rampant in the Stalinist states.

When the WRP (then SLL) went Maoist for a year back in 1967, Mr Banda, now the WRP's General Secretary, wrote that they would 'march' even under the portrait of Stalin. Once again he is 'marching' under the portrait of Stalin.

He won't write about it, but he is also uncomfortably close to marching under the portrait of Adolf Hitler.

Free speech for Zionists!

Workers' Action No 77, 29.10.77

THE National Union of Students Executive is to consider action against certain Unions in response to plans to form college Israel Societies and/or Jewish Societies.

Those who want to proscribe the Zionists from exercising free speech within student unions argue as follows:

The Zionist state of Israel is based on racial criteria. It is a racist state in its constitution and its definitions of citizenship. Zionism established itself in Palestine in a racist manner (eg boycotts of Arab produce and labour by the Zionists) and with racist goals. The practice of the state of Israel since its inception has been racist.

Therefore pro-Israel propaganda is racist through and through. Any and every apologist for the existence of the state of Israel must take as a starting-point the denial of any rights to the Palestinian Arabs.

By logic Zionists, like other racists, should be denied the right to organise, recruit, and justify the crimes of the state of Israel.

But to establish the fact that Zionism is racist, a form of racism, does not completely describe the problem. For who are the Zionists in Britain?

The hard core Zionists with a firm commitment to Israel are the Jewish community.

In Britain in general, there is widespread sympathy with Israel and acceptance of the Zionist state. But in the Jewish community this amounts to complete identification. Apart from revolutionary socialists whose origins are in the Jewish community, there

are very few Jewish non-Zionists.

This identification with Israel has its roots and motive force not in anti-Arab racism, nor in a thought-out programme of displacing the Palestinians, but in the fact that the Jewish masses in Europe have themselves been the victims of racist persecution. It was only during and after the Third Reich's "Final Solution", the terrible paroxysm of anti-semitism that slaughtered six million Jews, that Zionism gained general acceptance among the European and US Jewish communities. Before that, the Zionist project to colonise Palestine had been a minority creed among Jews.

The identification with the Zionist colony and later the state established with US imperialist support was largely identification by those who escaped the Nazi holocaust with a Jewish state that claimed to be a guarantee that the ages-old persecution of Jews would cease as a Jewish "homeland" was acquired.

That this state was European and not Middle Eastern, that it was exclusively Jewish, no doubt made it easier for western Jews to identify with it; but these were not the essential starting points for them. Far from being conscious racists, most Jews in Britain are not even conscious of the racist basis of the state of Israel.

Zionism is inescapably racist. But to say that Zionists are racists who should be treated like the National Front is to miss the point that the hard-core Zionists are Jews not

motivated by fascist-type race hatred but by a wrong and misguided response to anti-Jewish racism.

The Jewish community which is the bedrock of Zionist support is not organised and kept together by this Zionism even. Still less is it a racist selection of people. Its collusion with Zionism is not the essential characteristic of the Jewish community.

Of course Zionist Jews are responsible for themselves. Those who support the state of Israel are supporters of a racist state even if they have evaded the less acceptable facts about Israel's origins and its mode of operation in the Middle East in the past thirty years. As Zionists, they are still our political and ideological enemies.

That is quite a long way, however, from being the same as the National Front or other groups formed around fascist programmes and fuelled by race hatred.

Most members of the Jewish community can be reasoned with. The self-same consciousness of their own history that is manipulated by Zionism and imperialism leads many Jews to oppose those who are the organised racists in this country, such as the National Front. Even the conservative **Jewish Chronicle** said after Lewisham: "Not even the **Mirror** made the (to me) obvious point that, whatever their defects, the Trotskyists have the right attitude to the National Front and should not be left alone to stop its provocations". (Article by Philip Kleinman, cited in the anti-fascist paper **CARF**).

These Jews should be welcomed as allies in the anti-fascist struggle, even while they give support to racist Israel.

The abstract logical chain — Zionism is racism and since racism must be denied free speech so must Zionism — leads to the suppression of the rights of a community which is itself still potentially threatened with racism. As the NF has grown it has felt more confident to express its anti-semitism more and more openly. It cannot at all be excluded that the constant outpourings against "Finance" capital (by which they mean Jews) will lead before long to violent attacks on the Jewish community.

With extreme Zionist organisations such as Herut, which are overtly and aggressively racist against Arabs, direct action rather than debate may be needed. But ordinary college Jewish Societies cannot be treated the same way. A general proscription of Zionist meetings is an unnecessarily blunt instrument. Their pro-Israel propaganda should not pass unchallenged, but there are many other ways to intervene and oppose it. Such interventions may well lead to violent incidents, as there are certainly thuggish Zionists who try to silence anti-Israel views. We should be prepared for that; but it is preferable to a blanket ban on any student society or group that is explicitly (Israel Societies) or implicitly (Jewish societies) Zionist.

Don't ban Zionists!

John O'Mahony, SO 221, 28.3.84

ISRAEL IS a racist state, and Israeli atrocities such as its savage reprisals against Arab men, women and children in Lebanon are crimes against humanity.

Should anti-racists therefore treat Zionists — or all those who support the right of the Israeli state to exist — as racists? Sunderland Polytechnic's ban on the Union of Jewish Students has placed this issue at the centre of student politics. The issue goes way beyond student politics.

For almost all Jews — apart from revolutionary socialists and some religious zealots — are Zionists (at least in a broad sense), and therefore what is at issue here is whether or not socialists, and anti-racists, should politically persecute Jews.

The Sunderland student union ban was not the work of an unrepresentative minority. Over 1000 students attended its General Meeting last month which endorsed the ban on the Union of Jewish Students on the grounds that the UJS is racist because it is avowedly Zionist.

Nor is the majority attitude at Sunderland untypical of the Left.

Lenin and Trotsky never dreamed of 'banning Zionists' — though such a ban would have been a much less drastic matter in their day, when only an ideological minority of Jews were Zionists. They opposed Zionism politically; but, for example, the Poale Zion (Workers of Zion) movement continued to publish its paper in the USSR until 1927, the year the Left Opposition was outlawed.

Yet many today who consider themselves Leninists or Trotskyists support a ban on Zionists.

The intention of the Sunderland Poly students is to show the sharpest possible intolerance and hostility towards what they consider to be racism — and that is good.

What they have done, however, looks more like racism than the anti-racism they intend. They have targeted a community which for something like 1500 years has been the victim of Europe's ingrained, traditional Christian anti-Jewish racism. The greatest racist crime in recorded history was done not by Jews but against Jews.

The ban on the Jewish student society at Sunderland Polytechnic, which has now become a major issue within the National Union of Students (see report page 3), has implications way beyond student politics. John O'Mahony unravels the issues.

Israel exploits that fact, and uses the Nazi holocaust of six million Jews for self-justification and moral blackmail. But the holocaust does not thereby become something we can forget about or regard as an event of ancient history.

One of the tragedies of Israel, conceived as a refuge against anti-semitism, is that its activities now combine with the effect in the West of the increased power and wealth of the Arab states to generate anti-semitism dressed up in the garb of anti-Zionism.

Today the rump National Front has turned 'left' and denounces 'finance capitalism', which it says is 'Jewish capitalism'. They are poking around in the old vomit of the Nazis, who tried to appeal to workers by scapegoating the Jews for the crimes of capitalism. The new NF even denounces Israel and Zionism for their ill-treatment of the Palestinians.

Intentions

The drive, motives and intentions of even the most confused left-wing anti-Zionist are of course radically different. Yet today justified hostility to Israel has pushed much of the revolutionary left to the edge of a new anti-semitism, and some so-called leftists ('Newline') over the edge.

It is not that they are supporters of Hitlerite racial mumbo-jumbo, or anything like that. But whatever the good intentions, there is no way that a ban like that at Sunderland Poly can avoid being anti-semitic.

Zionism is part of the identity that modern history — centrally, Hitler's massacres, and the callous attitude of the big powers to those massacres and their survivors — has stamped on Jews. To differentiate between banning Zionists and banning Jews is no more than a thin fiction when the vast majority of

Jews today identify with Israel and are supporters — active or passive, callous or guilty, blinkered and happy or deeply troubled supporters — of the existing Jewish state. This is part of their identity as Jews, not easily detachable. The ban on Zionists is akin to the old proselytising Christian anti-semitism which wanted to convert the Jews, rather than, like Hitler and the racists, to kill them, but was bitterly hostile to those who refused to change and be converted.

Jewish identification with Israel has its roots and motives not in anti-Arab racism, nor even in a thought-out commitment to displace the Palestinian Arabs, but in the Jews' experience of racist persecution, culminating in the Nazi slaughter.

It was only during and after the Third Reich's 'Final Solution', the terrible paroxysm of anti-semitism that slaughtered six million Jews, that Zionism gained general acceptance in the European and US Jewish communities. Before then the Zionist project to colonise Palestine had been a minority creed among Jews.

The identification with the Zionist colony, and later with the Israeli state, was identification with a Jewish state that seemed to offer a guarantee that the age-old persecution of the Jews would now cease.

Far from being conscious racists, most Jewish Zionists in Britain are not even conscious of the racist basis of the state of Israel.

They are not motivated by race-hatred, but by a wrong and misguided response to anti-Jewish racism.

Of course Zionist Jews are responsible for themselves. Those who support the state of Israel are supporters of a racist state even if they refuse to acknowledge the less acceptable facts about Israel's origins and its mode of operation over the past 40 years.

As Zionists they are our political and ideological opponents.

That is quite a long way, however, from being the same as the National Front or other groups formed around fascist programmes and fuelled by race hatred.

The attempt to treat Zionist Jews as if they were racists is both unjust and itself inevitably productive of racist attitudes, albeit wrapped up in good intentions.

Listen to the usefully crass 'Newline' editorialising in support of the Sunderland decision. Benevolently they conclude:

"We reject the spurious premise that all Jews are and must be Zionists, or that anti-Zionism is anti-semitism. Sunderland Poly students are right to take a stand. We would support the formation of a Jewish Society which anti-Zionist Jews would be eligible to join. But a Zionist society is not acceptable."

Repeat: "We would support the formation of a Jewish Society which anti-Zionist Jews would be eligible to join": 'Newline' of course goes in for childish pretences and denies that most Jews are Zionists. But its 'benevolence' shows how closely the attitudes of sections of the Left now *parallel* traditional anti-semitism — in this case, the Christian anti-semitism that wanted to convert the Jews.

One of the blocks to rational discussion of this question on the Left today is that things are rarely spelled out. Even many who would not — for tactical or better reasons — ban Jewish student societies, share the notion that Zionists should — more or less — be treated as racists. Translated, that means that most Jews — those who cannot be persuaded to stop believing that Israel, or some version of Israel, has a right to exist — should be persecuted.

Some people *define* away the problem by pretending that anti-semitism must be defined as Hitlerism or bigoted Christianity (and therefore cannot include them).

As if there haven't been many anti-semitisms in history! Hitler's anti-semitism was very different from the Catholic anti-semitism to be found in old Austro-

Hungary or Poland; different again was the anti-semitism in Poland in the '50s and '60s in which hatred of a Jewish Stalinist terrorist like party boss Beirut blended with the older Catholic strain. It was a section of a Stalinist bureaucracy, not an old ruling class, which offered its Jewish Beirut (like Rothschilds in pre-war Europe) as scapegoats to deflect popular hatred.

Jews — rich and poor alike — have been the universal scapegoat. The basic culture of Christian society for two millennia has been saturated with the Bible's myth about who killed Christ.

If hypocrisy is a tribute paid by vice to virtue, mental dishonesty here is a device to keep the left from facing up to the implications of its attitudes. But the implications are there, under the surface. And sometimes they show through — as in the ravings of Newsline about the 'Zionist world conspiracy' or the crude drawings of 'Zionists' in the style of traditional anti-semitic caricatures of Jews published in the early Labour Herald. That these people are tolerated on the Left as part of the anti-Zionist common front tells its own story.

We should try to be logical — because that is the only way to be honest.

In face of the crimes of the Israeli state, perhaps we should say that the old anti-semites had something after all? That is an abhorrent idea for almost everybody on the Left. Yet it is the right way to pose the question, because it honestly sums up what is implicit in the attitude that 'all Zionists are racists'.

After all, if the ban on the

Jewish student society at Sunderland Poly is right, then we should not stop there. Other Jewish societies should be banned. Jewish community organisations like the Board of Deputies should be outlawed. Mainstream Jewish newspapers should be proscribed. And then what about the synagogues? Centres in each area of organised Zionist support for Israel? Why should they be allowed freely to meet like that?

If it is right to ban a Jewish student society, then it makes no sense to tolerate synagogues (unless they adhere to those small Jewish religious sects who reject the state of Israel).

It is, of course, this horrible logic that keeps sections of the Left from recognising the implications of their position. They also do not recognise the antecedents.

The truth — and many on the Left naturally find it unpalatable — is that anti-semitism of various sorts has more than once found a home in the organisations of the working class and of the Left.

In the late 19th century many anti-semites identified Jews with money-grubbing capitalism, though most Jews were terribly poor. Areas of the labour movement became tainted with the sort of 'well-intentioned' anti-semitism which Marxists denounced as 'the socialism of idiots'. Even the Austrian Marxists, faced with a powerful Catholic anti-semitism ostentatiously declared themselves 'neither anti-semitic nor philo-semitic'.

For many decades — and still to this day — anti-semitism has been rampant in the USSR and in most of the East

European Stalinist states. For example, in 1968-9 there was a thoroughgoing anti-semitic purge in Poland.

In the later '40s and early '50s, a virulent anti-semitism, thinly disguised as anti-Zionism, was poured out by the propaganda machine of the Stalinist governments and by the western CPs.

On the eve of his death in 1953, Stalin was about to stage an anti-semitic show trial (of the 'Jewish doctors in the Kremlin'). Most likely this would have been the start of Stalin's version of Hitler's 'final solution' — mass deportation and slaughter for the surviving Jews of the USSR and Eastern Europe.

Today, overwhelming revulsion at the crimes of the Israeli state and sympathy with the Palestinian Arabs provide the emotional drive for the sort of 'anti-Zionism' which has anti-semitic implications.

Some of the most fervent and confused left-wing 'anti-Zionists' are 'Third Worldists' or 'socialist bloc'-ists, seeing the world not in terms of class struggle but of 'progressive' and reactionary national blocs, and of a division of the world into 'imperialism' and 'anti-imperialism'. In one way or another, they think in terms of national conflicts, national confrontations, national causes and national — not class — solutions. They see progressive and reactionary peoples, 'good' and 'bad' nations. It is a small step from all this to the idea of good and bad peoples.

Memories of fascist anti-semitism stop such ideas from developing clearly, so the logic of such 'Third-Worldism' remains just under the

surface.

Another root of 'left-wing' anti-semitism is the fact that many of the vociferous 'anti-Zionists' do not accept that the Palestinian Jews have any rights in Palestine. To put it at its weakest, it is usually not at all clear what positive alternative much of the Left is advocating when it denounces Israel and the crimes of its governments. All too often the implication — certainly the logical and emotional implication — is 'Zionists out of the Middle East' (with the escape clause that this is nothing against Jews, because anti-Zionist Jews can remain). Many left-wing anti-Zionists operate not on class politics but on Palestinian or pan-Arab nationalism.

SO believes that the solution to the Jewish-Arab conflict is the creation of a secular democratic state for Palestinian Jews and Arabs, with guaranteed rights for the Jewish nation in Palestine. (A small minority of SO supporters think that the only practicable solution is some rearrangement in two states, Jewish and Arab). The idea of the democratic secular state is widely accepted. But that part of it which says that the Jewish nation, too, has rights, is often downplayed. SO accepts it and means it.

We should denounce the crimes of the Israeli state. We should defend the Palestinian victims of that state and champion their rights. But we must do so as working class socialists, not as Third Worldists or vicarious Arab chauvinists. We must not, mumbling about our fine anti-racist intentions, fall ourselves into a variant of the oldest racism in history.

Are nations guilty?

Jakob Taut, SO 229, 22.5.85

The recent banning of a Jewish student society at Sunderland Polytechnic — on the grounds that it is Zionist, and Zionism is racist — has stirred debate on the British left about Zionism, anti-Zionism, and anti-semitism.

The West German left has also been pushed into controversy on these issues following a visit to the Middle East by a delegation from the Greens, the West German ecological party.

The leader of the delega-

tion, Jurgen Reents, came out in favour of the Palestinians. But he put it like this: German anti-fascists must stand for compensation to the Palestinians because they are 'victims of the victims of the Nazis'.

Response

Responding to the official Israeli argument about the guilt of the whole German people in relation to the Jews, and the obligation

therefore for Germans to aid Israel, he declared: "The Nazi atrocities and neo-Nazi daubings pale in comparison with the Zionist atrocities, and not only I ask myself, when will the Jews be given something to think about, that will stop them murdering their fellow-beings".

Pro-Israeli critics of Reents within the Greens responded in the same terms of collective national guilt: "precisely as a German, one should not complain too loudly" about

what Jews do.

In the socialist paper *Was Tun*, Jakob Taut, a Marxist of German-Jewish origin now living in Israel, responded:

The Zionist idea of the solution of the Jewish question through the 'gathering-together of the exiles' and their settlement in Palestine arose over 100 years ago in Eastern Europe as a consequence of a wave of anti-Jewish pogroms. The founders built Zionist organisations

to realise this dream.

Eventually the trauma of the Nazis' annihilation of the Jews gave the idea and practice of Zionism a previously unknown force among the remaining Jewish communities and individuals. This, among many other factors, was a powerful impetus behind the setting-up of the Jewish state of Israel, in Palestine in 1948.

Originally Zionism neither planned the driving out of the Palestinian Arabs nor intended to create a bastion for imperialism. Zionism was a product of the extremely tragic and complicated Jewish problem. If revolutionary Marxists nonetheless declare war on Zionism, this is primarily on the basis of two points.

Palestine

Firstly . . . the concentration of some millions of Jews in Palestine/Israel, where the original Arab population was mostly driven out in 1948-9 and 1967 and the same fate threatens the Arabs remaining there, cannot be a basis for overcoming the ghetto existence of Jews. A nationally or ethnically oppressed people has never been liberated by oppressing or discriminating against another people.

The situation of the isolation of Israel in the Arab region created in fact the biggest ghetto . . . We are thus anti-Zionists because Zionism inevitably, because of its principles, oppresses another people and can be no solution to the Jewish problem . . .

Secondly . . . [the alliance between Israel and US imperialism against liberation struggles all over the world, including Central America.]

These two starting points of anti-Zionism do not mean, however, that every anti-Zionism is automatically 'progressive' or 'revolutionary' . . .

We seek neither to deny nor to gloss over the deeds of Zionism. But to compare those deeds with the Nazi atrocities is outrageous . . .



The Nazis systematically, as an industry, murdered all the Jews they could get hold of, because they were Jews, and wanted to exterminate the whole of world Jewry. In all the shameful record of Zionist 'atrocities' there is - up to now, anyway - no trace of such behaviour by Israel against the Palestinians.

Bloodthirsty

The demand to 'give the Jews something to think about' would have gone well in the bloodthirsty Nazi paper 'Der Sturmer' . . .

To call the Palestinians 'victims of the victims of the Nazis' and on those grounds to give them 'humanitarian' aid from the descendants of the Nazis, is tasteless.

Intentionally or not, 'compensation' here substitutes for support for a people fighting for its rights.

Besides it is incomprehensible why the anti-fascist forces of today, who have

nothing to do with the plight of the 'victims of the Nazis' 40 or 45 years ago, should relieve their consciences by 'compensation' to the 'victims of the victims of the Nazis' . . . Are the Greens, or their spokesperson Reents, somehow of the view that they carry the guilt of their 'elders' in their blood? . . .

If Reents wants to help the Palestinians as 'victims of the victims of the Nazis' and not from internationalist solidarity with an oppressed people, like every other oppressed people whether it is a 'victim of the victims of the Nazis' or not, then this betrays a nationalist narrowness. And nationalist narrowness is fertile soil for the example, above, of a reactionary anti-Zionism . . .

Conclusion

In conclusion, a personal note: the writer of these lines . . . had to flee Hitler Germany, lived as a retired worker in Palestine (later

Israel), and has been politically active there for 50 years. He was also seriously injured by Arabs in the Jewish-Arab 'conflict' . . .

The intention "as a German not to complain too loudly" not only does not compensate for the crimes of the Nazis against the Jews, but shows cowardice and lack of principle. As a victim of the whole complex I am of the view that both the Nazi crimes and international and regional Israeli policy - without in the least equating the two - can and should be sharply condemned and fought by Jews and Germans and all other people . . . Distorted ideas of national 'honour' or 'dishonour' unfortunately hinder the vitally necessary international action to prevent the destruction of human civilisation, which the Israeli regime, at least objectively, is helping to pave the way for.

Trotsky on the Jewish question

One way of putting the modern Trotskyist groups and their attitude to Israel into some sort of historical perspective is to enquire what Trotsky's opinions were or most likely would have been.

Of course Leon Trotsky died 8 years before the state of Israel was declared and consolidated. But he had watched the development of the Zionist project and commented on it over four decades.

Trotsky was a Ukrainian Jew whose life (he was born in October 1879) happened almost exactly to span the period from the beginning of systematic pogroms in Russia - 1881 - to the very eve of the holocaust, whose prep-

arations he witnessed and understood. He had seen the migration of millions of Jews, stirred up by the Russian pogroms after 1881 to Western Europe and to the USA. He had seen the growth of Jewish self-awareness in Europe in the later 19th and early 20th centuries.

Ghetto

He had taken part as an international socialist in the debates among left-wing Jews in the Tsarist Empire between Zionists and assimilationists. He attended Zionist Congresses as a journalistic observer.

He was always an opponent of the Zionist movement that created Israel. Close to the very end of his life he warned that Palestine could turn out to be a giant ghetto in which the Jews who had fled there might be trapped and massacred. Yet it is plain from the writings in a small collection published by Pathfinder Press, 'Leon Trotsky and the Jewish Question' that the experience of anti-semitism in the 20th century, not only in Nazi Germany and Poland but also in the USSR under Stalin, had radically changed Trotsky's views.

At the end of his life he believed that the persecution of the Jews, and the effect of that persecution on the consciousness of the Jewish people, had made the creation of some sort of Jewish state an inescapable necessity. He did not support the Palestine programme of the Zionists, or anyway not as conceived by them. But — his train of thought is clear — he was for a Jewish state nonetheless.

In a January 1937 interview with journalists of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency and *Der Weg*, a Jewish paper published in Mexico, Trotsky explained: "During my youth I rather leaned toward the prognosis that the Jews of different countries would be assimilated and that the Jewish question would thus disappear in a quasi-automatic fashion.

The historical development of the last quarter of a century has not confirmed this perspective. Decaying capitalism has everywhere swung over to an exacerbated nationalism, one part of which is anti-Semitism. The Jewish question has loomed largest in the most highly developed capitalist country of Europe, in Germany.

On the other hand the Jews of different countries have created their press and developed the Yiddish language as an instrument adapted to modern culture. One must therefore reckon with the fact that the Jewish nation will maintain itself for an entire epoch to come.

Now the nation cannot normally exist without a common territory. Zionism springs from this very idea. But the facts of every passing day demonstrate to us that Zionism is incapable of resolving the Jewish question. The conflict between the Jews and Arabs in Palestine acquires a more and more tragic and more and more menacing character.

I do not at all believe that the Jewish question can be resolved within the framework of rotting capitalism and under the control of British imperialism.

And how, you ask me, can socialism solve this question? On this point I can but offer hypotheses.

Once socialism has become master of our planet or at least of its most important sections, it will have unimaginable resources in all domains. Human history has witnessed the epoch of great migrations on the basis of barbarism. Socialism will open the possibility of great migrations on the basis of the most developed technique

and culture.

It goes without saying that what is here involved is not compulsory displacements, that is, the creation of new ghettos for certain nationalities, but displacements freely consented to, or rather demanded by certain nationalities or parts of nationalities.

The dispersed Jews who would want to be reassembled in the same community will find a sufficiently extensive and rich spot under the sun. The same possibility will be opened for the Arabs, as for all other scattered nations.

National topography will become a part of the planned economy. This is the grand historical perspective that I envisage. To work for international socialism means also to work for the solution of the Jewish question".

He went on in that interview to discuss anti-semitism in the USSR, which had been used against the Trotskyists within the degenerating Bolshevik Party as early as the mid '20s. That experience must surely have been a big factor in the development of Trotsky's thinking on the Jewish question.

Four years earlier, in 1932-3, Trotsky had discussed the 'Jewish problem' with 'Class Struggle', an American publication. He was asked:

"What is your attitude to Palestine as a possible Jewish 'homeland' and about a land for the Jews generally? Don't you believe that the anti-Semitism of German fascism compels a different approach to the Jewish question on the part of Communists?"

Trotsky replied:

"Both the fascist state in Germany, as well as the Arabian-Jewish struggle, bring forth new and very clear verifications of the principle that the Jewish question cannot be solved within the framework of capitalism.

I do not know whether Jewry will be built up again as a nation. However, there can be no doubt that the material conditions for the existence of Jewry as an independent nation could be brought about only by the proletarian revolution. There is no such thing on our planet as the idea that one has more claim to land than another.

The establishment of a territorial base for Jewry in Palestine or any other country is conceivable only with the migrations of large human masses. Only a triumphant socialism can take upon itself such tasks. It can be foreseen that it may take place either on the basis of a mutual understanding, or with the aid of a kind of international proletarian tribunal which should take up this question and solve it.

The blind alley in which German Jewry finds itself as well as the blind alley in which Zionism finds itself is inseparably bound up with the blind alley of world capitalism, as a whole. Only when the Jewish workers clearly see this interrelationship will they be forewarned against pessimism and despair".

Tragic

The tragic conflict between Arabs and Jews in Palestine would not be adjudicated by a proletarian tribunal but by the United Nations set up by the victors of World War 2 — those who had not gone out of their way to save the Jews, who had refused all but a trickle of Jews the right to enter (the USA) or ran anti-semitic regimes (the USSR) — who were, above all, concerned to secure their own interests in Palestine.

In the same interview Trotsky showed how far he was from the anti-imperialism of idiots when he answered this question.

"The official Communist Party

characterised, without question, the Jewish-Arab events in 1929 in Palestine as the revolutionary uprising of the oppressed Arabian masses. What is your opinion of this policy?"

Trotsky replied: "Unfortunately, I am not thoroughly familiar with the facts to venture a definite opinion. I am now studying the question. Then it will be easier to see in what proportion and in what degree there were present those elements such as national liberationists (anti-imperialists) and reactionary Mohammedans and anti-Semitic pogromists. On the surface, it seems to me that all these elements were there".

In an article on anti-Semitism in Stalin's USSR (22 February 1937) Trotsky developed his reappraisal of the Jewish question in the light of early 20th century experience. He speaks of a future socialist version of the Zionist "methods of solving the Jewish question", methods "which under decaying capitalism have a utopian and reactionary character".

Shrug

Trotsky had commented on the evidence of USSR anti-semitism which appeared in the official USSR press, and this had provoked the wrath of various 'Friends of the Soviet Union'. Trotsky responded:

"Some would-be 'pundits' have even accused me of 'suddenly' raising the 'Jewish question' and of intending to create some kind of ghetto for the Jews. I can only shrug my shoulders in pity.

I have lived my whole life outside of Jewish circles. I have always worked in the Russian workers' movement. My native tongue is Russian. Unfortunately, I have not even learned to read Jewish. The Jewish question therefore has never occupied the centre of my attention.

But that does not mean that I have the right to be blind to the Jewish problem which exists and demands solution.

The 'Friends of the USSR' are satisfied with the creation of Birobidjan [the largely fictitious autonomous Jewish republic within the USSR]. I will not stop at this point to consider whether it was built on a sound foundation, and what type of regime exists there. (Birobidjan cannot help reflecting all the vices of bureaucratic despotism).

But not a single progressive, thinking individual will object to the USSR designating a special territory for those of its citizens who feel themselves to be Jews, who use the Jewish language in preference to all other and who wish to live as a compact mass.

Is this or is this not a ghetto? During the period of Soviet democracy, of completely voluntary migrations, there could be no talk about ghettos. But the Jewish question, by the very manner in which settlements of Jews occurred, assumes an international aspect.

Are we not correct in saying that a world socialist federation would have to make possible the creation of a 'Birobidjan' for those Jews who wish to have their own autonomous republic as the arena for their own culture?

It may be presumed that a socialist democracy will not resort to compulsory assimilation. It may very well be that within two or three generations the boundaries of an independent Jewish republic, as of many other national regions, will be erased. I have neither time nor desire to meditate on this. Our descendants will know better than we what to do.

I have in mind a transitional historical period when the Jewish question,

as such, is still acute and demands adequate measures from a world federation of workers' states. The very same methods of solving the Jewish question which under decaying capitalism have a utopian and reactionary character (Zionism), will, under the regime of a socialist federation, take on a real and salutary meaning.

This is what I wanted to point out. How could any Marxist, or even any consistent democrat, object to this?"

Trotsky was against the Zionist project, which elsewhere he refers to as a 'tragic mirage'. He calls Birobidjan 'a bureaucratic farce'. He saw the Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine 'assuming tragic proportions'.

When he says (1932-3) "There is no such thing on our planet as the idea that one has more claim to land than another", in the context it seems to be directed against Zionist claims. But it has application to the Arabs too.

Of course it is impossible to know in detail what Trotsky would have said once the Jewish state was established in 1948. It is plain however that there would have been no place in his thought for the anti-Zionist demology and international conspiracy theories that dominate the left today.

Scope

Trotsky recognises the breadth and scope of the historical forces activating and threatening the Jews. He recognises that the reasonable expectation he and others had had about the assimilation of the Jewish people, and the programme on the question that they had adopted and fought for, had already been defeated by the developments of history.

He seems to assert - speaking very loosely according to the strict Leninist/Marxist definition of what a nation is - that a Jewish nation of sorts had been created since his youth, on the one hand by the blows of antisemitism and on the other by the striving of a minority of Jews to realise their nationhood like other nations on a national territory.

Trotsky's very loose use of the term nation to describe the Jews of the world may perhaps be explained as an unconscious by-product of his open acceptance of the need for a territorial

solution to the problem of the people 'without a land' - the very idea he had scoffed at and fought for most of his life as a reactionary utopia.

He still says it is a reactionary utopia and a mirage in its bourgeois, Zionist form. But now he counterposes to it not assimilation but a *socialist* version of the Zionist, territorial, state-creating solution.

What makes the Zionist project utopian and reactionary? The methods which flow inescapably from doing it under capitalism and British rule in Palestine. The unpostponable international task is the overthrow of capitalism, not the utopian project of ingathering and nation-building.

Trotsky insists that only socialist revolution can save the Jews from annihilation. The Zionist project cannot. But after the international socialist revolution? An international socialist federation "would have to make possible the creation of a Birobidjan for those Jews who wish to have their own autonomous republic as the arena for their own culture. It may be assumed that a socialist democracy will not resort to compulsory assimilation..." Trotsky would not be an advocate of the 'secular democratic state or else' policy. "I have in mind a transitional historical period when the Jewish question, as such, is still acute and demands adequate measures from a world federation of workers' states".

The Jewish people need and are entitled to such a measure because it is no longer reasonable to look to assimilation as the solution or to have anything other than supportive sympathy for Jews who cannot believe in assimilation. Trotsky finishes that article:

"How could any Marxist, or even any consistent democrat, object to that?"

The objection, of course, is based on the fate of the Palestinian Arabs. But condemnation of the driving-out of the Palestinian Arabs in 1947-8 does not resolve anything about our attitude to the Jewish state that actually exists. For it does now exist. Most of the Jews within its borders were born there, and a considerable proportion of their parents too. The question is what programme we *now* propose for Palestinian-Jewish/Palestinian-Arab relations.

Trotsky was right that the pressure from reaction and from the anti-semites was too great to allow Zionism to be any solution to the mortal threat facing the Jews in the 1930s. The Zionist project did not and could not save the nearly six million Jews who were slaughtered in Nazi-controlled Europe. If the Nazis had got to Palestine - either temporarily or as outright victors - Palestine would have been a second, smaller-scale Poland for the Jews. Only the socialist revolution could have averted the holocaust.

Defeated

But the revolutionary workers were defeated time after time throughout the 1930s - in Germany, Austria, France, Spain. The socialist revolution did not happen - not in time to save Europe's massacred Jews, or to save the 20 million people who died in the USSR, or to prevent Germany being pulverised and partitioned and having 10 million of its people driven out of East Prussia. Not in time to stop the atom-bombing of Japan, or the expansion of Stalinist totalitarianism into an area of Eastern Europe with a population of 90 million...

And history did not stop. The Zionist project continued and carved out for itself the state of Israel in tragic conflict with the Palestinian Arabs.

The 'reactionary-utopian' solution to the Jewish question received an immense boost from the events of the world war. The need which Trotsky reluctantly came to realise for a Jewish national territory as part of the solution to the Jewish question was now felt by the overwhelming majority of Jews. And it was made reality not in a benign socialist world, after the world workers' revolution, but in a world dominated by imperialism and Stalinism, by way of bitter communal and national conflict and within the framework of a Zionist-Kremlin and then Zionist-imperialist alliance.

The Jewish state was established in a world where it was still dog eat dog. It was not the Palestinian Jews alone who decreed that in 1948 if they had not prevailed they would have gone under. That is how things work in a world dominated by capitalism and Stalinism.

Anti-semitism and the left

John O'Mahony, SO 266, 10.4.86

WRITING soon after World War 2 (in one of the essays collected in 'The Non-Jewish Jew') Isaac Deutscher reported that he had found rampant anti-semitism and open hostility and contempt for the Jews among British army officers guarding Jews in the displaced persons camps of Europe.

The DPs had survived Hitler and now - Britain having forbidden Jewish immigration to Palestine, and the doors being closed elsewhere too - they were

told that they had to stay in or return to 'their countries of origin'. For most of them that meant return to virulently anti-semitic Poland. Their wish was to get to Palestine.

Deutscher commented that it was the tragic fate of the Jews, even after the holocaust that engulfed almost six million of them, to exist still in popular consciousness as the embodiment and personification of lucre and dirty money.

Not only in popular speech, where a mean or tight person may be called (and not necessarily with conscious malice) a 'Jew', will you find the Jew used as a symbol of money and capital in their dirtiest functions. You will find that even in the writings of Karl Marx, who spoke often in the brutal language of 19th century national

and racial stereotypes but was surely free of anything we would call racism.

Before Hitler sections of the socialist movement too identified the Jews with money and capital, and accepted Jews - rich, poor and destitute alike - as a representative and symbol of the things they were fighting against in capitalism.

A 'socialist', anti-capitalist, anti-semitism was a living current in or on the fringes of most European socialist and labour movements. 'Rothschild baiting' merged with popular Christian anti-semitism, which was often, as in Central Europe, quite fierce.

For example, faced with a Christian anti-semitic crusade, the Austrian Social Democrats - whose leader Victor Adler was a Jewish atheist - ostentatiously declared that they were neither

anti-nor philo-semitic. Prominent British Labour leaders supported the 1905 Aliens Act passed in Britain to keep out Russian and Polish Jews. In the published correspondence of Frederick Engels with Karl Marx's son in law Paul Lafargue you will find Lafargue expressing enthusiasm for the socialist 'potential' of the quasi-fascist and anti-semitic Boulangist movement of the late 1880s and Engels reprimanding him, affectionately but sharply.

Against this once quite important current in socialism, Engels (or was it the German socialist leader August Bebel) launched the slogan: 'Anti-semitism is the socialism of idiots'.

Today this sort of anti-semitism exists widely in the far left, slightly transformed - now the Jew in his guise of 'the Zionist' has come to symbolise racism and imperialism.

Zionism

'Zionism' - which though the precise meaning of the word is no longer clear must include most Jews - has entered the consciousness of large parts of the left as another word for the worst form of imperialism and racism. Our attitude to it should be little different from our attitude to fascism. The prevalent programme on the left for dealing with it is to 'destroy Zionism', that is, destroy Israel.

Is this accurate? Is this reasonable?

The Israeli state has committed and commits great wrongs against the Palestinian people. Israel could only come into existence at all by displacing the Palestinian Arabs and then by defeating the various Arab armies which tried to conquer and overrun the Jews of Palestine in 1948. In the course of the 1948 war vast numbers of Palestinian Arabs fled the Jewish-occupied territory or were driven out.

Israel wound up with more of Palestine than the UN had allotted as the Jewish portion, and the UN was already generous, giving the Jewish one-third of Palestine's people much more than half its resources. And in 1949 Israel joined together with the Arab state of Transjordan (now Jordan) to divide up what was left of the territory allotted by the UN to the Palestinian Arabs.

After 1948 the Israeli state systematically robbed Palestinian Arabs within Israel of their land. Israel is a regional sub-imperialism allied to US imperialism. Since the 1967 war Israel has occupied the West Bank and Gaza, acting as a brutal colonial power there. Israel recently invaded Lebanon.

Israel

There is much for socialists to criticise and condemn in Israel, and indeed most far left socialists are outspoken in their criticism and condemnation.

There is also much to condemn in all the other states of the Middle East, such as Iran, Iraq, Syria, etc. Both Iran and Iraq continue to wage barbaric war on the Kurdish nation. Jordan in 1970 and Syria in 1976 subjected the Palestinian Arabs under their rule to mass slaughter. The Christian Arabs in Lebanon have done likewise. In addition much of the Arab world which surrounds Israel is in the grip of a resurgent Islamic fundamentalism which threatens to throw its society and culture back to the Middle Ages. The religious barbarians who rule Iran leave socialist observers little room for pretence about the consequences of resurgent Islam when it has the whip hand.

Yet socialists - or at any rate most 'orthodox' Trotskyists - are surprising-

ly reluctant even to fundamentally criticise the Islamic states and brand them as reactionary. Some of them - and not only Healy's WRP - sometimes accept some of their bourgeoisies into 'our class camp'. Much of Ernest Mandel's 'United Secretariat of the Fourth International' continues to see something 'progressive' in Khomeini's Islamic revolution. Where the Iranian oppression of the Kurds is objected to, for example, the press of the section of the USFI led by the US SWP talks about 'errors' and 'mistakes' of the revolutionary regime.

The contrast with the left's attitude to Israel could not be sharper.

It is, as we shall see, often wrapped up in seemingly reasonable proposals like creating a secular democratic state in Palestine, but, put starkly, the far left's programme for Palestine is that 'Israel must be destroyed'.

Now this is a *unique* programme: the destruction of a state and the radical alteration of the population of that state's core area (the pre-1967 Israeli borders). From this everything else follows.

S. Africa

The programme is made to appear not unique by identifying Israel with South Africa. But that is an utterly false comparison of an organic society, made up of all classes and not essentially dependent on exploiting a submerged population, on one side, and on the other a society in which the white population are an exploiting caste dependent for what they have on the submergence and helotry of a numerically much bigger black population.

Whatever similarity in political-military techniques there may be between South Africa and Israel they are radically different societies. Israel was given its character by the Zionists' resolute refusal to exploit Arab labour and their drive instead to replace it. Whatever one thinks of the left Zionist colonists' 'Jewish labour only' policy it was the opposite of that mass exploitation on which modern South Africa was built. The exploitation of Arab labour from the occupied territories since 1967 has not fundamentally altered the character of Israel in this respect.

But, whatever about the comparison with South Africa, don't the crimes of Israel brand it as something specially abhorrent and therefore justify the programme of destroying the Zionist state? Doesn't the fate of the dispossessed Palestinian Arabs make any other programme than the destruction of the Jewish state inadequate if justice is to be done?

Chauvinism

The proper socialist answer is no. To answer yes is to take up the goals of Arab nationalism and chauvinism, but most of the left does answer yes. This is the dominant, all-shaping fact on the far left: that the left supports the destruction of the state of Israel - not merely its defeat in this or that battle where such defeat might be desirable on the issues, but the destruction of the core pre-1967 Jewish area as a territory where the Palestinian Jews can congregate as a compact national mass.

From that everything else follows. It only takes a twist of Gerry Healy paranoia or the touch of the petrodollar to bring up the anti-semitic logic.

Uniquely in the whole world, the left thinks that in the Israeli Jews it confronts a 'bad nation' which cannot be reformed or modified, not even by its own proletariat - unless they

abandon their national identity and the national territory where most of them were born - and which must be destroyed. In this unique case, unlike all the others created by the complicated and immensely tragic events of the last 40, 60, or even 80 years (and for what people were those years more tragic than for the Jews?) the left takes its stand on a historical-reversionist, roll-history-backwards position. The position is inseparable from Arab revanchism and Arab chauvinism.

Gerry Healy's WRP was rabidly anti-semitic. I asserted that the basic reason for this - to which Healy added paranoia and the mercenary desire to earn Arab petrodollars - was the WRP's support for the destruction of the Jewish state of Israel by its Arab neighbour states, a position which the Healyite WRP and the present one share with much of the left.

It follows, therefore, that much of the left is - though repudiating the paranoid ravings of a Gerry Healy - implicitly anti-semitic.

Israeli chauvinism once rejected, the Middle East reality allows of only two possible or imaginable solutions to the Jewish-Arab conflict in Palestine.

Either drive the Jews out; or accept that a Jewish nation has, despite the understandable Arab resistance, come into existence, and must be accepted as having rights, in the first place the right to exist as a nation in Palestine.

The programme of driving out the Jews means continuing to try to do what much of the Arab feudalists, bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie and working class have been united in trying to do for at least five decades. The latter option must mean compromise over the disputed territory, recompense for the Palestinian Arabs, and a comprehensive peace in which Israel's right to exist with agreed borders (not necessarily the present ones) is not challenged militarily.

Third

At a later stage in the peaceful development of the region the integration of the Jewish state into a Middle East federation would be posed. Exclusivism would break down as the barriers between the formerly warring nations have partly broken down in Europe over the last four decades.

It seems to me to be no part of a socialist solution to national conflicts like that of the Jews and Arabs in Palestine to advocate the destruction of one of the warring nations. The socialist programme in such a situation is for compromise, compensation, reconciliation.

But isn't there a third alternative - the secular democratic state? No, there isn't, because - as we shall see - it is unrealisable in reality and the slogan functions in politics as a propaganda auxiliary for the 'drive out the Jews' position.

Of course the idea of solving the terrible national conflict by simply enfolding, intermeshing and merging, as equal citizens, the hostile nations who compete for the disputed Palestinian territory is an attractive one, and all the more seductive because there is no other solution that even appears to do justice to both sides.

But it is nonsense. The idea that you could integrate any other two

nations – say France and Germany – in the territory occupied by one of them would be dismissed as ludicrous, even given the fading in the last decades of much of their old animosity. In Palestine the proposal for a secular democratic state amounts to a proposal to so enfold two nations, peoples who have related to each other with the most bitter and merciless war for half a century and more. As a practical proposal it is a utopian absurdity. National identities and conflicts will not be overcome or superseded historically in anything like that way.

Road

More than that. It is inconceivable that the Jews would agree to dismantle their state in return for a promise of equal citizenship. So the road to the secular democratic state lies inescapably through war and full-scale conquest of the Jews – after which the victorious armies (of Iraq, Syria, Iran?) will gallantly establish and protect the democratic rights of the Jews as individuals (rights their own citizens do not have now) in a Palestinian Arab state.

In reality such a conquest would be resisted to the death by the Jews, and the idea of such a conquest is in practice inseparable from a proposal to drive out the Jews or massacre them.

The secular democratic state is far more attractive and internationally 'saleable' than the programme of 'driving the Jews into the sea' that Yasser Arafat's predecessor Ahmed Shukhairy used to advocate in the 1960s. For many people the 'secular democratic state' slogan also represents a different intention and aspiration. But in practice it comes down to the same thing. It cannot but come down to the same thing, because it cannot be done by agreement. It differs essentially in being a more useful propaganda tool.

So the 'secular democratic state' is in fact a proposal to destroy the existing Jewish nation and at best to grant equal citizenship rights to those Jews who survived being conquered and wanted to remain in an Arab state.

But – so many say – if the Jews reject this proposal of equal citizenship in a secular democratic state, then they are demanding to retain intolerable privileges and therefore they deserve what they will get. The choice will be theirs, and the responsibility for what happens theirs.

But this is a-historical moralism; moreover it takes as its premise, as something to be taken for granted and beyond discussion, a stark denial of any national rights for the Jews in Palestine. It demands of them that they do what no other nation has ever done, and what no people extant will ever do – submit to the forced dissolution of their own national community and surrender the protection of their own state.

For the Jews this would involve additionally putting themselves into the hands of those they have been

fighting for 40 years and more – people in whose own states minorities like the Kurds (or Palestinian Arabs) are habitually repressed and routinely butchered. Yet if one questions the sense of proposing to the Jews that they agree to secular-democratic-state individual citizenship status when in fact none of the Arab states are fully secular or at all democratic, then no doubt that is anti-Arab racism.

That, I think, is a fair account of the reasoning one finds on much of the 'Marxist' left. It is a series of moralistic demands cut loose from any consideration of how the world works, and addressed as an unique ultimatum to the Palestinian Jews – a series of demands that it would be impossible for serious people to make without the prior unquestionable assumption that the Jewish nation does not have the right to exist – still less the right to defend itself.

In short, in its superficially attractive 'up-front' version the idea of a secular democratic state is simply a delusion. The slogan could not ever help deliver the solution it seems to promise – conciliation and equality of Jews and Arabs in a common state.

It could not unless the way politics and the relationships between peoples 'work' everywhere else in the world could somehow be replaced in Palestine – 40 years after the Israeli war of independence – by a different set of ways of functioning.

Agreement

A common democratic state could only be realised by agreement. So to believe that the 'secular democratic state' could be realised, you have to believe that the Jews can be persuaded that the way things are between conflicting peoples and interests throughout the rest of the world can be superseded and dispensed with in Palestine. You have to believe it possible to persuade people who know themselves surrounded and who are motivated in part in their notorious ruthlessness by the living memory of what happened to them when they were disarmed and helpless minorities in other states to surrender all their defences, first, as an act of faith in this new way of doing things. And this new way would at best make them one more minority in the Arab world, and a minority that had agreed to surrender national rights of the sort that the Kurds have spent decades fighting to establish.

The 'secular democratic state' is either disingenuous or it is absurd. And it is worse.

If you take it at its face value the 'secular democratic state' idea is an attractive utopian proposal. But we have seen that it cannot be taken at its face value. It is a political ultimatum behind which is posed a fearsome 'or else'. Immediately it is refused by Israel and the 'Zionists' it translates into a moralistic-political denunciation of those who refuse. They are 'expos-

ed'. That 'exposure' and denunciation then become a warrant for the military destruction of the Israeli state, the subjugation and if necessary killing of the citizens of Israel, and the forcible removal from them of national rights.

What happens if the Israeli Jews don't accept the 'secular democratic state' formula and fight? Conquer them and remove from them all powers of resistance, or of self-defence. What if they don't trust a promise that the conqueror will give them equal personal citizenship and absolve and protect them from the charge of being or having been agents or spies for the 'Great Satan' US imperialism, or of 'Zionist imperialism' – why, that's proof beyond dispute that they are unreasonable in rejecting 'secular democratic state' citizenship and deserve what they get.

1948 again

What they would get would be expulsion or the right to emigrate. It is to be 1948 again, and worse – only this time the 'right' people do the uprooting and expelling.

The raising of the 'utopian' secular democratic state demand as the opening political/ideological gambit produces a political and moral opiate for the left about what must inevitably follow from and is implied in the proposal to destroy the Jewish state and deprive the Palestinian Jews of national rights. Under the influence of this opiate, the most horrendous things are then proposed to be done to the Jews of Palestine – things no socialist would advocate or tolerate for any comparable grouping.

It is surrender and dissolve, or resist and deserve to be forcibly dissolved.

So the secular democratic state is not an alternative to driving the Jews out; it is treacherously barbed facet of that programme to drive the Jews out or reduce them to a vastly depleted territorial minority.

What might possibly be an attractive idea, and is certainly in the minds of many of its advocates a respectable ideal, has to be judged by how it fits into the whole picture, and by what function it performs in the mechanics and ideological swordplay of Middle East politics.

We have seen what role it does play. In the circumstances it could play no other role. Those who seek to avoid the real choice and try to settle for the unrealisable ideal wind up nevertheless tied to the war chariot of Arab chauvinism.

They flee from the real choices into a fantasy, and wind up nevertheless having a choice imposed on them by the logic of circumstances.

All the 'secular democratic state' evasion does it act as camouflage for the chauvinist position and, for the left, introduce a deep measure of mystification, confusion and sometimes hysteria.

The case of Healy's WRP

John O'Mahony, SO 265, 3.4.86

THE WRP split wide open last October, and now there are two organisations calling

themselves the WRP.

One, led – perhaps nominally – by Gerry Healy, the dic-

tator of the old organisation for 3½ decades, resumed publishing a daily paper, 'The

Newsline', at the beginning of February. The second WRP, which seems to contain all the other prominent leaders of the old organisation – the Banda brothers, Cliff Slaughter, Tom Kemp, Bill Hunter, etc. – now published a weekly, the Workers' Press.

The Newsline group is indistinguishable from the WRP of the previous decade. For the Newsline group all the old lunatic certainties – like the dogma that the miners did not suffer defeat in 1985 – remain fixed and the 'dialectical' prophet Healy is still in his place in the firmament.

The Workers Press group is the interesting WRP. For many weeks now they have given over a large proportion of the paper to a free discussion of some of the issues thrown up by their break with Healy. They have a long way to go yet before they will have worked themselves clear of Healyism, and it is not at all obvious that they will arrive at coherent or stable revolutionary socialist politics as a result of their political reappraisals.

The pressure on them, and the temptation, must be to sink into a lowest-common-denominator of 'kitch-Trotskyism' – that is, 'Trotskyist' forms filled with the current, often populist, fashions and enthusiasms of the broader left.

Those who were prominent leading members of Gerry Healy's WRP still maintain the transparent fiction that 'they didn't know' about Healy's misdeeds. On the other hand, it must take a great deal of courage for those of them who spent decades inside Gerry Healy's 'machine for maiming militants' even partially to confront their own past and set about radically reassessing it.

That they are trying to do that testifies to a continuing devotion to the socialist goals they must have thought they were serving during all their years of moral, intellectual, political and physical thralldom under the unfettered rule of the brutal and sadistic bully Gerry Healy. Old-timers like Bill Hunter, politically eclipsed and silenced for a quarter of a century, now seem to be playing a prominent role.

In a curious way what is happening to them resembles what happened to thinking members of the British Communist Party in 1956-7 after Khrushchev denounced Stalin at the so-called '20th Congress of the CPSU' in February 1956 and thereby blew the lid off the Stalinist parties, putting everything up for reassessment. And as a matter of fact some of them went through that experience as CPers in 1956-7 before making their way to a sort of Trotskyism.

The discussion pieces published by Workers' Press included a letter by SO's editor John O'Mahony which asked for clarification on the Workers' Press group's attitude to such things as the libel case the Healyites brought against SO. The Workers Press group itself is now facing a barrage of legal actions by the Healyites – actions designed to drive them out of business.

Issue

One very important issue raised in response to John O'Mahony's letter is the question of the anti-semitism of Healy's WRP. In 1983 SO published an article by John O'Mahony accusing the WRP of blatant anti-semitism, and now Charlie Pottins, a Workers Press supporter and also a prominent member of the

Jewish Socialist Group, has re-raised this question in Workers Press.

He accuses O'Mahony of "smearing the Party as 'anti-semites' and even 'pogromists'" (Workers Press, 8.3.86). Such "vicious slanders and incitements" are not "honest polemics", he insists.

In fact in 1983 it was Charlie Pottins who wrote the three-page Newsline reply to O'Mahony's SO article, lending his name as a prominent Jewish Socialist Group member to cover for the Healyites' anti-semitism.

Now this is a very important question. It can be easily demonstrated that the Healyite WRP was and is indeed blatantly anti-semitic. But if that were all there was to it, then it might not be worth returning to the subject now.

The fact is, however, that the explicit anti-semitic ravings of Healy's WRP are no more than an extreme and open expression, in (as we shall see) language and forms close to those of traditional anti-semitism, of ideas which are implicit in the fervent 'anti-Zionism', the strident insistence that 'Israel must be destroyed', common to much of the left.

To go over the edge into more or less explicit anti-semitism the Healyites needed only to add to the common left anti-Zionist demonology their own characteristic paranoia and a mercenary desire to get into step with the most extreme anti-Israeli Arab chauvinism.

While it would be libellous to identify the 'anti-Zionist' left with the anti-semitism of the Healyites, it nevertheless seems to us that what the Healyites made of the anti-Zionist demonology which they share with much of the left (and until not so long ago with SO too) holds an accurate mirror up to that ideology.

The Newsline editorial reproduced on this page was not just something that can be shrugged off as a peculiarity of Healy's crackpot WRP. On the same day that the editorial appeared, and side by side with it on the same page, Newsline carried an interview with 'Red Ken' Livingstone, then leader of the Greater London Council. In that interview Livingstone – who now considers himself a candidate to become leader of the Labour Party – chattily agreed with the interviewer that, of course, the item in a recent BBC 'Money Programme' exposing the distribution of Libyan money to political groups in Britain, and in the first place the WRP, had been inspired by 'the Zionists' to discredit the WRP.

Livingstone was then a joint editor of Labour Herald – a publication set up by Healy's WRP for Ken Livingstone and Ted Knight and 'technically' edited by Steven Miller, a member (according to Workers Press) of the Central Committee of Healy's WRP.

Livingstone did not demur at the anti-semitism of the Newsline editorial. SO publicly asked him to say where he stood on it: "What does he think of the editorial? Does he think we should just shrug and accept anti-semitism as a feature of the far left?" (SO 14.4.83).

Livingstone never answered explicitly – but he continued to collaborate with the WRP and appear on its platforms at public meetings for two years longer. In its own way that was a pretty clear answer.

Such tolerance of Healy's anti-semitic ravings tells its own story.

It would be wrong and unfair to hold the Workers Press group responsible for the Healyite editorial (though one still finds some echoes of its ideas in WP – see below). Reflex self-defence, such as Charlie Pottins', is humanly understandable and may prove to have no political significance – even for Pottins himself. The Workers Press group may well choose to cleanse itself of this most

filthy part of Healy's legacy too.

I take it up here not to try to brand the Workers Press group with the Healyite editorial but because of the general importance of the issue re-raised by Charlie Pottins.

Though Healy has now gone yet deeper into the isolation of his own political sewer, the question of our attitude to the Jewish state and our political programme for the Middle East – which Healy 'solved' by merging pseudo anti-imperialism with vicarious Arab chauvinism into something close to Hitlerite anti-semitism – remains a major one for the left.

Charlie Pottins says it is just a smear to accuse Healy's WRP of anti-semitism.

What are the facts? Healy's WRP did publish undisguised and unmistakable anti-semitic material, as I'll now prove. As well as the particular record of the WRP, I think much that an entire broad spectrum of the revolutionary, 'Trotskyist', left says about Israel and 'Zionism' is implicitly anti-semitic. I'll separate the two issues out.

On Saturday 9 April 1983 Newsline's editorial ('This Morning') appeared with a small strapline in the top left hand corner "From 'Socialist Organiser' to Reagan and Thatcher" followed by the main headline, across the column: "The Zionist Connection".

Strapline

The strapline summed up the editorial's thesis: there is an international Zionist conspiracy stretching from Ronald Reagan's cabinet, through Mrs Thatcher's Downing St, all the way to Socialist Organiser!

The editorial began:

"A powerful Zionist connection runs from the so-called left of the Labour Party right into the centre of this government in Downing St. There is no difficulty whatever in proving this". Evidence? "Mr Stuart Young, a director of the Jewish Chronicle" has been appointed as "youngest ever chairman of the BBC". "He is the brother of Mr David Young, another Thatcher appointee, who is chairman of the Manpower Services Commission... This is the key organisation the Tories are transforming into a 'corporatist front' [Newsline's quotes] to mobilise jobless youth from 14 years upwards into a slave labour body to break trade union wages, safety procedures and working conditions". The TUC and Labour chiefs have accepted "these appointments" of the Zionist Young brothers "without a murmur of protest".

Yes, but what is special about the Young brothers as distinct from any other Tory pigs? Why is it essential to give the job of organising slave labourers to David Young as opposed, say, to Norman Tebbit?

Following immediately after the last quote comes Newsline's answer.

"The Tories know they can rely totally upon Zionist imperialism [sic] to produce the most hated reactionaries" for use in such filthy work. But the Tories have other goals too. They can turn to their own use the reasonable hatred people will feel against these "Zionist imperialists", "in order to transform the situation at a later date into a pro-fascist anti-semitic pogrom against all the Jews in general".

In what way do the Young brothers especially represent "Zionist imperialism"?

That's not clear, but in the context the answer can only be that they are

Jews and that any Jew in any similar position is necessarily a link in the chain through which 'Zionist imperialism' interlaces itself with the other imperialism which the editorial will later strongly suggest, it guides and may even control.

Newsline continues:

"From the support and advance publicity which the 'Jewish Chronicle' gave the BBC's 'Money Programme' the reactionary Zionist link was clear for all to see [sic]. But it also stretches through Downing St channels right into the White House and President Reagan".

Naturally any Jewish Chronicle interest in an organisation it knows to be funded by Libya is proof positive that the WRP, Libya etc. are victims of an international Zionist conspiracy.

Now the editorial goes off on another tack.

US provocation against Libya "raises in its sharpest form the central political question". Do "Trotskyists" support Gaddafi's "régime" [sic] against US imperialism on principle, or seek neutrality between US imperialism and Gaddafi? Newsline lies that Socialist Organiser is neutral.

And Socialist Organiser supported "the Zionist-sponsored Money Programme". Now we come to the knot-tying exercise.

"Here" from SO "is unqualified support for the work of Thatcher's appointee as chairman of the BBC" who is also a director of British Caledonian Airways [eh?] and the British Overseas Trade Group for Israel.

So it is all clear. They needed to put in a Jew as chair of the BBC to get the Libyan gold item into a little early Sunday evening programme! And of course only Jews backed by the Cabinet could organise this attack on the WRP.

Newsline continues: "SO has landed itself right bang in the middle of Thatcher's hand-picked Zionists as an outright supporter of their policies of witch-hunting the WRP and the News Line for our principled stand against imperialism and in support of the Libyan masses [sic] under their leader Muammar Gaddafi".

Hour

"The question of the hour, we repeat, is the pro-Zionist policies of the Reagan and Thatcher administrations".

So who is in charge here? Zionism or Washington and London? Which is dog and which tail?

We shall see. But the author has more to reveal. He knows or senses something special about SO that explains how SO fits into the 'Zionist connection'.

"In the background of the 'Socialist Organiser' one can detect a powerful current of anti-Arab racism - also shared by Reagan and Thatcher. That is the substance of their support for the 'Money Programme'." By contrast Newsline "unhesitatingly supports the Libyan and Palestinian people and its leadership". Yes. And against what exactly do they need support? "Against the nuclear war plans of Reagan, Thatcher and the Zionists in their campaign to destroy all national liberation movements in the Middle East. Socialist Organiser has joined the class enemy". We are probably making our own small nuclear device in a cellar somewhere in London as our contribution.

Finally comes the editorial's punchline and finale. "The Zionist connection between these so-called 'lefts' in the Labour Party right through to Thatcher and Reagan's White House is there for all to see in its unprincipled nakedness".

Now the writer of that editorial, could be briefly dismissed as a nutcase - albeit an anti-semitic nutcase. Petty personal paranoia oozes out of it, inter-

woven with the grand historical paranoia of the various 'world Jewish conspiracy' theories with which the editorial aligned itself. If a Jew becomes chair of the BBC, then what else can it be but a 'Zionist' conspiracy calling on the aid of the prime minister to fix up for a rather mild item on the WRP to be broadcast on a low-audience early Sunday evening television programme. If the WRP is feeling persecuted, why it must be "the Zionists".

Why was the Money Programme's alleged 'witch-hunt' the work of 'Zionists'? Because a Jew is chair of the BBC? Or did the WRP notice what might be a Jewish name credited for part of it? Or is it because only 'Zionists' are concerned with the Middle East? Because only 'Zionists' exhibit the sort of "powerful current of anti-Arab racism" that the sensitive and omniscient "one" who wrote the editorial could detect in the background of SO?

Is it because the Jewish Chronicle showed interest? Interest "in an expose of people it must regard as at least potential pogromists" (to quote what I said in the 1983 SO

The Newsline editorial is the work of a writer who feels himself to be surrounded by Jews - Tory 'Zionists', Reagan 'Zionists', SO 'Zionists'. Perhaps his buried conscience is troubling him.

But the small-beer paranoia of one who needs to believe that Thatcher had to appoint a Jew chair of the BBC to secure the very same revelations of the Money Programme should be separated out from the picture of the world which is painted. It is a very familiar picture.

The Newsline editorialist theorises along the well-worn paths of classic anti-semitism, such as that embodied in the Tsarist secret police forgery 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion' (1905) - the book that has rightly been called 'a warrant for genocide' against the Jews of Europe under Hitler.

What the editorial asserts is that there is a world-wide 'Zionist' conspiracy linking and bonding people who are politically millions of miles apart - from members of Reagan's government to 'the centre' of Mrs Thatcher's cabinet, the commanding heights of the BBC and all the way through to... the publishers of Socialist Organiser.

And what links these seeming polar opposites? 'Zionism' and 'Zionist imperialism'. But Zionism here is a transparent code word, and plainly the writer is talking about a conspiracy of Jews - a conspiracy of political opposites who can nevertheless conspire together in the interests of 'Zionist imperialism' because they are Jews.

Who are the 'Zionists'? For Newsline the Zionists are all Jews who do not accept the proposal to smash and dismantle the Israeli state and to replace it by a Palestinian Arab state in which Jews are promised individual though not national rights - in other words all Jews except a few revolutionary socialists and a few of the ultra-religious.

"The Tories know that they can rely totally upon Zionist imperialism to produce the most hated reactionaries..." Newsline in effect defines all Jews as 'agents of Zionist imperialism' (or, to put it at the mildest, it assumes the right to so define any hostile Jew it can identify in any place of prominence within the capitalist system).

In this picture Zionist imperialism is no small or secondary power. Israel is not merely what it really is, a mere regional sub-imperialism with special features. "The question of the hour" is not US imperialism, or the domination of a large part of the world by Stalinist totalitarianism: it is the subservience of the US to 'Zionism', "the pro-Zionist policies of the Reagan and Thatcher administrations".

'Zionist imperialism' must be the very heart of imperialism, whose controlling tentacles reach secretly right into the centre of Mrs Thatcher's cabinet and into Reagan's too.

The Jews, it seems, are now the international janissaries of imperialism and - the logic is inescapable - possibly imperialism itself is only a projection of the Jewish drive for world domination.

Now there are Jews - or if you like 'Zionists' - in bourgeois cabinets, perhaps in some politburos still, in the BBC and in SO. The Jews are a people scattered through all segments of society and throughout the world.

Seek evidence that there may be a conspiratorial network of Jews, and you will find it - red Jews and Rothschilds, members of Reagan's and Thatcher's cabinets and writers for SO. These 'links' are the raw material from which theories about 'Jewish' or 'Zionist' conspiracies can easily be spun.

But - given the vast political gulf separating those linked together in the Newsline editorial - the only possible 'rational' common denominator on which to base such a theory is race (whatever that may be).

For of course not all the 'Zionists' are imperialists. Some of them are socialists and call themselves Trotskyists, like SO. They too are part of the conspiracy - and to judge by all the attention we were being given, a very important part of it. This is the proof of the vile racist basic structures and logic embedded in that editorial.

There is a parallel if not identity with Jewish world conspiracy theories popular before World War 2 (and still virulently alive in Eastern Europe). The Hitlerites and other anti-semites used to explain that both communism and finance capital - those seemingly implacable enemies - were really different aspects of a single world conspiracy, coordinated by the 'Elders of Zion' and directed against the German nation, against 'Christian civilisation' or whatever.

Centre

Likewise the Newsline editorial portrayed 'the centre' of Thatcher's government and SO as secretly linked and bonded - against the WRP and the Libyan and Palestinian peoples - by a hidden network of 'Zionists'.

But SO is opposed to Zionism (if that means Israeli chauvinism or Jewish exclusivism)? It supports national rights for the Palestinians? Though contemptuous of Gaddafi's claims to socialism, and of much of his hollow anti-imperialism, SO would defend Libya against an imperialist invasion? Why, all that is just a front, a mere sham division of labour among the conspirators.

Didn't the pre-war communists pretend to denounce finance capital and the finance-capital police shoot the communists in pre-war Germany? It's just a show to fool those who have not heard about the international Jewish conspiracy.

You could object. Isn't the asserted common thread political Zionism? Isn't it a case of making Israel and hostility or friendliness to Israel the measure of all things? Isn't it a matter of starting with the Arab-chauvinist picture of Israel and reading everything off negatively from that?

No: Zionism here is not a political reference. Today 'Zionism' commonly means pro-Israeli sentiment of one sort or another. It includes the overwhelming majority of the people of Britain. If political Zionism is the point, then adding a Zionist Jew to the cabinet is to add nothing, as all the cabinet members are Zionists anyway!

There are Zionists and Zionists: there are Zionists and there are Jews. Plainly it

is the Jews who are the core conspirators and who make up the special 'Zionist connections'.

The implication is inescapably this: that even anti-Zionist Jews like the SO writers the Newsline writer had in mind will have ineradicable loyalties and allegiances more basic than politics. These are the conspirators: some people are congenital 'Zionists' whatever their politics.

(And such ideas have not all gone with Gerry Healy. In his recent long article on the history of the Fourth International Michael Banda ascribed alleged errors by the movement over Palestine in 1947-8 to the 'Zionist proclivities' of Ernest Mandel. What is he talking about? There was no serious dispute in the FI on this question in 1948. Ernest Mandel played no notable part in discussing the position on Palestine in 1947 or '48. There is no political reason to link Ernest Mandel with Zionism in 1948 or 1986 except by way of the underlying thought that he has a 'Jewish' name, therefore is – or may be, I don't know – a Jew.)

I submit that whatever Charlie Pottins may say, the charge of overt, blatant anti-semitism is one that the Healyite WRP has to answer to, and that one of the clearest examples of it is this editorial. The writer sub-consciously (I assume) found himself pencilling in the outlines of the world view enshrined in the Protocols of Zion 'theories'. He fills those outlines, to be sure, with fervent though incoherent and false 'anti-imperialism'; but then the Nazis and other anti-semites used to get very angry at the crimes of capitalism – what they called, in scapegoating fashion, Jewish capitalism.

How did the WRP arrive at such a position? There are reasons peculiar to the WRP and reasons which the WRP has in common with many 'Trotskyists'.

Though Healy's WRP has gone

further into explicit anti-semitism than anyone else on the left – because of its leaders' paranoia and the malignant influence of the petrodollar brand of 'anti-Zionism'. I think that the fundamental cause of this degeneracy is the mistaken position on the Middle East which the Healy WRP and the present one share with much of the left (and until recently with SO).

much of the left has Arab-chauvinist and not working-class politics on the question, though for good anti-imperialist reasons and from the fine impulse to champion the defeated and oppressed Palestinians.

But first let us get out of the way what was specific to Healy's WRP in generating that editorial.

From the mid-'70s or earlier the WRP saw the world and especially the international Trotskyist movement, mainly in terms of police 'conspiracies' and the operation of 'agents' and counter-agents.

Vast amounts of money and time were given over to the search for the 'conspirators' and 'agents' who were seen as being at the root of all evil in the world, and whose subterranean combats and manoeuvres sometimes seemed in the WRP's eyes to have replaced the struggle of classes as the locomotive of history.

You can find large numbers of individuals in the labour movement who will never be politically rational again after an intensive course by Mr Healy on 'world history and politics for the last 50 years as a spy-hunt'.

Add to this paranoid view of the world Healy's financial links with Gaddafi and Iraq, etc., which put Zionism and anti-Zionism at the centre of world politics because Libyan and Iraqi gold was at the centre of Healy's survival, and the scenario virtually writes itself.

There is more to it than that, though.

There is the effect of an inbuilt 'Pabloite' tendency in the WRP to see the world in terms of the struggle of two basic camps.

This view arose first as the basic pattern of a world divided between the Stalinist states and the capitalist. But over the years it has shifted – and not only for the WRP – to mean imperialism and 'anti-imperialism'.

During the Falklands/Malvinas war most of those calling themselves Trotskyists accepted even the butcher Galtieri who ruled bourgeois (and indeed sub-imperialist) Argentina into 'our class camp'.

In the view of the world developed by the WRP under the influence of paranoia and petrodollars, the Palestine question came to be seen as the central pivot of this struggle of the two basic camps, the imperialist and the anti-imperialist. The Arab bourgeoisies, whatever their 'faults' and 'limitations', were in the 'anti-imperialist' camp – ours.

Now if the Palestine question and 'Zionism' is the pivot of this world struggle between two basic camps, then I suppose it does make a sort of twisted sense to think that within the imperialist countries the 'Zionists', linked by ineradicable ties to the arch-enemy, the very core of imperialism – Zionist imperialism – are the main enemy, everywhere. As we saw above, the Newsline editorial even defined London and Washington politics by their relation to Israel, not the other way round. This was no slip: it fits perfectly into the picture.

In one sense therefore the world view held by the WRP – and not only by the WRP – implies and demands anti-semitism. What is remarkable is not the editorial but that the basic Trotskyist and socialist conditioning of Healy has kept open anti-semitism partly at bay, relying on such little mental tricks as the transparent pretence that 'the Zionists' are only a few super-villains and not most Jews.

Yes, smash Israel!

Andrew Hornung and Tony Greenstein for the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine, SO 271, 29.5.86

Not long ago Socialist Organiser initiated discussion about the attitude to be taken by socialists towards the Palestinian and Hebrew national questions. The seriousness with which that discussion was undertaken contrasts sharply with the curious methods of John O'Mahony's polemic of recent weeks.

O'Mahony's central thesis is made clear in "Anti-semitism and the left, part 2" (SO no. 266). He writes: "Zionism – which though the precise meaning of the word is no longer clear must include most Jews – has entered the consciousness of large parts of the left as another word for the worst form of imperialism and racism. Our attitude to it should be little different from our attitude to fascism. The prevalent programme on the left for dealing with it is to 'destroy Zionism', that is, destroy Israel."

It is curious that O'Mahony thinks that Zionism "no longer"

has any clear meaning, though he seems to think that the term "anti-semitism" has so clear a meaning that it doesn't merit the slightest attention.

Let us say straight away that we do not think that there is any truth in what O'Mahony asserts. That does not mean that there are no mistaken attitudes towards Zionism, towards racism, imperialism, Arab nationalism and the ways of dealing with these currents in and out of the labour movement. But to reduce all this to "anti-semitism" is a ridiculous perversion of the truth.

First of all the problem: it is true that on the left there is a widespread tendency to mask the shortcomings, failures, even crimes of those forces engaged in a struggle with an imperialist power or the agent of an imperialist power.

Obviously this leads some leftists to oversimplify such struggles and see them in moral terms: as if the forces of unalloyed good were combatting the forces of unmiti-

gated evil. No doubt this is as true of the Palestine-Israel conflict as of scores of others.

But while O'Mahony – who has often written on this general problem – claims that the attitude taken by the left towards this conflict is "unique", the truth of it is that the attitude taken by the left on the Palestine-Israel conflict in general and on the question of the destruction of the state of Israel in particular is completely in line with its attitude on other cases of conflicts between settler states or the states deriving from colonial settlement and the national movements of the indigenous population directed against these states. We need only mention in this connection South Africa and Ireland to prove our point. Of course the left may be wrong on these questions, it may have been wrong on Algeria – though we don't think so – but it is not making a special or "unique" case of Israel!

Thus we see no reason to attri-

bute the left's errors – if errors they are – on the question of Israel to some “unique” cause – like anti-semitism. O'Mahony's claim that the left tries to make its programme on ‘the Hebrew national question seem not unique “by identifying Israel with South Africa” is absurd: it is the identification of Israel as a society based on recent settler colonialism that is the essential feature it shares with South Africa.

O'Mahony's point, however, illustrates that he is just as guilty of dealing with moral rather than scientific judgements as those he inveighs against. He says “Whatever similarity in political military-techniques (!) there may be between South Africa and Israel they are radically different societies. Israel was given its character by the Zionists' resolute refusal to exploit Arab labour and their drive instead to replace it (!). Whatever one thinks of the left Zionist colonialists' ‘Jewish labour only’ policy, it was the opposite (!) of the mass exploitation on which the modern South Africa was built.” Really, this is amazing!

Is the colonisation and the denial by a relative minority of settlers of the national rights of the indigenous majority simply a matter of “political-military techniques”? Isn't Israel's character based not so much on the replacement of Arab labour by Jewish labour, but the driving out of their homes of hundreds of thousands of people, the denial of their right to return and the imposition on the area to which they had undisputed rights of an alien rule? Is the effect – rather than the technique – of Zionist colonisation really “the opposite” of that in South Africa?

South Africa

It isn't simply the same, that's true: indeed right now South Africa seems to be attempting something like an Israeli solution while Israel seems to be developing certain traits reminiscent of South Africa. But let's be clear: the point isn't that Israel is just like South Africa, but that despite their differences they share essential colonial-settler traits. O'Mahony might take issue with this: he might believe that Israel can't be classed as a colonial-settler state. But then this is the nub of the issue and not this obsessive silliness about anti-semitism.

It is possible – indeed likely – that identification of Israel with South Africa (with whom of course it has a special relationship) and identification of Zionism as a racist ideology leads some leftists to thinking that they can do away with concrete analysis and rest any strategy on these generalities. But does this invalidate the generalities? Not at all! Zionism is racist even if many of those diplomats insisting on this in the UN daily defend racism: Zionism is racist even if the way socialists should deal with Zionism is markedly different from the way they should deal with tra-

ditional British racism.

Is it true that for “large parts of the left” Zionism is “another word for the worst form of imperialism and racism”? Firstly, it is obvious that for the avowedly reformist left, Zionism is a form of socialism. For which avowedly revolutionary organisations then is it “the worst form of imperialism and racism”? For the Healyites? But O'Mahony has written in the past that the Healyites aren't even part of the labour movement let alone the left. For Militant? Hardly. For the USFI? We don't think so and a single quote revealing its shortcomings on Iran can hardly be said to prove the case.

In any case, doesn't the USFI support the right of Israeli Jews to self-determination? That hardly makes it a candidate for the charge of anti-semitism.

The SWP, perhaps? Despite some very irresponsible positions taken by SWP students, an organisation that founded the Anti-Nazi League, launching it with a call signed by scores of celebrities who no doubt support Zionism, can hardly be accused of adopting an attitude towards Zionism “little different from our attitude to fascism”. Which “large sections” does that leave bloodied by O'Mahony's sharp-edged polemic?

Surely the point is simply that those who think that the world is divided into two moral camps and whose most sophisticated analytical tool is the allegation of guilt by association – as O'Mahony does himself time and again – end up with wrong political positions.

The trouble is that O'Mahony adds to the confusion – which is not in fact as great as he points out, which is why the only texts he can analyse in detail are Gerry Healy's nonsense – by his disgraceful claim that to oppose Zionism is to be anti-semitic.

It is true that sections of the early socialist movement (especially the anarchists) saw something progressive in anti-semitism and others, including Marx, were too inclined to identify Jews with the rise of capitalism. True too that Stalinism made use of anti-semitism, particularly in its attacks on Trotsky and that the German Communist Party made concessions to anti-semitism in order to try to relate to the nationalist “voelkische” right both in the 20s and in the 30s. Ruth Fischer, shortly before she became Party leader, called on her audience to “crush the Jew-capitalists, string them up from the lamp-posts, trample them underfoot”. This is not unimportant, but we must be wary of the conclusions we can draw from it.

Whatever its ideological shortcomings from time to time the left – which is today infinitely more sensitive to issues of racism than in the past – has an unparalleled record of fighting fascism and racism, including anti-semitism. We ask: whose heroism in the Battle of

Cable Street helped to stop the Mosleyites? Who supported the Anti Nazi League? Who are the activists in scores of anti-fascist and anti-racist committees up and down the country that, among other things, monitor and combat anti-semitism? What is O'Mahony's answer? The right, the middle of the road liberals and social-democrats?

Let's be serious: even if O'Mahony's description of the traditions of the left were accurate – and it most certainly isn't! – does it make any sense to call these fighters against anti-semitism “anti-semites”? When one considers the very large number of Jews among these fighters – most of them anti-Zionist Jews – O'Mahony's insulting designation becomes even more lurid.

But O'Mahony's mud slinging is not only insulting: it implies a re-writing of history. For if the left can be called anti-semitic for sometimes in its pre-World War 2 past endorsing or echoing anti-semitic ideas, in however small measure, cannot Zionism itself be called anti-semitic with even greater justice? Here we have a movement which has no real history of fighting anti-semitism, though it has a long history of doing deals with anti-semites. Here we have an outlook held by community leaders who spend their time pouring abuse on anti-fascists (retailing claims similar to those now being rehearsed by O'Mahony) when they organise to combat anti-semitism. Here we have an ideology which has at its core the idea that fighting anti-semitism is useless because anti-semitism is essentially justified.

Indeed, while it is true that prominent British Labour leaders – to their shame – supported the 1905 Aliens Act (something which had more to do with their reformism and nationalism than with anti-semitism), what O'Mahony fails to mention is that Balfour and the anti-semites of the British Brothers League who lobbied for the Act were given unequivocal support by the Zionists organised in the English Zionist Federation in the 1900 and 1906 general elections. David Hope-Kydd, who described the Jewish immigrants as the “scum of the European nations” was supported by the Zionists in the White-chapel constituency. Similarly the French anti-semites and later Mussolini and even certain Nazis before 1941 actually praised Zionism and saw it as an ideological movement similar to their own.

We don't cite this to prove that Zionism is simply the same as anti-semitism – though both drink in part from the same poisoned pools – rather to show that O'Mahony's account is not only absurd in its conclusions but partisan to the point of mendacity.

Anti-Zionist socialists are in the habit of explaining both in the face of slurs from Zionists and as part of their struggle against anti-semitism, that anti-Zionism and anti-semitism

are not the same. We patiently explain, for instance, that Zionism was for half its history a minority trend among Jews, indeed one seen by millions of Jews as a treasonous current, always willing to do the bidding of anti-semites. We point out — and O'Mahony makes the point too — that certain ultra-orthodox Jews are vigorous opponents of Zionism and that orthodox Jews of all trends were opposed to Zionism up to 1948.

But O'Mahony knows better. To want to see the destruction of the state of Israel — not the only but certainly a widely-held aim of anti-Zionists — is, he says, "implicitly anti-semitic". Sometimes he seems to be resting his argument on the fact that today the vast majority of Jews support the existence of the state of Israel — which is like claiming that support for Algerian independence was a product of a racist view of the French and sometimes on the spurious claim (dealt with above) that the left's programme for Israel is "unique" when all along it is of a piece with other attitudes towards colonial settler states.

It is not surprising that O'Mahony's slurs, illogic and fact-twisting influence his analysis of the slogan of the "secular, democratic state". For someone supposedly interested in the living political struggle, one would have thought that he might mention that this slogan was adop-

ted by the PLO as the result of a struggle against those elements who wanted simply to throw the Jews into the sea.

The fact that some elements who would be happy to return to the old position currently claim to support the "secular, democratic state" slogan has nothing to do with the matter. The fact that one of the world's most conservative powers calls itself the "Soviet" Union doesn't invalidate the significance of the soviet idea for revolutionaries.

Conquest

Central to O'Mahony's argument is his estimate of the Arab or pro-Arab forces: "The road to the secular democratic state lies inescapably through war and full-scale conquest of the Jews — after which the victorious armies (of Iraq, Syria, Iran?) will gallantly establish and protect the democratic rights of the Jews as individuals (rights their own citizens do not have now) in a Palestinian Arab state." Truly a remarkable statement. Has it not occurred to O'Mahony that one of the most important aspects of the "secular, democratic state" slogan is the criticism it implies of the lack of democratic rights prevailing in the Arab states, in Iran, etc? And since when do revolutionary socialists give up their strategic conceptions simply because the balance of

forces for their fulfilment is not present?

One might as well ask what on earth the propagation of the idea of a socialist Britain could possibly mean when the vast majority of those calling themselves socialists are led by one Neil Kinnock. Even if you don't agree with the slogan of the "secular, democratic state", comrade, you should see that it is an attempt to create a democratic, non-confessional society in contradistinction to all others in the region (including Israel).

As far as the supposed "utopianism" of the "secular, democratic state slogan" is concerned, we insist that it is no more utopian than the slogan of a socialist united Ireland. Nor, more to the point, is it more "utopian" than O'Mahony's own solution: two states in the area currently held by Israel with the right of secession for Arab areas inside the pre-1967 boundaries. What "ism" should one ascribe to O'Mahony's inability to see any possible progressive developments within the Arab camp (that would realise the slogan of the "secular, democratic state"), while holding firmly to a solution which implies a fundamental transformation of Israeli Jewish consciousness? If O'Mahony stood in the Zionist tradition, we would just say it was typical left Zionist arrogance.

* This article has been very slightly abbreviated for reasons of space.

Israel is not South Africa

John O'Mahony, SO 271, 29.5.86

OH WHAT a monstrous deal of splutter and bumph to so small a part of solid matter! So many angry words, and so few of the key points I made on anti-semitism taken up!

No, I did not 'reduce' what the writers describe as 'mistaken attitudes towards Zionism...' to 'anti-semitism' — i.e. say these things arose as an expression of the traditional anti-semitisms. I said that the attitude to Israel dominant in most of the far left is unique in that it proposes to destroy not only a 'state' but the Israeli Jewish nation, and that on that level 'anti-Zionism' is inevitably anti-semitic — firstly and primarily towards the Israeli Jews, and secondly, by derivation, towards the big majority of Jews throughout the world who solidarise with Israel. This may include attempts to treat Zionist Jews (as distinct from other, non-Jewish, Zionists) as if they are fascists — for example banning their student associations, as was done recently at Sunderland Poly.

The writers insist that "the attitude taken by the left on the Palestine-Israel conflict... is completely in line with its attitude on other cases of conflicts between settler states or states deriving from colonial settlement and

the national movements of the indigenous population directed against those states". As other examples they mention South Africa, Northern Ireland, and pre-independence Algeria, which had a large white population.

The comrades 'scientifically' satisfy themselves that all these, especially Israel and South Africa, are similar 'settler states', and then read off mechanically a common political programme: smash the settler state.

But — isn't it obvious? — even if the 'settler state' tag fits Northern Ireland, South Africa, and Israel, these societies are so vastly different that the tag alone is inadequately concrete to base any political conclusions on. What differentiates them is more important than the common name-tag.

It is preposterous to equate Northern Ireland's Protestant community with the South African whites. One is a replication of British society — though with some peculiarities — the other is a vastly privileged white caste ruling over a much larger black population who are super-exploited, disenfranchised, repressed helots.

And in Israel there is not a ruling Jewish caste exploiting Arab helots, there is a comprehensive Jewish soc-

iety organised in a Jewish nation state. This is not the same sort of society as South Africa's or colonial Algeria's!

'Smash the settler state' in South Africa or colonial Algeria means: abolish the monopoly of power and the caste privileges of the white minority; let the majority rule.

Overrun

But what does 'smash the settler state' mean for Israel? It is a state which is extremely democratic for its Jewish majority. Its army is pretty close to being a citizen army. For an external force to 'smash the state' is not a matter of destroying a repressive apparatus, or defeating it in war, but of overrunning Israel and forcible destroying the Jewish nation. It could *only* be done by slaughter, expropriation and terror — and, pretty much for certain, the driving out of large parts of the population.

Do the crimes of the Israeli occupying forces in the West Bank and elsewhere make this poetic justice? If so, say so! The comparison with South Africa and with Algeria — where the settlers were mostly driven out — implies that programme, but I'm not sure that the writers understand that

that is what they are saying.

People who play around the edge of a question, juggling with abstract labels, often do so because they need to avoid the real issues. In politics, comrades, the truth is always concrete.

The comrades' attempt to prove that it is not true that large parts of the left think of 'Zionism' as another word for the worst form of imperialism and racism' is junior debating society stuff.

Sure, I've written that the Healyites are not part of the labour movement — but the Healyite text which I analysed appeared on the same page as an endorsement from Ken Livingstone of the Healyites against their 'Zionist' persecution, and Livingstone did not repudiate the editorial when specifically invited to do so. Labour Herald, the Healyite Labour Party paper, was for a long time highly respectable on sections of the left.

Of course the SWP is anti-racist and opposed to anti-semitism. *I never said otherwise.*

Most telling of all is the case of the USFI. Yes, the USFI believes in self-determination for the Jews of Palestine. But what do their people in Britain say and do about it? They are silent about it. It is common to find members of theirs utterly unaware that their organisation has held this position for many years.

Do the comrades seriously want to deny that the most common attitude on the hard (and much even of the soft) left now is intense hostility to Israel, support for the Palestinians, and support for the 'secular, democratic state'? That, even though it often lacks coherence and consistency, the left attitude often goes far beyond the criticisms of Israel which SO shares, and in fact supports the replacement of any Jewish state with something else?

It is true that Israeli apologists attempt to morally blackmail critics of Israel into silence with cries of 'anti-semitism'. Criticism of Israel or of Zionism is equated with anti-semitism. This of course is contemptible.

There is, however, a level at which 'anti-Zionism' is indeed anti-semitic — the level at which 'anti-Zionism' becomes support for the destruction of the existing Jewish nation in Palestine.

Quite the most revealing thing in the comrades' article is their account of

anti-semitism and the labour movement. They know something about the subject. Therefore I don't believe they really think it all came to an end with the Second World War.

They know, for example, about the tide of thinly disguised anti-semitism in the USSR and Eastern Europe — and the Western CPs — after 1948. The reason the learned comrades prefer much more remote examples, of course, is that this, the most sustained and murderous anti-semitic campaign in any body claiming to be part of the labour movement, was conducted under the banner of 'anti-Zionism'.

Most of the stuff on why and how the left could not be anti-semitic is bumph, answering charges I never made, and missing the point that I did make: that the widespread left-wing commitment to the destruction of the Jewish state is inescapably anti-semitic, however sincere the same left is in its condemnation of Nazism, Christian anti-semitism, etc. etc.

The writers trip themselves up, too. How could left-wing movements have been anti-semitic when they contained Jewish militants, they ask. They themselves give us at least part of the answer. Earlier they mention the German communist leader Ruth Fischer denouncing 'Jew-capitalists'. Yes. But, comrades, unless my memory is playing tricks, Ruth Fischer — who was an honest communist who lived to learn from her mistakes — was a Jew!

The argument about Zionism and Nazism is irrelevant. I am not concerned to defend Zionism's record, and nothing I say about Israel now depends on doing that.

It is also obscene. For what is the point of going on about the many episodes of Zionist would-be real-politikers who made the best deals they could with various anti-semites, from Turkish dignitaries at the beginning to Nazis 50 years later?

Double-edged

The point for some 'anti-Zionists', like Tony Greenstein, a prominent member of the LMCP, is to try to smear the Zionists with some of the responsibility for the crimes of the Nazis — for the holocaust of six million Jews.

Wrongheaded, shortsighted, stupid, criminal as were many of the activities of the Zionist leaders who thought they could find some common ground with anti-semites because both agreed on the separating-out of the Jews, it is obscene to attribute to them a part of the responsibility for the holocaust.

It is a childish attempt to escape from the powerful retrospective logic the holocaust imparts to the Zionist case by saying to the Zionist: you caused or helped cause Hitler — you collaborated!

And it is double-edged and very dangerous for pro-Palestinians to attempt to condemn the people of Israel now because of the deals which some of their grandfathers and fathers made or attempted to make with the all-powerful monster which destroyed so many helpless millions of them. For the leaders of the Palestinians collaborated with the Nazis too. Their chief political leader, the Mufti of Jerusalem, actively worked for the Nazi cause from Berlin. There is no good reason to doubt that had the Nazis got to Palestine — and they almost decided to try in 1940-1 — then Palestine would have become a slaughterhouse for the Jews and the Mufti's Palestinian Arab followers would have been actively on the side of the Nazis, just as the Zionist Haganah collaborated with the British to brutally put down the Syrian-Palestine Arab revolt in 1936 — but with the difference that the Nazis would have killed every last Jew in Palestine.

Nationalist

Of course this ancient Palestinian collaboration with the Nazis can have no effect on our attitude to the oppressed Palestinians today. But neither can all the historical footnotes about the Zionists in the 1930s have any effect on our attitude to the rights of the Palestinian Jews. Our attitudes must come from the rights and wrongs of the conflict, and from the possible solutions.

Time and again the comrades' argument comes down to moral exasperation. And the lesson is that if you stop at moral protest, then you only distance yourself from 'Zionism' but remain on the same *nationalist* plane. You do not rise to the level of working-class, internationalist politics.

Ignoring reality

Tony Greenstein, SO 272, 12.6.86

Having accepted that "Israel's apologists attempt to morally blackmail critics of Israel into silence with cries of 'anti-Semitism'" and having, quite correctly, described such behaviour as "contemptible" John O'Mahony is guilty of exactly the same behaviour himself.

There can be no other interpretation of the phrase "some 'anti-Zionists' like Tony Greenstein, a prominent member of the LMCP". Given the context of the article, the inverted commas can only

mean that I am an anti-Semite masquerading as an anti-Zionist. I suggest that O'Mahony either substantiates this allegation or retracts it.

For the record I have been active in the anti-fascist movement all my political life.

Responsibility

Nor is it true that I "smear the Zionists with some of the responsibility for the crimes of the Nazis for the holo-

caust of six million Jews." On the moral and political level, the responsibility is solely that of the Nazis.

There is no serious historian — Zionist or otherwise — who has not raised the question as to whether the Zionist goal of statehood did not act at cross purposes to the need to rescue as many Jews as possible.

It is equally untrue to suggest that the Zionists tried to get "the best deals" from various anti-Semites from the Ottoman dignitaries to the Nazis.

Unless you mean the best deal for the Zionist movement. In Czarist Russia they did their best to undermine Jewish participation in the revolutionary movement. In Weimar Germany they abstained from all anti-fascist activity, even the most minimal bourgeois kind. The tragedy is that with his talk of

the Israeli army being a "citizen army" (i.e. a conscript army like South Africa) and being "extremely democratic" for its Jewish majority, O'Mahony has now adopted identical positions to those of traditional left Zionist apologists for Israel. Even for the Jews of Israel, the options are nar-

rowing as Israel follows a path not unlike that of Nazi Germany and South Africa today. It is overtly racist and the fascist right is growing, not the left Zionists that O'Mahony identified with. Unfortunately O'Mahony ignores the reality of Israel today in favour of ideological abstractions.

The Jewish nation

Liam Conway, SO 273, 19.6.86

It is a pity that Tony Greenstein has not bothered to read John O'Mahony's position on Palestine. Maybe then he wouldn't take isolated comments and give them ludicrous importance, inventing a political position that doesn't exist.

In fact O'Mahony's writings like those in Socialist Organiser generally, have persistently sought to condemn the nature of the current Israeli state. Indeed SO condemns racist policies in states all over the world, including Britain.

But condemning the racist nature of Israel does not mean that the Palestinian Jews are not a nation or that there cannot be a smaller non-racist Israel where

Arabs have full rights, including regional rights to cede to a Palestine Arab state.

Greenstein may be right to say that Israel "is overtly racist and the fascist right is growing". It may even be true that "Israel follows a path not unlike that of Nazi Germany".

But then is he suggesting that Germany has no right to exist because of its Nazi past? That any state which is "overtly racist" forfeits its right to be a nation?

Considering the widespread occurrence of racism in the world it appears to me there would be few people left with national rights in Tony Greenstein's world.

Thus any solution in Palestine which fails to recognise the existence of two nations there is not a solution at all because it seeks to build class consciousness by trampling on the national rights of the Jewish workers.

Tony Greenstein sees no political difference between Jewish national rights and the present Israeli state. Greenstein is not an anti-semitite but he fails to recognise the proposed secular democratic state has massive anti-semitic implications for the Jews in Palestine. Indeed, it is only achievable over the dead body of the Jewish nation, which is both impossible and undesirable.

A moral blackjack

John O'Mahony, SO 275, 3.7.86

TONY Greenstein (SO 272, 5 June) gets very excited because I put the description of him as an 'anti-Zionist' in quotation marks; that, he writes indignantly, is to say that he is "an anti-Semite masquerading as an anti-Zionist".

But this is just bluff and bluster by Greenstein, who doesn't even try to answer the serious points I made.

Greenstein — like much of the hard and soft left — is committed to the destruction of the state of Israel and its replacement by a 'secular democratic state' (SDS). In reality, this means commitment to the defeat and destruction of the Jewish nation in Palestine.

Compromise

Some advocates of the SDS think it is a benign compromise in which Jewish and Arab Palestinians could co-exist as equal citizens (that is what most supporters of SO used to think). But as I've argued at some length in SO, the SDS is no more than a seemingly benign mask used in the West by those who pursue the military conquest and destruction of the Jewish nation.

That Israel's apologists sometimes

equate any criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism should not blind critics of Israel to the fact that an 'anti-Zionism' that proposes to treat the Palestinian Jewish nation as a bad and illegitimate nation which does not have the right to exist; an anti-Zionism which sets itself the goal of destroying the Palestinian Jewish nation and will be satisfied with nothing less — such an 'anti-Zionism' is certainly a form of anti-semitism.

It is distinct from earlier Christian or racist strains of anti-semitism, but nonetheless it too is comprehensively hostile to Jews. Since the big majority of Jews, critically or otherwise, support Israel's right to exist, the hostility to Israel inevitably spills over from Israel to engulf Jews everywhere.

Extreme and active hostility to Jewish Zionists (who are treated quite differently from other Zionists) is now, for example, an established feature of college political life.

And we should keep in mind that 'anti-Zionism' has long served in Russia and Eastern Europe as a thin disguise for the old anti-semitism that has never ceased to be a force there.

Tony Greenstein does belong to the 'smash Israel' current, and thus I

put 'anti-Zionist' in quotes. But I'm concerned with drawing out the logic of what Greenstein and other socialists say about Israel, not with casting aspersions on their motives.

It's a shame that Greenstein takes refuge in the pretence that I'm branding him as some sort of old-style anti-semitite instead of answering the charges I do level against him.

Inverts

And isn't it strange that he so neatly parallels and inverts those Zionists who avoid thinking about our specific criticisms of Israel by branding the critics as anti-semites? Greenstein too is concerned not with thinking about the issues; but with getting hold of a moral blackjack and wielding it.

No self-determination!

Tony Greenstein, SO 278, 7.8.86

In reply to Liam Conway: Israel is one of the few remaining settler colonial states in the world, established by driving out another people, institutionalising racism, into every aspect of its functioning. Israel is an apartheid state, supporting reaction both in neighbouring states and worldwide.

Jews

The fact that it is Jews who are the perpetrators of racism is irrelevant as is the question of anti-Semitism. As long as Israel remains a 'Jewish state' it cannot help but be a racist state constantly at war with the Palestinians.

And because Israel is a state founded in alliance with imperialism, which

only survives today by virtue of the support of US imperialism, to imagine a "smaller non-racist Israel" is to substitute fantasy for reality. Israel is an expansionist state with a strategic role in the Middle East, and a Zionist ideology that imbues both 'left' and 'right' Zionists with the idea of a biblical greater Israel.

Nation

In so far as Israeli Jews constitute a nation, and that is debatable, it is as an oppressor nation. The question of self-determination does not arise as they are not oppressed as a nation.

Zionism is an intra-class alliance based on the oppression of the Palestinians. As long as the latter are oppressed, either inside Israel or in the bantustan on the West Bank, or both,

then the Israeli workers will never achieve even the most minimal class consciousness.

It is precisely because Israeli Jews are held together by their relationship to the Palestinians and the Arab masses, that a democratic, secular state solution is the most basic democratic demand that socialists should support. It is a demand opposed both by the Zionists and the Islamic chauvinists in the region. In no way is it inconsistent with e.g. language rights for those Liam Conway rightly terms Palestinian Jews. Far from being implicitly anti-Semitic it stands in opposition to all chauvinisms in the region. It may be incompatible with Israeli Jewish nationhood, but then so is the latter with Palestinian self-determination.

Utopia in Palestine

Clive Bradley, SO 279, 14.8.86

TONY GREENSTEIN (SO 278) has, once again, missed the point in his defence of the 'secular, democratic state in Palestine' argument.

Democratic

Of course, Marxists seek to use even limited democratic demands as tools for mobilisation; and any mobilisation necessarily poses new social questions, so that a struggle for purely democratic demands may develop into an assault on the entire social system. But it is not the Marxist approach to say: this is our democratic programme, but it is utterly meaningless unless all social relations are overhauled and society begins afresh.

This is precisely what the 'secular democratic state' slogan boils down to. To be at all possible it would re-

quire a complete change in consciousness of the vast majority of the Hebrew-speaking nation. Currently they are opposed even to autonomy for the Palestinians, let alone an independent Palestinian state: but they would have to accept, on Tony's own account, the extinction of 'Israeli Jewish nationhood'.

They would not only have to reject nationalism, but discard national identity — something Marxists generally reckon to be possible only after generations living under socialism.

Israeli Jews

The 'secular democratic state' cannot rationally be a proposal for an immediate solution to the Israeli/Palestine conflict. It can only be a proposal that could, possibly, take effect sometime in the future, *after the conflict*

is solved. Yet Greenstein et al talk about it as if it could be implemented immediately?

How? By what means are the Israeli Jews to miraculously change their consciousness overnight?

Smashing

This question is not answered, because it cannot be. In reality, the 'secular, democratic' state could only come into being in the foreseeable future on the basis of the *military defeat* of Israel in a way that could not be 'democratic' at all. The result would not be the happy intermingling of the two communities, but the opposite. This is all that can be meant by 'smashing the Zionist state', whatever the subjective intentions.

3. ZIONISM AND THE HOLOCAUST

Zionism, twin of anti-semitism

Andrew Homung, SO 109, 18.11.82

CHIEF Rabbi Emmanuel Jacobowitz was once asked by a BBC interviewer whether there was any difference between being anti-Israel and being anti-Semitic. 'In theory that is possible,' he replied, 'in practice it isn't.'

Earlier this year, a Jewish shopper in Regent Street, no doubt impelled by the same view, insisted that police arrest Labour Committee on Palestine members who were picketing the Israeli state airlines in protest at the invasion of Lebanon.

'I want you to arrest these people, officer, for stirring up racial hatred. They are anti-Semites,' he confidently asserted, undaunted by the fact that the people he was pointing to said they were Jewish.

Lie

Tony Greenstein's pamphlet, 'Zionism, anti-Semitism's twin in Jewish garb' is an attempt to give the lie to the equation made by Jacobowitz; and to show, on the contrary, that early Zionists (particularly) collaborated regularly with anti-Semites.

Now people aren't convinced of the wrong-headedness of Zionism today by having it pointed out to them that Theodore Herzl, the founder of Zionism, negotiated with the notorious Russian anti-Semite von Plehve and with the Czarist minister, Count Witte, who openly boasted that 'if it were possible to drown six or seven million Jews in the Black Sea I would be perfectly happy to do so...'

Obstacle

But the pamphlet also reveals that far from being a road to emancipation for Jews, Zionism has always constituted an obstacle to emancipatory movements.

The establishment of

the state of Israel was not only the culmination of a colonial drive whose victims were the people of the Arab East, but the foul fruit of a movement that set its face against all progress for Jews in Europe.

Zionism began in an age in which quack science looked to physiology for

Quack

many of its answers. Phrenology and palmistry aspired to be scientific pursuits, and theories were developed according to which criminal behaviour was the outcome of certain physical features.

Thus Pinsker, a pioneer Zionist, could write in 1882 that 'Judophobia is... a mental disease, and as a mental disease it is hereditary, and having been inherited for 2,000 years, it is incurable.'

Herzl came to the same conclusion as Pinsker: the Jews were not to be assimilated; gentile society rightly rejected them. So they had to become a colonising force which, under the protection of imperialist-colonialist powers, would create a Jewish state.

In his diaries, Herzl wrote, 'In Paris ... I achieved a freer attitude towards anti-Semitism, which I now began to understand historically and to pardon. Above all, I recognise the emptiness and futility of trying to 'combat' anti-Semitism.'

With blackhearts like von Plehve and Witte, early Zionism shared the assumptions, that racial persecution was inevitable — and the view that socialism was to be opposed.

Tony Greenstein quotes from Herzl's diaries again: 'Herzl told von Plehve, "Help us faster to land and the revolt will end. So will the defection (of Jews) to the socialist ranks..."'

Two decades on, Zionism proved no less intransigent

in its attitude towards revolutionary socialism. The Zionist Organisation in Palestine in 1921 was glad to see the arrest and deportation of leaders of the Jewish Communist Party by the British authorities.

Three years later the fledgling Histadrut (the Jewish 'trade union' movement in Palestine and then Israel) expelled members of the Palestine Communist Party.

Left

Even those trends within Zionism which claimed to be socialist collaborated with the British both against the Arabs and against Jewish revolutionaries. The petty-bourgeois nationalist 'socialism' of these trends gloried in pseudo-radical phrases concerning 'liberation of the land' and 'non-exploitation of Arab labour', when all this meant was the snatching of land from those who actually worked it and debarring Arabs from employment.

The contradiction between the radical phrases and the reactionary reality is well-brought out in this quotation from David HaCohen, a leading Labour Zionist.

'I had to fight my friends on the issue of Jewish socialism to defend the fact that I would not allow Arabs in my Trade Union... to defend preaching to housewives that they should not buy at Arab stores; to defend 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 Arab eggs they had bought... to take Rothschild, the incarnation of capitalism, as a socialist and to name him the 'benefactor' — to do all that was not easy...'

The image of the Nazi daubing Jewish shops with the slogan 'Don't buy

Jewish' here finds its grotesque parallel in the Jewish 'socialist' ruining the Arab crops and telling Jewish housewives 'Don't buy Arab'.

But Zionism did not simply replicate some features of German anti-Semitism, it collaborated with it.

The Nazis were well aware that the Zionists were not their enemies. In 1935 Heydrich ordered 'the activities of the Zionist orientated youth organisations are not to be treated with the same strictness that it is necessary to apply to the members of the so-called German Jewish organisations (the assimilationists).'

In line with this policy the Zionists were put in control of Jewish representative bodies, because, as Hanna Arendt put it, 'according to the Nazis, Zionists were the decent Jews since they too thought in "national terms".'

A Jewish police-force was established to bring in those unwilling to be sent to concentration camps.

Through the period of the holocaust, the Zionist organisations set out not to rescue Jews but to rescue Jews — preferably young ones — who wanted to go to Palestine.

The Jewish Agency consciously decided in the midst of the most terrible carnage the world had ever witnessed that they should concentrate on making propaganda for a Jewish state rather than give aid to Jews in desperate need. As an ex-chairperson of the Chief Rabbi's Rescue Committee wrote in The Times in 1961: 'My experience in 1942/3 was wholly in favour of a British readiness to help openly, constructively, and totally, and that this readiness met with opposition from Zionist leaders who insisted on rescue to Palestine as the only form of help.' (My empha-

sis — AH)

At every stage Zionism, while it reflected the emancipatory hopes of some Jews, sided with reaction, refused to rally resistance and played an ignominious part in ensuring that there could be no escape ... except via Palestine.

Tony Greenstein's pamphlet provides irrefutable evidence of the reactionary nature of Zionism in terms of the interests of Jews. He takes for granted that the colonising pro-imperialist project of Zionism had wholly reactionary results for the people of the Arab East, above all the Palestinians.

The weakness of the pamphlet arises out of its initial intention — to reply to the jibes coming, for the most part, from Jews. In attempting to counter the common charges levelled against anti-Zionists by

Jews, the author sometimes fails to give a balanced assessment.

For instance, he rightly attacks the nationalist ideas of Zionism. But what makes Zionism reactionary is not its nationalist character alone.

Garvey

After all, the Garvey movement in America (and beyond) was a profoundly progressive one — despite Garvey's announced intention not to stay to fight American racism but to organise emigration to a 'Negro Zion', despite Garvey's contact with the Ku Klux Klan, and despite a certain inverse racism.

Why — I can almost hear the question being asked by people like Jacobowitz — pick on Jewish nationalism? Tony Greenstein isn't sufficiently explicit about what makes Zionism

different.

Zionism's unremittingly reactionary character arises out of the fact that:

firstly, it teemed up with imperialism to establish and maintain itself where other national movements fought imperialism to gain liberation;

secondly, because Zionism was a colonial movement of Europeans it inevitably became an instrument for the denial of the national rights of millions of Arabs;

thirdly, unlike Garveyism, for instance, it did not draw hundreds of thousands — even millions — into political struggle but out of it;

and fourthly, its class composition and dependence on Diaspora capital as well as imperialism meant that from the beginning Zionism was virtually devoid of those class contradictions that

remain live within nationalist mass movements in spite of their nationalism.

Lastly, because the author is at pains to fling back the accusations of Jews, the pamphlet — its title immediately reveals this — is too much concerned to deal with the events of the first half of this century. Too little is said about, say, Zionism in the last ten years.

The last six months have revealed the open collaboration between the fascist-inspired Phalange and the Israeli forces; the blitzkrieg and the butchery have reminded less-blinded Israelis of the hellfire of Hitlerism.

Such will always be those living proofs of the nature of Zionism that might be capable of raising a movement to oppose it, stronger and more compelling than the most thorough historical research.

More demonology than Marxism

Jeremy Green, SO 112, 9.12.82

COMRADE ANDREW Hornung's review of Tony Greenstein's pamphlet 'Zionism - antisemitism in Jewish Garb' was almost as bad as the pamphlet itself. Both present a picture of Zionism as an evil conspiracy rather than as tragic illusion; their accounts have more in common with demonology than with Marxism.

The version of history they offer is of Zionism as a consciously reactionary group, seeking actively to promote antisemitism, work together with antisemites, and suppress Jewish resistance in order to achieve their aims.

For Greenstein and Hornung, Zionists have always lined up with anti-socialist forces. Any indication, any evidence that there were contradictions in Zionism, that there was any more to it than this, are resolutely ignored. Thus, from Greenstein we don't learn about the left Zionists who fought side by side with Bolsheviks in the Russian Civil War [mentioned by Trotsky] or the Zionists who went from Palestine to fight in defence of the Spanish

Republic.

And while we are told a lot about Zionist 'collaboration' with the Nazis, we hear nothing of the Zionists who organised Jewish partisan groups in the forests and ghettos of Poland — including Zionists from Palestine like Hannah Senesh who were parachuted into Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe specifically to organise Jewish resistance.

The argument about Zionist 'collaboration' with Nazis is based on: 1 Quotes from Nazi sources [hardly reliable on Jewish matters anyway], all some years before the Nazis decided on extermination as the 'final solution to the Jewish problem'.

2 The desperate behaviour of Jews faced with mass extermination. To argue that this is evidence of sinister conspiratorial deals between antisemitic Nazis and antisemitic Zionists is quite simply sick.

Moreover, there is hardly an indication as to the origins and mass appeal of Zionism.

Both Greenstein and Comrade Hornung seem to want to obscure the fact

that Zionism grew up among Jewish communities of Eastern Europe faced with a degree of murderous persecution almost unique to European history. Fifty years before Hitler, mass slaughter of Jews was a regular occurrence in Eastern Europe.

Thus Pinsker's 'Auto-Emancipation', quoted by Greenstein as evidence of Zionist racism towards non-Jews, appeared in 1882, as a response to the Kishinev and Odessa pogroms, in which literally thousands of Jews were murdered. Greenstein ignores this. In the absence of this context, Zionism must indeed seem like a conspiracy.

Greenstein ignores the way in which the failure of the labour movement to fight antisemitism, and the support given to immigration controls by socialists anxious to prevent Jewish refugees from coming to Britain, lent plausibility to Zionist arguments.

Finally, Comrade Hornung takes Greenstein to task for ignoring the last ten years of Zionism. A similar complaint might be made against his own acc-

ount of antisemitism.

Over the last few years, Jewish people have been killed all over Europe, sometimes by so-called 'communist' groups, acting in the name of anti-Zionism. Fascist antisemites have made 'Zionist conspiracies' a central part of their world view, and argued that anti-Jewish racism must be balanced against 'Jewish racism'.

In order for socialists to convincingly claim to Jews that we are anti-Zionists and not antisemites, we have to fight hardest against real antisemitism. We have to purge our writing of comments which have the rhetorical flavour of antisemites. We have to understand sympathetically the Jews and aspirations of Jews. In his review Comrade Andrew Hornung fails to do all these things.

Jeremy Green
(member of the Jewish
Socialists Group)

Brenner on the Nazi massacre

Gerry Ben-Noah, SO 199, 4.10.84

DENIAL of the holocaust has become the stock-in-trade of the far right in Europe and the USA, from Richard 'Harewood's "Did Six Million Really Die?" to Arthur Butz's "The Hoax of the Century". That pro-Nazi should seek to excuse their heroes of one of the greatest crimes in history can hardly be surprising.

What is remarkable, however, is the recent emergence of a "left-wing" version of holocaust revisionism.

At the most extreme, a French Trotskyist defends Robert Faurisson's right to deny the existence of gas chambers and extermination camps. More often, though, the "left" revisionists do not deny that the holocaust happened: they merely argue for a redistribution of responsibility for the tragedy. They suggest that the Nazis were not solely to blame for the disaster that befell the Jewish people. Zionism, too, must share the guilt.

Now, in fact, various Zionist leaders *did* calculate that anti-semites would for their own reasons collaborate with them. They understood that there was logical common ground between Zionism and anti-semitism — old-fashioned, central-European, pre-Nazi Christian anti-semitism — in that both rejected assimilation.

Zionism was generated by anti-semitism. Then once embarked on their project of removing the Jews to Palestine, out of reach of the anti-semites, the Zionist leaders made hard-headed calculations and assessments of the world they lived in, seeking to find ways of realising their programme.

Thus Zionist leaders had discussions with ministers of the viciously anti-semitic Tzarist government, with Von Plehve, for example.

In the same way the Zionists have allied in succession with Turkish, British and then US imperialism. Brutal realism and

cynical real-politik in the service of their central goal of creating the Jewish state has always characterised the central leadership of the Zionist movement. It has led to shameful episodes and unsavoury contacts.

The realpolitik of the Zionist leaders — together with a slowness to realise that older strains of anti-semitism had evolved into the lethal, genocidal Nazi variant, with which there could be no accommodation — may well have helped blunt the response of European Jews to Nazism.

Identify

But to go on from this tragic confusion to identify Zionism and anti-semitism, to place the moral or political responsibility — or any share of it — on the Zionist Jews for Hitler's holocaust of European Jewry — that is hysterically and obscenely stupid.

Yet that is what the new revisionism — at its sharpest when it stops playing with hollow, abstract logical identification between Zionism and anti-semitism and bases itself on the historical facts — concludes and now proclaims to the world.

It is important to recognise that, whilst holocaust revisionism is absolutely central to the ideology of the far right, "left" revisionism remains — so far — a marginal and aberrant belief within the socialist movement.

Until now, it has been propagated only by scattered articles in the "Workers Revolutionary Party" press, or by quaintly-titled pamphlets such as Tony Greenstein's "Zionism: Anti-semitism's Twin in Jewish Garg".

Until now, it has *looked* like the work of cranks.

Until now, Lenni Brenner, "left" revisionism's newest recruit is a Jew, whose books have all the appearance of serious works of history and are

published (expensively) by commercial publishers.

Both the books argue, with apparent authority, that Zionists did not fight back against anti-semitism because they were in sympathy with it. According to Brenner, the Zionists saw anti-semites as nationalists like themselves, with a common objective in the removal of the Jews from Europe and a similar evaluation of the intrinsic worth of diaspora Jewry.

Where does one begin to review work like this? The revisionists of the right have shown how easy it is to contest and even subvert what had seemed unassailable historical facts. For, of course, very little history can survive scepticism of this kind, based on the rejection of any evidence one does not like.

Now Brenner does not, by and large, engage in this kind of revisionism. Brenner's unique contribution to historical revision lies in the *sense* he makes of events.

Most of the events he refers to are real and publicly known. They have been described before by pro-Zionist writers, notably Hannah Arendt in "Eichmann in Jerusalem". (This is not to say that a sizeable catalogue of inaccuracies and contradictions within the Brenner *corpus* could not be assembled — but such an exercise would miss the point).

Congruence

Brenner's "theory" of Zionist-Nazi congruence rests upon two sets of phenomena: the actions of individual collaborators who were Zionists, and the policies of Zionist organisations which, for him, were lacking in anti-Nazi resolution.

With the benefit of hindsight it is, of course, easy to see that many Zionists underestimated the Nazis. They thought the new anti-semitism would be like the old; brutal, humiliating and dangerous for individual Jews.

They could not and did not conceive of the annihilation that was to come. Thus, their strategy was based on a series of assumptions about the immediate prospects for Europe's Jews which was horribly wrong.

Inner logic

To move from this tragic confusion, however, to the suggestion that they were unconcerned about the fate of those Jews is absurd. To argue that they were therefore in sympathy with the Nazis is bizarre.

It would be foolish to deny that there were Zionists who collaborated. So, no doubt, did some Communists, Bundists and liberals. In the nightmare world of Nazi Europe many people did bad things to save their own lives or those of people they loved.

For Brenner, though, these individual acts of collaboration are expressions of the inner logic of Zionism. Individual or collective acts of anti-fascist resistance by Zionists on the other hand, are dismissed as merely historical accidents, exceptions that in some unexplained way prove the rule.

It would be trivially easy to write a similar account of the "inner logic" of capitalist democracy, or of Marxism, which proved to this standard their affinity with Nazism. Such accounts have little to do with serious history.

Brenner claims to be opposed to Jewish, Arab and every other kind of nationalism. Perhaps he is so far from nationalism that he does not feel the need to avoid racial slurs, which he sprinkles throughout his writing. Thus, the inter-war Palestinian Arab leadership were not only "a parasitic upper class" but also "classic levantines" (*Iron Wall* p.57); and the Palestinian Arabs as a whole had a "low level of culture" (ibid p.65). As for the Jews:

"...the old Jewish slums were notoriously filthy: 'Two Jews and one cheese make three smells' was an old Polish proverb. Karl Marx was only being matter-of-fact when he remarked that 'The Jews of Poland are the smariest of all races'". (ibid p.11).

For a self-proclaimed socialist to repeat anti-semitic Polish proverbs as matters of fact is simply incredible. Such remarks are frequent in Brenner and range from the paranoid: the suggestion that rich Jews control the US Democratic Party and thus American foreign policy — to the merely unpleasant — Agudat Israel demanding from the Likud "their pound of flesh" (p.207) as the price for parliamentary support.

There is, then, a curious ambivalence in Brenner's writing. He censures Zionism for despising Jews and on the other hand he clearly despises them himself. Similarly, he characterises the Zionist-Revisionists as near-fascists, and cites quotes from anti-revisionist Zionists to establish this. But he also argues that the Revisionists were the most authentic Zionists, closest to the inner logic of the movement.

Therefore, the opposition of the Labour Zionists to Revisionism, of which good use is made in proving the latter to be reactionaries, is then dismissed as either bad faith or false consciousness. Either Labour's disagreements with Jabotinsky's followers were entirely tactical, a contest over who should control the colonialist venture — or the left simply did not appreciate, as Brenner can appreciate, that they were really just logical Zionist-Revisionists.

For a Marxist, Brenner places enormous weight on his own ability to critically examine other people's psyches across the years. (This ability is not restricted to the minds of Labour Zionists; Brenner also "shows" that Betar was Fascist by reference to the mental states of a

hypothetical "average Betari" (*ZAD*, p.114).

Psychoanalysis

We are also offered a psychoanalysis of Jabotinsky:

"...there was nothing ambiguous about Jabotinsky's oral fixation...he hated mathematics and was always undisciplined as a student: the infallible signs of oral fixation...He had other stigmata of the fixation...he became hopelessly addicted to detective stories and westerns." (*Iron Wall*, p.6).

This is the sort of thing that gets psychoanalysis a bad name. It reveals, too, that underneath the glossy covers Brenner's work is every bit as crankish as former attempts to construct a "socialist" version of historical revisionism.

Why, then, has it any credibility? A comment by Isaac Deutscher offers a clue:

"The anti-Zionist urged the Jews to trust their gentile environment, to help the 'progressive forces' in that environment...and so hope that those forces would effectively defend the Jews against anti-semitism...The Zionists on the other hand dwelt on the deepseated hatred of non-Jews and urged the Jews to trust their future to nobody except their own state. In this controversy Zionism has scored a terrible victory, one which it could neither wish nor expect." (*The Non-Jewish Jew*, p.91).

Brenner, like most socialists, wishes that this victory had not happened. But instead of thinking seriously about what kind of socialist strategy could win the Jews away from Zionism, he constructs a fantasy-world in which the Zionists did wish for and expect the holocaust, and in which the most fanatical Jewish nationalists were, in reality, ardent anti-semites.

All of this would undoubtedly be an interesting case-study for psychoanalysts. Marxists would be better off by turning to Nathan Weinstock's *Zionism: False Messiah*.

The left, not Zionists, have fought anti-semitism

Greenstein and Andrew Hornung, SO 208, 6.12.84

Tony Greenstein and Andrew Hornung take up a debate with Gerry Ben-Noah's review (SO 199) of Lenni Brenner's books 'Zionism in the Age of the Dictators' and 'The Iron Wall'

TO reply to Gerry Ben Noah's review article, "Re-writing the holocaust" (SO 199), we shall ignore some of the detailed remarks concerning, for instance, Lenni Brenner's books. On some of these questions Ben Noah is right, on others wrong — most of the time his points are simply not relevant.

What we are concerned with are the *central issues* raised by Brenner and others and raised again by Ben Noah; we are concerned with "the sense he makes" (to use Ben Noah's own phrase) of the history of Zionism.

A second preliminary remark: for an article that accuses certain writers of creating a grotesque "amalgam" — of equating Zionism with anti-Semitism — the review itself offers a pretty bizarre example of this very technique when it equates Nazi apologists who rewrite the history of the holocaust (note the title!) with people with a proven record of combatting racism including anti-Semitism.

Running through the article is the argument that there exists a "left" anti-Semitism equivalent to that of the right, as if the Left has, from the days of Marx onwards, constituted a second wing of anti-Semitism.

While examples of anti-immigrant campaigning of a decidedly anti-Semitic character are not hard to find before World War 2, it is the Left, the working class movement, that has proved the most consistent opponent of anti-Semitism.

Nutshell

Indeed, here we have the whole issue in a nutshell: it is the Left (with all its imperfections) that has been the opponent of anti-Semitism while the self-styled movements of national salvation of the Jews, Zionism, has manifestly failed.

That Zionism should seek to falsify this — indeed, claim the contrary — is not surprising. How else should it justify itself?

By its colonial conquests alone?

This distortion — the picture of "left" anti-Semitism — is peddled by the Jewish establishment in Britain today. Firstly, it serves as a cover for their own inactivity in fighting the real anti-Semites of the fascist and Tory Right. Whether it has been the Lewisham demonstration of 1977, the formation of the ANL, the fight to exclude Patrick Harrington from North London Polytechnic or other situations where a stand against racism and fascism needed to be made, the British Board of Deputies — the overwhelmingly Zionist "representatives" of the Jewish community in Britain — has opposed them.

The simplest justification for their refusal to fight has always been to claim, falsely, that the Left who organised opposition in these cases is anti-Semitic because it is anti-Zionist.

Of course, the inactivity of the BoD today is hardly different from the inactivity of the BoD before it was overwhelmingly Zionist. Zionism does not determine — in the above cases — the BoD's stand entirely, rather it gives an ideological cover to its inactivity.

No solution

Secondly, Zionism justifies its general programme by claiming that no country, no regime and no social movement can provide a solution to the Jewish question because all are inevitably anti-Semitic. It is one of the many crimes of Stalinism that anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union under Stalin appeared to prove the truth of this view. The consequences of this for Soviet opposition movements can be felt to this day.

Just as it is ludicrous to place the Left in the same camp as the Right when it comes to anti-Semitism, so it is nonsense to talk of a "left" version of fascist revisionism which seeks to deny the holocaust took place. What some Leftists are, however, trying to do is measure Zionism against its implicit and explicit claim to be the movement which saved Jewry and which offered a resistance to fascism that non-Jewish movements could not do.

Stating that the Zionist movement — not merely individual Zionists — collaborated with the Nazis (why they did is another

matter) and, more to the point, even obstructed attempts at rescue does not minimise the Nazis' guilt, as Ben Noah states.

To claim as much is like asserting that Trotsky, by insisting on the responsibility of Stalinism for Hitler's rise to power, was minimising the Nazis' responsibility for what happened as a consequence of Hitler's victory.

Or perhaps Lenin was wrong to see German Social Democracy's class collaboration as a decisive element in the victory of German imperialism over the labour movement? Perhaps he was whitewashing German imperialism!

Clearly this line of argument is simply a sentimentalist's confusion. It is utterly alien to Marxism.

Of course, the Nazis were responsible for the holocaust. The Nazis' responsibility, however, should not be used to obscure or conceal the role of others. Despite the good intentions of many Zionists — and many people joined the Zionist movement when all else had failed, more out of desperation than ideological conviction — we have to say (and Gerry Ben Noah nowhere denies it) that Zionism's starting point was the abandonment of the fight against anti-Semitism.

No wonder then that the Nazis looked to the Zionists to run the Judenrat's Jewish Councils and the Jewish police. As many have testified, they played an important part in pacifying the Jewish communities and in Hungary and elsewhere actually helped in rounding up victims. This is why the Judenrate were so despised and hated.

Let us emphasise one thing: we do not say simply (as an anti-Semite might) that Jews betrayed Jews. It is neither a matter merely of individual Jews nor of Jews in general — we are talking about Zionist organisations. Gerry Ben Noah's whole article bases itself on just the kind of confusion — the confusion between "Jew" and "zionism" — that he rails against.

Small

It is essential to remember that before World War 2 Zionism was almost everywhere little more than a small trend within Jewish communities.

In order to increase the con-

fusion, the article claims that the Polish Bund — the majority party of the Polish Jewish working class — collaborated on the same scale as the Zionists. It did not: it had a record of unswerving opposition to Nazism. Again, we are not talking about individual members but about the movements as a whole.

Ben Noah's defence of Zionism on these matters leads him to try to justify Herzl's meeting with von Plehve, the Tzarist Minister of the Interior and a noted anti-Semitic pogrommist. But it won't do simply to brush this off as a "hard-headed calculation", an alliance with the devil by a movement with its back to the wall.

The fact is that Zionism sought to ally with Russian autocracy against the progressive forces amongst whom the Jewish workers and petty-bourgeoisie formed a sizeable number.

Sentimentalism

Again, Ben Noah's sentimentalism breaks through. Perhaps he would prefer to see Herzl as a basically noble man. Who cares? The argument is not about good and bad persons, people acting in good or bad faith. The argument is about political affinities and political logic.

If Herzl, Weizmann — and, yes, why not? — Jabotinsky were all good people and devoted to the survival (as they saw it) of Jewry, then it is all the more clear how reactionary an ideology Zionism is when it was capable of getting the first to praise von Plehve; the second to praise Mussolini and the third to support Petlyura, the leader of the White Russians with over 200,000 Jewish lives on his hands.

Note well: Jabotinsky did not simply parley with Petlyura, he supported him against the Left!

To Ben Noah this is all "tragic confusion", the product of desperate circumstances. Weizmann's comparison of the bolshevik Revolution with the advent of Nazism was perhaps such a "tragic confusion" — a confusion between those who outlawed pogroms and those who instigated them!

Perhaps the leaders of Hungarian Zionism whose "Rescue Department" worked under the aegis of Eichmann and Becher and without whom Nazism could



never have been so successful in their exterminatory drive in Hungary — perhaps they were also tragically confused?

Or perhaps the economic transfer agreement between Nazi Germany and the Zionist settlement in Palestine — an agreement approved by the Zionist Congress of 1935 — which helped break the anti-Nazi boycott was both a "hard-headed calculation" and a "tragic confusion".

The only "confusion" here is in Ben Noah's own head. And it is a double confusion: firstly, he is confused about the facts (Weizmann was well aware of the genocidal drive of Nazism as his speech in 1937 to the 20th Zionist Congress made clear) and secondly, he is confused about the point under debate.

No one argues that the Zionists were just as willing to kill six million Jews as the Nazis.

Disarmed

The point under debate is whether or not Zionism as an ideology disarmed its followers in the face of persecution, whether it minimised the implications of anti-Semitism by its belief in the worthlessness of Diaspora Jewry (Weizmann in the above mentioned speech refers to the millions about to perish as "dust, economic and moral dust in a cruel world") and whether as a movement it

didn't always put the building up of the Jewish settlement in Palestine before the saving of Jewish or other lives...even to the point of obstructing emigration if it wasn't to Palestine and of rounding up Jews for the gas chambers.

Let Gerry Ben Noah answer the simple question as to whether Zionism as an ideology and as a movement disarmed its followers in the face of fascist attack and obstructed efforts at saving Jewish lives. If he believes it did not, let him say what part of the overwhelming evidence — "events (which) are real and publicly known", as he himself calls them — is wrong.

The truth is that the overwhelming evidence demonstrates that Zionist leaders were concerned about the fate of European Jewry only insofar as it concerned the establishment of a Jewish state. To understand why, it is necessary to realise that Zionism was never about saving Jews but redeeming them.

To the logical Zionist, then, a great stream of refugees to non-Nazi Europe or the US could only marginalise the effort to build up a Jewish state — the precondition for "redeeming" Jewry from its Diaspora mentality — and threaten the existing communities in the countries of reception.

Ben Gurion put it most succinctly when he said, by way of warning the Zionist Executive at its December 17 1938 meet-

ing: "If Jews will have to choose between the refugees, saving Jews from concentration camps, and assisting the national museum in Palestine, mercy will have the upper hand and the whole energy of the people will be channelled into saving Jews from various countries. Zionism will be struck off the agenda not only in world public opinion, in Britain and the United States, but elsewhere in Jewish public opinion.

Palestinians

If we allow a separation between the refugee problem and the Palestinian problem, we are risking the existence of Zionism."

Ben Noah knows that such quotations can be produced in great quantity from spokespersons of every wing of Zionism. He knows Zionism opposed the anti-Nazi boycott; he knows Zionism opposed the opening of the US to Jewish refugees in excess of the numbers stipulated in pre-war rulings; indeed, he recommends to us Nathan Weinstock's excellent book, "Zionism, False Messiah" as an alternative to the books he condemns though that book tells us (p.136) that, "The role of the Zionist Organisation's refusal to contribute to the rescue of European Jewry elsewhere than in Palestine remains to be written. Sometimes, this attitude was akin to outright sabotage."

So what is he saying? That Ben Gurion was joking? That he was lying to the Executive, playing a diplomatic game as Herzl had done with von Plehve? Or simply that the coincidence between the words and actions of Zionism's leaders is just that...a coincidence, a fluke of history?

In the final analysis, all Ben Noah has to say is this: even if Zionism as an ideology aided the Nazis and other reactionaries before them and even if there are documented acts of collaboration between Zionists and reactionaries (not just diplomatic agreements), the ultimate aims of the Zionists and those of the anti-Semites were different: the former wanted to redeem Jews while the latter didn't.

Needless to say, that is not something we deny, nor is that very surprising. But that is not what the dispute is about.

Socialist Organiser

A final word to Socialist Organiser. It is a good thing that you publish views that you don't agree with. This only becomes a problem when it is not clear what your own position is. Is it the position contained in a review some time ago which did not dispute the interpretation that Gerry Ben Noah attacks or is it Gerry Ben Noah's? Or have you no view at all?

It is time you pinned your colours to the mast before others do it for you.

Ignorant and libellous

Lenni Brenner, SO 234, 3.7.85

The world, she do run in funny ways. Way back on October 4 1984, your publication ran a review by one Gerry Ben-Noah, of my books, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators* and *The Iron Wall*.

Now Ben-Noah is forced to admit that "Most of the events he (Brenner) refers to," meaning my charges that various Zionist factions collaborated with the Hitlerites, "are real". However, "This is not to say that a sizeable catalogue of inaccuracies and contradictions within Brenner's *corpus* could not be assembled".

Well said, except that he then kind of forgot to tell us about even one specific inaccuracy.

After wasting a page

unsubstantiated charges about my alleged errors, Ben-Noah sagely counseled us that "Marxists would be better off turning to Nathan Weinstock's *Zionism: False Messiah*". An excellent choice, especially as Weinstock has been kind enough to write me that my book is "a fine piece of work," and that he has tried to get it translated into French!

Ben-Noah had the audacity to call me a "paranoid". Why? Because of "the suggestion that rich Jews control the US Democratic Party and thus American foreign policy".

Except that since the Democrats don't control Washington, not even a paranoid like me can think that any Democrat, Jewish or otherwise, runs Reagan's

foreign policy.

However, crazy guy that I am, I do not 'suggest', I insist that rich Jews — not rich Albanians — are the single most important financial factor in the Democratic Party, and that therefore that party will stick with Zionism to the end.

But would you believe it, I'm not the only lunatic on the set. Certainly most American scholars would acknowledge G. William Domhoff as the great specialist on the country's rich. That sociologist wrote, in his *Fat Cats and Democrats*, that:

"Since the gentile financial community is almost exclusively

Republican, however, it is the Jewish financiers who by default provide the Democrats with their handful of essential money raisers among the super-wealthy... Jewish investment bankers combined with other Jews... to provide the financial leadership of the Democratic Party in every major non-Southern city except Boston."

There is no need to go on, it is obvious that when Ben-Noah is not libelous he is ignorant, and when not ignorant he is libelous. All that needs to be further said is that it is evident that Zionism is in deep trouble over my charges if the *Jewish Chronicle* had to stoop to trying to utilise Ben-Noah's frothings to defend itself.

Abram Leon's Marxist classic

Constance Lever

Constance Lever reviews Abram Leon's classic Marxist attempt to explain the history of the Jewish people, and why for 2000 years without a country of their own they retained a separate identity. The article first appeared in the paper 'Workers' Fight', February 5 1972.

[The Jewish Question', by Abram Leon: Pathfinder Press].

IN 1944 Abram Leon was murdered in the gas chambers of Auschwitz. But unlike most of the millions who died there too, he understood the force that destroyed him, and he had devoted himself, up to his arrest a few months before, to the fight against it.

A leading Belgian Trotskyist, Leon had directed his party's socialist propaganda work amongst the working-class conscript soldiers of the occupying German army, helped organise meetings of underground factory committees in the metal plants of Liege, and travelled secretly to occupied France to re-establish the international links of the revolutionary workers' movement.

These actions were not only those of a socialist-internationalist, but of a Jew who understood that decaying capitalism had no place for the Jews whom it had evicted from their traditional class position as feudal middlemen: who understood that it could only use them as a scapegoat for its own crimes. Capitalism was a world system from which there could be no escape — and the only salva-

tion for the Jews, as for the working class, lay in destroying it.

Historical

Abram Leon came to these conclusions on the basis of a historical analysis which he had worked out while a leader of the Belgian Zionist socialist youth movement Hasnomer Hatzar. He had argued for his explanation within the Zionist movement, and had then left on the basis of it to join the Trotskyists in 1939.

Zionist ideas centred round the Jewish myth — that the root of the tragic history of the Jewish people lay in the action of the Roman soldiers, 2000 years ago, who drove the Jews from their land, dispersing them over the earth; that their spiritual greatness lay in their holding together, despite dispersal and persecution, united by a belief in one god and in their national destiny; and the myth that their problem could be solved and their destiny realised by a return to 'their' land, of 2000 years ago.

Leon argued that the Jews were a 'people-class': a historically and culturally distinct people, bound together by a common class position. They were mainly involved in trade, beginning in the ancient world in which their land straddled the crosspoints of the trade routes between the centres of the ancient civilisations. It was not the Roman soldiers, but their own jobs as traders which scattered them through the ancient world;

the mass dispersal of Jews outside Palestine had already become a fact before the final fall of Jerusalem. It was not despite the dispersal but because of it and of the common class position that accompanied it, that they survived as a distinct people.

Class

And now, in the modern world, it was not essentially as a national minority, but as an unpopular, increasingly irrelevant and therefore powerless class that they faced anti-semitism. It was, argued Leon, by the destruction of capitalism, not by the establishment of a client state of imperialism — Israel — that the survival and freedom of 18 million Jews around the world could be assured.

Centuries before the Romans destroyed the Temple more than three quarters of the Jews lived outside Palestine, scattered around the ancient world.

With the decline of Roman society, the eclipse of towns and the shrinking of trade and their replacement by a local rural economy producing use-values, ruled by local landowners, the Jews remained as more or less the only traders and, after the coming of Islam, the only links between east and west. On the other hand, in time those Jews not engaged in trade and finance stopped being Jews, assimilated by conversion to Christianity or Islam. The job of trading shaped Judaism and led to its survival. Being born a Jew prepared and destined

a child to the commercial class.

Again and again throughout its history, the unity of the Jewish people-class was selectively strengthened by the conversion and assimilation of those of its members who did not carry on the economic jobs of the majority. No trace remains, as distinct groups, of the pre-Islamic Jewish farmers of North Africa, of the Jewish landed proprietors of 4th-century Germany, or of the Jewish warrior tribes of Arabia.

It is probable, ironically, that there are more physical descendants of the Palestine Jews of Bar Kochbar's time in the Arab refugee camps than amongst the 'returning' Jews of Israel.

Markets

The natural economy of early feudalism is one where goods are produced to be used directly, by the peasant or his lord, and not with markets in mind. Money plays little part in daily life. Yet such a society, especially its ruling class, has need of traders and money-lenders for exceptional purposes — for rare essentials and for luxuries from distant countries, for celebrations and for war. The kings learned early to buy mercenaries against disobedient vassals.

Yet the performance of these essential commercial and financial tasks goes against the grain of the values and structure of natural-economy society. It was the Jews who performed them, and who were for a time well rewarded and respected for it.

Yet this independent Jewish merchant capital was in no sense a germ of modern capitalism. The Jewish merchant did not invest money in production, he was merely the link between points of production far apart, over which he had no influence. The development of early bourgeois merchant capital, growing up organically out of society and gradually achieving power over raw materials and local processes of production, had first to overcome the obstacle of the commercial monopoly of the Jews — who belonged to feudal society and depended on it, though they were a foreign body within it.

As money economy spread, cities grew and trade developed as part of normal life, the Jews were evicted from commerce and left with money-lending alone. As various sources of money developed, this too lost its essential relevance. Hostility to the money-lender, held in check by the need of him, broke bounds when this need disappeared. From the 12th century to the 14th century, Jews were hounded and burned, accused of ritual murder and of poisoning wells.

In 1190, for example, hundreds of Jews besieged in York Castle committed mass suicide rather than surrender to the excesses of the Crusader knights outside.

In country after country Jews were expropriated and driven out, most taking refuge in east Europe and Russia, where a more backward society still had a place for them as go-betweens.

But in eastern Europe, by the 18th and 19th centuries, history began to repeat itself. Feudal economy decayed, money and exchange relationships seeped

through the cracks. Jews made redundant in their old tasks moved from villages and small towns into the cities.

They started to diversify their economic activity and to become involved in production — but they went into workshops, not factories, as craftsmen. They took up, for market production, those consumer-goods skills that some had always practised for their own communities.

Ruined

But their new economic base soon shrank. The march of industrialisation eastwards drove them out of this refuge, just as it had ruined craftsmen such as handloom weavers everywhere else.

Everywhere it developed, capitalism ruined both feudal middlemen and artisans. In the west it eventually found new jobs for these displaced people. But it developed in the East only after it began to rot and become parasitic in the West.

Western capitalism at one and the same time both stimulated and stifled the development of the East, so that it was unable to reabsorb those ruined by the disruption of the old order.

The competition of the Jews — and also their weakness — now led to an explosion of the traditional hatred for Jews, often, as in Russia, organised by governments, Christian churches, and police forces. Artisans, shopkeepers and many workers remembered how their peasant fathers had hated the Jewish moneylender and landlord's agent. There followed pogroms, persecutions and witch trials on the model of the Middle Ages — as, for example, the Bayliss trial in Russia in 1911.

A second mass migratory wave reversed the movement of the 13th and 14th centuries. By the 1920s millions had left, most to Germany and America.

Obstacle

Unlike feudalism, capitalism has no special place for the people-class. Early capitalism finds them an obstacle. Established advancing capitalism diversifies their economic tasks and assimilates them. In the countries of the West, before the mass migrations from Eastern Europe, those who remained or had returned earlier were well on the road to assimilation. Intermarriage was high, conversion common.

The new wave of migration to the West was soon followed by the post-World-War-I crisis of capitalism, bringing mass unemployment, ruined small middle classes, and a decaying society. Having set the Jews in motion, capitalism could not now find room for them. Seeking to enter the petty bourgeois and craftsmen jobs to which they were accustomed, they found themselves facing the competition and hatred of similar elements, themselves being ruined.

Fascism directed popular hatred of capitalism and terror in the face of social collapse onto the traditional 'money-men', vulnerable precisely because they were, as a people, no longer major money-men or capitalists.

The septic stream of anti-semitism which had always oozed along the sewers of society — the preoccupation

of cranks, misfits and those who survive visions of the 'who-killed-Christ' variety — now became a central element in the fascist myth erected to defend the rule of society by deflecting the wrath of their victims against a scapegoat.

The Jew had long personified money in folklore. He now became the cause of all the catastrophes which capitalism was inflicting on the mass of the people.

Thus it was not capitalism as such which ruined and starved the people — but an undefinable section of it, 'Jewish capital' — which also, mysteriously, in its other guise of 'Jewish Bolshevism', was the all-malevolent force behind the workers' parties and the labour unions which were rousing the ire and jealousy of the terrified shopkeepers, yet offered little or nothing to the semi-worker, the lumpen-proletarian.

All ills could be traced to their source in the many-headed, anti-national 'Jewish conspiracy'. All who were aggrieved, sore, bruised, by the system or disappointed by the failures and betrayals of the Socialist and Communist parties and who could see no way out of their own misery, found a scapegoat.

In Europe, mass armies of ruined small shopkeepers, clerks, lumpen workers and demoralised unemployed were organised by the fascist agents of the big bosses to beat down the 'anti-national' 'Jewish conspiracy' — and first and foremost that expression of it to be found in the workers' parties and the trade unions.

Deluded

Drunk with despair and demagoguery, many of the fascist rank and file sincerely thought they were striking at the root cause of their problems, though in fact they were only the deluded soldier-squads, controlled from a safe distance, of the real cause of their misery: the real, rather than the apocryphal, capitalist class.

And the Jews, having figured in history for centuries as a people-class associated above all with trade and money, now had no special role left except as a scapegoat for the masters of money, of trade, of production and of the lives of the masses.

Together with Communists, Socialists, and trade union militants of the working class — including the German working class — millions of Jews vanished into the extermination camps of a lunatic society trapped in a blind alley of crisis and war. As Leon expressed it, "Historically the success of racism means that capitalism has managed to canalise the anti-capitalist consciousness of the masses into a form that antedates capitalism and which no longer exists except in a vestigial state."

In this situation Zionism, beginning as a small movement at the end of the last century, gained mass influence among Jews. It wanted to escape from the redundant people-class position and from crisis-ridden capitalism by a simple physical removal to Palestine. It remained a minority outlook among Jews until the Nazi holocaust.

Its predominance among Jews today is one of the results of that most tragic defeat in the history of the people-class — a defeat it was powerless to prevent.

and which could only have been prevented by the revolutionary victory of the international working class. That victory was prevented or betrayed by the Socialist and Stalinist political organisations (and, incidentally, to a minor degree, by the Zionist diversion from the class struggle).

Utopian

Living in Nazi Europe and fighting for the socialist revolution, Abram Leon dismissed Zionism as a utopian and reactionary diversion from the real struggle which would liberate humanity, including the Jews. He did not live to see modern Israel become a major client state of American imperialism and its partner in repressing the attempts of the Arabs to escape from backwardness and from the imperialist exploitation which keeps them backward.

Leon also could not have foreseen the post-war temporary revival and stability which gave a new lease of life both to Zionism and particularly to the process of Jewish assimilation. Russia is a pecu-

liar and, in many ways, a special case, but in the two other major Jewish centres, the USA and Israel, the Jews are well on the way to losing their old identity.

In America the Yiddish language is lost, sermons and choirs bring Jewish religious ceremonies towards a Christian pattern, ritual restrictions are dropped and Judaism becomes a marginally distinctive version of the American way of life. Jews have been absorbed into every level of the US class structure and economy, though particularly into the bourgeoisie, and they have been in a position to offer massive aid to Israel, motivated by memories of the gas chambers and the congruent interests of American imperialism.

Israel

In Israel too most of the traditional culture and way of life of the people-class (including their traditional radicalism and their internationalism) have also disappeared. The 'Jewish Question' here has been transformed into the prob-

lem of the Zionist state of Israel, imperialism's ally against the Arab people.

The twisted logic of a capitalist world has resulted in some of the remnants of one of imperialism's most tragic victims becoming its best defender in this area, where imperialism has helped create a Zionist state complete with all the normal features of capitalism, including even racial discrimination against dark-skinned Jews, as well as against the conquered Arabs.

This has been the fate of the utopian Zionist attempt to escape from the situation of the Jewish people under capitalism. Like every other utopian colony known to history, the Zionist one too has turned out to be a reproduction of the world outside. Almost everything the original colonists sought to escape has re-emerged within Israel itself.

It proves the truth which Abram Leon so clearly understood and which led him to a sharp break with Zionism — that there is no escape from the problems of the capitalist world except its total transformation by the revolutionary socialist struggle, and the victory of the working class.



4. 'ZIONISM' AND 'ANTI-ZIONISM' IN BRITAIN TODAY

What is 'Zionism' today?

Mick Ackersley,
SO 289, 23.10.86

'PILLAR OF Fire' was made, as the credits say, for Channel Four by the Israeli Broadcasting Authority. It is therefore likely to be dismissed by the left as 'Zionist propaganda'. It shouldn't be.

Zionism is a term that has now ceased to have any very clear meaning. It originally meant a Jewish political movement aiming to set up a Jewish state in Palestine. The Zionists were a minority of Jews until well after Hitler took power in Germany.

With the founding and consolidation of the state of Israel in 1948 and after, the original 'Zionism' was consigned to history.

What does 'Zionism' mean today? The right of the Jewish state of Israel to exist, even if you would like to see it radically changed? In that sense probably a majority of politically aware people in the world, vastly though their outlooks differ, are 'Zionist'. In that sense, too, Socialist Organiser is 'Zionist'.

But the 'Zionism' that is denounced on the left is not some vast amorphous body. It is far narrower than that. In practice it means the 'Zionist' hard core of activists and enthusiasts, that is the Jews.

The commitment of large chunks of the left to the destruction of the state of Israel inevitably leads it to adopt attitudes of deep hostility to Jews — not racist hostility, for the left is not racist, but political hostility — except that it is political hostility to almost an entire people, and on a matter of life and death.

'Pillar of Fire' tells a story which should make every 'anti-Zionist' socialist who sees it examine his or her conscience. For the facts do not lie. And though inevitably the story told by 'Pillar of Fire' is the story as seen by the Jews, and the series is thus 'biased', beyond that the facts are straightforward.

The late Isaac Deutscher compared Israel to a 'liferaft state' — the Jews who have survived the Holocaust fled there. The tragedy was and is that there were people there already.

Hitler — the most terrible enemy in the history of the Jews — made the state of Israel. In the '30s hundreds of thousands of Jews went to Palestine — because no other country would have them.

The great American democracy, whose Statue of Liberty invites the world to 'give me your poor, your huddled masses', could not find room for Jewish refugees even to save their lives. A shipload of Jewish refugees crossed the Atlantic but the few hundred passengers could not get permission to land in the USA — or

anywhere else on the two American continents.

They returned to Europe on the eve of World War 2. Most of them perished.

There are many pictures of the millions of Jews of Eastern Europe going about their daily lives — traders, peddlers, scholars, children playing in the street — almost all of them destined to die soon at the hands of Hitler's racist maniacs.

In 1937 a Commission of Enquiry was set up by the British government which then ruled Palestine, and it recommended that Palestine be partitioned, giving the Jews their own state. It was shelved because of Arab opposition.

The Arab opposition was understandable enough; but maybe if the Jewish state had been set up, the Jews of Europe would have had a refuge, and millions might have survived. Instead the Jews of Europe were trapped on a continent which soon offered them nothing but death.

Palestine itself came close to being a death-trap for the Jews there. If the Germans and Italians had won the battle in the Western Desert in 1942, then Palestine would have been theirs. In fact the British had plans for evacuating Palestine.

Last week's episode told of the

We're not Zionist: 1

Clive Bradley, SO 290, 30.10.86

I disagree with some of what Mick Ackersley had to say in his review of Pillar of Fire. I didn't see the programme so I can't comment on it; but the review raises broader issues.

It is true that Zionism in its original sense has been 'confined to history' — the movement for a separate Jewish state. But I cannot agree that Zionism as a term now means no more than the belief that the Israeli Jews have the right to a state. If this is so, the majority certainly of Israeli anti-Zionists and non-Zionists are 'Zionists'. I do not agree that SO's position is, or should be in any sense 'Zionist'.

Much of what is reactionary and oppressive in the Israeli state flows from its specifically Zionist character. That it is defined as a state for all Jews rather than its citizens is not incidental; that Jews are free to immigrate to Israel but displaced Arabs are not, is not incidental either. These features, among others, define Israel as a Zionist state, and to understate this aspect of the issue is liable to lead to an underestimation of the problems posed by the Middle East conflict.

Holocaust — the systematic extermination of Jews which began with the Nazi invasion of the USSR in mid-'41. In Poland, the Jews had been treated with great brutality and herded into a ghetto in Warsaw: the Jews the Nazis encountered in the USSR were slaughtered immediately.

Then came the extermination camps. All in all, nearly six million Jews died.

Presumably the next episode will show what happened when the few survivors of the death camps tried to pick up their lives again. In Poland, many were attacked and driven out: they fled, mostly to Palestine.

The terrible truth is that 'Zionist propaganda' had all its work — and much more — done for it by the virulent anti-semites and those who either connived with them or looked away.

'Pillar of Fire' made the telling point that though the Allied airforces had control of the air over Europe from mid 1944 and hit innumerable airports, depots, munitions factories, etc. (not to speak of cities), and though what was happening in the death camps was known to the Allied governments, no attempt was made to destroy the death factories or the railway lines leading to them.

Watch what's left of the series.

Similarly, it is right to condemn the anti-semitism of the 'democratic' Allies prior to 1948 in refusing to open their borders to Jews fleeing Hitler; but it seems to me to undermine that condemnation to add "maybe if a Jewish state had been created, the Jews of Europe would have had a refuge, and millions might have survived." Maybe. But far better, surely, if they had been able to escape to America, or Britain, where most of them would have preferred to go. And where were the communists, homosexuals, gypsies, trade unionists supposed to seek refuge? A 'refuge' was not the answer — as post-1948 history has tragically shown.

In any case, the fate of the 'refuge' would have depended on Allied military success in north Africa.

SO is right to bend the stick against the 'idiot anti-imperialists' on the question of the Middle East; but I think maybe there's a danger of bending it too far.

CLIVE BRADLEY,
London.

We're not Zionist: 2

Bryan Edmands, SO 290, 30.10.86

I wish to correct the balance of, and one of the central assertions made in the article "The making of the Jewish state" in SO 289.

Mick Ackersley states that "Zionism is a term that has now ceased to have any very clear meaning". However, as he asserts, it does mean "the right of the Jewish state of Israel to exist", even if perhaps "radically" altered.

But the state of Israel, a state clearly based upon the democratic wishes of the vast majority of its Jewish people, is a state fundamentally resting upon the oppression of over 2¼ million Palestinian Arabs — Arabs scattered throughout the Middle East (and elsewhere) or forced to live under the Israeli state's military control of the annexed West Bank and Gaza Strip, not to mention the con-

denied democratic, civil rights, expelled from their homelands and concentration camp-like ghettos in South Lebanon.

To say that in a "sense", then, Socialist Organiser is "Zionist" is thus akin to saying that we support and condone all of this — and the manifestation of the Israeli government's foreign and domestic policy in the region, namely the continued and systematic terrorisation of the Palestinian and Arab peoples.

I understand the motivation behind the sentiments expressed in the article — there is no easy solution to this situation: and that most solutions put forward by the Left in essence reduce to an external and forceful destruction of not only the Israeli state but Jewish society (and people)!

But in trying to differentiate from this position Mick Ackersley has gone too far the other way!

Zionism is a thoroughly racist and reactionary ideology — one today based upon the maintenance of power of one people, the Jews, organised in their own militarised state, over that of a dispossessed and dispersed people, the Palestinian Arabs.

The terrible tragedy of the Jewish people is that in fleeing the Holocaust they built a homeland by the systematic brutalising and oppression of another people — a people who to this day continue a hard, bitter, misrepresented and all too often forgotten struggle against this reality.

BRYAN EDMANDS
London.

Where 'anti-Zionism' leads

Jack Cleary, SO 293, 20.11.86

Clive Bradley was one of the first two or three SO supporters to break away from the delusion we used to share with many on the left that the answer to the Jewish-Arab conflict is a "secular democratic state" in Palestine.

His comments on Mick Ackersley's review of "Pillar of Fire" are therefore significant, because, it seems to me, they are inspired by an emotional left-over from the old position and the attitudes that properly went with it.

Like "Socialism", "Communism" and "Trotskyism", "Zionism" is now a pretty decayed word with lots of different meanings: it no longer defines something clearly — today you need additional information before you know what the word is being used for and what it means.

Its original — now its historic — meaning was clear enough: the goal of a Jewish state and activity to achieve it. Its logical meaning now, developing from its original meaning, should surely centre on the state created by the original Zionists and on one's attitude to that state. Those who support the right of the Jewish state, in some form, to exist, are, logically, "Zionists" — and that now includes a vast spectrum of opinion, including those, like SO, who are hostile to aspects of the existing Jewish state.

When we wanted to replace Israel with the mythical and impossible secular democratic state, we logically regarded all who supported Israel as Zionists of one sort or another. I did, certainly. Now we should try to be consistent and honest with ourselves.

If the word "Zionism" could be forgotten about or left in its decayed form to the reforming Israeli critics of the Jewish state as a term of abuse for the Israeli establishment, fine.

But we have to relate to the word "Zionism" according to its use in the society around us, and especially its use on the left. For, though logically all who support Israel's right to existence are Zionists, 'Zionist' on the left now in fact means Jew.

It is the Jews who have the hardcore commitment to Israel and from whom come Zionism's militants. It is the Jewish Zionists who are the target of the "no-free-speech-for-Zionists" campaigns.

It was surely established in our discussions in SO that the left's "anti-imperialism-of-idiots" Zionist-bashing is anti-semitic — a new form of anti-semitism, if you like, but anti-semitic nonetheless.

It is anti-semitic not only because of its unique proposal to destroy a nation, but also because of what it implies towards most Jews outside Israel, who defend Israel's right to exist. That being so, we can distance

ourselves from certain detestable policies and activities of the Israeli state: but to distance ourselves from "Zionism" is neither consistent nor honourable.

No name, no mere word will saddle us with responsibility for the crimes of the Israeli state. But on the left now the violent repudiation of that word, when in fact it is used to mean Jew, would saddle us with some share of the responsibility for the latent, and sometimes rampant, anti-semitism implied in the left's attitude to Israel and 'Zionism' — and some responsibility for the left's vocal and active hostility to Jews ('Zionists') who refuse to break with Israel and Zionism and endorse the Arab goal of conquering and destroying the Jewish nation state.

Yours fraternally,
JACK CLEARY
London

We're not Zionist: 3

Clive Bradley, SO 294, 27.11.86

If all that being a 'Zionist' meant or implied was support for the right of an Israeli Jewish nation to exist, and opposition to their forcible inclusion into a 'democratic secular state', I would have no quarrel with Mick Ackersley and Jack Cleary (Letters, SO 293).

I am even prepared to concede that

if that is all you mean by it, then I am a 'Zionist' too — it would be logically irrefutable.

But I don't think that is all it means. Zionism is an ideology — a 'decayed' one, no doubt, but an ideology all the same. There are two claims in particular of this ideology that I think we should oppose.

First, is that the movement for the creation of Israel was a movement of Jewish national liberation. Whatever

the subjective intentions of its adherents, it was in practice a movement of colonial conquest.

Second, even if it had not been a reactionary movement in this sense, the project of a Jewish state would have been a false method of fighting anti-semitism in Europe (as false as a notion of a 'homosexual state' for other victims of fascism); and a ridiculous method of developing a Jewish socialist movement as the 'socialist' Zionists believed.

Just history? I don't think so. Whilst, to repeat, defending the rights of the Jews, we have to explain

the origins of the conflict. It is simply impossible to discuss the question of Palestine without doing so. These historical issues are therefore very live political issues.

And the Israeli state is recognisably Zionist — recognisably the product of the Zionist movement. It is a state for Jews, as opposed to a state for its citizens; Arabs expelled since its creation cannot live in it.

I oppose a programme to conquer Israel. I think that to propose the self-obliteration of the Israeli Jewish nation is utopian rubbish. I think that the expelled Arabs have no ab-

solute right, in the sense of a right that in principle could be enforced by external armies and thus conquest, to 'return'. But I do think they have a 'right' in a more minimal sense, to live in Israel, and that their exclusion is chauvinist, indeed racist.

Zionism, minimally, is Israeli Jewish chauvinism. I do not think we should call ourselves 'Zionists' anymore than, through support for Palestinian national rights, we should be Palestinian nationalists.

To do so obscures real political issues rather than clarifying them.

CLIVE BRADLEY,
London

Against ideological terror

After Clive Bradley's letter in last weeks SO I'm not sure what his quarrel with Mick Ackersley and Jack Cleary is about. Clive objected to Mick Ackersley's assertion that Zionism logically means support for the right of Israel to exist and that those who support its right to exist are Zionist. Now Clive — who does support the right of Israel to exist concedes that if this is all that is meant by 'Zionism' then he too is a Zionist: 'It would be logically irrefutable'.

Clive insists that Zionism means other things too. Yet nobody proposed that we formally adopt the name — or the ideas and attitudes of the campaigning Zionists, who are usually Jewish chauvinists.

Israel was created by 'a movement of colonial conquest' — of sorts. But people who emphasise this are usually concerned with more than precise classification. They use it to justify a denial of Israel's right to exist and to back up a proposal to roll back the film of history by destroying the Jewish nation in Palestine. It encapsulates a reactionary Arab Revanchist and chauvinist programme.

In any case support for Israel's right to exist does not necessarily imply support for the 'movement of colonial conquest'. We can only relate to that now as an event of past history.

Setting up a Jewish state was a false way to fight anti-semitism in Europe? I'm not so sure about that. By the end of his life Trotsky — though he rejected the Zionist enterprise in Palestine — had come round to the view that a Jewish state was necessary (see SO number 226 — April 10th 1986: 'Trotsky and the Jewish question').

The historic fact is that Zionism wasn't able to save Europe's Jews from anti-semitism, or from massacre. Nothing but the socialist revolution would have saved the

Jews. The fascist armies might very well have got to Palestine — They almost did early in the war — and turned it into a death trap for the Jews. Yet that didn't happen: The Jews in Palestine survived, while the Jews of Poland and most of Europe were murdered in their millions. That fact makes one wish that what Issac Deutscher called 'The Liferaft State' had come into existence before the war.

History tells us that all methods of fighting Anti-semitism in Europe failed, and that our method — assimilation — failed more thoroughly and disastrously than the Zionist method; and that it failed most completely in the country where the Jews had been most assimilated — Germany. Trotsky faced up to that fact after a lifetime spent as an assimilationist.

I don't conclude that, therefore, those who said to the Jews 'assimilate and fight for the socialist revolution' were wrong. The tragic outcome wasn't inevitable. But that's how it turned out.

The massacre of the Jews — like so much else — was a byproduct of the defeat of the revolutionary socialist workers movement in the early twentieth century. But the workers were defeated; and the Jews were massacred; and as a knock-on effect terrible things were done — and are still being done — to the Palestinian Arabs (though incomparably less terrible things than were done to the Jews in Europe). From 1986 it is a matter of evaluating the history of the Jews in the 20th century and not what it was in 1900, a choice of programmes — Zionism or assimilation — to fight for.

Israel is a state for all Jews as opposed to a state for its citizens? Yes, but what is wrong with that?

As an ideal a state in which Jews and Arabs would coexist as equal citizens is very attractive. But haven't we all agreed — very belatedly to be sure — that it is a utopia behind which hides the Arab chauvinist demand for the conquest and destruction of the Jewish nation?

John O'Mahony, SO 295, 4.12.86

Either the Jews have a right to their state, or they don't. And if they do we can't make it conditional on us liking or approving everything they do. Of course while defending Israel's right to exist we champion the Palestinian Arabs within Israel and on the occupied West Bank; we support those Jews who fight Jewish Chauvinism and so on. I can't see why — within that framework and within those qualifications — it is of special concern that Israel says all Jews in the world have a right to Israeli citizenship. Israel is a state conceived as a refuge for all the victims of anti-semitism — why demand that the Israelis forget this? The law of (Jewish) return and the treatment of the Palestinian Arabs are separable and should be separated.

Surely the big issue here, though, is not just whether our support for the right of the Jews to have a state makes us — strictly speaking — Zionist or not. What makes that important and worth arguing about is that 'Zionist' now is used on the left as a term of condemnation whose emotional content — used to bludgeon, intimidate and stigmatise — is about equal to the term 'racist' and not too far away from 'fascist'. That is the political issue here.

It is necessary for us to stand up to this thinly disguised anti-semitism and to insist that it is based on ideological lies and on pseudo-historical myths about how Israel came into existence.

Think about it. On the left 'The Zionists' — read the very big majority of Jews — are stigmatised as Imperialists and racists of the very worst sort. Israel is Imperialism incarnate, with its tentacles everywhere. It was the undercover workings of powerful Jewish conspirators which led to the creation of Israel. Comparisons with Nazism come easy to those who see it like this and are frequently used. It may be only the demented 'Petro-dollar anti-Zionists' of Gerry Healy's old WRP who say all this clearly, but nevertheless that picture is widespread.

All this — despite the crimes of Israel against the Palestinian Arabs — is preposterous! The Jews have been chief single victim of Imperialism in the 20th century. The supposedly all-powerful pre-Israel world Jewish community couldn't even save its own from massacre. It couldn't secure entry visas for refugees from Nazism into Britain, the USA, or into any other country — not even to save their lives.

The picture of Zionism and Israel as a creation and tool of Imperialism (as distinct from an ally playing power politics with various imperialisms) is a grotesque historical libel and misrepresentation. That isn't how things happened, or why, whatever the long term plans and machinations of the Zionist movement. The Jews who made modern Israel possible fled to Palestine from murderous Fascism. As late as the all-

decisive war in 1948 Israel depended not on monopoly capitalist Imperialism, but on Moscow and its Czech satellite for the arms without which they might have lost.

The picture of modern history and the Jews' demonic place in it, now dominant on the left is if you think about it, not too far off a 'left-wing' version of the 'Blood libel' of the Christian anti-semites, according to which Jews murdered children during their religious rituals.

You don't need to regard Israel and Zionists as they are regarded on much of the left to be able to oppose and condemn aspects of Israel and to demand justice for the Palestinian Arabs.

In fact our equivalent of the blood libel — which owes a great deal to the thinly disguised anti-semitism of the Stalinist movement and its post 1948 campaigns against 'Zionism' — serves another purpose: It backs up

and legitimises 'socialist' support for the Arab chauvinist programme of conquering and annihilating the Jewish nation in Palestine.

Clive Bradley has as little time for this horrible nonsense as I have. But I think he hasn't freed himself from emotional attitudes and from hints and half thoughts which imply attitudes and policies he both rejects and condemns.

The job of SO is to help the left scour itself clean of the new anti-semitism. That is why, working in a political milieu in which Zionism is used as a demonological name tag to morally blackmail and ideologically terrorise Jews who stand up to the hysterical 'Anti-Zionists', SO cannot afford to go along even part of the way with the blackmailers. If we are Zionists, so then we are Zionists.

John O'Mahony

A perverse definition

Martin Thomas, SO 297, 8.1.87

FACED with rising anti-semitism in late 19th century Britain, Eleanor Marx used to declare at public meetings, 'I am a Jewess'.

Strictly speaking she wasn't, but she wanted to confront the anti-semites head on.

The position of Mick Ackersley and Jack Cleary is in some ways similar. Faced with 'anti-zionists' who say that if they defend the rights of the Israeli Jewish nation then they're Zionists, they respond: 'So I'm a Zionist. So what?'

The impulse is clearly honourable. But the logic, I think, is faulty. 'Zionism' had a clear meaning before 1948. Marxists opposed Zionism. They regarded it as a tragically mistaken attempt by the oppressed to respond to oppression, rather than as an anti-Arab imperialist conspiracy; but they opposed it.

They were right to oppose it, I think; and I believe Mick Ackersley and Jack Cleary would agree. But an Israeli Jewish nation now exists; and however it came into existence, it has rights.

Crude anti-Zionists often refer to the Israeli Jewish nation as 'the Zionists'. They evade the issue of the rights of the Israeli Jewish nation by first reducing the Israeli Jews to a political group ('Zionists') and then reducing 'Zionist' politics to the driving out of the Palestinian Arabs.

Now most Israeli Jews would accept the label 'Zionist'. And historic Zionism did mean the driving out of the Palestinian Arabs. But historic Zionism also meant many other things. And the big majority of Israeli Jews are Israeli Jews not because of an ideological choice but because they were born in Israel or found Israel as a refuge from persecution. So the 'anti-Zionist' definition grossly distorts the reality.

Then the 'anti-Zionists' add an in-

escapably anti-semitic twist by proceeding further in the same line of argument and extending the term 'Zionist' to all those (Jews) who feel a special national allegiance to the Israeli Jewish nation.

Even as a gambit in debate, saying 'So then I'm a Zionist too; so what?' is a more confusing than clarifying response. Obviously we — Mick Ackersley, Jack Cleary, myself — do not feel any special national allegiance to the Israeli Jewish nation above all others. Rather, we defend the rights of that nation like all others.

The point is to separate out all the different elements blurred together in the word 'Zionism'. It is crucial to insist that the Marxist opposition to historic Zionism has no bearing on the issue of the rights of the modern Israeli Jewish nation.

There is another problem. In Israeli and wider Jewish politics, 'Zionism' has a current meaning which is narrower than Jack Cleary's 'logical' definition as meaning 'defending the right of Israel to exist (maybe with modifications)'.

The narrower meaning is: seeing the state of Israel as having some mystic mission for the redemption (physical, social or spiritual) of the

whole worldwide Jewish people; and therefore seeing it as having not just rights proper to the Israeli Jewish nation as to any other nation, but special, additional rights, higher than those of other national entities.

I don't particularly advocate this narrower meaning as 'my' definition of Zionism. But it is certainly more logical than Jack Cleary's (one can very well condemn historic Zionism yet be a 'Zionist' in Jack Cleary's definition).

And another thing: in the general British labour movement we can very well deal with the crude 'anti-Zionists' by saying that their use of 'Zionism' is an ideological amalgam, and by insisting on defining issues more precisely: the politics of the state of Israel, and the rights of the Israeli Jewish nation, non-Israeli Jewish identification with that nation, etc.

But it is almost impossible to participate in Israeli, or broader Jewish, politics without accepting the narrower definition of Zionism, at least provisionally. And to have 'our' definition of Zionism in which almost all Jewish and Israeli anti-Zionists, and a sizeable spectrum of Palestinian nationalists, are 'Zionists', is perverse.

In the Zionist camp

————— Tony Greenstein, SO 298, 15.1.87

When, some 18 months ago, Socialist Organiser began debating its position on Zionism/Palestine, we forecast that SO would move into the Zionist camp.

Moshe Machover of Matzpen, the Socialist Organisation in Israel, was invited to participate in that debate,

because he too disagreed with the democratic, secular state position. Were he to read John O'Mahony's article (4 December) he would, I am sure, disagree with it in its entirety. Moshe is one of those who struggled to win a previously Zionist left over to an anti-Zionist position. O'Mahony seeks to do the opposite.

By his own admission he is a

Zionist supporter and despite all that has been written on the Zionist movement, its colonial roots, its reactionary role in Jewish politics, he has learnt nothing and forgotten all. He has even confused the terms 'Jewish' and 'Zionist' and then accused the rest of the Left of anti-semitism for the same sin!

Zionism *never* was a method of fighting anti-semitism. It held anti-semitism couldn't be fought, far better to come to terms with it and establish their own state. For most Jews it wasn't even a means of escape. Some 2.5 million Jews who did flee went not to Palestine but to Britain and America.

Describing those who believed that the Bolshevik Revolution made Zionism irrelevant, Chaim Weizmann, the first President of Israel, wrote "Nothing can be more superficial and nothing can be more wrong than that. The sufferings of Russian Jewry never were the cause of Zionism."

Similar statements were made by Ben Gurion during the Nazi era and the leader of American Zionism, Abba Hillel Silver. Israel was not "conceived as a refuge for all the victims of anti-Semitism" (otherwise it could hardly have seen in anti-semitism a force for good that stimulated emigration) but the only means of preserving the Jewish people as a collectivity. It was the response of the Jewish petit-bourgeoisie.

It is beyond doubt that the Zionist movement obstructed the movement to save Jews from the Holocaust, terming it 'refugeeism', e.g. it opposed the lowering of the immigration movements in Britain and the US arguing that the refugees should go to Palestine. Nor is it true that all methods of fighting anti-semitism in Europe failed.

Not only, by Begin's own admission, did some two million Jews survive by escaping into Russia, degenerated as the revolution was, but opposition to anti-semitism in countries such as Denmark (where the entire Jewish community was smuggled out to Sweden), Bulgaria and Italy *did* prevent many more Jews being killed. In Holland there was even a general strike against the deportations which the Zionist Judenrat opposed. Whose reading of history is false?

Even today, far from being the 'life-raft state', Israel jeopardises the position of Jews in the diaspora with its genocide of the Palestinians. What was Israel doing when over 2,000 young leftist Jews were being tortured to death in Argentina? Selling arms to the Junta. And the Zionist leaders of that community? Telling others not to make a fuss. Compare that to the Zionist campaign over Soviet Jewry.

Nothing in Trotsky's writings leads one to the conclusion that he supported the Zionist enterprise in Palestine. In July 1940 just before his death he wrote "The attempt to solve the Jewish question through the migration of Jews to Palestine can now be seen for what it is, a tragic mockery of the Jewish

people... Never was it so clear as it is today that the salvation of the Jewish people is bound up inseparably with the overthrow of the capitalist system."

O'Mahony's obsession with anti-semitism blinds him to the fact that anti-semitism today in Europe is not, unlike 50 years ago, state sponsored. It is a personal form of racism, confined to fringe fascist groups. It is black people in Britain, Arab people in France, Turkish workers in Germany who experience state racism. Jewish people have socially moved upwards and politically moved rightwards.

That is why we say that anti-semitism has been redefined and the term 'black anti-semitism' like 'left anti-semitism' is used as a means of countering opposition to Zionism.

Racism is not merely a question of personal prejudice, but at the level of class, a specifically oppressed section of the working class. Apart from France, there is no Jewish working class in the West, unlike the 1930s.

The Jewish people have changed and with it anti-semitism.

As Abram Leon noted, "Zionism transposes anti-semitism to all of history, it saves itself the trouble of studying the various forms of anti-semitism and their evolution." (Jewish Question, p. 247). If Jews today, unlike the Jews of the East End who fought the fascists, base their identity around Israel, then that is a reactionary identity.

Zionism as a colonial movement is not something of the past. Internal colonisation has been a continuing feature of Israel's existence. Today's operations on the West Bank are no different to what it did in the Galilee.

O'Mahony asks what is wrong with Israel being a state for all Jews as opposed to all its citizens. The answer is racism, not merely in this or that policy but in every single facet of the State's operations.

It means Israel's Arabs are at best tolerated and at worst unwanted. It means the growth of Kach and Tehiya, it means apartheid and expulsion. It means concern over the 'demographic problem', i.e. too many Arabs.

Huffing and puffing

— Steve Channon, SO 299, 22.1.87

Oh the rhetorical polemic of Tony Greenstein (SO, 15 January)... so much huffing and puffing but very little in the way of factual accuracy. Yet another tirade of half-truths, sheer fantasy and what the writer would not doubt claim to be anti-Zionism and nothing more.

Firstly there is the question of Zionism and the Holocaust. In the inimitable style of the new breed of (left wing) Holocaust revisionists, Greenstein attempts to justify his illogical analysis with plain lies.

The truth is that Zionists were at

The article demolishes other straw targets. Socialists did not advocate assimilation as a strategy, neither do we mourn it. Only incorrigible reactionaries would consciously seek to preserve differences of caste or religion where individuals choose otherwise.

Nobody on the Left believes Jews have a 'demonic place' in history. Those of us who are Jewish and whose opposition to Zionism came as a consequence of our revolutionary socialism understand not only Zionism's relationship to anti-semitism but also its reactionary role within Jewish politics.

Even the Jewish Socialists Group understand that Israel feeds off the diaspora Jewish communities contributing nothing to their well being.

Instead of an analysis which sees Israel as an artificial state, which cannot exist other than in alliance with imperialism, O'Mahony resorts to moral relativism. Jews are "the chief single victim of imperialism in the 20th century". "Incomparably less terrible things" were done to the Jews than to the Palestinians.* This ranking of hierarchies is ironically attacked on the facing page by Ms Carlisle and Ashworth.

Even were these statements true they would be irrelevant. Since when has support for a democratic, secular state been part of reactionary Arab chauvinism? It is a demand that is rejected by all the Islamic chauvinists. Unfortunately, Socialist Organiser, in refusing to give any meaningful support to the Palestinians — either in the labour movement or in NUS (where it is to the right of most reformists and on a par with Militant) has accommodated to imperialism.

As for helping the left "scour itself clean" of anti-semitism, this in itself speaks volumes about O'Mahony's analysis of racism — it's not located in society but in individuals. However not wishing to stand in his way, I suggest an open debate between ourselves and John O'Mahony in which he will have the opportunity to begin scouring.

*This sentence appears here as written in the original manuscript.

the forefront of the resistance against the Nazis — in the ghettos, concentration camps and towns — and to label the Judenrat and others who did not resist as "Zionists" is crass reactionary stereotyping of the worst order.

Jews did not die in the Holocaust because of so-called "Zionist collaboration" but because of the failure of the working class and indeed the entire world to resist the Nazis. Don't attempt to blame Jews (or Zionists, it's the same thing really) for anti-semitism — that is the sole responsibility of the anti-semites.

True, there was some support offered against the Hitlerite regime

certain states or people but the fact of the matter remains that these were isolated incidents. The majority actively assisted or passively accepted the attempted genocide of the Jewish people. That is why six million Jews were slaughtered and, as the renowned Marxist intellectual Isaac Deutscher wrote:

"If instead of arguing against Zionism in the 1920s and 1930s, I had urged European Jews to go to Palestine, I might have helped save some of the lives that were later extinguished in Hitler's gas chambers."

Zionism is racism

Bryan Edmands, SO 299, 22.1.87

Our stand against anti-semitism is both important and commendable. However, this has nothing to do with support for present-day Israel.

Well-documented histories of the racism of the Israeli state since its proclamation in May 1948; of the preceding 30 years of Zionist-encouraged and organised immigration to Palestine; and of the propaganda used by Zionists which often (purposely) served the interests of anti-semites exist.

It is now undoubtedly true that due in large part to the systematic and brutal terrorisation of the Palestinians, that Israel is held in contempt and hatred by not only Palestinians but all Arab peoples.

This brings me to the question: the above being the case, what should Socialist Organiser's position be?

I believe the basis of it should be: condemnation of the state of Israel; support for the Palestinian struggle; neighbouring Arab governments are no real friends of the Palestinians or indeed of their own working classes (they are their class enemies); a call — addressed to the only agency that could possibly carry it out, (short of there being socialism in a good part of the world), the Jewish working class — that Israel should renounce all expansionist claims and move back to, at the very least, its pre-1967 boundaries; and to begin to make extensive reparations, both in terms of financial aid and technical know-how (if so desired by the Palestinians).

Unlike the supporters of the 'democratic secular state' I agree that if there is a desire by Jews for some territorial expression of nationhood (and likewise the Palestinians), and accepting the reality that history has placed before us, some modification of pre-1967 Israel should be established through negotiations between the Jewish working class and the Palestinians. As Trotsky said in October 1934, in a reply to a letter from a group of Jewish Left Oppositionists working inside the Soviet Union:

"...for the Jews, as for any nation, the very best circumstances for cultural development (should be created). This means, inter alia: to provide for those Jews who desire to have their own schools, their own press, their own theatre, etc., a

separate territory for self-administration and development...In the sphere of the national question, there must be no restraint: on the contrary there must be an all-sided material assistance for the cultural needs of all nationalities and ethnic groups."

The truth of the situation is that anti-semitism remains the binding force of international fascism today — it is what links the National Front to Farrakhan and to the neo-Nazi AWB in South Africa. Anti-semitism is still very much at the core of racist and fascist ideology.

It may not be so evident as, say,

the oppression of blacks in this country but to dismiss it as fringe, with it being at the bottom of Greenstein's league table of oppression is hardly a socialist response.

But if one is to believe Greenstein's analysis then the reason why anti-semitism is not like it was 50 years ago is neither due to socialism nor Zionism but to Capitalism. For according to the writer it is the process of bourgeoisification that has reduced anti-semitism to the fringe!

Then again, such a reduction of anti-semitism and intellectual perversion is hardly surprising from someone like Tony Greenstein.

separate territory for self-administration and development...In the sphere of the national question, there must be no restraint: on the contrary there must be an all-sided material assistance for the cultural needs of all nationalities and ethnic groups."

It is not from emotionalism that we condemn Israel and support the Palestinians — it is in the name of democracy!

It is certainly not anti-semitic to condemn Zionism as an ideology, utterly and completely.

It is semantic nonsense to attempt to define Zionism away by saying that it now just expresses a desire for Jewish territorial rights.

The "right of return" should be

challenged, though not denied by us, on the basis that Israel is a diversion (and not a safe haven) from the class struggle. Jewish people would do better to fight for socialism in their countries of birth, rather than seeking a refuge along a spiritual/religious path.

Finally, Zionism is racism, of a peculiarly Jewish form true, but still racism.

So to assert as comrade O'Mahony does that "if we are Zionists, then we are Zionists" does nothing in aiding Jewish people, the Palestinians, and the working class, but on the contrary, gives cover to Zionism and ammunition to our enemies.

Rights and wrongs

Clive Bradley, SO 300, 29.1.87

PERHAPS the clearest way to reply to John O'Mahony's comments (Letters, SO 295) is to explain briefly my overall views.

Much of what passes as 'anti-Zionism' is implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, anti-semitic. The nice-sounding programme of a 'secular, democratic state' is a utopia, and in fact could only be implemented by force. In reality, whatever people mean by it, it is a programme unrealisable except by military conquest of Israel.

If it is supposed to be voluntary on the Jews' part, it is not an answer to the national question. A long (who could know how long?) process of change of heart by the Jews is not much of a programme for Palestinians facing oppression now. Withdrawal of Israeli forces from the post-1967 occupied territories, combined with the right of secession of majority Arab areas within pre-'67 Israel, is a big part of an immediate democratic programme.

So, I support Israel's right to exist. I agree with John O'Mahony that this is an unconditional right — that is, it is ridiculous to say that we support the conquest of Israel until such time as Israel is a nicer place. I am completely opposed to the conquest of Israel.

John O'Mahony says that we should champion the rights of the

Palestinians, and support Jews fighting Jewish chauvinism. On what basis, though? What does opposition to Jewish chauvinism mean?

It seems to me that it must include trenchant criticism of the refusal of Jews to countenance a large influx of Arabs into their state. We should not advocate 'return' on the point of a chauvinist's gun, nor deny the Jews rights until they agree to allow Arabs in. The agency for opposition to the racist, exclusivist character of Israel, and therefore for change, is the working class in Israel.

But Israel is exclusivist, and we do have a socialist responsibility to oppose this exclusivism. Israel's right to exist is not conditional upon it ceasing to be exclusivist, but opposition to its exclusivism should be part of our programme.

Israel's definition as a state for Jews rather than its citizens, which O'Mahony sees no problem with, is an expression of this exclusivism. It is part of the institutional structure that denies Arabs rights within Israel.

Because of this, I think it is wrong to identify ourselves with 'Zionists' even as a quiet way to make a stand against the hysterical 'anti-Zionists'. The Zionist movement — though not, of course, all individual Zionists — are our political enemies too.

I think it is possible both to make a stand against anti-semitism on the left and to maintain a socialist critique of the Israeli state.

Don't support Israel

Duncan Chapple, SO 302, 12.2.87

Adam Woolf in SO 296 is quite wrong to say that John O'Mahony is in any way "condoning racist oppression". Even so there are some points John made I'd like to comment on.

Socialist Organiser takes a 'two states' position on the Middle East. Why? Not because we support Israeli national chauvinism, but because we recognise the national rights of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. That

leads us to reject the formula of a military conquest of Israel.

SO supporters do not condone racism: we take the lead of Lenin on the national question in supporting national rights; but that should not lead us to support the state of Israel in the way John O'Mahony seems to.

What we want is class unity for a socialist federation of the Middle East. Recognising those national rights lays a basis for building that unity. We want to smash the Israeli

state only so far as we want to smash all "States", in as much as they are mechanisms for oppression.

The yes/no choice O'Mahony seems to offer ignores that there is more than one alternative. It ignores that our 'support' for Israel to exist is based on our opposition to that blood-bath, not on support for Israeli-Jewish oppression and chauvinism, nor because we see Israel's existence as the best possible state of affairs in the Middle East.

Reply to Tony Greenstein

John O'Mahony

This was written as a reply to the points made by Tony Greenstein and others in the SO discussion, but was not published in SO for reasons of space, balance and so on. It appears for the first time here.

I DON'T know what Tony Greenstein was doing getting himself involved in the SO discussion on Zionism. Apart from Greenstein it was a discussion between people all of whom share a certain common commitment to:

- The right of both the Israeli Jewish nation and the Palestinian Arabs to a state in Palestine — the 'two states' position.

- Opposition to the Judaeophobic 'anti-Zionism' that is dominant on the left; and

- Hostility to Israeli-Jewish chauvinism, and to Israel's treatment of 'its own' Arabs and those on the West Bank.

But Greenstein is a hard man to keep out. That's all right, except that he tends to drag the discussion down, and this time he did that too. Yet I welcome his presence in the discussion because it serves a useful purpose.

It demonstrates that you can't — despite what people like Martin Thomas think — have a calm, elevated, abstract, scholarly or pseudo-scholarly discussion on the mere meaning of the word Zionism. It is a living question of politics: the whole network of questions — of history and so on — cannot be separated from the central political questions of Middle East politics now: one state or two? the right of the Jewish nation to exist or the right of the Arabs to destroy it?

You cannot in the political arena discuss the meaning of 'Zionism' apart from current politics, or separate such a discussion from the attitude we should take, as socialists and democrats, to Jews and 'Zionists' who defend the right of Israel to exist and refuse to accept the ultimatum that they are posed with by much of the left — endorse the demand that the people of the Jewish state agree to dissolve themselves in an *Arab* secular democratic state, or be branded (like Israel) as racists and imperialist stooges.

Thus Martin Thomas's letter is typically balanced, and a fairminded summary of what has gone before — but it's five miles above the political terrain on which we operate. It simply does not engage with the political questions I have tried to take up. It doesn't relate to, let alone answer, the problem that we need to answer — that anti-Zionism mostly means anti-semitism on the left, and moreover that it is part of a massive political infection. Or the fact that by running before the hysterical anti-Zionists we give their campaign extra power and momentum, and abandon those who

cannot so readily solve their dilemmas by adding their own curses to a word — Zionism.

Martin Thomas should think about the very flattering analogy he makes between those of us who would be prepared to accept, with qualifications, the label Zionist, and Eleanor Marx's declaration during the anti-Jewish agitation in Britain that she was a Jewess. I think Martin misunderstands what she was doing. I don't think she was just making a romantic personal gesture. Eleanor Marx was a well-known and respected trade union activist among the East End workers. She had helped organise matchgirls, gasworkers, dockers, and others, helping to start what is today the GMBATU. She taught the union's first secretary, Will Thorne, how to read and write.

Surely Eleanor Marx was trying to counter the xenophobia, the fear of aliens and outsiders, by identifying 'Jews' with someone her listeners knew and accepted. SO has taught few on the left to read either English or Marxian, and there are those, in the hard left and the soft left, who would brand us ourselves as aliens; but, still, something can be gained by making a demonstrative stand against the anti-Zionist hysteria — and all the more so if we combine this, as we should, with honest defence of the oppressed Palestinian Arabs and support for the anti-chauvinists within Israel.

The point was made very early in the discussion that Zionism is a word with more than one meaning. By now it is a pretty decayed word. I think the logical meaning is what Jack Cleary said: acceptance of the right of Israel to exist. Martin Thomas says that the Israeli left use 'Zionism' to mean the idea that the Israeli Jewish nation has rights above all other nations. All right! But how many copies of SO go to Israel? If we were in Israel we could adopt the terminology of the left, and we'd have no reason to quarrel about it. In Britain we have, and that's the point of this discussion.

Greenstein takes advantage of the use of 'Zionism' in Israel to go all over the place on what is and what isn't Zionism. He is also dishonest.

Leave aside the dispute about words and labels for a moment. As far as I know almost all the Israeli left 'anti-Zionists' are in favour of the right of (a modified) Jewish state to exist; they are against Israel being subjugated; they reject the secular democratic state slogan. Whether they choose to call themselves Zionists or not, they fit what our side in the discussion has been defining as 'Zionist'. They are not in Greenstein's 'anti-Zionist' camp. And, of course, the issue that concerns us over the use of the term 'Zionist' does not arise for them. In Israel Zionophobia can hardly be a code for Judaeophobia.

I did not "admit" that I am "a Zionist supporter" in any sense Greenstein uses. I do not support or accept respon-

sibility for the crimes of the Israeli state, and no amount of play with words can saddle me with that responsibility. I want to defend the rights of 'Zionists' and of Jews, not Israel's treatment of the Palestinian Arabs.

Have I "confused" the terms 'Jew' and 'Zionist' and "then accused the rest of the left of anti-semitism for the same sin!" More small-beer polemical tri-cle-ry! At issue here is a question of fact: is it or is it not true that most Jews instinctively support Israel? The only exceptions are some very religious Jews and a thin smattering of revolutionary socialists.

It is not a matter of imposing the 'Zionist' label on Jews who would not accept it, a substitution of a 'congenital Zionist' definition of Zionism for the 'proper' one, but of defining rigorously what exists now. Either we accept that any emphatic hostility to 'Zionists' is in effect hostility to Jews, or we try to evade this problem by using 'Zionist' as a tag only for the allegedly super-villainous super-Zionists. But who are these? There are specifically Zionist organisations. But a broad campaign against such people for their pro-Israel stand, or for the crimes of Israel, is impossible without at the first move clawing in most 'Zionists' in the wider definition.

Greenstein says that Zionism was never a method of fighting anti-semitism. It certainly wasn't *our* method — though I think it is a requirement of political honesty to re-examine our methods and the others in the light of what actually happened. What bourgeois Europe in its mid-20th century nationalist convulsions did to six million Jews does, it seems to me, in retrospect powerfully support the reasoning of the Jewish nationalists.

That logic does not dispose of the objections to the Zionist project — in the first place the existence of the Palestinian Arabs. However, it suggests to me some sympathy with the Zionists and their terrible choices and dilemmas. I have no wish to defend or endorse the policies of historical Zionism. These were bourgeois, and also were steeped in the 'small nation' psychology and ways of working of the Jewish communities, who for centuries had lived and manoeuvred for survival in a sea of more or less rampant hostility.

Zionism's break with that past was inevitably only partial. It could only be partial. Zionism could only operate by trying to play *realpolitik* with more or less hostile powers — and, under the Nazis, at gunpoint. That is the fate of all small peoples and states caught up in the cross-currents of the competition between the big states, and the Jewish nationalists had no secure undisputed territory of their own, nor even, in almost all of Europe after 1940-1, general recognition that their people had a right to stay alive.

It is possible to understand the various shifts to which the Zionists were driven without necessarily endorsing them — and without shifting to the standpoint of Jewish nationalism. It is possible to sympathise with the Jewish nationalists without thereby ignoring the Palestinian Arabs or failing to sympathise with them and support their just demands. I think we should do that.

But it seems to me that sympathy, understanding, or even retrospective endorsement of the Zionist movement would be a thousand times more appropriate to the facts of modern Jewish history than the stupid demonology — based on utterly dishonest pseudo-history in which Greenstein, Brenner, etc. engage.

For Greenstein to deny that Zionism was an attempt to tackle anti-semitism because 'logically' Zionism accepted anti-semitism, and tried to build a Jewish nation as the answer to it, is logic-chopping. To go on to depict the various machinations of the Zionists with anti-semites as burdening them with some share of the responsibility for the Holocaust, is obscene. Greenstein's argument is not proper historical discussion, but a contrived use of history to preach a message about the present. Its only real content is hysterical and incoherent emotionalism about the present-day relations of Israel and the Palestinian Arabs.

Some Zionists spoke of anti-semitism as a force for good? But such views can be paralleled by statements from other radicals and nationalists about the ennobling or identity-restoring or galvanising effects of oppression. For example, try reading the most influential modern Irish

Catholic nationalist, Patrick Pearse. You could cite remarks like his greeting of World War 1 in the name of an Ireland now offered the chance to expel Britain — according to the Fenian axiom, Britain's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity — "The tired old Earth needed to be refreshed with blood"; and you could depict him as a fascist-minded maniac. He was very far from being anything like that.

The Zionists put nation-building above 'refugeeism': as they saw it, they wanted a fundamental solution rather than palliatives. But the fact is that Zionism became a majority movement among Jews because *Jews turned to it* under the blows of Nazism.

There was some successful resistance to anti-semitism in Nazi Europe, says Greenstein. True. But three million surviving and six million murdered is not a good testimonial for assimilation... At the end of World War 2, Europe's surviving Jews overwhelmingly wanted to go to Palestine rather than to the USSR, or Denmark, or Holland, where workers had struck to save Jews. Why? Not because of the demon power of Zionism, but because they no longer trusted *any* promises of toleration and equal rights. They were resolved to trust only their own people.

But, despite Greenstein's determination to avoid it, the point of the argument does show through when he says that "Israel jeopardises the position of Jews in the diaspora with its genocide [sic] of the Palestinians". How, exactly? Because the 'anti-Zionist' agitation against Israel inevitably claws in all Jews.

Greenstein's answer to this problem is to join in the Zionophobic agitation, and to sanitise it morally with the demand that Jews support the destruction of Israel or stand condemned as 'Zionists' and racists.

We would not have advocated Zionist solutions before 1948. In fact our movement opposed those solutions and fought for different ones — though, and it bears repeating, the politics of the entire Trotskyist movement before 1948 (including Tony Cliff, who now tells a different story) bore little relationship to the present Zionophobia and honorary Arab nationalist politics that have since become 'Trotskyism'. In any case the Jewish nation-state in Israel is now a fact.

Greenstein tries to evade the issue of the rights of that nation, and its possible place in any democratic or socialist future, by instead polemicising against Zionists of the first half of this century. It is an evasion — and an underhand way of trying to justify having the same attitude to a whole people (the Israeli Jews, and all other Jews who identify with Israel) as to a rival ideological tendency. Clive Bradley is right that we have to discuss the roots of Israel (and that discussion will include criticism of Zionism before 1948) — but we must not confuse the roots with the tree that has developed from it.

I never said that Trotsky supported the Zionist enterprise in Palestine. But I did show — at some length — that Trotsky concluded in the 1930s that a Jewish state was necessary, Greenstein quotes Trotsky: "The attempt to solve the Jewish question through the migration of Jews to Palestine can now be seen for what it is, a tragic mockery of the Jewish people... Never was it so clear as it is today that the salvation of the Jewish people is bound up inseparably with the overthrow of the capitalist system". This is an example of 'cunning' dogmatism used to stop thought. Trotsky fought to defeat anti-semitism through socialist revolution. He was defeated. There was no socialist revolution. Six million Jews were massacred. Then, in the aftermath of that defeat, Israel was established. Greenstein's implication here is that Trotsky's struggle in the 1930s for socialist revolution justifies the destruction of Israel today, because Israel arose as a result of the *defeat* of socialist revolution and the victory of a programme Trotsky fought against. But that is absurd.

Oddest, but most revealing of all, is Greenstein's stuff about anti-semitism. "Anti-semitism today in Europe is not, unlike 50 years ago, state-sponsored. It is a personal form of racism, confined to fringe fascist groups. It is black people in Britain, Arab people in France, Turkish workers in Germany who experience state racism. Jewish people have socially moved upwards and politically moved rightwards.

"That's why we say that anti-semitism has been redefined and the term 'black anti-semitism' like 'left anti-semitism' is used as a means of countering opposition to Zionism.

"Racism is not merely a question of personal prejudice, but at the level of class, a specifically oppressed section of the working class. Apart from France, there is no Jewish working class in the West, unlike the 1930s. The Jewish people have changed, and with it anti-semitism".

This could be better put, but Greenstein seems to be saying that anti-semitism today, even if it exists, doesn't matter. In the first place, it is not state-sponsored, like Nazi anti-semitism in the 1930s or the discrimination through immigration laws and so on against blacks, Turks and Arabs. (As if even the worst of the racism suffered by blacks in Britain, Arabs in France and Turks in Germany today is in the same order of things as the 'state anti-semitism' of the '30s!)

Moreover, only workers can experience real anti-semitism; or at any rate anti-semitism does not matter much if it does not target Jewish *workers*. Even to talk of anti-semitism (black anti-semitism, or left anti-semitism) today is a means of countering opposition to Zionism. To protest at anti-semitism is to play the Zionists' game, as it might have been put in the sort of Stalinist polemics in which the now-prevailing 'left anti-Zionism' first made its appearance nearly 40 years ago.

This version of a Marxist attitude to racism, if it makes any sense at all, is *economistic* — assuming that we should be concerned about oppression and prejudice only as they immediately affect the working class. It also contains a prize bit of historical obtuseness.

Where does Greenstein think that state-sponsored anti-semitic racism of '50 years ago' came from? Did it spring into being fully-formed from a ruling-class brainstorm? No! The anti-semitism which in its Hitlerite version proved lethal for two-thirds of Europe's Jews had been evolving, developing, inter-breeding and cross-fertilising for many decades. Part of the cross-fertilising came from left-wing anti-semitism — the well-named 'socialism of idiots'. 1930s anti-semitism did not begin with state racism.

Greenstein argues: "If Jews today, unlike the Jews of the East End who fought the fascists, base their identity around Israel, then that is a reactionary identity". And hostility to that 'reactionary identity' — what weak-minded a-historical people would call anti-semitism — is... what? Progressive? Or at any rate not reactionary? On the good side, that of the Arabs and the anti-imperialists?

Greenstein says that I am 'obsessed' with anti-semitism. No. Of course I am concerned about anti-semitism. But I am 'obsessed', or at any rate very concerned, with something else too — the state of the left.

I do think that anti-semitism is alive and a serious problem, and that it could become a very big problem in the future. Explicit anti-semitism has grown in Britain in recent years. Nevertheless, I agree that anti-semitism is not now the main racism, or the most burning question of oppression in Britain. Anti-semitism is a burning, unpostponable issue for the left not only because of what it means now, immediately, to Jews in Britain, but because of what it means for the left.

Greenstein's central thesis is that some of the victims of Nazi race-murder — 'the Zionists' — shared responsibility for the attempted genocide, and therefore that Israel, constructed by Zionists, does not have the right to exist. Zionism was always the central enemy of the Jews (and of others). It is a demon responsible even, in part, for the slaughter of the Jews in World War 2.

Yet Greenstein is not an isolated crank. Nor is Lenni Brenner, whose writings, though vastly superior to Greenstein's and seemingly more 'balanced', also use history just as a source of material for a preconceived and preposterously one-sided polemic. Greenstein's and Bren-

ner's ideas are widely accepted on the left, sometimes in diluted form, and sometimes even in cruder version, such as Jim Allen's recent play 'Perdition'.

No socialist can defend or justify Israeli chauvinism or Israeli treatment of the Arabs within and on its borders. I have no desire to. I condemn those policies. The problem, though, is that Greenstein's camp is concerned to make the case for the destruction — not the modification, the destruction — of the Jewish state, and in that cause it exaggerate and distorts without scruple.

No doubt there are Jewish racists in Israel. But what is elsewhere, in other countries, defined as *nationalism*, is here routinely translated as racism. The state of Israel is a vile capitalist state. Let us treat it as we treat other vile capitalist states — advocate a working-class revolution, and support the right for other nations oppressed by that state to get out from under its oppression.

For Greenstein this is ruled out. Israel does not have the right to exist. He sides against it with *other* vile capitalist states — all of them far viler towards the people they consider their own than Israel is to its own — and denounce (even who don't agree as Zionists, pro-imperialist, and racist).

This is double standards — or no standards, except the standards of wartime 'say what you need to say' propagandists.

APPENDIX: LENNI BRENNER'S FAKE INTERNATIONALISM

Re-reading Lenni Brenner's contribution to the debate on Palestine (page 12 of this pamphlet), I find myself wondering why nobody got round to replying to him.

'Zionism in the Age of the Dictators' had already been given a hostile review in *Socialist Organiser* (page 37 in this pamphlet). Apart from that, the welter of empty phrasemongering and senseless ultra-left sloganising in which Brenner's SO contribution indulges has so little grip on reality that you are naturally inclined just to shrug and get on with the real discussion of the real issues.

To unravel the tangled skein of weasel words, good aspirations, slogans, double standards and empty phrases promises to be both tedious and difficult, and also pointless. Yet it isn't pointless.

Brenner's two books on Zionism, and Jimmy Allen's use of Brenner's work as part of the basis for his notorious play 'Perdition' have given Brenner a certain prominence in the discussion on the Middle East. And his incoherent sloganising in SO does, if you look at it closely, show up the school of thought of which he is so vociferous a representative.

The ideals of internationalism are essential to socialism. It must therefore go without saying that socialists are against Israeli nationalism, and that we condemn Jewish chauvinism and all its manifestations. So far, so good.

But Israeli nationalism does not exist in a vacuum. It is part of a network of interlocking nationalisms and national antagonisms. It is confronted by Arab nationalist chauvinisms which have taken as their goal the destruction of the Israeli state and nation. Any fair account of Israeli nationalism would therefore put it in its framework. The demurrals and condemnations would take account of the counter-nationalisms and condemn them also.

Not so with Brenner. He is scathing about the PLO. But where he concludes from his strictures on Israeli nationalism and chauvinism that therefore the national organism itself does not have a right to exist, he makes no such conclusions for Arab or Palestinian nationalism.

The 'internationalism' is unequal and false because in

practice the condemnation of Israel that flows for Brenner from his internationalist credo is absolute and mortal; the condemnation of the Arabs is a moral stricture only, and a series of admonitions. Brenner does not make his support for the Arab (or Palestinian) side conditional on them not being nationalists or chauvinists. They are the legitimate nation. The Jewish is the illegitimate nation. One lot of nationalists have positive rights, the other the right only to surrender and submit.

The PLO's old commitment to a 'secular, democratic Palestine' is here used as a mechanism for having double standards. Brenner accepts the *disguise* of one of the competing nationalisms, a disguised and mystified version of its chauvinist demands. His internationalism is thereafter a club to bludgeon a way clear for Arab nationalism.

"Human equality, legal, economic and social, is at stake", writes Brenner. "The slightest accommodation to Jewish chauvinism in Palestine will, inexorably, lead to similar capitulations in principle to communalism in other parts of the world".

"Human equality" does not exist between states and peoples. We want it to. How do we proceed? By advocating that all state boundaries and citizenships be dissolved, and all nations and nation-states abolished? No: we advocate the right of nations to self-determination, hoping on that basis to make the dissolution of national frontiers possible after a long period of reconciliation.

If all we can do in the face of the existing nationalisms and chauvinisms, with their deep material roots, is to preach internationalism and call for people to rise above national concerns, then our struggle is hopeless. In fact we do not pretend that it is possible to dissolve national distinctions immediately, or even after a socialist revolution. On the contrary, why did the Bolsheviks have a programme on the national question for the USSR *after* the 1917 Revolution?

We have both a democratic and a socialist programme. We do not pretend rationalistically that national identity is a misunderstanding that can easily be dispelled. We ignore neither national oppression nor the fears of it.

Neither does Brenner. But he has a double approach. Towards the Israeli Jews he is a dogmatic, rationalistic internationalist, offering internationalism or nothing. Towards the Arabs he loses this rigidity, and becomes an enthusiastic advocate of the rights of oppressed nations. In effect his programme is Arab nationalism.

In Brenner's historical writings, the trick is to blame the Zionist movement — presented as some sort of diabolical power outside the ordinary Jewish people — for the Holocaust as if 'the Zionists' in Europe did not go to the death camps too. The argument ranges from the possibly reasonable point that if the Zionist movement had devoted all its energies to opening the doors of the USA, then that might have made a difference, all the way to the libellous nonsense that 'the Zionists' would rather have the European Jews dead than have them go anywhere but Palestine.

The latter claim is backed up by grossly unfair use of quotations like a 1938 comment by Ben Gurion that humanitarian work for refugees must take second place to building the Jewish state in Palestine. Ben Gurion was not talking about the Holocaust. He was a hard-headed politician convinced that there was only one real solution to anti-semitism, and fighting for that. It is possible to disagree with Ben Gurion's objective, or condemn it outright — but you have to tell the most scandalous lies to pretend that Ben Gurion was condoning the Holocaust in advance.

In 1938 the Zionist leaders still saw events under Hitler in the framework of the worst previous Judaeophobia. They probably could not imagine what was to come, and in any case they can't possibly have known what was to come. Which Zionists would, with clear foreknowledge, have

chosen the Palestine colony at the cost of six million dead? None of them did, and none of them saw the issue that way.

Brenner is effectively saying of Hitler's victims: "It was their fault, or at least the fault of their leaders. And, look, the Zionists (this time the entire Israeli Jewish nation, not only the Zionist leaders) are still pursuing the perverse racist doctrine which helped bring the Nazi catastrophe down on their heads. This can only be brought to a proper end if they consent to dissolve the Israeli Jewish nation or, failing that, they are overwhelmed". This political programme, which implies the bloody subjugation or destruction of an entire nation, is dressed up and presented in terms of anti-nationalism and anti-racism.

Instead of arguing for Jewish-Arab working-class unity on the basis of an agreed democratic solution, Brenner relies on ultra-left fantasies, in which he talks vaguely about 'permanent revolution' and an Arab conquest of Israel merging into or triggering the socialist revolution, while *in fact* what is proposed is just the conquest and destruction of one nation by another.

One of the things that makes this most disgusting is the way Brenner and others sift through some of the most terrible events of which we have detailed records looking for cheap political dirt. Did Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann in the late '30s ruminant out loud about the probable fate of the older layers of the Jewish population who remained in Germany and had little prospect of being able to make a new beginning in Palestine, saying that they would 'perish like dust'? It seems he did. Well then, grab hold of it, present it as if he was talking with full foreknowledge of the fate of the German Jews, and *blame* the kith and kin of the victims for the horrors!

None of this is serious history, and it is *indecent* politics. It is either dirty propaganda, or else it is hysterical 'factionalism' against Brenner's Zionist opponents within the Jewish community.

The memory of Hitler's massacre of the Jews acted for a long time as a bulwark against anti-semitism, forcing it underground. Even today, in most circles, it dare not bear its own name. It disguises itself.

The attempt to put part of the blame for the Holocaust on Jews does more than attempt to discredit Israel and to buttress the Arab chauvinist case that it has no right to exist in any form. It breaks down that bulwark against anti-semitism.

On the left, Zionist complicity in the Holocaust is now increasingly an article of faith in a movement which has adopted an attitude of comprehensive hostility to Jews, in Israel and outside it, who will not 'convert' to anti-Zionism and adopt the demand that Israel cease to exist.

There are striking parallels. 'Holocaust Revisionists' of history say that the Jews didn't die in Hitler's death factories at all. The 'blame Zionists' revisionists say: yes, they did, but they died partly because of the machinations of their leaders whose successors now rule Israel. A candid anti-semitism, indifferent to the massacre, might say: the Jews got what they deserved. The left 'anti-Zionists' say: they got what their leaders decreed, or at least connived at. The different versions are, of course, not identical, least of all in their motives; but the parallel exists independently of anyone's good intentions.

Brenner's basic thesis presents the issues in terms of a world-wide Jewish conspiracy ('Zionism') — with the assumption that even when the Jews were being massacred in Central and Eastern Europe the world-wide Zionist movement was still powerful enough to decide whether or not every other door would be closed to the Jews. Logically you cannot separate this 'Zionist conspiracy' view of reality from the 'Jewish conspiracy' thesis of Hitler and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. And many people who believe

Brenner will **not** have the inhibitions of his Trotskyist and
leftist **dogmatism**, and will make their own way 'back'.
That is one **basic reason** why the whole left 'anti-Zionist'
campaign **against the Jews — yes, against the Jews —** is
part of a **cultural ferment** that can lead to full-fledged
persecution of Jews.

