

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

The African e-Journals Project has digitized full text of articles of eleven social science and humanities journals. This item is from the digital archive maintained by Michigan State University Library. Find more at:

<http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/africanjournals/>

Available through a partnership with



*Scroll down to read the article.*

## IMPERIALISM AND SETTLER-COLONIALISM IN WEST ASIA: ISRAEL AND THE ARAB PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE\*

JAMIL HILAL\*\*

The present conflict between Israel and the Arab peoples (especially the Palestinian people) pre-dates the creation of the state of Israel and arose with the beginning of Zionist colonialisation of Palestine.

It was the representatives of British capital who, in the middle of the nineteenth century, first put forward the idea of creating a colonial settler state in Palestine (situated at the corner of the two continents of Asia and Africa) to guard the trade routes of British colonialism to the East, especially with India.

However, Zionism as a colonial-settler ideology was to emerge at a later period, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and in a different location. The disintegration of the feudal order and the rapid development of capitalism in Eastern Europe in the latter part of the nineteenth century, made the situation of the Jewish petty bourgeoisie untenable. They, as a class, were facing extinction, since they had lost, or were in the process of losing, their economic role, with no prospects of preserving their monopoly position (especially in the trade sector) in the decaying feudal order, or of moving to join the bourgeoisie in the emerging capitalist order. The only prospect facing them was proletarianisation.

The wave of anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe (especially the Russian pogroms of 1882) hastened the articulation of the Zionist ideology (e.g., the publication by Leo Pinsker of *Auto-Emancipation* in which he called for the "return" to Palestine as the only solution to the Jewish question; the publication by Theodor Herzl of *The Jewish State*, which remains to this day the Bible of Zionism).<sup>1</sup>

Zionism did not reject anti-Semitism, it incorporated it and gave it a central ideological significance; it projected it backwards and forwards in history; it made it innate, ineradicable and eternal. It considered assimilation an impossibility. The only solution, therefore, was to gather all the Jews in the Diaspora into a Jewish state. Thus the interests of the Jewish petty bourgeoisie were generalised and universalised, and articulated as the

\* This paper was presented at the TYL/Political Science Department Seminar on "Imperialism and Revolution in Southern Africa" held at the University of Dar es Salaam, and is published here by kind permission of the organisers.

\*\* Jamil Hilal was a lecturer in the Sociology Department, University of Dar es Salaam during 1974/5. He is now back in Beirut, Lebanon.

interests of Jews everywhere. The Jewish bourgeoisie, on the other hand, were profoundly assimilated and the Jewish proletariat was also integrated economically and politically. Indeed, Zionism, in its attempts to gain the support of various capitalist states offered its colonisation as a way to weakening revolutionary movements in Europe which had been joined by many Jewish workers. To the decaying and heavily indebted Ottoman rulers it offered the support of Jewish financial capital. But the West European Jewish bourgeoisie showed limited interest in Zionism as such; its later interest in Israel was motivated by the opportunities for investment the state offered, and not by a sentimental or religious consideration. That is, they became interested in Israel as bourgeoisie and not as Jews, and then only in a limited way (as a part of their general activities as a bourgeois class).

Organisationally, the Zionist movement was born during the First Zionist Congress held in Basle in 1897 under the presidency of Herzl. The objective of the movement was stated as the creation in Palestine of "a homeland for the Jewish people". This was to be achieved through the "fostering of colonisation of Palestine by Jewish farm and industry workers", through the "integration of all Jews of the world into appropriate local and international organisations", through "strengthening of national Jewish consciousness" and lastly through "development of the methods necessary to obtain from governments concerned the consent necessary to achieve Zionism's aims".

Since Zionism has no social base in Palestine,<sup>2</sup> the Zionist movement had to ally itself with the imperialist powers.<sup>3</sup> It approached and offered to serve the interests of the Ottoman rulers, German, French and British imperialism.

It was British imperialism which showed the most active interest in the Zionist project. But British imperialism could not actively interfere (apart from applying pressure on the "sick man of Europe", i.e., the Ottoman Empire) before the First World War, since before then, Palestine, like most Arab territory, was under Ottoman domination. The First World War led to the defeat of Turkey (which allied itself with Germany) and the Arab territories of the Ottoman Empire dismembered and divided between British and French colonialism (Italy having acquired control over part of Libya). As soon as the First World War ended the British issued the Balfour Declaration which promised the Zionist movement the establishment of a "national home" in Palestine. In 1920 Palestine fell under the control of British colonialism. A wave of Zionist immigration into Palestine began. Thus, the number of Jews in the country rose from 56,000 in 1917 to 175,000 in 1931 to 529,000 in 1944 to reach 700,000 (about 33% of the total population owning about 5.6% of the total area of Palestine and about 15% of its cultivated land) in 1948, when the British left the country just after the establishment of the state of Israel (May 1948), having handed most of their arms to Zionist gangs. From 1920 till 1948 the Palestinian

UTAFITI

people were subjected to a dual colonialism: (i) *British colonialism* which, as in Africa and Asia subjected the indigenous population to exploitation, tied their economy to the metropolitan economy and interrupted the country's own autonomous development; (ii) *Settler colonialism*. As in Southern Africa, stretches of land were acquired by the Zionist settlers, some presented to them by British colonialism, and other stretches were purchased from absentee landlords and their Arab tenants thrown out.

What Zionist colonialisation had in common with settler-colonialism in Southern Africa was the dispossession of the indigenous population of their land by Europeans. These similarities were sufficient to motivate Herzl to write to Rhodes for his blessing and support for the Zionist project, and were also sufficient to single out South Africa as the only country in Africa to give support in the United Nations to the establishment of Israel in 1948. These similarities are also manifested in the strong links that Israel has maintained with South Africa ever since, (likewise with Portugal for similar reasons).

But there are important differences between Zionist colonialism and settler-colonialism in Southern Africa. These differences explain the course and the intensity of the conflict that has raged in the Middle East for the last 50 years. The Zionist project aimed, right from the beginning, at creating a *Jewish* state. That is, the Zionists confronted the indigenous population (the Palestinian Arabs) not as a source of cheap labour to be exploited for the benefit of the Zionist settler economy (as settlers did in South Africa), but as an obstacle to the realisation of such an economy.<sup>4</sup> Herzl wrote in his *Diaries*, referring to the Palestinian Arabs:

'The poor population was to be worked across the frontier surreptitiously, after having rid the country of any existing wild animals such snakes, for Jewish benefit'.

So Palestinian labour was useful to Zionist colonialisation in one respect only, i.e., getting rid of wild animals, after which it was to be got rid of altogether!

Zionism was, therefore, pledged to create a fully-fledged class society of Jewish settlers (i.e., a Jewish working class). The constitution of the *Jewish Agency for Palestine* made clear that Arab land bought or acquired was inalienable Jewish land, but more important is the fact that Jewish farms and enterprises were forbidden to employ Arab labour, despite the fact that it was much cheaper than Jewish labour, and furthermore Zionist settlers were forbidden to buy Arab produce, although it was cheaper than the produce of settler farms. Thus a closed settler economy was created with very little interaction with the existing economy.

Thus Zionists strove not to *exploit* the indigenous Palestinian population but to *displace* it. This displacing character of Zionism explains the intensity of the contradiction that it engendered with the Palestinian people. This

contradiction manifested itself in the armed uprisings that took place against both Zionism and British imperialism between 1919 and 1948: 1919, 1921, 1929, 1936-39 (this latter included a general strike which lasted six months, the longest in history), and 1947-48. The contradiction was total. It engulfed all the major classes; the nascent but thwarted Arab bourgeoisie, the landlords fearful of Zionist competition and expansion, the peasantry who were becoming increasingly pauperised, the radicalised working class (a strong Arab communist party emerged in Palestine with the emergence of a working class there, mostly employed in the ports and railways of Palestine). They had lower wages and worse conditions of employment than Jewish workers and were deliberately prevented from employment in Zionist firms. There was also a frustrated Palestinian bourgeoisie with no future prospects.

However, the movement against Zionism and British colonialism was led by the Palestinian bourgeoisie and landlords who, despite their contradiction to Zionism, sought to compromise with British imperialism, and by the Arab ruling classes in the surrounding countries who were already allied to British colonialism. Thus, the Palestinian Arab workers and poor peasants were repeatedly let down, especially in 1936-39 and 1947-48.

The class nature of the Palestinian anti-Zionist movement and the extremely unfavourable balance of forces against the Palestinian Arab people explain why they failed.<sup>5</sup>

In 1948, Zionist forces—helped in various ways by British colonialism—succeeded in “pushing most of the Palestinian people across the frontier” but not surreptitiously. Whole villages—men, women and children—were butchered in a wave of Zionist terrorism to drive the people out.

Palestine was now divided into 3 parts:

The occupied area (Israel), 78% of the territory.

The West Bank (annexed by the Hashemite regime, a British client state at the time), 20.5% of the territory.

The Gaza Strip (came under Egyptian administration), 1.5% of the territory.

About three-quarters of a million Palestinians became refugees, scattered in refugee camps in the Gaza Strip, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

The Palestinian people, having lost their major means of production (land), their livelihood, and their political organisation, and having become geographically dispersed, found themselves powerless. The radicalised sections joined the various Arab nationalist anti-imperialist movements (Nasserite-type, Ba'ath, etc.), and communist parties. But since most of the Palestinian people were now under the Jordanian Hashemite rule, the struggle was resumed against the Jordanian regime.

The emirate of Transjordan was created in the process of Balkanization of Arab territory by British and French colonialism. It was carved out after the First World War in an area bordering Syria and Iraq in the North and East, Palestine in the West, and Saudi Arabia and the Red Sea in the South.

It was to act as a buffer state separating the anti-colonialist struggle in Palestine from that of Syria and Iraq. To subdue the local population in the area they relied on the conflict existing between the settled peasantry and bedouin tribes, who lived, partly, on the surplus of the peasantry through continued raids. The British first relied on the peasantry (1920-30) for the formation of a military force which they tried to use to subdue the bedouin tribes. This failed, so they switched their tactics. The bedouin from now on formed the core of the military force in Jordan. Thus the integration of these tribes (40% of the total population in 1940) into the newly formed state was carried out not by the integration of their economy and transforming it into the urban and peasant economies, but through integrating them occupationally, i.e., providing them with a source of income within the coercive apparatus of the state. Their pastoral economy was deliberately preserved to prevent their economic and hence political integration. Hence they remained really a mercenary force.<sup>6</sup> Even today the bulk of the fighting force of the Jordanian army (about 80,000 out of a resident population of less than two million) remains bedouin. This explains why—unlike in all surrounding Arab countries—no military *coup d'état* has taken place in Jordan, despite the widespread and militant opposition to the regime since the formation of the kingdom in 1950 (when two-thirds of its population became Palestinian).

Over half the national annual budget in Jordan is consumed by the army. But the army is not—and never has been—dependent for its consumption on the surplus produced locally. The source has been foreign aid, firstly British, i.e., up until 1957 when there was a general uprising against the regime in Jordan and against the British presence (the army command via Glubb Pasha remained until then British), which was—as always—put down by the army; and secondly through American aid.<sup>7</sup> The ratio of foreign aid to the GNP has never gone below 40% and has, on occasions (especially as internal popular opposition intensifies) reached a level of over 60%. Hence the army in Jordan (as in Israel) has never reflected the development of the forces of production in the country, nor depended on the economic surplus of the people.<sup>8</sup> This applies, to a large extent, to the whole state apparatus in Jordan. Although the state bureaucracy did appropriate economic surplus—through taxations of various kinds and through direct investment in economic enterprises—this surplus certainly cannot sustain a fraction of the huge state administrative, ideological, and coercive apparatus. This maintenance of the state by foreign aid and subsidies explains its dependence on imperialism on the one hand, and the large degree of autonomy it has internally. It explains, too, why the ruling bureaucratic class has been so unresponsive to internal demands throughout the history of its formation. It also explains why this class has never taken any independent stand *vis-à-vis* imperialist policy in the area, as it has in surrounding Arab states.

It is within such a political set-up that over half the Palestinians found themselves between 1948 and 1967 (when Israel occupied the West Bank of Jordan) under the control of the Hashemite regime. It was partly for this purpose of containing the Palestinian and radical East Jordanian masses that imperialism created and continued to subsidise the Jordanian regime.<sup>9</sup> The regime in Jordan (like the Israeli state) is subsidised for political reasons, i.e., its political role in the area. The repression, unemployment and marginalisation of the masses in Jordan made labour the major export commodity. Every year, tens of thousands migrated to the Arab oil states, forming large communities in the Gulf area. Although they found employment in these states, they did not escape political repression. As "foreign" workers (despite the ideology of Arab brotherhood professed by these regimes) they were subjected to various controls and pressures which paralysed any open political activity. This was an important factor in keeping the Palestinian national question and identity alive. In fact, it was from this area that some of the political leadership of the PLO (especially that of Fateh) emerged.

In 1964, because of popular pressure and in an attempt to contain the unrest and mounting general frustration with Arab nationalist regimes,<sup>10</sup> the Palestine Liberation Organization was established. Later that year the Palestine Liberation Army was formed. Both of these were under the sponsorship of the Arab nationalist regimes, and under bourgeois Palestinian leadership.

At the same time a clandestine Palestinian organisation was formed under the leadership of bourgeois.<sup>11</sup> This organisation believed that the Palestinian people could not wait for the Arab regimes to liberate Palestine and that, therefore, the Palestinians should begin to initiate military action against the Israeli state. This they did: their first guerrilla operation inside Israeli-held territory was carried out early in 1965.

Subsequent events were to make this a significant date in the history of the Palestinian struggle. For it was through the resistance movement that the Palestinian Arab people were able to regain the organisational unity they lost in 1948, and were enabled to assert their national identity and their right to self-determination.

Israeli aggression against the surrounding Arab countries and its subsequent occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip (thus bringing the whole of Palestine under occupation), together with the whole of Sinai and the Syrian Golan Heights made it clear to the poor masses that classical military confrontation is not the way (or at least not sufficient in itself) to fight the national enemy. The example of Vietnam had great impact. The bookshops of the Arab capitals became full of translations of the writings of General Giap, Mao, Che Guevara, among others. Marxist literature became available—for the first time—in great quantities in all the capitals of surrounding Arab countries.

The ruling classes of these countries, demoralised and weakened by the defeat, had no alternative but to make a tactical retreat. The Palestinian resistance movement grew enormously as peasants, workers, refugees, teachers, students (both Palestinian and from other Arab countries) flocked to join the movement. Bourgeois nationalist organisations (such as the Arab Nationalist Movement) found that their old theoretical framework (which believed that the Arab "bourgeois" regimes are capable, if they adopt some radical measures and policies, of building socialism) crumbled. From these movements emerged various organisations adopting a Marxist-Leninist ideology. A fairly large number of small organisations emerged committed to armed struggle (some opportunistic, some directly patronised and financed by the various Arab regimes). Most of these had little impact and some dissolved themselves and merged into the larger organisations.

Of these organisations Fateh had the largest support, basically for two reasons: firstly because it was the first on the scene. It began before the June War of 1967, and the results of the War seemed to confirm the correctness of its strategy and tactics. Secondly, and this is of equal if not more importance, its political programme was wide enough to appeal to a very wide sector of the Palestinian population, both among the pauperised masses of the refugee camps and the "bourgeoisie",<sup>12</sup> and even among certain sectors of the bourgeoisie. Because of this, Fateh was able to attract a heterogeneous membership, ranging from the fairly conservative to those committed to a Marxist-Leninist line. On the other hand, the more radical organisations (such as the PDFLP and PFLP) have a more restricted membership (mostly from the poorer classes and the more radicalised bourgeoisie).

Within a short period, the Palestine resistance movement became strong enough to make itself felt in the whole region; inside Israeli-held territory through increasing armed struggle, inside the Arab countries through increasing mass support. It was soon to take over the organisation of the PLO and to oust its old bourgeois leadership. It became strong enough to create a situation of dual authority within East Jordan. The people were armed, organised and deeply committed to overthrowing the regime. In the many camps in Amman and outside, the resistance movement had complete control, and various experiments in popular participation and decision-making, and even in production, were started.

The ruling class in Jordan was retreating and offering one concession after another. But these were tactical, for during the whole period between the beginning of 1969 till September 1970 the Jordanian regime was preparing itself militarily, politically and organisationally, with open support from American imperialism and encouragement from Israel, to smash the Resistance movement and re-establish full authority.

On the other hand, the major section of the Resistance movement did not orient itself or prepare itself for the seizure of power. Left-wing organi-

sations did, in 1970, raise such slogans as "All power to the Resistance and the people", but these were not taken seriously by the body of the Resistance which considered the main conflict to be with Israel, and with Israel alone, and attempted to limit its relations with the regime towards the obtaining of concessions. The infantile leftism of some of the practices, and the neglect by other Resistance organisations of the poorer Transjordanian masses, were used by the regime to mobilise sectors of the Transjordanian population against the Resistance. Similarly, not enough emphasis was given to the social aspects of the struggle (i.e., the transformation of social relations, which was left to the spontaneous action of the people). The emphasis was centred on the political-military side (i.e., on *resistance* rather than *revolution*).

I emphasise this because the above lesson that emerged from the bloody civil war in Jordan in September 1970 has been a costly one. It left many thousands killed and more injured, and it ended the open existence of the Resistance in Jordan. In July 1971 the Resistance was driven out of Jordan. This experience emphasises yet again the absolute necessity of combining theory with practice. No liberation movement can be successful without combining theory with practice; no revolutionary strategy can be achieved without the necessary revolutionary tactics. These are determined by the specific revolutionary situation.

While the Hashemite state was exporting Palestinian labour through economic and political pressures, the Israeli state was on the other hand importing Jewish labour through economic incentives and political pressures. Thus, between 1948 and 1967 the population of Israel tripled from 758,000 to 2,430,000. Most of these immigrants came from the Arab countries<sup>13</sup> and East Europe. In the former, Jewish emigration was the product of a number of factors: Zionism considered all Jews everywhere as potential citizens of the State of Israel.<sup>14</sup> That is, it deliberately equated Zionism (a political settler colonialist ideology) with Judaism (a religious ideology). This fact made the task of the ruling Arab classes easier in encouraging Jewish citizens to migrate to Israel. Since the Jewish minorities in most of the Arab countries concentrated their economic activities in trade, commerce and the professions, it meant that the control over these economic activities would fall into the hands of the Arab bourgeoisie. In some cases, the Israeli state paid cash to the Arab ruling class for every Arab Jew who migrated to Israel (this was certainly the case with the comprador class that ruled Iraq until 1958). In other Arab states Israeli secret agents began a wave of terrorist attacks on Jewish property and religious places to "encourage" their emigration.

Zionism had no attraction for the Arab Jewish population. Before the establishment of the state, no single Arab Jew went to Palestine as a Zionist settler. Certainly a Jew from the Yemen or Morocco had no cultural links with a Jew from Poland or France. These cultural, linguistic differences corresponded to differences in physical features. To Arab Jews, European

Jews looked, behaved and talked like Europeans. To European Jews, Arab Jews looked, talked and behaved like Arabs. Thus they had to be "assimilated", as far as possible, into European culture.

At the cultural level, Israeli society has come to be organised into three basic compartments. In this it resembles the colonial settler societies of Southern Africa. These compartments are: the European Jews, the Arab Jews, and those Palestinian Arabs who remained in Palestine after the establishment of the state of Israel. The ruling classes in Israel are exclusively drawn from the European Jews; ministers, army officers, managers, state administrators, etc. They control the state apparatus, the labour organisation (the Histadrut), the education system and the economy. The Arab or Asian Jews form the bulk of the unskilled and semi-skilled labour, petty traders, and the bulk of the rank and file of the Israeli army. The Palestinian Arabs (who formed in 1967 over 12% of the population) are confined to agricultural "reserves" (labour-intensive agriculture) and have remained subjected to various military, administrative and social restrictions.

This segmentation of Israeli society, depending on waves of Jewish immigration, faced the ruling classes with the task of providing an integration mechanism lest the conflicts between the various sectors tear the country apart. At the cultural level, the ideological apparatus of the state (the radio, press, schools, television, etc.), turned Zionism into the political religion of the state. Anti-Semitism anywhere was taken as evidence of the truth of Zionism, and where anti-Semitism did not exist it had to be created. Thus any attacks on Zionism were labelled as anti-Semitism. The demands by the Palestinian and Arab masses for the de-Zionisation of the state of Israel and the establishment of a secular Palestinian state were presented to the Irish population as unadulterated anti-Semitism. Thus, the Israeli population was led to believe that one is either a Zionist (and, therefore, a defender of the Israeli State) or else one is anti-Semitic (and, therefore, wants to throw all the Jews into the sea). Those Jews who stood against Zionism were considered traitors to the Jewish state.

Just as Zionism asserted the existence of a Jewish nation entitled to its own state,<sup>15</sup> it denied, and continues to deny, the existence of a Palestinian Arab people.<sup>16</sup> Israel was depicted internally and externally as the embodiment of Western values and democracy, surrounded by backward and savage people bent on its destruction. The presentation of an ever-present external threat to the "Jewish state" was and remains essential to Zionism. It is also essentially a justification and sanctification of its militarism and expansion.

In Jordan, a modern state apparatus was imposed on an already existing population with pre-capitalist modes of production. The colonial state began—through various administrative and economic measures—to transform those pre-capitalist modes of production into a colonial mode (e.g., the commercialisation of agriculture, the development of certain primary

products for export). However, the extraction of economic surplus is a subsidiary function of the colonial state. Its role remained primarily political-strategic (i.e., related to settler-colonialisation in Palestine and to the colonial exploitation in the neighbouring Arab States).<sup>17</sup>

The Israeli state apparatus (and its precursor in the form of the Zionist Organisation) on the other hand, was not imposed on an already existing population organised in production. One of its main tasks was to assemble such a population (from various parts of the world) in Palestine and organise its production. Even today, more than a quarter of a century after the establishment of the Israeli state, one of its major functions remains to organise immigration into the country and agitate for such immigration (the gathering of Jews from the Diaspora).

The fact that the Israeli state played and still plays a crucial role in the organisation of production has led some petty bourgeois idealists and various brands of "left-wingers" in the West to view Israel as a progressive and even socialist state, struggling for survival in a hostile environment.

The petty bourgeois origins of the Zionist movement and of the state, together with the tasks it had to perform (gather, integrate and organise a diverse population over one geographic area) explain the specificity of the Israeli state. This petty bourgeoisie did not seize state power from a comprador-landlord ruling class, as happened in countries such as Syria, Egypt, and Iraq; nor did it lead a struggle of decolonisation, as happened in many of the African countries. It created the state. This explains its reactionary character and its open and articulated alliance with imperialist interests, not only in the Arab and Mediterranean area but also in Africa and parts of Asia and Latin America.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, in the process of formation and creation, the Israeli state had to displace the Palestinian people, which explains its overt militarism and racialism.

Israel is completely integrated in the world capitalist system (e.g., the bulk of imports and exports are with the capitalist countries) and its relations of production are capitalist relations. The relationship between labour power and the means of production is a wage relationship. The Kibbutz system—which contains less than 3% of the population—is integrated, both economically (produces for the capitalist market) and militarily (Kibbutz members are trained, armed and supervised by the Israeli army) into the state.

The ruling class in Israel is the Bureaucratic (state) class, represented most clearly by the Israeli labour party, the Histadrut and the army. The Israeli army plays a role as an extremely important organisational apparatus for integration. Conscription ensures that every adult male and female goes through the military machine (with its emphasis on discipline, chauvinism, and constant external threat) and that they remain part of that army when they leave to their various civilian occupations (that is, retain a rank and are allocated to a military unit). They are liable to recall at any time. Thus, the Israeli state can raise an army of about a third of a million within

UTAFITI 72 hours—this out of a total population of three million inhabitants. As in Jordan, the army consumes the major part of the budget and is externally dependent on foreign aid from the imperialist countries.<sup>19</sup>

American imperialism has ensured that the Israeli army is constantly equipped with the latest and most sophisticated military equipment.<sup>20</sup> Thus an understanding of the role of the army in Israel is extremely important, for without its weakening (and hence the weakening of the state and the cohesiveness of the ruling class and its hold on the Israeli population), internal contradictions (including class contradictions) are likely to remain muted. This means that armed struggle is basic to any revolutionary action against the Israeli state.

The limited military blow that the Israeli army received during the October war<sup>21</sup> had a clear and manifest effect on the cohesion of the ruling class, and also brought a certain amount of open hostility to the ruling class from some sectors of the population. The conflicts were sufficient to force the bureaucratic bourgeoisie to change some of its political representatives (e.g., the removal of Dayan and Golda Meir, among others). The military losses have been more than compensated for by American military and financial aid. Israel received the equivalent of three billion dollars in military and other aid during 1974. Since the October War, the Israeli ruling class has been preparing itself for another military attack on neighbouring Arab countries (the most likely target being Syria). This is in order to re-establish its prestige and demonstrate its value to imperialism on the one hand (especially after European imperialism began to show signs of doubt as to the value of Israel as a sub-imperialist base in the area) and to mute and contain the internal discontent that emerged after, and as a direct result of the October war, and because of the deteriorating economic situation with increasing unemployment and rising cost of living.<sup>22</sup>

Major Israeli military aggression against the Arab people has always been initiated when specific conditions are present. Internally they have come during periods of worsening economic conditions and increasing political unrest, and the beginning of emigration from Israel, especially from among the European petty bourgeois.<sup>23</sup> Externally, such a period has been characterised by slackening of foreign aid and investments in Israel, together with an American interest in increasing its control in the area. This is true of 1956 with the Israeli-British-French aggression against Egypt, and of June 1967.

In June 1967 Israel came to occupy the whole of Palestine, the whole of Sinai and the Syrian Golan Heights. Israeli leadership was faced with the task of deciding upon a policy in the populated occupied areas, i.e., the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israeli leadership was faced with a dilemma. Expansionism has always been a basic tenet of Zionism. However, unlike the situation in 1948, when the majority of the Arab Palestinian population were driven out, in 1967, having learnt the lessons of 1948, the majority

of the Arab Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip refused to budge. They remained put in spite of the various attempts to drive them out. Hence, the expansionist tendency (territorial annexation) came into conflict with the tenets of the exclusiveness of the Jewish state and its "racial purity" (because of the absorption of over one million new Palestinian Arabs of the West Bank and Gaza Strip).

The commercial, agricultural and industrial Israeli bourgeoisie saw in the West Bank and Gaza Strip a reservoir of cheap labour and a new market for their commodities. The bureaucracy, on the other hand, tended to view the occupied Palestinian population in political terms, i.e., as representing a threat to the "purity and exclusiveness" of the Zionist state, an explosive element that could tear Israeli society apart.

Gradually a compromise was reached between the two factions. The occupied territories are to be integrated economically but to remain isolated politically and under strict military control. Thus a process of moulding the economies of the West Bank and Gaza Strip to meet the needs of the Israeli economy was begun in early 1968. That is, a process of rapid colonisation began in the occupied area. By 1973 the economies of the West Bank and Gaza became dependencies of the Israeli economy. Thus, after 1970 the occupied areas became the second major importers of Israeli goods after the U.S.A. with only a fractional difference between the two. According to official Israeli statistics, the balance of trade between Israel and the occupied area showed a surplus of 1.6 billion Israeli pounds during the period between July 1967 and October 1973.

Import of Arab labour remained restricted, but each year the quota of Palestinian labourers allowed to work in Israel was raised. The number of Arab workers from the occupied territories increased from about 10,000 in 1968 to nearly 80,000 before the October War (representing nearly 40% of the total labour force). Now the Israeli bourgeoisie found in them a source of cheap labour (mostly unskilled or semi-skilled hard physical labour employed in building industries, manufacturing and agriculture). The state bureaucracy found in them a source of revenue. Since Israeli labour laws applied to these workers, something like 40% of their gross wages had to go to the state. The Israeli workers who pay these taxes get various benefits in return for these deductions (sickness benefits, pensions, paid holidays, etc.). However, the Arab workers received none of these benefits, while having 40% of pay deducted. The Israeli state was exacting tribute from the Arab workers of the occupied territories. Israeli sources—which are likely to underestimate the amount—reported that the Israeli state was collecting, through these deductions, about half a million Israeli pounds every day from Arab workers. Thus Arab labour was subject to a double exploitation: an exploitation by the bourgeoisie which took the form of profit, and exploitation by the state, which took the form of tribute.

The Israeli bourgeoisie did not depend solely on migrant Arab labour

which travelled daily to work inside Israel. They went in search of cheap labour in the occupied territories themselves. Cottage-type industries were soon started where women's labour was exploited in sewing, embroidery, weaving, etc., for Israeli businessmen. Some Israeli industries were started. Small peasants became proletarianised as they found they could no longer subsist on their farms with the rapid rise in the cost of living. Large landowners turned to the production of agricultural crops that could be marketed in Israel and to partially mechanised agriculture because of the labour shortage created by the opening up of the Israeli labour market to Arab labour.

The Israeli military occupation authority adopted a conscious policy of "non-interference" in local affairs and daily administration. Municipal administration remained in local hands, supervised by the occupation forces—a typical colonial practice. At various points the Israeli leadership attempted to create a quisling Arab leadership in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It would probably have succeeded had it not been for the existence of the Resistance movement which came to be viewed by most of the poorer classes as their sole representative. The major Resistance groups established underground cells in the occupied territories. These engaged in military operations against Israeli targets and against collaborators.

The Israeli authorities also adopted a policy of "open bridges" (keeping the bridges across the Jordan River that link the West Bank with the East Bank open to the movement of goods and people). This had a double purpose. Politically it kept the West Bank linked to Arab markets, especially to that of the East Bank. Indeed, Israel initiated a policy of encouraging exports from the West Bank to Arab markets.<sup>24</sup> This was done for two reasons: firstly, Israeli commodities can be infiltrated into Arab markets through the Jordan Bridge, and secondly, the exports of local agricultural and manufactured products in the East Bank created a wider market in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for Israeli products. Thus the wages that the Arab workers received in Israel were spent on buying Israeli imported commodities. The value of these imports increased annually to reach nearly half a billion Israeli pounds in 1972.

Moreover, the "open-bridge" policy ensures the movement of money into the West Bank and Gaza from family-supporters working in the oil states and East Bank. On the political-ideological level it is meant to induce a feeling of normality and stability to people both inside and outside the occupied territories. People outside can come and visit their relatives (after obtaining the necessary permit from the Israeli authorities through their relatives in the occupied areas) and similarly people in the occupied territories can leave the West Bank and Gaza for travel and study.

Zionism, however, is a settler-colonial movement. It could not remain satisfied with economic colonisation of the occupied area. After the annexation of Jerusalem and its environs it initiated a programme of colonial settlement. Between July 1967 and September 1973, 46 Zionist settle-

ments were created in the occupied territories. Large stretches of land were seized and settlements were built on them. Plans were devised for the building of major urban settlement centres in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These agricultural-military settlements and the planned urban settlements are located in such a way as to isolate the Palestinian population in smaller units surrounded by Israeli settlements. Moreover, large stretches of land have been fenced off for "military" purposes and where this land has been cultivated crops have been destroyed (sprayed by chemical poison) and peasants prevented from cultivating the land. All public land has been taken over by the Israeli military authority. Israeli speculators and Zionist organisations have been covertly encouraged to buy land in the occupied territories.

Occupation breeds resistance, resistance breeds repression which breeds more resistance and the cycle begins again. The West Bank came under occupation after having been under Jordanian rule for seventeen years. The people were unarmed, the political, trade unions and other popular organisations smashed and their radical leadership imprisoned or exiled. Nevertheless, the resistance was soon to emerge. The Resistance movement—despite the enormous difficulties involved—was able to establish cells in the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip the situation was better. The people there, having experienced Israeli occupation in 1956 knew exactly what they were facing. More important, they had arms and were trained. The Palestine Liberation Army in Gaza gave the invading Israeli army a rough time. It soon submerged itself among the people and distributed arms to them. Furthermore, high density of population in the Gaza refugee camps also helped the process of sheltering and aiding resistance fighters. The Israelis amassed enormous forces against the people in Gaza. Right up to 1972 no Israeli soldier could enter the camps of Gaza at night. It was not until the Israelis bulldozed large sections of the refugee camps to build "security roads" and moved part of the refugees elsewhere, concentrating a large part of their army on the small population of Gaza, that the resistance there was weakened. The driving of the resistance out of Jordan in 1970/71 helped the Israelis in concentrating their efforts against it within the occupied territories, since the resistance was unable to operate across the River Jordan.

In the West Bank, as in Gaza, all forms of organised activity among the Palestinian population were banned (even those of a purely cultural kind). School books were scrutinised by the occupation authorities, all references to the Israeli state, the struggle of the Palestinian and other Arab people obliterated. Indeed, any reference (even in Arab grammar books or classical Arabic poetry, written many centuries ago) to struggles against oppression or exploitation were obliterated.

The most fascist-type measures were used against anybody suspected of aiding the resistance or taking part in any activity against the Israeli occupation. The Israeli authorities were not satisfied with long-term imprisonments (with the usual technique of torture) but also, in an efforts to create a

barrier between the population and the resistance, adopted a policy of blowing up the houses of those suspected of aiding the resistance. Thus, between 1967 and 1971, over 17,500 houses were blown up by the Israeli army in the West Bank alone. Moreover, thousands of people were exiled from the occupied territories and many more were imprisoned. The logic of occupation leads to resistance, which leads to repression which leads to intensified resistance. The pattern is a familiar one.

For the past ten years the Palestinian resistance movement has been engaged in armed struggle. During this period it has gone through various set-backs, but it has achieved various victories. I believe that the most important of these victories has been its mobilisation of the poorer section of the Palestinian masses. It turned refugees into freedom fighters. But the progressive radicalisation of the movement through active struggle has also been important. Here the left wing of the movement played a significant role. The left wing did not merely engage in armed struggle against the national enemy; it possessed a theory of imperialism, a theory which tied the struggle against the settler-colonial state of Israel and the Hashemite regime to the struggle against imperialism and with class struggle. The fact that the PLO came to comprise all the major resistance organisations (including the left-wing organisations) meant that they were able to participate in discussion, criticism, and even influence decisions concerning the policies and tactics of the PLO as a whole.

The PLO provided a framework for national unity among the resistance groups. The national charter<sup>25</sup> of the PLO provided a minimum programme of agreement among the different resistance groups.<sup>26</sup> "National Unity" has been based, and I believe rightly so, on the principle "alliance with criticism". Each organisation has kept its internal autonomy and its right to present its views on the various issues relevant to the struggle. No revolutionary party or organisation can escape the question of alliance, especially during the stage of liberation struggle. But alliance should not mean the fusion of the radical or revolutionary organisations with simple national-patriotic (i.e., bourgeois) organisations. Without alliance there is a real danger of factionalism and divisiveness with all their consequences of dissipation of effort, and confusion among the people. Within the context of specifying the major contradiction (i.e., who is the enemy), the question of alliances is clarified.

Similarly, since the struggle is waged in a specific politico-economic and world context, the question of the specification of the immediate, medium, and long range objectives cannot be evaded. This is extremely clear in the case of the Palestinian struggle. It would be pipe dreaming to suggest that a socialist society can be built in Palestine in the immediate or near future. The balance of class forces (local, regional and international) makes such an objective a long-term one. Indeed, the Palestine Resistance movement did not specify any immediate objectives (i.e., what is possible within the near future given the existing balance of forces) and merely stated its strategic aim (i.e.,

the de-Zionisation of Israel and the creation of a secular democratic Palestinian state). We have seen that the lack of such a specification led to serious mistakes being made before the period of the civil war in Jordan in 1970.

It was only after the October war of 1973 that the Palestine resistance began to think seriously about the immediate objectives of the struggle.<sup>27</sup> A programme had to be put forward with regard to the political future of the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The people in these territories faced the immediate and daily problem of occupation and they were certainly not desirous of reincorporation into the Jordanian state. To demand from them to continue their sacrifice until the whole of Palestine is liberated was, in real terms, tantamount to telling them to accept the occupation or a return to the repression and domination of the Hashemite regime. A struggle has to be waged to establish an independent national Palestinian authority over the occupied areas, once these are freed from the Israeli occupation.

The fact that this is a short-term objective does not mean that its achievement is going to be an easy one. For neither the Jordanian ruling class nor Israel nor American imperialism wants to see a Palestinian state established in the West Bank under the control of the resistance movement. The Israeli ruling class would prefer to re-establish Jordanian civilian control over the populated areas of the West Bank, while retaining military and economic control of the area, and maintaining the colonial settlements they established there. The Jordanian ruling class on the other hand want to re-establish full political control over all or most of the West Bank, without severing the economic ties established with the Israeli economy. The Americans, for various economic and political reasons to do with their policy in the area as a whole, favour a settlement nearer to that put forward by the Jordanian regime. But it is the expansionist greed of the Israeli state bourgeoisie that has so far stood in the way of a full rapprochement between the Jordanian and Israeli ruling classes.

The diplomatic and political gains achieved by the Palestine resistance movement recently (its acknowledgement as the sole representative of the Palestinian people by 105 countries at the last meeting of the U.N. General Assembly) together with the tactical retreat by the Jordanian regime and the increasing isolation and confusion of the Israeli ruling class is very likely to lead the latter into military adventurism and intervention. This is the classical reaction of the Israeli ruling class in periods of crisis, and it is experiencing its severest political crisis since 1948. Indeed, the immediate reaction of the Israeli military leaders to the Kissinger statement threatening the military occupation of Arab oil fields was to offer Israeli military services to U.S. imperialism, i.e., to attack Syria and Egypt while U.S. troops are occupying the oil fields of the Arab Gulf.

The Palestinian struggle against Zionism and imperialism has been long (over half a century), arduous and extremely costly. Despite its achieve-

**UTAFITI** ments, the road ahead also remains long, arduous and full of pitfalls. But history is on our side. The struggle must continue to hasten its arrival, so that we can all begin the task of making real history—the task of building socialism, of freeing man from the fetters of imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Herzl was a journalist, Leo Pinsker was a doctor and M. Hess (another Zionist ideologue of that period) was a teacher.
2. The Jews living in Palestine in 1917 formed about 80% of the total population and owned not more than 2.5% of the land.
3. It is a tribute to the Bolsheviks' historical acumen and the scientific nature of Marxism as a methodology, that they recognised from the beginning the reactionary nature of Zionism. Thus Lenin wrote in 1903 (*Iskra*, 22 October) that the Zionist idea of a Jewish nation "is entirely false and reactionary in its essence". The Bolsheviks took an anti-Zionist position on two grounds: firstly, they considered the idea of a Jewish nation to be against the interests of the Jewish proletariat, for "directly and indirectly, it engenders in its ranks a mood hostile to assimilation", a "ghetto mood", as Lenin observed. To the Bolsheviks, the Zionists were gathering "around themselves petty-bourgeois elements and erecting a thick barrier between the Jewish masses and the Russian Revolution". Secondly, the Bolsheviks saw Zionism as serving British foreign policy objectives in Palestine and the Arab East. In 1919 they declared: "Through its Palestine policy the Zionist party becomes an instrument in the hands of imperialism in its war against the proletarian revolution".

Thus, while Lenin and the Bolshevik Party saw, even before the beginning of any serious Zionist colonisation in Palestine, the nature and reactionary role of a Jewish state, the so-called "progressive" and "socialist" parties and organisations in Western Europe did not lose their enthusiasm and active support for Israel until very recently.

4. The bourgeois class nature of Zionism may be relevant in explaining this. This is also revealed in Zionist depiction of Israel as a classless society.
5. Especially the alliance of Zionism—well-organised and well-armed determined settlers—and British colonialism, which had at various periods something like half the British army stationed in Palestine, together with the comprador-landlord nature of the ruling classes in the Arab countries at the time. These ruling classes were allied with British imperialism and adopted policies which hindered and retarded the Palestinian struggle. A similar situation can be seen today in the attempts by bourgeois Arab regimes to appeal to imperialism to put "pressure" on Israel to withdraw from occupied Arab land. Thus imperialism (like British colonialism prior to 1948 which was instrumental in implementing Zionist settler-colonialism) is being presented by these ruling classes as a "neutral mediator" in the conflict with Israel. This of course, can only lead to the strengthening of imperialist domination in the area. Hence Israel plays a very useful role for imperialism. Without imperialist aid and support Israel is incapable of maintaining itself.
6. Last year units of the army went "on strike" in demand for better pay to meet the rise in cost of living.
7. In recent years the Jordan regime has become increasingly dependent on aid from the reactionary Arab oil states.

8. The marginalisation of the masses in Jordan is reflected in the sectoral employment of the labour force. In 1966, 35% of the labour force was employed in agriculture, 10% in manufacture and the remainder in the so-called tertiary sector (administration, trade and commerce). At the same time high rates of unemployment (reaching to 20% of labour force) and underemployment (most of the agricultural population was employed for less than half of the agricultural year) continued to exist.
9. This was made clear in the correspondence between Churchill and King Abdullah (grandfather of the present king of Jordan).
10. Between 1948 and 1958 all the surrounding Arab countries—apart from Jordan—went through a change of class rule. The old ruling class composed of an alliance between the big landlords, and the commercial comprador was overthrown through military *coup d'état* by sectors of the national bourgeoisie. The popularity that these regimes attained in their early stages was based on the measures they instituted to undermine and greatly weaken the economic base of the old ruling class through nationalisation of foreign enterprises, major industries and enterprises, banks, etc., and through land reforms which put a ceiling on individual ownership. It was also due to the anti-imperialist measures and postures that were taken, (e.g., nationalisation of Suez Canal, the removal of foreign military bases) and to their commitment to the liberation of Palestine and to Arab unity.
11. The radicalisation of the Palestinian bourgeoisie is largely due to its dispossession in 1948 and to the fact that it remained subject to various legal and political constraints in many of the countries where it found employment.
12. The loss of their means of production, together with the difficulties of competing with the labour force in the host Arab countries has led the Palestinians to invest heavily in education, this being the only guarantee of future employment. Hence, the Palestinians have the highest rates of literacy and the highest ration of "high man-power" (university-level education) of all the Arab countries. This means that a high percentage of Palestinians are bourgeois (i.e., possessors of certificates and skills). But it is also true that the percentage of peasants is extremely low, for obvious reasons. Wage-labourers constitute also a higher percentage than in the Arab countries.
13. Yemen, Morocco, Iraq, Egypt.
14. Israeli law entitles every Jew (defined through matrilineal descent) to immediate citizenship upon setting foot in Palestine.
15. Zionist leaders are never tired of repeating the slogan that they want "an exclusively Jewish state, just as the French have a French state and the English have an English State".
16. When asked about the Palestinian people, Golda Meir turned round and shouted: "There is nothing called Palestinian. They have never existed".
17. Thus the British-controlled army in Transjordan was used during the period between the two world wars, to prevent any real linkage taking place between the anti-imperialist struggle in Palestine and Syria. It was used similarly to put down an uprising in Iraq against British colonialism.
18. In Africa this took the form of preparing the ground for international (American) capital. U.S. imperialism used Israeli diplomatic, military and "development" institutions to pave the way in post-colonial Africa for its penetration. It was also used to undermine revolutionary and radical movements in Africa that threatened the hegemony of Western capital. It is no secret that (i) U.S. government helped shape the style and substance of Israeli assistance programmes to Africa; and (ii) the U.S. and Europe helped finance these programmes through the use of the semi-covert "third country" technique; (iii) Israeli assistance pro-

## UTAFITI

grammes have been concentrated in strategically important areas, particularly in specialised military training with direct "counterinsurgency" (i.e., counter-revolutionary) applications; and (iv) these Israeli programmes serve the interests of Israeli sub-imperialism and are well integrated in U.S. imperialist strategy. Israeli penetration in Africa included Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo (K), Dahomey, Ethiopia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda.

19. Last year (1974) Israeli military expenditure amounted to 46.9% of the country's national income.
20. During the October war of 1973 the U.S. carried out the largest airlift in history of military equipment to Israel. The Israeli state received last year a third of total American foreign aid.
21. About 5,000 Israeli soliders and officers were killed during the October War. In proportional terms this is the equivalent of a loss of more than 40,000 American soldiers.
22. Israeli currency was devalued by more than 40% towards the end of last year.
23. Because of the higher rates of natural population increase among Palestinian Arabs inside Israel and among the Arab Jews, the Israeli leadership has often openly expressed the desire to increase immigration into the country of European Jews, lest the country become culturally and ethnically "oriental" in character.
24. Exporters from the West Bank were given a subsidy amounting to 30% of the value of goods exported through the Jordan bridges.
25. The national charter specifies the aims and the methods of the Palestinian struggle. The Executive Committee of the PLO (drawn from the various resistance groups) is elected by the Palestine National Council (representing the various resistance groups and various Palestinian trade union and professional—students, teachers, etc.—organisations). The council meets twice annually.
26. The major resistance groups are: Fateh, PDFLP, Saiqa (Syrian backed), and ALM (Arab Liberation Movement, supported by Iraq).
27. The PDFLP did put forward such a programme before the October War and was subjected to severe criticism from various resistance groups at the time. A year later the Palestinian National Council adopted the Democratic Front's programme because among other things, of the mass support for the programme in the occupied territories.

Figure 81. Income Distribution 1966 and 1971  
(Adult male citizen employees)

