



COMMUNISM VERSUS ZIONISM: THE COMINTERN, YISHUVISM, AND THE PALESTINE COMMUNIST PARTY

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This article discusses how the official communist position on the Zionist project in Palestine went from hostile condemnation in the early 1920s to wary support after World War II. In so doing, it focuses on the ideological struggle between the traditional party line and “Yishuvism,” a theory that sought to reconcile Zionist and communist ideas, as it played out in the two bodies most closely involved in shaping Comintern policy on Palestine (the Palestine Communist Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain). In following the tortured justifications for evolving positions, the author identifies the key actors shaping the debate and turning points impacting it, especially the 1936–39 Arab Revolt, Britain’s 1939 White Paper, and the wartime fight against fascism. The author contends that an important reason for the USSR’s post-war about-face on Palestine was the success of the Yishuvist ideological campaign.

THE OFFICIAL COMMUNIST POSITION on the Zionist project in Palestine during the British Mandate was one of unreserved hostility. Zionism was seen as a reactionary and colonialist movement whose aim was to build, with the assistance of British imperialism, a Jewish state “upon the backs of another people.”¹ Furthermore, Zionist ideas were considered especially dangerous for Soviet Jews because they diverted attention from the task of “building socialism” in the Soviet Union. However, when in 1924 the Palestine Communist Party (PCP) was granted membership in the Communist International (Comintern), a catalyst for change in this position was created. Instructed by the Comintern to “Arabize” its membership, the PCP, the only internationalist party in Palestine during the Mandate, became an arena of ideological struggle between communist and Zionist ideas, with Zionist-leaning Jewish communists developing theories that sought to combine the seemingly irreconcilable ideologies. These theories were long confined mostly to Palestine and the occasional pro-Zionist writer in the international communist press. As the crisis in Palestine intensified, however (especially after the outbreak of the Arab Revolt in 1936), the

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new ideas began to reverberate and became more systematic within the political writings of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). Based in the metropolis from which Mandate Palestine was ruled, it is not surprising that the CPGB came to have a preponderant influence on Palestine policy within the Comintern.

This article discusses the process whereby the Comintern's response to the evolving theories justifying the Jewish colonization of Palestine changed from denouncing them as "Zionist deviations" to embracing them as a core part of the ideological discourse of the post-World War II debates on the future of Palestine. An important part of the ideological basis for Soviet and international communist support for a Zionist state in Palestine in the late 1940s in fact was based on the ideas first formulated in the 1920s by Jewish communists in Palestine and then developed over the decades.

THE COMINTERN AND THE PCP

The 1917 October Revolution and the subsequent establishment of the Soviet Union created an enormous impetus for the international communist movement (i.e., communism as interpreted by the Russian Bolsheviks). In 1919 the Third Communist International was founded in Moscow as a Soviet initiative to assist and guide the world revolutionary movement. Its predecessor, the Second International, had ceased to exist during World War I, as many of its constituent member parties chose—contrary to their prewar stated intent—to support their "own" imperialist countries in that war. Unlike the Second International, the Third International was exclusively made up of communist parties; in fact, assuming the name "Communist" was a requirement for membership. Thus, whereas the Second International had consisted of "socialist" and "social democratic" parties, some of which were even ruling parties in their countries, the Third International's members were mostly clandestine parties. Furthermore, in contrast to the Second International, many of whose European member parties regarded the colonial world as politically "immature," incapable of grasping the tenets of socialism, and indeed likely to benefit from colonial (though "socialist") rule so as to raise the political level of the "natives," the Third International was characterized by its thoroughly anti-colonial and anti-imperialist outlook. This was apparent in its political program, adopted at its first congress on 4 March 1919, which vowed to "support the exploited peoples of the colonies in their struggle against imperialism."²

The establishment of the Comintern precipitated ideological struggles over the nature of the "socialist revolution" and eventually splits in many of the old socialist parties, with left wings breaking away to form new parties that affiliated themselves with the Comintern. This was the case of the PCP, which emerged from a split within the Labor Zionist *Poale Zion* movement. Already in 1919 a left-wing in the Palestine section of that movement broke away to form the *Miflegat Poalim Sozialistit* (Socialist Workers' Party), which, while still considering itself Zionist and attending the *Poale Zion* World Congress in

1920, applied for Comintern membership. This was rejected because of the party's "nationalist nature," its unwillingness to adopt the name "Communist Party," and its refusal to denounce Jewish immigration into Palestine. But after disintegrating into several factions under the pressures of persecution by the British Mandate authorities, the two largest of the splinter groups merged in 1923³ and, after protracted negotiations with the Comintern leadership, the new party was granted Comintern affiliation.⁴ In March 1924, the group assumed the name "Palestine Communist Party,"⁵ and, after endorsing the Comintern charter, became its official representative in Palestine.

The requirement of subscribing to the charter's detailed list of twenty-one articles had been defended by Lenin as a way of keeping the new organization free of undesirable elements, "intermediate parties and groups of the 'Center'" that sought to benefit from the Comintern's "steadily gaining strength" while hoping to "retain a degree of 'autonomy' that will enable them to pursue their previous opportunist or 'Centrist' policies." The danger, Lenin warned, was that "In certain circumstances, the Communist International may be faced with the danger of dilution by the influx of wavering and irresolute groups that have not as yet broken with their Second International ideology."⁶ Without a doubt, the new PCP fell into this category. Article 8 of the charter, for example, stated that "Any party wishing to join the Third International must ruthlessly expose the colonial machinations of the imperialists of its 'own' country, must support—in deed, not merely in word—every colonial liberation movement, demand the expulsion of its compatriot imperialists from the colonies . . .".⁷ Furthermore, the Comintern's "Theses on the Eastern Question," drawn up in December 1922 at its fourth congress, stated that "The pseudo-socialist colonialist tendencies of some categories of well-paid European workers in the colonies must be firmly and stubbornly opposed." The text also denounced all forms of European "communist" organization on ethnic lines in the colonies: "The formation of separate Communist organizations of Europeans in some colonies . . . is a hidden form of colonialism and furthers imperialist interests. Any attempt to build Communist organizations on ethnic lines contradicts the principle of proletarian internationalism."⁸

In light of these positions, the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) told the leadership of the new party that its future depended on its "territorialization," that is, on its "transformation into a mass Party of Arab workers."⁹ Haim Auerbach, the party's representative in the negotiations with the Comintern, had been told by Karl Radek, the head of the Comintern's Eastern Section, that the PCP needed to "get out of the Ghetto!"¹⁰ This meant, in the words of Joseph Berger-Barzilai, the PCP's first party secretary, that the party's political activity could no longer be "exhausted on work in the Zionist Ghetto" and that in order to engage "in active immediate anti-imperialist struggle, it has to enter into a living connection with the decisive mass of the working population, the Arab workers and peasants." To this end, he continued, "the party, which to date has been exclusively composed of Jewish immigrants," had to transform itself into "a party of Arab workers and territorialized Jewish

comrades,” i.e., those who had grown up in Palestinian conditions and were acquainted with the Arabic language and Arab customs.¹¹ This fundamental task touched upon the very essence of the party: if it remained Jewish, objectively it would be a colonialist party, whereas if it succeeded in “territorializing” its Jewish membership and “Arabizing” its membership overall, its presence in the country would be justified.

The Comintern’s position on the Zionist project in Palestine was clear-cut. Its general view was that the Jews constituted a colonizing minority, led by the Jewish bourgeoisie through the Zionist movement. In 1930, the ECCI, in an open letter to the PCP, declared that Zionism was “the expression of the exploiting and great power oppressive strivings of the Jewish bourgeoisie, which makes use of the Jewish national minorities in Eastern Europe for the purpose of imperialist policy to insure its domination.”¹² The PCP grudgingly accepted the Comintern line, and so the resolution of its seventh congress in 1930 unequivocally stated that Zionism was the “militant detachment of imperialism” waging “a colonizing struggle of annihilation against the local toiling masses.”¹³ All Zionist thought, whether right wing or left wing, was considered reactionary because of its colonialist and imperialist nature. Official Communist propaganda called upon Jewish workers in Europe to stay where they were: “The true task of the Jews in every country is to fight against oppression in their own country shoulder to shoulder with their Communist fellow workers.”¹⁴

However, within the European non-communist Left there was growing support during the 1930s for the Zionist “project,” encouraged by the efforts of Labor Zionists (especially *Poale Zion*) to portray the essence of Zionism as “building socialism” in Palestine. Britain, with a significant number of Jewish leftist workers, was no exception to this trend, and Labor Zionist positions began to be expressed on occasion by the CPGB.¹⁵ Meanwhile, in Palestine the PCP leadership upheld the official Comintern line and declared that: “the Zionist movement is not a Socialist movement—it is a reactionary movement, wanting to build a capitalist system upon the backs of another people.”¹⁶

Such statements notwithstanding, the Zionist project in Palestine was not taken very seriously by the Comintern, which tended to dismiss it as idealistic and unfeasible, a naïve dream nurtured by the Jewish bourgeoisie. In general the Comintern was highly dismissive of Zionist ideology (especially its “socialist” variety) and fundamentally underestimated its impact (which might explain the Soviet policy of offering ardent Zionist political prisoners the choice of “deportation” to Palestine, a practice that continued until 1934¹⁷). It failed to appreciate Zionist nationalism’s deep-seated appeal to the Jewish workers of Eastern and Central Europe, who became the driving force of the colonization.

BER BOROKHOV, ARABIZATION, AND YISHUVISM

The ideological origins of the founding members of the PCP can be traced to one of the early “socialist Zionist” theoreticians, Ber Borokhov (1881–1917). He argued that before Jews could struggle for socialism or revolution they had

to establish a “normal” national state with a “normal” social stratification, that is, with a mass of Jewish peasants and proletarians.¹⁸ In contrast to “bourgeois Zionism,” Borokhov’s “proletarian Zionism” advocated the Zionist project as a movement in the interests of the “Jewish proletariat” rather than the Jewish people as a whole.¹⁹ Although acknowledging that Jewish proletarians were few, Borokhov nevertheless dealt with the concept of the Jewish proletariat as an already existing social force, which enabled him to portray his theory as socialist and to promote the Zionist project among the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe.

Arrival in Palestine for some leftist Jews brought the realization that the Zionist project was in fact colonialist rather than socialist. When seeing that the land was not empty, as they had been told, but in fact was very much inhabited and cultivated by Arabs deeply opposed to their “project,” many Jewish communists and socialists left.²⁰ For most of those who remained, however, including the founders of the new party, Borokhov’s ideas constituted a core tenet of their diverse *Weltanschauungs*. For them, “building socialism” was the reason for their coming to Palestine; they did not see themselves, as the Comintern contended, as “colonizing” a country against the will of its inhabitants. Consequently, the Comintern directive to “Arabize” the party and to “territorialize” the membership by adopting local ways prompted an intense ideological struggle. The supporters of the Comintern line were undoubtedly in the minority, and the leadership clearly had its mind set on the Yishuv, albeit without being vocal about it. There was, however, a small radical faction within the minority current calling itself the Jewish Workers Committee, which went so far as to maintain that the party should focus its work *exclusively* on the Arab population since the Yishuv was homogenous and too intimately identified with the Zionist project to be penetrable.²¹ This faction inevitably clashed with the leadership and was eventually expelled from the party in 1928.²²

Within the pro-Yishuv party mainstream, a theory known as “Yishuvism” developed in an attempt to reconcile official communist anti-Zionist principles with local conditions so as to justify the party’s continuing focus on the

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Yishuv. Ideologically, this theory, rooted in Borokhov’s ideas, maintained that the Yishuv was playing a progressive social and economic role, as evidenced in the economic transformation fueled by Jewish immigration.²³ This transformation, it was argued, would break down the feudal structures of the Palestinian countryside and thus advance the development of class differentiation within the Arab population.²⁴ It was further maintained that the dynamic of “private capitalist” development in the Yishuv, being in conflict with the “national colonization” of Zionism, would lead to a social and political differentiation of the Jewish masses and their consequent radicalization.²⁵ The “Yishuvists” thus justified Jewish colonization on the grounds that the “Jewish proletariat” in Palestine would become a socialist vanguard and raise

the political level of the Arab fellahin. What the theory failed to take into account—aside from the fact that there was no real difference between the communist “Yishuvist” and the Labor Zionist positions, which both justified colonization by the “progress” brought to the “natives”—was the fact that the Zionist workers were often more ideologically motivated to build “socialism” in the “promised land” than the Jewish capitalists. Contrary to the Yishuvist argument, they had not been duped into coming to Palestine but had come out of ideological conviction. Nonetheless, the notion of a Jewish proletariat in Palestine being oppressed and exploited by the Zionist bourgeoisie was politically useful: if they were just as oppressed as the Arabs, they could not constitute a colonizing minority.

The development and persistence of Yishuvist ideas within the party was hardly surprising in a community that lived and worked exclusively in the Yishuv, spoke only Russian or Yiddish, or at best Hebrew, but certainly no Arabic, and obviously had little in common with the Arab peasant masses. Because of the hegemony of Yishuvist thought among the party’s rank-and-file, the Comintern’s “nativization” directive did not have many advocates on the ground, and for the most part it received only lip service.

Still, some work among the Arab population did begin in the 1920s. Given the predominantly urban nature of the PCP, the “Arab work” was mostly carried out among the urban Arab intelligentsia or the nascent Arab working class, whereas the Arab population overwhelmingly was made up of peasants. The success of the “Arabization” directive was, therefore, very limited, leading to the recruitment of only a few dozen Arabs, for the most part more nationalist than communist. Some of these young Arab radicals were sent to the Communist University of the Toilers of the East (KUTV) in Moscow for training.²⁶ As a result, an Arab cadre loyal to the Comintern rather than to the Jewish leaders was gradually built up. Because of the scarcity of Arab workers and the lack of any real mass work among the Arab rural population, the few Arabs that could be recruited were rapidly promoted to leadership positions, leaving some of the Jewish rank-and-file members feeling maltreated. At the seventh PCP congress in 1930, a Central Committee with an Arab majority was elected for the first time,²⁷ giving the impression that the advocates of Arabization had won. The PCP’s representative at the Seventh Comintern Congress in 1935—a certain “Hadyar”²⁸—thus declared that the “opportunist semi-Zionist leadership of the C. P. of Palestine” had been removed.²⁹ Nonetheless, the overwhelming majority of party membership continued to be Jewish and nearly all work continued to be directed toward the Yishuv,³⁰ as can be seen from the fact that throughout the 1930s most of the party materials continued to be printed in Hebrew.³¹

THE ARAB REVOLT, THE PCP, AND THE CPGB

In May 1936 the Arab Revolt against Jewish immigration and land sales broke out in Palestine. Continuing on and off for three years, it was to have a major impact on the future of the PCP and served as a catalyst for changes within the

CPGB. It began spontaneously, though almost immediately Arab notables led by the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husayni, formed the Arab Higher Committee (AHC) in an attempt to gain a hold over it. Despite using the full limit of their traditional influence, they never quite managed to control the popular revolt in the urban areas, and in the countryside many of the guerrilla bands that sprang up did not recognize the AHC's leadership at all. The AHC was further circumscribed by the fact that, although it initially tried to limit the revolt's scope and showed a conciliatory attitude toward the British, it was still held responsible for the deteriorating situation. Despite the outlawing of the AHC and the exile of all its leaders in 1937, the British were not able to crush the revolt until 1939, and then only through a joint military and diplomatic offensive involving 20,000 British troops, the Royal Air Force, the Jewish supernumerary police, and a Jewish counterinsurgency force known as the Special Night Squads.³² With Britain's publication of the May 1939 White Paper, which for the first time put sharp limits on its "Jewish national home" policy, a wedge was driven into the Arab national movement. The combination of general fatigue and hopes that Britain would honor its promises dampened popular support for the revolt, enabling Britain to finish it off. As for the guerrilla bands that refused to lay down arms, they found themselves without logistical support and had to resort to more unpopular methods (e.g., extortion and robbery) to sustain themselves.

When the revolt broke out, the leadership of the PCP (which as noted above had an Arab majority though the party as a whole had remained overwhelmingly Jewish) supported it fully, arguing that it was a "necessary self-defence" against two powerful enemies.³³ At the same time, however, the party's Yishuvist current, headed by Arieh Lev, secretary of its Tel Aviv committee, drafted a leaflet in May 1936 condemning the revolt.³⁴ This was immediately rejected by the party's Central Committee, which issued a counter leaflet in support of the rebellion.³⁵ The arrest of much of the party's Arab leadership³⁶ greatly facilitated the task of the Yishuvists, who had been utilizing the tensions to claim that the Jewish members were unable to work among the Arab masses as long as the revolt continued. After the arrest in late 1936 of Ridwan al-Hilu (Musa), the secretary of the PCP and an Arab, the remaining members of the Central Committee gave in to the pressures and announced in early 1937 the establishment of a Jewish Section. The Central Committee saw the section's task simply as a means to "transfer the decisions of the Central Committee to the Jewish circles,"³⁷ the concession being presented as a temporary measure for the duration of the revolt. In fact, however, the separate section laid the ground for the party's future split along ethnic lines. Ideologically dominated by Yishuvism, the section grew increasingly confident and began openly to pursue pro-Zionist policies once it realized how weak the Central Committee had become. Among other things, it decided to pursue an alliance with the "progressive forces" within the Yishuv.³⁸ Using as pretext the resolutions of the Seventh Comintern Congress of 1935, which had called for the creation of broad popular fronts to combat fascism, the PCP's Jewish members were encouraged to join Zionist organizations and parties, to gain positions

of influence and hold office,³⁹ and to “transfer the essence of Party activity” to these legal organizations.⁴⁰ The aim was to strengthen the PCP’s position within the Yishuv. By demonstrating to Jews the party’s positive role within the Yishuv,⁴¹ the section laid the foundations that would later be used to transform the PCP into a mainstream Zionist party.

Initially the international communist press treated the Arab Revolt as a “progressive anti-imperialist revolt.” The Comintern set the tone by its positive stance, and this was closely adhered to by the CPGB, whose Central Committee declared in June that the revolt and its demands were “fully justified and should be supported.”⁴² Despite this confident assertion, however, the CPGB at the time did not have much previous specialist knowledge of the Palestine question (or indeed of any colonial question except India⁴³), the over-arching concern then being the rise of fascism in Britain and elsewhere in Europe.

Indeed, the outbreak of the Arab Revolt had caught the CPGB off guard. With no clear policy on Palestine and with an increasing following among British Jews, it realized the need for clear guidelines on this and other “Jewish” questions. The fact that the party’s June statement supporting the revolt was criticized by some Jewish members as representing an “anti-Semitic partnership” with “Arab fascists”⁴⁴ was itself an indication of that need. Ben Bradley, the party’s colonial secretary,⁴⁵ refuted that accusation even while conceding that the revolt was the product of a “clash between the vital interests of two groups of Fascist capitalists, the Zionist Jews and the feudal Arab aristocracy.”⁴⁶

In any case, it was the Arab Revolt that prompted the decision to set up an “Advisory Board” that would give guidance to the party leadership on Jewish questions.⁴⁷ However, because most communists, especially those of Jewish origin, were reluctant to pursue “ethnic politics,” the party had difficulty finding members to sit on the new body. As a result, the advisory group, which soon took on a more permanent shape as the “Jewish Bureau,” had to be filled largely by non-party members loosely attached to the party through various front organizations.⁴⁸

Although only sparsely represented in the top party leadership, Jewish communists had a strong presence in the party cadre (i.e., in the mid-level leadership and party administration). According to Jason Heppell, they constituted some 7 percent of that category, a relatively high proportion considering that Jews formed less than 1 percent of the British population.⁴⁹ Heppell has suggested that there were two main identities among Jewish members of the CPGB: “grass roots Communist Jews” and “Jewish activists.” The first group—the vast majority—comprised young second or third generation Anglicized Jews whose loyalty was first and foremost as communists. “Within the context of political activity, they were not ‘Jewish’ variants of a Communist, but were rather Jews separated from their ethnic community by their Communist beliefs.”⁵⁰ The “Jewish activists,” on the other hand, were a small group, scarcely more than a dozen, consisting almost exclusively of older, first generation immigrants from Eastern Europe, whose language was Yiddish and whose cultural background was non-British.⁵¹ These “Jewish activists” were torn between communism and their affinity for Jewish culture. Anxious to portray themselves as anti-Zionists,

they took every opportunity to support expressions of “Jewishness” within the framework of the Communist party. As pointed out by Henry Felix Srebrnik: “Although classical Marxism was hostile to Jewish nationalism, the Jewish Communists managed to square this with fervent support of ‘non-Zionist’ forms of Jewish consciousness, remaining, if sometimes covertly, left-wing Diaspora nationalists.”⁵² Perhaps not surprisingly, it was “Jewish activists” that made up the CPGB’s new Jewish Bureau.

One of the Jewish Bureau’s most influential members was Israel (Issie) Panner. Born in Austria in 1908, he became a naturalized British subject in November 1933 and the next year became the Secretary of the ICCS (Jewish Organization for Colonization in the Soviet Union).⁵³ While the actual leaders of the Jewish Bureau (and later Jewish bodies within the CPGB) were Lazar Zaidman and Chimen Abramsky, it appears that Panner was responsible for writing on Palestine. Under the anagram I. Rennap (or sometimes I. Renap), he contributed numerous articles on the Palestine question to the party journals *Daily Worker* and *Labour Monthly* and to the Comintern journals *International Press Correspondence (Inprecorr)* and its successor *World News and Views*.

The Comintern continued to support the Arab Revolt with relative consistency until early 1939, when the fascist threat against the Soviet Union began to overshadow other considerations. When the momentum of the revolt was fading and the AHC leaders adopted more “terrorist” methods, the Comintern denounced them as “traitors.” The new policy was declared in January 1939 in the *Communist International*, the central organ of the Comintern, which wrote: “Eli Chusein [Haj Amin al-Husayni] and his mysterious men . . . are wreckers and traitors to the true national movement of the Arabian people.”⁵⁴ Within the CPGB, this change of policy did not immediately take hold, primarily because of the impending London Round Table Conference bringing together Arab and Zionist leaders in an attempt to reach agreement on what was to be done in Palestine. During this period, the Jewish Bureau apparently felt constrained to uphold the legitimacy of the AHC (several of whose members—though not the Mufti—had been permitted to attend) pending the outcome of the conference. It was thus that in articles written in January and as late as February, the very eve of the conference, Panner was still describing the AHC as “genuine national revolutionary leaders,” enjoying the “backing of the Arab people,” “the real leadership of the mass of the Arabs in Palestine,” and so on.⁵⁵

Meanwhile, an all-out assault on the Mufti and the AHC was elsewhere underway. Writing in *World News and Views*, the pseudonym M. Akin declared that the Mufti “receives his orders direct from Berlin” and that the “partisan divisions of the Mufti’s followers are led by German officers,” adding that it was German propaganda that had caused the hostility between Jews and Arabs in Palestine.⁵⁶ With the London conference having ended in failure, Panner himself could now declare that the Mufti “was never to be trusted” and to describe him and the AHC as “the most reactionary [elements] in Palestine.”⁵⁷ With the “the fascist offensive against the democracies” now being “the main enemy,” he added that “the *primary* struggle of the colonial peoples must be against

fascism and its agents in the colonial liberation movements, since the struggle of the colonial peoples . . . can only be successful if the splitting and diverting influence of fascist penetration is crushed.”⁵⁸ Perhaps in an effort to justify the volte-face, Panner wrote that whereas the Arab leaders had been “fulfilling a progressive function” early in the revolt, “the struggle in Palestine to-day . . . has ceased to be a struggle purely of the Arab masses against British Imperialism and Zionist penetration.” This being the case, he argued (echoing the calls of the PCP’s Jewish Section), “the Arab people, supported by the progressive elements within Palestine Jewry, must wage an uncompromising struggle against the Grand Mufti and his associates.”⁵⁹

On the part of the Jewish Bureau, there is little doubt that the escalation in tone was motivated to a large extent by Britain’s unilateral publication, after the London conference’s failure, of the White Paper, which the Yishuv went all out to combat as the death knell of the Zionist project: the paper in essence rejected the 1937 Peel Commission proposal to partition Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, limited Jewish immigration to 75,000 persons over the next five years, restricted land sales to Jews, and called for the establishment of institutions that could lead to independence of a *unitary* Palestinian state after ten years.⁶⁰ Using the fight against fascism as a pretext, Panner strongly denounced the White Paper, claiming that it would not end the revolt but would only “strengthen the Mufti’s fascism and facilitate further fascist inroads into Palestine”⁶¹ and would make “the Mufti and his clique . . . the tools of Britain and France.”⁶² That Panner’s views were not those of the CPGB leadership can be glimpsed in a sharp exchange he had with Ben Bradley, a member of the Central Committee and secretary of the party’s Colonial Information Bureau, the day after the White Paper was issued. On 18 May 1939 Panner telephoned Bradley to dictate his comments on the document for publication in the *Daily Worker*. Bradley, however, completely modified the gist of Panner’s remarks when conveying them to the *Daily Worker*, commenting that although “we should not throw our arms around the White Paper,” the Arabs and Jews needed to work toward “unity and a united representative Government.”⁶³ When Panner, furious, confronted Bradley about the change the following day, Bradley was vague as to how it had come about, and in the exchange that followed Panner protested heatedly that the article now read as if the party were upholding British imperialism and insisted that he was the one who was in charge of the party’s policy on Palestine.⁶⁴ After more heated discussion in a later conversation the same day, Bradley told Panner to write a memorandum on the issue and that he would mention it to Harry Pollitt, the party secretary.⁶⁵ With no further mention of the incident in the files, it seems reasonable to assume that Panner decided not to pursue the matter.

TOWARD RECONCILING THE TRADITIONAL PARTY LINE AND YISHUVISM

The accusations by the CPGB’s Jewish Bureau that the AHC and the Arab Revolt in general had fallen under fascist influence, while convenient for their

purposes, were highly exaggerated. Although undoubtedly members of the AHC (most notably Haj Amin al-Husayni himself) had come under fascist influence in the late 1930s, the spontaneous mass character of the revolt is beyond doubt,⁶⁶ and its thrust can hardly be described as fascist.⁶⁷ In fact, the real motivation for the Jewish Bureau's all-out dismissal of the AHC as "agents of Imperialism,"⁶⁸ and its charges of the "fascist offensive" within the revolt, seems more about arguing for a reevaluation of the party position on the Yishuv (or, more bluntly, justifying the bureau's increasingly open support of Yishuvism). Using the vulnerable situation of European Jewry, the Jewish Bureau had gradually been able to press the case that the Jewish colony in Palestine constituted a "national minority." As early as 1936, it had managed to obtain from the CPGB's Central Committee an official statement describing the Jewish colony in Palestine as a "national minority."⁶⁹ This trend accelerated with the discrediting of the Arab national movement, and by 1939 Panner was describing Palestinian Jewry as an "oppressed people" (a concept hitherto reserved for the Palestinian Arabs) and praising the "heroic work of the Jewish settlers," which according to him needed to be "conserved and strengthened as a force for progress and of benefit to the Arabs as well as the Jews."⁷⁰ Later that year, following the policy of the Jewish Section in Palestine, Panner advocated the transformation of the PCP into a mainstream Zionist party. He reported that the PCP (i.e., the Jewish Section) had "called upon every responsible individual in the Yishuv to *defend unitedly the Histadrut*."⁷¹ And, so as to rid the last illusion of the PCP as an anti-Zionist party, he exclaimed: "the Palestine Communists . . . have proven themselves to be the best friends of the Yishuv. Their increasing influence is reflected in the demand made by the hitherto anti-Communist, Zionist circles for the legalisation of the C. P. of Palestine."⁷²

Soon, however, the Jewish activists within the CPGB were to suffer a setback: at the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, the Jewish Bureau was suddenly dissolved. Although there is little archival material pointing to the reason,⁷³ the move was almost certainly linked to the Soviet-German nonaggression pact signed a few weeks earlier. But the fortune of the Jewish activists changed again after Germany's attack on the Soviet Union in 1941. With the need to redirect all efforts within the international communist movement toward supporting the Soviet war effort (the "Great Patriotic War"), there was once again increased leeway for cooperation with previously "suspect" organizations on the political left. The Jewish Bureau was reconstituted,⁷⁴ and its prestige increased following

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the 1943 visit of two prominent Soviet Jews to Britain to rally support for the Soviet Union. Impressed by Soviet interest in the bureau, Rajani Palme Dutt, one of the CPGB's top leaders and its main theoretician on colonial questions, elevated it to a subcommittee—now renamed the National Jewish Committee (NJC)—responsible not to the London District Committee, as before, but to

the Colonial and International Bureaus and to himself personally.⁷⁵ With this change, and in relocating the body to party headquarters, Dutt signaled the new significance of Jewish issues by elevating them from the local to the national level.

At its first meeting in April 1943, the NJC decided on the need for a “reevaluation of the whole question of Zionism and Palestine,”⁷⁶ specifying in December that the “reevaluation” was to be carried out “in the light of the need for greatest unity in the fight against fascism.”⁷⁷ Using the same lines of argument as its forerunner, the NJC now came out fully in favor of the Yishuv, espousing positions that were difficult to distinguish from mainstream Zionist positions. In a 1944 “Statement on the Jewish Question,” the NJC declared that the Yishuv was “playing a progressive role in the economic and social development of Palestine and the Middle East” and that it took part “in a most positive fashion” in the struggle against fascism, showing a “powerful expression” of solidarity with the Soviet Union.⁷⁸ In March 1945, the NJC argued that since Palestinian Jewry was “the most progressive force in the Middle East,” Palestine should be open to Jewish immigration on a mass scale and the White Paper should be denounced “by all sections of Jewry as wrong policy.”⁷⁹ Another statement a month later announced that “Jews—everywhere—may aspire to Palestine as a homeland,” because immigration was “a Jewish right,”⁸⁰ and that the time had come for the Jews to “restore many of the glories of which the Jewish people are only aware from their Bible stories.”⁸¹ The minutes of an NJC meeting in April state that Jewish Communists should be prepared “to unite” with Zionists “in the interests of Jewry.”⁸²

Meanwhile, in Palestine, the PCP’s Yishuvist trend had undergone changes of fortune parallel to what had been witnessed with the CPGB’s “Jewish activists”: in both cases, a setback suffered in the late 1930s had been followed a few years later by a new phase of unprecedented influence. It will be recalled that a separate Jewish Section of the PCP had been established in 1937 during the Arab Revolt, and for the next few years this section and the Central Committee had developed into two separate organizations pursuing opposing lines and with no communication between them. When the revolt ended, efforts at reconciliation between the two groups made clear that differences remained. One of these involved the Jewish Section’s contention (like that of the CPGB’s Jewish Bureau) that the Yishuv had developed into a “nation.”⁸³ This notion was rejected outright by the Central Committee, which, relying on Stalin’s classic 1912 definition of what constitutes a nation,⁸⁴ declared in a document entitled “Is There a Necessity for National Rights for the Yishuv?” that recognition of the Yishuv’s national demands in Palestine amounted to support of Zionism.⁸⁵ The Jewish Section also rejected the May 1939 White Paper, while the Central Committee supported it.⁸⁶ Continuing disagreement on these issues led the Central Committee to dissolve the Jewish Section in December 1939. While the majority of the section remained loyal to the Central Committee, a faction within the section’s leadership, which came to be known as the Emet group, left the party in early 1940.⁸⁷ When contentious issues were put aside to aid

the war effort, however, the Emet group in 1942 rejoined the party, even while retaining its Yishuvist positions. The result was that the group's Yishuvist ideas began to spread and become generalized among the rest of the Jewish members of the PCP.⁸⁸

The party's wartime truce with the Zionist movement and its pursuit of an alliance with "progressive forces" in the Yishuv had several consequences. While it led to an increase in the party's Jewish membership, it also rendered legitimacy to the Yishuvist line, causing alienation within the Arab section.⁸⁹ Recognizing the problem, Party Secretary Hilu convened an "enlarged plenum" in January 1943 and declared that the truce should be called off. This was met with vociferous opposition, and as the plenum was unable to reach a decision the case was referred to the Central Committee. Though the Central Committee implemented Hilu's suggestions,⁹⁰ the dissolution of the Comintern later that year undermined Hilu's authority, touching off a struggle among rival groups for the party leadership. The result was another ethnic split, with two groups on the Arab side and three on the Jewish. Hilu, attacked from all sides, realized that attempts at reunification were futile and retired from politics that November.⁹¹ Most of the Arab communists united under the leadership of Emile Tuma to form '*Usbat al-Tabarrur al-Watani*'⁹² in early 1944, which chose to work within the framework of the Arab national movement. On the Jewish side, the smallest of the groups eventually developed into an overtly Zionist party without real significance, while the other two united under Shmuel Mikunis. This group, which claimed to be the legitimate continuation of the party, held a congress in May 1944 and was granted legal status, enabling it to publish its newspaper *Kol Ha'am* openly.⁹³ Israel Panner, the CPGB's authority on Palestine, became the paper's correspondent in Britain, writing under the pseudonym Harry Robertson.⁹⁴

Both the Mikunis and Tuma groups were eager to represent the correct communist line in Palestine, but neither appears to have had direct contact with the Soviets apart from the meetings both held with Sultanov, the Soviet Counselor in Egypt, during the latter's visit to Palestine in May 1944. It appears that the only stable channel of communication between the Palestinian communist groups and the Soviet Union was the CPGB.⁹⁵ There were also claims that the British communists played an important role in formulating communist policy on Palestine. According to Chimen Abramsky, secretary of the NJC as of January 1946, the committee had become "involved in international negotiations" and "formulated a lot of CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] . . . policy on Palestine, as [the Soviets] themselves didn't know too much about it."⁹⁶ Lazar Zaidman, another NJC leader, stated that the NJC's influence was so great that its policy statements on Palestine became the basis of communist action programs, adding that it "should be realized that London is the place where all of the various interests and views with regard to Palestine (and the Middle East) meet and are decided upon."⁹⁷

Whereas such statements may be exaggerated, there is little doubt that the CPGB was playing an active role in influencing the PCP. One example is the

follow-up to the International Workers' Congress held in London in 1945, where a pro-Zionist resolution supporting the creation of a Jewish "national home" in Palestine was backed by the Soviet Union.⁹⁸ Mikunis's PCP had been uncertain about the Soviet position on the issue, and therefore what his own position should be. After the congress the CPGB contacted Mikunis and, on the basis of the Soviets' support for the resolution, which it interpreted as recognition of the legitimacy of the national home policy, instructed him to change his group's official anti-Zionist positions to pro-Zionist ones.⁹⁹ In 1946, when Jewish groups were carrying out armed attacks against the British, the Mikunis group, echoing the CPGB's "Jewish activists," for the first time came out openly in support of the Zionist leadership, claiming that the attacks constituted an "anti-colonial" struggle and that the Yishuv was an "oppressed national group in a colonial country."¹⁰⁰

ABOUT-FACE

Meanwhile, the Central Committee of the CPGB had continued to support a unitary "democratic bi-national state" in Palestine and to oppose partition; its eighteenth congress in 1945 declared that "a just and democratic settlement of the problem of Palestine can only be achieved by the abolition of the Mandate and the recognition of the national independence of Palestine under a democratic regime which assures freedom and equal rights to Arabs and Jews."¹⁰¹ Needless to say, with the Jews constituting no more than 30 percent of the Palestinian population, a democratic regime was as much anathema to the Zionists as the White Paper had been, and the proposal was combated tooth and nail. While the NJC very likely shared this view, it could not openly come out against democratic principles. Instead, it argued that the anti-British sentiment in the Yishuv was proof that "in the Jewish community . . . there is a sharpening conflict between the leading Zionists, who are increasingly identified with the Jewish bourgeoisie and are willing tools of British imperialism, and the rest of the Jewish community."¹⁰² This argument, of course, was a logical development of the old Yishuvist notion of a chasm between an oppressing Zionist bourgeoisie and the oppressed mass of Jewish proletarians. The notion that the Yishuv played an anti-imperialist role because it had conflicting interests with Britain was an important justification for the developing communist support for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, since ending British rule in the country would constitute, it was argued, a major strategic blow to British imperialism. Seemingly a new idea, its tenets went back to the first adherents of Yishuvism.

In Palestine, whatever the private thoughts of the party leadership may have been, Mikunis, too, realized that it was not possible to oppose a democratic solution to the Palestine problem. At its tenth congress in November 1946, the PCP had therefore condemned partition and called for a "united Arab Jewish state . . . democratic and independent [with] full equality of rights." Writing in the *Jewish Clarion* (edited by Panner) in December 1946, Mikunis argued

that the Palestine question should be decided in the UN's Security Council.¹⁰³ With the Soviet Union already having implied support for a Jewish "national home," the hope clearly was that Moscow would support partition.

Such hopes proved correct, and in November 1947 the Soviet Union supported the UN recommendation for the partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states.¹⁰⁴ While the leadership circles of the CPGB apparently were somewhat taken aback, Panner in a letter to Dr. Biletski, the editor of *Kol Ha'am*, wrote that he had not been surprised and that he had "not been happy for a long time at the way the Palestine issue has been presented by us."¹⁰⁵ Although Panner had been the leading CPGB authority on Palestine, in the sense that he most closely followed events there, it is clear that when major political statements were to be formulated, decisions were taken at a higher level (as evidenced in the altercation between him and Bradley over the White Paper in 1939). Despite an apparent loss in influence within the CPGB following the Soviet decision, Panner appears to have continued to be heavily involved in contacts between Mikunis's PCP and the CPGB,¹⁰⁶ and there is a striking similarity between Panner's earlier writing and the Mikunis group's positions.

In Palestine, it was now the turn of the Mikunis group to change positions, committing itself to the struggle "for the establishment of two independent democratic states"¹⁰⁷ in accordance with the new Soviet line. For the Arab communists, on the other hand, the Soviet volte-face was much more difficult to deal with. While blaming the traditional Arab leaders for playing into Zionist hands by pursuing "racialist" policies, they denounced partition as an "imperialist plot." Explaining their independent stance, they declared that "notwithstanding our friendship for the USSR, we do not tie ourselves to its policy, but formulate our own from existing local conditions and the aims of our people." With time, however, they, too, came to defend the Soviet decision, which they said was based on the Soviets' desire to expel Britain from the area.¹⁰⁸

In the end, therefore, even the Arab communists, who since obtaining positions of influence within the PCP in the early 1930s had consistently combated Zionism both generally and within the party, now had to bow to the overwhelming force not only of the Zionist movement backed by the American and British governments, but also to the authority of their erstwhile principal sponsor, the Soviet Union. The historical irony is that the Soviet decision seems at least partly to have derived from Yishuvist notions whose intellectual roots went back to the 1920s. In those days, such ideas had been firmly opposed by the international communist movement, but gradually, through the well-known Zionist practice of creating "facts on the ground" and through the tireless dissemination of these ideas in Palestine and Britain, these ideas slowly gained acceptance.

Without doubt, the horrendous crimes perpetrated by the Nazis against the Jews during World War II also contributed to heightened sympathy for the Zionist movement, encouraged by the Yishuvists in Palestine and the "Jewish activists" in Britain who worked indefatigably to establish a connection between the oppressed Jews of Europe and the Jewish "national minority" in

Palestine. Furthermore, World War II in itself created the need for the international communist movement to cast aside fundamental principles in order to unite as broad as possible popular support for the defense of the Soviet Union. In these circumstances, even previously rejected policies of agitation along ethnic lines became acceptable. Organizations and groups within the international communist movement that previously had been viewed with suspicion became the allies of the day, and pro-Zionist opinions were given leeway. This opportunity was utilized by the Yishuvists in Palestine and the “Jewish activists” in Britain to gradually transform the view of the Zionist colonization in Palestine. In my opinion, Soviet reappraisal of Zionism can therefore, to a large extent, be attributed to the success of the Yishuvists’ ideological campaign.

NOTES

1. Palestine Communist Party, “A Threatened Nation Appeals to You,” *Daily Worker*, 18 June 1936.
2. See M. A. Persits, “Eastern Internationalists in Russia and some Questions of the National Liberation Movement (1918–July 1920),” in R. A. Ulyanovsky, ed., *The Comintern and the East: The Struggle for the Leninist Strategy and Tactics in National Liberation Movements* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979), p. 110.
3. Musa Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party, 1919–1948: Arab and Jew in the Struggle for Internationalism* (London: Ithaca Press, 1979), pp. 5–7.
4. The Comintern leadership was among other things worried that recognizing the party would be equal to acknowledging the Balfour Declaration. For a more elaborate account of the PCP’s admission into the Comintern, see Mario Offenber, *Kommunismus in Palästina: Nation und Klasse in der antikolonialen Revolution* (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1975), pp. 315–18.
5. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 7.
6. V. I. Lenin, “The Terms of Admission into the Communist International,” in *Collected Works*, vol. 31 (April–December 1920) (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1966), pp. 206–7.
7. Lenin, “Terms of Admission,” p. 209.
8. Alan Adler, ed., *Theses, Resolutions, and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, 2d ed. (London: Pluto Press, 1983), p. 418.
9. Offenber, *Kommunismus*, p. 316 (author’s translation).
10. Offenber, *Kommunismus*, pp. 316–17 (author’s translation).
11. Offenber, *Kommunismus*, p. 317 (author’s translation).
12. Quoted in Ivar Spector, *The Soviet Union and the Muslim World, 1917–1958* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1959), p. 172.
13. “The Tasks of the Communist Party of Palestine in the Countryside: Resolution of the VIIth Congress of the Communist Party of Palestine,” quoted in Spector, *The Soviet Union and the Muslim World*, p. 172.
14. Aitken Ferguson, “Communists and the Jews,” *Daily Worker*, 28 July 1936.
15. See, for example, the April 1930 article entitled “The Class Character of the Palestine Rising,” in the *Labour Monthly*, an organ of the CPGB, which explained how “innocent” Jewish workers were being used as a tool of colonization by the Zionist bourgeoisie, and how the Jewish working population in Palestine “are as devoid of rights, as oppressed and exploited as the Arabs themselves.” “The Class Character of the Palestine Rising,” *Labour Monthly* 12, no. 4 (April 1930), pp. 244–45.
16. PCP, “A Threatened Nation Appeals to You.”
17. For details, see Ziva Galili and Boris Morozov, *Exiled to Palestine: The Emigration of Zionist Convicts from the Soviet Union, 1924–1934* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).
18. See Offenber, *Kommunismus*, p. 51; Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906–1948* (Berkeley:

University of California Press, 1996), pp. 40–41; Dunia Habib Nahas, *The Israeli Communist Party* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), pp. 12–13; Matityahu Mintz, “Ber Borokhov,” in Ezra Mendelsohn, ed., *Essential Papers on Jews and the Left* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), pp. 128, 130.

19. Offenberg, *Kommunismus*, pp. 51–52.

20. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, pp. 7–8.

21. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, pp. 21–22.

22. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 58.

23. Jacob Hen-Tov, *Communism and Zionism in Palestine: The Comintern and the Political Unrest in the 1920s* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1974), p. 110.

24. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 21.

25. Offenberg, *Kommunismus*, p. 282.

26. According to Walter Laqueur, more than thirty Arabs were sent to the Soviet Union between 1929 and 1935 by the PCP. Walter Z. Laqueur, *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 87.

27. Samih Samarah, *al-Amal al-sbuyu’i fi Filastin: Al-tabaqa wal-sba’b fi muwajabat al-kulluniyaliyya* (Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 1979), p. 193.

28. “Hadyar” (sometimes “Haidar”) was the pseudonym of S. Averbukh, a Ukrainian Jew and an ex-member of the *Poale Zion*. After the congress he remained in the USSR, was later arrested during the purges of the late 1930s, and subsequently died in prison in 1941. Branko Lazitch and Milorad M. Drachkovitch, eds., *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern*, New, Revised, and Expanded Edition (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), p. 165.

29. Comrade Hadyar (Palestine), “The Seventh World Congress of the Communist International (Full Report),” *International Press Correspondence [Inprecorr]* 15, no. 65 (2 December 1935), p. 1617.

30. Maher al-Sharif, *al-Umamiyya al-sbuyu’iyya wa Filastin, 1919–1928* (Beirut: Dar Ibn Khaldun, 1980), p. 212.

31. Alexander Flores, “The Palestine Communist Party during the Mandatory Period: An Account of Sources and Recent

Research,” *Peuples Méditerranéens* no. 11 (April–June 1980), p. 58.

32. Both the Jewish Supernumerary Police and the “Special Night Squads” were financed and led by the British. Ted Swedenburg, “The Role of the Palestinian Peasantry in the Great Revolt (1936–1939),” in Albert Hourani, Philip S. Khoury, and Mary C. Wilson, eds., *The Modern Middle East: A Reader* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1993), p. 493.

33. “Uprising in Palestine: Appeal from Communist Party of Palestine,” *Inprecorr* 16, no. 30 (27 June 1936), p. 805.

34. Shmuel Dothan, “The Jewish Section of the Palestine Communist Party, 1937–1939,” in Daniel Carpi and Gedalia Yogev, eds., *Zionism: Studies in the History of the Zionist Movement and of the Jewish Community in Palestine*, English ed., vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University and Massada Publishing, 1975), p. 245; Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 98; Sondra Miller Rubinstein, *The Communist Movement in Palestine and Israel, 1919–1984* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), p. 232.

35. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 98.

36. In total, during the first phase of the revolt, 264 communists were detained by the authorities for different periods and a large number of others were kept under police supervision. In addition, 37 communists were deported, and 9 others were forced to leave the country “of their own volition.” British Library: IOR/L/PS/12/3343, CID, Palestine Police, 28 September 1936.

37. Samarah, *al-Amal al-sbuyu’i*, p. 215 (author’s translation).

38. Dothan, “The Jewish Section,” p. 248.

39. Dothan, “The Jewish Section,” p. 247; Miller Rubinstein, *The Communist Movement*, p. 239.

40. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 113.

41. Dothan, “The Jewish Section,” p. 251.

42. “Why Revolt in Palestine: Unity of Peoples the Solution of Problem,” *Daily Worker*, 8 June 1936.

43. Joyce M. Bellamy and John Saville, eds., *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, vol. 7 (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 46.

44. Quoted in Ben Bradley, “Palestine:

The Answer to Critics," *Daily Worker*, 22 June 1936.

45. Ben Bradley (1898–1957), a member of the CPGB's Central Committee since 1935, had been sent to India by the Comintern in the 1920s to help set up a communist party there and was heavily involved in anti-colonial politics. At the seventh Comintern congress, he was coopted as a candidate member of the ECCI. Bellamy and Saville, *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, vol. 10, pp. 23–25.

46. Bradley, "Palestine." Though Bradley's assessment of the revolt was a minority view at the time, several years later the charge of fascism was precisely the tool used to attack the Arab national movement.

47. Jason Heppell, "A Question of 'Jewish Politics'? The Jewish Section of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1936–45," in Christine Collette and Stephen Bird, eds., *Jews, Labour, and the Left, 1918–48* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 97–98.

48. Heppell, "A Question of 'Jewish Politics?'," p. 99.

49. Heppell, "A Question of 'Jewish Politics?'," p. 95.

50. Heppell, "A Question of 'Jewish Politics?'," pp. 107–108.

51. Heppell, "A Question of 'Jewish Politics?'," p. 107.

52. Henry Felix Srebrnik, *London Jews and British Communism, 1935–1945* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1995), p. 15.

53. The National Archives (United Kingdom) [TNA]: Public Records Office [PRO] KV 2/2173/PF 46, 639 "PANNER, Israel."

54. "The Fighting in Palestine," *The Communist International* 17, no. 1 (January 1939), p. 41.

55. See I. Rennap, "The Arab Jewish Conference," *Labour Monthly* 21, no. 1 (January 1939), pp. 55, 58; I. Renap, "The Prospective Conference of Arabs and Jews," *World News and Views* [WNAV] 19, no. 2 (14 January 1939), p. 38; and I. Renap, "On the Eve of the London Conference," *WNAV* 19, no. 5 (4 February 1939), p. 103.

56. M. Akin, "Fascist Manoeuvres in the Arab Countries," *WNAV* 19, no. 12 (18 March 1939), p. 230.

57. I. Rennap, "The Position in Palestine and the Path to Peace," *Labour Monthly* 21, no. 5 (May 1939), pp. 306, 308.

58. I. Renap, "The Present Struggle in Palestine," *WNAV* 19, no. 18 (1 April 1939), p. 365 (emphasis in the original).

59. *Labour Monthly* (May 1939), pp. 306, 308–9.

60. Swedenburg, "The Role of the Palestinian Peasantry," p. 493.

61. I. Rennap, "The White Paper on Palestine," *WNAV* 19, no. 30 (3 June 1939), p. 670.

62. I. Renap, "The Situation in Palestine and the Near East," *WNAV* 19, no. 58 (16 December 1939), pp. 1151–52.

63. Intercepted phone calls on 18 May 1939, "Panner to Bradley" and "Daily Worker to Bradley," TNA: PRO KV 2/2173/PF 46, 639.

64. Intercepted phone call on 19 May 1939, "Panner to Bradley," TNA: PRO KV 2/2173/PF 46, 639.

65. Intercepted phone call on 19 May 1939, "Panner to Bradley," TNA: PRO KV 2/2173/PF 46, 639.

66. See for instance the description of the popular character of the revolt in Swedenburg, "The Role of the Palestinian Peasantry."

67. Fascist influences had earlier been minimized in Comintern publications. See, for example, Richard Goodman's article in *Inprecorr* asserting that Italian fascist and Nazi influence "is confined to the ruling cliques in the present Arab states (Iraq, Hedjaz, Yemen) and, in Palestine, to certain of the rich, reactionary Arab effendis who have already betrayed the democratic revolution." Richard Goodman, "Great Britain and Palestine," *Inprecorr* 17, no. 48 (6 November 1937), p. 1158.

68. I. Rennap, "War Effects in Palestine and the Near East," *Labour Monthly* 22, no. 1 (January, 1940), p. 50.

69. Statement by the Communist Party of Great Britain, *Daily Worker*, 10 June 1936.

70. *WNAV* (14 January 1939), p. 38; see also *Labour Monthly* (January 1940), p. 53.

71. I. Rennap, "The Revisionist Menace," *WNAV* 19, no. 39 (5 August 1939), pp. 864–65 (emphasis in the original). The *Histadrut* was the Labor Zionist trade union in Palestine.

72. *WNAV* (5 August 1939), p. 865.

73. Heppell, "A Question of 'Jewish Politics?'," p. 100.

74. Heppell, "A Question of 'Jewish Politics?'," p. 100.

75. Heppell, "A Question of 'Jewish Politics'?", p. 102.

76. "Report of National Jewish Committee to International Affairs Committee," 9 April 1943, quoted in Srebrnik, *London Jews*, p. 123.

77. "Party Work amongst the Jews in Britain," draft prepared by the NJC in December 1943, quoted in Srebrnik, *London Jews*, p. 123.

78. NJC "Statement on the Jewish Question," 1944, quoted in Srebrnik, *London Jews*, p. 124.

79. "Information Document for International Affairs Committee: Palestine," March 1945, quoted in Srebrnik, *London Jews*, p. 125.

80. Already in January 1940, Panner had argued that "in Palestine there are today half a million Jews whose *right* to be in Palestine . . . cannot be denied" (*Labour Monthly* [January 1940], p. 51; emphasis added).

81. "Statement to International Affairs Committee from National Jewish Committee: Palestine," April 1945, quoted in Srebrnik, *London Jews*, p. 125.

82. "Minutes of London Jewish Committee Meeting," 26 April 1945, quoted in Srebrnik, *London Jews*, p. 125.

83. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 111-12.

84. See Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1945).

85. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 112.

86. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 104.

87. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 109-110.

88. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 154.

89. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 136.

90. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 156-57.

91. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 164.

92. "The National Liberation League." For the history of 'Usbat al-tabarrur al-watani, see 'Umar Hilmi al-Ghul, 'Usbat al-tabarrur al-watani fi Filastin:

Nasb'atuba wa tatawwuruba wa dauruba, 1943-1948 (Beirut: Mukhtarat, 1987).

93. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 169.

94. TNA: PRO KV 2/2174, Jan 2 1948 "Defence Security Officer, Palestine C. J. H. Foulkes to the Director General of the Security Service."

95. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 182. See also intercepted letters between Dr. Marcus Biletsky, the editor of *Kol Ha'am*, and leading Jewish communists in Britain: TNA: PRO KV 2/2173; TNA: PRO KV2/2174.

96. Srebrnik, *London Jews*, p. 123.

97. Letter from Lazar Zaidman to Isaac Gust, 31 May 1945, London, quoted in Srebrnik, *London Jews*, p. 123.

98. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 170.

99. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 182.

100. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 170.

101. Quoted in Jack Gaster, "Palestine," *Labour Monthly* 28, no. 1 (January 1946), p. 29.

102. Gaster, "Palestine," p. 29.

103. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 171-72.

104. For a detailed description based on Soviet archival material of the development of Soviet policy during the period leading up to the partition decision, see Laurent Rucker, "Moscow's Surprise: The Soviet-Israeli Alliance of 1947-1949" (Working Paper #46, Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC, 2005).

105. Intercepted letter from Panner to Biletski in TNA: PRO KV 2/2174 "Defence Security Officer, Palestine & Transjordan Major W. McK. Wright to the Head of S. I. M. E."

106. See various intercepted letters from Panner to the editor of *Kol Ha'am* in TNA: PRO KV 2/2174.

107. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, p. 173.

108. Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party*, pp. 231-33.