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THE PALESTINE COMMUNIST PARTY, ITS ARABISATION AND THE ARAB JEWISH CONFLICT IN PALESTINE, 1929-1948

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by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is devoted to a study of the communist movement in Palestine during the British Mandate with special emphasis on its growth within the Arab section of the population.

Chapter one traces the development of the Palestine Communist Party as an outgrowth of the Zionist labour movement and its progress during the first ten years of its existence as a predominantly Jewish organisation.

Chapters two and three examine the Comintern's preoccupation with the necessity of Arabising the Party and traces the Party's early attempts to penetrate into the Arab community, its reactions to the Comintern's directives and the actual process of Arabisation and the policies pursued therein.

Chapter four looks at the Party's policies and role vis-a-vis the Arab Rebellion of 1936-39, and the development of a Jewish opposition culminating in the first major split of the Party.

Chapter five is devoted to an examination of the Party's position during the Second World War and its faithful adherence to the twists and turns of Soviet foreign policy. It also traces the Party's increasing involvement within the Arab community as evinced by its activity in the labour movement.

Chapter six deals with the split of the Party in 1943, its origins and the consequent establishment of separate Arab and Jewish communist organisations, and the development of the Jewish communists up to 1948.

Chapter seven examines the establishment of an Arab national communist movement and looks in detail at communist activity within the Arab working class and the intelligentsia. It closes with an analysis of the communist response to partition and the attempts made to justify it.

The primary sources upon which this study is based include the following: the publications of the Palestine Communist Party and the National Liberation League, intelligence reports of the British

Colonial Office and the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, the official publications of the Comintern, and personal interviews with old party members.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AG	AL GHAD
AWC	ARAB WORKERS' CONGRESS
AWS	ARAB WORKERS' SOCIETY
CI	COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL (Journal)
COMINTERN	COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL
CO	COLONIAL OFFICE
CZA	CENTRAL ZIONIST ARCHIVES
CS	CHIEF SECRETARY
CPP	COMMUNIST PARTY OF PALESTINE
ECCI	EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL
FALT	FEDERATION OF ARAB TRADE UNIONS AND LABOUR SOCIETIES
FO	FOREIGN OFFICE
HAC	HIGHER ARAB COMMITTEE
IT	AL ITTIHAD
ISA	ISRAEL STATE ARCHIVES
INPRECOR	INTERNATIONAL PRESS CORRESPONDENCE
KH	KOL HAAM
LAI	LEAGUE OF ARAB INTELLECTUALS
MPS	SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY
NLL	NATIONAL LIBERATION LEAGUE
PAWS	PALESTINE ARAB WORKERS' SOCIETY
PCP	PALESTINE COMMUNIST PARTY
PRO	PUBLIC RECORDS OFFICE
WO	WAR OFFICE

CHAPTER ONE

THE BEGINNINGS OF COMMUNISM IN PALESTINE

The Comintern and The Colonial Problem

The policy of the Comintern in regard to the colonial problem and its continued shift of emphasis between East and West passed through a number of phases. Initially, the Comintern had its eyes firmly fixed on revolutionary possibilities in the West and considered the East only as an auxiliary in the hopefully "imminent proletarian revolution". The victorious proletariat in Europe would aid the backward countries of Asia and Africa in the transformation from feudalism to socialism without passing through the capitalist stage.[1]

In the Second Comintern Congress a great deal of attention was paid to the question of the colonies and co-operation with the national movement, and Lenin established what was later to become the orthodox communist position.[2] He emphasised the necessity of collaboration with the "revolutionary wing" of the national bourgeoisie.[3] At the basis of his position was the belief that the anti-colonial struggle was a valuable ally of the new socialist state in so far as it was directed at imperialism's "weakest link".

The Third Comintern Congress meeting in June 1921, recognised that the prospect of immediate revolution in the West had failed. The new phase was characterised as one of "temporary capitalist stabilisation".[4] In a letter to member parties, the ECCI reminded them that "without a revolution in Asia, the proletarian revolution cannot be victorious"[5] but Trotsky more accurately summed up the pre-occupation of the participants in his definition of revolution as flowing along "three river beds, Europe, America, and lastly Asia and the colonial world".[6] Zionism, interestingly enough, was singled out for criticism. The Palestine project of the Zionist movement was condemned as aiming "to divert the Jewish working masses from the class struggle and is nothing but a petty bourgeois counter-revolutionary utopia".[7]

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1. D. Boersner. The Bolsheviks and the National and Colonial Problem (Paris 1954). p. 272.
2. S. Schram. Marxism and Asia. (London 1969). p. 26.
3. Lenin. Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Question in On the Unity of the International Communist Movement (Moscow 1966).
4. Boersner, op. cit. p. 106.
5. Protocols of the Third Comintern Congress. (London 1921) pp. 8-9.
6. Boersner, loc. cit.
7. Inprecor. 2 August 1922. p. 411.

The Fourth Comintern Congress meeting in November 1922, was dominated by a defensive state of mind, and the slogan of the "united front" now made its appearance.[8] The Congress was characterised by a marked "Asian tendency", and voices were raised for collaboration with all national movements, including those such as Pan Islamism which had been condemned by Lenin himself in the past.[9] The final resolutions of the Congress stressed the necessity of firm collaboration with the national movements irrespective of the absence of a revolutionary wing within them.[10]

The Fifth Comintern Congress meeting in June 1924 saw an even more determined shift towards a strong colonial orientation.[11] This was a direct response to the further defeats inflicted on the revolutionary movement in Germany, which convinced the Comintern's leaders that "capitalist stabilisation" was firmly established and not merely a short term phase.[12] The resolutions passed by the Congress prescribed yet again collaboration with the bourgeois nationalists on the basis of a "united front" whose validity encompassed the whole East. Support for the leadership of the nationalist movement was unconditional.[13] Soon after, the Fifth Plenum of the ECCI declared that it was premature to advance the slogan of achieving proletarian hegemony in the liberation movement of the colonies.[14] The Communist Party's role lay in supporting the bourgeois-led national independence movements. Indeed the period following the Fifth Congress was characterised by support for all and every national struggle, irrespective of the nature of its leadership. This encompassed the struggles in China, India, the Arabian peninsula, Syria and Morocco.[15]

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8. Schram, op. cit. p. 411.
9. Boersner, op. cit. p. 126.
10. Schram, op. cit. p. 44.
11. Ibid.
12. Outline History of the Communist International. (Moscow 1971). p. 205.
13. Schram, op. cit. p. 45.
14. Outline History, op. cit. p. 232.
15. Abdul Karim, the leader of the Rif rebellion was referred to as "the greatest leader of all the oppressed peoples of the world", see Inprecor, N.40 1925. p. 504.

Although the end of 1926 saw the ebb of the tide of revolution in the colonies, and an ECCI plenum of March 1926 had already characterised the new period in the capitalist countries as one of "tottering stabilisation",[16] the official line in the colonial countries was still in favour of the "united front from above".[17]

By October 1927, the political secretariat of the ECCI had arrived at a new characterisation of developments in Europe. The reformist socialist parties were now seen to have gone over to the bourgeoisie, and the new tactic put forward was one of "class against class".[18] This was followed by the establishment of a new sectarian line in the Ninth Plenum of the ECCI meeting in February 1928. The new demand was for building the united front "from below" in opposition to the social democratic parties in the West.[19] This new tactic of class against class was held to apply also in the colonial countries in response to the perceived betrayal of the leadership of the national movements.

The Sixth Comintern Congress, meeting in July 1928, formally ushered in the "third period". Essentially, this was a reaction to the failure of the Comintern in China.[20] From this point alliances with even the "revolutionary wing of the national bourgeoisie" were proscribed,[21] and the Commmnist Parties task was to set up independent organisations "liberated from the influence of the bourgeois nationalists".[22] The Commmnist Parties were to prepare for the establishment of Soviet power by embarking on armed uprising if necessary.[23] The backward countries were now declared to be capable of skipping the phase of capitalist development, and "even the development of capitalist relations in general."[24]

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16. J. Haithcox, Commmnism and Nationalism in India: M.N. Roy and Comintern policy, 1920-1939. (Princeton. 1971). p. 111.
17. Boersner, op. cit. p. 196.
18. Outline History, op. cit. p. 269.
19. Haithcox, op. cit. p. 87.
20. Schram, op. cit. p. 59.
21. Ibid. p. 58.
22. Haithcox, op. cit. p. 108.
23. Program of the Comintern adopted at the Sixth Congress. (N.Y. 1929). p. 59.
24. Boersner, op. cit. p. 263.

In a further ultra-left turn, the Tenth Plenum of the ECCI meeting in July 1929, called on all Communist Parties to sever their relations with the nationalist movements and to wage a determined struggle against their bourgeois leaderships.[25]

The advent of fascism in Germany in 1933 brought the Comintern's ultra-left policy to a halt. The communists now sought to mend their bridges with the social democratic parties. The slogan of the "national front" was now raised and the seventh Comintern Congress in 1935 officially substituted the slogan of "nation against nation" for that of "class against class".[26] Once again, this change in tactics applied to the colonial countries. The Communist Parties were instructed to soft peddle the social and anti-imperialist struggle. It was now mandatory for them to mend their fences with the bourgeois nationalists and to enter into alliances with them. This policy continued apart from a brief interval in 1939-1941, to be the official line of the Comintern until its dissolution in 1943, as a further "contribution" to strengthening the anti-Nazi democratic front.

The Birth of the Communist Movement in Palestine 1919-1929

The communist movement in Palestine was born within the confines of the Zionist movement in complete isolation from the Arab inhabitants of the country. Its roots went back to the rise of a Socialist-Zionist movement in Tsarist Russia. Jewish life in Eastern Europe was influenced both by Marxism and the impact of economic changes consequent on Russian industrialisation and Tsarist oppression.[27] During the closing decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, Russian Jews had participated in all anti-Tsarist parties, while many of the leaders of the 1905 and 1917 revolutions were themselves of Jewish origin. The percentage of Jews among revolutionaries was always greater than their percentage of the population, a

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25. Haithcox, op. cit. p. 129.
26. See Report of Dimitrov, The Working Class against Fascism, and Report of Wang Ming, The Revolutionary Movement in the Colonial Countries, in Report of the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern. (London. 1936).
27. H. Sachar. A History of Israel (N.Y. 1976). p. 68.

fact usually explained by the large concentrations of Jews in urban areas, the existence of a large Jewish proletariat and intelligentsia, and their oppression by the Tsarist regime, not only as proletarians but also as a national minority.

Before the outbreak of the October Revolution, the politically conscious section of the Jewish working class was mainly attracted to the ranks of the non-Zionist socialist parties.[28] The predominant party among the Jewish working class was the social democratic Bund[29] which had taken part in the establishment of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party[30] but had soon after broken with it over the issue of representation of the Jewish proletariat. The Bund evolved a national ideology which, unlike that of Zionism was based on the concept of "national cultural autonomy".[31] While remaining firmly opposed to Zionism which it dubbed "a bourgeois movement with close ties to anti-revolutionary clericalists",[32] the Bund, in its Tenth Congress held in 1910, recognised that the concept of "nationality" applied to the Jewish people,[33] and the national element came to assume an increasingly equal standing with the class struggle in its ideology.

The year 1905 constituted an important landmark in the history of Russian Jewry. It witnessed the consolidation of various groups of Socialist-Zionists and the termination of the Bund's monopoly of the Jewish field, and renewed oppression as a result of the failure of the 1905 revolution. The establishment of Labour Zionism in Russia was an attempt to formulate a socialist solution to the Jewish question. Nachman Syrkin was the first to try to bridge the gap between socialism and Zionism, and attempted to show that there was

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28. Z. Gitelman. Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics: The Jewish Sections of the CPSU, 1917-1930. (Princeton. 1972). p. 71.
29. The General League of Jewish Workingmen in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia, established in 1897.
30. Gitelman, op. cit. p. 33.
31. E. Mendelsohn. Class Struggle in the Pale: The Formative Years of the Jewish Working Class in Tsarist Russia. (Cambridge, 1970). p. ix.
32. Gitelman, op. cit. p. 40.
33. Ibid. p. 38. The Bolsheviks condemned the Bundists as "Zionists who are afraid of sea sickness". Ibid. p. 35.

no contradiction between the two.[34] It was another Russian Jew however, Ber Borochov, who worked out the theoretical principles of Labour Zionism.[35] His doctrine of "proletarian Zionism" stressed the existence of an independent Jewish proletariat and characterised Zionism as the expression of the objective movement and the interests of the Jewish working class, and not the Jewish people in general.[36] He further argued that the Jewish people, constituting a single nation, suffered from a deformed economic structure which he attributed to the absence of a national territory. Borochov's ideas became the platform of the various socialist-Zionist groups which amalgamated in 1906 and formed the Poale Zion (Workers of Zion) party.[37] Its members were drawn from two groups: nationalist elements from within the Jewish labour movement, and socialist elements from within the Zionist movement. They were united by a combination of Zionist aspirations and a socialist political and economic program.

The rise of Labour Zionism in Palestine can be traced back directly to the second wave of Jewish immigration (1904-1914), the background to which was the failure of the 1905 Russian revolution. While the first wave of immigration into Palestine (1882-1903) had not been predominantly Zionist and did not contain a large number of proletarian elements,[38] the second wave contained large numbers of young workers "animated by socialist ideals" and with a past record of activity in the anti-Tsarist Russian labour movement.[39] Members of Poale Zion took part in this wave of immigration impelled by the desire to create in Palestine a base for the future socialist Jewish state, and on their arrival declared themselves "the party of the Palestinian working class in creation".[40] Established in Palestine in 1905, Poale Zion had as a cornerstone of its policy the plan "Conquest of Labour" aimed at creating conditions for the development of a Jewish proletariat.

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34. Sachar, op. cit. p. 69. See also W. Laqueur. A History of Zionism. (London 1972) p. 27. For a short summary of Syrkin's views see A. Hertzberg (ed.) The Zionist Idea. (N.Y. 1975) pp. 333-350.
35. Gitelman, op. cit. p. 48.
36. Ber Borochov. Nationalism and the Class Struggle: A Marxian approach to the Jewish Problem. (Greenwood press 1972). pp. 71-72.
37. Borochov, op. cit. p. 181.
38. Sachar, op. cit. pp. 26-27. Gitelman, op. cit. p. 47.
39. I. Cohen. A Short History of Zionism. (London 1951). p. 65.
40. Sachar, op. cit. p. 73.

It thus took part in the establishment of the first organisations of the Yishuv, such as the Gdud (Workers' Batallions) and Shomer (guards) in 1909, and the Histadrut in 1920.[41]

The Russian and Palestinian sections of Poale Zion were soon joined by similar groups established in Austria, the United States, and Britain,[42] which eventually led to the creation of a World Confederation of Poale Zion in 1907. The outbreak of the October Revolution posed serious problems for the Poale Zion movement. Many of its members were sympathetic to the Bolsheviks and a division soon appeared between pro- and anti- communists. The Fifth World Congress meeting in Vienna in July-August 1920 saw a split in the ranks of the movement on the question of affiliation to the Comintern.[43] The Palestine section sided with the right wing and chose to remain independent of Moscow.

In Palestine itself, Poale Zion had in February 1919 joined with other independent elements to form a new organisation, Ahdut HaAvoda (Unity of Labour).[44] A small group of Poale Zion members opposed this and broke away[45] establishing their own organisation, Mifleget Poalim Zozialistit (Socialist Workers Party - MPS).[46] In the first congress of MPS, held in October 1919,[47] the split was characterised as being similar to those which had taken place in all socialist parties throughout the world between left and right.[48]

The new Party was ambiguous in its attitude to Zionism. Declaring its allegiance to "proletarian Zionism", it linked the achievement of the Zionist ideal with the victory of the socialist revolution, and

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41. D. Zohar. Political Parties in Israel. (N.Y. 1974). p. 40.
42. Laqueur, op. cit. p. 291.
43. Zohar, op. cit. p. 43.
44. Y. Shapiro. The Formative Years of the Israeli Labour Party: The Organisation of Power, 1919-1930. (London, 1976). p. 25.
45. Zohar, op. cit. p. 54.
46. The Commmnist Party in Israel, dates its formation from this date March 1919. See M. Vilner, Lecture delivered on the 50th Anniversary of the Israeli New Commmnist Party, March 1970, in Fifty Years of the Commmnist Party in Palestine. (Haifa. 1970). p. 25. See also, The Labour Movement in Palestine. Inprecor. N.15. 1923. p. 386.
47. Extracts from the General Conference of the Socialist Workers Party in Palestine held October 1919. ISA CS 148. See also, M. Offenberg. Vom Zionismus zum Internationalismus: Der entstehungsprozess der Commmnistischen Partei Palestinas (PKP) 1919-1924. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. Free University of West Berlin. 1973. p. 156.
48. Extracts from the General Conference.....loc. cit.

emphasised that "the Diaspora will be the spring from which we shall draw our vintage of life inspiration". The novel element in its doctrine was the affirmation that the establishment of a Jewish socialist community in Palestine was conditional on an understanding with the native working class, and the necessity of joint Arab-Jewish organisation.

The MPS continued however to regard itself as part of the Zionist movement and participated in the Fifth World Congress of Poale Zion in Vienna.[49] Its delegate antagonised the Congress by attacking the Palestine Zionist program as "illusory" and calling attention to the existence of a native Arab population determined to repel foreign newcomers.[50] He also launched an attack on the Zionist policy of co-operation with Britain, which he described as being the cause of Arab enmity towards the Zionist immigrants. As a result, the Palestinian delegate was expelled from the Congress, and MPS itself felt impelled to dissociate itself from his views.[51]

Relations of the MPS with other Socialist-Zionist parties continued to deteriorate, though it continued to gather some support among the new immigrants, based mainly on their sympathy with the Soviet Union and their rejection of the Zionist leaders' collaboration with the British.[52] At the same time the MPS persisted in its calls for an alliance "with our Arab brethren"[53] and its Third Congress held in April 1921 passed an official resolution to this effect.[54] To the Arabs however, the existence of a Bolshevic party provided them with an extra argument in their protestations against Jewish immigration and they exhibited strong opposition to communist activity.[55] The disturbances of the First of May 1921, were the direct outcome of a clash between an official

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49. ISA.CS.148. General Staff Intelligence, Cairo 30 May, 1922.
50. Letter from Y. Meyrson to MPS, 25 August 1920 in Vilner op. cit. p. 31.
51. Vilner, Ibid. p. 32.
52. ISA.CS.148. CID Report, 7 May 1921 quotes the number of MPS members as 300. See also CID Report, 12 November 1920, for the early activity of the group.
53. MPS leaflet (Hebrew & Yiddish) 7 November, 1920.
54. ISA.CS.148. CID Report, 17 June 1921.
55. Letter of Omar Bitar, Head of Jaffa Moslem-Christian Association to the High Commissioner, 20 November 1920. ISA.CS.148.

Zionist procession and an MPS demonstration which ended in Arab attacks on the Jewish quarter.[56] The outcome was the suppression of MPS with the arrest and deportation of most of its leaders[57] and the party was banned and had to go underground.[58]

Soon after, MPS disintegrated but this did not prevent the appearance of a plethora of small groups such as the Jewish Communist Party, the Workers' Councils, the Communist Party of Palestine (CCP) and the Palestine Communist Party (PCP) which carried on an ideological struggle within their ranks centred on the position towards Zionism and the association with the Comintern.[59] The groups varied in their rejection of the Zionist program and in their degree of support for the Arab national movement. Some took an extreme view, calling for the abandonment of Palestine altogether[60] while others were in favour of the establishment of a "Jewish workers' centre" in Palestine and condemned the more anti-Zionist groups as "liquidationists".[61]

The two largest groups, the PCP and the CPP eventually came together in July 1923 and formed a single party.[62] For a short time following this, some small groups continued to exist and to denounce the PCP as crypto-Zionist,[63] advocating the abandonment of the Zionist project in Palestine and calling for total support for the Arab movement. With the recognition early in 1924 of the PCP as the official Comintern Section in Palestine, these groups gradually disappeared from the scene.

The main issue which had split the World Federation of Poale Zion, affialiation to the Comintern, continued to occupy the attention of the

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56. British Government Statement in Miraat al Shark, 3 May 1921.
57. C.O.733/5/272. Administrative Report for July 1921. p. 11.
58. From the Fifth to the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern. Report by the ECCI (London 1928). p. 147.
59. C.O.733/141/44511. Report on Communist Activity, October 1927. p. 8.
60. Y. Hen-Tov. The Comintern and Zionism in Palestine: An Inquiry into the Circumstances surrounding the Comintern's involvement in the 1929 Riots in Palestine. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Brandeis University. 1969. pp. 199-200.
61. G. Israeli. MPS PKP MAKI: The Story of the Communist Party in Israel. (Tel Aviv, 1954). p. 22.
62. The Foundation of the United Communist Party in Palestine. Statement of CC's of CCP and PCP. Inprecor (German Edition). N.136. 22 August 1923. pp. 1187. See also C.O.733/48/42903. Political Report for July 1923.
63. Memo to the ECCI Drafted by ex-members of the CC of the CCP, Jaffa-Palestine. 1st January 1924. ISA.CS.149.

various groups of Jewish communists.[64] A representative of MPS had taken part in the Third Comintern Congress in 1921 as an observer,[65] but objection to the "national nature" of the group and Comintern demands such as a change in the Party's name and its repudiation of immigration[66] which the Jewish communists were not prepared to accept, resulted in the failure to reach agreement. Upon the establishment of the united party in 1923, the PCP again decided to approach the Comintern and sent one of its leaders, Wolf Auerbach[67] to negotiate the terms of affiliation.[68] Auerbach encountered some difficulty in view of the fact that the Comintern's leaders feared that recognition of the PCP would give implicit support to the Balfour Declaration.[69] Moreover, they were critical of the Party's failure to gather support among the Arabs, a failure which they attributed to the subjective Jewish orientation of the Party. When the Party was eventually admitted into the Comintern in March 1924,[70] the ECCI stressed the importance of transforming it "from an organisation of Jewish workers into a truly territorial party" and outlined its task as one of support for the Arabs against both Zionists and British.[71]

Until the time of the Party's recognition by the Comintern, the Jewish communists had been divided into three groups. There were those who still adhered to the doctrine of "proletarian Zionism" and regarded the Party as the left wing of the Zionist movement. Another group desired a break with Zionism but could not bring itself to openly denounce the Balfour Declaration and place itself outside the Jewish community, and continued to regard the Jewish immigrants as the

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64. ISA CS.148 CID report, 23 May 1921.
65. The Communist International, N 16/17. 1921. p. 123.
66. Police Report on Communist Activity, 1927. loc. cit.
67. Wolf Auerbach (also known as Danieli, Haidar, Ichtiar, Abu Siam). Born 1883, arrived in Palestine 1922 already a member of the Jewish Section of the CPSU. He joined the PCP and was its Secretary 1924-1929. He was recalled to Moscow as a result of his suspected opposition to Arabisation. Arrested in 1936 he reportedly died in 1941 and was rehabilitated in 1957.
68. From the Fourth to the Fifth World Congress. op. cit. pp. 66-67.
69. Letter from Auerbach to PCP, March 1924, in Police Report on Communist Activity 1927. op. cit. p. 22.
70. From the Fourth to the Fifth World Congress. loc. cit.
71. C.O.733/96/38648. Police Report on Communist Activity, July 1925. p. 2.

harbingers of revolution in the East.[72] The third group rejected any form of Jewish presence in the country and its members eventually left the Party and the country.[73] Such behaviour was completely in accordance with a total rejection of Zionism by people who were recent immigrants and had no special ties with Palestine. Indeed, for many communists the Party became in its early years a "transit camp" on the way to the Soviet Union. Those who remained and accepted the Comintern's instructions regarding the necessity of joining forces with the Arab population in the struggle against British imperialism were however badly suited for this task. By reasons of custom, history, language, doctrine, and not least by belonging to the Jewish community of immigrants, they were hardly distinguishable in Arab eyes from the rest of the Jewish community.

Communist activity in the early years was mostly concentrated in the trade union field and among Jewish workers. The Fraktzia (workers faction) was organised towards the end of 1922.[74] Its main aims were to penetrate the trade unions affiliated to the Histadrut with the object of separating them from the economic and co-operative functions linked to the Zionist project, and to open them to Arab membership.[75] Simultaneously the Fraktzia attacked as "liquidationists" those who called on Jewish immigrants to leave Palestine and stressed that the correct path was "to fight and not to run away".[76] The Fraktzia was in favour of participation in Zionist bodies and took part in election for the Histadrut congresses but coupled this with the demand for transforming the organisation into a territorial professional trade union. It succeeded in establishing some contact with Arab workers[77] but in the event was

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72. The only party leaflet calling for the repudiation of the Balfour Declaration is dated 1 May 1923, issued during the unity negotiations between the CPP and PCP, and probably under pressure from the former.
73. This group was made up of members of the CPP and Workers Circles, C.O.733/96/38648 Police Report on Communist Activity, July 1925. p.2
74. From the Fourth to the Fifth.....op. cit. pp. 66-67.
75. Leaflet of CC/Fraktzia, 3 January 1923. Auerbach in a speech at the Histadrut Congress, February 1923 said that the Histadrut "should not associate itself with Zionist or nationalist affairs.. should establish professional unions". See Police Report on Communist activity 1927...op. cit. Appendix "A" pp. 1-7.
76. Leaflet CC/Fraktzia, 18 September 1923.
77. ISA CS.148 CID Report 23 June 1924.

unable to effect their entry into the Histadrut as it was itself expelled from the organisation in April 1924, ostensibly for its unfavourable attitude to Zionism and immigration.[78]

The greater interest taken in the Arab field reflected itself in a more careful differentiation of the various groups in the Arab camp. While early in January 1924, J. Berger[79] a member of the Party Secretariat wrote that as far as the Arabs were concerned "all classes of the people are in the struggle against imperialism",[80] a few months later a clearer distinction was made between landowners, urban capitalists and proletarian toilers[81] and "a class struggle within the Arab national movement" was discerned.

This characterisation of "class struggle" within the Arab camp was reflected in the proceedings of the Third Conference of the Party held in June 1924.[82] Pointing to the importance of work among the peasants, the Conference declared that the extremist tendencies within the Party such as had called for opposition to the Histadrut and to Jewish immigration, had been liquidated. At the same time, the Party was deemed to be free of any trace of Jewish national chauvinism and to be heading towards the realisation of the ECCI slogan of becoming "the territorial party" of the Palestinian working class.[83] Zionism was condemned as a movement which embodied the aspirations of the Jewish bourgeoisie, while the Arab national movement was portrayed as "one of the main factors in the struggle against British imperialism" and to be deserving of support in so far as it performed this task.[84] While the Party should not become a "missionary group" its duties should involve influencing the speedy development of the division of classes in the Arab movement and gaining the confidence of the oppressed by

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78. CZA S25/7808. Report on Communist Activity, 31 October 1929.
79. Joseph Berger-Barzalai, born 1904, came to Palestine 1919. In 1922 he was Secretary of the CPP and was instrumental in bringing about the union which took place in 1923 with the PCP. He was until 1929 a member of the Party's Secretariat and was responsible for contact with the Comintern. In 1929 he became the Secretary of the Party until he left Palestine in 1932. He held responsible Comintern posts till his arrest in 1935. Upon his release from Stalin's concentration camps in 1956, he went to Poland and then to Israel where he still lives.
80. Autocracy in Palestine. Inprecor. N 4, 1924. p. 32.
81. The class war within the Arab National Movement. Inprecor. N 32, 1924. p. 33.
82. Both police reports and Party sources claim that for the first time an Arab member took part in the Party's congress. See Report on Communist Activity, 1925. op. cit. p. 22. Vilner, op. cit. p. 39.
83. The Third Conference of the PCP. Inprecor. N 48, 1924. p. 497.
84. Vilner, loc. cit.

intervention in agrarian disputes. Within the Jewish community, the Party pledged itself to combat "proletarian Zionism" primarily by educational activity among Jewish workers and by struggling against manifestations of national chauvinism.[85]

In January 1925, Berger travelled to Moscow to deliver a report to the ECCI on the PCP's activity.[86] The ECCI was pleased with the progress of the Party and approved its policy. Its instructions to the Party called on it to work among the peasantry in recognition of the absence of an Arab proletariat, but it should also pay attention to the urban population and to the students.[87] The attitude of the Party to the "landowning feudals" and to the nationalist groups was to be conditioned by whether they were attempting to reach a compromise with the British or struggling against them. In the case of the former they were to be exposed, while in the latter they were to be supported to the extent of forming temporary alliances with them and taking part in their assemblies and meetings.

Zionism was viewed by the Party as a pawn in the hands of British policy, and as its "watchdog" in the midst of the oppressed Arab population.[88] Likewise Arab national leaders were condemned, in that they tried to divert the Arab movement against the Zionists instead of against British rule.[89] The Party was insistent that attacks on the Jews were diversionary and would only help to strengthen Britain's hold on the country, and that the struggle should be waged primarily against the British. The Jewish workers, recent immigrants though they were, and despite the fact that they had been brought to Palestine through the agency of the Zionist organisations, continued to be regarded as potential revolutionaries whose interests in no way contradicted those of the Arabs.

The ECCI for its part looked to the Istiklal movement. The latter called for the independence and unity of the Arabs, and had

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85. Police Report on Communist Activity, 1927. op. cit. pp. 11-13.
86. Police Report on Communist Activity, 1927. op. cit. p. 24.
87. ECCI letter to PCP after having heard Berger's report, 9 May 1925.
88. The Imperialists and the Revolutionary Movement in Syria and Palestine. Inprecor. N 40. 1925. p. 531.
89. The Counter Revolutionary Role of Zionism. Inprecor. N 69, 1925. p. 100.

played an important role in establishing the Arab government in Damascus. The ECCI regarded it as the progressive wing of the Arab national movement and directed the PCP to make contact with it.[90] Contact was established with the Syrian rebels[91] and Auerbach himself travelled to Syria to meet with the leaders of the rebellion,[92] but although help was promised nothing appears to have come of the episode.

Party activity remained largely within the Jewish community. Some success was achieved as with the Gdud Avoda (Workers' Batallions) when the group split and a section emigrated to the Soviet Union.[93] Yet the Party's attitude towards Jewish immigration remained ambiguous. Berger writing in 1926 attacked the Government for its opposition to both the Arab and the Jewish population.[94] Referring to the latter he accused it of "not helping to give immigrants work and bread, still less land". As regards the Histadrut, the Party had changed its policy after being rebuked by the ECCI in 1925 for advising Arabs not to join the organisation.[95] Within the Histadrut, the Party now raised the call for entry of Arab workers and in 1927, when Arabs were admitted as observers for the first time to a Histadrut congress this was regarded as a measure of the Party's success in influencing both the Histadrut and Arab workers.[96] Despite the Fraktzia's expulsion from the Histadrut, the Party continued to set up factions under different names to propagate its policy within the Jewish workers' community, side by side with the organisation of demonstrations of the unemployed and the disillusioned in protest against the leaders of the Zionist movement.[97]

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90. Letter from ECCI to PCP, 10 September 1925 in C.O.733/862/214.
91. Police Report on Communist Activity, 1925. op. cit. p. 16.
92. Interview of J. Berger-Barzalai with Yediot Ahranot, 15 March 1965. See also Police Report on Communist Activity, 1927, op. cit. p.49. and F. Shemali, The History of the Communist Movement in Lebanon, Al Assifa, No 51, p. 17, and No. 53, pp. 16-17. 1933.
93. For the relations of the Gdud Avoda and the PCP see A. Shapira, The Left in the Gdud Avoda and the PCP until 1928, in D. Carpi (ed.) Zionism: Studies in the History of the Zionist Movement and of the Jews in Palestine (Tel Aviv University 1971) Vol. 2. pp. 148-168.
94. Palestine Under Lord Plumer. Inprecor N.19. 1926. p. 290.
95. Letter from Petrof head of Comintern Eastern Section to PCP 7 May 1925 in Police Report on Communist Activity, 1925, op.cit. p. 22.
96. The Histadrut Congress in Palestine, Inprecor, N 46. 1927. p. 1034. See also Police Report on Communist Activity, 1927. op. cit. p.38.
97. CZA S25/536. Jewish Intelligence Report, 26 August 1926; see also From the Fifth to the Sixth World Congress of Comintern. op. cit. p.418.

At the Sixth Party Conference in September 1926, the Party reaffirmed the necessity of persisting in its attempts to re-enter the Histadrut and for mutual organisation with the Arab working masses.[98] Composed of both Arab and Jewish members the Conference discussed the role of the Jewish working population in Palestine who, it was declared were slowly adopting an anti-imperialist position. It was also revealed that the Party had been maintaining contact with "the left-wing of the Arab national revolutionary movement".[99] While recognising that the Arab national movement was petty bourgeois in nature and relied on the peasantry in its attempts to secure the necessary conditions for free capitalist development in Palestine and thus had "nothing in common with communism", it was decided to support it in so far as it continued to be directed against imperialism.[100]

The Comintern, impatient for greater involvement among the Arab community, revealed itself dissatisfied with the Party's progress. Auerbach, the Party Secretary, travelled to Moscow in December 1926 to attend an enlarged plenum of the ECCI and found that the Comintern was not pleased with the results of the Party's work.[101] Their main criticisms centred on the overwhelming Jewish composition of the Party. They pointed out to Auerbach that the Party's main role lay in increased activity among the Arabs in order "to widen and strengthen" its ties with the Arab national movement. This was to be accomplished without decreasing the volume of the Party's activities in the Jewish community.

Within the Jewish street, the Party evolved a new doctrine: Yishuvism.[102] The Jewish community in Palestine was appraised in positive terms and attributed with a major progressive role in the social

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98. The Sixth Party Congress of the PCP. Inprecor. N 68. 1926. p. 1184.
99. Hen Tov. op. cit. p. 117; Berger, interview with Yediot Ahranot, loc. cit.; Jewish Intelligence Report, 26 August 1926, loc. cit.
100. The Political and Social Movement in Arabia. Inprecor. N 71,1926, p. 1237.
101. Speech delivered by Auerbach on his meeting in Moscow with the ECCI at a meeting in Tel Aviv, 8 March 1927 to celebrate the 3rd anniversary of the Comintern's recognition of the PCP, in Police Report on Communist Activity, 1927, op. cit. Appendix "A".
102. Offenberg, op. cit. pp. 282-293. See Y. Hen Tov, "The Communist International, the PCP and the Political Unrest in Palestine, 1929. (Worcester, 1970). Pamphlet, p. 4.

and economic development of the country, while the Jewish labour movement was regarded as having a positive influence on the course of revolution in the East. This doctrine was an attempt to differentiate between Zionism and the Jewish community in Palestine. While rejecting the tenets of Zionist nationalism and asserting the unity of Arab and Jewish interests, the PCP was averse to calls of emigration and expelled from its ranks those who fell victim to this "liquidationist" tendency. It is possible however to explain this positive attitude to the Jewish community as an attempt to make meaningful the Party's pre-occupation with the Jewish section of the population. Though adherence to this doctrine was not to last long, it continued to raise its head, leading to splits and expulsions in the next twenty years of the Party's history.

The Sixth Congress of the Comintern introduced a new policy of struggle against "national reformism". In its application to Palestine this called for a struggle against the leadership of the Arab national movement and for replacing the demand for Palestine's independence with that of Arab unity. The leadership of the PCP was severely criticised for its failure to apply the Comintern's directives, and for exhibiting national Jewish tendencies in its persisting pre-occupation with the Jewish community.[103] Auerbach, representing Palestine at the Congress came out in disagreement with Bukharin's report on the declining importance of the colonies to capitalism, and reproached him and the entire Comintern leadership for not paying sufficient attention to the Arab East.[104] But he remained silent on the question of Arabisation.

In December 1928 the PCP held a conference to discuss the recommendations of the Comintern Congress. This conference reported increased police persecution, arrests and deportations resulting in a weakening of Party activity.[105] Resolutions were passed stressing the paramount importance of organising Arab workers and recognising the increasing pro-imperialist orientation of the Arab leadership. Auerbach had attempted to re-organise the Party on his return from Moscow only to be met by opposition from some who did not accept that the new Comintern line was correct.[106] The conference condemned the

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103. Hen Tov (pamphlet) op. cit. p. 9.
104. Speech of Haydar (Palestine) on Bukharin's report to the Sixth Comintern Congress. Inprecor. N 48. 1928. p. 851.
105. The Third Conference of the PCP, December 1928. Inprecor. N 1. 1929. p. 15.
106. Hen Tov (thesis) op. cit. p. 64.

oppositionist as well as "the defeatist mood" permeating sections of the Party as a result of the Comintern's opposition to the PCP's political line. In the event it proved impossible to arrive at a final decision and it was resolved to continue the discussion of the Comintern's directives in the Party's literature.[107]

1929 was to prove a difficult year for the communist movement in Palestine. The attack on the "reformist Arab leadership" was carried out in accordance with the Comintern's directives.[108] At the same time there was a change in the tone of the Party's propaganda. Less emphasis was accorded to "the coming world revolution" and more was paid to specific problems and their immediate cure. The agrarian problem was the centrepiece of the Party's program. Recognising the absence of an Arab proletariat, it emphasised that the coming revolution would have an agrarian character, and it called for the distribution of land to the peasants and the refusal to pay debts and taxes, with the aim of widening the class divisions within the Arab community.[109]

The internal affairs of the Party were not in order. It had been hit by a strong wave of arrests and there was a decrease in its publishing activity. Branches were criticised by the CC for relying too much on "leafleting" and "easy" propaganda, substituting this for "real contact" with the Arab masses.[110] The contents of Party literature also came under criticism. It did not relate to the conditions of those to whom it was addressed and Party activists were characterised as "propaganda teams calling the masses to struggle but standing aside themselves". The large number of arrests was directly linked to this mode of activity[111] and the Party called for the preservation of trained cadres raising the slogan of "big gains through small losses".

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107. This referred to the ECCI Letter to PCP Congress, December 1928, published in Inprecor N 29. 1929 p. 647.
108. Hen Tov (pamphlet) op. cit. p. 10. The Political Situation in Palestine Inprecor. N 50. 1929. p. 1056.
109. Forois, 19 May 1929. op. cit. p. 61. The First of August in Palestine Inprecor. N 42. 1929. 1.899.
110. CC/PCP. Internal Bulletin N 11 (Arabic), addressed to Branches, Fraktzia and Youth Section.
111. It was reported that 60% of those arrested, were caught while distributing leaflets.

A plenary session of the CC held in mid-1929, condemned the defeatist mood permeating the Party, and the underestimation of the role of the working class in the forthcoming struggles in Palestine.[112] It was clear that opposition existed to the Comintern's slogan of a "workers' and peasants' government" in Palestine and the Arab countries. The opposition regarded the national movement with its current leadership as playing the main role in the struggle for a democratic republic. The Party's role should be to support this as a transitional demand. The CC condemned this viewpoint as fostering "democratic illusions among the masses", and as over-estimating the influence of the nationalists who were actually making capitulatory deals with the British at the expense of the Arab population, and it called for an intensification of the struggle against the "right wing" of the Party.

On the eve of the August 1929 uprising in Palestine, the PCP's analysis of the situation and the main protagonists remained unchanged. Britain required "the aid of a Jewish national home" to maintain its hold on Palestine[113] while the Zionists acted in collaboration with Arab absentee landlords in expropriating the Arab peasants. The characterisation of the Arab national leaders as "sleeping partners with Zionism" eventually led to the growth of defeatist tendencies within the Party which resulted in a decrease in its activities.[114] In June 1929 however, when nationalist groups in Jaffa had called for a demonstration against land agents, the communists had supported the demonstrations and attempted to introduce their own anti-imperialist slogans.[115] The Party leadership chose to derive encouragement from what it perceived to be increasing militancy among young Arabs and workers and the recurring violent clashes between the Zionists and Arab peasant.[116] This new mood of Party militancy reflected itself in the demonstrations and clashes with the police which took place on August 1st, and resulted in the arrest of more than forty Party members.[117] This was a shattering blow from which the Party had not yet recovered when three weeks later Arab-Jewish hostilities were triggered off as a result of disagreements over the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem.

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112. The Fight Against the Right Deviation. Inprecor. N 29.1929. p.647.
113. The Fight for Land in Palestine. Inprecor. No38. 1929. p. 809.
114. The First of August in Palestine. Inprecor. N.42. 1929. p. 899.
115. The Fight for Land in Palestine. op. cit. p. 810.
116. The Political Situation in Palestine. loc. cit.
117. The First of August in Palestine. loc. cit.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ARABISATION OF THE PALESTINE COMMUNIST PARTY

Party Activity among the Arabs since 1924 and the Position of the Comintern on Arabisation

The steps which the ECCI took in the wake of the August 1929 events in Palestine in decreeing the immediate Arabisation of the PCP, were the culmination of a politically consistent line which stretched back to the period before the recognition of the Party as a section of the Comintern in 1924.

The leaders of the PCP in their discussions with the ECCI prior to 1924, had met opposition to the Party's membership on the basis of the national composition of the group.[1] The absence of Arab members was attributed to insufficient work on the part of the Jewish communists and to a conscious limitation of their activity to within the "Jewish ghetto". Thus the difficulties encountered in winning recognition were due primarily to this Comintern view of the Party as "a Jewish group confined solely to work among the Jewish element and ignoring the Arab majority".[2] When recognition was eventually granted in 1924 this was accompanied by the first of the many demands which the ECCI was to make on the Party to Arabise itself.[3]

The Third Conference of the PCP, held in July 1924, adopted the ECCI slogan of "territorialisation" of the Party[4] and declared the readiness of the Party to effect a rapid realisation of this demand. A steady increase of activity in the Arab street can be readily observed in the years following this conference, but the tempo of this activity did not greatly impress the Comintern. Exactly a year later the ECCI tabled a resolution criticising the activity of the Party among the Arabs.[5] While recognising that the PCP had taken heed of the instructions to commence work among the Arabs, the resolution emphasised that, due to the absence of an Arab proletariat, the Party's main work should be aimed at the overwhelmingly peasant population of the country "under the watchword of agrarian revolution".

Despite the outward acquiescence of the PCP with the ECCI's instructions, the persistent concern of the latter with the development

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1. Police Report on Communist Activity 1927. op. cit. p. 22.
2. Police Report on Communist Activity, 1925. op. cit. p. 8.
3. Conversation of Radek with Auerbach, see Offenberg, op. cit. p. 347.
4. The Third Conference of the PCP. Inprecor. N 48. 1924. p. 1497.
5. ECCI resolution: On the Question of Work In Palestine, May 1925.

of the Party indicates that the rate of progress continued to be regarded as unsatisfactory. An enlarged meeting of the ECCI in December 1926 again dealt with the problem of activity in Palestine.[6] It was pointed out that the progress of the PCP had been slow, and that the main reason for this was that the Party was still composed of "a few Jewish persons". The ECCI however was not able to offer any quick remedies. It rejected a suggestion that activity among the Jewish population should be reduced in order to enable the whole cadre of the Party to concentrate on the Arab street. The solutions put forward were to increase the published propaganda of the Party in Arabic, and the inevitable exhortations to redouble efforts in order to make the Party "Arab in character".

The Comintern in its emphasis on work within the Arab population, instructed the Party to establish relations with the leadership of the Arab national movement.[7] This line was to persist until the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928 when the policy was reversed. The new course was explained in a communication of the ECCI to the PCP which, forecasting the outbreak of an agrarian revolution in Palestine, called on the Party to prepare itself for a leading role by entrenching itself among the Arabs as the standard bearers of the anti-imperialist revolution. The failure of the PCP to adopt what the Comintern saw as a correct position to the August 1929 events, was siezed upon as the outcome of the mistaken policy of the Party and its refusal to abide by the ECCI's instructions. Consequently, the Comintern gave up its calls for a progression towards an Arabised Party and instead took active steps to ensure the desired transformation.

Within the PCP two tendencies had co-existed from the time of its recognition by the Comintern until the major shake-up which followed the August 1929 events. The first called for Arabisation, and held that the Party should be composed in its majority, of members of the population group which was in a position to undertake the anti-imperialist struggle. In Palestine this group was perceived to be the Arabs. Consequently the Party, claiming as it did to stand at the

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6. Speech of Auerbach at Tel-Aviv PCP meeting, 8 March 1927. loc. cit.
7. Interview with J. Berger-Barzalai, Tel Aviv, 2 January 1974. See also Offenberg, op. cit. p. 355.

head of the anti-imperialist revolutionary movement, could not be Jewish. This tendency continued until 1929 to be the minority group in the Party, and its platform was not reflected in official Party doctrine.

The second and predominant tendency upheld the doctrine of Yishuvism and attributed to the Jewish community in Palestine a progressive role in the social and economic development of the country. It regarded the economic transformation consequent on Jewish immigration as beneficial to the capitalist development of Palestine and to the break-up of ancient feudal structures, which in its turn would lead to class differentiation within the Arab community. Consequently a distinction was drawn between the Zionist movement and the development of the Jewish community and an identity of interests was proclaimed between the two national communities in the country. Thus the period 1924-1929 saw an understandable pre-occupation with the problems of the Jewish immigrant society. The most active organisations of the Party, the Fraktzia and the Red Aid Society concentrated their work among the Jewish unemployed and the left Zionist groups.

Opposition to the Party leadership came from both the right and the left of its own ranks. The "right deviation" exhibited itself prior to 1929 as a tendency which underestimated the strength of the working class and the mass movement in the country and which held a "defeatist attitude" towards the possibility of successful work.[8] It denied the validity of the Comintern's forecast of a projected agrarian upheaval and mistrusted the revolutionary potentialities of the Arab population. It demanded a more active policy within the Yishuv, and at the same time the establishment of stronger relations with the leadership of the Arab movement.

This position was condemned by the Party with the full approval of the ECCI. Its denial of revolutionary possibilities in the Arab street and its position regarding the primacy of activity with the Yishuv appeared to amount to a call for revolution based on the forces of the Jewish working class alone. Yet these ideas were shared by a section of the leadership of the Party, consequently the

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8. The Fight Against the Right Deviation in the PCP. Inprecor. N 29 1929. p. 647.

struggle against the "right deviation" continued in the following years, to be coupled with the struggle for Arabisation.

The perceived threat to the Party leadership came from another direction. A small element in the Party continued to echo the "heretical" views of the 1922 opposition to the existence of a Jewish commmunist party and pointed to the irrationality of the presence in Palestine of anti-Zionist Jews. Their policy advocated concentrating Party activity on the Arab population only and of maintaining contact with the more extreme wing of the Arab national movement.[9] Their policy also clashed with that of the Party leadership concerning activity within the Yishuv which they regarded as a homogeneous whole with the Jewish workers too closely identified with the Zionist colonisation project.

In a statement delivered to the Seventh Arab Congress meeting in June 1928, this opposition group under the name of the "Jewish Workers Committee" denounced Zionism as the enemy of the Arab people and declared that the "Arab people living in Palestine are the only ones with a right to it".[10] As far as the Jewish inhabitants were concerned, the statement declared that "the home of the Jew is the place he happens to be born in", and it was his duty to struggle for his rights in his country of origin. In Palestine, the duty of Palestinian Jews was declared to be to struggle with the Arabs for their common liberation and to extend support for the Arab national independence movement. The leadership of the PCP saw this as a deviation from the official Party line, and was quick to send a rebutal to the Arabic press denying that the statement of the Workers' Committee embodied the communist position, or that the group was in any way associated with the Party.[11]

Yet despite the repeated demands of the ECCI, the leadership of the Party which had remained unchanged from 1924 to 1930 continued

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9. Letter of A. Karmi in Falastin, 26 March 1929. See also F.O.371/14500/3997. Police Report on Communist Activity, June 1930. p. 14 where it was reported that this group had been expelled from the Party in 1928.
10. Statement sent to the Seventh Palestine Congress by the Jewish Workers Committee (signed by 53 members). Al Jamia Al Arabiya, 25 June 1928.
11. Statement of PCP on Seventh Palestine Congress, 6 July 1928. Al Jamia Al Arabiya, 9 July 1928.

to pay little more than lip service to the practical application of Arabisation. An enlarged Plenum of the CC which convened in December 1928 to discuss the resolutions of the Sixth Comintern Congress, was marked by the complete absence of any reference to Arabisation.[12] Not only did the leadership of the Party remain one hundred per cent Jewish, but its doctrine was likewise unchanged. However both conditions in Palestine and the actual composition of the Party itself had begun to show signs of change. After a relative period of quiet, the Arab national movement towards the end of the twenties became restive and showed signs of the advent of a more agressive policy vis-a-vis both the Zionists and the British. This quelled the voices within the Party which had continued to ignore the Comintern's prognostications. At the same time, the presence of Arabs in the Party was beginning to make itself felt. Although Arab members constituted a small minority, their presence was nevertheless a novel development and opened up vistas of new activity in the country.

The first direct appeal of the Party to the Arab population, took the form of a leaflet issued on the first of May 1921 and signed The Libertarian Party of Palestine.[13] The Party called on Arab labourers not to work on that day and to demonstrate in the streets under the banner of the red flag. After a general description of the international labour movement, it called on the Arab labourers to unite with Jewish workers who, it explained had not come to Palestine to oppress the Arabs but to struggle jointly with them against Arab and Jewish capitalists. The leaflet ended with a declaration that the Jewish workers were "the soldiers of the revolution" and raised the slogan of "Soviet Palestine". There was no mention of the Balfour Declaration or of the struggle against Zionism, and the overwhelming emphasis was on class conflict and the class struggle.

The Party continued to address itself to the Arabs on various occasions, but its propaganda effort was small and infrequent, and

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12. The Third Conference of the PCP, 1-2 December 1928. Inprecor. N. 1 1929. p. 15.
13. Al Hizb Al Ibahi. Arabic leaflet addressed, To All Groups of Workers in Palestine, under the general heading, Workers of the World Unite. The leaflet was reproduced in full in Al Nafir, 14 May 1921.

in general its leaflets were badly written and produced,[14] indicating the absence of Arabs from its ranks.

After 1924, increased interest was shown in the Arab field, and the Party made some gestures towards fulfilling the ECCI's instructions to win over the Arabs and leave the Jewish ghetto. The breakthrough came with the struggle in Affula between the Arab tenants of land sold by a wealthy Arab family to the Jewish National Fund, and the new Jewish owners who attempted to take possession of the land and evict the Arab peasants. In the affray that resulted, one Arab peasant was killed and several Arabs and Jews were injured. The PCP rapidly issued a statement condemning the action of the Zionists in attempting to evict the Arab peasants from their land.[15] It attacked the Jewish bourgeoisie for "dipping its hand in the blood of innocent Arab and Jewish workers", and warned the latter that they were being used as cannon fodder to further the aims of Jewish capitalism. The Party stated its determination to disrupt the occupation of the land at Affula and in addition to its agitation on behalf of the Arab peasants, dispatched its members to support them in resisting the Jewish settlers as a gesture of both support and defiance.[16]

This action served to further estrange the Party from the Jewish community while bringing it to the attention of the Arab national movement.[17] Previously the Arab press had reported various activities of the Party and reproduced its leaflets, albeit in an effort to discredit it and to bring it to the attention of the authorities.[18] The action at Affula delivered the Party's propaganda to a wider audience that its meagre resources allowed and presented it to the Arabs in a positive light. Initial contact was made with some of the leaders of the Affula dispossessed tribes[19] but although

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14. Police Report on Commmunist Activity, 1927. op. cit. p. 19.
15. A call from the PCP on the Affula Incident. Hebrew leaflet of CC/PCP 29 November 1924.
16. Offenberg, op. cit. p. 338.
17. The Party's leaflet on the incident was published in full in Al Nafir, 9 December 1924.
18. e.g. Falastin, 28 March 1924 published an article on Auerbach's speech at the Comintern Congress and described the activity of the PCP.
19. Interview with J. Berger-Barzaki, Tel Aviv, 2 January 1974. See also Police Report on Communist Activity, 1925. op. cit. pp. 14-17.

the Party continued to agitate for armed resistance against Zionist land acquisition, it was not able to exploit its initial contacts nor reap any practical long term benefits from its involvement in the affair.

The real success of the Party in the Arab field during 1924 arose from its contact with Elliya Zakka, the owner of a well established Haifa journal, Al Nafir, who conducted a financial arrangement with the Party to produce a weekly journal putting forward the general line of the communists and performing an educational-cum-agitational role.[20] The first issue of this journal "Haifa"[21] was published in October 1924 and publication continued somewhat irregularly until the end of 1925. The journal, well written and produced, dealt with general political topics, and concentrated on the affairs of the labour movement and trade union organisation. It contained translations from Russian and articles on the international labour movement, as well as analysis of the political situation in the neighbouring Arab countries. It adopted a militantly anti-British line and also attacked the leadership of the Arab national movement, but largely ignored the Zionist movement. Its main emphasis was on the community of interests between Arab and Jewish workers[22] which led it to come out against the attempts made by some Arab workers to establish independent Arab trade unions.

In addition to this legal journal, various attempts were made by local Party committees to distribute propaganda sheets[23] but none of these proved to have any staying power. The Party did not bring out a regular printed Arabic organ until 1929, by which time it had gained sufficient Arab cadres and was capable of sustaining a regular Arabic mouthpiece. The first issue of Ella Al Ammam[24] attempted to introduce the Party to the Arab public by giving an account of its activities and

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20. Police Report on Communist Activity, 1925, Ibid. p. 43.
21. Haifa, subtitle Majalat al Ummal (the Workers' Journal). From its Seventh issue, 15 January 1925, subtitle was changed to Workers' and Peasants' Journal.
22. Haifa, N 18. 21 May 1925. pp. 144-145.
23. e.g. Shabiba (Youth) issued by the Jaffa local committee, 15 April 1924, and Al Munabeh (The Clarion) also issued by the Jaffa local Committee in 1926.
24. Ella Al Ammam (Forward) Organ of CC/PCP, Section of the Comintern. The first issue was in March 1929. This was a seventeen page number, with the hammer and sickle prominent on the front cover above the Party's name.

principles and explaining its links with the international communist movement. It called on Arab workers to unite with their Jewish counterparts and warned them of the attempts made by the British and the Arab feudal leaders to divert their attention against the Jews. The journal did not introduce any changes in the propaganda line of the Party and continued to place the emphasis on the class rather than on the national independence struggle.

The Party's efforts in the direction of the Arab population were slowly beginning to bear fruit. On the occasion of May 1st 1925, Haifa journal called a general meeting to celebrate the day[25] while on May 1st 1926, Arab workers joined their Jewish comrades in Haifa in coming out on strike.[26] Contact was established with an Arab labour organisation, the Palestine Arab Workers Society in Haifa in 1925,[27] and the Party succeeded in organising a number of Arab workers in Jerusalem and Haifa.[28] The most significant success of the Party in the trade union field was the organisation of the Ihud (Unity) Movement conference in December 1926[29] which was attended by sixteen Arab delegates out of a total of eighty-five, and led by two prominent Arab communists, Rafik Jabbour[30] and Abdul Ghani al Karmi.[31] A pamphlet issued soon after the conference declared that its aim was

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25. Haifa. N. 15. 30 April, 1925.
26. Falastin, 7 May 1926.
27. Falastin, 4 June 1926. See also Police Report on Communist Activity, 1927. op. cit. p. 44.
28. Falastin, 15 November 1926, 13 April 1928, 16 May 1929. See also Police Report on Communist Activity, 1925, op. cit. p. 16.
29. Police Report on Communist Activity, 1927, op. cit. pp. 32-33. See also Inprecor, N. 3 1927.
30. Rafik Jabbour (1882-1927) a Journalist of Lebanese origin who was a member of the CC of the Egyptian Communist Party and editor of its Journal Al Hissab. He was arrested in June 1925 and sentenced to six months imprisonment and deportation. After a brief stay in Lebanon, he arrived in Jaffa in 1926 and secured employment as a journalist with Falastin. Prior to his death, he had been served with a deportation order on account of his communist activity.
31. Abdul Ghani al Karmi (1906-1974), the son of an established family in Tulkarem, he was one of the earliest members of the Party and was sent to Moscow in 1927 for a short course of instruction. He dissociated himself from the Party on his arrival back in Palestine in the same year, and in his activity as a journalist wrote various articles attacking it. He later became a confident of Kind Abdullah of Jordan, and was appointed Jordanian Ambassador in Spain.

to lay the foundations of a truly international labour movement in the country, uniting Arab and Jewish workers.[32] Here again however, the Party was not able to sustain the break-through, and the Unity Movement suffered a natural death soon after.

Contacts with the Arab national movement were established on the recommendation of the ECCI. Initiating with a message of support delivered to the Arab Executive expressing the Party's solidarity with the victims of an anti-Balfour visit demonstration in Damascus,[33] contact was established with a group of extremist Arab nationalists centred round the figure of Hamid Husseini.[34] Relations were also set up with one of the established leaders of the national movement Jamal Husseini,[35] while in the 1927 election to the Jerusalem municipality, the Party issued a statement calling on the Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem not to cast their votes for the Nashashibi faction.[36]

The relations of the Party with the leadership of the Arab national movement came to an abrupt end in 1928[37] as a natural result of the new Comintern policy decided in its Sixth Congress. Contact however was maintained with Hamdi Husseini and his group. The Party saw him as the representative of a left bloc within the Arab national movement, and as such connected him with the League Against Imperialism which was active in Berlin. Unable to attend the Frankfurt Congress of the League as a result of the Egyptian Government's refusal to grant him a visa[38] H. Husseini was elected an honorary member of the praesidium

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32. Statement to All Workers in Palestine. Arabic Pamphlet printed in Jaffa by the Unity Club (n.d.)
33. The Party also sent a small financial donation, Falastin, 8 May 1925.
34. Interviews with J. Berger-Barzalai, Tel Aviv, 2 January 1974, and with Hamdi Husseini, Gaza, 7 September 1975. Hamdi Husseini, from Gaza, was a teacher and journalist active in Jaffa. He headed a small group of "left nationalists" within the Istiklal Movement, and played a prominent role in the Seventh Arab Congress in opposition to the moderate Arab leadership. During the August 1929 events he came out in opposition to Arab attacks on Jews, and was imprisoned by the British on charges of incitation.
35. Offenberg, op. cit. p. 358.
36. Al Jamia Al Arabiya, 7 April 1927.
37. On the Occasion of the Seventh Arab Congress. Arabic Leaflet of CC/PCP, June 1928. See also Letter of PCP to Davar, 4 November 1929, CZA S25/3268.
38. Telegram of H. Husseini to Frankfurt Congress of League Against Imperialism. Falastin, 25 July 1929.

of the Congress. However, Palestine's voice was not absent from the gathering. In addition to a PCP delegate, Dr. Khalil Budeiri, a Palestinian Arab in sympathy with the Party, addressed the Congress and roundly condemned both Zionism and British Imperialism.[39] H. Husseini was however able to attend a meeting of the League in Cologne held later in 1929[40] and from there travelled to Moscow with the Secretary of the PCP, where he met Stalin.[41] The connection of the Party with Hamdi Husseini was to last, with few minor lapses, until 1948 and the partition of the country.

The actual gain in terms of Arab cadres which the PCP achieved in this period is hard to estimate. The Party claimed its first Arab member in 1924,[42] and as early as January 1925, one of its leaders Berger-Barzalai, impressed on the Party the necessity of sending Arab students to Moscow's University of Toilers of the East[43] an indication that the PCP had already secured the allegiance of a number of Arabs.

The first such Arab member to travel to Moscow was Najati Sidki al-Alaymini[44] one of the first Arabs to join the Party.[45] Between 1925 and 1930, twelve Arabs travelled to Moscow, most of them for short stays of just under a year, where they studied conspiratorial methods and general political topics. A number of them deserted the Party soon after their return,[46] while a few decided to stay on in the

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39. Al Ahrar, 16 and 24 August 1929.
40. Inprecor, N 26. November 1929. p. 1330.
41. Interview with Hamdi Husseini, Gaza, 7th September 1975.
42. Interview with Yussuf Yazbak, Beirut, 26 October 1974. See also Police Report on Communist Activity, 1925, op. cit. p. 9.
43. Ibid. p. 11.
44. Najati Sidki was a clerk in the Post Office in Jerusalem. He travelled to Moscow in 1925/6 and returned in 1929. He was appointed to the CC in 1930 on the direct intervention of the ECCI but was arrested a couple of months after his appointment. After serving two years in jail, he left for Syria and later participated in the Spanish Civil War. He remained active in the Syrian Communist Party till the outbreak of World War Two, whereupon he severed his connections with communism and was allowed to return to Palestine where he became a radio journalist.
45. Interviews with J. Berger-Barzalai, Tel-Aviv, 2 January 1974, and with Najati Sidki, Beirut, 15 October 1973. See also letter of Ahmad Sidki, Najati's brother, Falastin, 23 May 1931.
46. Ahmad Sidki and Abdul Ghani al Karmi.

Soviet Union. Among the rest however, were members who were to become prominent as leaders of the Party in the next two decades[47] and one who was to die in Spain fighting for the Republic.[48] Police reports reflected this constant trend of growth. While in 1927 only four names of active communists were listed, a report in 1929 listed the names of nineteen Arab communists[49] while another in 1930 listed twenty-six.[50] The majority of the new recruits came from the small Arab working class, although there was also a fair number of educated members, mostly journalists. For some, especially the educated members, the motive for joining the Party was undoubtedly the anti-imperialist struggle,[51] but for the majority the attraction could only have been the day-to-day economic struggle, drawn by the Party's slogan such as the eight-hour day, better conditions of work, equal pay with Jewish workers and many other demands.

As far as the Comintern was concerned the Party's record was not impressive. In a review of the first four years of the Party's existence the Comintern recorded that its main activity had been concentrated in the Jewish labour movement, while Arab activities consisted of an intervention in the Jerusalem Municipal election and the issuing of a legal Arab journal.[52] This was a grossly unfair resume of the PCP's struggles considering the difficulties it encountered in its work, both as an underground party and as a Jewish party attempting to penetrate a hostile and generally backward environment. The Comintern however, desired to set up an influential section in Palestine, and this by definition had to be an Arab party. It hoped to employ the Jewish communist grouping in the country to perform this task. Yet in the six years of the Party's existence, it had managed to lay the groundwork by recruiting an Arab cadre, training it and selecting Arab members for

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47. Najati Sidki, Mahmoud Moghrabi, Radwan al Hilou, Taher Moghrabi.
48. Ali Abdul Khalek al Tuwaini, from al Jib near Jerusalem.
49. Report of Political Executive of Zionist Organisation on Communism in Palestine, 31 October 1929. CZA S 25/7807.
50. Police Report on Communist Activity 1930. op. cit. pp. 30-31.
51. Interviews with Najati Sidki, Beirut, 12 March 1974, and with Radwan al Hilou, Jericho, 12 January 1974.
52. The Comintern Between the Fifth and the Sixth World Congresses, 1924-1928. (London, 1928). pp. 417-418.

further instruction in Moscow, and generally bringing itself to the attention of the Arab population. At the same time, the Party had attempted, by utilising the Affula incident and similar cases, to arouse the peasants, not only against the Jewish settlers, but also against their feudal landlords and the British. In all this the PCP was handicapped by the fact that it had to employ Jewish cadres who were hardly suited for such a task. Its difficulties which arose from conditions beyond its control were to continue to hamper its activity even after Arabisation. Jewish members continued to be in the majority and had to be relied upon to work among the Arab population. It is difficult to envisage how the consequent Arabisation could have been attempted without the existence of the Arab cadre which the Jewish leadership of the twenties had itself enlisted and trained.

The PCP's Characterisation of the August 1929 Events in Palestine

The confusion which characterised the political line of the PCP on the outbreak of disturbances in Palestine in August 1929 can be traced back directly to the changes introduced in the international communist movement at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928. The Party was not unanimous in its acceptance of the new orthodoxy of an impending stage of heightened class struggle in Europe, and revolutionary outbreaks in the colonies. In December 1928, the ECCI addressed itself to the PCP calling on it to wage a struggle against all Arab nationalist groups, especially the clerical feudal reactionary leadership of the Arab national movement.[53] It also called upon it to repudiate the doctrine of Yishuvism, and other theories of the positive aspects of Jewish immigration into the country. The ECCI put forward a new demand for Arabisation which was backed up by a forecast of intense radicalisation of the Arab masses, and by the necessity of relying on them in the struggle for the establishment of a Workers' and Peasants' Government in Palestine.

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53. The Fight Against the Right Deviation. Inprecor. N 29. 1929. p. 647. See also Forois, 19 May 1929, p. 13, quoted in Hen-Tov (Worcester) op. cit. pp. 10-11.

Opposition to the new line of the Comintern and its application to Palestine was strong. A group which came to be known as the "right deviationists"[54] rejected the validity of the "third period" and continued to affirm that while there was indeed a radicalisation in Palestine, this should not be overestimated as the growth of the revolutionary movement had not yet reached the stage of an offensive waged by the masses against their enemies.[55] The "rightists" held to their demand for a democratic republic and estimated that the Party was not strong enough to embark on a revolutionary path faced as it was with strong government repression and its weak position among the Arab population. The differences within the Party were multiplied by the recent arrival from Moscow of some of the Arab students previously dispatched, who began to question what they regarded as the "Jewish hegemony".[56] They demanded that the "owners of Palestine"[57] who understood its people better than the Jews, should have first say in the Party, and be allowed, to at least partake in the Party's decisions and administration. The Comintern decided to send an emissary to Palestine to investigate the Party's affairs and see how far it had travelled along the path of Arabisation.[58]

The outbreak of disturbances at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem in October 1928, proved to be a dress rehearsal for the much bloodier events a year later. The Party characterised the events as a "little pogrom",[59] and accused the British Government of arousing national conflicts in Palestine between the Arab and Jewish communities in order to maintain its domination of the country. The Party's response to this "pogrom" was a call for unity between Arab and Jewish workers, and it appealed to both sides not to let themselves be provoked by their respective leaders, and to reject calls for national incitement. The Party did not profess to see any revolutionary

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54. The Fight Against the Right Deviation. loc. cit.
55. The Political Situation in Palestine. Inprecor. N 50. 1929. p. 1057.
56. Police Report on Commmnist Activity, 1930. op. cit. p. 16.
57. Letter of A. Karmi in Falastin, 26 March 1929.
58. J. Berger-Barzalai. Jerusalem, August 1929. Keshet. N 29. 1965. p. 125.
59. Imperialist Provocation in Palestine. Inprecor. N 73. 1928. p. 1330.

character in the events, nor did it regard them as a sign of the growing radicalisation of the Arab masses. The competent Comintern authorities did not fault this analysis, an act which was to lead the Party to characterise the August 1929 events in the same way, in the evident belief that it had full Comintern approval.

The outbreak of the August disturbances came as a surprise to the leadership of the PCP. The Party had issued a leaflet on the eve of the first bloody outbreaks which was pacifistic in tone.[60] A suggestion to bring out another statement after the development of the disturbances was turned down by the Secretariat,[61] reflecting the uncertainty and confusion which pervaded it, and the absence of any meaningful analysis of the deep-seated causes of the conflict. The CC's leaflet characterised the troubles as an imperialist provocation; Britain, afraid of the unity of Arab and Jewish workers, was instigating racial hatred to divide the two communities, and in this it was aided by the Zionist leaders and the Arab effendis. The leaflet portrayed the struggle taking place as one between brothers and called on Arab and Jewish workers to cease fighting each other, and to direct their common effort against British rule and the Zionist and Arab leaders.

The first authoritative description written by a member of the Party's Secretariat gave a contradictory appraisal of the events.[62] They were characterised as both a "pogrom" and a "general Arab uprising". Initially the uprising was seen to have taken an "anti-Jewish form", as a result of Moslem clerical instigation. The Supreme Moslem Council had "inflamed the fanatic hatred of the Moslems against the Jewish unbelievers", and the Government saw to it that the flames of national hatred would keep blazing, by turning a blind eye and even supporting the rumours spread by the "frantic masses of Mohammaden peasants and Bedouins under the leadership of obscurantist clericals, feudal chiefs, and bourgeois elements" that the Government was in support of the massacre of Jews. The report

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60. Do not change the wailing wall to a wall of hatred between you. Hebrew leaflet of CC/PCP. 19 August 1929.
61. Berger-Barzalai. op. cit. p. 129.
62. The Blood Bath in the Holy Land. (Berger Barzalai.) Inprecor N 50. 1929. p. 1058.

detailed the massacres of Jews in Hebron and other places and the brutal destruction of settlements. At the same time, Berger pointed out that at a certain stage, the movement began to get out of the hands of its instigators, a fact attested by the attacks on British Government buildings in the purely Arab town. The reasons which Berger presented for this "Government inspired pogrom" were startlingly out of touch with reality. They served however to cover up the lack of any serious analysis. The Government, he stated, was "trying at any price to destroy the Arab-Jewish rapprochment observable in the recent years".[63] In the face of this, the Party again raised the slogans of fraternisation of Arabs and Jews and daubed the walls of Jerusalem with slogans calling on the workers to turn again t the common enemy, instead of murdering one another.

On a more practical level, the Party acted in accordance with the Comintern's emissary who, by an unhappy coincidence arrived in Palestine a few days prior to the outbreak of the uprising.[64] The attacks on the Jewish quarter in Jerusalem, posed the Party with a difficult question. If the movement engulfing the country was a pogrom, then it was the duty of the PCP to call on its members to defend the threatened Jewish quarters. In the event this was the decision of the Party Secretariat, and it was one with which the Comintern's emissary concurred.[65] The Secretariat's decision was that "whereas there is a danger of a pogrom and massacres, it is the duty of members of the PCP and the Fraktzia, to join the Hagana in those quarters which are in danger".[66] This decision was promptly implemented in Jerusalem. Moreover, members of the Party met with Hagana leaders, informing them of the Party's decision, and putting at their disposal the Party's small arms cache. In retrospect this was a natural position for the Party to take. It followed logically from its characterisation of the nature of the events and from its isolation from the Arab masses. Taking into consideration the

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63. The Blood Bath in the Holy Land. loc. cit.
64. Berger-Barzalai, op. cit. p. 125. The emissary was Bohumil Smeral, a Czech member of the ECCI and a prominent ex social democratic leader and member of the Austrian Hungarian Parliament. For his activity before joining the Czech communist party, see T. Vaughan Thomas, B. Smeral and the Czech question, 1904-1914. Journal of Contemporary History N 2. 3 July 1976.
65. Berger-Barzalai, op. cit. p. 131.
66. Ibid.

Party's weakness and its inability to put itself at the head of the uprising, its role was reduced to that of spectator issuing calls for the avoidance of bloodshed, and putting the blame on an outside party: the British authorities. This position which lacked any real attempt to place events in their wider political context, where it was possible to regard the racial massacres as a marginal aspect of a legitimate national anti-imperialist uprising, was soon to give way to discussion within the Party on the validity of such a characterisation.[67]

Two documents, both issued by the CC towards the end of September 1929, a month after the uprising, reflect the growing confusion within Party ranks, and an attempt to grapple with the underlying causes of the upheaval. "The Revolt in Palestine"[68] provided an explanation of the background to the uprising and its general causes. The article started with the British occupation of Palestine, and its fostering of the Jewish national home, and described the Jewish community in the country as "the most advanced outpost of British imperialism in the Arabian countries",[69] and one which served to protect the interests of imperialism. It portrayed Britain as engaged in a game of playing the national community off against the other, with the connivance of the traitorous Arab and Jewish leaders. It went on to list the justified grievances of the Arab peasant masses and their hatred towards the Jewish settlers, "the intruders who took away not only the money and work of the poor peasants, but even what was dearest to them of anything, their small holdings". The resultant agrarian unrest radicalised and revolutionised the masses, who were actually on the brink of an anti-imperialist revolt against the British. Here, the Party's communique felt impelled to provide an explanation for the "pogromist" aspects of the uprising and rather than look for the cause within the framework of Palestinian conditions, layed the blame on the reformist leaders and the imperialist government who spread the rumours of "al Doola maana",[70] and converted the impending revolution into a "Jihad",

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67. Berger-Barzalai, op. cit. p. 135.
68. The Revolt in Palestine: Communique of CC/PCP. Inprecor N 54 & 56. 1929.
69. Ibid. p. 1162.
70. Ibid. p. 1163 (The Government is with us).

where "the Jews had to be killed because they were Jews". Listing the horrific excesses of the uprising, the murders and mutilations of old men, women and children, the statement went on to describe the attackers: "the Bedouins singing in religious ecstacy while they slit abdomens, and struck off the heads of little children".[71] Yet despite this, the Party was able to see the beginnings of the transformation of the movement "into a pan-Arab insurrectionary one, with aims far exceeding the massacres of the Jews",[72] and one which "almost" turned into an anti-imperialist rising. The combined force of the reformist Arab leaders, the Zionist "counter-pogromists" and British military intervention thwarted this. The Party excused its inactivity during the whole affray by its "infancy and (it was) much harassed by constant persecution on the part of the British Government apparatus and the Zionist and Arab bourgeoisie",[73] and by its weakness in relation to both Arab and Jewish workers. Although it continued to proclaim the necessity for national peace and class war, it admitted, in so many words, that its calls went unheeded, and its stand remained completely irrelevant to the actual state of affairs.

The second statement of the Party, "The Bloody War in Palestine and the Working Class" is a lengthy pamphlet issued in late September 1929.[74] It set out to answer the question "What Happened?" and provided a detailed answer covering all aspects of the uprising and the position of the Jewish community in the country, but remained within the general framework of the previous communique. Although this pamphlet did not introduce any startling new changes to the Party's previous analysis, it did provide a comprehensive platform embodying the PCP's political standpoint. It proclaimed the necessity of judging the uprising from a class point of view, relating it to the revolutionary war against imperialism, and professed to see the roots of the events in the agrarian situation. The Zionists had destroyed peasant land ownership and increased the poverty of the Bedouins.[75] The reasons

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71. The Revolt in Palestine: Communique of CC/PCP. Inprecor N 54 & 56. 1929.
72. Ibid. p. 1220.
73. Ibid. p. 1221.
74. Pamphlet issued by CC/PCP. The Bloody War in Palestine and the Working Class in Appendix to Political Report on Communist Activity 1930.
75. Ibid. p. 2.

for the agrarian unrest were directly linked to this Zionist policy of expropriating land and expelling the peasants.[76] The feudal Arab leaders and the Government, both conscious of the impending revolutionary agrarian outburst, resolved to channel it into an anti-Jewish movement before it assumed an inevitably anti-imperialist character.[77] As partners, the Zionist leaders were also held accountable for this state of affairs, for through their land policy they had "converted the Jewish masses as an object of prey for the bitterness of the peasants" and placed the Jewish community in the front line trenches of imperialism in Palestine.

The uprising had proceeded on the lines of "a pogrom slaughtering of Jews" while Government property was not touched and the British police were not attacked.[78] But "within the first twenty-four hours a mass movement commenced to develop which over-reached the control of the Government",[79] and the masses began their attacks on the Government itself. This characterisation of the speedy transformation of the movement, absent from the Party's earlier statement, was not followed up. The pamphlet moved on to lay the blame at the door of the Zionists for the national division which existed in the workers' movement, and which was the main reason for the inability of the working class to put itself at the head of the peasant masses and convert the movement into a struggle against British imperialism.[80] The Zionist movement was labelled as historically responsible for the pogroms which were "a direct result of the Balfour Declaration".[81] In the absence of the Zionist movement and the national home, the expropriation of peasants, and support for the moderate and pro-imperialist Arab faction, the Party was confident that there would have been no religious national hatred in the country. Yet it affirmed that pogroms would continue to take place "until the British imperialists are driven out of the country". The Party insisted

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76. Pamphlet issued by CC/PCP. The Bloody War in Palestine and the Working Class in Appendix to Political Report on Communist Activity 1930. p. 3.
77. Ibid. p. 4.
78. Ibid. p. 6.
79. Ibid. p. 7.
80. Ibid. p. 11.
81. Ibid. p. 13.

on the correctness of its line of joining neither the Zionists nor the Arabs,[82] and the mobilisation of its members "in the defence of the workers' quarters, and the poor shopkeepers against the attacks of the hooligans".[83] It denied any support to the Zionist self-defence effort, claiming that it never abided by their orders, accepted their authority, nor consented to the slogan of national unity. Stating its preference for "the new, pogromless revolution"[84] the Party's analysis ended by calling on Jewish workers to free themselves from the control of the Zionist organisation and on the Arab masses to rid themselves of the rich Arab landlords and sheiks.

This initial reaction of the PCP to the August uprising contained within it a dual approach. The main emphasis was laid on its "pogromist" aspects and the horrific details of the actual massacres. At the same time, in providing the historical background for the outbreak, the Party laid the blame at the door of the Zionist movement which by its very presence and activity had called forth this attack on the Jewish community, thus deflecting the movement from its legitimate target, the British authorities. To understand the Party's aversion to the Arab attacks on the Jewish community which, according to the Party's own analysis, were inevitable given the nature and aim of the Zionist presence in the country, it must be remembered that the Party was a Jewish grouping holding tenaciously to the necessity of differentiating between the Zionist movement and the Jewish community in Palestine, and completely alien to the Arab milieu. Looking at the Arab community from the outside, the Party leadership could not perceive that the religious fanaticism of the Arab masses was simply an expression of their opposition to the foreigners who were usurping their lands, within the familiar reference points of their own value system, and primitive political awareness. The slaughter and pogroms were an inescapable reality in any social upheaval, while the Party's call for a "pogromless revolution" was a

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82. Pamphlet issued by CC/PCP. The Bloody War in Palestine and the Working Class in Appendix to Political Report on Communist Activity 1930, p. 20.
83. Ibid. pp. 21-22.
84. Ibid. p. 29.

hankering after a "pure revolution" the likes of which have never ever taken place.

Yet the Party had second thoughts about its position even before it received the Comintern's own version of events. Within the leadership of the Party a discussion had already started[85] and voices were raised denying that the movement of the Arab masses had no anti-imperialist significance. In an enlarged meeting of the CC held in October 1929, prior to the receipt of a letter from the ECCI, but at a time when the Party leadership had realised the existence of an entirely different and opposed interpretation, the first voices of self-criticism were beginning to make themselves heard.[86] It was readily admitted at the meeting that the upheaval had a national dimension, and the Haifa local committee of the Party, which had refused to see in the events anything but a pogrom pure and simple, was censured and reproached for "purposely overlooking all social motives of the movement".[87] However the meeting upheld the previous analysis of the Party and reiterated that the movement had been deflected into a pogrom, expressing full support for, and confidence in, the leadership of the Party.

The Comintern's Characterisation of The August 1929 Events as a Revolutionary Uprising

The different interpretations of events held by the PCP on the one hand, and the rest of the international communist movement on the other, became clear almost immediately following the suppression of the uprising. The Party received a communication from one of its leaders who at the time was in Moscow, hinting that the Comintern evaluated the events differently from the Party Secretariat, preferring to see in them an anti-imperialist revolt.[88] The Party leadership must have already had an intimation of the Comintern's position, as the official organisation's mouthpiece, Inprecor, had earlier stated that "the Arab

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85. Berger-Barzalai, op. cit. p. 135.
86. The PCP and the Arab Revolt. Inprecor. N 61. 1929. p. 1321.
87. Ibid.
88. Berger-Barzalai. op. cit. p. 135.

national revolutionary movement has taken on the form of an insurrection",[89] and one which it forecast would reverberate throughout the Arab world. The first official statement by a Comintern controlled organisation, was issued by the League Against Imperialism and Colonialism early in September.[90] It portrayed the struggle as one "between the Arab inhabitants, and the immigrant Zionist population artificially imported" into the country, and extended its support to what it termed a "revolt against the economic and political serfdom" which British imperialism had enforced. The manifesto explained that the Arab masses had risen against the Zionist movement which "they rightly regarded...as the main instrument of British imperialist exploitation" in the country, but warned them against succumbing to imperialist intrigue and embarking on the road of religious and racial strife.

Soon after the uprising, the ECCI held a special session to discuss the events and to hear Smeral's report.[91] The meeting came to the decision that the PCP had made a mistake in its analysis of the events, and that the uprising had to be seen in the broad historical context; thus what was significant was not the pogroms, but the breadth of the movement, and its roots in the agrarian situation. It was decided to communicate to the PCP the text of the ECCI resolution faulting its analysis and pointing out its mistakes. This "Resolution of the Political Secretariat of the ECCI on the Insurgent Movement in Arabistan" dated 16 October 1929, was only made public early in 1930.[92]

The ECCI resolution flatly denied that the events of August 1929 seen as a complete whole, constituted a pogrom. These events were "a national liberation and anti-imperialist movement of all Arabians.... by social composition chiefly a peasant movement".[93] The ECCI admitted that the movement had begun as an attempt by Arab reactionaries to start a pogrom in response to Zionist provocations, but this was soon transformed into a revolution aimed at overthrowing

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89. The Bloody Events in Palestine. Inprecor No 47. 1929. p. 991.
90. Against British Imperialism in Palestine: Manifesto of the League Against Imperialism. Inprecor N. 47. 1929. pp. 991-2.
91. Berger-Barzalai. loc. cit.
92. The resolution was published in Inprecor N. 6. February 1930. pp. 104-6. It was also published in Arabic in abridged form in Ella Al Ammam, N. 7. May 1930.
93. Ibid. p. 104.

imperialism, and the initiation of an agrarian revolution. The Comintern's emphasis was on the movement as a peasant uprising, and it was regarded as the natural outcome of the Zionist policy of disposing Arab peasants of their lands.[94] The attacks on Jewish settlements were the response of the land-hungry peasants to their direct and visible dispossessors, thus the emnity of the Arab peasants to the Zionist settlers was not of a racial character, nor was it the result of outside instigation, but constituted a clear class antagonism. It followed from this characterisation that the PCP's analysis of the events was grossly mistaken and ignored the fundamental causes of the resultant Arab actions in attacking and burning down Jewish settlements during the uprising.

The fundamental cause of the mistaken analysis by the PCP leadership was seen to be "the predominance of Jews"[95] in the Party, and the lack of contact with the Arab masses. Thus the leadership was accused of having been "caught unawares" by the outbreak of the uprising, precisely because it had ignored the repeated demands of the ECCI to Arabise the Party. Had the Party taken "a bold and determined course to Arabise itself from top to bottom", it would not have been so totally deprived of Arab cadres, especially among the peasantry. One of the cardinal mistakes it had committed was that it had "concentrated chiefly on Jewish workers" and had not exerted more serious effort to the task of penetrating the Arab workers and peasants. The leadership was further criticised for having adopted a mechanical interpretation of previous demands to Arabise and having appointed merely a few Arab members to the CC of the Party, instead of striving to set up a permanent organisation among the Arabs. Furthermore, the "rightists" in the Party leadership had held a pessimistic stand on the possibility of organising peasant and Bedouin members, thus activity in that specially important field was neglected. This disbelief in the possibility of work among the peasantry in particular, and the Arab masses in

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94. I. Shlichter. "Jewish agricultural colonisation and the Uprising of 1929 in Palestine." Agrar-Probleme Vol. 2. N. 3/4 Moscow. 1929. Translated in Dirast Arabiya N.10. 1970. p. 2.
95. ECCI resolution. op. cit. p. 106.

general, had led "to an underestimation of the revolutionary possibilities" in the country, and to the consequent unprepared state of the Party, when the uprising did take place. This lamented absence from the Arab scene had led to an inability to influence the small Arab working class in the towns, and the lack of any directing role as far as the peasant movement was concerned. Thus the Party was unable to "perceive the transformation of the religious-national conflict into a general anti-imperialist peasant revolt", and failed to advance the appropriate slogans of the agrarian revolution: the siezure of land and the formation of peasant committees.

The tasks which the ECCI resolution put forward were mainly concerned with transforming the Jewish character of the Party from one based on Jewish immigrants, to a territorial organisation representative of the indigenous Arab population. The Jewish members of the Party and the CC, it was pointed out, should fulfil the role of "aids and not of leaders"[96] in their relation to Arab communists and the Arab labour movement. Their task should be "to Arabise the Party from top to bottom", and direct its main energies towards the Arab field. The selection of Arab members for responsible positions should take place gradually and through the sharing out of responsibilities in "all organisations and all governing bodies" of the Party. At the same time, this emphasis on Arab work, the creation of peasant committees and the drawing up of an agrarian program, should not lead to an abandonment of the Jewish community. Party activity should continue among the Jewish working class and in reformist organisations like the Histadrut. Hidden opposition to Arabisation should be exposed, especially in regard to activity among the Arabs, and in the failure to accept the role of Jewish Party members as helpers and not leaders in fostering the growth of the communist movement in Palestine. Activity in the Arab field should be systematized and Party members should be appointed for different activities: for work among Arab workers, for work among the peasants and Bedouins, and for the creation of Arab cadres for trade union activity. The Arab youth, so long ignored by the Party, should be

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96. ECCI resolution. op. cit. p. 105.

organised by the Young Communist League, and this purely Jewish organisation should also undergo Arabisation.

It is clear that the aim of the ECCI's resolution was to change the direction of the Party from activity within the Jewish community, increasingly perceived to be controlled by the Zionist movement, to the up till then ignored Arab majority in the country. The ECCI foresaw that resistance to this new line would be forthcoming not only from the rank and file members of the Party, but also from the leadership and thus called for a struggle inside the Party against those who persisted in their estimation of the uprising as a pogrom, accusing them of harbouring nationalist tendencies and preferring to remain within the narrow and familiar confines of the Jewish community.[97]

The emphasis on Arabisation, though not a new feature of Comintern policy, must be seen in conjunction with the new line introduced at the Comintern's Sixth Congress in 1928. In its application to Palestine, this policy called for a fierce struggle against the national reformist Arab leaders and the scuttling of the demand for a representative assembly and a democratic republic. The Comintern raised the slogans of "Workers' and Peasants' Government", and the "All Arab Workers' and Peasants' Socialist Federation of the Arab East". This necessitated an active policy aimed at winning over the Arab masses in Palestine, increased attention to agrarian issues and a decreased interest in the fortunes of the Jewish labour movement which it was correctly perceived could not, as a sector of the smaller of the two national communities in the country, constitute the basis of the mass movement. The pogromist aspects of the uprising were not ignored,[98] but they were attributed to the peculiar conditions of the colonial revolution, and were not allowed to affect the Comintern's recognition of the overall positive character of the uprising. The immediate task set out in the October resolution was that an indigenous communist movement should be built which would be able when the next uprising came, to influence the course of events in a meaningful way.

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97. ECCI Resolution. op. cit. p. 106.
98. Report of Manuislky to the plenary session of the Executive Committee of the Young Communist International, held in Moscow November-December 1929. Inprecor. N 15. 1930. p. 268.

The ECCI's evaluation of the August events as the first stage of an impending agrarian revolution, and as constituting an "anti-imperialist peasant revolution" suffered from the fundamental weakness that no corroborative evidence could be found to substantiate it. Not only did the participants avoid any attack on the obvious manifestations of the British presence in the country, but the immediate cause of the disturbances was religious in nature, and the whole episode was devoid of any immediate social or economic dimension. The massacres of long-established Jewish communities in Safad and Hebron indicated that the outbreak was directed against Jews, irrespective of political affiliation. Moreover the events were marked by a complete absence of any agrarian upheaval in the shape of attacks on the property of absentee landlords or an attempted distribution of land.

The Party's Re-evaluation of the Events

The September 1929 Plenum of the PCP had already gone some way towards revising the Party's initial stand on the August uprising. It was then admitted that the upheaval was a national uprising, but its reactionary character was noted, as was its diversion into the direction of a pogrom.[99] The Haifa local committee of the Party which had refused to admit the existence of any positive aspect to the movement, and had insisted on the initial characterisation of the events as a pogrom, was condemned. The Plenum also criticised the CC for a number of mistakes committed in relation to the estimation of the rate of development of the radicalisation of the Arab population, and declared that work among the Arabs must be accelerated to enable the Party to play an important role in the next revolutionary uprising of which the August outbreak was only the first stage. The Party and its leadership were not prepared to go much further in their evaluation of the positive aspects of the uprising. Thus on receipt of the ECCI October Resolution, there was surprise and resentment in the Party's ranks.[100] Among the

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99. The PCP and the Arab Revolt. Inprecor. N 61. 1929. p. 1321.
100. Berger-Barazalai, op. cit. p. 136.

leadership of the Party voices were also raised against the demand for Arabisation[101] and the idea of the existence of a national peasant movement and the revolutionary characterisation of the August events were rejected.[102] The Party leadership however, did not express its views on this matter to the Comintern, and accepted the resolution as a matter of revolutionary discipline, even going so far as to expel Jewish members who opposed the new line.[103] Although opposition within the leadership was not openly manifested, it did not cease. The Jewish Party leaders who were ordered by the Comintern to gradually replace themselves by Arabs, refused to accept the correctness of the decision to Arabise, and resolved to slow down the process and obstruct its implementation.[104]

The Party's propaganda soon adjusted itself to the new interpretation of events. A new pamphlet was published[105] which attempted to reconcile the Party's earlier statements and position with the new line. It dealt with the theoretical issues raised in assessing whether the revolt was an uprising or a pogrom. While not denying the fact that atrocities were committed against Jews and Jewish settlements, the pamphlet argued that "it was not the massacres that determined the essence of the uprising", but the attacks carried out by the Arab masses against the British authorities in the purely Arab towns.[106] It condemned the pogroms which took place as reactionary and counter-revolutionary, but insisted that these were only "minor pogromist manifestations", and should not be utilised to belittle or detract from the potentially revolutionary situation. The responsibility for the Jewish blood which had been shed was placed at the doors of the Zionist movement and the Arab reactionaries, but it was the formers' activities as the spearhead of imperialism which were cited as the main cause of the outbreak and the Party's

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101. J. Degras. The Communist International. (London 1956). Vol.3. p. 177.
102. W. Laqueur. The Soviet Union and the Middle East (London 1959) p.102.
103. Berger-Barzalai, loc. cit.
104. J. Berger. The Tragedy of the Russian Revolution. (Tel Aviv. 1968) p. 81 quoted in Hen-Tov (thesis) op. cit. p. 191
105. The Arab Revolutionary Movement and the Tasks of the Proletariat. Hebrew Pamphlet quoted in Hen-Tov (thesis) op. cit. pp. 255-259.
106. Ibid. p. 257.

advice to the Jews was that continued support for the Zionist movement would necessarily lead to further pogroms and national strife.[107]

As far as the Comintern was concerned however, the PCP was not making rapid enough progress. It still refused to come out openly in support of the ECCI October resolution and clung to shreds of its previous interpretation. In a message on the occasion of the 25th issue of the Party's Yiddish organ "Forois" in November 1929,[108] the Comintern reiterated that the main weakness of the Party had been due to its failure to penetrate the Arab masses. The Jewish members of the Party were reminded that as the "avant-garde" of the Jewish workers in the country, they were assigned the "historical and central task of securing the confidence of the Arabs, and accelerating the process by which the PCP will become a mass party of the local Arab proletariat".

In December 1929, an enlarged plenum of the CC decided that the rebellion was a link in a long chain of revolutionary outbreaks in the whole of the Arab East, and owed nothing to outside instigation.[109] The roots of the uprising lay in the changing social relations taking place in Palestine: the destruction of the peasant economy, the poverty and desperation of the peasants and the Bedouins, the increased rents, taxes, usury, etc.[110] These were expected to lead to a new revolution both in Palestine and the Arab world, of which the August uprising was only the opening chapter. The Plenum criticised the Party's position during the uprising and attributed it to a number of subjective and objective conditions: the Party had been forced due to increased police repression to burrow deeper underground, and as a consequence was isolated and cut off from the masses. This led to the main blunder committed in August 1929 which resulted in the upholding of a mistaken position: the disbelief in the radicalisation of the masses, and the underestimation of the possibilities open to the Party. The "pacifistic" line held during

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107. The Arab Revolutionary Movement and the Tasks of the Proletariat. Hebrew Pamphlet quoted in Hen-Tov (thesis) op. cit. p. 259.
108. Forois, 29 November 1929. Quoted in Israeli, op. cit. pp.67-68.
109. PCP Plenum. Forois, December 1929. Reproduced in Police Report on Communist Activity 1930. op. cit. pp. 20-23.
110. PCP Plenum. Forois, December 1929. op. cit. p. 20.

August was faulted, and the leadership was criticised for failing to give a lead, by placing itself at the head of the mass movement, to the peasants and Bedouins who "wanted clear and concrete instructions on what to do with their knives, swords, rifles, revolvers, naboots".[111]

The forthcoming duties of the Party were listed and first and foremost was the struggle against defeatist tendencies within the Party which had been unleashed as a result of the uprising and the Comintern's line. Members were questioning the validity of their activity in Palestine, and some were advocating emmigration. The Plenum emphasised that the Party should continue to explain to Jewish workers the folly of the Zionist movement and call on them to join the national liberation movement of the Arab masses, but should also raise the slogan "out of the Jewish ghetto", and intensify the policy of Arabising the Party. The new aim was to broaden and develop the revolutionary movement of the Arab masses, and to identify the PCP with the aims of the movement in the eyes of the Arab workers and peasants. A practical outcome of this new line was the expulsion of Jewish Party members who refused to accept the ECCI's characterisation of the events. Thus the majority of the Haifa branch of the Party, and some members of the Tel-Aviv branch were expelled.[112] As a result, Jewish members were confused about their role in Palestine and, in disagreement with the Comintern's perception of actual events, many left the Party or deserted Palestine altogether.[113]

In the period stretching from October 1929 to the holding of the CC plenum of May 1930, the Party claimed to have increased its Arab membership, to have set up purely Arab branches, and to have elected Arab members to all its leading organisations,[114] but this was undoubtedly a gross exaggeration aimed at winning the favour of the Comintern.

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111. PCP Plenum. Forois, December 1929. op. cit. p. 22 (Naboot: wooden club).
112. Police Report on Communist Activity, op. cit. p. 15.
113. Y. Porath. Revolution and Terrorism in PCP, 1929-1939. Hamizrah Hahadash. N 34. 1968. p. 259.
114. The PCP and the Arab masses. Inprecor N 16. 1930. p. 325.

The May 1930 plenum of the CC met under the slogan of "Arabisation plus Bolshivisation". This latter term was a reference to the resolution passed at the Sixth Comintern Congress to establish the Communist Parties as professional revolutionary organisations. Its introduction by the Jewish leadership of the Party who aimed to slow down the process of Arabisation[115] while still remaining within the bounds of the Comintern line. The plenum nevertheless seems to have satisfied the Comintern that Arabisation was proceeding as required.[116] It reviewed Party activity since the last enlarged CC meeting of December 1929 and concentrated its discussions on the peasant problem which it was agreed represented the main repository of the Arab masses, the proletariat being confined to the Jewish section of the population. The correct path for linking the workers' and peasants' movement in the country was seen to lie in Arabising the Party in order to enable it to lead the growing peasant movement. As a result of this plenum, the Party adopted an agrarian program calling for the distribution of land to the peasants by confiscating it from "all large landowners, religious institutions and state domains".[117] The reason for this emphasis on the peasants was explained as being necessary to enable the Party to withstand the counter-revolutionary forces ranged against it. The proletariat, should link its forces with those of the agrarian movement, and work to convert the agrarian disturbances taking place throughout the country into an agrarian revolution.[118] The Party attempted to give concrete form to this activity and to popularise the slogan of agrarian revolution by linking up with the peasants in their struggles to stay on the land. In Wadi al Hawareth, a repeat performance of the Affula affair, the Party extended its support to the Arab peasants in their struggle in refusing to evict their land after its sale to Zionist settlers.[119] It called on Jewish workers to dissociate themselves

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115. Porath. op. cit. p. 259.
116. Arabisation plus Bolshivisation: Enlarged plenum of the PCP. Article in Pravda 22 June 1930.
117. Police Report on Communist Activity. 1930, op. cit. p. 29.
118. Police Report on Communist Activity, 1930. op. cit. p. 30.
119. The Zionist Plunder of Work has Started. We Must all Stand Together to Help the Peasants of Wadi al Hawareth. Arabic Leaflet of CC/PCP, September 1930.

from those attempting to rob the Arab peasants of their livelihood, who were creating conditions which would lead to outbreaks against the Jewish inhabitants. It exhorted them to stop the hands of those attempting to usurp the Wadi al Hawareth lands, and to join with the Arab peasants in their struggle against the "Zionist plunderers".

The PCP had come a long way from its first negative characterisation of the August uprising. At least on the official level, its course had been re-directed towards the Arab community after a decade of intense involvement in the Jewish labour movement. Its aim had become, enlarged Arab membership, and its first step was an increase in propaganda activities among the peasants,[120] calling for the siezure of lands and the taking up of arms. The volume of the Party's printed Arabic literature increased manyfold, as did the frequency of its distribution, even in the most distant villages.[121] The whole emphasis given to the events of 1929 underwent a profound change; it was now characterised as "a revolt of Arab small peasants"[122] and the responsibility of the massacres was attributed to the crimes of the Zionist leaders. Those Jewish members of the Party who opposed this reformulation were expelled as were those members who had played an active role in the Jewish defence effort in Jerusalem.[123] It was pointed out to the Jewish workers that they had a choice of two roads: joining the national emancipation movement of the Arab masses, or Zionism.[124] From all outward appearances it seemed that the process of Arabisation was taking place smoothly and in accordance with the ECCI's instructions. Despite this, opposition within the Party remained strong and the May plenum of the CC had made that abundantly clear.

The reaction of the PCP to the Comintern's decision to speed up implementation of the long called for Arabisation, and its emphasis on the revolutionary role of the Arab masses was a mixed one. On

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120. Police Report on Communist Activity, 1930. op. cit. pp. 23-27.
121. Ibid. p. 28.
122. Zionism is Bankrupt. Inprecor N 41. 1930. p. 865. See also, At The Crossroads. Hebrew Pamphlet of Communist Youth League 1930 p.8.
123. Police Report on Communist Activity 1930. op. cit. p. 27.
124. The Palestine Program of British Social Imperialism. Inprecor N. 50. 1930. p. 1041.

the one hand, there was disagreement with the Comintern's characterisation of the 1929 events, and the prescribed role of the Jewish communists; on the other hand, revolutionary discipline and loyalty to the cause of revolutionary communism impelled unquestioning loyalty and obedience. Opposition to Arabisation was based on the belief that leadership of the Party would go to the Arab members, those recent converts to the cause who were not capable of carrying out the tasks required of leading a revolutionary party and who had had no preparation to enable them to shoulder such a task. They perceived that the result would be to weaken the Party, and the whole communist movement as a result. Furthermore, to the Jewish leaders of the Party, nurtured as they had been in the socialist movement in Europe, and the Jewish labour movement in Palestine, the proper object of a communist party was the organisation of the proletariat and the marshalling of its forces into battle. In Palestine the proletariat was overwhelmingly Jewish, and organised in the left Zionist movement. To communist militants, the peasantry did not seem to be a fit subject for a communist party.

The opposition of the PCP's leadership was clearly demonstrated at the May 1930 plenum. Their reluctance to hand over command of the Party to the Arab members led them to link the slogan of Arabisation to that of Bolshivisation. This latter formulation completely excluded the Arab members of the Party as there were no "Arab bolsheviks" in the PCP. There were only recent recruits who had joined the Party for a variety of reasons, and who were completely ignorant, even if not by choice, of the principles of Marxism-Leninism, and who were totally foreign to the struggles of the labour movement. In time no doubt, these cadres would develop and some would be capable of shouldering the responsibilities of leadership, but not till then could they be entrusted with so important a task as the direction of a communist organisation. The leadership of the PCP never came out openly against Arabisation;[125] indeed it was thanks to its efforts that the small cadre of Arab members existed at all. Their misgivings over the speed of the Comintern's Arabisation policy

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125. Interviews with J. Berger-Barzalai, Tel Aviv, 2 January 1974, and Radwan al Hilou, Jericho, 12 January 1974.

were to prove well founded. The Party did not yet possess a sufficient number of tried and mature Arab cadres to carry out the required tasks. For four years after the uprising of August 1929 the leadership of the Party continued to be in the hands of the Jewish cadres, while the overall majority of the Party was to remain Jewish until the split of 1943.

The Long Process of Arabisation I: The Seventh Congress of the Palestine Communist Party. December 1930.

The ECCI, impatient with the vaccilations of the leadership of the PCP and its seeming inability to comprehend what was required of it, addressed itself to the Party in an open letter in October 1930.[126] It complained of the inactivity of the CC and the lack of success among Arab workers and peasants.[127] The CC was also criticised for its failure to transform Party organisations like the Red Aid Society, the Youth League, and the League Against Imperialism, into general member organisations by winning for them a non-party membership, primarily from among the Arab workers and educated youth, and thus changing their all Jewish character. Yet the Comintern was not in agreement with those Arab members of the Party who had previously voiced opposition to "Jewish domination" and the Arab and Jewish members who had gone as far as to declare that there was no room for Jewish workers in Palestine, and that emigration was the only alternative open to non-Zionist Jews. The open letter threatened with expulsion those who demanded that 'Palestine should remain an Arab country" and denounced them as "national deviationists". It explained that the ECCI's October resolution, while calling for the transformation of the PCP into an Arab party had not implied that work among the Jewish working class should cease. On the contrary, the Party should maintain its activity among the Jewish community; furthermore, the expulsion of Jewish workers from Palestine would greatly weaken the Party itself. What was important to realise was

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126. Decisions of 7th Congress of PCP: Appendix pp. 213-22 in G. Israeli op. cit. p. 216.
127. Forois, January 1931. translated in Falastin, 31 January 1931.

that the nature of the struggle in Palestine was one of national emancipation, and that in such a struggle, Jewish communists could in no way take on the role of leaders. Their aim should be to secure the agreement of the Arab national movement to grant the Jewish community in Palestine minority rights in the independent Palestine of the future.

The practical aspect of the Comintern's intervention was to effect a change in the leadership of the Party. The CC was for the first time appointed directly by the Comintern,[128] and was composed of three Arab and two Jewish members.[129] This was the first time in the Party's history that the Arabs had enjoyed a majority in the Party's leading body, but this in no way reflected the real balance between Arab and Jewish members in the organisation. Moreover the Arab leadership was to have an extremely short active life, for exactly three months after its appointment, the two prominent Arab members were arrested by the police.[130]

The Seventh Congress of the Party met in Jerusalem towards the end of December 1930[131] in the presence of a Comintern representative, and was presided over by an Arab member of the CC.[132] The Congress set the tone for communist activity in Palestine for the next decade and directed the Party's path firmly towards the Arab community. The deliberations of the Congress can be divided into three main areas; first, an examination and criticism of the Party's development and record in the last ten years; second, an analysis of the role of the Jewish community in Palestine, and third, the tasks the Party should perform in the Arab national liberation movement. These three areas were dealt with by way of an attempted criticism of the Party's previous understanding of the national question in the country, which the Congress had declared to be the key for the formulation of a correct policy.[133]

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128. Interview with J. Berger Barzalai, Tel-Aviv, 2 January 1974; Porath. op. cit. p. 259; Decisions of Seventh Congress. op. cit. p. 216.
129. Mahmoud Moghrabi, Najati Sidki, an Arab printing worker, J. Berger and M. Kuperman.
130. Mahmoud Moghrabi and Najati Sidki were arrested on the 2nd of February 1931. See Falastin, 3 February 1931.
131. The Times 10 January 1931, reported that it was composed of an equal number of Arab and Jewish delegates.
132. Najati Sidki, according to Falastin, 15 May, 1931.
133. The National Question at the 7th Party Congress. Inprecor N 3.1931. p. 64.

The Congress's main criticisms of Party activity since its recognition by the Comintern, stemmed from the view that it had failed to characterise the "peculiar position of the Jewish national minority in Palestine", and that this was the major source for the mistakes and errors which it had committed.[134] The Party was seen to have been successful until 1929 in its work in the Jewish labour movement, having set up workers' clubs and organisations, and having participated in various events and demonstrations.[135] It had also disseminated its propaganda in favour of a united front of Arab and Jewish workers, widely among the ranks of the Jewish proletariat. In the Arab field however, the Party had committed mistakes, and these had led directly to its weakness and estrangement from the Arab masses in 1929.[136] It had restricted its activity among the Arabs to printed propaganda and contact with the leadership of the national movement, and consequently failed to achieve the transformation to "a pure Arab party". Its very success among the Jewish workers had led to a weakening of the Party's Arab work, and to an incorrect estimate of the Jewish workers' ability to effect change in the country. Thus it had failed to take note of the radicalisation of the Arab masses and of the antagonism between the Arab national movement and imperialism. The Party also held to an incorrect equation of Jewish agricultural colonists and Arab peasants, and emphasised a false contradiction between the Zionist movement and imperialism in Palestine. This policy led to the neglect of the necessary build up of an Arab cadre for the leadership of the Party, while as far as Arab Party members were concerned, the leadership did not take sufficient interest in their progress,[137] nor in securing gainful Party work for them. The activity of the Party in the Arab field projected internationalist slogans, but these were so in form only and not in content. The failure to convince not only the Arab masses but even the Arab communists, that the Party stood at the head of the Arab national liberation movement resulted in mistrust of its

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134. The National Question at the 7th Party Congress. Inprecor N. 3. 1931. p. 64
135. Decisions of the 7th Congress. op. cit. p. 213.
136. Ibid. p. 214.
137. Ibid. p. 215.

policies among the Arabs, and failure to achieve any sizeable growth.

The Congress's decisions denied that the mistakes of the Party leadership could be blamed on the existing objective conditions, or that they were the responsibility of a few leading members, who themselves deviated from the Party's norms. It was the CC itself which was declared responsible for the failure to Arabise the Party; moreover it stood condemned for failing to put the Comintern in the picture, and for deliberately misleading it about developments within the Party. This manifestly incorrect stand vis-a-vis the national problem resulted from a "double failure": first, lack of understanding of the peasant problem in Palestine; second, failure to arrive at a correct interpretation of 'Leninist proletarian internationalism", as far as the relationship of the Jewish communists to the Arabs was concerned.

Dealing with the response of the PCP to the October 1929 ECCI resolution, the Congress laid the blame on a "right opportunist deviation": the result of Jewish national chauvinism in the Party.[138] Although the CC had struggled against these "Zionist manifestations", it had not implemented the Comintern's directive. On the contrary, it contrived to place obstacles in the way of the realisation of Arabisation, and the slogan of the May plenum, "Bolshivisation plus Arabisation" had been an attempt by the CC itself to block the process. Even after the Comintern's direct appointment of a new CC with an Arab majority, opposition persisted in the form of demands for further "explanations", and the acceptance of the Comintern's directives "in principle" and as theoretical statements only.[139] This the Congress declared, flowed from the absence of a proper understanding of the background of the national problem and "deliberately ignoring the tasks of the Jewish minority in Palestine" which itself was closely connected to the Zionist movement. It was noted on the other hand, that since the Comintern's appointment of an Arab dominated CC in October, a mere two months before the Congress, the Party had thrown off its lethargy, and was actively performing its

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138. Decisions of the 7th Congress. op. cit. p. 216.
139. Ibid. p. 217.

tasks in the Arab field, in correct understanding of the national problem, and struggling against "Jewish national chauvinism". The Congress affirmed its determination to continue along the line decreed by the Comintern and confirmed the appointment of the Arab dominated CC.[140]

The second topic dealt with by the Congress concerned the national problem and the position of the Jewish national minority in Palestine. The Party's role, it was declared, was to wage a struggle not only against the Jewish bourgeoisie, but also against the Jewish minority which was completely under the influence of Zionism, and "played the role of an imperialist agency in the suppression of the Arab national emancipation movement".[141] As far as the uprising of the Arabs against the presence of the Jewish minrity in the country was concerned, the Congress affirmed that the Party's duty was to make clear to the Jewish working class that this phenomenon was a common feature of colonial uprisings against imperialism, in so far as national minorities often supported the continued domination of imperialist rule.[142] As long as the Jewish minority in Palestine maintained its support for imperialism and continued to serve as its agent, so long would Arab uprisings in the country continue to be directed against it.

Examining the class composition of the Jewish minority in the country, the Congress established that "only 5% of the Jewish immigrants are workers, while the rest are petty bourgeois".[143] In an attempt to counter earlier support or at least acquiescence for Jewish immigration, it was declared that Jewish immigration into Palestine was not a spontaneous phenomenon, but organised by the Zionist movement with the express aim of creating a Jewish state.[144] Thus it was the duty of the Party to oppose Jewish immigration and

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140. The fight of the Arab Communists. Inprecor No. 11. 1931, p. 215. See also Israeli, op. cit. p. 81.
141. The National Question at the 7th Congress. op. cit. p. 64.
142. Decisions of the Seventh Congress, op. cit. p. 218.
143. "Work Among the Peasants and the Struggle Against Zionism", in Documents of the Programs of the Communist Parties of the East. Ed. Madyar, Mif, Orakhelashvili & Safarov. (Published by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute of CC/RCP. Moscow 1934). Tr. in I Spector "The Soviet Union and the Moslem World 1917-58" (Univ. of Washington press. 1967)(pp. 111-78) p. 172.
144. Decisions of Seventh Congress. op. cit. p. 222.

expose its "robber imperialist" character. Likewise, Jewish colonists could not be regarded as oppressed peasants, nor be compared with the Arab peasants who had been evicted from their land with the sole purpose of making place for these self-same settlers. Rather, the Jewish farmer was a member of a privileged class,[145] and his relationship to the peasants was akin to that of the kulak. The Party had to struggle against Jewish colonisation as strongly as it should against Jewish immigration, as both would lead to the Arab workers and peasants being "evicted from their workplace" and deprived of their livelihood.[146]

The Congress's conclusions on the position of the Jewish minority were ambiguous. It clearly portrayed the Jewish community in Palestine as fulfilling the role of an imperialist agent, and in turn being aided by imperialism to realise its policies of land conquest and immigration. Thus the opposition of the Arab movement was perceived to be both natural and just, but its appearance as an anti-Jewish movement was seen as affording an opportunity to Arab reactionaries and to British imperialism to deflect the masses' dissatisfaction from themselves, and turn it against the Jewish minority.[147] The Congress insisted that "it would be erroneous to regard Zionism and the Jewish population as one organic whole", among whom there were no internal contradictions. There was a process of differentiation continuously taking place among the Jewish minority and it was perceived that a section of the workers was already abandoning Zionism, and that the privileges which Jewish workers enjoyed were fast disappearing. Thus despite the Congress's characterisation of the pro-imperialist role of the Jewish minority and despite the fact that the Arab masses continued to regard it as an "organic whole", the Party persisted in holding out the prospect of a future united front between Arabs and Jews, justifying not only its repeated calls for co-operation, but also the activity of the

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145. Work Among the Peasants and the Struggle Against Zionism. op. cit. p. 177.
146. The National Question at the Seventh Congress. op. cit. p. 64.
147. Work Among the Peasants and the Struggle Against Zionism. op. cit. p. 175.

Jewish communists and their continued presence in the country.

The third area of activity dealt with by the Congress consisted of the Party's work in the Arab street and the general political outlook. The first basic condition for successful work among Arab peasants, was seen to depend on the transformation of the Party into an Arab organisation. Only then would it be able to assume its "proper place in the national struggle against imperialism and Zionism".[148] The main field of activity was provided by the assumed atmosphere of permanent agrarian unrest. The Party's duty was to take advantage of the "exploitation and betrayal" of the Arab peasants by the Arab leadership, and the absence of an agrarian program in the platform of the left wing of the Arab national movement. The Party's activity should concentrate on landless peasants and the semi-proletarian agricultural workers; the Congress mapped out a number of practical measures, such as the distribution of printed matter "written in simple and understandable language", personal contact with the villages, and specifically contact with the teachers in village schools, and the formation of peasant committees. The Party's stand on land sales was unambiguous and uncompromising; it refused to recognise the validity of deals made between the Zionists and absentee Arab landowners, and declared that the duty of Jewish workers was not only to offer support to the peasants, but also to supply them with arms to enable them to fight against the expropriation of their lands.[149] At the same time, the Party's propaganda among the Jewish workers should explain that the settlement of Jews on those "robbed lands" would only cause the peasants to launch attacks against the Jewish settlers. The tasks of the agrarian revolution included the expulsion of Jewish settlers from their recently acquired land, and the return of this land to its previous owners. Only by enrolling in the Arab national movement could the Jewish workers assure themselves of the prospect of being allowed to remain on the land. Their future in Palestine would depend on the extent of their struggle against Zionism, and they would be granted the rights of a national minority with full freedom to develop their national culture.

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148. Decisions of the Seventh Congress. op. cit. p. 219.
149. Ibid. p. 223.

The Congress affirmed that the general activity of the Party should not neglect work among the small Arab working class and in the Jewish street. The real character of Zionist immigration should be made clear to the workers, and the Party should raise the demand for its cessation.[150] It should also pay special attention to the organisation of joint demonstrations of Arab and Jewish workers against British imperialism, and by underlining the Arab masses opposition to imperialism, gain adherents among the Jewish labour movement.

The Seventh Congress's comprehension of Palestinian conditions suffered from major defects. In so far as it perceived a situation of agrarian unrest and rebelliousness against the traditional Arab leadership, this was the result of dogmatic preconceptions which did not match the reality of the situation. The agrarian revolution was not on the agenda in Palestine. The Arab peasants: traditional, backward and conservative, were activated by tribal and religious loyalties rather than by social and political considerations, and were completely subservient to the Arab urban religious and semi-feudal leadership. The position regarding the Yishuv revealed a similar lack of understanding. The belief that sections of the Jewish working class were increasingly becoming disenchanted with Zionism was unfounded: even if true, the outcome would have been an increase in the rate of emigration as had happened in the past when severe economic conditions had led to discontent and despair among sections of the Yishuv. There were no grounds for the belief that Jewish workers had any interest in joining the ranks of the Arab national movement. As Zionist immigrants they had come to Palestine with the express aim of building a Jewish national home; the success of the Arabs in securing national independence would necessarily deliver a death blow to the Zionist dream. As such, the British were not at this stage an enemy but rather an ally. Thus from the standpoint of both Arabs and Jews, any call for joint activity in pursuit of supposed common interests was devoid of any meaningful content.

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150. Decisions of the Seventh Congress. op. cit. p. 222.

The deliberations of the Seventh Congress nevertheless constituted a landmark in the development of the communist movement in Palestine. The Party radically re-orientated its policy and set its course for the next eighteen years. The implication of its new analysis and the policies put forward affected not only the PCP's previous existence as an "immigrant section", but also the practical abandonment of the goal of socialist proletarian revolution and its replacement by the recognition of the national character of the struggle taking place in Palestine: the primacy of the tasks of national liberation over those of social emancipation.

Hitherto the Party, in its preoccupation with the Jewish labour movement had acted in accordance with the precepts of classical European Marxism, with its emphasis on the central role of the proletarian class struggle. It had ignored the colonialist aspects of the Jewish presence in Palestine and worked out the doctrine of Yishuvism which justified its preoccupation with the Jewish community and excused its lack of opposition to Jewish immigration. It had attempted to link the struggles of the Jewish working class to those of the oppressed Arab masses, by abstract appeals to internationalism and calls for a joint struggle against the Arab and Jewish bourgeoisie. It failed to comprehend that as far as the Arabs were concerned, the perceived threat came from the outsider, the foreigner who was depriving them of both land and work, and that the first condition of a successful social struggle was the realisation of the country's independence and the evacuation of British troops. The Seventh Congress repudiated the Party's previous positions, and came out strongly not only against Jewish immigration but also against the Jewish minority as a whole which was correctly seen for what it was: the result of Zionist agitation and activity in the effort to build the national home, and not the freak outcome of immigration in response to national persecution or the personal desire of individuals to start a new life or make their personal fortunes.

The necessity of setting up an Arab communist party presented itself, once the anti-imperialist nature of the conflict in Palestine had been recognised. The Seventh Congress can justly be regarded as the first step, taken at the Comintern's prodding, to embark on the road to Arabisation. This involved the re-examination of the position

of the Jewish minority, and the re-direction of the Party's activity on the path of involvement within the Arab community. It is evident that the Party's position vis-a-vis the Jewish minority remained ambiguous, but this was essentially because the Party aspired to be an internationalist organisation and not a nationalist one. It could not itself put forward nationalist solutions, but it was prepared to support a national independence struggle, while firmly insisting on the rights of minorities. Regarding the nature of the Jewish community in Palestine, the Party was not very clear as to whether it constituted a national group, or merely a settler society, but it insisted on the differentiation between the Zionist movement and the Jewish community as a whole. Even though the Jewish community was in Palestine as a result of the activities of the Zionist movement and extended its wholehearted support to this movement, the Party continued to see an objective community of interest between the Arab and Jewish working masses, and never advocated the emigration of the Jews from the country. Thus it hoped to arrive at a synthesis between its support for the national emancipation movement of the Arabs, and its communist ideology. Although this would initially weaken the Party in the Jewish street, it was hoped, as the Seventh Congress demonstrated, that the Party would become firmly established among the Arab population, and thus win recognition for the rights of the Jewish minority in the country, and as a result, extend its influence within that minority.

The Long Process of ArabisationII: Transformation and Activity 1929-1935

The formal decision to Arabise the PCP taken at the Seventh Congress did not put an end to discussion of the nature of the 1929 events or the correctness of Arabisation. Confusion remained in the Party and a state of flux continued until the appointment in 1934 of Radwan al Hilou (Musa)[151] as the first Arab secretary of the Party. It took

151. Radwan al Hilou (1910-1975) had joined the Party in 1927. In 1930 he travelled to Moscow as a delegate to the Profintern Congress and remained there at the Comintern School till 1933. On his return to Palestine, he was appointed secretary of the Communist youth movement and early in 1934 after the arrest of the Jewish Party secretary Zeev Berman, he was appointed Secretary of the Party, a position he continued to hold till the split of Arab and Jewish communists in 1943.

the Party three years to put its house in order and arrive at an understanding of what it considered to be the correct attitude towards the Arab national movement. Those three years, stretching from the Seventh Congress to Musa's appointment as Secretary, were replete with assurances that Arabisation had been finally implemented,[152] and counter claims from within the Party itself that the line agreed at the Seventh Congress had not in fact been followed.[153] The Comintern chose to disbelieve the claims of the former and continued delivering its exhortations to struggle against "Jewish national chauvinism" and the influence of Zionism within the Party.

As late as the Seventh Comintern Congress held in 1935, the Party was criticised for having failed to perform its tasks in the demonstrations which swept Palestine in October 1933, and for being "again, as in 1929 overtaken by events"[154] a failure attributed to its not having Arabised itself. In similar fashion, Musa, the Party's delegate to the Congress, was even more severe in his criticisms of the previous Party leadership and its record.[155] He stressed that the reason for the Party's past failure had been the strong influence of Jewish nationalism within the old leadership. The Jewish leaders of the Party being ex-Zionists "had ideologically never changed their line"[156] and had continued to wage a struggle against the line of the Comintern and hinder Arabisation. It was only at the beginning of 1935, Musa claimed, that "the defeat of the opportunist line in the leadership" had been achieved.

The Party had suffered a series of set-backs soon after the conclusion of the Seventh Congress. Its secret press was siezed by the police[157] and its newly appointed Arab leaders were arrested less than a month after the Congress. Although their arrest was a

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152. Tasks of the Communists in the All Arab National Movement: An Analysis Adopted at a Meeting of Representatives of the PCP and the Syrian Communist Party in 1931. Reproduced in The Communist Programs, op. cit. p. 139.
153. A Secretariat report described the Party as "a discussion club" and stated that it had not followed the line laid down by the Congress. See Report by M. Kuperman, 1932, loc. cit.
154. Der Kommunistiche Internationale Vor der 7th Welt Kongress Materialle. (Moscow 1935) p. 599.
155. Musa spoke under the name of Yussuf. Inprecor. N 54. 1935. p. 1344.
156. Ibid.
157. F.O.372/2937/256. Police Summary, 7 October 1931.

serious blow to the Party, the Comintern chose to regard their trial as a success. For the first time, Arab communists appeared in public and were tried for being leaders of the movement. Their firm stand at the trial and their defence of their political convictions was seen to illustrate to the Arab population that communism was not merely a Jewish affair; it also served to demonstrate to those Jewish members of the Party who were doubtful about Arabisation that Arab Party members were mature and reliable cadres.[158]

For the three years that elapsed between the arrest of the Arab members of the CC and the appointment of Musa as Party Secretary, the leadership remained in the hands of Jewish communists, and they energetically applied themselves to the task of its transformation. A year and a half after the Seventh Congress, the leadership itself was still critical of the attitude of the Jewish rank and file. Many were seen to be in the Party not because of their adherence to communism, but simply as a reaction against Zionism, and appeared to be doubtful of the usefulness of activity among the Arabs.[159] Members of the Tel-Aviv branch denied that the Party was implementing the Comintern line in its Arabic leaflets or that they were calling on the Arabs to struggle against their own national leaders[160] thus exhibiting a crisis of confidence between the Party and its leaders. In its efforts to explain the Comintern line to the Jewish members, and to neutralise the slogan of Bolshivisation as a weapon in the hands of the anti-Arabisers, the Party explained that Bolshivisation in an agrarian country like Palestine differed from that in Europe where the main task was to win over the proletariat. In Palestine the task was "to win over the mass of poor and middle peasants", for it was on the Arab masses that the Party had to rely in its revolutionary struggle.[161] The answer to the endless argument concerning Arabisation was a ban on theoretical discussions and a call for

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158. Arab Communists before the Court. Inprecor. N 28. 1931. p. 515.
159. Document of PCP Secretariat, 16 March 1932. CZA S 25/7530.
160. Document of PCP Secretariat, 23 April 1932. CZA S 25/7530.
161. Bolshivisation and Arabisation. Document of PCP Secretariat June 1932. CZA S 25/7530.

practical revolutionary work.[162] The continuing climate among the Jewish Party members of "doubts and hesitations", "everlasting discussions", "fear of instigation", "defeatism",[163] "questioning", "non confidence", and the "spread of Zionist ideas"[164] forced the Party leaders to consider implementing a purge of Party members.[165] This purge and re-registration of members, coupled with a campaign for branch expansion was carried out in September 1932 in order to rid the Party of opposition.[166] Party members were requested to fill in application forms stating whether they were familiar with and accepted the resolutions of the Seventh Congress on Arabisation.[167] Every Party member had to go through this process of re-registration[168] and those with a previous record of opposition had to face an investigation committee where they were called on to explain their political attitudes.[169] In the branch expansion plan which accompanied the re-registration, emphasis was placed on the winning of new Arab members and the establishment of new branches in villages round the three main areas of Party activity, Haifa, Jerusalem, and Jaffa/Tel-Aviv.[170] The instructions of the Secretariat to the Party branches were detailed and pin-pointed areas of activity. The Party, however, did not set its aims too high, and this was reflected in the proportion of Jewish to Arab members which it hoped to enlist.[171] It was implicitly admitted that the proportion of Jews to Arabs would remain high, as would the proportion of workers to peasants. Certain branches such as the Jaffa Tel-Aviv local committee, came in for heavy criticism and were accused of being "nests of defeatism",[172] and admonished for their

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162. Document of PCP Secretariat, 10 May 1932. CZA S 25/7529.
163. Report by M. Kuperman, 1932. loc. cit.
164. Document of PCP Secretariat, 23 April 1932. loc. cit.
165. Document of PCP Secretariat, 16 March 1932. loc. cit.
166. Document of PCP Secretariat. 1932.
167. Registration and Acceptance Forms. Document of PCP Secretariat. 1932.
168. Instructions to Registration Committee on the Registration of Cadres. Document of PCP Secretariat. 1932.
169. Ibid. paragraph 6.
170. Branches Expansion Plan. Document of PCP Secretariat. 1932.
171. Plan of Activity for Six Months. Document of PCP Secretariat. 1932.
172. Report by M. Kuperman. Document of PCP Secretariat. 1932.

lack of Arab members,[173] while other branches such as Haifa were commended for their successful activity.

The intensified activity of the Party in this period had its negative aspect: it led to increased arrests among the more experienced cadres and the Party was thus handicapped by the "lack of experienced comrades with the necessary knowledge of Party work".[174] In a communication to the Oriental Department of the Comintern, the Party Secretariat actually called on the Comintern to supply it with experienced cadres to enable it to continue the policy of Arabisation. It went on to report that the majority of Party members had not yet accepted the new line,[175] that the Party had lost nearly all its leading cadres since the Seventh Congress, that very few experienced Party members remained in the branches and that most of the members were new and had no past revolutionary experience. The CC itself was described as being very weak and suffering from the absence of Arab cadres. In addition, police harrassment coupled with increased hostility from the Yishuv, virtually outlawed the Party in the Jewish street in the aftermath of the August 1929 uprising. Yet despite all the shortcomings and despite the proclamations by the Party leaders at the Seventh Comintern Congress, of the obstructionist tactics of the Jewish leaders of the Party, this period was to witness an increasing militancy in Party activity and its establishment in the Arab Street.

The uprising of August 1929 had been regarded by the Party as the expression of the agrarian ferment taking place among the Arab peasants and Bedouins. The Party professed to see a continuation of the peasant movement in the form of "partisan fights" and rural brigandage.[176] In the absence of any meaningful Arab proletariat, the Party outlined a course of action whereby in each village where contact had been established, small meetings of peasants should be held where Party members would lecture on the communist agrarian

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173. Open Letter of Reprimand to Jaffa/Tel-Aviv Branch. Document of PCP Secretariat. 1932.
174. Letter from Party Secretariat to Oriental Section of the Comintern, 1932. CZA S25/7529.
175. Ibid.
176. The Partisan Fight in Palestine. Inprecor. N 70. 1929. p. 1479.

program and explain the means by which it could be realised.[177] The subjects discussed should encompass the political situation in the country, bad harvests, the dangers of famine, the Zionist conquest of land, the siezure of land and crops, taxes and the obstruction of tax collectors. It was necessary to set up revolutionary village committees under the slogan of "organise and arm yourselves for the revolutionary uprising". The economic situation of the peasants was characterised in a Party document as so desperate that the coming of the inevitable agrarian uprising was only a matter of time, and it was the Party's duty to prepare for it by organising the most revolutionary groups among the peasants. The Party centred its activity around the landless and the unemployed whom it estimated to make up to 25% of the Arab peasant population.[178] Of these, the youth were held to constitute the group "least influence by religious fanaticism" and most open to revolutionary agitation, and thus had to be attracted to participate in the revolutionary committees.

The three years following the Seventh Congress witnessed an unprecedented degree of activity geared to delivering the Party's message to the peasants, and encompassing the most distant villages. The Arabic press contained many reports of the distribution of communist leaflets in Arab villages calling on the peasants not to leave their land and to refuse to pay taxes. Although this activity did not achieve any startling breakthrough, the Party did succeed in mustering some support,[179] and in gaining sympathy for itself.[180] Yet its agitation remained abstract and although its leaflets were written in simple language and concerned themselves with concrete issues relating to the peasants' daily needs, the few peasants that

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177. Instructions to Party members. Document of PCP Secretariat, 10 May 1932. Circular letter N 3. CZA S 25/7529.
178. Instructions to Party Members. Document of PCP Secretariat, 5 May 1932. CZA S 25/7530.
179. F.O. 370/1787/405. Police Summary, 26 May 1933.
180. A newspaper reported the trial of a Jewish communist in Tulkarem accused of distributing leaflets to Arab peasants, where the Arab peasant who had arrested him expressed regret for having delivered him to the police after hearing his political defence, not having known that "he is working for the poor and trying to help us". See Falastin, 25 September 1932.

the Party did succeed in enlisting were themselves divorced from their villages and carried out their activities in the towns. Here again the Party was hampered by its Jewish make-up. Jewish cadres were ready and capable of distributing leaflets in Arab villages and among agricultural workers, but this activity could not compensate for the lack of personal contacts and the existence of Arab members who were themselves living in the villages, sharing their daily life and struggle, and thus capable of playing an active role and mustering round them other radical elements.

In its leaflets directed at the peasant masses, the Party called for the taking over of state domains and the lands of Zionist settlers and Arab feudalists.[181] It called on the peasants to rise in armed rebellion and to rely solely on their "swords and rifles" and forsake the Arab traitorous leaders. It was explained that the cause of their poverty was the existence of imperialism and Zionism, and it called on them not to give an inch of their land to the Zionist settlers.[182] Throughout its literature in this period, the Party emphasised that the peasants had to struggle not only against the imperialist government and its taxes, and the Zionist settlers who were expropriating their lands, but also "the traitorous feudal effendis"[183] who sold their land to the Zionist companies and lived parasitically off the money they extracted from their labour. Also for the first time in the Party's literature, the issues of "land conquest" and Jewish immigration were linked together,[184] and the peasants were called upon to demonstrate outside Government buildings and in the ports against Jewish immigration and to call for the return of the immigrants. Instead of bringing foreigners into the country, the Government was called upon to provide work and food for the inhabitants. The Party called on the peasants to "prepare for the armed agrarian national liberation revolution" and

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181. To the Masses of Oppressed Peasants: Life or Death. Arabic leaflet of CC/PCP. January 1930.
182. Remember Peasant. Unsigned Arabic leaflet adorned with the Hammer and Sickle, 1932.
183. To the Masses of Workers and Peasants and to the Revolutionary Youth. Arabic Leaflet of CC/PCP. April 1932.
184. To the Workers and Peasant Masses. Arabic Leaflet of CC/PCP April 1932.

although this projected uprising did not materialise, and the ferment in the villages continued to express itself in primitive forms more akin to brigandage than to revolution, the Party attempted to capitalise on the increased Zionist acquisition of land. As far back as the Affula incident of 1924, it had opposed the land acquisition policy of the Zionists. After 1930 this became one of its main planks, and was linked to the struggle against the conquest of work campaign in the towns. Increasingly, Party literature advocated a more militant stance, openly calling on the Arab peasants to use armed force, not only in defence of their lands, but also to retrieve those which they had lost in the past.[185]

Among the small Arab working class and in the urban community, communist propaganda was well organised and persistent. Initially the aim was to popularise the Party's slogans and to advertise its existence. The Party embarked on the novel technique of hanging banners across the main streets of large towns;[186] it distributed leaflets after the Friday prayers in Jerusalem and on occasion Arab communists delivered speeches at Moslem religious festivals.[187] Two occasions when communist prisoners, comprising both Arabs and Jews, declared hunger strikes in Palestine's jails were utilised by the Party to win sympathy in the Arab street.[188] A veteran Arab communist, Aref al Azouni, issued a call to "all social layers of the Arab population" to support the communists in their strike which he described as "non political".[189] The communists' demand was for the setting-up of a special prison regime for political

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185. A call to All Peasants and Revolutionary Nationalists. Arabic leaflet of CC/PCP. February 1935.
186. e.g. Falstin, 30 November, 1929 reports two such banners hung in King George street, Jerusalem: "Arab workers Unite-Down with Zionist imperialism", and "Down with the Traitorous Arab Leaders".
187. Falastin, 12 February 1930.
188. The first strike took place in May 1930, see Falastin 6 and 11 May 1930. The second strike was a much bigger affair; 55 political prisoners at the head of which was the veteran communist leader Mahmoud al Moghrabi took place in July 1935. See L. Links, Political Prisoners in Palestine: Their Lives and Struggles. (Palestine Labour Defence. 1936) p. 12.
189. Falastin, 6 March 1930. Aref al Azouni was an Arab journalist on the staff of Falastin newspaper. He was one of the early members of the Party having joined in 1927, and was particularly active in the Party's publishing activities.

prisoners. In this they were naturally supported by the Arab press, as such a regime was seen to benefit Arab prisoners of the 1929 and 1933 uprisings[190] and the communists won the sympathy and admiration of many as a result of their nineteen-day hunger strike in 1925. The demonstrations held by the Party in Jerusalem and Jaffa to extend solidarity to the strikers were joined by many Arabs[191] and contributed towards popularising the struggles of the Party and its involvement in Arab affairs. This was coupled with the cannonisation of the three Arabs executed by the Government for their role in the events of August 1929. They were hailed in the Party's literature as martyrs, and the day of their execution was singled out every year as a remembrance day,[192] while the Arabs were called upon to storm the country's jails to free the political prisoners held there.[193] This increased attention paid to the Arab movement stimulated additional Arab involvement in the activity of the Party, and was reflected in the growth of the number of Arab communists arrested, as reported in the press[194] and in police reports on communist activity.[195]

The Party called on Arab workers to struggle for a number of trade union demands, linking these to the wider political struggle against both Arab leaders and the Histadrut.[196] According to the Party the immediate struggle of the workers should be directed towards the abolishment of child labour, the right to organise Arab unions, the distribution of land to the peasants, the eight-hour-day, Government aid to the unemployed, equal wages for Arab and

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190. Falastin, 29 May 1930 published an editorial in support of the communist prisoners on strike. See also Political Prisoners in Palestine, op. cit. p. 14 which reported that all the important Arab newspapers came out in sympathy with the strikers.
191. Ibid. p. 11.
192. To All Working People in Palestine and Revolutionary Youth: On the Occasion of the 17th June, the Day of the Martyrs. Arabic Leaflet of CC/PCP, June 1932.
193. Arabic Leaflet of CC/PCP quoted in Palestine, 10 July 1930.
194. e.g. Falastin, 15 March 1930, reported arrest of 13 Arab communists in Jerusalem; 28 January 1931, the arrest of 18 Arab communists; 3 May 1930 the arrest of the Secretary of the CC of the Arab Workers Congress, Kamel Odeh, a communist; 17 January 1931, the arrest of the Secretary of the Arab Workers Society-Jaffa, Darwish al Fashar a communist.
195. F.O. 371/16926/1076 & 4051. Police Summaries, 9 February 1933 and 26 May 1934.
196. To All Workers Peasants and Labourers in Palestine: On the Occasion of the First of May. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP. 1 May 1931.

Jewish workers, and a Government labour ordinance regulating employment conditions.[197] The workers were warned that the Histadrut was not honest in its claims to care for their interests and the same applied to the traditional Arab leaders "who belong to the employer and capitalist class and inherently cannot support the exploited workers".[198]

The PCP's real involvement with the Arab workers movement started with the efforts to convene a general Arab workers' congress in Haifa. Arab Party members did much of the groundwork for the congress and actively participated in its proceedings.[199] The holding of the congress in January 1930 was hailed as "the hour of the birth of the Arab proletariat as a distinct class".[200] In retrospect however, this congress, although it was followed by increased militancy in the Arab labour movement, did not prove to be the breakthrough that had been hoped for. Within the PAWS, the strongest Arab workers' organisation in the country, there was open hostility to communist involvement in labour affairs, at the same time both the Mufti's supporters and the oppositionists, attempted to set up rival unions whose aims and activities were strictly partisan and political. As a consequence, the Arab labour movement remained weak and divided.

The Party persisted in its efforts to work within the established labour organisation and to help found others where none existed. Special attention was paid to the railway and port workers and to building and printing workers.[201] The Party attempted to organise cells in industrial establishments such as the Electric

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197. To All Working Youth in Palestine. Arabic Leaflet of CC/ Communist Youth organisation. 1931.
198. Manuscript of Arabic pamphlet on the Labour movement issued by CC/PCP, 1932.
199. The First Arab Workers Congress, Haifa 11 January 1930. Pamphlet issued by the PAWS (n.p.n.d.) Of the elected 11 man CC of the Congress, 3 were communists, as was the president of the Congress, and the secretary of the CC. Among the future leaders of the Party who took part in this congress were Radwan al Hilou, Boulous Farah, Sadek al Jarrah.
200. The Rise of the Arab Working Class in Palestine. Inprecor. N. 5. 1930. p. 78.
201. Letter from Party cadre in Jerusalem to Secretariat. 23 April 1932. Document of PCP Secretariat. 16 March 1932. CZA. S25/7530.

Company and the Dead Sea Works, and among the workers of the Iraqi Petroleum Company in Haifa.[202] In Jaffa it succeeded in setting up the Transport Workers' Society[203] and the communists involved themselves in the struggle of the Jaffa Arab Workers' Association against Zionist pickets formed to enforce the policy of "Conquest of Labour". Its propaganda activity culminated with the issuing of a labour journal "Al Nur", which devoted itself to Arab labour affairs and the defence of the Arab workers rights,[204] and with its publication of a number of pamphlets dealing with topics as varied as, "The Chinese Revolution", "Liebknecht Against the War", "Lenin's Death", "The Railway Workers", and "Class Revenge and Class Power".[205] This period of prolific publication also saw the distribution of a number of legal booklets by an Arab member of the CC dealing with the methods of trade union organisation and other topics.[206]

In the prevailing atmosphere of heightened Histadrut activity, the Party centred its campaign among Arab workers on the struggle against their eviction from their jobs. It emphasised the all-embracing importance of a campaign to win support among them, based on their defence against the encroachments of the Histadrut.[207] In

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202. Police Summary, 9 February 1933. loc. cit.
203. This was headed by Said Kabalan, an active communist who joined the Party in 1932 and participated in the activities of the Jaffa Arab Workers' Association. He continued to play a prominant role in Arab Labour affairs in the Forties. For activity of Transport Society see Police Summary, 26 May 1934. loc. cit.
204. Al Nur (The Light), published by the Lawyer M. Stein who also published Haor in Hebrew. He was assisted by two Arabs, Jabra Nicola and Abdul Rahim al Iraki.
205. Document of PCP Secretariat, March 1933. CZA. S25/7530.
206. Jabra Nicola (1912-1975), a journalist joined the Party in 1931 and in 1935 became a member of the CC. He left the Party after the split of 1943, and later became a Trotskyst. He was one of the few Arab members interested in theoretical issues. His works include, The Strike Movement among the Workers in Palestine (1935 n.p.), Trade Union Organisation: A Study in the Organisation of Workers and the way to Establish Trade Unions (Jaffa 1935), In the Jewish World: A Concise Survey of the History of the Jews and a Detailed Analysis of Zionism and its Parties with a Description of Other Jewish Trends (Jerusalem 1935), and a translation of Palm Dut 's Lenin (1935 n.p.)
207. Internal Document of PCP Secretariat: Activity Against Occupation of Work. 23 April 1932.

its instructions to Jewish Party members, it underlined that "the duty of the communists is to stand by the side of the Arab workers, and to struggle against the Histadrut".[208] This activity was characterised as absolutely necessary in order "to gain the confidence of the Arab workers". To counter hesitations among the Jewish Party members, the Secretariat declared that participation in activity against the "Conquest of Work" campaign was obligatory and threatened with expulsion any members who refused to take part.[209] The Party aimed to actively instigate the Arab workers in Jaffa, where the confrontation took the most extreme form, to set up counter-pickets to defend themselves against the pickets of the Histadrut[210] and it did not shy away from calling on the Arab workers to "use force if necessary"[211] in their own defence against what it termed "the hooligan fascist campaign" to oust them from their jobs.

In Wadi Hunein (Nis Ziyona), where clashes between Arabs and Jews were a consequence of the Histadrut's activity, the Party declared that "the duty of class conscious Jewish workers was to prove to the Arab peasant that they had nothing in common with those who occupied his land and his work".[212] The Party presumed that the resistance of the Arab workers was a result of its agitation and took pride in this fact; it described the Jewish workers who took part in this activity as having "lost all feeling of class interest and collaboration".[213] It glorified the armed resistance of the Arab workers against the Zionist pickets and declared that "there is only the language of the stick to deal with scoundrels who attack the livelihood of the workers". In Jaffa itself, the Transport Workers Society, the labour organisation set up by the Party, actively engaged in the picketing organised by the Arab Workers Association in the city. The Party's attacks on the "Hitleristic labour

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208. Instructions of PCP Secretariat to the Members. Circular Letter N. 3. May 1932.
209. Document of PCP Secretariat, 3 June 1932. loc. cit.
210. F.O. 371/17878/6778. Police Summary, 15 October 1934.
211. Open Letter of reprimand to Jaffa/Tel Aviv branch. Document of PCP Secretariat. 1932. in Khomer Shel Mazkirot. op. cit.
212. Haor, 15 April 1932. quoted in Vilner, op. cit.
213. To All the Working Masses in Palestine. Arabic Leaflet of CC/PCP December 1932.

conquerors" serves as an example of the Party's attitude to the problem and its campaigns among Jewish workers to take the side of the Arabs. In Tel-Aviv where Arab and Jewish workers were injured during an attack by a Zionist Picket, the Party commended the action of a couple of Jewish workers who defended the Arabs and were injured as a result.[214] It characterised the Zionists as "building a wall of national hatred" between Arab and Jewish workers, and attempting to exterminate the Arab labouring masses. The Jewish workers were warned that the policy being implemented by the Histadrut endangered their future in the country and even their very existence.[215] They were called upon to desert their "chauvinistic leaders" and to refuse to take part in "the Zionist hooligan groups". Only through struggling against the policy of "conquest" and against Jewish immigration in the common front with the Arab workers, could imperialism be expelled from the country and the welfare of both Arab and Jewish workers be safeguarded.

The position taken by the PCP and the international communist movement on the events of August 1929, coupled with the firm turn towards Arabisation that the Party had taken after the Seventh Congress resulted in increased hostility from the Yishuv and a decline in activity within the Jewish community. This was reflected in the Party's poor showing in the election to the "elected assembly" of the Yishuv in 1930 when it won a very small number of votes[216] and where its members were attacked as "pogromists".

Within the Party, the struggle centred on the issue of whether it was possible for Arab workers to conduct an economic struggle, and whether raising demands for higher pay and the eight-hour-day would lead to a weakening of the Arab movement and the facilitation of the Zionist "conquest of work". The Party leadership denied the validity of these criticisms[217] and held that the Arab workers

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214. To All Workers in Palestine. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP. October 1932.
215. To All Arab Labourers and Revolutionary Jewish Workers: Down with the Fascist Conquest of Labour. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP. May 1934.
216. The "Proletarian List" a communist front organisation gained only 700 votes, less than half the votes gained in the 1925 elections. See Israeli, op. cit. p. 83.
217. The Strike Movement Among the Arab Workers. CC/Fraktzia. 20 June 1932. Circular N.8.

had demonstrated by embarking on strikes even while suffering great economic distress, that there was room for a syndicalist struggle, and that the organisation of Arab workers should accompany the raising of economic demands and not necessarily precede it. The Party insisted, at the same time, that Jewish members should continue to seek entry into the Histadrut to wage a struggle from within the Zionist organisations. This however, brought strong opposition from Party members. The conditions of activity within Zionist organisations were extremely difficult and hostility towards the Party was so pronounced that Jewish Party members preferred to set up their own trade union organisation. The Party leadership however, never wavered in its belief that opposition to Zionism should come from within and to this end, it continued to wage its struggle inside the Zionist movement, but with little success, and as far as the members were concerned, with great reluctance. The Party never conceded that the Jewish community as a whole was a lost cause, or that it was impossible to differentiate between the Zionist leadership and the Jewish working masses in the country.[218]

The Party's main drive within the Jewish community remained aimed at winning support for the Arab national independence movement. The Jewish minority was seen to have become, as a result of Zionist policy, the "main pillar of British imperialism and used as a tool against the Arab national liberation movement."[219] This, it was pointed out, presented a threat to the existence of the Jewish minority and the Party warned of the danger of a repetition of the massacres of 1929. Furthermore, the threat which immigration presented was declared to be not only directed against the Arab workers and peasants, but also against Jewish workers, for "it served as a means of swelling the ranks of the unemployed and lowering wages".[220] It also led to the creation of "an abyss of hatred" between the two peoples, which was to the benefit of neither. The only way to guarantee the free development of the Jewish minority

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218. Arabic Leaflet of CC/PCP quoted in Falastin, 10 September 1931.
219. A stop must be put to Zionist provocation: Long live the Arab National Liberation Movement. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP 1931.
220. To the Working and Peasant Masses. Hebrew leaflet of CC/PCP. April 1932.

in the country was to struggle against imperialism and Zionism, against immigration and conquest,[221] and to ensure that in the coming revolutionary uprising in the country, the Jewish workers would, unlike in 1929, participate in the struggle for national independence.

In the five years stretching from the Party's Seventh Congress in 1930, to the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in 1935, the Party had succeeded in extending its roots within the Arab community. Arabisation was the natural outcome of the change in the Comintern's emphasis from the class to the national struggle. The Jewish leadership had fulfilled its historic task of drawing a number of Arab cadres into the Party and had to make way in order to facilitate the Party's identification with the Arab national struggle. This transformation did not take place as a result of the Party's own reading of the situation in Palestine, but in conformity with the Comintern's instructions. The Party failed in its task of winning over the Arab peasant masses, but it did succeed in attracting sections of the Arab working class and intelligentsia. The objective conditions in Palestine favoured the development of the Party. The national struggle was becoming more acute, there was an increase in land sales and in Jewish immigration. Within the Arab community, the Arab masses were becoming restive: they were impatient with their leaders who were holding out for an arrangement with Britain, and they favoured more militant action, as the demonstrations of 1933 and the guerrilla band of Shikh al Kassam showed. The small Arab working class was growing and beginning to take the offensive: strikes were occurring with increasing frequency and trade union organisation was the popular watchword. The educated youth were also clamouring for organisation and to wage a struggle against the British, and for the first time literary works were circulating which introduced new ideas of revolution and social justice. The struggle for the Arabisation of the Party went hand-in-hand with the attempt to take advantage of this new climate in the country.

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221. To the Workers of Palestine, the Labouring inhabitants, and the Revolutionary youth. Arabic Leaflet of CC/PCP. April 1932.

CHAPTER THREE

PARTY POLICY DURING THE THIRD PERIOD AND THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NATIONAL FRONT

The Left Phase of the PCP

The PCP's position vis-a-vis the Arab national movement was formulated in conformity with the decisions of the Sixth Comintern Congress. The new Comintern policy relating to association with the nationalist movements in the colonies started as an attempt to redirect the policies of the French and British communist parties with regard to political alliances with social democratic parties and as a reaction to failures in China.[1] The Ninth Plenum of the ECCI meeting in February 1928 decided on the new tactic of "class-versus-class"; the period was characterised as one of "increasing capitalist instability"[2] and of betrayal by the leadership of the social democratic parties in the West, and the leaders of the nationalist movement in the colonial countries, of the anti-imperialist revolutionary struggle. The Sixth Comintern Congress meeting in July 1928 formally consecrated the "Third Period". This was based on both internal and external considerations pertaining to the Soviet Union and Stalin's struggle for power, but its strictures were to apply to all communist parties, and all countries without exception and irrespective of their varying internal conditions. In the backward colonial countries the tactic of alliance with the national bourgeoisie was rejected, and the "revolutionary wing" of the national liberation movement was no longer to be trusted. The new orthodoxy declared that although temporary alliances with the revolutionary wing of the national bourgeoisie were permissable under very specific conditions, the aim was to establish independent organisations in preparation for the setting-up of Soviet power, by armed uprisings if necessary.[3] The communist parties of the colonial countries were instructed to wage a determined struggle against the leaderships of the various nationalist movements and to sever all relations with them, including what had been previously characterised as their revolutionary wings.[4]

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1. Haithcox, op. cit. p. 87.
2. Outline History of the Communist International op. cit. p. 270.
3. Program of the Comintern adopted at the 6th Congress (N.Y.1929) p.59.
4. Tenth plenum of ECCI July 1929, in Haithcox. op. cit. p. 129.

The PCP carried out the Comintern's instructions to the letter and waged a determined campaign against the Arab Executive and the leadership of the Palestine Arab national movement which lasted well beyond 1933. The Party dated the "betrayal of the national reformists"[5] from the convening of the Seventh Arab Congress in 1928, which had adopted a policy of co-operation with Britain. The Arab Executive was characterised as "having entered upon the road of traitorous competition with the Zionists in bargaining for concessions from British imperialism"[6] and the national reformists were declared to have turned more and more to "counter-revolution and capitulation". The re-evaluation by the Party of the nature of the August 1929 events led to an attack on the leadership of the Arab national movement for having diverted the struggle of the Arab masses into racial attacks on the Jewish population, and for having betrayed the insurrectionary movement of the Arabs by discussing terms with the British imperialist Government "while corpses are still lying in the streets of Haifa, Nablus, and Jerusalem".[7] The Party declared its vehement opposition to the discussions which took place between the British Government and the leaders of the Arab national movement in the aftermath of the August 1929 uprising, and came out strongly against the sending of an Arab delegation to London.[8] The Arab leaders, it was declared, had in the past played a revolutionary role and opposed British imperialism but, as became obvious during the 1929 uprising and its aftermath, had become traitors. Their policy had changed from one of struggle against imperialism to one of trying to make a deal with the British within the terms of the Mandate. The aim of the delegation to London was declared to be not the securing of the independence of Palestine, but the reaching of a compromise which would give the country the semblance of parliamentary rule, but which would keep it under the domination of Britain, and further the interests of the traitorous leaders.

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5. Decisions of the 7th Congress of PCP. 1930. op. cit. p. 220.
6. Tasks of the Comm. in the All Arab National Movement. 1931. op. cit. p. 18.
7. Ibid. p. 19.
8. London, the Mecca of the Traitors of the Revolution. Ella Al Ammam, No. 7. May 1930.

Before the delegation actually travelled to London, the Party called on the Arabs to refuse to give any contribution to help finance the trip.[9] It was stressed that the aim of the delegation was to work out some compromise which would not bring any benefit to the Arab masses themselves, and pointed out that the struggle for Palestine's independence could only take place in Palestine itself. This would be achieved through the total rejection of not only the Balfour Declaration which the Arab leaders were bargaining over, but also the British imperialist presence in the country.

The decisions of the Seventh Congress of the Party held in December 1930 were unequivocally hostile to the aims and practices of the Arab national movement. It was stated that although Zionist activity had been detrimental to all sections of the Arab population, the landowners constituted an exception[10] for they sold their lands to the Zionists and benefitted from the inflated prices which the latter were prepared to pay. It was these self-same people who constituted the leadership of the Arab national movement, and the Party accused the members of the Arab Executive of selling land to the Zionists.[11] Thus the Party saw its task as one of "exposing the traitorous leadership of the effendi Majlisi and the Mufti"[12] and of contrasting their behaviour in attempting to work out a deal with British imperialism, with the suffering of the Arab masses as symbolised by the execution of the three Arab rebels in Acre by the British for their part in the 1929 uprising. It was decided at the Congress that the Party's propaganda should emphasise the betrayal of the Arab feudal landowners, who were accorded the Comintern's latest label, "national reformists",[13] and should expose the "secret agreement" concocted in London by the Arab delegation and the British in return for a sham legislative council. Likewise it condemned the Supreme

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9. "To comrades, workers, and peasants". Arabic leaflet CC/PCP February 1930.
10. The tasks of the PCP in the Countryside. Resolutions of the Seventh Congress. op. cit. p. 174.
11. Ibid. 170.
12. Ibid. p. 159.
13. Decisions of the 7th Congress. op. cit. p. 220.

Moslem Council itself, under the leadership of the Mufti, for being "the defending body active in the name of religion and Arab tradition" and for being representative of the clerics, the merchants and the feudalists who had, as one body, turned away from the Arab national liberation struggle, and joined the imperialist camp.[14] Even the bourgeoisie elements in the country were regarded as being incapable of waging a revolutionary struggle against imperialism[15] and, in conformity with the feudal landowners, were characterised as moving towards the conclusion "of a counter-revolutionary deal" in the shape of continued imperialist domination of Palestine disguised by "pseudo-constitutional concessions".[16]

The Party attempted to link the national struggle against British domination and Zionism, to the social struggle revolving round the agrarian problem in the countryside. It criticised the Arab national movement for ignoring the basic agrarian problem and confining their demands to keeping the land within Arab hands. The Party, while not minimising the importance of this struggle, saw the necessity of directing attention to "the landlessness of the peasants...peasant indebtedness...taxes...the feudal exploitation of the villages by the landowners...the Khums."[17] It criticised the H. Husseini group, which it regarded as constituting the most advanced section of the national movement, for being hesitant about the agrarian problem and for not raising the slogan "land to the peasants".[18] The PCP saw its role as one of introducing the class struggle into the rural scene, and putting pressure on the H. Husseini group, as the most radical national section, towards achieving a correct appraisal of the agrarian problem. However, the Congress was careful to point out the great difficulties involved in working among the backward Arab peasantry and warned against the dangers of provoking the Arab peasants into the counter-revolutionary camp by extremist propaganda which was too advanced or injured their religious sensibilities.

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14. The National Question at the 7th Congress. Inprecor. op. cit. p.64.
15. Tasks of the Communists, op. cit. p. 17.
16. Ibid.
17. Resolutions of the 7th Congress (programs) op. cit. p. 170.
18. Ibid.

The Party, showing itself conscious of the objective limitations on its activity among the rural masses, declared that care must be taken to consider "the living conditions and religious factors connected with the backwardness and illiteracy"[19] of the peasant masses and warned that party propaganda should not take a hostile attitude to matters relating to the peasants' religious beliefs.[20] This however, was not to be construed to mean a cessation of the exposure of the political role which certain clerics performed, to the detriment of the national liberation struggle.

The PCP's attack on the Palestine Arab national movement and the hostility evinced to its leadership, was linked to the adoption of a new policy pertaining to the Arab national question and the political boundaries dividing the Arab states. The Party characterised the essence of the Arab national question as being contained in the deliberate imperialist policy of arbitrarily splitting the Arab world into separate parts under the domination of the different imperialist powers.[21] These boundaries, which were "forcibly maintained" by the imperialist powers, were seen as "artificially weakening the masses of the Arab people in their struggle against the foreign domination" in their pursuit of national independence and unification. The resultant "feudal fragmentation" deprived each and every one of those countries of "the pre-requisites for economic independence and political development", and at the same time harnassed the services of "the reactionary monarchical cliques, the feudal and semi-feudal landowners and sheikhs, and the native bourgeois compradores and high clergy"[22] to maintain and preserve this enforced disunity and safeguard continued imperialist dominance, whether British, French, or Italian. The groups which constituted the leadership of the Arab national movement in Palestine, and in the other Arab states, were seen to have an interest in the continued existence of the Arab states formed as a result of the post-First World War imperialist carve-up, and to be hostile to the

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19. Resolutions of the 7th Congress (programs) op. cit. p. 159.
20. Ibid. Such as attacks on "Rajul al din" and the Wakf.
21. Tasks of the communists op. cit. p. 16.
22. Ibid. p. 17.

realisation of Arab unity which would deprive them of their privileges and put an end to their sectional interests. In opposition to this, the PCP raised the slogan of national political independence as a step towards the voluntary union of the Arab countries "on the basis of federal principles".[23] The role of the communist parties in the Arab world was to struggle for national independence and national unity, "not only within the narrow and artificial boundaries created by imperialism and despotic interests";[24] but for the national unification of the whole Arab East. Thus the Party must work for the formation of an "all Arab revolutionary anti-imperialist front" stretching across the boundaries of the various Arab states, and lead the masses behind the slogan of the "all Arab workers' and peasants' federation of the Arab peoples".[25] This, the Party emphasised, was imperative if it hoped to win the support of the urban poor and the petty bourgeois masses. It was necessary to link the social struggle of the workers against the Arab bourgeoisie, and the peasant masses against the feudalists, to the wider national anti-imperialist struggle aimed at the national liberation of the Arab countries.

This was a novel departure in the policy of the PCP in Palestine. It had in effect donned the mantle of the Istiklal movement at the close of the First World War, and proclaimed the necessity of involving the Party in the national liberation movement of the Arab peoples in order to win them over to its economic and social program. The Party's literature continued, right up to 1935, to proclaim the slogan of the "Workers' and Peasants' all-Arab Federation" and to call for co-ordinated struggle in all the Arab countries against British and French imperialism, in the face of the increasingly separate national movements which were leading the campaign for political independence of their own states. It thus tried to outflank this traditional leadership by making a wider national appeal to the more radical sectors of the Arab population and the radical section of the Istiklal, and the Arab Youth Congress.

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23. Tasks of the communists op. cit. p. 17.
24. Ibid. p. 19.
25. Ibid. p. 18.

With the coming of the era of the popular and national fronts, ushered in by the Seventh Comintern Congress in 1935, this slogan was quietly dropped, as the PCP hastened to form a closer alliance with the leadership of the Arab national movement in Palestine, and was never to be raised again.

The hostility of the PCP towards the Arab national movement had manifested itself as early as 1928 in the form of an attack on the Seventh Arab Congress and its non-representative character. The new Arab Executive formed as a result, was regarded with suspicion and its treasonable intents were quickly siezed upon during, and in the aftermath of, the 1929 uprising. The Party saw in the favourable reception accorded by the Arab leaders to the report of the Investigation Committee dealing with the events, confirmation of its suspicions that the Arab leaders were ready to accept a compromise based on the setting-up of a legislative body. This the Party regarded as a betrayal of the Arab national liberation struggle, as the report of the Commission had "renewed the committment to the Mandate and the Balfour Declaration",[26] and consequently any constitutional set-up created would necessarily remain within the framework of continued British domination and Zionist expansion. The Party interpreted the decisions of the leaders of the Arab Executive to dispense with the holding of the traditional protest demonstrations at the Nebi Musa festival in 1930[27] and on the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration on the 2nd November 1931, as a concilliatory move towards the British authorities and as signalling the abandonment of the mass struggle.[28] At the same time the Party regarded the Arab national movement, including its radical wing, as being afraid of the impending revolutionary outbreak[29] while preparing nevertheless to dominate the outbreak should it occur, and channel it in the direction of racial slaughter. The Arab leaders, who the Party saw as still excercising total control over

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26. On the Statement of the Investigation Commission. p. 6. Ella al Ammam. N. 7. May 1930.
27. Is Peace Permanent? Ibid. p. 9.
28. A call to the Arab Youth Congress, to the Nat. Intellectuals, and the extremist revolutionary youth. CC/PCP leaflet November 1931. Israeli. op. cit. 86.
29. Documents of PCP Secretariat. Letter to Party members, 5 May 1932. CZA S25/7530.

the Arab mass movement, attempted to channel the popular anti-Zionist agitation into peaceful avenues to aid them in applying pressure on the British Government, but the Party was afraid that in the event of any outbreak, the Arab Executive would "divert the movement into bloody racial disturbances"[30] to ward off the threat of agrarian rebellion and arrest the anti-British struggle. Thus its leaflets to the Arab population were full of attacks on the betrayals of the Arab leaders and their total indifference to the sufferings of the peasants at the hands of Government tax collectors, and their eviction from their land by British soldiers to make way for Zionist settlers.[31] The Party exposed the role of the Arab leaders as holders of Government jobs, and called on the masses to ask them to explain what they were doing to stem the tide of Zionist immigration and land acquisition[32] and why, instead of leading the August uprising against the British presence in the country, they had aborted the revolt and turned it into inter-communal feuds.[33]

The demonstrations which broke out in October 1933 in a number of towns in Palestine, seemed to confirm the Party's prognosis of the continuing revolutionary ferment in the country. Although the immediate cause of the protest was to be found in the mounting tensions created by the increased Jewish immigration and land transfers, the Party saw in the "outspokenly anti-British character" of the events,[34] an affirmation of its claim that the August 1929 uprising was only the first chapter in the revolutionary outbreak and that, although subdued, the revolutionary movement continued despite the concilliatory policies of the leaders of the Executive Committee, to ferment under the surface. The Party emphasised

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30. To the Workers of Palestine, the labouring inhabitants and the Revolutionary Youth. Arabic Leaflet of CC/PCP April 1932.
31. Greetings to the Oppressed Masses, to all Workers, Peasants, Bedouins, and national revolutionaries. Arabic Leaflet of CC/PCP April 1933.
32. The Expulsions of the Arabs of Wadi al Hawareth. Ella al Ammam . N. 4. July 1933.
33. To All Labouring People in Palestine: To the Revolutionary Youth on the occasion of the 17th of June, the Day of the Martyrs. Arabic Leaflet of CC/PCP. June 1932.
34. The Bloody Events in Palestine. Inprecor. N. 48. 1933. p. 1058.

the anti-British nature of the events to cut short any possible allegations of a pogrom, or of the movement being organised by "the Mufti and the effendis as in 1929".[35] On the contrary, the Arab Executive Committee, under pressure from the radical section of the Istiklal, had been impelled to call for a protest strike against Jewish immigration and against land sales as early as March 1933, had, after contacts with the High Commissioner, gone back on its decision and called off the strike. In October 1933, again under the mounting pressure of Arab feeling against increasing immigration, the Arab leaders were forced to call for national demonstrations, but the Party pointed to the fact that the demonstrations were called for different days in different towns as proof of the Arab leadership's attempts to atomise the demonstrations and thwart any concentrated mass movement. The occasion of the demonstrations was siezed upon to modify the Party's stand towards the Istiklal movement. Although Awni Abdul Hadi, the leader of the Istiklal and its most prominent representative in the Arab Executive, was attacked as belonging to the same group of reactionaries as the other Arab effendis,[36] the radical wing of the movement was commended as having become more revolutionary and for having raised during the demonstrations, the right political slogans of "no diplomatic negotiation, only mass demonstrations".[37] The Party described the members of the radical wing as the "true anti-imperialists"[38] and insisted that it was they who had marched at the head of the demonstrations and gave the latter their anti-British character. Whereas in 1929, the traditional Arab leaders had retained control over the movement, and H. Husseini's efforts to turn the demonstrations against the British rather than the Jewish inhabitants had failed, in 1933, the central role was played by the radical sections of the Arab national movement, represented by the Istiklal radical wing, and the Arab Youth Congress.

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35. F.O.371/16926/1585. Palestine Police Summaries, 15 November 1933. The report confirms that the demonstrations were directed against the British.
36. Arabic leaflet of CC/PCP quoted in Falastin, 8 November 1933.
37. Yiddish leaflet of CC/PCP October 1933 quoted in Israeli op.cit.p.98.
38. Ibid. Mentioned by name were, H. Husseini; Izat Darwaza; Ajaj Nuwaihad.

The Party wholeheartedly supported the outbreak of the October 1933 demonstrations, and its militants, many of whom were arrested,[39] played an active role, unlike during the 1929 events. The main slogans of the demonstrations, against continued Jewish immigration, and for the cessation of land sales, where ones which the Party itself had been propagating consistently for some time. The situation in Palestine was characterised by the Party as one where two hundred villages were already in open revolt,[40] and the country was seen to be fast approaching the stage of a revolutionary crisis. During the demonstrations themselves the Party's call was not restricted to support for the two above mentioned slogans, but directed the masses to call for the annulment of the Mandate and the Balfour Declaration as the only way to achieve the desired stoppage of immigration and land sales. This was linked to the demand for the immediate confiscation of the lands of the Government, the Zionists, and the Arab feudalists, and for the organisation of workers' and peasants' committees to boycott British and Zionist goods.[41] Unlike in 1929 the position of the Party during the 1933 events was clear and unanimous. The Arabs had spontaneously erupted against the Zionist "land and work robbery" and the oppression of the imperialist government; this was a just struggle and deserved support. The Party protested in its publications against the arrest of the leaders of the demonstrations and demanded that the accusations against them be dropped, and that both they and all other political prisoners in Palestine's jails should be set free.[42] At the same time an appeal for funds was made, to send to the families of those who had lost their lives as a result of the suppression of the demonstrations.

The Party's characterisation of the nature of the 1933 events was not entirely correct. The emphasis on the participation of Arab peasants and Bedouins was simply not true. Unlike the August events, the eruption was mainly an urban one and was of such short duration that it was suppressed before it could have any wider

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39. F.O. 371/16926/7585. Pal. police summaries. loc. cit.
40. The beginning of the Revolutionary Crisis in Palestine. Inprecor No. 50. 1933. P. 1110.
41. To all the labouring inhabitants. Arabic leaflet of CC/PCP. October 1933.
42. Article in HAOR, No. 18. 1933. Quoted in Israeli. op. cit. p. 103.

national repercussions. At the same time, the social connotations that the Party professed to see in the demonstrations are difficult to verify. Although there is no denying the economic hardships of the rural masses, and the exactions they suffered at the hands of both Government tax collectors and feudal landlords, there is no evidence whatsoever of any form of social rebellion or agrarian outbreak. The nature of the 1933 events was wholly political, and here the Party was correct in seeing the change of direction which had taken place in the Arab national movement since 1929. For the first time since the British occupation of Palestine, the movement which broke out in 1933 was directed largely against the British presence itself, and not against the Jewish community. A change had occurred in the national movement, which after three years of frustration in its dealings with the Mandatory power, and its inability to secure concessions even in the form of a power-shorn legislative assembly, had led to the realisation that it was necessary to struggle against British policy itself, rather than its manifestations: the continued growth of the Zionist movement in the country and the strengthening of the Yishuv. The demonstrations had been organised not, as the Party had claimed, by the radical wing of the Arab national movement, although there is no denying that these groups contributed to the changed climate of opinion, but by the Arab Executive itself under pressure to show some positive results after a long period of inactivity. There had been a shift towards more radical policies within the Arab Executive and the 1933 demonstrations had consecrated the break between the mainstream of the national movement, which was becoming increasingly hostile to Britain, and the Nashashibi opposition which though it occasionally pursued an extreme line in its attempts to embarrass the Mufti, favoured a policy of moderation and continued dialogue in the hope of winning Britain away from its Zionist allies and protegés.[43] The Party's characterisation was again correct in seeing the outbreaks of 1933 as only the opening chapter in the long expected national uprising. The years to 1936 witnessed a continued radicalisation of the Arab national

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43. For the activities of the Nashashibi opposition see Y. Porath. The Emergence of the Palestinian Arab National Movement 1918-1929. (London 1976). Chapter 5.

movement and increasing reference to the necessity of armed struggle as the only possible path which would lead to freeing Palestine from Britain and consequently from the continued growth and strengthening of the Yishuv. The movement of al Kassam in 1935 was a manifestation of the adoption of this path.[44]

The events of 1933 are important in the history of the development of the Party: they signalled a change in its attitude towards the leadership of the national movement, though this did not become official doctrine until after the Comintern Congress of 1935. The Party gradually began to abandon its call for agrarian revolution, and although it continued its agitation among the small Arab working class in the towns, its attention was more fully directed to the national dimension of the struggle in Palestine. Even in its activity among the Arab workers, its efforts were directed at agitating for the organisation of Arab labour pickets to stand up to the Zionist "Conquest of Work" campaign, and it directly linked this struggle with that against immigration. This is not to imply that the Party approved of the Mufti's leadership; indeed he was attacked as late as 1935 as an "Italian propagandist",[45] and so were the other Arab leaders for their persistent efforts to find a modus vivendi with the Mandatory power. But the Party was beginning to give primacy in its propaganda to the national aspect of the struggle more than it had ever done before. Thus attention was paid to any armed activity in the country which could be construed as representing armed opposition to British authority. Prominence was given to Abu Jildeh,[46] and he was described as a leader of

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44. For the activity of Al Kasaan see Y. Taggar. The Mufti of Jerusalem and Palestine Arab Politics 1930-1937. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. London University 1973. pp. 355-356.
45. To the Masses of the People in the Country: Join the Struggle of Ethiopia For its Freedom and Independence. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP. October 1935.
46. A murderer who evaded the authorities for a considerable period and became something of a folk hero. He was later hanged. A recent Soviet publication described Abu Jildeh as "..the popular hero who used to plant terror in the hearts of the imperialists with his courage and bravery". See D. Foblikov (ed.) The Modern History of the Arab Countries, 1917-1970. (Moscow 1975). Vol. 1. p. 223.

"partisan detatchments".[47] The Party saw in supporting this band of peasant outlaws, an extension of its support for the defiant armed spirit in the country, contributing to disorder, and agitating defiance of Government authority. Although the Party expressed itself opposed to the use of individual terror,[48] it mounted a popular campaign for Abu Jildeh's release and clamoured for the commuting of the death sentence passed against him.[49] Similarly, the Party maintained contacts with the al Kassam group prior to their discovery in October 1935[50] and came out in open solidarity with the movement after al Kassam's death in a chance encounter with the British army.[51] Yet the Party itself remained ambivalent in its attitude to armed activity and criticised al Kassam's movement for being too eager to take the field, for being conspiratorial, and for being unclear about the nature of the enemy facing it.

The thirties saw a hardening of the Party's attitude towards the Zionist movement, and a decrease in its political activity within the Yishuv. Although it had taken part in the elections for the Vaad Leumi in 1930, and fared badly, the Party explained its participation as a propaganda ploy to expose Zionist policy among the mass of Jewish workers[52] and to show that Jewish communists were ready to declare their support for the Arab struggle against Zionism from within this "imperialist assembly". The big test came in 1933 with the accession of Hitler to power in Germany and the start of a new wave of immigration to Palestine. Until then, Jewish immigration from Germany had been virtually non-existent, and immigration as a whole had not been in sufficient numbers to constitute any real threat, or to enable the realisation of the Zionist aim of a Jewish

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47. The Beginning of the Crisis in Palestine. Inprecor. loc. cit.
48. Leaflet of Palestine Red Aid, Haor, 18 August 1934. Quoted in Israeli, loc. cit.
49. Arabic Leaflet of CC/PCP quoted in Falastin, 29 June 1934. Interview with A. Iraki, Al Tira, 28 May 1975. The Party toyed with the idea of mounting a rescue operation when Abu Jildeh was being moved from jail.
50. Porath, op. cit. p. 264. In an interview with Radwan al Hilou, Jericho 16 January 1974, he stated that the brother of M. Ashkar, the PCP delegate to the Comintern Congress was a member of Kassam's group and served as go-between.
51. Arabic leaflet of CC/PCP quoted in Falastin, 29 January 1936.
52. The Communists and the Vaad Leumi. Ella al Ammam. N. 11. January 1931. p. 12.

state. With the changed circumstances in 1933, the Party was forced to meet the problem head on and declared itself in favour of the demands of the Arab national movement in regard to the cessation of immigration. The Party realised that Hitler's ascendence in Germany would only serve to help the Zionists in their task of agitating for immigration to Palestine. The Nazi persecution itself was a Zionist argument for immigration.[53] The Party argued against Jewish immigration, pointing out that Palestine could not absorb more than its present population[59] and linked this to the Zionist campaigns of "Conquest of Work" and "Conquest of Land", arguing that immigration would only lead to more Arab peasants being forced off their land, and more Arab workers thrown out of their jobs. In its propaganda to the Jewish street, the Party emphasised that immigration would only lead to magnified Arab hatred and that, in addition to increasing the danger to the Jewish community in the country, "every new immigrant takes away the livelihood of another Jew".[55] It pointed out that the Nazis were not only oppressing Jews, but also Germans and other nationalities and that the proper course for Jews to take would be to struggle together with other workers, and not to leave their countries of origin.[56]

In the period before 1933, the Party had directed its efforts towards winning the support of the Jewish workers for the struggle against imperialism and Zionism, and for the joint trade union organisation of Arab and Jewish workers, but the increased turn towards the Arab national movement in the mid-thirties, and the realisation of the primacy of the national conflict led the Party to weaken its efforts to win support within the Yishuv. Indeed, its policies were directly opposed to the mainstream of the perceived self-interest of the Jewish community, and its struggle against immigration which became increasingly the focus of its activity in the Jewish street, served to act as both the cause and the effect of the Party turning its back on the Jewish population.

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53. Review of the Enemy Camp. Haor, 17 August 1933. Quoted in Israeli, op. cit. p. 108.
54. Arabic leaflet of CC/PCP. Falastin, 14 October 1933.
55. Israeli, op. cit. p. 107.
56. To the Jewish workers. German leaflet of Tel Aviv local comt. of PCP. July 1936. quoted in Israeli. op. cit. p. 109.

The Advent of the National Front

The new line of the PCP which started to emerge towards the latter half of 1933, was a faithful reflection of developments within the international communist movement. The success of Nazism and the rise of Hitler to power in Germany impelled the Comintern to modify its hostile opposition to social democratic parties, and to embark on a new line of collaboration with them to oppose the common enemy. As early as March 1933, the ECCI had issued an appeal to the workers of all countries proposing an anti-Fascist alliance of communist and social democratic parties.[57] This was an attempt to work out an agreement at leadership level between the two parties, which contrasted sharply with the Comintern's stand of a year earlier, when it was specified that agreements were permissible only in special circumstances and for short periods. The first sign of the fruition of this new tactic was the holding of the European anti-Fascist Workers' Congress in June 1933 in Paris,[58] which was attended by both communist and social democratic representatives. After that the movement snowballed, and various European communist parties worked out bilateral agreements with their social democratic counterparts to form united fronts in the face of the perceived Nazi danger. The speech of the Bulgarian communist leader Dimitrov, at the Leipzig trial, stressing the "necessity of establishing a united front with the social democrats and other workers",[59] was a clear indication that the Comintern had embarked on a fundamental transformation of policy, while the 13th plenum of the ECCI meeting in November/December 1933 gave the official blessing of the international communist movement's governing body to this new policy by calling on the communist parties to "persistently fight for the realisation of a united militant front" with social democracy.[60]

As far as the colonial countries were concerned, the first explicit indication of the applicability of the new "united front"

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57. Outline History of the Communist International, op. cit. p. 332.
58. Outline History of the Communist International. op. cit. p. 334.
59. Ibid. p. 336.
60. The 13th Plenum of the ECCI. Theses and Resolutions. (London 1935). p. 20.

tactic to conditions in those areas, came in the form of an article in a Comintern journal prior to the holding of the Seventh Congress.[61] The article referred to the possibility of broad unity among the anti-imperialist forces based on "drawing the bulk of the national bourgeoisie into the anti-imperialist struggle". At the same time criticism was levelled at the "sectarianism" of the colonial communist parties, and the slogan of "Soviet rule in backward countries" was rejected in favour of the "national liberation revolution". "Soviet government" was declared to have been no more than a propaganda slogan, and one moreover, which ignored the specific conditions of the struggle in the various colonial countries and the extent of their backwardness.

The Seventh Congress of the Communist International meeting in July 1935, was attended by two Arab delegates from the PCP.[62] As far as the colonies were concerned, the Congress repudiated the formerly held slogans of "workers' and peasants' revolution" and "Soviet government".[63] Condemning this "ultra-leftism", the Congress outlined a theory of stages, in which the "national liberation struggle" necessitated the formation of an anti-imperialist front with the "national reformists".[64] The Congress rejected the view that the national bourgeoisie of the colonies was wholly pro-imperialist[65] and declared that the antagonisms between the national bourgeoisie and imperialism not only continued to exist, but in a number of countries, had been aggravated. As far as the Arab countries were concerned, the Secretariat of the ECCI adopted a resolution in February 1936[66] which condemned the previous orthodoxy

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61. The Communist International. N 10 1935. p. 571. Quoted In Outline History of the Communist International. op. cit. pp. 368-369.
62. Radwan al Hilou (whose name appeared as Yussuf) travelled from Palestine specially to attend the Congress. F.O. 371/18957/6729. Palestine Police Summaries, 30 October 1935. Mahmoud al Ashkar (whose name appeared as Hadschar) was one of a group of Palestinian students attending the Comintern School. CZA S25/7531.
63. Outline History of the Communist International. op. cit. p. 388.
64. The Anti-Imperialist Peoples Front in the Colonial Countries: Resolution Adopted at the 7th Comintern Congress. Inprecor N. 46. 1935. p. 1181.
65. Outline History of the Communist International. op. cit. p. 389.
66. Ibid. p. 429.

of hostility to the "national reformist organisations", and recommended to the communist parties of the area the necessity of ensuring "close co-operation with the national revolutionaries... to work for collaboration with the national reformist organisations.. support the demands of these organisations directed against the positions of imperialism", while at the same time continuing their struggle against the conclusion of any compromise with imperialism.

During the discussion of Dimitrov's report to the Congress, Khaled Bakdash[67] spoke in the name of the Arab communist parties, and expounded on the new line to be followed in the Arab East. Central to his reasoning was the division of the struggle into stages, and his definition of the prevalent stage as being that of the struggle against imperialism. This was the first stage of the struggle, and only after its successful conclusion could the communist parties lead the masses in the fight for socialism. From this, it followed that the communists should adopt a more positive policy towards the national reformists. Bakdash denied the validity of the thesis, upheld during the "Third Period" concerning the betrayal of the national bourgeoisie and their capitulation to imperialism. He advocated support for the "anti imperialist demands which are raised by the national reformists", and indicated that the Arab communist parties "must have in view the possibility of collaboration and agreement with even the most varied parties of the national reformist bourgeoisie". Even if the national reformist bourgeoisie were to come to power on the basis of a compromise agreement with imperialism, the continued existence of contradictions between the two camps would persist, and the communists' duty would remain one of extending support to the nationalists. Similarly, Bakdash, while paying lip service to the importance of the agrarian revolution, declared that at the present stage it was not necessary to raise such a slogan. The peasants, as a result of Zionist and imperialist oppression, were driven to "concentrate all their anger" against the domination of imperialism, thus their revolutionary potentialities should be gauged by their

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67. Leader of the Syrian Communist Party; he spoke under the name of Ramsi. Inprecor. N 62. 1935. p. 1541.

willingness to struggle against foreign domination and not necessarily by their class consciousness.

The speech of the Secretary of the PCP to the Congress, did not depart from the outline given by Bakdash and emphasised the necessity, for the Party's success, of creating in Palestine "a united front with the national revolutionary and national reformist groups and organisations for the struggle against imperialism".[68] The speech was marked by a fierce condemnation of Zionism, and described the Jewish population as a whole as a "colonising society". The Arabs of Palestine were portrayed as legitimately opposing the Zionists, whose policies were leading to the evacuation of the Arab peasants from their lands, and to the expulsion of the Arab workers from their jobs. The Party was characterised as having been unable to involve itself in the national liberation struggle of the Arab masses because of the "Jewish nationalism" which continued to permeate the Party leadership even after its formal Arabisation. While re-iterating the resolve of the Party to continue its work among the masses of the Jewish population "to emancipate them from Zionist influence",[69] the marked emphasis of the Party secretary's speech was on the necessity of involvement in the Arab national and anti-imperialist struggle. Indeed the fierceness of this attack and the absence of any clear distinction between the Zionist movement and the masses of the Jewish population in the country, was not lost upon the praesidium of the Congress, and was consequently condemned.[70]

To rectify the imbalance caused by this speech, the PCP delegation was instructed to address the Congress a second time. The second Palestinian speaker reiterated the need to form "the anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist peoples' front"[71] and to support the national revolutionary forces in their struggle against imperialism. But he noted that the Party's role was to lead the Arab national struggle "on the right road against the main enemy:

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68. Speech of Radwan al Hilou (Yussuf) in the Discussion of the Report of the Activities of the Ex.Comt. 31 July. Inprecor N 54. 1935. p. 1344.
69. Speech of Radwan al Hilou. Inprecor N 34. 1935. p. 884.
70. Interview with Radwan al Hilou. Jericho, 23 February 1974.
71. Speech of M. Ashkar (Hadschar) in the Discussion on the Report of Dimitrov. 10 August. Inprecor N 35. 1935. p. 948.

foreign imperialism".[72] While condemning Zionism for its role as an agent of British imperialism, he offered "a comradely hand to the Jewish labourers for the common struggle". He went further than the first Palestinian speaker in declaring that the Party's task was to win the participation of the Jewish workers in the national struggle of the Arab masses, and to make them a part of the anti-imperialist peoples' front. This second speech by the Palestine delegation was completely free, in contrast to the former, of any hostility to the Jewish population in Palestine, and while opposing Zionism in equally strong terms, singled out British imperialism as the legitimate object of the anti-imperialist peoples' front, and emphasised the joint interests of both Arabs and Jews in the prosecution of this struggle.

On his return to Palestine in October 1935, Radwan al Hilou set out to implement the new Comintern policy. In a speech to Party activists immediately after his return, he called for the abandonment of the policy of instigation of class struggle, explaining that the Party would never be able to penetrate the Arab masses if it did not put itself at the head of their national struggle.[73] In its activity among the Arabs, the Party should emphasise the struggle against Zionism and against British imperialism, and come out strongly against Jewish immigration and land sales. At the same time he pointed out that the Jewish work of the Party was not to be neglected, and that this should centre on the economic demands of the workers, and on the formation of opposition groups within the Jewish trade unions. Laying special stress on the necessity of Party activity among the Jewish inhabitants, the Party Secretary declared that the presence of Jews in the Party was indispensable, and that "it would be impossible to attain success without the Jewish element".[74]

The Party's policy in the period between the Sixth and Seventh

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72. The speech of Comrade Hajjar - representative of the PCP to the 7th Comintern Congress 1935. Hebrew translation in CZA S25/7531.
73. Assorted news of the Communist Movement, 22 October 1935. CZA S25/7531.
74. F.O. 371/18957/6729. Palestine Police Summaries, 30 October, 1935.

Congresses of the Comintern was not based on any independent formulations, but was completely subservient to the tactics of the International Communist Movement as developed in Moscow. The Arabisation of the Party coincided with the "Third Period" and the Comintern's new militant policy. Although the introduction of this policy was not predicated upon conditions in Palestine, being, as it clearly was, a response to developments in Europe and in China, it did nevertheless coincide with the pursuit of moderate and concilliatory policies by the Arab national movement in Palestine. Yet this hostility and the sectarianism which permeated the Party's outlook did slow down the process of Arabisation and the desired penetration of the Arab population. This was the direct result of an inability to comprehend the national dimension of the struggle in Palestine, and the continued emphasis on the Party's role in the process of social revolution. To this extent, the policy of the PCP in the early thirties represented, despite the on-going process of Arabisation, a continuation of the "revolutionary" line of the past. There were, in addition to the Party's hostility to the national movement, two important features of Party policy in this period. First, the beginning of the involvement in the nascent Arab labour movement which however, was cut short by the outbreak of the 1936 rebellion; second, on the theoretical level, there was an attempt to develop an all-Arab strategy which reflected itself in the condemnation of the existing division in the Arab East, and the demand for Arab unity. This, however, was to prove a passing phase.

In 1935, the change in the Comintern tactics, this time in response to the rise of fascism in Europe, again imposed itself on the strategy of the Party, and propelled it towards greater involvement in the Arab national struggle. Yet this could not have been at all possible had it not embarked on the path of Arabisation and the development of an Arab cadre. In 1936, on the eve of the tumultuous events which were to envelop Palestine, the Party had undergone a conversion, and was totally committed to the Arab national movement. Musa's accession to the leadership of the Party, the adoption of the theory of stages by the Comintern and the introduction of the popular/national front tactic, took the

Party firmly into the anti-imperialist struggle, and relegated the social revolution to an unspecified future date. In the actual conditions of Palestine, this transformation, despite its foreign origins, was much more in tune with the realities of the situation but, while enabling the Party to establish a firmer base among the Arab population, proceeded to further isolate it among the Jewish working class.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PCP AND THE ARAB REBELLION 1936-1939

The Party's Position on the Eve of the Rebellion

The popular front policy initiated at the Comintern's Seventh Congress gave the green light to the PCP's attempts to win a base for itself within the Arab community. It legitimised the Party's increasing involvement with the Arab national movement, and it felt free to declare its recognition of the positive role played by the Palestinian Arab national movement, albeit led by feudal and clerical elements, in pursuit of the now much enhanced national independence struggle.

The Party lost no time in declaring its adherence to the new policy and the concrete tasks this entailed in the prevailing conditions in Palestine. In a meeting held in October 1935 in Tel Aviv, shortly after Radwan al Hilou's return from Moscow, the Party Secretary set out the new line.[1] While not denying the importance of Jewish work and affirming that it was imperative to continue the recruitment of Jews to the Party, the outstanding aspect of his speech lay in the emphasis on activity within the Arab population and the change from class to national agitation. The Party Secretary explained that the popular front with the Arab parties was a vital necessity, and stressed that the basis for this front was not the Party's social program, but those aspects of it which constituted common ground with the Arab nationalists, such as the struggle against Zionism and British imperialism. Arab Party members who were expected to form this liaison with the Arab parties were warned that it was not necessary to speak of communist aims, and to restrict their agitation to those issues which were the common property of both the Party and the nationalists. This was the only way, the Party Secretary declared, of ensuring the transformation of the PCP into a mass organisation. Activity in the Jewish street was to be restricted to the economic sphere with the setting-up of opposition blocs within the Histadrut. The aim was to explain to the Jewish workers the need to form a united front with the Arab national movement, a clear indication that whereas the popular front policy was to manifest itself concretely in an alliance

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1. Assorted News, 22 October 1935. Jewish Intelligence Report. CZA S25/7531.

with the Arab national independence movement, on the Jewish side, there was to be no change in the perception of the Zionist camp as one undifferentiated whole.

In a statement explaining its new line to the Arab population and at the same time openly declaring its support for the independence struggle of the Arabs in Palestine and in the neighbouring Arab countries, the Party issued a pamphlet outlining its new policy and suggesting the formation of a popular front.[2] In a section dealing with foreign affairs, this pamphlet urged Palestinian Arabs to show their solidarity with the Ethiopians fighting against fascism, while calling on those Arabs under French rule to struggle against continued French occupation and in the event of an imperialist war, to struggle against the warring imperialists and turn that war into "a revolution of national liberation".[3]

Dealing with matters pertaining to Palestine, the pamphlet declared the Party's total opposition to both British imperialism and Zionism, and stressed that the struggle against both was, by necessity a single struggle. The immediate activity of the Party was to be geared towards the "destruction of Zionism and for the immediate cessation of immigration and the disarming of all Zionists".[4] It explained that the Party was not motivated by animosity towards the Jewish people, but professed to see in the large number of immigrants brought into Palestine and their arming, an imperialist plot. This was aimed at thwarting the Arab independence struggle both in Palestine and in the neighbouring Arab countries, and at setting up "a reactionary front in this strategic area of the world against the USSR". The Party perceived the Yishuv as performing a "fascist role" in the country, and the Jewish workers were dismissed as constituting an "aristocracy of labour".[5] Although the Party had actively tried to thwart the

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2. A Statement of the PCP: For the Alliance of All the Arabs and their Friends Against all Imperialists. Arabic Pamphlet of PCP. October 1935.
3. Ibid. pp. 9-10. The Party set up the 'Friends of Ethiopia" society headed by Raja Hourani, a member of the Lebanese Communist Party who spent a few years working in Palestine as a teacher during the thirties.
4. Ibid. pp. 10-11.
5. Ibid. p. 13.

Zionist manipulation of the Jewish community, the pamphlet conceded that the results had been meagre, and attributed this to "objective conditions which drive it (the Jewish minority) to play this imperialist role". As a result of this, the Party, while not actually saying so, called for a struggle against the whole Jewish community in the country as a privileged and oppressing minority.

The pamphlet called on the Palestinian Arabs to struggle as a national community against their inferior status in their own country, and asked them to set up "committees and associations to struggle against the privileges granted to Zionism" in the allocation of Government jobs and in business, and to carry on a struggle against the policy of land and labour conquest.[6] The Party directed its call to all patriotic groups and specified that it was appealing to all classes of Arabs whether "merchants or artisans, shopkeepers, or factory owners, bankers or professional persons" to come together in a united front.[7] It further condemned the dissension and bickering between the various nationalist groups and warned the people to be wary of their leaders whose record was one of compromise with the British, and who had shown themselves in the past to be incapable of fulfilling their duties and serving the homeland.[8] The Party also warned of the danger of provocation by the fascists and the agents of Italian and German imperialism, who wanted the Arab movement to indulge in terrorist acts and who declared the time ripe for a general uprising.[9] An uprising could only be the last stage of a successful struggle, to be embarked upon only if there were responsible and honest leaders who were prepared to persevere in the struggle to the end. Otherwise the projected uprising would be aborted, and this would constitute a setback for the liberation struggle in the country for a long time to come.

The Party took the opportunity of this declaration of its new

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6. A Statement of the PCP: For the Alliance of All the Arabs and their Friends Against all Imperialists. Arabic Pamphlet PCP. op. cit. p. 15.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid. p. 17.
9. Ibid. pp. 18-19.

line to "stretch its hand to all those who accept it" asking in return only that its future allies should be honest and sincere in their desire to struggle for the independence of the country. Aligning itself firmly within the ranks of the Arab national movement, the Party called on "the Jewish workers and peasants" to struggle against immigration and the militarisation of the Yishuv, and against the policy of land and labour conquest,[10] raising in fact, the slogans of the Arab nationalists, and portraying them as "the conditions for bringing the two peoples together".

The Party pursued the same line in its Hebrew leaflets directed to the Yishuv and on the occasion of a strike on the 13th November 1935, against the arrival of the High Commissioner in Palestine, it called on the Jewish working masses to join the strikes and demonstrations, and explained that Zionism had transformed the Jewish minority in the country into "a persecuting reactionary imperialist cushion",[11] and that the only way to ensure the rights of the Jews as a national minority was through their participation in the "united front which is forming...for the struggle against imperialism and Zionism, and for the independence of Palestine". Again on the eve of the Arab strike in 1936, the Party addressed itself to the Yishuv, calling on the Jewish workers to "put out your hands in friendship to the Arab workers, for a united struggle against oppression" and declared the emancipation of the Jews to be conditional on the liberation movement of the Arabs themselves.[12]

The discovery of a smuggled shipment of arms in the port of Jaffa in October 1935[13] was the occasion for the Party to make contact

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10. A Statement of the PCP: For the Alliance of All the Arabs and their Friends Against all Imperialists. Arabic Pamphlet PCP. op. cit. pp. 17-18.
11. To the Jewish Working Masses. Hebrew Leaflet CC/PCP. November 1935.
12. To Jewish Intellectuals and Workers. Hebrew Leaflet CC/PCP February 1936. The Party was often accused, both by Arabs and Jews of speaking different languages to the Arab and Jewish communities. This claim could argueably be made after the setting up of the Jewish Section in 1937, and its drift away from the Party, but there is no evidence for this prior to that date.
13. R. John & S. Hadawi. The Palestine Diary. (Beirut 1970). Vol. 2. p. 251.

with the leadership of the Arab national movement. A Party delegation delivered a memorandum, addressed to the Arab parties and the Supreme Moslem Council, to the Grand Mufti himself.[14] In it the Party condemned the activities of the Zionists in importing arms and called on the Arab leadership to arm and organise the Arabs for the approaching struggle against immigration, land sales and the Mandate. This first contact with the official leadership of the Arab movement was implicit recognition by the Party of this national leadership, and indicative of the new course it was to chart as an autonomous group within the framework of the Arab national movement. It was born out of the recognition, not only of the necessity of the formation of the popular front, as directed by the Comintern's Seventh Congress, but also the realisation that the Party itself could not lead the national movement, and that its role was confined to putting pressure on the leadership to adopt more radical aims and methods.

Initially the Party's policy remained distinct and separate. Although it secretly maintained contact with some terrorist groups,[15] it nevertheless remained opposed to terror,[16] and warned of its dangers. It differentiated itself on a number of other issues, notably the approach to the land problem. Whereas the Arab leadership sought to collect funds to buy Arab land which was in danger of falling into the hands of Zionist institutions, the Party thought that this policy would result in failure. Its view was that the Zionists could only be defeated by increasing the degree of national awareness of the Arab population to ensure that they themselves would refuse to head the tempting offers of the Zionists, and hold

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14. The delegation was composed of Said Kabalan and Najib Franjieh. Interview with Radwan al Hilou, Jericho, 16 January 1974.
15. Assorted News, 11 October 1935. Jewish Intelligence Report. CZA S25/7531. The Report mentions that Khalil Shannir, secretary of the Jaffa party committee maintained contact with terrorist groups near the Tulkarem area. This is supported by Radwan al Hilou, interview, Jericho, 16 January 1974.
16. Jewish Intelligence Report, 11 October 1935, loc. cit. states that there was agitation within the Party for partaking in the terrorist campaign, and that this included Jewish party members in Haifa. Radwan al Hilou however remained opposed to this path and travelled to Haifa to point out the dangers of such activity.

on to their lands. But this independent stand was soon swamped by the enthusiasm engendered by the long national strike, and the ever closer identification with the policies of the Mufti's leadership, and with the separation of the Party into two sections. This immersed the leadership completely in the Arab struggle and it became even more distant from the Yishuv and its internal problems.

The Party siezed on the death of al Kassam which closely followed the discovery of the smuggled Jewish arms and created an atmosphere of intense political agitation, to arrange a public meeting to launch its new national front policy. Held in Jaffa in December 1935, the meeting was attended by a large audience[17] and chaired by Mohammad Nimr Odeh[18] a recent convert to the Party. At this meeting, the Party declared its adherence to the slogans which were to become the official demands of the Arab strike and subsequent rebellion: the cessation of immigration and land sales, and the establishment of a democratic government in the country. In addition, it called on the Arab national movement to declare civil disobedience by refusing to pay taxes and demanded the raising of the slogan of "no taxation without representation". As a further step

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17. Falastin, 10 December 1935. The meeting, which was held in the Appolo cinema, was estimated by the paper to have been attended by over 2,000 people. A large picture of Al Kassam decorated the platform and the meeting was attended by H. Husseini, I. Darwaza, A. Nuwaihed (left Istiklal leaders) and K. Mitri, leader of the Jaffa Arab workers' society. In an interview with Radwan al Hilou, Jericho, 22 January 1974, he stated that H. Husseini secretly organised the meeting on behalf of the Party.

18. Mohammad Nimr Odeh, was a young teacher who had resigned from his Government job as a protest against the death of al Kassam, and the whipping of two pupils as a punishment for their agitational activity. This act won him great notoriety in the country. On joining the Party he was immediately appointed to the CC and soon after to the Secretariat. He was later held responsible for identifying the Party with the policies of the Mufti, especially as regards terror activities, and was accused by the Jewish Section of being a Mufti plant. He left Palestine in 1939 and joined the Mufti in his exile in Baghdad. His association with the Party ended with the termination of the rebellion in 1939 and his disagreement with the Party over the 1939 White Paper to which he was opposed.

to put pressure on the Government, the communist chairman of the meeting called for the resignation of all Arab Government officials, a demand which, considering the official standing of the Mufti, was clearly intended as an attempt to put pressure on the Arab leadership to come out openly against the British administration and to completely sever its links with the Mandatory power.

Thus on the eve of the Arab general strike, and the forthcoming protracted Arab rebellion, the Party attempted to dispel the stigma of being a Jewish party. The turnabout in the Comintern's policy at the Seventh Congress could not have been better suited for the Party's future development. Arabisation had been initially linked to an ultra-left policy which necessitated continued hostility to the Arab national movement, and the primacy of the class over the national struggle. The introduction of the popular front line removed the last barrier separating the Party from the Arab national movement. Although numerically it continued to have a large Jewish membership and Arab sympathisers from among the intelligentsia continued to shy away from open association with it, the Party could no longer be accused on the grounds of either its leadership or its political line, of being alien to the struggles of the Arab movement in the country. This itself, after a long period of vaccilation was preparing to embark on a long struggle against the British Mandate, the enemy which the Party had long proclaimed was inseparable from the on-going Zionist colonisation project, and by far the more important and dangerous adversary.

The Party During the Rebellion

a. The Reaction to the Rebellion

The outbreak of the general strike and the ensuing rebellion took the Party by surprise. While it had repeatedly called on the Arabs to forsake co-operation with the British,[19] and pointed to the path mapped out by al Kassam, the Party had simultaneously warned of the dangers of a premature uprising and of provocatory attempts to

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19. Leaflet of CC/PCP, quoted in Falastin, 29 January 1936.

abort the mass movement. However, once the general strike was declared and unanimously observed, the Party wholeheartedly gave its support to what it regarded as "a link in the chain of spontaneous outbreaks which have taken place from time to time during the eighteen years of the Zionist policy of conquest."[20]

The outbreak of the rebellion found the Party still divided on the correct interpretation and application of the popular front line, and its consequent attitude to the Zionists and to the Arab national movement. As understood by the Party leadership,[21] the popular front implied support for the Arab movement and for the primacy of the independence struggle. Simultaneously, it meant an unchanged position of hostility towards the Zionist movement as a whole. While not being blind to the differentiation which existed within the Zionist camp, the Party leadership rejected any consideration of joint activity with the more "moderate" Zionist groups, denying the validity of any possible co-existence with "moderation" based on Zionist principles and policies. Thus the Zionist movement was treated as one hostile body, and this reduced the Party's activity to the one section of the population which offered potentialities for activity in the independence struggle. Party activity in the Jewish street was confined to dealing with immediate economic demands and to propaganda for the Arab movement with repeated calls to the Jewish workers to forsake Zionism and join the Arab independence struggle.

There existed two other, as yet uncrystalised points of view within the Jewish cadre of the Party. The first represented the Jews in the country as being "chauvinist and reactionary", while tending to regard the Arabs as "progressive and revolutionary".[22] From this it logically followed that the role of the Party lay entirely within the Arab movement. Until the outbreak of the rebellion, this point of view was regarded as a deviation. Later however, it became official Party policy though this was never explicitly admitted.

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20. Events in Palestine: Letter from Jaffa. Inprecor. N.28. 1936. p.80.
21. During 1936-39, the Party Secretariat was made up of Radwan al Hilou, Simha Tzabari and Mohammad Nimr Odeh.
22. F.O.371/21881/5922. CID Report on Communist Activity. 20 September 1938.

The second point of view which crystalised among the Jewish cadre, was a more orthodox continuation of the Party's past political attitudes. It opposed the methods and tactics of the Arab movement and did not see the role of the Communist Party as helping to effect "national liberation", but rather as uniting Arabs and Jews to realise the aims of the "social revolution".[23] This point of view was to serve as the basis of the policy of the Jewish section which was set up by the Party in 1937 and which later split and established itself as an independent group.[24]

With the outbreak of the revolt, the Party leadership put forward the thesis of "two struggle camps". The Arab camp was portrayed as progressive, while the Zionists were relegated to the imperialist camp.[25] The armed struggle in the Arab street was characterised as a mass struggle resulting from objective political conditions which the Arab masses found themselves in. It was thus perceived to be correct that the task of the Jewish members of the Party was to help the Arab movement, including participation in the armed struggle. Regarding the Zionist camp as a uniform front, the Party did not introduce any slogans in the Jewish Street which were specific to the internal conflicts which existed within the Zionist movement. The Yishuv was regarded as "a single reactionary body opposed to the Arab people as a single progressive body".[26] The Party's role in the Jewish street was reduced to propagating the slogans of the Arab national movement and extending support to the armed rebellion.

The Party's support for the rebellion was immediate, though initially it had believed that the general strike would not last long, and tended to see the events as a repetition and continuation, though undoubtedly with a different thrust, of the previous dis-

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23. F.O. 371/21881/5922. CID Report on Communist Activity. 20 September 1938.
24. See pp. 140-148.
25. Memorandum of the Jewish Section to the Comintern, September 1939. p. 6. Kaf Alef Shel Teudot shel Ha Miflaga HaKomonistit be Eretz Yisrael (21 documents of the PCP - hitherto referred to as Kaf Alef Documents) Type written collection compiled by the Hagana. Tel Aviv, October 1941.
26. Letter of CC/PCP to the Executive Committee of the Histadrut, Tel Aviv 29 July 1944. Reproduced in Supplement N.XV to Digest of Press and Events. Jewish Agency for Palestine. Information Section. Jerusalem. (20 September, 1944).

turbances of 1929 and 1933.[27] In an appeal calling for support for the strike, the Party characterised the Arab struggle as one of "necessary self-defence" against two powerful enemies,[28] and commended the high degree of unity shown by "every category of the population...all parties, all creeds, in one united front against the common enemy". It saw the struggle in Palestine as one for the right of self-determination and "for national liberation from the yoke of foreign oppressors". The Party vehemently denied the "false allegations" that Hitler and Mussolini supported the insurgents and supplied them with money and arms[29] and described the struggle as one of "a small and suppressed nation" exhibiting, despite all the ensuing hardships and suffering, "a rare example". The battle which the Arab movement was seen to be waging was portrayed as constituting a "crossroads" and one whose result would be "decisive... liberty or slavery, life or death".[30]

The rebellion was seen to have two objectives: against the British, the aim was to achieve independence, while against Zionism, the Party recognised and gave implicit support to the "endeavours to make the continuation of Zionist colonisation impossible by means of sabotage and partisan attacks".[31] In its leaflets directed at the Jewish street, the Party did not hesitate to come out fully in support of the rebellion, and called on the Jews to join the Arabs in the struggle against Zionism and imperialism.[32] Its message to the Jews was clear and uncompromising. It warned them of falling into the trap of becoming the means by which Britain, for its own interests, put down the rebellion,[33] and called on them to struggle against Jewish immigration, not only because it was aimed at building a Jewish state and reducing the Arabs to a minority status, but also in terms of the economic hardships they were suffering and those

27. Interview with M. Nimr Odeh. Beirut, 10 March 1974. At the outbreak of the strike it was decided that Odeh should not go underground and that he should allow himself to be arrested, as this was expected to be for a short duration.
28. Uprising in Palestine: Appeal of CC/PCP. Inprecor. N 30.1936.p.805.
29. To All British Soldiers, Members of the Navy and the Air Force in Palestine and Trans-Jordan. English Leaflet of the Revolutionary Organisation for the Social and Political Liberation of Palestine. Haifa, August 1936.
30. To All Jewish Workers. Hebrew Leaflet CC/PCP. June 1936.
31. Uprising in Palestine. loc. cit.
32. Leaflet of CC/PCP, quoted in Falastin, 1 May 1936.
33. To All Jewish Workers. Hebrew Leaflet of Tel Aviv Local Committee-PCP. August 1936.

which would befall the new immigrants.[34] Referring to the attacks on Jewish settlements by Arab bands, the Party laid the blame fully at the door of the Zionist movement which was "deepening the national hatred chasm between Jews and Arabs and driving the Jews into a dead end".[35] It was the Zionists who were "toying with Jewish blood" and theirs was the responsibility for whatever calamaties befell the Jews in Palestine. The Party called on Jewish workers to refuse to support the Histadrut in its strike-breaking activities against the Arabs. These activities were seen to constitute "provocatory deeds" which would "bring about the escalation of the Arab masses' hatred of the Jews in the country" and contribute to the anti-Jewish terror.[36]

The leaflets of the Party directed at the Jewish street described the rebellion as "fully justified" and went so far as to see it as "a struggle for all the oppressed in the country...for your liberation also from the yoke of your oppressors".[37] The Arabs had been so far engaging in the struggle alone, and the duty of the Jews was to support them and not to stand as obstacles in the path of their liberation. Both to save the Jewish community in the country from further bloodshed, and to shake the country free from the oppressive imperialist yoke, it was necessary for the Jews to form a united front with the Arabs. Although the Party did not indicate how this should come about, it continued to hold to this slogan as the only possible means of avoiding further inter-communal conflict, and of depriving the British of one of their mainstays in the country.

The Party correctly perceived that the rebellion was directed predominantly against the British, and this in many ways justified its call for support for the Arab national movement and its characterisation as anti-imperialist. However, it was not blind to the terror that accompanied the rebellion and to the attacks on the Jewish community. The Party saw this anti-Jewish terror as a by-

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34. To All the Refugees of Tel Aviv. Hebrew Leaflet of the Tel Aviv Local Committee-PCP. July 1936.
35. To All Jewish Workers. Hebrew Leaflet CC/PCP. August 1936.
36. To All Jewish Workers. June 1936. loc. cit.
37. Ibid.

product of the armed struggle[38] and not, as in previous disturbances, as the predominant feature of the Arab movement. While it condemned the terror in no uncertain terms[39] it also tried to explain its occurrence as a result of the predominance of peasants, who had felt more directly the pressure of Zionist colonisation, in the armed bands.[40] It pointed out that in the towns, where the urban population was more mature politically, the struggle was mainly conducted against the British. While not reporting anti-Jewish acts of terror in the Party press,[41] the Party's most frequent reaction to this phenomenon was to explain it as being the consequence of Zionist policy, of immigration and of the campaigns of land and work conquest.

The Party also blamed the Histadrut for the fact that the Arab strike was not a total one. It explained the lack of participation of some Arab workers in the strike, such as the railway workers, as being due to fear of "Jewish blacklegs".[42] The Arab reluctance was seen to be the direct result of the Histadrut's call to Jewish workers "to force their way into undertakings were Arabs are on strike". Thus the Arab workers, though in solidarity with the strike, felt impelled to stay at their jobs, but the Party claimed that they had shown their solidarity by "contributing their wages to the strike fund".

The illegal Party press took it upon itself to propagate the activities of the rebel bands and the hardships which the country was suffering as a consequence of "British oppression". A weekly organ displayed reports of armed activity against police stations and various other incidents, and dwelt on the "military atrocities" inflicted on the Arabs, condemning the burning of houses by troops, the searching of villages, the "assaults on women and looting",[43] and echoed the national movement in its denunciations of Jewish immigration. But when the HAC called for the termination of the strike in October 1936, the Party refused to acquiesce in what it

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38. Memorandum of Jewish Section ... op. cit. p. 8.
39. Interview with Radwan al Hilou. Jericho, 16 February 1974. See also Porath, op. cit. p. 265.
40. Palestine in Uproar. Inprecor. N.33. 1936. pp. 884-886.
41. Porath, loc. cit.
42. Events in Palestine: Letter from Jaffa. loc. cit.
43. CID Report on Communist Activity, 1938. loc. cit. The Party's new Arabic organ was entitled Al Jabha Al Shaabiya (The Popular Front).

perceived to be a retreat from the struggle against the British and a desire on the part of the Arab leaders to arrive at a compromise with the mandatory government. It correctly perceived the intervention of the Arab Kings as a face-saving device prompted by the Palestinian Arab leadership in order to put an end to the strike, and called on the Arabs to disregard this "shameful betrayal"[44] by their leaders and to continue their strike until the demands put forward at the outbreak of the strike were met.

b. Involvement in the Armed Struggle

The actual involvement of the Party in the rebellion, in the sense of carrying out armed activities, was small and rather insignificant, and it did not constitute an important variable in the development of the rebellion itself. However, the Party's support for the rebellion, both politically and as symbolised by the few acts committed by Party members, was important. At the time, those few acts which can be grouped together under the general heading of participation in armed activity, assumed an importance out of all proportion to theirreal size. The reason for this lay in the fact that the Party, despite its Arabisation, continued to be regarded by both Arabs and Jews as a Jewish party, and indeed, Jews continued to make up the majority of the Party's cadre.

The Party's policies contributed to a changed image of the Party within the Arab community: its strength among the Arab youth increased and it came to be regarded as being firmly pro-Arab.[45] At the same time the Arabs held an exaggerated view of the Party's strength and capabilities.[46] The Party had worked hard to achieve this transformation and achieved some prominence due to its participation in a number of nationalist gatherings. In April-May

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44. Interview with M. Nimr Odeh. Beirut, 10 March 1974. See also Leaflet of CC/PCP in Falastin, 14 September 1936.
45. M. Nimr Odeh termed this "the golden age" of the Party.
46. During the first months of the strike, the Party was approached by a group of Arab youth at the head of whom stood a young lawyer, Aziz Shihade, who asked for arms to carry out activities in Jerusalem. Interview with Radwan al Hilou, Jericho, 1 February 1974.

1936 Party members took part in the activities of The National Congress of Studying Youth,[47] while in 1937 two Party members[48] were dispatched to the Bludan Congress.[49] There they distributed a statement declaring the Party's support for the rebellion and at the conclusion of the Congress the Party issued a further statement condemning the expulsion of the Mufti from Palestine and supporting the resolutions and pronouncements of the Congress in its demands for national independence and the continuation of the rebellion.[50]

Within the Yishuv, the Party's support for the rebellion took two forms: the first[51] consisted of oral and written propaganda aimed at explaining the situation in the country, and showing the common interests of the Yishuv and the Arabs in the struggle against "British imperialism and its Zionist servants"; the second consisted of armed activity and collaboration with the Partisan bands.[52] This latter was aimed at increasing the confusion within the Yishuv[53] and to demonstrate the Party's open support for the Arab movement. At the same time in its literature, the Party increasingly attacked Jewish immigration and this, at a time of mounting pressure on European Jewry, inevitably gained it wide hostility within the ranks of the Yishuv.

The issue which angered the Yishuv and sowed dissension within the Party arose as a result of the planting of a bomb at a Histadrut-

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47. The Role of the Party and the Communist Youth in the Arab Street: Document of CC/PCP April 1942, in Y. Frankel (ed.) Ha Tnua HaKomonistit Ve Ha Yishuv Ba Eretz Yisrael 1920-48 (The Communist Movement and the Yishuv in Palestine: A collection of Documents) (Jerusalem 1968) p. 165. This work is hitherto referred to as Frankel Collection.
48. The Policy of the PCP towards the Arab National Movement: Document of CC/PCP, August 1941 in Kaf Alef Documents, op. cit. p. 83. The two members were Abdullah Bandak and M. Nimr Odeh. Interview with A. Bandak. Amman, 6 March 1974. See also F. Meifreij. The Arab National Congress in Bludan 1937 (Damascus 1937). pp. 33-34.
49. This Congress held in Syria, September 1937 was attended by more than 300 delegates from various Arab states. See Hurewitz, op.cit. pp.88-89.
50. A Living Picture of the Bludan Congress. Hebrew Leaflet CC/PCP.1937.
51. The Dissolution of the Jewish Section: Resolution Circulated to Party Branches. Document of CC/PCP, December 1939. Kaf Aelf Documents. op. cit. p. 31.
52. Ibid. These were referred to simply as "known deeds".
53. Memo of Jewish Section ... op. cit. p. 6.

run workers' club in Haifa during the strike in 1936.[54] Even then this act of the Party was attacked in the pages of the pro-communist paper Haor.[55] An answer on behalf of the Party did not deny the authenticity of the report, but argued against its publication on the grounds that it hardened the Yishuv against the Party by serving as a propaganda ploy in the hands of the Zionists.[56] While this seems to have been an isolated incident the Party did however engage in other acts[57] both on its own and in collaboration with the partisan bands, and its members who enrolled in the bands pursued activities such as blowing up trains, cutting telegraph wires, and uprooting trees in Jewish plantations.[58] The Party leadership maintained contact with the leaders of the rebellion in the

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54. Most Party members I interviewed affirmed that this act took place. Pnina Feinhaus Haifa, 4 April 1974 stated that she had knowledge of the decision to place the bomb but was unable to change it. Radwan al Hilou on the other hand denied that this event ever took place (interview, Jericho, 9 February 1974) and claimed that the Party issued a statement at the time denying its responsibility. M. Nimr Odeh (interview, Beirut 10 March 1974) who was a member of the Secretariat at the time also denies Party responsibility for this incident. He admits, however, himself placing a bomb on the Tel Aviv beach but claimed that this was done without the knowledge of the Party!
55. Haor, 7 December 1936. On the Role of the PCP In the Recent Events: A letter to the Editor. This letter condemned the armed activity of the Party and mentioned the bombing of the Histadrut club in Haifa.
56. A Letter to the Editor (translated from Arabic): About the letter of "Worker" in the previous issue. Haor. 7 January 1937.
57. e.g. Placing bombs in the Jewish exhibition in Tel Aviv; placing bombs in a wood storage depot in Jaffa. See also Falastin, 15 July 1936 and F.O. 371/20018/5551. Palestine Police Summaries, 18 August 1936. Radwan al Hilou, Interview, Jericho 9 February 1974, stated that all acts committed in the Jewish street were carried out by Jewish Party members. He also claimed that Jewish communists were eager to take part in the armed struggle and that rather than the CC ordering them to perform such acts, it was they who approached the CC with the demand to be allowed to enrol in the armed struggle.
58. e.g. Fakhri Maraka, known as the Red Corporal, who was active in the Majdal area. He had joined the Party while a member of the Police, and later deserted and fled to the mountains where he became the right hand man of Shikh Hassan Salameh one of the prominent partisan leaders. He was wounded and taken prisoner in 1936 and given a life sentence, but managed to escape from Acre jail in 1946 when it was blown up by Jewish terrorists. Interview with Fakhri Maraka, Amman, 6 March 1974.

mountains[59] and on a few occasions with the Mufti himself,[60] carrying out intelligence services,[61] and performing some technical aid which the Jewish and Armenian cadres of the Party were able to supply. At the same time the Party undertook the printing of leaflets for some of the partisan bands[62] and hoped in this way to be able to influence the political outlook of the rebellion. The one notable success was the publication by Aref Abdul Razik, the second most prominent rebel leader, at the prompting of the Party, of a leaflet directed by the Jewish population.[63] This leaflet denied any religious or racial motivation to the Arab struggle and denied accusations that the Arab movement wanted "to throw you into the sea... or that we will treat you as they treat you in Europe", and pledged the Arabs to guarantee the security and the liberty of the Jews on condition that they did not take Britain's side in the on-going independence struggle. This was what the Party characterised as being able "to influence the political direction of events", and vindicated its support for the rebellion.

By the time the second phase of the rebellion started, the Party

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59. The Policy of the PCP towards the Arab National Movement..... op. cit. p. 84. Radwan al Hilou, Interview, Jericho, 1 February 1974, maintained that the Party was in touch with Arif Abdul Razik, a gang leader in the mountains. Abdullah Bandak, Interview, Amman, 6 March 1974, stated that he established contact with Fouad Nassar, a future leader of the Arab communists in the forties and of the Jordanian communist Party, who at the time led a small band in the Hebron area. Khaled Zagnouri, Interview Amman 8 March 1974, who at the time was a member of the CC recounted that he often travelled to the mountains with M. Nimr Odeh to confer with the armed band leaders.
60. Mohammed Nimr Odeh, Interview Beirut 10 March 1974, claimed that his first meeting with the Mufti was in Beirut in 1937 and that all his contacts with the Mufti were known and approved by the two other members of the Secretariat, Musa and S. Tzabari. Radwan al Hilou, Interview, Jericho 9 February 1974, stated that in addition to the activity of M. Nimr Odeh, contact with the Mufti was maintained via one of his agents, Mohammad Nimr al Hawari.
61. W. Laqueur. Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East (London 1961) p. 97. Interview with Radwan al Hilou, Jericho, 9 February 1974.
62. Interview with Abdullah Bandak. Bethlehem, 23 July 1973.
63. To the Jewish People in the Country and Outside it. Hebrew leaflet signed Arif Abdul Razik-Commander of the Rebels. September 1938. This was re-published in Kol Haam. N. 18 March 1939.

had suffered hard blows. The period of anarchy which followed the general strike enabled the Party cadre to surface and operate in an atmosphere of semi-legality, but during the latter half of 1938 the British army went on the offensive. The Party cadre was again forced underground, and it suffered losses among the active members, some of whom had been killed or imprisoned, especially among the youth.[64] Others, especially among the Jewish cadre had been separated from the Party and preferred, due to disagreements with the Party's pro-nationalist line, to remain dormant. Very early in the strike, the authorities had taken "preventive action" against the known communists and the Party's sympathisers. By the end of the strike, forty-six communists had been deported, while a total of two hundred and sixty-four persons had been detained[65] on suspicion of communist activity. Among those was the Party Secretary Radwan al Hilou and most other leading cadres. Although this greatly hampered the Party's activity it was, unlike deportations, a minor irritant since the time spent in jail was usually no more than a few months, after which Party members could return to political activity.

The Party's total adherence to the Arab movement and the support it extended to the armed Arab bands also had a negative effect: it resulted in strong disagreement among the Jewish cadre of the Party. As early as May 1936, the secretary of the Tel Aviv local Party committee had drafted a leaflet which, while supporting the Arab revolt, had called on Arabs and Jews to refrain from bloodshed.[66] The Party, holding to the view that it was necessary to give full backing to the revolt, and that terror was a minor manifestation and a by-product of the general armed struggle, rejected this and in its own leaflets called on the Jews to take an active role in the revolt. As a result of this dissension the Tel Aviv

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64. The Role of the Party and the Commmunist Youth in the Arab Street... op. cit. p. 166-167.
65. F.O. 371/20018/6608. Palestine Police Summaries, 28 September 1936.
66. The Events: CC Version. Document of CC/PCP March 1940. In Frankel Collection, op. cit. p. 143. See also S. Dothan. The Beginnings of Jewish National Communism in Palestine, in Carpi (ed.), op. cit. p. 210.

committee was dissolved and its members were expelled from the Party. Although this incident was exceptional, the majority of the Jewish cadre gradually found themselves in opposition to what they saw to be the outright "tailism" of the Party to the national movement. A number of cadres found a way out of this impasse by volunteering to go and fight with the loyalists in the Spanish Civil War.[67] However, by 1937 the Party had found itself forced to divide its work in the Arab and Jewish streets, a formulation which it was hoped would preserve the Jewish cadres loyalty, while at the same time allowing them to pursue their own political activities within the Yishuv.

c. The Setting-up of the Jewish Section

The establishment by the CC of the Jewish Section early in 1937, to carry out activity in the Jewish street was explained simply in terms of tactical re-organisation stemming from the changed conditions in Palestine resulting from the 1936 rebellion.[68] A Party document spoke of the disturbances as preventing the "permanent and active connection between the Jewish and Arab street"[69] and pointed

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67. F.O.371/20018/7576. Palestine Police Summaries, 20 November 1936. See also C.O.733/397/75146. Undesirables,1939. While all the sources agree that Jewish members of the PCP went to Spain, there is wide disagreement over the actual numbers involved. Falastin 7 November, 9 December, and 25 December 1936, gave a figure of 60, some of whom it reported were released from prison on condition that they left the country for Spain. C. Abramsky (Interview, London, 5 July 1973) gave a figure nearer 100 which is the same as that mentioned by Radwan al Hilou, Interview, Jericho, 9 February 1974. Two Arabs only went to Spain. One, Ali Abdul Khalik al Tuwaini was according to a report in Falastin, 28 May 1938, killed there. The second, Najati Sidki, spent 5 months there working as an intelligence officer; he returned to Beirut and published a number of articles entitled, Five Months in Spain, in Sawt al Shaab (organ of Syrian Communist Party) July 1937. The Party, it is worth mentioning, objected to the dispatch of large numbers of its members to Spain as this was seen to weaken the Party.
68. The Dissolution of the Jewish Section ... op. cit. p. 28. See also CID Report on Communist Activity 1938. loc. cit.
69. The Dissolution of the Jewish Section ... loc. cit. Interviews with Radwan al Hilou, Jericho, 16 February 1974 and Jabra Nicola, London, 5 January 1973.

to the existence of special conditions in the two streets which demanded particular attention and different tactics. The establishment of the Section was not meant to enshrine the pursuit of two different policies, but was rather the utilisation of two methods to suit the existing national divisions and to overcome the difficulty of Arab and Jewish communists getting together in the prevalent atmosphere of animosity and boycott.[70]

In reality the decision to establish the Section was necessitated by more than the fact that the conditions created by the rebellion made joint activity impossible. Although the precedent of having separate national sections did exist among communist parties,[71] the fact that the Party had existed in Palestine for over twelve years within a united organisational framework, despite severe police repression and the hostility of both Jewish and Arab communities, lends weight to the assumption that the decision signalled a change of strategy concerning the role of the Jewish cadre in the Party vis-a-vis the Arab rebellion. It perhaps signified a realisation by the Party leadership that the previous insistence on Jewish communists playing an active role in the armed rebellion was not realistic. The setting-up of the Section aimed at directing the Jewish cadre's activity to within the ranks of the Yishuv, by involving it in the Jewish community's own problems and activities. It was in effect, an admittance on the part of the Party leadership that the pro-rebellion path pursued by the CC was at best incomprehensible and at worst unacceptable to the Jewish cadre.

The establishment of the Section was carried out at a meeting of delegates of the local Jewish committees in Jerusalem, Haifa,

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70. There is some disagreement among the Party members I interviewed concerning contact between Jews and Arabs in the Party. Some Arab Party members seem to have had a lot of contact with Jewish members while others explained the absence of contact as resulting from the realities of national division in the country. Few places of employment combined within them Arab and Jewish workers which led to most Party cells being made up of one or the other national group. In an interview with C. Abramsky, London 5 July 1973, who was active in the PCP during 1936-39, he stated that in the entire period he met only one Arab Party member, Radwan al Hilou, the Party Secretary.

71. e.g. In the USSR the Yevsketzia existed till 1930.

and Tel Aviv.[72] The CC appointed Hanoch Brozaza[73] as Secretary of the Section.[74] He had not opposed the Party line during 1936 and was appointed as leader of the Section on the strength of his lack of oppositional activity. As it turned out he was soon to introduce changes in the political orientation of the Section's activities which led it to revise and reinterpret the slogan of the "popular front", recognising the existence of "progressive circles within Zionism", and embarking on a policy of "entrism" within the Zionist organisations.[75] This led to a departure from the line decreed by the CC and to widening the gulf separating the latter from the Section. A year after the Section's establishment, its path had so diverged from that of the Party leadership that the organisational link between the two was severed[76] to be renewed only after the termination of the rebellion. Thus, what started as an attempt to fit the general line of the Party to the special conditions of the Arab and Jewish streets, led to the adoption of two separate and seemingly heterogeneous policies, each in tune with the national aspirations of that part of the population in which the respective section of the Party was active.

d. The Response to Partition

The Party's response to the 1937 partition proposal of the Peel

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72. Memo of Jewish Section to Comintern...op. cit. p. 9. Radwan al Hilou was in jail at the time of the Section's establishment. The decision was taken by Simha Tzabari and Farajjal al Hilou, (a leader of the Lebanese Communist Party who was sent to Palestine for the duration of Radwan al Hilou's imprisonment) and agreed to by the Party Secretary. Interviews with Radwan al Hilou, Jericho, 16 February 1974 and M. Nimr Odeh, Beirut, 10 March 1974. See also Dothan, op. cit. p. 211.
73. Hanoch Brozaza (known as Zaken: the old man) 1910-64, emigrated to Palestine in 1928 as a member of a left wing group, Hashomer Hatzair and joined the PCP early in the 1930's. He led a split from the Party in 1939-40 and formed the Ha Emet group. He joined the Party for a short spell in 1942 only to split again in 1943.
74. Interview with Radwan al Hilou, Jericho, 16 February 1974. See also Dothan, loc. cit.
75. For the policy of the Section and its disagreements with the Party leadership see pp. 142-146.
76. The Dissolution of the Jewish Section...loc. cit.

Commission was one of immediate rejection, describing it as an attempt to strengthen Britain's hold over Palestine under the guise of "satisfying both sides".[77] The partition plan was portrayed as providing a political base for Zionism in the most important parts of the country by transferring the Arabs from the proposed Jewish state to the economically secondary regions, maintaining a chasm separating the two peoples and reducing both to complete dependence on Britain.[78] By realising partition under the "facade of a Jewish state and a Jewish army" the Party saw British policy as successfully establishing an armed force for itself and a base for its military forces which would serve to safeguard British interests in the whole Arab region, while at the same time directing Arab nationalist hostility from Britain to the independent Jewish state.[79]

The Party raised its voice against partition in its Arabic and Hebrew leaflets and in its underground press, calling for a struggle against partition by political means.[80] As far as the Arabs were concerned, its call fell on receptive ears since the national movement itself was unanimously opposed to partition, while in the Yishuv the Zionists were divided. The mainstream leaders of the Yishuv were in agreement with the principle of partition, while the Revisionists stood firmly in opposition to it. The Party characterised the acceptance of this "Jewish dwarf state" by Weitzman and Ben Gurion, as being based on the dream of future expansion, while the Revisionists were attacked for opposing partition because they were desirous of a state "on both sides of the Jordan"[81] and held to a maximalist position which would not accept anything less than total Jewish control of the country.

Directing its attention to the Yishuv, the Party attacked the Zionist leaders for accepting partition after luring thousands of Jews into the country with false promises of Jewish independence and consequently subjecting them to economic hardships and suffering and

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77. To the Yishuv: To the Masses of Toilers in the Country. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP. July 1937.
78. The Dissoluation of the Jewish Section...op. cit. p. 31.
79. To the Yishuv: To the Masses of Toilers...loc. cit.
80. The Policy of the PCP Towards the Arab National Movement...op.cit. p. 83.
81. The Dissolution of the Jewish Section...op. cit. p. 32.

placing them in a situation where their life was in constant danger. It warned the Yishuv that the concurrence of its leaders in the partition plan was against the interests of both peoples in Palestine and emphasised that the Arabs "would not agree to the tearing-up of their country"[82] but would struggle against partition with all their might. It further sought to make them aware of its own characterisation of the proposed Jewish state as a facade for British domination which would strengthen British imperialism at the expense of the Jews themselves and would place the Yishuv in permanent danger and exacerbate racial hatred in the region. This would only serve to create a favourable atmosphere for fascist propaganda among the Arabs and would ensure that even moderate Arabs would be won over to fascism.[83] The Party further warned the Jewish inhabitants that the only way to avoid the outbreak of anti-Jewish terror lay in "understanding" between Arabs and Jews on the basis of the rejection of partition. It proposed as a foundation for this "understanding" plan the prevailing numerous clausus between Arabs and Jews in the country, the establishment of an elected democratic government and the securing of equal rights to the Yishuv, conditional on the latter's giving up its occupation policy against the Arabs.[84]

The divergence between the CC of the Party and the Jewish Section began to appear soon after the latter's establishment and came into the open in response to the partition question. Both relied in their calls to the Yishuv on a predominantly class appeal and outlined the economic hardships of the immigrants, the unemployment, the bad living and working conditions, and the insecurity which accompanied the Arab rebellion and which was further exacerbated by the Zionist support for partition.[85] The CC although endeavouring to strengthen opposition to partition within the Yishuv, rejected any form of co-operation with Zionists and insisted on maintaining

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82. To the Yishuv: To the Masses of Toilers.. loc. cit.
83. Article in Kol Haam, N. 4. December 1937, reprinted in Kol Haam, N.11. March 1938.
84. The Prevention of Partition is the Prevention of New Disturbances. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP 4 September 1937.
85. The Struggle Against Partition is a Struggle for Understanding. Hebrew Leaflet of the Jewish Section-PCP. August 1938.

its policy of treating the Zionist camp as one hostile bloc. The Section, on the other hand sought to implement a popular front policy on the basis of opposition to partition within the Yishuv, and thus found itself in the same camp as the Revisionists. It actually defended them in its leaflets against the efforts of the partition supporters to silence all opposition within the Jewish community[86] and it called on all those opposed to partition, irrespective of their political beliefs to unite together in the struggle against partition.[87] Similarly, while the CC called on the Arabs to boycott the hearings of the Technical Commission and put forward as conditions for co-operation: abolishing martial law, stopping army activity in the countryside, bringing back political exiles, freeing all political prisoners, and the restoration of democratic rights and freedoms, including the re-establishment of the HAC,[88] the Section called on the Jews to appear before the Commission and to oppose partition.[89] Again, as far as Jewish immigration into the country was concerned, the CC and the Section found themselves following divergent policies. While the CC based its call for "understanding" on the existing numerical ratio in the country, and echoed the call of the national movement for the immediate cessation of immigration, the Section characterised "understanding" with the Arabs as ensuring agreement to enable further immigration into Palestine, and even went so far as to proclaim that "understanding" would lead the Arabs "to open the doors of the Arab states to Jewish refugees".[90]

The dropping of the partition plan in 1938 was portrayed by the Party as a consequence of the strong resistance put by the Arabs of Palestine and of the surrounding countries, whose intervention it welcomed and viewed as a concession of the part of Britain. While welcoming the invitation to the London Conference, the Party called on the Arabs to insist on the right to choose their own representatives[91] and declared that the basis for negotiations must

86. Those Who are Opposed to Partition Do Not Give In to Terror. Hebrew Leaflet of the Jewish Section-PCP. 1938.
87. Zionists, Unite with Non Zionists against Partition. Hebrew Leaflet of Jewish Section, 1 May 1938, quoted in Dothan, op.cit. p.252.
88. Statement of PCP. Arabic Leaflet of CC/PCP, January 1938.
89. Those Who are opposed to Partition do not give in to terror. loc.cit.
90. Article in Kol Haam, N.10 September 1938. Quoted in Israeli, op. cit. p. 112.
91. Statement of PCP. Arabic Leaflet of CC/PCP, 12 November 1938.

be the cancellation of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate, and the setting-up of constitutional government in the country with proportional representation for Arabs and Jews, and the restoration of Palestine to its normal state of affairs through the annulment of the emergency regulations.

e. The Renewal of the Rebellion and the 1939 White Paper

Initially, the Party stood opposed to the renewed outbreak of armed activity and characterised the new disturbances taking place as being against the interests of the Arab liberation movement as well as the Yishuv.[92] It warned the Arabs that the renewal of the rebellion would only succeed in harming their political struggle against the partition, while the Yishuv was warned of fresh victims and the worsening of the economic crisis. Thus in its leaflets, the Party called on the Arabs to maintain the peace and to turn all their energies to the political struggle and for "understanding" with the Jews, while the Yishuv was called upon to reaffirm its policy of "Havlaga" (self-restraint) and to refrain from revenge deeds against the Arabs.[93]

The Party regarded the renewal of the rebellion as the Arabs' direct response to partition and a consequence of the Arab leadership's desperation of reaching a compromise with the British.[94] It estimated that conditions in Palestine were not ripe and that the economic situation did not allow the initiation of a new armed struggle campaign. It favoured instead a policy of concentrating on improving the economic conditions of the inhabitants and organising them for a political struggle against partition,[95] hoping that in this way it would be able to show the Jewish minority that the possibility of joint co-existence did exist in the country. It argued that the renewal of armed clashes, especially between Arabs and Jews could only serve to facilitate the realisation of partition

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92. The Prevention of Partition is the Prevention.....loc. cit.
93. Ibid.
94. The Dissolution of the Jewish Section...op. cit. p. 32.
95. Ibid. p. 31.

and strengthen the hands of those arguing in favour of the impossibility of securing the peace and prosperity of the Yishuv in an independent Arab state.

The Party came out much more strongly against individual terror, especially after the murder of Andrews, a Government official in the Gallilee and sought, through its contacts with the national movement, to explain that the situation in the country was not ripe for armed activity, that its pursuit was meaningless and suicidal[96] and would only result in counter repression by the British and strengthen the hands of those in favour of partition within the Yishuv. It was, however too weak numerically and too deeply committed on the side of the national movement to be able to exert any moderating influence and effect a change of course in the development of the rebellion. Finding itself battling alone against the tide, the Party allowed itself to be swept along and resumed its collaboration with the national movement, while attempting to maintain a degree of independence which manifested itself in its condemnations of acts of terror and its objection to attacks on the Jewish community.[97] The Party reasoned that it could only influence the Arab movement from within its ranks. By joining the movement it sought to enable itself, if not to change the course of the rebellion at least to retain the support it had won as a result of its backing of the rebellion in its first phase. Moreover this was justified by the continued characterisation of the rebellion as a progressive and anti-imperialist uprising.

The Party did not find it possible to persevere in this policy. The Section had gone its own way and opposed the renewal of the rebellion, pointing to the "increasingly fascist direction "it was taking, and the contacts of the rebellions' leaders in exile with the fascist powers, thus drawing closer to the Jewish community and to what it represented as the "moderate" wing of Zionism. The Party itself could not, after the defeat of partition in 1938,

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96. The Policy of the PCP Towards the Arab National Movement...loc.cit. The Party was asked by the national movement to print leaflets calling for the renewal of the rebellion, but it refused.
97. The Policy of the PCP Towards the Arab National Movement...loc.cit. See also, The Latest Developments in Palestine. Inprecor N. 35. 1938. p. 837.

continue to support the rebellion and called on the Arabs to lay down their arms[98] pointing out that the reason for which the rebellion had been declared in the first place no longer existed.

The Party recognised the publication of the White Paper in March 1939 as an "achievement of the Arab rebellion", and urged those elements in the armed bands it was in contact with to leave the field.[99] Its estimate of the situation was that the rebellion had played itself out, and that the White Paper provided the Arab leaders with an escape from this impasse. It called on them to accept the White Paper as a first step in the struggle for the "absolute liberation of Palestine" and while recognising that its terms did not completely fulfil Arab national aspirations,[100] pointed to the tiredness of the masses and to the impossibility of maintaining the tempo of the rebellion as additional arguments in favour of acceptance.[101] In its propaganda in the Arab street, the Party emphasised that the White Paper constituted "an imperialist document of retreat" in the face of the Arab movement at a time when the danger of a European war was increasing[102] and welcomed it as providing a compulsory basis by which Arabs and Jews in Palestine would be forced to seek co-operation, by negating the fear held by both of domination by the opposing side. The White Paper, by offering the Arabs conciliatory terms, provided a way out of the continuation of the rebellion which had reached a stage where its further pursuit could only be in the "interests of fascism".

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98. The Policy of the PCP towards the Arab National Movement. op.cit. p. 84. The Party claimed to have published a number of Arabic Leaflets to this effect immediately after the publication of the report of the Technical Commission.
99. The Party asked Fouad Nassar, one of the Armed Band leaders with whom it was in close contact, to withdraw from the field. He refused however, and later left the country to join the Mufti in his exile in Baghdad. Interview with Radwan al Hilou, Jericho 1 February 1974.
100. The Policy of the PCP towards the Arab National Movement. loc. cit.
101. The Party's public support for the White Paper led to open hostility with the national movement. Radwan al Hilou and another Arab member of the CC, Said Kabalan, were arrested by Hassan Salameh, one of the leaders of the armed bands. They were released however a few days later after the intercession of Fakhri Maraka, who was a senior member of Salameh's Staff. Interviews with Radwan al Hilou, Jericho, 1 February 1974 and Fakhri Maraka, Amman 6 March 1974. The Jewish Section accused the Party of succumbing to the Mufti's terror and as a result issuing only one Arabic leaflet in support of the White Paper. See Memo of Jewish Section to Comintern. op. cit. p. 8.
102. The Dissolution of the Jewish Section...op. cit. p. 32.

By affirming the White Paper as a basis for Arab-Jewish "understanding" the Party again found itself in opposition to the Section. The latter's leaflets directed to the Jewish street were based on the premise that acceptance of the White Paper would further isolate the Party in the Yishuv, and it vehemently denied the CC's prognosis that a non Zionist formula could serve as a basis for "understanding". The Section perceived that the central place accorded to the questions of immigration and independence in the White Paper, negated any validity it might have in the eyes of the Yishuv.[103] It condemned it as "an imperialist document" leading to "enlarging the hatred between Jews and Arabs". Moreover, the Section chose to see in the publication of the White Paper and the resultant opposition of the Yishuv, the beginning of the parting of the ways between Britain and the Yishuv. This it hoped would provide a more meaningful basis for understanding between Jews and Arabs. Thus it directed itself to the Yishuv hoping to establish an alliance with Zionist groups within it on the basis of this perceived hostility towards Britain.

The Consequences of the Rebellion

The Party's penetration of the Arab street was greatly facilitated by its support of the rebellion and by its adoption of the slogans of the Arab national movement as its own. The Party's unhesitant support was a natural outcome of the continuing drive towards Arabisation, and furthermore a fulfilment of the resolutions of the Seventh Comintern Congress on the popular front, and support for the independence struggle in the colonies.

Participation in the Arab revolt and the open identification with its slogans brought the Party to the attention of the Arab population and enabled it, in the near anarchic conditions obtaining in the country during the first two years of the revolt, to emerge from the underground and operate in conditions of semi-legality. For the first time, the Party managed to win a measure of

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103. Memo of Jewish Section of Comintern. op. cit. p. 18.

respectability in Arab eyes[104] and to shed the stigma of being regarded as a Jewish party.

In terms of numerical expansion and the attraction the Party posed for members of the Arab intelligentsia, this was indeed the "golden age" of the Party. While previously its call had been answered by Arab proletarian elements, and only rarely by educated Arab youth, the years of the revolt witnessed a dramatic transformation which was to manifest itself even more clearly during the latter stages of the Second World War and the setting-up of separate Arab and Jewish communist organisations. Even in the early thirties there had existed in Jerusalem a group of young educated Arabs who sympathised with the Party but who stopped short of actual membership.[105] With the outbreak of the rebellion, and the open support exhibited by the Party, most of those were drawn into the sphere of active participation. It is significant that the pole of attraction for these educated youth was the communist ideology of the Party, yet they were only impelled to take part in its activity when it openly came out in support of the national and anti-imperialist struggle. This is also observable among those who came to the Party with no previous knowledge of communist doctrine. While the few Arabs who had joined the Party in the twenties and even in the early thirties saw it as the vehicle of their day-to-day economic struggle and were not much interested in the national dimension of the conflict in the country, the adherents of the mid-thirties found their way into the Party in response to its anti-imperialist appeal and as a result of identifying it with radical anti-imperialist activity.[106] Although the Party lost some

104. In 1936 for example a group of Arab lawyers made a declaration to the Arab press of their readiness to defend Arab and Jewish members of the PCP free of charge. See The CC/PCP to the Active Members: Internal Document 20 March 1940, in Kaf Alef Documents op.cit.p.47.

105. A number of those were educated in Europe, like Abdullah Bandak, and Dr.Khalil Budeiri, where they had come in touch with socialist and communist ideas. This group was later joined by two Syrian members of the Syrian Communist Party, Raja Hourani and Raif Khoury who were employed as teachers in Palestine. The latter was a well known writer and exercised a strong influence on a wide circle of youth.

106. Nearly all Arab Party members interviewed gave the anti-imperialist struggle as the reason for their entry into the Party. In an Interview with Khaled Zagmouri, Amman 8 March 1974, a metal worker who joined the Party in 1936 and was later to become one of the leaders of the National Liberation League, he recounted that he decided to join the Party on hearing of Gallacher's (the communist member of parliament in Britain) defence of Palestine and the Arab rebellion and on being told that he was a communist. He further recounts that he and others used to shout the slogan "long live Gallacher" in demonstrations even before he had joined the Party.

of its supporters as a result of its initial opposition to the renewal of the rebellion, and later due to its acceptance of the White Paper, there is little doubt that the gains in Arab membership and the contacts established in the Arab street in the 1936-39 period provided the Party with the cadre which later in the forties was to succeed in establishing and leading an independent Arab communist movement.[107]

Another important consequence of the rebellion was the severance of relations with the Comintern,[108] and the increasingly different policies pursued by the Party in Palestine from those advocated in the Comintern's journals abroad. Other than the difficulty of maintaining contact between Palestine and Moscow as a result of the chaotic conditions in the country, it is probable that Moscow itself was pre-occupied with the purges, and the Middle Eastern Section of the Comintern was unable to give a firm lead in the absence of any policy formulated at a higher level.

The Comintern's journals however, while reporting on the development of the situation in Palestine, did occasionally put forward opinions which appeared to be in no way connected with the actual practices of the Party. Soon after the declaration of the Arab general strike, an unsigned article appeared which praised the "constructionist" efforts of the young Jewish pioneers, and admired the "splendid idealism" shown by the immigrants in building the country and establishing a strong trade union movement.[109]

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107. Of those who joined the Party during 1936-39 or came in touch with it and later played an important role in the communist movement, E. Tuma, E. Habibi and T. Toubi became leaders of the NLL (and are now leaders of the New Israeli Communist Party); Fouad Nassar, became a leader of the NLL and the Arab workers' Congress in the forties and until his recent death he was secretary of the Jordanian Communist Party; A. Bandak, M. Amer, K. Zagmouri, and M. Nashashibi became leaders of the NLL in the forties.

108. Radwan al Hilou stated in an interview, Jericho, 23 February 1974, that contact with the Comintern weakened in 1937 and was completely severed in 1938 when the last Party student in Moscow returned to Palestine. The Jewish Section on the other hand claimed that Moscow cut its links with the PCP as a direct result of the Party leadership's deviation from the Comintern line. See, From the Resolutions of the Party Conference Called by the Jewish Section, August 1940. In Kaf Alef Documents, op. cit. p. 58.

109. The Jewish National Home and the Arab Rebellion. Inprecor. N.27. 1936. p. 728.

Ignoring the independence slogan raised by the Arab national movement and supported by the Party, the article went on to recommend only a temporary stoppage of Jewish immigration and the creation of a legislative assembly "based on proportional representation", a clear recognition of what the Jewish Section was later to term the "legitimate national rights of the Yishuv".

A year later another article called for the "recognition of the Jews as a national minority with equal rights"[110] while yet another demanded from the Arabs "a sympathetic understanding of the aspirations for national statehood within the Yishuv".[111] In Palestine, the Party was demanding the establishment of an independent Arab state and the recognition of only the individual rights of the Jews, and also calling on the Arabs to insist on the right to nominate the leaders of their choice (meaning the Mufti) to the London Conference. The Comintern press in the meantime was condemning the Mufti for maintaining contacts with Fascism and accusing the rebellion of receiving arms and financial and technical aid from Berlin and Rome.[112] It declared that the struggle in Palestine had ceased to be a purely Arab struggle in opposition to British imperialism, and had "become complicated and influenced by the war aims of the fascist axis against the democracies".[113] The Arabs, characterised as "pawns in the game of fascism",[114] were called upon to struggle against the Mufti, while the Jewish Section's call for a "united front of Zionists and non-Zionists" was endorsed, as was the necessity of actively supporting the "moderate" leadership of Weitzman within the Yishuv.[115]

By 1939 the leadership of the PCP was impelled to attempt a re-evaluation of its position and to note the causes of the failure of the Arab rebellion. Since the abandonment of the partition proposal it had opposed the continuation of the armed rebellion and, by endorsing the terms of the 1939 White Paper, had come out

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110. The Best Solution for Palestine. Inprecor N 43. 1937. p. 971.
111. The Present Situation in Palestine. WNAV. N 51. 1938. pp.1176-1177.
112. Fascist Agitation in the Near East. C.I. N 6. 1939. p. 476.
113. The Present Situation in Palestine. WNAV. N 18. 1939. p. 365.
114. The Fighting in Palestine. C.I. N 1. 1939. p. 40-42.
115. The Revisionist Menace. WNAV. N 39. 1939. p. 864.

irrevocably in opposition to the leadership of the Arab national movement. A combination of pressure from the Jewish Section and its newly found independence, led the Party over the next couple of years to re-examine its previously held positions and to indulge in a certain amount of internal self-criticism.[116]

a. Re-evaluation of the Party Line

The Party put forth a number of reasons which, in its analysis, combined to bring about the decline of the rebellion. While pointing to the bad economic situation which had resulted in hardship and suffering and led to the desire for a return to more stable conditions, and the escalation of the Government's campaign against the rebels which eventually led to their military defeat,[117] the Party perceived the main reasons for the rebellion's decline as lying elsewhere. The most important of these was the lack of a centralised leadership and the egoism and selfishness of the Arab leaders who preferred to rely on military adventurers who were personally loyal to them, rather than on men of sound military knowledge and clear political aims.[118] This decentralisation in command had led to the entrance of "gangs of criminals and hooligans" into the ranks of the rebels, who used the rebellion, especially in its latter stages, as a means of exacting tribute from the peasants. The terror which these elements unleashed had led to the loss of sympathy for the rebellion on the part of the majority of the Arab population. The introduction of terror into the rebellion was blamed on the Mufti himself, who, according to the Party, utilised it to struggle against his political opponents and as a means of continuing the rebellion when popular sympathy for it was beginning to wane. The anti-Jewish terror indulged in by

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116. The Party's criticisms of its past policies were contained in internal Party documents and never made public. In 1944 however, after the split of the Party, the now Jewish PCP in the course of correspondence with the Histadrut admitted certain mistakes committed during the rebellion period.
117. The Policy of the PCP towards the Arab National Movement. op. cit. p. 82.
118. Ibid. p. 81.

the Arab bands proved counter-productive, for it did "not decrease the hatred of the Yishuv to the Arab revolutionary movement", and also allowed the Zionist leaders to exploit the terror and mobilise the Jewish workers into playing a reactionary role in the service of the British, while believing that they were performing an important anti-fascist task.

Another equally important factor seen to lead to the rebellion's decline was what the Party termed "the involvement of the external factor".[119] This referred to the part played in the rebellion by Italian Fascism and by Germany, which had a vested interest in the continued existence of a state of chaos in Palestine. Fascist agents bore a direct responsibility for introducing the terror into the rebellion and towards the end, had succeeded in infiltrating into the heart of the movement. The sum effect of this was that democratic forces in the world lost sympathy for the rebellion, and this, in combination with the other factors, had brought about the Arab masses disenchantment and the termination of the rebellion.

The demise of the rebellion also led to an attempt by the CC to examine the pro-rebellion line it had formerly pursued. While continuing to hold to the correctness of its general line in support of the revolt, and its characterisation as a progressive anti-imperialist struggle,[120] it recognised that some of the policies had been wrong and that some of its political evaluations had been faulty. As early as 1937, the Party had admitted its mistakes concerning armed activity in the Jewish street[121] and had, by setting up the Jewish Section, seemingly recognised the impossibility of forcing the Jewish cadre to indulge in the same kind of activity as was taking place in the Arab street.[122] As regards its policy towards the rebellion, the CC stressed that it had opposed its renewal, in 1937 in opposition to the partition scheme,[123] and

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119. The Policy of the PCP towards the Arab National Movement op.cit. p. 82.
120. The Dissolution of the Jewish Section. op. cit. p.31. See also The Policy of the PCP Towards the Arab National Movement. loc.cit.
121. The Dissolution of the Jewish Section. loc. cit.
122. Memo of Jewish Section to the Comintern. op. cit. p. 6.
123. The Policy of the PCP Towards the Arab National Movement.... op. cit. p. 83.

had refused to collaborate with the armed bands. However the CC admitted that this "correct policy" of the Party did not last long, and that the Party due to its numerical weakness was unable to influence the orientation of the national movement. Consequently it had found itself isolated from the Arab masses, and lost what little influence it had gained among them. The departure from this "correct policy" was explained as being due to the inability of the Party to oppose the Mufti inside the national movement, and by the absence of a strong cadre which would have enabled it to spread its call for a political as opposed to a military struggle against partition. It evidently hoped to be able, by reversing its stand and supporting the renewed outbreak of armed activity, to influence the movement and affect a change from the inside.

Turning to the problem of fascist influence in the rebellion, the CC, while admitting that it was possible for fascist interests to exploit the independence struggle in the colonies, denied that the objective situation in those countries provided the political and social basis for the movement to be transformed into a fascist one.[124] Only in May 1939 did the CC admit the existence of contacts between certain of the Arab leaders and the fascist countries.[125] It explained this as the result of the desperation of the Arab leaders in the face of the united front of Zionism and imperialism, but later admitted that it had "not valued sufficiently the fascist danger in the Arab movement".[126] In its subsequent evaluations, the CC recognised that the leadership of the revolt had, towards the end, fallen under fascist influence and used fascist slogans and fascist methods.[127]

The CC gave 1938 as the year when "the Husseinis became open agents of fascism"[128] and this was at a time when the Party still supported the Mufti's leadership of the Arab movement, called for his return to Palestine and the legalising of the HAC, and insisted

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124. The Events: CC Version. loc. cit.
125. Memo of Jewish Section to the Comintern. op. cit. p. 7.
126. The Dissolution of the Jewish Section. op. cit. p. 32.
127. The Events: CC Version. loc. cit.
128. The Role of the Party and the Communist Youth in the Arab Street. op. cit. p. 165.

on the Arabs' right to nominate him as their representative to the London Conference. In this later evaluation the CC saw the Mufti as facilitating the entry of fascist propaganda not only into Palestine, but over the whole Near East, by popularising the idea that the Germans would help the independence struggle of the Arabs.

Dealing with the early activity of the Jewish section, the CC declared in 1939, that it had followed a mistaken policy in seeking to look for allies within the Zionist camp.[129] The role of the Jewish cadre should have been confined to explaining to the Jewish community that those responsible for the Arab revolt were "the Zionists and the imperialists with their occupation policy" and that the terror was "a side phenomenon".[130] By seeking to exploit those voices in the Jewish street which had come out against partition, the Party had hoped to win over the Jewish masses. This attempt to form a front with certain groups within Zionism by playing on the internal conflicts within the Yishuv was condemned as a mistaken policy.[131] The CC declared that there were "no progressives in the Zionist movement", that Jewish democrats should exhibit their anti-imperialism by supporting the Arabs, and that there was no possibility of carrying on political activity within the Zionist movement.[132] While criticising its repeated calls for Arab-Jewish understanding without putting forward any formula for its attainment during the rebellion, the CC declared that "understanding" could only be achieved on a non-Zionist basis,[133] and characterised the 1939 White Paper as the proper basis for such an "understanding". It chose to see the rejection by the Zionist movement, of the provisions of the White Paper, as proof of the correctness of its position in condemning the pursual of a front policy within the Yishuv.[134]

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129. Memo of Jewish Section to the Comintern. op. cit. p. 11.
130. The Events: CC Version. loc. cit.
131. The Dissolution of the Jewish Section. loc. cit.
132. Protocol N. 2 of a meeting of Secretariat members of the Jewish Section with two members of the CC. Quoted in Memo of Jewish Section to the Comintern. op. cit. p. 13.
133. The Problems of Immigration and the White Paper: Document of CC/PCP. Frankel Collection, op. cit. p. 151.
134. The Dissolution of the Jewish Section. op. cit. p. 33.

b. The Split with the Jewish Section

The differences between the CC of the Party and the Jewish Section began to appear soon after the latter's formation in 1937, and were manifested by loss of contact between the two a year after the Section's establishment.[135] The two organisations were already pursuing separate paths when the Section issued a leaflet in June 1938 condemning the execution of a Revisionist accused of terror activities.[136] This leaflet which signified the Section's belief that the Zionist-British alliance was not necessarily permanent, as evidenced by the willingness of the British to execute a Zionist, brought into the open the wide gulf which separated the Section from the CC. The differences centred on three main issues: the characterisation of the Arab rebellion, the recognition of the "national rights" of the Yishuv, and the policy of the popular front within the Yishuv. After the termination of the rebellion, contact between the two was re-established, but no agreement was reached and the CC formally dissolved the Section in December 1939.[137] The leadership of the Section refused to abide by the CC's decision and, although the majority of the Jewish cadre remained loyal to the CC,[138] the leadership of the Section succeeded in holding a "Party congress" in August 1940 in which their secession from the Party was declared. They subsequently came to be known as the "Emet" group.[139]

The Section's evaluation of the Arab national movement was basically hostile. It characterised the second phase of the rebellion as "a revolt organised by fascist agents"[140] and condemned the slogans of independence and the banning of Jewish immigration as contributing to the fascist domination of the movement.[141] The Section saw the slogan of independence, raised

135. The Dissolution of the Jewish Section. op. cit. p. 28.
136. Hebrew Leaflet of Jewish Section, June 1938, quoted in Dothan, op. cit. p. 219.
137. The Dissolution of the Jewish Section. loc. cit.
138. The Reasons for the Split in the PCP: Report by a member of the CC of Emet. December 1940. Kaf Alef Documents, op.cit.p.77.
139. From the Resolutions of the Party Conference Called by the Jewish Section. op. cit. p. 59. Emet (the truth) was the name of the organ of the group.
140. Ibid. p. 57.
141. Memo of Jewish Section to the Comintern. op. cit. p. 8.

in what it termed the "fascist period" as only playing into the hands of fascism in its struggle against the democracies. It perceived the immigration slogan as being even more damaging because it was wrongly posed as a central question, instead of being left open to be decided by the future government of the country.

The CC was condemned for committing a number of mistakes: failing to evaluate the fascist danger, supporting the independence slogan, and refraining from open struggle against anti-Jewish and inter-Arab terror. It was criticised for ignoring the struggle for "understanding" in the Jewish street and confining itself to mouthing well intentioned slogans[142] as well as for failing to struggle against the Jewish boycott declared by the armed bands, and finally for engaging in armed activity against the Yishuv. The Party's mistakes were attributed to an incorrect evaluation of the international scene[143] and for not having grasped the contradictions which existed between the fascist states and the democracies, which encouraged the former to exploit the independence slogan in the hope of gaining a foothold in Palestine. As a result of its failure to condemn the re-opening of the rebellion and having ignored the ties of the rebellion's leaders to fascism, the CC was accused of weakening the Party both in the Arab and Jewish streets.[144] In the latter this had resulted in the Yishuv's loss of confidence in the Party's call for "understanding", and for the Jewish cadres' mistrust of their leaders. In the Arab street, the CC by identifying the Party completely with the Arab national movement, had lost its Arab cadres to the nationalists, and was unable to concentrate the "progressive Arab forces" around itself.

The Section suggested an alternative set of policies to those pursued by the CC. In its eyes the Party should have concentrated on widening the democratic rights of the inhabitants and struggled against terror and against the danger of fascism in Palestine.[145]

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142. From the Resolutions of the Party Conference called by the Jewish Section. loc. cit.
143. Ibid.
144. Memo of Jewish Section to the Comintern. op. cit. p. 7.
145. Ibid. p. 9.

Such a policy would have provided the basis for a "formula for understanding" which could have won support in the Jewish street. The Section itself had attempted to implement this policy in so far as the struggle against terror was concerned, by coming out against it in its leaflets, and calling for the Jewish inhabitants' right to defend themselves.[146] The Section saw the anti-Jewish terror as helping fascism in the Arab street to divert the struggle from being directed against the British onto the Yishuv, and thus deepening the chasm between the two peoples. It rejected the CC's view that the terror was a by-product of the rebellion and proposed to come out against it in its leaflets and call on Jewish youth to defend themselves against the Arabs. However, the CC stood opposed to any appearance against the terror even as a matter of self-defence, seeing this as acquiescence to the Zionists' practice of "armed occupation", in addition to their "peaceful occupation" of the country.[147] Dissolving the Section and expelling a number of the leaders whom it held to be responsible for its divergent policies, the CC rejected its arguments regarding the character of the revolt and denied the existence of a social and political basis for fascism in the colonial countries. It ascribed this belief to the Section's failure to comprehend the "objective progressive nature of a colonial anti-imperialist rebellion" regardless of the fact that it was led by "feudal and clerical elements."[148] While it admitted that it had minimised the danger of the fascist influence in the revolt, it rejected the charge of having failed to stand up to the terror, and held to the correctness of the independence slogan accusing the Section's leadership of having fallen under "nationalist Zionist influences".[149]

The central contradiction between the CC and the Section revolved around the determination of the nature of the Yishuv. The novel and positive evaluation by the Section in rejecting the Party's traditional hostility to the Yishuv as a whole, brought

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146. Memo of Jewish Section to the Comintern. op. cit. p. 8.
147. The Events: CC Version. loc. cit.
148. Ibid.
149. The CC/PCP to the Active Members. op. cit. p. 48.

about the divergent paths followed by the two groups and the resultant split. The Section claimed that the CC had failed to grasp the changes and developments which had taken place within the Yishuv as a result of the influx of new immigrants and the entry of large scale Jewish capital which had led to increased social differentiation in the Jewish street.[150] While the Yishuv had appeared seemingly united in the "prosperity period" of 1933-35, and had succeeded in "smearing its internal conflicts",[151] the outbreak of the economic crisis at the end of 1935 and the influence of the Arab strike early in 1936 had led to the beginnings of disintegration in the Zionist front and to intensified internal conflict. The CC was accused of having ignored these changes and maintained its outlook of a uniform Zionist front encompassing both "the fascist Revisionists and the Zionist socialist left". The CC had continued to regard the whole of the Yishuv as "a parasitic group"[152] and to identify it with Zionist and imperialist policies. Thus it did not introduce any specific slogans in the Jewish street based on the real and existing conflicts within it, and its propaganda was confined to support for the Arab rebellion. This was an added mistake in that it did not take into account the level of political maturity of the Jewish inhabitants. The Section rejected the CC's position of negating "the existence of progressive elements within Zionism",[153] and declared that the Party's activity should have been based on the internal differentiation within Zionism and should have adapted its methods to the level of the Yishuv's maturity.

The Section interpreted the slogan of "understanding" raised by the Party in 1937, as signifying implicit acceptance of the "progressive national interests" of the Yishuv and the solution of the problem in the country by agreement between the two peoples.[154] On this basis it rejected the provisions of the 1939 White Paper as being incompatible with the struggle for "understanding", and as unacceptable to the left forces within the Yishuv.[155] The Section

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150. The reasons for the Split in the PCP. op. cit. p. 78.
151. Memo of Jewish Section to the Comintern. op. cit. p. 7.
152. The reasons for the split in the PCP. loc. cit.
153. Memo of Jewish Section to the Comintern. loc. cit.
154. Ibid. p. 17.
155. Ibid. p. 18.

was emphatic that the Jews in Palestine constituted a "nation" with progressive national demands which did not however conflict with the interests of the Arabs[156] and relied on a number of articles appearing in the Comintern's press to attest to the correctness of its position.[157]

The CC took the Section to task on this question of the Yishuv's development into a "nation", declaring it "absolutely incorrect"[158] and ridiculing it by claiming that the only way to deduce "national demands" for the Jews in Palestine, was by "accepting the Zionist thesis that the Yishuv in Palestine is the actual Jewish nation". The CC relied on Stalin's authority to deny that the Jews constituted a nation, pointing to the absence of "territorial unity" the "principle condition" for the formation of a nation. The CC did not deny that the Jewish people had national demands for which they fought wherever they happened to be, but emphasised that the Jewish problem could only be solved by "social revolution". It reiterated its traditional condemnation of the Yishuv by affirming that in Palestine it was "an instrument of British imperialism contrary to the interests of the Jewish masses and for the national oppression of the Arab people".[159] It declared that recognising the national demands of the "Jewish nation" on the territorial basis of Palestine meant supporting Zionism which was engaged in a policy of occupation and "the removal of the Arabs from their own country".[160] On this basis the CC supported the Government's policy against illegal immigration and condemned the Section's leaflets which attacked the brutality of the Government's treatment of the immigrants in refusing to permit them to disembark once they had reached the shores of Palestine.[161]

Until 1937, the only activity of the Party in the Jewish street had been confined to the Histadrut and the "Antifa".[162] The pursuit

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156. Memo of Jewish Section to the Comintern. loc. cit. p. 13.
157. Ibid. p. 14.
158. Is There a Necessity for National Rights for the Yishuv: Document of CC/PCP. Frankel Collection, op. cit. p. 153.
159. Ibid. p. 154.
160. Ibid.
161. Memo of Jewish Section to the Comintern. op. cit. p. 14.
162. "Anti Fascist Organisation". A grouping of the Party and some small left Zionist groups on the basis of the struggle against fascism in Palestine.

of anti-Zionist policies within the Yishuv was regarded by the Section as the reason for the Party's lack of growth, and its isolation from the "progressive elements within Zionism".[163] These policies led a large part of the Jewish cadre to despair of ever making headway in the Yishuv and consequently to being bound to inactivity. They were also responsible for the rise of the theory that "the Jewish workers in Palestine are reactionary", for the blind belief in the possibility of success in the Arab street, and for the desire to leave the country: a liquidationary trend in so far as the presence of the Party within the Yishuv was concerned.[164]

The establishment of the Section had led to alterations in the orientations of the Party, beginning with the recognition of the existence of "progressive forces within Zionism".[165] The Section divided the Zionist movement into two parts, one progressive, the other reactionary, and tried to organise the progressives into a front for the economic struggle within the Yishuv. Its main slogans were the struggle for the widening of democratic "understanding". The Section relied on Dimitrov's directives on the popular front in the Seventh Comintern Congress, to put forward a policy parallel to that being pursued in the Arab street, and to implement this in the Yishuv. Known as the "trojan horse" method, the Section sought to infiltrate the "progressive forces within Zionism" and instructed its cadres to "use Zionist reasons and language", to aspire to reach important leading positions within these organisations, and "to transfer the essence of Party activity" to the legal organisations, in the hope of affecting a change of policy from within the Yishuv. In addition to this, it gave its support to the "moderates" in the struggle between the existing leadership of the Yishuv and the Revisionists.[166] While admitting that its advocacy of a "popular front" within the Yishuv was "seemingly not aimed against Zionism", the Section nevertheless insisted that it was anti-Zionist "by its very nature" in that it

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163. Memo of the Jewish Section to the Comintern. op. cit. p. 9.
164. Ibid. p. 10.
165. Ibid. p. 11.
166. Ibid. p. 16.

"increased conflicts within the Zionist camp".[167] The only reservations that the Section had on the line it had pursued within the Yishuv up to the end of 1939 were in the form of a self-criticism of its own "sectarian attitude", which had not allowed it to exploit the conflicts in the Zionist camp more fully and for having blurred the differences between left and right in its attacks on a "united front of the right".[168]

For its part the CC opposed the "trojan horse" method, and stressed the impossibility of carrying out a popular front policy in the Jewish street.[169] It refused to allow the publication of articles advocating the establishment of a popular front in the Party's organs[170] and recognised the existence of only a small number of progressives in the Yishuv. These were determined by the degree of anti- or non-Zionism they displayed. The Section's call for a front was condemned for being based on a false understanding of Dimitrov's tactics, and as an attempt "to imitate what other parties under different conditions had done in other countries".[171] This policy was viewed as a method of "creeping through the back door" of Zionism and as having led the Section to the abandonment of an "independent and revolutionary policy" in the Jewish street, and to the acceptance of the Zionist thesis of a "Jewish nation and Jewish national demands in Palestine". The Section's formulation for "understanding" was also rejected on the grounds that the so-called "progressive forces within Zionism" were in favour of "understanding" only in so far as it allowed them "to realise Zionist colonisation in peace". Their objection to the White Paper had shown the true nature of their "progressiveness". The CC was unequivocally clear: there could be no alliance of any form with any group in the Yishuv on anything other than a non-Zionist basis. Even the Section's attempts to differentiate between "moderates" and "extremists" and the support it extended to the former was declared to have been wrong.

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167. Memo of the Jewish Section to the Comintern. op. cit. p. 10.
168. Ibid. p. 16.
169. Ibid. p. 18.
170. The reasons for the split in the PCP. op. cit. p. 77.
171. The problems of immigration and the White Paper. op. cit. p. 150.

The split of the Party in 1939 was a dress rehearsal for the final break between Arab and Jewish communists which was to take place four years later. While in 1939 the break was only temporary[172] the issues which led to the split of 1943 were the same as those which had led to the dissolution of the Section and its defection. Arabisation had rested uneasily on the shoulders of the Jewish cadres; it had severely restricted their role within the Yishuv by denying any revolutionary role to the Jewish community and directed the Party's full attention to the Arabs as that section of the population capable of carrying out the tasks of the anti-colonial revolution.

The influx of Jewish immigration, especially after the rise of Nazism, and the spreading danger of fascism, brought about changes both in the makeup of the Yishuv, and in the direction of the Arab rebellion. To an increasingly large section of the Jewish cadres, the policy pursued by the Party during the rebellion appeared to be one of tailing behind the nationalists and signified a "liquidation" of the Party's independent role. At the same time, their close involvement with the Yishuv, brought them to realise the falseness of the orthodox view of the Jewish community as one undifferentiated whole. Again the old question posed itself: what should be the role of the Yishuv? While in the early twenties the question was arguably false in that the Jewish immigrants constituted an insignificant minority of the population, the change in both the numbers and the composition of the Yishuv which had taken place in the twenty years which had elapsed, made the question more relevant and indeed more pressing. The Jewish cadre could not fail to be affected by the nationalist atmosphere which existed within the Yishuv just as the Arab cadres were influenced by the nationalist atmosphere of their own community. The fact that the Party followed a pro-Arab nationalist line during the rebellion solved the problem for the Arab cadres, and indeed contributed to the expansion of the Party's strength in the Arab street. The problem

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172. The Emet group returned to the Party in mid 1942, only to split again in 1943.

was resolved by the temporary expedient of setting-up the Jewish Section, but this only served to confirm the distance between the two national components of the Party, and led to the pursuit of mutually irreconcilable policies. While in the past the communal disturbances had resulted in small desertions from its ranks, in 1939 this was repeated on a much larger scale. The rupture was again temporarily healed, but the Party was to prove unable to survive the increasing divisions in the country. A novel contribution was added to the existing internal tensions by the increasingly aggressive role which the new group of Arab members, the fruition of the Party's pro-Arab policies of 1936-39, were to play. Thus the crisis of 1939 proved to be a larger repetition of past ruptures and a telling foretaste of things still to come.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PARTY DURING THE WAR

The Position Towards The War

Prior to August 1939 the PCP had pursued a consistently anti-fascist line in conjunction with the resolutions of the Comintern and the dictates of Soviet foreign policy. It had repeatedly attacked fascism and pointed to the threat which Germany and Italy posed to the Soviet Union and the independence struggle in the colonies, calling for the formation of an international popular front of communists and democrats to bloc the path of fascist expansion. The signing of the Nazi Soviet Pact in August 1939 which came as an unexpected shock to communist parties everywhere, placed the PCP in a particularly difficult position. Not only were the majority of the Party's cadres Jews, but part of its political activity was carried out among the Jewish population of the country, whose uncompromising hostility to the Nazis was an issue commanding the unified consensus of the whole Yishuv. Yet the Party showed no hesitation in explaining and justifying the Soviet Union's decision, displaying to a much more unified degree than on any other previous occasion, a lack of independent line and complete subservience to the twists and turns of Moscow's foreign policy.

Almost immediately after the conclusion of the Soviet German agreement, the Party attempted to perform an acrobatic feat by explaining that this pact was aimed at furthering the cause of peace, and that the nature of the Nazi regime itself had undergone a transformation as a result of its "detachment from the British-French imperialist camp" and its association with Moscow. The Party's literature portrayed Germany as having been "forced to go to Moscow" and paradoxically, the result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement was characterised as having "put the Hitlerite gang in a situation of total isolation".[1] At the same time, it was argued that the pact was the result of Germany's "fear of the strength of the Red Army",[2] and was hailed as a work of genius on the part of Stalin who by concluding this agreement with the Nazis had foiled the capitalist states' plans to direct Hitler's aggression against the

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1. Article in Kol Haam, August 1939. Quoted in Israeli, op. cit. p. 155.
2. To the Workers and Masses of the People. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP September 1939.

Soviet Union, and "refused to pull Chamberlain's chestnuts out of the fire".[3] The move of the Red Army into Poland later in 1939, was acclaimed by the Party as a further step towards averting the danger of war in the East, and as "guaranteeing the safety of Romania...and stopping Hitler's advances against Hungary".[4] Miraculously, Hitler was now a changed man; he had ceased to be "the gendarme of Chamberlain and Daladier and has to do what Moscow tells him";[5] thus he could no longer conduct a campaign against the Soviet Union and no longer constituted a threat to the communist movement.

Yet the opening of the war in September 1939 found the Party unsure of the position it should adopt and its natural inclination was to support the war against fascism. In a leaflet issued just after the outbreak of hostilities, it characterised the war as the result of "fascist aggression" and attributed it to the appeasement policy of Chamberlain which had previously sacrificed "Ethiopia, Austria, Spain and Czechoslovakia" and whetted Hitler's appetite for more easy conquests. Although the war was seen to have been forced on Chamberlain and Daladier by the Polish resistance to the German invasion, and not due to any desire on the part of Britain or France to stand up to Hitler, the Party nevertheless offered the conditional support of "all progressive forces in the world" to the war as long as Chamberlain and Daladier would "consistently carry out the war against Hitler".[6] The Party declared that the masses had taken "to the battlefield to exterminate fascism in the world" and that the communists placed themselves in the front ranks of the battle. However, the Party quickly reversed its position when it became clear that support for the war was not consistent with the terms of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. It embarked on a propaganda campaign against what was re-termed "the imperialist war" and against British policy in Palestine, a campaign which was to last until after

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3. To the Workers and Masses of the People. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP September 1939. See also, In the Communist Camp: July 1941-March 1942. Jewish Intelligence Report. p. 1. CZA S25/48.
4. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP quoted in Israeli, loc. cit.
5. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP quoted in N. Weinstock. Le Sionisme Contre Israel. (Paris 1969). p. 218.
6. To the Workers and Masses of the People. loc. cit.

the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941.

The Party's attitude to World War Two passed through two clearly distinct phases. The first, stretching from 1939 to 1941 was one of outright hostility and opposition; the second, starting in June 1941 on the heels of the German attack on the Soviet Union was quickly transformed from support for the Soviet Union alone, and continuing condemnation of "British imperialist aims", to enthusiastic support for the "democratic allies" in the struggle against fascism, and for the British war effort in Palestine.

In the first period, the Party characterised the struggle between Britain and France on the one hand against Germany and Italy on the other, as an "imperialist war" aimed at "dividing the world between the capitalist powers".[7] As far as the inhabitants of Palestine were concerned, this war which had been "declared in the name of the colonial people without their opinion and against their wishes"[8] was aimed at securing "British world domination and establishing its colonial terroristic government in Palestine".[9] It was "a colonisatory war" which Britain wanted to force Palestine into against its will, but the Party was confident that "the Jewish people and the Arabs are not interested in this war"[10] which they realised was not theirs and which was moreover directed against their aims of liberation and independence. The Party attempted to adopt a position similar to that of Lenin's vis-a-vis the first World War, which was seen as a struggle for the retention of the colonies and the re-division of the world. Thus it rejected the slogan raised by the Zionists for "defence of the fatherland" and counterposed this with its slogan of "peace and bread".[11] In its propaganda the Party sought to show that there was no difference between the two opposing camps as far as the inhabitants of Palestine were concerned. Thus it was emphasised that there was no struggle over principles between

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7. Communist Affairs, January-June 1941. Jewish Intelligence Report. p. 5. CZA S 25/48.
8. To all Workers in the Country: On the fall of France. Hebrew leaflet of CC/PCP June 1940.
9. Let us Beware of Colonial Conspiracies. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP 5 May 1941.
10. To all Workers in the Country: on the fall..... loc. cit.
11. Article in Kol Haam, May 1941. Quoted in Israeli, op. cit. p. 168.

the two camps and that "English and French imperialists had long supported fascism in Germany and tried to direct it against the Soviet Union".[12] The British regime in Palestine was described as being "identical to that of Hitler or Mussolini" and the struggle was portrayed as being solely concerned with the "monopoly of the exploitation of the capitalist countries and of the oppressed nations of the colonies".[13] The Party countered the warnings of the Zionists that the country was under imminent danger from the advancing fascist armies which were approaching the Suez Canal, by explaining that while "it is true that Hitler's and Mussolini's armies are at the gate....that Churchill's armies are in Palestine, it is our first duty to struggle against the enemy within".[14] This demagogic attempt to direct the attention of Palestine's inhabitants against Britain was paralleled by the false interpretation the Party gave to Arab opposition to the war effort and the struggle against recruitment. Thus the Party attacked Britain's Arab policy and conjured up the "long record of oppression and destruction" since Britain's arrival in Palestine[15] and paid special attention to the British army's activity during the 1936 rebellion. The Party proudly proclaimed that the Arabs in Palestine were "opposed to the imperialist war" and that this could be clearly seen in the small number of Arab recruits to the army, and the small financial contributions made by them to the war effort. Yet the Party chose to forget that this opposition was due to support and sympathy for the Axis powers, and not a result of any realisation of the "imperialist nature" of the war. Even the small number of Arab volunteers for the army, were accounted for by the Party by pointing to the Government's economic policy of "deliberate pauperisation" which compelled the Arabs, unable to secure any form of employment, to join the army.[16] It was thus explained that the reason which compelled those few Arabs to join the army and take up

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12. To all Workers in the Country: on the fall... loc. cit.
13. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP, July 1940. Quoted in Weinstock, loc.cit.
14. Article in Kol Haam, May 1941. Quoted in Israeli, op.cit. p.169.
15. Sawt al Shaab, October 1940. Quoted in Jewish Intelligence Report. CZA S 25/7532.
16. Ibid.

arms against fascism was "not idealism, but their material circumstances".

At the same time, the Party increasingly sought to undermine the Arab's support and sympathy for the Axis powers by pointing out the falseness of Arab hopes that they might achieve their deliverance at the hands of the advancing German armies. Thus the Party combatted the frequent calls made by the Mufti to the Arabs to resume the rebellion. Not only did it proclaim that "the time is not ripe" but chose to see in these calls an "Italian plot to enslave the Arabs" and harness them to the service of aims external to their own interests.[17] The Germans and Italians, despite the fact that they were engaged in a war against England, were "also the enemies of the Arab liberation struggle", and the Party blamed the "treacherous Arab leaders"[18] who conspired with the fascists to raise a premature uprising in the country, for endangering the national movement and warned the Arab masses not to place any trust in them. Thus, when the Rashid Ali uprising took place in Iraq, the Party called on both the Germans and the British "not to intefere". It explained that the Germans had succeeded in "paving the way for German colonisation" in that country and warned that the fascist states had colonialist aims and aspired to control "Iraqi oil..the potash in Palestine..the Suez Canal and the cotton in Egypt.."[19] and were trying "to deceive the Arabs as Britain had done in the First World War". Yet paradoxically when the British intervened in Iraq and toppled the Rashid Ali Government, the Party came out against their intervention and condemned it.[20]

Soon after the outbreak of war in 1939 the Party unleashed a campaign against recruitment to the British army in Palestine. This lasted until well after the German attack on the Soviet Union, and continued to engage the Party's attention until the final split in 1943. This campaign was directed both against the Jewish Agency and the British Government. The former were attacked for their

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17. Sawt al Shaab, August 1940. Quoted in Jewish Intelligence Report. CZA S 25/7532.
18. Let us Beware of Colonial Conspiracies...loc. cit.
19. Ibid.
20. Arabic Leaflet of CC/PCP, June 1941.

policy of encouraging the recruitment of Jewish youth into the army and thus "sending them to the Maginot line as cannon fodder".[21] The Party argued that although the Jewish Agency claimed that its support for recruitment was based on the wish to defend the country against fascism, conscription to the army could be nothing more than "a tool of imperialism and Zionism"[22] and thus had to be opposed. It attacked the Zionist leaders as "warmongers" and called on the Jews in Palestine to demonstrate their "opposition to the war effort" and "not to give imperialism a single soldier...a single farthing"[23] pointing out that it was against the interests of the Jewish masses themselves to have "a Jewish army under the command of the traitorous Zionist gangs and British imperialism."

In the Arab street the Party's task was facilitated by the fact that there was little support for the war and recruitment was insignificant. In its campaign in the Jewish street it pointed out that recruitment would increase the "danger of turning Palestine into a battle -field"[24] and continued to argue till as late as the middle of 1941 that the reason Palestine had not been engulfed by the war, was due to its "opposition to the war and to both Britain and Germany".[25] It continuously called on both Arabs and Jews to put pressure on the Government "to remove its military bases from Palestine".[26] Condemning the savagery of the Italian bombings on Haifa in August 1940, it explained them as being "retaliation for British attacks against civilian targets in Libya".[27] It also held Britain responsible for endangering the lives and property of the inhabitants of Palestine by "turning Palestine's villages and towns into military camps" and called for the removal of the British army from the country[28] and the declaring of Palestine a non-combatant zone. This explanation which certainly fell on welcome ears in the

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21. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP, February 1940. Quoted in Israeli, op. cit. p. 162.
22. The CC/PCP to the Active Members...op. cit. p. 50. The Party also condemned the Jewish Agency's call for the establishment of a Jewish Army. See Nidal al Shaab, October 1940. loc. cit.
23. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP, July 1940. Quoted in Israeli, op.cit.p.164.
24. An Outline of Communist Activity, 8 October-8 November 1940. Jewish Intelligence Report. CZA S 25/7532.
25. Let us Beware of Colonial Conspiracies...loc. cit.
26. To All Workers in the Country: On the Fall...loc. cit.
27. The Communist Movement in Jaffa. Jewish Intelligence Report, 10 September 1940. CZA S 25/7532.
28. Statement After 3rd Italian Air Raid on Haifa. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP. August 1940.

Arab street, was anaethma to the Yishuv; but the Party did not allow this to influence its complete opposition to the "imperialist war" and its persistent attempts to use any and all arguments to turn the Yishuv against the war in faithful pursuit of Moscow's line.

The news of the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 caught the Party unawares. This unexpected event, as far as the Party itself was concerned, resulted in confusion and an attempt to explain the Nazi attack in terms of a capitalist conspiracy abetted by Britain to bring down the socialist regime in the Soviet Union. On the morrow of the attack the Party called on Palestine's inhabitants to defend the Soviet Union and to show their solidarity by declaring strikes and organising demonstrations throughout the country,[29] while continuing to struggle against recruitment, and transforming the on-going "imperialist war" into a war of liberation, and for the freedom and independence of Palestine. Unable to explain the war between Germany and the Soviet Union within the framework of its past statements and analysis, the Party reverted to the old line of blaming "the reactionary bourgeoisie in the United States and Britain" for instigating the Nazis.[30] It was explained in the Party's Arabic leaflets that Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union was "backed by German capitalists and their friends in Britain" and that Hitler "could not have started the war without the agreement of the capitalists of Britain and the United States".[31]

The Party attacked Churchill's offer of help to the Soviet Union and characterised this as "aimed to lull the masses and to benefit from their support for the Soviet Union".[32] In Palestine the Party saw this strategy as aimed at enlisting the support of the inhabitants for Britain's own interests and "to increase recruitment and forced labour for small wages in the army camps" but this recruitment it was declared, "did not aid the Soviet Union...(it) aimed at strengthening British occupation and the realisation of

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29. To the Masses on the Occasion of the German Attack on the USSR. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP, 26 June 1941.
30. Long Live the Wide Popular Front for the Defence of the USSR. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP. 29 June 1941.
31. Arabic Leaflet of CC/PCP, quoted in Communist Affairs: January-June 1941. Jewish Intelligence Report. p. 6. CZA S 25/48.
32. Long Live the Wide Popular Front...loc. cit.

Zionist occupation against the Arab liberation movement".[33] The Party called for direct recruitment to the Red Army as the best way to help the Soviet Union and for a short period actually advocated the formation of international brigades to go and fight on the Russian front.[34] This was deemed to be preferable to complying with the Zionists call for recruitment which "had a Zionist and anti-Arab nature" and hindered the fostering of friendly relations between Arabs and Jews.

The war between Britain and Germany had been opposed by the Party for nearly two years; it was and continued to be, condemned as an "imperialist war" where the prospect of a victory for England meant a world "in which a race of masters sucked the colonial people's blood in a capitalist world of crisis and unemployment.[35] While Churchill had "abstained" from declaring his war aims, Stalin in contrast had announced that the Soviet Union had no ambitions of conquest and aimed at nothing more than "the destruction of fascism once and for all". Thus even after June 1941, the Party continued to differentiate the forces engaged in the war against Germany as "imperialist" and "socialist" and it continued to regard the United States and Britain as "the secret allies of Hitler".[36] Its reading of the international situation led it to arrive at the conclusion, just prior to the construction of the Anglo-Soviet alliance, that the weakening of inter-imperialist contradictions would result in increased danger of a general war of intervention against the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union's entry into the war did not initially cause the Party to abandon its old line. It persisted in its propaganda against recruitment and denied that "the British robber gangs, exploiters of the people...are partners of the Red Army"[37] and declared that the enemy of the Party remained the British presence in Palestine. It called on the inhabitants to struggle against

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33. Long Live the Wide Popular Front...loc. cit.
34. In the Communist Camp: July 1941-March 1942. Jewish Intelligence Report. p. 1. CZA S 25/48.
35. Leaflet of CC/PCP, quoted in Information on the Communist Movement. Jewish Intelligence Report, 12 July 1941. CZA S 25/48.
36. Theses of the Secretariat: Document of PCP, April 1942. Frankel Collection, op. cit. p. 161.
37. Leaflet of CC/PCP, 8 July 1941.

the policies of imperialism and Zionism, to call for the establishment of wide democratic rights, for legalising the Communist Party, as proof of Britain's good faith in its claims of willingness to co-operate with all anti-fascists, and for increasing the tempo of the class struggle against "the exploitation of the bourgeoisie and the leaders of the Histadrut".[38] The Arabs in particular were called upon to struggle for the liberation of the prisoners of the rebellion and for the expulsion of British imperialism from the country and the establishment of "a popular government".[39] Britain was called upon to show the sincerity of its often asserted desire to help the Soviet Union "by ending its rule in the colonies" and granting freedom and independence to the people of Palestine.

The Party took more than four months to overcome its adherence to the old line and produce a new policy suited to the circumstances created as a result of the Soviet involvement in the war. It was hampered by having lost nearly all its top leadership in July 1941 shortly after the Nazi attack, and was still reeling from this unexpected shock and unsure of the correct position to adopt.[40] It was some time before the new leadership, seeing the close co-operation developing between Britain and the Soviet Union, eventually came out in unequivocal support for all the participants in the war against fascism and declared itself in favour of the British war effort in Palestine. It relegated to second place the internal conflicts and the struggle against Zionism, maintaining that it was necessary to subordinate everything to the task of defeating fascism. Announcing the formation of an anti-fascist front comprising Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States[41] the Party came out in favour of the recruitment of Arabs and Jews into the army[42] and exhorted them to enter the ranks of the British army "the brothers in arms of the heroic Red Army".

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38. Long Live the Wide Popular Front...loc. cit.
39. Arabic Leaflet of CC/PCP, quoted in Communist Affairs, January-June 1941. loc. cit.
40. Musa and his two Jewish lieutenants, S. Tzabari and S. Mikunis, were arrested a week after the German attack on the Soviet Union. They were all released towards the end of the year. During their imprisonment, the Party was led by Pneina Feinhaus, Khalil Shannir, and Hassan Yehia abu Aysha.
41. Long Live the Anti-Fascist Front from Leningrad to Torbruk. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP, October 1941.
42. W.O. 169/8310. Communist Activity in Palestine, 30 May 1943.

The Party's most profound change of attitude concerned the British Government itself. The Government had been perceived as being the immediate enemy which Palestine's inhabitants had been exhorted to struggle against and whose "brutal oppression" of the 1936 rebellion was frequently called to mind as reflecting the true nature of Britain's motives in the ongoing "imperialist war". However, towards the end of 1941 the Party recognised that it was inconceivable to maintain this attitude towards Britain while at the same time calling for a wide popular front for the prosecution of the anti-fascist war and when the Soviet Union itself was in very close co-operation with Britain. Thus the Party soon declared that the Soviet Union's entrance in the war had "changed its character and influenced Britain" in the struggle against fascism;[43] it was no longer possible to make a distinction between a "Soviet liberation war" and a "British imperialist war". Britain it was emphasised, had declared its willingness "to make great sacrifices for the anti-fascist war headed by the Soviet Union".[44]

The Party's new attitude implied an enthusiastic and persistent call for recruitment, but more important, in its agitation for all-out support for the war effort, it stood for a period in opposition to industrial action,[45] condemning it as a "sabotaging of the war effort". The Party sought to exact a price from the Government for its support, and persistently called on it to legalise the Party and allow it to pursue its activities openly.[46] This call was frequently repeated in the public meetings which the Party was holding openly for the first time with the ostensible aim of generating support for the war, and which the Government, starting in 1942, allowed the Party to convene.[47] The Government's

43. Theses of Secretariat. loc. cit.
44. Long Live the Anti Fascist Front. loc. cit.
45. In the Communist Camp: July 1941-March 1942. loc. cit.
46. Statement to the High Commissioner and every Honest Citizen of the Country: A call to abolish all limitations on the Party in pursuit of the Joint Anti Fascist Struggle. Leaflet of CC/PCP reproduced in Assorted News, Jewish Intelligence Report 24 April 1942. CZA S25/48.
47. The Party held its first ever public meetings during the war years. e.g. in Haifa, 16 May 1942 (attended by 150 Jews and 50 Arabs). See Communist Affairs. Jewish Intelligence Report 29 May 1942. The 22nd of June 1942 was designated Day of Mass Recruitment and Party members were instructed to join the army on that day. The Party also took the opportunity of the relative freedom it enjoyed to hold meetings on "socialist occasions".e.g. the Anniversary of the Red Army, meetings held in Jerusalem 20 February 1943, in Haifa, 23 February and in Jaffa 26 February. See Nidal al Shaab N.4. March 1943. pp.6-7; The Anniversary of the October Revolution, meetings in Haifa 6 November 1942 (attended by 600 people), and in Jerusalem (attended by 1,000 people). See Nidal al Shaab, N.5 November 1942.

adherence to "the wide popular front" did not however extend to granting legality to the communists, but Government reports indicate that it was not oblivious of the valuable role they were performing in drumming-up support for the war effort. As early as 1941, the Government had noted the "considerable modifications" which Party policy had undergone and its call on Jewish workers "to fulfil their sacred duty...in the great anti-fascist front of the Anglo-Soviet alliance".[48] After two years of such activity, the Government recognised that as far as the war effort was concerned "the general attitude of the PCP and its members is irreproachably pro-British",[49] and that its propaganda "maintained a spirit conducive to the efficient prosecution of the war".[50] Although this did not earn the Party the right to legality it was allowed a measure of freedom, which reflected itself in a strengthening of its ranks and in the extension of its activities.

A natural corrolary of the Party's advocacy of a joint war effort against fascism was the toning down of the struggle against Zionism. The Party declared its readiness to recognise some of the "national organisations" of the Yishuv[51] and attempted to extend its popular front policy to include those Zionist parties willing to co-operate with it and prepared to subordinate their differences to the main aim of the struggle against fascism. The "Victory League"[52] was born out of an attempt to affect such a collaboration, but the Party's influence within it remained relatively small. The Party also reversed its stand on the mobilisation of Jewish youth into the British army, While previously it had opposed the Jewish Agency's advocacy of recruitment, it now criticised its own continued adherence to this line after the Soviet Union was under attack. It recognised its continued opposition to what it had

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48. C.O. 733/457/75162. Annual Report, 1941. p. 45.
49. W.O.169/8310 PICME Paper N.7. Communism in Palestine, 1 July 1943.
50. . Communist Activity in Palestine, 30 May 1943. loc. cit.
51. Speech of Musa: Political and Organisational Tasks of the PCP in the Present Time, delivered at Enlarged Plenum held on the 8th January 1943. See In the Communist Camp, 1943. Jewish Intelligence Report. CZA S 25/7532.
52. "The Council to Aid the USSR in the War Against Fascism" was set up early in 1942; later its name was changed to Victory League. See W.O.167/15702 PICME N.64. Russian Influence in the Levant. 31 August 1943.

termed the "imperialist Zionist mobilisation"[53] while it itself had called for anti-fascist mobilisation, as a mistake. This had constituted a double error in that it served as "a weapon against anti-fascist mobilisation", and also left the initiative, and thus the control of the Yishuv, to the Zionists. Rectifying its policy, the Party's new line was to call on "all those who can carry arms to join the army".[54]

Increasingly the propaganda of the Party centred on the demand for the opening of a second front in Europe. Among the numerous arguments used to advance this demand, the most radical, and the one which was to prove to have far ranging consequences, was the appeal to the "national consciousness" of the Yishuv, to its feelings of anger and horror at the fate engulfing the Jewish communities in occupied Europe, and the desire for revenge.[55] This was repeatedly used to appeal to the Yishuv in language which did not much differ from that used by the Zionists, harping on the theme of "national interests", and calling on the Jews "to organise meetings and demonstrations to press the Government through mass action"[56] for an immediate opening of the second front. The war was variously described as "the war of the Jewish people" and "the great national war of all the Jewish people",[57] and the necessity of joining the army was highlighted by emphasising that at "this moment our fate as workers and as Jews is being decided".[58] The Party's leaflets talked about "revenging the spilled blood of thousands of Jews in Europe"[59] and called on the Yishuv to heed the "national interests

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53. Theses of Secretariat. op. cit. p. 162.
54. Assorted News. Jewish Intelligence Report, 24 April 1942. CZA S25/48.
55. Speech of David Fry, World Jewry in the Struggle Against Fascism, in Hebrew Pamphlet, Speeches at Anti-Fascist Farewell Party for Mobilised Cadres held by the Party in Tel Aviv, 30 May 1942.
56. Long Live the 7th of November, the 25th Anniversary of the Soviet Union, Land of Socialism and Freedom of All Peoples. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP, November 1942.
57. Ibid.
58. Long Live the Anti Fascist Front. loc. cit.
59. To the Citizens of Jerusalem: Let us Revenge the Blood of our Brethren in Europe. Hebrew Leaflet of Jerusalem Committee of PCP. December 1942.

of the Jewish people" and prevent the "total extermination of our brethren" by the immediate opening of the second front to achieve the speedy ending of the war. The motive of revenge repeatedly appeared in the Party's Hebrew literature, and Jewish youth were called upon to "unconditionally join the ranks...to revenge the blood of their brothers and sisters being killed in Europe".[60]

Despite the adoption of this new line, the Party continued to sense that the Zionist parties "did not accept (its) declared sincerity...in the struggle against fascism".[61] The opposition to the Zionist leadership of the Yishuv which had manifested itself in the period perceived as the "imperialist war" continued well after the German attack on the Soviet Union. Even during the German advance in the Western desert and when Palestine itself was threatened, the Zionist leaders had been attacked for "sowing panic..(and) desperation propaganda",[62] and the Party had continued to oppose the recruitment of Jewish youth for a number of months after June 1941.[63] The truce which the Party declared in 1941 meant a rectification of this policy, and it went so far as to declare in its Arabic propaganda that "Zionism is not the main enemy at this stage".[64] However, even during this short lived truce the Party continued to oppose certain policies of the Zionists. In particular, it severely criticised the persistent efforts of the Jewish Agency to organise illegal immigration in defiance of the terms of the 1939 White Paper.[65] Likewise, it stood opposed to the call for the formation of a Jewish army,[66] and saw this as preparation for "the conquest of the country" after the ending of the war. Special attention was accorded to the Hagana which was attacked for "persecuting anti-fascist fighters" and pursuing "police activities" vis-a-vis the Party and its cadres.[67]

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60. Long Live the 7th of November...loc. cit.
61. Musa's Speech at Enlarged Plenum, 8 January 1943. op. cit. p. 2.
62. Kol Haam, April 1941. Quoted in Israeli, op. cit. p. 160.
63. Theses of Secretariat. loc. cit.
64. Nidal al Shaab, N. 4, March 1943. Speech of Musa at meeting held in Jaffa, 26 February 1943 on the anniversary of the Red Army.
65. On the Struma Incident. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP. March 1941. Quoted in Assorted News. Jewish Intelligence Report. 18 March 1942. CZA S25/7532. The Jewish immigrants on board the ship were characterised as the "victims of Gestapo agents and Zionist contrabandists".
66. Communism in Palestine, 1943. PICME. N.7. loc. cit.
67. Kol Haam, February 1942. Quoted in Assorted News. Jewish Intelligence Report, 27 March 1942. CZA S 25/7532.

At the beginning of 1943 however, this one-sided truce was allowed to lapse. Although the Party did not succeed in winning the desired respectability within the Yishuv, this period was nevertheless one of increased activity and witnessed an expansion in the Party's membership. It had assumed in the Yishuv the posture of the most militant advocate of the anti-fascist struggle, a fact which both allowed it to pursue its activities for the first time openly, and endeared it to certain sections of the Yishuv who were favourably predisposed towards the Soviet Union and judged the Party by its attempts to promote the anti-fascist struggle, remaining oblivious to the rest of its policies. The discontinuation of the truce was largely the result of the growing "national" struggle within the ranks of the Party itself, which was soon to lead to its final break-up.

The new Party line of support for the war proved much more difficult to apply within the Arab street. With the British army's suppression of the rebellion still fresh in their memories, the Party initially baulked at calling on the Arabs to enrol in the army, but called for support of the war effort in all other possible ways. In its propaganda it tried to maintain a distinction between Britain and the colonial administration in Palestine, calling on the Arabs to struggle against the latter while "supporting the struggle of the British people against fascism".[68] Realising that it was "swimming against the current" the Party nevertheless saw its task as formulating the Arabs' consciousness "about the place of the national liberation movement in the anti-fascist war",[69] and to explain to the Arab inhabitants that "this was their war in the first place".[70]

In this period of relatively free activity the Party held numerous meetings at which Party leaders spoke of the necessity of supporting the war. To this was invariably added more general demands for the release of the prisoners of the rebellion, for the widening of democratic freedoms, and for the legalising of the

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68. In the Communist Camp: July 1941-March 1942. op. cit. p. 2.
69. The Role of the Party and the Communist Youth. op. cit. p. 166.
70. Theses of Secretariat. loc. cit.

Party.[71] The demands for the organisation of the Arab labour force, and the day-to-day economic struggle were never absent from the Party's literature or its public meetings. These were persistently linked to the ongoing war against fascism and the importance of partaking in this struggle.[72]

Throughout the war years, the Party remained conscious of the pro-Axis sympathies of a large section of the Arab population, and of its inability to muster "a single Arab demonstration in support of the second front".[73] Recognising that there was in the Arab street no "wide volunteering movement to the army and no confidence towards Britain",[74] and accounting for the little enlistment that did take place by referring it to the hard economic conditions and denying it any anti-fascist nature, the Party attempted to educate the Arab public about the implications of the war for their own independence struggle. For this reason it set up the "League For Struggle Against Nazism and Fascism in Palestine".[75] In its opening statement the League called on the Arabs not to be deceived by the promises of the Rome-Berlin axis whose victory would not bring forth the desired independence of Palestine, but would lead to its enslavement.[76] The condition for independence was support for the "united nations" whose victory was "the only guarantee for the success of our national struggle". The Party tried to win the Arabs' support for the war by explaining that "the destruction of fascism is the inevitable end of Zionism".[77] It reasoned that the

71. e.g. Meeting held in Jerusalem, 20 February 1943. The hall was adorned with red flags and pictures of Lenin and Stalin. At such meetings Arab leaders of the Party such as Musa, Abdullah Bandak, and Emil Habibi spoke. Less frequently Jewish communists also appeared on the platform.
72. Let the Government Guarantee Bread to the People. Arabic Leaflet of CC/PCP, November 1942. The Party warned the Government that "a hungry people cannot pull its weight in the war effort...(and) cannot be depended upon to support the Government".
73. Interview with Radwan al Hilou, Jericho 23 February 1974. He further stated that pro-fascist elements were openly preparing lists of people to be liquidated in the expected event of a fascist victory, and that he himself was stabbed soon after his release from jail early in 1942.
74. The Role of the Party and the Communist Youth. loc. cit.
75. "Usbat Mukafahat al Naziya wa al Fashiya fi Falastin". It brought out its first statement on the 12th of November 1942, and held its first meeting in Jerusalem, 15th November 1942. It was headed by a fellow traveller, the lawyer Jaafar Hashem, and its meetings were attended by educated Arab youth, who though not members of the Party, felt admiration for the prowess of the Soviet Union, and were disenchanted with the Arab leadership.
76. Statement to the Noble Arab People 12 November 1942. Al Tarik. N.19. 1942.
77. Speech of Musa at Jaffa meeting, 26 February 1943. loc. cit.

Soviet Union's leadership of the anti-fascist bloc established beyond all possible doubt that "the war to destroy fascism is a just war" and that "all reactionary movements including Zionism will be destroyed".[78] Addressing itself to those Arabs who doubted the nature of the war, the Party deduced the need for unconditional support for the war effort and the relegating of the struggle against Zionism to the background, by purporting to show the link between the rise of Nazism in Europe and the persecution of the Jews, with the intensification of Zionist immigration into Palestine.[79] Consequently the destruction of fascism would automatically lead to a drying-up of the sources of Jewish immigration, and "without immigration there is no Zionism". Thus in an appeal to the "national interests" of the Arabs which closely paralleled similar appeals made to the Jewish population, the surest way to defeat Zionism was declared to lie in steadfast support of the war "in co-operation with all anti-fascists".

Yet the Party could not resolve the problem of how to deal with the recruitment issue among the Arabs. From initial hostility, the Party at a later period criticised the absence of a positive stand on this problem.[80] The Party had been mistaken both in having opposed recruitment in the Jewish street as a big danger to the Party among the Arab community, and for leaving the initiative in the hands of "the Nashashibi agents of the regime" which resulted only in "postponing the development of an anti-fascist consciousness among the Arabs". The decision to support recruitment had been taken while the Party's leaders were in jail and without their views being taken into account.[81] On their release the Party was unable to come to a unanimous decision[82] on how to deal with the problem, and it was left to the CC to decide on the most suitable course to follow. This problem eventually played its part in causing the

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78. Speech of Musa at meeting in Jerusalem attended by one thousand people on 6th November 1942. Nidal al Shaab N. 5/1. November 1942.
79. Speech of Musa at Jaffa 26 February 1942. Ibid.
80. Theses of Secretariat. loc. cit.
81. Interview with Radwan al Hilou, Jericho, 1 February 1974.
82. In the Communist Camp 1943. op. cit. p. 2. Interviews with Radwan al Hilou concerning enlarged plenum held January 1943. Jericho, 1 and 26 February 1974.

final Party split, but in the short term, it led the Party to pursue an ambiguous policy of supporting recruitment in the Jewish street, while refraining from any similar calls in the Arab street, restricting itself to combating fascist propaganda, calling for support for the Allied effort and for the stepping-up of efforts in the field of war production.

The sum total of the Party's activity during the war years proved to be largely beneficial despite the confusions and falterings exhibited at the beginning. For the first two years of the war, the Party found itself forced to pursue a political line which did not in any way follow from its previously held convictions, and which isolated it within the Yishuv. It nevertheless religiously adhered to the Comintern line and subordinated its policies to the immediate demands of Soviet diplomacy. Needless to say, the policy of "abstentionism" pursued by the Party during this period did not conform with its character and it eagerly siezed on the outbreak of war between Germany and the Soviet Union to continue where it had left off in August 1939, the pursuit of a firm struggle against fascism. Yet as the Party's consequent self-criticism showed,[83] it was unable in the first few months of the German attack to completely ditch its old policy of opposition to Britain and the Zionists, and had to wait and see how relations between Britain and the Soviet Union would develop. Once the Party had decided to come out in total support for the war and all those engaged in the struggle against fascism, it faithfully stuck to this policy and subordinated all other conflicts to it. Thus the struggle against both Britain and the Zionists was suspended, although early in 1943 and shortly before the Party split, the policy towards the Zionists was reversed. But as far as Britain was concerned and the "Democratic aims" of the war, there was no backtracking. The Party went so far as to criticise "leftist elements" within the Yishuv, who called for the establishment of a "socialist charter" to replace the Atlantic Charter and who argued for the transformation of the war into a revolutionary struggle to achieve the "final goals" of socialism.[84] The Party opposed

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83. Theses of Secretariat. op. cit. pp. 161-2.
84. Ibid. p. 162.

this as being aimed at "splitting the united front" and declared that the "main goal" during the "anti-fascist war" was to unite all the forces willing to struggle against the Axis powers. The sincerity and enthusiasm of its propaganda in favour of the unhindered prosecution of the war did not pass the Palestine administration unnoticed, and the Party was allowed to come out into the open and pursue its activities publicly. This in its turn facilitated its progress, and even in the Arab street, where it was swimming against the current, enabled it to appear publicly for the first time and to dispel the lingering myths, both by its pro-Arab policies and by the presence of its Arab cadre, that the communists were just "another Jewish party". Its success among the Arabs was to prove to be a mixed blessing, as it was to contribute largely to the ensuing split.

Activity in the Arab Labour Movement

The PCP had played an important role in the formation of the Arab labour movement in the late 1920's and early 1930's. As early as 1925 it had published "Haifa" a weekly journal of labour affairs and agitation, while in 1926 it had succeeded in setting up the Ichud Movement, the only successful instance of a joint Arab-Jewish labour organisation throughout the years of the Mandate. In 1930 the Party was instrumental in the holding of the First Arab Workers' Congress in Haifa, and its Arab cadres played a prominent role in its proceedings. It remained active in the following years until the General Strike and the rebellion of 1936 brought all trade union activity to an end, and the class struggle, by necessity gave way to the national struggle for independence. The Arab trade union movement as a whole, which was centred on Haifa and had slowly started to spread all over Palestine, was faced with an immensely difficult task. In the Arab street there was no working class as such and the majority of the population was rooted in a peasant economy where wage earning in the cities was more often than not regarded as subsidiary to agriculture. With the prolongation of the rebellion, the labour movement which had already succeeded in making some headway and had established itself in the country's few urban

centres, began to contract and was eventually reduced to the original stronghold of the movement in Haifa. Even there, however, the movement was dormant and existed in name only.

The outbreak of the Second World War and the severance of Palestine from the metropolis and from the other parts of the Empire had an immediate effect on the country. It boosted industrial development and created new places of employment in the army work camps which were set up to meet the needs of the British army, cut off from its base in England, in addition to meeting the needs of Palestine's civilian population. In the Arab street, the effects of this were easily observable in the swelling ranks of Arab labour. By the middle of 1941, the Government and the British army had become the largest employers of Arab labour in the country.[85] Previous to this, the opportunities had been very limited. Jewish employers refused to employ Arab labour on political grounds[86] and there were no industrial undertakings in the Arab sector capable of employing large numbers of workers. The small Arab working class was distributed among a number of occupations, the most important of which were the railways, the ports of Jaffa and Haifa, the building industry, the Government public works department, the international oil companies and, until the outbreak of the war, they had also found seasonal employment in the citrus industry. Arab wages were extremely low, and compared unfavourably with Jewish labour,[87] and in the complete absence of trade union organisation[88] Arab workers were at the mercy of their employers.[89]

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85. C.O.733/441/75430/2. Survey of Labour in Palestine: Report by R. M. Graves, June 1941. p. 3.
86. There were a few exceptions to this such as the Palestine Electric Corporation and the Palestine Potash Company.
87. The ratio between Arab and Jewish workers wages was in proportion of 5:3. An unskilled Arab labourer received from 80-160 mills a day, while a skilled Arab labourer received a maximum of 350 mills a day. See Survey of Labour in Palestine, 1941. op. cit. p. 7.
88. Ibid. p. 9. The PAWS claimed in June 1940 a membership of 700 workers, but not all of those were fully paid-up members.
89. F.O.371/39988/2768. Hankey in a memo dated 29 November 1944, commenting on a draft paper on Arab nationalism by Professor Gibb had this to say on the conditions of workers in the Middle East. "...the untrammelled and outrageous exploitation of the workers by the capitalists throughout the Middle East area makes anyone from Europe astonished that the whole working class is not communist, or at least actively revolutionary.."

The initiative to reactivate the labour movement came from the PCP. At the same time the Palestine Government adopted a policy of fostering the development of "responsible trade unionism" among the Arabs. In September 1940 a labour adviser to the Government was appointed[90] and in July 1942 a Department of Labour officially came into existence,[91] composed of a director and three labour inspectors to cover Jerusalem, the northern region and the southern region respectively. The mere existence of the labour department was seen as a go-ahead sign by the elements in the Arab street who were in favour of creating a strong labour movement, and undoubtedly, by seeming to afford Government sanction for such an enterprise, helped make it more acceptable to those elements who were hesitant.

The PCP's attempts to breathe life into the existing framework of the labour movement were assisted by a number of factors. The war itself had led to the creation of favourable conditions. Coinciding with the Soviet entry into the war the Party, for the first time, enjoyed increasing Government toleration, while the setting-up of the military camps led to the creation of a new kind of Arab worker dependent on wages for his family's livelihood,[92] and to the concentration of large numbers of workers in a single establishment. To this must be added the support extended by the labour department for the setting-up of new trade unions, and the ever present example of the organised Jewish workers and the success of the Histadrut. The setting-up of cultural clubs in the Arab street, giving expression to the political and cultural fermentation among Arab youth during the war and the rebellion against their traditional leaders, was to contribute directly to the increasing enthusiasm for organisation among the Arab workers, and a number of future leaders of the Arab labour movement were to come from within the ranks of these societies.

The new interest shown by the Party in the Arab labour movement signified an important shift from its previous trade union policy.

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90. C.O.733/423/75430. R. Graves who was previously Director of the Labour Office in Egypt.
91. Graves became the Director of the Department which began its regular work in October 1942. See Department of Labour Annual Report, 1942. p. 5.
92. Ibid. The report estimated the number of Arab workers in 1942 as between 85,000-100,000.

It had until then, concentrated on carrying out its activity within the Histadrut, although with demonstrably no measure of success. Despite its expulsion from the organisation early in the twenties, it persisted in fielding front organisations within the Histadrut, and continued to call for its transformation into a truly professional body uniting within its ranks both Jewish and Arab workers. The obvious failure of this tactic and the growth of the Party's Arab cadre as a result of its pro-Arab nationalist line during the rebellion, led it to re-orientate its policy and work for the formation of purely Arab trade unions, an enterprise made that much more realistic by the large increase in Arab workers as a result of the war conditions.

The Party's attitude to Labour organisation within the Arab street was similar to its previous policy towards the Histadrut. It did not aim to create separate communist labour organisations, but preferred to penetrate the existing Arab trade union structures and work within them.[93] In 1942 three labour societies were set up in Jerusalem, Jaffa and Nazareth, the leading positions in all of which were held by Party members.[94] The Government noted that the Arab labour movement exhibited a "steady progress" during that year[95] and estimated the number of organised Arab workers to be in the region of nine thousand.[96]

While the Party was pursuing its policy of working within the framework of the Palestine Arab Workers' Society, a group within the Party was arguing for carrying out an independent line. It opposed co-operation with the Haifa-based trade union and advocated the setting up of a separate trade union organisation. The differences of this Haifa-based opposition group went well beyond the question of independent trade union organisation. Its moving

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93. W.O.169/8311. Communism in Palestine: January-June 1943. PICME 24 August 1943. Interviews with Said Kabalan, Jericho, 2nd March 1974, and Fahmi Salfiti, Amman 26 March 1974.
94. Survey of Arab Communists. Jewish Intelligence Report, 15 May 1946. CZA S25/48. The Arab workers Society in Jaffa was established 2 October 1942; in Jerusalem, October 1942, and in Nazareth November 1942.
95. A Survey of Palestine. (Jerusalem, 1946) Vol. 2. p. 764.
96. Department of Labour, Annual Report 1942. op. cit. pp.27-28.

spirit was Boulous Farah[97] an ex-member of the CC who, with a number of adherents set up a cultural club called the "Rays of Hope" in October 1942.[98] As a result of discussions which took place in the club's "committee for labour affairs", it was resolved to establish a trade union movement affiliated to the club. The ostensible reason for this was dissatisfaction with what was termed the "conservative policy" of the PAWS and its preoccupation with the setting-up of co-operative societies and modelling itself on the Histadrut, while neglecting the organisation of Arab workers in the new industrial undertakings.[99] Thus, in November 1942 the "Federation of Arab Trade Unions and Labour Societies" came into existence,[100] comprising in addition to individual members, the Arab Workers' Society in Nazareth, the Arab workers' trade unions of the Consolidated Refineries, the Iraqi Petroleum Company, Shell Company, the Public Works Department and the Naval workshops in Haifa.[101] This activity was met with hostile resentment from the Party, which continued to call on Arab workers to enrol in the Haifa based PAWS[102]

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97. Boulous Farah, an ex-railway worker who had taken part in the First Arab Workers' Congress in 1930. In 1934 he travelled to Moscow to the Comintern school where he stayed till 1938. On his return he was appointed to the CC of the Party but came into conflict with Musa. In 1940 he was accused of attempting to lead the police to the Party's secret printing press whereupon he was expelled and Party members were forbidden to associate with him. Nevertheless, he gathered round him a group of educated youth in Haifa who continued to identify him with the Party. He played an important role in bringing about the Party split in 1943 and was instrumental in creating the NLL. During the forties he played a prominent role in the Arab labour movement. In 1948 he opposed partition and was expelled from the NLL.
98. Survey of Arab Commmists, 1946. op. cit. p. 2. Nadi Shu'a al Amal described itself as "anti-fascist" and called for greater democracy in the country and the organisation of Arab workers. Among its members were two future leaders of the NLL, Emil Tuma and Toufic Toubi. It ceased to exist soon after the formation of the FALT.
99. Notes on the Federation of Arab Trade Unions, by Y. Chudleigh (Inspector of Labour), 15 July 1943. ISA. 31/42-258.
100. Ittihad Nakabat wa Jamiyat al Umal al Arabiya. (FALT).
101. Memo submitted by the Federation to the Wages Committee in Jerusalem. (Haifa, 1942). p. 2-3. (Arabic pamphlet).
102. Interview with E. Tuma (a leader of the FALT at the time) Haifa, 3 April 1974. See also, Survey of Arab Communists, 1946. loc.cit.

and condemned what it termed the "splitting activity" of the Haifa group. Yet this seeming division of efforts by the Party and its supporters introduced an element of healthy competition into the labour movement, in the shape of a drive for increased membership and a determination to appear as the more sincere representative of the Arab workers' interests.[103]

Early in 1943, after a gap of twelve years, the second General Conference of Arab Workers was held. Forty delegates met in Jaffa on the 22nd of January, representing three main labour societies in Haifa, Jaffa and Jerusalem and a host of smaller groups.[104] Among the main speakers a large number were Party members, some of whom had been active in the labour movement as far back as the time of the First Arab Workers' Congress. It was due to their efforts that the conference took place at all and it was their speeches which set the tone to the resolutions which were later adopted by the delegates. Also present was the secretary of the "Peoples Club" in Haifa[105] a front organisation of the Party, who attended as an observer, while the rival Federation was conspicuous by its absence. The discussions of the conference centred on the demands for equalising the wages of Arab and Jewish workers, the necessity of establishing Government employment exchanges, the organisation of Arab labour, and the demand for the institution of a Government social insurance scheme. At the same time a resolution was passed condemning the separatist movement of the Federation, calling on it to join the society and protesting against the recommendations it had forwarded to the Wages Committee regarding the establishment of a fixed wage

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103. The Histadrut also fielded an Arab labour organisation, The Palestine Labour League. A Labour Department report credited it with 500 members. See Department of Labour Annual Report 1942. op. cit. p. 27.

104. Memo by A. Yassin (Labour Department) 25 January 1943, on First PAWS Conference held in Jaffa, 22 January. ISA 1440. A report by Chudleigh, Progress of the Palestine Arab Trade Union Movement, during 1943, dated 13 September 1943 gave the following membership figures: Haifa, 4,000; Jaffa, 1,700; Jerusalem 1,234.

105. Nadi al Shaab was organised by Said Kabalan and Emil Habibi, two of Musa's supporters in the struggle against the Haifa group of B. Farah, in October 1942. It was taken over by the latter's group in May 1943 when the Party was undergoing a process of dissolution.

for unskilled labour.[106] Soon after, a Third Arab Workers' Conference was held. This, a much larger affair, was held in July 1943. Three hundred delegates attended the meeting in Haifa claiming to represent thirty thousand workers.[107] Again, the main speeches were delivered by Party members[108] and resolutions were passed calling for a periodic fixing of a minimum wage, for the equalising of the wages of Arab and Jewish workers in the military camps and calling on the Government to grant the PAWS a permit to publish a labour journal.[109]

This same period saw the convening of a third labour meeting which was to be of much greater import. The First Congress of Arab Workers in the Military Camps was held on the 4th April 1943 and was attended by over a hundred participants. The forty-four delegates who took part in the meeting claimed to represent twenty-eight thousand out of a total of forty-five thousand Arab workers employed in the camps.[110] Among the main speakers at the congress, seven were Party members. A. Bandak delivered the key speech which was met by unanimous approval and his demands were reiterated by nearly every other speaker. The commmnist speakers emphasised that the Arab workers in the camps were the "backbone of the war effort which will destroy fascism"[111] and declared the Arab workers' complete support for the war against fascism. They attacked the Histadrut and described its attempts to organise Arab workers as divisive[112] while at the same time declaring themselves in favour of joint activity

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106. In its memo submitted to the Wages Committee in November 1942, the FALT had asked for the fixing of a minimum wage for unskilled Arab labour of 250 mills a day. See Memo of Federation. op. cit. p. 10-11.
107. Falastin, 26 July 1943.
108. The most active members were Abdullah Bandak, Khalil Shannir, and Khaled Zagmouri. Bandak, a Party member since 1933 was active in the student movement during the War years and in publishing. He was later to play an important role in the NLL and in the LAI. The other two, both workers, were active in the Party since the mid-thirties.
109. Al Difa, 26 July 1943.
110. Conference of Arab Workers in the Military Camps, Jaffa, 4 April 1943. (Arabic pamphlet) p. 15.
111. Nidal al Shaab, N.5/26. April 1943. Special issue on the First Conference of Civilian Arab Workers in the Military Camps. Speech of D. Turujman. p. 3.
112. Ibid. p. 4. Speech of Emil Habibi.

with "honest Jewish workers" and the setting-up of joint committees of Arab and Jewish workers in the camps in the pursual of the workers' common interests. The conference's resolutions made the customary call for the equalisation of wages in the camps and a host of other economic demands. More importantly, the conference called on the Government to grant permission for the re-publication of Al Ghad[113] as an organ of the labour movement, while in a direct rebuff to the activities of the Haifa-based FALT and the Histradrut, urged all Arab workers to join the ranks of the PAWS, and declared that the latter was "the only one entitled to represent the workers in the camps and to negotiate on their behalf".[114] Events were soon to show that this claim was well founded. A strike declared by the Histadrut in the military camps in May 1943 was opposed by the PAWS[115] and in the event, the Arab workers obeyed the PAWS's call and stayed at work.[116]

Simultaneously, the Federation was also enjoying rapid success in its efforts to organise Arab workers. Its membership figures saw a constant rise,[117] and it succeeded in getting trade union recognition where other trade unions had previously failed.[118] The Federation claimed that it was only interested in non-unionised Arab labour and declared, in a move to placate the rival PAWS, that it would not interfere in areas already covered by the latter organisation.[119]

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113. Al Ghad (The Morrow) was first brought out in 1938 as the organ of the Arab Students' League, by Abdullah Bandak, and ceased publication in 1941. It was open to all shades of opinion and many of the future leaders of the NLL served their apprenticeship on its pages. When it was republished in 1945, it was as the organ of the League of Arab Intellectuals.
114. Minutes of Decisions of Congress held in Jaffa, 4 April 1943 by Civilian Arab Workers in the Military Camps. Memo in English submitted by the PAWS to the Labour Department, 20 April 1943.
115. Leaflet of CC of Arab Workers in the Camps, and of Jaffa AWS quoted in memo of A. Yassin, 9 May 1943, "The AWS and non-participation in the Strike declared by the Histadrut". ISA 1440.
116. F.O.371/35030/1922. War Office Report, May 1943.
117. A Government source gave the figure of 1,600 paid-up members in 1942. See Department of Labour Annual Report, 1942. op. cit. p. 28. In 1943, the FALT claimed a membership of 2,300. See Progress of Palestine Arab Trade Union Movement during 1943, op. cit. p. 2. A Government labour inspector estimated that it spoke for 4,000-5,000 workers. See Notes on the Federation of Arab Trade Unions, by Y.Chudleigh, 15 July 1943. ISA I/31/42-258.p.2.
118. Notes on the Federation. loc. cit.
119. Ibid.

Despite the fact that the two organisations reached an agreement not to poach on each other's territory,[120] the agreement proved to be shortlived and broke down as a result of the PAWS's attempts to win over some of the Federation's members.[121] The PAWS continued to resent the activity of the Federation and aimed at absorbing the latter's members within its own ranks, while the Federation's declared aim continued to be that of confederation between the two bodies, a scheme which remained unacceptable to the PAWS.[122]

While sharing with the PAWS, the general economic demands put forward, such as trade union recognition, the setting-up of Government sponsored labour exchanges, the equalising of Arab and Jewish wages, the improvement of wages and working conditions in the camps, and public support for the war effort including the discouragement of strikes,[123] the Federation went further in directing its attention to spheres which it deemed to be of fundamental importance to the life of the Arab workers. It thus called on the Government to revoke the laws forbidding strikes, to institute a social insurance scheme for the workers, to institute collective bargaining between workers and employers, to set up construction projects to absorb the workers who would become unemployed as a result of the termination of the war and the closure of the military camps, and to help Arab workers to return to agriculture by subsidising small farmers.[124] The Federation combined within itself the functions of trade union and political movement, a political dimension which was totally absent from the activity of the PAWS.[125] Although described by a sympathetic official

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120. Progress of Palestine Arab Trade Union..op. cit. p. 3.
121. Ibid. The PAWS succeeded in winning over the Nazareth AWS early in 1943.
122. Notes on the Federation. loc. cit.
123. Ibid. and Memo of Federation. op. cit. p. 20.
124. Memo of the Federation of Arab Trade Unions to the Chief Secretary September 1943. ISA 65/1574.
125. Although the PAWS did not engage in political activities, Party members who were active in the labour movement siezed every suitable occasion to call for support for the war effort. e.g. Odeh al Ashab (a Party member) addressing a First of May meeting in Jaffa, 1943 admonished the workers that "the first duty of Arab workers is to struggle against Nazism". His speech was full of pro-Soviet propaganda, but there was no mention of Independence for Palestine, while socialism was prescribed as the cure-all for every existing problem in an indefinite future. See Speeches of Odeh al Ashahb, ISA 65/3048.

of the labour department as "politically socialist",[126] the Federation chose to identify itself with the demands of the Arab national movement as put forward at the outbreak of the 1936 General Strike, and called for self-determination as "a basic right of all peoples...as guaranteed by all democratic countries".[127] It blamed the British Government for allowing Zionist immigration into the country and called for the imposition of an effective ban on immigration and on land sales, linking the Government's struggle against fascism with the necessity of combating the danger of the possible establishment of "a Zionist majority in an Arab country". While declaring its support for the 1939 White Paper, the Federation demanded the institution of more far-reaching steps. It warned the Government that only by implementing the demands of the Arab national movement during the war itself, would support for the anti-fascist struggle and the democracies be preserved.[128] It further called for the immediate removal of political censorship, for provisions guaranteeing freedom of thought, publication and organisation, for with withdrawal of police supervision of the Arab labour movement, for the institution of compulsory education, for raising the level of the health services, and for the establishment of a truly democratic regime in the country by "enabling the public to partake in solving all problems affecting its immediate life".[129]

The Party's efforts to re-activate the Arab labour movement proved a resounding success. Helped by the conditions prevailing at that time in Palestine, conditions which had not existed in the 1930's when the first such attempt had been made, the Arab labour movement grew to sizeable proportions and came to command a wide following in the years preceeding the termination of the Mandate. The involvement in the Arab labour movement was to absorb all the Party's energies in the Arab sector in the years following the termination of the rebellion and signified, parallel to its involvement in the rebellion, a further shift towards identifying itself

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126. Notes on the Federation. loc. cit.
127. Memo of Federation of Arab Trade Unions to Mr. Boyd (an official of the Middle East Section of the CO who was on a visit to Palestine) 9 July 1943. p. 1. ISA 65/348.
128. Ibid.
129. Ibid. p. 2.

with the problems of the Arab population and support for its aspirations. It further strengthened the Party in the Arab street, and attracted to its ranks a new kind of membership from within the ranks of the Arab intelligentsia. These were disillusioned with the traditional leaders and were drawn, not so much by the Party's advocacy of communism, but by its support for the Arab independence struggle, its modernity and methods of organisation, and not least, as a result of an ill-defined identification of the Party with the Soviet Union whose growing prowess in the war was attracting a number of enthusiastic admirers among the educated youth. This increasing strength in the Arab street was to give rise to two internal problems, the first vis-a-vis the Jewish members of the Party, and the second concerning a growing "national opposition" to the policies of the leadership from amongst the new Arab membership and even from some of the old cadres, which tended to appear as a conflict based on an intellectual versus worker basis. Both these problems were to prove important factors in the break up of the Party which was to soon take place.

CHAPTER SIX

THE NATIONAL SPLIT IN THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

The dissolution of the multi-national PCP in 1943 foreshadowed the coming partition of the country. Already, with the turning of the tide and the ascending fortunes of the Allies, the future of Palestine following the termination of the war was becoming a matter of continuous and consuming discussion within the Yishuv. The Party could not escape from the national divisions obtaining in the country, and its inability to satisfactorily resolve the national conflict reflected itself in the resurgence of national antagonism within the confines of the Party itself, witness to the reality that the resolution of the issues first raised by the Jewish Section during the Arab rebellion had not been adequately resolved. Simultaneously the Party soon became aware that, in addition to the existence of opposition from a section of the Jewish cadre to the policies pursued by the leadership, there had arisen a parallel but conflicting Arab opposition which attempted to steer the Party in the framework of the Arab national movement. The split which took place in the summer of 1943 was to prove the only workable outcome of the sole experiment of Arab-Jewish co-operation in Mandate Palestine, and signified the failure of the communist movement, despite its adherence to an "internationalist ideology" to cope with and surmount the national antagonism of Arabs and Jews.

Dissension Within the Party

The Party's role in the Arab rebellion and its positive evaluation of the Arab national movement, continued to rankle with the Jewish cadres of the Party, who persisted in their demands for a full and critical review of its policies during that period. The Party's attempts to escape contamination by the national conflict through the setting-up of the Jewish Section during the rebellion itself, had proved counter-productive. Even as a short-term solution aimed at maintaining the unity of the Party, it proved a charade. The pursuit of two different political lines resulted in a closer identification of the Jewish Section with the struggles and aspirations of the Jewish community, and its inability to reconcile itself to the pro-Arab nationalist policies of the Party leadership when the two sections came together again at the end of the rebellion.

The end result was the dissolution of the Jewish Section and the expulsion of its leaders from the Party. The Emet faction set up by the ex-members of the Section had pursued a policy based on the recognition of differences within the Zionist camp and attempted to form a working alliance with what was termed "the progressive elements within Zionism". The significance of this development cannot be minimised. For the first time since the admission of the PCP to the ranks of the Comintern, and the move towards involvement with the Arab national movement in the 1930's in recognition of its paramount role in the anti-British struggle in the country, a group of Jewish communists came to recognise that the Jews as well as the Arabs, had "legitimate national interests" in Palestine.

In June 1942, the Emet group dissolved itself and returned to the ranks of the Party.[1] This reunification however did not imply any retraction of the previously held political line of the group. Rather, it was the result of the recognition of a common aim: the struggle for victory in the anti-fascist war in support of the Soviet Union. This did not imply agreement with the Party's internal policies regarding the national conflict or acceptance of the group's criticisms by the Party leadership. It brought with it the seeds of the future split and innumerable disagreements, and introduced into the Party new members who did not subscribe to the previously held positions of the Party, but who had entered the ranks of the Emet group when it was functioning as an independent organisation, and who were soon to find themselves strangers in the Party's ranks.

The political attitudes of the ex-Section's members and their demand for the pursuit of "Yishuv-orientated" policies were soon to become generalised among the Jewish membership of the Party. The leadership was criticised for the past support it had extended to the Mufti and for blindly accepting the leadership of the Arab nationalists in the anti-British struggle. At the same time, the

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1. In the Communist Camp, 1943. Jewish Intelligence Report. p. 1. CZA S 25/7533. Musa, the Party Secretary was not very enthusiastic about the reunification of the Party, fearing rightly as events were to demonstrate, that the Emet members political line would "infect" other Jewish members of the Party. He was however, unable to stand in opposition to the demand for reunification. Interview with Radwan al Hilou. Jericho, 1 February 1974. See also, Y. Porath. The National Liberation League 1943-48. Asian and African Studies. Volume 4. 1968. p. 3.

demand was raised for the revision of the Party's attitude towards the Yishuv. There was talk of the need to recognise that the concentration of Jews in Palestine had created the beginnings of a distinctly "Jewish nationality" in the country, and that the Party should recognise the Yishuv as a "national group". The Party should no longer view the Jews in Palestine as an "undifferentiated mass" and press for their democratic, religious and social rights as individuals, but should regard them as constituting a "nation in being" and consequently approach the conflict of Arab and Jew in an altogether different manner.[2] The implications of this new departure from the orthodox line held by the Party since 1924, were far-reaching, and reflected themselves in the call for the continuation of the popular front policy within the Yishuv, and with the dropping of the slogan of "Arab independence" in Palestine.[3] The Jewish opposition argued that the Party's slogans had to adapt themselves to the realities of the situation in the country. Palestine was no longer a purely Arab country: the size of the Jewish minority had greatly increased since the Party's Arabisation in 1930 when it had embarked on the path of support for the Arab national movement's struggle for independence. The existence of a large and differentiated Jewish minority in the country thus made it imperative to recognise that the old slogan of an "independent Arab Palestine" was no longer correct. Even the alternative slogan of a "democratic Palestine" was deemed to be insufficient as it denied any national recognition to the Jewish masses in the country.

The Party leadership stood totally opposed to what it regarded as

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2. It was only after the split that these demands were reflected in the written materials of the Jewish PCP. According to Fahmi Salfiti (Interview, Amman, 26 March 1974) they were previously debated between the Arab and Jewish members of the CC.
3. This was not reflected in the Party's literature, but remained confined to internal discussions. According to Emil Tuma (Interview, Haifa, 3 April 1974) Mikunis was in the forefront of the opposition to Musa's leadership and was in favour of the slogan of "democratic Palestine" and insisting that areas of Jewish concentration should be able to excercise self-government. See also, Assorted News. Jewish Intelligence Report, 24 February 1942. CZA S 25/48.

a "Jewish national deviation" within the ranks of the Jewish communists.[4] Yet the appearance of this "deviation" was itself a necessary consequence of the leadership's policies in the period following the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union. In its attempts to invoke support for the war within the Jewish community, the Party had resorted to appeals to "Jewish national consciousness". Taking its cue from the formation of the "Jewish anti-fascist Committee" in the Soviet Union, the Party, departing from its previously held policy vis-a-vis the Zionist organisations within the Yishuv, called for the formation of a popular front to pursue the common aim of struggle against Nazism. To this effect, the opposition professed to perceive a distinct differentiation within the Zionist camp, and echoing the Jewish Section's analysis which had contributed to the latter's expulsion from the ranks of the Party a short period before, opined to see "progressive and reactionary wings" within Zionism. It was now not only possible, but necessary to form a front with the "progressive groups within Zionism" in support of the war.[5] To this end, the Party showed itself ready to drop the demand for "independence" declaring that the immediate task was to achieve victory,[6] after which the world would necessarily be remodelled in a new and democratic fashion.

The Party for the first time, formulated a theory of "stages" and refused to pose final goals as the aims of the immediate struggle. The only slogan that it was ready to raise was "all efforts for victory in the war".[7] Implicitly this was seen as sufficient guarantee to solve Palestine's problems, but the Party remained deliberately vague on how the problem was to be resolved in practice. The importance the Party set on the establishment of a popular front

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4. In the period preceding the split the Secretariat was made up of four Jewish members, S. Mikunis, S. Tzabari, M. Slonism, P. Feinhaus, and one Arab, Radwan al Hilou, the Party Secretary. The CC had a larger proportion of Arabs. Decision-making, however, was in the hands of Musa himself. Thus opposition to the leadership implied opposition to Musa and his supporters (both Jews and Arabs) and not to the Party leadership as a whole.
5. Theses of Secretariat. loc. cit.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid. p. 162.

within the Yishuv can be deduced from the fact that it rejected any repetition of the "two path" strategy adopted during the rebellion. It was seen to be necessary to carry out the same struggle in both Arab and Jewish streets irrespective of their particular conditions. Yet when this policy was translated into practice, especially as regards the problem of recruitment to the army and the stand the Party should adopt to this in both the Jewish and Arab streets, it found it impossible to maintain the line laid down in its own formulations. Rather it pursued a contradictory policy which, though it was more in accordance with the realities of the situation, provided the Jewish members of the Party with added grievance against the leadership.

Prior to the attack on the Soviet Union, the Party had opposed recruitment to the British army among both Jews and Arabs. The attack on the Soviet Union had altered the picture. The Party now wholeheartedly came out in favour of recruitment and declared that it was no longer possible to call for recruitment while at the same time struggling against Zionist calls for mobilisation, as the Party had continued to do for a few months after June 1941. Under the conditions of the anti-fascist war, mobilisation it was declared, had a positive aspect irrespective of the political differences separating the communists from the Zionist parties.[8] Likewise the Party refuted charges that its support for recruitment would make its position in the Arab street untenable.[9] Yet it was aware that the majority of the Arab public sympathised with the Axis and that it was not possible to carry out open propaganda in favour of the war or of recruitment and still hope to maintain support within the Arab street. The problem was resolved by deciding to transfer the centre of Party activity among the Arabs to reviving the dormant labour organisations, and to present the question of recruitment from within them, through the influence of the communist cadres on the rest of the members.[10]

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8. Theses of Secretariat. loc. cit. p. 161.
9. In an Interview with Radwan al Hilou, Jericho, 16 February 1974, he stated that the decision to support recruitment in the Arab Street, was taken while he was in jail and that he was not consulted. The leadership of the Party was then in the hands of P. Feinhaus and K. Shannir.
10. The Role of the Party and the Communist Youth. op. cit. p. 51.

This political line was not to be pursued by the Party for long. In an enlarged plenum held in January 1943, Musa the Party Secretary, came out for a revision of the previous tactics of the Party.[11] He argued that it was necessary to change the Party's line both vis-a-vis the British Government and the Zionist movement. The truce which the Party had declared had not led to any positive response from either, and it was necessary to renew the struggle against the British administration on the one hand, and to terminate the attempted collaboration with the Zionists on the other. He put forward two proposals for the practical implementation of this line, first, to drop the propaganda in favour of recruitment in the Arab street, and second, to disband the Proletarian Faction, the Party's trade union group within the Jewish labour movement. This led to a storm of opposition from the majority of the Jewish cadres especially from among the members of the Faction and army recruits, and even some of the Arab members.[12] The Jewish members had hoped for a further strengthening of the popular front within the Yishuv and had argued in the plenum in favour of arming the inhabitants of Palestine in preparation for a possible Nazi occupation.[13] At the same time voices were raised in favour of the Jewish Brigade's demand to have its own flag, and for dropping the Party's propaganda against immigration, arguing that the first would increase enthusiasm for the war, while the issue of immigration had become outdated, holding, falsely as events were to show, that immigration would dry up after the end of the war and the creation of the hoped-for new world order.[14] Musa insisted in his response that the propaganda for recruitment in the Arab street should be halted and pointed out that Arab memories were still fresh with British army activity in suppressing the rebellion, that the most the Party could call for in the circumstances was general support for the war effort. It could

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11. Musa's speech, Political and Organisational Tasks of the Party in the Present Time. Reproduced in The Communist Camp 1943. op.cit. p.2-3.
12. The opposition of the Arab members was more in the nature of a personal opposition to Musa himself and an effort to weaken his position rather than a principled disagreement with his political line, as will become clear when discussing the Arab opposition.
13. Interview with Radwan al Hilou. Jericho, 16 February 1974.
14. Interviews with Mufid Nashashibi, Beirut, 11 March 1974; Said Kabalan, Jericho, 2 March 1974; Radwan al Hilou, Jericho, 16 February 1974, all of whom attended the January Plenum.

not hope to augment its position among the Arabs by calling on them to join the same army which until recently they had been up in arms against. He also rejected the demand for supporting the distribution of arms as playing into the hands of the Zionists who alone had an organisation, the Hagana, capable of utilising these arms. The end result would be the arming of the Zionists, while the Party's policy was aimed at avoiding any future bloodshed and the disarming of the population to ensure that such an eventuality would not arise. Musa further attacked both the Histradrut and the Zionist leadership for their attempts "to isolate the Yishuv from the anti-fascist movement",[15] denounced the Biltmore Program, and called for the abolition of the popular front in the Jewish Street.

The division of opinion in the Plenum was such, however, that it was not possible to reach a decision and, to avoid a split, the participants decided to refer the matter to the CC and allow it to act as it saw fit. This decision suited Musa, and his recommendations soon became the Party's new political line.[16] The Proletarian Faction was dissolved,[17] the recruitment campaign in the Arab Street was toned down, and the Party resumed its attacks on the Zionist movement and the leadership of the Yishuv. As far as the Jewish members of the Party were concerned, the issue had not been satisfactorily resolved and they objected to this imposition of the Party Secretary's political line. There were further objections that this new line had been decided upon without a general congress, while some country branches lamented the absence of democratic procedures and refused to abide by a political line which they

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15. In the Communist Camp, 1943. op. cit. p. 8.
16. In an Interview with Radwan al Hilou, Jericho, 16 February 1974, he stated that referring the matter to the CC was exactly what he had hoped for as this meant that the decision rested with the Secretariat. As an interesting illustration of how the Party was internally run, he explained that decisions were never taken by majority vote. It was the Party Secretary himself who had the final word irrespective of the wishes of either the CC or the Secretariat. As was stated earlier, the Secretariat was made up of four Jewish members in addition to Musa himself. S. Mikunis and P. Feinhaus led the opposition to Musa, while M. Slonim and S. Tzabari, generally considered to be in Musa's camp, remained neutral.
17. In the Communist Camp, 1943. op. cit. p. 5.

claimed had been "imposed upon them from above".[18] Soon, old wounds were to be re-opened by bringing back the issue of the rebellion and the Party's support for the Arab national movement at a time when it had become clear that the Mufti was in contact with the Axis powers. While attempts had been made during the Plenum to initiate a discussion on the subject, Musa had succeeded in refusing to allow such a discussion. The issue however was brought to life again by the new policy adopted by the Party in the Arab street. While in the Jewish street the emphasis was now laid on the demand for the opening of a second front in Europe, in the Arab street, the Party raised the slogan of releasing the political prisoners of the rebellion,[19] and this was persistently upheld in the Party's Arabic press and in its public meetings.[20] This brought charges of "national deviation" against the Party Secretary and further disrupted the fragile Party framework which had existed since the January Plenum. A number of factors jointly contributed towards the crystalisation of a climate of opinion among the Jewish cadre which was hostile to Musa and the unwelcome political line he had imposed on the Party. There was the Jewish members proximity to the Yishuv, which resulted from the pursuit of the popular front policy, coupled with a stronger reception for the ideas of the members of the ex-Section, now active within the Party. This provided the ideological framework within the Party which, compounded with the hostility of a section of the Arab membership to Musa's leadership, was to result in the forthcoming split.

The unsettled mood which existed among the Jewish cadres and the resentment felt against the political line imposed by Musa was closely mirrored among the Arab cadres. In the same way as the Jewish members were moving towards recognition of the ongoing transformation of the Yishuv as a national group and wanted to play

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18. In the Communist Camp, 1943. loc. cit.
19. Ibid. p. 3.
20. See articles and references to public meetings in Nidal al Shaab the Party's Arabic organ, during 1942-3. It is significant that while a call was made for "self determination for the Arabs of Palestine" after the war, there was no mention of the Yishuv. (Nidal al Shaab, March 1943, p. 6.) In a public meeting in Jaffa, Musa delivered a speech which called on the Arabs to support the war in order to defeat the Zionists, but he was silent as regards the British presence itself. (Nidal al Shaab, op. cit. pp. 4-5).

a more active role within it, the Arab cadres were likewise moving towards closer identification with the Arab national movement. Their main grievance revolved round the issue of the Arab/Jewish composition of the Party. They resented the presence of Jewish members, believing that this was a factor leading to the retarded growth of the Party among the Arabs. They saw their association with Jews, of whatever political persuasion, as inviting accusations against them from within the Arab national movement and firmly believed that their task within the Arab street would be greatly facilitated by an assertion of political independence and the setting-up of a strictly Arab communist organisation.

The policies pursued by the Party during the war years contributed in no small measure to the rise of this "national deviation" among the Arab members. It had followed a parallel policy within both the Jewish and the Arab communities, appealing to their national consciousness in its efforts to manufacture support for the war. In the Arab street the Party's task was particularly difficult as it had to face an essentially hostile public, the majority of whose sympathies lay firmly with the Axis powers. At the same time it had to counter German and Italian propaganda which harped on the Arabs' desire for independence and attempted to keep alive the memories of the rebellion and the activities of the British army in suppressing it. Thus, the Party tried to win the Arabs' support for the Allies by purporting to show that the struggle against fascism implied at the same time a weakening of Zionism, and that a "just solution" to Palestine's problems (and to the Arabs there could only be one just solution: that of an Arab independent state) would necessarily follow from the "just war" and the new age which they were promised was going to follow its conclusion. The toning down of the struggle against Britain in the Party's written and oral propaganda after the German attack on the Soviet Union led to the struggle against Zionism assuming a more central place, and to this the Party added insistent agitation on behalf of the prisoners of the rebellion. This led to a state of affairs, already observed in the case of the Jewish street, where the Party was talking to each community in its own political language and appealing to it in terms of its national sentiments.

The political opposition to the Party leadership was compounded by personal differences and ambitions. Boulous Farah, who had been expelled from the Party as far back as 1940, did not resign himself to political inactivity, but set about gathering round him a group of educated youth, a few of whom were already in the Party, but most of whom remained outside it. While considering themselves part of the communist movement in the country, and indeed being seen as such by outsiders, these activists did not accept Musa's authority. Farah's opposition to Musa was motivated by personal ambition though inevitably combined with political disagreements. He had dissented with Musa's policy vis-a-vis the Arab rebellion and had accused him of leading the Party into a "national deviation" through support for the Mufti's leadership[21] whereby the Party had lost its independent identity and political line.[22] At the same time he held Musa guilty of indecision over the "national deviation" of the Jewish Section, and had demanded as early as 1938, the expulsion of its secretary Brozaza, from the Party. He also disagreed with the Party's policy vis-a-vis the Arab labour movement during the war. While Musa's policy rested on the attempt to breathe life into the existing labour organisations and to collaborate with the Haifa based PAWS, Farah saw the need for the formation of independent labour unions and rejected the Haifa society's leadership as conservative and politically subservient to the traditional Arab leadership. On the personal level, Farah aspired to the Party leadership himself and resented Musa whom he deemed to be "illiterate", his intellectual inferior, incapable of leading a communist party and more specifically of not appealing to the Arab educated youth in the country. The Party under Musa's leadership had failed to win support outside the narrow confines of the Arab working class, and the quality of its membership failed to measure up to Farah's conception of the kind of members it should have and its consequent place in the Arab national movement.

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21. Interview with Boulous Farah, Haifa, 4 April 1974.
22. This he ascribed to the presence of Mohammad Nimr Odeh in the leadership of the Party which he opposed, and whom he regarded as the Mufti's agent. This belief he shared with other members among the Jewish cadres of the Party.

The group which gathered round Farah in Haifa, started initially as a gathering of intellectuals who were not ready to take the plunge and organisationally identify themselves with the Party, but hesitated on its fringes. Most of its members were educated youth from well-to-do families, a not inconsiderable part of whom were Christians. They were both disenchanted with the policies of the traditional leadership of the Arab national movement and owing, to the family set-up which characterised Palestinian Arab politics and the absence of modern political party structures, were unable to play an active political role. The activity of these youths initially centred round the journal "Al-Ghad"[23] and the Movement to Reform the Arab Village.[24] In 1942 a more formal organisation, the Rays of Hope society was set up, later to be followed up by the PALT. Having secured a base among the young and among the workers, Farah was able to overshadow Musa who by now was no longer in control of the Jewish Section of the Party and whose Arab supporters were reduced to a group of workers centred on Jaffa. Farah made use of Musa's difficulties to extend his contacts with the Jewish members of the Party[25] and appeared to share with them a number of common grievances against the General Secretary which featured disagreement over the Party's role during the rebellion, the issue of recruitment in the Arab street, and the question of support for the Histadrut strike.[26] Indeed, to many Jewish members, Farah appeared to adhere more closely to an "internationalist position" and seemed free from Musa's "national deviation".[27] It became clear soon after the split however, that this was no more than an opportunistic tactic. Farah's group set out to establish an exclusively Arab party, which at the outset appeared indistinguishable from other Arab national groups and

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23. Al Ghad (The Morrow), was published by A. Bandak on behalf of the "Arab students League", from May 1938 till October 1941.
24. Also called the "Village Welfare Service", this movement was begun in April 1940 and aimed at "the enlightenment of the fellah".
25. Survey of Arab communists, 1946. op. cit. p. 1. Both Mikunis and Feinhaus had opposed his expulsion from the Party and maintained contact with him despite a CC ban.
26. For Histadrut strike see supra. p. 191-193.
27. Interview with P. Feinhaus. Haifa, 3 April 1974.

which persisted right up to partition, in trying to win formal recognition from the traditional leadership of the Arab movement. It is, however, more constructive to see the opposition of Farah's group, as opposed to the strictly personal ambitions of Farah himself, as representing a much more fundamental divergence in the ranks of the Arab communists along a worker/intellectual dichotomy. The older generation of Arabs who had joined the Party in the late twenties and early thirties were mainly workers with no formal education, who were attracted to the Party in the first place as a result of the class struggle and in a self-conscious attempt to improve the standing of their class. A number of them, including Musa, had received their training in Moscow and on their return tried to apply in Palestine what they had learnt in the Comintern school, but they had few pretensions to theoretical sophistication. They were content to follow the directives of the Comintern, and while giving support to the Arab movement in its anti-British and anti-Zionist struggle, remained grounded in the day-to-day struggles of the Arab working class, and perceived their first duty as being directed primarily at organising and winning adherents from within that class. This became increasingly easier to accomplish during the war years when conditions facilitated the development of an Arab labour movement. More importantly, they did not view their association with Jewish communists as a handicap which they needed to overcome in their approach to Arab society, but accepted it as one of the fundamental tenets of "internationalism" which, as class conscious workers subscribing to communist doctrine, they accepted.

The younger generation of Arab communists who were clustered round the Farah group, had been attracted to the Party as a result of the 1936 rebellion and the vacuum created by the absence of the traditional leadership from the country and its visible failure to accommodate them within the national movement. On the whole they possessed better educational qualifications than the first group; all of them had finished high school, while a few had been to university. They possessed an anti-colonial and basically nationalist outlook, which was what had attracted them to the Party in the first place. They were also acquainted, through their familiarity with a foreign language, with socialist ideas, and admired the national

achievements of the Soviet Union. Their adherence to socialism, which revolved round its anti-imperialist content, was a reaction against the economic order they associated with British imperialism. Not only did the class composition of this group differ from that of the early generation of communists but, possessing an "intellectual" self-image, their interest in trade union organisation merely aimed at providing themselves with a power base and was not the sole ambition of their activity. They hoped to appeal to a much wider section of the population, the educated youth in particular and all those opposed to the Mandate and desirous of independence. Thus they saw the necessity of forming an alliance with the leadership of the national movement, and of making the Party attractive to the broadest possible section of Arab opinion. This in its turn necessitated not only a diluting of the Party's class approach, but also getting rid of the Jewish connection.

The Split and The Formation Of The National Liberation League

The spark which brought matters to a head and provided the immediate cause of the split, was the result of disagreement over the propriety of Party support for a strike called by the Histadrut in the army-run labour camps in May 1943.[28] The issue was not manifestly an important one, and the decision to support the strike and call on both Arab and Jewish workers to participate in it, was taken by the Party Secretariat in Musa's absence. The latter however did not agree with this decision, and subsequently overturned it.[29] He reasoned that the Party could not co-operate with the Histadrut as the latter had not consulted the Arabs about the strike,[30] and regarded the way the Histadrut had conducted the strike as showing that it was not merely a struggle for economic demands, but

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28. The strike, in favour of higher wages was called for the 10th May by the Histadrut alone without consulting the Arab labour organisations. The majority of workers in the camps were Arabs.
29. The four Jewish members of the Secretariat had taken their decision during Musa's absence. He immediately cancelled it and forbade the distribution of a leaflet which had been prepared and called on Arab workers to support the strike. Interview with Radwan al Hilou, Jericho, 1 February 1974.
30. Survey of Arab Communists, 1946. loc. cit.

was aimed at asserting the Histadrut's leadership over the Arab labour movement. Success of the strike would not only lead the Histadrut to claim that it possessed the confidence of the Arab workers in the camps,[31] but would also necessarily lead it to exploit this success by enrolling Arab workers within its ranks.[32] The Jewish members on the other hand, saw this as one more move on the part of the General Secretary to limit their capacity for manoeuvre within the Jewish street.[33] They insisted on the necessity of taking part in the strike and approached the issue as one involving merely workers' economic rights which the Party could not afford to ignore.[34] Furthermore, they argued that their absence would isolate them further within the Jewish labour movement. They added that just as the Party should not confuse the Jewish inhabitants of the country with Zionism, it should not confuse the rank and file Jewish workers with the Histadrut leadership. In this they were joined by Farah's Haifa group which also supported participation in the strike and accused Musa of wanting to further split the Arab and Jewish workers' movement and prevent their coming together.[35] The strength of opposition to Musa's line was such that he was forced to back down; he offered instead a compromise whereby the Arabs were instructed not to particpate in the strike, while the Jewish members of the Party were allowed to make their own choice.[36] This did not

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31. In the Communist Camp, 1943. op. cit. p. 3.
32. Histadrut membership was restricted to Jewish workers, but it possessed a front organisation, the Palestine Labour League, which tried to organise Arab workers.
33. Previous to the strike issue, Musa had reportedly opposed participation in the May Day activities organised by the Histadrut. This had resulted in the expulsion of members of the Haifa and the Tel Aviv local committees who had ignored the Party's instructions. See Porath, op. cit. p. 3.
34. Survey of Arab Communists, 1946. loc. cit.
35. Ibid. This was a blatantly opportunistic tactic, generated by opposition to Musa rather than any concern for the unity of Arab and Jewish workers. Not only did this group object to the formation of joint Arab Jewish demonstrations to press for a second front in Europe on the grounds that this would damage the Party's image in the Arab street, but after the formation of the NLL, there is no record (with one notable exception) of any such support for joint activity.
36. The Arab labour organisations came out against the strike and Government reports indicate that communist members of these organisations were in the forefront of agitation for non-participation. In the event the Arab workers did not support the strike. See memo by A. Yassin, Arab Workers and Non Participation in the Strike declared by the Histadrut. Labour Department Report, 9 May 1943. ISA File 1440. See also F.O.371/35030/1922. War Office Situation Report, 26 May 1943.

prove to be a workable compromise and amounted to the pursuit of two separate lines to accommodate the two feuding sections of the population. The immediate result of this disagreement was the refusal of the overwhelming majority of the Jewish members and some members of the Secretariat, to abide by the directives of the General Secretary and the consequent disintegration of the Party. This process was hastened along and facilitated by an unforseen development, Moscow's decision to dismantle the Comintern.

The decision to dissolve the Communist International came as a surprise shock to the leadership of the PCP. Although it was regarded as a mere formality[37] it led to a weakening of Musa's already precarious position, and added to the considerable confusion and disunity prevailing within its ranks. While the Party had not had any direct contact with the Comintern for a number of years,[38] its abolition deprived the General Secretary of any claim to being the final depository of orthodoxy and from playing the role of mediator between the Comintern Executive and the rank and file members of the Party. Musa's strength had lain in the Comintern's sanction of his position, and the control of the party apparatus which he enjoyed as a result. Up to the time of the Comintern's dissolution Musa held a virtual veto on all important decisions, and more than once exercised this right by overriding the decisions of the other members of the Secretariat. The Comintern's dissolution deprived him of his authority and generally weakened his position.[39] It opened the door to challenges to his leadership, both from those who disagreed with

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37. Interview with Radwan al Hilou, Jericho, 1 February 1974.
38. In the Communist Camp, 1943. op. cit. p. 3. In an Interview, Radwan al Hilou, Jericho, 9 and 16 February 1974, stated that contact with the Comintern had been non-existent since 1936-37. The CC established a committee whose sole purpose was to monitor Moscow radio and report on Soviet news and views to the CC.
39. It is interesting to note that Radwan al Hilou himself dated the beginning of the erosion of his authority from the time of his arrest in June 1941. This he claimed brought to the surface a lot of internal discussion which he would not have allowed had he been in control of the Party. After his release he was unable to put a stop to this discussion, and his position was further weakened by the disappearance of the Comintern. Interview with Radwan al Hilou, Jericho, 16 February 1974.

his politics and saw in them a departure from the "correct" communist path, as was the case with the Jewish opposition, and from those like Farah, whose opposition was of a more personal nature.

The abolition of Moscow's central control was to result in a number of communist parties coming out with added emphasis on their national colours, claiming to advocate a national communism free from any outside control. This was reflected in the behaviour of both Arab and Jewish communists. The former favoured greater involvement with the Arab national movement and the shedding of their Jewish handicap in order to appear more appealing to their national community, while the latter, recognising that it was difficult to ignore the "national consciousness" of nearly half a million Jews in the country, wanted to effect a revision in the basic tenets of the Party. These had been established at a time when the Jewish presence in the country was still insignificant and the Arab movement had seemed to hold promise of waging a determined anti-British struggle.

This news of the dissolution of the Comintern, following hard on the heels of the conflict over the Histadrut strike, afforded the Farah group the opportunity needed to deprive Musa of his remaining Arab base and to assume the leadership of the Arab communist movement. By May 1943 Musa had already lost the allegiance of the Jewish membership of the Party. The aftermath of the strike had heralded a period of complete anarchy and confusion. At this juncture the Arab opposition group embarked on a step which finalised the split and made the possibility of any future reunion of Arab and Jewish communists extremely unlikely. Immediately after a CC meeting held in the last week of May to try and heal the rift in the Party,[40] an Arabic leaflet appeared under the name of the CC which was quickly seized upon by the Jewish opposition to formalise the already existing split.[41] Although the leaflet was the work of individual

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40. In the Communist Camp, 1943. loc. cit.
41. Ibid. p. 4. Mikunis and Feinhaus circulated a Hebrew translation of the leaflet.

Arab members, not all of whom were members of the CC[42] and although it was repudiated by Musa who denied CC authorisation for its publication,[43] the damage had nevertheless already been done. The leaflet proclaimed the PCP as "a national Arab party in whose ranks there are Jews who accept its national program".[44] It welcomed the abolition of the Comintern as opening the path for the entrance of national elements into its ranks, and declared that the CC had purged "Zionist deviationists" from the Party and proceeded to expel the members of the Tel Aviv and Hadar (Haifa) branches. What followed can only be described as near anarchy, with the expulsions by Musa of members of the Jewish opposition[45] and counter-expulsions of Arabs by a Jewish opposition group under the leadership of S. Mikunis.[46]

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42. This leaflet, dated 29 May, was signed by A. Bandak, Y. Armani, and E. Habibi (the latter was not a member of the CC), on behalf of the CC. T. Toubi, a Party member and one of Farah's group also had a hand in its formulation. Interviews with E. Habibi and T. Toubi, Haifa, 3 and 5 April 1974, and A. Bandak, Amman, 6 March 1974. See also, Survey of Arab Communists, 1946. op. cit. p. 2.
43. Survey of Arab Communists, 1946. loc. cit.; Porath, op. cit. p. 4. Interview with Radwan al Hilou, Jericho, 9 February 1974.
44. A translation of the leaflet is reproduced in, In the Communist Camp, 1943. op. cit. p. 4. Also in, Survey of Arab Communists, 1946, loc. cit. In the Frankel Collection, op. cit. p. 171, two items from Kol Haam, 10 June 1943 labelled CC communique's Nos. 1 and 2 appear. The first is the 29th May leaflet while the second, signed by a "Temporary CC" declares the previous statement "a total fabrication of the principles of the PCP", and affirms the Party's internationalism.
45. In the Communist Camp, 1943. op. cit. p. 3.
46. Ibid. pp. 5-6. Musa was accused of being an "Arab nationalist", and of deception concerning the existence of an Arab communist cadre which the Jewish communists now denied had ever existed. A number of Arab ex-members of the Party stated that Mikunis himself had expelled all Arabs from the CC. Interviews with F. Salfiti, Amman, 26 March 1974, M. Nashashibi, Beirut, 11 March 1974 and A. Bandak, Bethlehem, 23 July 1973. A War Office document reported that Jewish members of the CC met towards the end of May 1943 and "decided to set up a Jewish communist party purged of all Arabs". W.O. 169/8310. PICME Report N.5. Political and General Intelligence Summary, 13 July 1943.
Shmuel Mikunis, an engineer, had joined the Party during the years of the rebellion. He rose to prominence as a supporter of the Party leadership in its attempts to discipline the Jewish Section. After the split of 1943 he played a prominent role in the Jewish PCP and in the Israeli Communist Party till the split in 1965, when he again led a wholly Jewish group out of the Party.

The months following were characterised by utter confusion with the appearance of a number of self-appointed CCs each claiming to represent the Party; contacts between the contending groups were maintained for some time in the hope of finding an agreeable framework for co-operation, but a proposed plenum to be attended by Jews and Arabs of all the groups was continuously postponed, and eventually never took place.[47] The gulf separating the groups which now amounted to two on the Arab side, and three on the Jewish, and the inter-group differences between them, proved too large to surmount. Although Musa himself and his small group of Arab supporters were opposed to the split and in favour of the continued existence of a united communist party, they were not able to hold the Party together, and it subsequently ceased to exist as a centralised and disciplined organisation.[48]

The distintegration of the Party brought the Farah group into prominence as the only disciplined and coherent group among the Arab communists. Simultaneously, some of Musa's supporters began to desert him and attach themselves to the opposition.[49] Musa himself, though supported by a number of leading Jewish communists[50] was not able to muster sufficient support to maintain a meaningful Arab-Jewish party, and realising his weakness, chose to retire from political activity, resigning in November from the by now fictitious position of General Secretary. The summer of 1943 was spent in a series of meetings organised by the Haifa group, to set up a national

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47. In the Communist Camp: Review of 1944. Jewish Intelligence Report, p. 1. CZA S 25/7533.
48. Owing to the fact that the split did not come about as the result of a "legal divorce" but took the form of gradual disintegration, it is difficult to give a specific date as to when the Party actually ceased to exist. There is general agreement however that May 1943 is the most appropriate date. This is subscribed to by the Jewish PCP in, Statement of PCP, March 1944. Quoted in, In the Communist Camp: Review of 1944. loc. cit.
49. Of those who were with Musa, some refused to join the NLL on its formation but joined up later, while others restricted their activity to the Labour movement.
50. M. Slonim and S. Tzabari. Soon after the split however, both were to adopt very manifestly pro-Zionist stands. See the Communist Movement: Review of 1946. Jewish Intelligence Report. 29 December 1946. CZA S 25/7533. Also, W.O.169/15703. PICME Report N.7, dated 8 September 1944.

communist movement in the country. In the absence of any contact with Moscow, both Arab and Jewish communists looked to the Syrian Communist Party, and to its leader, K. Bakdash,[51] for guidance. Owing to the state of affairs in the now non-existent Party, those members who went to consult Bakdash did so necessarily on their own group's initiative and not as representatives of the Party as a whole.[52] Bakdash seems to have condoned the existing split, and advised the Arab communists to set themselves up as an independent national communist organisation without giving it an explicitly communist title,[53] and a member of the CC of the Syrian party was dispatched to Palestine to investigate the affairs of the Party.[54] His recommendations were in line with those of Bakdash, based on the view of the impossibility of maintaining a joint Arab-Jewish organisation in the charged national atmosphere prevailing in the country.

The confusion in the ranks of the Arab communists came to an end with the setting-up of the NLL. In September 1943, a meeting

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51. Khaled Bakdash, a member of the Syrian Communist Party since 1931, received his training in Moscow and participated in the 7th Comintern Congress as the representative of the Arab countries. He achieved prominence as a result of the legality conferred on the Syrian party during the popular front government in France. In the forties he emerged as the "official spokesman" of the Arab communist parties.
52. A. Bandak, E. Habibi, Y. Armani, and K. Shannir, travelled to Damascus to meet Bakdash (Interviews with A. Bandak, Amman 6 March 1974; E. Habibi and T. Toubi, Haifa, 3 and 5 April 1974). Two Jewish communists, O. Preminger and H. Gesis also travelled separately to Damascus. (Interview with Radwan al Hilou, Jericho 22 February 1974). E. Habibi mentions another Jewish communist, Eleazer Langer, later a member of the Slonim-Tzabari group, as having also travelled to meet Bakdash.
53. In an Interview with A. Bandak, Jerusalem 23 July 1973, he claimed that while this was the opinion of Bakdash, Farajallah al Hilou, the second man in the Party was opposed to the split.
54. Meer Mas'ad, a brother-in-law of A. Bandak. Interviews with F. Salfiti, Amman 26 March 1974, A. Bandak, Jerusalem 23 July 1973, and E. Habibi, Haifa, 3 April 1974.
55. In the light of the above, it is interesting that the organ of the Syrian communists, Sawt al Shaab, did not make any reference to the establishment of the NLL and its activities till 8 August 1946, when a prominent front page article introduced the NLL and reproduced one of its statements. Up to that date there had only been three mentions of the NLL in the paper, the first on 2 April 1945, a full year after its establishment.

was held in Haifa which was attended by Farah's group and a number of Arab members of the Party, which decided on the establishment of an Arab communist party.[56] Following this meeting all efforts were concentrated on convincing the Arab cadre of the Party, Musa included, of the necessity of joining this new organisation,[57] and the idea of separate Arab and Jewish organisations was now formally accepted and propagated.[58] For some time, the Arab communists continued to appear under the name of the PCP,[59] but early in 1944 the title National Liberation League (Usbat al-Taharrur al-Watani, hitherto referred to as NLL), indicating the non-communist image the Arab communists wanted to project, was adopted. The first bulletin containing the NLL's program was issued on 1st February, 1944.[60] The formation of the NLL was not, at the outset, regarded by its

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56. Al Jamahir (The Masses) Organ of the Jordanian Communist Party. Year 28. N.9. September 1976. Interviews with E. Tuma, E. Habibi, and T. Toubi, Haifa, 4, 3, 5 April 1974.
57. In an Interview with E. Tuma, he stated that as late as January 1944, attempts were still being made to convince Musa and his supporters to join the NLL and a meeting attended by twenty-five people was held in Haifa to this effect.
58. A typewritten document entitled, Internal Document of the Arab Preparatory CC of PCP, and dated November 1943 (in the possession of T. Toubi, one of the founders of the NLL) is the earliest I have found where the suggestion for the setting-up of independent Arab and Jewish communist parties is made. Toubi himself is of the opinion that this document was the first step taken towards the establishment of the NLL. It is important to note that B. Farah, who had maintained contacts with the Jewish opposition to Musa previous to the split, now refused suggestions made by Jewish communists, to establish a joint Arab-Jewish organisation. See, Survey of Arab Communists, 1946. loc. cit.
59. As late as 17th January 1944 an Arabic Leaflet entitled "Statement to the Noble Arab Nation" was issued under the name of CC/PCP. The "nationalist" line of this leaflet clearly indicates that it was the work of the NLL group.
60. The issue of the first internal bulletin of the NLL, containing its program and a call to Arabs to enrol in its ranks is taken by most sources as its foundation date. The call was signed by E. Tuma its Secretary and most well known member, and by B. Farah, Sami Habibi, and Musa Dajani. In it the NLL described itself as a "socialist democratic party" whose main aim was "the national independence of Palestine". See Survey of Arab Communists, 1946...op. cit. p. 3. and also, The League of National Liberation, 1944. Jewish Intelligence Report, 1st March 1944. loc. cit.

founders as a continuation of the PCP, nor was it so regarded by its friends or enemies. Its program did not include any reference to the principles of socialism or revolution, but confined itself to the Arab movement's struggle for national independence. Indeed the name chosen for the group was self-explanatory; it indicated the "national" composition and orientation of the group and confined its aims to those of "liberation" from foreign domination. The NLL further defined its early outlook in two ways: by its demand to the traditional Arab leaders to grant recognition to the League as part of the Arab national movement[61] and its deliberate choice of a Moslem as president of an organisation whose leadership was predominantly Christian.[62]

The Communist Movement in the Jewish Street

The situation among the ranks of the Jewish communists was more confused and chaotic than on the Arab side, due to the existence of numerous small groups who, while being united in their enmity to Musa, managed to agree on little else.[63] The rest of the year 1943 was spent in little activity, most of the groups' energies being absorbed by their attempts to find common ground on which to resume their political unity. A chief preccupation was the combating of certain defeatist trends which were circulating among the Jewish members: that there was no place for an organised communist party in the country as the failure of the united PCP had shown, and that the Jewish communists should content themselves with the establishment of a wider and more loosely based anti-fascist movement.[64] The

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61. 2nd Internal Bulletin of NLL, 14 February 1944. Quoted in League for National Liberation, 1944. loc. cit.
62. Musa Dajani was named president. He was a teacher who had been a member of Farah's Rays of Hope society, but never a member of the Party. He did not remain in this office for long and was replaced later in 1944 by another Moslem, Khaled Zagmouri, a railway worker and a member of the PCP since 1936.
63. In the Communist Camp, 1943. op. cit. p. 4.
64. Report on Communist Activity. Jewish Intelligence Report. 3 December 1943. CZA S 25/48.

beginning of 1944 saw the appearance of some semblance of unity and the crystalisation of three distinct groups. The smallest of these, which was not destined to have any lasting presence on the political scene, was made up of part of the old membership of the Section and the Emet group, who refused to co-operate with other Jewish communist groups and established themselves as a separate organisation.[65] The second group was composed of a number of important Party leaders who had remained loyal to Musa and were sympathetic to neither the Arab opposition nor the Jewish opposition led by Mikunis, and some sections of the Party's youth movement. Discussions were initiated with the Mikunis group to ressurect the Party after it had become clear that the split was final and Musa had retired from active political life, and the political materials to be submitted to a congress to take place in 1944 were agreed upon.[66] Only part of this group, however, finally merged with the Mikunis group to establish a new communist party in the country.[67] The remnant formed themselves into the "Communist Educational Union"[68] and were to continue a separate existence until after the establishment of the state in 1948. The third group was the largest and most important. Led by S. Mikunis and P. Feinhaus both of whom had figured prominently in the opposition to Musa's leadership before and during the split, it succeeded in drawing to its ranks part of the ex-Emet group and a section of the group round Slonim and Tzabari. In March 1944 a framework for union was achieved and the group held its first congress, termed the Eighth Party Congress, in May 1944,[69] laying claim to being the legitimate continuation of the

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65. This group was known as Socialists opposed to National Policy and was led by H. Brozaza. See, In the Communist Camp: Review of 1944. op. cit. p. 8.
66. In the Communist Camp, 1943. op. cit. p. 11.
67. In the Communist Camp: Review of 1944. loc.cit. The report states that members of this group withdrew during the congress in May 1944 as a result of disagreements over organisational matters.
68. This was led by S.Tzabari and M.Slonim, both ex-members of the Secretariat, who had received their training in Moscow in the early thirties.
69. In the Communist Camp: Review of 1944. op.cit. p.2. The leaders of this group were to continue to lead the Party till well after the establishment of the State of Israel. Goshanski was killed in a plane crash in 1948; Vilner is currently General Secretary of the predominantly Arab Israeli Communist Party (Rakah); Feinhaus is still active in the ranks of Rakah; Mikunis became the Secretary of the Israeli Communist Party in 1948 and in 1965 led a split which established a new Jewish communist party; Vilenska was a member of the CC of the Israeli Communist Party till 1965 and then joined the Milunis faction; W.Erlich is currently a member of the Central Control Commission of Rakah.

pre-split PCP.[70]

The Communist Educational Union held its founding congress in April 1945; on this occasion it came out firmly in support of the "Jewish national home" and declared its acceptance of the goal of political independence for the Yishuv, calling for its further economic and political development.[71] The group held to the view that Palestine was not in need of a communist party, and saw its role as one of "spreading communist ideology among workers in the Yishuv".[72]. It thus structured itself accordingly. Its organisational framework was extremely loose, and it proclaimed its doors open to all those who accepted its educational and propagandist aims, while emphasising that members did not have to abide by the decisions of the leadership, and that the constitution of the group could be changed by a simple majority vote.[73] While continuing to attack the leadership of the Histadrut and the Zionist movement for their "mistaken" policies, and paying lip service to the need for co-operation with the Arabs to ensure the equal rights of both communities in the country, it adopted the slogans of the Zionist movement as its own to the extent that it became indistinguishable from the latter. Thus it echoed the demand for the immediate entry into Palestine of one hundred thousand Jewish refugees from the displaced persons camps in Europe, and proclaimed the right of the Yishuv to self-defence.[74] The culmination of this stand was the consequent laudatory attitude to the Haganah and the call on Jewish youth to enter its ranks.[75] Although the group was denied recognition by the international communist movement[76] it perceived

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70. The new party kept the old name, PCP and continued to date its congresses and journal as if no split had taken place.
71. In the Communist Camp. Jewish Intelligence Report, 29 December 1946. CZA S 25/7533.
72. Information on the Communist Party. Jewish Intelligence Report, 4 May 1945. CZA S 25/7532.
73. Ibid. p. 2.
74. In the Communist Camp, December 1946. loc. cit.
75. Hebrew Leaflet of Jerusalem Committee of the Communist Union of Eretz Yisrael, 21 April 1947. The group had adopted this name sometime in 1946.
76. Jewish Clarion (published by the Jewish Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain). N.6. March 1974. The group was refused participation in the Congress of the Communist Parties of the British Empire, held in London in 1947, on the grounds that "its program and rules showed that it is not a communist movement".

its role as one of "destroying the walls of suspicion and estrangement between the Yishuv" and the communists abroad,[77] and made the claim as early as 1946 that the Soviet Union was in support of a solution of the Palestine problem based on "the right to self-determination of both nations in the country".[78] A conference held in October 1947, saw the transformation of the group into the "Hebrew Communist Party" whose aim was now described as "fusing the theory of communism with the national and social liberation of the Hebrew nation in Palestine" and which "aspired to be a driving force in the Yishuv for national independence".[79] This group, uncharacteristically for a self-proclaimed communist party, developed the thesis of the Jews in Palestine constituting an "oppressed colonial people" and proclaimed their fight as one of "national liberation of the Yishuv".[80] But partition was rejected as a solution to the problem and the group put forward a scheme of "territorial federalism" encompassing complicated divisions and safeguards, designed to allay the fears of both communities of being dominated by the other side, while at the same time preserving the framework of an "independent democratic united state". Needless to say, the group supported the establishment of the Israeli state when partition was decreed, maintaining contact with one of the most extreme Jewish terrorist groups,[81] but soon after amalgamated with the Israeli Communist Party.[82]

The Mikunis group held its first congress in May 1944, an event which was proclaimed to heal the split which had taken place in the Party the summer before.[83] It was now explained that the reason

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77. On the Founding Conference of the Hebrew Communist Party, Tel Aviv, 3-6 October 1947. Hebrew Leaflet of the Centre of the Communist Union of Eretz Yisrael.
78. Pravda Supports National Independence of the Yishuv. Editorial in Achdut (Unity), the organ of the group, October 1946.
79. On the Founding Conference of the Hebrew Communists. loc. cit.
80. Statement of the Communist Union to UNSCOP, May 1947. Frankel Collection op. cit. p. 224.
81. Laqueur, op. cit. p. 302. See also Porath, op. cit. p. 6.
82. The Full Unity of the Communist Camp has Been Established. Hebrew Leaflet of CCs of Israeli Communist Party and the Hebrew Communists, Achdut, 9 December 1948.
83. Decisions of 8th Congress of PCP, Tel Aviv, 26-28 May 1944. Jewish Intelligence Report. CZA S 25/7533.

for the split was the unspecified "existence of differences in political views", and the blame was put on Musa for the absence of democracy in the Party which would have enabled the resolution of these problems within the united Party framework.[84] The new Party's policies as formulated by the decisions of the Congress, were based on opposition to the White Paper and the Land Transfer Regulations which were seen as providing the conditions for the partitioning of the country.[85] At the same time the Party declared itself in support of the entry of Jewish refugees from the displaced persons camps in Europe to Palestine, if they so wished, but refused to concur in the demands for unlimited immigration. The Party affirmed its belief in the community of interests between the Jewish settlers and the Arabs in the country and called for the establishment of an "independent democratic state" which would guarantee "complete equality of rights to the Jewish national minority". A special provision was called for, to ensure the establishment of extensive autonomy to local authorities to enable the Jewish community to develop its national culture.[86]

The party which emerged from the "Eighth Congress" was in no way a continuation of the old PCP though it tried hard to appear as such. The new leadership had simply glossed over and ignored the division of the Party on national lines; yet it was noticeable that not a single greeting to the congress was received from any fraternal communist party in the neighbouring Arab states.[87] The Arab-Jewish national conflict was not discussed at this Congress, nor was it to be discussed at any of the future gatherings; it was simply ignored and the Party, which for the first time obtained legal permission to publish its journal "Kol Haam" in December 1944,[88] produced its literature in many European languages but not a single leaflet was brought out in Arabic. The new Party took a further step away from the pre-split PCP: in its endeavour to gain entry into the Histadrut, it attempted the first ever public self-criticism

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84. In the Communist Camp: Review of 1944. op. cit. p. 2.
85. Decisions of 8th Congress. op. cit. p. 15.
86. Ibid. p. 16.
87. In the Communist Camp: Review of 1944. op. cit. p. 4.
88. Ibid.

of the past mistakes of the old leadership of the Party.[89] In a self-proclaimed spirit of "bolshevic self-criticism", it tried to dissociate itself from the policies adopted during the 1936 rebellion by claiming that Party members had not been consulted at the time by the leadership, and that the consequent struggle waged by the Party's Jewish cadres had succeeded in ejecting this old leadership. It went on to explain that the Party's policy in that period had been mistaken in its support for the rebellion and in its failure to struggle against the leadership of the Mufti who had been in contact with the Fascists and had "become their agent". It had also held to a mistaken view of the Jewish community "as a single reactionary body opposed to the Arab people as a single progressive body" and consequently failed to draw up a program for the future of the Jewish community.[90]

The new Party differed also as a result of the general atmosphere of legality in which it was now allowed to operate. For the first time communists openly called for attendance of Party meetings and advertised them publicly. The first attempt to enter the political field came with the Histadrut elections held in August 1944. While the Jewish opposition in the Party had objected to Musa's attempt to dissolve the Proletarian Faction in 1943, this group was not reorganised now that Musa was no longer in control, but the Party continued to implement his policy by pressing for individual membership of its members in the Histadrut. However, despite meetings with representatives of the Jewish workers' leaders and the self-criticism which the Party undertook, it was unable to meet the demands placed on it by the Histadrut, namely open and complete support for Jewish immigration, and the development of the "national home" in all its facets, and it thus failed to win admittance.[91] In the following

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89. The Interchange of Correspondence Between the Executive Committee of the Histadrut and the PCP as Regards the Submission of a Communist List for the Elections to the Sixth Convention of the Histadrut. Supplement N.XV to Digest of Press and Events, 20 September 1944. Issued by the Jewish Agency for Palestine. Information Service. Jerusalem.
90. Ibid. Letter from CC/PCP to Executive Committee of Histadrut. 29 July 1944.
91. Ibid. Letter from D. Remez on Behalf of Executive Committee of Histadrut to CC/PCP. 4 August 1944.

years the Party continued its attempts to press the executive committee of the Histadrut to meet to discuss the problem of its cadres' admission and regarded the matter as one of "top priority"[92] but only managed to win entry early in 1947.[93] More successfully the Party, appearing under the name of the "Popular Democratic List" won 3,948 votes in the elections to the Yishuv's Elected Assembly and gained three seats.[94] Its program was based on a call for increased participation of the Yishuv in the war effort and for guaranteeing the national rights of the Yishuv, claiming to stand in the name of numerous groups within the Jewish community encompassing "workers, clerks, artisans, shopkeepers, intellectuals, small farmers, and small traders".[95] In its first legal appearance in the councils of the Yishuv, the Party declared itself in favour of abolishing the White Paper of 1939, but was vague on the issue of immigration.[96] It vehemently rejected the setting-up of a Jewish state, which it characterised as being merely a prelude to partition. In its place it put forward the demand of independence for a "united Palestine" with vague provisions of "equality of rights for the Jewish settlers".[97] This successful entry into the politics of the Yishuv signified the Party's self-imposed restriction of its activity to the Jewish section of the population, and differentiated it further from the pre-split PCP.[98]

The Party's position on the nature of the Yishuv and its rights evolved gradually and was not clearly formulated at the founding congress of May 1944. To a large extent this was due to the absence of strong contacts with Moscow and to the lack of any lead emanating from the latter as to what the "orthodox communist" position should be and how the international communist movement regarded the Jewish question, with particular reference to the establishment of the

92. Information on the Communist Party. Jewish Intelligence Report, 1 June 1945. p. 2. CZA S 25/7532.
93. Supplement to Survey of Palestine. Report Prepared by the British Government for the Benefit of the Anglo-US Investigation Committee. (Jerusalem. June 1947) p. 150.
94. C.O.733/459/75519. Elections to the Assiphat Hanivharim, 1 August 1944. The three communist members were Mikunis, E.Novak and Goshanski. They were also entitled to have one seat in the General Council (Vaad Leumi) which was occupied by Mikunis.
95. W.O.169/15702. PICME Report N.7 (revised), 8 September 1944.
96. In the Communist Camp: Review of 1944, op. cit. p. 2.
97. Ibid. p.3. Political Program submitted by PCP to the Second meeting of the Elected Assembly, December 1944.
98. The Jewish Clarion, which gave prominence to the activity and political statements of the PCP, always referred to it, correctly, as "the Jewish Communist Party in Palestine".

"national home".[99] Yet as early as the 8th Congress, the new Party had indicated the importance of the issue of the Yishuv's position in Palestine, by proclaiming that the "mark of progressive forces in Palestine is the attitude taken towards the equality of rights for the Jewish population".[100] An indication of the line adopted by the international communist movement came on the occasion of the International Workers' Congress in London in 1945 when a resolution, pro-Zionist in tone, and indicating support for the "national home", was supported by the Soviet Union. This was understood by the Party to signal Moscow's approval for closer identification with the struggles and aspirations of the Yishuv.[101] The Party accordingly adapted its activity and propaganda to this new position, proclaiming that the "progressive forces in the world" were in support of the "free development of the national home" and the Yishuv's "just war against the White Paper".[102] Already in May 1945, the Party was raising the slogan "let us struggle for the development of the national home".[103] In June 1946, when the British authorities held the Yishuv "under violent military siege" arresting nearly three thousand people, among them leaders of the Zionist movement and the Histadrut, in an attempt to curb Jewish terrorism,[104] the Party came out for the first time in its history in open support of the Zionist leadership. Declaring the British action to be an "outrage" and a "new expression of colonial oppression",[105]

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99. The Communist Party in Eretz Yisrael. Jewish Intelligence Report, 1 February 1948. CZA S 25/7533. It is probable that there was some contact with the Soviet Union such as took place during the visit of Sultanov, the Soviet Counsellor in Egypt to Palestine during May 1944. Both Arab and Jewish communists held meetings with him. See F.O.371/41049/4496. Visit of Sultanov to Palestine. It seems however that the British Communist Party was the main channel of contacts as far as both Arab and Jewish communists were concerned.
100. Decisions of 8th Congress. loc. cit.
101. Information on the Communist Party, June 1945. op. cit. p. 1. The report states that the British communists contacted the PCP after the congress and instructed it to modify its anti-Zionist line in accordance with the support shown by the "progressive forces" for this resolution and suggested that the Party should "support the national home".
102. Ibid.
103. Information on the Communist Party, May 1945. op. cit. p. 1.
104. Hurewitz, op. cit. p. 254.
105. Statement of CC/PCP submitted to the Executive Committee of the Histadrut. K.H. 2 July 1946. Reproduced in Jewish Clarion, July 1946.

it described those arrested as "the sons and daughters of the Yishuv" and their apprehension as a serious attack "upon the elementary rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine". Calling for the immediate release of all those arrested, it proposed lodging a complaint in the name of the Yishuv at the UN.[106] After this the Party's literature abounded with calls for the "recognition of the existing Jewish community and its rights to free national development",[107] and it called for acknowledgement of the fact that the "national home" was now a "reality" and that the existence of "two peoples in Palestine could no longer be denied". The Party's delegates abroad were now explaining Jewish terrorism by ascribing it to "the justified bitterness of the masses of the Yishuv against colonial rule"[108] and professed to see the Jewish resistance to the British as "objectively viewed, something in the nature of a protest against colonial rule" with the Yishuv being increasingly posed in the role of an "oppressed national group in a colonial country".[109]

The problem of "understanding" with the Arabs and the need to find common ground with those whom the Party declared "we shall have to live together forever"[110] figured prominently in the Jewish communists' deliberations and propaganda, yet the practical outcome of this considerable verbal activity was practically nil. The Party's congresses reiterated the need for unity with the "progressive forces" in the Arab community, stressing that this was the only way to convince Jews and Arabs that co-operation in the country was possible.[111] Yet, with the exception of a few joint leaflets on

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106. Statement of CC/PCP submitted to the Executive Committee of the Histadrut. K.H. 2 July 1946. Reproduced in Jewish Clarion July 1946.
107. Speech of M. Vilner at the Tenth Congress of PCP: The Political Situation in Palestine. November 1946. K.H. 5 December 1946.
108. Speech of Mikunis at Congress of Communist Parties of the British Empire held in London February-March 1947. We Speak of Freedom (London 1947) p. 66.
109. S. Mikunis, Set Palestine Free. Jewish Clarion, December 1946.
110. E. Vilenska (Editor of Kol Haam) Who Are Our Friends? Jewish Clarion, February 1946.
111. Statement of CC of Israeli Communist Party, 6 October 1948. Al Ittihad, N.1. 18 October 1948. The statement reproduces statements made at the Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Congress of the Jewish PCP emphasising the importance and the desirability of unity.

the occasion of industrial action, no other form of co-operation between the Arab and Jewish communists was established prior to the termination of the Mandate. Despite the pressure exerted on the Jewish communists from abroad[112] the desired co-operation simply did not materialise. In public, the Jewish communists claimed that both Arab and Jewish communists shared the same opinions on all major issues affecting Palestine, and that the split was "a question of internal organisation".[113] Yet the Party's spokesman, Mikunis, refused to commit himself on whether there was a "difference in principle" between the two groups as regards the form of government each advocated for the future independent Palestine state.[114] In private however, the Jewish communists blamed the lack of co-operation on the Arab communists' "opportunistic position" of refusing to co-operate on the grounds that this would "isolate them from the Arab national movement" and their desire to appear as a "purely Arab group".[115] The truth of the matter was that the gap between the two groups was too wide to bridge and was becoming increasingly wider with each step taken by the Jewish communists in support of the "national home". The Arab communists did not at any time recognise the "equal national rights" of the Yishuv and persisted in their support for the White Paper and in opposing Jewish immigration and even the entry of Jewish refugees. In calling for an independent Arab state in Palestine, where Jews would enjoy civil but not national minority rights, they were further away from the Jewish communists than they had been even at the time of the split in 1943.

Prior to the split of May 1943 the communist movement in Palestine had declared its support for the demands of the Arab national movement, its only proviso being the necessity of guaranteeing full equality and civil rights to the Jewish inhabitants. The new Jewish party came out in its first congress in May 1944[116] in

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112. Information on the Communist Party, June 1945. loc. cit. In 1946 the British Communists came out publicly with a demand for the unity of the communist movement in Palestine. See, Palme Dutt, For a Democratic Palestine. World News and Views. 5 January 1946. N.1. p. 6.
113. Statement of S. Mikunis to UNSCOP, May 1947. Frankel Collection, op. cit. p. 216.
114. Ibid. p. 221.
115. M. Vilner, The Road to Liberation, October 1946. See Porath, op. cit. pp. 18-19.
116. In the Communist Camp: Review of 1944. op. cit. p. 10.

support of an independent democratic state, which was not described as Arab or Jewish but deliberately left ambiguous. This unsatisfactory position was soon left behind, and at its Tenth Congress the Party, while condemning "any form of partition or federation" put forward the slogan of a "united Arab Jewish state...democratic and independent (with) full equality of rights".[117] At the same time it raised the slogan of the necessity of taking the Palestine problem to the Security Council of the UN, where it was hoped the influence of the democratic and progressive forces would be brought to bear to achieve a just settlement of the problem.[118] The Party's main aim was to remove the problem of Palestine's future "from the hands of Anglo-US imperialism" and on this basis it objected to the visit of the Anglo-US investigation committee to Palestine in March 1946, and described it as an attempt to keep the Soviet Union out of the area and as "illegal".[119]

By 1947 the Party had moved even further along the road to recognising "two separate national groups" in the country, and was arguing for the rights of both peoples to "independence in a single, free and democratic Palestine...on the principle of full equality of civil and national political rights".[120] Denying that immigration was in any way a serious problem, and maintaining its distinction between the Palestine problem and that of the Jewish refugees in Europe, the Party put forward its proposal for a "unitarian bi-national solution",[121] and even went as far as accepting the "federal solution" which it had previously rejected if this proved to be the desire of the country's inhabitants. Rejecting both an Arab and a Jewish state as implying the domination of one people by another,

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117. Speech of Vilner at Tenth Party Congress, November 1946. loc.cit.
118. Mikunis. Set Palestine Free. loc. cit.
119. Statement of M. Vilner to the Anglo-US Investigation Committee. K.H. 27 March 1946.
120. Statement of M. Vilner to UNSCOP. Frankel Collection. op. cit. p. 213.
121. In an Interview with C. Abramsky, London 5 July 1973, he stated that Mikunis had put forward the idea of a bi-national state or partition at the time of the London Congress of the Communist parties in 1947. The Congress's resolutions however, expressed support for a united independent democratic state guaranteeing equal rights to Arabs and Jews and specifically rejected partition. See, Declaration on Palestine. World News and Views 15 March 1947. N.9. pp. 101-102.

the Party's proposed state was based on proportional representation; condemning the "arithmetical approach" and denying the need for parity, it claimed that once the foreign element was removed from Palestine, the two peoples would settle down and solve their problems amicably. This was the Jewish communists' decision at a time when the Soviet Union itself had just decided to clarify its own position on the problem and throw its weight behind the, until now, totally unacceptable idea of partition.

The Soviet Union's public attitude on the Palestine problem began to take shape only during the April-May 1947 discussions at the UN. The Soviet representative's speech contained implicit support for partition. For the first time ever, a communist spokesman admitted the possibility of a partition solution and endorsed "the aspirations of the Jews to establish their own state".[122] This however, was declared a second choice to be implemented only in the case of failure to realise the establishment of "an independent, dual, democratic, homogeneous Arab-Jewish state". The ambiguity in this new Soviet approach allowed the Party to maintain its original position, and its political propaganda continued to demand the creation of a bi-national state and to condemn partition. Thus in September 1947 the Party condemned the majority report of the UNSCOP which was in favour of partition, and criticised it for awarding the projected Jewish state a size "beyond the dreams" of the Zionist leaders, declaring it to be "unworkable and impossible to implement".[123] It came out in favour of the minority report calling for the creation of a "federal state". A month later, when the Soviet representative declared his country's support for the minority report "in principle" but called for the implementation of the majority proposal which he described as a "bad solution" but the only possible one in the prevailing circumstances of deteriorating relations between Jews and Arabs, the Party reproduced his speech in its journal but refrained from indicating its own position.[124] The change was, however, not

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122. Speech of Gromyko, 14 May 1947. Quoted in Hurewitz, op.cit. p.288.
123. Statement of PCP on the Recommendations of UNSCOP. K.H. 1, 3 and 8, September 1947. Frankel Collection, op. cit. p. 228.
124. Statement of PCP on Speech of Tsarapkin, 13 October 1947. K.H. 14 October 1947.

long in coming, and a few days later it came out in support of partition and the two-state plan.[125] Without waiting for the resolution of the problem at the UN nor ascertaining which side the Soviet Union would eventually support,[126] the Party revised its previous opposition to partition in its political propaganda and declared itself wholeheartedly in favour of a struggle "for the establishment of two independent democratic states" in the country.[127]

The Jewish communists' support for the setting-up of the Jewish State and the war which followed, was total. Finding themselves for the first time in their history in complete unity of purpose with the rest of the Yishuv, they strove to form a united front with the "progressive wing" of the Zionist movement.[128] In calling for this, the Party did not omit to mention that the success of the Yishuv's struggle against the Mandate was partly due to the help of the Soviet Union and "all progressive forces" in the world.[129] With the proclamation of the State of Israel in May 1948 the Jewish communists hailed the onset of this "great day" and called for the total mobilisation of the Yishuv to partake in "the fight for our freedom", in which the Jewish state's only allies were "the whole Jewish people" and the Soviet Union. Members of the Party took an active part in the ongoing war against the invading Arab armies, while certain of its leaders were dispatched abroad to solicit aid for the newly established state.[130] During the military operations themselves, the Party adopted a hard line, calling for the lifting of the arms

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125. Statement of PCP on Independence. K.H. 17 October 1947.
126. Tsarapkin had declared in a speech delivered in mid-November the Soviet Union's intention of voting in favour of partition. The actual vote took place on the 25th November. The whole of the Soviet bloc with the exception of Yugoslavia voted in favour.
127. Workers, Youth, Sons of the Yishuv. Hebrew Leaflet of CC/PCP November 1947.
128. S. Mikunis. The Peoples of Palestine Struggle for National Independence. For A Lasting Peace, For A Peoples' Democracy (Organ of the Cominform) N.8. 5 April 1948.
129. Statement of CC of Israeli Communist Party on the Proclamation of the State of Israel, May 1948. Quoted in M. Ebbon. Communist Tactics in Palestine. Middle East Journal. N.3. July 1948. p.259.
130. Both E. Goshanski (the Party Secretary) and Mikunis travelled to Eastern Europe to negotiate aid. The former was killed in a plane crash on a return trip from Poland, 21 January 1948.

embargo, criticising the Provisional Government for agreeing to a ceasefire with the Arab states, and justifying the occupation of Arab areas outside the boundaries of the proposed Jewish state by referring to reasons of "strategic necessity".[131]

With the Party's signing of the Israeli Declaration of Independence, and its General Secretary becoming one of the thirty-one members of the Provisional Council of Government, the Jewish communists had travelled full circle and finally returned to the position which they had held in 1919 before the parting of the ways between them and the rest of the Zionist movement. For nearly a quarter of a century they had waged a fierce struggle against establishing the "national home" and the partitioning of Palestine. In the end, considerations of Soviet foreign policy proved to be the deciding factor in their political decisions and it was this rather than any internal ideological revision which had caused them to turn their backs on their years of hostility to Zionism, and to finally accept the "national solution" to the Jewish problem.

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131. S. Mikunis. We Shall Continue to Fight until no Foreign Soldier Treads our Fair Land. Jewish Clarion. N.33. August 1948.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ARAB NATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

The Arab Workers' Congress

The Communists and the Arab Labour Movement

Prior to the split of the PCP in 1943, the Arab communists were active in the two competing Arab labour organisations, the FALT and the various branches of the PAWS.[1] The establishment of the NLL early in 1944 was a triumph for the Haifa opposition group which had itself launched the FALT during its struggle with the Party leadership. However, with the establishment of the NLL, a new organisational framework was created which rendered the FALT unnecessary. Simultaneously, the disappearance of the united PCP had weakened Musa's supporters in the labour movement, who were active in the ranks of the PAWS, and reconciled them to their Haifa enemies, now in control of the only organised Arab communist group. This convergence reflected itself in a change of policy in the FALT. Although it continued to exist for some time, its leaders, who were now also the leaders of the NLL, favoured activity within the framework of the PAWS. This helped further to heal the breach between the Haifa group and Musa's old supporters in Jaffa and Jerusalem. This new line reflected itself in the halting of attempts to win over new members and in a more positive attitude towards the PAWS. New applicants were now turned down and advised to join the existing PAWS branches,[2] while Al Ittihad, the organ of the FALT, continuously called for collaboration between all sections of the Arab labour movement, and the creation of a new framework which would bring together the FALT and the PAWS.

The FALT remained numerically weaker than its rival and did not succeed in winning its acceptance as a legitimate partner in the labour movement. Nevertheless, it scored a major success by bringing out a weekly journal "Al Ittihad".[3] An editorial in the first issue emphasised the contribution of the Arab working class

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1. See Chapter 5. pp. 167-177.
2. Survey of Palestine, Vol. 2. op. cit. p. 765.
3. Al Ittihad (Unity), subtitled, Voice of the Arab Workers in Palestine, was edited by Emil Tuma on behalf of the FALT. The first issue appeared on the 14th May 1944. (Hereafter referred to as IT).

and the Arab people in Palestine to the struggle to defeat Nazism. It declared, as one of its aims, the familiarisation of its readers with workers' struggles throughout the world, to enable Arab workers to benefit from the experiences of others in the common struggle for the creation of "a free and happy world".[4] Its second major aim was to pursue the daily economic struggle of Arab workers to improve their economic, social and cultural conditions and to unite their efforts in one strong movement. The editorial went on to explain that by defending the rights of "the toiling masses of the people" it was serving the interests of Arab Palestine as a whole and showing the world the progressive face of the Arab national movement.

From the start, Al Ittihad received the support of the left branches of the PAWS. In response to a letter sent by the editor of the paper to all Arab labour organisations calling on them "to participate in editing the workers' paper" by sending representatives to take part in periodic meetings to decide its general policy[5] four organisations which belonged to the PAWS responded favourably. The Arab workers' societies in Jerusalem, Ramalla, Bethlehem, and Beitjala agreed to send their representatives and proposed the formation of a central administrative council, calling on all other Arab labour organisations to support Al Ittihad as the legitimate voice of the Arab working class in Palestine.[6]

For the first two years of its existence, Al Ittihad devoted considerable attention to labour affairs and to the activity of Arab labour organisations. It is important to see the views expounded by the paper not as solely representative of the opinions of a number of trade unionists, but as being an important ideological component of the armoury of the Arab communists. Al Ittihad served as the organ of both the Arab labour movement and of the NLL, and its editors and most frequent writers were the political leaders of the NLL. Most of the articles relating to the affairs of the labour

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4. Our Paper. IT 14 May 1944.
5. For Workers Unity. IT 14 May 1944.
6. Ibid. Meeting of Arab Workers Societies, 7 May 1944.

movement were written by Farah, himself one of the founders of the NLL.[7]

The Arab communists saw their role within the labour movement as consisting of defending and protecting the interests of the Arab workers by demanding an end to the "wage discrimination" policy of the Government, and decrying the existing differentiation in wages and conditions of Arab and Jewish workers.[8] The Government was called upon to grant official recognition to the Arab labour organisations[9] and criticised for "not creating the conditions necessary" for the progress of trade unionism,[10] with collective bargaining instituted by the introduction of the relevant labour legislation.[11] Company unions were denounced as an attempt by the foreign companies to thwart independent labour organisation, as were private labour exchanges which charged the workers fees for securing them employment,[12] and the Government was called upon to establish public labour exchanges and to outlaw private ones.[13] The attitude to the Labour Department was ambivalent. Initially, it was welcomed as providing the impetus for trade union organisation, and for conferring legality on the spontaneous organisational activity of the workers.[14] This defence of the Department's activity can be understood in terms of the support and co-operation which the FALT had received from the Labour Department on its formation and especially from one of the labour inspectors H. Chudleigh.[15] The Department's failings were referred to "the opposition of reactionary elements in the administration" to its activities.[16] But after continuously

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7. B. Farah had organised the opposition to Musa within the PCP. He was a founder member of the NLL and member of the CC/FALT and its Secretary. After the split of the PAWS he became a member of the Executive Committee of the AWC.
8. B. Farah. The Arab Worker and the necessity of protecting him. IT 21 May 1944.
9. T. Toubi. We Demand Official Recognition of the Trade Unions. IT 30 July 1944.
10. B. Farah. For the introduction of labour legislation. IT 7 November 1945.
11. B. Farah. What Arab Workers Demand from the Labour Department. IT 25 June 1944.
12. B. Farah. Company Unions. IT 4 June 1944.
13. Labour Exchanges. IT. 28 May 1944.
14. What Arab Workers Demand from the Labour Department. loc. cit.
15. For relations between Chudleigh and the FALT see, Survey of the Arab communists, 1946. op. cit. p. 2.
16. The Labour Department. IT 15 April 1945.

insisting that the Department's role was "not only to register the conditions of the workers but to change them", Al Ittihad dismissed the Department for having become "an obedient tool in the hands of the Government".[17] The duty of the Arab labour movement was declared to consist of putting pressure on the Government to comply with a number of demands: the introduction of social insurance and pension schemes, the fixing of minimum wages and minimum working hours, equalising the wages of Arab workers with those of non-Arabs,[18] the setting-up of supervisory councils with workers' participation, revising the laws forbidding strikes, implementing free compulsory primary education, and embarking on construction schemes for schools, hospitals and roads to absorb workers threatened by impending unemployment at the end of the war.[19]

A series of articles explaining the importance of organisation "as the basis of success" in the struggle between workers and employers, also pointed to the necessity of a strong labour movement to attract the attention of the traditional leadership of the national movement, and to perform its role "in the national struggle and in the creation of a new society with no exploitation".[20] To be able to show the progressive face of the labour movement abroad, to give the lie to the Histadrut's assertions that its opponents in Palestine were "reactionary feudal effendis" and to have a voice in the national councils and in deciding policy relating to Palestine's future and to the workers affairs, it was necessary to unite all Arab labour organisations in one "higher Arab labour council".[21] While rejecting the PAWS's claim to leadership of the labour movement, the Arab communists indicated that they were willing to collaborate with the PAWS leaders. The new leadership they proposed, would draw on the experience of the older organisations like the PAWS, and on the awareness and progressive outlook of new organisations like the FALT.[22]

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17. The Road of the Labour Department, IT 17 November 1946.
18. B. Farah. The Higher Arab Labour Council. IT 23 July 1944.
19. Memo of FALT to the Chief Secretary, 21 May 1944.
20. B. Farah. Organisation is the Basis of Success of the Arab Labour Movement. IT 13 August 1944.
21. B. Farah. The Higher Arab Labour Council. loc. cit.
22. B. Farah. The Higher Arab Labour Council. IT 1 June 1944.

Not long after its establishment, Al Ittihad was forced to defend itself against accusations, made in the guise of "the national interest" that it was dividing national unity with its calls for an independent labour organisation and an economic struggle against the employers. F. Nassar[23] replied to these attacks by affirming the political role of the labour movement in showing "the progressive face of our struggle to the popular democratic forces in the world" and denied that the HAC, formed as it was at the behest of the Arab League, was representative of Palestine's Arab inhabitants.[24] Despite this, the labour movement was prepared to co-operate with other classes in Palestine, "the peasants and the small capitalists and landowners", on the basis of a "common interest against imperialism".[25] Nevertheless it did this, conscious that its duty lay in drawing the other two classes away from concentrating their efforts on the struggle against Zionism, and directing them against the "main enemy" of the Arab national movement, British imperialism.

The Arab communists were careful to explain that their primary preoccupation was with the national struggle for independence and that the labour movement's duty was "to support the national economy in the present stage of the national liberation struggle".[26] Arab employers were to be treated differently from foreign ones; whereas the latter were "obstacles in the way of independence",[27] the Arab workers were conscious of the need to strengthen national unity and did "not want to embarrass the national economy".[28] Co-operation and mutual sacrifice on both sides were called for in order that the

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23. F. Nassar returned to Palestine from exile in Iraq in January 1943. He became secretary of the workers' society in Nazareth and was active in bringing about the split of the PAWS in August 1945. He then became leader of the newly formed AWC, but later left it to join the leadership of the NLL.
24. F. Nassar. Our Labour Movement and the HAC. IT 25 November 1945.
25. F. Nassar. Our plan was and remains strong and correct. IT 2 December 1945.
26. B. Farah. The national economy and the Arab workers. IT 10 September 1944.
27. K. Shanrir. The labour movement's stand towards the employers. IT 30 December 1945.
28. In September 1944, a strike broke out at an Arab-owned mill near Nablus. Al Ittihad took the side of the workers and called on the employers to concede to their demands. At the same time, it explained that this did not imply enmity to the Arab national economy, support for which however could not mean concurring in the outrageous exploitation of Arab workers and not giving them a fair wage. See IT 24 September 1944.

workers should not be exploited under the pretext of "nationalist slogans" and the argument was put to the employers that the granting of higher wages was in their own best interests as it would lead to higher productivity and to higher sales of their goods as a result of the improved purchasing power of a large section of the population.[29] Farah rejected "patriotic" attacks on the Arab labour movement as being based on the identification of "national interest" with a small section of the population who stood at the head of the national movement and who were "afraid of losing some of their profits", and emphasised that the workers struggle was a fundamental part of the national movement.[30] The working class was declared to constitute "one third of the Arab population" and to be the only class which was "growing daily as a result of the development of industry". Thus it was only right that the labour movement should participate in the struggle according to its own interests, particularly as the national struggle was "not a monopoly of any one class".[31] Going even further, he declared that the working class was "the most important class in society" and the one with the biggest stake in "liberating humanity from the existing regime of exploitation and national slavery".[32] In the specific case of Palestine, the Arab workers were directly threatened by the influx of Jewish immigration and land transfers to Jewish companies, which necessarily led to increased unemployment and the migration of large numbers of peasants to the towns in search of scarce employment. The working class had a direct interest in engaging in the political struggle to defend its own threatened rights, and to influence events in such a way as to ensure that the existing economic and political regime in the country was a democratic one, to enable it to realise its aims.[33]

The differences between the left branches of the PAWS and the central leadership of the organisation in Haifa manifested themselves more clearly with the growth of the influence of the NLL, which

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29. The national economy and the Arab worker. loc. cit.
30. B. Farah. The Arab labour movement and the national economy in the national struggle. IT 22 October 1944.
31. B. Farah. Arab workers and the struggle for national liberation. IT 18 June 1944.
32. Ibid.
33. B. Farah. Arab workers and politics. IT 9 July 1944.

through the wide distribution of its organ Al Ittihad, was able to reach the rank and file members of the PAWS.[34] The communists now controlled the labour organisations of Jerusalem, Jaffa and Gaza, in addition to a number of smaller branches, which left the PAWS leadership in control of only Haifa, and numerous rural branches with insignificant membership. The rift between the two sections of the movement made itself felt on a number of issues. Most importantly the PAWS leadership was opposed to worker participation in political affairs, while the left took the opportunity of every labour gathering to press its political demands on the Government and on the national leadership.[35] At the same time, the left branches openly declared their association with the communist movement. A number of prominent leaders of the labour organisations in Jerusalem, Jaffa and Nazareth regularly wrote for Al Ittihad, while some officers of PAWS branches held official positions in the NLL.[36] The gatherings of the left branches increasingly issued political resolutions demanding the widening of democratic liberties in the country, and came out openly in support of the Red Army and the USSR.[37] In Haifa, on the other hand, celebrations held on the occasion of May Day were characterised by attacks on the Arab communists for "misleading the workers", and on the Soviet Union.[38] Another difference centred on the attitude towards Jewish workers in Palestine. While all were unanimous in condemning the Histadrut, especially its attempts to recruit Arab workers, the left affirmed that Arab workers were ready to collaborate with Jewish workers, and

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34. "The Arab labour movement, December 1945". Survey of Palestine. loc. cit.
35. e.g. In a meeting held in the Arab workers' society in Jerusalem, to celebrate the First of May 1944, a resolution was passed condemning the decision of the executive committee of the Labour Party in favour of the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. IT. 14 May 1944. On the occasion of the May celebrations in 1945, telegrams were dispatched to the Chief Secretary calling for the release of Arab political prisoners. Telegram from R. Habbab on behalf of the AWS in Jaffa to Chief Secretary, 2 May 1945, and Telegram from F. Nassar on behalf of the AWS in Nazareth to Chief Secretary, 11 th May 1945. ISA File 260 1/Lab/1/45.
36. e.g. As'ad Makki, deputy secretary of the AWS in Gaza was also a member of the NLL local committee in the town.
37. Report of May Day celebrations in Jerusalem, Jaffa AWS. IT 6 December 1945.
38. Report of Regional Labour inspector on May Day celebrations in Haifa PAWS, 19 May 1945. ISA File 258. I/Lab/3/42.

the differences that existed were characterised as due to "surface contradictions" which could be satisfactorily resolved.[39] Members of the left branches took the initiative in arranging for meetings of Arab and Jewish workers to establish joint action committees at the places of work, while emphasising that such organisations should remain free from Histadrut interference.[40]

The growing strength of the left within the PAWS was now however reflected in its decision-making bodies. Despite the fact that the left controlled the most important labour organisations in the country with the exception of the Haifa centre, Sami Taha, the leader of the PAWS remained in control of the rural branches, which always gave him a majority whenever an important issue was put to the vote. The left directed their energies to two fronts. The first was to put pressure on the leadership to co-operate with the FALT, and the second related to democracy within the labour movement. They called for changes in the organisational rules which allowed the same voting power to both large and small organisations, and for elections to the executive committee of the PAWS. Yet despite the evident strength of the left branches, Taha continued to ignore them. His control of the central organisation and his in-built majority threatened the communist leaders of the left branches with liquidation. This fear, coupled with Taha's high-handed policy, coincided with the NLL's despair of affecting any change within the PAWS leadership, and impelled them to actively work for splitting the organisation.[41]

The Split of the Labour Movement and the Formation of the Arab Workers' Congress

The immediate origins of the split which took place in August 1945 can be traced back to differences between the left branches of the PAWS and its leadership, over the composition of the Arab labour

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39. Speech of Odeh al-Ashhab, one of the leaders of the Jerusalem AWS in the May Day celebrations in Jerusalem 1944. ISA 65/3048.
40. eg. Conference of Postal and Telegraph workers in Palestine. IT 7 June 1945.
41. Survey of Arab Communists. 1946. op. cit. pp. 5-6. Interviews with E. Tuma, Haifa 4 April 1974; F. Salfiti, Amman 26 March 1974; and M. Kuwaider, Amman, 7 March, 1974.

delegation to the London Conference of the World Trade Union Movement held in February 1945. The left pressed to make the delegation representative of the various shades of opinion within the labour movement, and to use this international platform to show that the Arab workers "differentiated between Jews and Zionists" and that the aim of the Arab national movement was "to liberate the Arab and Jewish masses from exploitation and from Zionism".[42] In the event Taha was able to defeat the left's attempts to block the candidacy of his own nominee, the lawyer Hana Asfour, by agreeing to a compromise whereby a representative of the FALT was also included in the delegation.[43] The affair however was not to be resolved to the satisfaction of the left. The British Government while granting visas to Taha and Asfour, withheld it from the FALT's delegate Farah,[44] and when it did eventually allow him to travel to London,[45] he arrived late at the Conference and was granted observer status only.[46]

The failure of the Arab delegation at the London Conference to block the passage of a resolution supporting the establishment of "the national home"[47] led to further disagreements between the left and the PAWS leadership. Whereas the latter criticised the USSR for its support of the pro-Zionist resolution, the left defended the Soviet stand and explained it in terms of the necessity of maintaining the unity of the international labour movement in the face of "attempts by reactionary forces" to split it.[48] In addition, the left attributed the Arabs' failure to the internal structure of the PAWS and to its inability to appeal to the "progressive forces" in the international labour movement.[49]

The spark for the split in the PAWS was the decision of a labour conference[50] to nominate Taha and Asfour yet again as delegates to

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42. IT, 14 January 1945.
43. Ibid.
44. IT, 21 January 1945.
45. IT, 4 February 1945.
46. Survey of Arab Communists, 1946. op. cit. p. 4.
47. Report of the World Trade Union Conference. (London 1945) p. 181.
48. IT, 6 and 13 May 1945.
49. IT, 16 November 1945.
50. The conference took place in Nablus, 5th August 1945. Seventeen labour organisations claiming to represent 15,000 Arab workers took part. See, Survey of Palestine. op. cit. p. 764.

the World Trade Union Conference due to be held in Paris. During the meeting Taha had overridden the objections of the left branches to the nomination of Asfour and reportedly threatened "to dissolve any organisation" which objected to his decisions.[51] The representatives of the Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Gaza branches withdrew from the meeting in protest, and a few days later issued a statement declaring their withdrawal from the PAWS, and their intention to hold a labour congress to elect a labour delegation to Paris, and to formulate "a constitutional and organisational framework for the labour movement".[52]

The left branches justified their withdrawal from the PAWS by pointing to a number of abuses which in their opinion had resulted in "stagnation" in the development of the Arab labour movement and in its isolation on the international scene. They emphasised the absence of democracy within the PAWS in which "no elections had been held for a period of over ten years", and the dictatorial methods of Taha in forcing his opinions on the branches of the movement.[53] They further pointed out that the financial affairs of the movement had been kept a secret even from leading members, that the majority of rural branches "existed on paper only", and that the main thrust of the movement had been directed at establishing co-operatives rather than at trade union organisation.[54] Turning to H. Asfour's nomination as a delegate to international conferences, the breakaway branches explained that Taha had "forced him on the labour movement" at the time of the London Conference, despite the opposition of the largest branches, and that he had attempted to do so again. Their opposition to Asfour was based on the fact that he was "a landowner who does not represent the interests of the workers", and that his presence at international conferences was exploited by the Zionists to claim that the Arab labour movement was "led by effendis".[55] A report by an official of the Labour Department substantiated most

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51. Statement of AWS in Jerusalem, Jaffa and Gaza, 10 August 1945. IT 12 August 1945.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. IT 21 August 1945.
55. Ibid.

of the claims made by the left branches concerning the absence of democracy and the non-representative nature of the delegations chosen by the PAWS leadership, and concluded by stating that "this Department thinks that the actions of the dissidents was justified".[56]

The congress called for by the left branches of the PAWS, was held on the 19th August, 1945 and was attended by representatives of the three big branches which had initiated the split, and eight smaller ones. In addition there were representatives of the FALT, the Trade Union of IPC Workers, the Trade Union of Workers in the Consolidated Refineries, and various small unions most of which had remained outside the framework of the two competing organisations.[57] Although an invitation had been extended to the PAWS leadership to participate in the meeting[58] this was rejected. Instead, a small mob attacked the meeting, and later similar attacks were made on the FALT offices in Haifa, and efforts were made to close down some of the seceding organisations.[59]

The Congress elected an executive committee made up of the heads of the AWS in Jerusalem, Jaffa and Gaza, as well as Farah, who was the Secretary of the FALT, M. Amer, a member of the central committee of the NLL, and F. Nassar the head of the AWS in Nazareth.[60] It proceeded to elect the two leaders of the NLL, Farah and Amer as its delegates to the Paris Conference.[61] The Congress also passed a number of resolutions dealing with both economic and political matters. In the economic sphere, the resolutions called for Government labour legislation to protect the workers, construction schemes to deal with unemployment, the establishment of free industrial training centres and agricultural schools and issued a host of statements of support for various other trade union issues.[62] The

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56. "Report from the regional inspector of Labour-Northern District, 30 September 1945" ISA File 1440.
57. The First Arab Workers' Congress-Jaffa 19 August 1945. IT, 21 August 1945.
58. "Letter from secretary of AWS-Jaffa to District Commissioner Lydda, 10 September 1945". ISA File 1440 Jb/1.
59. Ibid.
60. The AWS-Nazareth had severed its contacts with the PAWS as early as August 1944, but had remained outside the FALT. IT, 13 August 1944.
61. The First Arab Workers' Congress-Jaffa 19 August 1945. loc. cit.
62. Ibid. Economic resolutions of the congress.

political resolutions called for the establishment of an independent democratic government in the country, guaranteeing the economic, social and political rights of all its inhabitants and, while declaring firm opposition to Zionism and to Jewish immigration, pointed to the necessity of "explaining to the Jewish people that support for Zionism was contrary to their own interests". The Government was called upon to remove political censorship and institute democratic freedoms, to purge Government Departments of "reactionary elements", to release Arab political prisoners, to hold democratic elections for municipal and local councils and to change the contents of school curriculi endowing them with a "national democratic content".[63]

The establishment of the Arab Workers' Congress (AWC) was a vindication of those members of the NLL who had argued that the left was strong enough to establish its own independent labour organisation, and that the left branches in the PAWS had "the support of eighty per cent of the Arab labour movement".[64] The split left the Haifa PAWS centre "in a shaky position" and the new committees established in the towns where the split was effective, had "no rank and file".[65] The arguments put forward by Nassar and other NLL leaders who were in favour of the split, had centred round the theme that Taha himself was making it impossible for the left to remain in the PAWS and at the same time pursue an active policy. If that was the case, then it was probable that Taha was just as happy to rid himself of the left. However, what the split had revealed was that the left within the PAWS enjoyed the support of an overwhelming majority of the active membership, which itself raises doubts about the fears of "liquidation" cited by the communists as one of the reasons for the necessity of the split. In the event however, the communists succeeded in establishing a strong labour organisation independent of the Haifa-based PAWS, but the latter did not disappear. It soon managed to recoup its strength and went on to

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63. The First Arab Workers' Congress-Jaffa 19 August 1945. loc. cit. Political resolutions of the congress.
64. F. Nassar. The Arab labour Movement. IT, 2 September 1945.
65. Report of Regional Inspector of Labour, 30 September 1945. loc.cit.

become perhaps numerically larger than the AWC itself. The communists had long campaigned against Taha for his refusal to co-operate with the FALT, and the resultant duplication of efforts, and accused him of "splitting" the Arab labour movement. Nevertheless, soon after the split, the PAWS' recovery caused them to renew their calls to Taha for unity. This however was continually rejected by the PAWS, and at the time of partition in 1948 the Arab labour movement was still divided into two competing sections, a situation which obtained largely thanks to the communists' success in splitting the PAWS in August 1945.

Activity of the Arab Workers' Congress

Despite the fact that the new labour organisation was born as a result of a split, it achieved almost instant success. Besides attracting to its ranks a majority of the active membership of the PAWS, the FALT, whose leaders had taken part in the establishment of the AWC, soon announced its own dissolution and amalgamated with the newly established organisation.[66] Within the Arab community, the new trade union, despite its avowedly communist leadership, was received favourably by a group of young professionals, as well as by elements opposed to the Mufti's hegemony over the national movement who saw in its formation a challenge to the monopoly of authority wielded by him.[67] An additional boost was the decision taken by the leaders of the FALT and the editors of Al Ittihad to transfer the ownership of the journal to the Executive Committee of the AWC, which assumed responsibility for its publication in September 1945.[68] The greatest achievement of the AWC however, came with the

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66. Statement of the Administrative Committee of FALT in answer to the call of the Executive Committee of AWC to dissolve itself, 10 October 1945. IT 14 October 1945.
67. A list of contributors to the AWC included, R. Nashashibi, the leader of the opposition to the Mufti, Karaman Dick and Salti (Cigarette manufacturers), The National Bus Company, and a group of Doctors and Lawyers. At a meeting organised in Jerusalem to welcome the returning Paris delegation of the AWC, attended by a number of notables, contributions amounted to £P 215. See IT 9 December 1945.
68. The decision to invite the AWC to take responsibility for Al Ittihad was taken on 7 September 1945. IT 16 September 1945. F. Nassar, the Secretary of the Executive Committee of AWC was delegated to edit the paper, and the first issue bearing the name of the AWC appeared on the 30 September 1945.

success of its delegation to the Paris Trade Union Conference in being accredited as representatives of the Arab labour movement in Palestine.[69]

The international recognition implied by the AWC's participation in an international labour gathering, strengthened its standing internally. Amer's speech at the Conference criticised the decision of the London Conference in support of the "national home", condemned Zionism as a tool of international capitalism, and declared that Arab and Jewish workers had common interests, and should struggle jointly against Zionism and for Palestine's independence.[70] In the event, the AWC delegation scored a double triumph; together with other Arab delegates it supported and secured the nomination of the Lebanese communist delegate M.Al Ariss, to the position of Near East representative on the executive of the International Federation, in opposition to the candidacy of a Histadrut delegate from Palestine. It also succeeded in blocking the passage of a pro-Zionist resolution similar to the one taken at the London Conference.[71] On its return to Palestine, meetings were held in various towns to celebrate the return of the delegation, and the AWC took this opportunity both to publicise its local political and economic demands, and also to explain that Palestine's struggle for independence was similar to that waged by other colonial peoples, and that it was necessary to make contact with outside democratic forces to secure their support.[72]

Eight months after its establishment, the AWC held a second Congress which was devoted mainly to a discussion of its prospective constition.[73] The Constitution which was approved after some minor amendments contained the usual pledges to struggle for the unity of the labour movement, for labour legislation, for recognition of Arab trade unions, for the introduction of pensions and social insurance

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69. Survey of Palestine. op. cit. p. 765
70. Speech of M. Amer at Paris Conference. IT 28 October 1945.
71. Ibid.
72. Celebrations for returning Paris delegation in Jerusalem. IT 9 December 1945.
73. The constitution was prepared by O. al Ashhab, K. Shannir and H. Abu Aysha. Al Ghad N.20. p. 22. All had been members of the PCP before 1943. Abu Aysha had received his training at the Comintern school in Moscow in the early thirties.

schemes and for "the protection of the workers vis-a-vis the employers" through the introduction of various measures regulating hours, wages and holiday pay.[74] Two of the articles in the Constitution were of striking significance. First, despite the fact that it defined the aims of the AWC as "the organisation and unity of Arab workers in Palestine", it also declared its intention of "working for the co-operation and solidarity of all Palestinian workers irrespective of nationality, colour, religion or political belief". The second affirmed the non-sectarian character of the AWC and declared its readiness to "co-operate with all parties and associations working for Palestine's freedom and independence, for the establishment of a democratic government where all its citizens would enjoy equal rights and responsibilities".[75] This Second Congress which approved the AWC's Constitution was also significant in that a number of women workers attended as delegates, and the new CC elected by the Congress included two women members.[76] Making great play of the democratic proceedings of the gathering, the Congress' resolutions called on the PAWS to join with the AWC on the basis of the latter's "democratically adopted constitution", and called on the leadership of the national movement to establish national unity on the basis of "free and popular elections".[77]

The policy pursued by the AWC was characterised by support for militant political and economic action, and attempts to establish joint Arab-Jewish action committees to pursue common economic demands on the shop floor. Even when it criticised the activity of Jewish workers in the army camps, where the majority of workers were Arabs, it argued that "there are no differences between Arab and Jewish workers" and that its objection to the activity of certain Jewish overseers was "not because they are Jewish but because of their political bias".[78] Joint strikes by Arabs and Jews were defended and the AWC warned that Arab opposition to such activity, which was of a non-political nature, was playing into the hands of company

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74. The constitution of the AWC. IT 21 April 1946.
75. Ibid. Article 2. Sections 1(b) and 1(j).
76. The 2nd Congress of AWC, 14 April 1946. IT 21 April 1946.
77. Ibid. Resolutions of the Congress.
78. Memo of Jaffa and Lydda AWS to Labour Department, 29 January 1946. ISA File 1440.

owners, who stoked racial divisions in order to forestall labour unity.[79] Members of AWC branches were instrumental in organising joint meetings of Arab and Jewish workers and loudly publicised them as proof of the ability of Arabs and Jews to work together in pursuit of their common interests.[80] When a strike by the employees of the Department of Posts and Telegraphs broke out in 1946, lasting for two weeks, and "virtually paralysing the administration including railways and postal communications",[81] the AWC called it a "historic strike...the first time in Palestine that Arab and Jewish workers have united to show that there are no differences between them and that they have a common enemy".[82] A joint statement was issued by the NLL and the PCP supporting the strike[83] and the AWC dispatched a delegation to show solidarity with the strikers and called on all Government employees to come out in solidarity strikes. Nassar, the Secretary of the AWC, actively intervened in the strike, urging the strike leaders, without success, not to accept any compromise and to continue the strike until the demands of all the strikers, both civil servants and workers were met.[84]

The AWC was particularly active among Arab camp workers, holding a special congress for them attended by one hundred and twenty delegates which put their demands to the military authorities.[85] Failing to elicit any positive response, it called for a one-day national strike[86] which was met with unanimous response when fifty

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79. The strike in the oil refinery in Haifa. IT 2 February 1947.
80. e.g. A successful attempt was made in the oil refineries in Haifa on the initiative of a leading member of the AWC, Sadek Jarrah to set up a joint local organisation. IT 29 June 1947.
81. C.O.733/457/75156. Strike of employees in the Department of Posts and Telegraphs, 9 April 1946.
82. Statement of Executive Committee of AWC. IT 21 and 25 April 1946.
83. CC/PCP and CC/NLL Arabic leaflet on Civil servants strike. April 1946.
84. IT 28 April 1946.
85. The Congress of camp workers in Gaza, 16 February. IT 23 February 1947.
86. Statement of CC of Arab camp workers affiliated to AWC, to camp workers for one day strike. Falastin 17 May 1947.

thousand Arab and Jewish workers came out on strike.[87] Eventually it gained recognition from the camp authorities as the sole representative of Arab workers in the camps throughout the country.[88] Attempts were also made to organise village workers, and an AWC committee was established to deal with village affairs.[89] The Government was called upon to pay farmers for land taken away from them for use by the army, to give priority to the employment of those whose lands had been requisitioned, to build water towers, clinics and schools in villages, to carry out irrigation projects, to supply farmers with seeds and free interest loans, to reduce taxes to their pre-war level, and to establish democratically elected local councils in all villages and entrust them with responsible tasks.[90] A conference to discuss the problem of unemployment was also held, attended by a number of employers and representatives of political parties, and it placed the onus on the Government to provide a solution to the problem. The speakers of the AWC put forward practical proposals for the alleviation of unemployment such as raising customs tariffs, banning overtime, banning the use of prisoner-of-war labour, decontrolling building materials, stopping immigration, and the initiation of construction schemes such as schools, hospitals and roads to absorb the unemployed workers.[91]

In the political field the AWC held the customary celebrations on the occasion of the First of May and adopted resolutions calling for the release of political prisoners, for the banning of immigration, and for the establishment of an independent democratic government.[92]

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87. IT 25 May 1947.
88. IT 24 August 1947.
89. In a meeting held in Jaffa, 11 January 1947 attended by 20 delegates. IT 12 January 1947.
90. Resolutions of 3rd Congress of AWC. IT 21 September 1947.
91. "Report of T. Toubi Inspector of Labour on National Conference on Unemployment, 15 October 1945". ISA File 260 I/Lab/1/45. The conference was attended by 65 delegates of whom 10 represented industry and 8, political parties.
92. e.g. May Day celebration in Jerusalem AWS. IT 11 May 1947. The paper reported that 1,000 people attended the meeting. Similar meetings took place in Jaffa, Nazareth and Gaza which were addressed by local labour leaders, and those of the AWC and NLL.

On the occasion of national strikes such as the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, the AWC complied with the national leadership's call for strike action[93] and used the event to hold public meetings to press the national leaders to establish a "democratically representative HAC" including within it " representatives of the workers and peasants".[94]

The political role which some of the AWC leaders wanted the organisation to play[95] was for some time to give it the appearance of a political party. When Jamil Mardam the Arab League delegate came to Palestine to try and establish a new HAC, Nassar led a delegation of the AWC to confer with him, and impressed upon him the necessity of including a representative of the labour movement in the prospective committee.[96] In February 1946 a statement was brought out calling on the Arab people to boycott the Anglo American Investigation Committee[97] while J. Husseini who had declared the readiness of the national leaders to co-operate with the Committee was criticised for his "divisive action", and the HAC's claim to represent Arab opinion was called into question.[98] When the report of the Committee was made public, the AWC pointed to its findings as proof of the mistaken policy of the HAC and called for the Palestine problem to be taken to the UN.[99] Nassar's numerous articles in Al Ittihad, and the various meetings of the AWC branches continued to tackle political problems, starting with calls for the termination

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93. Statement of CC/AWC on Balfour Day anniversary. Falastin, 30 October 1946. The paper reported that the PAWS refused to comply and called on its supporters to strike for half-an-hour only.
94. Meeting of AWS Jerusalem on Balfour Day anniversary. IT 4 November 1945.
95. F. Nassar the leader of the AWC wanted to establish a political committee, and was in favour of a political role for the AWC. This was resented by the NLL leaders who wanted the AWC to pursue a purely economic role: eventually Nassar was co-opted, not without some opposition, into the NLL leadership, whereupon the AWC reverted to a more traditional trade union role. Interviews with F. Salfiti, Amman 26 March 1974; M. Kuwaider, Amman 7 March 1974; E. Habibi, Haifa, 3 April 1974.
96. IT 25 November 1945.
97. Executive Committee of AWC: Statement to the working class and the Arab people, 24 February 1946. Al Ghad. N.16. p. 2.
98. Statement of Executive Committee of AWC. IT 30 March, 1946.
99. Statement of Executive Committee of AWC 7 May 1946. IT 12 May 1946.

of Zionist immigration and criticism of Arab League policy on Palestine, leading on to the castigation of the Iraqi and Egyptian Governments for their repressive internal policies. In the meantime the AWC found itself under attack from the national leadership concerning alleged co-operation with Zionist organisations. Defending itself against all such accusations and pointing to its record of soliciting the support of "progressive forces" on the international scene for the cause of Arab national liberation[100] the AWC nevertheless adopted a conciliatory tone. It explained its position as being based on "separating the Jewish people from Zionism" and as calling for "understanding with the Jewish people" not in terms of immigration and the slogan of a Jewish state, but on the basis of its calls to the Jewish people" to support our struggle for Palestine's independence and freedom".[101] Yet it reminded the HAC that, while it had called for struggle against imperialism "in the first place", the Arab leaders, by directing the struggle against Zionism, were diverting the national movement from facing the main enemy.

The attitude of the AWC to the PAWS and especially to its leader, Taha, was characterised by hostility coupled with repeated calls for unity and co-operation. Taha himself was criticised on four main issues: for acting as the "agent of the British Government", for ignoring calls for unity between the two organisations, for carrying out splitting activities within the labour movement, and for thwarting a number of strikes directed against foreign companies. As early as December 1946 the AWC had contacted the PAWS in order to start negotiations to unite the two wings of the labour movement, and had enlisted M. al Ariss, the Lebanese trade union leader and the Near East representative of the IFTU to act as mediator.[102] Taha however was not interested and al Ariss' efforts foundered as a result. Undaunted, the NLL continued to declare the unity of the labour movement as "the problem of the hour" and to press for

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100. Statement of Executive Committee of AWC. IT 16 June 1946.
101. F. Nassar. "J. Husseini disfigures the aims of the AWC". IT 9 June 1946.
102. Interview with M. al Ariss, Beirut, 15 March 1974. See also IT 29 December 1946.

the unity of the PAWS and the AWC, appealing to the rank and file of the movement to destroy "separatism and its proponents".[103] Taha was condemned for attempting to further split the labour movement by employing "terrorist methods" against his opponents,[104] by sending his supporters to take the place of striking workers,[105] and by setting up "paper unions" where rival unions were already in existence, thereby giving a pretext to employers to ignore the workers' demands and benefit by their divisions.[106] His record as a "strike breaker" was continuously conjured up. During the civil servants' strike he was accused of putting pressure on workers in the oil industry and in the camps not to declare solidarity strikes.[107] In the case of the strike of the IPC workers in Haifa he was accused of taking the side of the oil companies by declaring his "neutrality"[108] and trying to create despair among the ranks of the strikers by stating that the strike had been "too hasty"[109] and forbidding other workers from collecting donations for the strikers.[110] In yet another instance he was criticised for calling for a general strike in the Public Works Department, most of whose members were organised in the AWC, without co-ordinating beforehand with the latter, or even informing them of his proposed course of action.[111]

Increasingly, the communists's criticism of Taha came to centre on his political activity, and his declared intention of transforming the PAWS into a political party. This was denounced as "a retreat from the trade union struggle", as evidence of his belief that "the workers did not possess sufficient consciousness" and of his lack of faith in the Arab labour movement.[112] His participation in the

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103. Statement of NLL: A general call to all Arab workers in Palestine 14 August 1947. IT 17 August 1947.
104. A number of workers in the IPC who had deserted Taha and joined the rival AWC had been physically attacked by PAWS members. IT 18 May 1947.
105. IT 23 February 1947.
106. IT 9 February 1947.
107. IT 5 May 1946. A Jewish Intelligence Report stated that Taha was under pressure from the Arab leaders to subvert the strike. See Survey of Arab communists, 1946. op. cit. p. 5.
108. IT 30 March 1947.
109. IT 13 and 23 March 1947.
110. IT 16 March 1947.
111. IT 10 August 1947.
112. IT 8 September 1946.

London Conference held late in 1946, was declared to have been imposed on the HAC by the British Government and he was dubbed "the representative of the British Government".[113] His claims to speak in the name of the Arab working class were ridiculed; it was pointed out that within his own organisation the PAWS, elections had never been held and his claim to represent his own membership was called into question.[114] His contacts with the British Labour Party "the friends of Zionism"[115] and his "suspect connections with imperialist circles"[116] rendered him, in Al Ittihad's view as acting in accordance with British plans for the partitioning of the country. His suggestion for the formation of an "armed Arab guard for the protection of Arab villages" and his call "not for British evacuation but for the reduction of British forces in Palestine" were seen as aiming to create "favourable conditions" for the coming partition.[117] Yet despite all the vitriolic attacks on Taha himself, the AWC never tired of calling for unity with the PAWS, and later condemned his assassination as a "heinous crime" directed at the whole of the Arab labour movement.[118]

The last public act of the AWC was the convening of its Third Congress in September 1947. This represented the zenith of its power. Ninety-four delegates took part in the Congress which lasted for three days.[119] Messages of congratulations were received from thirteen foreign labour organisations including the IFTU in whose activities the AWC had played an active part ever since the Paris Conference.[120] The Congress' opening statement rejected partition,

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113. Statement of Executive Committee of AWC on S.Taha statements in London. IT 2 February 1947.
114. IT 8 September 1946.
115. IT 2 March 1947.
116. IT 9 March 1947.
117. This man helps partition Palestine. IT 6 September 1947.
118. IT 21 September 1947. Taha was murdered during the 3rd Congress of the AWC. Attempts were made to put the blame for his death on the communists, but the most likely candidate remains the Mufti who was resentful of Taha's attempts to launch a new political party.
119. The 3rd Congress of the AWC 12-14 September 1947. IT 21 September 1947.
120. The Executive Committee of the AWC had sent one of its own members as a delegate to the Prague meeting of the IFTU. IT 13 April 1947. Delegations were also sent to the International Youth Congress in Prague, and to take part in a road building project in Yugoslavia. IT 21 September 1947.

and declared that the labour movement could not be a political party but should open its ranks to workers from all political persuasions. While stressing its support for all national parties working for the independence of the country, it called on the UN to grant the people of Palestine the right to self-determination, and on the IFTU, as representative of the international working class, to intercede on behalf of Palestine to enable it to secure its independence.[121] The actual resolutions of the Congress, starting with the preamble that the AWC was "a trade union organisation which does not interest itself in party matters" covered every conceivable economic and political demand, from calling on the Government to "enlarge the paved road system by extending them to all towns and villages" to extending greetings to "the heroic Indonesian people in their struggle against imperialism".[122] The Congress came to an end with the election, by secret ballot, of the new executive committee. Democratic procedure did not however save the AWC from the forthcoming disintegration which took place a few months later as a result of the partition decision, and the newly elected leadership was soon to find itself without any following.

The creation of the AWC had come about as a result of the growing strength of the communists within the labour movement and their desire to unite its various parts. Despite the fact that its creation had led to the opposite of what had been intended, namely widening the divisions within the labour movement, its establishment proved beneficial both to the communists and to the labour movement as a whole. As far as the NLL was concerned, the AWC served as its labour base. Through its control of the leadership, the AWC invariably followed the political line laid down by the Arab communists. Although the overwhelming majority of the rank and file of the membership were not communists, the existence of the AWC enabled the communists to contact the widest possible sections of the Arab working class. In the trade union field, the AWC was most active

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121. Opening statements of 3rd Congress of AWC, 12 September. IT 13 September 1947.
122. Resolutions of 3rd Congress of AWC, 14 September. IT 21 September 1947.

in its support of workers' demands and their strike actions. A hostile source commenting on its role concluded "that it was without doubt more faithful to the interests of the workers than the PAWS".[123]

The strength of the AWC in terms of actual numbers is difficult to determine. Its own claims exceeded the twenty thousand figure, which seems to be an exaggeration in so far as duly registered and fully paid-up members were concerned. There is little doubt however that it commanded the support of a much larger number of workers.[124] Its internal democratic organisation, the periodic holding of elections for local branches, and the convening of yearly congresses where issues were openly debated and elections to the highest bodies of the organisation took place, were unparalleled by any other Arab association in the country. It was indeed the first Arab trade union association organised and run on modern Western lines.

An evaluation of the success or failure of the AWC cannot however be separated from the collapse of the Arab social fabric which rapidly followed the partition decision of November 1947. The AWC itself disintegrated, in part at least as a result of the Arab communists' acceptance of partition and the confusion this led to within the leadership of the AWC, not all of whose members concurred with the decision. Yet the main reason remained largely outside its control. The whole structure of Arab society disintegrated as a result of the outbreak of armed hostilities, the shattering of the Arab economy and the large scale migration which took place. The collapse of the AWC was the outcome of a malaise which alone, it could neither cure nor withstand.

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123. Survey of Arab Communists 1946. op. cit. p. 5.
124. A Government report gives the strength of the AWC in the Southern region of Palestine as being 6,820 of which only 3,410 were fee-paying members. Jaffa alone was credited with 5,000 members. See "Report of N. Antoun, assistant inspector of Labour, 1947". ISA File 1440.

The League of Arab Intellectuals (LAI)

a. The Origins and Activity of the League

The origins of the LAI go back to the summer of 1937 when a group of students in association with A. Bandak, a journalist and member of the PCP, met in Bethlehem and decided to set up an Arab students' organisation.[125] The aims of this small group of educated youth centred round a campaign to eradicate illiteracy among the country's Arab inhabitants and to improve the conditions of the Arab village in general.[126] While emphasising that the Arab Students' Society was not "attached" to any political party or association, the influence of the PCP can be discerned in the inclusion among the society's basic principles, of the promotion of the "struggle against reactionaries and confessionalism". Its nationalist political leanings manifested themselves in the insistence that co-ordination between Arab students throughout the Arab countries was necessary "in the service of the principles of Arab unity" and the spread of "correct nationalist spirit" among the students' ranks.[127]

The students were keen to issue their own publication but were unable to do so, and had to content themselves with a monthly supplement to the daily newspaper "Sawt al Shaab".[128] With the growth of the organisation, it was soon decided to change its name to the League of Arab Students[129] and in May 1938 it was able to produce the first issue of its own journal "Al Ghad" (The Morrow). The journal's contributors were predominantly students, although a few teachers did also participate, and it treated a wide variety of subjects. Its tone was both "nationalistic" and "progressive", and it devoted considerable attention to criticisms of the Palestine Government's Department of Education and its staff, whom it

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125. Al Ghad (hereafter referred to as AG) N.4. July 1939. p. 201.
126. Our Basic Aims: Statement of Arab Students' Society. AG N.1. 1 May 1938. pp. 1-2.
127. Ibid. Article 2.
128. Sawt al Shaab (Voice of the People), was a weekly newspaper issued in Bethlehem by Issa Bandak, Mayor of the town and a cousin of A. Bandak.
129. AG N.3 July 1938. p. 1.

characterised as reactionary and hostile to the national aspirations of Arab youth.[130] The journal was suppressed by the Government during the war, but immediately before this enforced closure, the leaders of the League had announced that a decision had been taken to widen the framework of the organisation to include both students and non-students from among the ranks of the educated youth.[131] With the closure of the journal the activities of the Students' League ceased and the principal activists in the organisation graduated to more serious political work in the ranks of the Rays of Hope Society, the PCP and the newly revived Labour movement. However, the decision to transform the League into a broader intellectual association was not put into practice until the closing stages of the war, when the Government's relaxation of the ban on Arab political activity, and the invigorated stimulus of the Arab communists operating as an independent group, led to the revival of the LAI.[132]

Until the publication of the new "Al Ghad" in July 1945, the activity of the LAI was largely concentrated on the organisation of new branches. The general activity of the branches consisted of holding regular meetings open to the public, at which members of the LAI delivered lectures on various political and social topics; some branches started night schools to combat illiteracy, while others organised public meetings which provided a forum for local notables, activists in the labour movement and leaders of the NLL. The League attempted to present itself on a strictly non-sectarian

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130. A statement by the editors of the journal claimed that the Director of the Education Department had advised students and teachers not to join the organisation and to shun its journal. See, A quiet word to the Director of the Department of Education. AG N.10 February 1939. Later, it was claimed that closure of the journal was the work of the Education Department.
131. AG N.4 October 1941. p. 8.
132. Among seven members of the CC/Arab Students' League, named in August 1941, five reappeared later as members of the NLL. Of these, E. Tuma became the acknowledged leader of the NLL; T. Toubi a member of its CC; I. Shaker, the national secretary of the LAI and member of the local committee of the NLL in Jerusalem; A. Bandak, who was termed as "adviser" to the Students' League in 1941 was the chief editor of the new "Al Ghad" when it resumed publication.

basis, and in this aim it was largely successful. Although it publicly associated itself with the NLL as part of the "progressive front struggling for the liberation of Palestine",[133] it was able to attract traditional political leaders to its meetings and even religious figures.[134] The LAI's radical outlook did not blind it to the importance of Islam as a factor in Arab political life. Thus on the occasion of the visit of Sultanov, a Soviet official based in Cairo, to Jerusalem, it organised a social gathering after which Sultanov was accompanied by members of the League on a visit to the Dome of the Rock and the offices of the Moslem Council.[135] In a similar vein, the LAI branch in Haifa organised a public meeting to celebrate the Moslem prophet's birthday, which was addressed by E. Tuma, the leader of the NLL.[136] Yet there was no attempt to hide the political ideology which lay at the basis of the League's thinking. Articles written by its members called on Arab youth to "struggle against reaction in the Arab national movement",[137] and advanced a Marxist interpretation of history, emphasising that "history is not made by heroes but by the masses" and explaining the development of society as passing through fixed stages following the Marxist model, in an "inevitable process" which would lead to socialism.[138]

The rapid growth of the LAI indicates that it fulfilled a growing need among educated Arab youth, who were attracted by its radical nationalism and impressed by the new ideas it was propagating. By the middle of 1946, the League had nine branches encompassing all

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133. Speech of Arafat al Taher (Secretary of Haifa branch of LAI) at LAI meeting. IT 24 December 1944.
134. e.g. A reception held by the LAI in Jerusalem for an ex-Iraqi minister was attended by local dignitaries and staff of the Iraqi consulate. (IT 25 February 1945). At a meeting of LAI in Haifa concerned with problems of the Department of Education, there were among the speakers, a Christian priest and a Moslem shikh. (IT 10 June 1945). In Hebron, the opening of the LAI branch was held under the auspices of Ahmad Hilmi Pasha, a nationally prominent traditional political figure. (AG N.13. January 1946. p. 2.)
135. IT 14 May 1944.
136. IT 4 March 1945.
137. A. al Taher. Youth: break those bonds. IT 14 January 1945.
138. Article by anonymous member of Haifa LAI. IT 25 January 1945.

the main towns in the country.[139] While the national leaders of the League and a good number of those who wrote in its journal were simultaneously members of the NLL,[140] this was not the case with the members of the various local committees and the overwhelming number of rank and file members. A certain number did progress towards membership of the NLL, and in as much as that was the case, the LAI acted as a transmission belt attracting members from among the educated youth to the ranks of the Arab communists. Yet the League remained a heterogeneous association, with the majority of members, although friendly to the political line of the NLL, remaining firmly outside its organisational framework.

The political line of the LAI underwent gradual changes. In its early phase it was concerned with the more general and educational aim of "spreading liberal culture" through the foundation of study circles and cultural publications. It campaigned for the eradication of illiteracy and the "setting-up of a project for the revival of the Arab village", for the establishment of agricultural co-operatives and experimental stations, and for the reduction of taxation and the implementation of compulsory education, pointing out the necessity of "supporting the national (Arab) economy".[141] This activity evolved into increasing involvement in the political aspect of the national conflict in the country. Initial interest focused on activity such as the campaign to "reform" the Education Department, calling on the Government to set up an investigation committee into its affairs,[142]

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139. AG N.19 April 1946. reported a meeting of the CC/LAI in Nablus which was attended by representatives from the following towns: Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa, Nablus, Hebron, Nazareth, Jenin, Bethlehem and Beitjalla. Later branches were opened in Gaza, Acre and Ramallah. A report on the activity of the LAI in 1945 credits it with having 423 members. See Survey of Arab communists, 1946. op. cit. p. 6.

140. The secretariat of the LAI elected in a congress held in Jerusalem in November 1945 was made up of M. Amer, I. Shaker and A. Hashem. M. Amer was a member of the PCP since the mid 1930's and was a member of the CCs of the NLL and the AWC. I. Shaker was a member of the CC of the League of Arab Students in 1941, he later joined the PCP and was on the NLL local committee in Jerusalem; A. Hashem joined the PCP in the late 1930's and was a member of the NLL.

141. AG N.6. September 1945. p. 12.

142. Conference of LAI in Jaffa, 21 October 1945. IT 28 October 1945.

and general demands for the spread of education and the founding of an Arab university in Palestine,[143] the removal of political censorship, and for the spread of "free thought". In some instances, the League's branches took a keen interest in local issues, such as municipal elections, using them to put forward a program of local reforms based on the day-to-day interests of the Arab inhabitants,[144] and to make the more general call for electoral reform and the spread of "representative democracy".[145]

With the exacerbation of the national conflict and the spread of the influence of the "left" among the Arab inhabitants, the LAI adopted an increasingly radical political stance, in closer association with both the NLL and the AWC. As early as March 1946, prominence was given in "Al Ghad" to a visit by a delegation of the LAI to Arab political prisoners in Acre jail,[146] and a few months later, on the occasion of a hunger strike by the prisoners, the LAI sent a memorandum to the High Commissioner calling for their release.[147] The League's attitude towards the Arab national movement closely paralleled that of the NLL in its insistence on the urgency of national unity and the call for the establishment of a "national front" on a representative basis.[148]

Addressing itself to the problem of Palestine's future and the best policy for achieving its independence, the LAI came out against the establishment of the Anglo-US Investigation Committee, which it termed an "imperialist committee" aimed at a solution of the Palestine problem to coincide with the interests of British and American imperialism.[149] It adopted a critical stand towards the

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143. General Congress of LAI in Jerusalem, 21 November 1945. AG N.8 November 1945. p. 24.
144. e.g. Statement of Nablus-LAI branch on Municipal elections. The statement put a program of sixteen points encompassing such tasks as the paving of roads, the establishment of rest homes for the aged, and beautifying the city. See, IT 28 April 1946.
145. Ibid.
146. AG N.16 March 1946. p. 17.
147. Statement of LAI on hunger strike of Arab prisoners in Acre jail. AG N.26 August 1946. p. 24.
148. Editorial. AG N.4 August 1945.
149. Editorial: AG N.12 January 1946. p. 2.

HAC's decision to testify before the Committee[150] and insistently called for its boycott. When the decisions of the Investigation Committee were made known, the League pointed to them as proof of the correctness of its stand and called for the transference of the Palestine problem to the Security Council of the UN.[151] This call was mounted with increasing urgency throughout the activity of the League, and emphasis was added by pointing to the expected assistance from the Soviet Union in the international forum, which was lauded for its past hostility to Zionism, its anti-imperialist tradition, and for its help to movements of national independence.[152] Hostility to the Arab League and its activity on "behalf" of the Palestine Arabs soon became one of the hallmarks of "Al Ghad's" editorials. It was characterised as being under the influence of British imperialism[153] and consequently both unwilling and unable to engage in a struggle against it in Palestine, advising instead the continuation of negotiations with the "imperialist powers".[154]

The League's attitude towards the HAC underwent a gradual change. From proferring advise and insisting on the necessity of widening the Committee to include representatives of the labour movement and the left in Palestine, it became hostile to the HAC's continuing assent for maintaining relations with the British in the hope of finding a satisfactory common solution.[155] This criticism was also applied to the methods and aims of the traditional leadership of the national movement. The LAI, while maintaining its opposition to Jewish immigration and to land sales, and propounding the need to struggle against both, admonished the Arab leaders for refusing to recognise that the main struggle should be directed against the British occupiers of the country. The boycott of the Yishuv and the plans to fight against illegal Jewish

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150. Editorial: AG N.13 January 1946.
151. Statement of LAI. The decisions of the Investigation Commission are a continuation of imperialist policy. IT 12 May 1946.
152. Editorial: AG N.20 May 1946. p. 21.
153. Editorial: AG N.30 August 1946. p. 4. Articles criticising the Arab League appeared in the journal as early as February 1946.
154. Open letter of Al Ghad editorial board to Arab communist parties in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. AG N.23. June 1946. p. 11.
155. Editorial: AG N.35. January 1947. p. 4.

immigration were declared to be diversionary; once the struggle for the evacuation of British troops from the country and the establishment of an independent state was accomplished, the Zionist movement would automatically suffer defeat.[156] The LAI differed with the traditional Arab leadership on another more fundamental issue. It rejected the latter's call for the establishment of an Arab state in Palestine and described this as facilitating the task of those who were working for the partition of the country. It proposed instead, the establishment of an "independent democratic Palestine state" guaranteeing equal rights to all its inhabitants, with the provision of cultural and local autonomy to the Jews already in the country.[157] In contrast to the Arab leaders' insistence that they would not accept Jews who arrived in the country after 1917, the LAI maintained its disagreement with this condition, and declared that citizenship in the future Palestine state should be accorded to all Jews who were already resident in it.

A couple of years after its foundation, the LAI had moved a long way from its original platform and had adopted political positions indistinguishable from those of the NLL, which more openly reflected its association with the latter and the political ideology of its leadership. In a statement, redefining the League's aims, the association described itself as composed of young intellectuals "eager to shoulder their national and social responsibilities" and aiming at the diffusion of "correct national consciousness and democratic principles".[158] The means to accomplish this were declared to lie in "assimilating the methods of western civilisation and the spirit of the age", exactly what the NLL itself had set out to accomplish.

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156. Editorial: AG N.18. April 1946. p. 4.
157. Editorial: AG N.43. May 1947. p. 24.
158. Statement of LAI in Nazareth. IT 30 December 1946.

b. The Journal "Al Ghad"

The NLL possessed two publications, "Al Ittihad", a newspaper dealing with current political events and labour affairs[159] and "Al Ghad"[160] which served as the theoretical organ of the movement despite its publication by the LAI, which remained outwardly a separate and an independent body. "Al Ghad" fulfiled two functions. Firstly, it served to attract Arab educated youth and to provide them with a forum for debating their views and interests. This was accomplished by covering a wide range of subjects closely related to the everyday life and interests of radical nationalist youth, encompassing social problems, education, student affairs, conditions of the peasants, Arab culture and tradition, world literature, the Arab national economy, and not least by painting an acute picture of the economic deprivation and misery of the overwhelming majority of the Arab inhabitants of the country. Secondly, it attempted to introduce Marxist thought and to popularise it by giving simplified accounts of its main ideological components, not infrequently without explicitly specifying the Marxist origins of the theories it was putting forward. This was by no means confined to the political realm, but encompassed literature, history and even art. Another closely related aim was the introduction of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries to Arab readers in a sympathetic vein. This was done mainly through translations from Soviet or communist publications, describing in glowing terms the conditions of life under communism, in addition to popularising Soviet views on international events. "Al Ghad" also took it upon itself to defend Soviet interpretations of world problems, and to portray the Soviets

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159. "Al Ittihad" was first issued in May 1944 and was directed mainly at the labour movement. It later widened its interests, and the labour movement came to occupy an increasingly smaller part of its attention.

160. Subtitled "Message of enlightened nationalism and progressive culture", it was issued between July 1945 and May 1947; 43 issues were published. Its first editor A. Bandak was a veteran communist and member of NLL. He was replaced by M. Amer, also a veteran communist and one of the leaders of the NLL and the AWC, with the publication of the 4th issue in August 1945. The other two names which appeared as part of the editorial board, A. G. Khatib and I. Shaker were both former members of the PCP and current members of the NLL.

as playing a most important role as the champions of national independence movements throughout the world.

The majority of the writers on political topics in the journal were members of the Arab communist movement in Palestine.[161] A number of articles were penned by Arab communists from outside Palestine, either writing directly for "Al Ghad", or their articles were reproduced from Arab communist publications appearing in Egypt, Iraq and Lebanon.[162] These were supplemented by the translation of articles by various Western communists, mainly British, and by reviews of books by British communist authors, which were available in Arabic translations.[163] To a large extent the journal was successful in gaining the participation of non-communist writers. This was largely confined, however, to non-political subjects, mostly poetry, literature and cultural studies.[164] A number of these contributors were nationally renowned and undoubtedly contributed to the journal's standing by their willingness to write for it.[165] Yet it is interesting to note, in contrast to this, that many of the articles appeared under pseudonyms, a clear indication of the sizeable number of authors who, despite being friendly to the LAI

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161. An examination of the various issues of the journal shows that M. Amer was the main contributor on matters of Marxist theory. In addition to frequently writing the editorials, nearly every issue of Al Ghad contains one or more articles by him. Another important contributor on theoretical problems, was M. Fiad a young engineer. Frequent contributors were F. Nassar, E. Tuma, E. Habibi, R. Shaheen, all leaders of the NLL.

162. e.g. Articles by K. Bakdash, leader of the Syrian CP; Raif Khoury and Farajallah al Hilou, prominent Lebanese communists; Kassem Hassan, Nazim Zahawi, Hussein Jamil, Iraqi communists and fellow travellers; and numerous articles reproduced from "Al Fajr al Jaddid" and "Um Durman", Egyptian communist journals.

163. e.g. authors such as H. Politt, E. Burns, J. Strachey, I. Rennap.

164. One notable exception was Dr. K. Budeiri, who was already closely identified with the PCP as far back as the mid-thirties and who was for a short period in 1946, a member of the HAC. His contributions, which were numerous, dealt exclusively with political matters, and were indistinguishable from the political viewpoint of the NLL.

165. e.g. Kadri Toukan, a member of one of the leading families in Nablus, a reputed educationalist and writer on scientific topics, and Abu Salma (Abdul Karim al Karmi) Palestine's foremost Arab poet.

were reluctant to have their names publicly associated with an avowedly leftist publication. In the light of this, an analysis of contributions to the journal reveals that articles by members of the NLL and its affiliated bodies, by Arab communists, and articles translated from the international communist press were most numerous. The second largest number of contributions came from non-communist Arab writers and were almost entirely devoted to poetry, short stories, and studies dealing with Arab literature and the wider aspects of Moslem cultural heritage and tradition.

It is possible to discern a number of themes in "Al Ghad", an examination of which provides a more coherent picture of the ideology which the Arab communists were trying to impart to their Arab readers. These themes can be grouped under six major headings: introduction to Marxist theory, the Palestine problem and the role of the Arab national movement and the Arab League, literature studies and culture and tradition, Zionism and the Jewish problem, propaganda for the Soviet Union, and social problems.

Introduction to Marxist Theory

"Al Ghad" published a series of studies introducing its readers to history, philosophy, politics and socialist theory from a Marxist perspective. Most of these studies were written by local Arab communists.[166]

M. Amer, editor of the journal and the foremost Marxist theoretician among the Arab communists, wrote a series of articles on philosophy explaining "idealism" and "materialism", and the workings of the rules of logic and dialectics and relating them to Marx's emphasis on man's social and economic situation as determining his consciousness.[167]

Another series of articles outlined a "scientific" interpretation

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166. It also provided a list of communist texts available in Arabic. See, The Marxist Library, AG N.26. Of 43 books included, 26 were translations while the remainder were by non-Palestinian Arab authors.

167. Amer wrote numerous articles on this topic, e.g. Modern Science and Modern logic: Dialectics, AG N.9.; Idealist and Materialist Philosophy AG N.6.

of history and described man's evolution from a state of primitive communism to capitalism and the inevitable realisation of socialism.[168] The history of the world as a continuous class struggle was described from the civilisations of Athens and Pharonic Egypt right through to the outbreak of the Russian Revolution and the war of intervention. Marxism was accounted for as the direct outcome of the advent of industrial society and it was credited with "explaining the secrets of capitalist exploitation of the working class".

The international capitalist order was described as suffering from three main contradictions: the class struggle within industrial societies, the national struggle of the colonial peoples, and the struggle between the ruling classes of the various capitalist countries. A series of articles sought to illustrate this by sketching the history of Europe from the outbreak of "the first international capitalist war to redivide the world" to the establishment of a new world order at the termination of World War Two.[169]

Addressing itself to problems of socialist theory it reproduced the works of socialists such as Strachey and Cole[170] and devoted considerable space to an examination of the ideas of early socialists such as R. Owen, Babeuf and the Luddites. The life and works of Marx were treated at considerable length and his main ideas were presented in a simplified form. Marx the political activist was not ignored; his role in the First International was emphasised as providing an example of the unity of theory and practice which was demanded by his doctrine.[171]

Only a couple of articles which appeared in "Al Ghad" attempted to link the journal's advocacy of socialist principles with the call for a struggle to establish socialism in Palestine. This can best be understood in the context of the Arab communists' adherence to a "theory of stages" whereby the Arab countries were seen to be passing through the stage of "national liberation". Only after this was concluded would it be possible to speak of socialism.

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168. Historical Events. AG Nos. 7,8,9,10,11.
169. Modern War and Peace. AG Nos. 5,6,7,8.
170. Why You Should Be a Socialist. AG Nos. 7,8,10,11.
171. Socialism: Utopian and Scientific. AG Nos. 16,17,21,43.

Meanwhile, the duty of Arab workers and peasants was "to join the bourgeois class and even the capitalists against the foreign imperialists".[172] The triumph of socialism worldwide was not to come through revolution, but through the "gradual wresting of economic powers from the big capitalists".[173] To this end, "Al Ghad" pointed to the necessity of implementing various nationalisation measures in the industrial countries as a step towards transforming their economies. As far as Palestine was concerned, Marxism entailed the implementation of social reforms, the spread of education, the termination of poverty, unemployment, ignorance and disease and not, as the enemies of communism maintained, the arousal of anarchy and disorder.[174]

The Arab National Movement and the Palestine Problem

In its first issue, "Al Ghad" declared its adherence to a "constructive nationalism" which entailed a struggle for "the happiness of peoples on the basis of universal human progress".[175] To join the "caravan of progress" it was however necessary to realise Palestine's political independence. Here "Al Ghad" came into conflict with the traditional Arab leadership of whom it had always been critical. It denied the claim of the HAC to represent the Arab inhabitants and called for the establishment of a national front.[176] It criticised the Arab leaders for their preoccupation with schemes to combat Zionism and for forgetting the main obstacle to Palestine's independence: the existence of the Mandate itself.[177] "Al Ghad" put forward proposals for a democratically elected national congress which would assume the leadership of the independence struggle[178] and rejected the HAC as "the appointee of the Arab League".[179] The Arab League itself was criticised for its continued

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172. Modern War and Peace. AG N.5. p. 15.
173. World Peace. AG N.8. p. 10.
174. The Marxist Library. AG N.26. p. 17.
175. Enlightened Nationalism and Liberal Culture. AG N.1. p. 2.
176. We Will Hold you to account for your Deeds. AG N.15.
177. Our Political problems and our plans. AG N.5. p. 23.
178. Complicated solutions which suit imperialist aims. AG N.25.
179. A big national congress to map the path. AG N.31. p. 4.

faith in negotiations with the British, and its leaders were characterised as "agents of British imperialism".[180]

In rejecting all forms of negotiation with Britain, "Al Ghad" clamoured for transferring the Palestine problem to the international arena, in the belief that the Arabs struggle for independence was not an isolated case but similar to those waged in India, Indo-China, and Indonesia.[181] It thus called for taking the problem to the UN and when the General Assembly decided on the establishment of UNSCOP, much to the anger of the Arab inhabitants of Palestine, "Al Ghad" blamed the "racist and reactionary" speeches of the HAC delegate for alienating international public opinion.[182] Nevertheless, it supported the establishment of the Committee.

"Al Ghad" rejected the slogan of an Arab Palestine and called for the establishment of a democratic state. It accused the Arab leaders of unleashing a campaign of terror which could only lead to the partitioning of the country,[183] and declared that the only way to keep Palestine united, lay through showing that the Arabs were willing and ready to live with the Jews in peace. It warned, prophetically, that refusal would lead not only to partition, but also to the establishment of a Jewish state on an area "much larger than is presently occupied by the Jews", while the remaining Arab territory "would be annexed by a neighbouring state".[184]

Socialist Realism in Literature

Literary studies, poems and short stories occupied a major share of "Al Ghad's" pages. The poetry published was of a "nationalist progressive" variety, and the journal also provided a forum for famous and well-known Arab poets.[185] In addition it opened its pages to the young and the unknown, attracting a large readership

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180. This referred to Nuri al Said and Abdullah. AG Nos. 14 and 16.
181. Our National Struggle and the World. AG N.33.
182. Our position in the coming important phase. AG N.43. p. 4.
183. For maintaining the peace in Palestine. AG N.7.
184. Our position in the coming....loc. cit.
185. e.g. Abu Shabka (AG N.7.); Al Safi al Najafi (AG N.31). Abu Salma, Palestine's foremost Arab poet frequently published in Al Ghad.

as a result. Fiction was mostly by Arab or Soviet authors, although there was a fair number of internationally famous names.[186] Russian stories were mostly propaganda pieces extolling the Soviet people and their sacrifices in "the great patriotic war".[187] The Arabic stories were statements of protest about poverty and oppression and their predominant feature was their "nationalist humanistic" outlook.[188]

In its first issue, "Al Ghad" defined the poet's role as being that of "the prophet of tortured humanity"[189] and condemned those poets who secluded themselves in ivory towers. It called on Arab poets "to immerse themselves in life" and to spread "hope, national pride, past glory...to comfort the weak and be a sword in the face of the strong and the oppressor". In another article, literature was defined as "a material force for change"[190] and as performing a manifestly ideological role stressing "the humanity of man, his love of freedom and truth, hate of slavery and injustice".[191] In a series of studies dealing with the work of several famous Arab poets[192] one feature of their poetry which was deliberately enlarged upon and emphasised was the nationalist strain. This was used as an illustration of the role of poetry in the struggle for independence and social justice.

A series of articles by Amer introduced "socialist realism" to "Al Ghad's" readers, combined with an outline of materialist philosophy relating to questions of being and consciousness and the evolution of human society, thought and literature.[193] These articles incorporated an exposition of the "dialectical materialist" interpretation of history, politics and science. While it is not

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186. Tolstoy (AG N.10), Goldsmith (AG N.9), Maupassant (AG N.20).
187. e.g. Batka (AG N.30), The Old Man (AG N.33.)
188. e.g. Abu Mahmoud (AG N.18).
189. The Poet's didactic mission. AG N.1. p. 9.
190. The Literature of Life. AG N.11.
191. Books are of two sorts. AG N.4. p. 11.
192. Toukan (A G N.5), Shawki (AG N.8), Al Jawahiri (AG N.23), Al Rasafi (AG N.19).
193. e.g. Literature and Class (AG Nos. 12 and 13), Literature between subjectivism and objectivity (AG N.16), Literature between content and style (AG Nos. 30 and 33), The origins of Literature (AG N.4.).

possible to claim that Amer himself contributed anything original, the service he performed was undoubtedly of a pioneering nature. For the Arabic reading public, faced with a near total absence of Arabic translations of Marxist texts, this was its first introduction to Marxist ideas. Moreover, Amer's articles were not presented in an abstract form, but were replete with illustrations from past and contemporary Arabic literature, relating to the cultural background of the readers, and serving to remind them that these self-same ideas were present, although in a diluted form, in the Arabs' own cultural heritage.

Zionism and the Jewish Inhabitants

"Al Ghad" set itself the task of acquainting its readers with the developments of Jewish history from the time of the dispersion until the rise of the Zionist movement.[194] It presented a simplified Marxist account, stressing that the Jews had performed an "economically necessary" role during the change from slavery to feudalism and later with the arrival of the new bourgeois order.[195] Persecution and the rise of anti-semitism, with the concomitant mass movement of Jews across Europe, were disposed of with similar economic explanations. The rise of Zionism was traced through the ideas of thinkers such as Herzl, Pinsker, and Borochov, and the Zionist movement was condemned as a "capitalist movement", and its identity of interests with British imperialism was continuously stressed. The numerous waves of Jewish immigration into Palestine were explained as not wholly the result of Zionist endeavours, but also as being a reaction to persecution in Europe which extended from Tsarist times to the rise of the Nazis.

"Al Ghad's" articles maintained a careful distinction between Zionism and the Jewish inhabitants in Palestine. While the former were seen to present a threat to the Arab people, the interests of the Jewish inhabitants did not conflict with those of the Arabs.[196]

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194. The Jews in Palestine: From the Destruction of the Temple to the Jewish State (1). AG N.15.
195. The Jews in Palestine: (2). AG N.18.
196. Judaism and Zionism: What is the viewpoint of Arab Nationalism? AG N.6.

They were seen to be natural allies in the struggle to establish "a just economic order" which itself would result in the destruction of Zionism. Rejecting those "bourgeois nationalists" who called for the expulsion of the Jews from Palestine, "Al Ghad" pointed to the past history of Arab tolerance. It called on the Arab national movement to show the Jews that the Arabs did not bear them any racial emnity, by striving for the establishment of a democratic regime which would provide the framework for "peace and co-operation between the two peoples".[197] To this end, "Al Ghad" put forward its own proposals for the establishment of a democratic Palestine state guaranteeing the Jewish inhabitants "complete cultural and administrative autonomy".[198]

Propaganda for the Soviet Union

Articles relating to the Soviet Union were mostly direct translations from Soviet journals, or the publications of other Communist Parties. They were of two kinds, either descriptive, inevitably laudatory, of life in the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries,[199] or expositions of the Soviet view of international affairs with emphasis on news of the independence movements in the colonies.[200] However, reports on the Soviet view of the Palestine problem itself were completely absent from "Al Ghad's" pages.

Islamic Tradition

Little attention was paid to Islam on the pages of "Al Ghad" but the absence of any serious examination of its role in Arab society should not imply that it was viewed in a hostile manner. The few

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197. Editorial. AG N.2.
198. Our Stand in the Important Situation we are now facing. AG N.43. p. 24.
199. e.g. No Conflicting Classes, No Exploitation, No Unemployment in the USSR. AG N.15.; The Life of Tito. AG N.26.; Marriage and Motherhood in the USSR. AG N.21.; Memoirs of Travel in the USSR. AG N.23.
200. These were mostly reproductions of Tass Agency reports.

articles which did treat this subject show the journal as being very careful to present itself as part of the continuous cultural tradition of Islam. A regular feature in every issue was devoted to short anecdotes about the wisdom, bravery and generosity of the early Moslems. In addition, a lukewarm attempt was made to focus on a number of historical figures and show the existence of an early tradition of socialism and social justice in Islam[201] and of struggle against foreign oppression and for national independence.[202] The Prophet Mohammad was portrayed as a man coming from the ranks of the poor and the dispossessed, his life as being a continuous struggle and rebellion against injustice and oppression, and whose consuming activity was devoted to organising and leading the oppressed against the rich and the privileged.[203] Its attempts to appeal to religious sentiments went as far as to use quotations from the Koran to emphasise the necessity of intensifying the struggle for Palestine's independence.[204]

Despite the fact that religious appeal was not a regular feature of "Al Ghad's" ideological armoury, the few and far between articles which did deal with the subject show an interesting development. The Arab communists, in contrast to the PCP, had moved a step further towards coming to terms with the prevailing religious beliefs which constituted a large and important part of the Arab national and cultural heritage. While the PCP had maintained a stance of neutrality on the subject and refrained from committing any act which might injure the religious sensibilities of the Arab inhabitants, the NIL had moved to a position of re-affirming Moslem tradition as a positive component of the national movement and attempted to find justification for its own ideology in Islamic religious principles.

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201. The Companion of the Prophet Abu Zhur and the spirit of Socialism. AG N.6.
202. Jamal al Din al Afghani. AG N. 43.
203. The Holy Anniversary of the Prophet's birthday. AG N. 36.
204. Answers from the Holy Koran to the Decisions of the Anglo-US Investigation Committee. AG N. 20.

Social Problems

In an attempt to appeal to the widest possible readership, "Al Ghad" treated an extensive variety of topics.[205] A regular feature dealt with student affairs, discussing their problems at universities abroad and calling for an increase in the number of schools especially in rural areas and for an improvement in the quality of both teachers and curriculi. Linked to this was the demand for increasing the provisions for girls' schooling.[206] Medical conditions in the country were declared to be unsatisfactory especially in the countryside where there was an absence of adequate medical facilities.[207] In the economic sphere, "Al Ghad" criticised Arabs who embarked on joint ventures with British concerns, as being accessories to the establishment of "British economic imperialism".[208]

The problem of women's place in society and their struggle for equality was bravely tackled by the journal. Arab men were held responsible for the subjugation of women and for preventing them from performing a socially useful role.[209] Early marriage was decried as a "commercial undertaking" preventing women from pursuing their education, and economic independence through employment was pointed to as the only path for women's emancipation.[210] A series of articles dealt with the social and economic conditions of the Arab village.[211] "Al Ghad" outlined the unfavourable situation of the peasant and apportioned most of the blame for his poverty and the backwardness of the villages to the deliberate policies of the Government which, while collecting large taxes, gave little or no services in return.[212]

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205. Including such topics as, The Splitting of the Atom (AG N.4.) and, Arab Architecture Between Two Styles (AG N.21).
206. The People of Palestine insist on educating their daughters. AG N.23.
207. The Health Situation in the Villages. AG N.17.
208. Our National Economy and the Interests of the People. AG N.1.
209. To the Women of my Sex. AG N.19.
210. Subjectivism and Objectivity in Judgment. AG N.6.
211. Social and Economic Life in Arab Villages. AG Nos. 20, 30, 31.
212. The Government is Exhausting the Peasant. AG N.15.

It is perhaps more accurate to designate "Al Ghad" as reformist rather than revolutionary in its outlook, and anti-imperialist rather than communist in its content. In the main, its articles had an educational and a literary appeal, and its tone was decidedly emotional. Its major shortcoming lay in the absence of any attempt to apply Marxist analysis to the current political situation in Palestine or to the internal structures of Arab society. It satisfied itself with merely translating Marxist ideas into the Arabic language, and shied away from translating them into the Arab social and political context. Thus, a number of important topics such as the class nature of Arab society, the role of religion, and the national problem, were absent from its pages. Others, such as the Jewish problem and the task of explaining to the Arabs the necessity of Arab - Jewish co-operation, and the composition of the traditional Arab leadership and the reasons for its policies, were not treated in sufficient depth. Even those studies introducing history and philosophy from a Marxist perspective appear, in retrospect, to suffer from an exaggerated mechanical presentation of Marxist fundamentals. They were devoted to tracing the stages of development of European society, but completely ignored the question of whether the history of non-European societies had developed on similar or different lines.

All this however, does not detract from the fact that "Al Ghad" played a pioneering role in introducing Marxism to the Arabic reading public, and that this was done in a highly literate and comprehensible fashion. There is no doubt that the wide range of topics covered by the journal contributed to the securing of a large readership among the Arab educated public.[213] The journal brought to its readers new ideas with which they had had no previous acquaintance beyond vague notions about the "anarchy", the "atheism",

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213. At least initially, Al Ghad's attraction lay in its literary content. A competition held in its seventh month of publication invited articles on one of three topics: a short story, a study of a social problem, and a political essay based on a quote from a communist leader, on the Arab League and western military blocs (AG N.12). Of the 60 entries received, the journal reported that the majority were stories, and "only a few had dealt with the other two topics". (AG N.16.)

and the "immorality" of communists, which was the staple diet of the Arab nationalist press. To this extent "Al Ghad" performed successfully in not only introducing communist ideology, but also in removing to some degree, the stigma attached to communists and communism. The success of the communist movement among the Arabs in the forties, in contrast to its relative failure during the thirties, can be traced both to its acquired "nationalism" and to its newfound ability to acquaint the Arabs with its ideology, largely exhibited and fulfilled by "Al Ghad".

The National Liberation League

a. Political Ideology

The National Charter of the NLL did not give any indication of the communist orientation of the new party. The political, social and economic aims which were set out in detail were, broadly speaking, the common property of all the Arab political parties. Evacuation of British troops and Palestine's independence headed the list, although the NLL unlike other Arab political groups, did not call for the establishment of an "Arab Palestine state", but raised the slogan of a "democratic government guaranteeing the rights of all inhabitants without distinction".[214] There followed calls for resisting Zionist immigration, land transfers, and the establishment of a Jewish state[215] and demands for co-operation with the Arab peoples in the neighbouring states[216] and for the preservation of democratic and individual liberties.[217] The economic aims of the party stipulated the importance of strengthening "national industry, agriculture and commerce",[218] a fair distribution of taxes,[219] raising the economic and social standard of the Arab workers and peasants, and reforming the Arab village.[220] The social aims

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214. The National Charter (n.p.n.d.) Political Aims: Article 1. p. 3.
215. Ibid. article 2.
216. Ibid. article 3.
217. Ibid. article 5.
218. Ibid. Economic Aims: article 8. pp. 4-5.
219. Ibid. article 9.
220. Ibid. articles 6 and 7.

emphasised the "preservation of Arab cultural tradition" and the raising of the standard of Arab women and "caring for the health of the Arab mother and her child".[221]

The Charter did include three articles which differentiated the NLL from the rest of the national movement. The first declared the existence of a "distinction between Zionism and the Jewish inhabitants",[222] the second called for "co-operation with all colonial peoples and those struggling against imperialism",[223] while the third declared that "the party is built on the basis of democratic centralism".[224] It is interesting that the NLL's charter included an article specifically stating that its membership was "open to every Arab citizen",[225] a stipulation which, by excluding Jews from its ranks, automatically deprived it of any claim to constitute a territorial communist party. By upholding the Leninist principle of party organisation however, the link with the past was tenuously retained.

The NLL's own self-image was variously expressed as "the conscious vanguard of the national movement"[226] and as "the organisation of the Arab working class and progressive forces".[227] It differentiated itself from the traditional Arab parties by its possession of a definite "social program which cannot be separated from the struggle for independence"[228] and its defence of the economic and social interests of workers and peasants. Its attempts to "introduce new popular forces in the independence struggle"[229] also set it apart from the other parties, as did its perception of the struggle in Palestine as being part of the chain of the "international liberation movement in the colonies and the working class in Europe", and its efforts to align the Arab national movement

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221. The National Charter (n.p.n.d.) Social Aims: articles 14 & 15 pp.5-6
222. Ibid. Political Aims: article 2. p. 3.
223. Ibid. article 4.
224. Ibid. Internal Organisation. article 4. p. 6.
225. Ibid. article 2.
226. Statement of Politbureau/NLL: Answer to Jamal Husseini, 8 June 1946. IT 16 June 1946.
227. Statement of E. Tuma to foreign journalists, Jerusalem 5 June 1947. IT 13 July 1947.
228. IT 10 February 1946.
229. Statement of E. Tuma to journalists. loc. cit.

with the "forces of freedom in the world", at the head of which stood "the Soviet Union and the new democracies".[230]

Following the orthodox communist theory of "stages of development" the NLL's view was that the prevalent stage of the struggle in Palestine was that of "national liberation", which could "only be achieved through national unity".[231] Building socialism, it was declared was "not the problem of today but that of tomorrow" after independence had been won, and the national economic structure established, and it depended on the existence of "favourable international conditions".[232] Characterising Palestinian society as one where "the predominant values are those of feudalism and Hamedian authoritarianism",[233] the NLL called for the realisation of "bourgeois democracy" and addressed itself to the traditional Arab leadership to this effect.

The NLL's perception of the struggle in Palestine led it to the conclusion that the realisation of independence was in the interests of all classes of Palestinian society, "the industrialist, the merchant, the worker, the peasant, and the intellectual".[234] It perceived a contradiction between the continued existence of the Mandate and the interests of all the constituent layers of Arab society including both landowners and the budding commercial and industrial bourgeoisie who, due to the unique feature of the existence of a more developed Jewish capitalist sector, were not taken into partnership by British capitalism. Hence the NLL's program was based on a belief in the feasibility of co-operation with the Arab political parties, as representatives of the Arab bourgeoisie and landed interests, in pursuit of the common aim of independence.[235] Yet it noted that, despite the fact that the Arab working class appreciated the need for national unity and was ready to support the Arab economy and forego any activity which might "embarrass the Arab employers at this stage in the national liberation struggle"[236] the other Arab classes did

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230. Statement of E. Tuma to journalists. loc. cit.
231. IT 8 October 1944.
232. IT 5 November 1944.
233. IT 9 February 1947.
234. NLL in Palestine (Internal Bulletin) N.3. 22 February 1944. This bulletin first appeared 1st February 1944, and stopped with publication of "Al Ittihad".
235. IT 2 December 1945.
236. IT 22 October 1944.

not fully appreciate the need for unity.[237] It regarded it its duty to press home the importance of such national unity and to "draw the other classes into the direct struggle against British imperialism".[238]

The NLL's view of the traditional leadership of the Arab national movement remained ambiguous. On the one hand, it condemned their past record which had led to the continuous failure of the Arab struggle for independence, and attributed this to the "opportunistic class nature" of the leadership.[239] This was best characterised by their policy of regarding Britain's enemies as the allies of the Arab national movement, and had resulted in their support for the Nazis during the war, whereas the NLL had consistently called for alliance with "freedom loving peoples" only. With the increasing opposition of a section of the Zionist movement to Britain, the same Arab leaders who had in the past put their faith in Germany were now seen to be transferring their allegiance in an attempt to reach an accommodation with British policy, supposedly at the expense of the Zionists. Moreover, the traditional leadership subordinated all social and economic demands to the independence question, declaring the realisation of such tasks to be of secondary importance,[240] a view vehemently rejected by the NLL. Despite this however, the NLL saw the Arab parties as retaining a "revolutionary" nature in so far as they struggled for freedom and independence. Their weakness was believed to lie in the "hesitancy of the leadership" and herein lay the NLL's self-appointed task to make "positive criticism...urging a transformation of their outlook".[241]

The NLL continued to adhere to the policy of the pre-split commmunist movement, of support for the Allied cause in the war against the Nazis stressing that there was a fundamental difference between the two which should be recognised by the Arab national movement.[242] The interests of the Arabs were seen to lie on the side of the Allies,

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237. IT 8 October 1944.
238. IT 2 December 1945.
239. IT 19 May 1946.
240. IT 10 February 1946.
241. Ibid.
242. IT 23 July 1944.

whose victory over Nazism was regarded as "a victory for us...for the principle of self-determination".[243] The war was characterised as being fought for the cause of "real democracy",[244] for the creation of a "free world",[245] and was seen to usher in an "unprecedented revolutionary situation" heralding the "end of imperialism".[246] The NLL saw the Atlantic Charter as opening a new stage of development in the international scene; the war had created a new fact: that of the "international recognition of the rights of people to self-determination".[247] The struggle of the Arabs for independence was portrayed as being part of this "international struggle for freedom and against imperialism".[248]

In the light of the Atlantic Charter and the declarations of the Tehran and Moscow conferences, the NLL held that the task of the Arab national movement, whose aims were "in the spirit of the Charter", was to make use of this "stage of the victory of the peoples over Nazism".[249] The UN Charter's aim of "helping mandated territories to proceed along the path of self-rule and independence"[250] was to be siezed upon by the Arabs whose struggle for national independence and freedom was similar to that of several other colonial peoples.[251] It saw in the creation of the UN, and the presence there of the Soviet Bloc, an important international forum which could be relied upon to implement a solution favourable to Arab aspirations. This came increasingly to occupy a central place in the NLL's calculations; initially its use was urged on the grounds that it was an international forum where British policy could be exposed.[252] By the close of the Mandate however, recourse to the UN had become a

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243. IT 13 August 1944.
244. IT 20 August 1944.
245. IT 28 May 1944.
246. IT 4 February 1946.
247. NLL in Palestine N.9. 5 April 1944.
248. NLL in Palestine N.10. 21 April 1944.
249. IT 24 September 1944.
250. The Palestine Knot and the Way to its Solution (Memo submitted by NLL to Prime Minister Atlee, 10 October 1945, and issued as an Arabic pamphlet). p. 11.
251. Ibid. p. 5.
252. Statement on the Anniversary of the Imperialist Balfour Declaration. Leaflet of CC/NLL. 2 November 1945.

panacea replacing any thought of internal preparation for a forthcoming struggle between the Arabs and the Zionist movement, in the event of which it was hoped, Soviet support for the Arab cause at the UN would prove sufficient to tip the scales in their favour.[253]

The NLL clashed with the traditional leadership of the Arab national movement on the issue of democracy within the national movement, and on the question of aligning the Arab movement with the anti-imperialist struggle and support for the Soviet Union. The most fundamental issue however, concerned the Jewish inhabitants of Palestine, their future status, and the nature of the forthcoming independent state. The NLL regarded the problem of Zionism as inseparable from Britain's attempts to maintain its presence in Palestine. The Balfour Declaration itself was portrayed as an attempt to create "a little Jewish Ulster"[254] and to complicate the Arabs' struggle for independence. British policy throughout the years of the Mandate was characterised as having favoured the Yishuv[255] and established a "privileged Jewish community"[256] with the aim of creating a permanent division between Arabs and Jews. The change in British policy, which was recognised as having taken place towards the end of the war, was seen to be based on the need for Arab support in building an anti-Soviet bloc in the Middle East, the important strategic location of the Arab countries, and British dependence on Arab oil supplies. It was merely a "change of tactic". British policy continued to be regarded as striving to maintain its position in Palestine by appearing to satisfy both Arabs and Jews, and partition was siezed upon as proof of Britain's manoeuvres to maintain its hold over the country.[257]

Recognising that the Zionist movement enjoyed the support of the overwhelming majority of the Jewish inhabitants, the NLL nevertheless maintained that this support was "misguided" and likened it to the support of the Germans for the Nazis in the pre-war period.[258]

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253. The leaders of the NLL were impressed by Soviet support for the cause of Syrian and Lebanese independence in the Security Council and hoped for a repeat performance. Interview with E. Tuma, Haifa, 4 April 1974.
254. Palestine's Road to Freedom (Memo submitted by NLL to the UN, August 1947 and issued as an Arabic pamphlet). p. 6.
255. Ibid. pp. 55-56.
256. Speech of E. Tuma at London Congress of the Communist Parties of the British Empire, in, We Speak of Freedom, op. cit. p. 71.
257. IT 19 May 1946.
258. IT 14 July 1946. See also Speech of Tuma at London Congress. op. cit. p. 69.

Zionism was perceived to be a "diversionary attempt to withdraw the Jewish masses from the revolutionary struggle in the world".[259] Likewise, the proposed Jewish state was characterised as "a base for US and British imperialism against the independence struggle of the Arabs"[260] with the Jewish inhabitants manipulated as "tools to strike the national liberation movement of the Arab people and to drench the area in a sea of racial conflict".[261] The Zionist movement was held to be unashamedly reactionary in so far as it did not struggle for the achievement of self-determination for the country's inhabitants, and of thus being opposed to the spirit of the Atlantic Charter.[262] Moreover, its policies were "racialist and extremist" in that they ran counter to the Arabs' "just national struggle for self-determination".[263] The establishment of a Jewish state would only "provide fuel for anti-semitism and reaction in Europe"[264] and lead to increased enmity against the Jews, not only in Palestine but also in the neighbouring Arab state.[265]

The roots of Zionism were seen to lie in the persecution undergone by Jews in Europe and in the existence of regimes which had openly practised racial discrimination against their Jewish inhabitants. The NLL, in conformity with communist orthodoxy, held to the view that anti-semitism was a manifestation of a problem of a specific society which could not be solved by emigration and the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. It regarded the solution as lying in the institution of democratic regimes.[266] The majority of the Jews in Palestine were seen to have arrived in the country "to escape the Nazi terror",[267] and the victory of the Allies in the war, which supposedly had "put an end to racial discrimination and the oppression

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259. IT 14 July 1946. See also Speech of Tuma at London Congress. op. cit. p. 70.
260. Statement of E. Tuma to journalists. loc. cit.
261. National Statement of NLL Congress, 13 June 1947. IT 22 June 1947.
262. Statement of CC/NLL: To the struggling Arab people, 8 November 1944. IT 15 November 1944. See also IT 28 May 1944.
263. The Palestine Knot. op. cit. pp. 15-16.
264. Palestine's Road to Freedom. op. cit. p. 69.
265. IT 14 July 1946.
266. Palestine's Road to Freedom. op. cit. p. 73.
267. IT 27 May and 18 March 1945.

of peoples",[268] was regarded as having signalled "the end of Zionism". It was held to be inconceivable that Zionism could flourish in a democratic society, and already in 1945 it was being claimed that "immigration has now stopped" and that "many Jews are now returning to their countries of origin".[269]

The NLL held that there existed a clear-cut class division within the Jewish community, and that the Jewish workers and peasants were "forced to support Zionism" only as a result of the "negative policy" of the Arab national movement.[270] The traditional Arab leadership was seen to have "never been able to understand Zionism" and to have never attempted to separate the non-Zionist Jews from Zionism by addressing the Jewish inhabitants directly. The NLL urged the national leadership to explain to the Jews that their future lay in "supporting the national struggle for independence",[271] that the Arabs were not engaged in a "racial struggle" against them,[272] and that Zionism was the barrier to understanding and co-operation between the two peoples. It was the duty of the Arab national movement to guarantee the democratic rights of the Jewish inhabitants so as to "isolate the Jews from imperialism and Zionism", and "to win them over to our liberation struggle".[273] The NLL, recognising that conflict would lead to partition, held firmly to the necessity of distinguishing between the "aggressive Zionist movement" and the mass of the Jewish inhabitants in the country, whose interests were seen to be firmly linked to those of the Arab people in establishing a democratic order".[274] Realising that "the independent democratic state is only possible on the basis of Arab-Jewish co-operation",[275] and that Zionism could only be defeated if the Arab national movement was successful in winning the majority of the Jewish inhabitants to its side,[276] the

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268. The Palestine Knot, op. cit. p. 21.
269. IT 20 May and 3 June 1945.
270. IT 1 October 1944.
271. IT 29 July 1945.
272. IT 7 April 1946.
273. Statement of CC/NLL to the Arab parties on national unity. IT 11 March 1945.
274. IT 21 May 1944.
275. IT 7 April 1946.
276. IT 18 March 1945.

NLL firmly held that "no solution which ignores the Jewish inhabitants can succeed".[277] It increasingly directed its criticisms at the traditional Arab leadership for "ignoring the existence of the Jewish inhabitants" and for refusing to grant them equal democratic rights as full citizens of the proposed independent state.[278] To the end, the NLL maintained that the main issue was the continuation of the British Mandate and Palestine's independence and that no solution was possible as long as the Mandate continued to exist.[279] To this effect the Arab national movement's efforts, which were primarily devoted to the struggle against Zionism, were decried as "diversionary" and all talk of an "Arab-Jewish problem" was dismissed as "artificial... (and) secondary".[280]

b. Political Activity

The political activity of the Arab communists[281] centred round a program of transitional demands based on the "stage of development" of the country, the struggle for national independence, and the situation within the Arab national movement. Their demands focused on four main issues: the establishment of democratic rule, the granting of wider democratic and political freedoms, allowing the inhabitants to partake in the administration of their affairs, and the release of Arab "political prisoners". At the same time, they called for Palestine's independence and the establishment of a "free Arab Palestine";[282] they persisted in this call until the middle of 1945 when it was gradually replaced by the demand for the implementation of a "democratic solution" to the Palestine problem, which entailed the establishment of an "independent democratic Palestine state" guaranteeing equal rights to all its inhabitants.[283]

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277. IT 15 July 1945.
278. IT 18 May 1947.
279. Statement of E. Tuma to journalists. loc. cit.
280. Palestine's Road to Freedom. op. cit. p. 65.
281. For the establishment of the NLL see Chapter Six pp.191-199.
282. IT 28 May 1944.
283. Statement of the Secretariat/NLL to the Arab people of Palestine, 11 October 1945. IT 14 October 1945.

Within the Arab national movement, the NLL's first task was to gain recognition of itself as expressing the true aspirations of the Arab inhabitants and as constituting a legitimate representative of a section of the Arab community. Its energies were directed towards the establishment of a broad "national popular front" under the slogan of "national unity for national liberation".[284] This call for a democratically elected national representative body was to persist throughout the remaining years of the Mandate.

The NLL's initial attitude to other Arab political parties which, without exception, had been dormant during the war years and were only just beginning to revive, was not one of hostility; it simply declared that these parties were non-representative and thus not in a position to speak in the name of the Arab inhabitants.[285] The propaganda for national unity was based on the perceived need for "popular representation", and the NLL put forward its own existence and that of other "popular associations...labour organisations...clubs..." as reason for terminating the "monopoly of self-appointed guardians", and to establish the right of the Arabs to "self determination" in electing their own representatives to lead their national movement.[286] Articles appearing in "Al Ittihad" continued to harp on the necessity of establishing a "broad-based unity" and to inveigh against "secrecy and private consultations" among Arab leaders, for well over a year. In its calls for the holding of a national congress to elect the leadership of the national movement and establish a national charter, the NLL received a measure of support from other political parties and national figures.[287] However it was completely ignored by the dominant Husseini faction represented by the Arab Party, and by the Arab League, which was to prove instrumental in the establishment of the leading bodies of the national movement in the country. When consultations were initiated

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284. NLL in Palestine N.3. 22 February 1944.
285. NLL in Palestine. N.2. 14 February 1944.
286. IT 8 October 1944.
287. A number of national leaders wrote in "Al Ittihad" expressing support for the NLL's ideas: O. Bitar, Mayor of Jaffa (IT 6 August 1944); A. Saleh, president of the National Bloc (IT 16 July 1944); H. Husseini (IT 30 July 1944); Y. Ghussein president of the Youth Congress party (IT 15 April 1945).

late in 1944 for the establishment of a new HAC, "Al Ittihad" complained that "the popular organisations" were being excluded from the talks, and reminded its readers that all existing Arab political parties had been established on "non democratic principles".[288] Despite its ostracisation from the decision-making councils however, the NLL extended its support to the nomination of a Palestinian representative to the Alexandria meeting of the Arab League, coupling this with yet another call for the establishment of a "national front".[289] In its first public meeting held in Haifa on the occasion of the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, the NLL's leaders raised the slogan of the "national front" and hoped that this would rally support from other sections of the national movement namely, those who were not keen on the domination of the Mufti's faction.[290]

Despite its failure to elicit any positive response to its calls for democratisation and for the broadening of the leadership of the national movement, the NLL published early in 1945, "practical proposals" for the establishment of this cherished goal.[291] These proposals offered two alternatives; the first which the NLL supported on the grounds of "simplicity", was based on the formation of a preparatory committee composed of an equal number of representatives from all political parties and associations, which in its turn would call for a national congress. This would establish a national charter and proceed to elect a representative HAC. The second proposal, which was deemed more democratic though rather cumbersome, was for a conference based on individual fee-paying members who would elect the members of the congress in a national referendum on a proportional basis supervised by a temporary committee composed of two members of each Arab party; the elected delegates would constitute the national congress and proceed to formulate future national policy and the election of a new leadership.[292] This

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288. IT 24 September 1944.
289. IT 1 October 1944.
290. IT 5 November 1944.
291. K. Zagmouri (Secretary of NLL). A practical proposal to unite our efforts. IT 4 March 1945.
292. K. Zagmouri. A practical proposal to unite...loc. cit.

proposal was given formal shape by the issue of a statement by the CC of the NLL, calling for the establishment of a preparatory committee made up of representatives of the six existing Arab parties, to organise the congress whose members would be elected directly "by all Arabs of twenty-one years and over".[293] A further statement called for the formation of "national committees" in every Arab town and village, as the first step towards convening the proposed congress and the desired national front. It was pointed out that for the success of this scheme, it was necessary for the local national committees to be "representative of all classes of the people".[294]

The NLL's call for a national front was doomed to failure by its insistence that it could agree to it only on condition that the other concerned parties accepted its own solution of the Palestine problem.[295] This referred primarily to the question of the country's Jewish inhabitants and their future status in the prospective independent state. While the NLL proposed to grant them "full citizens' rights in a democratic republic", this formula was in conflict with the declared policy of the leadership of the Arab national movement. Undaunted by this, and by its own characterisation of the traditional leadership as having "withdrawn and given no lead or orderly retreat" during the years of the war, and of having supported the Axis powers during that same period,[296] the NLL launched a series of public meetings to popularise its demands for the establishment of the "national front".[297] However, rapidly realising the impossibility of any immediate fruition of its plans, it turned its attention to drumming up support for the local Arab Fronts established in two of Palestine's largest cities, Jaffa and Haifa.[298] Nevertheless it continued to inveigh against the policy of the traditional leaders which it characterised as aiming to

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293. Statement to the Arab Parties on national unity. Signed on behalf of CC/NLL by E. Tuma and K. Zagmouri. IT 11 March 1945.
294. CC/NLL: Statement to the Arab people: The popular front, the problem of municipalities and unemployment, 24 March 1945. IT 8 April 1945.
295. IT 18 March 1945.
296. IT 8 April and 20 May 1945.
297. The first meeting was held in Jaffa, 20 April 1945. IT 22 April 1945.
298. Statement of CC/NLL: Decision of CC, 16 June 1945. IT 24 June 1945.

"isolate radical cadres from the national movement" and impose instead "old leaders with racialist views and reactionary imperialist ideologies".[299]

The establishment of a new HAC in November 1945 on the direct intervention of the Arab League, prompted a mixed response from the NLL. While smarting over its exclusion, it recognised the fact that it had achieved some measure of recognition as a result of the consultations held by the Arab League emissary with a number of its leaders.[300] Its initial response was to extend support to the new HAC while deploring the fact that it excluded "the representatives of the new forces".[301] A subsequent article in "Al Ittihad" declared that the new HAC "had not been created by the people of Palestine but by the Arab League", and expressed the hope that it would broaden its base by co-operating with the representatives of the "popular forces" if it wished to survive and develop.[302] An official statement of the CC/NLL chose to endorse the HAC's creation by terming it a "preparatory committee for the setting-up of real national unity" and emphasised its belief that although it did not represent "all popular groups and parties", it was nevertheless "a symbol of the national unity the NLL had been calling for".[303] Soon however, the policies pursued by the new HAC drove the NLL to withdraw its support; this it explained in terms of the HAC's "lack of any mass responsibility", and its unwillingness to "come out clearly against British imperialism".[304] While putting pressure on the HAC to boycott the proposed Anglo American Committee of Inquiry and to take the Palestine problem to the UN, the NLL continued to argue that despite all their shortcomings "the traditional parties are still revolutionary in so far as they struggle for independence", though their leaders were characterised as weak, hesitant, and opportunist.[305] The NLL saw its task of striving for the inclusion of the "popular forces" in the HAC, as one of stiffening and

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299. IT 20 May 1945.
300. IT 25 November 1945.
301. Ibid.
302. IT 2 December 1945.
303. Decisions of Enlarged CC/NLL meeting, 2 December 1945. IT 9 December 1945.
304. IT 27 January 1946.
305. IT 10 February 1946.

activating national unity for the sake of national independence.

With the return of the Mufti's Lieutenant, J. Husseini, to Palestine in May 1946 and his establishment of yet another HAC with an overwhelming majority of Arab Party members, the NLL lost any hope of gaining admittance to the ranks of the national leadership. Indeed, J. Husseini had tried to placate the communists by appointing Dr. K. Budeiri, who was generally identified with them, to its membership.[306] This did not satisfy the NLL which insisted on a representative of its own choosing, and Dr. Budeiri himself was soon calling for a democratically elected HAC.[307] This new body was declared by the NLL to be unrepresentative and to constitute "the voice of the Arab Party only". While refusing to recognise "an HAC forced on the people" and claiming that it had "false attributions of representation", the NLL again put forward its favoured proposal of a preparatory committee for a national congress.[308]

H. Husseini's consequent declaration of the willingness of the HAC to meet with the Anglo-US Committee, in the face of the almost unanimous rejection of this policy by the other Arab parties, and his refusal to accept the NLL's advice to take the problem to the UN, provoked the NLL to come out publicly with the demand for a new HAC. It denied recognition to the existing body and condemned it for its total subservience to the wishes of the Arab League.[309] J. Husseini countered this by explaining his refusal to allow the NLL to participate in the HAC, on the grounds of its declared policy of "wanting to co-operate with the Zionist organisations and with Ben Gurion". This brought an angry rebutal from the NLL which accused J. Husseini of deliberately misrepresenting the policy of the Arab communists towards the Jewish inhabitants. Nevertheless it refused to retreat from its declared position which was based on the necessity of separating the masses of the Jewish inhabitants from the Zionist organisations and of calling on the national move-

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306. Arab political news. Jewish Intelligence Report 27 March 1946. CZA S 25/4139.
307. Survey of Arab communists, 1946. op. cit. p. 6.
308. Statement of CC/NLL on situation in the national movement, 29 March 1946. IT 31 March 1946.
309. IT 26 May 1946.

ment to formulate a positive policy to win them over to its side.[310] "Al Ittihad" accused J. Husseini of wanting to keep the NLL out of the HAC in order " to maintain his position within it" and described his policy, which it characterised as one of "directing the national movement against the Jews only and not against imperialism" as "bankrupt".[311] Tuma writing in "Al Ittihad", called on J. Husseini to retract his statement against the Arab communists and levelled an accusation against all those who refused to accept a "democratic solution", of paving the way for partition of the country and the establishment of a Jewish state.[312]

The practical response of the NLL to its continued exclusion from the leading body of the Arab national movement was the establishment of an Higher Arab Front composed of all Arab political parties with the single exception of the Arab Party.[313] The new organisation was however, stillborn and never became active.[314] In May 1946 the Mufti had made his appearance in Cairo; his national standinghad remained untramelled by his wartime activity, so much so that "Al Ittihad" itself felt obliged to pay homage to his leadership.[315] His hegemony over the national movement was speedily re-established. In Palestine this was reflected in the Arab League's dissolution of both the HAC and the Higher Arab Front.[316] The new HAC created by the Mufti acting through the agency of the Arab League, was mainly staffed by his supporters[317] and again excluded the Arab communists.

By the middle of 1946 it became clear that the NLL had foregone any possibility, if indeed one had ever existed, of recognition by the traditional leadership of the Arab movement. Yet continuously, until the end of the Mandate, it persisted in its calls for the establishment of the "national front", for the holding of a "national

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310. Statement of Secretariat/NLL concerning J. Husseini, 8 June 1946. IT 16 June 1946.
311. IT 9 June 1946.
312. Concerning statement of J. Husseini. IT 9 June 1946.
313. IT 9 June 1946.
314. Supplement to Survey of Palestine. op. cit. p. 139.
315. IT 23 June 1946.
316. Hurewitz. op. cit. p. 251.
317. Ibid. p. 270.

congress", and for "democratising" the movement. The NLL's reasoning was based on the realisation that alone it was incapable of meaningfully influencing the direction of national politics; it needed recognition by the traditional leadership in order to achieve legitimation and to partake in the HAC. Only then would it be able to influence national decisions. The lengths to which the NLL was prepared to go to show its "sincerity" are evidenced by its acceptance of the HAC's boycott of UNSCOP. It did so in order to exhibit its willingness to subordinate itself to "national discipline", and hopefully convince the traditional leadership of its worth as a participant in the national movement.[318]

The divergence between the policies the NLL desired the national movement to pursue, and those actually formulated by the Arab League and the HAC, became wider as the war drew to a close. Although initially the NLL had welcomed the establishment of the Arab League, defending it against accusations that it arose as "a result of a call from the outside"[319] and supporting Palestine's participation in its meetings,[320] its position was transformed towards the end of 1945 to one of outright hostility. The League was now accused of having been the realisation of a "British reactionary scheme",[321] and indited for being more interested in aiding imperialist domination over a "greater Syria" than in the struggle for Palestine's independence and the evacuation of British armies from the whole region.[322] The local Arab leadership in Palestine was similarly criticised for being under the domination of the Arab League, and further accused of blurring the Palestine issue by over emphasising the immigration

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318. While keeping the NLL out of the leadership of the national movement the traditional leaders could not but note its influence among certain sections of Arab society. Some attempts were made to accommodate the NLL such as the addition of Dr. K. Budeiri to the proposed Arab delegation to the UN General Assembly hearings of May 1947. This was foiled however by the refusal of the US Government to grant him a visa. See, Al Jamahir, 19 May 1947. Quoted in R. al Said. The Egyptian Left and the Palestine Problem (Beirut 1974). p. 212. Interview with Dr. K. Budeiri, Jerusalem, 10 August 1974.
319. IT 1 October 1944.
320. CC/NLL: Decisions of CC Meeting, 16 June 1945. IT 24 June 1945.
321. IT 28 October 1945.
322. IT 14 October 1945.

and land sales issues.[323] By presenting the problem of Palestine's independence on the international scene as one of Arab demands for the banning of immigration, it had reduced it to "a bargain over the number of immigrants to be allowed into the country"[324] and completely ignored the main root of the problem: Britain's presence in Palestine, and the necessity of directing the national movement's main efforts towards securing its expulsion. The local Arab leadership was further criticised for raising extremist nationalist slogans, explicitly refusing to live with the Jewish inhabitants of the country, a policy which the NLL warned could only be understood as a demand for the establishment of two separate states.[325] From its inception "Al Ittihad" had regularly featured articles calling on the national movement to recognise the existence of differences within the Jewish community and to direct its efforts towards the Jewish inhabitants, with the aim of separating them from Zionism.[326] It warned that failure to achieve understanding and co-operation between Jews and Arabs would inevitably result in partition, a solution which the NLL declared itself determinedly opposed to.

The divergence in practical policies came into the open as a result of Bevin's statement of November 1945 and the declaration of the intended formation of an Anglo American Committee of Inquiry. This was to discuss the possibility of the entry of one hundred thousand Jewish refugees from Europe into Palestine, and the future form which Britain's continued presence was to take. The NLL unequivocally opposed Bevin's proposals. It denied the need for an inquiry, and called for an international conference to deal with the problem of Palestine on the basis of self-determination for the country's inhabitants. It rejected the linking of the refugee problem in Europe with Palestine, and opposed US intervention into

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323. Statement of CC/NLL on the Occasion of the Balfour Declaration. 4 November 1945.
324. The Palestine Knot. op. cit. Introduction, pp. 3-4.
325. Ibid. p. 10.
326. Scarcely a month passed by without "Al Ittihad" publishing an article on this subject. e.g. The National Movement and the Jewish minority. IT 1 October 1945; The Solution of our national problem depends on our stand vis-a-vis the Jewish people in Palestine. IT 8 July 1945.

Palestine's affairs.[327] The NLL went on to condemn the positive reception accorded by the Arab League to Bevin's statement and its recommendation that the HAC should co-operate with the Inquiry Committee.[328] The NLL called on the HAC to boycott the Committee, reminding it that Britain was "the national movement's first enemy", and that its co-operation would imply recognition of Britain's role as "judge and neutral observer".[329] It proposed as an alternative, to take the problem to the Security Council and thus remove it from the jurisdiction of Britain.[330] The aim, however, was not to create yet another inquiry but to strive for a decision to abolish the Mandate and to "expose imperialism on the international arena".[331] This call was to become one of the main planks of the NLL's program and was to be repeated with increasing frequency in the next year and a half. It was soon to be linked to another plank stressing that the Arabs had "friends" at the UN, and that they could rely on the support of "all progressive forces" at the head of which stood the Soviet Union.[332]

Increasingly "Al Ittihad's" attacks were directed at the Arab League whose "evil council" was seen to lie behind the HAC's decisions; it repudiated the "Arab League's leadership of our national struggle"[333] and explained that its continued meddling in Palestine's affairs and its attempts to direct the struggle against the Jewish inhabitants instead of British imperialism, were part of an "imperialist plot" to partition the country.[334]

The Inquiry Committee's recommendations, which called for the entry of one hundred thousand refugees and outlined the necessity of transferring the Mandate to a UN trusteeship, were in accordance with

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327. Statement of the Secretariat of NLL on the Declaration of the British Government: No solution except Independence. 16 November 1945. IT 9 December 1945.
328. IT 25 November 1945.
329. NLL Open Letter to the HAC, 27 January 1946.
330. Statement of CC/NLL: Decisions of CC, 14-15 February 1946. IT 17 February 1946. See also, Letter of CC/NLL to HAC regarding Anglo-US Committee 3 March 1946.
331. IT 4 February 1946.
332. IT 12 May 1946.
333. IT 3 March 1946.
334. IT 10 March 1946.

the wishes of the US and British Governments respectively.[335] The NLL pointed to the recommendations as proof of the correctness of its position in advocating the boycotting of the "imperialist investigation committee".[336] The Arab leaders were castigated for having proved "incapable of seeing further than their own noses"[337] and Tuma wrote in "Al Ittihad" explaining the emergence of a new British policy which wanted to placate the Arabs without angering the Zionists, and aimed at the partitioning of the country.[338] "Al Ittihad" lamented that the Arab League had siezed the initiative from the hands of Palestine's Arab inhabitants and that it was "interfering in our affairs large and small".[339] The main thrust of the Arab movement's policy had remained directed towards the economic boycott of the Jewish community, and on the similarly "diversionary" and "secondary" struggle against immigration and land sales. This was seen as a deliberate policy aimed at maintaining relations with Britain in the hope of arriving at a mutually satisfactory compromise.[340]

In July 1946, the British Government put forward a "provincial autonomy plan" based essentially on a partitioning of the country under a British trusteeship, and proposed the holding of a conference to be attended by both Arabs and Jews in addition to the representatives of the Arabs states, to discuss the problem.[341] Whereas both Palestinian Arabs and Jews refused to participate in the discussions, the Arab states agreed. The NLL responded by calling on both the Arab League and the HAC to boycott the negotiations and warned that the eventual result could only be partition.[342] Moreover it declared its opposition to any plan, including that of federation, which would lead to the establishment of a Jewish state in any part of Palestine.

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335. Hurewitz. op. cit. p. 246.
336. Statement of Secretariat of NLL: We demand that our problem be raised at the UN and insist on the establishment of a Democratic United Popular Front. 5 May 1946.
337. IT 5 May 1946.
338. Palestine and the World. IT 19 May 1946.
339. IT 23 June 1946.
340. IT 2 June 1946.
341. Hurewitz. op. cit. pp. 258-259.
342. Statement of the Secretariat of NLL on the 4th of August 1946. IT 4 August 1946.

The NLL did not trust the HAC's declared refusal to attend the London conference, which it termed "ambiguous and hesitant[343] and kept up the pressure through "Al Ittihad" for a clear declaration of boycott and for going to the Security Council. When the conference was postponed by Britain, it claimed to see this as "an attempt to hide its failure" but warned that it was also a "manoeuvre to keep us away from the UN".[344] At the same time it criticised the HAC for keeping silent on the Arab states' proposals at the conference, which implied that they had the agreement of Palestine's Arab inhabitants,[345] and declared itself opposed to them in so far as they "limited the freedom and independence of Palestine" and tied it to "the imperialist chariot".[346]

When the London conference was reconvened, this time with the participation of the HAC, the NLL was loud in pointing to the danger of "bilateral talks which keep us away from the UN and its charter", and to Britain's attempt to portray the problem as one of conflict between Arabs and Jews, while it itself was performing "a neutral role...keeping the peace".[347] The failure of the conference when Britain declared its termination in February 1947, was described as a failure of HAC policy, and the NLL referred to the "policy of catastrophe which it has been pursuing for a quarter of a century".[348] Simultaneously, the conference was declared to have been a success for Britain which now donned the mantle of "concilliator of Arabs and Jews", a role which the Arabs themselves were helping it to perform.

Although Britain had declared at the conclusion of the conference, that it was referring the problem to the UN, the NLL did not regard this as a positive step, but as one more manoeuvre on the part of

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343. IT 28 August 1946.
344. Leaflet of Secretariat of NLL: Statement to the Arab People. 4 October 1946.
345. IT 13 October 1946.
346. NLL Leaflet: On the Anniversary of the Imperialist Balfour Declaration. 2 November 1946.
347. NLL Leaflet: Palestine Where to? In the shadow of Zionist terror and negotiations with Imperialism. 31 January 1947.
348. NLL Leaflet: Take the problem back to the people. 17 February 1947.

Britain to maintain its control over Palestine.[349] It held that the problem was being presented to the UN in "the wrong way"; it had been referred to the General Assembly instead of the Security Council and it had been taken there by Britain instead of by the Arabs.[350] It nevertheless mounted a public campaign heralded by the distribution of more than ten thousand cards addressed to the HAC calling on it to raise the problem in the Security Council,[351] in an effort to affect a change in the policy of the HAC.

The formation of UNSCOP and the exclusion of both Britain and the US from its membership was regarded as a victory by the NLL,[352] but the statements by the Arab delegates to the General Assembly were seen to be counter-productive and were sharply criticised. By attacking the Jews and adopting an "ambiguous" position on the "democratic solution", and by remaining silent on the issue of continued British presence in the country, the Palestine delegation was deemed to have presented international public opinion with a negative picture of the Arab national movement.[353] The NLL declared that failure to endorse the "democratic solution" would enable the Zionists to exploit the weakness of the Arab position, and lead to partition and the establishment of a "Jewish racialist state".[354] It repeated the warnings of the Soviet delegate to the Assembly that Arab-Jewish understanding was necessary if the unity of Palestine was to be preserved, and criticised the HAC's decision to boycott UNSCOP.[355] At this juncture the NLL, itself under pressure from the HAC to boycott UNSCOP, complied, declaring that it was doing this in the interest of "national unity" while reaffirming its opinion of the mistaken nature of such a policy and its continued faith in the international organisation.[356] This volte face was

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349. This is corroborated by Hurewitz, op. cit. pp. 284-285.
350. IT 11 May and 27 April 1947.
351. IT 16 February and 30 March 1947.
352. NLL Leaflet: Let us unite our forces and establish a Democratic strategy to resist partition, for evacuation and an independent Palestine united and undivided. May 1947. p. 2.
353. Ibid. p. 3.
354. IT 25 May 1947.
355. Statement of CC/NLL: A call to the HAC to realise the wishes of the people for national unity and for keeping the Palestine problem outside the control of Imperialism. loc. cit.
356. This followed a meeting of Tuma and others with J. Husseini. See, IT 22 June 1947.

accompanied by compliance with the HAC's ban on reporting on the activity of UNSCOP while it was in Palestine. Understandably however, the NLL remained uncomfortable with this decision, and took the opportunity of the Yugoslav delegate's appeal to the HAC to reconsider its position, to itself call on it to end the boycott.[357] Publicly the NLL remained faithful to its declared adherence to the HAC's decision but privately it sent a lengthy memorandum to the UN[358] and held secret meetings with the Yugoslav member of the UNSCOP delegation.[359] Despite its blatantly "tailist" line, the NLL shortly afterwards declared that the HAC policy with which it had collaborated, was leading the country towards racial conflict and inevitable partition.[360]

Throughout the last years of the Mandate the NLL's policy remained geared towards a political solution of the Palestine problem and totally opposed to terrorism. Even before the end of the war, terrorism had been actively promoted by extremist groups within the Yishuv, and in 1947 had also become a feature of Arab society. The NLL opposed its practice by either community, on the grounds that it created enmity between Arabs and Jews, and thus blocked the way to understanding and co-operation which were necessary for the establishment of a united state. In addition, it was seen to serve British policy in its attempts to maintain its presence in the country, enabling it to project the struggle in Palestine as a "racial" one.

Initially, Jewish terrorism was explained as "proof of the weakness of the Zionist movement internally and externally".[361] As the war was drawing to a close, the Zionists were seen to be attempting to "impose a Jewish state" in part of Palestine.[362]

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357. IT 13 July 1947.
358. NLL Memo to the UN, August 1947. Published as an Arabic pamphlet entitled, Palestine's Road to Freedom.
359. Interviews with Mufid Nashashibi, Beirut, 13 October 1973, and Dr. K. Budeiri, Jerusalem, 10 August 1974.
360. IT 20 July 1947.
361. NLL In Palestine. N.8. 29 March 1944.
362. IT 27 January 1946.

Zionism was considered to be in a crisis; it was going through its "death throes" as a result of the liberation of Europe which had "put an end to immigration".[363] Although it was grudgingly admitted that the Zionists' policy possessed "nearly mass support "within the Yishuv, this was explained away as being the result of "fear of Arab domination".[364] Yet it was siezed upon to further emphasise the urgency of the Arab communists' call for the national movement's adoption of the "democratic solution" and the democratic state.

Increasingly however, British policy came to be regarded as "aiding and abetting Zionist terrorism";[365] by fanning the flames of enmity between Arabs and Jews it was perceived to be trying to bring about the partitioning of the country, an aim which it held in common with the Zionists.[366] In addition, British policy, through the creation of an atmosphere of conflict and instability, was seen to be aiming at legitimising its presence in Palestine as a protector of the peace and of the Jewish minority.[367] The NLL denied that Britain's attempts to put an end to terrorism were serious[368] and pointed out that this could only be accomplished by "dissolving the organisations which have established secret armies"[369] a clear reference to the Jewish Agency. Various incidents were cited to the effect that British police and army authorities "deliberately allowed clashes to spread" by remaining immobile and arriving late on the scene.[370] This was seen to be part of a carefully prepared policy aimed at implementing the emergency regulations under the pretext of "inability to terminate the disturbances". The real aim however, was perceived

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363. IT 22 October 1944.
364. IT 27 January 1946.
365. IT 23 June 1946.
366. Leaflet of Secretariat of NLL: On the Anniversary of the Balfour Declaration. 2 November 1946. p. 1.
367. CC/NLL: Statement on the Anniversary of the Balfour Declaration. 4 November 1945.
368. IT 28 July and 12 August 1946.
369. IT 7 July 1946.
370. IT 10 November 1946 and in January 1947, an NLL delegation met the D.C. of Jaffa to complain about police inactivity and sent a telegram to the UN to that effect. IT 17 August 1947.

to be directed at the Arab national movement and the suspension of democratic freedoms and liberties.[371]

With the increasing involvement of the Hagana, the secret army of the mainstream Zionist organisations, in terrorist activity, "Al Ittihad", which had always insisted on a differentiation, although ambiguous, within the Zionist movement, now declared that the policy of the Zionists as a whole was aimed at "showing the impossibility of Arabs and Jews living together".[372] It placed the responsibility on the Jewish masses to put an end to this "criminal policy".[373] Particularly incensed by Zionist claims that the policy of terror which they waged was a "struggle of national liberation" directed against the British and aimed at securing independence, "Al Ittihad" explained that there could be no comparison between the Arab rebellion of 1936 and the terror which accompanied it, and what was taking place in Palestine in 1947. The former was the expression of the Arab national movement's struggle for the independence and liberation of the whole country, while that unleashed by the Zionists was "in aid of imperialist policies" of partitioning the country[374] and its perpetrators were branded as "agents of British imperialism".[375]

Within the Arab community, terrorism began to assume alarming proportions only in the last year of the Mandate, and a major part of it was internal, directed against political opponents of the Mufti and those suspected of collaboration with the Zionists. The NLL, as early as 1945 on the occasion of the disturbances which occurred in Egypt and Libya, had warned that the struggle of the Arabs was aimed at independence, and should not be directed towards "racialist venues".[376] When internal terrorism became the hallmark of the Arab leadership, "Al Ittihad" warned that "the national movement must avoid bloodshed" and pointed to the past failure of such policies to put an end to land sales or to provide any positive results.[377]

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371. Leaflet/NLL: Palestine where to? In the shadow...loc. cit.
372. IT 25 May 1947.
373. IT 23 November 1947.
374. IT 10 August 1947.
375. IT 11 January 1948.
376. IT 4 November 1945. In November demonstrations of solidarity on the occasion of the Balfour anniversary took place in many cities in Arab states. In Cairo and Tripoli these turned into violent attacks on local Jews.
377. IT 10 November 1946.

It called on the HAC to formally dissociate itself from all terror activities. When the latter remained silent, it was publicly criticised for this failure[378] and was later accused of using terror "to maintain its own leadership".[379] The Arab press and the political parties were also criticised for maintaining a silence which implied a condonance of terror acts.[380] On numerous occasions, the Arab communists warned the Arab leadership of the danger of transforming the struggle in Palestine into a "racial conflict between Arabs and Jews"[381] and pointed out that this was part of an imperialist plot to implement partition.

Alone of all Arab parties and associations, the NLL continued to condemn the "terrorist policy" advocated by Arab leaders[382] and to decry the perpetrators whenever a terrorist outrage occured.[383] In October 1947 it published a booklet written by one of its leaders, explaining the dangers and shortcomings of the policy of "individual terror" and pointing to its negative results as far as internal unity and understanding with the Jewish inhabitants were concerned.[384] In its instructions to its members, it urged the necessity of taking a public stand against terrorism, through the organisation of meetings in towns and villages to explain to the Arab community the harmfulness of such a path, and the importance of preserving the peace in order to ward off the impending partition.[385]

Although the NLL came out very strongly against Arab terrorism whether directed against Arabs or against the Jewish community, as soon as the phenomenon made itself felt, it is interesting to note that this was not the case concerning Jewish terrorism. The first condemnation of this occurred only in October 1944[386] followed by a long silence until May 1945.[387] It was only towards the end of

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378. IT 24 August 1947.
379. IT 2 February 1947.
380. IT 5 October 1947.
381. NLL Leaflet: To the Arab National Leadership. May 1947.
382. Letter of CC/NLL to HAC: NLL calls on all national forces to beware of what imperialism prepares for our country; Racial conflict as a prelude to realising partition, 5 August 1947. IT 10 August 1947.
383. IT 17 August 1947.
384. F.Nassar. Individual Terror and Political Murder (October 1947).
385. Statement of Secretariat of NLL: To Members of NLL and Friends. 17 August 1947.
386. IT 22 October 1944.
387. IT 27 May 1945.

1945 and the beginning of 1946 that frequent articles began to appear dealing with the problem of Jewish terrorism and these invariably denied any independent volition to the Yishuv, subordinating all its activity to the realization of what was seen to be the predominantly British aim of partition. Throughout the period when Jewish terrorism was exclusively directed against the British, "Al Ittihad" maintained a stony silence and ignored the activity of the extremist Zionist groups. When Arabs became the subject of these attacks, the Arab communists could no longer remain silent, but chose to describe the events as an attempt to create instability in the country. They did not accept that the Zionist movement was fighting on two fronts: against both the Arabs and the British Mandate. In the interests of the declared policy of understanding and co-operation, and the hoped for establishment of a united democratic state, the NLL chose to underemphasise the Jewish terrorist factor in the problem, and to minimise both its extent and the unanimous support it commanded within the ranks of the Yishuv.

While it is not meaningful to speak of the NLL's "communist policy", it is nevertheless possible to observe the Arab communists self-identification with the international communist movement. Although relations with Moscow - non existent since before the dissolution of the Comintern - remained severed,[388] the NLL identified itself with international communism through the publication of numerous glorificatory articles on life in the Soviet Union and through propaganda for the aims of Soviet foreign policy, and the attitude it took on developments in the Arab world. "Al Ittihad" wrote at length on the long record of Soviet hostility to Zionism and frequently reproduced articles from the Soviet press underlining support for Palestine's unity and independence.

The holding of the Congress of Communist Parties of the British Empire in London in February 1947 was the occasion of the NLL's public adherence to the ranks of the international communist movement. Tuma travelled to the Congress as the delegate of the Arab communists[389]

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388. The Communist Movement in Palestine. Jewish Intelligence Report, 11 February 1947. CZA S 25/7533.
389. IT 9 February 1947.

and later went on to Prague to confer with Czech communists,[390] and then to Belgrade where great play was made of his meeting with Tito and the latter's endorsement for the NLL's aim of a democratic state in Palestine.[391]

Despite repeated attempts at co-operation, relations between the Arab communists and the now exclusively Jewish PCP remained non-existent.[392] Joint activity had taken place on a number of occasions,[393] and there was superficial agreement on the basic objectives of independence and the preservation of the unity of the country, but nevertheless the gulf between the two parties was widening. The NLL continued however, to give prominence to the activities of the Jewish communists and to reproduce their statements.[394] While maintaining that the PCP was "the only party which is really democratic and popular and expresses the wishes of the Jewish masses", the Arab communists declared that the PCP had "deviated from communist principles" as a result of the policies of its "opportunistic leadership".[395]

The social demands of the NLL were not put forward as part of a complete socio-philosophical program but rather in response to specific conditions and it did not identify these demands with communist doctrine. "Al Ittihad" however, was utilised from its inception in May 1944 as a vehicle for communist propaganda.[396] Without ever employing the term "communism", the paper stressed the adaptability of socialism to Palestine's conditions by pointing to the example of the Soviet Union. Even Islam and Marxism were declared to be compatible, and in the Soviet Union, Islam was described as "flourishing under the protection of the state".[397]

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390. IT 6 April 1947.
391. IT 20 April 1947.
392. Survey of Arab Communists, 1946. op. cit. p. 7.
393. e.g. Joint PCP-NLL leaflet on occasion of strike of Government employees, April 1946.
394. e.g. Testimony of Jewish Communists to Anglo-US Investigation Committee. IT 31 March 1946.
395. IT 5 August 1945.
396. e.g. The Anniversary of the October Revolution. IT 5 November 1944.
397. Call of Lenin and Stalin (sic) to the Moslems of the East was reproduced in IT 4 February 1945, in addition to numerous articles on the conditions of Moslems under Soviet rule.

The Arab communists were careful to peddle their wares not as revolutionary doctrine, but in a rather conservative mould, and to show them as the sure path to national revival and independence.

The day-to-day activity of the Party centred on specific economic, social and political issues relating to the everyday lives of the Arab inhabitants. While maintaining to the fore the slogan of independence, the NLL made clear its interest in the here-and-now. It relegated socialism to the distant future and laboured to appear as the champion of the Arabs in their attempts to improve their existing material conditions. This activity was facilitated by the Communist's control of the LAI and the AWC, which allowed them to deliver their message to a wide audience and to mobilise the ranks of the intelligentsia and the working class.

The NLL advocated policies which were aimed at securing the support of the widest possible sections of the Arab population. Thus it upheld the call for the retention of the office of Mayor in Jerusalem as well as in Haifa, in Arab hands,[398] and mounted a persistent campaign for the release of "Arab political prisoners".[399] Initially the NLL's platform centred on the struggle for the implementation of the 1939 White Paper as the first step towards realising independence.[400] Later this was replaced by a campaign based on specific issues such as the demand for the abolition of censorship[401] and of the Emergency Regulations,[402] and it repeatedly called on the Government to grant "democratic liberties" and to allow the people to partake in the administration of the country.[403]

Special attention was paid by the NLL to the problem of municipal and local councils which were termed "the only form of self-rule enjoyed by the country since 1925".[404] The administration

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398. IT 3 September 1944, 27 May 1945.
399. IT 13 August 1944; 14 April 1946.
400. CC/NLL Statement: To the Struggling Arab People. IT 15 November 1944.
401. IT 10 June 1945.
402. CC/NLL: Decisions of CC - 16 June. IT 24 June 1945.
403. IT 7 January 1945.
404. IT 11 March 1945.

was criticised for reducing them to the role of government departments,[405] and was called upon to remove all restrictions on their activity, to extend their authority and to abolish all property and tax qualifications both for voting and for standing for office.[406] "Al Ittihad's" interest in municipal affairs extended to very specific local issues[407] and as such sought to establish itself as the Arab community's most enthusiastic defender of its rights.

However, the problems of the Arab village and the conditions of the peasants did not occupy a central place in the NLL's interests. Its proferred solutions were of a profoundly reformist character, calling for the modernisation of agriculture,[408] and charging the Government with responsibility for the implementation of a host of improvements extending from the provision of free medical treatment, to the paving of roads.[409] The NLL did not attempt to deal with the prevailing feudal-type relations in the countryside and its sole "revolutionary" proposal consisted of a demand, made in the last year of the Mandate, for "the distribution of Government land to the peasants".[410]

The main thrust of the NLL's policies remained aimed throughout at appealing to the widest possible sections of Arab opinion and, in order to achieve this "national legitimation", the Arab communists sought to associate themselves with other Arab parties. Some co-operation was achieved with two small organisations, the National Bloc and the Youth Congress, and communist speakers frequently appeared at joint platforms with other non-communist speakers. In a number of local Arab Fronts, communists were co-opted as members. Yet the Arab communists continued to be hampered by their advocacy of "unpopular causes", the most important of which was their stand towards the Jewish inhabitants.

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405. IT 12 November 1944.
406. IT 30 September 1945.
407. e.g. the absence of electricity in Jerusalem's poor quarters. See, IT 11 March 1945.
408. NLL in Palestine. N.7. 22 March 1944.
409. Resolutions of Congress of NLL, 15 June 1947.
410. Ibid.

c. Response to Partition

The UNSCOP submitted its report to the UN General Assembly at the end of August 1947. It unanimously recommended the termination of the British Mandate and that Palestine be granted its independence. It was unable to agree however, on the future shape of the independent state. The majority proposed the establishment of two states in Palestine, one Arab the other Jewish, with economic unity between the two, and an international zone in Jerusalem. The majority report was in favour of a united Palestine in the shape of a bi-national federation.[411] The NLL's response to this was mixed. On the one hand, it welcomed the recognition that the Jewish problem could not be solved within the confines of Palestine.[412] On the other hand, it rejected the partition decision as "aiming at ensuring the interests of Anglo-US imperialism".[413] While welcoming the minority report's recommendations for maintaining the unity of the country, it denied it the right to pronounce on "the specific form" that this independence should take, a matter which was "for the people of Palestine alone to decide".[414] The NLL, while emphasising its continued adherence to its own proposal of a united democratic state, and thus rejecting the recommendations of both majority and minority, chose to direct its propaganda in favour of UNSCOP's recommendation for independence which it termed the more significant part of the Committee's proposals.

With partition clearly on the agenda, the NLL turned its fury against the leadership of the Arab national movement. It accused it of having paved the way for partition with its "negative" and "racialist" policy towards Palestine's Jewish inhabitants.[415] The traditional leaders' rejection of the "democratic solution", and their refusal to recognise the civil rights of Jewish immigrants who had arrived in Palestine after 1918, were declared to have given credence to Zionist claims that partition was necessary as a means of

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411. Hurewitz. op. cit. pp. 295-6.
412. Statement of the Secretariat of NLL on the Recommendations of UNSCOP, 5 September 1947. See, Palestine's Road to Freedom. op. cit. p. 83.
413. Ibid. pp. 84-85.
414. Ibid. p. 86.
415. IT 6 September 1947.

"protecting the Jewish minority from the aggression of the Arabs", and to lie at the root of the Arabs' failure to gain international support for their "just cause".[416] The attitude of the NLL towards the leadership of the national movement was transformed from one of proferred collaboration to outright hostility. The NLL now called for the immediate establishment of "firm internal organisation in the national movement" in order to realise the independence decreed by the UN,[417] and put forward a program for the establishment of "local national committees" in every town and village "to organise the national struggle for independence and for a united Palestine".[418] The policy of the HAC was condemned as "bankrupt", for while rejecting the partition decision, it did not put forward its own alternative demands and in consequence, appeared to be opposed to the international community's support for Palestine's independence.[419] The NLL recognised and condemned the fact that the leadership of the Palestinian Arabs had passed from their own hands to those of the Arab League, and warned of the folly of heeding the dictates of "Arab governments who are working hand-in-hand with British imperialist schemes".[420]

In the period between September and the 29th of November partition decision, the Arab communists concentrated their efforts on warning of the dangerous policies pursued by the Arab leadership and Britain, which were paving the way to partition. They pointed to the necessity of arriving at a formula for co-operation and understanding with the Jewish inhabitants of the country, in order to maintain Palestine's unity and to subvert partition. The main thrust of the NLL's propaganda pointed to the danger of transforming the struggle for independence, which "should be directed against British imperialism as our main enemy", into "a racial conflict".[421]

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416. IT 13 September 1947.
417. IT 28 September 1947.
418. Statement of CC/NLL, 17 October 1947. See, Falastin, 19 October 1947.
419. IT 9 November 1947.
420. Ibid.
421. Leaflet of NLL: Imperialists evacuate Palestine: Long live the struggle of the Arab people for its freedom and the freedom of Palestine. 3 October 1947.

The leaders of the NLL addressed numerous public meetings at which they warned that "imperialism is trying to divert the national movement to wage a racial struggle against the Jews" in order to show that the problem in Palestine was one of strife between the two communities, and that the continuation of British domination was necessary to maintain the peace and to avoid massacres.[422] They admonished moreover, against the use of terror as a political weapon and declared that "no nation has liberated itself via the road of political murder" and that terrorist methods would result in "tearing the Arab movement apart".[423] Partition was firmly rejected as being outside the legitimate authority of the UN, and discussion about the future constitutional form of Palestine when the country was still under British occupation and its people unable to freely exercise their right of self-determination, was declared to be a "diversion". The main issue was independence and the NLL reiterated its support for the slogan of a "democratic united and undivided Palestine" the success of which entailed a determined struggle for co-operation and understanding between Arabs and Jews.[424]

The NLL recognised, as it became clear through the discussion of the Palestine issue at the UN, that there was a majority in favour of partition, and "Al Ittihad" pointed out that "there is no possibility now of convincing a majority of setting up a united state".[425] This was explained to be a direct result of "the absence of understanding between Arabs and Jews". The responsibility for this did not lie solely with the Arab leadership but was shared with British imperialism which had long pursued "a policy of igniting racial hatred",[426] and with the Zionist organisations which had unleashed a campaign of terror to further separate the two peoples

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422. e.g. Meeting in Jerusalem, 5 October 1947 addressed by Nassar, Habibi and Shaheen, under the slogan: Down with partition and the Jewish state. Let Palestine's inhabitants determine their own fate. See, IT 12 October 1947.
423. Ibid. Speech of Nassar.
424. Ibid. Speech of E. Habibi.
425. IT 20 October 1947.
426. Statement of CC/NLL - 17 October 1947. loc. cit.

and "pour oil on the ongoing racial conflict".[427] Nevertheless the NLL called on the Arab leaders "to go to the Jewish masses and ask them to join the liberation struggle for independence". In the absence of understanding and in the event of the outbreak of a "racial war", partition would become inevitable, and the NLL warned that the Arab League was already "preparing to occupy the Arab part of Palestine, while the other part will form the Jewish state...in accordance with the schemes of British imperialism".[428]

The last statement issued by the NLL before partition was officially decreed, again denied that "the UN or any state has the right to give an opinion on the constitutional shape" of the future independent state, and declared that the UN's duty lay in "helping Palestine's inhabitants to exercise their rights of self-determination".[429] At the same time, partition was condemned as an "imperialist plot" which could only lead to "providing a foothold for Anglo-US imperialism to thwart the national liberation movement of the Arab people".[430] The NLL turned to the Jewish inhabitants and warned them that it was their responsibility, and in their own best interests, to put an end to Zionist terrorism against Arabs,[431] and exercised its "historic duty in informing the Jewish masses of the dangers of following Zionist policies in support of partition and the establishment of a Jewish state".[432] A Jewish state in part of Palestine would bring neither peace nor security to the Jews; moreover it would be a destabilising force in the region and its establishment would serve to transfer the "hated racial conflict" from Europe to Palestine and the whole region.

The day after the UN passed its decision calling for the partition of Palestine, an article appeared in "Al Ittihad" stating

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427. IT 23 November 1947.
428. IT 12 October 1947.
429. Statement of Secretariat of NLL: A call for unity of ranks, for struggle against partition and for abolition of the Mandate, 16 October. IT 19 October 1947.
430. Statement of CC/NLL issued after meeting of CC in Jaffa, 17 October 1947 to discuss support of majority of UN members for partition proposals. See, Falastin, 19 October 1947, and IT 25 October 1947.
431. IT 23 November 1947.
432. Statement of CC/NLL - 17 October 1974. loc. cit.

that partition was already a reality with the Arab and Jewish communities living in total isolation from each other.[433] However, it went on to declare that the future of Palestine did not depend on UN decrees but on the ability of Palestine's inhabitants "to avoid racial conflict and religious massacres" and to find a way to reduce tension and arrive at a common understanding.

The UN decision, which had the blessing and support of the Soviet Union, placed the NLL in a difficult position. Its initial reaction to Soviet support for partition, when it was still being debated at the UN, had been to assert the independence of the Arab communists, and to declare 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".[434] Soon after however, "Al Ittihad" was defending the Soviet's pro-partition stand as being based on the desire to see Britain expelled from Palestine.[435] The support for the establishment of two states was explained as resulting from the conclusion that "other solutions, though more desirable, are not practicable at the present time".[436]

Once the UN decision had been taken however, the NLL had to make its stand known. At a meeting of the Secretariat held immediately after the partition decision,[437] the majority took a stand in favour, on the grounds that partition was going to be imposed on Palestine irrespective of the wishes of the Arab population. The decision was also seen to have positive aspects in that it declared the independence of Palestine and the evacuation of the British, that the two states would be linked in an economic union, and they saw it to be the communists' task to struggle for the political reunification of the country. Furthermore, Nassar who headed the pro-partition faction, argued that the Arab states would

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433. IT 30 November 1947.
434. Concerning the USSR's stand on Partition. IT 19 October 1947.
435. IT 2 November 1947.
436. IT 30 November 1947.
437. E. Tuma, Interview, Haifa, 4 April 1974. The Secretariat meeting was held in Jerusalem on the same day that the UN decision was made. The members of the Secretariat were: Tuma, Nassar, T. Toubi, E. Habibi, and R. Shaheen.

not fight against partition but would content themselves with verbal protestations.[438] It was however, decided not to make the Secretariat's new stand public and a vaguely worded statement was issued which directed its main attack on 'British machinations". It called on the Arabs "to struggle against British imperialism, the main root of our problems", and reaffirmed the NLL's position in favour of keeping Palestine "united and undivided in a democratic unity".[439] A meeting of the CC held shortly after, produced a majority in favour of Tuma's position, the lone opposer to partition, in the Secretariat, and with this the control of the Party press passed over to the anti-partition faction of the NLL.[440] It was, nevertheless, decided to hold a second enlarged plenum of the CC to discuss the matter further; at this Second Nazareth Plenum, Tuma and most of his supporters absented themselves, and the decisions of the First Nazareth Plenum were reversed.[441] A majority was secured for the pro-partition position; the Party press returned to the control of the Secretariat and Tuma and his supporters were subsequently expelled from the ranks of the NLL.[442]

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438. Tuma stood alone in his opposition to partition, while Nassar stood at the head of the pro-partition faction. Interviews with E.Tuma, Haifa, 4 April 1974; E.Habibi, Haifa, 3 April 1974; F.Salfiti, Amman, 26 March 1974.

439. Statement of Secretariat of NLL: To the Strugglers for the Unity of Palestine; the Unity of Palestine lies in its complete Independence, 3 December 1947. IT 14 December 1947.

440. This was known as the First Nazareth Plenum, and was held some time in the first half of December 1947. The Editorial Board of IT was made up of Tuma, Habibi, and Shaheen. After the First Plenum, Tuma's faction took control of the paper; proposals were also made but not followed up that the NLL should approach other Arab communist parties to send a joint memo to Stalin calling on him to withdraw Soviet support for partition. In addition to the Secretariat's statement against partition, the sole issue produced by Tuma carried an anti partition statement by K. Bakdash the Syrian communist leader. IT 14 December 1947. Interviews with Tuma, Habibi and Salfiti, loc. cit.

441. The Second Nazareth Plenum was held sometime between the 14th and the 21st of December, when IT appeared without Tuma's name as Editor and was replaced by Habibi and Shaheen of Nassar's faction. IT 21 December 1947.

442. Tuma explained his deliberate abstention as due to his unwillingness to split the NLL and uncertainty over his political position. (Interviews with Tuma and Salfiti, loc. cit.) After support for partition became official NLL policy, a number of its members ceased their political activity and were subsequently expelled. Most however were later to return to the ranks of the communist movement in Jordan and Israel.

The new pro-partition policy of the NLL did not find immediate and explicit expression in the pages of "Al Ittihad"; the articles carried by the party organ were characterised by ambiguity in their pronouncements on partition, and shied away from adopting a clear position. In the event, the permit to publish "Al Ittihad" was revoked by the Government[443] after only five issues had been brought out since Tuma's expulsion as editor, and the NLL was left without a legal organ enabling it to deliver its political message to the Arab public.

The last five issues of "Al Ittihad" continued to pay a certain amount of lip service to the slogan of a "united Palestine", although it was emphasised that understanding between Jews and Arabs was necessary to achieve this. This was accompanied by the declaration that it was "impractical" and "too late now to call for a united democratic state", because of the tense situation between Arabs and Jews,[444] and the implicit message was that the "united Palestine" was something to be attained in a distant future when such understanding and co-operation proved feasible.

The main preoccupation of "Al Ittihad" was to repeatedly warn of the dangers of terrorism and call on both Arabs and Jews to direct their energies to the common aim of expelling the British from the country. Terrorism and massacre, whether committed by Arabs or by Jews were condemned as merely serving to realise British policy, which aimed at showing the world that its presence in Palestine was necessary to avoid the destruction of the country.[445] At the same time, the NLL persistently called on the Jewish working class "to wake up" and to repudiate acts of Zionist terrorism,[446] warning that these acts were contrary to the interests of the Jewish inhabitants, and that "the continued silence of the Jewish masses is now a crime".[447]

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443. NLL Leaflet: Statement concerning the Withdrawal of the Permit to publish Al Ittihad. 31 January 1948. The Government's pretext for this action was a report in IT accusing British soldiers of actively encouraging acts of terrorism on both Arab and Jewish sides. The last issue of Al Ittihad came out on the 25 January 1948.
444. IT 28 December 1947.
445. IT 4 January and 25 January 1948.
446. IT 4 January 1948.
447. IT 11 January 1948.

The tone of "Al Ittihad's" articles indicated that it was not so much opposed to partition as to the way in which it was being implemented. It thus warned that the Arab part of Palestine was going to be "annexed to Jordan"[448] and called on the inhabitants to resist British schemes "to join Arab Palestine to Jordan and the Jewish state to the British Dominion".[449] Already in the last three issues of the paper, published in January 1948, the demand for an "independent united and undivided state" was dropped and the NLL's call now centred on the need to struggle "to organise means of defence against terrorism", to "expel the British armies from Palestine",[450] and to realise "Palestine's freedom and independence".[451]

Yet the Arab communists did not pursue a consistent line in their published propaganda. An internal bulletin, appearing in February 1948, to fill the gap created by the absence of "Al Ittihad", completely ignored events in Palestine and concentrated on affairs in Iraq.[452] A further issue of the same bulletin warned that the US was trying to abolish the UN decision and rob Palestine of its independence, but refused to meet the issue of partition head on and claimed that "it is not possible to arrive at a just constitutional settlement with the British still in the country".[453] The NLL did pronounce clearly upon its by now familiar assertion, that partition was the result of the policies of the Arab leaders. Their extreme nationalist stand had led to a "national conflict" between Arab and Jews. Likewise the Arab League states were seen to be conniving with Britain for the British officered Arab Legion to enter Palestine "only to stop at prearranged boundaries" and then "to annex the Arab part of Palestine to Trans-Jordan", which was described as "tied to Britain by a treaty of serfdom and enslavement".[454]

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448. IT 21 December 1947.
449. IT 28 December 1947.
450. IT 11 January 1948.
451. NLL Leaflet: Statement Concerning withdrawal of permit...loc.cit.
452. Al Usba (The League). Internal Bulletin of NLL. N.1. 1st February 1948.
453. Al Usba N.4. 2 April 1948.
454. Leaflet of NLL Local Committee-Haifa: To the Arab People. 2 May 1948. An NLL Leaflet as late as July 1948 came out in support of the recommendations of the UN minority report and called for the establishment of "a federal democratic state on the basis of the right of self-determination for Arabs and Jews". See Leaflet of NLL: For the Establishment of a Popular Front; To the masses of the Arab people. July 1948.

With the establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948 and the subsequent invasion of the Arab League armies, the NLL made its position clearer and it now publicly called for the application of the UN partition resolution and the establishment of an independent Arab state beside the already established Jewish state. Its attitude to the entry of the Arab League armies into Palestine was characterised by vehement condemnation, and members of the NLL were active in distributing leaflets in the areas occupied by the Arab armies.[455] The tone of these leaflets was provocative and seditious; Arab soldiers were called upon to "go back home" and to struggle for the overthrow of their own rulers, and it was explained to them that the aim of their campaign in Palestine was "not to liberate it...but to annex the Arab part to Abdullah, the puppet of British imperialism".[456]

The NLL's leaflets concentrated their fury on the leaders of the Palestinian national movement and the Arab League. The former were castigated for having deserted the country and for encouraging the Arab inhabitants to flee in their wake.[457] They were described as "traitors...a handful of corrupt large landowners and proprietors who had been in the service of imperialism for the last thirty years... who had sold their lands in Palestine and now ran away".[458] They were "feudalists with the mentalities of the middle ages" who had adopted "racialist policies" towards the Jewish inhabitants, instituted a boycott of the Jewish community, declared, in international forums, their "refusal to live with the Jews in one country"[459] and by the pursuit of extremist nationalist policies had erected barriers in the path of understanding between Arabs and Jews and thus paved the way for partition.[460] The Arab League was denounced as a "tool

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455. Both F. Nassar and O. Ashahb, leaders of the NLL were arrested in mid 1948 while distributing such leaflets. IT 1st February 1949. See also, A. Kapeliuk, When the Communists supported the Jewish State. New Outlook. N.9. 1962. p. 90.
456. Leaflet of NLL: A call to the Soldiers. Soldiers of Egypt and brother Arab states, Go back to your own countries and direct your weapons against the imperialists and their agents. July 1948.
457. And Now...What is to be Done? NLL Pamphlet, September 1948. p.4.
458. Leaflet/NLL: For the Establishment of a Popular Front, loc.cit.
459. And Now...What is to be Done? op. cit. p. 3.
460. Al Usba (Regular Bulletin of NLL) N.1. August 1948.

of imperialism" and the NLL declared that the behaviour of the Arab states and their connivance with British schemes had exposed the "treason of the Arab kings and the Arab ruling classes".[461] While the Arab League's armies had entered Palestine with the ostensible aim of destroying partition, their real mission was seen to have been the active implementation of partition and the prevention of the establishment of an independent Arab state; their armies had never even approached the borders of the proposed Jewish state.[462] The NLL did not regard the war in Palestine as waged to prevent the establishment of the Jewish state, and as evidence for this it pointed to the surrender of various parts of the country to the Jewish forces by Abdullah's Arab Legion, without even the pretence of a fight.[463] Furthermore, Abdullah with the blessing of Britain, and the connivance of certain "reactionary elements" in the already established Jewish state, was accused of planning to annex the Arab part of Palestine to Trans-Jordan.[464]

The NLL called on the Arab people to struggle against the war and to establish an independent Arab state based on the decisions of the UN. It called for the "evacuation of Arab and Jewish armies of occupation" from the proposed Arab state and for the return of areas occupied by the Hagana in excess of the UN proposed boundary,[465] declaring that the struggle of the Arabs was now a "struggle for the right of self determination and for an end to occupation by all foreign armies".[466] It reminded the Arabs that if they had accepted the UN decision on independence and partition, and facilitated its implementation, the projected economic unity between the two states would have provided a framework for the eventual political re-unification of Palestine.[467] It was still possible and necessary however, to struggle for the establishment of an Arab state on the basis of understanding between Arabs and Jews and respect for each other's right to self-determination[468] as this would provide a stepping-stone

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461. Leaflet/NLL: For the Establishment of a Popular Front. loc.cit.
462. And Now...What is to be Done? op. cit. p. 7.
463. NLL Leaflet: To the Arab People. August 1948.
464. And Now...What is to be Done? loc. cit.
465. Ibid.
466. NLL Leaflet: To the Arab Palestinian People, August 1948. loc.cit.
467. NLL Leaflet: For the Establishment of a Popular Front. loc.cit.
468. Al Usba. N.1. August 1948. loc. cit.

on the path to eventual re-unification.

Already in August 1948 the NLL was attempting to explain the switch it had performed in transferring its support from the "united and undivided democratic state" to the "two state" solution. While insisting on the correctness of its previous slogan, the NLL explained the failure of its realisation as a consequence of the reactionary policy of the Arab leaders and "reactionaries among the Jews" who thwarted the growth of understanding between the two communities.[469] The NLL was already trying to find ideological justification for its new line, and echoing the analysis of the Jewish communists, it shyly introduced the thesis that "a new society possessing national characteristics had appeared in Palestine" as a result of Jewish immigration and settlement, and that this "new nation...had the right to determine its own future and set up its own state".[470] This was further amplified in a subsequent publication, which although entitled "Why we must struggle for the Arab Palestine state" devoted itself to a self-criticism of the previous policies and ideological positions of the NLL.[471] The first self-criticism revolved round the NLL's policy of "national unity" which it now declared to have been mistaken and to have provided "a cover for the treasons of the national leadership".[472] The correct policy would have been to expose the reactionary leaders of the Arab national movement and to isolate them from the Arab masses. In the absence of such a policy, the NLL held itself partly to blame for the mistakes of the national movement which had contributed to the lack of understanding between Arabs and Jews. The second and more significant self-criticism centred on its attitude to the "democratic state" and the Jewish minority in the country. While affirming that the slogan of the "united democratic state" as an expression of the right to self-determination for all Palestine's inhabitants, was correct at a certain period,[473] it went on to explain that the absence of under-

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469. Al Usba. N.1. August 1948. loc. cit.
470. Ibid.
471. Why We must Struggle for the Arab Palestine State. NLL Pamphlet, September 1948.
472. Ibid. p. 4.
473. Ibid. p. 6.

standing had created conditions which rendered the struggle for such a state "unrealistic and futile".[474]

The NLL also elaborated on its new found discovery of the existence of "a separate Jewish nationality" in the country. This new society had evolved during the years of the Mandate in complete isolation from Arab society and was characterised by its possession of a separate language, culture, and economy.[475] The existence of "new national seeds" in Palestine which had begun to become clear before and during World War Two, meant that it was wrong to force the "Jewish nation" in the country to accept the position of a minority in a united state. The correct policy would have entailed "recognition of rights of both nations to self-determination to the point of separation and the establishment of independent states".[476] Thus, both on the grounds of feasibility and ideological principle, the NLL arrived at the position that the partitioning of the country and the establishment of two separate states was correct.[477]

This new position of the NLL towards the Jewish national question in Palestine and its explicit support for the Jewish people's right to establish their own state, rendered meaningless the continued separation of Arab and Jewish Communists. Accordingly the two groups decided to amalgamate. The Jewish communists, having now established themselves as the Israeli Communist Party, declared that the NLL's "change in position towards the national problem in Palestine" had "removed the last stumbling block in the path of unity", and affirmed their readiness to unite with the Arab communists.[478] Late in October 1948 a Unity Congress was held in Haifa, attended by Arab and Jewish delegates, which reaffirmed the internationalism of the Palestine communist movement which had been ruptured since 1943.[479]

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474. Why We Must Struggle for the Arab Palestine State. NLL Pamphlet, September 1948. op. cit. p. 7.
475. Ibid. p. 8.
476. Ibid.
477. In October 1948, four Arab communist parties, the NLL, the Iraqi, the Syrian and the Lebanese parties had declared their support for partition. See, Statement to the Arab peoples regarding the Palestine problem and Anglo-US imperialist war aims in the Arab East. Leaflet. October 1948.
478. Statement of CC of Israeli Communist Party, 6 October 1948. IT 18 October 1948.
479. M. Vilner. Twenty five years of the unity of Arab and Jewish communists. IT 23 October 1973.

The Arab communists had to pay the price for their belated recognition of the "Jewish nation" and their initial hesitations towards partition before they could be accepted by their Jewish comrades. This they did in the form of a public self-criticism of their past mistakes. According to this new version of the Party's history, the separation of the Arab communists in an independent organisation was proferred as the cause of their "inability to realise the new conditions in Palestine", namely the establishment of an "independent Jewish nation".[480] This had necessitated new methods of struggle and the Arab communists declared themselves guilty of not having raised the slogan of "the rights of the Arab and Jewish nations to independence and national sovereignty on the basis of the Marxist-Leninist principle of self-determination". They had failed to perceive this, and had consequently weakened the struggle of the Arab and Jewish workers. The second consequence of the existence of a separate Arab communist organisation was the rise of a "national right deviation" in the ranks of the NLL,[481] which regarded the Arab people as alone capable of freeing Palestine and defeating British imperialism, and disregarded the potential of "the revolutionary forces among the Jewish people". Consequently the Arab communists' policy had been based on a broad "national front" which combined within it "bourgeois and semi-feudal elements". What the NLL had not realised, was that this unity was doomed to failure as "the agents of imperialism" were incapable of joining a front aimed at its expulsion from the country. The practical outcome of the Arab communists' activity had been to ignore the importance of "exposing the bourgeois and semi-feudal leaders of the national movement" and of releasing the Arab national liberation movement from their control.

The NLL was recognisably fundamentally different from the pre-split PCP and not only in so far as its membership was restricted to one national group in a bi-national country. Even as an Arab party

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480. Statement of CC/NLL, End of September 1948. K.H. 15 October 1948.
481. Ibid.

it did not constitute a continuation of the PCP. It saw itself as an inherent part of the Arab national movement and its role as the struggle, not for communism or social revolution, but for national independence. This view was based on its interpretation of the role of a Marxist party as being conditioned by the stage of development of a particular society. In Palestine, where the primary contradiction was seen to be between Arab society as a whole and the continuing British occupation, its role was seen to be one of support for the national independence struggle of the Arabs. The NLL denied that its support for such a struggle, or the similarity of its aims with those of the Arab national movement, transformed it into a nationalist party. Yet in practice, it proved itself always ready to abide by the decisions of the national movement and, despite the fact that it fought and lost many battles with the leadership of the movement concerning democracy within the national ranks, the attitude to the Jewish inhabitants, and regarding co-operation with the international "anti-imperialist camp", it remained loyal to this leadership and refused to dissociate itself from it.

The political platform of the NLL was devoid of any class character and contained no socialist planks or even a mention of the form of the future state. Class conflict was absent from its perspectives and emphasis was pre-eminently given to the widest possible national unity. The NLL's claim to "progressiveness" lay in its social demands and its support for the USSR, but even those demands were of a modest character and took second place to the slogan of "national unity" and the need to realise class collaboration. The NLL attempted no creative application of Marxism to local conditions, nor did it broach any of the fundamental issues of Arab society. If anything, its attempted use of traditional and Moslem themes to appeal to the widest possible sections of the population, although undoubtedly contributing to its success, also reinforced traditional values, and reduced its Marxism to little more than the struggle against imperialism and the demand for the establishment of a "welfare type" state.

As far as the internal struggle in Palestine was concerned, the NLL refused to recognise the existence of a three-cornered fight comprising the Arabs, the Yishuv, and the British, and reduced the

situation to a straight forward struggle between the Arabs and the British. The antagonism of the Yishuv towards the British was ignored as was the Arab-Jewish struggle itself. The NLL refused to draw the relevant conclusion from the overwhelming support of the Jewish inhabitants to the Zionist program of the Jewish state. In the interests of the cherished Jewish-Arab co-operation and understanding, the NLL saw fit to deny the existence of realities which contradicted this ideal. Later in the Mandate when its propaganda began to portray the struggle as one of self-determination for the inhabitants of Palestine, the Arab communists did not explain the content of this slogan. The inhabitants were, after all, not united, but composed of two groups with opposed national aspirations. To the Arabs self-determination meant an Arab state in all of Palestine, while to the Jews, this same self-determination meant the establishment of a Jewish state over as large a part of Palestine as was possible. In reality of course, the NLL identified itself with the aims of the Arab national movement, although it had its own specific solution to the problem of the Jewish inhabitants, and was completely opposed to the aims and aspirations of the Yishuv, which was both ready and desirous of partition.

As the Mandate drew to a close, the NLL's call for a "peaceful solution" became more vociferous. This suffered from two weaknesses: it was directed at one part of the population only, and it ignored the realities of the situation. The armed and organised Yishuv constituted a "state within a state"; while at the same time, the Arabs, though neither organised nor armed to the same degree, were confident of the military intervention of the neighbouring Arab states. Both sides were preparing for the forthcoming struggle and had made clear their determination to fight to achieve their expressed political aims.

From 1946 until the end of the Mandate the NLL chose to see the UN as the best medium for the solution of the Palestine problem. It was confident that recourse to the international community would result in the achievement of Palestine's independence. The Arab communists completely ignored the option of internal organisation as a means to realise their proclaimed aims of independence and the rejection of partition, and were desirous of an imposed solution.

This can only be explained in terms of their belief that the Soviet Union would support the Arab national movement's demand for an independent and united state. The prestige of the Soviet Union at the end of the war, and its possession of the power of the veto at the Security Council convinced the NLL that a new international balance of forces existed in the post-war period which guaranteed the success of the colonial peoples' struggle for self-determination and national independence. Its calculations foundered on the unexpected change in the Soviet position which left the NLL without a meaningful policy. The imposed solution which it had championed had, on arrival, turned out to be the threat which it had warned of all along and strove to avoid.

The NLL, despite its weaknesses, was nevertheless a unique feature of Arab society. It was the first modern party, organised not on the basis of traditional family loyalty, but possessing a clear-cut social and political program. Starting as a movement of intellectuals, it had succeeded in penetrating the ranks of the working class, and to a lesser extent, the intelligentsia. It had established a strong labour movement which provided it with a power base in Arab society, and had created an alliance of Arab workers and intellectuals. The main preoccupation of the founders, having established their working class base, was to widen their appeal in order to increase their support among the more articulate section of Arab society: the predominantly "middle class" intelligentsia.

The traditional leadership of the Arab national movement remained adamant in its refusal to extend recognition to the NLL, and consequently the latter's role in influencing political events in Palestine remained small. Yet it was the first to foresee the dangers of partition and to realise the importance of Arab-Jewish understanding as the key to maintaining the unity of the country. Its warnings however, were continuously disregarded by the Arab leaders who acted on an "all or nothing basis". Its belated recognition of partition resulted not only from the necessity of following the Soviet lead, but also from acceptance of an existing reality and a fait accompli, which it realised the Arabs were incapable of overturning. The ideological justification for this

volte face, the "self criticism" and denunciation of the "nationalist rightist deviation" were the outcome of political exigencies, and the need to justify what had already taken place. Yet the NLL alone did not disintegrate among the total collapse of all Arab institutions in Palestine. Its members continued their activity during the 1948 war and later in the ranks of the Israeli Communist Party and the Jordanian Communist Party, which continued to be led by the communist leaders of the forties. While in 1948 it was possible to regard the NLL as having been more successful in the trade union rather than the political field, the success of the former proved to be of a short term and transitory nature. The collapse of Arab society and the mass exodus of 1948, led to the destruction of the labour movement and the disintegration of the Arab working class. Yet in the political field, the roots which the NLL hadmanaged to implant during the forties proved more resilient, and provided the framework for the subsequent activity of the Arab communists both in Israel and in Jordan.

CONCLUSION

Despite the small size of the communist movement in Palestine, a study of its activity throws light on the dilemma of a party that adheres to an internationalist position in a situation characterised by acute national polarisation. In its attempts to surmount the national divisions pertaining in the country and build a lasting Arab-Jewish communist organisation, the communist movement's record was a mixture of success and failure. The PCP failed not only in its attempts to create a lasting Arab-Jewish class alliance, but also in maintaining its unity. It was unable to withstand the nationalist pull which the Arab and Jewish communities exercised on Arab and Jewish party members and it eventually split into two completely separate national sections. Much of this failure was due not to subjective conditions, but was the outcome of the historical situation in which the communists found themselves. However, the Party's activity during the Mandate can be viewed as the beginnings of an on-going process, and in this sense it can be credited with a measure of success.

The communist movement in Palestine passed through three phases. The period 1919-1929 witnessed the birth of the movement within the ranks of labour Zionism, and its preoccupation with the tasks of the proletarian revolution on the international scene, and the Jewish working class on the national scene. The period 1930-1942 was marked by a preoccupation with the anti-colonial revolution, and the rise of a distinctly Arab orientation leading to a widening of the gulf between its Arab and Jewish members. The third period, 1943-1947 saw the Arab and Jewish communists each firmly established within their own national communities, pursuing nationalist policies, and unable, despite the lip service paid to the cause of internationalism and the community of interests between Arabs and Jews, to bridge the gap separating them, not to mention the wide chasm separating Arabs from Jews.

In the first phase of its development, the communist movement remained entirely faithful to its origins, both in respect to its adherence to the primacy of the class struggle and in remaining within the confines of the Jewish community. Yet already its position was marked by ambiguity. Its total condemnation of Zionism cast a question mark on its own existence, but it could not come out against the continued existence of the Yishuv without denying the

raison d'etre for its own activity. Its development on the extreme left wing of the Zionist movement was, however, cut short by the advent of the Comintern's policy of support for the national independence struggles in the colonies.

The second phase of the communist movement's development was the most difficult. Once the decision to support the national independence struggle had been accepted, it was only natural that the Arabs should become the legitimate focus of the Party's activity. Despite the difficulties of this path, as a result of the disadvantageous position of the Jewish communists as members of a newly established alien immigrant minority, completely isolated from the indigenous inhabitants, and the general backwardness and unreceptiveness of the Arab population to the novel ideology, the Jewish communists succeeded in laying the groundwork for an Arab communist movement. Their very success raised the question of the position of the Jewish inhabitants and indeed the future role of the Jewish communists themselves. A satisfactory resolution of the problem posed by the ever-increasing Jewish presence was never achieved. This was a direct outcome of the communists' persistence in maintaining a differentiation between the Zionist movement and the Jewish community as a whole. At the base of this lay the communists' inability to comprehend Zionist ideology and its nationalist appeal, or to recognise its success in attracting relatively large numbers of Jews to Palestine.

The ambiguity surrounding the Party's attitude to the Yishuv created tensions within its ranks between Arab and Jewish communists. This came to a head at the time of the Arab rebellion of 1936-1939. Support for the rebellion was in line with the Party's policy of entrenching itself within the Arab national independence movement. Yet by its very nature, this support blurred the distinction which the Party maintained between Zionists and the rest of the Jewish community. The resultant split of the Jewish Section was partly a logical outcome of the Party's insistence on preserving this deep-rooted distinction between Zionism and the general Jewish public.

The split of the PCP into two separate national sections was evidence of the inability of the Party's framework to withstand the

pull of two opposing tendencies: support for the aims of the Arab national independence movement, and the crystalisation of the belief that the Jewish community in Palestine was undergoing a process of transformation into a national entity. The appeal the two hostile communities made on their respective members proved stronger than the promise of an eventual realisation of a community of interests between Arabs and Jews.

The newly achieved independence of the Arab and Jewish communists from each other in 1943 did not prove equally beneficial to both. The Jewish communists, continuing their opposition to Zionism remained on the fringes of the Yishuv. They reverted to a position similar to that held by the PCP during its first phase, opposing both Zionism and the traditional leadership of the Arab national movement, and confined their activity to the Jewish working class. The Arab communists on the other hand, proved more successful.

The NLL appeared on the Palestinian scene as an Arab party supporting the national aspirations of the Arab population. It managed to succeed where the PCP had failed and created a base for itself among the Arab working class and the intelligentsia, but this very success was the outcome of its national appeal and owed little to its identification with the international communist movement. Yet its insistence on differentiating itself from the more extreme policies of the Arab leadership made it suspect in nationalist eyes, and it was unable to exert an influence in the Arab national movement commensurate with its actual strength among the Arab population. The NLL's stand towards the Jewish minority continued to be marked by the same ambiguity which had characterised the policy of the PCP. It recognised the Jewish grouping in Palestine as a national minority in all but name, yet refused to extend to the Yishuv the right of national self-determination which Arab communists so loudly proclaimed. When the NLL did eventually come out in support of partition, this was in response to the dictates of Soviet foreign policy, though the same reasons adduced for the adoption of this new line could have been convincingly made a number of years earlier and would have followed quite consistently from the NLL's characterisation of the situation. The

Jewish communists on the other hand, found no difficulty in justifying their support for partition and threw themselves wholeheartedly into the struggle for the establishment of the Jewish state. The adoption of this position was facilitated by the Jewish communists' recognition of the Jewish minority in Palestine as constituting a national entity. With its support for partition, the communist movement in Palestine had travelled full circle from its early beginnings in 1919 as an outgrowth of labour Zionism. After more than twenty years of fierce hostility to Zionism, it had arrived at the conclusion of accepting the establishment of the Jewish national home.

The communists' support for partition was a belated recognition of their failure to discern the existence of a new reality in the country: the transformation of the Jewish community into a national entity. They also failed to win over the Jewish masses to their ideal of a united Palestine state or to secure the agreement of the Arab national movement to the presence of a large Jewish minority in the country. Support for partition did not imply a change in the international communist movement's long-term strategy of supporting the Arab national independence movement. Working actively within this strategy after 1948, the Palestinian communists were able to rebuild their organisations in Jordan and in Israel, and in the case of the latter at least, have scored significant successes. It is doubtful whether this could have been possible without the new direction taken by the PCP first with Arabisation, and later with the advent of an Arab national communist movement.

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