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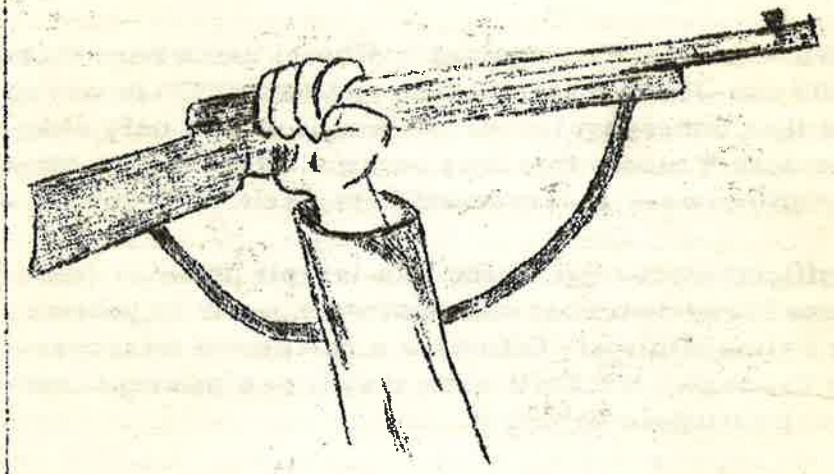
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ISRAELI SOCIALIST ORGANIZATION
(MATZPEN)



ZIONISM
AND
PALESTINE

SRAFFLET

MARCH 1971

ZIONISM and the PALESTINIANS

by A. Orr

The last interview given by Levi Eshkol to the foreign press, included the following exchange:

Q: "If the Jews are entitled to a homeland in this part of the world are not the Palestinians similarly entitled to their own country?"

A: "What are the Palestinians? When I came here there were 250,000 non-Jews, mainly Arabs and Beduins. It was desert. More than underdeveloped. Nothing. It was only after we made the desert bloom that they became interested in taking it from us." (Newsweek & Jerusalem Post, Feb. 17, 1969.)

This official statement by the late Israeli premier (the version in the Jerusalem Post was approved, prior to publication, by the Prime Minister's Office) is a calculated misrepresentation of the past. We shall show that it is a misrepresentation, and the rationale behind it.

In 1891-92 the Jewish philosopher Ahad-Haam visited Palestine. He published his impressions in two long articles entitled: "Truth from Palestine". Ahad-Haam was respected for his honesty, thoroughness and insight. His report was never challenged by anyone in the Zionist movement. We quote a passage from the first article:

"We abroad are accustomed to believe that Palestine nowadays (1891!) is almost entirely desolate; a barren desert where anyone can buy land to his heart's content. In fact that is not so. All over the country it is hard to find arable land that is not cultivated. . . . Not only the peasants but even the owners of large estates are reluctant to sell good, arable land. Many of our brethren who came here to buy land, stayed in the country for months, toured it extensively, yet failed to find what they came for." It is certainly true that the Zionist colonization, with its technical knowhow and nationalist enthusiasm, transformed much of the then non-arable lands into arable areas. But that is

only part of the truth. Another part for example, is the question of how the Israeli Land Authority came to possess all the land which it never bought?

A second point made by Eshkol asserts that when he immigrated to Palestine (at the turn of the century) the country was inhabited only by "250,000 non-Jews mainly Arabs and Beduins". This assertion contradicts an estimate made by Sir Herbert Samuel over 64 years ago.

Herbert Samuel played a significant role in Zionist history. As a member of a well known family of bankers in the City of London he wielded considerable influence over some members of the British Cabinet during the first World War. Though a Jew with pro-Zionist sentiments, he always felt his Empire loyalties first, such was one of the reasons for his appointment as the first British High Commissioner in Palestine in 1920. As early as 1915, when the British Cabinet discussed the future of territories which Britain would be likely to possess after the war, Herbert Samuel sent a memorandum to the cabinet, which, eventually shaped British policy in Palestine. We quote one paragraph:

"Another alternative often suggested is the establishment in Palestine of an autonomous Jewish state.

Whatever be the merits, or demerits, of that proposal, it is certain that the time is not ripe for it. Such increase of population as there has been in Palestine in recent years has been composed, indeed, mostly of Jewish immigrants. The new Jewish agricultural colonies already number about 15,000 souls. In Jerusalem itself two-thirds of the population are Jewish; but in the country as a whole they still, probably, do not number more than about one-sixth of the population. If the attempt were made to place the 500,000 or 600,000 Mahomedans of Arab race under a government which rested upon the support of 90 or 100,000 Jewish inhabitants, there can be no assurance that such a government, even if established by the authority of the Powers, would be able to command obedience. The dream of a Jewish State, prosperous, progressive, and the home of a brilliant civilization, might vanish in a series of

squalid conflicts with the Arab population. And even if a State so constituted did succeed in avoiding, or repressing, internal disorder, it is doubtful whether it would be strong enough to protect itself from external aggression on the part of the turbulent elements around it. To attempt to realize the aspiration of a Jewish State one century too soon might throw back its actual realization for many centuries more. These considerations are fully recognized by the Zionist movement." (John Bowle, 'Viscount Samuel', Gollancz 1957, p. 177.)

In contemporary parlance one would say simply, that the Zionist movement did not wish to implement Jewish minority-rule in Palestine, and -- naturally -- did not wish the Palestinian Arabs to achieve independence while Jews were still a minority. Samuel drew the attention of the British Cabinet to this consideration, which aligned Zionist policy in Palestine with that of British imperialism. The Balfour declaration of 1917 is nothing more than the treaty between these two partners who shared, from 1915 to 1945, a common political interest in Palestine. Samuel could not foresee, in 1915, that at some time later it would become necessary for Zionists to deny the existence of an indigenous Palestinian population. Actually, the figures he quotes were similar to those quoted by a Dr. Loewe in the first Zionist Congress as early as 1897.

Eshkol's misrepresentation of the recent past in Palestine is not a result of ignorance (his generation knows the facts better than most other Israelis), nor are these private, personal views. Most Zionists hold the same views; some of them -- like Ben-Gurion -- express them even clearer. In a recent polemic against another Zionist leader (M. Yaari of Mapam), Ben-Gurion stated:

"I have always been careful to refer to 'Arabs' when speaking of Palestine; I have always distinguished between the rights of the Jewish PEOPLE in Palestine and the rights of the Arabs WHO LIVE IN IT; never the rights of Arab PEOPLE in Palestine.... My comrades and myself never accepted that 'Palestine belongs to the Jewish People and to the Arab People'. I have always been careful to state in all my articles and speeches

t that 'Palestine belongs to the Jewish People and to the Arabs who live in it'. That is what I insist on today, and what the majority of the Zionists have always insisted on." (Ha'aretz, March 15, 1968.)

The difference between the two formulations which Ben-Gurion mentions is decisive; if the Palestinians are merely a population they can claim only civil rights whereas if they are recognized as a People, then even according to Ben-Gurion, they have political rights in Palestine. To Zionists, who always insisted, vehemently, on a morally impeccable case, it is important to deny the existence of the Palestinians as a national entity, whose rights to independence they have usurped.

As for the Palestinians, they expressed their political desires in a general strike of the entire population in 1936, which lasted for many weeks, and finally in an armed rebellion, known in the annals of British imperialism as "The Arab Rebellion of 1938-39". The Zionist policies towards these struggles can be illuminated by the following incidents. When the Palestinian stevedores in the Port of Haifa joined the General Strike, the Zionist "Federation of Jewish Workers in Palestine" also known as the "Histadruth", sent special emissaries to the port of Saloniki in Greece and brought over a whole community of Jewish stevedores to work as scabs and implement "Jewish Labor Only" in the port of Haifa. Many of the Palestinian stevedores never regained their jobs. When Palestinian saboteurs started to blow up the IPC pipeline leading from Iraq to Haifa, the British mobilized Zionist youth to fight them, under the command of British officers like C.O. Wingate. M. Dayan was one of those, so were many other high ranking Israeli commanders. In fact, the Wingate school of military thinking permeates all Israeli military thinking to this day.

The Zionist insistence that the Palestinians do not constitute a national entity is not merely a product of political expediencies, it has deep psychological roots. Zionist ideology is founded on the assumption that discrimination, and persecution, of national minorities is an eternal feature of human behavior, independent of political, social or economic

factors. It accepts anti-semitism as a phenomenon which cannot be overcome by changes in society. Zionist ideology is based on an historiosophy which considers Jewish history as separate from, at best parallel to, world history, its interpretation of Jewish history can be summed up in the words: "every generation attempts to annihilate us anew". It is important for this ideology to interpret the conflict with the Palestinians as an "irrational urge to exterminate the Jews". It is for this reason that Zionists label the conflict as the "Israeli-Arab conflict" rather than "Zionist-Palestinian", that they blame "the Arabs" in general, or "Arab governments" as responsible for the conflict.

Moreover, when Zionists talk of "the threat of annihilation", they do not mean "physical extermination" but mainly the denial of special rights to Jews in Palestine. Zionists do not consider Israel as the political expression of its own population but as the political expression of world Jewry. The only law with a constitutional status in Israel is the "Law of Return", which grants every Jew in the world automatic rights of immigration and citizenship in Palestine. Jews are never considered as immigrants but as "returnees" whereas most of the Palestinians actually born in Palestine but now living as refugees outside Israel are deprived in principle, of that right. Zionists will only accept the principle of "one person -- one vote" as long as Jews are in the majority. The peculiar thing about the whole business is the fact that the Zionists have no definition of "a Jew" but depend on anti-semitism for it. Even the slogan, raised by some Israelis, saying "let us transform Israel from the State of the Jews into the State of the Israelis" is considered by the Zionists as incitement to annihilation. The Chief Education Officer of the Israeli Army, Brigadier M. Bar-On expressed this as follows: "As for peace; mere declarations are useless. We do not require anybody's endorsement in order to exist. Peace means a change in Arab attitudes, so that they will recognize not merely the existence of Israel but its right to be a Jewish state, with the right to absorb Jewish immigration, and have a Jewish orientation, not an Arab one. The Arabs must recognize the uniqueness of our character. Those who demand that Israel become a Middle-Eastern State desire its annihilation." (Talk given at a seminar for Israeli students in Europe, Arnhem, Holland, December, 1967.)

This may seem an odd interpretation of the term "annihilation" but it is neither hypocrisy nor expediency for Zionists to employ it in this sense; it is their psychological identity, not physical existence which is, indeed, threatened.

As for the Palestinians, they have now been re-unified by the Israeli occupation and reshaped into a national unity by their resistance. As in most societies struggling for independence, one can recognize the emerging pattern of two trends, one -- the more nationalistic oriented -- subordinates all social issues to the struggle for National liberation; the other -- more revolutionary oriented -- realizes that the National problem cannot be solved without a social revolution. In the specific circumstances of Palestine, it is impossible to impose a nationalistic solution to the problem; this situation creates conditions wherein the nationalist trend will probably undergo a chain of internal struggles culminating in the emergence of a non-nationalistic, revolutionary leadership, which could eventually transform Arab society all over the Middle East. The Palestinian resistance as a whole is already undermining all authority relations in Arab society. Not only the authority of King Hussein, but that of the governments of Egypt, the US, the USSR, UN and every other political authority is undermined, challenged, and defied -- politically and morally, by it. On a far more significant, social level, children declaring themselves "guerillas", challenge the authority of their parents; pupils -- that of their teachers; women -- that of the men; and non-religious people -- that of the religious authorities. The entire authority structure in Arab society is eroding as a result of the Palestinian defiance. The US has already recognized the potential threat which the Palestinian resistance presents far away from the locus of the conflict. Henry A. Kissinger, Nixon's special adviser on foreign affairs had the following to say on that matter:

"They have the revolutionary momentum -- in fact, they are the only dynamic factor in an otherwise stagnant situation -- and public opinion is behind them. Arab governments have neither momentum nor popular support. It is not that Arab leaders admire the terrorists -- they are threatened by them. They must accomo-

date the terrorists or out they go." The Washington Post has called for "a new approach to the Arab terrorists" and argued that "it makes no more sense to exclude them from considerations affecting a settlement than to exclude the Vietcong in Vietnam." (The Jewish Chronicle, London February 28, 1969, p. 12.)

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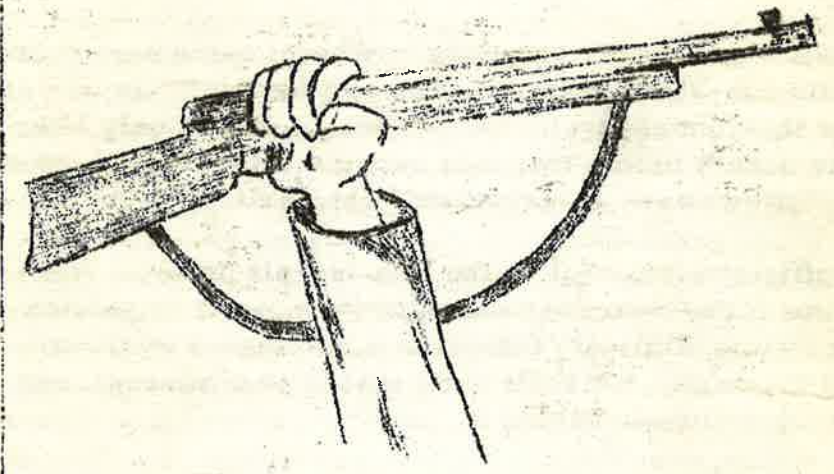
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