

# The Labor Movement in Palestine

(R. I. L. U.) The work of an international revolutionary organization is rendered extremely difficult in Palestine by the *general conditions*: In the first place the native working masses, the Arabians, who compose 90 % of the total population, represent a most inaccessible material, for they have as yet scarcely been touched by the capitalist development of recent years. In the second place, the Jewish emigrant workers—about 20,000 in all are permeated by a thoroughly petty-bourgeois spirit, and are for the most part still greatly under the influence of the nationalist organizations, which—as for instance the General Jewish Labor Organization (Histadruth Haklalith-H. H.)—not only hold their members by nationalist phrases, but also by the immediate advantages offered by their co-operatives. The Communist Party of Palestine, on the other hand, has to work *quite illegally*. Its last appeal, for example, a May Day proclamation in the English and Arabian languages, an English copy of which printed in an illegal printing works lies before us, fell into the hands of the police before it could be distributed, the whole edition being confiscated.

The permanent crisis under which agriculture has been suffering in Palestine for some time past was aggravated in the winter of 1922/23 by an *acute crisis in industry*. 3—4000 unemployed were counted in Palestine this winter, that is, about one quarter of the whole working population. The unemployed were put off with ridiculous doles, these amounting to about three days wages! The repeatedly promised emergency work was never taken in hand. To all this must be added the severe depression of wages. The H. H. helped the workers according to its lights: it sent one delegation after another to the Zionist Committee, and these returned with promises.

Under these conditions, the H. H. convened the Second *Conference* of their organization. The preparations for the same, involving much blatant advertising, were accompanied by such a brutal terror against our Communist comrades, working in

the movement as "the international labor group", that these finally found themselves forced to withdraw from the whole affair, and to issue the slogan that the H. H. be boycotted.

There is nothing positive to be reported about the conference. The question as to whether the H. H. stands for the class struggle or not was answered in the *negative*; the slogan of the class struggle is substituted by the formula of the "struggle of defence and emancipation". A resolution was carried to affiliate with Amsterdam. A productive co-operative is to be founded, which is to realize for every worker the ideal of the prophet "each man under his own vine and each man under his own fig-tree". These are the resolutions which are to bring the working people of Palestine nearer to their emancipation from the capitalist yoke!

The outcome of the 2. Conference of the "Histadruth" was an excellent preparation of the soil for *our activity within this organization*. Resolutions to this effect have also been actually passed at the national conference of the Communist Party of Palestine. From the very beginning, its work encountered much difficulty, for our Palestine comrades within the Histadruth had to reach a clear and definite understanding with the Poale Zionists. While our comrades have been striving for co-operation in the interests of the H. H. and with the aim of revolutionizing it, the Poale Zionists declined to co-operate from petty party motives, until their own followers taught them better. At the present time our comrades have formed "proletarian fractions" within the H. H., and these are carrying on energetic propaganda among the members, by word of mouth and by writing, by means of magazines published at irregular intervals in the Hebrew and Yiddish languages, appeals, etc. In these publications there have appeared, for instance, the theses on the Eastern Question accepted at the Third Congress of the R.I.L.U., and a platform for the forth-coming elections to the "Workers' Councils".

The leaders of the H. H. reply to this activity of our comrades by attempting to expel them from the movement. They have been supported in this endeavour by the Poale Zionists ("labor fraction"). But our friends are not alarmed by this. The work of gathering together and training the class-conscious elements within the reformist labor organizations themselves is making steady progress.