'The Left's Views on Israel: From the establishment of the Jewish state
to the intifada'

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ABSTRACT

The British left has confronted a dilemma in forming its attitude towards Israel in the postwar period. The establishment of the Jewish state seemed to force people on the left to choose between competing nationalisms - Israeli, Arab and later, Palestinian. Over time, a number of key developments sharpened the dilemma. My central focus is the evolution of thinking about Israel and the Middle East in the British Labour Party. I examine four critical periods: the creation of Israel in 1948; the Suez war in 1956; the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 and the 1980s, covering mainly the Israeli invasion of Lebanon but also the intifada. In each case, entrenched attitudes were called into question and longer-term shifts were triggered in the aftermath. The evolution of Labour's debates shows important contrasts with thinking in the Communist Party over the same period. There are also continuities and differences between developments in both British parties and their French equivalents.

Within the Labour Party (and the French Socialist Party) the virtual consensus of support for Israel was maintained in 1956; was tested but not completely broken in 1967 and more or less collapsed in the early 1980s. Within the British and French communist parties, the initial support for the formation of the Jewish state broke down by the 1956 crisis and the parties adopted a consistently pro-Arab perspective thereafter. However, in the 1980s the extreme anti-zionism of earlier periods was replaced with a more tolerant approach to Jewish nationalism. The left's attitudes did not derive directly from democratic socialist or communist principles. Non-ideological factors including political expediency, linkages between the left and the nationalist movements, intra-party organisational developments and the campaigning activities of certain individuals were critical to understanding the left's policy positions.

CONTENTS

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The debates in the late 1980s over the left's attitude towards Israel and the question of whether contemporary left-wing anti-zionism was a new form of antisemitism motivated me to do this thesis. As a student of race relations, I naively thought that it was impossible for the left to be racist in any way and I wanted to explore the issue further. Had I known how difficult this project was going to be, I certainly would have thought about doing something else. However, I did continue and, as the thesis evolved, I moved partially away from the initial question to the matter of how and why the left's attitudes towards Israel changed during the postwar period. On the premise that Israel's wars with the Arab countries and its treatment of Palestinian nationalism increasingly challenged the left's view of the state as progressive, I organised the thesis around major crises in Middle East history. Aware of the sensitivity of the topic, I have tried to avoid assessing Israeli policy, restricting myself as far as possible to describing Israel's rationale for engaging in the conflicts. Based on an inductive method, this study provides a simple account of Labour's, in particular, but also the British Communist Party's and the French left's attitudes towards these various turning points in Israel's history. Despite its narrative style and chronological structure, the project is not a history, partly because the requisite sources are unavailable and partly because I am not a historian. Nor is the thesis a study of foreign policy or international relations, areas about which I know very little. From the outset, I carried out the research because of its intrinsic interest. However, I do hope that it sheds some light on the theoretical question of political parties and policy change, and I have given this some consideration in the last section of the conclusion.

I could not have completed this study without the help of a number of organisations and people and I should like the opportunity to thank them.

Personal Acknowledgements

ABBREVIATIONS

ACCT	Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians
AEUW, TASS	Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Section
AFL	American Federation of Labour
AFP	Association France-Palestine
AUT	Association of University Teachers (not affiliated to Labour)
BOD	Board of Deputies of British Jews
BUF	British Union of Fascists
CAABU	Council for the Promotion of Arab-British Understanding
CERES	Centre d'Études et de Recherche et d'Éducation Socialiste
CGT	Confédération Générale du Travail
CIR	Convention des Institutions Républicains
CLP	Constituency Labour Party
CLPD	Campaign for Labour Party Democracy
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
CNFM	Convention Nationale des Français Musulmans
COHSE	Confederation of Health Service Employees
CPGB (CP)	Communist Party of Great Britain
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CRIF	Conseil Répresentatif des Institutions Juives de France
EDM	Early Day Motion
EEC	European Economic Community
EETPU	Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbing Union
EMU	Ethnic Minorities Unit
FBU	Fire Brigades Union
FGDS	Fédération de la Gauche Démocrate et Socialiste
FLN	Front de la Libération Nationale (Algerian)
GLC	Greater London Council

GMB	General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union
ILP	Independent Labour Party
JAFC	Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (CPSU)
JSG	Jewish Socialists' Group
LCC	Labour Co-ordinating Committee
LCC	London County Council
LCP	Labour Committee on Palestine
LFI	Labour Friends of Israel
LMEC	Labour Middle East Council
LPACR	Labour Party Annual Conference Report
LSE	London School of Economics and Political Science
MAP	Medical Aid for Palestine
MCF	Movement for Colonial Freedom
MESC	Middle East Sub-Committee (Labour)
MRAP	Mouvement Contre le Racisme et Pour l'Amitié Entre Les Peuples
MSF	Manufacturing Science Finance
NALGO	National and Local Government Officers Association (not affiliated to Labour)
NCLW(A)	National Conference of Labour Women (Agenda)
NEC	National Executive Committee
NGA	National Graphic Association
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NJC	National Jewish Committee (CPGB)
NLR	New Left Review
NUCPS	National Union of Civil and Public Servants
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUPE	National Union of Public Employees
NUT	National Union of Teachers (not affiliated to Labour)
OMOV	One Member One Vote
PCF	Parti Communiste Français
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
PLP	Parliamentary Labour Party
PS	Parti Socialiste
PSC	Palestine Solidarity Campaign
PSU	Parti Socialiste Unifié
SFIO	Section Français de l'Internationale Ouvrière
SFP	Scottish Friends of Palestine
SI	Socialist International
SOA	Socialist Organiser Alliance
SOGAT 82	Society of Graphical and Allied Trades (1982)
STUC	Scottish Trades Union Congress
SWP	Socialist Workers' Party
TGWU	Transport and General Workers Union
TUC	Trades Union Congress
TUFP	Trades Union Friends of Palestine
UCATT	Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNO	United Nations Organisation
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
WCFS	Bundist Workers' Circle Friendly Society
WRP	Workers' Revolutionary Party
WZO	World Zionist Organisation

Part One: Introduction and the
British Labour Party

CHAPTER ONE

ZIONISM, ISRAEL AND THE LEFT: AN INTRODUCTION

Socialists have found the question of nationalism particularly intractable. In theory, the universalist principles of socialism are antithetical to the particularist principles of nationalism. The left has responded to this opposition in two ways. Some, like Hobsbawm, have rejected outright the integrity of nationalism.[1] Others, like Debray, believe that socialists have failed fundamentally to understand nationalism and need to confront the question.[2] However, the second solution gives way to a further problem, namely, how to reconcile competing nationalist aspirations. This thesis considers the way in which the left, principally the British Labour Party, has dealt with the particular conflict between Jewish, Arab and later, Palestinian nationalism. In this chapter I review socialist attitudes towards zionism and the development of the Israel/Arab conflict. Section one surveys far left attitudes, including those of the classical socialists, communists and the new left. Section two examines the attitudes of the social democratic left, especially the Labour Party. Section three outlines the principal objectives and structure of this study and section four looks briefly at the particular dilemmas this project raised for its author.

1.1 Far Left Attitudes

The legacy of Marx' efforts to reconcile the universalist principles of socialism with the particularism of nationalism was ideological ambivalence. Marx initially believed that national differences and conflicts would disappear under the universalising impact of capitalism. Later, Marx understood nationalism as an expression of the capitalist need for bigger markets. Since nationalism was the 'building block' of capitalism and socialism was the successor of capitalism, Marx favoured the national movements that he felt were most conducive to the development of the forces of production, such as German and Italian unification.[3] In accordance with this premise,

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[1] Hobsbawm, 1977:3-23; see also, Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds., 1983.
[2] Debray, 1977: 25-41.
[3] Avineri in Reinharz and Mosse, eds., 1992:285-286.

it was not even the case that movements of colonial liberation could always depend on Marx for support: In 1857-59, he refused to back Indian independence on the grounds that the entry of British capitalism into India was a progressive development.[4]

If socialists have found nationalism taxing, Jewish nationalism and modern political zionism have created an even greater source of dilemma. While Jewish nationalism has a long history, zionism as a political movement did not properly emerge until the late nineteenth century, largely at the initiative of Theodor Herzl, who helped establish the World Zionist Organisation (WZO).[5] Even then, Jews were ambivalent about the attractions of zionism, with critics arguing that the movement for the creation of a Jewish state was utopian because Jewish assimilation was unstoppable and with thousands of Jews in western and central Europe joining left-wing movements.[6] An important historical tie between Jews and socialist movements has existed. The classical socialists Marx, Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg were all Jewish. Moreover, Jews have numbered disproportionately in communist parties such as the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB)[7] and they have played a significant role in the social democratic left[8] and the new left.[9] Nevertheless, the universalist and internationalist principles of socialism have tended to militate against recognition of a Jewish national identity. Marx, Trotsky and Luxemburg all distanced themselves from their Jewish origins, to the extent that some commentators have described them as 'self-hating Jews'.[10] A more fitting description, perhaps, would be that of the 'non-Jewish Jew'.[11] Whatever the label, it is certain that these people had little time for the concept of Jewish national identity.

Confronted with Jewish nationalism, the classical socialists typically responded in a negative way. They considered this form of nationalism reactionary since it was based on the idea of Jewish separateness. For Marx, Jewish emancipation did not depend on a national solution. Jewish oppression was rooted in the historical role Jews had been forced to play; the emancipation of the Jews therefore depended upon

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[4] Davis, 1965:26-31.
[5] Peters in Foley, ed., 1994:155.
[6] See Laqueur, 1971:161-165.
[7] Alderman, 1992:293.
[8] See Rubinstein, 1982.
[9] See Cohen, 1980.
[10] Rubinstein, 1982:99-104.
[11] See Deutscher, 1968.

the disappearance of the Jew as historically defined.[12] More fundamentally, classical socialists did not believe that Jewish nationalism had any potential for speeding up the break-down of feudalism and consequently objected to the idea that it represented a progressive form of nationalism.[13]

This unwillingness to credit Jewish nationalism with any legitimacy carried on into the international communist movement. Like their mentors, Lenin and Stalin believed that the Jewish problem could be solved through the assimilation of the Jews. They viewed zionism as a reactionary movement because it opposed this process. Lenin objected to zionism on the grounds that it identified Jews as a separate caste and hence dovetailed with anti-semitism. Stalin disapproved of Jewish nationalism on the grounds that the Jews did not possess what he regarded as all the criteria of nationhood: a common language, territory, economic life and culture. Most importantly, Lenin and Stalin rejected Jewish nationalism because they thought it had no revolutionary potential. Indeed, they characterised zionism as a bourgeois form of nationalism that divided the Jews.[14]

Based on a genuine commitment to ending anti-Jewish practices, opposition to Jewish nationalism within the classical socialist tradition was fairly benign.[15] However, left-wing anti-zionism has not always been so innocuous. The anti-zionist campaigns initiated by the Soviet Union took on particularly brutal contours. The alliance between Soviet communism and zionism between 1945 and 1949, when the USSR supported zionist aspirations for statehood in an effort to undermine British interests in the Middle East,[16] collapsed with the escalation of the cold war. Communist anti-zionism was brought into cruel relief in the early 1950s. The Slansky trials took place in Prague in 1952 when fourteen Czech politicians, eleven of whom were Jews, were charged with involvement in a 'world-wide Jewish-nationalist-zionist imperialist' conspiracy against Czechoslovakia. Under torture, the deputy premier Rudolf Slansky, confessed to being a zionist and American agent. The so-called 'Doctors' Plot' took place in 1953 when nine Russian doctors, seven of whom were

[12] Marx, K., 'On the Jewish Question' in McLellan, D., ed., Karl Marx Selected Writings, 1977: 39-62.
[13] Wistrich in Wistrich ed., 1979:3-11.
[14] Ibid:12-13; Gitelman in Wistrich ed., 1990:16.
[15] Wistrich in Wistrich ed., 1990:46-48.
[16] Wistrich in Wistrich ed., 1979:283; Gitleman in Wistrich ed., 1990:20.

Jews, were accused of collaboration with the western intelligence service.[17] Russia's recognition of Israel in the post-1948 period was invariably accompanied by denouncements of zionism. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) identified zionism with the 'Jewish bourgeoisie', imperialism and fascism and condemned Israel as the 'base and bridgehead of imperialism'.[18]

The various national communist parties have tended to mirror the CPSU's stand. Despite the sense of mutual identification between British Jews and communism in the 1930s and 1940s as a result of the rise of fascism and the communists' role in anti-fascist activities,[19] the Communist Party of Great Britain (CP) has consistently and mechanically adopted an anti-zionist stand. The party saw zionism as the weapon of the bourgeoisie, a reactionary movement which divided the Jewish working class. In the context of the cold war, the British communists proclaimed that zionism was an agent of American imperialism. In France, where the Parti Communiste Français (PCF) was more important to the political process than in Britain, the communists also espoused anti-zionist ideas. Like the British party, the PCF held that zionism was a bourgeois form of nationalism which divided the working class.[20] At the time of the Slansky trials and the Doctors' Plot, the party spoke of Israeli and zionist espionage working for American imperialism.[21] Former Jewish members of the party have testified to the PCF's uncompromising line on zionism.[22] Faced with criticism, the party regularly persuaded prominent Jewish members such as Maxime Rodinson or Annie Besse (later Kriegel) to defend its view of zionism.[23]

Anti-zionism, which refers to opposition to Jewish national aspirations and, more recently, hostility towards the state of Israel, has a long tradition in socialist thought. The predisposition towards universalism and internationalism inherent in marxism made for an intolerance towards expressions of Jewish particularism and provided the basis for socialism's antipathy towards modern political zionism. While the marxist left offered its support to national movements regarded as progressive, it

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[17] Caute, 1964:202; Gitelman in Wistrich in Wistrich ed., 1990:19-21.

[18] Gitelman in Wistrich ed., 1990:21-24.

[19] See Alderman, 1992:293.

[20] Caute, 1964:202.

[21] Cohen and Wall in Malino and Wasserstein eds., 1985:92-93.

[22] See Kriegel, 1984.

[23] Caute, 1964:202; Cohen and Wall in Malino and Wasserstein, eds., 1985:93.

did not count Jewish nationalism among these.[24] Recent trends in the contemporary left indicate both a continuity with this tradition and a departure from it. Various historical movements and events, including the rise of Palestinian nationalism, a shift to the right in Israel and developments in the United Nations such as the 1976 General Assembly resolution stating that zionism was a form of 'racism and racial discrimination',[25] provided the background to a resurgence of anti-zionism. The new left, which identified with Third World national liberation movements, began to adopt the Palestinian nationalist cause and to articulate an anti-zionist stand. The new anti-zionists no longer portrayed zionism as the weapon of the bourgeoisie. Rather, they depicted zionism as a form of racism and colonialism and the state of Israel as inherently racist on the grounds that it was built on the idea of a purely Jewish state.[26] This strand characterised Israelis as 'aggressive, expansionist, fascist colonisers'.[27] The contemporary anti-zionist left's language reflected broader changes in socialist ideology. The new left differed from the traditional left because it envisaged a society free not only from class divisions but also gender and ethnic divisions.[28]

The developments that led to a resurgence of left anti-zionism impacted upon related movements such as the women's movement. The rise of feminist movements in the Third World and trends in the UN had a particular effect. During the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985), western and Third World feminists came together at the three conferences held in Mexico City, Copenhagen and Nairobi. At the meetings of the non-governmental organisations, zionism was denounced as a form of racism. Combined with the influence of the new left on western feminism, these developments produced a shift in attitudes towards zionism on the part of women's movements in the west and in Britain, a trend accentuated by Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Feminist journals such as *Spare Rib* and *Outwrite* portrayed zionist ideology as racist, imperialist and anti-feminist. The effect was to split the women's movement. Some Jewish feminists in particular objected to the parallels being drawn between zionism and racism or antisemitism.[29] Others, like Gill

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[24] Wistrich in Wistrich ed., 1979:1-15.
[25] See Lewis, 1976-1977:54.
[26] For a good example of this position, see Weinstock, 1979.
[27] Wistrich in Wistrich ed., 1990:48.
[28] Caute, 1988:20-21.
[29] Pope, 1986:13-25.

Seidel, dealt with the dilemmas raised by the invasion by distinguishing sharply between Israeli government policies and zionism.[30]

The historical relationship between Jews and socialism has therefore been paradoxical. While there has been a significant tie between Jews and left-wing movements, socialists have not always been free from anti-Jewish sentiment. For example, they have sometimes identified Jews with capitalism in their opposition to capitalism generally. Despite Marx' professed support for Jewish emancipation, it cannot be denied that he associated Jews with capital and held negative stereotypes about them as well as other national groups.[31] The French socialist tradition has been equally culpable. One of the founders of French socialism, Charles Fourier, objected to Jewish emancipation (which followed the 1789 revolution) on the grounds that it represented a new individualism. Fourier characterised Jews as 'parasites, merchants [and] usurers', although, he later supported zionism when he began to believe that it was a communitarian project. Marx' contemporaries in France, such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, also linked Jews with usury and capitalism.[32]

The recent appearance of anti-zionism within the contemporary left has raised again the question of socialist anti-semitism. Billig has suggested that characterisations of the state of Israel as essentially racist, colonialist or imperialist are premised on a failure to accord Jewish national identity any legitimacy.[33] Avineri has argued that anti-zionism, which contests the idea of the Jewish state, is necessarily anti-Jewish in so far as it refuses to allow for the secular (national) expression of Jewish identity.[34] Avineri's contention is an overstatement because it is possible analytically to distinguish between anti-zionism and anti-semitism. His conclusion does not take account of Jewish hostility towards zionism on religious grounds. Some ultra-orthodox Jews opposed zionism because as a secular movement it contravened the messianic message of the bible.[35] Moreover, as Billig has noted, socialists who reject zionism as part of a general hostility towards all forms of nationalism, are not guilty of singling out Jewish nationalism for criticism.[36]

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[30] See Bourne, 1987:6.
[31] Wistrich, 1975:1-6; Davis, 1965:33.
[32] Lichtheim, 1968:316-323.
[33] Billig, 1984a:3-4.
[34] Avineri, 1982:3-4.
[35] See Laqueur, 1971:169-170.
[36] Billig, 1984a:8-9.

In practice, however, anti-zionism has frequently incorporated traditional anti-Jewish themes, expressed in references to 'bourgois zionist Jews' and the conspiracy theory of zionism. In response to events such as Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the modern anti-zionist left used typical anti-Jewish themes. In Britain, Trotskyist groups such as the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) portrayed zionism as an all-powerful movement, responsible for reactionary policies everywhere, constructing a conspiracy theory of zionism that touched on the traditional anti-semitic stereotypes of the Jews.[37] The far left also equated Israelis with Nazis or fascists.[38] Although not necessarily anti-semitic, these parallels understandably offended some Jews. So, in continuation with the traditional left, contemporary far left ideology contained a reluctance to acknowledge the legitimacy of a Jewish national identity.

The controversy surrounding Jim Allen's play *Perdition*[39] brought out the significance of the issues surrounding the emergence of a left-wing anti-zionism in Britain. The play was supposed to have been staged at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs but was cancelled at the last moment. Based on a libel case held in Israel in the 1950s, Allen's play elaborated views characteristic of the anti-zionist left. *Perdition* centred principally on the theme of zionist/Nazi collaboration in wartime Hungary. In the resulting furore, the divisions within the left over Israel and the Palestinians came into sharp relief. Lining up with Allen were people like the radical intellectuals Noam Chomsky and Maxime Rodinson. Lining up against Allen were people like the enigmatic playwright Steven Berkoff.[40]

The play provoked a storm of protest. The historians Martin Gilbert and David Cesarani condemned Allen for misusing history and for exploiting anti-semitic themes.[41] Cesarani argued that *Perdition* belonged 'to a strand of left-wing anti-zionism that regards the accepted history of the Holocaust as an ideological prop for Israel's survival'.[42] He claimed that a conspiracy theory of zionism lay at the centre of the play in the accusation that zionist leaders in Hungary colluded with Nazi leaders like Eichmann in order to facilitate the emigration of zionists to Palestine. Cesarani

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[37] Billig, 1984b:28-34.
[38] Wistrich in Wistrich ed., 1990:48.
[39] Allen, 1987.
[40] See Allen, 1987.
[41] Ibid:123-124.
[42] Cesarani, 1987:7.

also felt that the conspiracy theory was manifest in the play's contention that zionists in Germany had secret meetings with the Nazis and that the American Jewish leadership remained silent when confronted with information about the extermination of the Jews.[43]

Political commentators on the right exploited the left's difficulties with the Israel/Arab conflict and zionism. New right thinkers such as Roger Scruton complained of the anti-racists' failure to tackle anti-semitism, which he saw as the principal manifestation of racism in Europe. Scruton suggested that in the postwar period Israel became an obstacle to Soviet policy in the Middle East, resulting in socialists dropping anti-semitism from their agenda. He argued that left-wing anti-zionism was an ill-concealed form of anti-Jewish prejudice.[44] Scruton's concern with anti-Jewish views did not fit comfortably with the fact that his own attitude towards ethnic minorities was at best ambivalent.[45] Entering the debate, Auberon Waugh asserted that the left's solution to the Jewish question would be 'extermination', in line with the ideas of Marx.[46] The acrimony surrounding the debate over the left and Israel and the 'Perdition affair' testifies to the importance of the issues addressed in this study and points to the need for a less heated look at left-wing attitudes.

1.2 Social Democratic Attitudes and the Labour Party

The social democratic left's attachment to the principles of internationalism and anti-imperialism has also created a source of tension between mainstream socialism and zionism. In Britain members of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) such as James Maxton regarded zionism as an instrument of British imperialism.[47] Key figures on the anti-colonialist left such as Fenner Brockway confessed to being completely bemused by the complexity of the Palestine question.[48] Nevertheless, the social democratic left has tended to be less hostile to zionism and Israel than the marxist and communist left and has been more sympathetic to the idea of a Jewish

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[43] Ibid; Cesarani in Wistrich in Wistrich ed., 1990:53-60.
[44] *The Times*, 3 April 1984:14.
[45] See various issues of the *Salisbury Review* and Seidel in Levitus ed., 1986 : 107 - 136 .
[46] *The Spectator*, 1 December 1984:6.
[47] Gorny, 1983:154-155.
[48] Howe, 1993:149.

national identity. In the period after the First World War in particular, reformist socialists began increasingly to acknowledge Jewish national self determination. Indeed, they thought that zionism was compatible with democracy and progress. British socialists like George Lansbury and Ramsay MacDonald and French socialists like Leon Blum sympathised with zionist aims for this reason.[49]

Since its establishment, Israel has generally been able to count on the support of parties such as the Labour Party and the French Socialist Party. Harold Wilson in Britain and Guy Mollet in France expressed a strong attachment to the Jewish state. According to Rubinstein, the social democratic left's identification with Israel rests on three main factors: First, the influence of nineteenth century liberalism on social democratic thought. Liberalism opposed the religious persecution of the Jews and fought for the removal of legal restrictions on Jewish participation in western society. Second, the tradition of reformism that enabled social democrats to reject aspects of marxist doctrine and to view Israel as historically justified. Third, the historically close association between western Jews and social democratic parties.[50] The Israeli Labour Party's dominance from 1948 to 1977 also contributed to this sense of unity. Starting off as Mapai in 1930, the Labour Party was formed in 1965 when three left-wing groups, including Mapai, merged.[51] Like the British Labour Party, the Israeli one was a member of the Socialist International.

However, the identification between Israel and social democracy has recently deteriorated. Rubinstein suggests that two particular developments underpin this shift. First, the view of the Palestinians as victims of Israeli policy that challenged the conception of Israel as the state of a persecuted minority. Second, the growing influence of what he describes as extreme socialist elements in the social democratic parties combined with a decline of consensus politics and economic affluence in the 1970s.[52] Changes in Israeli policy also contributed to this deterioration, including the disenfranchisement of Palestinians living in the occupied territories and the rise of the Likud right, which adopted a series of uncompromising policies in the West Bank and Gaza and annexed the Golan Heights.

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[49] Wistrich in Wistrich ed., 1979:11-12.
[50] Rubinstein, 1982:103-104.
[51] Ovendale, 1989:242.
[52] Rubinstein, 1982:112-113.

This picture of the social democratic left is based on impression rather than systematic research. Compared with the work done on the marxist left, few scholars have looked carefully at the mainstream left's attitude towards zionism and Israel in the post-state period. Only a single volume considers the Labour Party and zionism in a methodical and detailed way, looking at Labour's policy in the post First World War period and through various crises until 1948.[53] Gorny provides an account of the views of various strands of the party: the leadership, from Arthur Henderson to Clement Attlee; the Fabians through a consideration of the Webbs; and the Labour left, including the ILP. A critical limitation of this volume is its failure to grapple with the moral and political issues at stake for the Labour Party in its assessment of zionism and the genuine sense of dilemma within the labour movement over the conflicting claims to Palestine.[54] Indeed, most of the literature on socialism and zionism has failed to understand just how perplexing the Israel/Arab conflict has been for the left.

This failure has created a climate of polemicism rather than reasoned research. For instance, Wistrich has gone as far as to say that:

> '"anti-zionism" has...become an integral part of the political culture of the left as a whole, contaminating the mainstream social democratic parties, the trade unions, the liberal-left intelligentsia as well as the traditionally receptive student milieu'.[55]

Rubinstein has asserted that:

> 'the main enemies of the Jews and Israel are almost exclusively on the political left...Within the Western democracies, the main danger to contemporary Jewish interests comes from left-socialist anti-zionists, especially if they can wrest control of the social democratic parties'.[56]

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[53] See Gorny, 1983.
[54] Lockman, 1984:135-136.
[55] Wistrich in Wistrich ed., 1990:49.
[56] Rubinstein, 1982:77.

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The starting-point of these studies is that zionism has a monopoly over justice whereas Palestinian nationalism has no legitimate basis.[57] Billig's contribution to the debate is a notable exception to this pattern.[58]

In the 1940s, socialists were confronted with two movements for national self-determination: Jewish and Arab. The question of Palestine divided the left in an unprecedented manner and cut across the division between colonialists and anti-colonialists.[59] As the Israel/Arab conflict intensified, especially in the post-1967 period, the dilemmas facing the left were sharpened. Sartre has succinctly expressed this sense of predicament. As a result of his experience of the war, Sartre strongly identified with the Jews. He reported his horror at anti-semitism in a short book on the question.[60] However, the Algerian national liberation movement also made him sensitive to the Arab cause. When the 1967 war broke out, Sartre felt torn by a sense of conflicting loyalties and he suggested that the conflict had paralysed the left. He dealt with this tension by devoting an entire volume of *Les Temps Modernes* to the hostilities and placing the opposing views of the Jews and Arabs side by side. However, Sartre still concluded that the two cases were virtually irreconcilable.[61]

This brief review of the literature on the left, zionism and the Arab/Israel conflict shows the need for a systematic account of the social democratic left's attitudes. With obvious exceptions such as the material on the Soviet Union and the PCF, the existing literature has focused principally on left-wing groups and movements that are not part of mainstream politics. The marxist and new left play a vital role in bringing issues on to the political agenda, but their main goal is not to obtain office. These groups are relatively free to give full rein to their ideological position. What about left-wing parties that are ideologically committed to socialist principles but also constrained by their objective to gain power? How have they dealt with the dilemmas posed by the Israel/Arab conflict? Has there been a shift in the social democratic left's ideas and if so, what are the dynamics behind the change?

The Labour Party, like other socialist parties and groups, has a deeply rooted ideological tradition of internationalism. Labour's attitude towards international

[57] See for example, Wistrich in Wistrich ed., 1979:viii-xi.
[58] See Billig, 1984a; 1984b.
[59] Howe, 1993:148-149.
[60] Sartre, 1948.
[61] *Les Temps Modernes*, Vol.22.3, 1967.

issues cannot simply be read off Marx or other classical socialists. Movements as diverse as liberalism, Fabianism and Methodism influenced Labour thought.[62] Nevertheless classical socialism's affect on the party has not been insignificant. Labour was a member of the Second International in the early 1900s. It later became a member of the Socialist International. First formed in 1923 and then reformed in 1951 after its wartime postponement, the Socialist International was based on reformist rather than revolutionary principles, having a membership of social democratic parties. Nevertheless, Labour tried to develop a distinctively socialist approach to foreign affairs that incorporated the principles of internationalism, international working-class solidarity, anti-imperialism and pacifism.[63] The view that socialist principles should govern international policy as much as domestic policy has been an important part of Labour thought, constituting Labour's ethos[64] in relation to international matters.

In practice, the party's ethos and the actual policies adopted or implemented when in office have often clashed. In the area of international affairs, Labour has traditionally been divided between those committed to a radical transformation of international relationships and those committed to a more pragmatic stand. This split has tended to reflect the cleavage between left and right.[65] In the 1940s the Keep Left group put pressure on the Labour government to pursue socialist policies abroad. In the 1960s a younger generation of left-wing activists campaigned vigorously against aspects of Wilson's foreign policy, especially his tacit support for American intervention in Vietnam. In both cases, the left felt that the leadership had abandoned the aim of pursuing a socialist agenda abroad. Whether the party's ethos is translated into policy at any given moment depends upon a variety of factors including whether Labour is in office, the particular balance of power held by the competing ideological strands, changes in the party's social base and an assessment of how British interests should be pursued.

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[62] Elliot, 1993:3.

[63] Gordon, 1969:1-30;43.

[64] According to Drucker the ideology of the Labour Party contains two dimensions: doctrine and ethos. Whereas the party's doctrine refers to explicitly formulated policies, its ethos alludes to a set of values not always spelled out (Drucker, 1979:8-9).

[65] Seyd, 1987:2.

From the end of the Second World War, Labour's approach to international affairs has gone through several radical phases. By radical I mean a commitment to the pursuit of specifically socialist principles, such as internationalism or anti-colonialism. In the 1940s, Labour's radicalism was expressed in its commitment to decolonisation embodied most notably in the case of India. However, the party's principled support for decolonisation was gradually undermined in the course of office, manifest chiefly in the government's desire to hold on to Britain's non-Indian empire. The Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, thought about extending British control in parts of Africa and he wanted to strengthen Britain's military and economic role in the Middle East.[66] In the mid-1950s a more socialist approach to foreign affairs re-emerged. Despite Gaitskell's hard-headed approach to international issues, as the Labour left gained strength and put pressure on the leadership to take on board some of its ideas, the party re-asserted its commitment to anti-colonialism. The campaign against the Suez war was a clear example of this new trend.[67]

The Wilson governments reverted to a more pragmatic approach, re-instituting the Atlanticism of other Labour leaders, manifest principally over Wilson's reluctance to criticise American involvement in Vietnam. The leadership's failure to condemn the USA generated a good deal of internal criticism and contributed to the collapse of consensus politics in the 1970s and 1980s.[68] In the early eighties the party embraced a new kind of radicalism in international affairs. Under the leadership of Michael Foot, Labour took on board a range of left-wing issues, including unilateral disarmament and opposition to American neo-imperialism.[69] The party began to take up causes such as anti-racism, anti-apartheid and opposed American involvement in the Third World. This trend ended in the late 1980s when the new leadership tried to make the party more electable after Labour's resounding defeat in 1983. How did shifts in Labour's internal politics and approach to international affairs interact with its position on zionism and the Israel/Arab conflict?

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[66] Morgan, 1989:191-193.
[67] Kavanagh and Morris, 1989:98-99.
[68] Ibid:102-103.
[69] Ibid:107-108.

1.3 The Structure of the Thesis

This thesis principally considers the evolution of the Labour Party's position from the postwar period to the late 1980s. Using a narrative style, I look at Labour's responses to four critical turning points in the history of the Middle East: the period surrounding the establishment of the Jewish state; the 1956 Suez war; the 1967 Arab/Israeli war and the invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and its aftermath. I have chosen to organise the thesis around these events for two reasons. First, they triggered debate within the left. Second, they represent important turning-points in the history of the Israel/Arab conflict and called into question entrenched attitudes, forcing socialists to confront rival national claims. Although the 1973 war was important, I have not included it because the debates centred principally over the oil crisis rather than the rival nationalist claims. The study seeks to shed light on the way Labour's ideology interacted with these developments and the process of policy formulation and ideological change. The thesis is divided into two parts. Part one examines Labour Party policy and part two considers the British Communist Party and the French left and ends with a general conclusion.

When Labour came to power in 1945 it was ostensibly committed to a process of decolonisation. Although ambivalent on the question of political change in the colonies, the party explicitly favoured Indian independence.[70] Immediately before entering government, Labour was overwhelmingly committed to zionism,[71] opposing the Conservatives' restrictions on Jewish immigration into Palestine and supported the development of a Jewish state. Chapter two examines a number of issues. It considers the construction of a consensus of support for zionism and the way the party reconciled its anti-colonialist ethos with its pro-zionist position; the process by which Labour threw aside its commitment to zionism once in office, generating intra-party conflict as a consequence, and finally, the way the party reverted to its pro-zionist position in 1949-1951, this time in the form of a pro-Israel orientation.

By the time of the Suez war in 1956, Labour contained a strong current of anti-colonialist ideology, partly as a result of the rise of the left. The Movement for

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[70] Howe, 1993:143.
[71] Alderman, 1983:125.

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Colonial Freedom (MCF), formed in 1954, was dominated by Labour people. The organisation opposed the economic exploitation of the colonies and supported independence. The Labour left put pressure on the right to adopt a more critical approach to a range of foreign policy issues, including Atlanticism and American neo-colonialism.[72] Also by 1956, the party was a staunch supporter of the state of Israel.[73] Given Labour's anti-colonialist ideology, Israel's role in the war against Egypt represented a particular challenge. How did the party reconcile its identification with Israel with its part in the anti-war campaign? Chapter three looks at the way Labour resolved this challenge to its previous consensus of support for Israel, showing how this consensus was maintained despite the party's impassioned opposition to British and French military interventions in alliance with Israel. I also identify the sources of dissent that emerged as a result of the war and investigate their dynamics.

Labour's ostensible commitment to decolonisation continued during the 1960s. Between 1964 and 1970 a number of countries gained independence, including Northern Rhodesia, the Gambia and British Guyana.[74] At the time of the 1967 Arab/Israeli war the party's identification with Israel was deeply entrenched. Wilson was notably pro-Israel and the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) was similarly inclined. Israel's role in the conflict, especially its decision to maintain a military occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights, provided a major challenge to this pro-Israel orientation, as did the rise of an independent Palestinian nationalism stimulated by the defeat of the Arab states.[75] These developments forced Labour to confront the opposing claims of the rival nationalisms. Chapter four considers the way Labour leaders, MPs and factions dealt with the dilemmas raised by the war. Was the party able to stand by its identification with Israel while it was in government? Did the growing divisions within the party over foreign policy affect attitudes towards Israel? Did 1967 stimulate a break-down in Labour's consensus of support for Israel and if so, who were the key dissenters?

In the early 1980s, Labour's approach to international issues was radicalised. The invasion of Lebanon in 1982 symbolised the rise of the right in Israel, taking

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[72] Kavanagh and Morris, 1989:98-99.
[73] Kyle, 1991:89.
[74] Kavanagh and Morris, 1989:100.
[75] Ajami, 1992:140-141.

place under the government headed by Menachem Begin. Begin personified Israel's post-1977 shift to the right.[76] The invasion seemed to unleash a torrent of left-wing anti-zionism in general. Chapter five explores how Labour responded to this further challenge to its pro-Israel tradition and the tensions that resulted from the invasion. It investigates how a new consensus emerged around support for Palestinian national rights. It identifies the major sources of the movement for Palestinian national rights within the party and assesses the movement's success in getting Labour to adopt a pro-Palestinian platform. It asks whether sections of the Labour Party, like other strands of the left, became anti-zionist or even anti-semitic. Finally, the chapter examines the ways in which the pro-Israel strand of the party tackled this new development and the eventual policy compromise.

A secondary aim is to compare Labour's position with the British Communist Party's and the French left's. I have chosen these comparisons mainly because the existing literature tends to neglect differences over Israel within and between left-wing parties and groups. With respect to the communist left, the literature assumes that its position was unchanging and static, determined by ideological heritage and Soviet policy. The question of whether the communist parties' stance generated internal dissent and whether national political factors influenced their policy positions needs to be considered. For example, was the British party less circumscribed than the French party, given the former's marginal position in the political system? With respect to the British/French comparison, the part played by its particular historical and political needs to be addressed. Did French socialists' experience of Nazism produce a specific effect? Did the fact that France had a different colonial experience in the Middle East than Britain play a part in shaping left attitudes? Unlike in Britain, moreover, the French left has a history of fragmentation and rivalry between two large parties. Did this affect its approach to the Arab/Israel conflict?

Chapter six provides an account of the evolution of attitudes within the British Communist Party (CP). The CP has never been a major political force. After a brief spell of some popular sympathy in the 1930s and 1940s, its history had been characterised by a sharp decline in its membership and electoral base. Consequently, it has not constituted a serious rival to the Labour Party, a situation stemming partly

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[76] For a fuller account of the subordination of the moderate strand of zionism to the activist and fundamentalist strand see Shanin (1988:232-242).

from the nature of the political system.[77] Nevertheless, there are good reasons for including the party in this study. First, although the communists' relationship with Labour has been difficult,[78] there have been significant links between the parties, operating principally through the trade unions and the constituency parties. Second, the CP's relative distance from the formal political system provides the opportunity to delineate the effects of freedom from the political establishment on policy positions. Third, it is worthwhile including the CP for intrinsic reasons, namely, the historical tie between communism and the Jews.

The literature shows that the communists' position on zionism, Israel and the Palestinians largely mirrored the Soviet Union's and fundamental communist principles. However, following the chronology of the thesis, this chapter considers internal dissent over the question of zionism, Israel and the Palestinians and changes in the party's attitudes. Whereas in the case of the Labour Party there was a break-down in the consensus of support for zionism and Israel, the CP developed in a different direction. It ended up supporting Palestinian national rights but also adopting a more accommodating approach to Jewish nationalism for the first time. This chapter therefore focuses on the break-down in the consensus of opposition to zionism and Israel.

Chapter seven centres on the French left. The French left differs from the British left because it comprises two major parties, both competing for electoral support. The French Socialist Party started off as the Section Français de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO) in 1905 and ended up as the Parti Socialiste (PS), formed in 1969. Like the Labour Party, French socialists have a strong tradition of support for zionism and Israel. Leon Blum was actively involved in the zionist effort to establish a Jewish state. In 1956 France allied itself with Israel in the war against Egypt under Guy Mollet's socialist government. In 1967 the SFIO remained one of Israel's strongest supporters. This consensus dramatically broke down in 1982, giving way to a significant pro-Palestinian current. Why did this break-down occur? How did the French socialists' attitudes compare with Labour's? Formed in 1920, the Parti Communiste Français (PCF) enjoyed considerable electoral support until the 1970s, and was a serious rival to the Socialist Party. As a member of the international

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[77] Newton, 1969:1.
[78] See Pelling, 1991:49-54;79.

communist movement, it persistently adopted an anti-zionist stand. In 1967, the two parties clashed over their respective responses to Israel's role in the war. Even so, was it the case that the PCF's position never changed? Was the PCF's ideology unaffected by the constraints imposed by its incorporation into the formal political process? Chapter seven examines the evolution of the French left's approach to Israel. In chapter eight, the conclusion, I describe the main themes concerning changes in the left's attitudes and then go on to draw some conclusions about the theoretical question of policy change in political parties.

1.4 A Note on Research Method, Terminology and Sensitivity

The nature of the research topic and the kinds of questions asked should direct the way the researcher conducts her research. This study's focus on policy and attitude change over time led me towards qualitative documentary research. Pre-existing documents of the parties under investigation were the only means by which I could access past policy positions and trends within the left's attitude towards Israel. My sources included both published and unpublished documents such as conference reports, biographies, political diaries, party newspapers and journals, parliamentary reports and Early Day Motions (EDMs),[79] interviews and internal policy documentation where available or appropriate.[80] The problems associated with archival research are numerous. Unlike other forms of research, such as questionnaire surveys, it does not generate evidence but depends upon finding it.[81] This gives rise to a series of difficulties, including: document availability, sampling problems when confronted with a profusion of documents and making inferences from documents other than their factual statements.[82] Moreover, once documents have been dug out, they can turn out to be 'unyieldingly barren'.[83]

During the course of my research, I encountered some of these difficulties. Formal government rules, such as the thirty-year rule, meant that I had no access to

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[79] An EDM is a parliamentary member's motion for which no date has been fixed for debate and, in most cases, never gets debated. Its function is to record members' opinion and to canvass support from other members (Factsheet No. 30, Early Day Motions, Public Information Office).
[80] See appendix one.
[81] Goldthorpe, 1991:213-214.
[82] Platt, 1981a:33.
[83] Goldsworthy, 1971:4-5.

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Cabinet documents on the 1967 hostilities and the subsequent conflicts. Moreover, although the Labour government's Palestine policy in the 1940s has been well researched, some relevant documents have not been released on the grounds of sensitivity.[84] The Labour Party itself operates a fifteen-year rule covering its internal documentation, which meant that documents relating to the early 1980s were unavailable. I also came across incomplete archives. Neither Labour Friends of Israel (LFI) nor the Labour Middle East Council (LMEC) appeared to have complete records of their membership over the years, prohibiting a systematic analysis of trends in participation in these organisations. The British CP's archives, moreover, turned up some interesting internal documentation relating to the 1956 crisis, but very little on the other wars. Rather dubiously, the PCF claimed that it had no internal documents whatsoever relating to Israel. Dryness was another problem. It was not unusual to trawl through several years' conference reports from the Labour Party, TUC or Labour Women, only to discover no reference at all to Israel. Alternatively the references were sometimes very dull. After discovering 'Israel' in the index to one of Tony Benn's diaries, I was disappointed only to find that Benn had had 'a long talk with Messaoud about Israel'.[85] Such experiences were not atypical.

These difficulties in turn gave rise to the question of bias and the plausibility of inferences. I tried to resolve these problems by using a plurality of sources in the hope that a consistent picture of party attitudes and policies would emerge. With this in mind, I interviewed some people directly involved in the parties' debates over Israel and, although they came from different perspectives, some consistency in their accounts of policy changes did emerge. With respect to the Labour Party in particular, I carried out a quantitative analysis of EDM signatures to show trends in the PLP's attitudes. The use of EDMs is itself problematic, with parliamentary members signing them sometimes in an arbitrary way.[86] Nevertheless, groups of MPs have tended to unite around particular issues.[87] My own use of them certainly confirmed my perception of opinion changes towards Israel derived from other sources.

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[84] Stephen Bird, Labour Party archivist, Museum of Labour History.
[85] Benn, 1987:83.
[86] Berrington, 1973:6-11; Norton, 1981:89.
[87] Berrington, 1973:7-9.

A further issue that needs to be addressed here is the use of the categories pro-Israel or pro-Arab in this study. I attribute a 'pro-zionist/Israel' category to individuals or groups who show a slightly more favourable attitude towards Israel than to the Palestinians or a definite sympathy in this direction. This orientation may be expressed in assertions about Israel's right to exist, opposition to pro-Palestinian elements in the party and opposition to recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). A 'pro-Arab/Palestinian' label is attributed to those individuals or groups who show some sympathy for Arab and Palestinian national goals. This may be expressed in criticism of Israel's policies with respect to the Arab countries or the occupied territories, outright anti-zionism or declarations of support for Palestinian statehood and for the PLO. Such a simple classification obviously obscures subtle differences in positions within both strands. It lumps Michael Foot and David Watkins together as pro-Palestinian but obscures the fact that their views are different in important respects. However, it is justified on the grounds that it gives a feel for shifts in opinion. In fact, I have used these categories throughout the study and in different contexts. The categories are useful only as summaries and I have drawn out the more subtle distinctions in the text.

Finally, the sensitivity of the topic being examined should be considered. Research takes place in a political context, either institutional or interpersonal, which can affect the outcome of the work.[88] According to Lee and Renzetti, a topic is sensitive when it is potentially threatening to the researcher or the researched or both and when this has problematic consequences in relation to the research.[89] The sensitive nature of the topic in this study certainly had serious repercussions for the outcome of the project. As a researcher who did not belong to any of the constituencies being studied (I am neither Palestinian, Jewish nor a member of any political organisation), I had been unprepared for the consequences of tackling the issue. My motives for engaging in the research were constantly questioned, with some direct implications for access to crucial material. For example, Poale Zion refused to allow me access to its internal documentation on the grounds that the question being addressed in my thesis was 'too fundamental'. A Palestinian who worked closely with the labour movement in Britain said that he would give me access to campaigning

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[88] Bell and Newby, 1977:10.
[89] Renzetti and Lee, eds., 1993:5.

activities amongst the constituency parties only if I allowed him to read my work first of all. Finally, a former editor of the *Tribune* newspaper, who had agreed to provide me with material on contacts between the newspaper and Palestinians, became less co-operative after I indicated that my interest in the topic had originally been motivated by an interest in the relationship between anti-zionism and anti-semitism. I do not blame these organisations or individuals for their defensive attitudes. Given the way people unsympathetic to their goals can exploit their respective positions, they are entirely understandable.

More importantly, however, the sensitivity of the topic was manifest in the way I often felt that I was walking on a tightrope in my efforts not to offend either Jews or Palestinians, or sometimes even the left. In relation to the first two groups, the effect of reading, firstly an account of the suffering of the Jews under Nazism and then an account of the problems experienced by the Palestinians, was very disorientating. I have tried to resolve the dilemmas raised as a result of dealing with a topic such as this by being as neutral as possible. Part of this has been achieved by describing the views of the left instead of entering into the debates that rage over the nature of zionism, Israel and the Palestinians. However, even description can be infused with values and I do not deny that some of the accounts could seem biased. In conclusion, although I have been systematic and rigorous in my treatment of data, I do not pretend that the story I tell will be complete and impartial. This is for two reasons. Firstly, the thesis is based primarily on 'relics of the past'[90] with all their attendant difficulties. Secondly, the sensitive nature of the topic has limited the possibility of total impartiality.

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[90] Goldthorpe, 1991:213.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LABOUR PARTY AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

The conflicting aspirations of the Jews and the Arabs in the period leading up to the formation of Israel were a problem for Labour. For the Jews, Palestine was to be the national home promised by the Balfour Declaration in 1917.[1] The country offered a territorial basis, rich with historic and religious symbolism, for a distinctive national identity and freedom from persecution. For the Arabs, Palestine was to be the independent Arab state promised by the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement.[2] Zionism was not a straightforward form of colonialism, representing an oppressed people's nationalist aims.[3] Nevertheless, as far as the Palestinian Arabs were concerned, Jewish colonisation of Palestine represented an unwanted 'import'[4] at a time when the Middle East sought independence from external domination. Both movements therefore appealed to the party's support for national self-determination and anti-colonialism.[5] Having a long internationalist tradition that was radicalised in the early 1940s with a demand for full social, political and economic rights for colonial peoples,[6] Labour came to power in 1945 committed in principle to anti-colonialism and decolonisation.[7]

In this chapter I shall consider, first, the construction of a consensus of support for zionism and why Labour identified with Jewish national aspirations over the Arabs'. Second, I shall discuss the collapse of this consensus in the post-1945 government and the leadership's adoption of a pro-Arab policy. Finally, I shall look at the resulting intra-party conflict and the re-emergence of a consensus of support for zionism in the leadership's gradual acceptance of the new Jewish state.

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[1] Laqueur and Rubin, eds., 1984:17-18.
[2] Ibid:12.
[3] See Shanin in Halliday and Alavi, eds., 1988:222-255.
[4] Said, 1992:57.
[5] Howe, 1993:149.
[6] Ibid:138.
[7] See Gordon, 1969.

2.1 The Construction of a Consensus of Support for Zionism

Despite the difficult nature of the Jewish/Arab conflict, there is not much evidence that Labour did a lot of soul-searching over the rival nationalist movements in the period running up to the 1945 general election. As Denis Healey recalls, the labour movement was 'overwhelmingly pro-zionist' by the end of the Second World War.[8] Between 1936 and 1945, the party's annual conference repeatedly confirmed its support for a Jewish national home or state.[9] Successive TUC conferences also accepted this policy, arguing for Jewish refugees to be admitted to Palestine.[10] Although the Labour leader, Clement Attlee, was personally anti-zionist, believing that this particular nationalist movement was irrational and romantic, he publicly endorsed Labour's pro-zionist policy in 1945.[11] Right-wing members of the leadership like Hugh Dalton and Herbert Morrison were pro-zionist. Even Bevin backed zionist goals during the war. On the left, Arthur Creech Jones,[12] Aneurin Bevan and Richard Crossman strongly supported Jewish nationalist aims. The radical left also favoured the establishment of a Jewish state. The leader of the Socialist League, Stafford Cripps, welcomed Jewish developments in Palestine as a just response to Germany's persecution of the Jews.[13] Fenner Brockway and most of the Independent Labour Party defended zionist goals.[14] Labour Women also supported the construction of a Jewish national home in Palestine.[15] Why, given the party's commitment to anti-colonialist politics, did it choose so overwhelmingly to support Jewish aims over Arab ones?

One of the reasons was Labour's political identification with zionism. Seeing the Jewish nationalist movement as a progressive form of nationalism, the party incorporated it into its anti-colonialist vision. An important aspect of Labour's attitude towards colonialism was based on social engineering or 'modernising imperialism'.[16]

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[8] Healey, 1989:90.
[9] Alderman, 1983:124-125.
[10] Ibid:124;128; Levenberg, 1945:198-199;260-261.
[11] Gorny, 1983:131;206-207.
[12] Colonial Secretary, 1946-1950.
[13] Gorny, 1983:152-153.
[14] Ibid:185-187.
[15] *The Labour Woman*, September 1937:136-137.
[16] Gupta, 1975:390.

Leading party members saw zionism as a means by which the Middle East region could be modernised. Dalton, for example, believed that Jewish immigration into Palestine would facilitate the economic development of the area, largely through the introduction of advanced irrigation techniques.[17] Labour's Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions used these ideas in its internal policy documents.[18] Even Bevin said that:

> 'there would be a great welcome for many more Jewish
> brains and ability throughout the Arab world. They
> possess the scientific, cultural and other abilities which
> the Middle East requires'.[19]

This attitude was not confined to the right. The Labour left's identification with internationalism had previously made it sceptical about zionism. Non-zionist Jews like Lucjan Blit,[20] who represented the Bund[21] in London, influenced this faction. The Bund was a marxist and anti-zionist party that believed that the Jewish problem could be solved without resorting to a territorial solution.[22] Nevertheless, the left began to believe that Jewish immigration would enhance the economic potential of Palestine. This faction argued that the Middle East was a region of 'vital imperial communications' which had been held back by 'a medieval land system', claiming that there was a need for a:

> 'unified development plan for the Middle East, based on
> irrigation, land reform and new industries...a sort of
> Tennessee Valley Authority for the whole Middle
> East...Into such a plan, Jewish colonisation in part of
> Palestine...could be fitted without real difficulty'.[23]

Left-wingers felt that Jewish colonisation of Palestine would facilitate the development of that country, encourage industrial development and raise the Arabs' standard of

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[17] Correspondence, Hugh Dalton to Herbert Morrison, 28 October 1944. Hugh Dalton's Private Papers, File 8/1.
[18] 'Economic Approach to the Palestine Problem', International Department, No. 276A, October 1944.
[19] Labour Party, Foreign Affairs, 1946-1947:9.
[20] Interview with Michael Foot, 1 November 1990.
[21] The General Jewish Labour Alliance in Russia, Poland and Lithuania (Alderman, 1983:53).
[22] Alderman, 1983:53.
[23] Tribune, 25 May 1945:8.

living.[24] They maintained that the Jews in Palestine were 'spiritually and physically virile, a progressive, civilised society' whose place in Palestine was of 'paramount importance in relation to the fate of democracy'.[25] Indeed, many saw zionism as a revolutionary movement that would bring Palestine into the modern world. Reflecting on the dilemmas posed by the contending nationalisms, Crossman commented:

> 'Looking at the position of the Palestinian Arab, I had to admit that no other western colonist had done so little harm. Arab patriotism and Arab self-respect had been deeply affronted...by the development of a national home; *but if I believed in social progress, I had to admit that the Jews had set going revolutionary forces in the Middle East* which, in the long run, would benefit the Arabs'.[26]

The ILP also supported Jewish immigration for this reason. Disaffiliated from Labour in the early 1930s as a party committed to revolutionary politics,[27] the ILP contained ethical socialists[28] like H.N. Brailsford and Fenner Brockway who both were principled anti-imperialists. However, they supported zionism on socialist grounds, with Brailsford enthusing about the movement's potential for introducing socialism into the region and with Brockway welcoming the Jewish labour movement in Palestine as a 'constructive contribution to socialism'.[29]

Developments in Palestine reinforced this position. The zionist movement was politically heterogeneous, but contained two basic elements: the fundamentalist strand represented by the revisionists and the moderate or liberal strand including people like Chaim Weizmann and Labour zionists. Based on the principle of nationalist exclusivity, the Revisionist Party[30] led by Jabotinsky adopted a maximalist position towards the Jewish state, opposing any co-operation with the Arabs. In contrast, the moderate strand was based on more universalist principles and favoured co-operative policies. These

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[24] *Tribune*, 25 May 1945:8.

[25] *Tribune*, 31 July 1942:8.

[26] Crossman, 1946:176; my emphasis.

[27] Foote, 1986:151.

[28] Ibid:17.

[29] Gorny, 1983:154-155.

[30] The Revisionist Party was formed in 1925 in opposition to Chaim Weizmann's and labour zionism's practical approach to the establishment of a Jewish state (Lucas, 1974:131).

two elements were in conflict in the period running up to Israel's formation, however, the moderates dominated both the international zionist movement and Palestine Jewry. This situation stemmed from the social characteristics of Palestine Jewry. In the pre-state era, the majority of the Palestine Jewish community was from eastern Europe and steeped in socialist traditions.[31] The Labour zionist party, Mapai, which was formed in 1930 and led by David Ben-Gurion, dominated institutions in Palestine such as the quasi-governmental Jewish Agency in the 1940s. Moreover, organisations like the Histadrut (the General Federation of Jewish Workers) were integral to the state-building process.[32] This situation produced an alliance between the Palestine zionist movement and the British labour movement. Ian Mikardo believed that the 'great friendship' between Labour and Israel was based on the fact that:

> 'Israel, the Yishuv, [had been] started by people who had
> immigrated to Israel mostly from eastern Europe, not
> entirely but mostly, with socialist ideals. Hence the
> formation of the Kibbutzim...the whole of the leadership
> of the Yishuv, virtually the whole...was of the left - Ben-
> Gurion, Eshkol, Golda Meir...and all the ideologues'.[33]

For people like Bevan and other left-wingers in particular, the idea that Jewish settlement of Palestine was a socialist enterprise was important: 'for these people [Bevan, Foot and others], those Jews in Palestine were socialists...socialists were creating Israel. The Labour left could not help but be excited'.[34]

Moreover, the wartime atrocities against the Jews gave zionism a moral legitimacy. Dalton adopted zionism as a 'personal cause' after his experience of the war,[35] claiming that the case for a limitation on Jewish immigration into Palestine had collapsed in the face of the 'cold and calculated German Nazi plan to kill all Jews in Europe', and the 'horror of the Hitlerite atrocities'.[36] The war also profoundly affected Bevan. When he became the editor of *Tribune* he appointed Jon Kimche and the former

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[31] This account derives from Shanin in Halliday and Alavi, eds., 1988:222-229.
[32] See Lucas, 1974:119-138;456.
[33] Interview with Ian Mikardo, 1 May 1990.
[34] Interview with Richard Clements, 19 May 1990.
[35] Pimlott, 1985:389-390.
[36] Dalton, 1957:426.

German Social Democrat and anti-Nazi refugee, Evelyn Anderson,[37] as his chief assistants.[38] As a result of the Nazi crimes, the left believed that the Jews' claim to Palestine was morally justified, contending that their right to Palestine lay:

> 'not only from an urge to act as a nation state, but perhaps even more from a primeval desire for a place where they [the Jews] can settle down and feel sure that in a few years they will not be treated as "aliens" and hounded out...'.[39]

Crossman reasoned that anti-semitism had prevented the Jews from committing themselves wholeheartedly to either Jewish nationalism or to assimilation and that anti-semitism provided the historical justification for zionism. For Crossman, 'history, reaching its climax in the Nazi persecutions, had made these few survivors of the Polish, Hungarian and Rumanian Jewish communities into the members of a Jewish nation'.[40] Other left-wingers like Harold Laski converted to zionism after the war. As a marxist and Jewish, Laski had objected to the idea that Jews were a separate national group, envisaging a world with '"neither Jew nor Gentile, bondman nor free"'.[41] After the Nazi genocide of the Jews, he began to attend Poale Zion meetings,[42] and in early 1945 Laski said that he felt like 'a prodigal son returning home'. Rejecting his earlier view that religion was the opium of the masses and his belief in Jewish assimilation, Laski became 'firmly and utterly convinced of the need for the rebirth of the Jewish nation in Palestine'.[43]

The war created a groundswell of sympathy for zionism throughout the labour movement. Parties in areas with a significant Jewish community such as Finchley and Friern Barnet, North Hackney, the City of Leeds Labour Party, Central Leeds CLP and Lewisham Central Labour Party and Trades Council made a considerable contribution to this.[44] The North Eastern Federation of the Labour Party at Newcastle Upon Tyne

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[37] Jenkins, 1979:37;Crick, 1982:445.
[38] Foot, 1962:302.
[39] *Tribune*, 17 November 1944:1-2; see also *Tribune*, 9 April 1943:10.
[40] Crossman, 1946:175.
[41] Martin, 1953:207; see also Kramnick and Sheerman, 1993: 4;54.
[42] Kramnick and Sheerman, 1993:462.
[43] *Jewish Chronicle*, 11 May 1945:10. See also Kramnick and Sheerman, 1993: 476-477.
[44] *Zionist Review*, 30 April 1943.

unanimously passed a resolution which endorsed the demand that the Jewish Agency be given authority to develop to the full capacity of Palestine to absorb immigrants and called upon the NEC to combat anti-semitism.[45] The Liverpool Labour Party and Trades Union Council pledged 'the wholehearted support of the Labour movement in the fight against anti-Semitism and for safeguarding the Jewish future in Palestine'.[46]

Moreover, there was a political alliance between Labour and the Jews. Jews who came to Britain in the late nineteenth century brought with them not only zionism, but also socialism and trade unionism. These east European immigrants concentrated in urban areas such as London's East End, parts of Manchester and Leeds, forming a significant Jewish working class. The socialist zionist organisation, Poale Zion, developed out of this population and affiliated to Labour in 1920, introducing leading Labour politicians such as Ramsay MacDonald to the movement in Palestine.[47] In the mid-1930s, the Jewish community increasingly turned away from the Liberal Party towards Labour. This shift occurred partly because of the Liberals' decline, but also because of the Jews' economic position. Alderman has suggested that by this time Labour 'had become the normal political home of the mass of poor working class Jews in Great Britain' and probably of many middle class Jews too.[48]

In the run-up to the 1945 general election, political opportunism played a part in Labour's pro-zionist platform.[49] The party, especially the leadership, saw that it was politically advantageous to adopt a pro-zionist position. The concentration of Jews in particular parliamentary constituencies opened up the way for a situation of mutual electoral rewards.[50] Labour candidates in areas with a high number of Jewish constituents made very explicit appeals to the Jewish vote. In Hackney North, for example, Harry Goodrich took great pains to inform the Jewish community of Labour's pro-zionist stand.[51] Two Jewish candidates stood for constituencies with substantial Jewish electorates: Maurice Orbach for East Willesden and David Weitzman for Stoke

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[45] Jewish Telegraphic Agency, London, 15 September 1943.
[46] Jewish Telegraphic Agency, London, 22 November 1943.
[47] Alderman, 1983:55-65.
[48] Ibid:115.
[49] Ibid:124-125.
[50] See Lawson, ed., 1980:14.
[51] *Jewish Chronicle*, 29 June 1945:1.

Newington.[52] Orbach made his sympathy for the zionist cause known at a meeting organised by the Barcai Zionist Society.[53] Both candidates won their seats, although it is not certain that their victory resulted from Jewish votes or the party's pro-zionist credentials. Candidates who tried to court Jewish voters in Hendon South and Prestwich[54] failed to win their seats.[55] Just before the election the Labour leadership tried to influence Jewish opinion. In May 1945, Dalton declared at the party conference that it was 'morally wrong and politically indefensible to restrict the entry of Jews desiring to go [to Palestine].[56] Attlee had always objected to 'the reconsolidation of Jewish nationalism on a political basis'.[57] However, in the period before the election, he emphasised that Labour was the party which would enable the Jews to fulfil their nationalist ambitions. From the other side, Poale Zion acted as a 'powerful pressure group' in the labour movement.[58] In the period running up to the election, it mobilised electoral support for Labour by stressing the party's Palestine policy.[59] Non-socialist organisations such as the Leeds Zionist Council, the General Election Bureau of the New Zionist Organisation in Great Britain[60] and the Jewish press[61] also informed Jewish voters of the record of the respective parties on zionism, suggesting that to vote Labour was to vote for Jewish interests.

These factors combined to put Arab nationalism at a disadvantage. Unlike zionism, Arab nationalism had no ideological or political ties with Labour. Left-wing movements, either socialist or communist, have traditionally played only a marginal role in Arab nationalism and nationalist movements such as Nasser's have tended to be anti-communist in theory and in practice, implementing severely repressive policies to deal with communist elements.[62] In the 1940s pan-Arabists based in Syria made appeals to socialist principles, but their socialism was 'vague and mild'.[63] Healey has remarked

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[52] Alderman, 1983:126-127.
[53] *Jewish Chronicle*, 29 June 1945:1.
[54] *Jewish Chronicle*, 29 June 1945:1.
[55] See Alderman, 1983:127.
[56] *Jewish Chronicle*, 18 May 1945:1.
[57] Gorny, 1983:137.
[58] Alderman, 1992:315.
[59] *Jewish Chronicle*, 15 June 1945:7.
[60] *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 June 1945:12.
[61] *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 May 1945:8.
[62] Halliday in Davis, Mack and Yuval-Davis, eds., 1975:164.
[63] Ajami, 1992:xiii.

that Labour's overriding pro-zionism sprang partly from the fact that neither the party nor the trade unions knew much about the Arab countries and that there were no socialist movements in the Middle East to draw attention to the Arab case.[64] It was not until the rise of Nasser and Ba'athism in the 1950s and 1960s that Arab nationalism began significantly to draw on socialist ideals and to make inroads into western liberal or left opinion.

Nor did the Arabs have the moral legitimacy zionism enjoyed, resulting from the Arab states' role in the war. As a result of the German occupation of France, Syria and Lebanon came under Vichy control and in 1941 Iraq became 'pro-Axis'.[65] The British wartime government, which included a number of Labour figures such as Attlee, Dalton, Morrison and Bevin, was eager to check pro-German feeling in Arab countries and engaged in considerable propaganda of a dubious quality to this end.[66] Moreover, during the war thousands of British troops were stationed in the Middle East. At the time, constituents' views on foreign and colonial affairs significantly constrained Labour MPs' positions. People like Bevan almost certainly took account of popular feeling on this issue. *Tribune* for instance, made a clear link between the Arab states' behaviour in the war and a refusal to recognise Arab demands. It suggested that the rival claims to Palestine had to be understood in terms of the Arabs' record against Britain and its allies:

> 'In the present war the Arab leaders, the Mufti, Rashid Ali (both now in Berlin), and their gang have sold themselves for cash to Mussolini, who exterminated thousands of their Libyan co-religionists. They have also sold themselves to Hirohito...Hitler's agents were more difficult to trace, but we know there were many, including some of the most prominent Arabs'.[67]

Moreover, a fundamental ambivalence in Labour's thought on colonial issues,[68] shaped the party's understanding of Arab nationalism. Labour's anti-colonialism was

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[64] Healey, 1989:90.
[65] Ovendale, 1992:15-17.
[66] *The Guardian*, 8 September 1994:22.
[67] *Tribune*, 10 December 1943:11.
[68] Howe, 1993:47-48.

'fragmentary' and 'fragile'[69] and confronted with the rival nationalist movements, this fragility came to the surface. Said has shown that west European colonialism in the Middle East and North Africa produced a belief system which conceptualised Arabs as backward, feudalistic and reactionary, lasting well into the post-Second World War period.[70] In relation to the Palestinian Arabs in particular, colonial history rendered them invisible. Although Palestine contained a sizeable Arab population, which, as a result of living under Ottoman rule and then the British mandate, had a significant national consciousness, western politicians persistently denied the validity of this consciousness.[71] Despite having achieved paradigmatic status in the study of non-European history,[72] Said has been accused of being theoretically inconsistent[73] and of overstating his case.[74] Although these comments have some purchase, Said's insights are of considerable empirical value and applicable to the case of the Labour Party, many of whose members succumbed to these popular images of Arabs.

For prominent party members, Arab nationalism did not have the same status as Jewish ones on a number of levels: economic, political and moral. Labour spokespeople on colonial affairs regarded the Arabs as backward and feudalistic. Arthur Creech Jones[75] was fairly progressive on colonial affairs, having links with organisations such as the Anti-Slavery Society and the Fabian Colonial Bureau.[76] However, he did not extend his empathy for colonial peoples to the Arabs, portraying the conflict over Palestine as one 'between the new order for which the Jews stand in Palestine and the *crumbling feudal system* for which a few rich Arab landlords stand'.[77] The extra-parliamentary left similarly viewed the Arab/Jewish conflict in terms of the Arabs' cultural, technological and political backwardness, saying that:

> 'the great majority of the Arabs does not really know
> what Democracy stands for...They were allowed to be led

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[69] Morgan, 1994:40.
[70] Said, 1985:15-19.
[71] Said, 1992:11-19.
[72] O'Hanlon and Washbrook, 1992:141.
[73] Ibid:155-157.
[74] Ahmed, 1992:179-191.
[75] Colonial Secretary from 1946 to 1950.
[76] Goldsworthy, 1971:14.
[77] Quoted in Levenberg, 1945:234.

by a few half-educated landowners and greedy politicians who soon enough made their contacts with Fascism. Rashid Ali of Iraq, Haj Amin of Palestine, and Ahmed Maher of Egypt, are not unrepresentative specimens of the Arab ruling classes.[78]

Labour was largely ignorant of the Palestinian people's aspirations. Leading Labour figures took no account of the Palestinians' views on Jewish immigration or their identification with Palestine. Dalton proposed a total transfer of the Palestinians suggesting that 'the Arabs be encouraged to move out, as the Jews move in', a policy which he thought would make the Palestinians happier.[79] This proposal was not merely an expression of Dalton's idiosyncrasy. Labour's annual conference unanimously accepted the policy in 1944.[80] Moreover, the Labour left shared these ideas. In 'A Palestine Munich?', Richard Crossman and Michael Foot envisaged the transfer of the Palestinians from certain parts of Palestine. They claimed that this policy would give the Palestinians Transjordan citizenship making them 'as they demand, citizens of an Arab state'.[81]

So, by the time of the 1945 general election Labour was, for a number of reasons, overwhelmingly supportive of the zionist aim to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. Despite its commitment to anti-colonialism, it had very little sympathy for Arab nationalist aspirations. In July 1945 Labour entered office with an impressive electoral victory, having gained nearly twice as many seats as the Conservatives. The extent of the victory produced a new optimism within the party, raising hopes for radical reforms in both domestic and international policy. With Ernest Bevin as Foreign Secretary, the party believed that the government would break with past traditions and create a new international order based on stability and peace. Bevin dominated nearly all aspects of the government's foreign policy, including Palestine.[82] In the following section, I shall look at what happened when Labour won office.

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[78] *Tribune*, 31 July 1942:8.
[79] Dalton, 1957:427.
[80] LPACR, 1944:4-9;140.
[81] Crossman and Foot, 1946:31.
[82] Morgan, 1989:231-236.

2.2 The Government and Palestine[83]

Despite this groundswell of sympathy for Jewish nationalist aims and opposition to Arab nationalism, the new government's policies broke sharply with the party's pre-election commitments. Immediately after taking up his new position as Foreign Secretary, Bevin told Attlee, 'we've got it wrong. We've got to think again.'[84] As soon as Labour came to power, the leadership decided not to repeal the central clauses of the 1939 White Paper, opposition to which was central to Labour's pre-1945 stand.[85] In November, the government announced the establishment of an Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry to investigate the conditions of Jewish refugees in Europe and the potential for mass Jewish immigration to Palestine. In 1946, the Commission recommended the immediate immigration of one hundred thousand Jewish D.P.s in Germany, a policy sanctioned by President Truman.[86] Despite the PLP's support for the Commission's proposals, Attlee and Bevin ignored its recommendations.[87] In February 1947, Bevin told the Commons that the government intended to hand the Palestine Mandate back to the United Nations. The leadership later refused to support the UN's proposal for Palestine's partition.[88] Finally, in contrast to America's decision immediately to grant Israel de facto recognition on its formation, the Labour government refused to recognise the new state. Even some of zionism's most outspoken supporters in the leadership, such as Dalton and Herbert Morrison, sanctioned the anti-zionist policy.[89] Creech Jones, who felt great sympathy for the aims of moderate zionism, accepted Bevin's position.[90] Why did Labour, once in power, deviate so sharply from its pre-election stand?

Opponents of the government's policy have explained the departure from party policy in terms of Bevin's personal antagonism towards Jews. Crossman, Mikardo and

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[83] The Labour government's Palestine policy has been thoroughly documented (Bullock, 1983; Gorny, 1983; Louis, 1984; Morgan, 1989). I shall therefore provide only a brief account of the policy.
[84] Hennessy, 1992:239-240.
[85] Morgan, 1989:209.
[86] Gorny, 1983:199;208;213.
[87] The Times, 22 February 1946:7; The Times, 1 May 1946:1.
[88] Jewish Chronicle, 5 December 1947:1.
[89] Morgan, 1989:209.
[90] Louis, 1984:385.

Jon Kimche all believed that anti-semitism played a part.[91] Other commentators have been more cautious. Morgan ambivalently suggested that Bevin was not anti-semitic but 'without doubt emotionally prejudiced against the Jews',[92] While Louis denied that Bevin was anti-Jewish at all.[93] Nevertheless, the Palestine conflict did bring out Bevin's (in particular) anti-Jewish ideas. In a contradictory way, anti-semitism has traditionally portrayed Jews as both capitalists and communists. It has also put forward a theory of a world-wide Jewish conspiracy and presented Jews as excessively powerful. Bevin drew on these traditional stereotypes. According to Kimche:

> 'Bevin found often that his bitterest opponents in the union were communists who happened to be Jews or Jews who happened to be communists. Either way, the connection became firmly planted in his mind'.[94]

Bevin also appeared to believe in a Jewish conspiracy, claiming that the Jews were involved in a world conspiracy against Britain.[95] The Foreign Secretary explained the outcome of the 1948 Arab/Israeli war in terms of the role of 'international Jewry'.[96] He also made anti-Jewish jokes, attributing America's pro-zionist policy to the 'purest of motives': the fact that the Americans 'did not want too many Jews in New York'.[97] He was also offensive about Jewish members of the party, claiming that the idea of a Jewish state gave him nightmares of 'thousands and thousands of Harold Laskis pursuing him down the road'.[98] Even the party's most prominent pro-zionists held anti-Jewish attitudes. Dalton, for example, was 'a Zionist who could lapse into anti-Semitism',[99] referring to Laski as an 'under-sized Semite' and mocking him for his left-wing 'yideology'.[100] These examples reveal a deeply rooted ambivalence towards Jews even

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[91] Crossman, 1960:69; Kimche, 1960:21-22; Mikardo, 1988:4.
[92] Morgan, 1989:208.
[93] Louis, 1984:384.
[94] Quoted by Alderman, 1983:119 note 3.
[95] Crossman, 1960:69.
[96] Louis, 1984:43.
[97] Foreign Affairs, Labour Party, 1946/1947:6.
[98] Shlaim et al., 1977:61.
[99] Morgan, 1992:130.
[100] Kramnick and Sheerman, 1993:207.

amongst people who were philosemitic. Herbert Morrison showed this clearly when he said that:

> 'I have met many Jews in many countries. I know the London Jews very well. But the Palestinian Jews were to me different; so different that a large proportion of them were not obviously Jews at all',[101]

implicitly introducing a distinction between acceptable and unacceptable Jews. It is therefore clear that leading Labour people succumbed to popular stereotypes of the Jews, confirming the thesis that anti-Jewish ideas are not restricted to actively racist groups.[102] Such ambivalence had a long history, evident in Ben Tillett's, the nineteenth century unionist, qualification of his welcome to a group of Jewish immigrants as brothers with the remark that 'we wish you had not come to this country'.[103]

However, it would be a mistake to conclude that these personal convictions dictated the government's policy. While the Palestine conflict exacerbated Bevin's anti-Jewishness, it is unlikely that anti-semitism determined his position. If this had been the case, one would have expected a consistently anti-zionist stand. In fact, Bevin's attitude towards zionism was instrumental. He moved from a pro-zionist position to an anti-zionist position and back again to a pro-zionist one in a relatively short space of time. Like Attlee, Bevin tended to have personal reservations about Jewish nationalism, believing that the Jews were a religious group and not a nation. However, he adopted a utilitarian approach to the question and this explained his support for the movement in the late 1930s and early 1940s. As a member of Churchill's wartime Cabinet, for example, Bevin was a 'champion' of the zionist cause.[104]

Labour's pro-zionist policy was constructed in the 'luxury of opposition',[105] when its aim was above all to compete with the Conservatives. With respect to Jewish issues, Labour had been at a distinct advantage over the Conservative Party. However hard Churchill tried to show that the Conservatives had Jewish interests at heart, his efforts

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[101] Quoted in Gorny, 1983:125.
[102] See Kushner, 1989:1-13.
[103] See Husbands in Atkinson et al.1983:161.
[104] Gorny, 1983:171.
[105] Alderman, 1983:

fell on deaf ears given the party's track-record on zionism, most notably, with the 1939 White Paper restricting Jewish immigration into Palestine. Moreover, the Conservatives did not have an anti-fascist current like Labour and even contained anti-semitic elements. Furthermore, the Jewish population's socio-economic status led it to be more drawn to Labour than to the Conservatives, a situation which continued until the 1970s and 1980s.

It was not a sudden change of heart about the merits of Arab nationalism that determined the government's position. Above all, an instrumental assessment of how British interests could best be served underpinned Labour's postwar refusal to implement its pre-election promises. Once in power, the leadership jettisoned the idea of a socialist foreign policy in favour of realism. From the outset, Bevin made clear that he wished to maintain Britain's international status.[106] Moreover, the Cabinet contained a number of prominent right-wingers who shared this approach. Dalton, for example, was unrelentingly hostile to socialist foreign policy, campaigning against those in the party who did believe in such a notion.[107] The International Secretary, Denis Healey, also favoured a 'tough, unsentimental' approach and became a 'belligerent supporter of Bevin's stance in foreign affairs'[108] and worked to bridge the gap between government policy and the Labour Party.[109] At the time, support for Jewish nationalism was linked with socialist foreign policy.

In the postwar period, Britain continued to have substantial financial and strategic interests across the world, but particularly in the Middle East.[110] The Foreign Secretary thought that Britain's economic well-being depended on maintaining British interests in the region. Bevin's belief in the link between international policy and domestic prosperity was explicit when he said, in relation to Palestine, that Britain:

> 'must maintain a continuing interest in the [Middle East]
> area, if only because our economic and financial interests
> in the Middle East are of vast importance to us and to
> other countries as well. I would like this faced squarely.

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[106] Morgan, 1989:240.
[107] Jackson, 1968:63-64.
[108] Morgan, 1992:316-317.
[109] Healey, 1989:74.
[110] Morgan, 1992:154.

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If those interests were lost to us, the effect on the life of this country would be a considerable reduction in the standard of living...British interests in the Middle East contributed substantially not only to the prosperity of the people there, but also to the wage packets of the workers in this country.[111] (emphasis added).

The government's approach to the Middle East turned on a policy of non-intervention on the grounds that intervention would undermine rather than strengthen British influence in the area. Bevin felt that to alienate the Arabs would jeopardise British interests. His priority was to appeal to the Arab leaders by refusing to use force and to replace the traditionally unequal relationship between Britain and the Arabs with one based on alliances and partnership.[112]

Moreover, the government implemented its policy against the background of the cold war. Bevin and the rest of the leadership took on board the cold war consensus, adopting a sharply anti-communist stance. The Foreign Secretary wanted to curb the Middle East's revolutionary potential and to avoid provoking extreme nationalist sentiment.[113] He believed that a Jewish state could be a revolutionary socialist state and that Russia's support for partition was based on the idea that:

'by immigration they [the Russians] can pour in sufficient indoctrinated Jews to turn it into a communist state in a very short time. The New York Jews have been doing their work for them'.[114]

Developments in Palestine also contributed to the government's back-tracking. After the war, revisionist zionists began to challenge labour zionism's dominance in Palestine, aiming to replace moderate demands with maximalist territorial claims.[115] Terrorist groups such as the Stern Gang and Irgun, headed by Menachem Begin, engaged in a series of anti-British attacks including the bombing of the King David

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[111] *Jewish Chronicle*, 23 May 1947:5.
[112] Louis, 1984:16-17.
[113] Weiler, 1988:8-12.
[114] Quoted in Louis, 1984:43.
[115] Shanin in Halliday and Alavi, eds., 1988:226-227.

Hotel in July 1946[116] and, more significantly, the hanging of two British sergeants in 1947. The latter incident caused outrage in the British public and a rise in popular anti-semitism.[117] British soldiers rampaged in Palestine and anti-semitic riots broke out in London, Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow.[118] Attlee announced that while he appreciated:

> 'the natural intensity of the feelings of those who experienced the atrocities of the Hitler regime....this [could] not condone the adoption by Jews in Palestine of some of the very worst of the methods of their oppressors in Europe'.[119]

In this context, the government thought it would be politically popular to adopt an anti-zionist position. Bevin needed to pacify people whose relatives were located in the Middle East (especially Egypt and Palestine) at a time of considerable economic austerity. Hundreds of thousands of British troops were stationed in the region in the immediate postwar period at considerable cost to Britain, leaving the government susceptible to the opposition's jibes. Churchill constantly exploited this theme.[120] Moreover, the rise of Jewish terrorism limited people's tolerance of the idea of British soldiers being based in Palestine.[121]

Nevertheless, Labour's Palestine policy came to be known as one of the government's major failures. Despite the anti-Jewish incidents in the main cities, the popular mood was generally sympathetic to the idea of a Jewish national home. Morgan has suggested that, in the war's aftermath, Bevin fundamentally misunderstood popular sentiment and that he failed to understand the political ramifications of Truman's sensitivity to the Jewish vote.[122] Truman put pressure on the British government to allow Jewish immigration into Palestine almost as soon as Attlee took office. The USA condemned British policy, exploiting in particular Bevin's decision to force Jewish

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[116] Morgan, 1989:211.
[117] *Jewish Chronicle*, 1 August 1947:1; *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 August 1947:5.
[118] Hennessy, 1992:241.
[119] *The Times*, 2 July 1946:4.
[120] Louis, 1984:11.
[121] Hennessy, 1992:241-242.
[122] Morgan, 1992:158.

refugees arriving in Palestine to return to refugee camps in Germany.[123] The Jewish/Arab conflict undermined the government's efforts to forge a strong relationship with America at a time of mounting tensions between the west and the Soviet Union.

How did the government succeed in implementing a policy that broke with the party's commitments and ideals? One factor was the extent of internal loyalty the leadership was able to command. In Cabinet, Attlee and Bevin 'made an unbreakable combination'.[124] Bevin dominated most of the Cabinet and the Colonial Secretary, Creech Jones, worked very much in the Foreign Secretary's shadow, leading zionists to portray him as a sycophant.[125] Only a few Cabinet Ministers challenged the policy. Aneurin Bevan argued forcefully for partition and questioned the view that Britain's interests would be damaged if the government did not comply with the Arab states' wishes.[126] He even threatened to resign over the matter.[127] Bevan and John Strachey argued that the Jewish socialist movement would rejuvenate the Middle East, but they and other pro-zionists like Emmanuel Shinwell were not sufficiently knowledgeable about foreign policy effectively to oppose the Palestine policy.[128]

The leadership also depended on a fairly submissive PLP. Throughout much of Attlee's governments, the parliamentary party was not particularly rebellious, a loyalty springing chiefly from a sense of shared purpose with the leadership. However, organisational strategies, including the leadership's decision to divide the PLP into a number of policy-making groups, also played a part. Moreover, many of Labour's MPs came from the professional classes, helping to dampen down rebellions.[129] Furthermore, despite the fact that around one third of the PLP objected to aspects of Bevin's foreign policies, these discontented elements did not want to do anything to jeopardise the government's standing in its early years.[130]

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[123] Hennessy, 1992:241.
[124] Louis, 1984:5.
[125] Ibid:453.
[126] Ovendale, 1989:187-188.
[127] Dalton, 1962:199.
[128] Morgan, 1989:214-215;209.
[129] Ibid:59-61.
[130] Schneer, 1988:60.

The government's strength also rested on its relationship with the trade unions, which backed the leadership on most issues in the postwar period.[131] Bevin's Ministerial position made him one of the most powerful trade unionists and as a Minister, he maintained critical links with the unions.[132] The unions controlled over 80 per cent of the total conference vote and a reciprocal relationship existed, where Bevin could count on union support for his foreign policy in return for the representation of union interests in Cabinet.[133] Despite the TUC's previous pro-zionism, it supported Bevin's Palestine policy. When the Histadrut asked the TUC General Council to pressurise the government into implementing the Anglo-American Commission's recommendations, the General Council refused and 'strongly urged' acceptance of British policy.[134] At the party conference, the leadership consistently defeated the pro-zionist strand. Bevin succeeded in getting oppositional motions withdrawn, including Poale Zion's.[135] When he advised the conference not to carry any resolution on the matter, the conference complied.[136]

Labour Women also backed the leadership's foreign policy. Mary Sutherland, the Chief Woman Officer, wrote that despite divisions over international affairs:

> 'we can be sure that our Foreign Secretary will continue
> to work with patience, firmness and frankness, to reach
> decisions on the issues before the Conference that are in
> harmony with the Charter of the UNO'.[137]

In a later editorial on international affairs, *Labour Woman* commented that if there was no unity among the big powers 'it is fair to claim that the fault does not lie with Ernest Bevin and his colleagues'.[138] This section's reluctance to criticise the leadership reflected its historically weak role. Despite the fact that thousands of women entered the labour movement after women's suffrage in 1918, they remained marginal to policy-

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[131] Ibid:134.
[132] Morgan, 1992:151.
[133] Bullock, 1983:58-59.
[134] TUC Report, 1947:205.
[135] *The Times*, 13 June 1946; *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 June 1946:1.
[136] *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 June 1947:.
[137] *Labour Woman*, May 1946:109.
[138] *Labour Woman*, 15 August 1946:181.

making. Consequently, Labour Women tended traditionally to take an uncritical stance towards the leadership.[139]

So, once in office Labour abandoned its principles in favour of a policy which was broadly in line with a Conservative approach. By the end of the war, zionism was closely associated with the left's international agenda, but Attlee and Bevin rejected it, displaying the tendency for Labour to move rightwards once in office. It was not anti-imperialist politics which led the leadership to adopt a pro-Arab stance. Bevin's decision to favour the Arabs over the Jews was rooted in a 'late Forties imperialism,' an approach which aimed to preserve Britain's strategic position and oil interests in the Middle East through a policy of partnership rather than domination.[140] The Foreign Secretary's primary goal was to maintain British economic and strategic influence in the Middle East,[141] and the left's hopes for radical changes in foreign policies were dashed. The government managed to implement a basically unpopular policy because of the extent of internal loyalty it could command in the immediate postwar period. Nevertheless, the policy did stimulate some dissent. In the following section, I shall consider the sources of dissent and the leadership's later return to Labour's pro-zionist tradition.

2.3 Intra-Party Conflict and a Return to the Old Consensus

Only a minority was willing to oppose the government's policy, principally, the Labour left and Jewish party members. These groups overlapped because the Jewish members tended predominantly to come from the party's left-wing, including people like Sydney Silverman, Ian Mikardo, Maurice Orbach and Harold Laski. Other Jewish MPs, such as Barnett Janner and Barbara Ayrton-Gould untiringly criticised government policy both in parliament and in public demonstrations.[142] Crossman and Foot were also vocal critics of the policy in parliament, in public and in the left-wing press. Local parties such as Glasgow City Labour Party,[143] the Southport Trades Council and Labour

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[139] Graves, 1994:1-2;12.
[140] Hennessy, 1992:239-240.
[141] Louis, 1984:15-17.
[142] *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 November 1945:5;*The Times*, 8 July 1946:8..
[143] *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 October 1945:12.

Party,[144] and Hackney North, Manchester Exchange and Leeds Central[145] all condemned the government's policy. At the 1946 annual conference, five critical resolutions called on the government to revert to its pre-election pledges, but were withdrawn at Bevin's request.[146] On the whole, the critics represented the oppositional voice of the left with Crossman and Foot belonging to the Keep Left group of MPs,[147] and Silverman and Laski having a history of rebelliousness.[148]

The dissenters condemned the government for refusing to implement the Anglo-American Commission's recommendations. Silverman described the decision as a 'plain, naked war upon the Jewish National Home'.[149] Michael Foot appealed to the government to implement every item of the report in order to avoid a war which would 'leave an indelible and black stain on this country'.[150] They also held the government responsible for the rise of Jewish terrorism. Crossman suggested that the increase in terrorist activities was the 'direct result' of the government's continuation with the policy embodied in the 1939 White Paper. He attacked the government for arresting leaders of socialist and trade union organizations and others on the 'political left' in Palestine.[151] In 'A Palestine Munich?',[152] Crossman and Foot systematically rejected the government's justification for the policy. They recalled the party's pledges of support for zionism, including those made by Labour leaders such as Morrison and Dalton, and condemned the policy as 'appeasement of the Arabs'.[153] They objected to the Palestine policy as one which put expediency before questions of justice and morality. Recognising the impossibility of pleasing both sides, Crossman and Foot commented that:

> 'either course...involves the risk of bloodshed; either
> course involves a measure of injustice for one side. The
> question to be decided is which course involves the lesser

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[144] *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 October 1945:12.
[145] Resolutions, 1947:28.
[146] LPACR, 1946:155, 169; *The Times*, 13 June 1946:2; *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 June 1946:1.
[147] Keep Left also included: Ian Mikardo; Geoffrey Bing; Donald Bruce; Harold Davies; Leslie Hale; Fred Lee; Benn Levy; Ronald MacKay; J.P.W. Mallalieu; E.R. Millington and Stephen Swingler (Jackson, 1968:62-63).
[148] Morgan, 1992:61-62;97.
[149] *The Times*, 2 July 1946:1,2.
[150] *The Times*, 2 July 1946:2.
[151] *The Times*, 2 July 1946:1,2; *Jewish Chronicle*, 5 July 1946:5,6.
[152] Published by Victor Gollancz in 1946.
[153] Crossman and Foot, 1946:28.

injustice, the lesser amount of bloodshed and the lesser risk to world peace.'[154]

Crossman's intervention exasperated Bevin who observed that the former's ideas derived from 'his lack of judgement and his intellectual arrogance'.[155]

The 1948 Palestine Bill, introduced to deal with the termination of the British mandate, precipitated some parliamentary rebellion. During the Bill's second reading, William Warbey moved an amendment for rejection on the grounds that it failed to make provision for the 'independence of Jewish and Arab States in Palestine as provided by the United Nations decision'. Silverman seconded the amendment and thirty Labour MPs supported it, including: R. Acland; H.L. Austin; J. Baird; A. Bramall; F.F. Cocks; V.J. Collins; L. Comyns; W.G. Cove; R.H.S. Crossman; H.J. Delargy; M. Edelman; W.J. Field; B. Janner; J. Lee; N. H. Lever; B.W. Levy; J. Lewis; J.D. Mack; R.W.G. Mackay; I. Mikardo; E.R. Millington; M. Orbach; J.F.F. Platts-Mills; J. Silverman; S. Silverman; G. Thomas; W.Vernon; W.N. Warbey; L. Wilkes; K. Zilliacus, together with one Communist MP and Denis Pritt, an ILP member.[156] On 2 December 1948 Alice Bacon; Richard Crossman; Harold Davies; Barnett Janner; Ian Mikardo; George Porter and David Weitzman signed an EDM which criticised the government for the 'continued unsatisfactory situation in Palestine' and called for the government to 'support at the United Nations a settlement which would ensure the speedy international recognition of Israel'.[157]

The left's objection to the Palestine policy turned on the view that it represented a continuation of conservative policy and a rejection of socialist principles as the main directive of policy. Keep Left regarded the government's approach to the Middle East as an attempt to create 'an anti-Bolshevik bloc of reactionary Arab states', seeing the Palestine policy in terms of this wider objective.[158] The opponents consistently claimed that a conservative and traditionally pro-Arab Foreign Office had dictated the policy in order to preserve British interests, stating that:

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[154] Ibid:4.
[155] Louis, 1984:419, note 61.
[156] Berrington, 1973:70-71; Norton, 1975:44-47.
[157] Notices of Motions, Vol.1, 1948-1949:626.
[158] Berrington, 1973:70-71.

'It [was] no accident that the Labour Government's outstanding failure...occurred in the one field of action where there has been less change of personnel since the Chamberlain era than in any other sphere of the national life. The Middle East has remained untouched by the Labour revolution: the men, the practice and the policy throughout the Middle East...continue entirely with the accents of 1939 predominating'.[159]

The left believed that the government's Palestine policy was based on 'narrow strategic calculations which would make the Middle East a strategic centre and base'.[160] In an unconcealed attack on the leadership, Laski said that:

'neither Arab blackmail nor the strategy on which our policy in the Middle East was based should make these homeless wanderers the victims of hesitation or timidity in Downing Street. A British statesman who sacrificed the Jews who escaped from the tortures of Hitlerism to the Arab leaders *did not understand the elementary principles of the socialism he professed*.[161] (emphasis added).

According to Kimche, the Foreign Office had initiated a 'new look' in terms of its attitude towards the region, involving the establishment of treaties such as the one signed with Iraq in January 1948,[162] aimed at achieving a balance between the removal of British troops and the maintenance of British power. Kimche concluded that a Jewish state had no part in this scheme because the government assumed that Soviet influence would 'seep' into such a state through immigration.[163]

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[159] *Tribune*, 7 February 1947:2.

[160] *Tribune*, 7 February 1947:2.

[161] *The Times*, 11 June 1946:2; *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 June 1946:1. From these statements we can see that Laski was not immune to the use of negative imagery of Arabs. The idea of 'Arab blackmail' and an 'oriental bazaar' touches on the stereotype of Arab corruption and vice.

[162] The Portsmouth Treaty (15 January 1948) between Britain and Iraq was designed to replace the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 with the aim of forging an equal relationship between the two countries. British air bases were to be handed to Iraq and strategic interests considered by a joint defence board. Demonstrations against the Treaty in Iraq led to its retraction (Ovendale, 1992:205).

[163] *Tribune*, 13 February 1948:9.

The left's opposition to the Palestine policy stemmed from its broader disillusion with the government's foreign policy. Divisions within Labour during Attlee's government centred principally on foreign affairs. From the beginning, two groups of left-wingers, Keep Left and a small faction of pro-Soviet fellow-travellers, began systematically to condemn Bevin's approach to international issues, disagreeing over ties between Britain and the Soviet Union and specific questions like Indonesia. Keep Left was the most significant group, including Crossman, Foot and Mikardo, favouring a neutralist, third force position, whereby Britain would stand between the two major powers. [164] Silverman also belonged to the third force movement,[165] and advocated a socialist foreign policy.[166] This element felt that the leadership had jettisoned its commitment to the principle of socialist foreign policy.[167] In a sense, the Jewish leadership in Palestine appealed to both of these groups. Its claim to neutrality in the conflict between west and east appealed to Keep Left's neutralism and to the communists, who saw such a stance as potentially pro-communist.

However, during most of the debates over Palestine, the dissenters failed to make an impact. This was because the left was relatively weak at the time, having no significant base within the constituency parties or the trade unions.[168] Moreover, the Labour left was internally divided, consisting of a number of separate elements including pacifists as well as Keep Left and the fellow-travellers.[169] The parliamentary left was also numerically small. Keep Left had only fifteen members and did not remain cohesive throughout the government. Moreover, the leadership formed an organised response to the group, with Hugh Dalton, Morgan Phillips and Denis Healey launching a campaign against the left's idea of a socialist foreign policy. Other party members joined in this campaign, rendering the left incapable of influencing policy.[170]

Nevertheless, once Israel was established, the gap between the leadership and its opponents narrowed. Attlee and Bevin maintained a publicly hostile attitude towards the Jewish state, criticising the Jewish lobby in America and making anti-Israel speeches

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[164] Morgan, 1989:63.
[165] Schneer, 1988:56-57.
[166] Morgan, 1989:238.
[167] Pelling, 1991:99.
[168] See Coates, 1975.
[169] Pelling, 1991:99-100.
[170] Jackson, 1968:62-64.

in the Commons.[171] Yet behind the scenes Bevin started to make a series of gestures of friendship. As early as May 1948, the Foreign Secretary spoke of the need to secure Arab acceptance of the Jewish state and tried to convince Arab governments that the new state was permanent. In October, he initiated the opening of a British Consulate in the Jewish part of Jerusalem; an action which anticipated recognition.[172] In January 1949, the government responded in a restrained way to the shooting down of five British aircraft over Egypt.[173] At the same time, Bevin began to take a more relaxed approach to Jewish immigration, announcing that Jewish immigrants of military age detained in Cyprus could leave as soon as transport was provided. Bevin's critics took this statement as an indication of a modification of policy towards Israel.[174] At the end of January 1949 Britain gave de facto recognition to Israel and, in April 1950, the government conceded de jure recognition, although refrained from acknowledging Israeli sovereignty over the Jewish part of Jerusalem.[175]

The party also began to build bridges with Israel through a spate of networking with zionist groups in Israel. In December 1949 an official party delegation, including TUC representatives, representatives from the Co-operative movement, Alice Bacon, and the party's Chair, Sam Watson, visited Israel where they met the Israeli president, Chaim Weizmann, David Ben-Gurion, the Prime Minister, Moshe Sharett, the Foreign Minister, Golda Myerson, Minister of Labour and Social Insurance and Eliezer Kaplan, Minister of Finance as well as Histadrut representatives and other members of the Mapai Party. In their report, Alice Bacon and Sam Watson recommended full recognition of Israel, assistance with its economic recovery and the establishment of strong relations.[176] Later, Herbert Morrison and Morgan Phillips joined the Labour delegation at a reception held by the Israel Histadrut Committee in London. At the reception Morrison said that 'Jewish Palestine was one of the greatest experiments in the modern world'.[177] What precipitated this policy shift?

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[171] Pappé, 1990:565;568.
[172] Ibid:562-564.
[173] *The Times*, 11 January 1949:4.
[174] *The Times*, 19 January 1949:4.
[175] Pappé, 1990:574.
[176] Report of the Delegation to Israel (29 December 1949 to 13 January 1950), January 1950.
[177] *Labour Israel*, 27 January 1950:1.

One factor was a change in the relationship between the leadership and the PLP. As the government proceeded, the parliamentary party began to challenge the former's dominance. The prospect of a general election made the leadership more vulnerable to internal criticism and the possibility of a divided party. A shift in the party's internal dynamics began, portending a decade of intra-party conflict and dissent, a decline in Labour's popularity, and the rise of the Bevanite left.[178] The opposition exploited these difficulties and, over Israel, persistently called for the government to recognise the new state. Churchill engaged in a fierce debate with Bevin in the Commons over how best British interests could be served, arguing forcefully for recognition of Israel.[179] The PLP's growing impatience with the government over Israel came to light at the end of January 1949 when at least fifty Labour members abstained from voting on what Attlee saw as a vote of confidence in the government's policy. Although the government won the motion of adjournment, defeating its critics by two hundred and eighty-three votes to one hundred and ninety-three, Labour's increasing dissatisfaction was expressed in the abstentions.[180]

With the new state in existence, recognised by both the USA and the Soviet Union, a new international context existed. Internal opponents of the policy were in a stronger position to voice their dissent and the impact on the leadership was greater. The dissenters enjoyed a new legitimacy since Britain was now clearly out of step with wider international developments and especially America. The critics' claim that the government's policy had created a cleavage between American and Britain,[181] hit a raw nerve with a leadership which was keen to forge a strong relationship with America. Bevin and Attlee were still bitter about the division between the two countries over Palestine, which they saw as damaging to the Anglo-American alliance.[182]

However, Bevin's policy change stemmed principally from his concern to forge a strong alliance with America in the context of the heightening cold war. After the Korean crisis, the division between countries falling within the western alliance and neutral ones sharpened. Israel's support for the UN in Korea was the first sign of a

[178] Pelling, 1991:105-106.
[179] Pappé, 1990:568.
[180] *The Times*. 27 January 1949:4.
[181] *Tribune*, 28 May 1948:7; *The Times*, 20 May 1948:2; *Jewish Chronicle*, 21 May 1948:11.
[182] Pappé, 1990:565.

desire to ally with the west. The Israeli leadership's earlier displays of neutrality, designed not to alienate the Soviet Union while getting arms supplies from the eastern bloc, began to give way to a shift towards the west. Ben-Gurion and Moshe Sharett both wanted Israel to be included in the western bloc.[183] The Foreign Office started to see Israel as a country which shared Britain's interests in the Middle East and rejected ideas about Israel moving into the communist camp.[184] The Foreign Office and the American State Department wanted to put the differences between the two countries over Palestine into the past in favour of a co-ordinated defence strategy. Bevin's aim to secure Anglo-American collaboration to combat the Soviet Union's influence overrode his fears about the Arab/Jewish conflict.[185]

By the early 1950s then, Bevin's return to Labour's traditionally pro-zionist stance was essentially complete. He even told the Israelis that his Palestine policy had been a failure.[186] However, practical considerations and not a sudden spurt of pro-Israeli altruism determined the leadership's policy change. As Pappé has observed, 'the dynamism and logic of pragmatic policy...ignores past prejudices, psychological barriers, preconceptions or emotions'.[187] Bevin's return to a pro-zionist stance resulted from his desire to check internal dissent in a climate of mounting unpopularity and, most importantly, to establish a strong Anglo-American alliance in the cold war period.

2.4 Conclusion

Confronted with the rival nationalist claims to Palestine, Labour was fundamentally predisposed towards Jewish nationalism over Arab nationalism. Internationalist and anti-colonialist principles played very little part in policy positions. Indeed, the party was not immune from ideas hanging over from Britain's colonial history, making use of a dichotomy whereby the Jews stood for progress and civilisation and the Arabs stood for feudalism and reaction. Far from being impartial when faced with the contending nationalist movements, Labour's choices reflected 'prior patterns of personal contact as

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[183] Ibid:561;563.
[184] Ibid:571.
[185] Morgan. 1989:217-218; Pappé, 1990:561.
[186] Pappé, 1990:573.
[187] Ibid:561.

well as ideological considerations heavily coloured by British experience and alignments'.[188] Forced to choose between the Jews and the Arabs, Labour settled for the movement with which it had the closest political ties and which, as a result of wartime experiences, had won considerable moral legitimacy. Moreover, Labour's perception of the political advantages of a pro-zionist policy led Attlee and Bevin unreservedly to abandon their doubts about the formation of a Jewish state in the pre-election campaign.

Once in office, the Labour leadership moved right, implementing policies which are continuous with traditional foreign policy. In the 1940s, zionism was associated with a left-wing agenda abroad, fitting in with Labour's anti-colonialist ethos which included a desire to modernise and democratise post-colonial countries. It was traditionalism and not anti-colonialism which led the leadership to pursue policies more favourable to the Arabs than the Jews. Bevin wanted above all to protect British interests in the Middle East and he thought that they would be jeopardised by the formation of a Jewish state in the face of Arab hostility. Having a loyal Cabinet, PLP and TUC, the government was able to run rough shod over the party's 'conscience',[189] that is, those who wanted the leadership to pursue a distinctively socialist approach to international affairs.

Even so, pro-zionist sympathies remained latent throughout this time, ready to re-emerge in the right circumstances. These circumstances came about very soon after Israel's formation. Under mounting international pressure in the context of the cold war, the Jewish state's obvious desire to ally with the west and increasing pressure from inside the party, the government returned to Labour's pro-zionist principles and the party embarked on a series of measures designed to improve relations with the Israeli Labour government. By 1951, the pro-zionist consensus re-emerged in the shape of a new pro-Israeli consensus. However, the formation of a Jewish state in the Middle East inevitably provided a source of tension with the Arab countries and it was not long before this tension expressed itself in a new set of hostilities, the Suez war, forcing Labour to make choices again. In the next chapter I shall look at how the party dealt with the dilemmas

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[188] Howe, 1992:236.
[189] Schneer, 1988.

posed by a war which pitted anti-colonialist Arab nationalism against Israeli nationalism.

CHAPTER THREE

LABOUR, SUEZ AND ISRAEL: THE END OF A 'SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP'[1]?

The 1956 war was the first major test of Labour's pro-Israel loyalties. As an expression of demands for full equality and freedom from colonial domination in the postwar era,[2] Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal appealed to Labour's anti-imperialist principles, which had been sharpened during the 1950s. However, by 1956, the Labour front-bench was the most pro-Israel of the political parties.[3] Indeed, all sections of the labour movement shared this sentiment, expressed at successive party conferences,[4] at the TUC conferences,[5] in party publications such as *Tribune*[6] and by Labour Women.[7] Israel's action against Egypt presented Labour with a predicament. For sympathisers with Israel, opposition to the war 'called for a less critical view of Britain's action, if not for outright advocacy, than that which was implied by the Labour Party's all-out opposition to Eden'.[8] Yet under the leadership of Hugh Gaitskell, Labour engaged in a vigorous campaign against the war and the previously divided party united behind the leader in all-out condemnation of the war, sponsoring a 'Law Not War' rally in Trafalgar Square. Alderman has suggested that Labour's stance ended the 'special relationship' between the party and the Jews.[9] To what extent does this claim capture what actually happened? This chapter looks at how Labour reconciled its pro-Israel and anti-government stance. In section one I shall show that the war did not produce a collapse in pro-Israeli feeling. In section two I shall show that most of the party, especially the leadership, maintained a negative attitude towards Arab nationalism. In

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[1] Alderman, 1983:133.
[2] Dessouki in Louis and Owen, eds., 1989:31-33.
[3] Kyle, 1991:89.
[4] LPACR, 1951:9-10;LPACR, 1954:74-75;LPACR, 1955:178-179;LPACR, 1956:70-78.
[5] TUC Report, 1951:218-219;TUC Report, 1956:436.
[6] See for example, *Tribune*, 8 April 1955:1,8; *Tribune*, 4 November 1955:4; *Tribune*, 13 January 1956:1.
[7] NCLW, 1954:15;NCLW, 1956:44-45.
[8] Epstein, 1964:174-176.
[9] Alderman, 1983:133.

section three I shall consider the reasons for the maintenance of Labour's traditional position on the Israel/Arab dispute and in the fourth section I shall describe the way some members of the left started to question Labour's pro-Israel and anti-Arab stance.

3.1 Attitudes Towards Israel

To some extent the war did produce criticism of Israeli policy. Gaitskell said that if Labour had been in government he would have warned Israel against aggression and he supported the UN Security Council's resolution against the state's attack on Egypt.[10] In response to one of Eden's speeches, the Labour leader remarked that the Prime Minister, instead of acting as a policeman, had gone in to 'help the burglar and shoot the householder',[11] a comment implying that Israel was the 'burglar' and, as such, went down badly within Anglo-Jewry.[12] However, the conflict did not generate deep anti-Israel feeling. In fact, the party exonerated the Jewish state by distinguishing Israeli actions from British and French ones.[13] Holding the image of Israel as a small, embattled state surrounded by hostile Arab neighbours, the party depicted the Anglo-French alliance as aggressive and portrayed Israel's part as defensive. Throughout his attack on government policy, Gaitskell contrasted Israeli policy with British policy, saying that:

> 'the devastating mistake that the Government have made
> in this matter is to mix up the Arab-Israeli conflict with
> the Suez conflict...I warn them that until and unless they
> make a sharp distinction between these two
> problems...they will never get themselves right with
> world opinion'.[14]

Hugh Dalton similarly excused Israel, arguing that the Jewish state's action was a legitimate reaction to provocation from Egypt and refusing to accept the view that 'Israel

[10] Epstein, 1964:81.
[11] Ibid:192.
[12] Alderman, 1983:133.
[13] In his chapter on 'cross-pressure' Epstein focuses principally on the way Jewish Labour MPs dealt with the pressures arising out of Israel's role in the war (See Epstein, 1964:173-198).
[14] Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol.560, 1956-57, Col.32.

[was] a wicked aggressor and Egypt an innocent victim of aggression'. Dalton's support for Israel was so strong that he supported the Conservative government's rejection of a UN Security Council resolution stating that Israel was an aggressor.[15] This exonerative attitude was not confined to the right. Tony Benn believed that the British government's denial of arms to Israel had made the state feel insecure and was responsible for Ben-Gurion's policy.[16] He and five other Labour MPs cabled the Israeli Prime Minister asking him to confirm that Israel's action was limited to the 'protection of Israeli frontiers and elimination of Egyptian marauders' and that it had 'no connection with British action'. The message was signed by 'six lifelong friends of Israel'.[17]

Labour did not view the Jewish state as an equal partner in the tripartite attack on Egypt, believing that Britain and France had exploited the Jewish state for their own purposes. The NEC claimed that while Britain's desire to maintain control over the region and France's aim to deal with Egyptian 'subversion' in Algeria lay behind their actions, the establishment of 'a unified Syrian-Jordan-Egyptian Command' had provoked Israel into taking defensive action.[18] Nor did the Labour left see Israel as colluding with the west, claiming that the 'imperial powers' had exploited country's vulnerability:

> 'They [Britain and France] exploited Israel's difficulties,
> and the tragic error by which that small nation tried to
> resolve them, in order to launch a war against Egypt and
> secure control of the Suez Canal'.[19]

The left believed that Britain's cold war policy made Israel vulnerable because it excluded the country from defence pacts like the Baghdad Pact, exacerbating the Arab/Israel conflict.[20] The Baghdad Pact was a treaty based on mutual defence and co-operation between Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, Iran and Britain.[21]

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[15] Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol.561, 1956-57, Col.1296.
[16] Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol.570, 1956-57, Cols.472-473.
[17] Adams, 1992:121-122.
[18] NEC, 28 November 1956:1-2.
[19] *Tribune*, 14 December 1956:1.
[20] Foot and Jones, 1957:90-92.
[21] Ovendale, 1989:200.

After the war, Labour tried to re-establish its pro-Israel credentials, suggesting that the Jewish state should force Egypt to grant it recognition. Gaitskell stated that while Israel should withdraw from the occupied territories, the UN ought to guarantee Israeli shipping through the Canal and the Gulf of Akaba and protection from raids from Egypt, concluding that:

> 'While we are completely opposed to the Anglo-French attack on Egypt, we in the Labour Party have always said that Israel could not be expected just to go back to the status quo existing at the end of October. The essential point is that Egypt should recognise publicly that the state of war is now at an end and that she therefore cannot exercise her so-called belligerent rights. The United Nations should insist upon this just as much as on the withdrawal of the Israeli forces'.[22]

The Labour leader did not believe that Israel should compromise with the Arab countries, maintaining that if the Arabs had accepted partition in 1947 Israel would have been smaller.[23] Aneurin Bevan, Labour's foreign affairs spokesperson, objected to American pressure on Israel to withdraw from the Sinai and wanted Israel's position to be used as a bargaining counter to secure Arab recognition of the Jewish state.[24] After the war, Richard Crossman got in touch with Ben-Gurion with the aim of restoring good relations between Labour and Israel.[25]

The PLP also remained overwhelmingly pro-Israel during the crisis. The Labour MP Edward Short sponsored a pro-Israel EDM which attracted one hundred and twenty-six signatures, eighty-one (see appendix 3.1 and table 3.1) of which were from Labour MPs. Labour's support for the motion was twice as high as the Conservatives', showing that the Conservative government's policy did not stem from pro-Israeli sentiment. Eden accepted the Foreign Office's pro-Arab orientation, believing that Israel should give up some of the territory captured during the 1948 war. Moreover, he had

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[22] Press Release issued by Transport House, 15 February 1957.
[23] Williams, ed., 1983:553.
[24] Foot, 1973:540.
[25] Howard, 1990:203.

Table 3.1 **Pro-Israel Early-Day Motion, 1956**

Date of First Tabling	Number and Title	Party Support	Main Sponsor	Total Number of Names Appended	Number of Labour Names Appended (and percentage of total names)
11.2.57	42. Withdrawal of Israeli Forces	Labour Conservative Liberal	Edward Short (Labour)	126	81 (64)

previously refrained from criticising Egypt for refusing to allow Israeli shipping through the Canal. Nor did the party have a pro-Jewish reputation at the time, even containing people like the MP Thomas Moore who sympathised with the British Union of Fascists in the 1930s.[26] The Conservatives' unwillingness to sign the motion also reflected the partisan nature of the debates over Suez, drawing attention to the shift away from consensus politics, as well as the fact that opposition MPs were more likely to sign EDMs that were critical of government policy.

For Jewish MPs, the dilemmas of the war were particularly acute.[27] With the Jewish community predominantly behind Israeli policy,[28] Jewish MPs were under pressure to dissent from Labour's anti-war policy. Barnett Janner, who was President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews (BOD) and the Zionist Federation, came under particular pressure, with the Jewish community challenging his position on the BOD.[29] Even the French General Zionist Party condemned Janner for having voted with Labour against the intervention, stating that Janner's conduct was 'incompatible with the moral obligations of a zionist' and disqualified him from 'holding any responsible position in the Jewish national movement'.[30] Nevertheless, Janner, aiong with the other sixteen Jewish Labour MPs,[31] voted with Labour in the voting divisions. He only refused to conform to party policy on the vote which took place immediately after the UN's condemnation of Israel and just before the Anglo-French attack because such a vote criticised Israel alone. Justifying his stand, Janner distinguished between the Israeli action and the British action, saying that Labour opposed the latter and not the former.[32]

For left-wing Jewish Labour MPs, the difficulties in reconciling their opposition to the war with their pro-Israel sympathies were sharper because their involvement in anti-

[26] Epstein, 1964:175-177.
[27] Ibid:174.
[28] Alderman, 1983:131.
[29] This account draws heavily on Epstein, 1964:189-195 and Alderman, 1983:131-132.
[30] *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 December 1956:1.
[31] These were: Austen Albu, Frank Allaun, Maurice Edelman, George Jeger, Harold Lever, Leslie Lever, Marcus Lipton, Ian Mikardo, Maurice Orbach, Emanuel Shinwell, Julius Silverman, Sydney Silverman, George Strauss, Barnet Stross, Moss Turner-Samuels and David Weitzman (Epstein, 1964:185).
[32] Epstein, 1964:195. The other Jewish MPs who abstained from this vote were Austin Albu, Leslie Lever, Moss Turner-Samuels and David Weitzman (Alderman, 1983:199 26n) Shinwell and Harold Lever.

colonialist politics put pressure on them to adopt a pro-Nasser position. Ian Mikardo, Maurice Orbach, Sydney Silverman and Barnett Stross all condemned the government's reaction to Nasser's nationalisation of the Canal.[33] However, these MPs' stand was far from anti-Israel. Like Janner, they distinguished Israel's role from Britain's and France's. Mikardo denied the suggestion that Israel benefited from the Anglo-French intervention, claiming that a demilitarisation of the Sinai Peninsula would have been more helpful.[34] Moreover, he claimed that Israel's objectives were 'limited' and were a legitimate response to Egypt's sponsorship of the fedayeen (saboteurs) and the blockade on Israeli shipping.[35] Most of the Jewish Labour MPs responded to criticism by saying that they represented their constituents and not the Jewish community and Mikardo defended his obedience to the party whip in this way.[36]

There were two exceptions to this pattern. Emanuel Shinwell, who had never forgiven Gaitskell for replacing him as Minister of Fuel and Power in 1947,[37] publicly criticised Labour's policy. Shinwell was not actively involved in zionist or Jewish organisations, having a background in trade unionism and socialism,[38] and as a socialist he rejected zionist philosophy. Nevertheless, he had a strong emotional commitment to the Jewish state, rooted in his view of it as a refuge for the Jews and as an experiment in socialism.[39] Although he mainly voted with the party in the divisions, he deliberately abstained from the vote condemning Israeli policy. Shinwell publicly accused the government for having previously failed to counter Arab aggression against Israel and suggested that the UN's delay in taking speedy action explained Israel's military response. He strongly criticised those who portrayed Israel's action as a violation of international law, including people in his own party.[40] Harold Lever, who represented the Jewish constituency Manchester Cheetham, also deliberately abstained from the vote

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[33] *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 August 1956:8.
[34] Epstein, 1964:191.
[35] *Tribune*, 2 November 1956:2.
[36] Alderman, 1983:132; 199 27n.
[37] Morgan, 1992:222.
[38] Epstein, 1964:188-190; Alderman, 1983:131-132.
[39] Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol.570, 1956-57, Cols.608-609.
[40] Epstein, 1964:188-190; Alderman, 1983:131-132.

which implicitly criticised Israeli action.[41] Lever objected to the idea that Israel was the aggressor and supported Britain's alignment with the state and the government's veto of the UN Security Council's condemnation of the Israeli action. Although he did not back the British attack on Egypt, he suggested that it showed that the government recognised Israeli interests.[42]

The balance in favour of Israel also remained in the party's policy-making sections (see tables 3.2 and 3.3). The NEC and the International sub-committee contained Jewish MPs like Ian Mikardo and Sydney Silverman and people like Gaitskell, Anthony Greenwood, Crossman, Bevan and Alice Bacon, all of whom supported the formation of Israel for historical reasons. Although Barbara Castle sympathised with Nasser, she was not anti-Israel. Edith Summerskill was the only strongly pro-Arab member of the NEC and International sub-committee and her views brought her into conflict with other NEC members.[43]

Nor were there any signs of a grass-roots retreat from Labour's pro-Israel consensus. Speeches at the party's conference stressed the view that Israel wanted peace and that the west should arm the Jewish state in order to reduce its sense of insecurity.[44] At the TUC conference, speakers claimed that peace in the Middle East depended on the Arab states recognising the Jewish state.[45] Labour Women also remained loyal to Israel. Like the rest of the party, this section exonerated Israel for its role in the crisis, criticising the government's Middle East policy on the grounds that it threatened the existence of Israel.[46] At its conference in February 1957, Mary Mikardo, from Poale Zion, moved a resolution condemning Egypt for its anti-Israel policies and called for UN guarantees of Israel's borders and shipping. The conference carried the resolution and Morgan Phillips, the general secretary, sanctioned it.[47]

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[41] Alderman, 1983:132.
[42] Epstein, 1964:190; see also Alderman, 1983:199 26n.
[43] Gaitskell in Williams, ed., 1983:569.
[44] LPACR, 1956:70-75.
[45] TUC Report, 1956:436-440.
[46] NCLW, 1956:44.
[47] NCLW, 1957:42-43.

Table 3.2 **NEC Members, 1956**

Pro-Zionist/Israel	Pro-Arab/Palestinian
Alice Bacon	Barbara Castle
Aneurin Bevan	Edith Summerskill
R.H.S. Crossman	
T.E.N. Driberg (Vice-Chair)	
Hugh Gaitskell	
E.G. Gooch	
A.W.J. Greenwood	
M. Herbison (Chair)	
Ian Mikardo	
S. Silverman	
H. Wilson	

Table 3.3 **International Sub-Committee Members, 1956**

Pro-Zionist/Israel	Pro-Arab/Palestinian
Hugh Gaitskell	Barbara Castle
E.G. Gooch	Edith Summerskill
A. Greenwood	
R.G. Gunter	
M. Herbison	
Sam Watson (Chair)	

So, Labour's anti-war campaign did not undermine the party's basic pro-Israel orientation. Indeed, the party rallied to support the Jewish state, reconciling its anti-war stance with its support for Israel by distinguishing sharply between Israeli actions and British and French actions. This suggests that although the party's policy was badly received by the Jewish community, the relations between Jews and Labour were not irreparably damaged as implied by Alderman's claim.[48] In the following section I shall consider the way the war affected the party's attitudes towards Arab nationalism.

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[48] See Alderman, 1983:133.

3.2 **Attitudes Towards Arab Nationalism**

Although Labour opposed the war against Egypt, the crisis did not dramatically challenge its traditional hostility towards Arab nationalism. If anything, the hostilities showed just how deeply rooted anti-Arab feeling was, paralleling Conservative attitudes. This similarity between Labour and the Conservatives was most evident at the start of the crisis when only Gaitskell's emphasis on Israeli interests distinguished his position from the Conservatives'.[49] The Labour leader saw the Egyptian president as a dictator with expansionist aims and opposed the nationalisation of the Canal, calling for American-backed sanctions against Egypt.[50] Dalton went even further, welcoming Israel's defeat of Egypt and claiming that 'the myth of Egypt as a military power and a leader of the Arab world is smashed for ever. All this is wonderful'.[51] In a parliamentary debate, Dalton asked whether Ministers had ever thought that Nasser should have been left to the Israelis, since they 'were doing a very good job'.[52] Herbert Morrison and other right-wingers such as Reggie Paget, Frank Tomney and Jack Jones,[53] favoured military action against Egypt.[54] Some TUC members also advocated outright condemnation of the nationalisation and objected to the idea that force could only be used after referral to the UN. However, the mainstream view prevailed in the end,[55] reflecting Gaitskell's influence in the TUC leadership.[56]

Throughout the crisis, the leadership was at pains to show that its position did not imply support for Nasser. Gaitskell was contemptuous of people who sympathised with

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[49] Kyle, 1991:164-165.

[50] Epstein, 1964:66.

[51] Quoted in Pimlott, 1986:687.

[52] Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol.561, 1956-57, Col.1294.

[53] Reggie Paget represented Northampton from 1945 to 1974. Frank Tomney was the MP for North Hammersmith from 1950 to 1979 and Jack Jones was a junior Minister between 1947 and 1950 and MP for Bolton from 1945 to 1950 and for Rotherham from 1950 to 1962 (Williams, ed., 1983:349 17n; 366 4n; 569 21n).

[54] Gaitskell in Williams, ed., 1983:569.

[55] *The Times,* 1 September 1956:6.

[56] See Foote, 1985:230.

the Egyptian president, including John Hynd,[57] William Warbey, Tony Benn and Edith Summerskill, challenging what he saw as their automatic defence of any eastern country and their failure to recognise that Nasser was a dictator. He believed that Summerskill's views stemmed from her being 'a woman whose political views are almost entirely dependent on personal contacts'.[58] Gaitskell publicly denied that Labour was taking a 'pro-Nasser' line.[59] The MP Patrick Gordon Walker,[60] advised the annual conference not to become 'pro-Nasser' because it was anti-government, distinguishing popular nationalism from the Egyptian leader's nationalism:

> 'We must come to terms with the genuine nationalism of the Middle East and cut the ground from beneath Nasser's feet by saying openly that we recognise the right of the Arab states to nationalise the oil wells and installations'.[61]

The TUC leadership made a similar distinction. At its conference, C.J. Geddes, head of the international committee, said:

> 'We must not let our legitimate criticism of the Government's handling of this situation be interpreted as praise for Colonel Nasser...Nasser is a military dictator and this movement has no love...for military dictators'.[62]

Even Bevan described Nasser as a 'thug' who needed to be 'taught a lesson'.[63] At the 'Law Not War' rally at Trafalgar Square, he stressed that although he thought that Eden was wrong, he did not think that Nasser was right.[64] While opposed to the war, Bevan maintained that even the existence of western imperialist interests in the Canal did not justify Nasser's 'extreme nationalism', contending that:

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[57] Former Minister and Labour MP for Sheffield Attercliffe, 1944 to 1970.
[58] Gaitskell in Williams, ed., 1983:567-569.
[59] *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 November 1956:8.
[60] Labour MP for Smethwick.
[61] *The Times*, 2 October 1956:11.
[62] TUC Report, 1956:434.
[63] See Mikardo, 1988:158.
[64] Foot, 1973:526.

'it is no answer to say that the Suez Canal was an imperialist project from the beginning and that it has been exploited ever since. That does not establish Egypt's right to exploit the Canal in her own interests'.[65]

Arab nationalism never had the same emotional appeal as Israeli nationalism for Bevan.[66] His perception of the Middle East drew heavily on traditional stereotypes of Arabs:

'the collective psychology of the Moslem states is definitely repulsive to me. It is so morbid and wildly irrational that I am conscious of an abiding sense of unease when I am in one of them'.[67]

Bevan's attitude impressed Gaitskell.[68] Prior to Suez, he and the leader had been rivals. Gaitskell saw Bevan as excessively volatile, even comparing him with Hitler on one occasion.[69] As Chancellor, Gaitskell provided the occasion for Bevan's resignation from government over NHS charges. In opposition, the two disagreed over German rearmament and Bevan resigned from the shadow Cabinet. However, the Suez war united the former opponents and they co-operated over the anti-war campaign. Gaitskell later rewarded Bevan by making him shadow Foreign Secretary.[70]

Bevan's position reflected his ambivalent attitude towards international affairs, putting him at odds with the rest of the left. Mikardo thought that his anti-Nasser statements had 'blunted' his attack on Eden.[71] The press commented on the emerging division between 'Bevan and the Bevanites'.[72] One of *Tribune*'s readers remarked that 'as a disciple of Mr. Bevan, it was most disappointing to see "Our Nye" climbing on to

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[65] *Tribune*, 10 August 1956:12.
[66] Foot, 1973:517.
[67] Quoted in Foot, 1973:547.
[68] See Kyle, 1991:190.
[69] Morgan, 1992:225.
[70] Pelling, 1991:107-118.
[71] Mikardo, 1988:157.
[72] *The Times*, 10 August 1956:2.

the Eden-Gaitskell bandwagon of hate against Nasser and Egypt'.[73] This development was highly portentous, presaging Bevan's growing alienation from the left-wing. His new closeness with the right led to bitter differences with the rest of the Bevanite left, including people like Crossman, Castle and Foot. This became especially evident during the 1957 annual conference when Bevan urged Britain to hold on to its nuclear weapons, overturning his previous commitment to unilateralism.[74]

Labour's anti-Arab current was also evident in its treatment of the Palestinian crisis. By 1956 there were about one hundred thousand refugees living in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Gaza Strip. Despite UNRWA's (the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees) efforts to provide the refugees with homes, medical and educational services and the Palestinians' success in finding employment in countries like Lebanon, many of the refugees lived in very sub-standard conditions.[75] However, the party showed little sympathy for their situation. The leadership marginalised people who drew attention to their position. Before the war, Anthony Greenwood reprimanded Summerskill for suggesting that some of the refugees should return to Israel, claiming that her proposal gave the false impression that Labour held Israel responsible for the resettling of the refugees.[76] Whenever the issue came up during the war, leading party members portrayed it as a problem for Egypt and the Arab countries to resolve. Dalton argued that the refugees should be resettled in (unspecified) 'Arab lands' and that Israel had no responsibility for them:

> 'There is no room for them [the Palestinian refugees] in Israel, that is clear. Their place has been taken by other refugees, by Jewish refugees from Arab lands and we cannot keep turning people round and round'.[77]

Even left-wingers portrayed the Palestinian incursions into Israel as instances of 'mindless terrorism'. As part of a series of visits to the Middle East in the early 1950s,

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[73] Quoted in Kyle, 1991:190.
[74] See Morgan, 1992:216-217.
[75] Rodinson, 1970:52.
[76] Poale Zion Press Release, 7 October 1955.
[77] Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol.561, 1956-57, Col.1299.

Crossman inspected the refugee camps.[78] Before the 1956 hostilities, Crossman and Maurice Orbach acted as 'mediators' between Egypt and Israel when America and Britain sponsored the peace plan Project Alpha. This plan proposed that Israel would take back about seventy-five thousand refugees and compensate the rest in return for a guarantee of Israel's borders and an end to the Arab blockade on Israeli shipping.[79] However, the experience did not make Crossman sensitive to the Palestinians' situation. After the war, he spoke of the impunity under which the 'Fedayeen gangs' entered Israel and said that he would not blame the Israelis if they tried to 'drive the Egyptians out and clean up the Fedayeen'.[80] Ian Mikardo described the Palestinian fedayeen as 'murder-trained infiltrators',[81] indicating a failure to acknowledge the fact that many of the refugees who crossed Israel's borders were not sponsored by Arab states but merely trying to return home.[82]

Labour's anti-war campaign did not therefore hinge on pro-Nasser sympathies and the hostilities did not produce a groundswell of support for Arab nationalism, especially on the part of the leadership, but also in the PLP, the NEC and the trade unions. In the next section, I shall consider why the crisis did not significantly affect Labour attitudes.

3.3 Explaining Labour's Policy

One of the reasons why the war did not dramatically affect Labour's outlook was because anti-imperialist politics played no part at all in Gaitskell's campaign against the war. On the contrary, as a member of the revisionist right, the Labour leader disapproved of the idea of socialist foreign policy, favouring pragmatism over what he saw as left-wing 'utopianism'.[83] Ever since the Korean war, Gaitskell had been strongly pro-American and anti-communist.[84] It was the leader's view that Britain's policy

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[78] Morgan, ed., 1981:195.
[79] Shamir in Louis and Owen, eds., 1989:77; Oren, 1990:358.
[80] Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol.566, 1956-57, Cols.1418-1419.
[81] *Tribune*, 2 November 1956:12.
[82] See Rodinson, 1970:68.
[83] Haseler, 1969:112-113.
[84] Morgan, 1992:224.

undermined the Anglo-American alliance which principally lay behind his protest against government policy.[85] Under the Eisenhower government, America's desire to improve its position in the region led it to shift from a pro-Israel to a pro-Arab policy.[86] The leadership's respect for the UN also determined its anti-war stance. Gaitskell constantly stressed 'the wrongfulness of acting outside the United Nations and...in defiance of the United Nations',[87] protesting against the government's failure to comply with Britain's pro-UN policy.[88] Before the hostilities, Labour claimed that Britain should use the UN Security Council to help it resolve its problems with Egypt, saying that Britain should not contemplate using force without the UN's approval. Gaitskell argued that military intervention disregarded the UN's Charter. Labour's deputy leader, James Griffiths, centred on this theme in his motion of censure.[89]

Internal party pressure also persuaded Gaitskell to adopt an anti-war position, with people like Denis Healey and Douglas Jay on the right and Barbara Castle on the left, being particularly influential.[90] Healey was more 'pacifist' and 'neutralist' than Gaitskell had anticipated,[91] stemming partly from his vehement distaste for the Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary.[92] Gaitskell himself admitted that Healey had critically influenced his decision to oppose government policy.[93] A ginger group called the Suez Emergency Committee, operating from the Movement for Colonial Freedom's (MCF) offices, organised over two hundred and forty protest meetings across the country. Constituency party activists also protested against the intervention.[94] The Labour left attacked Gaitskell for 'outdoing the Tories' in his response to the Canal's nationalisation and his comparison of Nasser with Hitler, suggesting that the leader's proposal that Egyptian funds in Britain be blocked was 'indefensible in law or morality'.[95] Gaitskell's

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[85] Foot, 1973:518.
[86] Ovendale, 1992:157-158.
[87] Epstein, 1964:80; See also Morgan, 1992:228..
[88] Epstein, 1964:75.
[89] Ibid:80 62n.
[90] Morgan, 1992:228.
[91] Gaitskell in Williams, ed., 1983:566.
[92] Reed and Williams, 1971:112.
[93] Ibid:112.
[94] Howe, 1993:270-272.
[95] *Tribune*, 3 August 1956:1

characterisation of Nasser as Hitler also went down badly, with Tony Benn feeling so embarrassed that he 'wanted to shout "Shame". As a member of the back-bench foreign affairs group, Benn, along with his colleagues, tried to persuade the leader to take a more oppositional line towards government policy.[96]

Labour's stance also reflected the shift away from consensus politics, especially over colonial policy. Under the impact of the Labour left's rise and this faction's pressure on the party to adopt a more confrontational approach to foreign policy, in the mid-1950s the two major parties began to polarise over colonial issues and decolonisation, with Labour adopting a more moralistic opposition to colonialism now that it was in opposition. The previous agreement between the two major parties over the inevitability of decolonisation gave way to Labour strongly opposing the Conservative government's use of force, especially in British Guyana and the Suez crisis almost led to a 'total break-down in communication' between the two parties.[97]

Although the anti-war campaign satisfied a variety of elements in the party, including pacifists, anti-colonialists and UN supporters,[98] this unity obscured some fundamental differences between the factions. It was not pro-American feeling which led left-wingers like Bevan and Crossman to oppose the war. Bevan was deeply suspicious of American motives in the Middle East.[99] Critical of American and Soviet policy, he wanted the two powers to disengage from the region. In the postwar period, Gaitskell went on to support the Eisenhower Doctrine whereas Bevan went on to oppose it as much as he had objected to the Anglo-French intervention.[100] Crossman believed that America's policy of appeasement to the Arab states had previously shaped British policy, contending that the consequence of America's patronage of the Middle East was 'the job of bribing the Arabs on our side by sacrificing the essential rights of the Jews'.[101]

Labour's reluctance to acknowledge Nasser's nationalist movement also stemmed from the nature of the Egyptian regime. The leadership, in particular, was unwilling to

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[96] Adams, 1992:117.
[97] Kavanagh and Morris, 1989:97-99.
[98] Epstein, 1964:78-79.
[99] Foot, 1973:517.
[100] Ibid:536;539
[101] Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol.566, 1956-57, Col.1420.

embrace a movement which was not social democratic. Nasser's desire to increase Egypt's independence and to modernise the economy by adopting a neutralist position had a progressive element. The Suez campaign turned him into something of a hero within Arab nationalism, scuppering Britain and France's intention to weaken the Egyptian leader.[102] However, in terms of internal policies, Nasser's promise of progress and democratic control of the economy turned out to be superficial. Through a system of state control over the economy, landowners, officers and bureaucrats continued to have a monopoly over power and the Egyptian people suffered considerably as a result of Egypt's foreign policies.[103] Moreover, although Nasser opened up the political system with elections to the Legislative Assembly and by giving the left greater freedom of expression, the military remained overwhelmingly powerful.[104]

Labour's neglect of the Palestinian refugee question reflected the Palestinians' dependence on Nasser. In the 1950s, the Palestinian cause was intimately bound up with Egypt and Palestinian activists were 'drawn into the orbit of Nasserism'.[105] Although Nasser's policy towards the refugees was ambivalent and instrumental, Palestinians living in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon saw the Egyptian leader as their natural ally against Israel. While Palestinians in Egypt and the Gaza Strip were more sceptical about the president, Egypt sponsored some (although not all) of the raids into Israel. However, there is a sense in which the Suez crisis helped to stimulate Palestinian nationalist consciousness, precipitating the formation of Fatah, which later became the dominant faction of the PLO.[106] This development would later prove critical to Labour's subsequent shift towards a pro-Palestinian stance.

The party's hostility towards Nasserism also reflected its ambivalence towards anti-imperialist movements. Gaitskell, Dalton and Morrison all valued a pragmatic approach to international affairs. The Labour leadership's aims were not dissimilar from

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[102] Rodinson, 1970:77.
[103] Halliday, 1979:21.
[104] Rodinson, 1970:81.
[105] Ajami, 1992:xv.
[106] Khalidi in Louis and Owen, eds., 1989:387.

the Conservative government's in so far as they prioritised the protection of British interests. The difference between the two turned on the means by which these interests could best be protected rather than the aims, with Labour believing that force was not the way.[107] Carlton has suggested that this sentiment stirred the leadership's protests over Suez and represented a form of 'inverted jingoism'.[108] Gaitskell initially opposed Nasser because he felt that the Canal's nationalisation threatened British interests in the region and he did not believe that these should be sacrificed in favour of anti-imperialist nationalisms.[109] The Labour leader felt that stability in the Middle East was vital to Britain's oil interests.[110] A number of backbenchers objected to intervention against Egypt because they believed that it would 'inflame the Arab nations against us and have the gravest repercussions in Asia and Africa'.[111] John Strachey,[112] a member of the revisionist right, argued that:

> 'We are supposed...to be safeguarding our oil supplies,
> but where will our oil supplies be if we are at war with
> every Muslim state between the Persian Gulf and the
> Atlantic?'.[113]

Even Bevan argued that the Suez Canal was critical to Europe's supply of oil, giving Egypt the potential to put 'a stranglehold on the economic life of Europe'.[114]

Nor was it politically advantageous for Labour to identify too closely with Arab nationalism. In an attempt to portray the opposition as unpatriotic, Conservatives derided Labour for being 'Nasser's party' or 'Nasser's little lackey', playing on its reputation for failing to protect national interests.[115] By opposing the war and simultaneously objecting to Nasser, Labour could avoid being explicitly jingoistic while

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[107] See Epstein, 1964:28.
[108] Carlton, 1988:107.
[109] See Williams, ed., 1983:558.
[110] Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol.570, 1956-57, Col.420.
[111] *The Times*, 9 August 1956:5.
[112] Labour MP for Dundee West.
[113] *The Times*, 3 September 1956:5.
[114] *Tribune*, 10 August 1956:12.
[115] Epstein, 1964:75.

continuing to allay public fears by appealing to popular hostility towards Arabs. While the general public was split along party lines over Suez, some leading party members were worried that support for Egypt would alienate working class voters. Bevan, for example, thought that middle class ideas overly-influenced Labour's approach to foreign affairs.[116] The Arab states' role in the Second World War had created some wariness within the British public.[117] Before the 1956 hostilities, opinion polls suggested that there was widespread opposition to the hostilities. However, once the conflict started, the public showed a lot more sympathy for the government and 'rallied to support' Britain's position.[118]

Labour's continuing sympathy for Israel reflected a number of ideological and non-ideological factors too. First, whereas it opposed Nasser for being anti-social democratic, it supported the Jewish state for its commitment to social democratic principles. Defending the Jewish state, Dalton appealed to its democratic nature and said that:

> 'I am not a Jew. But I am a very warm admirer of the achievements of the State of Israel. In this, I am in the mainstream of thought and sympathy of the British Labour Party, which has always been very friendly to the State of Israel'.[119]

Greenwood stated that Israel was the only country in the Middle East 'which [thought] and [felt] and [had] the same standards as ourselves'.[120] These ideas were pervasive in the party. The Labour left believed that Israel's socialist experiment would raise the Arabs' standard of living and teach them progressive practices.[121] This sense of common politics led Labour to ignore developments in Israel such as the rise of hard-liners like Ben-Gurion over moderates like Sharett. As Israel's Prime Minister between

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[116] Ibid:147-148.
[117] See chapter two.
[118] Howe, 1993:273.
[119] Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol.561, 1956-57, Col.1295.
[120] *Tribune*, 9 March 1956:4.
[121] *Tribune*, 24 August 1956:2; TUC Report, 1956:440.

1953 and 1955, Sharett negotiated with Egyptian officers and his diplomatic approach to the conflict impressed Nasser.[122] Ben-Gurion initiated a campaign against Sharett's moderation, forcing his resignation in 1955 so that he could become leader again. It was Ben-Gurion's tough approach to foreign policy which provided the backdrop to the 1956 conflict.[123]

Whereas Labour had no political links with Arab nationalism, it had strong ones with the Israeli government and Labour Party. Gaitskell's visit to the Jewish state in 1953 had already sharpened his pro-Israeli leanings.[124] Dalton was also influenced by his links with the Israelis, having met Sharett, his former student at the LSE, and other members of the Knesset during one of his visits to the Jewish state. After one visit, he claimed that Israel was a country based on the principle of social equality.[125] Bevan was on very close terms with Yigal Allon, the Labour Minister.[126] Moreover, the Israeli labour movement was well-represented at the Socialist International, providing an arena for contacts between the two parties.[127] Furthermore, there were significant relations between the British trade union movement and the Israeli trade union movement, in the form of reciprocal visits.[128] Finally, there were linkages between Labour Women and the Israeli Labour movement through the International Women's School.[129]

These ties enabled the Israeli Labour Party, Mapai, to lobby the British party over Suez. During the crisis, Mapai was worried about Labour's policy. Golda Meir recalled that some Israeli socialists felt that Labour had 'swallowed Nasser's line whole'.[130] Israeli politicians tried to rectify this situation, with Mapai, for example, contacting the party about the number of fedayeen attacks against Israel.[131] Moreover, talks with the Israeli Ambassador in Britain influenced Gaitskell's view that Nasser had

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[122] Rodinson, 1970:69.
[123] Shanin in Halliday and Alavi, eds., 1988:235.
[124] Williams, 1979:421.
[125] Pimlott, 1985:615.
[126] Foot, 1973:419; Mikardo, 1988:159.
[127] Interview with Ian Mikardo, 1 May 1990.
[128] See TUC Report, 1950:201-202; LPACR, 1951:9-10.
[129] See NCLW, 1954:15.
[130] Middle East Visit, 12-26 August 1959, Int/1958-9/34:1.
[131] Telegram from Mapai, 8 November 1956.

expansionist ambitions and that his rise would harm Israel in the long term.[132] More locally, Poale Zion put forward Israel's case during the debates over the crisis, arguing that the Jewish state put into practice the British labour movement's ideals by trying to build socialism, condemning the Conservative government for refusing to supply Israel with arms and allowing Nasser to prevent Israeli shipping from using the Canal.[133] Poale Zion tried to re-build relations between Labour and the Jewish community, taking part in the creation of Labour Friends of Israel (LFI) in 1957.[134] As a non-affiliated organisation, LFI aimed to lobby opinion on behalf of Israel. Formed at a public rally at Labour's annual conference, Herbert Morrison was among a number who addressed the rally and Anthony Greenwood was its first chair.[135]

Historical considerations also played a part in the maintenance of Labour's pro-Israel sympathies. Leading Labour figures supported Israel because memories of Germany's wartime atrocities were still fresh in their minds. Gaitskell saw the state as the progressive homeland of an oppressed people,[136] and both he and Bevan were emotionally attached to the country.[137] Gaitskell's commitment stemmed from his experiences in 1930s Vienna where he met Jews brought up in the Central European tradition of Marxism,[138] and the collapse of social democracy in Austria led him to become a strong supporter of anti-fascist causes.[139] The 'spirit of the resistance' which was so strong in France,[140] was not lost on this generation of Labour politicians whose experience of the war converted them to the zionist cause. They believed that the Jewish people's survival depended on Israel's existence and that Egypt threatened this. In fact, recent contributions to the crisis show that Nasser was not a great threat to Israel at the time and that he wanted to avoid conflict with Israel up to 1955 and for a while opposed Palestinian raids into the country.[141] Nevertheless, emotional commitment to

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[132] See Williams, ed., 1983:559-560.
[133] LPACR, 1956:72-73.
[134] Alderman, 1983:133-134.
[135] LFI leaflet, '30 Years of LFI (1957-1987).
[136] Williams, 1979:393.
[137] Foot, 1973:517.
[138] See Williams, 1979:53-63.
[139] Morgan, 1992:222.
[140] See Louis and Owen, eds., 1989:4.
[141] Khalidi in Louis and Owen, eds., 1989:390.

the Jewish state remained an important determinant of pro-Israel feeling. Labour continued to regard Israel as a refuge for the Jews from persecution and Shinwell spoke for many when he said that:

> 'When, as a result of Hitler's dastardly acts, millions of people were destroyed in gas chambers, what could one expect? There must be a haven, a refuge for persecuted people, the victims of the pogroms and the rest, and there was the state of Israel'.[142]

There were also compelling political reasons for maintaining a pro-Israel position, rooted in the continuing link between Jews and social democracy. By 1956, there were still significant ties between Labour and the Jews, with the party containing seventeen Jewish Labour MPs. Moreover, there was a notable connection between these and the party's left-wing. Six of the MPs were among the fifty-seven who joined Bevan in voting against defence policy in 1952. Ian Mikardo and Sydney Silverman were prominent left-wingers. Mikardo had close ties with the affiliated organisation, Poale Zion and Silverman had connections with various zionist organisations.[143] In the same way as the Conservatives exploited the party's (largely ungrounded) 'pro-Nasser' stand, they also made much of Labour's apparent 'betrayal' of its friendship with Israel. In one Commons' debate, a Conservative MP, Charles Waterhouse, and an enthusiastic supporter of force against Egypt, said that:

> 'it is a very cruel thing that the Israelis, in this hour of their tribulation, in this hour when every hand is turned against them, should find that many of the voices to which they have been used to listen have been silent'.[144]

Gaitskell himself represented a constituency, Leeds South, which contained a significant Jewish community. He was married to a Jewish women and his father-in-law was an

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[142] Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol.570, 1956-57, Col.609.
[143] Epstein, 1964:186-187.
[144] Quoted in Epstein, 1964:192.

active zionist.[145] Such was the strain between Gaitskell's opposition to the war and his sympathies with Israel that he felt compelled to make clear that he had not given up on Israel. During his anti-government attack Gaitskell telephoned a close Jewish friend in Leeds to reassure her that he was not 'turning against' Israel.[146] This concern was not groundless. Maurice Orbach's case illustrated the costs of too close an identification with the Arabs' case. Unlike the other left-wing Jewish MPs, Orbach clearly sympathised with Nasser, having previously mediated between Egypt and Israel over the Palestinian refugee question.[147] At a public meeting, he defended Nasser, eliciting a good deal of anger from the Jewish community.[148] Orbach represented Willesden East, a marginal constituency which contained a good number of Jews who were in a position to affect election results.[149] Local Conservatives exploited the MP's difficulties up to the 1959 general election and he lost the seat by over two thousand votes.[150]

The 1956 war did very little to change Labour's fundamental loyalties in the Israel/Arab conflict. Ideological and non-ideological factors combined to produce this situation. Committed to social democracy, Labour looked more favourably on Israeli nationalism because the Jewish state was a liberal democracy led by a sister party. In contrast, although Nasserism appealed to progressive values, it was not a social democratic movement and had no political ties with Labour. Moreover, Israeli nationalism, because of the history of Nazism, had more of a moral and emotional appeal to the party than Arab nationalism. Even so, instrumental factors also played a part. Despite Labour's commitment to anti-imperialism, it was ambivalent towards anti-imperialist movements, sharing with the Conservatives a commitment to the preservation of British interests. Furthermore, its pro-Israeli stance stemmed also from a rational calculation of the political costs associated with a pro-Arab policy and the benefits arising from a pro-Israeli one. However, there was some evidence of changing dynamics and I shall consider these in the next section.

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[145] Epstein, 1964:194.
[146] Williams, ed., 1983:243-244.
[147] See Shamir in Louis and Owen, eds., 1989:77.
[148] *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 August 1956:8; *Jewish Chronicle*, 31 August 1956:14.
[149] Epstein, 1964:185.
[150] Alderman, 1983:133. Orbach returned to parliament in 1964 as MP for Stockport South.

3.4 Towards Dissent

Despite the overwhelming tendency to continue to support Israel and to be sceptical of Arab nationalism, the 1956 conflict did produce a slight shift from the prevailing Labour views. People like William Warbey, Edith Summerskill and Tony Benn challenged the leadership's hostility towards Nasser. Benn claimed that 'no country has committed so many crimes against Egypt as this country has'.[151] After a meeting of the executive of Bristol South East CLP in August, he issued a statement which said that:

> 'the real issue is very simple. Egypt is a poor country which since 1882 has been fully or partly occupied by British troops. Now free, she is anxious to raise her living standards. Without the Aswan Dam she cannot succeed...she deserves the support of the British people'.[152]

Edith Summerskill knew Nasser personally. After the war, she visited Egypt and returned saying that the Anglo-French attack caused many more casualties than acknowledged.[153] Barbara Castle and Fenner Brockway led a march of five hundred people to protest against the government.[154] People linked with the *Tribune* newspaper described the Anglo-French intervention as a 'Crime Against the World', suggesting that Britain and France had, in defiance of the United Nations, engaged in an 'evil, imperialist struggle against the Arab peoples'.[155]

The rise of the MCF partly accounted for this development. Formed in 1954, it was not linked specifically to one party, however, Labour tended to dominate it.[156] The organisation aimed to support national liberation movements and decolonisation. It attracted people from the party's left-wing, including Michael Foot, Barbara Castle,

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[151] Quoted in Epstein, 1964:28.
[152] Quoted in Adams, 1992:118.
[153] Epstein, 1964:76.
[154] *The Times*, 15 August 1956:6.
[155] *Tribune*, 2 November 1956:1.
[156] Kavanagh and Morris, 1989:99.

pacifists like Frank Allaun, and Tony Benn, who was its treasurer. William Warbey was also closely involved in the organisation, having chaired its London Area Council. There was a particularly strong link between ILP members like Fenner Brockway and the MCF. The body's links with Labour also operated through affiliated constituency parties, local and national trade unions. It was the MCF which originally planned the anti-war demonstration in Trafalgar Square, allowing Labour to take it over after the latter showed some interest.[157]

Unlike the leadership, these elements did oppose the war on anti-colonialist grounds. Warbey was highly critical of Labour's foreign policy and although he was not a fellow-traveller, he had some sympathy for communist principles. Brockway was a committed anti-colonialist for humanitarian reasons. He believed in the absolute right to national self-determination on moral grounds and wanted Labour to strengthen its anti-colonialism and to support independence for all the colonies. The Labour left identified with the third force principle, opposing the cold war division between America and the Soviet Union.[158] It argued that freeing the Middle East from cold war ambitions would provide stability in the region and that this depended upon recognition of Arab nationalism.[159] Barbara Castle advocated a new approach to the Middle East 'based on the political co-operation of all the great powers, including Russia, in an effort to solve the problems of the area'. She claimed that military pacts should be replaced with economic aid through UN agencies and suggested that Nasser's position was a weaker nation's response to 'imperialist polices'.[160] Left-wing opponents of the war were very critical of America's decision to withdraw aid for Egypt's Aswan Dam project.

Developments in the Middle East also contributed to this shift. In the late 1950s, Arab nationalism began to make appeals to socialism and these forms of nationalism went on to dominate in Egypt, Syria, Algeria and Iraq in the early 1960s.[161] The rise of

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[157] This account derives from Howe, 1993:231-249;265;272 note 14.
[158] See Howe, 1993:168-169;171-173;265.
[159] *Tribune*, 19 October 1956:1.
[160] *Tribune*, 21 September 1956:5.
[161] See Sharabi, 1966:67.

Nasser was particularly important. Whatever his shortcomings in terms of domestic policy, he was a charismatic leader who won the loyalty of Arab people but also appealed to western politicians. Nasser attended the Bandung conference in 1955. The conference's pro-Arab views impressed him and he began to believe that African and Asian states needed to distinguish themselves from the superpowers in order to achieve independence and argued that they should act as a third force in international politics. Nasser created the idea of positive neutrality, which suggested that states like Egypt could build up independence if they avoided alignment with the great powers in the cold war. [162] The Bandung conference as a whole identified with third force ideas. [163] Since Labour's anti-colonialists shared these politics, they began to sympathise with Nasserism. This faction's concern with anti-colonialist goals allowed it to turn a blind eye to some of the more unsavoury aspects of Egypt's internal regime.

At this stage, sympathy for Nasser did not entail criticism of Israeli policy. People like Warbey and Brockway had been strongly pro-zionist in the 1940s. Warbey joined Silverman, Mikardo and Maurice Orbach in their condemnation of Bevin's Palestine policy. [164] Nor was Barbara Castle anti-Israel. She believed that to ignore Arab nationalism and to adopt anti-Nasser policies would exacerbate the Arab/Israeli conflict and threaten Israel's existence. [165] Reflecting on the crisis, Castle remarked on the difficulties of the Arab/Israeli dispute:

> 'Though I was no Zionist, I always had an instinctive alignment with Israel. I was haunted by the horrors of the holocaust and could identify with the Jews' hunger for status and security. At the same time, I had sympathy with the Palestinians who had been turned off their land and out of their homes so that the new state could be formed. It was one of those problems which, like Northern Ireland, seemed almost insoluble.' [166]

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[162] Dessouki in Louis and Owen, eds., 1989:33-36.
[163] Howe, 1993:302.
[164] Ibid:151.
[165] *Tribune*, 21 September 1956:5.
[166] Castle, 1993:242.

Only one left-winger, Michael Foot, was openly critical of Israel's policies. He believed that the west's cold war policies, such as the Baghdad Pact, isolated Israel. However, he did not think that this was enough completely to let Israel off the hook.[167] Foot suggested that although Israel had been subjected to severe provocation, the Jewish state's actions were 'morally wrong and highly dangerous'.[168] He has claimed that his position stemmed from disillusionment with internal Israeli politics, in particular, the marginalisation of moderates like Sharett in favour of activists like Ben-Gurion.[169]

These developments later provided the basis of a slight change in Labour's analysis of the Israel/Arab conflict. Arab socialist groups tried to exploit the anti-imperialist tendency in the party which had come to the fore in Suez. At the end of 1957 members of an Arab Students Union approached Tony Benn and proposed the establishment of permanent links with the Labour Party which could be used as the basis of contacts between Labour and Ba'ath Socialists in the Middle East. Although Benn was worried about the Ba'ath Socialists refusal to meet the Israelis, he concluded that such contacts were the only way to progress.[170] John Clarke, the Administrative Officer of the International Department, welcomed this development.[171] Moreover, after the war the NEC asked the International sub-committee to provide a restatement of Labour's Middle East policy. The subsequent document proposed that Labour 'seek out and assist socialist elements among the Arabs'.[172]

A Middle East working party aiming to reconsider Arab nationalism and the Israel/Arab conflict was set up in 1959. Sympathisers with Israel, including the chair, Ian Mikardo, and Crossman, Philip Noel Baker and Kenneth Younger, were members, so the working party was unlikely radically to change party policy. Nevertheless, it gave Arab nationalism serious consideration for the first time.[173] In August 1959 the Secretary of the International Department, David Ennals, went on a fact-finding visit to

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[167] See Foot and Jones, 1957:90-92.
[168] *Tribune*, 2 November 1956:1.
[169] Interview with Michael Foot, 1 November 1990.
[170] Correspondence from Tony Benn to John Hatch, 4 November 1957.
[171] Correspondence from John Clarke to Tony Benn 20 November 1957.
[172] The Middle East, ID/November 1957:1.
[173] Int/ME/1958-9/3.

Israel, Syria, Lebanon and Cyprus. Crucially, he paid an informal visit to the Ba'ath Socialist Party conference in Beirut.[174] One of Ennals's aims was to 'make contact with socialist groups and to see the Palestine refugee problem at first hand'.[175] During his stay, he met a number of people involved in the Ba'ath Socialist Party, including Dr. Jamal Shaer, a member of its organising committee. In Lebanon he stayed with Nassim Majdalany, a parliamentary representative of the Popular Socialist Party led by Kamal Jumblat.[176]

This experience was of formative importance in Ennals's approach to the Arab/Israeli conflict. It produced the first indication of a movement away from Labour's pro-Israel consensus. In an unpublished report on the Palestinians, Ennals wrote that:

> 'While they [the Palestinian refugees] have eked out their existence on the UNRWA rations, maybe supplemented by casual labour, they have seen thousands of Jewish immigrants from Europe, North Africa and elsewhere pour into Israel. They are aware that at the same time as Arabs are refused permission to return, the Jewish Agency is negotiating for new immigrants'.[177]

However, Ennals's views remained those of a minority until well after the 1956 war.

3.5 Conclusion

Although the 1956 war provided a significant test of Labour's pro-Israeli policy, the vast majority of the party remained committed to the Jewish state, refusing to see the Israeli government as blameworthy as the British and French ones for its intervention against Egypt. Leading the anti-war campaign, Gaitskell went to great lengths to distinguish Labour's opposition to the war from support for Arab nationalism. Labour's

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[174] Correspondence from David Ennals to Leslie Carver, Deputy Director of UNRWA, 21 July 1959.
[175] Report of Middle East Visit, 12-26 August 1959, Int/1958-59/34:1.
[176] Report of Middle East Visit, 12-26 August 1959, Int/1958-59/34:3.
[177] Unpublished article by David Ennals, 31 August 1959:1.

exonerative attitude towards Israel stemmed from its strong relationship with the Israeli Labour leadership and lack of equivalent ties with Arab nationalism together with an awareness of the potentially damaging political effect of adopting an anti-Israel policy given the relationship between Jews and the party. Moreover, memories of the Second World War generated an emotional loyalty to the Jewish state, leading party members to rationalise Israeli policy in terms of the country's survival. Nevertheless, the war did generate a ripple of dissent from Labour's prevailing hostility towards Arab nationalism and sympathy for Jewish nationalism. Although few members of the Labour left actually challenged Israeli policy, a significant number began to question the leadership's anti-Arab attitudes. The conflict succeeded in putting pressure on the party to take Arab nationalism seriously and set off a series of contacts between members of Labour's internal bodies and Arab nationalist groups. In the next chapter, I shall look at how Labour responded to a further challenge to its pro-Israeli tradition.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE 1967 WAR: TOWARDS A BREAK-DOWN IN LABOUR'S CONSENSUS OF SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

The 1967 war provided the second major test of Labour's pro-Israel consensus. The Jewish state's definitive victory within six days and its subsequent occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights, directly challenged the left's conception of the country as an underdog.[1] Moreover, invoking a division between the west and the Soviet Union, with western countries almost exclusively backing Israel and non-capitalist countries supporting the Arab states,[2] aspects of the conflict appealed to Labour's anti-imperialist politics. Coming from the Bevanite left and committed to continuing the postwar process of decolonisation,[3] the Labour Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, was apparently dedicated to the pursuit of socialist policies abroad.[4] With this background, Wilson, his government and the party, had to decide between Israeli nationalism and anti-imperialist Arab nationalism. Alderman has suggested that 1967 was a turning-point in Labour's relations with the Jewish state and that the government transgressed the party's pro-Israel tradition.[5] This chapter explores the way Labour dealt with the challenges posed by the hostilities. In section one, I show how the war created a wave of solidarity with Israel. In the second section, I look at the reasons for the party's overwhelming support for the Jewish state and in section three, I consider dissent from the traditional pro-Israel consensus.

4.1 Solidarity with Israel

Despite the government's claims to neutrality,[6] and Wilson's contention that Britain would not take sides in the conflict,[7] leading members of the Cabinet showed

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[1] Kingsley Martin, 'Dual Sympathies on the Left', *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 October 1967.
[2] Halliday in Davis et al., eds., 1975:161-162.
[3] Howe, 1993:306-308.
[4] Morgan, 1987:250.
[5] Alderman, 1983:160.
[6] Brand, 1974:367.
[7] *The Times*, 6 June 1967:1.

considerable solidarity with the Jewish state. Wilson strongly condemned Nasser's blockade and spoke of forcing Egypt's president to open the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping.[8] Referring to Egypt's part, he said that there was no 'doubt...that the UAR military posture, with its loud orchestrated propaganda support, looked to the Israelis like a formidable threat of imminent invasion'.[9] The Prime Minister wanted to persuade America to break the blockade of Israeli shipping and 'passionately advocated intervention to aid Israel'. Herbert Bowden, the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs, and Ray Gunter, the Minister of Labour, wanted Britain to take unilateral action to help Israel. Other key members of the government rallied around the Jewish state during the war. Roy Jenkins, the Home Secretary, also backed the use of force to help the country. John Silkin, the Chief Whip, apparently became a 'fanatical pro-Israeli', despite his anti-zionist and non-religious Jewish background. It was the view that an Anglo-American intervention would look like an attempt to 're-assert western domination in the Middle East', alienating the Afro-Asian block in the UN, that persuaded the leadership to adopt a more cautious approach. [10]

It is true that in the parliamentary debates, the Foreign Secretary, George Brown, frequently claimed that there was an Arab case as well as an Israeli case.[11] When Israel continued to occupy the territories captured during the war, he told the UN General Assembly that the country should not seek territorial expansion or take unilateral action over the status of Jerusalem.[12] However, he pursued a pro-Israel line behind-the-scenes by adopting a 'hawkish' attitude towards the blockade; instructing the British delegation at the UN to help America to frustrate the Soviet attack on Israel in the General Assembly and by trying to persuade King Hussein of Jordan to seek a settlement with Israel.[13] Brown also proposed that political assurances should accompany Israel's withdrawal from the territories.[14] Wilson later recalled that

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[8] Eban, 1972:210.
[9] Wilson, 1971:395-396.
[10] Crossman, 1976:356-358.
[11] *The Times*, 6 June 1967:7.
[12] *The Times*, 22 June 1967:4.
[13] *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 July 1967:7.
[14] *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 August 1967:16.

although Brown had never been as pro-Israel as the rest of the leadership, during the war he 'never wavered...to make his weight felt against Arab aggression'.[15]

It was not just the right that held these views. Richard Crossman, the Leader of the Commons, regarded Nasser's 'peremptory' demands as one of the main causes of the war.[16] Although he did not favour actively helping Israel, he was clearly torn, writing:

> 'For once part of me is on the side of military action but another instinct says we shouldn't take part. We should stand aside and let the Americans take the rap, to which my reason replies that if we stand aside the Americans will let the Israelis down, in which case the Israelis will be forced to fight a war on their own and be dubbed an aggressor by the U.N. We would have another Suez on our hands with a Labour Government this time colluding with the aggressor'.[17]

Crossman's views surprised his colleagues who thought that he would have adopted a more explicitly pro-Israel position and the press even described him as an appeaser. Finding this particularly upsetting, he immediately 'put the record straight' with the Israeli Ambassador.[18] When the UN began to debate Israel's withdrawal from the territories, he argued that it was 'intolerable' to expect the country to return to its previous frontiers.[19] Crossman said that Israel's achievement confirmed the wisdom of having 'left the Israelis alone...to let them have their one chance'.[20]

The PLP also rallied behind the Jewish state. During the war, Labour MPs sponsored three pro-Israel EDMs. The most popular motion attracted one hundred and sixty-six signatures, one hundred and five of which were from Labour members (see Table 4.1 and appendix 4.1). This motion asserted 'the right of Israel, by her own force of arms, to meet an avowed threat to her existence'.[21] Although there were three Labour-sponsored pro-Arab EDMs, these attracted little support; the most popular had

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[15] Wilson, 1981:332.
[16] Crossman, 1976:355.
[17] Ibid:356.
[18] Ibid:358;365; See also Wilson, 1981:332.
[19] Crossman, 1976:393.
[20] Ibid:366.
[21] Notices of Motions, 5 June - 6 July 1967:11389.

only nineteen Labour names (see Table 4.2). Moreover, out of just over three hundred Labour MPs, two hundred were registered and paying members of LFI.[22]

Support for Israel clearly transcended party factions. Although one might have expected some left-wing dissent, there was none in the parliamentary party. Eric Heffer, MP for Liverpool Walton, for example, was one of Israel's most outspoken supporters. In the Commons, Heffer opposed the UN General Assembly's resolution calling for the state to revoke its law on Jerusalem's status. He described reports of Israel's intention to incorporate the Gaza Strip as false on the grounds that, first, the country wanted to preserve its Jewish character and second, the territories would be an economic burden.[23] Shortly after the war Heffer was one of seven Labour MPs to fly to Israel in order to assess the political situation and the refugee problem at LFI's invitation.[24] On his return, he wrote that 'the Israelis not only want peace with the Arabs, but equally they want justice for the Arabs'. On the refugees, he claimed that he was convinced that 'it has not been the declared policy of the Israeli Government to force the refugees to leave'.[25] Later, Heffer was one of a number of Labour MPs who argued that Israel should not return to its pre-June borders and that the Golan Heights 'should never go back to having gun emplacements shooting at Israel'.[26]

For Jewish Labour MPs, the dilemmas of the 1967 conflict were not as acute as those of the 1956 war because the party's leadership was not asking them to oppose a war in which Israel was involved. Nevertheless, they were under pressure to express outright support for the Jewish state. At the time, there were thirty-eight Jewish members of the PLP.[27] Some of these had particularly strong links with zionist organisations. Barnett Janner, for example, chaired the Anglo-Israel Parliamentary Group and he was president of the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and the European Council of World Confederation of General Zionists and a member of the World Zionists General Council (Actions Committee).[28] In parliament, Janner consistently spoke on behalf of Israel, maintaining that the country wanted peace

[22] *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 July 1967:7.
[23] Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol. 749, 1966-67, Cols.2059-2060.
[24] *The Times*, 28 June 1967:6.
[25] *The Times*, 29 July 1967:11.
[26] *Jewish Chronicle*, 13 October 1967:26.
[27] See Alderman, 1983:174-175.
[28] The Jewish Year Book, 1967:257-258.

Table 4.1 **Pro-Israel Early-Day Motions, 1967**

Date of first tabling	Number and title	Party support	Main sponsor	Total number of names appended	Number of labour names appended (and percentage of total names)
8.6.67	568. The Middle East	Labour, Conservative and Liberal	David Weitzman (Labour)	166	105 (63)
8.6.67	570. Defence of peace and Israel	Labour	Arthur Lewis (Labour)	1	1 (100)
27.7.67	630. Middle East peace	Labour	William Molloy (Labour)	11	11 (100)

Table 4.2 Pro-Arab Early-Day Motions, 1967

Date of first tabling	Number and title	Party support	Main sponsor	Total number of names appended	Number of Labour names appended (and percentage of total names)
14.6.67	573. Plight of Arabs in Sinai Desert	Labour	Jack Ashley (Labour)	19	19 (100)
13.7.67	606. Ending Israel's occupation of Jerusalem	Labour	Margaret McKay (Labour)	18	18 (100)
No fixed date	78. Her Majesty's Governments' policy towards Arab/Israel dispute	Labour	Margaret McKay (Labour)	1	1 (100)

whereas the Arab states wanted war, supporting Israel's measures in Jerusalem and objecting to the presence of a UN peace-keeping force inside Israel's frontiers.[29] David Weitzman, the MP for Stoke Newington and Hackney North, made similar claims.[30] Other Jewish MPs, such as Ian Mikardo, Leo Abse and John Mendelson, actively campaigned in favour of Israel by organising 'solidarity with Israel' meetings.[31]

The extra-parliamentary party also remained largely pro-Israel. The NEC and the Overseas Department contained many more pro-Israel members than pro-Arab ones (see tables 4.3 and 4.4). There were few indications of a shift in these sections' attitudes. The Overseas Sub-Committee did show some sign of a more neutral position with one document suggesting that peace depended on compromise between Israel and the Arab states. The document said that Israel should not hold on to the occupied territories and that the Arab states should guarantee Israel's shipping rights; that Israel should take back the refugees created by the war and that both Israel and the Arab states should work together in finding a solution to the problem of the other refugees; that economic links should be encouraged between Israel and the Arab states and finally, that the international community should work towards keeping the level of arms in the Middle East down.[32] However, these views were not incorporated into official policy. In the postwar period, the NEC adopted the UN Security Council Resolution 242[33] as central to its policy, but added a clause that stressed Israel's 'absolute right to exist'. The Jewish press welcomed the NEC's position as confirmation of Labour's continuing support for Israel.[34]

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[29] Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol.749, 1966-67, Cols.2044-2051.
[30] Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol.749, 1966-67, Cols.2084-2090.
[31] *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 June 1967:5.
[32] 'The Middle East War - the Aftermath', Labour Party Overseas Sub-Committee, 1967.
[33] For the full text of the resolution, see Djonovich, ed., 1989:8.
[34] *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 October 1970:40.

Table 4.3 **NEC Members, 1967**

Pro-Zionist/Israel	Pro-Arab/Palestinian
A. Bacon	F. Allaun
E.M. Braddock	T. Benn
J. Callaghan	B. Castle
T. Driberg	
A. Greenwood	
J. Lee (Chair)	
J. Lestor	
I. Mikardo	
H. Wilson	

Nor did the hostilities result in a break-down in the constituency section's support for Israel. Five constituency parties' resolutions held a position broadly in line with the government's.[35] Although there was a groundswell of grass-roots' opposition to the government's other foreign policies, such as Vietnam, Rhodesia and South Africa, there was none on the Middle East generally or the Israel/Arab conflict specifically.[36] This situation continued well after the war. While Labour activists were generally hostile to the government's foreign policy in the late 1960s, they did not attack Wilson's attitude towards the Middle East,[37] with the annual conference unanimously accepting the leadership's policy.[38] Moreover, Labour members of the GLC showed solidarity with Israel, supporting a policy of sending advisers on rebuilding East Jerusalem to Israel and backing Soviet Jewry's emigration rights.[39]

Throughout the conflict the TUC remained pro-Israel too. The unions' leadership strongly supported the Jewish state's aims, calling for the Arab countries to recognise Israel and for direct negotiations between the two sides.[40] Labour Women also continued in the party's tradition. At the first of its conference held after the war,

[35] 'Resolutions from CLPs and Trade Unions', Overseas Department, OV/1966-67:61.
[36] See Resolutions, 1967:58-61.
[37] Resolutions, 1968:50-53.
[38] LPACR, 1970:200-205;327.
[39] Alderman, 1989:116.
[40] TUC Report, 1967:489-492; *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 September 1967:1.

this section expressed its 'full solidarity with the people of Israel who are defending their existence and their liberty against aggression'. Although Doris Young, from the National Labour Women's Advisory Committee, raised the matter of the Palestinian refugees, she supported the resolution and the conference carried it.[41] Later, she and another member of the committee attended an International Council of Social Democratic Women seminar in Israel. After meeting with representatives from the Histadrut, the Israeli Labour Party, and the Israeli women's movement, these women reported sympathetically on Israel's situation in the Middle East, calling for the establishment of the 'closest possible links' between the British and Israeli labour movements to help counter the threat to the Jewish state.[42]

Table 4.4 **Overseas Department Members, 1967**

Pro-Zionist/Israel	Pro-Arab/Palestinian
J. Callaghan	B. Castle
T. Driberg	
A. Greenwood	
M. Herbison	
J. Lee	
G. Morgan	
H. Wilson	

Despite Labour's ostensible commitment to anti-imperialist politics, it continued to have little sympathy for Arab nationalism. Western colonial history in the Middle East gave rise to anti-Arab stereotyping, including the characterisation of Arabs as aggressive, backward and feudalistic. Moreover, it involved the denial of Palestinian identity and portrayals of Palestine as an empty land that needed to be transformed.[43] Rodinson has suggested that western indifference to the Palestinian people stemmed from the notion of European supremacy.[44] By the late 1960s, important sections of the labour movement continued to operate within this tradition. Wilson believed that responsibility for the war lay squarely with 'Arab aggression' and Nasser's 'great

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[41] NCLW, 1968:40.
[42] NAD/W/80/7/70; OV/1969-70/78
[43] See Said, 1980:8-9.
[44] Ibid:82. The concept of 'European supremacy' here refers to a tradition of thought that sees Europe and Europeans as possessing a monopoly over civilised and progressive values and practices.

fanfare of aggressive speeches'.[45] The trade union leadership also spoke of 'Arab backwardness' and 'fascism'. At the TUC conference, Frank Cousins, the TGWU leader, referred to the Arab states' 'feudalism'. In the debate on the Middle East, Fred Hayday, Chair of the International Committee, said that 'the Arab countries' war aims [were] clear, simple and specific - that is, to drive the Israelis out of Israel and to extinguish them as a people...'. Another trade unionist spoke of the Arab states' 'Fascist' and 'Nazi' ideas,[46] and these themes were common in the labour movement.[47]

The 1967 conflict also drew attention to the Palestinian question. The PLO was formed in 1964 with the aim of uniting expatriate Palestinians. It had a government in exile in Gaza and an army consisting of refugees and Nasser was one of its main sponsors.[48] Having abandoned pan-Arabism in the aftermath of the war in the belief that the Arab states were powerless in the face of Israel, Palestinian nationalism focused on the figure of Yasser Arafat and called for independent national rights for the Palestinians.[49] However, key members of the government paid very little attention to the refugee question. Although Brown's speech at the UN called for a solution to the refugee crisis, it did not identify Israel as responsible.[50] In their postwar reflections on the conflict, neither Wilson nor Crossman mentioned the Palestinians at all.[51] Many party members continued to argue that the Arab states should take responsibility for resettling the refugees.[52] Moreover, although Labour's rank and file took up other aspects of Third World politics, such as the anti-Vietnam war campaign and anti-apartheid, it did not adopt the Palestinian cause. The party as a whole showed little sympathy for this movement, condemning the rise of Palestinian terrorism and the activities of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) at the 1970 annual conference.[53]

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[45] Wilson, 1971:395-396.
[46] TUC Report, 1967:489-491.
[47] See, 'Labour Looks at Israel', LFI, 1971.
[48] Ovendale, 1984:170-171.
[49] Ajami, 1983:123.
[50] *The Times*, 22 June 1967:4.
[51] See Wilson, 1971; Crossman, 1976.
[52] See, for example, Parliamentary Debates, Commons, vol.749, cols.2046-2047;2059;2089-2090;
[53] LPACR, 1970:327.

There is little evidence then that the war significantly altered Labour's traditional sympathies. Indeed, the conflict led most of the party, from the leadership to the constituency parties, to rally behind the Jewish state and to condemn the Arab countries for aggression. The fact that Israel had a decisive victory and went on to maintain military control over the territories and to annex East Jerusalem, was of little consequence to the party's policy. In the next section I shall consider the reasons for this.

4.2 Explaining Labour's Policy

One of the reasons why Labour continued to support Israel during the hostilities was essentially ideological, that is, based on a sense of shared political purpose with the Jewish state. Heffer, for example, defended Israel's continued occupation of the territories on the grounds that Israel was 'the only genuine democratic and socialist oriented state in the Middle East'.[54] The MP Raymond Fletcher said:

> 'I support the socialist dockers of Haifa, the socialist builders of Beersheba, the socialist farmers on the shores of Galilee, the socialist mayor of Nazareth, who has given his Arab people better houses and better conditions than they would get in Jordan.'[55]

The political identity between Labour and the Israeli Labour Party led to considerable networking, enabling Labour to hear the Israeli case. Wilson, for example, was on very close terms with people like Golda Meir,[56] Abba Eban and Yigal Allon, describing Allon as his 'closest friend among the Israelis'.[57] During the war, Wilson entertained the Israeli Prime Minister, Levi Eshkol, at Chequers and Downing Street.[58] Crossman was close to Labour politicians in Israel and people linked with Israel in Britain, such as Marcus Sieff and the Israeli Ambassador, Aharon Remez.

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[54] See 'Labour Looks At Israel', LFI, 1971:31.
[55] 'Labour Looks At Israel', LFI, 1971:30.
[56] See Alderman, 1983:160.
[57] Wilson, 1981:380.
[58] Eban, 1972:192.

Sieff was vice president of the Joint Palestine Appeal and Crossman kept in touch with both people throughout the conflict.[59] George Brown publicly announced that his concern for Israel's safety arose out of his being married to a Jewish woman.[60] Furthermore, a number of Cabinet Ministers, including Crossman, Greenwood, Bowden, Edward Short, Tony Benn, Patrick Gordon Walker, Arthur Bottomley, George Thompson (Minister of State for Foreign Affairs) and Jennie Lee, were members of LFI.[61]

Similar links existed between the TUC and the Israeli labour movement. Throughout the 1960s, the TUC leadership and representatives of powerful unions such as the TGWU went on a number of mutual exchange visits with the Histadrut executive. From the early 1960s the TUC had given the Histadrut financial assistance for its Afro-Asian Institute in Tel Aviv. The institute provided scholarships for students from countries like Nigeria, (then) southern Rhodesia, Ghana, Grenada, Uganda and Zambia for training in trade unionism.[62] Left-wing Israeli critics of Israel's role in Africa and Asia have suggested that the Institute was a primary means by which the Jewish state tried to 'build economic and political ties with non-Arab Afro-Asian states and to strengthen pro-Israeli influence there'.[63] Given the unions' block vote at the annual conference, these links had significant policy consequences. Other sections of the Israeli labour movement had links with the British movement. For example, Pioneer Women of Great Britain was an affiliate of Mapai operating in the UK. Mary Mikardo was a member of this organisation and it sent representatives to the Labour Women's conference.[64]

Labour's solidarity with Israel also arose out of a continuing emotional commitment, leading it to exonerate the country for policies that it would normally have criticised. For instance, the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza involved the disenfranchisement of the Palestinian population in these areas, contravening the state's liberal democratic principles. However, Labour chose to gloss over this

[59] See Crossman, 1976:364-365.
[60] Litvinoff, 1969:3.
[61] *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 July 1967:7.
[62] TUC Report 1964:477; TUC Report 1965:251; TUC Report 1966:264;TUC Report 1967:266.
[63] Hanegbi et al., 1971:12-13.
[64] NCLW, 1968.

development. For people who had been around during the Second World War, the sight of Arab armies converging on Israel's borders struck a deep emotional chord. Not enough time had passed for war-time memories not to be salient. Referring to public sympathy for Israel, Wilson said that it was 'understandable after two thousand years of history and the sufferings of the Jewish people, including the massacres of the last war'.[65] Defending Israel's postwar policies, Crossman claimed that the country had 'raised the status of the Jew and banished his sense of insecurity which provided for centuries the basis of antisemitism'.[66]

These ideological and historical factors gave Israel an advantage over the Arab nationalist leadership. Arab nationalism was not based on social democratic principles. In the period after the Second World War, Nasserism was the dominant anti-imperialist movement in the Arab world, opposing western control over Egypt's economy and apparently empowering the masses through state control of the economy. However, its socialist rhetoric obscured the fact that Nasser did not allow mass political organisation.[67] Furthermore, there were no Arab members of the Socialist international at the time, with which the party could identify. Although the Palestinian cause had begun to organise itself, it was still subordinated to pan-Arabism, being physically dependent on the Arab states' sponsorship. The PLO's lack of independence meant that the Palestinians had yet to touch western opinion. Just before the war, people living in western Europe were almost completely unaware of the Palestinian refugee crisis, despite the fact that there were already over a million refugees.[68]

However, external political considerations also played an important part in shaping the government's policy. In office, Labour was constrained by the need to protect British interests. Despite the left's expectations, Wilson's approach to international affairs departed little from the conservative tradition.[69] The anti-colonialist left's hopes for the government had been premature, evidenced especially

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[65] Wilson, 1971:403.
[66] *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 November, 1967:19.
[67] Halliday, 1979:21-24.
[68] Ovendale, 1984:172-175.
[69] Wrigley in Coopey et. al. eds., 1993:123-125.

by Wilson's attitude towards Rhodesia and Vietnam.[70] The government's commitment to Atlanticism was an important dynamic behind its support for Israel. Wilson enthusiastically supported a strong alliance with America in opposition to the Soviet Union. His tacit support for American involvement in Vietnam was the most controversial expression of this tendency.[71] Wilson's belief that Britain should form a special relationship with America shaped his general attitude to foreign affairs.[72] Indeed, all the key players at the time - Wilson, Brown and Healey - accepted the need for Britain to ally itself with America in opposition to the Soviet Union. Brown subordinated his pro-Arab inclination to his fear of the Soviet Union. Being a tough-minded pragmatist, Healey, the Defence Secretary, prioritised the alliance with the US and he was keen to maintain British presence in areas such as south-east Asia and the Persian Gulf and even supported the supply of arms to South Africa.[73]

Under Wilson between 1964 and 1970 the Labour government preserved aspects of the postwar consensus in foreign policy, including the nuclear deterrent and pro-Americanism, despite Wilson's short-lived spell of unilateralism. At the end of his second term, he even approved the updating of the Polaris system.[74] This continuity between Labour and the Conservative tradition expressed itself in the government's attitude towards the Middle East. There was considerable agreement between Labour and the Conservatives over the 1967 war. The leader of the opposition, Edward Heath, welcomed Wilson's approach,[75] and in none of the four Commons debates was there a division or a motion of censure,[76] contrasting sharply with the Suez crisis.

In 1967 the west's identification with Israel and the Soviet Union's support for the Arabs was most pronounced.[77] Israel's alliance with America had been sharpened in the years preceding the 1967 war. The USA provided the Jewish state with ideological, economic and military support.[78] In the previous wars, America was more ambivalent, supporting the formation of the state in 1948, but opposing its role

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[70] Howe, 1991:308.
[71] Pelling, 1991:148.
[72] Foot, 1968:207-213.
[73] Morgan, 1992:317-320.
[74] Kavanagh and Morris, 1989:102-103.
[75] Wilson, 1981:336-344.
[76] *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 July 1967:7.
[77] Halliday in Davis, Mack and Yuval-Davis, eds., 1975:161-162.
[78] Chomsky, 1986:1-27.

in the 1956 war in the belief that Israel was not in sufficient danger to warrant US support. However, in 1967, it saw the Jewish state as an ally in its attempts to counter revolutionary movements.[79] Leading Israeli Labour politicians, like Shimon Peres, made it clear to key party members that Israel's ambition was to integrate into the industrially advanced west.[80] Israel's pro-western orientation made it an obvious ally for a Labour government which wanted to strengthen its relationship with America.

Internal political considerations were also important. In 1967, Labour lost control of the GLC and its inner London districts which the party had controlled from the 1930s.[81] The Conservatives took the lead in the opinion polls, largely because of the government's unpopular economic policies. Wilson, and the Chancellor, James Callaghan, presided over a government whose determination to ward off devaluation led to a series of economic measures, including a wages and price freeze, which were badly received.[82] During the war, public opinion was predominantly pro-Israel.[83] Two Gallup polls showed that one fifth of the British public wanted Britain actively to help Israel, compared with 1 per cent who wanted Britain to fight on the Arabs' side.[84] A poll conducted by the Opinion Research Centre for the *Sunday Times* showed that whereas 56 per cent of the people questioned supported Israel, only 2 per cent of those polled supported the Arab states.[85] Popular support for Israel was also expressed in the high level of participation in 'solidarity with Israel' rallies, with around ten thousand people attending a pro-Israel demonstration on 5 June.[86] Wilson and people like Crossman were acutely aware of the weight of public opinion in favour of Israel,[87] and this was likely to have played a part in their thinking.

In this context, too, the leadership took notice of Jewish opinion. Jewish members of the party were quick to condemn any public signs of a moderate approach

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[79] Halliday in Davis et al. eds., 1975:161-162.
[80] See Benn, 1987:489.
[81] Pelling, 1991:140.
[82] Ibid:140-141.
[83] Ovendale, 1984:174-175.
[84] *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 June 1967:26.
[85] *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 July 1967:16.
[86] *The Times*, 6 June 1967:1.
[87] See Wilson, 1971:403 and Crossman, 1976:370.

to the Arabs, with Poale Zion warning of alienating Jewish opinion.[88] The Jewish community and a number of Jewish Labour MPs characterised the government's ostensible non-alignment as a betrayal of the party's pro-Israel tradition, portraying the policy as one of non-intervention in favour of the Arabs. The Jewish press maintained that 'the Foreign Office, from Bevin to Brown, has based its policy on its so-called Arab friends'.[89] The Labour MP, Emmanuel Shinwell, forcefully attacked the leadership for failing to take positive action in favour of Israel.[90] Paul Rose, David Weitzman, Sydney Silverman and Barnett Janner all reacted sharply to Brown's pro-Arab tone at the UN.[91] Poale Zion's General Secretary, Sidney Goldberg, told the party that the organisation was dismayed at Brown's UN speech, saying that 'appeasement' would be counterproductive for Britain's relations with Israel and the Arab states.[92] The organisation sent a delegation to the Prime Minister complaining about the UN speech and seeking confirmation of Labour's commitment to Israel. Concerned about these developments, Wilson instructed Gerald Kaufman, then the Parliamentary Press Liaison Officer, to clarify the government's position, which was that it did not advocate an Israeli withdrawal in the absence of guarantees for its recognition.[93]

The PLP chose to support Israel for much the same reasons as the government, namely, a strong ideological and emotional attachment to the country. However, its failure to challenge the leadership's position reflected also its conservative and pro-leadership tendency in the 1960s. The parliamentary left had begun to grow, partly as a result of new recruits after the 1964 and 1966 elections,[94] and partly as a result of the establishment of the Tribune Group in 1966.[95] However, it was not a strong oppositional force at this stage, lacking a well-defined programme and constrained by its ties with Wilson.[96] During the first years of Wilson's government, much of the left

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[88] Correspondence from Sidney Goldberg to Gwyn Morgan, Overseas Department; see also *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 July 1967:7.
[89] *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 June 1967:6.
[90] *The Times*, 8 June 1967:7.
[91] *Jewish Chronicle*, 21 July 1967:17; *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 November 1967:18.
[92] Telegram , 22 June 1967.
[93] *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 August 1967:1.
[94] Berrington in Kavanagh, ed., 1982:81.
[95] See Seyd, 1987:77.
[96] Seyd, 1987:16.

supported the new leader and the PLP was very loyal to him.[97] A similar situation existed in the NEC. Its left-wing members included people like Mikardo, Greenwood and Jennie Lee, all of whom belonged to the generation who welcomed the establishment of the Jewish state in the 1940s, for humanitarian reasons. However, grass-roots' sympathy for Israel was paradoxical because America's support for Israel was related to its attempt to gain political, economic and military control over other parts of the Third World.[98] Given the activists' hostility towards American foreign policy and Wilson's pro-American orientation, one might have expected a different outcome. The fact that there was not testifies to the idiosyncratic nature of Israel's appeal and the continuing Jewish presence in left-wing politics at the time, with prominent Jewish members of the left, such as Ian Mikardo and Frank Allaun, reinforcing the idea of a link between Jews and socialist politics.

Claims that the 1967 war ended Labour's traditional sympathy for Israel[99] therefore fail to capture the extent of pro-Israeli feeling within the party during the war. A number of factors, including international allies and national opinion, determined Wilson's foreign policy generally,[100] and these, together with a strong ideological and emotional commitment to the state played a part in Labour's views. Yet despite the weight of opinion in favour of Israel, there were signs of the start of a break-down in the pro-Israel consensus.

4.3 Dissent from the Pro-Israel Consensus

Only a small minority dissented from the party's conventional position. However, whereas in 1956 only a few individuals challenged the pro-Israel consensus, in 1967 the dissenters were more organised, more vocal and more systematic. The war marked the start of a trend which intensified throughout the 1970s and reached a peak in the 1980s. Labour has always contained a pro-Arab minority following in Bevin's
set in 1945 to 1947.
tradition. George Brown, for example, had pro-Arab sympathies, although he forsook
it

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[97] See Foot, 1968:301-309.
[98] Deutscher, 1967:31.
[99] See Alderman, 1983:160.
[100] Wrigley in Coopey et al., eds., 1993:125.

these for what he perceived as higher objectives during the war. Douglas Jay, President of the Board of Trade, one of the party's revisionists, also sympathised with the Arabs.[101] From the PLP, Christopher Mayhew was the most notable advocate of the Arab cause; Crossman described him as a 'fanatical pro-Arab'.[102] Others included Margaret McKay, Andrew Faulds and David Watkins.[103]

Whereas Cabinet Ministers were constrained by their offices and had to moderate their positions, the backbenchers were freer to voice their opinions. In the period immediately after the war, they attacked Israel for occupying the captured territories and for annexing East Jerusalem. Margaret McKay sponsored an EDM which called for an end to Israel's occupation of Jerusalem. The motion also urged the country to implement the UN General Assembly's resolution, which had declared the annexation of East Jerusalem invalid, and to observe the UN Charter which stated that war should not lead to territorial expansion.[104] The EDM attracted eighteen Labour signatures, including those of Mayhew, Watkins and Faulds and Will Griffiths from the left (see appendix 4.2). In a Commons debate on the Middle East, Mayhew accused Israel of the 'arbitrary annexation' of Jerusalem.[105]

They also challenged the party's view of Arabs, objecting to the idea that Arab aggression caused the war, with Mayhew saying that:

> 'We should stop labelling the Arabs the aggressors...It is not true that either the Arabs or the Jews are the aggressors in this quarrel. It depends where in time one takes one's stand. If one takes one's stand on 5th June, the Israelis were the aggressors; but if one takes one's stand a fortnight earlier, at Aqaba, then the Egyptians were the aggressors'.[106]

In a private meeting of Labour's foreign affairs group, Mayhew denied that Nasser was a racist, saying that when the Egyptian president spoke of the liberation of

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[101] *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 July 1967:7.
[102] Crossman, 1976:370.
[103] MPs for Woolwich East, Clapham, Smethwick and Duham Consett respectively.
[104] Notices of Motions, 7 July 1967-27 October 1967:12811.
[105] Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol.749, 1966-67, Col.2047.
[106] Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol.749, 1966-67, Cols. 2098-2099.

Palestine he did not mean to annihilate the Jews.[107] He also appeared on a *Panorama* programme, expressing sympathy for Nasser.[108] Moreover, the right-wing pro-Arabists drew attention to the Palestinian refugee crisis, comparing the Palestinians' situation with Jewish historical experience. Mayhew maintained that while the establishment of Israel had seemed to the Jews 'a miraculous homecoming after two thousand years of dispersion', for the Palestinians, it had meant 'dispersion from the land of their fathers and their holy places, eviction from land which they...had occupied for longer than the Jews'.[109]

Some of these MPs took part in the formation of the Council for the Promotion of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU). CAABU was formed in 1967, apparently in response to the revelation that 98 per cent of the British public had no knowledge of the Arab world.[110] It aimed to strengthen economic, political and cultural links with Arab countries. Although CAABU was not exclusively a Labour organisation, it lobbied on behalf of the Arab cause within the party. In 1967 it held a meeting at the party's conference, with the MP Bob Edwards presiding and Mayhew speaking.[111] Mayhew also played a central part in the formation of the Labour Middle East Council (LMEC) in 1969 and Faulds and Watkins later became deeply involved with the Council. LMEC's goal was to persuade the Labour Party to take up the Arab cause. It published pamphlets and organised meetings at the annual conference in order to put forward the Arab case. LMEC members sought the same affiliated status as Poale Zion, although without success, with the NEC consistently rejecting the organisation's requests for affiliation.[112]

The 1967 conflict also precipitated left-wing dissent from the party's traditional stance. Barbara Castle, the Minister of Transport, opposed the leadership's original reaction to rally around Israel with America. Castle viewed Wilson's plan to 'stand by the US' and 'enforce the right of innocent passage through the Gulf' as 'no better than 1956'.[113] In the PLP, the left-wingers Will Griffiths and Stanley Orme, MPs for

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[107] *The Times*, 7 June 1967:5.
[108] Crossman, 1976:364.
[109] Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol. 749, 1966-67, Cols.2096-2097.
[110] CAABU leaflet.
[111] *Jewish Chronicle*, 13 October 1967:26.
[112] Minutes of the meeting of the Organisation Committee: Org/9 10 July 1972;NEC 26 July 1972.
[113] Castle, 1984: 258.

Manchester Exchange and Salford West respectively, adopted a pro-Arab stance. Crossman contemptuously described them as 'left-wing Nasserites just back from Egypt'.[114] In the Commons, Griffiths forcefully argued for a re-evaluation of Arab nationalism, contending that it represented an understandable response to western interference in the Middle East, especially after the Suez War.[115] Griffiths was one of three Labour MPs who moved a critical amendment to the pro-Israel EDM put down on 8 June, calling for the right of Egypt, Jordan and Syria to 'live without breach of their territorial integrity' in accordance with the UN Charter.[116]

Outside parliament, the *Tribune* left began to question the party's conventional approach to the conflict. Previously one of Israel's the most enthusiastic supporters, it now condemned the country's decision to remain in the territories captured during the war and to annex East Jerusalem on the grounds that these policies breached international law.[117] The shift in this strand's position was sharply illustrated in the editorial's contention that:

> 'sentimental Israelis are wont to excuse this [annexation] on the grounds that Jerusalem means so much to the Jews. It means a lot to the Moslems too, but no-one is being sentimental about them'.[118]

The *Tribune* left now explicitly challenged customary conceptions of the Arabs as feudalistic, backward and reactionary, arguing that Nasser's Egypt represented a source of 'stability and moderation' in the region and denouncing 'hysterical comparisons with Hitlerism'.[119] It also took up the Palestinian cause and claimed that peace between Israel and the Arab states depended upon Israel accepting its obligations towards 'the hundreds of thousands of Arab refugees who lost their homes when Israel was created'. *Tribune* carried a cartoon by Abu which depicted Moshe Dayan sending Palestinian refugees back to where they *'didn't* come from'.[120]

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[114] Crossman, 1976:361.
[115] Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol. 747, 1966-67, Cols.142-153.
[116] Notices of Motions, 5 June 1967-6 July 1967:12122.
[117] *Tribune*, 16 June 1967:1; *Tribune*, 30 June 1967:2.
[118] *Tribune*, 7 July 1967:3.
[119] *Tribune*, 9 June 1967:1.
[120] *Tribune*, 30 December 1967:2.

Furthermore, a leading member of this group, Michael Foot, was one of LMEC's sponsors.

Although the party's right and left-wing dissenters united in their challenge to the pro-Israel tradition, their reasons for doing so were not the same. The right's dissent was not motivated by a socialist-inspired anti-imperialist ideology. This faction's support for the Arabs lay more with a desire to protect British interests in the Middle East than an idealistic concern for Arab nationalist aspirations. Although CAABU aimed to be independent of party politics, conservatives and business sponsorships originally dominated the organisation.[121] Following in Bevin's footsteps,[122] the Labour right was highly pragmatic and objected to the notion of socialist foreign policy as unrealistic.

Brown subordinated his pro-Arabism to the demands of office, but he did sympathise with Arab aims. Reflecting on his position, he claimed that it arose out of his 'oddly inherited Irish background, which made [him] an anti-imperialist and gave [him] sympathy for people who were trying to throw off the yoke of imperialism'.[123] This interpretation was rather romantic, contradicting the Foreign Secretary's reputation for being strongly pro-American and hostile to the Soviet Union. Moreover, Brown's own links with the Middle East originated in commercial contacts.[124] During the 1950s, Brown had got to know a number of Arab leaders, including a member of the Lebanese Parliament, Emile Bustani, who wanted to put the Arab case to western politicians. Through Bustani, Brown made contact with King Hussein of Jordan and, most importantly, with President Nasser, whom he admired greatly.[125] In the past, Douglas Jay was associated with *Socialist Commentary*, a journal which advocated maintaining British influence in the colonies and promoted a paternalistic type of imperialism.[126] Mayhew was Bevin's Parliamentary Under-Secretary during the 1945 to 1951 Labour governments and had backed the government's Palestine policy in the 1940s. Some suggested that McKay's

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[121] Interview with John Gee, Information Officer, CAABU, 27 June 1991.
[122] See Haseler, 1969:112-137.
[123] Brown, 1971:227.
[124] Ibid:227-228.
[125] See Brown, 1971:229-231.
[126] Foote, 1986:203-204.

support for the Arabs derived from her dedication to the monarchies in Jordan and Saudi Arabia.[127] McKay retired in Abu Dhabi in the Union of Arab Emirates.[128]

In contrast, the left's views sprang from a different set of factors. This faction's previous sympathy for Israel arose from its identification with moderate members of Mapai, such as Sharett.[129] However, developments within Israeli politics undermined this identity. Although the Israeli Labour Alignment, formerly Mapai, was still in power, it had moved rightwards in relation to external affairs and the Palestinians. The Israeli government's postwar policies reflected the subordination of the moderate strand of zionism, represented by Sharett, to the activist strand of zionism, represented by people like Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir. The entry of former military people into politics was partly responsible for this development.[130] People known as hard-liners on external policy, such as Moshe Dayan and Shimon Peres, entered politics from the military under Ben-Gurion's patronage.[131] Peres was Deputy Minister of Defence between 1959 and 1965 and Dayan was Minister of Agriculture from 1959 to 1966 and appointed Minister of Defence in June 1967.[132] The Labour left in Britain did not identify with the new, activist type of politician in Israel, seeing Dayan's rise in politics as an obstacle to peaceful settlement in the Middle East.[133]

Moreover, by the time of the war this element had become more sensitive to anti-colonialist politics. America's involvement in Vietnam generated a wave of protests. The 1967 hostilities took place, crucially, in the midst of these developments. Left-wing activists began to make connections between Israel's role in the Middle East and America's involvement in Vietnam and to see Israel as a major inhibitor of Arab nationalism.[134] Griffiths argued that 'it [was] the conviction of Arab nationalists everywhere that Israel was created as an instrument of imperialism and not a refuge for persecuted Jews' and that the current crisis was a direct result of the west's use of Israel to defend its interests in 1956.[135] Left-wing dissenters from

[127] *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 July 1967:7.
[128] Who's Who, 1993.
[129] Interview with Michael Foot, 1 November 1990.
[130] Shanin in Halliday and Alavi, eds., 1988:244.
[131] Peri, 1983:71-73; Medding, 1972:252-253.
[132] Ovendale, 1992:156;180-181.
[133] *Tribune*, 30 June 1967:2.
[134] See *New Left Review*, No. 44, 1967:30-45.
[135] Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol. 747, 1966-67, Cols. 143-144.

Labour's pro-Israel tradition tended to be involved in the anti-colonialist and anti-racist movements. Castle, was a long-time member of the anti-colonialist left and between 1960 and 1964 she was president of the Anti-Apartheid Movement.[136] David Ennals chaired the Anti-Apartheid Movement between 1960 and 1964.[137] As a backbencher, Ennals was one of a few MPs to oppose the government's attitude towards Vietnam.[138] *Tribune* was a forum for protesting against America's war against Vietnam too. It was no accident that the paper chose to serialise the reflections of the radical American journalist, I.F. Stone, on the Israel/Arab war.[139] Stone was a sharp critic of American foreign policy.

The rise of Nasser as a figurehead against western neo-colonialism appealed to these new sentiments. Despite Arab nationalism's ambivalent relationship to socialism, it began to exploit socialist language.[140] Arab, especially Palestinian, politics started to converge with other major issues and people like Frantz Fanon, Mao and Guevara entered the Arab 'political idiom'.[141] Arab nationalism's appeal to socialist principles led this faction to ignore the unsavoury aspects of movements like Nasserism and Ba'athism, including the repression of communist elements. Some of those who sympathised with the Arabs were aware of these movements' short-comings but willing to tolerate them. For example Ennals believed that Labour should form good relations with Ba'athist socialists despite the fact that they were not democratic socialists.[142] These developments provided fertile ground for the creation of contacts between Arab groups and the party, serving to counter the ties between Jewish groups and Labour. Links between Labour and the PLO were also established. *Tribune* had made contact with Palestinian refugees and the PLO before the 1967 war,[143] and the PLO's decision to forge a separate identity in the postwar period further generated support for Palestinian nationalism in this faction.[144]

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[136] See Howe, 1993:250.
[137] Who's Who, 1992.
[138] Foot, 1968:319-320.
[139] *Tribune*, 2 June 1967:7; *Tribune*, 9 June 1967:1; *Tribune*, 16 June 1967:7.
[140] See Ajami, 1992:42.
[141] Said, 1992:xi.
[142] Correspondence, David Ennals to Patrick Gordon Walker, 11 March 1963.
[143] Interview with Michael Foot, 1 November 1990.
[144] Interview with Richard Clements, 18 May 1990.

However, the introduction of pro-Arab views into the party provoked a furore. In a Commons debate, Janner attacked McKay, asking her to read 'the scurrilous, venomous-Hitlerian' literature of the Arabs.[145] Pro-Israel activists, such as Paul Rose, Edward Rowlands and David Weitzman, moved critical amendments to the pro-Arab EDMs. Mayhew's appearance on *Panorama* got an angry response, with a number of Labour MPs writing to the Chief Whip complaining that the MP's presence on the programme gave the impression that his views represented the Labour Party's.[146] Thirty-five Labour backbenchers signed the letter, including Ted Rowlands, Edwin Brooks, John Dunwoody, Myer Galpern, Arnold Shaw, Daniel Jones, Lena Jeger, Raymond Fletcher and Paul Rose.[147] The political costs of appearing to sympathise too closely with the Arabs were most clear in the case of McKay. McKay entered into a debate with her constituency party over her pro-Arab activities and the NEC authorised a reselection meeting to solve the difficulties. However, she withdrew from the contest before the meeting was held.[148]

In the party's left, a rift developed between previously close colleagues. Ian Mikardo was deeply distressed by *Tribune*'s line on the conflict. In his article, 'Who let Nasser off the leash?',[149] he deviated from the newspaper's editorial position. Mikardo resigned from *Tribune* shortly after this episode and it is possible that the newspaper's movement towards a more critical position on Israel contributed to his resignation. *Tribune*'s position on the war also led to a debate with the Israeli party, Mapam, which was to the left of Mapai, centering on the paper's refusal to accept that Nasser was intent on territorial expansion.[150] Moreover, Abu's cartoon led to accusations of anti-semitism, but Michael Foot and others on the newspaper's board denied these accusations and defended the cartoon's publication.[151]

Did these developments result in Labour anti-semitism? In the first place, very few Labour members adopted an anti-zionist stance, defined in terms of opposition to the existence of a Jewish state. Even the strongest pro-Arabists in the party, Mayhew

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[145] Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol.749, 1966-67, Cols.2049-2050.
[146] *Jewish Chronicle*, 16 June 1967:23 and Crossman, 1976:364.
[147] *The Times*, 13 June 1967:4.
[148] Butler and Pinto-Duschinsky, 1971:295-296.
[149] *Tribune*, 2 June 1967:6.
[150] *Tribune*, 16 June 1967:6.
[151] Interview with Michael Foot, 1 November 1990.

and Mckay, defended Israel's right to exist;[152] although, in a private meeting of the party's foreign affairs group Mayhew advocated the reconstruction of Israel as a 'non-zionist, multi-racialist state'.[153] At this stage too, the Labour left explicitly did not adopt an anti-zionist stand-point and consistently defended Israel's right to exist. For example, *Tribune*'s pointed critique of Israel's policies also stated that 'the Arabs have got to accept the existence of Israel. They must recognise as every sane person does, that Israel...has the "right to live"'.[154] In 1967 this faction was wholly free from anti-Jewish stereotypes.

However, some individual members of the pro-Arab strand did use anti-Jewish ideas. Although anti-zionism and anti-semitism are analytically distinct, they can overlap in practice.[155] The theme of Jewish 'dual loyalty' and a conspiracy theory of zionism have been central to traditional anti-semitism and there is clear evidence of these themes appearing in the views of prominent pro-Arab members of the party. Mayhew, for example, consistently exaggerated zionist power, holding that the 'zionist lobby' was responsible for Labour's policy.[156] Mayhew later defected to the Liberal Party. In the early 1970s, Young Liberals like Peter Hain, now a Labour MP, were at the forefront of the anti-apartheid and anti-zionist campaign inside the Liberal Party, leading to Lord Beloff's resignation.[157] Andrew Faulds and David Watkins also used anti-Jewish themes. For example, in a Commons debate on the Middle East, Faulds made a very explicit appeal to the idea of Jewish dual loyalty when he said that:

'It is time some of our colleagues on both sides of the House forgot their dual loyalty and another Parliament. They are representatives here and not in the Knesset...it is undeniable that many MPs have what I can only term a dual loyalty, which is to another nation and another nation's interests'.[158]

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[152] See Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Vol. 747, 1966-67, Col.170 and Mayhew in *Twentieth Century*, Vol.1066, 1971:4.
[153] *The Times*, 7 June 1967:5.
[154] *Tribune*, 9 June 1967:1.
[155] See chapter one.
[156] Mayhew in Adams and Mayhew, 1976:27.
[157] Alderman, 1989:117-118.
[158] Quoted in Alderman, 1983:150.

Wilson later removed Faulds from the front-bench for 'uncomradely behaviour' in 'impugning the patriotism' of Jewish MPs.[159] In his reflections on 'Labour and Palestine', Watkins argued that zionism was a nationalistic philosophy which opposed the basic principles of democratic socialism. In his account of the relationship between zionism and the labour movement, he drew heavily on a conspiracy theory of zionism, maintaining that 'the infiltration of the Labour Party has always been the policy of British agencies of the world-wide zionist movement'; he said that this infiltration began in 1906 and that it was 'under zionist influence [that] Labour adopted double standards towards the Middle East in the year of the Balfour Declaration'. Explaining the pro-zionist tradition of the party, Watkins argued that 'during the 1930s and '40s, the zionists consolidated their grip on the Labour Party and came completely to control its policy towards the Middle East'.[160] This crude conspiracy theory of zionism runs through Watkins's pamphlet, completely ignoring the fact that Labour frequently exploited zionism for its own purposes and abandoned it when it wanted to, as in the postwar government.

Despite these signs of dissent, Labour criticism of Israel and sympathy for the Arabs remained marginal. At the 1970 conference, the NEC's statement on the Middle East condemned the activities of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. It claimed that the UN Resolution 242 provided the best basis of peace in the region but added a series of clauses which prioritised Israel's right to exist as a sovereign state. David Ennals asked conference to refer back the statement on the grounds that the NEC had added the party's 'own gloss' to the UN resolution. Ennals's request was overwhelmingly defeated.[161] The conference also refused to observe a minute's silence in memory of President Nasser, who died that year.[162] In the period after the war, the NEC consistently rejected LMEC's requests to affiliate.

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[159] Ziegler, 1993:389.
[160] Watkins, 1975:3-14.
[161] See LPACR, 1970:200-205;327;334.
[162] *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 October 1970:16.

4.4 Conclusion

Labour mainly responded to the war by maintaining its pro-Israeli stance. Indeed, the hostilities succeeded in uniting the leadership, most of the PLP, the NEC, the trade unions and the constituency parties behind the Jewish state, cutting across party factions. This virtual consensus existed because the Israeli Labour Alignment shared significant ideological and political links with Labour, and the Israeli right-wing had yet to dent the left's hegemony. It also existed because the Palestinian nationalist movement had only just emerged as an independent force and had not managed to influence international opinion. Partly because of this, it was more politically advantageous for Labour to adopt a pro-Israeli rather than a pro-Arab position. The weight of sympathy for Israel in the party made it impossible for the small minority of dissenters from the pro-Israel consensus to affect any policy change. All the more so since those who challenged the leadership's stance were either marginal mavericks, like Christopher Mayhew, or elements from the Labour left which was relatively powerless at this stage. Nevertheless, the 1967 conflict represented a turning-point in so far as the seeds for change were sown and a further crisis in the Middle East where Israeli policies appeared to depart even more from socialist principles, would almost certainly generate a greater level of dissent. In the following chapter, I shall look at Labour's reaction to Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

CHAPTER FIVE

ISRAEL IN LEBANON: A NEW LABOUR CONSENSUS?

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Israel made a series of incursions into Lebanon. The 1982 invasion was the most controversial, unleashing an unprecedented level of international condemnation. Although the attempted assassination of Shlomo Argov, the Israeli Ambassador in London, was the pretext for the strike, Israel aimed first, to undermine the PLO's military and political base in the country; second, to forge links with its Lebanese allies and third, to improve its border security.[1] The government believed that a heavy military blow to the PLO would render it incapable of carrying out terrorist activities and erode its support among moderate Palestinians.[2] In September the Lebanese Christian militia massacred Palestinians in the Sabra and Chatila refugee camps in Beirut. The massacre took place within sight of the Israeli army,[3] creating the view that Israel's decision to send the militia into the camps rendered it responsible for the subsequent events. The invasion and the massacre dramatically undermined the Jewish state's international standing. The resulting furore drew attention to a new form of left-wing anti-zionism, found mainly in new and far left groups and the women's movement.[4] How did the social democratic left react? In this chapter, I look at the way the British Labour Party responded to Israel's policy towards Lebanon. In section one I illustrate the shift in the party's attitudes. In section two I consider the reasons for this shift. In the third section I explore the emergence of anti-zionism and in the fourth section, I investigate the intra-party conflict resulting from the policy change and the leadership's subsequent efforts to moderate the party's position as part of the 1987 policy review process.

5.1 The Collapse of the Pro-Israel Consensus

The 1982 war precipitated a wave of Labour grass-roots condemnation of Israeli policy and revealed how far the party's activists had moved in the direction of the

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[1] Lesch and Tessler, 1989:63.
[2] Ibid:36-37.
[3] Ibid:63.
[4] See chapter one.

Palestinian national cause. Local parties in London and Scotland spearheaded the campaign against Israel and in favour of the Palestinians. In London, Hackney North and Stoke Newington, Brent South, Paddington and St. Pancras North actively championed the Palestinian cause.[5] Later on, the Chipping Barnet CLP endorsed a pro-PLO motion.[6] In Scotland, Aberdeen South, Dundee East, Dundee West and West Renfrewshire were the main pro-Palestinian parties. The Dundee Labour Party was especially active. It forged links with Palestinian activists from Dundee University such as Yousef Allen, who later became the British representative of the Palestinian Trade Union Federation.[7] The party also organised meetings open to the general public and addressed by PLO representatives.[8]

Although particular parties in London and Scotland dominated the pro-Palestinian campaign, a more general shift took place too. At the annual party conference held immediately after the Sabra and Chatila massacres, forty-six emergency resolutions were sent to Labour's headquarters and all of them condemned Israel.[9] Grass roots' sympathy for the Palestinians escalated during the 1980s and reached a peak in the late 1980s. By this time, nearly all the constituency parties in the Greater London region and the south consistently turned down LFI's offers of speakers for their meetings.[10] Conference decisions reflected the trend. At the 1988 conference, the pro-Palestinian motions won the two-thirds majority needed to become policy (see table 5.1).

A similar development occurred in some Labour councils. Both the GLC and Brent began actively to promote Palestinian national rights. In the May 1982 borough elections, the Jewish Labour candidate for Cricklewood (Brent), Alf Filer, declared that Israel should become a secular state.[11] In the 1980s, the GLC embarked on a number of measures to promote the Palestinian cause. County Hall became the base for the Labour Committee on Palestine (LCP). In 1984 the Council launched an anti-racist year and the Ethnic Minorities Unit (EMU) provided funding to the

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[5] Sources for this information include the LPACA, 1982; the LPACR, 1982; the *Jewish Chronicle* and an interview with Ernie Ross, MP, 16 April 1991. The list of pro-Palestinian parties is not exhaustive.
[6] Alderman, 1989:136.
[7] Interview with Yousef Allen, 5 June 1991.
[8] Interview with Ernie Ross, 16 April 1991.
[9] *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 September 1982:6.
[10] Interview with Peter Grunberger, Director of LFI, 8 July 1991.
[11] Alderman, 1989:126.

Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) for a conference on racism against Arabs.[12] Dundee District Council played an important part in campaigning for the Palestinian nationalist cause. The council was twinned with the West Bank town of Nablus and the PLO flag flew over Dundee City Chambers. After the invasion of Lebanon, the council unanimously adopted a resolution that condemned Israel for its actions in Lebanon, for its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and which spoke of the 'genocide' of the Palestinian people.[13]

Table 5.1 **Pro-Palestinian Resolutions, Labour Party Annual Conference**

Year	Votes For	Votes Against
1982	3,538,000[+]	3,263,000
	3,318,000[++]	3,308,000
1988	4,163,000	1,943,000
1989	4,645,000	1,394,000

[+] Composite motion.

[++] Emergency resolution.

The trade unions also began to challenge the pro-Israel consensus after the invasions. At the TUC conference in 1982 the General Council and Tom Jackson (chair of the International Committee) opposed a pro-Palestinian motion on the grounds that condemnation of Israel would hinder the prospects of peace. However, the conference overwhelmingly backed an FBU-sponsored resolution, condemning the 'death and destruction' caused by Israel's invasion and saying that only recognition of the national rights of the Palestinian people would provide security for all the states in the Middle East, including Israel.[14] The TGWU also put its weight behind the Palestinians, asking the TUC in 1982 to organise an air and sea boycott of Israel until the country's troops left Lebanon.[15]

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[12] Ibid:130-134. It should be noted that Jewish groups also benefited from EMU funding, such as the ultra-orthodox Agudas Israel.

[13] *Jewish Chronicle*, 16 July 1982:6.

[14] *The Times*, 10 September 1982:4; TUC Report 1982:615.

[15] *The Times*, 25 September 1982:6.

During the 1980s, a number of unions sent delegations to the occupied territories as a result of Trade Union Friends of Palestine (TUFP) co-ordination. These included: the FBU, GMB, MSF, NGA, NUPE, SOGAT 82, TGWU and UCATT and non-affiliated unions such as the AUT, NALGO, and the NUT. At the same time, branch level unions increasingly participated in TUFP activities.[16] NALGO, NUPE, NUCPS, ACCT, COHSE, GMB, FBU, NUM and SOGAT affiliated to TUFP. Although the TGWU was not affiliated, it had good relations with the organisation and both sent and received delegations to and from the West Bank.[17] Having the support of unions like the NUM, the TGWU and NUPE was vital since these unions controlled a large proportion of the conference vote.[18] As the 1980s proceeded, the unions continued in this trend. SOGAT '82 played a specially active part in the late eighties, sponsoring the resolutions at the party conferences in 1988 and 1989 that, in the context of the intifada, attracted overwhelming support.[19]

The new generation of Labour Women also challenged the party's pro-Israel tradition. Clare Short played a high-profile role in the campaign for recognition of Palestinian national rights and became an active member of LMEC. Harriet Harman, Maria Fyfe, Kate Hoey and Marjorie Mowlam also sympathised with Palestinian nationalism and joined LMEC. Dawn Primarolo, Alice Mahon and Anne Clwyd did not join LMEC but sympathised with its aims.[20] The agendas for the National Conference of Labour Women (NCLW) in 1984 and 1986 indicate a shift in favour of Palestinian national rights and a more critical attitude towards Israel.[21] These developments represented a significant policy change. In the early 1980s, the NEC for the first time adopted a resolution that called for the establishment of a Palestinian state, with the PLO involved in negotiations. Benn described the decision as a 'major development in Labour policy'.[22]

Israel's involvement in Lebanon set off an unprecedented critical reaction in the PLP. An analysis of EDMs put down on the Palestinian/Israeli conflict in 1948, 1956,

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[16] See 'A Cry For Justice: Trade unions and life in the occupied territories of Palestine', NUCPS, 1990:25-26.
[17] Interview with Yousef Allen, 5 June 1991.
[18] See Koelble, 1987:260-261.
[19] LPACR 1988:134;LPACR 1989:156.
[20] LMEC membership list, 1991.
[21] NCLWA, 1984:55;NCLWA, 1986:110.
[22] Benn, 1992:240.

1967 and 1982 indicates a sharp decline in pro-Israel feeling in 1982 and a corresponding increase in support for Palestinian nationalism. However, sympathy for the Palestinians did not reach the level of pro-Israel feeling in the preceding years (see graph 5.1 and appendix 5.1). There were no Labour-sponsored pro-Israel EDMs between April and June 1982, but there were three Labour-sponsored pro-Palestinian ones (see table 5.2). Pro-Israel activists contented themselves with moving critical amendments to EDMs which criticised Israel.

The party's leadership played a part in this shift. In June 1982 Michael Foot sponsored an EDM that condemned Israel's invasion of Lebanon; endorsed the United Nations Security Council's call for an immediate cease-fire and demanded the withdrawal of all Israeli forces from Lebanon. Although, it should be noted that the motion also included a condemnation of the attempted assassination of Israel's Ambassador to Great Britain, Shlomo Argov.[23] Foot's stand was consistent with his earlier departure from the party's tradition. However, even prominent right-wing members of the leadership began to criticise Israeli poiicy and support Palestinian national aims. In June, Denis Healey, then the shadow Foreign Secretary, warned Israel that humiliation of the Arabs in Lebanon would have repercussions throughout the Arab world and play into the hands of 'Arab fundamentalism'.[24] Elsewhere, Healey sympathised with the idea of Palestinian statehood.[25] In the 1980s then, most of the party's sections began to challenge Labour's traditional loyalty to Israel and to advocate a policy in favour of Palestinian national rights. In the following section I shall consider the reasons for this development.

5.2 Explaining Labour's Policy

In the past, a good deal of Labour's sympathy for Israel depended on an identification between zionism, socialism and progress and the idea that Israel was the only progressive and democratic regime in the Middle East. From the state's inception, the Israeli Labour Party was politically dominant, reinforcing these conceptions. Israel's shift to the right challenged these views. In 1977, the right-wing Likud Party won

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[23] Notices of Motions, Vol.VIII, 1981-1982:7214.
[24] *Jewish Chronicle*, 11 June 1982:44.
[25] LPACR 1982:136-137.

Table 5.2 **Early-Day Motions, 1982**

Date of first tabling	Number and title	Party support	Main sponsor	Total number of names appended	Number of Labour names appended (and percentage of total names)
29.3.82	372. Israeli action against Palestinians	Labour, Conservative and SDP	David Watkins (Labour)	30	18 (60)
22.4.82	422. Israeli attacks on Lebanon	Conservative and Labour	Tony Marlow (Conservative)	44	22 (50)
26.4.82	426. Congratulations to the Institute of Contemporary Art*	Labour and Conservative	David Watkins (Labour)	13	8 (62)
9.6.82	510. Israeli invasions of Lebanon	Conservative and Labour	Dennis Walters (Conservative)	60	25 (42)
9.6.82	512. The conflict in the Lebanon	Liberal and Labour	David Alton (Liberal)	14	6 (43)
10.6.82	519. The Middle East	Labour	Michael Foot (Labour)	64	62 (97)

* EDM 426 refers to the ICA's decision to show a film depicting the Palestinians' situation in the occupied territories.

Graph 5.1 **Top-Scoring Early Day Motions**
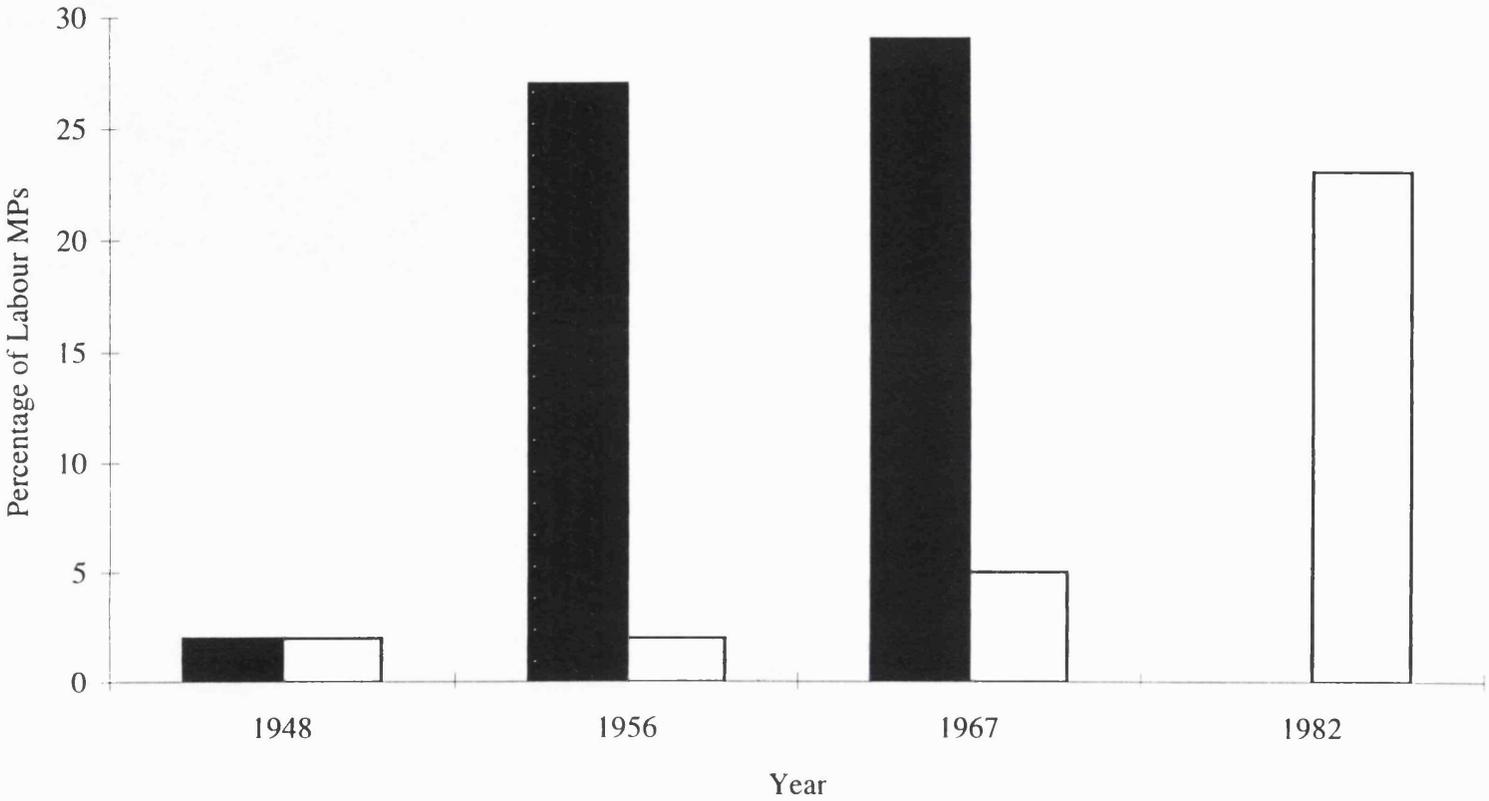
power. Made up of a number of independent factions including Herut, which was headed by Menachem Begin,[26] Likud was ideologically committed to a 'Greater Israel' and embarked on a series of uncompromising policies towards the Palestinians and the Arab countries, including intensive settlement of the occupied territories and the annexation of the Golan Heights.

These political changes led a number of Labour people to feel that Israel's policies betrayed the country's original values. From the left, Eric Heffer's support for Israel had been based on the idea that Israel was a progressive and democratic state. Israel's involvement in Lebanon forced Heffer to question his own convictions. At the LFI's annual dinner in November 1981, he responded to Shimon Peres's criticism of the European conception of Palestinian self-determination by dropping his prepared speech in favour of a proposal for Palestinian national self-determination and negotiations with the PLO.[27] In protest against Israel's position on the question of Palestinian statehood and its involvement in Lebanon, Eric Heffer and Tony Benn resigned from LFI in 1982.

Prominent right-wingers responded similarly. Although Healey was never as emotionally committed to Israel as Heffer (his pragmatism led him to support Bevin in the 1940s), in the 1980s he argued that Begin's and Sharon's policies were a threat to peace in the region and to Israel's existence.[28] Gerald Kaufman's personal account of Israeli politics in the 1980s argued that the country was in political and moral decline.[29] Leo Abse, the MP for Pontypool, summed up the general feeling when he said that Begin's policies represented a 'vulgar nationalism quite contrary to the founding principles of the Israeli state'.[30]

The developments in Israel dovetailed with political changes in the Jewish communities outside Israel. In a number of western countries Jews began to drop socialism in favour of conservative politics, largely as a consequence of changes in their socio-economic status, but also because of their disillusion with left-wing anti-zionism.[31] Commenting on American Jewish attitudes, Healey claimed that Jewish

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[26] Lesch and Tessler, 1989:143-144.
[27] *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 December 1981:21.
[28] *New Socialist*, September/October 1982:40-41.
[29] Kaufman, 1986.
[30] *The Times*, 9 August 1982:1.
[31] Rubinstein, 1982:118.

intellectuals had evolved from anti-communist marxists to 'hard-line zionists of the radical right' and that this had detrimentally affected American policy in the Middle East.[32] In Britain, as a result of increasing prosperity and disproportionate membership of the upper and middle classes, the Jewish community started to adopt conservative politics and the Jewish electorate moved to the right.[33] Although Jewish Labour MPs continued to outnumber conservative ones, the gap between the two narrowed.[34] Jews started to perceive the Conservative Party as the best representative of their social and economic position, eroding the 'traditional affinity' between Labour and the Jews.[35]

As Israeli and Jewish politics moved rightwards, Palestinian politics moved towards a more accommodating position. From the early 1980s the PLO began to move from a maximalist position, calling for Israel's destruction, to one that accepted the Jewish state's existence. The PLO began to accept a two-state solution to the conflict and by 1986 it offered to acknowledge UN Resolution 242 in return for Israeli recognition of Palestinian national rights.[36] The organisation's shift towards a more moderate policy legitimised Palestinian aims. At the same time, the PLO's organisation in western countries helped it to win international recognition. In Britain, Palestinian activists carried out solidarity work aimed at influencing party policies. They worked with the party's activists and members of the PLP.[37] PLO representatives in London, such as Said Hammani and Nabil Ramlawi, forged links with MPs such as Ernie Ross in order to influence opinion.[38] London representatives of the PLO were also in touch with members of Labour's front-bench, notably, Gerald Kaufman. In 1988 Kaufman shared a platform with Edward Said and Faisal Lweida, a London-based PLO representative, at a meeting organised by LMEC.[39]

Other developments affected the party's perceptions of Israel. During the 1980s, organisations like UNESCO, the Socialist International and the EEC began to take up the Palestinian nationalist cause.[40] In June 1980 the EEC stated that the Palestinian

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[32] Healey, 1989:200-201.
[33] See Alderman, 1983:135-138;154-160.
[34] Ibid:174-175.
[35] See Rubinstein, 1982:156.
[36] Lesch and Tessler, 1989:282.
[37] Interview with Yousef Allen, 5 June 1991.
[38] Interview with Ernie Ross, MP, 16 April 1991.
[39] Jewish Chronicle, 20 September 1988:44.
[40] Said, 1992:xx.

people had a right to self-determination and that the PLO should be involved in peace negotiations. More generally, by 1989, ninety-six states had given Palestinian representatives diplomatic recognition.[41] As early as the 1970s, the Socialist International had started to establish links between European socialists and Arab socialist groups, causing some debate in Labour's internal policy-making bodies.[42] Nevertheless, these developments clearly affected Labour policy. Healey, for example, referred to them in his justification for supporting Palestinian self-determination.[43]

In the latter part of the 1980s, the intifada stimulated widespread sympathy for the Palestinians. Starting in December 1987, it involved a series of riots and protests that began spontaneously and were subsequently directed by local committees. The uprising was a grass-roots movement, spearheaded by young people living in the occupied territories rather than political leaders or academics. It galvanised Israeli Arabs into asserting their Palestinian identity and it represented the Palestinians' attempt to act independently of the Arab countries.[44] The intifada had major implications for international politics. It affected the policies of the PLO as well as other important actors in the Middle East conflict, including America.[45] This movement provided a significant backdrop to Labour's overwhelming support for Palestinian nationalism at the 1987 and 1988 annual conferences.

Nevertheless, these developments would have been less effective without the rise of the Labour left, which made the party particularly receptive to the Palestinian cause. In the seventies and 1980s, the party began to attract people from middle class professions, including teachers, lecturers and social workers, displacing traditional working class activists. Ethnic minorities and women's groups also began to enter the party, introducing distinctive 'voices of protest'.[46] The new activists tended to be young and influenced by movements such as anti-apartheid, CND and the women's movement.[47] The left began to organise itself into groups such as the Campaign for

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[41] Ovendale, 1992:202;294.
[42] Int/9 12 November 1974; NEC 26 November 1974. As chair of the international committee, Ian Mikardo had opposed the SI's decision to make these links.
[43] *New Socialist*, September/October 1982:40.
[44] Lesch and Tessler, 1989:272-273.
[45] Hunter 1991:4.
[46] Morgan, 1992:8.
[47] Seyd, 1987:40-50.

Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) and the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC). The former was established in 1974 and fought mainly for constitutional changes, whereas the latter was formed in 1978 and focused mainly on political ideas and policies.[48] Labour councils, especially in London, became the site of considerable left-wing activism. In London, the GLC was the most notable case. After the May 1981 elections to the council, the new Labour majority introduced a more radical outlook.[49] Under the leadership of Ken Livingstone,[50] the GLC introduced a new left agenda, incorporating a multiplicity of causes such as feminist and anti-racist politics. This development influenced other London councils, such as Brent borough council and Labour councils in Scotland also became more radical in the 1980s.[51]

Although the unions were not politically unified, having both a right and left wing,[52] they too moved to the left in the 1980s. The unions' dissatisfaction with the party's leadership and the new left activists' strategy to mobilise union support for their aims accounted for this shift.[53] The formation of Trade Union Friends of Palestine (TUFP) was part of this process. Established in 1980, its sponsors included Bill Speirs, Assistant Secretary of the STUC; Ernie Ross, Labour MP for Dundee West; Brian Price, President of AEUW, TASS; Jim McCafferty, member of the Scottish executive of the NUM; William McKelvey, MP for Kilmarnock; George Galloway, Vice Chair of the Labour Party in Scotland and Councillors Colin Rennie and Tom McDonald from Dundee District Council.[54] TUFP aimed explicitly to mobilise support for the Palestinians within the trade union movement. Prior to the recent introduction of One Member One Vote (OMOV), Labour's industrial wing had a disproportionate influence at the annual party conference because of the block vote.[55] The party's structure in the 1980s meant that these campaigners had no chance of affecting a policy change without the trade unions' support. The TUFP's tactics were partly responsible for the high levels of conference support for pro-Palestinian resolutions in the 1980s.

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[48] See Seyd, 1987:83-94.
[49] Alderman, 1989:127.
[50] 1981-1986.
[51] Wainwright, 1987:94-105.
[52] See Dunleavy in Dunleavy et al. eds., 1993:139.
[53] Koelble, 1987:255-258.
[54] TUFP information sheet, 1980.
[55] Koelble, 1987:255.

Labour Women's support for the Palestinians also resulted from these internal changes. In the 1970s and 1980s, a new generation of women who had been involved in the feminist movement entered the party.[56] These feminists radicalised the women's organisations, politicising institutions such as the NCLW.[57] The women's movement outside the party had already taken up the Palestinian cause under the impact of Third World feminism, developments in the UN and trends within socialism, such as those towards anti-racism and anti-imperialism.[58] The new generation of women brought these ideas into the party.

Similar developments occurred in Labour's internal organisations. External advisers began to play a part in formulating policy. People like Fred Halliday and Christopher Hitchens joined Labour's Middle East sub-committee (MESC). Both were from the left of the political spectrum. Halliday was a regular contributor to the *New Left Review* and Hitchens was a radical journalist and author. Although Halliday was not prominent in the campaign for Palestinian national rights, he had some sympathy for the cause. From 1967, the NLR pursued a consistently pro-Palestinian line. Halliday himself contributed to a volume on 'Israel and the Palestinians' where he argued that the Arab states could force America to pressurise Israel into conceding Palestinian statehood.[59] Hitchens's pro-Palestinian views were expressed in a book jointly authored with Edward Said entitled *Blaming the Victims*.[60] Although MESC had previously been highly divided over Palestinian nationalism, it played a part in getting the party to call for PLO participation in peace negotiations in the early 1980s.[61]

The PLP's position also stemmed from a shift to the left. As a result of the 1964, 1966 and 1974 elections, the parliamentary left had grown. Incoming MPs were disproportionately left-wing and the constituency parties selected more left-leaning candidates.[62] These developments contributed to Michael Foot's election as leader in 1980.[63] In 1982, twenty-three Labour MPs formed the left-wing Campaign Group.[64]

[56] Seyd, 1987:49.
[57] Lovenduski and Randall, 1993:142.
[58] See Pope, 1986:13-25.
[59] Halliday in Davis, Mack and Yuval-Davis, eds., 1975:169-170.
[60] Said and Hitchens, 1988.
[61] *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 June 1982:6.
[62] Berrington in Kavanagh, ed., 1982:69-94.
[63] Seyd, 1987:128.
[64] Ibid:165.

As the 1980s progressed, the PLP's left-wards trend intensified as a result of the entry into parliament of the 'new urban left'. This new element introduced a soft left agenda which included a sensitivity to issues such as gender and minority rights[65], predisposing them to Palestinian nationalism. Members of LFI's parliamentary group noted that new MPs were reluctant to join the organisation.[66]

A striking number of left-wingers were actively involved in the campaign for recognition of Palestinian national rights. Although David Watkins and Andrew Faulds were not left-wing, a number of the other pro-Palestinian activists were (see appendix 5.2). Martin Flannery, Joan Maynard, William McKelvey, Robert McTaggart, Robert Parry, Reg Race, Allan Roberts and Ernie Ross were all members of the Campaign Group. Albert Booth, Dale Campbell-Savours, Stanley Newens and Martin O'Neill were members of the Tribune Group. Many TUFP sponsors were from the Labour left, such as Dennis Canavan, who was a member of the Campaign Group[67] and George Galloway, who was involved in the formation of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC) in Scotland.[68] Moreover, the pro-Israel/pro-Palestinian division mapped on to the right/left divide in the unions. While a good number of unions had begun to take on the Palestinian cause, the right-wing EETPU remained pro-Israel. At the 1983 conference the EETPU moved a resolution which gave priority to recognition of Israel's borders. The motion was defeated.[69]

Generational changes also played a critical part in the party's adoption of the Palestinian cause. Whereas the sight of Jewish refugees had touched Labour's older generation and created a groundswell of sympathy for zionist aims, the Palestinian refugee crisis was more salient for the 1980s' generation. The Palestinian cause attracted a greater proportion of the younger generation of Labour MPs than the Israeli cause. An analysis of the activists[70] in the PLP for the respective causes shows that 9 per cent of pro-Israel activists were born in or after 1935 compared with 32 per cent

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[65] Dunleavy in Dunleavy et al., eds., 1993:140-141.
[66] Minutes of the Parliamentary Group, LFI, 1 July 1980.
[67] Seyd, 1987:222 note 18.
[68] Heffernan and Marqusee, 1992:172.
[69] TUC Report 1983:555-558.
[70] I have included as pro-Palestinian activists Labour MPs who signed two or more EDMs in 1982 which were critical of Israel and supportive of Palestinian national rights. I have included as pro-Israel activists Labour MPs who signed critical amendments to the pro-Palestinian MPs. I have discounted members who signed both pro-Palestinian motions and critical amendments.

of pro-Palestinian activists. After taking into account other sources of data which give a broader picture, around 6 per cent of Labour MPs who sympathised with Israel were born in or after 1935 compared with around 29 per cent of Labour MPs who identified with the Palestinian cause. Furthermore, whereas 32 per cent of pro-Israel Labour MPs entered parliament after 1970, around 62 per cent of pro-Palestinian MPs did.

The left's rise led the party to adopt a broad approach to foreign policy which was particularly amenable to Palestinian demands. Labour contained a strong undercurrent of anti-American feeling, being particularly critical of America's involvement in the Third World. At the same time, the party adopted anti-racist politics, protesting against South African apartheid, and it took up the campaign for nuclear disarmament. These developments coincided with Israel's increasing identification with American foreign policy. America provided Israel with a high level of financial and political support and the Likud government helped America implement its foreign policy agenda in the Third World. It sold arms to countries like Somoza's Nicaragua and Guatemala. It also had links with South Africa.[71] Furthermore, Israel had begun to develop a nuclear capacity. The Vanunu affair in 1986 drew attention to this development, sparking off a series of protests. In an interview with the Sunday Times, Mordechai Vanunu claimed that Israel had developed and stockpiled nuclear weapons. Mossad captured Vanunu in Rome and he was imprisoned for treason.[72] Healey has commented that the American authorities' knowledge of Israel's nuclear weapons programme provided a further example of America commitment to the Jewish state leading to controvert its broader aims.[73]

The significant localisation of pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel activism in London and Scotland deserves special consideration. The case of London was particularly interesting because the pro-Palestinian movement occurred in traditionally Jewish areas, such as Brent. However, demographic trends created black and Asian communities in boroughs such as this and relations between these minorities and the Jewish community were tense, with some Asians and Afro-Caribbeans adopting anti-zionist politics.[74] This coincided with Labour's efforts to appeal to black and Asian

[71] See Said, 1988:24;33.
[72] Ovendale, 1992:303-304.
[73] Healey, 1989:315.
[74] Alderman, 1989:118-125.

voters.[75] During the 1982 local elections in particular, Labour candidates, amongst others, made a concerted effort to attract these minorities' votes.[76] Consequently, the new, anti-racist left's links with black and Asian communities replaced the traditional alliance between Labour and the Jews.

These factors did not account for the high level of pro-Palestinian activism in the Scottish labour movement. The Scottish left's support for the Palestinians reflected the radical and independent tradition in the country's labour movement. The Scottish Labour Party and the Scottish TUC (STUC) had never felt compelled to stand by the national party's policy positions.[77] The Scottish labour movement's independent spirit enabled it to identify with movements for self-determination such as the Palestinian one. Moreover, its identification with other left-wing causes, such as the anti-apartheid campaign, was important. Although not on the far left, the Dundee Labour Party had long been committed to causes such as the anti-apartheid movement and various anti-imperialist movements.[78] Political activists such as Abe Sirton, who had spent his life campaigning on behalf of oppressed groups, played a part in getting the Scottish Party to take up the Palestinian cause by helping to establish the Scottish Friends of Palestine (SFP).[79]

Like other left-wing movements then, in the 1980s the Labour Party broke away from its pro-Israel tradition and moved towards support for Palestinian national rights. External factors, including developments in Israel, the British Jews' shift to the right, and the rise of the PLO and the intifada, all contributed to this shift. However, the rise of the Labour left was the most important factor. In the following section I shall discuss the question of anti-zionism in the party and whether the party succumbed to anti-Jewish themes.

5.3 Anti-zionism

It would be misleading to suggest that the Labour Party has never contained anti-zionist elements. The traditional pro-Arabists, Mayhew and Watkins, were anti-

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[75] Peele in Dunleavy et al. eds., 1990:81.
[76] Charlot in Ranney, ed., 1985:139-154.
[77] Wainwright, 1987:144-149.
[78] Interview with Ernie Ross, 16 April 1991.
[79] *The Guardian*, G2T:18.

zionist.[80] However, their views were very marginal before the 1980s. In this decade, new elements began to elaborate anti-zionist themes. For example, at the 1982 annual conference, Ted Knight (a Workers' Revolutionary Party [WRP] plant) moved an emergency motion which called for the replacement of Israel with a democratic secular state of Palestine.[81] In his supporting speech, Knight compared zionism with anti-semitism and Nazism, claiming that it was the 'zionists who...feed antisemitism by working hand-in-glove with the Nazi Falangists in Lebanon'.[82] At the party conference in 1986, Jeremy Corbyn chaired a meeting of the Labour Campaign for Palestine (LCP). Tony Greenstein was one of the speakers at the meeting.[83] Greenstein espoused an especially extreme form of anti-zionism, claiming zionism justified the National Front's views and even questioning the extent of the Nazi genocide of the Jews.[84] Ken Livingstone allegedly referred to Israel as a country based on 'racism and the murder of Arabs'.[85] At a rally held in Trafalgar Square in August 1982, he compared the Israeli Cabinet with the Galtieri regime in Argentina.[86]

The far left Labour press also provided a platform for anti-zionist views. In June 1982 the *Labour Herald* carried a cartoon which showed Begin, dressed in a Gestapo uniform, standing over the bodies of Palestinians. The cartoon was entitled 'The Final Solution'. The newspaper also described Israel as a 'state entirely built on the blood of Europe's Jews, whom the zionists deserted in their hour of greatest need'.[87] The ILP newspaper, the *Labour Leader*, used similar images. In September 1982, it published a photograph of Jews in a Nazi concentration camp next to a picture of Begin described as the 'former leader of a terrorist gang'.[88] By the mid-1980s, far left ideas had evidently affected Labour Women. NCLW resolutions began to use characteristic anti-zionist themes. In 1984, Bootle Women's Section put down a resolution which stated that the Palestinian/Israeli conflict was the result of the 'intervention of imperialism'.[89] Two years later Leicester South Women's Section called on the NEC

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[80] See chapter four.
[81] LPACR, 1982:148.
[82] LPACR, 1982:133
[83] *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 October 1986:52.
[84] See Billig, 1984b:31.
[85] Alderman, 1989:133.
[86] *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 September 1982, London Extra:1.
[87] Alderman, 1989:132-133.
[88] *Labour Leader*, September 1982:6-7.
[89] Agenda for the NCLW 1984:55.

to demand Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories and stated that it was 'opposed to the zionist state as racist, exclusivist and a direct agency of imperialism'.[90] International developments underpinned this trend, including: the 1976 UN security council passed a resolution which condemned zionism as a form of racism; the shift to the right in Israel and the rise of Palestinian nationalism.[91]

However, Trotskyist entryism was also responsible for introducing anti-zionism into the party. Trotskyism has a strong anti-zionist tradition. Contemporary groups continued in this tradition, but also added a new theme, replacing the idea that zionism split the working class with the view that zionism was a form of racism or even fascism.[92] In the 1970s various far left groups entered the party. The Militant Group, which was strong in Merseyside and to a lesser extent London, was the most significant of these,[93] with its membership tripling between 1976 and 1982.[94] Other Trotskyist groups included the Socialist Organiser Alliance (SOA) and the Chartist Group, which seceded from the SOA in 1980 and published *London Labour Briefing*. The latter was active primarily around the GLC and Labour borough councils in London.[95] Ted Knight, the controversial leader of Lambeth council, was a member of the WRP.[96] Knight had links with people like Ken Livingstone and Jeremy Corbyn. All of these people were involved in the *Labour Herald*, which was published by Gerry Healy's WRP printing presses.[97] The *London Labour Briefing* was also anti-zionist. A committee of WRP members ran this newspaper and Livingstone, representing the Labour Party, was a committee member.

Did this wave of anti-zionism incorporate anti-semitic themes? Billig argues that anti-zionism is anti-Jewish when it singles out Jewish nationalism for special criticism. Hence, it is not anti-Jewish to oppose Jewish nationalism on the grounds that nationalism generally contradicts socialist principles.[98] The question of whether opposition to Israel is anti-Jewish can only be settled at the empirical level. At this level, it cannot be denied that some party members' anti-zionism had an obsessive

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[90] Agenda for the NCLW 1986:110.
[91] See chapter one.
[92] See Billig, 1984b:28-34.
[93] Lovenduski and Randall, 1993:138.
[94] Crick, 1986:315.
[95] Seyd, 1987:52.
[96] Lansley et al., 1989:6.
[97] Crick, 1986:257.
[98] Billig, 1984a:8-9.

quality and included typical anti-Jewish themes. The *Labour Leader*, for example, conceptualised Jews as a race, claiming that Israel had given 'exclusive civil and political power to the race which had habitually been denied such power'.[99] The portrayal of Begin as a blood sucker and the claim that Israel was based on the 'blood of Jews', resonated with the anti-semitic theory of 'blood libel'.

Some members of the far left and pro-Palestinian strand also upheld a conspiracy theory of zionism. Knight spoke of 'zionist forces' and claimed that 'zionist organisations, particularly in this country and throughout the world, have attempted to silence the critics of what has gone on in the Lebanon'.[100] Some members of LMEC referred to the 'conspiracy of silence' over Labour's policy on Israel.[101] The conspiracy theory of zionism exaggerates the power of zionist organisations in the same way as anti-semites have traditionally exaggerated Jewish power. More sensitive members of the campaign for recognition of Palestinian national rights noticed the tendency towards conspiracy theory. After attending a Poale Zion fringe meeting on 'Racism, Antisemitism and the Socialist Agenda', Clare Short said that supporters of the Palestinian cause were in danger of 'slipping into the language of conspiracy'.[102]

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to conclude, as Alderman does, that the anti-zionist element of the party had taken control of the NEC by the early 1980s.[103] Although in 1982 the NEC endorsed the principle of Palestinian self-determination and statehood, it was not anti-zionist. Indeed, the NEC explicitly opposed hard-line opposition to zionism or Israel. Speaking as its representative at the 1982 annual conference, Healey opposed two resolutions on the grounds that they failed to include clauses which conceded Israel's right to exist.[104] Moreover, it is important to distinguish between the views of the far and the soft left. Whereas the former saw class conflict as fundamental, the latter was interested in divisions other than class ones.[105] Consequently, the far left refused to recognise Israel and proposed the establishment of a democratic, secular state, whereas the soft left tended only to

[99] *Labour Leader*, September 1982:6-7.
[100] LPACR 1982:133.
[101] Interview with Ernie Ross, 16 April 1991.
[102] *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 October 1986:52.
[103] See Alderman, 1989:125.
[104] LPACR 1982:137
[105] See Seyd, 1987:168-169.

criticise Israeli policy, which is not necessarily anti-zionist. Michael Foot, for example, did not question Israel's right to exist. Nor did he depict Israel as a racist or fascist state. The same was true of the younger generation of soft left activists. Clare Short, for example, advocated a two-state solution to the conflict and explicitly opposed Trotskyist demands.[106] Even Palestinian activists believed that the far left's call to abolish Israel was impractical and damaged their cause.[107] So, although the anti-zionist elements did seek to influence policy, their views were in the minority. In the following section, I shall consider the intra-party conflict which followed Labour's movement away from a pro-Israeli perspective and its implications for policy.

5.4 Conflict and Retreat

However widespread the shift towards recognition of Palestinian national rights, it produced a serious rift within Labour's ranks. Jewish members of the party played an active part in seeking to stem the tide of the new current, including prominent backbenchers like Ian Mikardo. Although Mikardo accepted the principle of Palestinian self-determination,[108] he strongly opposed the movement in the party towards recognition of the PLO. In the past,[109] he objected to internal party criticism of Israel and the Socialist International's decision to establish links between European socialists and Arab socialist groups.[110] Following a fact-finding trip to Lebanon after the 1982 invasion, the MP told a meeting of LFI's parliamentary branch that there had been a 'gross exaggeration' of the number of casualties and people made homeless and that the Lebanese people were grateful to Israel for freeing them from PLO control.[111] At the party conference, he opposed the pro-Palestinian resolutions on the grounds that they sought the 'extinction' of Israel.[112] In response to the cluster of pro-Palestinian resolutions submitted to the conference in 1982, Greville Janner, MP for Leicester West and president of the BOD, complained that he and the Jewish

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[106] The principle of a two-state solution was advocated by Short at a talk given at the LSE on the Gulf War on 25 February 1991. Before talking about the conflict, Short criticised the Trotskyist element in the party.
[107] Interview with Yousef Allen, 5 June 1991.
[108] Interview with Ian Mikardo, 1 May 1990.
[109] Mikardo chaired the International Committee between 1973 and 1979.
[110] Int/9 12 November 1974;NEC 26 November 1974.
[111] Minutes of the meeting of the Parliamentary Branch of LFI, 20 July 1982.
[112] LPACR 1982:134.

community could not understand how a democratic body such as Labour could have relations with the PLO. He added that Jewish delegates at the conference would do their best to overturn the resolution.[113] Kaufman's contacts with the PLO alienated certain sections of the Jewish community and press. Some Jews felt that his links with the PLO invalidated his claim to be a zionist.[114] In their efforts to counter the pro-Palestinian movement, Jewish Labour organisations began to operate in areas which were at the forefront of the campaigns. In particular, Poale Zion and LFI organised in the Scottish labour movement. In the summer of 1982, LFI arranged a demonstration against a Scottish TUC meeting in Perth. A leader of the Dundee Jewish community, Albert Jacobs, supported LFI's director, Valerie Cocks.[115] In June 1982 Poale Zion formed a Scottish branch with the MP for East Kilbride, Maurice Miller, becoming its chair.[116]

Some Jewish Labour members and groups tried to influence political opinion by appealing to the Jewish vote. In the Brent borough elections in May 1982, John Lebor advised electors not to vote Labour on the grounds that around one fifth of all Labour candidates in the borough supported the PLO. The local Rabbi, Dr Harry Rabinowicz, warned congregants not to vote for Alf Filer, the Jewish Labour candidate for Cricklewood, because Filer favoured the establishment of a secular state of Israel. During the May 1982 elections Labour lost two Cricklewood seats and its share of the poll decreased quite considerably compared with 1978. Some attributed Labour's poor results to the rows between the Brent Labour Party and the Jewish community.[117] The BOD also tried to influence the Jewish electorate. In the 1983 election, Dr. Jack Gewirtz, its director of defence, expressed concern about 'activities within the Labour Party of groups and individuals which work closely with the PLO'. The Board identified the Labour candidate for Westminster North, Arthur Latham, as a PLO supporter.[118] The organisation also made direct appeals to the party leadership. Just before the annual conference in 1988, a BOD delegation, headed by its president, Dr.

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[113] *Jewish Chronicle*, 11 June 1982:8.
[114] Joseph Finklestone, diplomatic editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, made this point (*The Guardian*, 27 March 1992:23).
[115] *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 May 1982:14.
[116] *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 June 1982:9.
[117] Alderman, 1989:126.
[118] *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 June 1983:1.

Lionel Kopelowitz, met Neil Kinnock to express concern about the anti-Israel motions which had been tabled.[119]

The Labour councils' shift towards the Palestinian movement revealed sharp differences in opinion between the old Labour left and the new Labour left.[120] John Lebor, former leader of Brent council and a member of LFI's national executive, claimed that 'militant leftists' were responsible for this development.[121] The protest focused on Ken Livingstone. Some Labour members of the GLC objected to Livingstone's outspoken criticisms of Israel, and especially his claim that Jews on the extreme right had taken over the BOD. The GLC chair, Illtyd Harrington suggested that Livingstone's remarks had made the GLC seem anti-semitic and damaged relations with the entire Jewish community. Gladys Dimson, former chair of the GLC's Housing Committee, threatened to resign unless Livingstone apologised for the remark about the BOD. The Labour Group subsequently voted for Livingstone to withdraw his claim.[122]

The policy changes also split Labour Women. The party's older generation of women and the incoming generation disagreed over a range of issues.[123] This split played itself out on the question of Israel. Prominent women in Labour's older generation, such as Gwyneth Dunwoody and Jo Richardson, remained strong supporters of Israel and active members of LFI. In the 1980s Dunwoody and Richardson continued to champion Israel and to resist the impetus towards the Palestinian cause, especially recognition of the PLO. This conflict also took place in Labour councils. In April 1983 women members of Poale Zion were prevented from attending an International Women's Day seminar at County Hall. In June 1984 four Labour members of the GLC council, including Gladys Dimson, voted with the opposition in protest against the GLC's Women's Committee's alleged anti-zionist comments.[124]

The debates drew attention to the potential costs to Labour of too strongly identifying with the Palestinian cause. The party's officials and leadership tried to

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[119] *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 October 1988:1.
[120] See Alderman, 1983:114.
[121] Alderman, 1989:125-126.
[122] Ibid:134.
[123] Seyd, 1987:49; see also Wainwright, 1987:165-171.
[124] Alderman, 1989:135.

diffuse the tension. In response to the NEC's endorsement of a policy document drafted by MESC, Joan Lestor, chair of the international committee, suggested that the reference to the PLO be omitted.[125] At the 1983 conference, the NEC decided to withdraw resolutions on the Palestinian/Israeli conflict for the sake of unity and its statement on the Middle East did not include a reference to the conflict.[126] The new leader, Neil Kinnock, adopted a more conciliatory approach towards Jewish opinion and tried to re-build bridges with Jewish Labour groups in Britain and in Israel. Kinnock always attended the LFI reception held at the party's annual conference. He expressed a particular sympathy for Israel and was close to Shimon Peres and other leading Israeli politicians.[127] In June 1987, Kinnock told the *Jewish Chronicle* that Labour was 'a strong supporter of Israel' and that he had campaigned strongly for changes in Soviet policy on the question of Jewish emigration.[128]

Labour's attempts at reconciliation with the Jewish community had direct implications for candidates' policies in the 1987 general election in Jewish areas. The candidate for Hendon South, Louise Christian told the *Jewish Chronicle* that she 'fully supported Israel's right to exist as a separate state'. She also said that although the PLO should be included in peace talks, she opposed the view that zionism was a form of racism, clearly seeking to distance herself from the anti-zionist left. Poale Zion backed her. In Finchley, John Davies, leader of the Labour group on Barnet Council, campaigned primarily on issues irrelevant to Jewish voters. However, his agent, Mick O'Connor, said that the party was going to draw attention to Thatcher's refusal to pursue Nazi war criminals.[129] Thatcher had long been personally committed to Israel, being one of the first members of the Conservative Friends of Israel.[130] However, she was vulnerable to Labour's exploitation of her government's record, whose Middle East policy previously tended to be pro-Arab.[131] Even Ken Livingstone, the candidate for Brent East, began to moderate his views. Livingstone replaced the Jewish Labour MP Reg Freeson, who had been particularly upset by the developments in London.[132]

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[125] *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 June 1982:6.
[126] LPACR 1983:167.
[127] Interview with Peter Grunberger, director of LFI, 8 July 1991.
[128] *Jewish Chronicle*, 5 June 1987:8
[129] *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 June 1987, London Extra:4.
[130] Rubinstein, 1982:95.
[131] Ibid:154-155.
[132] See Alderman, 1989:126-127.

In an interview with the *Jewish Chronicle*, Livingstone said that if anyone thought he was anti-semitic, they should not vote for him, but 'it would be difficult for anyone to explain how [he could] support every single minority except the Jewish minority'. He added that he had always defended the rights of Jews to live in Israel. He dismissed the charge that he had described the BOD as fascist and added that he did not think zionism was a form of racism,[133] signalling a definite shift in his position. Livingstone's new moderation on this issue reflected his increasing alienation from far left groups.[134]

In the late 1980s the tide began to turn on the question of Labour's policy towards Israel and the Palestinians. The leadership sought to replace the earlier radicalism with a more moderate position. The NEC opposed the resolutions at the 1988 and 1989 conferences,[135] despite the fact that they included references to Israel's right to exist. Whereas in 1982 the NEC's policy statement had included an explicit reference to Palestinian statehood, its policy statement in 1988 referred to the Palestinians' right to self-determination and a 'homeland'. The pro-Palestinian activists were not happy with this shift.[136] Kaufman's and Tony Clarke's policy review on 'Britain and the World', included a diluted form of previous policy commitments to the Palestinian cause. The statement recognised that the Palestinians had been prevented from having their own chosen form of government; called for the government of Israel to enter into dialogue with the PLO and supported a UN sponsored International Conference to negotiate a settlement to the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.[137] At a meeting in May 1989 the NEC discussed the review document. During the discussion of the Middle East, Tony Benn moved a motion in favour of acceptance of a Palestinian state. He was defeated by eighteen votes to five. Ken Livingstone moved a motion which called for Palestinian refugees to be allowed to return to Israel. The motion was defeated by twenty votes to three.[138] These votes showed very clearly the change that had taken place since the early 1980s.

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[133] *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 June 1987, London Extra:4.
[134] See Seyd, 1987:168.
[135] Interview with Bridget Gilchrist, LMEC, 27 June 1991.
[136] *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 October 1988:6.
[137] LPACR, 1989:156.
[138] Benn, 1992:565.

The battle over the party's policy towards Israel and the Palestinians was part of a wider battle. The Labour right began a counter-attack on the left and the left started to fragment and divide.[139] As the 1980s proceeded, the left's dominance declined. With the election of the new leadership in 1983, the balance of power between the factions shifted. The Kinnock/Hattersley partnership tried to restore a more centralised style of leadership, characteristic of the Wilson era.[140] Kinnock was from the party's left. Nevertheless, under his leadership the left divided over a series of issues, in particular, the miners' strike.[141] After Labour's electoral defeat in 1987, the leadership's desire to reconstitute the party intensified. The 1987 policy review process aimed to transform the party by dropping apparently unpopular policies.[142] By the late 1980s, the left's retreat was evident in Labour's decision to drop its commitment to unilateralism and withdrawal from the EC.[143]

Nevertheless, a new (if imperfect) Labour consensus emerged, based a compromise between the two sides. The policy included three main principles: first, recognition of Israel; second, support for a UN-sponsored peace conference and third, support for Palestinian self-determination. With respect to the first principle, the pro-Palestinian activists conceded the leadership's demand for a policy which included an explicit recognition of Israel's right to exist within secure borders.[144] The activists' concession reflected developments in the PLO. Under Yasser Arafat's leadership, the PLO had moved towards co-existence with Israel as well as Palestinian statehood.[145] The two sides also agreed over the idea of a UN peace conference. At the party conference in 1990, Kaufman said that there had to be an international conference which would provide 'justice and self-determination' for the Palestinian people.[146] Later, the NEC overwhelmingly backed this policy. Ernie Ross's support for the NEC's decision indicated agreement between the activists and the leadership.[147] The two sides also agreed over the principle of Palestinian self-determination. Although the leadership's statements tended to use the ambiguous concept of 'homeland' rather

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[139] See Seyd, 1987:159-171.
[140] Dunleavy in Dunleavy et al. eds., 1993:139-142.
[141] Seyd, 1987:166-167.
[142] Peele in Dunleavy et al. eds., 1990:79-80.
[143] Morgan, 1992:339.
[144] LPACR, 1988:180; LPACR, 1989:156.
[145] Said, 1992:xiii. See also, Lesch and Tessler, 1989:282.
[146] *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 October 1990:6.
[147] *The Guardian*, 31 January 1991:4.

than statehood, irritating some of the pro-Palestinian campaigners,[148] Kaufman claimed that a peace conference should aim to achieve self-determination for the Palestinians.[149] Moreover, LMEC members felt that the party could not go back on its commitment to this principle.[150] In any case, Labour's sanctioning of this policy was not politically risky. By this stage, there was a significant current of support for Palestinian self-determination, both internationally and nationally. An implicit consensus also emerged over recognition of the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Although the leadership did not include this principle in official policy statements, it gave the principle its unofficial support. Kinnock stated that a future Labour government would be willing to meet the PLO if such a meeting would assist the peace process.[151] Moreover, Kaufman told a meeting of Poale Zion and LMEC that the PLO should be included in peace talks. He suggested that the Palestinians should be able to choose their representatives in the same way as the Jews had been able to choose theirs during the British mandate.[152]

5.5 Conclusion

In the early 1980s Labour moved decisively towards recognition of Palestinian national rights. Previously, dissent from the pro-Israel consensus was confined to a small number of pro-Arab MPs, some elements in the Labour left and the constituency parties. However, the break-down in support for Israel in the 1980s embraced all sections of the party, including the PLP. The rise of the right in Israel, the movement of British Jews towards conservatism, and the increased activism of the Palestinian nationalist movement in western politics all contributed to this shift. However, the key dynamic was the rise of the Labour left. Although identification with Palestinian nationalism cut across party factions, the Palestinian cause became closely associated with the new kind of left activist. The party's policy in favour of Palestinian statehood in the early 1980s was part of a wider process which led to the adoption of unilateralism and a policy of withdrawal from the EC.

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[148] *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 October 1988:6.
[149] *The Guardian*, 6 February 1991:19.
[150] See Said, 1992:xx.
[151] *Jewish Chronicle*, 5 June 1987:8.
[152] See 'Palestine, An End To The Silence', LMEC, 1987:13.

This trend towards greater sympathy for Palestinian nationalism did not go uncontested. The minority which continued to be ideologically committed to zionism and Israel campaigned against the pro-Palestinian element. Alderman's description of the 1980s as a decade marked by a 'descent into war' between the Labour Party and the Jews,[153] somewhat exaggerates the state of affairs, but the Israeli/Palestinian conflict did reveal intra-party divisions. The debates drew attention to the potential costs of a party identifying with the Palestinian cause, in terms of intra-party division and in electoral terms. The election of a new leadership in 1983, intent on weakening the left as part of a drive towards making Labour more electable, had repercussions for the policy on the Palestinian/Israel conflict. In the late 1980s, a new division emerged when the leadership marginalised some of the pro-Palestinian demands in its attempt to re-build the party. This gave way to a new consensus, based on recognition of Israel's right to exist and the Palestinians' right to self-determination.

Although intra-party developments were behind this shift towards a moderate stance, external factors made it easier for pro-Palestinian activists to accept it. In the first place, the PLO itself had dropped its wholesale opposition to Israel, advocating a two-state solution to the conflict. Second, Israel's shift to the right, which had so alienated traditional Labour supporters of the Jewish state, had sparked off a counter-reaction and given rise to progressive forces such as the Peace Now movement. Its effect had not been to unite Israelis but to polarise them, creating a sharp division between right and left with the former rallying behind Begin and the latter strongly dissenting from the Israeli government's policy.[154] These developments provided the original momentum behind the Israeli Labour Party's move towards negotiation with the Palestinians, propelling leaders like Shimon Peres towards a more accommodating attitude, ending with the current peace negotiations. The British Labour Party could now safely support a two-state option without alienating the Jewish community.

To what extent did the evolution in Labour's thinking take place in other left-wing groups? Did the processes behind its policy changes operate within the communist left and other social democratic parties? The next part of the thesis addresses these comparative questions. It looks first at the way the British

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[153] Alderman, 1989:111.
[154] Lesch and Tessler, 1989:39-40.

Communist Party responded to Israel during the postwar period and then at the French left's attitudes.

Part Two: The CPGB, the French Left and
Conclusion

CHAPTER SIX

THE BRITISH COMMUNIST PARTY AND ISRAEL: FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE JEWISH STATE TO THE INVASION OF LEBANON

As a member of the international communist movement, the British Communist Party (CP) had a strong internationalist current, holding that international socialism prevailed over national culture and that the cause of the international working class took priority over nationalism.[1] Supporting only those nationalist movements considered capable of overthrowing capitalism and imperialism, the CP had a long tradition of hostility for zionism and support for Arab nationalism. With respect to the conflicting nationalist claims to Palestine, the party opposed the Jews' claims on the grounds that zionism divided the working class and only paid 'lip service' to socialism. Moreover, it believed that the zionist movement depended upon an alliance with imperialism, whereas Arab nationalism represented a 'struggle for national independence against imperialism'.[2]

As the cold war intensified, the CP's support for anti-imperialist national liberation movements sharpened. Perceiving western imperialism as the major threat to progress, the party supported national liberation movements irrespective of their relationship to communism or socialism so long as they were anti-imperialist.[3] To what extent did communist principles determine the party's policy positions during the various Israel/Arab conflicts? Was the party's attitude unchanging and monolithic or was there dissent? How did the communists' stand compare with Labour's? In this chapter I shall consider these issues. In the first section, I shall describe the way the CP interpreted the Israel/Arab conflict from the postwar period to the 1980s. In the second section, I shall explain its various policy positions and in the third section, I shall compare the evolution of its approach to Israel with Labour's.

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[1] Hobsbawm, 1977:5-6.
[2] See Rennap, 1943:73-87.
[3] Howe, 1993:288-293.

6.1 Changing Attitudes Towards Israel

Given the CP's traditional hostility towards zionism, one might have expected it to oppose Jewish immigration into Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish state. However, during the 1940s, the CP abandoned its principles and adopted a number of pro-zionist policies, including the formation of a National Jewish Committee (NJC) in 1943 and support for Jewish immigration into Palestine and land purchases.[4] Phil Piratin, MP for Mile End, and Jack Gaster, communist representative for Mile End on the LCC,[5] made a statement to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry saying that although Jewish development in Palestine had contributed to a large mass of landless Arabs, the existing Jewish community had earned the right to 'develop their new home as free and equal citizens of Palestine'.[6] In 1948, the CP wholeheartedly supported the establishment of Israel, seeing the state's foundation as 'a big step toward fulfillment of self-determination of the peoples of Palestine' and 'a great sign of the times'.[7] The party's past support for Arab nationalism gave way to a hostile characterisation of the nationalist movement as reactionary and feudalistic,[8] with it suggesting that there should be an 'ultimatum to the Arab feudal lords, who are truly puppets of Anglo-American oil - an ultimatum to lay down their arms'.[9]

This position brought the communists into conflict with the Labour government. The CP condemned Bevin's Palestine policy, accusing him of having committed a 'shameful betrayal' of the Jews and claiming that 'Bevinism leads to antisemitism and all that follows'.[10] In parliament, William Gallacher, MP for West Fife, and Piratin sponsored an EDM that stated that the government was responsible for the Arab states' invasion of Palestine, urging recognition of Israel and recommending the immediate withdrawal of military aid to the Arabs. The fellow-travellers, Denis Pritt and John Platts-Mills added their signatures.[11]

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[4] Kushner, 1990:67-70.
[5] Alderman, 1992:317.
[6] CPGB, 'European Jewry and the Palestine Problem', 1946:14-15.
[7] *Daily Worker*, 15 May 1948:1.
[8] See Said, 1978 for an account of popular stereotypes of Arabs.
[9] *Daily Worker*, 18 May 1948:1.
[10] Kushner, 1990:70-71.
[11] Notices of Motions, vol. 4, 1947-48:3217;3242.

The party declared that the war in Palestine was 'British sponsored' and the direct consequence of 'imperialist policy':

> 'This reactionary war conducted by the chieftains of the Arab League under British control is entirely against the interests of the Arab masses, who in all the countries of the Middle East are striving for freedom from imperialist domination'.[12]

The communists portrayed the Jews' protest against British policy as an anti-imperialist struggle, declaring that 'the days of imperialism are numbered'.[13]

However, the party's ideological opposition to zionism and support for Arab nationalism quickly re-emerged. Its initial support for Israel gave way to a strong anti-zionist stand during the Slansky trials in Czechoslovakia and the 'Doctors' Plot' in Russia,[14] with the party asserting that the Slansky trials:

> 'revealed the now familiar pattern of American espionage and sabotage against the People's Democracies...The fact that eleven of the fourteen conspirators were of bourgeois Jewish origin...proved beyond doubt the complicity of the zionist organisation and Israeli government in the plot'.[15]

Now the CP saw Israel as an imperialist state. Harry Pollitt, the party's secretary, said that the zionist movement had always been a 'tool of British imperialism' and that it was 'increasingly shifting its allegiance to the stronger American imperialism'. He claimed that Israel had become a 'pawn of the USA' and that zionism was 'a ready-made tool and weapon for the American-backed spies, traitors and wreckers'.[16]

The party adopted a pro-Arab position in the 1956 hostilities, seeing Nasser's nationalisation of Suez as 'Egyptian defiance of western imperialism',[17] and

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[12] *Daily Worker*, 22 May 1948:1.
[13] *Daily Worker*, 22 May 1948:1.
[14] See chapter one.
[15] *World News and Views*, no. 50, 1953:591.
[16] Pelling, 1975:167-168.
[17] *Daily Worker*, 31 July 1956:1.

viewing the Anglo-French attack as a manifestation of the west's aim to undermine national liberation movements in the Middle East and North Africa. The communists claimed that the British government's

> 'only friends are rabid French imperialists, who, having got themselves embroiled in large-scale warfare in Algeria, would like their British allies and rivals embroiled up to the neck in Egypt...Their only semblance of a policy consists in the assumption that if Britain and France can overthrow Nasser, the Arab world will quieten down...'.[18]

Citing Lenin's theory of imperialism, the party argued that the Anglo-French invasion happened because 'while there [was] capitalism in the world, the forces of reaction, representing the interests of capitalist monopolies, will persist in military gambles and aggression'.[19]

The CP accused Israel of allying with western imperialism, suggesting that Israel's role in the war served 'the interests of the foreign colonialists' and was motivated by a desire for 'territorial expansion'. It claimed that the Ben-Gurion government had 'entered into a dangerous plot, together with the British and French imperialists, against neighbouring peoples defending their national independence and sovereignty'.[20] Bert Ramelson, head of the NJC, said that Israel's part in the conflict reflected the country's 'imperialist alliances'.[21] The conflict revived the party's views on the nature of zionism and antisemitism. It claimed that antisemitism was the 'weapon of reactionary ruling classes' which 'split the working class' and reiterated the view that zionism could not combat antisemitism since it was based on the premise that antisemitism was 'ineradicable'.

However, the 1956 crisis saw an unprecedented groundswell of internal dissent over the party's position on Israel. Chimen Abramsky and Hyman Levy began to challenge communist policy and the view that the USSR was a haven for

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[18] *Daily Worker*, 1 September 1956:1.
[19] *Labour Monthly*, December 1956:560.
[20] *World News*, 22 December 1956:815-819.
[21] *Marxism Today*, January 1959:24.

the Jews. In September 1956 the International Department and the NJC held an emergency meeting on the question of Soviet antisemitism, revealing a split between some Jewish members and the leadership. Members of the NJC stated that the *Daily Worker* had suppressed debate on antisemitism in the USSR and had given the impression that the party condoned socialist anti-semitism. The majority of the NJC refused to accept Palme Dutt's defence of the Soviet Union.[22] Levy and Abramsky in particular challenged the party's line on zionism and Israel, publishing a short book on 'Jews and the National Question' that called for a re-evaluation of communism's attitude towards Jewish nationalism and the party's policy towards zionism and the Arab/Israel conflict.[23]

The break-down in the anti-zionist consensus reflected wider developments resulting from Khrushchev's revelations about Stalinist repression. Those who dissented over the party's attitude towards zionism were also involved in the movement for greater internal democracy. Abramsky argued that the party should learn from the Khrushchev revelations and that it should re-examine the principle of democratic centralism and he objected to the way in which ordinary party members played no part in the formulation of party policy and to the tendency for 'blind loyalty to Moscow'.[24] His and Levy's eventual departure from the party was part of a much wider flight, in which people such as Edward Thompson and John Saville took part: Between 1956 and 1959 about ten thousand members left.[25] The latter took part in the establishment of *The Reasoner* which also found the Soviet Union's attitudes towards Jewish nationalism disturbing.[26]

The affair split Jewish communists. Chimen Abramsky later told Zaidman that members of his former branch regarded him as an 'untouchable'.[27] Jack Woddis, an active member of the MCF, also later broke with the party's line on Jewish nationalism, claiming that the Soviet Union was hostile to Jewish cultural expression.[28] Ramelson, Zaidman and Solly Kaye chose to remain in the party and to conform to its anti-zionist position. Reflecting on the affair, Solly Kaye has

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[22] Kushner, 1990:71-72.
[23] Levy, 1958:12-17.
[24] *World News*, 27 October 1956:687.
[25] Callaghan, 1990:186-187.
[26] Saville, 1976:6.
[27] Kushner, 1990:72.
[28] *Marxism Today*, March 1959:96.

said that although he could now see that what Levy said was well founded, at the time he was impressed by Dutt's expertise on international affairs.[29]

The leadership responded by trying to repress the dissent. Palme Dutt disowned Levy's book on the grounds that it contradicted basic marxist tenets, saying that Jewish nationalist aspirations could only be realised by 'methods of colonial conquest or imperialism' and that it provided 'fodder for antisemitism'.[30] Bert Ramelson, head of the NJC, objected to Levy's call for a re-evaluation of the party's stand on zionism and described the book as a 'thinly disguised defence of zionism', attacking Levy for praising the Israeli party Mapam (to the left of Mapai) on the grounds that the party shared responsibility for the Israeli government's 'deeds'.[31] Idris Cox recommended a review of the NJC's activities.[32] Palme Dutt imposed hand-picked members on the committee on the grounds that there was an 'urgent need for a strong and effective Jewish committee' and claimed that the committee should put forward the communist perspective on the Jewish question as 'part of the general fight against imperialism'.[33] The new NJC complied with this imperative. In a subsequent policy statement it said that zionism falsely claimed that Jewish workers had something in common with 'Jewish supporters of imperialism'; that zionism was a reactionary doctrine and had rightly been condemned as such by the international socialist movement as early as the first world war. The committee further maintained that zionism was integrally linked with imperialism and that:

> 'No-one is Socialist - certainly not Marxist - who divides workers of a given country, city or locality, from each other and finds greater unity between capitalists and workers of one religion or race than among workers of the same class who may have different religions'.[34]

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[29] Interview with Solly Kaye, 3 April 1990.
[30] *World News*, 8 March 1958:156.
[31] Undated document.
[32] Memorandum from Idris Cox to the Political Committee, 7 November 1956.
[33] Minutes of a meeting of 'Jewish comrades', 11 September 1957.
[34] Policy statement on the Jewish Question, September 1958.

With respect to antisemitism in the Soviet Union, the committee contended that 'bourgeois Jews' who 'could not believe that there [was] a difference between hostility to zionism and hostility to Jews' had made the accusations.[35]

The CP's anti-Israel and pro-Arab position remained throughout the 1967 hostilities. Supporting the Arab countries, John Gollan, the general secretary, maintained that the struggle against imperialism demanded support for the Arab liberation movement.[36] The party claimed that the 'imperialist powers' had 'stirred up conflict between Jews and Arabs to safeguard their own economic and strategic interests in the Middle East'.[37] It said that the west's principal aim was to overthrow the Syrian and Egyptian governments and to bring these countries back into the 'imperialist orbit' to secure oil supplies and remove Soviet influence from the region.[38]

As for Israel, the communists said that its role in the war was the result of 'imperialist alliances', with the political committee stating that:

> 'Israel can never enjoy security and peace as long as
> it acts as an ally of imperialism, denies the rights of
> Arabs and ranges itself on the side of the forces
> opposing the Arab liberation movement'.[39]

The 1967 hostilities produced another spate of anti-zionism. Ramelson's pamphlet on the Middle East crisis contended that zionism was a 'false' and 'reactionary' doctrine whose sole aim was to 'weaken the class sense of Jews by preaching a non-existent "common national interest"'.[40] His exposition of the party's position included a conspiracy theory of zionism. He claimed that Israel's military, financial and strategic force rested on 'zionist inspired financial, economic and "pressure group" support from the widespread Jewish communities, conditioned by years of zionist propaganda to believe that they owe allegiance to the zionist state of Israel',[41] and that:

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[35] NJC policy statement, September 1958.
[36] *Morning Star*, 10 June 1967:2.
[37] *Morning Star*, 6 June 1967:1
[38] Ramelson, 1967:24.
[39] *Morning Star*, 14 June 1967:2.
[40] Ramelson, 1967:7-10.
[41] Ramelson, 1967:36-37.

'It is...no accident that the "new found" friends of the Jews and Israel during 1956 and 1967 are often the same ones who supported Munich and the rise of Hitler and Mosley, and for exactly the same reasons - considerations of imperialist advantage'.[42]

The party's policy generated further dissent, with some members challenging the idea that Israel was the aggressor and suggesting that the Arab states had deliberately whipped up the Palestinian refugee crisis. They also queried the CP's support for Egypt in the light of Nasser's anti-communist policies. Other party members began to question the leadership's defence of the Soviet bloc against accusations of antisemitism. Referring to the Polish Communist Party's repression of Jewish cultural activities, the dissenters accused the British party's leadership of refusing to take seriously the possibility of antisemitism in eastern Europe. In particular, they attacked Bert Ramelson and Maurice Lichtig for failing to provide information on Poland's anti-zionist propaganda.[43] The leadership again tried to repress disquiet over its Arab/Israel position. Idris Cox and the International Department decided to re-establish the Middle East sub-committee and to merge it with the NJC.[44] Cox was responsible for the choice of potential members of the new sub-committee and decided that Maurice Lichtig should be chair.[45] This decision was significant because Lichtig was highly committed to the traditional communist view of zionism and the idea that the Soviet Union had solved 'the Jewish problem'.[46]

So, for most of the postwar period, the CP maintained a pro-Arab and anti-Israel stance. However, Israel's involvement in Lebanon in the 1980s drew attention to some significant changes in the party's outlook. By this time, the party had split between the traditionalists and the reformist new times faction. The traditionalists centred principally around the *Morning Star*, and the revisionists or the new times faction, centred around *Marxism Today*. The key

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[42] Ibid:41.

[43] Untitled document signed by A. Lewish and D. Jacobs from the Prestwich branch and D. Nesbitt and J. Garman from the Crumpsall branch.

[44] Correspondence from Idris Cox to Tom McWhinnie, 16 December 1968.

[45] Correspondence from Idris Cox to Maurice Lichtig, 13 January 1969.

[46] See *Comment*, 25 February 1967:117.

difference between the two factions rested on their analysis of the role of class in contemporary society. The former strand believed that communism's appeal to the working class should remain a priority, and although it recognised the importance of non-class identities, it maintained that it was wrong to understand them separately from class.[47] The new times strand included people like Martin Jacques and Beatrix Campbell and believed that there was a deep-seated weakness in the labour movement, arising primarily out of the decline of the working class. This faction challenged what they saw as an indiscriminate tendency to apply class analysis to new social divisions.

With respect to the Palestinian cause in the 1980s, the CP as a whole was committed to Palestinian nationalist aspirations, having a policy that claimed that Britain should 'recognise the Palestinian people's right to establish their own national state and the PLO as the sole voice of the Palestinians'.[48] After the invasion, Gerry Pocock, head of the international department, said that the party favoured 'full recognition of the PLO and the right of the Palestinian people to establish their own state in the occupied territories'.[49] An article in *Marxism Today* suggested that the decline of the communist Rakah party in Israel stemmed from its unwillingness to acknowledge the 'unity of the Palestinian people'.[50] The CP supported Labour's shift towards recognition of Palestinian national rights and called on the labour movement to follow the pro-PLO resolutions at the annual conference and at the TUC conference.[51]

However, this consensus over Palestinian national rights did not extend to views on Israel, with the traditionalists maintaining the party's previous anti-zionist approach and the reformers rejecting it. Pocock argued that the Israeli attack was part of a long-term plan to destroy the Palestinian people and to extend Israel's territory. He believed that the UN should impose sanctions against Israel to enforce a withdrawal.[52] Just before the invasion, the *Morning Star* condemned Lord Carrington, the Foreign Secretary, for refusing to meet PLO representatives

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[47] Pitcairn, 1985:102-120.
[48] 36th National Conference of the CPGB, 1979:7.
[49] *Morning Star*, 8 June 1982:1.
[50] *Marxism Today*, August 1982:6-7.
[51] *Morning Star*, 11 October 1982:3.
[52] *Morning Star*, 8 June 1982:1.

and claimed that Britain gave Israel 'tacit support' for expansionist policies.[53] Moreover, it drew parallels between the invasion and the Nazi holocaust, saying that Israel had used 'Blitzkrieg tactics' 'modelled on the military theories of Nazi strategists'.[54] The party's traditional strand portrayed Menachem Begin and Ariel Sharon as 'Nazi monsters', stating that 'General Sharon seems to have regarded this operation as some sort of Israeli version of a "Final Solution" but against the Palestinians'.[55]

Some of the traditionalists' coverage of Israel was antisemitic, drawing on anti-Jewish themes couched in biblical references. In response to the massacre, for example, the *Morning Star* declared that 'the mark of Cain is clearly on Sharon's forehead' and:

> '"thy brother's blood cries out from the ground" needs to be inscribed in letters of blood over the courtroom in Jerusalem...For these lines from the biblical story of Cain and Abel have been in the minds and mouths of millions the world over as ever more horrific details emerged of the monsters who masterminded it'.[56]

In a pamphlet on Israel and the Palestinians, the party published a cartoon that depicted Begin salivating over skulls with his mouth open and revealing the teeth of a vampire.[57]

With a sharp break from party orthodoxy, the reformists adopted a more moderate attitude towards Israel and Jewish nationalism, rejecting traditional communist rhetoric and confining its criticism to specific Israeli policies such as Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza on the grounds that it breached human rights and to the rise of the Israeli far right, most notably, the Kach Party.[58] Whereas in the past, the CP believed that there was no progressive

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[53] *Morning Star*, 3 April 1982:3.

[54] *Morning Star*, 8 June 1982:1.

[55] *Morning Star*, 9 October 1982:3.

[56] *Morning Star*, 9 October 1982:3.

[57] 'A Land With People', May 1982:30.

[58] *Marxism Today*, April 1983:14-17. The Kach Party was founded by Rabbi Meir Kahane in 1977. Kahane became a member of the Knesset in 1984 but the Israeli High Court stopped him from seeking a return to Israel's parliament in 1988 on the grounds that Kach was racist and

left-wing in Israel, the reformists sympathised with the Israeli *New Outlook*, edited by Simcha Flapan, which believed that zionism should return to its socialist roots,[59] and they supported members of the Israeli peace movement, such as Uri Avineri.[60] In the late 1980s, this, by now dominant, faction's new approach was sealed when it explicitly condemned left-wing anti-zionists like Lenni Brenner for being apologists for 'Marx's antisemitism' and rejected communism's 'simple binary theory' which posited that Jews were good but zionists were bad as 'sloganism which equates zionism with imperialism or Israel as a tool of the US'. It further objected to a fixation on zionist collusion with the Nazis and asked the left to take on board 'the experience of the Jew who has ingested the knowledge of the holocaust and now finds it uncomfortable to feel at home anywhere'.[61] What accounted for the CP's various positions?

6.2 Explaining the Evolution of the CPGB's Attitudes

The CP's early attitude towards Israel and the Israel/Arab conflict stemmed principally from its subordination to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Although the British party was one of the smallest in western Europe, it belonged to the Communist International from 1920 until the International's end in 1943. While it was not formally a member of the Cominform, established in 1947, it tended to adopt the Cominform line. The formation of the Cominform meant that the British party came under greater pressure for conformity by Moscow. In relation to colonial and imperial affairs, it accepted the Russian leader's, Andrei Zhdanov's, view that the world was split into 'the imperialist and anti-democratic camp' and the 'anti-imperialist and democratic camp' whereby the first camp sought to establish American imperialism across the world and the second aimed to undermine imperialism and install democracy.[62] The intensification of the cold war led the international communist movement

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undemocratic for advocating the expulsion of Palestinians from Israel and the occupied territories (Ovendale, 1992:285)
[59] *Marxism Today*, August 1982:11.
[60] *Marxism Today*, April 1983:14.
[61] *Marxism Today*, May 1987:47.
[62] Pelling, 1975:141.

increasingly to pressurise the party into rejecting any possibility of a third way between the USSR and America.[63]

It was primarily the CP's relationship to the Soviet party that led it to make various pro-zionist gestures in the 1940s. As part of its attempt to mobilise Jewish support after Germany's invasion of Russia, the CPSU set up the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAFC) and declared that the Jews had a 'right to political independence in Palestine'.[64] Moreover, Soviet officials made contacts with zionists and supported the Haganah's illegal efforts to bring Jewish survivors to Palestine.[65] As part of Russia's efforts to obtain Jewish support for its fight against Germany, the Soviet leadership sent the actor Shloime Mikhoels and the poet Itzik Feffer to Britain to advertise the USSR's pro-Jewish activities. The CPSU directed Jewish communists in Britain to raise specific issues in their electoral campaigns, such as Mikhoel's Moscow Yiddish State Theatre, the activities of the JAFC and Birobidzhan (an autonomous Jewish region established in 1934). Piratin and other candidates dutifully complied with the directive.[66] The British party's recognition of Israel directly mirrored Soviet positions. Stalin's immediate postwar policy was pro-Israel, symbolised by Golda Meir's visit to Moscow's Grand Synagogue soon after the Jewish state's establishment. At this time, the Soviet Union had no allies in the Middle East and the zionist movement in Palestine was anti-British. Russia supported Israel because it wanted to weaken the western alliance by exploiting Attlee's and Truman's disagreement over Jewish immigration and to obstruct western control over oil resources.[67]

The British party's position in 1956 also arose out of its identification with the Soviet Union, which had intensified in the early 1950s. During the Suez crisis, Nikita Khrushchev, Russia's leader between 1953 and 1964, denounced Britain, France and Israel for their war against Egypt, saying that Russia would help Egypt militarily if the three countries did not withdraw their forces.[68] In an effort to improve Russia's position in the Middle East, Khrushchev adopted a pro-Arab

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[63] Howe, 1993:160.
[64] Wistrich, in Wistrich ed., 1979:277-278.
[65] Brod in Wistrich, ed., 1979:53-55.
[66] Srebrnik, 1986:285;295-300.
[67] Wistrich in Wistrich ed., 1979:278-279;281.
[68] Campbell in Louis and Owen, eds., 1989:246-247.

stance, seeing the non-aligned states in the Third World as potential allies and portraying Arab nationalists like Nasser as progressive as well as providing Egypt with military aid.[69] As the Soviet Union's relations with Egypt improved, its relations with Israel deteriorated. Russia's identification with Third World neutralism and Egypt occurred when border clashes between Israel and Egypt had exacerbated relations between the two Middle Eastern countries. The Russian premier, Bulganin, declared that Israel's role in the war would alienate the Jewish state and even threaten its existence.[70] Under Khrushchev, Russia continued to repress Jewish nationalist expression and its media consistently linked zionism and Judaism with reaction.[71]

The CP's position in 1967 again reflected the Soviet Union's. The Soviet Union was neutral about the war at first,[72] but soon moved to an anti-Israel stance, breaking off diplomatic relations with the Jewish state and other east European countries quickly followed suit.[73] Russia protested against Israel's aggression and called on the country to give up the occupied territories. The Russian leader, Brezhnev, said that 'the Israeli aggressors [were] behaving like the worst of bandits. In their atrocities against the Arab population...they want to copy the crimes of the Hitler invaders.'[74] This position stemmed from the USSR's continuing pro-Arab strategy aimed at strengthening its position in the Middle East by establishing a military presence there.[75] In this context, Russia presented itself as the Arabs' natural ally by identifying with Third World liberation movements and the Soviet leadership described Nasser as 'Hero of the Soviet Union', portraying the Egyptian leader's movement as preparing the way for socialism.[76]

The CP's anti-zionist campaign in 1967 directly mirrored developments in Russia. The new international rivalries between the USSR and America over the Middle East expressed themselves in an extreme anti-zionist campaign.[77] The

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[69] Wistrich in Wistrich, ed., 1979:285-286.
[70] Brod in Wistrich, ed., 1979:64-66.
[71] Wistrich in Wistrich, ed., 1979:286.
[72] Golan, 1991:67.
[73] Laqueur, 1969:59.
[74] Wistrich in Wistrich, ed., 1979:287;302 39n.
[75] Golan, 1991:58.
[76] Wistrich in Wistrich, ed., 1979:286.
[77] Wistrich, ed., 1979:137-152.

postwar Soviet press constructed a conspiracy theory of zionism, claiming that zionism was a 'ramified system of agencies and political practice of the Jewish big bourgeoisie closely linked to the monopoly groups in the United States'.[78] In the late 1960s, the Polish Communist Party embarked on a campaign against zionism, accusing zionists of being imperialism's lackeys, warmongers and wanting to isolate Poland from the Soviet Union; a campaign launched in response to economic problems and internal unrest, despite the fact that Polish opinion was sympathetic to Israel.[79]

The British CP, like the CPSU, opposed Israel because it was a western ally. Almost from its inception, Israel adopted a pro-western orientation, identifying with the west over the Korean conflict and seeking to join the western alliance at the early stages of the cold war.[80] In the 1950s, the Israeli government became increasingly anti-communist. After the Slansky trials, Ben-Gurion began actively to oppose the Israeli Communist Party. The Histadrut banned communists from its trade unions, the government stopped the distribution of the communist daily newspaper and Ben-Gurion wanted to expel communists from the Knesset.[81] Later, Israel moved increasingly towards a pro-American stance, depending upon alliances with powerful countries like the America to fulfil its military, economic and political needs. This coincided with America's need to find suitable allies to protect its interests in regions like the Middle East. Israel's original pro-Europe orientation gave way to a pro-American alignment and the Jewish state simultaneously became more hostile towards the Soviet Union, condemning Russia for supporting the Arabs.[82] In contrast, Nasser began increasingly to stress socialist values,[83] and in international affairs, Egypt started increasingly to identify with the Soviet Union.[84]

The party's loyalty to the Soviet Union at the height of the cold war led it to have very little internal democracy. After 1947, the CP initiated procedural changes that undermined its earlier openness. In 1945 the executive committee

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[78] 'Soviet Opinion in the Middle East and the Adventures of International Zionism', 1970:48-50.
[79] For a full discussion of anti-zionism in Poland, see Ciolkosz in Wistrich, ed., 1979:137-152.
[80] Pappé, 1990:561;578.
[81] *Jewish Chronicle*, 23 January 1953.
[82] Shanin in Halliday and Alavi, eds., 1988:248.
[83] Ayubi in Foley, ed., 1994:168.
[84] Laqueur, 1969:67-68.

was chosen by open ballot, but by 1952 the Political Committee drew up a list from which an open ballot was then conducted. In the same year, the leadership decided that the rank and file could only discuss party policy and could not actively take part in its formulation.[85] The Khrushchev revelations did not unduly upset the leadership, with Palme Dutt describing them merely as 'spots on the sun'.[86] The lack of internal democracy and loyalty to the CPSU accounted for the way the party dealt with members who dissented from the anti-zionist line. The leadership's attack on Levy was part of its wider campaign against party intellectuals and marked the start of the party's attempts to establish a division between intellectuals and industrial workers.[87] Although under Gollan between 1956 and 1975 the CP was supposed to have become more democratic, its subordination to Russia remained entrenched.[88]

The party's relationship with the CPSU also influenced part of its reaction to Israel's invasion of Lebanon in the early 1980s. Although the traditionalists were not uncritical of the Soviet Union, having objected to its intervention in Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan,[89] they continued broadly to follow Moscow policy. From the mid-1970s, Russia consistently supported Palestinian nationalism, recognising the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinians and supporting the establishment of a Palestinian mini-state.[90] The invasion of Lebanon occurred when Russia's relations with America had deteriorated, partly as a result of the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan and the election of Reagan as president. Moscow provided the PLO with arms supplies, paralleling its previous policies towards Egypt. Russia's support for the PLO arose from its desire to undermine American influence in pro-American Arab countries.[91] The CP's traditionalists held America responsible for the events in Lebanon through the use of its veto in the UN and its economic and military aid to Israel.[92]

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[85] Pelling, 1975:160.
[86] Callaghan, 1990:186-187.
[87] Saville, 1976:16;20-22.
[88] Miliband, 1976:136.
[89] Pitcairn, 1985:110.
[90] Wistrich, in Wistrich ed., 1979:299.
[91] Golan, 1991:126-132.
[92] *Morning Star*, 11 June 1982:1; *Morning Star*, 13 June 1982:3.

However, the British party's policies did not always flow from Russian policy. When its relationship with the CPSU loosened, national factors played a part. Between 1943 and 1947, for example, there was a relatively high level of intra-party democracy and the party tried to integrate more directly into the British democratic system.[93] This situation played out in the party's attitude towards the Palestine conflict. While pro-zionist policies mirrored Soviet initiatives, they also stemmed from internal factors. For instance, the party had significant political ties with the Jews, especially in London's East End, to the extent that Poale Zion had been worried about Jewish support for communism. At the end of the war, the zionist movement had only managed to attract about seven per cent of Britain's Jewish population.[94] Jews accounted for 10 per cent of the CPGB's national membership,[95] and for an even greater proportion of membership of London branches, making up at least half of the Stepney party's membership in 1945.[96] Many of the party's Jewish members were actively involved in organisations such as the Bundist Workers' Circle Friendly Society (WCFS) and local trade unions.[97] The NJC contained a number of Jewish communists such as Chimen Abramsky, Hyam Levy, Mick Mindel, Alec Waterman, Lazar Zaidman and Issie Panner.[98]

The identification between Jews and the CP was rooted partly in the level of pro-Soviet feeling within the Jewish community. Those of East European origin, were committed to socialism, having been impressed by post-revolutionary Russia's attempts to deal with the Jewish question, including the establishment of Birobidzhan, a Jewish national region, and the Soviet Union's role in the war.[99] It also sprang from the party's history of actively seeking to combat antisemitism and fascist groups like British Union of Fascists (BUF), activities that contrasted favourably with the Board of Deputies of British Jews' (BOD) non-confrontational approach.[100] The Jewish left has traditionally been hostile towards the BOD's passivity.[101] Solly Kaye, for example, joined the party because of the communists'

[93] Pelling, 1975:129.
[94] Alderman, 1992:315.
[95] Ibid:317.
[96] Kushner, 1990:66.
[97] Ibid:66-67.
[98] Ibid:67-70.
[99] Srebrnik, 1986:285-288;298; Kushner, 1990:70.
[100] Alderman, 1992:316.
[101] Kushner, 1990:68.

participation in anti-fascist campaigns.[102] The communists believed that the Nazis' anti-Jewish activities justified limited immigration into Palestine.[103]

This link provided the basis for the party's attempts to exploit the Jewish vote during the 1945 general election campaign. Wanting to pre-empt the zionist movement's influence in the Jewish community,[104] communist candidates like Phil Piratin and William Rust, the candidate for South Hackney, tried to attract Jewish voters in their campaign by moderating the party's assimilationist principles. Piratin stood as a 'communist and a Jew' and both candidates called for anti-semitism to be outlawed and for measures to satisfy Jewish cultural needs.[105] Communist candidates did not do well in the general election, winning only two parliamentary seats when William Gallacher was re-elected for West Fife and Phil Piratin won the Mile End seat, taking it from the Labour incumbent.[106] Nevertheless, their limited success was largely due to Jewish electoral support, with about half of Piratin's vote probably coming from Jews.[107]

In the 1980s, when the party's reformists began to dominate, the CP's more moderate attitude towards zionism and Israel reflected its distancing from the Soviet Union. From the late 1970s, the British party came under the influence of Eurocommunism, a term that refers principally to the French, Italian and Spanish parties' attempts to create a more distinctive national identity by distancing themselves from the Soviet Union and emphasising integration into their own democratic systems. Eurocommunist strategies reflected the national parties' efforts to enhance their domestic image and increase their electoral strength after years of being marginalised because of their identification with Moscow.[108]

The British reformists' attitude sprang from their movement away from Soviet politics. Although they were not strongly anti-communist,[109] they refused blindly to follow the Soviet Union's line. This meant that they refrained from judging nationalist movements only in terms of their contribution to Soviet

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[102] Interview with Solly Kaye, 3 April 1990.
[103] Weekly letter of the CPGB Executive Committee, 5 October 1945; *Jewish Clarion*, December 1945:1;4.
[104] Kushner, 1990:69.
[105] Ibid:70.
[106] Pelling, 1975:131-132.
[107] Alderman, 1992:317.
[108] Webb, 1979:3-6.
[109] Miliband, 1985:24-25.

interests and started to support them for intrinsic reasons. The new times manifesto called for a greater sensitivity to ethnic and national identities for their own sake. Their sympathy for both Palestinian and Jewish nationalism came from a new emphasis on national identities:

> 'The character of the working class is changing...other sources of collective identity among women, black people, and other social groups will be central to progressive politics. Progressive politics has to realign itself to changes in its potential constituencies of support'.[110]

The revisionists' position stemmed from an attempt to create a new alliance with Labour. In their efforts to rejuvenate socialist politics, the new times people began to forge links with Labour's soft left, in particular with members of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC).[111] This Labour faction, like the revisionists, began to stress the importance of identities like gender and ethnicity as well as class. Although in the 1980s, hard left Labour activists like Ted Knight tried to get Labour to adopt an anti-zionist agenda, they failed when the Kinnock leadership embarked on a process of making the party more electable. After the divisions of the early 1980s, Labour eventually adopted the soft left's support for a two-state solution to the Palestinian/Israeli conflict as policy.[112] The CP's move towards a more moderate attitude towards Jewish nationalism represented an attempt to appeal once more to left-wing Jews. In the late 1980s, Jewish groups like the Jewish Socialists' Group (JSG) continued to draw on the Jewish communist tradition, being attracted to Bundist ideology and celebrating the Bund's 90th anniversary in 1989.[113]

So, although communist principles played a significant part in shaping the CP's policy positions on Israel, by the late 1980s other factors, including intra-party changes and political expediency, directed the party away from orthodox

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[110] Manifesto For New Times, CPGB, 1988:13.
[111] Heffernan and Marqusee, 1992:63-64.
[112] See chapter five.
[113] See Kushner, 1990:72 for details of this group.

communist policy. In the following section I shall consider the way the CP's attitudes towards Israel and the Arab/Israel conflict compared with Labour's.

6.3 Conclusion:Comparing the CPGB and Labour

There were significant differences between the Communist Party's and Labour's approach to Israel in the postwar period. Immediately after the war, the Labour leadership jettisoned the party's electoral commitment to the establishment of a Jewish state in favour of an anti-zionist policy. In contrast, the CP abandoned its traditional hostility towards zionism and support for Arab nationalism in favour of a pro-zionist policy, supporting the creation of Israel and opposing the government's approach to Palestine. During the Suez war, although both parties campaigned against the tripartite attack on Egypt, they differed considerably in their attitudes towards Israel and Nasser. Labour explicitly tried to separate its anti-war stance from an anti-Israel one and made clear tnat its opposition to the war did not entail support for Nasser's nationalist aims.[114] The CP, on the other hand, strongly identified with Arab nationalism and reverted to its previous anti-zionist ideology, condemning Israel for being an imperialist state.

The CP and Labour diverged even more sharply over the 1967 war. The majority of the Labour Party, including the leadership, the PLP and most of the extra-parliamentary party, rallied behind Israel, claiming that Arab aggression caused the war. The CP adopted a completely different policy, showing solidarity with the Arab states and arguing that Israeli aggression caused the war. It accused the Labour government of colluding with America and Israel in the war against the Arab countries, saying that Wilson and President Johnson favoured Israeli aggression. Ramelson wrote that both leaders had threatened Egypt with force; that they failed to act to help stop the aggression and that they prevented a cease-fire decision at the UN.[115] Moreover, the 1967 conflict led the CP to reassert its anti-zionist views, whereas anti-zionism barely existed in the Labour Party at this

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[114] Chapter three.
[115] Ramelson, 1967:19-25.

time, being confined to a tiny minority of people including Christopher Mayhew.[116]

The two parties also differed in the direction in which their respective dissenters from their traditional attitudes towards Israel tried to push them. In 1956, Labour's dissenters, including people like Michael Foot and David Ennals, began to move towards a more sympathetic approach to Arab nationalist claims. The CP's dissenters, including people like Levy and Abramsky, went the other way, urging the leadership to refrain from unquestioningly adopting a pro-Arab stance and to re-evaluate its attitude towards Jewish nationalism. In 1967, Labour's dissenters comprised a small group of right-wingers, most notably Christopher Mayhew, and some left-wingers like Michael Foot, who began to criticise Israel's postwar policy and tried to get the party to recognise Arab grievances. The former saw the conflict as a chance to air previously held views in the tradition of Bevin whereas left-wing critics began to support the Arabs as a result of their involvement in anti-colonialist politics.[117] The CP's dissenters again challenged the idea that the Arabs were victims of Israeli aggression and accused the leadership of pandering to anti-semitism in its anti-zionism.

What lay behind these differences? In the first place, the CP never constituted a serious rival to Labour, stemming partly from the nature of the political system.[118] At its high-point in the 1945 it only won two parliamentary seats. Thereafter, the party suffered a drop in its membership,[119] and both local and national decline. During the 1950 election, the CP put up a hundred candidates, with only three managing to keep their deposits.[120] Piratin and Gallacher both lost their parliamentary seats in 1950, with Piratin attracting the lowest number of votes in his constituency. Moreover, communist representation on the LCC collapsed.[121] By the 1980s, the party had irretrievably lost its industrial base, rendering it unable to influence the trade union movement, and was completely unable to attract the younger generation into its ranks.[122]

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[116] Chapter four.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Newton, 1969:1.
[119] Morgan, 1989:295.
[120] Pelling, 1975:163.
[121] Alderman, 1992:318.
[122] Callaghan in Seldon, ed., 1990:74.

Furthermore, the relationship between Jews and communism broke down in the aftermath of the 1956 events. Although by 1957 every communist candidate elected to Stepney Borough Council was Jewish, this situation was confined to Stepney.[123] Although Jewish support for communism still existed in 1967, with Jews making up around ten per cent of the party's membership, the new crisis further undermined the link between Jews and communism.[124] While the CP recognised the political advantages of adopting a pro-zionist platform in the immediate postwar period, it did not appeal to Jewish opinion again until the late 1980s. In contrast, the relationship between Labour and the Jews, despite a couple of hiccups, remained significant until the 1970s. Unlike the CP, Labour's integration into formal politics and its continuing links with Jews meant that it continued to appeal to Jewish opinion in the postwar period. In 1956, Gaitskell was worried that Labour's anti-war stance would jeopardise the party's ties with the Jews and he tried to reassure Jewish opinion about Labour's continuing identification with Israel.[125] In a period of some unpopularity, members of the Wilson government were aware of the weight of popular and Jewish sympathy behind Israel during the 1967 hostilities and realised that sympathy for Israel would do its image no harm.[126]

The parties' different approaches to the Israel/Arab conflict also reflected the rivalries between them in the postwar period. Relations between the CP and Labour deteriorated after the war as a result of the cold war, the communist leadership's pro-Stalinism and the Labour leadership's anti-communism.[127] The postwar Labour government was strongly anti-communist, believing that communist infiltration into the unions would damage government policy.[128] With the start of the cold war and communist opposition to the Marshall Plan,[129] the government began to clamp down on communists, with Attlee refusing to allow communist civil servants to handle sensitive documents. Attlee, Morrison,

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[123] Alderman, 1992:318.
[124] Litvinoff, 1969:158.
[125] Chapter three.
[126] Chapter four.
[127] Howe, 1993:263.
[128] Pelling, 1991:101.
[129] The American Secretary of State George Marshall's plan for Europe's economic reconstruction. The Soviet Union opposed the plan because it viewed it as the US's attempt to undermine its influence in Europe.

Dalton, Shinwell and Morgan Phillips saw people like Platts Mills and Konni Zilliacus as subversive elements[130] and initiated a policy to purge the party of such 'fellow-travellers', expelling Platts-Mills and his colleagues for their pro-Soviet sympathies.[131]

The rivalry between Labour and the CP in the 1940s expressed itself in the parties' respective attitudes towards the Palestine conflict. Believing that the Middle East was critical to Britain's economic and strategic needs, the Labour government began to regard communism as a threat to its interests in this region and Russia's support for the Jewish state reinforced Bevin's fears.[132] Thinking that Israel could 'turn red' as a result of an influx of Jews from eastern Europe,[133] Bevin became obsessed with preventing the Soviet Union from gaining strength in the Middle East.[134] In contrast, having decided to join the anti-imperialist side, the CP thought that a pro-Soviet Jewish state would undermine Britain's imperialist interests in the region. Many of Israel's founders were Russian Jews who sympathised with the Soviet Union. The Yishuv contained people like Moshe Sneh, who led the Haganah, between 1940 and 1946, and who believed that the Yishuv should support Russia's struggle against British imperialism. Left-wing zionists in the Palmach, the Haganah's elite force, and Mapam shared this view.[135] Moreover, the CP believed that in Palestine, as well as India, the eradication of colonialism would end local conflicts.[136]

Gaitskell was as opposed to communist links with Labour as his predecessors, denouncing communist activism in the constituency parties.[137] He belonged to the revisionist right, a faction that was notoriously suspicious of Soviet foreign policy.[138] Labour's opposition to the war arose from a number of factors, but anti-imperialist politics did not play a part in the leadership's stance. Gaitskell took an anti-war line because he feared that Britain's action would jeopardise the Anglo-American alliance. His faith in the UN's authority also led

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[130] Schneer, 1988:110-112.
[131] Howe, 1993:160-161; note 55.
[132] Callaghan in Fyrth, ed., 1993:128
[133] Pappé, 1990:563.
[134] Morgan, 1989:218.
[135] Wistrich in Wistrich, ed., 1979:283.
[136] Howe, 1993:157-158.
[137] Haseler, 1969:38.
[138] Ibid:120.

him to oppose the war on the grounds that it breached international law, because the UN had not sanctioned the tripartite attack on Egypt.[139] The motivation behind Gaitskell's opposition to the war contrasted sharply with the communists'. By now, having made the defeat of imperialism its overriding priority, the CP supported anti-imperialist nationalist movements irrespective of their character arguing that even bourgeois nationalist movements were progressive,[140] an outlook that informed the communists' attitude towards Nasser. The party had little in common with the Labour leadership, saying that:

> 'The battle for a socialist foreign policy has not yet been won in the Labour Party and the trade unions: and that showed itself in...November 1956, in spite of the wonderful and heartening protests against the attack on Egypt.'[141]

In 1967, the two parties' different allegiances in the cold war and the rivalries between them displayed themselves in their positions on the war. Wilson's pro-Israel orientation sprang from his commitment to the Atlantic alliance. The CP's pro-Arab position stemmed from its pro-Soviet orientation. In the 1960s, the communists' commitment to anti-imperialist nationalist movements had intensified,[142] justifying their support for non-communist movements such as Nasser's on the grounds that imperialism had prevented the growth of a working class in colonial regions by preventing industrial development.[143] The communists' opposition to Labour's attitude towards the hostilities was part of its wider disillusion with Wilson's foreign policies, especially the Labour leader's refusal explicitly to condemn America's involvement in Vietnam and his failure to prevent the unilateral declaration of independence from Britain in Southern Rhodesia. The CP supported a Labour back-bench rebellion over this issue.[144]

However, there were some similarities between the CP and Labour, especially between the communists and the Labour left. In the 1940s, both parties

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[139] Chapter three.
[140] Howe, 1993:290.
[141] *Labour Monthly*, December 1956:564.
[142] Howe, 1993:290-293.
[143] Ramelson, 1967:17.
[144] *Morning Star*, 16 June 1967:1.

adopted a pro-zionist platform in the campaign to the 1945 general election. The CP's attempts to forge links with Labour and integrate into the political system made it subject to some of the same constraints as Labour, including an appreciation of popular and Jewish opinion. Aware of the political advantages of adopting a pro-zionist stance, both parties did so for electoral gain. Once Labour won power, the CP allied with the Labour left in protesting against Bevin's Palestine policy, a unity that stemmed from a shared disappointment with the government's approach to foreign policy. Both the Labour left and the CP believed that the government had jeopardised its commitment to a socialist foreign policy. The communists' protests against Bevin's Palestine policy were part of a campaign against other aspects of the government's policies abroad, including, most notably, the government's response to the insurgency in Malaya.[145]

There were also some similarities between the two parties in 1956. The CP joined the anti-war demonstration in Trafalgar Square along with the Labour Party, the TUC and other Labour organisations such as Labour Women from Scotland.[146] It particularly sympathised with the Labour left, portraying this faction as responsible for Gaitskell's decision to oppose the British government's policy.[147] The party presented Bevan as the hero of the anti-war movement and described the demonstration as 'the most united', where 'Labour and Communist, trade unionist, Ministers of religion and students stood side by side'.[148] This unity reflected the CP's links with Labour left-wingers, especially with people like Maurice Orbach and William Warbey. Prominent communists like Idris Cox, Kay Beauchamp and Jack Woddis, worked with Labour anti-colonialists in the MCF.[149] Partly under the influence of the MCF, the Labour left began to support national liberation movements in the Third World, putting pressure on the leadership to pursue a more radical approach to foreign and colonial affairs.[150] It was Labour members of the MCF, including Orbach, who protested against the war for anti-colonialist reasons, like the CP.[151]

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[145] See Howe, 1993:159-160.
[146] *Daily Worker*, 17 September 1956:1.
[147] *World News*, 25 August 1956:534.
[148] *Daily Worker*, 5 November 1956:1.
[149] Howe, 1993:262-265.
[150] Kavanagh and Morris, 1989:98.
[151] Chapter three.

There were also parallels between the CP's position and the Labour left's in 1967. The CP's opposition to the government's pro-Israel orientation stemmed from its view that the war could not be understood outside America's neo-colonialist agenda in the Third World. It supported left-wing MPs like James Dickens, who opposed Israel's occupation of the territories.[152] Labour's left-wing dissenters from the party's pro-Israeli tradition similarly began to show some sympathy for the Arab countries because of their hostility towards American neo-colonialism. Having been influenced by the rise of Third World nationalism and new left politics, which centred on anti-colonialist politics, the Labour left started to see Israeli politics as helping to force through America's agenda in the Third World.[153]

There were even stronger parallels in the 1980s and these were twofold. First, in the early part of the decade Labour contained a small group of far left people, such as Ted Knight, which espoused anti-zionist ideas, condemning Israel for being a racist, imperialist state and calling for its dissolution. Some of this anti-zionism was anti-semitic.[154] The CP's traditionalist strand articulated identical themes, making links between zionism and racism, comparing zionism and Nazism and elaborating anti-Jewish themes. This faction differed from Labour's far left only in so far as it did not call for Israel's abolition, in line with communist orthodoxy. Both the Labour far left's anti-zionism and the CP's traditionalists' reflected their unwillingness to adapt their basic ideological assumptions to changing situations. The orthodox communists were reluctant to depart from classical class analysis.[155] Labour's far left was unwilling to abandon conventional Trotskyist formulas.

The second similarity turned on that between Labour's soft left and the CP's reformers. By the late 1980s, both of these factions in the respective parties adopted an even-handed approach to the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, recognising Palestinian and Israeli nationalism. Both parties ended up in this position for similar reasons, including intra-party changes and decisions to make the parties

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[152] *Morning Star*, 13 June 1967:1.
[153] Chapter four.
[154] Chapter five.
[155] Callaghan in Seldon, ed., 1990:74.

more accountable to popular opinion. The entry of a younger generation of activists, influenced by the new left movements of the 1960s and anti-racist and anti-colonialist politics, led Labour to take on board non-class issues such as national identity. This new current favoured recognition of Palestinian as well as Israeli national rights. Moreover, under Neil Kinnock, Labour embarked on a policy review process designed to make the party more attractive by eradicating what the leadership saw as unpopular policies like unilateralism. By the late 1980s, this aim underpinned Kinnock's attempts to remove some of the more extreme aspects of the pro-Palestinian campaign, especially the far left's demands for the dissolution of the Jewish state. The leadership wanted to rebuild the bridges that had been broken in the late 1970s and early 1980s between Labour and the Jews.[156]

Similarly, it was the rise of a younger generation of communists, people like Martin Jacques, which forced the CP to take on board non-class issues like gender, ethnic and national identities, and to depart from communism's emphasis on class. This co-incidence of ideas between the soft left and the, by now dominant, communist reformers, reflected the links between these two groups. In the aftermath of Labour's 1983 election defeat, Neil Kinnock's supporters and the Labour Co-Ordinating Committee (LCC) worked with *Marxism Today* to push for policy changes[157] in order to combat Thatcherism. Like the Labour Party under Kinnock, the CP embarked on a policy review process, re-evaluating its position on questions like public ownership and nuclear disarmament.[158] Also like the new Labour leadership, the CP's reformers began to purge their party of what they thought of as Stalinists,[159] in order to rid the party of unpopular ideas. The CP's efforts to make the party into a more effective political force and to re-connect with socialist members of the Jewish community triggered this shift towards a more moderate approach to the Israel/Palestinian conflict.

This review has shown that the CP's policies towards Israel and the Arab/Israel conflict were more ideologically driven than Labour's. Communism's

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[156] Chapter five.
[157] Callaghan in Seldon, ed., 1990:71.
[158] Ibid:75.
[159] Ibid:74.

principled hostility towards zionism frequently surfaced in the party's position on the various conflicts in the Middle East in the postwar period. This situation stemmed from the CP's subordination to the CPSU and its greater distance from the formal political system than Labour, leading it simply to repeat the Soviet line and to ignore popular or Jewish opinion. However, it is not the case that the party's stance was monolithic and unchanging. In this respect, it is important to distinguish between the leadership and the activists. Until the 1980s, there was far more stasis on the part of the leadership than the activists. While Palme Dutt and Harry Pollitt were happy to conform to the communist line, party intellectuals and activists were not. People who were disillusioned with the party's refusal to be flexible over policies and its lack of internal democracy, also challenged its automatic anti-zionist stand. However, the party's authoritarian structure made it very difficult for dissenters to affect its policy positions, especially at the height of the cold war. The leadership's rigidity forced those who questioned communist anti-zionism to take a highly oppositional position. This sometimes led opponents to go too far in the other direction and to ignore Arab nationalist feeling.

Nor is it the case that the CP's stance was unchanging and that it was entirely unresponsive to external and internal developments. The rise of Eurocommunism and the introduction of Gramscian ideas into the party dovetailed with Labour's electoral defeat in 1979 and the rise of Thatcherism to introduce a whole new set of values into the CP. The reformers, or the Eurocommunists, were particularly willing to embrace the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s and to take on board a range of issues including feminism, environmentalism and ethnicity. After a bitter struggle with the party's traditionalists in the mid-1980s, the reformers gained control of the party.[160] These developments produced significant changes in the revamped party's attitude towards the Israel/Palestinian conflict. With the new times faction in the ascendant, the CP dropped its traditional hostility to Jewish nationalism, but without losing its commitment to Palestinian national rights.

Having considered the similarities and differences between the British Labour Party and the British Communist Party's policy towards Israel, the next

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[160] Callaghan in Waller and Fennema, 1988:227-241.

thing is to see how these parties' positions compared with the French left. To what extent did the French left reproduce these patterns of policy change? Did factors peculiar to French history and its political system produce different policy outcomes? In the following chapter I shall provide an account of the way the social democratic and communist left in France conceptualised the Israel/Arab conflict in the postwar period.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FRENCH LEFT AND ISRAEL: FROM THE CREATION OF THE JEWISH STATE TO THE INVASION OF LEBANON

France's history of colonialism in the Middle East and North Africa combined with Germany's wartime occupation of France and its consequences for French Jews, made the rival Jewish and Arab nationalist movements a problem for French socialists. The Suez war highlighted the dilemmas raised by the Israel/Arab conflict because it occurred when Arab nationalism was high on the French political agenda.[1] The 1967 hostilities further tested the French left's commitment to anti-colonialist politics and finally, the 1982 war in Lebanon challenged the apparently pro-Israel government led by François Mitterrand. This chapter looks at the evolution of the French left's attitude towards Israel and how its approach compared with the British left's. In section one I consider changes in the Socialist Party's perceptions of Israel. In section two, I examine the PCF's attitude towards Israel and in the third section, I compare the French and British left.

7.1 The French Socialist Party

The French Socialist Party's attitude towards Israel and the Arab/Israel conflict evolved in much the same way as Labour's. In the 1940s, the SFIO was strongly committed to zionist goals, supporting the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Leon Blum, head of the 1936-38 Popular Front government and the party's leader until 1946, was generally on good terms with the British Labour leadership. However, Blum's sympathy for zionism put him at odds with Britain's postwar government.[2] He regarded Bevin's Palestine policy as one of appeasement to 'pan-Arab fanaticism' and compared Arab nationalism with Spanish fascism.[3] Drawing on customary anti-Arab stereotypes, the SFIO thought

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[1] Johnson, 1981:42.
[2] Birnbaum, 1992:55.
[3] *Le Populaire*, 6 July 1946.

that the Arabs should give up their 'feudalistic ways' in favour of solidarity with the Jews.[4] The SFIO leadership condemned Britain's restrictions on Jewish immigration as morally corrupt and explained the rise of Jewish terrorism in the activities of Irgun and the Stern Gang as a direct consequence of British policy.[5] In May 1948 Blum urged immediate recognition of the new state and opposed the UN's decision to put Jerusalem under international control.[6] Under the leadership of Guy Mollet, Blum's successor, the party welcomed the establishment of the Jewish state as an 'historic moment' and as a symbol of the world's recognition of the Jews' right to live as a nation and not a minority.[7]

The SFIO's pro-Israel and anti-Arab stance was maintained in 1956. Whereas the British Labour Party campaigned vigorously against the war, the socialist-led government in France allied with Israel against Egypt. The party drew on traditional stereotypes of Arab nationalism, comparing it with fascism and Nazism, and depicted Nasser as a reactionary dictator intent on expansion. Mollet compared the Egyptian president with Hitler,[8] participating in the 'Munich syndrome', whereby politicians and journalists competed in making comparisons between Hitler and Nasser and between the 1930s and 1940s.[9] The government's policy attracted little internal dissent. The National Assembly and the Senate overwhelmingly supported Mollet's action. Despite the fact that a number of socialist deputies were concerned about breaches of international law and the conflict with the British Labour Party, few were willing to criticise the government. Although, a group of Paris socialists including Robert Verdier, chair of the parliamentary party, showed some signs of dissent over the war.[10] The non-Communist trade union, the Force-Ouvrière, was also reluctant to condemn the war because of its links with the party.[11] Pierre Mendès France, leader of the centre-left Radical Party and former Prime Minister, stood virtually alone in his condemnation of the government's stand. Although Jewish, Mendès France's

[4] *Le Populaire*, 2 May 1947:4.
[5] *Le Populaire*, 6 July 1946; *Le Populaire*, 18 March 1947:4.
[6] Birnbaum, 1992:56.
[7] *Le Populaire*, 15 May 1948:1.
[8] See *Le Populaire*, 27 November 1956.
[9] Vaisse in Louis and Owen, eds., 1989:134.
[10] *Tribune*, 16 November 1956:3.
[11] *Tribune*, 9 November 1956:3.

attachment to Israel did not affect his policy positions.[12] Known for having firm beliefs, Mendès France displayed a consistently anti-colonialist stance, having campaigned in favour of Algerian independence in the pre-1956 election campaign.[13]

During the 1967 hostilities, the SFIO's pro-Israel tradition remained strong. Immediately before the outbreak of the war, Mollet sent a telegram to Golda Meir expressing the SFIO's solidarity with Mapai. The socialist leader said that he would do his utmost at the 'heart of the Socialist International' to rally international support for Israel.[14] In the parliamentary debate on the Middle East in mid-June, Mollet put forward the Israeli case and at the SFIO's National Congress at the end of June, all the key figures in the socialist party expressed their unswerving identification with Israel, including Mollet, Pineau and Gaston Deferre.[15] The Fédération de la Gauche Démocrate et Socialiste (FGDS) set up a 'Committee for Israel's right to exist', with the aim of mobilising support for Israel.[16] Formed in 1965, the FGDS included the SFIO, the Radicals and the CIR (Convention des Institutions Républicains), headed by Mitterrand, but not the PCF.[17]

However, the 1967 war did generate some dissent from the social democratic left's pro-Israel tradition. The PSU (Parti Socialiste Unifié) departed from the conventional approach to Israel, strongly criticising Israeli policy and adopting a pro-Arab stand.[18] Created in 1960, the party consisted of disillusioned members of the SFIO who felt that Mollet had become too right-wing, manifest in his Algerian policy, including sanctioning the torture of Algerian nationalists[19] and in his support for de Gaulle's new constitution in 1958.[20] The intellectual left also adopted a more pro-Arab position. *Le Nouvel Observateur* criticised Israel for engaging in expansionist policies and advocated a moderate postwar policy.[21]

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[12] Birnbaum, 1992:52-57.
[13] Williams, 1970:30;154.
[14] *Le Populaire*, 1-2 June 1967:1.
[15] Codding and Safran, 1979:194.
[16] *Le Populaire*, 3-4 June 1967.
[17] Safran, 1977:88.
[18] Codding and Safran, 1979:193.
[19] Hazareesingh, 1994:238.
[20] Johnson, 1981:53.
[21] *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 4 October 1967.

Whereas the SFIO paid little attention to the Palestinians, this journal carried articles on the Palestinian refugee crisis. Defending Israel's right to exist, it also argued in favour of Palestinian national rights.[22] In response to critical reactions to its coverage, the journal maintained that acknowledgement of Israel's right to exist implied recognition of the Palestinians' right to their country. It suggested that there was an urgent need to move beyond the racisms of extreme nationalist sentiment on both sides: anti-semitism on the one and anti-Arab racism on the other.[23]

The split in the social democratic left reflected the rise of the radical left. People like Frantz Fanon and Regis Debray, whom Johnson described as 'prophets of Third World revolution, had captured the younger generation of socialists' imagination,[24] generating a sensitivity to Third World nationalist movements. The PSU consisted of activists who were alienated from both the SFIO and the communist party. Its outlook included opposition to the Algerian war, Gaullism and to the ideological stasis of the two left parties, and it shared the ideals that informed the May 1968 events.[25] The PSU's position reflected the younger generation of socialists' greater sensitivity towards the Third World. Its values made it more aware of the Palestinian crisis than the wartime experiences of the Jews and Israel's increasing identification with America reinforced the PSU's support for the Palestinian cause.

However, it was not until the early 1980s that the socialists' pro-Israel tradition collapsed and gave way to a pro-Palestinian position. When the Parti Socialiste (PS) won its landslide victory in 1981, there were grounds for believing that the government would continue to adopt a pro-Israel stance. Mitterrand was sympathetic to Jewish concerns, encouraging Jewish ethnic and cultural projects and subsidising Jewish schools.[26] He condemned inadequate responses to anti-semitic attacks on the Jewish community such as the explosion on the rue de Copernic in Paris in October 1980. The new president was personally committed to Israel, having connections with the Israeli Labour Party through the Socialist

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[22] *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 28 June 1967.
[23] *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 1 June 1967
[24] Johnson, 1981:ix.
[25] Hazareesingh, 1994:238.
[26] Safran, 1985:52-53.

International and immediately after his election, being the first European head of state to visit the Jewish state. The Hebrew University congratulated Mitterrand for his work on behalf of Jewish issues, including his involvement in the resistance and his recognition of Soviet Jewry's right to emigrate to Israel.[27]

However, Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 stimulated a clear break from socialist tradition. Responding to a journalist's questions in Budapest, Mitterrand said that Israel's military intervention reminded him of the Nazi massacre of over six hundred people in June 1944 at Oradour-sur-Glâne. Mitterrand's comparison between Israel's action in Beirut and the Oradour massacre exacerbated relations between France and Israel,[28] his statement having provoked outrage in the Jewish state and the Israeli government's condemnation.[29] The Foreign Minister, Claude Cheysson, condemned Israel's entry into Beirut on 15 September as a violation of the 'Habib plan',[30] which referred to the evacuation of the PLO, saying that Israel acted against international norms. Cheysson demanded Israel's immediate withdrawal from Beirut.[31]

France stood alone in western Europe in the level of support it gave the PLO, providing the organisation with military protection for its departure from Beirut and constructing a peace plan with Egypt based on the need to recognise Palestinian national rights and to allow the PLO to participate directly in peace negotiations with Israel.[32] After the massacres at Sabra and Chatila, Yasser Arafat asked Mitterrand for help.[33] In the European community, Mitterrand mobilised opposition to the 'annihilation of the Palestinian people'. Other key left-wing figures, such as the former Prime Minister Mendès France, called for negotiations with the PLO.[34] France's identification with the Palestinians in 1982 led to a deterioration in its relations with Israel. Ariel Sharon, Israel's defence Minister, accused Mitterrand of having prolonged the war by protecting the PLO and asked 'why, given the president's sympathy for Israel and the Jewish people,

[27] Marrus in Malino and Wasserstein, eds., 1985:227.
[28] Moisi, 1981-82:76.
[29] *Le Monde*, 13 July 1982.
[30] Philip Charles Habib, Special US Presidential Envoy to the Middle East, 1981-83 (Ovendale, 1992:163).
[31] *Le Monde*, 21 September 1982.
[32] Moisi, 1981-82:76-77.
[33] *Le Matin*, 20 September 1982:14.
[34] Marrus in Malino and Wasserstein, eds., 1985:227-228.

has Mitterrand done his utmost to save the PLO, a terrorist and murderous organization?'.[35]

The PSU was even more forthright in its support for the Palestinians and its condemnation of Israel's involvement in Lebanon. Along with other left-wing organisations such as the PCF and the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), the PSU participated in mass demonstrations protesting against the massacres of the refugees and demanding Israel's immediate withdrawal from Beirut.[36] In common with the anti-zionist left, the PSU drew on historical examples of Israeli massacres of Palestinians. Huguette Bouchardeau, its national secretary, said that:

> 'words cannot describe the horror and barbarity of the Beirut massacres. After Deir Yassin, Black September, Tell-el-Zaatar and the bombardments of Beirut, the Palestinian people are once again the victims'.[37]

She suggested that the massacres were carried out with the 'complicity of the Begin government'.[38] Anti-racist groups like MRAP (Mouvement contre le Racisme et pour l'Amitié entre les Peuples) also condemned the invasion and called for a two-state solution to the conflict.[39] So, the 1980s saw the social democratic left break with its traditional pro-Israeli stance. What accounted for, first, the socialists' support for the Jewish state throughout the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s and then the break-down in this support?

Like the British left, French socialism was not completely free from the legacy of colonialism, despite its stated commitment to anti-colonialist politics. Traditionally, the SFIO adopted a paternalistic attitude towards the colonies and prioritised the maintenance of French interests abroad. Although the SFIO opposed colonialism, it believed that the colonies' freedom depended on France's lead.[40] Moreover, French colonial history in the Middle East and North Africa led

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[35] *Le Monde*, 1 October 1982.
[36] *Le Monde*, 21 September 1982.
[37] *Le Monde*, 23 September 1982.
[38] *Le Monde*, 23 September 1982.
[39] *Le Monde*, 11-12 July 1982.
[40] Shennan, 1989:159-164.

French politics as a whole to contain a strong fear of Arab nationalism on the grounds that Arab nationalism threatened national interests in Syria, Lebanon and North Africa. So, despite its anti-colonialist principles, the social democratic left had little time for Arab nationalist aspirations. Prior to the Second World War, the Blum government objected to British policy initiatives perceived as appeasement of the Arabs, including the Peel Commission's recommendation for partition.[41]

The SFIO's ambivalent attitude towards national independence movements informed the socialist government's attitude towards Nasser during the Suez conflict. The government's concern to protect French interests overrode its principled support for anti-colonialism. While the party defended movements for national self-determination that did not pose a great threat to France's economic and political interests, it refused to back movements considered dangerous. Mollet's aim to win the war against the Algerian Front de la Libération Nationale (FLN) and to punish Egypt for supporting the FLN was the principal motivation for his alliance with Israel and Britain.[42] Christian Pineau, the Foreign Minister, believed that if France did not defeat Nasser then Europe's influence and control across other parts of Africa would be jeopardised.[43] Mollet's decision to invade also arose out of his conviction that the canal's closure would badly affect France's supply of oil,[44] claiming that the economies of a number of countries in Europe and Asia depended upon free passage through the canal.[45]

During the 1967 hostilities, too, the perception of Arab nationalism as threatening remained entrenched. The socialists derided left-wing groups that equated the Arab cause with socialism,[46] making comparisons between Nasser and Hitler and saying that the only socialism in Egypt was 'national socialism'.[47] In his discussion of 'Israel and the French tradition' Pineau spoke of Nasser's 'hatred' and 'envy' of Israel's achievements and asserted that 'civilization, culture and democracy are on Israel's side...we want nothing more than for Arab leaders

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[41] Abitbol, 1989:173; 277 note 22.
[42] Codding and Safran, 1979:32;140; Vaisse in Louis and Owen eds., 1989:137.
[43] Vaisse in Louis and Owen, eds., 1989:137.
[44] Le Populaire, 6 November 1956.
[45] Le Populaire, 13 September 1956:1.
[46] Codding and Safran, 1979:194.
[47] Le Populaire, 13 June 1967.

to make an effort to achieve comparable results',[48] signalling his adherence to traditional stereotypes of Arabs as backward and reactionary.

In contrast, the SFIO had a deeply rooted tradition of support for zionism for ideological reasons, viewing it as a progressive and democratic nationalist movement. Leon Blum was actively pro-zionist, being as committed to zionism as he was to socialism.[49] He supported zionism because he thought it was a non-aggressive form of nationalism and that a Jewish Palestine would be a new democracy founded on the principle of social justice.[50] Like many social democratic socialists, Blum believed that zionism could be 'reconciled with international socialism' because it was 'popular, just and humane'.[51] The SFIO was particularly impressed by the socialist orientation of the Jewish community in Palestine and the Histadrut's role in developing the country.[52] The socialists thought that a Jewish state would facilitate co-operation between the Arabs and the Jewish workers and bring the Arabs out of 'feudalism' and into the modern world.[53]

The fact that Mapai, later the Israeli Labour Party, dominated Israel for decades after the state's formation further buoyed the left's perception of Israel as the only progressive democratic state in the Middle East. In 1956, government supporters of Israel viewed it as a major source of stability in an otherwise unstable region. They saw Egypt as a serious threat to the Jewish state and wanted to arm Israel in preparation for war.[54] During the 1967 war, the SFIO referred to the connections between Israel and social democracy, appealing to the common traditions between France and Israel based on a shared attachment to 'civilisation, culture and democracy'.[55] Even in 1982, the PS appealed to Israel's essentially democratic nature, with the Prime Minister, Pierre Mauroy, claiming that France had not lost faith in the democratic values of the state of Israel and that it identified closely with progressive elements in the Jewish state.[56]

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[48] *Le Populaire*, 1-2 June 1967:4.
[49] Birnbaum, 1992:52.
[50] Abitbol, 1989:94;107.
[51] Birnbaum, 1992:55.
[52] *Le Populaire*, 7 May 1947:4.
[53] *Le Populaire*, 2 May 1947:4.
[54] Vaisse in Louis and Owen, eds., 1989:133-135.
[55] Le Populaire, 1-2 June 1967:4.
[56] *Le Monde*, 23 September 1982.

This perception of zionism stemmed partly from linkages between the SFIO and the zionist movement. As a result of the high level of Jewish integration into French life, the Jewish community historically tended not to be attracted to zionism and identified strongly with the French nation.[57] Nevertheless, a number of zionist organisations of various political persuasions and with strong links with the Palestine Jewish community began to flourish after the First World War.[58] Blum had been a member of the Comité France-Palestine since the 1920s.[59] Poale Zion, formed by Marc Jarblum,[60] was also a major influence on the SFIO. Blum enjoyed a close friendship with Jarblum and it was through him that he met Chaim Weizmann. Like Laski in Britain, Blum mediated between Weizmann and the French government on particular issues, such as partition in 1947.[61] The SFIO's support for Israel in 1956 and 1967 reflected continuing links between the Socialist Party and the Israeli Labour Party. Both parties belonged to the Socialist International (SI) which was an important arena for creating alliances between democratic socialist parties. Mollet was closely involved in the SI[62] and he was close to David Ben Gurion in the 1950s, and later, Golda Meir.

A significant political link between Jews and the left was a further source of the SFIO's support for Israel. Although French Jews were politically heterogeneous, the popular conception of Jews as predominantly left-wing was not totally unfounded.[63] In the 1920s France had opened its doors to immigrants from Russia, Poland, Romania and Lithuania. Immigrants from these countries tended to have sympathy for socialist politics and became involved in left-wing organisations.[64] Germany's occupation of France and the deportation of French Jews meant that the Jewish community in France was relatively small during the war, standing at about three hundred thousand in 1940.[65] Nevertheless, as a member of the postwar government, the SFIO could not ignore the fact that

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[57] Birnbaum, 1992:52.
[58] Abitbol, 1989:147-148.
[59] Ibid:108.
[60] Ibid:105-106;23.
[61] Birnbaum, 1992:52-56.
[62] Codding and Safran, 1979:124.
[63] Cohen and Wall in Malino and Wasserstein, eds., 1985:84-85.
[64] Cohen, 1987:6.
[65] Rubinstein, 1982:35

popular sympathy, especially in liberal circles, was with Jewish national aspirations.

France's Jewish community grew considerably from the early 1950s as a result of immigration from North Africa, eventually turning into one of the largest in western Europe.[66] Studies of Jewish voting patterns in France have tended to conclude that there is no specifically Jewish vote because Jews vote according to their socio-economic status. However, French Jews have a specific interest in issues relating to their identity, including anti-semitism and Israel.[67] In the postwar period, they continued to show a preference for socialist politicians.[68] Mollet's pro-Israeli stance in 1956 and his decision to invade Egypt could only have gone down well with the Jewish population. Moreover, it did not risk alienating popular opinion generally because polls showed that 44 per cent of those questioned supported the invasion compared with 37 per cent who opposed it.[69]

Political considerations also played a part in the SFIO's pro-Israel stance in 1967. In the 1960s, the party had suffered from a sharp decline in its membership and electoral base.[70] The Gaullists had won overall parliamentary majorities in the 1962 and 1967 elections. So, out of government and powerless in the National Assembly, the SFIO decided to replace its 'constructive opposition' phase with outright opposition to de Gaulle's government.[71] In the post-Suez period de Gaulle initiated a policy of decolonisation as a way of strengthening France's influence in the Middle East.[72] This outlook informed his position on the Arab/Israeli hostilities, leading him explicitly to condemn Israel's postwar policies in the occupied territories and to sympathise with the Palestinians.[73] De Gaulle's contention that Jews were an 'elite and dominating people' created an uproar.[74] Although French Jews identified with France, they were interested in Israel and reacted negatively to the government's pro-Arab policy, especially

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[66] Ibid:36.
[67] Schnapper and Strudel, 1983:957.
[68] Safran, 1977:32.
[69] Codding and Safran, 1979:139-140.
[70] Hazareesingh, 1994:237.
[71] Johnson, 1981:54-56.
[72] Vaisse in Louis and Owen, eds., 1989:343.
[73] Rondot, 1987:88-89.
[74] Safran in Curtis, ed., 1986:279.

resulting anti-semitic incidents.[75] The SFIO knew that a pro-Israel position would go down well with French Jews.

National interest considerations also determined the SFIO's pro-Israel position. As a member of the tripartite government in the 1940s, the SFIO leadership had to assess the advantages to France of adopting a pro-zionist stance. Eager to forge an alliance with American in order to attract postwar aid, the party's pro-zionist position reflected this need. Under President Truman, America was one of the first countries to recognise the new state. Subsidised by the American Federation of Labour (AFL),[76] *Le Populaire* consistently mirrored America's pro-zionist stance. Blum's desire not to offend American public opinion was one reason why he recommended immediate recognition of the Jewish state.[77] In office again during the 1956 hostilities, the socialists adopted the cold war consensus to the extent that anti-communism almost became its 'raison d'être'.[78] Despite the party's pre-election commitment to decolonisation, Guy Mollet's government ended up opposing the Algerian nationalist movement,[79] displaying continuity with Antoine Pinay's former right-wing government whose Middle East policy aimed to undermine potential alliances between Egypt and the Soviet Union.[80] Despite the fact that Russian influence in Egypt was negligible and that Nasser adopted a neutralist position,[81] the socialist leadership thought that the Egyptian president was pro-communist and compared him with Stalin.[82] The government's alliance with Israel was rooted in the fact that by the time of the war, the Jewish state had revealed its pro-western orientation.

France's wartime experiences also significantly influenced the socialists' attitude towards Israel. The Nazis' anti-Jewish practices undermined anti-semitic tendencies in the left. In the period of appeasement just before the Second World War, the SFIO and the communists alone opposed the Daladier government's

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[75] Safran, 1977:32.
[76] Johnson, 1981:32-34.
[77] Birnbaum, 1992:56.
[78] Johnson, 1981:40.
[79] Ibid:42.
[80] Vaisse in Louis and Owen, eds., 1989:139.
[81] Hourani in Vaisse and Owen, eds., 1989:400-401.
[82] *Le Populaire*, 27 November 1956.

restrictive refugee policies.[83] The deportation of Jews from France under Vichy critically affected the left's thinking on zionism. Blum himself was incarcerated in the Buchenwald concentration camp,[84] and although the socialist leader had been sympathetic to zionist aims since the 1920s, the war sharpened his convictions. Blum was an assimilated Jew but he claimed that Hitler had made the Jews into a 'race' and believed that Israel should rescue Jews persecuted by Nazism.[85] It was the 'collective memory' of Munich and the resistance that contributed to the SFIO's pro-Israel policy in 1956.[86] Memories of the war and of France's withdrawal from Lebanon and Syria struck a chord with French politicians, motivating them to act against Egypt.[87] The period between the Second World War and Suez was not enough for socialists to forget the persecution of the Jews. Reflecting on the government's policy, Christian Pineau, the Foreign Minister, said that when confronted with the Israeli view that Egypt threatened the state's existence, the government remembered the horror of 'thousands of Jews who perished in the concentration camps' and wanted to avoid another Nazi 'pogrom'.[88]

French guilt about the past and ordinary citizens' complicity with Vichy policies did not start to diminish until the late 1970s.[89] In 1967 Sartre noted how the left experienced the Israel/Arab war as a 'personal tragedy' because people old enough to have experienced the German occupation knew that the systematic extermination of the Jews resulted from the French people's 'passive complicity' as much as Nazi policy.[90] The social democratic left's overwhelming support for Israel in 1967 sprang partly from this sense of guilt. The sight of hostile countries surrounding the Jewish state played on wartime memories. Pineau commented, in a way calculated to appeal to the older generation party members, that:

> 'when you have seen thousands of Jews die in
> concentration camps, victims of the most horrific

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[83] Caron, 1985:165-167.
[84] Marrus and Paxton, 1981:349.
[85] Colton, 1966:476-477.
[86] Vaisse in Louis and Owen, eds., 1989:134.
[87] Hourani in Louis and Owen, eds., 1989:393.
[88] *Le Monde*, 4 November 1966:4; *Quotidien de Paris*, 13 October 1976.
[89] Safran, 1977:11.
[90] *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 15 June 1967.

genocide that history has known, you do not...become an accomplice in a new form of Hitlerism'.[91]

The SFIO therefore remained committed to the Jewish state during the various crises in most of the postwar period. There were a number of reasons for this stasis, including: ideological ones such as the legacy of colonialism and a sense of shared purpose with the zionist enterprise; political ones, such as the linkages between the zionist movement and the SFIO and appeals to popular and Jewish opinion; economic ones, including the view that French interests were best maintained through opposing Arab nationalism and historical ones, mainly, the effect of France's wartime experience. What then accounted for the break-down in the socialists' pro-Israel consensus in the 1980s?

As with the British Labour Party, in the early 1980s the PS shifted to the left, taking on board issues such as feminism, environmentalism and anti-racism as a result of the entry into the party of people who had identified with the 1968 movement.[92] Under the PS's control from the mid-1970s, the PSU brought into the party a younger generation of socialists who had protested against the Algerian war, people like Michel Rocard who had a radical perspective on Third World questions. This new current informed the Mitterrand government's efforts to improve relations with the Third World.[93] Mitterrand's outlook on foreign policy differed considerably from previous presidents'. In particular, he was highly critical of a whole series of Reaganite policies, protesting against American support for El Salvador and the Contras in Nicaragua.[94] The Foreign Minister during the Lebanon war, Claude Cheysson[95] came from this background, being 'pro-Arab, pro-Third World, anti-American, pacifist' and he significantly affected Mitterrand's attitude towards the Middle East.[96]

These changes in the party's approach to international affairs dovetailed with converse developments in Israel. The PS's distaste for Reagan's policies in

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[91] *Le Populaire*, 1-2 June 1967:4.
[92] Hazareesingh, 1994:238-242.
[93] Safran, 1985:59.
[94] Bell and Criddle, 1988:166-167.
[95] Foreign Minister from 1981 to 1984.
[96] Howorth in Hayward, ed., 1993:169-170.

the Third World coincided with Israel's strong identification, under Likud, with America. During the 1980s, Israel helped to further the US's agenda in the Third World by supplying arms and counter-insurgency skills to countries like El Salvador and Guatemala and the state provided the South African apartheid regime with arms.[97] The party's response to the invasion reflected its growing disillusion with the policies of the right-wing government in Israel. The French socialists' past support for Israel was linked with the fact that the Israeli Labour Party had dominated the Jewish state for decades. The PS viewed the political changes in Israel and the country's links with America as a departure from its social democratic tradition.

The socialists' break from its pro-Israeli tradition also sprang from the government's need to take account of the rise of ethnic politics within the Maghrebi community. During the 1980s the socialists embarked on a series of policy initiatives designed to accommodate ethnic sentiment in the face of increased ethnic diversity resulting from the entry of Muslims and Jews from North Africa.[98] At the same time, the Maghrebi population began to organise itself into a significant pressure group. In particular, a 'shared Arab identity' arose as a result of demands for Mosques, the emergence of a 'Beur* vote' and collective action that centred on Islam. Organisations such as SOS Racisme took up the goals of this new force in French politics.[99] During the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, France's Muslims minorities were key protesters against Israeli policies in Lebanon. The 'Convention Nationale des Français Musulmans' called for a break in diplomatic relations between France and Israel and the 'Association France-Palestine' wanted France to recall its ambassador in Israel and for an international tribunal to 'judge those guilty of the horrific crime' committed against the Palestinian refugees.[100]

This new activism countered the history of Jewish political activism in the shape of organisations like CRIF (Conseil Représentatif des Institutions Juives de France), a key political representative of French Jewry centring principally on

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[97] Pieterse, 1985:10.
[98] Safran, 1985:41-64.
[99] Feldblum, 1993:58-60.
[100] Le Monde, 21 September 1982.
* Beur refers to the second generation of France's North African immigrant community (Feldblum, 1993:54).

questions relating to Israel.[101] In 1982 it condemned prominent left-wing Jews, like Mendes France, for calling for peace negotiations between Israel and the PLO, saying that the PLO was the enemy of peace. L'Alliance France-Israel also opposed Mitterrand's and Cheysson's calls for a Palestinian state.[102] Some Jewish groups accused the president of being an assassin when six people were killed on the rue de Rosiers in August 1982.[103] Moreover, some zionist groups tried to sabotage peaceful Jewish protests against the invasion.[104]

However, the war in Lebanon split French Jews in an unprecedented way. Whereas in the past, French Jewry believed that Israel was fighting for its survival, in 1982 significant elements believed that the war was not legitimate because Israel's survival was not at risk.[105] A number of left-wing and liberal Jewish organisations demonstrated against the massacre of the Palestinians. In September the 'Association des Juifs de Gauche', 'Hashomer Hatzir', 'Identité et Dialogue', and the 'Mouvement des Juifs Progressistes' demanded a commission of inquiry into the massacres and Begin's and Sharon's resignation. They chose a demonstration date to coincide with a 'Peace Now' protest in Israel to show that a number of Jewish groups rejected a military solution to a political problem which, they believed, jeopardised the original values of the Jewish state.[106] This made the government's decision to ally with the Palestinians much easier in terms of domestic political considerations, because it did not risk alienating Jewish opinion to the extent that de Gaulle had done in 1967.

Finally, the constraints of office influenced the government's policy, forcing Mitterrand to end his series of pro-Israel gestures. As president, Mitterrand had considerable control over foreign policy, but political and diplomatic factors or external contingencies, such as France's world interests, bound policy options.[107] France's membership of the European community influenced the PS's position on Israel. Mitterrand was fully committed to Europe, saying that 'France is my

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[101] Schnapper in Eisenstadt, ed., 1987:167.
[102] *Le Monde*, 7 July 1982.
[103] Marrus in Malino and Wasserstein, eds., 1985:228-229.
[104] *Le Monde*, 23 September 1982.
[105] *Le Monde*, 3 July 1982.
[106] *Le Monde*, 24 September 1982.
[107] Howorth in Hayward ed., 1993:150-151.

country, but Europe is my future'.[108]   In the 1980s the community tried to accommodate Palestinian national aspirations, putting the question of Palestinian self-determination at the centre of its Middle East policy as a result of a series of negotiations between Arab countries and the EC.   Various international organisations such as UNESCO, numerous NGOs and the Socialist International itself did similarly.[109]   These developments both affected and reflected the government's attitude, especially as Claude Cheysson himself had been EC Commissioner for external affairs.

Moreover, Mitterrand wanted to restore France's political, economic and strategic interests in the Arab countries by adopting a pro-Palestinian policy after a first year of presidency when the president pursued a pro-Israel line.[110]   France had previously been a major arms supplier to Israel.[111]   Mitterrand himself decided not to sell arms to Israel and contributed French troops to an international peacekeeping force in Lebanon.[112] The socialist government's policy towards the Israel/Palestinian conflict in the 1980s expressed part of a wider approach to foreign policy which, in a contradictory way, united a progressive attitude towards human rights issues and Third World nationalism with an instrumental attitude based on furthering French interests.[113]

The socialists' pro-Israeli tradition therefore collapsed in the early 1980s, giving way to a pro-Palestinian position. Again, a combination of ideological and non-ideological factors contributed to this situation, including: the rise of a younger generation of socialists with a radical, pro-Third World outlook; national interest considerations; and political considerations. How did the PCF's positions compare with the socialists'?

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[108] Howorth in Hall et al, eds., 1990:211.
[109] Said, 1992:xx.
[110] Moisi, 1981-82:75.
[111] Kyle in Louis and Owen, eds., 1989:105.
[112] Wright, 1992:56.
[113] Howorth in Hall et al, eds., 1990:212.

7.2 The French Communist Party

As a member of the international communist movement the PCF's (Parti Communiste Français) internationalism was more sharply defined than the socialists'. This ideological orientation shaped the party's stand on zionism. Like other members of the international communist movement, the PCF was ideologically opposed to Jewish nationalism, favouring assimilation and portraying zionism as a divisive and reactionary movement.[114] Nevertheless, in the immediate postwar period, the communists joined the socialists in supporting the new Jewish state and the party urged the Arabs to join the Jews in the struggle against imperialism.[115] In the National Assembly, communist deputies stated that the west's aim was to secure oil resources and military bases in the Middle East,[116] and that Bevin's Palestine policy was part of this goal.[117] Towards the end of the British mandate, French communists protested against British policy, opposing restrictions on Jewish immigration into Palestine. In July 1947 the PCF and the CGT (Confédération Générale du Travail) joined various Jewish organisations in Marseilles to protest against the British treatment of Jewish immigrants.[118] On Israel's establishment the party's central committee offered the new state its 'warmest greetings'.[119]

The agreement between the socialists and the communists over Palestine, when both parties favoured zionist aims, collapsed in 1956 when the PCF adopted an overtly pro-Arab position, supporting Nasser's nationalisation of the canal. At the start of the crisis, four hundred and twenty-two members of the National Assembly supported a vote that called for France to react firmly to Egypt and one hundred and fifty communist members opposed it.[120] The party argued that France and Britain were engaged in an imperialist struggle, designed to secure oil reserves for western capitalism. It described measures to protect the right of passage through the canal as a breach of Egyptian sovereignty. The communists

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[114] See chapter one.
[115] *L'Humanité*, 15 May 1948:3.
[116] *L'Humanité*, 28 April 1948:1.
[117] *L'Humanité*, 15 May 1948:3.
[118] *Daily Mail*, 1 August 1947.
[119] *L'Humanité*, 19 May 1948:1.
[120] *Paris-Presse*, 4 August 1956.

attacked the Mollet government for engaging in an anti-socialist position and for allying with 'international capitalism's exploitation of the Egyptian people'.[121] They condemned Mollet and Pineau for putting national interests before socialist principles, which demanded recognition of Egypt's rights over the canal.[122]

The SFIO retaliated by criticising Thorez for supporting a dictator and for acting as the Soviet Union's lackey.[123] The party accused Nasser and Khrushchev of confusing 'independence' with 'sovereignty', arguing that although it supported independence, defined as a nation's right to develop freely inside its borders, Egypt's nationalisation of the canal was not a quest for independence.[124] In response, the PCF restated the communist line on nationalism, with Thorez claiming that:

> 'Marxist-Leninists have been...well aware of the fact that the progressive nature of a national movement does not necessarily imply that this movement will have a progressive programme. When the Egyptian bourgeoisie were fighting for independence...it was a bourgeois nationalist movement, and yet it objectively favoured the overthrow of imperialist forces and the progress of socialism throughout the world.'[125]

With respect to Israel's part in the war, the communist party was relatively silent.[126] Whenever the communists did mention Israel, it was in a fairly uncritical way. They argued that although Israel was guilty of aggression, it was far less responsible for the war than France and Britain. Communist theorists contended that Israel could be criticised for providing Britain and France with a pretext for the war, but that both the Israeli government and people bitterly regretted the episode. The party stated that France and Britain had used the Jewish state for their purposes and that peace in the Middle East and Israel's

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[121] L'Humanité, 17 September 1956.
[122] L'Humanité, 10 September 1956; L'Humanite, 13 September 1956.
[123] Le Populaire, 27 November 1956.
[124] Le Populaire, 21 September 1956.
[125] L'Humanité, 10 September 1956.
[126] See, Horizons, July-August 1956:13-18; La Pensée, September- October 1956:3-9; La Pensée, November-December 1956:9-31.

survival depended upon negotiation between Israel and the Arab countries.[127] This moderate tone on Israel contrasted sharply with the anti-zionist campaign of the early 1950s.[128] Then, at the height of the cold war, the PCF joined the Soviet anti-zionist campaign, bringing out Jewish members like Annie Kriegel to defend its record on anti-semitism. During this period it was difficult for Jews to get promotion in the PCF and a number of Egyptian Jews were excluded.[129]

The divisions over Suez reflected the political gulf between the two parties. The relationship between the SFIO (and later the PS) and the PCF has been characterised by bitter rivalry and conflict, with each party struggling to maintain a distinctive identity, even when ostensibly forging political alliances.[130] However, in the 1950s, the socialists' hostility towards the communists was so great that they preferred political obscurity than to accept opportunities for unity. Between 1951 and 1956 the SFIO used its period of opposition to compete with the PCF which had won almost twice as many votes as the socialists at the 1951 election.[131] In the cold war period the two parties fought principally over foreign policy questions, with the communists supporting the Soviet Union's 'anti-imperialist camp' and the SFIO adopting an unyieldingly pro-American and anti-communist position.[132]

During the 1967 hostilities, the PCF's anti-Israel and pro-Arab policy remained in place. The communists maintained that Israel was a pawn for American imperialism and that America used Israel for strategic purposes. They claimed that the west viewed the rise of Arab nationalism as a threat to its oil supply.[133] At the start of the war, Waldeck Rochet, the party's general secretary, blamed Israel for initiating the hostilities, arguing that the country's attack on Syria violated the armistice agreements and proved that Israel's leaders were the instruments of American imperialism. He drew a parallel with Vietnam, maintaining that American imperialists were behind both wars, the only difference being that whereas the Americans intervened directly in Vietnam, they used

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[127] *Horizons*, December 1956:3-4.
[128] See, *La Nouvelle Critique*, No. 44 March 1953:3-31.
[129] Cohen and Wall in Malino and Wasserstein, eds., 1985:92-94.
[130] Wright, 1989:215.
[131] Johnson, 1981:41.
[132] Adereth, 1984:149.
[133] *L'Humanité*, 7 June 1967.

Israel's leaders to do the work for them in the Middle East.[134] The PCF also drew attention to the Palestinian refugee crisis, claiming that peace in the area depended upon finding a solution to the Palestinian question.[135]

The party's press returned to the extreme anti-zionism of the early cold war period, lapsing into anti-semitism with a conspiracy theory of zionism. It maintained that '"zionist agents" had orchestrated the anti-Arab campaign along with the most reactionary forces, including fanatical anti-semites and the most relentless supporters of American imperialism'.[136] In an article entitled 'An American Agent', the PCF contended that General Dayan acted as an American agent in the war against Vietnam.[137] *L'Humanité*'s depiction of the Rothschilds at the Wailing Wall after the war was highly insensitive. It said that:

> 'The presence of certain personalities of high finance conferred on the event another meaning than religious fervor...The spectacle made one think that, as in Faust, it was the Devil who was "leading the ball"',[138]

drawing on customary anti-Jewish themes including the association of Jews with finance and the anti-Christ.

The war again highlighted the differences between the socialists and communists and threatened the parties' attempts at unity. The former Minister, Pineau, derided the communists for assuming that any ally of the Soviet Union was left-wing and suggesting that far from being a socialist, Nasser was a reactionary racist.[139] Pineau further commented that 'we are back to the time when...one could correctly describe the PCF as a mere branch of the Soviet Communist party'. The anti-communist Deferre held the same view and Mollet began to doubt the potential for unity. Aware of the damage the different attitudes could do to the left-wing alliance, the PCF showed some restraint in the parliamentary debates on the Middle East and both parties refrained from

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[134] *L'Humanité*, 13 June 1967.

[135] *L'Humanité*, 5 June 1967; *L'Humanité*, 11 July 1967.

[136] *Cahiers du Communisme*, July-August 1967:6.

[137] *L'Humanité*, 6 June 1967.

[138] Quoted by Cohen and Wall in Malino and Wasserstein, eds, 1985:95.

[139] *Le Monde*, 13 June 1967.

discussing the issue for some time.[140] The Arab/Israel war revealed the fragility of the democratic-communist alliance, drawing attention to the parties' different allegiances and the PCF's loyalty to the Soviet Union.

During Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the PCF adopted an anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian stance, attacking the Begin government for using Lebanon to bolster the 'greater Israel' movement and stating that:

> 'too many Palestinians, Lebanese, Syrians and Israelis have been sacrificed in the name of an archaic colonialism supported militarily, economically and financially by the USA'.[141]

George Marchais, the party's leader, emphasised his 'complete agreement' with Mitterrand on the question of imposing an international UN force in Lebanon.[142] After the massacres, the PCF's political bureau criticised the Americans, the Italians and the French for leaving Beirut without having achieved the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Beirut and stated that Israel was 'fundamentally responsible' for the 'pogrom' committed against the refugees.[143] The party's press carried articles on Palestinians in the occupied territories and Israel's repressive policies, especially forms of collective punishment such as the demolition of houses.[144] René Andrieu, deputy editor of L'Humanité, and Pierre Juquin, member of the communist party's political bureau, refused to take part in a press conference given by Ariel Sharon, saying that to interview Sharon when the victims of the massacre had yet to be taken from Beirut was 'obscene and dangerous'.[145] Nevertheless, the PCF's past extreme anti-zionism was largely absent, with the party confining its hostility to the Begin government and distinguishing between the Israeli government's policies and the Jewish people's views.

For most of the postwar period, the PCF's position on Israel reflected its loyalty to the CPSU. After being forced out of Ramadier's (SFIO) Cabinet in 1947, this subordination increased. Repaying Stalin's patronage with undivided

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[140] Codding and Safran, 1979:193-194.
[141] L'Humanité, 7 June 1982.
[142] Le Monde, 22 September 1982.
[143] Le Monde, 21 September 1982.
[144] L'Humanité, 7 January 1982:1; La Pensée, July-August 1982:11-12.
[145] Le Monde, 24 September 1982.

loyalty, Thorez, the party's leader from 1930 to 1964, earned the reputation for being 'the best Stalinist in France'.[146] At the start of the cold war, the CPSU jettisoned its anti-zionist policy in favour of the creation of a Jewish state in its effort to undermine Britain's role in the Middle East. The French party, like the other national CPs, followed suit, arguing that western economic and strategic interests caused the first Israel/Arab war and attacking Bevin's Palestine policy as imperialistic. The PCF's shift to a pro-Arab policy in 1956 also reflected developments in the USSR's foreign policy. In the cold war period, the west and the Soviet Union competed for influence in the Middle East. Distracted by Hungary and lacking strong relations with countries like Egypt, Moscow did not play an active part in the crisis, [147] but it did express support for Nasser and the PCF did likewise.

By the time of the 1967 war the PCF had dropped its simple loyalty to the CPSU, with Waldeck Rochet, Thorez's successor, initiating liberalising initiatives.[148] Yet despite its greater independence from the Soviet Union, the party's language reflected its inability to break free from orthodox communist themes. The PCF's collapse into a conspiracy theory of zionism indicated an unwillingness to move away from a deeply held belief system. The 1967 hostilities set off an aggressive anti-zionist campaign in the Soviet Union,[149] and the PCF's extremist views reflected this development. Under Marchais the party dropped its Stalinist image. However, its short-lived Eurocommunist spell in the late 1970s gave way to a new alignment with Soviet policy, most obviously when it sanctioned Russia's invasion of Afghanistan in 1980.[150] This identity between the PCF and the Soviet Union was evident in its treatment of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict in 1982 when it repeated commonplace communist formulas and put forward a traditional class analysis of the hostilities. Moreover, the PCF identified with the Palestinian Communist Party, believing that its revival in the early 1980s expressed the Palestinian working class's increasing influence

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[146] Johnson, 1981:43-44.
[147] Hourani in Louis and Owen, eds., 1989:403.
[148] Wright, 1989:234.
[149] Wistrich in Wistrich ed., 1979:288.
[150] Hazareesingh, 1994:308.

on the nationalist movement. It called for an alliance between the Palestinian and Jewish working class.[151]

However, to understand the party's attitude towards Israel and the Arab/Israel conflict, it is not enough simply to trace it back to Soviet policy. While the party had to heed the CPSU's line, it also had to take account of the domestic situation because of its institutionalisation in the political system.[152] As a member of the tripartite government from 1944 to 1947, the PCF was subject to domestic circumstances and internal pressures such as public opinion. The PCF enjoyed a close tie with Jews of east European origin, presenting itself as the 'natural defender' of the Jewish workers, to the extent that Poale Zion and Marc Jarblum were worried about Jewish support for communism.[153] Although the Soviet Union's entry into the war precipitated the party's resistance activities,[154] ordinary activists were genuinely moved by the Jews' situation.[155] After the war, there was a good deal of popular support for zionist goals, and as a member of the government, the PCF was responsive to this.

In 1956 the PCF refrained from the anti-zionist sloganising of the early 1950s, and its uncritical attitude towards Israel reflected the contradictions facing the communists. The furore in France that resulted from the anti-zionist campaigns in 1953 had left its mark. Moreover, when Jewish communists returned from the Soviet Union with evidence of widespread anti-semitism under Stalin after the Khrushchev revelations, Jewish membership of the party dropped.[156] This happened when the other political parties had marginalised the PCF and when it was outside government.[157] Israel enjoyed considerable popular support and the PCF could not afford to alienate public opinion too greatly. These political factors forced the communists to adopt a more moderate stance on politically sensitive issues such as the Israel/Arab conflict.

The 1967 war occurred when the rival left-wing parties were trying to undermine de Gaulle's dominance through political alliance. De Gaulle's

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[151] *La Pensée*, July-August 1982:11.
[152] Tarrow in Blackmer and Tarrow, eds. 1975:579-595.
[153] Abitbol, 1989:206-208.
[154] Wingeate Pike, 1993:465-485.
[155] I got this impression from a conversation with a long-time member of the PCF.
[156] Caute, 1964:205.
[157] See Johnson, 1981:40-43.

overwhelming electoral victories in the 1960s forced the SFIO and the PCF towards a new phase of left-wing unity.[158] Starting in 1962, this unity was later expressed during the 1965 presidential elections when both the SFIO and the communists supported Mitterrand and again during the 1967 and 1968 legislative elections when the two parties entered a second ballot electoral agreement.[159] In this context, the PCF was forced to tone down its anti-Israel comments in the National Assembly debates and the two parties agreed not to debate the war openly, ending up with Mitterrand commenting that 'we have passed the Mideast crisis with the requisite serenity'.[160]

The PCF further moderated its anti-zionist stance during its brief Eurocommunist phase in 1976 to 1977, making a series of gestures towards specifically Jewish interests. These included an appeal to the Jewish vote in 1978 and a celebration of the 45th anniversary of the Paris Yiddish communist newspaper, Naie Presse, in 1979. The party also made joint declarations with the Israeli Communist Party, claiming that its position on Jewish nationalism had been misread and stating that the PCF accepted a Jewish community and culture based on shared history. It even sent a delegation to demonstrate against anti-semitism in response to the bombing of the synagogue in the rue Copernic in 1981. Kriegel believed that Jews played a greater part in the party during its Eurocommunist phase, which was initiated by the Jewish Jean Kanapa.[161]

The party's moderate position on the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, its lack of anti-zionist sloganising characteristic of earlier periods and its agreement with the Mitterrand policy also stemmed from internal political considerations. By the early 1980s, the communist party had suffered massive electoral decline, with Marchais winning about 15 per cent of the vote in the presidential election and the party obtaining around 16 per cent of the vote in the legislative election in 1981.[162] This meant that the party had lost two-thirds of its postwar electorate.[163] Even so, the new Mitterrand government contained four communist Ministers,

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[158] Johnson, 1981:54.
[159] Wright, 1989:215.
[160] Codding and Safran, 1977:194.
[161] Cohen and Wall in Malino and Wasserstein, eds., 1985:97-100.
[162] Wright, 1989:241.
[163] Bell and Criddle, 1989:516.

entering government for the first time since 1947. As an unpopular party, it could not use well-worn and outmoded communist formulas and as a minority member of government, it had to co-operate with the president's policy.

In 1982 then the two left-wing parties came together in their attitudes towards the Israel/Palestinian conflict, both protesting against Israel's invasion of Lebanon and both promoting recognition of Palestinian national rights. The PCF's position was continuous with its former pro-Arab stance but differed from past policy in the absence of extreme anti-zionism. The PS's policy represented a sharp break with the past. The left's pro-Palestinian stand in 1982 generated accusations of left-wing anti-semitism. Alain de Rothschild, president of CRIF, complained about the way political commentaries held Israel responsible for the massacres before the results of an inquiry and argued that statements about Israel's role in the massacres were dangerous and would produce a climate of anti-semitism and racism.[164] Was the French left's stand a new form of anti-Jewish hostility? Mitterrand's comments about Oradour were insensitive and offensive to Jews, but the remark was not necessarily anti-semitic. The PCF's characterisation of the massacre of the Palestinians as a pogrom could have upset Jews. However, as Marrus has commented, the 'misuse of Nazi references' reflects the way in which major historical reference points are used to encapsulate feeling about significant contemporary events and is not necessarily anti-Jewish.[165] The PCF defended itself rigorously against accusations of anti-semitism on the grounds that it had never faltered in its efforts to combat anti-semitism. This defence was spurious since historically the party has used anti-Jewish stereotypes in its treatment of the Arab/Israel conflict. For instance, in the early 1950s the PCF drew heavily on the dual loyalty theme, arguing that according to zionist ideology:

> 'A French Jew would not be French. He would be, by right, Israeli, that is a citizen of another state...the French Jew would be a stranger in his own country. Just like Marras, leading Zionists say

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[164] *Le Monde*, 23 September 1982.
[165] Marrus in Curtis, ed., 1986:174.

to the Jews "Go to Palestine! You are not welcome here.'[166]

Moreover, the party's treatment of the 1967 war overtly used anti-Jewish themes, including the association between Jews and usury and making connections between Jews and the devil. In the following section, I shall look at how the French left's views compared with the British left's.

7.3 Conclusion: Comparing the British and French Left

There were important similarities between British and French left-wing attitudes towards Israel in the postwar period. The social democratic parties in the two countries moved from a consensus of support for Israel in the 1940s to a consensus of support for the Palestinians in the 1980s, maintaining (with the exception of Bevin's Palestine policy) a more or less pro-Israel stance in the intervening period. In both cases, the history of colonialism led the parties to underestimate the strength of Arab nationalist sentiment, and to believe that the modernising potential of a Jewish state would eradicate nationalist tensions. Both parties had strong connections with the socialist zionist movement and later, with the Israeli Labour Party. The networking between zionist and Israeli political groups and the British Labour Party and the French Socialist Party, especially through the Socialist International, helped to create a strong sense of mutual identity. Moreover, both Britain and France contained politically articulate Jewish communities that identified closely with the social democratic left until the 1970s, and, in this context, the two parties believed that it was politically advantageous to identify with Israel. Finally, the Holocaust led Labour and the SFIO to exonerate Israel for policies which anti-colonialist parties would normally condemn, such as Israel's role in the 1956 war and its occupation of Arab territories in 1967.

The break-down in this consensus of support for Israel within Labour and the PS also stemmed from a similar set of dynamics. In the 1980s, both parties came under the influence of a younger generation of left-wing activists who

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[166] *La Nouvelle Critique*, March 1953:21.

introduced a radical perspective on international affairs. Israel's shift to the right and its close relationship with America alienated the social democratic left in Britain and France which, by the 1980s, opposed American neo-colonialism. Moreover, western Jewry's move to the political right and the left's new interest in other ethnic minorities, including Afro-Caribbeans and Asians in Britain and the Maghrebi community in France, also played a part in the parties' adoption of a pro-Palestinian policy. Finally, the rise of the PLO and its impact on international organisations like the UN and organisations closer to home such as the EC, affected Labour's and the PS's outlook.

Nevertheless, there were differences between the British and French democratic left. The SFIO and the Labour government came into conflict over Palestine in the 1940s. Whereas Labour could not maintain its pro-zionist policy once in government because it believed that to do so would threaten British interests, the SFIO was free to continue with tradition because first, it did not have direct links with Palestine and second, by the time of Israel's creation, France had withdrawn from Syria and Lebanon. There were differences in 1956 too. Mollet's policy isolated the SFIO from democratic socialist parties in the rest of Europe.[167] The French socialists took a more anti-Arab line than Labour, despite Gaitskell's hostility towards Nasser. The Labour left in Britain condemned Mollet for engaging in war against Egypt in order to create a 'second front in the war against Algerian freedom'.[168] The SFIO's more explicit pro-Israel and anti-Arab line was linked to the fact that France's continuing role in Algeria served to maintain a deeply rooted fear of Arab nationalism even in the left. Moreover, the socialist government had directly to deal with the Algerian crisis and to balance French people's views against the national liberation movement. Whereas in Britain, Labour was in opposition and its priority had been to oppose the government's policy. Furthermore, its leadership was subject to pressure from the Labour left whereas in France the major left-wing force, the PCF, was discredited at the time of the crisis.

Although the SFIO and Labour both adopted a pro-Israel stand in 1967, there were differences between them. The French party was again more overtly

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[167] *Le Monde*, 21 September 1956.
[168] *Tribune*, 7 September 1956:1.

pro-Israel and anti-Arab than the Labour government. Whereas the Labour leadership tried to appear neutral in order to sustain Britain's status in the Arab countries and to avoid negative economic repercussions, the SFIO was out of office and trying to win public favour by distinguishing its Middle East policy from de Gaulle's. The apparent similarities in the 1980s also obscured significant differences. The principal factor behind Labour's pro-Palestinian stand was the rise of the Labour left. While such intra-party dynamics also played a part in Mitterrand's pro-Palestinian policy, the leadership's interest in enhancing France's image in the Middle East was more important. Moreover, unlike Labour, Mitterrand had to appease internal Muslim opinion, which in the 1980s became politicised, centring on the idea of an Arab identity.

The British and French communist parties' attitudes to Israel also evolved in a similar way. Both parties jettisoned their anti-zionist ideology in the 1940s in order to oppose Bevin's Palestine policy and to support the formation of a Jewish state. Both parties reverted to a pro-Arab stance in the 1950s and maintained this during the 1967 hostilities. While recognising Palestinian national rights in the 1980s, both parties moderated their criticism of Israel and refrained from using anti-zionist slogans. This similarity between the British and French communists' position reflected their subordination to Soviet policy, which for most of the period in question, was considerable. However, there were differences. The PCF's attitude towards Israel in 1956 was more exonerating than the CPGB's. Furthermore, the PCF attempted to moderate its criticism of Israel in 1967 whereas the CPGB did not. These differences stemmed from the fact that the PCF was a more significant political force in France than the CPGB was in Britain, attracting a substantial part of the electorate until its decline in the 1980s and periodically engaging in political alliances with the Socialist Party. Whereas these political factors sometimes forced the French communists to moderate its views on Israel, the British communists' marginal role in mainstream politics allowed them freely to articulate unpopular themes. Moreover, it was the rise of Eurocommunist politics, translated into the new times current, which led the CPGB to drop its anti-zionist orthodoxy in the 1980s. In contrast, the French communists' moderation during the Lebanon war reflected the fact that it was

eager to enhance its public image in a period of unprecedented unpopularity. Furthermore, the party's participation in the Mitterrand government imposed some constraint on its views and co-operation with the president's policy.

There was then a clear pattern of policy change associated with the social democratic and communist left in Britain and France, with the former moving from a general consensus of support for zionism to a pro-Palestinian position in the 1980s and with the latter jettisoning its orthodox anti-zionism in favour of a more accommodating approach to Jewish nationalism. These similarities do not mean that the dynamics underpinning the parties' shifting policies were the same in the two countries. Historical and political factors unique to France, including its continuing links with North Africa, the presence of a significant Maghrebi population and the nature of its political system which allowed the PCF to have a mainstream role, did not operate in the British case. Nevertheless, there are sufficient continuities to make qualified generalisations about the policy changes. In the following chapter I shall look consider some possibilities for theorising these changes.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

Israel's formation forced the left to choose between Jewish and Arab nationalism. Since the state's establishment, the disputes between it, the Arab countries, and later, Palestinian nationalism, tested the left's loyalties. In 1956, Israel allied with the west in a war against Egypt aimed at undermining Nasser's anti-colonialist movement. In 1967, Israel's victory over the Arab states ended with an occupation of Arab land and the annexation of Arab East Jerusalem. In the 1980s, Israel's incursions into Lebanon, especially in 1982, pitted Israeli nationalism against Palestinian nationalism in a particularly stark way. For socialists, few other international issues have been as taxing and divisive as the Israel/Arab conflict.[1] In this chapter I shall briefly describe the way the left's attitude towards Israel has evolved and then go on to consider the theoretical implications of this study for policy change and political parties.

8.1 Shifting Perceptions of Israel

Generally speaking, the social democratic left moved from a consensus of support for zionism and Israel in the 1940s to a consensus of support for Palestinian national rights in the 1980s, although without dropping its commitment to Israel's right to exist. Both Labour and the SFIO unanimously favoured zionist aims over Arab ones in the 1940s.[2] Both parties maintained a pro-Israeli stance during the 1956 hostilities, with Gaitskell exonerating Israel and condemning Arab nationalism[3] and with Mollet's socialist government allying with Israel in a war against Egypt.[4] In 1967, Wilson and the rest of the Labour Cabinet, the PLP and most of the extra-parliamentary party, overwhelmingly supported Israel over the Arab states.[5] Similarly, the French socialists consistently expressed their

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[1] Howe, 1993:148.
[2] Chapter two; Chapter seven.
[3] Chapter three.
[4] Chapter seven.
[5] Chapter four.

solidarity with the Jewish state, with the party's leadership, including Guy Mollet, Christian Pineau and Gaston Deferre, taking up a pro-Israel position in the National Assembly and with the FGDS organising a campaign in favour of the Jewish state.[6]

There were signs of dissent in both parties as early as 1956 with some of Labour's left-wingers, such as Barbara Castle and Tony Benn, explicitly sympathising with Nasser and others, such as David Ennals, challenging the party's unquestioning support for the Jewish state.[7] In the French case, a small minority began to challenge the leadership's position, including the chair of the parliamentary party, Robert Verdier, and Pierre Mendès France, the former Radical Prime Minister.[8] In 1967, there was a more significant level of dissent from the parties' previous consensus, with a small group in the PLP and some members of the Labour left refusing to exonerate Israel for its actions after the war.[9] In the French case too, some elements of the social democratic left, especially the PSU, departed significantly from the SFIO's position, siding with the Arab countries and condemning Israel's postwar policies.[10]

It was not until the early 1980s that Labour's pro-Israeli feeling broke down, giving way to a movement in favour of Palestinian national rights. Led by the constituency parties and the local councils, especially in London and Scotland, this movement affected all the party's sections, including the NEC, the trade unions, Labour Women and the PLP. However, by the late 1980s, some of the extreme aspects of the pro-Palestinian campaign gave way to a more moderate approach, accommodating both Israeli and Palestinian nationalism. The end result for Labour was the creation of a new consensus based on a compromise between the competing strands and recognition of both Jewish and Palestinian national rights. This compromise included three explicit principles. First, there was agreement over the need to have a policy that formally recognised Israel's right to exist. Second, there was consensus over the need for a UN-sponsored peace conference and third, there was agreement over the need for a policy that formally supported

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[6] Chapter seven.
[7] Chapter three.
[8] Chapter seven.
[9] Chapter four.
[10] Chapter seven.

the principle of Palestinian self-determination. An informal consensus also emerged over recognition of the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, with key spokespeople like Gerald Kaufman, claiming that it was the Palestinians' right to choose their own representatives.[11]

Like Labour, the French socialists' pro-Israel tradition collapsed in the 1980s. The newly elected socialist president in 1981 showed definite signs of continuing with the party's past support for Israel by visiting the Knesset and by implementing domestic policies favourable to Jewish cultural activities. However, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon put an end to this period of rapprochement. Under the Mitterrand government, France gave the PLO moral and practical help. Mitterrand's comments about the massacre of the Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila antagonised the Israeli leadership. The PSU, by now incorporated into the PS, demonstrated against the Israeli invasion, calling for the country's immediate withdrawal and drawing parallels between the Palestinians' position with the Jews' position under Nazism.[12]

The evolution of the communist parties' attitudes differed from the social democratic left's and internal forces for change pushed in an opposite direction. Despite the two parties' support for the formation of Israel, they basically adopted a pro-Arab and anti-Israel position throughout most of the postwar period, condemning zionism as a reactionary movement that divided the working class and supporting Arab nationalism on anti-imperialist grounds. In 1956 the CPGB supported Nasser's anti-imperialism.[13] Although the PCF's criticism of Israel's part in the Suez war was more muted than the CPGB's, it too reverted to pro-Arab position, standing almost alone in the National Assembly in its condemnation of the socialist government's involvement in the war against Egypt.[14] In 1967 the CPGB rallied to the Arab states' side, arguing that the Arabs' role in the war represented a struggle against western imperialism and condemning the Jewish state for siding with imperialism against the movement for Arab liberation and unleashing a new wave of anti-zionist propaganda, with members of the National

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[11] Chapter five.
[12] Chapter seven.
[13] Chapter six.
[14] Chapter seven.

Jewish Committee, such as Bert Ramelson and Solly Kaye, restating anti-zionist slogans.[15] The PCF similarly supported the Arab states blaming Israel for initiating the hostilities and portraying the Jewish state as a pawn for American imperialism. The war precipitated a new and extreme attack on zionism, with the party's press depicting the nationalist movement in conspiratorial terms and exploiting anti-Jewish themes by making links between Jews with high finance.[16]

Dissent from the communists' anti-zionist consensus also started as early as 1956. In the CPGB there was an unprecedented challenge to the party's anti-zionist orthodoxy. In response to revelations about Soviet anti-semitism, leading Jewish members of the pro-democracy movement, such as Chimen Abramsky and Hyman Levy, began to challenge anti-zionism, arguing for a re-evaluation of communism's approach to Jewish nationalism. The 1967 hostilities provoked a second wave of dissent, with some Jewish members questioning the communists' automatic anti-Israel and pro-Arab line.[17] In the French case too, prominent former communists such as Annie Kriegel challenged the party's orthodoxy, accusing it of being anti-semitic[18] and even people like Maxime Rodinson began to reevaluate the party's traditional policy towards zionism.

However, significant changes took place in communist policy in the 1980s. During this decade, the CPGB split between the traditional strand and the reformist, new times strand, with the latter coming eventually to dominate. This division played itself out over the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. While both strands supported Palestinian national rights, the traditionalists maintained an orthodox anti-zionist position, describing Israel as a racist state and drawing analogies between zionists and Nazis. In contrast, while objecting to Israeli human rights abuses in the occupied territories, the reformists rejected anti-zionist slogans, maintaining that the party needed to recognise Jewish nationalism and the Jews' historical identity. In this respect, there was a significant convergence between communist reformists and Labour's soft left, with both recognising Jewish and Palestinian national rights and calling for a two-state solution to the conflict.[19]

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[15] Chapter six.
[16] Chapter seven.
[17] Chapter six.
[18] Chapter seven.
[19] Chapter six.

Maintaining its basic pro-Arab position in the early 1980s, the PCF condemned Israel's invasion of Lebanon as an expansionist policy and supported the PLO. Marchais, the party's leader, generally supported Mitterrand's policy, disagreeing only over the way France, amongst other western countries, had not managed to secure Israel's withdrawal. However, as in the British case, the party's past anti-zionism was largely absent, with the communist leadership seeking to distinguish Begin's policy from Israeli and Jewish opinion.[20]

So, by the late 1980s, the social democratic left's pro-Israel consensus broke down and the communist left's anti-zionist consensus broke down. Both elements contained some anti-zionist and anti-semitic strands, with the Labour far left calling for the dissolution of the Jewish state and with the communist traditionalists maintaining an orthodox anti-zionist stand. However, for the most part, Labour's and the French Socialist Party's departure from an uncritical attitude towards Israel was confined to a critique of Israeli policy and was not anti-zionist. Moreover, in an unprecedented way, the communist left began to accept the legitimacy of Jewish nationalism. Nevertheless, a new consensus of support for Palestinian nationalism was established.

8.2 Theorising Policy Change

This study begs a particular theoretical question: how does policy change occur in political parties? What forces underpinned the parties' general consensus of support for Palestinian national rights in the 1980s? The answer to this question is necessarily tentative. However illuminating it is to look at party attitudes towards a single issue for intrinsic reasons, it is not possible to make general claims about party formulation from one case alone. Furthermore, the particular case, Israel and the Arab/Israel conflict is an especially idiosyncratic one, cutting across party factions and dividing loyalties in a way other issues have not done. Second, there are clear methodological difficulties associated with seeking to make theoretical generalisations from historical reconstruction because sources are ambiguous and memories are partial.[21] As I mentioned in the introduction, the sensitivity of the

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[20] Chapter seven.
[21] Cornford, 1971:235.

topic gave rise to particular problems relating to the collection of evidence, with the researcher coming up against suspicion and blank walls on a number of occasions.[22] Confronted with inadequate documentary sources, researchers tend to go for interviews with key political actors, but this step is itself problematic precisely because members of the political elite cannot be relied upon to present an unbiased account,[23] raising the question of representativeness. Nevertheless, it is worth making qualified conclusions about how policy change comes about, if only to provide a sense of what could be done in future research.

Some of the most interesting material on policy change focuses on government rather than party policy. Polsby's study of policy innovation, for example, centres on American national politics, and policy change in three areas: scientific policy, foreign policy and domestic policy.[24] Allison's study of policy change deals with the American government's reaction to the Cuban missile crisis.[25] Dunleavy has taken up some of Allison's insights and applied them to the British government's handling of the Westland affair.[26] However, there is no reason why their theoretical insights cannot be applied to parties. Political parties aim to take control over government and fulfil a number of functions, including the construction of a distinctive set of ideas and policies out of which the electorate makes choices.[27] Moreover, parties can be understood in terms of their internal structure because they are based on an organisation of groups of people who aim to govern the nation either alone or in alliance with other parties and who are in a sense training for government.[28]

In his discussion of how policy innovation occurs in American national politics, Polsby introduced a distinction between acute innovation and incubated innovation. Acute innovation refers to the situation where a policy decision is taken in a relatively short space of time and the period between the raising of an idea and decision makers taking it up and implementing it is brief and based on

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[22] Chapter one.

[23] Lawson, 1990:107.

[24] Polsby, 1984.

[25] Allison, 1971.

[26] Dunleavy, 1990:29-60.

[27] See Schonfeld, 1983:477-478;489.

[28] Schonfeld, 1983:489-490. These comments do not apply to all the parties in this study. The CPGB has never taken a part in government and, presumably, its leadership and members were aware that it had little chance of doing so.

little research.[29] In this situation, the policy outcome does not reflect so much the range of alternatives facing the government as the first solution that appears to solve the immediate problem. Hence, Polsby has characterised this form of policy making process as 'organized anarchy', so that a particular policy outcome may depend on purely arbitrary factors such as whoever came to the right meeting at the right time with the right amount of work done. Furthermore, the speed at which decisions are reached means that a low level of partisan conflict is typically associated with acute change.[30]

Incubated change, on the other hand, refers to the situation where innovation takes place slowly, often over a number of years. Unlike the acute type of change, it is frequently based on considerable research and pressure for innovation comes not so much from the actual decision makers as the work of people relatively distant from the central decision making authority, both physically and socially, including academics, interest groups or researchers. During the period of incubation, political actors take up ideas, moderate them and publicise them, putting them on to the mainstream political agenda. This type of change is often the focus of partisan conflict and taken up on party platforms. As the movement for change builds up, controversy grows and attracts rivalry and counter claims. In contrast to the first type of innovation, there is a lag between the proposal of alternatives and the search for solutions, with policy proposals being 'aired' long before being implemented.[31]

What about the actual mechanisms of change? In his study of how national governments construct policies, Allison adopted a threefold approach to policy formulation. His starting point was that in order to understand why governments take up particular positions, it is necessary 'to identify the games and players, to display the coalitions, bargains and compromises...',[32] on the premise that policy decisions result from an 'elaborate game between a number of political actors pursuing their own institutional or personal interests'.[33]   Conceptualising governments as unitary, purposive actors, Allison outlined three models aimed at

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[29] Polsby, 1984:150.
[30] Ibid:151.
[31] Ibid:153-154.
[32] Allison, 1971:146.
[33] Dunleavy, 1990:35.

understanding policy change, applying them to the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. In the first model, the rational policy model, he compared government with a rational person, suggesting that the analyst needs to think in terms of how a rational person would act in order to achieve her/his goals in order to understand why a government adopts a particular policy, a model which is based on the idea of governments acting in the national interest.[34] According to Allison, both specialist and lay analyses of international events such as the Cuban missile confrontation typically depend upon a common sense understanding of decisions in terms of governments' aims and calculations.[35] From this perspective, governmental behaviour is 'action chosen by unitary, rational decision makers: centrally controlled, completely informed and value maximizing'.[36]

However, in the belief that the rational policy model neglects the more humdrum aspects of policy construction, Allison proposed a second model, the organisational process model. This model is based on the way governments are made up of a number of linked organisations, each having 'a substantial life of its own'.[37] According to this framework, governmental behaviour stems from the 'outputs of large organizations functioning according to standard patterns of behaviour'.[38] The idea here is to examine decision making in terms of the procedures of governmental organisations on the grounds that organisations tend to come up with policies that reflect ways of thinking characteristic of the organisation itself.[39]

Allison's third model, the governmental politics model, contrasts sharply with the first. Instead of stressing the idea of government as unitary actor, it takes individual political actors as central. According to this view, policy positions emerge out of a game between various players who make bargains with each other. Decisions reflect not so much rational choices as the nature of the political game itself.[40] This model examines policy outcomes in terms of the personalities and political interests of the individual participants, maintaining that people will

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[34] Cornford, 1974:233;236.
[35] Allison, 1971:10.
[36] Ibid:67.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Cornford, 1974:233.
[40] Allison, 1971:144.

act to further their own career, their party's or bureaucracy's interests, and that any given policy will emerge from a conflict between rival views and aims, reflecting such arbitrary factors as the relative strength of individual politicians.[41] Although personal career ambitions may be a key source of motivation, the way people behave also reflects sources of socialisation, including organisational ones and peer group influences.[42]

In the following sections I shall consider the relevance of these analyses to understanding the way the left's policy towards Israel changed in the postwar period. I shall look first at the pertinence of Polsby's concepts of incubated and acute policy change and then at the applicability of Allison's threefold conception of policy making.

8.3 Incubated and Acute Policy Change

Reflecting first on Labour's movement away from a pro-Israel policy to a pro-Palestinian one, Polsby's classification has obvious relevance. For the most part, the shift fits closely into the pattern associated with incubated change, but it also shares some of the features associated with acute innovation. In the first place, there was a long time lapse between the initial awareness of the Arab/Palestinian case and its incorporation into party policy. As early as the 1956 crisis, some Labour officials, for instance, David Ennals, raised the Palestinian refugee question and the matter of Labour making alliances with Arab nationalist movements such as Ba'athism. Gradually, over time, the demand for change built up with people like Michael Foot, Christopher Mayhew, and later, Ken Livingstone, Clare Short and Ernie Ross, campaigning increasingly strongly for Labour to include Palestinian national rights into its official policy. Although a simple majority in the annual conference voted in favour of Palestinian nationalism in 1982, it was not until the policy review process in 1989 that Labour officially called for a two-state solution to the conflict. Similarly, in the case of the French left, parts of the social democratic left called for changes in the party's overwhelmingly pro-Israel consensus as early as 1967. After the June war, for

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[41] Cornford, 1974:233-234.
[42] Dunleavy, 1990:35.

instance, the Parti Socialiste Unifié (PSU) diverged from the SFIO's pro-Israeli consensus. However, its views had very little impact until the late 1970s and early 1980s when the PS began to take on board Palestinian nationalist demands.[43]

Moreover, during the early stages, the people or groups pushing for change were relatively distant from the actual decision making process. Academics and journalists played an important part in pressurising for change at a distance. People like Edward Said, in particular, made an impact on perceptions of the Israel/Arab conflict. The media also played an important role in airing the Palestinian cause, with journalists such as David Hirst for the *Guardian* condemning Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and calling for a solution to the Palestinian refugee crisis and later publishing a book detailing Israeli policy towards the Palestinians from the formation of the Jewish state to the 1980s.[44] Later still, Robert Fisk from the *Independent* published a book called *Pity The Nation*,[45] criticising Israel's involvement in Lebanon. A further source of pressure was the Palestinian nationalist movement itself. Set up in 1964, the PLO became an important political force in the international arena in the 1970s and 1980s, especially when it replaced its terrorist tactics with a strategy to win over the diplomatic argument. It made an impact on organisations like the UN, with this body consistently calling for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. At the same time, Palestinian activists began to campaign within Labour's constituency parties and, eventually, with frontbench Labour MPs like Gerald Kaufman, who was shadow Foreign Secretary between 1987 and 1992.

As the parties started to shift away from a consensus of support for Israeli nationalism towards a consensus of support for Palestinian nationalism and the PLO, controversy broke out both inside the parties and between the parties and interested groups outside, especially Jewish groups. In this respect, the movement shared a characteristic associated with incubated change, namely, the tendency to generate controversy and a counter movement. In the case of the Labour Party, for example, organisations like Poale Zion and LFI began to copy some of the tactics employed by the campaign for recognition of Palestinian national rights, such as

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[43] Chapter seven.
[44] Hirst, 1978;1984.
[45] Fisk, 1992.

those used by LMEC and TUFP, by organising in the constituencies and the trade unions and abandoning their, especially LFI's, concentration on the PLP. The shift also stimulated controversy within the wider Jewish community, with organisations like the BOD making representations to leading Labour members about their concerns about developments in the party towards favouring the PLO. In France, too, bodies such as CRIF began to counter the trend within the left towards sympathy for the PLO, claiming that left-wing Jews like Pierre Mendès France were encouraging an anti-semitic climate by criticising Israel.[46]

Although the cases fit most closely with incubated innovation, they also had an acute aspect. In the Labour Party, for example, there had been a significant growth of pro-Palestinian activism throughout the 1970s, but there was a sudden swing against Israel and in favour of the PLO in 1982. At the party's annual conference, an unprecedented number of constituency party submitted resolutions condemning Israeli action and there were two emergency resolutions.[47] Similarly in the PS, the Mitterrand government very quickly abandoned its earlier attempts at rapprochement with Israel during the 1982 events. The speed at which he turned, after a year of implementing policies favourable to the Jewish community in France and to the Jewish state, was reflected in the clumsy comments he made equating the Israeli invasion with the Nazi massacre of the Jews. This sudden change reflected the immediacy of the crisis arising out of Israel's invasion of Lebanon and the subsequent massacre of Palestinian refugees which created an unparalleled level of international condemnation.[48]

The pattern of policy change in the communist parties was different from that associated with the social democratic parties. Unlike the social democratic left, the communist parties' support for Palestinian national rights in the 1980s was continuous with their previous pro-Arab policies. The innovative aspect, therefore, turned on the way they combined this position with a less hostile attitude towards Israeli nationalism, abandoning the extreme anti-zionism characteristic of communist orthodoxy. This shift too can best be understood in terms of incubated change. As early as 1956 elements inside the CPGB, including

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[46] Chapter seven.
[47] Chapter five.
[48] Chapter seven.

Hyman Levy and Chimen Abramsky, began to suggest that the party adopt a more accommodating approach to Jewish nationalism. This move was repeated again in 1967 but those who dissented from the anti-zionist orthodoxy had no affect on party policy until the 1980s.[49] Similarly, in the case of the PCF, Jewish members like Annie Kriegel began early on to question the party's position, but the leadership resolutely refused to moderate its stand until the late 1970s and early 1980s.[50]

8.4 Policy Change and the Party as Unitary Actor

Using the idea of the party as a unitary, purposive actor, we can see that Labour's policy shift was rational in terms of its foreign policy aims and attitude. For most of the postwar period, the party's pro-Israel stance stemmed from the successive leadership's approach to international affairs. Bevin, Gaitskell and Wilson all accepted the cold war consensus and the western alliance, a position that informed their attitude towards Israel. From the start, the new Jewish state signalled its support for the western alliance.[51] However, from the late 1970s there was a movement away from consensus politics to a more intense phase of party competition.[52] During this period Labour broke away from the postwar agreement over international affairs. Under the leadership of Michael Foot and the rise following of the Labour left, the party adopted an ideological hostility towards American neo-colonialism and in favour of movements of national self-determination. From this perspective, it was entirely rational to switch from a pro-Israel position to a pro-Palestinian one. Labour's new opposition to American policy in the Third World led it to gravitate towards the Palestinian cause.[53] Starting in the 1960s, Israel and America became increasingly close and by the early 1980s the two countries enjoyed a particularly strong relationship, with the American government seeing

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[49] Chapter six.
[50] Chapter seven.
[51] Chapter two.
[52] Messina, 1989:184.
[53] Chapter five.

the Jewish state as an important strategic ally and strongly opposing the PLO as a result.[54]

Furthermore, for most of the postwar period it was politically advantageous for Labour to adopt a pro-Israel policy. Until the 1970s, the party had considerable support from the Jewish community. However, from this time, Jews turned increasingly towards Conservative politics and, in a number of London constituencies, started to indicate a significantly greater tendency to support the Conservatives than non-Jews.[55] Jews no longer identified Labour as the party that served Jewish interests, and their representation within the PLP began to decline in favour of the Conservatives and Social Democrats.[56] The Conservative Party began to portray itself as the party of the Jews, with Thatcher appointing them in an unprecedented way as Cabinet Ministers and distancing herself from the party's pro-Arab tradition.[57]

Having lost Jewish support and, as a result of demographic developments, Labour's new ethnic constituency comprised Afro-Caribbeans and Asians. In the early 1980s, at local and national level, the party began to make efforts to attract ethnic minority votes, focusing on Afro-Caribbean and Asian voters.[58] Although it failed to agree over the question of black sections, it overwhelmingly supported the formation of a Black and Asian Advisory Committee in 1985.[59] Black and Asian communities tended to be less interested in international issues than immediately relevant concerns such as policing and immigration and nationality policy.[60] Nevertheless, this trend was significant because there was tension between Jews and Afro-Caribbean and Asian groups, with politically orientated Asians and Afro-Caribbeans adopting an anti-zionist and pro-Palestinian outlook.[61] In this new context, it became more politically rewarding to adopt a sympathetic position on Palestinian nationalism.

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[54] Said, 1992:xxv-xxvi.
[55] Rubinstein, 1982:158-159.
[56] Alderman, 1983:172-174.
[57] Ibid:347-348.
[58] Charlot in Ranney, eds., 1985:145.
[59] Husbands, 1986:297-298.
[60] Ibid:296.
[61] Alderman, 1989:118.

The French Socialist Party's shift in favour of the Palestinians in the 1980s can also be understood in terms of the party's efforts to further its interests. Unlike Labour, the socialists were in government in the early 1980s and had to act according to the perceived national interest. Despite Mitterrand's efforts during the first year of his presidency to form friendly relations with the Israeli government, he found that he had to abandon this when faced with Israel's invasion of Lebanon. Mitterrand's policy reflected both external and domestic considerations. In the past, despite de Gaulle's pro-Arab policy, France had been a major supplier of arms to Israel. This changed in the 1980s when Israel started to buy hardware from the USA, alienating the French government. Moreover, the socialists' pro-PLO stance stemmed from a concern to improve relations with the Maghreb, an area that accounted for the majority of France's economic transactions with the Arab world.[62]

The government's interest in appeasing domestic ethnic opinion also played a part in determining its position. By the 1980s France had a sizeable Muslim community of North African origin that was actively hostile towards Israel and pro-Palestinian. In order to avoid a potentially explosive internal situation with respect to France's Maghrebi population, it was rational for Mitterrand to adopt an anti-Israel policy. During the 1980s, organisations such as the Convention Nationale des Français Musulmans (CNFM) and the Association France-Palestine (AFP) and anti-racist groups like SOS Racism strongly condemned Israeli policy and supported the PLO. This orientation later emerged during the Gulf war when French Muslims maintained that France would become a base for civil military action if Israel entered the war.[63] Although Mitterrand risked alienating the Jewish community, this was not so much of a problem because left-wing Jewish groups condemned Israeli policy in Lebanon in an unprecedented way, believing that it reflected the state's shift away from its socialist roots.[64]

Turning to the communist left, it is equally possible to understand the two parties' policy change in terms of their goals and calculations of how to optimise their interests. For most of the postwar period, the national parties' main priority

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[62] Howorth, 1991:4.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Chapter seven.

was to support Soviet policy. From the start of the cold war, the CPSU increasingly demanded conformity from the national communist parties. The British party's leadership, including Palme Dutt, Harry Pollitt and John Golan, tended to comply with Moscow's policy. Like the British CP, the PCF's relationship with the Soviet Union principally determined its positions. From 1947 until the late 1970s, the party was entirely predisposed towards Russian policy.[65] The CPSU's original support for Israel quickly evaporated when it realised that the Jewish state intended to ally with the west. In the 1950s, Russia supported Nasser and in 1967 it backed the Arab states, breaking off diplomatic relations with Israel. Given the national parties' priority to support the Soviet Union, it was rational to adopt an anti-zionist perspective, even when it clearly did not fit easily with national politics and public opinion.[66]

However, the decline of the national communist parties made it irrational for them simply to follow the CPSU line. In Britain, both communist MPs lost their seats in 1950 and from that point the party's electoral fortunes never recovered, either nationally or locally. During the 1950s and 1960s, the party's membership also dropped and by the 1980s, its influence in the trade union movement collapsed, partly because of the decline of its industrial base and partly because of internal divisions over ideology.[67] During the postwar period, the PCF was in a stronger position electorally than the CPGB. However, by the 1980s, it too had suffered a major blow to its electoral position, having lost out to the PS in the 1978 legislative elections and having failed to stem a drop in membership rates or to prevent a collapse in its popular image.[68]

In this context, it was rational for the parties to become more responsive to their own political systems and to reject orthodox communist positions, an aim captured in the Eurocommunist movement. Under the influence of these developments, the British new times faction refused blindly to follow the Soviet line, rejecting the traditionalists' emphasis on class and embarking on a major revision of communist policy.[69] Challenging the indiscriminate use of class

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Chapter six.

[67] Callaghan in Seldon, ed., 1990:74.

[68] See Raymond in Cole, ed., 1990:43-44.

[69] Callaghan in Seldon, ed., 1990:75.

analysis, the revisionists argued for recognition of a multitude of identities, including ethnic and national ones, enabling it to recognise the legitimacy of both Israeli and Palestinian nationalist identities.[70] Seeking to enhance its political viability but being unable electorally to compete with Labour, the party's reformers forged links with Labour's soft left, such as the Labour Co-ordinating Committee. It became irrational to hold on to past orthodoxies such as anti-zionism even if, paradoxically, other left-wing groups had began to adopt this stand. Acknowledging that the party's anti-zionist perspective had alienated the Jews, it tried to appeal again to Jewish opinion by rejecting anti-zionist slogans.[71]

Similarly, the PCF's electoral and membership decline meant that it could no longer ignore the public's alienation from traditional communist positions. In the 1980s the communists continued to be ideologically hostile to ethnic and national identities, with Marchais declaring that France was not multi-ethnic but one nation.[72] Even so, it began explicitly to condemn anti-semitic and terrorist attacks on Jews and even started to make appeals to the Jewish vote. Moreover, its new position in the early 1980s made it untenable simply to repeat customary formulas. The PCF leadership allied with the PS in 1981 in the belief that its participation in government would prevent further marginalisation. As a result of Mitterrand's victory in 1981, the party entered government for the first time in thirty-four years and Pierre Mauroy's second government included four Cabinet Ministers.[73] Given its pro-Palestinian orientation, it was not too difficult for the party to agree with Mitterrand. Nevertheless, it diluted its previous anti-zionist rhetoric to fit in with its new status as government member.

8.5 Policy Change and Party Organisation

It is also illuminating to consider the policy changes in terms of internal organisational developments. In principle, Labour has a high level of internal democracy. Composed of a direct membership, that is, individual constituency

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[70] Chapter six.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Safran, 1985:59.
[73] Raymond in cole, ed., 1990:42-60.

party members, and an indirect membership, including affiliated bodies like the trade unions, both sections have a say on conference decisions.[74] As far as policy formulation is concerned, the NEC formulates policy and submits resolutions to the annual conference and later holds a meeting with the (shadow) Cabinet to choose policies to be included in the manifesto. Nonetheless, even those conference decisions that achieve a two thirds majority are not necessarily included.[75] Moreover, it has traditionally been the case that the leadership and the PLP, often with the support of the unions' block vote, have tended to control policy outcomes.[76]

Organisational changes in the 1980s provided the framework for a policy change. As a result of the activities of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) and the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC), Labour became more internally democratic. The CLPD's principal aim was to get the PLP to implement policy decisions taken by the annual conference and it believed that the compulsory reselection of MPs would facilitate this, making MPs more accountable to the party's membership and so forcing them to take conference decisions more seriously.[77] The LCC differed from the CLPD in so far as it concentrated on getting the party to debate policy options more widely and to enhance its general campaigning role. Its policy agenda was distinctively left-wing and it even published an alternative party manifesto.[78] These organisations' efforts paid off, with conference voting in favour of automatic reselection of MPs in 1980,[79] and in 1981 accepting a constitutional change that broadened the vote for the party leader to include the constituency parties and the trade unions as well as the PLP.[80] From this year the leader was chosen by an electoral college consisting of MPs with 30 per cent of the vote, constituency parties with 30 per cent of the vote and affiliated trade unions with 40 per cent of the vote.[81]

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[74] Seyd, 1987:3.
[75] Hatfield, 1978:22.
[76] Seyd, 1987:4-5.
[77] Ibid:83-86.
[78] Ibid:91-92.
[79] Ibid:109.
[80] Ibid:120.
[81] Byrd in Ware, ed., 1987:216.

The left began to dominate the NEC and other important policy making bodies such as the organisation committee, the home policy committee and the international affairs committee.[82] This development was partly responsible for the shift away from automatic support for Israel towards the Palestinian cause. The formation of the Middle East Sub-Committee (MESC) under the authority of the International Committee in 1978, for example, played a significant role. Although this body contained members of the old left who were highly sympathetic to Israel, it also included external commentators on the Middle East like Fred Halliday and Christopher Hitchens, both of whom were critical of Israeli policy towards the Palestinians. MESC put pressure on the NEC in the early 1980s to adopt a policy recognising the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. Moreover, at the time of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Michael Foot was the party's leader. Coming from a left-wing background and as a member of LMEC, Foot was already involved in pro-Palestinian politics. The fact that he sponsored an EDM condemning Israeli policy accounted partly for the level of support for the motion.[83]

Moreover, in the past organisational links between the zionist movement and Labour affected its pro-Israeli tendency. Poale Zion affiliated to the party in 1920. After the Suez war, when Jewish opinion was concerned about Labour's anti-war stance, LFI was established. As a non-affiliated organisation, it acted as a significant lobbying group, influencing the PLP and the extra-parliamentary parties. By 1967 the majority of the PLP were LFI members.[84] Furthermore, there were long-standing links between the Israeli trade union organisation, the Histadrut, and the TUC, based on mutual exchange visits and even financial support. Given the unions' block vote at the party conference, these ties were important.

The formation of equivalent groups campaigning for the Palestinians further accounted for Labour's policy shift. In the 1970s and 1980s, Palestinian groups formed a series of networks with Labour, countering those between Jews and the party. Organisations like LMEC, although not allowed to affiliate to the party,

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[82] Seyd, 1987:101.
[83] Chapter five.
[84] Chapter four.

218

acted in a similar way to Poale Zion and LFI. CAABU tried to lobby in favour of the Arab cause among Labour MPs. Friends of Palestine groups began to operate at the party's annual conference. PLO representatives based in London made links with Labour MPs such as Claire Short and Ernie Ross, who went on actively to campaign on behalf of the Palestinian cause. In the 1980s, TUFP developed ties between the trade union movement in Britain and the Palestinians, providing a balance to Labour's relationship with the Israeli Histadrut.[85]

Intra-party developments also applied in the French case. Unlike the Labour Party, the PS does not have formal links with trade unions. Based solely on direct membership organised into sections, section representatives attend the Federal Congress in order to debate policies that go on to the biennial National Congress. The National Congress elects the Directing Committee which goes on to elect the Executive Bureau and the National Secretariat.[86] In principle, the PS is pluralistic and committed to the mass membership having a say in policy formulation.[87] Nevertheless, policy debates tend to reflect the distribution of power between the competing currents.[88]

The PS's move from a pro-Israel to pro-Palestinian position in the early 1980s stemmed from a leftwards shift. The party's alliance with the PCF partly accounted for the direction of political change. However, other groups played a part, including the marxist group, CERES (Centre d'Études, de Recherches et d'Éducation Socialiste), led by Jean-Pierre Chevenèment. CERES supported the PCF,[89] and, in terms of foreign policy, was particularly critical of American neo-colonialism in the Third World.[90] The trend also reflected the PSU's inclusion in the PS from 1974,[91] a new left group associated with people like Michel Rocard. Rocard was one of Mitterrand's five socialist Prime Ministers between the years 1981 and 1993.[92] Under Mitterrand, the government consisted principally of the professional classes, including academics, journalists and doctors,[93] a group that

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[85] Chapter five.
[86] Gaffney in Cole, ed., 1990:62.
[87] Criddle in Ware, ed., 1987:153.
[88] Gaffney in Cole, ed., 1990:63.
[89] Ibid:64.
[90] Bell and Criddle, 1988:241.
[91] Hazareesingh, 1994:240-241.
[92] Ibid:239.
[93] Morgan, 1992:12.

typically leaned towards liberal attitudes towards the Third World. The rise of these groups clearly influenced the President's approach to foreign policy which was basically pro-Third World.[94]

In contrast to the social democratic left, the communist parties' organisation militated against policy change. Both the CPGB and the PCF were organised according to the principle of democratic centralism. In the case of the British party, this entailed a highly centralised organisation with power located principally in the Political Committee.[95] With respect to the PCF, internal debate is permitted, but the higher bodies' decisions take precedent over lower ones.[96] Referring to the PCF, Criddle has suggested that democratic centralism means that the base is subordinated to the elite and that 'elections are not elections and debates are not debates'. Dissidents either have to leave or are forced to leave so that, in the end, a 'small professional elite decides and imposes policy'.[97]

For most of the postwar period, democratic centralism was deeply entrenched and was responsible for the leadership's refusal to take on board internal pressure for the party to reconsider its position on zionism. The British party did not contain overt rivalries like Labour because its priority was to present a united front, so the leadership dealt harshly with dissent.[98] This lack of internal democracy led Palme Dutt to denounce calls for a re-evaluation of the communists' attitude towards Israel and its decision to reorganise the NJC, forcing it to put forward an anti-zionist line. In 1967, too, the leadership dealt with a new demand for a more sympathetic approach to Jewish nationalism by repressing it.[99] In the PCF's case too, the leadership had no patience with people who challenged its views on zionism and for most of the postwar period, the dissidents' only option was to leave the party.[100]

However, in the 1980s there were significant organisational changes in the British case, with the reformers coming to dominate the party. This faction gained ground as a result of recruiting from new social movement political activists such

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[94] Chapter seven.
[95] See Callaghan in Waller and Fennema, eds., 1988:235.
[96] Raymond in Cole, ed., 1990:44.
[97] Criddle in Ware, ed., 1987:154.
[98] Samuel, 1986:63-65.
[99] Chapter six.
[100] Annie Kriegel did this.

as students and feminists.[101] More importantly, Thatcher's victory in 1979 and 1983 ensured that the new times faction won the party's leadership support.[102] To some extent, this group was as authoritarian as the party's former leaders, purging the party of traditionalists such as Ken Gill, TUC chair in 1985, and Bert Ramelson amongst others.[103] Nevertheless, it allowed a wider variety of views to be expressed in the pages of its journal, *Marxism Today*. With respect to Israel and the Palestinian conflict, for example, the journal opened its pages to a diversity of views, including those of social democratic left Israelis.[104]

The PCF also contained a reformist faction, affecting its policy positions. After a damaging performance in the 1978 legislative elections, the PCF's leadership faced a growing challenge to the party's organisational structure. Prominent left-wing intellectuals, such as Louis Althusser, joined the dissenters in demanding the demise of democratic centralism and greater internal democracy over policy formulation. Despite Marchais' success in stemming dissent, he was clearly on the defensive in the context of increasingly poor electoral fortunes, a drop in membership and an increasingly hostile public.[105] This situation provided circumstances amenable to policy moderation and partly accounted for the party abandoning its traditional anti-zionist and anti-Jewish rhetoric.[106]

8.6 Policy Change and Individuals

In addition to understanding the parties' policy change in organisational terms, it is useful to consider the roles played by particular individuals. During most of the postwar period, certain individuals played a notable part in sustaining Labour's pro-Israel tradition. People such as Hugh Dalton, Hugh Gaitskell, Aneurin Bevan and Harold Wilson all shared strong sympathies with the Jewish state. Gaitskell and Dalton were on close terms with members of Israel's Labour elite, including Ben-Gurion and Moshe Sharett. Wilson was close to people like Golda Meir,

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[101] Callaghan in Waller and Fennema, eds., 1990:233.
[102] Ibid:238.
[103] Ibid:241.
[104] Chapter six.
[105] Raymond in Cole, ed., 1990:45-47.
[106] Chapter seven.

Abba Eban and Yigal Allon. In the 1940s, there were numerous meetings between the socialist zionist movement and people like Bevin, Dalton and Morrison.[107] In 1956, Israeli political representatives lobbied the Labour leader and other party members[108] and in 1967, Abba Eban visited Wilson with the aim of mobilising support for Israel.[109]

It is not possible to understand Labour's policy shift without recognising the role of certain individuals who decided to focus a considerable amount of attention on getting the party to take on board the Arab and later, the Palestinian cause. After the Suez war, David Ennals was notable in his efforts to get the internal policy making bodies to forge links with Arab socialist groups.[110] In the period immediately following the 1967 conflict, Christopher Mayhew was central to the campaign for recognition of the Arab case. Mayhew was instrumental in the formation of the Labour Middle East Council (LMEC) and he repeatedly tried to get this body affiliated to the party, although without success. Other members of the PLP, including Margaret McKay and Andrew Faulds, also campaigned against Israeli policy with respect to the Arab countries and the occupied territories.[111]

It is unlikely that career motivations lay behind these individuals' activities. Mayhew's Ministerial role was in the past,[112] and he went on to resign from Labour in favour of the Liberal Party. Moreover, McKay's involvement in the Arab cause was detrimental to her career prospects because it resulted in her constituency party seeking to deselect her. Nor was it politically rewarding for Andrew Faulds to take up the Arab cause because he lost his frontbench position under Wilson's leadership for describing Jewish MPs as having dual loyalty.[113] From the data, it is difficult to understand the motivations behind these people's activities. As members of Labour's right wing they were interested in getting the party to adopt policies which, when in government, would best serve the national interests in economic terms. However, they were clearly 'true believers' in the

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[107] Chapter two.
[108] Chapter three.
[109] Chapter four.
[110] Chapter three.
[111] Chapter four.
[112] Mayhew was Bevin's Parliamentary Under-Secretary between 1945 and 1951.
[113] Chapter four.

Arab cause, with Mayhew writing conspiratorially about a cover-up on views on the Middle East and McKay retiring to Abu Dhabi.[114]

Other political actors, mainly from the left, began to take an especially active role. As Labour leader, Michael Foot condemned Israeli policy in Lebanon. Tony Benn and Eric Heffer publicly showed where their sympathies lay by resigning from LFI. Ken Livingstone, Clare Short and Ernie Ross were closely involved in the campaign, with the GLC funding the Palestinian nationalist campaign and with the others organising constituency party meetings with PLO representatives and taking part in conferences on the Israel/Palestinian conflict. Later still, Gerald Kaufman, as shadow Foreign Secretary, began publicly to commit the party to a policy that was based on a two-state solution to the conflict.[115]

Kaufman's institutionalised role as shadow Foreign Secretary compelled him to take a stand. At the end of the 1980s his role involved steering the party away from the anti-zionist politics of the far left to a policy that recognised Palestinian national rights without abandoning support for Israeli nationalism. However, Kaufman also had personal reasons for being interested in the case, being Jewish and feeling disillusioned with the way Israeli politics had gone since the state's establishment. Involvement in the campaign did not damage Ernie Ross's career in the way it did his predecessors, as he ended up as a member of the parliamentary party's foreign affairs sub-committee in the early 1990s and maybe he foresaw personal opportunities for taking up the Palestinian campaign so assiduously.

However, the most appropriate way to understand these individuals' role in changing the party's policy is in terms of socialisation. Discounting Kaufman, many of them came from the party's left, a faction traditionally committed to socialist foreign policy. Whereas in the 1940s zionism was associated with socialist foreign policy, during the 1970s and 1980s the left began increasingly to identify with Third World politics and the Palestinian cause began to appeal to socialist principles. Although Foot, Benn and Heffer had all previously supported zionism, they came under the influence of the new left movements in the 1970s, supporting the anti-apartheid movement and the campaign for nuclear

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[114] Ibid.
[115] Chapter five.

disarmament. The others, including Clare Short, Ernie Ross and Ken Livingstone, were clearly socialised into the Palestinian cause through their association with the new left, pro-Third World agenda. Being too young to have witnessed the effects of Nazism on the Jews, their political background included the new left's opposition to American neo-colonialism.[116]

Similar dynamics took place in the French Socialist Party. Indeed, the presidentialism of the French political system enhanced the role of individuals to the extent that intra-party currents tended to be defined in terms of particular individuals, such as Mitterrandists or Rocardians.[117] Under Mitterrand, the PS appointed Ministers almost exclusively from middle class professions such as journalism and university teaching, with a succession of highly educated Prime Ministers.[118] Michel Rocard, who left the PSU to join the PS in 1974, was a member of the Executive Bureau between 1975 and 1981 and eventually became Prime Minister in 1988. Rocard's background led him to sympathise with Third World nationalism. More significantly, Claude Cheysson, who was Foreign Secretary between 1981 and 1984, was clearly socialised into Third World politics. Between 1973 and 1981, Cheysson was a member of the European Community Commission in Brussels and his past included considerable involvement in overseas affairs.[119] This was at a time when the EC was starting to take the Palestinian nationalist movement seriously and to move towards a policy based on the formation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.

Particular individuals also helped to determine the communist parties' policy change. In the British case, the rise of activists, such as Martin Jacques and Beatrix Campbell, predisposed the party towards accommodating both Palestinian and Israeli nationalism. These people were committed to recognising a diversity of identities, national, ethnic and gender, inducing them to reject orthodox anti-zionist slogans and to argue for recognition of both Palestinian and Israeli national rights.[120] Julia Pascall played a more direct part, specifically calling on the party

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[116] Ibid.
[117] Gaffney in Cole, ed., 1990:63.
[118] Morgan, 1992:12.
[119] See Who's Who in European Politics, 1993:146.
[120] Chapter six.

to reject crude anti-zionism in *Marxism Today*.[121] In the French case too, specific personalities played a part in getting the PCF to take a more sympathetic attitude towards Jewish interests. The Jewish Eurocommunist, Jean Kanapa, significantly influenced Marchais' views on the Israel/Palestinian question.[122]

8.7 Conclusion

This study can only shed partial light on the way policy change takes place in political parties. The difficulties involved in using documentary sources which are either biased or unavailable means that any interpretation is limited. Nevertheless, it does show that it is not enough to read particular policies off basic ideological premises within the left. The existing literature on the left and zionism overwhelmingly suggests that the contemporary left's views are continuous with the left's fundamental antagonism towards nationalism generally and Jewish nationalism in particular.[123] However, this starting point makes it difficult to understand the variety of views within the left and the changes in policy positions. In the case of the Labour Party and the French Socialist Party, both of which espoused a commitment to internationalism, there was very little evidence of hostility towards Jewish nationalism throughout most of the postwar period until the 1980s and, even then, the mainstream view was not anti-zionist. It is true that internationalist and communist principles played a greater role in shaping the communist parties' positions, but even in these cases, there was evidence of dissent and fluctuation and their ideological hostility towards zionism did not always determine policy positions.

It is more useful, therefore, to take a contingent approach to understanding policy shifts. Policy decisions reflected a mixture of rational, organisational and personal factors. The parties' positions in the 1980s stemmed from a consideration of how best to maximise their interests both domestically and externally and from organisational changes, in particular, the rise of the left in both the Labour Party and the PS and the rise of the reformist factions in the

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[121] Ibid.

[122] Chapter seven.

[123] Chapter one.

communist left. Finally, it is impossible to understand how policy change occurred without taking account of the role of individual members of the parties personally committed to forcing through a change in direction, a factor which gives the decisions an almost arbitrary aspect. If this thesis shows anything, it shows that there is a need to look beyond basic ideological principles to understand particular policies and to consider the way structural factors, such as intra-organisational structures, combine with personal ones to produce particular outcomes.

EPILOGUE

It is at first perhaps surprising that the heated controversies over the left's attitude towards Israel and zionism in the 1970s and 1980s have now given way to a period of relative calm. Accusations of left-wing anti-semitism, such as those associated with the *Perdition* affair, have subsided and there is general acceptance of the need to recognise both Israeli and Palestinian national rights encapsulated in the 1992 peace agreements. There are two main reasons for this decline in controversy. First, the left has been put on to the defensive. In response to a loss of its natural constituency[1] resulting from the decline of the industrial sector, the left has been weakened and is seeking to forge a new identity. Having suffered four successive electoral defeats, Labour has embarked on a major modernisation programme. Jacques Chirac's resounding defeat of the Parti Socialiste in 1995 has forced the latter also to rethink its identity, a process that had in any case begun in the Mitterrand era. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the pro-democracy movements in Eastern Europe pressurised the national communist parties into a period of introspection, with the CPGB turning into the Democratic Left in 1992.[2] Few in the left are confident enough to espouse ideals and policies that hint of the Labour left's rise in the 1980s or orthodox communism. In the 1990s, Labour has left behind its traditional concerns in favour of so-called 'post-materialist' issues such as political participation,[3] and the communist left has dropped its loyalty to marxism. In this new context, there is little room for controversial criticism of Israeli policy or calls for the dissolution of the Jewish state on the grounds that it prioritises national interests over class ones.

The second important factor is the end of the cold war and its implications for the Middle East. A number of internal considerations, including an exhaustion on the part of both sides and the commitment of certain people, such as Shimon Peres, provided the impetus for the Israel/PLO peace agreements. However, the new international climate and the need for stability in the Middle East, made the peace process inescapable. In an unprecedented way, the US under the Clinton administration moved from a rejectionist position to an accommodationist one,

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[1] See Seyd and Whitely, 1992:17.
[2] See Hunt in Robins et al. eds., 1994:191-192.
[3] Seyd and Whiteley, 1992:137.

227

abandoning its previous objection to any relations with the PLO. The Israeli Labour government under Yitzhak Rabin and then Shimon Peres, began to forge relations with the PLO. The movement towards mutual recognition on the part of the Israelis and the PLO made divisions within the left over the conflict redundant and a continuing attachment to extremism on either side appear out of date.

Even so, this new consensus could easily collapse again. The current conflict between Hamas, Hizbollah and Israel indicates the difficulties in actually putting peace into practice. Furthermore, the recent electoral victory of the right-wing Likud Party under Benjamin Netanyahu's leadership provides a significant threat to the achievements made under Peres's and his predecessor's government. Although Netanyahu says that he will continue to work towards peace, he still supports the formation of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and refuses to accept the need for Palestinian statehood. So far, there has been little international disquiet over these policies. However, by raising the stakes in this way, Netanyahu's approach could revive the old dilemmas and precipitate a new series of debates. New Labour will have to deal with the difficulties raised by a growing tension between the Israeli leadership and the PLO, exacerbated by the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in response to the slowness of improvements in Palestinian lives. Faced with Likud's hard-line approach to peace, Tony Blair and the rest of the leadership might be forced to take account of the kind of views that divided the party in the 1980s, that is, the very ideas that the modernisers wanted to remove.

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Jewish Clarion*

Jewish Vanguard* (Poale Zion)

Labour Herald*

Labour Israel*

Labour Leader*

Labour Monthly*

Labour Woman*

LFI News*

Marxism Today

Le Matin*

Le Monde

Morning Star

New Socialist*

New Statesman (and Nation)*

La Nouvelle Critique*

Le Nouvel Observateur*

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Jack Elliot, LFI

Peter Grunberger, LFI

Yousef Allen (Medical Aid for Palestine)

Bridget Gilchrist, LMEC

John Gee, CAABU

Solly Kaye, CPGB

Phil Piratin, CPGB

* = occasional

Appendix 3.1 **Pro-Israel Labour MPs,**[1] **1956**

Edward Short (Newcastle Upon Tyne, Central)

Marcus Lipton (Lambeth, Brixton)

J. Dickson Mabon (Labour and Co-op, Greenock)

Barnett Janner (Leicester, North West)

Mark Hewitson (Kingston Upon Hull, West)

William Owen (Northumberland, Morpeth)

John McKay (Wallsend)

Alice Bacon (Leeds, South East)

Horace Holmes (Yorkshire, W.R., Hemsworth)

R.J. Mellish (Bermondsey)

Arthur Lewis (West Ham, North)

William Reid (Glasgow, Provan)

James Hutchinson Hoy (Edinburgh, Leith)

Charles Frederick Grey (Durham, Durham)

Roy Mason (Barnsley)

William Reid Blyton (Durham, Houghton-le-Spring)

Leslie Lever (Manchester, Ardwick)

David Rhys Grenfell (Glamorgan, Gower)

Arthur Moody (Gateshead, East)

John Ainsley (Durham, North West)

Arthur Blenkinsop (Newcastle Upon Tyne, East)

George Jeger (Yorkshire W.R., Goole)

Emanuel Shinwell (Durham, Easington)

Alfred Broughton (Batley and Morley)

Alice Cullen (Glasgow, Gorbals)

Frank Anderson (Cumberland, Whitehaven)

William Stones (Durham, Consett)

Charles Simmons (Staffordshire, Brierley Hill)

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[1] This list is based on signatories to the pro-Israel EDM.

Benjamin Parkin (Paddington, North)

Lynn Ungoed-Thomas (Leicester, North East)

Albert Roberts (Yorkshire W.R., Normanton)

Simon Mahon (Bootle)

Elizabeth Braddock (Liverpool, Exchange)

Harold Neal (Derbyshire, Bolsover)

Percy Daines (Labour and Co-op, East Ham, North)

Morgan Philips Price (Gloucestershire, West)

Eric Fletcher (Islington, East)

Stephen Davies (Merthyr Tydfil)

David Logan (Liverpool, Scotland)

Thomas Oswald (Edinburgh, Central)

John Paton (Norwich, North)

David Jones (The Hartlepools)

Elwyn Jones (West Ham, South)

Harold Finch (Monmouthshire, Bedwellty)

Percy Morris (Swansea, West)

Eustace George (Edinburgh, East)

Hector Hughes (Aberdeen, North)

Lena Jeger (Holborn and St. Pancras)

Cyril Bence (Dunbartonshire, East)

John Edwards (Brighouse and Spenborough)

David Weitzman (Stoke Newington and Hackney North)

Frederick Willey (Sunderland, North)

Maurice Orbach (Willesden, East)

Michael Stewart (Fulham)

Samuel Philip Viant (Willesden, West)

Joseph Reeves (Greenwich)

Henry Usborne (Birmingham, Yardley)

Thomas Hubbard (Kirkcaldy)

Ernest Davies (Enfield, East)

Leslie Plummer (Deptford)

Roy Jenkins (Birmingham, Stechford)

Julius Silverman (Birmingham, Aston)

George Alfred Isaacs (Southwark)

Edward Redhead (Walthamstow, West)

George Darling (Labour and Co-op, Sheffield, Hillsborough)

M.K. MacMillan (Western Isles)

Norman Dodds (Erith and Crayford)

J. Harrison (Nottingham, North)

Daniel Granville West (Monmouthshire, Pontypool)

John Forman (Labour and Co-op, Glasgow, Springburn)

Charles Hobson (Keighley)

Stephen Swingler (Newcastle Under Lyme)

George Albert Pargiter (Southall)

G.R. Chetwynd (Stockton-On-Tees)

Bernard Taylor (Nottinghamshire, Mansfield)

George Craddock (Bradford, South)

Charles Royle (Salford, West)

W.J. Edwards (Stepney)

M. Herbison (Lanarkshire, North)

Hugh Dalton (Bishop Auckland)

Frank Allaun (Salford, East)

David Weitzman (Stoke Newington and Hackney North)

John Dunwoody (Falmouth and Camborne)

Ian Mikardo (Poplar)

Sydney Silverman (Nelson and Colne)

Mr. Winterbottom (Sheffield, Brightside)

Renee Short (Wolverhampton, North East)

James Tinn (Cleveland)

E.M. Braddock (Liverpool, Exchange)

Donald Chapman (Birmingham, Northfield)

Robert Sheldon (Ashton-Under-Lyne)

David Winnick (Croydon, South)

Maurice Miller (Glasgow, Kelvingrove)

William Hamling (Woolwich, West)

Edward Lyons (Bradford, East)

John Lee (Reading)

Eric Moonman (Billericay)

Elystan Morgan (Cardigan)

Arthur Davidson (Accrington)

Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe)

Raphael Tuck (Watford)

Maurice Orbach (Stockport, South)

Archie Manuel (Ayrshire and Bute, Central Ayrshire)

Arnold Shaw (Ilford, South)

Hector Hughes (Aberdeen, North)

Hugh Gray (Norfolk, Yarmouth)

Peter Jackson (Derbyshire, High Peak)

Raymond Fletcher (Derbyshire, Ilkeston)

Arthur Lewis (West Ham, North)

Joel Barnett (Lancashire, Heywood and Royton)

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[1] This list is based on signatories to the top-scoring pro-Israel EDM.

Edwin Brooks (Bebington)

William S. Hilton (Bethnal Green)

Edward Rowlands (Cardiff, North)

Bert Hazell (Norfolk, North)

William Hamilton (Fife, West)

James Griffiths (Carmarthenshire, Llanelly)

G.R. Strauss (Lambeth, Vauxhall)

Paul Rose (Manchester, Blackley)

Dennis Hobden (Brighton, Kemp Town)

Eric Varley (Chesterfield)

David Ginsburg (Dewsbury)

David Kerr (Wandsworth, Central)

William Price (Warwickshire, Rugby)

Roland Moyle (Lewisham, North)

Arnold Gregory (Stockport, North)

Desmond Donnelly (Pembroke)

John Rankin (Labour and Co-op, Glasgow, Govan)

Ben Whitaker (Hampstead)

Denis Walter Coe (Lancashire, Middleton and Prestwich)

John Parker (Dagenham)

Alan Lee Williams (Hornchurch)

Robert Maxwell (Buckinghamshire, Buckingham)

George Rogers (Kensington, North)

Stanley Henig (Lancashire, Lancaster)

George Henry Perry (Nottingham, South)

Herbert Butler (Hackney, Central)

Leo Abse (Monmouthshire, Pontypool)

Gwilym Roberts (Bedfordshire South)

Will Owen (Labour and Co-op, Northumberland, Morpeth)

Tony Gardner (Nottingham, Rushcliffe)

Robert Woof (Durham, Blaydon)

Hugh Delargy (Essex, Thurrock)

Richard Crawshaw (Liverpool, Toxteth)

James Dempsey (Coatbridge and Airdrie)

Julius Silverman (Birmingham, Aston)

Cyril Bence (Dunbartonshire, East)

James Johnson (Kingston-Upon-Hull)

Peter Archer (Rowley Regis and Tipton)

Edward Stanley Bishop (Nottingham, Newark)

Laurence Pavitt (Labour and Co-op, West Willesden)

Roy Roebuck (Harrow, East)

Gwyneth Dunwoody (Exeter)

Leslie Lever (Manchester, Ardwick)

Lena Jeger (Holborn and St. Pancras, South)

Simon Mahon (Bootle)

Alice Cullen (Glasgow, Gorbals)

Michael Barnes (Brentford and Chiswick)

Ivor Richard (Barons Court)

Edwin Wainwright (Yorkshire W.R., Dearne Valley)

Albert Roberts (Yorkshire W.R., Normanton)

Arthur Pearson (Glamorganshire, Pontypridd)

Daniel Jones (Burnley)

Alistair Macdonald (Kent, Chislehurst)

James A. Dunn (Liverpool, Kirkdale)

Eric Ogden (Liverpool, West Derby)

Thomas Steele (Dunbartonshire, West)

William Wilson (Coventry, South)

Neil Carmichael (Glasgow, Woodside)

Leslie Huckfield (Nuneaton)

Peter Mahon (Preston, South)

Arthur Probert (Aberdare)

Arthur Palmer (Labour and Co-op, Bristol, Central)

James Hamilton (Lanarkshire, Bothwell)

Samuel Charles Silkin (Camberwell, Dulwich)

Idwal Jones (Denbighshire, Wrexham)

Maurice Edelman (Coventry, North)

John Binns (Keighley)

John Forrester (Stoke-On-Trent, North)

John Horner (Oldbury and Halesowen)

Geoffrey Rhodes (Labour and Co-op, Newcastle, East)

Charles Mapp (Oldham, East)

Malcolm MacMillan (Western Isles)

John Ellis (Bristol, North-West)

Robert Edwards (Bilston)

John Robertson (Paisley)

Shirley Summersill (Halifax)

Margaret McKay (Wandsworth, Clapham)

Derek Page (Norfold, Kings Lynn)

John Ryan (Middlesex, Uxbridge)

Will Owen* (Labour and Co-op, Northumberland, Morpeth)

William Molloy* (Ealing, North)

James Dickens (Lewisham, West)

Christopher Mayhew (Woolwich, East)

David Watkins (Durham, Consett)

George Lawson (Lanarkshire, Motherwell)

Alan Beaney (Hemsworth, Yorks)

Evan Luard (Oxford)

Thomas Urwin (Durham, Houghton-le-Spring)

Sydney Bidwell (Southall)

Michael McGuire (Lancashire, Ince)

Roy Hughes (Newport)

Andrew Faulds (Smethwick)

Will Griffiths (Manchester, Exchange)

Brian Parkyn (Bedfordshire, Bedford)

* MPs who signed both pro-Israel and pro-Arab EDMs

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[1] This list is based on signatories to a top-scoring pro-Arab EDM.

Appendix 5.1 **Pro-Palestinian Labour MPs,**[1] **1982**

Michael Foot (Gwent, Ebbw Vale)

Denis Healey (Leeds, East)

John Silkin (Lewisham, Deptford)

Royland Moyle (Lewisham, East)

Jack Dormand (Durham, Easington)

Ioan Evans (Labour and Co-op, Aberdare)

Alexander Lyon (York)

Dennis Skinner (Derbyshire, Bolsover)

Tony Benn (Bristol, South East)

Frank Haynes (Ashfield)

A.W. Stallard (Camden, St. Pancras North)

Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East)

David Stoddart (Swindon)

Ray Powell (Ogmore)

Robin F. Cook (Edinburgh, Central)

Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras South)

Don Dixon (Jarrow)

Robert C. Brown (Newcastle Upon Tyne)

John Home Robertson (Berwich and East Lothian)

Laurence Pavitt (Labour and Co-op, Brent South)

Stanley Newens (Labour and Co-op, Harlow)

David Watkins (Durham, Consett)

Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles)

Roger Stott (Westhoughton)

David Winnick (Walsall, North)

Frank Hooley (Sheffield, Heeley)

Neil Carmichael (Glasgow, Kelvingrove)

Neil Kinnock (Bedwellty)

Allan Roberts (Bootle)

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[1] This list is based on signatories to the top-scoring pro-Palestinian EDM.

Ernie Roberts (Hackney North and Stoke Newington)

Ken Woolmer (Batley and Morley)

John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart)

Stanley Orme (Salford, West)

Roy Hughes (Newport)

Allen McKay (Yorkshire, W.R., Penistone)

Joan Maynard (Sheffield, Brightside)

Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Craigton)

Ted Fletcher (Darlington)

Ernie Ross (Dundee, West)

Norman Hogg (Dunbartonshire, East)

Robert Parry (Liverpool, Scotland Exchange)

William McKelvey (Kilmarnock)

Harold Walker (Doncaster)

Guy Barnett (Greenwich)

George Morton (Manchester, Moss Side)

Martin O'Neil (Clackmannan and East Stirlingshire)

Stan Thorne (Preston, South)

John Sever (Birmingham, Ladywood)

Reg Race (Haringey, Wood Green)

J.D. Concannon (Nottinghamshire, Mansfield)

David Ennals (Norwich, North)

Clive Soley (Hammersmith North)

Dick Douglas (Dunfermline)

Sheila Wright (Birmingham, Handsworth)

Andrew Faulds (Warley, East)

J.W. Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Bar)

Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough)

Tom Urwin (Durham, Houghton-le-Spring)

Terry Davis (Birmingham, Stechford)

Roger Thomas (Carmarthen)

George Park (Coventry, North East)

Hugh McCartney (Dunbartonshire, Central)

Appendix 5.2 **Pro-Palestinian Labour Activists,** [1] **1982**

Albert Booth (Barrow-in-Furness)

Dale Campbell-Savours (Workington)

J.D. Concannon (Nottinghamshire, Mansfield)

Andrew Faulds (Warley, East)

Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough)

Norman Hogg (Dunbartonshire, East)

John Home Robertson (Berwich and East Lothian)

Roy Hughes (Newport)

David Lambie (Ayrshire, Central)

Joan Maynard (Sheffield, Brightside)

Hugh McCartney (Dunbartonshire, Central)

William McKelvey (Kilmarnock)

Robert McTaggart (Glasgow, Central)

Stanley Newens (Labour and Co-op., Harlow)

Martin O'Neil (Clackmannan and East Stirlingshire)

Robert Parry (Liverpool, Scotland Exchange)

Allan Roberts (Bootle)

Leslie Spriggs (St. Helens)

Roger Stott (Westhoughton)

Roger Thomas (Carmarthen)

James Tinn (Teesside, Redcar)

Stan Thorne (Preston, South)

Tom Urwin (Durham, Houghton-le-Spring)

David Watkins (Durham, Consett)

Ken Weetch (Ipswich)

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[1] I have defined as activists those Labour MPs who signed two or more EDMs which were critical of Israel and pro-Palestinian in orientation.

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245

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