

Fighting for class independence inside the Zionist state

[JGav]

SP: How would you characterise the present political situation in Palestine and the surrounding area?

WL: The defeat of the Palestinian nationalist forces in the Lebanese Civil War following the massacres by fascists in the Tel al Zataar refugee camp, has opened a period of general setback in the area for the workers' movement and national liberation struggles.

This was also indicated by the victory of the ultra-right Begin government in the 1977 elections in Israel, and in the political retreats of the Palestinians in the face of the Zionist and UN invasions of the Lebanon.

SP: What is your characterisation of Zionism?

WL: Zionism is the method of rule of the Israeli bourgeoisie supported by an international movement which cooperated in the establishment of a Jewish state—that is to say a state based on race and religion—and opposed to the native Palestinians.

SP: And the State of Israel?

This interview was conducted by "Socialist Press" during August with a member of the Workers League, an organisation operating within the Zionist state of Israel, and regarding itself in political solidarity with the Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International of which the largest supporter is the French OCI.

Despite political disagreements with the Workers League we think its views and activities will be of interest in the workers' movement in Britain.



Arab traitor Sadat

SP: Why do you call for a 'democratic' rather than a 'socialist' Palestine?

WL: Because we cannot place conditions on our support for Palestinian national liberation by saying that it has to be socialist.

However, we place no confidence in the ability of the Arab regimes or the Palestinian bourgeoisie to achieve national liberation.

We consider that by mobilising the working class unconditionally to this end, workers should then take their leading role in establishing a democratic state, which can only be a workers state also.



Zionist chief Begin with Cyrus Vance

state on the West Bank.

The Popular Front and the 'rejectionists' we would define as petty bourgeois—coming into conflict at times with the bourgeoisie, but unable to express any independent perspectives.

SP: Can you explain something of the recent history of the movements in Palestine calling themselves Trotskyist, and of how your organisation has emerged?

WL: In 1962 the Matzpen movement emerged, and this came to take up a position of socialist anti-Zionism. It was a very loose organisation, including many political trends, some pro-Pabloite, some state capitalist, some little different from bourgeois liberals.

At least two bodies still use the name, one associated with the British SWP, the other with supporters of the Pabloite USFI.

We emerged in 1970, and declared support for the International Committee of the Fourth International.

WL: We say that Israel is a bourgeois colonialist state run in the interests of the Jewish bourgeoisie in close alliance with world imperialism.

Therefore, not only does the state by its very existence stamp on the national rights of the Palestinians, it is also in contradiction to the interests of the Jewish workers and the petty bourgeoisie.

SP: What is your attitude towards military conflict between Israel and the Arab states?

WL: We call for the military defeat of Israel and the victory of the Arab states.

We do this not, of course, because we have any confidence in the Arab bourgeoisie, but in order to develop the struggle for the setting up of a democratic Palestine with equal rights for Jews and Arabs.

We see the defeat of the Zionist state as serving the

interests both of the Arab masses, and of Palestinians and Jews currently under Israeli rule.

While supporting the Arab side in the war, we believe that only the independent mobilisation of the working class will secure the kind of state we want.



Aftermath of a Zionist raid on Palestinian camp

SP: How does the centrality of the national liberation task in Palestine affect your relations to the workers of the various national groups?

WL: The spontaneously anti-Zionist consciousness of the Palestinian workers gives them a special role within the vanguard of the

working class.

Taking this into account, we see the importance of uniting the working class to achieve its independence, both to break the Jewish working class from the influence of Zionism, and also to make the Palestinian workers able to appear as an independent class capable of leading the struggle for national liberation.

SP: Can you say something about the organisations of the workers' movement in Palestine and your attitude towards them?

WL: We do not consider the Histadrut, which is sometimes referred to as a trade union, as anything of the kind.

It is a Zionist institution for colonisation and capitalist development which also has a 'trade union' department.

Nor is the 'Labour Party' which is closely linked to the Histadrut, in any way even a social democratic organisation, but a simple instrument of the colonial bourgeoisie.

Therefore we call for the democratisation and strengthening of the factory committees which exist in all factories or other enterprises of any size.

We think that the representation and leading role of Arab workers in these committees is an essential part of the development of militant struggle and in establishing the political independence of the working class.

Concretely, during the elections of 1977, we called on workers' committees, together with the CP and other workers' organisations to set up a new Labour Party for proletarian demands and the most important democratic aim—the national liberation of the Palestinian people.

SP: Can you give us some other examples of your intervention in workers' struggles?

WL: We have taken up the economic demands of Jewish workers (there are many factories from which Palestinians are excluded) and have tried to develop the democratic demands of the Palestinian workers towards proletarian struggle.

When Jewish workers are in struggle even on small economic questions, they come into sharp conflict with the Zionist state apparatus. It is by intervening in such struggles that we get the best hearing from these workers.

We advocate defending Arab workers in order to broaden such struggles, and to take a step to further political development.

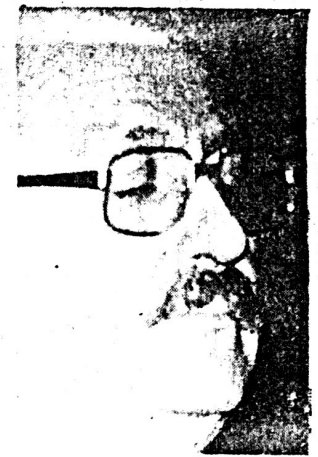
During 1976 there was a 'land day' declared by the Palestinians against the takeover of farmers land by Zionist colonisers, and this included national strike action.

We called for, and in some cases achieved, the setting up of strike committees aimed at defending the workers who supported the strike against victimisation, at making the strike more general by getting the support of Jewish workers, and at continuing the campaign after the day itself.

SP: How would you characterise the different forces within the Palestinian national movement?

WL: We say that Al Fatah and the PLO majority represent the interests of the Palestinian bourgeoisie who want to set up a capitalist state.

This leadership is prepared to compromise on the basic interests of the masses—namely for the right of return of the refugees and the liberation of the whole of Palestine—in return for a deal giving them a puppet



OCFI leader Lambert

We were, however, opposed to the 1971 split of the IC on the grounds that it had been carried out in a sectarian manner by Healy without proper discussion, and we subsequently joined the OCFI.

We were expelled from this in 1975 for reasons which we do not yet consider to have been fully discussed. Subsequently, we had a split within our ranks with those prepared to join OCFI at any cost, but now supporting the USFI.

We consider the USFI to be centrists, and the Healy organisations to have degenerated well outside the bounds of Trotskyism.

We therefore cannot see the continuity of Trotskyism outside the OCFI, and are appealing for re-admission to it.

Regular readers will be aware that the WSL holds very different views on the continuity of Trotskyism which we do not see as flowing through the OCFI.

OUT NOW!

WRP JUNKS THE OLD TROTSKYISM



This pamphlet brings together two articles recently published in *Socialist Press*, dealing with the policies of the self-styled 'Trotskyists' of the Workers Revolutionary Party in relation to the Middle East. The second article in particular exposes the way in which almost every aspect of the WRP's current international orientation represents the polar opposite of the principles historically defended by the WRP and its forerunner the Socialist Labour League. The remainder of the pamphlet consists of documentary material to demonstrate the full extent of this volte face.

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