

On the Communist Approach to Zionism

A REPLY TO A MEMORANDUM

The Communist, July 1936

[We have received from the Jewish Bureau of the Pittsburgh District of the Communist Party a memorandum on the question of the recent events in Palestine, in which the comrades point out that these events have endangered our united front movement in organizations involving Jewish influential bodies. The memorandum raises the question whether the emphasis as to the main danger to the Palestinian masses should not be placed on British imperialism, which should be charged with the whole responsibility for the Palestinian happenings.

Below, we present a statement by the Jewish Bureau of the Central Committee, giving the correct approach to the problem. – EDITORS.]

The memorandum of the Jewish Bureau of the Pittsburgh District states in part:

"It is our definite opinion that we must concretely and clearly place the whole responsibility for the situation in Palestine on the policies of British imperialism.... That while we expose Zionism as the tool of the Jewish bourgeoisie whose policy of race discrimination is playing into the hands of English imperialism and misleads the Jewish masses, we must center our attack on the *main* enemy of the Arabian and Jewish masses which is British imperialism and call for the unity of the Arabian and Jewish masses to struggle against this main enemy of British imperialism and its agents."

The cited passage from the memorandum raises a number of serious problems in connection with the Palestinian question that call for a thorough enlightenment in order to make clear our approach to the question of Zionism and the struggle taking place in Palestine.

The Communist position on Palestine was outlined at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern by Comrade Hadyar, who stated:

"The Arab masses are filled with a burning hatred towards the Arab capitalists, feudalists, towards the Zionist bourgeoisie, which has taken upon itself the gendarme role of imperialist oppression. The struggle against the Zionist bourgeoisie is something which can be directly understood by almost all the oppressed social strata of the Arab people. This struggle is taking place daily, and is basically an anti-imperialist struggle. By supporting this struggle we must lead, extend and direct it along the proper channels, towards the struggle against the main enemy, against imperialism.

"We hate the Jewish Zionist bourgeoisie, but we extend a fraternal hand to the Jewish toilers for a joint struggle against imperialism, against Zionism, against the bitterest enemies of the Arab and Jewish peoples in Palestine.

"The Communist Party is building the Arab national people's front against imperialism and against Zionism. It actively works among the Jewish toiling masses in order to liberate them from the influence of the counter-revolutionary party of the Jewish Zionist capitalists, in order to draw the toiling Jews into the national emancipation struggle of the Arab masses."

This correct approach towards the situation in Palestine has regrettably not always been carried out without mistakes by our Party in Palestine. Thus, in a leaflet published last December, no differentiation was made between the rich Jewish Zionist bourgeoisie and the toiling masses. However, that leaflet does not constitute the line of the Communist Party in Palestine, and has since then been corrected.

In discussing the present events in Palestine, we must have in mind the national liberation character of the struggle in that country, and our attitude must be the attitude of Communists towards a national liberation movement in a colonial country – the attitude of supporting such a movement.

At the same time, we must take into consideration the three and a half to four hundred thousand Jews living in that country and the attempt being made by the feudalists, by Nazi and Italian fascist agitators, as well as by British imperialists, to turn the movement into a race struggle, into pogrom on the Jewish people. In this

respect, the role of Zionism must be made very clear. Zionism is playing into the hands of the reactionary forces. Not only is it playing into the hands of reaction, but is itself reactionary to the core.

Zionism is reactionary in that it fosters racial division and oppression. It divides the workers according to race, discriminating against Arab workers and barring them from the labor unions. That is called the "conquest of labor" – the policy carried out by the reactionary reformist Histadruth (Hebrew United Trade Unions of Palestine). Zionism dispossesses Arab peasants from the land and calls the policy, the "conquest of land".

The Zionist policy in Palestine makes for pogroms, by its racial discrimination policy which is being supported by British imperialism. This policy has poisoned the atmosphere of Palestine, making that country fertile ground for provocateurs of all kinds, particularly British imperialist provocateurs, who wish to divert the anti-imperialist struggle into channels of anti-Jewish struggles. This is made easier by the fact that the Zionist leaders, who constitute a small minority among the Jews, presume to speak in the name of all the Jews.

Zionism is reactionary in that it is and always has been a tool of imperialism. It supports and bases itself on imperialism. It preaches separation of the Jewish workers from the other workers in all the nations in which they find themselves. This diverts their attention from local struggles for improved conditions, and for the struggle for socialism as the only scientific solution of the national question.

The Zionist leaders contend that they are "using" British imperialism for Zionist purposes; actually, however, Zionism has become the tool, the very policeman, of British imperialism.

On the issue of the main danger and the shouldering of full responsibility for the recent happenings in Palestine, the Pittsburgh comrades are here making a mechanical separation of Zionist policies from British imperialism, by presenting British imperialism alone as the cause of the race clashes in Palestine under the old maxim of "divide and rule". We must in no way mitigate the participation of Zionism as a conscious policy and program in the imperialist designs of Great Britain. When we speak of the main danger and the full guilt for the happenings in Palestine, we must present the combined imperialist forces against which the Arabian and Jewish toilers of Palestine must fight: the British imperialists –

backed by Zionism. It is in this sense of the combined forces of imperialism that Comrade Hadyar presented the need for struggle against imperialism as the main enemy. We would be weakening our entire defense against the efforts of imperialism to bring Palestine completely under its heel, if we blinded ourselves in the slightest to Zionism's conscious role as accomplice of the British imperialist robber policy.

Zionism fights for the status quo in the Near East, for a continuation of the British Mandate over Palestine. It demands that Great Britain, by force, hold the Arab majority in subjection. It is at this very moment agitating against self-determination and democratic self-government in Palestine, which the colonially oppressed masses in that land are struggling to force British imperialism to concede.

We have said enough about the reactionary and imperialist character of Zionism to make it clear that the struggle against Zion is a special duty of Jewish Communists everywhere, is a struggle against imperialism. The Jewish comrades in the United States must wage a struggle against Zionist ideology, the imperialist weapon of the Jewish bourgeoisie. It is therefore clear that there can be no soft pedaling in our attitude towards the Zionist movement.

On the question of immigration, we must show that Communists are for free immigration. But we must confront the Zionist accusers with the fact that the present Jewish immigration into Palestine is not a free, but a selective immigration, for the purpose of strengthening British rule in Palestine. It is a conquest colonization, not free immigration. When, therefore, we come out in opposition to the Palestine immigration, we come out against the present Zionist immigration.

The Communists have traditionally and by the very nature of the Marxian-Leninist principles upheld the right of immigration and asylum. We fight the present Zionist-controlled immigration, which is intended to bolster the reactionary purposes of Zionism in Palestine. We Communists desire to broaden out in a thoroughgoing manner, the right of the oppressed and persecuted Jews in countries such as Germany, Poland, Rumania, and elsewhere, to emigrate without strictures, not only to Palestine, but also to the United States. In this connection, we emphasize the struggle that our Party is conducting against the reactionary anti-foreign born policy of William Green, who has recently offered a plank to the

Republican Party convention, favoring deportation of foreign-born. Let us refute the lying allegation of the Zionist leaders against us on the issue of immigration by countering with our policy of immigration and asylum as against the restrictive policy of Zionism.

We must, however, in our struggle against Zionism always emphasize that we have in mind the broad Jewish masses, whom the Zionist leaders are inciting against us by pointing to the Jewish blood that is flowing in Palestine – blood, Arabian as well as Jewish, that is the outcome of the criminal adventurism of the Zionist policy. In the past, we have made the mistake that our struggles against Zionism took on a form which made the impression of a struggle against the Jews living in Palestine. This was not correct. We must make clear, even more than we have, that Communists are not against the Jewish masses living at the present time in Palestine; that the Communists are fighting for the lives and the interests of the Jewish toiling masses everywhere – in Palestine, as in other capitalist countries where they are being oppressed by imperialism, anti-Semitism, fascism, etc. It is in connection with this that our Jewish Bureau has formulated a program of democratic demands that would immediately improve relations between Arabs and Jews in Palestine. These demands were formulated in the statement issued by the Jewish Bureau on the events in Palestine and in a number of articles printed in the *Morning Freiheit*. The main features of these demands are the following:

1. The responsible Jewish leaders of mass organizations in Palestine shall commit themselves publicly to the declaration that the Jews are not out to capture or dominate Palestine, that their aim is to live in peace and neighborly friendship with the Arabs.

2. The responsible Jewish leaders shall declare that they are in favor of a free Palestine, not dominated by British imperialism, but ruled by a democratically elected parliament, with the fullest freedom for the entire population and with guaranteed national rights for the Jews.

3. The leaders of the Jewish organizations in Palestine shall at once demonstrate their friendship toward the Arabs by admitting Arab workers into the trade unions and Arab farm laborers into the tenant organizations, renouncing the criminal scabbing policy of "capturing labor".

4. The responsible Jewish leaders shall declare that from now on Jews will buy land in Palestine only with the consent of those

living upon that land and cultivating it. This will put an end to the shameful and criminal policy of "capturing the land".

5. Jewish immigration into Palestine shall be freed from Zionist domination. At present it is *not immigration* but *colonization* for the purpose of capturing the country. The Zionists select as immigrants either rich Jews or toilers who are misled and ready to put themselves at the disposal of Zionists and their policy. Jewish immigration into Palestine must be placed under the supervision of organizations representing the mass of Jews and Arabs in Palestine.

We believe that this program, when properly explained and popularized among the Jewish masses, gives us a powerful weapon to combat the Zionist slander that Communists are against the Jewish masses living in Palestine. We must make it clear, that we – as against the ruinous Zionist policy – are very much concerned with the lives of the Jews living in Palestine and that we are making practical proposals to eliminate the causes of struggle raging now in Palestine and make it possible for the Jews and Arabs to live amicably together.

There is no doubt that the Zionist propaganda has succeeded in influencing thousands of workers and toilers, as well as a section of the leadership of certain mass organizations which were coming our way, on the question of the united front and the people's front. It is our task to prove to these leaders that, while we are combating Zionism, we are fighting for the interests of the Jewish toiling masses everywhere, and that we are even ready to make united fronts with those Zionists that are willing to struggle for the interests of the Jewish masses in this country or abroad.

We hope that this letter will clear up the confusion which was evident in the memorandum submitted by the comrades of the Pittsburgh District Jewish Bureau and will help them understand more clearly the tasks before them.

We are in agreement with that part of the memorandum which proposes that the Central Committee should issue a statement on the situation in Palestine. Comrade Earl Browder appearing on June 8 at a big mass meeting in New York made such a statement in the name of the Party, which appeared in the press.

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Central Committee, C.P.U.S.A.*