

ZIONISM

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IN 1898 the *Neue Zeit*, chief theoretical journal of the international Socialist movement of the day, discussed the foundation of the Zionist movement at a congress in Basel the previous August, under the chairmanship of Dr. Herzl, author of a statement of Zionist principles *The Jewish State*. The big Jewish capitalists, said *Neue Zeit*—those ‘whose “national” feeling ends where their material interest begins’ (i.e. those who were part of the big capitalist class in the country where they lived, and whose Jewishness took second place to that)—might help to finance the removal to Palestine of their poor ‘coreligionists’, but only as a limited act of philanthropy. The Jewish industrial working class, so far as it had socialist ideas ‘has no particular confidence in the social side of Herzl’s Utopia, and doesn’t wish to let itself be torn away from unity with the rest of the fighting proletariat in order to be exploited in Palestine by its “coreligionists”’. Zionism looked for its main support to the Jewish petty capitalists and middle-class intellectuals. Its foreign policy, by which Dr. Herzl hoped to achieve its ends, consisted in ‘uttering amiabilities to the Sultan’ (Palestine at that time was part of the Turkish Empire). If anti-semitism were to disappear, the real basis for Zionism would disappear too.

Neue Zeit had hit the right nail on the head, in the main. Zionism proclaimed that the Jew, wherever he lived outside Palestine—from which his forefathers (or some of them: for the Jews in all countries are as mixed as the French, Belgians, Germans or Italians) were driven 1,800 years ago—was an alien. So did the anti-semites. Zionism proclaimed ‘the return of the Jews to Judaism even before their return to the Jewish land’ (Herzl at Basel) i.e. that Jewish exploiter and Jewish exploited, outside Palestine, had far more in common with each other than with their fellow citizens: so did the anti-semites. Zionism proclaimed that the Jewish national minorities in a score of different lands (from advanced capitalist countries like the U.S.A. to patriarchal communities like the Yemen), despite the absence of common territory, speech, economy, or even psychological characteristics, constituted a single nation, with interests distinct from all others: so did the anti-semites.

Zionism told the Jewish worker not to have anything to do with the socialist movement in his own country, which linked him with the rest of the workers there ('time enough to exercise the right to build socialist parties once the Jewish people are in Palestine', said Herzl in August 1903, at St. Petersburg). The anti-semites told the rest of the workers not to have anything to do with the Jews. In short, Zionism was anti-semitism inside out.

How had this come about? Zionism appeared as a reaction of middle-class Jews against the 'pogroms', or officially-inspired massacres of Jews, which befouled Roumania from the '60's onwards, Russia from the '80's: and against the anti-semitic propaganda, also encouraged by the authorities, which developed in these countries, as well as in Austria-Hungary and Germany, by the end of the century. Indeed what mass support it got came from the terror aroused by the pogroms, not because the miserably poor Jewish workers, artisans, petty hucksters and peasants were moved by national feeling. But what was the origin of all these bestialities? It was the panic of the ruling classes at the growth of socialism and the labour movement: they attempted to use the Jews as a whipping-boy. Furthermore, the Jewish industrial workers in all European countries (in Russia from the '80's onwards) were among the most active in trade unionism and in accepting progressive socialist ideas. Their response to anti-semitism and pogroms was to strengthen their organisation and their links with the general working-class movement in the lands where they lived. As such they were welcomed: Plekhanov, in the first report of the Russian labour movement ever presented to an international Congress (London, 1896), wrote that 'in some respects they can be considered the vanguard of the workers' army in Russia'. But for that very reason the Jewish labour movement was *not* welcomed by the petty Jewish capitalists and Jewish intellectuals wanting a middle-class career. For them Zionism was a heaven-sent way of diverting the Jewish workers from pursuit of their class interests—and in this, too, it coincided with the desires of the ruling classes.

These were the fundamental features of Zionism at its very birth: and they have dominated all its subsequent development. Throughout its sixty years its leaders and spokesmen have licked the boots of whatever capitalist Great Power seemed to serve their interests. Their Basel Congress of 1897 itself opened with a 'resolution of thanks and devotion', suggested by Herzl, to the Turkish Sultan—whose government was just then swimming in the blood of

massacred Armenians. In 1898 Herzl was seeking the patronage of the German Kaiser: so, talking with the Foreign Minister Bülow, he 'thought it advisable to stress the anti-socialist attitude of Zionism', and in his audience with Wilhelm II himself he got an 'opening for his favourite argument that Zionism would dissolve the revolutionary parties in the Jewish people'. These quotations are from Herzl's Zionist biographer, Bein. In 1903 Herzl was trying to enlist the favours of the Russian Tsar: so he visited Plehve, the Russian Minister of the Interior, and suggested that Zionism would combat socialist ideas among the Jewish youth in exchange for Tsarist support (Herzl's *Diary*, published in 1922-3).

After October 1905, when Tsardom replied to the revolutionary General Strike by organising pogroms, the Russian Zionists denounced the Jewish workers who took part in the socialist movement, and in some towns (Bobruisk, Belostok, Slobodka, Amdur, Siedlowice) Jewish petty capitalists under the influence of these denunciations actually organised *Jewish* 'Black Hundreds' and their own pogroms against Jewish socialist workers. When the present Zionist bourgeois rulers of Israel organise pogroms today against the progressive and Communist workers who are protesting against servility to Wall Street and attacks on the socialist states, they are only reviving a fifty-year-old tradition.

Of course the Zionist leaders of the present Israel Government call themselves 'socialists' even though the State of which they are the caretakers protects capitalism and not socialism, in Israel, by its laws, police, army, spies, diplomats, propaganda, etc. But this is an old trick too. We have seen that Herzl himself advised Russian Jews in 1903 to postpone forming socialist parties until they got to Palestine. This was not completely practical advice, since the great mass of the Jewish workers in Russia were accepting socialist ideas. But the Russian Zionists did the next worst thing. They organised a number of parties—'Zionist Socialists' (1904), 'Jewish Socialist Labour Party' (1905), 'Territorialists' (1904), 'Poalei Zion' (1906)—which differed in minor details, but all agreed in separating the Jewish workers from all others, and in telling them that the struggle for socialism was hopeless until they emigrated to some other territory or country and set up a new state—which of course must begin as a capitalist state (the Poalei-Zion leader Borochov even developed an entire theory about large-scale capitalism developing in Palestine and thus promoting the class struggle there better). Thus these 'proletarian' Zionists helped the bourgeois

Zionists just as the latter helped the ruling classes and anti-semitic propagandists, in Russia and elsewhere.

No wonder the Russian Social Democratic Party Executive (comprising both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks) unanimously refused in July 1907 to include the 'Zionist-Socialists' and 'Poalei-Zion' in the Russian delegation to the International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart that year: and that the International Socialist Bureau elected by the Congress, at its meeting in October, 1908, refused to recognise them as affiliated bodies (Lenin, *Works*, 4th edition, vol. XV, p. 220).

Up to the first world war, the Zionist propaganda had not been very successful in promoting Jewish emigration to Palestine. But in the course of that war the Zionist leaders found in the British Government a more favourable imperialist patron than the Sultan, the Tsar or the Kaiser. British imperialism wanted to break up the Turkish Empire from within, and in 1917 the Balfour Declaration promised the Zionist leaders a 'national home' in Palestine, as a 'mandated' colony of the British Empire. Jewish emigration, stimulated by big capital investments in Palestine, increased. In 1921 there were only 80,000 Jews and 600,000 Arabs: by the end of 1938 there were 424,000 Jews and 916,000 Arabs. By this time, too, even the most loyal service by the Zionist leaders as 'a little loyal Jewish Ulster in a sea of hostile Arabs' (Sir Ronald Storrs, *Orientalisms*) had not prevented a fair amount of British intrigue with the feudal Arab States themselves—with the consequence that the coming of the second world war found Arabs and Jews in Palestine at each other's throats, and a British police state holding down both.

The frightful massacres of the Jews in the Nazi-occupied countries of Europe from 1939 to 1945 proved a powerful recruiting agent for Palestine among the survivors. By 1946 there were 600,000 Jews there, and today there are 1,450,000—with a national minority of 120,000 Arabs: many hundreds of thousands of other Arabs were driven out of the country. In the course of the second world war the Zionist leaders had shifted their allegiance once again to the highest bidder—American imperialism, with hundreds of millions of dollars to invest—and when the new state of Israel was set up in May 1948, after bloody and protracted armed struggles, Jewish millionaires in the U.S.A. took over in practice the leadership of the world Zionist organisation and *liaison* with the rulers of the new state, lending them \$100 million—a sum which by the end of 1952 had (with grants) been nearly trebled.

The Soviet Union, with the object of ending bloodshed, proposed in May, 1947, that the United Nations should recommend a dual-nation democratic state in Palestine, or, failing that, separate states for Jews and Arabs. In doing so, its spokesmen always made it plain that they were concerned for the fate of the 'Jews in Palestine'—as well as of the Arabs—and were not giving support to the Zionist pretension that Israel was to be the 'national home' of Jews throughout the world. The Soviet Union and the People's Democracies established diplomatic relations with the new state as they would with any other state, capitalist or feudal, which wanted peaceful and friendly relations with them. When they gave material support to Israel, during the 1948 hostilities with the Arab States (which were incited by British imperialism to attack Israel), it was to help the Jewish people living there to defend themselves, not as backing for Zionism. As Ilya Ehrenburg wrote in a famous article in *Pravda* (September 21, 1948):

In addition to invasion by Anglo-Arab hordes, Israel knows another invasion, less noisy but not less dangerous—by Anglo-American capital. . . . It is not representatives of the workers who head the State of Israel. We have all seen how the bourgeoisie of the European countries, with their great traditions and their ancient statehood, has betrayed national interests in the name of the dollar. Can Soviet people expect the Israeli bourgeois to have more conscience and foresight than the bourgeois of France or Italy? Hardly . . .

Ehrenburg was right. The bourgeois Zionist rulers of Israel, not satisfied with maintaining capitalist exploitation in their own country, with national oppression of the Arab minority, have harnessed themselves in the service of the dollar. Their diplomatic missions have served the ends of American and British espionage in the countries of socialism. Their official spokesmen have incited the most savage hatred of the U.S.S.R.—the country which, by its victory at Stalingrad, signed Hitler's death warrant and saved millions of Jews from destruction. Just as Herzl, in his *Jewish State*, promised 'Europe' that the Zionist state in Palestine would be 'the outpost of civilisation, stemming the tide of barbarism', so now his worthy successors are appealing to the U.S.A. to treat them as 'the focal point of Western influence in the Middle East' and 'a better base for meeting Russian aggression than Egypt' (*Daily Telegraph* New York correspondent, reporting a visit of the Israeli Ambassador to the State Department, February 12, 1953).

The Zionist leaders of this and other countries have rushed into the press to attack the Soviet Union for arresting a few degenerate

middle-class professional men whom thwarted class hatred of socialism (thwarted Zionism for some) has led into terrorist activities on behalf of Wall Street. They, too, are only repeating ancient history—the history of the Jewish petty capitalists who licked the boots of the murderers of Armenians and Jews, and who in 1905-6 sided with the Tsarist police against socialist workers. Zionism in 1953, as sixty years ago, is an enemy of the Jewish working people. The Jewish workers who support its policy of betrayal and adventure, whether in Israel or in Britain, are unwittingly doing themselves the gravest injury. There is but one road to freedom for the Jewish workers in Britain, just as there is but one road to safety from the dangerous situation into which the working people of Israel have now been dragged by their rulers. It is the struggle for the victory of socialism over capitalism, for people's democracy, for the victory of working-class internationalism over bourgeois nationalism and Zionist racialism.