



Discussion Bulletin

Published by

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

14 Charles Lane, New York, N. Y. 10014

Vol. 29 No. 27

August 1971

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WHY WE SUPPORT A DEMOCRATIC SECULAR PALESTINE AND
OPPOSE SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ISRAEL
by Peter Buch, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local

(The following is based on a report given to the Brooklyn Branch July 12, 1971, in a debate with Comrade Bob Langston.)

The Test of Internationalism in the "6-Day War"

Four years ago, in June, 1967, Israel launched a ruthless blitzkrieg attack on the neighboring Arab countries and the Palestinian refugee camps, with the hysterical, chauvinist battlecry that this was a "war of survival" to avert nothing less than another Auschwitz.

Then, our party had no difficulty in taking the correct revolutionary position, even though we didn't have a specific Mideast resolution to guide us. We stood on the traditions of revolutionary Marxism, on everything that Lenin and Trotsky had taught us about proletarian internationalism and the national question, on what we had learned from Malcolm X, from our experience with the rise of Black nationalism in the United States, from the course of national liberation movements in Vietnam, Algeria, Cuba, and elsewhere.

Virtually alone on the left in this country, our party supported unconditionally the right of the Arab states to defend themselves against the Israeli attack and to resist the maneuvers of the imperialists and the Kremlin at the UN to dispose of Arab sovereignty, territories, and populations. We received heavy criticism then, not only from our enemies, but also from long time *Militant* readers and even from among some comrades, that the party had been one-sided, had not sufficiently denounced the Arab bourgeois and royalist leaders, and was unmindful of the Arab record of "terrorist" attacks on civilians and blood-curdling threats of Jewish annihilation.

We insisted that, at a time when the Arab peoples were under brutal, all-out assault from the Zionist colonizing state, with the ill-concealed blessings of American imperialism, it was the first obligation of revolutionaries—especially *American* revolutionaries—to leave absolutely no room for doubt where we stood in that confrontation and on which side we would be fighting if we were an Arab party and physically located in that part of the world!

When our partisanship in the immediate crisis had been firmly established, we went on to analyze, in our press and our public forums, why not only the semi-feudal reactionary monarchies but also the "progressive" bourgeois nationalist regimes were unable and unwilling to lead the Arab national revolution to victory, why they feared a revolutionary mass mobilization which might escape their control, challenge their privileges and power, and throw them out. We explained from the standpoint of the permanent revolution why the only *consistent* struggle for independence from imperialism, for democracy, industrialization, land reform, and secularism meant a mass struggle for socialism and required the leadership of a working class vanguard party of the Leninist type.

We also declared that revolutionary Marxists who wished to build such a party in the Middle East had to demonstrate that they were the best and most *consistent* fighters for democracy, for national independence and dignity,

for the land, and against foreign and domestic exploitation. They had to demonstrate to the workers, the peasants, the refugees, the students, the women and the youth that they were the only trustworthy and uncompromising fighters for their liberation.

And when the Palestinian commando forces emerged as the expression of a popular resistance movement, independent of the Arab regimes and dedicated to an uncompromising struggle against the Zionist usurpers of their homeland, we greeted this movement as a great new step in the development of the Arab revolution.

That's the way we proceeded, against the heavy stream of public prejudice toward the Arab peoples and the avalanche of hosannahs in the "free world" for the Israeli conquerors. And if that's our procedure in a matter of a "6-day crisis" (of course it was longer than that!), that is, dealing with the concrete situation and meeting our internationalist obligations accordingly without hedging, then in a matter involving a whole stage of struggle on the part of an oppressed nation, we are going to do the same. We are going to defend the right of the aggrieved party, the oppressed population, to fight for its national and democratic rights by any means necessary. We are going to be sensitive to *their* fears, *their* sorrows, *their* humiliations, not to those of the oppressors who accuse their victims of being responsible for their own oppression.

The Power of the Palestinian Struggle

In the meantime, the Palestinian resistance movement has demonstrated its mettle not only against the Zionist state but against the Arab regimes who sought to sell them down the river, be it the Nile or the Jordan. In the dramatic confrontation between the fedayeen and the Jordanian monarchy in Sept., 1970, after Nasser's acceptance of the "Rogers Plan," the leaders of the Arab states thoroughly discredited themselves, precisely on the issue of the right of Palestinian self-determination and the fight against Israel and imperialism.

Far from being inciters of Arab "terror" against Israel, the Soviet bureaucrats have revealed themselves as enemies of the Palestinian national liberation movement and chief advisers of the Arab rulers in how to co-exist with Israel and with imperialism and how to hold on to their rule at home.

The Israeli occupiers have become more shrill in their chauvinism and brutal in their repressions (not only of Arabs but of Jewish critics at home). They have become more openly dependent on imperialist arms and support, more clearly intertwined with the American counter-revolutionary military and intelligence network. Israel's internal class and ethnic divisions have boiled over to contradict the Zionist image of a harmonious melting pot of Jewry and "loyal" Israeli Arabs. Moreover, the worldwide youth radicalization has finally begun to reach Israel, too. Undoubtedly taking courage from the new stage of the struggle, 25% of the Israeli Arab high school youth were not afraid to tell their Israeli interviewers in a recent survey that they didn't think Israel had the right to exist! Twenty-

five percent! That's compared to about 3% of their parents who responded that way. In addition to widespread "dove" criticism of the Israeli regime, an anti-Zionist left current, though small, has already had a significant political impact, both inside and outside Israeli borders. Chief among these is the Israeli Socialist Organization.

So, our position today does not appear as unreasonable or unreal as it did to many people in 1967 at the height of hysterical pro-Israeli public sentiment.

The NC draft resolution on Israel and the Arab Revolution flows from the same Leninist and Trotskyist principles and traditions which guided us in relation to the explosion in the Mideast at that time, and which have always placed us in opposition to Zionism and in support of the Arab revolution, regardless of its current leadership or program. As partisans of this revolution, we have always felt free to put forth *our* program for the revolution and *our* analysis of events. The NC resolution proceeds from this basis to summarize very explicitly our view of the current stage of the Palestinian struggle and our party tasks and obligations in building support for it and in mobilizing mass opposition to intervention against it by the world's chief counter-revolutionary power.

We think that events have already demonstrated the power of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination to arouse masses of Arab people against all upholders of the status quo, against the Zionist settler-state, the imperialists, the Stalinist bureaucrats, and against the entire Arab establishment, from Nasser to King Faisal.

The struggle for democracy in the Middle East is above all the struggle for Palestinian self-determination. The latter is possible only by establishing a state power on its national territory after dismantling the Zionist state, and the only kind of state that will carry out the required democratic tasks is a workers state. Does this fact invalidate the democratic demands, including the one for a democratic secular Palestine? Not at all! It only reinforces the revolutionary potential of a mass movement impelled into the struggle for the achievement of these demands. Once the Arab masses are on their feet and enter the arena of their own history-making, there is no people on earth more likely to take the road of socialist revolution, given a prior period of preparation and party building, of cadre training and mass socialist education around the correct Marxist program.

We have a great opportunity and responsibility to spur such party building in the Mideast because of the many Arab and Israeli youth residing in this country and because of the prestige we have won in defending the Palestinians as well as the Vietnamese. Therefore, our current discussion is not only a much-needed chance to check ourselves again on concepts, principles, and theories which we all thought we understood, but it is also essential to work out a clear and principled position if we are going to help recruit a Mideast Trotskyist cadre equal to its enormous task.

Nationalism, Self-Determination, and the I. S. O.

Now, if the pressure of public opinion, especially in the Jewish communities, was heavily against us here, you can imagine what it must have been like in Israel on anyone who challenged the Zionist regime's "Holy

War" to ensure its retention of the "Promised Land." Nevertheless, there were heroic people who did raise the challenge, to their great credit and honor. But some of their statements at the time were impermissible from a Marxist standpoint and revealed fundamental gaps in their understanding of nationalism, the struggle for national self-determination, and the permanent revolution. Without clarity on these questions, it is possible for devoted and well-intentioned revolutionaries to make fatal concessions in contradiction to their own avowed aims.

On June 8, 1967, a "Joint Israeli-Arab Statement on the Middle East Crisis" by the Israeli Socialist Organization and the Palestinian Democratic Front (whose relation to any Palestinian group existing today is unknown to me) was published in the *London Times*. "The signatory parties," said the introductory lines, "are opposed to the official policies of their nationalist leaders, and are not favored by current public opinion among their own peoples. But their existence proves that not everyone in the Middle East is sick with the nationalist fever." (This quotation, and the others that follow, appear in *The Other Israel*, a collection of ISO documents published in London, July 1968. This London edition contains some material not included in the New England Free Press collection of the same title.

The statement goes on to declare: "The new generation all over the world is fed up with racist and nationalist ideologies, politics and strife . . . India and Pakistan, Greece and Turkey, Iraq and Kurdistan, Israel and the Arab states all provide examples of conflict situations which, however differing in political background, have one thing in common: the underlying political realities are swamped in a torrent of competing nationalisms. The only result such policies ever achieve is to turn persecutor into persecuted, -oppressor into oppressed."

The implicit identification here of the legitimate nationalist aspirations of oppressed nations with the inadequate or reactionary nationalist leadership at any point is made explicit later in the statement. But observe that the struggle between Iraq and the oppressed Kurds, like that between the Israelis and the Arabs, is characterized as a set of "competing nationalisms," where one side temporarily plays the part of oppressor and the other side that of the oppressed and where the roles are periodically reversed, a game which the "new generation" is "fed up with."

Despite an articulate denunciation of Zionist nationalism, with its accompanying racism, oppression, and pro-imperialism, and despite a clear call for the abolition of the Zionist power structure, this statement identifies the chauvinist Arab spokesmen like Ahmed Shukairy and the Nasserites as "nationalist leaders," and condemns the "nationalists of both sides."

"It is not by accident that only we, socialists freed from the shackles of nationalism, can work together and jointly propose a solution. It is because our loyalty is not to this or that nation, but to humanity as a political entity, and to its only possible mode of existence—socialism." So say the joint authors of this document. But the liberation of humanity must be the liberation of those who are actually oppressed! Palestinians will surely say to the Palestinian do-authors of this document, "We are the oppressed party, isn't that so? And aren't we entitled

to your loyalty, especially as you aspire to be our leaders? Insofar as humanity was a 'political entity,' it stood by while we were being dispossessed and denied our national rights. We need your loyalty, not some general 'humanity.'

It is true that a society which oppresses Blacks, for example, or women, also grips the whites and the males in its destructive coils. As Marx said, a nation which oppresses another cannot itself be free. But the program for liberating the whites, males, or dominant nation from the effects of their oppression of others cannot be different from the program of the liberation of the oppressed. White liberation from racism can come only by the full support of whites for Black liberation; for males, by their full support of women's liberation; and for the members of an oppressor nation by the full, unswerving support of the national liberation struggle of the nation or nationality from whose oppression they inevitably benefit.

In accordance with their equation of the "nationalism of both sides," the ISO and PDF authors call for concessions from both sides. The Arabs should offer innocent passage of Israeli shipping in Tiran, stop all propaganda threats against Israel, and adopt "a political solution to the Palestine problem that recognizes the political rights of the Israelis in Palestine." In return, "Israel must undergo a deep, revolutionary, transformation *and become a normal state of its own inhabitants*. The Zionist power structure and all elements of Jewish supremacy must be abolished totally. This must be achieved *only* through internal joint struggle of all non-Zionists inside Israel who wish to *integrate this state* in the Middle East." (Emphasis added.) In addition, the "new, transformed, non-Zionist Israel" will repatriate or compensate the Palestinian refugees according to their own wishes, and it "will pursue a policy of merging the Israelis and Palestinians in a federal, non-nationalist, socialist state . . ." Since the authors understand that repatriation is not self-determination for the Palestinians, they require that the new Israel "declare its readiness to make territorial concessions to the Palestinians, and help them to establish an independent Palestinian state should they wish to do so." The location of such a state is left unspecified.

This is presented as "a solution which simultaneously resolves both aspects of the problem," i.e., "that of re-establishing the rights of the Palestinians, and that of integrating the Israelis into the Arab-East." Israel must become a "normal state"—socialist, to be sure—through *internal* efforts alone. The Palestinians can accept repatriation, compensation, or "territorial concessions," as they wish. Both nationalities will then presumably be even.

Similar conceptions were expressed in a subsequent joint statement, published in the *London Bulletin* of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation in August, 1967. The same signatories declare that the problem is rooted in the segregationist, pro-imperialist Israeli power structure which dispossessed the Palestinians as well as the inability of the Arab nationalists to deal with it. They say:

"As for Israel, every attempt of Arab nationalists to destroy the state by force only consolidates the entire Israeli population behind the Zionist leadership. Israel will be changed from the inside by its own anti-Zionist internationalists who will, in due time, join ranks with the internationalists in the Arab world in a joint struggle

against imperialism and for establishing a genuine Socialist republic throughout the Middle-East"

"The only viable solution is:

"1. To abolish completely all segregationist measures of the Zionists against the Palestinians. . . ."

"2. Active participation of the non-Zionist Israel in the anti-imperialist struggle of the Arab people.

"3. Enabling the Palestinians to decide themselves about their political fate."

So, the Palestinian Arabs should wait, or perhaps focus their struggle on Arab governments, until the anti-Zionists within Israel get read, "in due time," to change their government! It is not clear whether the Israeli Arabs or the Palestinians in the occupied territories should be governed by this forbearance, too. In any case, the claim of the Israelis to a state of their own in the land of Palestine which they took from its inhabitants is not challenged. Indeed, the Palestinians are urged to avoid challenging this claim if they expect to win their national rights.

With the emergence of the Palestinian resistance movement after 1967, the ISO had to define its attitude to this nationalist current. In a "Declaration" issued March 22, 1968, the ISO denounced the new and more complete victimization of the Palestinians and insisted that the means and methods of their resistance was for them to decide. But then they say:

"While recognizing the unconditional right of the conquered to resist against occupation, we can support only such organizations, which in addition to resisting against occupation also recognize the right of the Israeli people for self-determination."

This astonishing passage leads in effect to imposing conditions on this "unconditional right" to resist, since the main Palestinian fighting groups, "in addition to resisting against occupation" (which would oblige internationalists to support them), are not prepared to recognize the right of self-determination for their oppressors. This question, then, tends to become in practice the main criterion in determining the authenticity of the nationalist revolutionaries, rather than their actual consistency in the fight against imperialism and its Zionist and Arab ruling class allies.

This approach has led the I.S.O. to pick out for special support the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DPFLP) and oppose them to Al Fatah, not only because the DPFLP calls itself Marxist-Leninist but because it at least grants the existence of an Israeli-Jewish nation, if not its right to self-determination.

For their part, the "left" Zionists gleefully observe that even the object of ISO hopes, the DPFLP, does not yield on this point. On the other hand, they try to divide the forces which support the Palestinian national liberation struggle by using leftist demagoguery against socialists who support the Palestinian struggle as a whole and who refuse to counterpose the DPFLP to it.

In a recent editorial published in March this year in their journal *Al-Thawra* (The Revolution) and appearing in English in the latest *Palestine Resistance Bulletin*, the Mao-oriented DPFLP attacks the Trotskyist movement (mistakenly including the I.S.O. in that category), accuses it of playing up them and estranging them from the rest of the "socialist world," and especially denounces the "Trotskyist" support of self-determination for the oppressor nation

(Israel). Their criticism of this position is right, their denunciation of Trotskyism is wrong, and they have a long way to go before qualifying as the historic leadership of the Palestinian revolution. They deserve support as part of the authentic Palestinian resistance movement, where a long process of contention for leadership and clarification of program among the tendencies is underway. The NC resolution carefully notes this and cautions against hasty "adoption" of this or that tendency at this stage of the development, certainly not on the basis of which one allegedly passes further "beyond pure nationalism" or toward granting the self-determination of the Israelis.

In fact, it is going to be a snowy day in the Negev Desert before any sensible Palestinians are going to agree to let the Israelis set up a state again after the trouble such a state has already caused them! Promises that such a state would be "de-Zionized" won't reassure them much either. It is the *Palestinians* who must have guarantees for their national self-determination and liberation. That means a strong Palestinian state that will ensure that the superior technological, educational, material, and physical conditions of the Israelis do not become the starting-point for a new privilege-ridden, oppressive society.

All the statements just quoted were, as noted before, republished in "The Other Israel" by the ISO in July, 1968. While undoubtedly there have been changes in some formulations and conceptions, the fundamental fear (or misunderstanding) of the nationalism of oppressed nations, in this case, the Palestinian and Arab revolutions, and the insistent demand for the right of self-determination for the Israelis remains part of their outlook today.

Lenin and Trotsky on Self-Determination

Before going any further, let us call attention to the fact that Lenin differentiated between oppressed and oppressor nations and that his method was to intervene on the side of the *currently oppressed* nation and not to put forth even-handed appeals to both sides to abandon their national struggles or to formulate hypothetical programs which would prevent the currently oppressed nation from possibly becoming a future oppressor. Here is how he put it at the Second Congress of the Communist International, July 26, 1920, in a report of the "Commission on the National and the Colonial Questions":

"First, what is the cardinal idea underlying our theses? It is the distinction between oppressed and oppressor nations. Unlike the Second International and bourgeois democracy, we emphasize this distinction. In this age of imperialism, it is particularly important for the proletariat and the Communist International to establish the concrete economic facts and to proceed from concrete realities, not from abstract postulates, in all colonial and national problems."

Trotsky provides another example of this key differentiation in the *History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol. III, in a footnote to Chapter II, "The Problem of Nationalities." He speaks of an *oppressor* nation, namely, Austria, whose empire was dismembered after the first world war and whose former possessions became independent nations.

"The Austrian Germans hung over an abyss. Their problem was no longer to preserve their dominance over other nations, but to avoid falling themselves under a

foreign yoke. And Otto Bauer, representing the "left" wing of the Austrian social democracy, considered this a suitable moment to bring forward the formula of national self-determination. That program which during the preceding decades should have inspired the struggle of the proletariat against the Hapsburgs and the ruling bourgeoisie, was now brought in as an instrument of self-preservation for the nation which had dominated yesterday, but today was in danger from the side of the liberated Slavic peoples. Just as the reformist program of the Austrian social democracy had become in the wink of an eye the straw at which a drowning monarchy tried to grab, so the formula of self-determination, emasculated by these Austro-Marxists, was now to become the anchor of salvation for the German bourgeoisie."

Does Trotsky go on to suggest that the Slavic peoples, the formerly oppressed, should have declared a guarantee for the self-determination of the Austrian Germans? He does not. Self-determination doesn't happen to be the problem with this oppressor nation recently shorn of its possessions! I don't think there is any doubt that, if the Slavic peoples had found it necessary to dismantle the Austrian German state to remove the threat of a reimposition of their yoke, Trotsky would have staunchly supported them and urged the Austrian German workers to support them too.

The Consciousness of the Counter-Resolution and Historical Reality

The counter-resolution offered by Comrades Langston, Langston, and Rothschild differs from the NC resolution on precisely these points. The comrades undoubtedly consider their views to be the outcome of an elaborate, objective analysis which leads them to differing conclusions and a different approach which they feel will facilitate the destruction of the Zionist state and the liberation of the Palestinian Arab people. Nevertheless, I believe that their theoretical and practical propositions weaken the case for the Palestinian revolution against Zionism.

I think that as we compare the 1967 ISO-PDF statements and the 1968 ISO declaration with the views expressed today by the counter-resolution, we will recognize an immediate kinship between some of their fundamental conceptions. On the other hand, we note formulations and ideas, especially concerning nationalism, that the supporters of both the NC resolution and the counter-resolution would reject. If we are to help clarify these issues in the international movement and help to foster the growth of revolutionary socialist leadership parties in the Middle East, Arab and Israeli, then I think it is a far greater danger to even *appear* to conciliate with these fatally defective views than to neglect teaching the Palestinians not to hate the Jews.

So let us examine the main differences raised in the counter-resolution, which, it should be noted, contains also much that is common to, or taken verbatim from, the NC resolution.

The authors of the counter-resolution oppose the Palestinian demand for a democratic secular Palestine because it allegedly reflects the interests of the Palestinian bourgeoisie. They propose that this demand be replaced with a call for a workers state that will achieve Palestinian self-determination, and, within the context of the destruc-

tion of the Zionist state, the expulsion of imperialism, and the establishment of socialist power, will grant the Israeli-Jewish nation the right to self-determination, i.e., the right to form a separate, socialist Israeli-Jewish state.

How do they justify this?

The main theoretical framework for their argument is as follows:

There are three main types of consciousness which have arisen in the Palestinian movement.

First, there is the "feudal consciousness" whose craving for landed privileges results in the demand for expulsion of the Jews.

Second, there is bourgeois-democratic consciousness, which demands a democratic secular state because it provides the most favorable conditions for capitalist development.

Third, there is revolutionary socialist consciousness, corresponding to the real needs and interests of the Palestinian proletariat. This consciousness provides the perspective for a Palestinian workers state, which under the norms of proletarian democracy, will grant "the right of the Israeli-Jewish proletariat to secede and form a politically independent workers state." (p. 17)

The first thing to be noted in this three-part schema is that it does not correspond to the *real historical behavior* of the ruling classes in Palestine or the Arab world. That real feudalism even existed in the Arab east is subject to heavy dispute. But in any case, simple land relations were long ago transcended in the main by market relations and the close ties with bourgeois and imperialist interests, similar to other colonial areas of the world. King Hussein or even King Faisal cannot be said to be animated by feudal consciousness; rather, their wealth and power-hunger reflects bourgeois, not feudal, appetites. Far from waging a struggle against the Zionist colonizers, the landholders sold much land to them, often secretly, and actively helped to break the indigenous Palestinian struggles like the 1936-39 general strike and uprising. Today such "feudalists" as King Hussein join with the Arab and Palestinian bourgeois representatives in seeking to co-exist with Israel and either to contain the Palestinians within Jordan by crushing their movement or to help Israel try to buy it off with a Bantustan-like mini-state on the West Bank.

The demand to expel the Jews, while wrong, is not a "feudal" demand but is easily understandable as a natural reaction of the dispossessed and dispersed Palestinian masses, like the Black demand for expulsion of all whites from the ghetto.

Permanent Revolution and Palestine

But the most serious result of this sort of analysis comes with identifying the interests of the Palestinian bourgeoisie with establishment of a democratic secular Palestine, i.e., their interests in carrying out the bourgeois-democratic revolution. In the case of Palestine, this requires a revolutionary war against Israel and its imperialist backers. Doesn't this impute a role and character to the Arab bourgeoisie that the theory of *permanent revolution* has long denied? Moreover, isn't it denied *in fact* by the whole historical record of the bourgeois class, especially in the colonial countries?

Now listen to this passage from the counter-resolution, p. 16:

"For revolutionary struggles by the Israeli-Jewish proletariat against the Zionist state will inevitably possess not merely a democratic character—it will not be solely a struggle against the privileges of the Israeli-Jews—but also a revolutionary socialist character—it will be a struggle against capital of whatever nationality. Vigorous class struggle by the Israeli-Jewish proletariat against the Zionist state, however much it will hasten the victory of the Palestinian revolution, will thus tend to challenge directly the power of the Palestinian national bourgeoisie in a liberated Palestine."

The logic of the permanent revolution is here seen to apply to the Israeli-Jewish struggle but not to the Palestinian struggle. Another example of this is on page 22, where the counter-resolution states:

"To the extent that the Israeli-Jewish workers demonstrate their independence of the Zionist ruling classes and conduct a struggle against the Zionist state, to that extent will the proletarian, internationalist tendencies be intensified among the Palestinian workers and peasants.... To the extent, on the other hand, that the Israeli-Jewish proletariat remains bound to the Zionist ruling classes, incapable of conducting an independent struggle for its class interests, to that extent will the class antagonisms within the Arab and Palestinian people tend to remain submerged within the purely national struggle, to that extent will the difficulties of the revolutionary-socialist forces in winning hegemony within the Arab and Palestinian national movements be increased, to that extent will the danger that the Arab revolution in Palestine will be arrested through seizure and consolidation of power by the national bourgeoisie be increased...."

Here, the Arab national struggle will stay under bourgeois control unless the Israelis fight Zionism! But the events during and after last September shout the very opposite. The heaviest battles the Palestinians ever fought were against their own bourgeoisie and feudalists, not because of anti-Zionism in Israel but because the Arab bourgeoisie *opposes* their national struggle.

Elsewhere, on page 18, the counter-resolution says that the Israelis will approach revolutionary socialism "to the extent" that they "actually see the Palestinian and other Arab workers and peasants mobilizing for national and social struggle on a program that raises the perspective of the workers state governed by the norms of proletarian democracy, including the broadest possible democracy in the national question...."

No, the matter must be put quite differently: To the extent that the revolutionaries in Israel can convince the Israeli workers to struggle for the creation of a Palestinian workers state together with the Palestinian Arabs, to *that* extent will they lose their false fear of physical or cultural oppression by the Arabs, to *that* extent will they be willing to throw out their Zionist rulers and to *that* extent will they be able to help the Palestinians define the proletarian nature of the new state and defeat the Arab bourgeoisie.

Furthermore—and this should be of special concern to those who are distressed that most of the Palestinians refuse to accept the Israeli-Jews as a nation—to the extent that the Palestinians see the Israeli-Jews clamoring not for the right of national self-determination, i.e., a separ-

ate state, but rather for national equality within a Palestinian state, to *that* extent will they become more inclined to view them as a national group after all. They are clear about wanting nothing less than their own rights to national self-determination. They know something is wrong with that demand for their oppressors, but since most of them aren't Marxists, they can't put their finger on it. Thus they are often led to deny any national aspect of the Israeli-Jewish community. It can be justifiably asserted that to the extent that they are mistakenly persuaded that the national identity of the Israeli-Jews entitles them to a separate state (even if it's in the socialist future), the Palestinian masses who are rightly convinced their future is blocked by this state now will tend to balk at recognizing such a group as a nation.

The counter-resolution's argument goes like this: The Arab bourgeoisie threatens to take over the Palestinian revolution as long as its program is limited to a democratic secular Palestine. Anti-Zionist struggle by the Israeli workers will enable the Palestinian workers to sharpen their class struggle against their bourgeoisie and avoid submergence "within the purely national struggle." The Israeli workers, however, will be impelled to fight Zionism to the extent the Palestinians call for a workers state with democratic norms, especially the (Israeli) right to self-determination. Therefore, the job of both Palestinian *and* Israeli revolutionists is to insist that the Palestinian liberation movement call for nothing less than a proletarian revolution and Israeli self-determination.

But this is the conclusion of the "left" Zionists, too! They lament, "If only the Arabs were really revolutionary and socialist-minded, we could defeat the Israeli hawks and build a socialist Middle East!"

In this schema, the Palestinians must fight their bourgeoisie, not because it cannot lead their liberation struggle to victory, but in order to convince the Israeli workers to fight Zionism. Does this prepare the Palestinian masses for the real treachery of their bourgeoisie in the national struggle? Does it help defend them against the Zionist charge that they are simply rival nationalists whose allegedly progressive struggle is belied by their "bourgeois" leadership and aims? It does not.

The theory of permanent revolution does not deny that the national bourgeoisie can seize power, as it has in a number of colonial countries. What it says is that the national bourgeoisie cannot accomplish even the bourgeois tasks when they do seize power, cannot really carry the revolution through to achieve genuine land reform, democracy, or independence. The counter-resolution, however, envisions the Arab national bourgeoisie as capable not only of defeating imperialism and its strong, modern capitalist ally, Israel, but also of establishing a democratic state in Palestine and successfully submerging the class struggle.

But haven't we always understood the national struggle of oppressed nations as a form of the class struggle? It is on the basis of a struggle to establish a democratic republic, which is the issue of the day for the homeless Palestinian nation, that the Palestinian and Arab bourgeois interests can be unmasked by the revolutionary socialist party and whereby the nature of the state will be defined by the only class that can see the creation of such a democratic state through to the end, the working

class.

Otherwise, we are left with sectarian or opportunist slogans and demands which may call for socialism and verbally differentiate us from the bourgeois politicians — although they often mouth socialist phrases too — but which leaves the actual leadership of the current struggle for democracy and self-determination in their hands!

The key question here is the construction of a revolutionary socialist vanguard party to intervene in the events and challenge the bourgeois or petty bourgeois leadership. Our sectarian opponents like the Healyites of course also insist on the need for Marxist-Leninist parties "everywhere." The trick is to build them and win hegemony of the national and class struggles. Only an independent mass vanguard party that places itself in the forefront of the democratic struggles of the oppressed nation can contend successfully with the national bourgeoisie and its representatives.

It was the absence of such parties and often the harmful presence of Stalinist parties which guaranteed the bourgeois victories in Indonesia, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Sudan, Morocco, Algeria, India, Brazil, Ceylon, China in 1927, etc. The record of the Stalinists is often a zig-zag pattern where they completely subordinate the masses to the national bourgeoisie until catastrophe strikes, then ignore the legitimate democratic demands and zoom off with hopeless uprisings and even attempted coups by military sympathizers. Or they just fold up from sheer demoralization.

It is not the adoption of democratic slogans that leads to bourgeois co-optation, but the refusal to wage an independent revolutionary struggle for them. *That* is the real differentiation, not the slogans which may at times also be adopted by some of the bourgeois nationalists. They also promise "socialism," "rule of the workers and peasants," "planned economy," "cooperation with the Soviet countries," "struggle against Israel and imperialism," etc., etc. The revolutionary party doesn't reject the democratic or socialist demands just because they are voiced by the bourgeoisie. It organizes the masses independently to fight for them all the way.

"But we don't reject the struggle for democratic demands," the counter-resolution authors will say. "We just insist that an undefined "democratic state" can only be a bourgeois state, that Leninists never called for a "democratic state," and that since only a workers state can grant the democratic demands of the Palestinians, we should call for that. Otherwise, we are left with a form of the "two-stage" theory of revolution espoused by the Stalinists, or a conception of the spontaneous passing over to a workers state without the intervention of a revolutionary socialist vanguard party."

In our movement, when we speak of a state, we are always careful to specify its class content. The formula for a secular democratic *state* is ambiguous by itself, because it uses a political characterization for the state and leaves open its class character. This is its great weakness in the face of the monumental confusion and miseducation on this question caused by the Stalinists and social democrats. They counterpose a classless "people's" state to the workers state in accordance with their "two-stage" conception of the road to socialism. As Leninists, we have to be doubly on guard against any attempt to blur over

the class nature of the state which we advocate to achieve the democratic goals. That is why the NC draft resolution carefully speaks of supporting the struggle for a democratic and a unitary Palestine which must culminate in a workers state to be successful.

As Leninists, we support the right of oppressed nations to fashion a state for themselves, with no *conditions* on the class character this state must have before we support their struggle for it. The Palestinians are unclear about the sociological character of the demand for a "democratic secular state" and many use it interchangeably with "democratic Palestine." There are some who envision a socialist state and undoubtedly others who clearly anticipate a capitalist state which will assure private property rights. The actual thrust of the Palestinian struggle, however, is toward dismantling the oppressor Zionist state and establishing a unitary Palestine where their democratic rights will be guaranteed.

Comrade Bob Langston has pointed out that the main component of the Palestinian resistance movement, Al Fatah, who are forwarding the slogan of a secular democratic state, do not consider it to be a part of a transitional program but really believe they will achieve just that.

If Al Fatah had a transitional program for the Palestinian revolution the way we understand it, they'd be Trotskyist! They would be more precise in their definition of the goal of the national revolution as a democratic Palestine and would work to build a proletarian leadership to win hegemony over it and to struggle for a workers state. They are *not* Trotskyists. They do express the national democratic demands of the Palestinian people and have fought uncompromisingly, along with other organizations, for their achievement. Their program contains no guarantees of private property rights, as so many nationalist programs do and as even the program of the NLF of South Vietnam does. Their adoption of the slogan for a secular democratic state in Palestine is not so much wrong as it is inexact or insufficient. There is no evidence that it deliberately covers up a program for a capitalist Palestine. As the discussion of this slogan and the problems and perspectives of the Palestinian revolution deepen, the weakness of the formulation will undoubtedly be subjected to critical analysis by Palestinian revolutionaries and a division will occur over the real class lines. Our contributions to the discussion will be a significant factor in their clarification.

A Leninist party must join the Palestinian masses in their fight for democratic rights, must warn them against the "two-stage" theory, and must convince them that the unitary Palestinian state they seek must be a workers state. But how is that done?

For a start, the Leninist party must leave no doubt in the minds of the Palestinians that it unconditionally advocates and defends their right to a secular democratic Palestine, their right to build a state of their own. Furthermore, the Leninist party must oppose the subordination of the democratic revolution to the interests of the national bourgeoisie or the diplomatic needs of the Kremlin. This is after all the fundamental content of the "two-stage" theory, to subordinate the revolution to the bourgeoisie. Thus, through the experience of the masses, the call for secularity and democracy in a unitary Palestinian state, arising out of the needs of the demo-

cratic revolution, can be organically linked to the fight for a workers state by the vanguard party and not counterposed to it. On the other hand, the demand for a workers state in that context will not be seen by the masses as a condition the party makes on support of the democratic revolution, but more and more as the clear-sighted perspective of a mass vanguard party that places itself at the *head* of the democratic revolution.

The counter-resolution, despite its inveighing against the "two-stage" theory of revolution, unwittingly is tinged with its false logic. The Palestinian revolution, in its view, is bound to be either a bourgeois or proletarian one. Nothing less will do to assure the triumph of the latter than the full maximum program for a workers state with proletarian norms of democracy (including, says the counter-resolution, the right of self-determination for Israelis). Otherwise the revolution will stop short at the first "stage." The way to avoid this lamentable outcome is simply to skip over it, right to the second "stage." No interconnection is made between the fight for bourgeois-democratic demands and the socialist mobilization of the workers at the head of the peasants. The *combined* national and class character of the revolution is granted but not allowed to play a part in analyzing the relationship of the revolution's democratic and socialist components and how the transition will be made from one to the other only under the leadership of a workers party that understands that relationship.

Actually, the counter-resolution is led to oppose a unitary Palestine because of its position on the right of self-determination for the Israelis. It looks to the formula of a Palestinian workers state with "norms of proletarian democracy" as an alternative, not just to a bourgeois state in Palestine, but to a unitary Palestine no matter what the class character of its state might be. This is where the real argument hinges.

The three-way division of Palestinian consciousness is not very helpful in arriving at a concrete objective analysis of the situation. It represents an abstract schema, a forced march of logical and social categories in dress uniform which breaks into confusion the moment it hears the gunfire of reality. We are led to an actual denial of the process of permanent revolution. We are told to abandon the demand for a democratic secular Palestine and to *counterpose* the slogan of a workers state in opposition to it, in contrast with our traditional position that the consistent struggle for democratic demands must *lead* to the creation of a workers state. We appear to put conditions on the right of self-determination for oppressed nations.

Finally, we are told that we must guarantee in advance that the Palestinian workers state grant the present oppressors the right to secede lest they become oppressed in the future.

Self-Determination for Oppressor Nations?

From a theoretical point of view, the counter-resolution argues, the right of self-determination is a right of all nations, to be restored even to oppressor nations as soon as they cease to be oppressors. The struggle for self-determination is thus deprived of its revolutionary significance in the age of imperialism. The right of self-determination is viewed as a great moral good and natural

attribute of all those social units considering themselves nations. Deprived of its character as a revolutionary rallying point of oppressed nations, the right of self-determination can indeed express the interests of... the bourgeoisie. We have seen from Trotsky how this "right" was newly discovered by the Austrian German bourgeoisie and their social democratic lap dogs.

"Israel," say Langston, Langston, and Rothschild, "is, as yet, for the Israeli-Jews one of the more democratic countries in the world; as individuals, the Palestinians are denied even the elementary right to live in some particular place. The primary, immediate instrument of this total denial of democratic rights to the Palestinians is the present realization of the democratic right of the Israeli-Jews to national self-determination—the Zionist state." (p. 13)

So, the Israeli-Jews have the democratic right of national self-determination, but unfortunately they've used that right wrongly to set up an oppressor state. The right of Jewish-Israeli self-determination thus retains all its validity in general, as a natural attribute of the nation, it would seem, but only after the oppressive Zionist state is overthrown.

Another important error in the counter-resolution appears on page 5 where it says that "Like every movement of the nationally oppressed, Zionism originally possessed a deep democratic ideological content." But, it goes on, "In the reality of Palestine, however, every right won by the settler was a right lost by the Palestinian; every benefit gained by the colonist was a benefit lost by the Palestinian." Elsewhere, on the same page, it says that because it diverted Jewish workers from the real class struggle and promoted national solidarity between them and the Jewish capitalists, "Zionism from the outset played a thoroughly reactionary role."

So, because it addressed itself to the problem of oppressed Jews, the Zionist program, by that very fact, possessed a "deep democratic ideological content." As soon as this content was tested by reality, however, whether in Palestine or in Eastern Europe, it proved thoroughly reactionary! But in fact, we don't grant any deep democratic content to an ideology merely because its rhetoric directs appeals to the oppressed. Zionism by its very nature set itself against socialist revolution in the native countries of Jewry, depended on collaboration with imperialism, and counted upon the dispossession and displacement of the Palestinian Arabs.

This abstract, disconnected, and useless characterization of Zionist ideology is only one example of the bewildering methodology employed by the authors of the counter-resolution.

Leninists are concerned with the self-determination of *oppressed* nations because in the epoch of imperialism, the struggle for this democratic right, like other national democratic rights, mobilizes the oppressed nationalities to fight against imperialism as well as against those within the nation, i.e., its own ruling classes, who collaborate or temporize with the foreign oppressor and who seek to *inherit* the reins of this oppressor rather than cut them loose. Thus, the national liberation struggles of oppressed peoples become, not struggles to reverse the positions of oppression, but part of the international class struggle against imperialism and against the native bourgeoisie.

The concern of Leninists must be for the achievement

of those state forms that can guarantee the freedom of the oppressed nation and the removal of the conditions of its oppression. In the case of the Russian, German, or American empires, this has meant the right of *secession* from the dominant nation. It has *also* always meant the right of choosing to stay within the borders of the dominant nation and fighting for the overthrow of its oppressive apparatus.

In the case of Palestine, the Palestinian Arabs were not forcibly retained but forcibly ejected—most of them—from their homeland. Their struggle for national self-determination therefore takes the form of fighting to regain their territory and setting up the *conditions* for their liberation. As long as the Israeli-Jews continue to have the highest level of technology, social organization, health, and housing, they will continue to have the prerequisites of a dominant and oppressor nation. These acquisitions of the Israeli-Jews, obtained as a privilege vis-a-vis the Palestinians, must be put in the service of the material emancipation of the Palestinians from the results of decades of oppression through preferential treatment to eliminate all vestiges of this unequal heritage. The Palestinian demand for a unitary state is not a demand for the retention of an oppressed nationality for the purpose of continuing its oppression, because the Israeli-Jews are not such an oppressed nationality. Rather, it is a demand that the resources of Palestine be used first of all to promote and achieve genuine equality for the Palestinians.

Why the Example of South Africa Is Valid

If we were to apply the reasoning of the counter-resolution to South Africa, we would have to accept the right of self-determination for the white Afrikaaner nation, too. There are differences, of course, between the South African and Israeli forms of oppression, even though the respective leaderships have often enough expressly recognized each other as kindred spirits. In Israel, most of the Palestinians were expelled and their land taken. Those who remained are second class citizens. In South Africa, the Blacks were not only dispossessed of lands but also enslaved as wage workers in the mines. With the concession now being advocated by some Israeli leaders of a West Bank mini-state for the Palestinians, which the latter rightly reject as a kind of Bantustan in which they would form a cheap labor pool for Israel and Jordan, even the form of oppression would not appear so different between Israel and South Africa.

The Boers have the usual attributes of nationhood: a language, a culture, a consciousness of national identity, and much longer historical roots than the Israelis. Like the Israelis, they have nowhere else to go and are terrified of their victims. What is more, they were also once an oppressed people and fought the British at the turn of the century.

Would we urge that the South African revolutionary party's program contain a promise to the whites of self-determination after the achievement of socialism? The idea is so repugnant for its obvious concession to white racism and exclusivism that no one in our ranks advocates it. But lest this example work to refute the approach of the counter-resolution, its authors object to the validity of the analogy with South Africa.

In the branch discussion Comrade Bob Langston denied

that the white South Africans constitute a real nation, because they have no "productive class," having undergone an extensive process of de-proletarianization. This consideration, however, does not prevent them from describing the East European Jews, whose tragedy was, they say, the lack of a productive class, as a "nation-in-information." And if South African whites are now de-proletarianized, were they formerly a nation and not now? Does a nation disappear when it gets others to do its heavy labor? This is a very arbitrary way of defining the being, becoming, and un-becoming of a nation.

The absence of any one factor among those which define nationhood, by itself, never disqualifies a nation, especially when perhaps the most significant component, popular consciousness of a national identity, is present, as it is with the Afrikaners. Nor is a full spectrum of social classes a necessary definition of nationhood either.

Most of the East European and Russian Jews were workers in marginal industry and handicrafts or were unemployed. Some worked on the land. They had a "productive class," though not a large industrial proletariat. The South African whites are not all capitalists. Of their four million or so population, there is a substantial skilled working class, an aristocracy of labor, to be sure, but still a working class. It is wrong to speak so narrowly of a "productive class," to imply as in the case of South Africa, that the division is not a national one but merely a class conflict between the white "ruling class" and the Black proletariat. But suppose there were an unskilled white working class, a "productive" industrial proletariat, if you please, such as the counter-resolution authors imply must have existed in South Africa prior to the "de-proletarianization" of the whites. Suppose the whites had all the attributes necessary for Langston, Langston, and Rothschild to qualify them as a nation. Would we *then*, in their view, be obliged to offer the whites a part of South Africa for a white state?

To take an example closer to home: if the Blacks, Chicanos, and Québécois set up separate states in North America, would we countenance the creation of white or Anglo states in the rest of the territory?

Perhaps the argument over the absence of an Afrikaner proletariat is intended to point to the impossibility of the development of class divisions among the whites, as may be possible in Israel if the Israeli workers are only assured of their guaranteed rights for a Jewish state after the revolution. Let us assume that all the whites, other than the big bourgeoisie, were petty bourgeois. Isn't it an essential aspect of revolutionary policy to try to win over, or at least neutralize, as much of the petty bourgeoisie as possible? From the practical side of making the African revolution easier and less costly for the Blacks, wouldn't it be good to calm their fears of national annihilation, too, by assuring them of their right to self-determination after the revolution? But no Afrikaner, thus reassured even by his victims that he has a right to at least a part of the Africa which he or his grandfather stole, will abandon the racist state which assures him he will keep all of it. We can expect an average Israeli's thinking to be similar.

To say that Israel is a unique case in that those whom it has oppressed will have the power sooner or later to annihilate it is not true. The white South Africans and Rhodesians are in that position, too. Ultimately every privileged

nation, including the United States, must recognize that the vast majority of the world's people, if allowed to develop their industry and living standards, would have the power one day to revenge themselves for centuries of brutality, murder, and exploitation. Although we know this power will be used for socialist reconstruction and not revenge, the American anti-communist crusade tries to create just as much fear of this potential among the American people as the Zionists do in connection with the Arab potential. To support self-determination for Israel with this argument would be like reassuring the U.S. that if it only pulled back its armies and bases from around the world, it could still continue to maintain its huge military force and nuclear weaponry here at home.

"But," the counter-resolution authors will object, "we demand that Israel be de-Zionized and undergo a socialist revolution before granting the right of self-determination." That is, they want the Israelis to hold in abeyance their fear of the Arab potential to annihilate them or oppress them until after the destruction of the Zionist state. Then, if they are still afraid, their potential liquidators will recognize their right to a state of their own, with sufficient arms presumably to prevent such liquidation. It is hard to see how this logic can convince the Israelis to break with their Zionist "protector."

There is simply no escaping the fact that as long as the Israelis view the Arab peoples in the way they do now, they will not break their bonds to Zionism. If we concede this view to them, no matter how strongly they hold it or how justified it might seem to them, we have no hope of bringing any sizable portion of the Israeli workers over to the Palestinian revolution.

From all the essential aspects, the example of South Africa is eminently valid in this connection and speaks loudly . . . against the counter-resolution's assumptions and conclusions. The burden of proof is still heavy on the counter-resolution authors to show why the Israeli oppressor nation has any more right to self-determination than the South African white oppressor nation, how it is fundamentally different in this respect.

Maximum-Minimum or Transitional Program?

The authors of the counter-resolution will argue that they don't recommend self-determination for Israeli-Jews as an active slogan, but rather to the vanguard for inclusion as a part of the *total* program of the Palestinian and Israeli revolutions, somewhere down the bottom, so to speak, of an overall program, not all of whose parts are advanced equally at all times. (Of course, this contradicts their other argument that, guarantees of self-determination are necessary *right now* to split the Israelis from Zionism!)

This approach, however, smacks of the maximum-minimum program that was the hallmark of the pre-World War One social democracy and was superseded by the Bolshevik and later Trotskyist *transitional* program. That is, the "maximum" program projects some idealized future society not necessarily linked concretely to present contradictions and conditions. For these, there is a "minimum" program. But in this epoch of "imperialist wars, proletarian revolutions, and colonial uprisings" the seizure of power and the actual construction of a new society are on the agenda. These tasks must be closely linked to the actual concrete struggles that the masses engage in through

a transitional program. Such a program can have no room for a plank of "self-determination" for a nation which has *determined* to be not only an oppressor but part of the foundation stones for U.S. imperialism in the Middle East.

Inclusion of this demand is all the more impermissible inasmuch as it is directed *against the Palestinians* and does nothing to pit the Israeli-Jews against their real enemy, the Zionist rulers. For the Israelis, this demand will only tend to confirm their allegiance to the Israeli state and their fear of the Arabs. For the Palestinians, it will represent a denial of their own fight for self-determination. No Arab revolutionaries can build a mass party with such a "guarantee" for the oppressors. Thus the transition of mass consciousness is hurled in the opposite direction, away from the revolution and not toward it.

But, say Langston, Langston, and Rothschild, this programmatic element, the call for self-determination for the Israeli-Jews, would only be actively advanced if the latter should find themselves an oppressed minority. In the meantime, it is there as part of a fully "rounded" program to allow for such a variant.

It is true that different parts of our revolutionary program are given emphasis at various times, in accordance with tactical requirements. But all parts of the program relate to our current tasks and perspectives, guide our current work, and must be generally defended, especially such strategic concepts as national self-determination. Our program cannot be a contingency plan for all possible combinations and variations of historical development, especially for the least likely ones.

The best way to be prepared for unexpected historical twists and turns is to have a firm grasp of the genuine relationship of forces, the main contradictions at work, the concrete direction which events are taking and to develop a principled program addressed to the reality. Otherwise we don't have a revolutionary program, but a worry wart's compendium of revolutionary recipes for every occasion.

What If the Israelis Are Oppressed?

How likely is it that the Israeli-Jews will emerge in the foreseeable future as an oppressed national minority?

Recognizing that even the most "rounded" portions of a rounded program must have a plausible relation to a real problem or danger, the counter-resolution authors are impelled to postulate "realistic" variants, based on familiar models of stunted or defeated revolutions in the past, where this fate could befall the Israeli-Jews. They point to a defeat by imperialism, a victory of the Arab bourgeoisie, or a deformed or degenerated workers state as the possible causes of such a stunning reversal in the future.

But in the case of a great setback to the Arab revolution, stopping short of a workers state in Palestine or winding up as a bureaucratically deformed workers state, the most likely candidates for oppression will *not* be the Israeli-Jews but those who have been oppressed before. The new bourgeois or bureaucratic rulers would, as usual, seek points of support among other privileged strata of the population, particularly the Israeli-Jews who have already shown how jealously and ruthlessly they can guard privileges. In Ireland, Kenya, and Algeria, for example, the former ruling minorities have not been extirpated or shorn of their privileges but — unless they chose to emigrate — have

become valued supporters of the new ruling bureaucracies and classes, providing the administrators, technicians, professionals, and skilled workers required.

And what if a catastrophic defeat by imperialism imposes a deep setback to the Arab revolution *for a whole historical epoch*, a variant posed by the counter-resolution despite the general estimate by our movement of the present period as one of the rising world revolution? It is very doubtful if U.S. imperialism would be so ready to give up its staunchest ally in the Middle East to satisfy the reactionary rulers it has just placed in power but whose lack of popular support will still render them unreliable. Their demands against Israel were mainly rhetorical devices anyway, to fool the rebellious Arab masses. Once that rebellion was crushed, even the rhetoric would be forgotten by the Arab rulers more anxious to enjoy their unchallenged exploitation at home than to excite the people anew.

In the very unlikely event, then, that the Israeli-Jews do wind up as an oppressed group in the Middle East, our movement would have no difficulty in formulating our position. We are against national oppression. We are specifically against the historical oppression of Jews, as the NC resolution makes abundantly clear, and in the past our party has struggled not only against anti-Semitic movements but for rescue operations of the Jews at a time when the gates of this country were closed to them despite the Nazi threat. If the Israeli-Jews were subjected to oppression by imperialism or Arab reaction, we would certainly support their struggle against it and raise demands appropriate to the particular context.

Winning Over the Israelis: The Practical Argument

Now we come to the last main argument for self-determination of the Israeli-Jews, the practical one: it will help split them from support of their reactionary state which they mistakenly believe defends their well-being and represents genuine democracy.

This approach views the Israelis as simply misguided about the true nature of their state and unaware of the special privileges and status it confers on them. To be sure, even the most privileged people in imperialist and racist states are convinced they have a perfect right to enjoy their position and impute the noblest standards to their civilizations. But these illusions are not just mistaken assumptions among the dominant populace. They flow from and conform to real material interests they have in maintaining their domination and are expressed in their racist and chauvinist prejudices.

The Israeli-Jews adhere to their state not only out of fear for survival but also at least as much because it protects their privileges — first of all, their claim to the land of Palestine. Their fear stems much more from an awareness of their material superiority over the surrounding Arab peoples and their consequent isolation than from the distant trauma of Nazi Germany or even mistreatment in Arab lands.

"We made the desert bloom! The Arabs are just jealous of our achievements and want to take them away!" These are the typical refrains of the Zionists, echoed daily among the Israelis. Abba Eban, the Israeli Foreign Minister, who often speaks for moderate or liberal thinking in

Israel, voiced this attitude in a popular book, *Voice of Israel* (1957), where he insisted on a relationship between Israel and the Arab world similar to that between the United States and Latin America, and expressed revulsion for an "unnatural Orientalism."

Consider a recent *Time* — Louis Harris Poll (*Time*, April 12, 1971) of a carefully selected cross section of the Israeli-Jewish population. "Do you agree with these statements?" the pollsters asked. Here are the statements and the response:

	Yes	No
Arabs are lazier than Israelis.	53%	36%
Arabs are less intelligent than Israelis.	74	19
Most Arabs have a blind hatred toward Israel.	68	26
Arabs are more cruel than Israelis.	75	17
Arabs are not so brave as Israelis.	80	12
Arabs are more dishonest than Israelis.	66	20
Arabs are inferior to Israelis.	67	23

Half of the Israeli-Jews think that Arabs are lazier; three out of four believe they are less intelligent and more cruel; two out of three think they are "inferior" and more dishonest. This is a profile of a population deeply infected with chauvinist prejudice and exclusivism, filled with the conqueror's contempt for their victims to justify their oppression of them.

Whatever they thought of their monstrous Nazi tormentors, the Jewish concentration camp prisoners did not think they were "lazy," "less intelligent," or "inferior." These are attitudes not of people who are afraid of becoming victims, but of those who are afraid of *their* victims.

The Israeli fear of future oppression by the Arabs is in reality a fear of the revolution itself and the loss of their privileges as well as their exclusive "rights" to Palestine. As long as they share this reactionary fear, the Israelis cannot be won over from their Zionist leaders. Only the crushing of the Arab revolution can reassure them.

Guaranteeing the right of self-determination to the Israelis "after the socialist revolution" represents a concession to this fear and by that same token fails to win their confidence and support for the Palestinian revolution.

What Will Israeli Self-Determination Look Like?

"You say that after a socialist Middle East is established," an Israeli worker might tell us if we adopted the counter-resolution, "I will have the democratic right to a Jewish state in order to protect all my other democratic rights. So, you agree that there are forces among the Arabs who might want to oppress me. After the revolution, why should they let me have a state to protect rights they want to deny me? All I have to go on are your promises and those of your Arab friends. There are no doubt some bad eggs in my government, but maybe they are doing what they have to do. I think I'll stick with the state I have now."

In the August, 1971 *Ramparts* magazine, contributing editor Sol Stern unburdens himself on "My Jewish Problem — and Ours," in defense of Israel against a catch-all category he calls "the Left." His argument centers on self-determination for the Israelis and he grabs for the weakness in the position of the Israeli Socialist Organization

(or Matzpen, after their journal):

"But what Matzpen's 'anti-Zionism' comes down to is the demand that Israelis give up the protection of their state in return for the eventual prospect of self-determination offered by one tiny fraction of the guerrilla movement — a fraction which, judging by the lessons of recent national liberation struggles in Algeria, Syria and Iraq, will probably be eliminated after the revolution. Matzpen asks Jews to embark on a course which entails a very high probability of committing national and cultural suicide, in return for the very small possibility that by doing so they will usher in a new socialist Utopia in the Middle East. . . ."

Stern seems to understand what he is fighting against when he says: "The glib notion that the way to solve the problem is to create a democratic secular state of Palestine where Arabs and Jews live in peace ignores the obvious fact that Fatah hasn't geared up just to go out of business after a secular Palestinian state is created. It has not tried to create a Palestine national renaissance to merely usher in some universalist homogenized society, but one which serves the very special needs and aspirations of the Arab Palestinian people."

Astonishing insight here, though Stern draws a different conclusion from ours. Not until he understands what nationalism is all about and the difference between oppressed and oppressor nations will he understand that it is precisely "the very special needs and aspirations of the Arab Palestinian people" that genuine revolutionaries, Israeli and Arab, must be concerned about. The concept of self-determination for the Israeli-Jews, however, will not help him very much to understand.

Suppose we adopted the counter-resolution position of self-determination for the Israelis after the socialist revolution and our Israeli worker, curious now, approaches us again.

"Tell me more about my right to self-determination after the socialist revolution," he asks us.

"Well, first of all," we'd be obliged to reply, "your state will have to be socialist and will have to be part of a socialist Middle East federation with the Arab states. Your foreign policy will have to be part of a consensus of this federation. You will have to cut your ties with world Jewry and with the United States. You will have to abolish the law of return, give up all the territories you've seized since 1948, and submit to a plan of settlement imposed in accordance with the best interests of the Palestinians. Your armed forces must be tightly restricted so as never to constitute a danger again to the Arabs. You will have to farm the land and live in towns the Palestinians allot to you and you will have to give up control of your industrial, transportation, energy-producing and communication facilities."

If our Israeli worker is still weak on the question of Zionism, if he still seeks the guarantees of a Jewish state to protect his privileges from the Arab revolution, he is apt to look upon the promise of self-determination after the revolution as a big fraud, from his standpoint, the moment its severe limitations are explained to him. "That's not what I mean by self-determination," he will gasp. "I won't trust you! Never again!" His break with Zionism will not be promoted but retarded by revolutionaries appearing to grant in the future what the Israeli state already grants him today, self-determination. The Palestinian revolution can offer him safety, security, democratic rights,

socialism—but not a state of his own, unless it wants to yield everything it has been fighting for to the Israeli who already has it all.

There is no getting around the fact that the Israeli-Jews claim the same territory for their state as the Palestinians do. They have a democratic right to live as a (peaceful) national community, but certainly not as a *state* power on this territory. That is what the fight is all about, because it is that *state power* that has guaranteed and protected their domination, it is that body of armed men and women which seized Palestine.

It will be the setbacks and defeats of this Israeli armed power and the material sacrifices imposed on the Israeli-Jews under the blows of the Arab revolution that will divest them of their false identification with it and dependence on it. Calling for self-determination for Israeli-Jews only helps prolong the moment of that realization.

In its preoccupation with the sensibilities of the Israeli-Jews, the counter-resolution does not consider the effect of such a demand on the Palestinians. There is no doubt that most of them see it as an aspersion on their cause, a qualification of their rights, and an unwarranted concession to the Zionists. Revolutionists with that position would immediately come under great suspicion by a deeply wounded people and would find it impossible to build a revolutionary socialist party among them.

On the plane of practicality, then, the demand for Israeli self-determination is just as unjustified as on the plane of social theory or political principle.

"De-Zionization" and Transitional Demands

In the Brooklyn branch discussion, several more arguments were raised by Comrades Bob and Berta Langston in defense of the counter-resolution that I want to deal with briefly here.

One is that the NC resolution has no class analysis of Israel or the historical evolution of Zionism. Consequently, there is no explanation for the actual creation of the Israeli state except through a "demon" theory of conspiracy by imperialism, Stalinism, and Zionism. There is no valid explanation of the pervasive hold of Zionist ideology over the Israelis and therefore no program of transitional demands to break them away. Moreover, the NC resolution leaves open the question of whether the Israeli-Jews are a nation.

The NC draft resolution, however, quite clearly concerns itself with the main problem for our movement and for all internationalists, namely, our attitude to the masses who are now in struggle for their liberation, i.e., the Palestinians. The resolution holds open the question of whether the Israeli-Jews are indeed a nation. There are still deep ethnic, social and historical divisions among the Jews there and any major change in the situation within Israel may still hold some real surprises for us on this score. We can afford to be cautious on a question which we are not obliged to answer definitively today for a principled approach to the problem. Our analysis and conclusions do not depend on whether the Israelis are seen as a nation and for argument's sake, we can even grant it without changing our program.

On the class nature of Israel, the NC resolution is quite explicit: "Israel is a settler-colonialist and expansionist capitalist state maintained principally by American im-

perialism, hostile to the surrounding Arab peoples." This is the class nature, history, foreign policy, and domestic policy of Israel in a nutshell, but the NC resolution goes on to outline the historical process of Israel's creation, its collaboration with imperialism, its expulsion of the Palestinians, and its manipulation of the Jewish refugees. It is a record which, by the way, involved perhaps even more than the usual share of conspiratorial skullduggery.

The NC draft points to the history of anti-Jewish oppression and genocide as an important factor which helped the Zionists mobilize public opinion behind the formation of Israel, but it gives a proper balance to this factor in the present situation. It leaves little room for projecting a "deep democratic content" to Zionism because it appealed to and maneuvered with the oppressed Jews. The Israeli state is seen for what it was and is, a capitalist oppressor defending not only bourgeois property rights but the national privileges of the Israeli-Jews, for whom it is not merely a badly chosen vehicle for protecting their democratic rights which they mistakenly trust.

The real content of the claim that there is an insufficient class analysis of Israel and Zionism actually boils down to the charge that there is no room in the NC document to see the legitimacy of the Israeli-Jewish demands for a state of their own in the Middle East, even after the socialist revolution. We have already answered this argument.

A related argument is that the NC resolution is ambiguous in its attitude to "de-Zionization," whereas it should recognize it, at least in the form the I.S.O. proposes it, as a transitional program whose consistent fulfillment would lead to the destruction of Zionism and the creation of a workers state.

But any transitional program to reach Israeli workers must first of all be clear about the Palestinian struggle and the way to fight Israeli chauvinism. Any "de-Zionization" program must be judged in that light, and in view of the ambiguous meaning of that term among many Israelis, the NC resolution questions it and gives very unambiguous reasons. The term itself implies not necessarily the destruction of the state of Israel but a change in its role of "ingatherer of the exiles," a change from being a "Jewish" state to being an Israeli state.

Langston, Langston, and Rothschild are anxious that we differentiate ourselves from the Arab national bourgeoisie by rejecting the slogan for a democratic secular Palestine. However, they seem unconcerned about differentiating ourselves from this slogan of "de-Zionization," which is widely used by Israeli bourgeois politicians like Uri Avneri and others who mean something very different from the I.S.O. and the counter-resolution and who advocate it in *counterposition* to the Arab demand for a democratic Palestine.

There can be no objection to the concrete demands put forward by the I.S.O. for abolishing the law of return and other discriminatory measures, withdrawing from the occupied territories, ending the odious detention and curfew practices, breaking ties with imperialism, and so forth. But, as the NC resolution says, ". . . these struggles must be linked with the goal of replacing the Israeli state with a democratic Palestine."

Lenin on Self-Determination

In his summary report for the counter-resolution Com-

rade Bob Langston pointed to a report by Lenin on the party program given at the 8th Congress of the Russian Communist Party on March 19, 1919. (See *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 29, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965, pp. 165-185.) Comrade Langston said that Lenin not only speaks for the right of *all* nations to self-determination but even applies this right to Germany, which, even though it had just been defeated in World War One, was still an oppressor, imperialist country.

Comrade Langston accurately explained that Lenin was concerned about the fear of a Russian invasion by the German workers and the way this was being used by their bosses to turn them against communism.

But first, whom is Lenin arguing against here? Against Bukharin, one of the leaders of the "Left Communist" faction in the Bolshevik party, who had advocated revolutionary war in 1918 during the peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk and who considered the right of national self-determination to be a concession to the bourgeoisie.

Lenin says of Bukharin: "He says that we must not recognize the right of nations to self-determination. A nation means the bourgeoisie together with the proletariat. And are we, the proletarians, to recognize the right to self-determination of the despised bourgeoisie? . . . 'I want to recognize only the right of the working classes to self-determination,' says Comrade Bukharin. That is to say, you want to recognize something that has not been achieved in a single country except Russia. . . ."

Then Lenin proceeds to explain why he thinks Bukharin is wrong: "To reject the self-determination of nations and insert the self-determination of the working people would be absolutely wrong, because this manner of settling the question does not reckon with the difficulties, with the zigzag course taken by differentiation within nations." Lenin is referring to the problem of differentiating, or splitting, the workers from the bourgeoisie.

" . . . Now Scheidemann's party is already saying that we want to conquer Germany. /Philip Scheidemann was the German Social Democrat who headed the German bourgeois government from February to June, 1919.— P.B./ That is of course ridiculous, nonsensical. But the bourgeoisie have their own interests and their own press, which is shouting this to the whole world in hundreds of millions of copies; Wilson, too, is supporting this in his own interests. The Bolsheviks, they declare, have a large army, and they want, by means of conquest, to implant their Bolshevism in Germany As long as the bourgeoisie, or the petty bourgeoisie, or even part of the German workers, are under the influence of this bugbear — 'the Bolsheviks want to establish their system by force' — so long will the formula 'self-determination of the working people' not help matters. We must arrange things so that the German traitor-socialists will not be able to say that the Bolsheviks are trying to impose their universal system, which, as it were, can be brought into Berlin on Red Army bayonets. And this is what may happen if the principle of the self-determination of nations is denied.

"Our programme must not speak of the self-determination of the working people, because that would be wrong Every nation must obtain the right to self-determination, and that will make the self-determination of the working people easier"

The foregoing quotations make the context of the debate much more clear. The idea that it is the historical duty of the working class in every country to make the socialist revolution is not new in our movement. Bukharin's formulations opened the Russian Bolsheviks to enemy charges that they were trying to substitute their Red Army for the struggle the German workers would have to wage for socialism. This was not only dangerous to the young Soviet republic desperately struggling to get on its feet but also played into the hands of the German bourgeoisie and their social democratic agents in their efforts to repress communists in Germany.

But when Lenin sought to calm the false fears of the German working class, he in no way assured them they would be able to keep any of the special privileges they enjoyed as members of an oppressor nation. He only assured them that the Bolsheviks recognized their historical development as a German nation, that the Red Army would not invade their country and decide for them what sort of society they should have at home.

Lenin speaks of the right of self-determination for *all* nations with the understanding that other things are equal. That is, no state has inherently any less right to exist than another. No nation has inherently any less rights to determine its course and social system than another. The exception is when the relations between oppressed and oppressor nations are involved, an exception which became of paramount importance in the epoch of imperialism.

Can there possibly be an analogy with the relations of the Palestinian revolutionaries to the Israeli workers? In the first place, if we held Comrade Langston's concept of self-determination for the Israelis, namely, only the right to set up a workers state, we would come dangerously close to Bukharin's concept that self-determination was valid for the proletariat only.

In the second place, the German-Soviet conflict derived from the confrontation of two hostile social systems that were ultimately incompatible on a world scale; it was not a national struggle. Lenin assured the German workers that he did not intend to impose the socialist system on them by invasion but urged them at the same time to establish that system themselves so as to avoid the wars and other miseries capitalism was preparing for them. The Palestinian struggle against Israel, however, is first of all a struggle for the right to exist as a nation. The Palestinians have no choice but to fight to get back into their homeland. To the Israeli chauvinists, that means "invasion."

Obviously, the Palestinians can only calm such fears by calling off their struggle, not by promising future self-determination. Handing them this advice from Lenin would only tend to prejudice them against him and wouldn't be fair to the chief architect of the Marxist policy on the national question and self-determination!

The perspectives outlined in the NC draft resolution for the real course of the Palestinian revolution and the mobilization of the Arab masses for a socialist Middle East is in full accord with the Leninist policy on national self-determination and the rich traditions of our movement in defending the struggle of oppressed peoples.

July 28, 1971

IN SUPPORT OF THE COUNTER DRAFT RESOLUTION
ON ISRAEL AND THE ARAB REVOLUTION
by Berta Langston, Bob Langston, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local;
and Jon Rothschild, Upper West Side Branch, New York Local

Our differences with the National Committee Draft Resolution on Israel and the Arab Revolution center around two major points:

1) The draft uncritically embraces the perspective of the "democratic secular Palestine." In so doing, the draft does not present a correct position on the program of the Palestinian revolution, and, at the same time, obscures the role of the Leninist party in the Arab East.

2) The draft, through what we believe is an arbitrary redefinition of the concept of the right of self-determination of nations, presents an incorrect position on the national question as it relates to the Israeli-Jews.

(In this document, we will refer to passages in the documents concerned by three numbers: the first one indicating the page, the second the column, and the third the paragraph. The NC document is called "Draft," our counter-resolution, "Counter," and Comrade Gus Horowitz's report to the last plenum of the party, "Report.")

I. Dynamics of the Palestinian Revolution

A. Zionism and De-Zionization

The character of the Arab revolution cannot be understood without a clear understanding of the forces it must oppose. One of the main such forces is Zionism, and its product—the Israeli state.

We therefore found it necessary to begin our resolution, after setting the Arab revolution in the context of world politics, with a historical analysis of Zionism and the nature of the Israeli state.

Zionism, as a movement and an ideology, appears as a very ghostly thing in the NC draft. The draft's historical analysis of Zionism is confined to the following paragraph:

"Zionism is not, as it claims, a national liberation movement. Zionism is a political movement that developed for the purpose of establishing a settler-colonialist state in Palestine and which rules the bourgeois society headed by the Israeli state today in alliance with world imperialism." (Draft, 6, 1, 1)

That is all. But the questions are immediately posed: How did this purpose enter the world? Where did it come from? And once it was in the world, how could it form the basis of a political movement? How did it capture the minds of masses of people? To these questions there is not the hint of an answer in the NC draft.

Likewise, in the only reference to the forces that brought the Israeli state into existence, this ghostly Zionism figures with imperialism and Stalinism in what can only be called a conspiracy theory:

"Cynically utilizing the crimes of the Nazis as a pretext, and with the complicity of the Soviet bureaucracy and the Stalinist movement the imperialists and Zionists created the state of Israel at the expense of the Palestinians" (Draft, 6, 1, 4)

But *how* were the imperialists and Zionists able to do this? How did it happen that the human material of the Jewish settlements in Palestine permitted itself to be transformed into the human material of this state which, as

the NC draft correctly points out, is a state that is opposed to their real interests?

Answers to these questions are important. First, unless we have a clear understanding of the historical reality of Zionism, we cannot understand the hold of Zionist ideology over the Israeli-Jewish masses today, and we cannot formulate the strategy necessary to undermine that hegemony.

Moreover, the explanation of the real history of Zionism is an exceptionally important aspect of anti-Zionist propaganda, both among Israeli-Jews and among supporters of Zionism elsewhere. Denunciation is not enough. It is important to explain where the illusion comes from that Zionism is the national liberation movement of the Jews, and how it inevitably happened that the attempt to solve the Jewish question through Zionism led to the formation of this national-oppressor state pitted against the democratic struggles of the Arab masses and utterly dependent on the most dangerous enemies of the Jews—the imperialist ruling classes.

The first three sections of our counterresolution, following the preamble, seek to give a brief analysis of these questions.

The failure of the NC draft to offer such an analysis leads it to regard the Israeli state *purely* as an artificial creation of imperialism. It abstracts from the actual development of the Jewish settlements in Palestine, and therefore does not recognize the development of a new Hebrew-speaking nationality in Palestine, through the process of a displacing colonialism.

Thus, the NC draft recognizes only two of the three central aspects of the Zionist state—the settler-colonialist and the imperialist-client aspects. It fails to recognize that the Zionist state is a national state because of its agnostic position on whether or not the Israeli-Jews constitute a distinct nation: "The question of whether or not the Israeli Jews form a separate nationality from Jewish people in other parts of the world is subject to theoretical investigation." (Draft, 9, 1, 5)

With this statement the NC leaves open two important political questions. The first is whether or not the Israeli-Jews themselves constitute a nation. The second is whether or not all the Jews of the world—inclusive or exclusive of the Israeli-Jews—constitute a single nationality. We do not know what arguments can be advanced against a clear, unambiguous statement that "Yes, the Israeli-Jews constitute a nation;" and an equally unambiguous assertion that "No, the Jews of the world do not constitute a single nationality."

These are not merely scholastic questions. They are of great political importance. First, both questions are central political issues in the Palestinian movement. Different ways of regarding the Israeli-Jews—whether they are a national group or a religious community, for example—define different programmatic conceptions about the relations between Israeli-Jews and Arabs in a liberated Palestine. The program of the Leninist party that will intervene in the Palestinian struggle will have to give answers to these questions.

Second, an important task in Israel in undermining Zionist ideology is precisely to win mass understanding of the fact that the Israeli-Jews constitute a new nation in the Arab East to which the historical question is posed: "How shall we find our place in this region to which we came as invaders?" It must be made clear that Israel is not the territory for ingathering some dispersed nationality to which Israeli-Jews have a responsibility that justifies in democratic terms everything done to the Palestinian and Arab peoples, and to which dispersed nationality the Israeli-Jews can realistically look for support over the long term. It seems to us that any concession to the idea of the existence of a world Jewish nationality inevitably lends a certain justification, or at least legitimation, to the entire Zionist project.

Because of the draft's lack of clarity on the national character of Israeli-Jewish society, it is unable to formulate any realistic proposals for the activity of the revolutionary party in Israel.

The NC draft has the following to say about the de-Zionization program of the Israeli Socialist Organization:

"A related slogan that has been raised by members of the ISO is for the de-Zionization of Israel. This slogan is wrong if it is counterposed to the demand of the Palestinian liberation movement for a democratic Palestine, because in that case it can be interpreted to mean support for the maintenance of the Israeli state. Revolutionists support all struggles within Israel against every Zionist discriminatory law and practice, but since the national oppression of the Palestinians cannot be ended within the framework of the maintenance of the Israeli state, these struggles must be linked with the goal of replacing the Israeli state with a democratic Palestine." (Draft, 10, 1, 3)

Since the NC draft doesn't indicate the specific demands of the ISO de-Zionization program, this paragraph might seem plausible, although it is difficult to know what is meant by "replacing the Israeli state with a democratic Palestine"—how does one replace a state with a country?

The de-Zionization program consists of the following main points:

". . . the end of all laws and practices conferring privilege on Jews, beginning with the law of return; repatriation of all Palestinians who desire it to the present territory of Israel and compensation for their losses of all who do not want repatriation; and the rupture of all military and financial ties to the imperialist powers and all financial and political ties to the Jewish communities of the world. Tied to the de-Zionization program is the demand of immediate withdrawal from the territories occupied since the June 1967 war." (Counter, 10, 1, 2)

We do not see how these demands can be "counterposed" to the demand for a democratic Palestine, so far as this demand expresses simply the democratic tasks of the Arab revolution. The "de-Zionization" demands constitute the program for a democratic Palestine, in this sense, addressed to the Israeli-Jews.

What we do think should be counterposed to the demand for a democratic *state* in Palestine is the demand for a workers state in Palestine.

How the de-Zionization program can be construed as support for the maintenance of the Israeli state we do not know. If really carried out, what else would these demands result in than the thorough democratization of relations between the Israeli-Jews and the Palestinians?

It is barely conceivable that the state power that carried out these measures would continue for a time to bear the name "Israel." But what would it have in common with the present state of Israel besides the name? Is the name of the state the major issue in the Palestinian liberation struggle?

The implementation of these demands would in fact constitute the destruction of the Zionist state—which is why they will not be carried out by the Zionist state. If carried out they would remove all blocks from the Israeli-Jewish side to the expression of Palestinian self-determination. The demands are democratic in character; potentially they can mobilize masses of Israeli-Jews to attack the Zionist state from within, thus giving real, active support to the Palestinian struggle.

In fact, the de-Zionization demands form the framework of a transitional program aimed at the Israeli-Jews. Masses of Israeli-Jews cannot be mobilized around the slogan "Self-determination for the Palestinians," or "Smash the state." The same objections to these slogans can be, and should be, raised as the objections we in this country raise toward similar slogans like "Victory to the Vietnamese Revolution," or "two, four, six, eight—organize to smash the state," as mass action slogans.

It is true that by themselves the de-Zionization demands are not a complete program of socialist revolution—any more than any transitional program is. Like any transitional demands, they must be part of the general socialist struggle and program. To fail to relate the struggles against privilege to the struggle for the workers state is to make a gulf between democratic struggles and the fight for socialism. It is to destroy the transitional character of the program, and transform it into a radical reform program. The counter-draft does not do this.

The NC draft, it seems to us, reduces Israeli-Jewish revolutionaries to writing articles about the socialist future on the one hand, and proclaiming support to the Palestinian struggle on the other—without being able to do anything to manifest that support, aside from announcing that they are for smashing the state.

B. Mass Consciousness and Revolution

The lack of analysis of Zionism and Israel is paralleled by the absence of any characterization of the social structure of the Palestinian nation. The counterdraft contains a section dealing with this question, in which it notes the existence of a Palestinian bourgeoisie and its social position. We believe that these questions are important in formulating a program that can compete with bourgeois ideology for hegemony over the mass movement.

Programs and political perspectives always have a real material social base. In this connection we seek, in sections 11-13, to locate the consciousness and perspectives that have been brought forward in the Palestinian movement.

A number of clarifications are in order.

1) It should be clear that what we are discussing is *not* the empirical desires and aspirations, consciousness or program of the Palestinian landowners or businessmen, workers or peasants, at any given moment. For example, the perspective that we claim reflects the interests of the Palestinian proletariat and poor peasantry is not today their consciousness, although we think that—through the intervention of the Leninist party—it will become so in

the future.

What we are discussing is the *mass* consciousness of the Palestinian people. That mass consciousness is, we believe, based on the existing social relations. In characterising this consciousness, we are investigating which class' interests are objectively served by the consciousness in question, and not which class in reality at the present time has this consciousness and is acting on it.

2) Because of 1), we are not seeking to demonstrate that the participants in the liberation organizations that have the programs we are discussing are members of the feudal class, or the bourgeoisie. In particular, we are not saying that the leaders of these organizations are members of those classes, or even that those classes necessarily support the organizations whose programs correspond with the consciousness we are discussing.

It should be noted that there is nothing in the counter-draft that implies that the national bourgeoisie is leading the Palestinian struggle in the sense that the leading cadres of the revolutionary forces are members of the bourgeoisie. This is not peculiar to the colonial revolution. Even in the pre-imperialist epoch, in the era of "classic" bourgeois democratic revolutions, no bourgeoisie has ever been the vanguard of a real revolution in that sense. The bourgeoisie has always held back from carrying out the democratic tasks demanded by the revolutionary masses. They have seized power only through a liquidation of the revolution and a retreat from its most advanced positions.

But the bourgeoisie did—and still does—in the absence of a revolutionary party that knows how to effectively oppose it ideologically and politically—triumph under the "classless" slogans of pure abstract democracy. Mass consciousness tends to be the consciousness of the class that is dominant in the given social relations of production. That is, the bourgeoisie does not conspire behind closed doors to inject their own consciousness into the masses. On the contrary, this tends to happen automatically, whence the need for a revolutionary Leninist party. The masses do not attain political proletarian consciousness organically from their experiences.

Our point in sections 11-13 is that the consciousness of the Palestinian masses has been determined largely by the prevailing objective conditions in Palestine; that this consciousness reflects class interests; and that all consciousness that is not proletarian consciousness must be transformed by the Leninist party.

If this analysis is rejected, how is the fact to be explained that for thirty years the mass consciousness of the Palestinian people demanded the expulsion of the Jews; and that at a certain point in history, this consciousness changed radically? Why?

This is not at all the same as saying that the Palestinian landholders struggled for—or even necessarily wanted—the expulsion of the Jews. And it is not the same as saying that the Palestinian national bourgeoisie struggles for the creation of a democratic Palestine. But this is not because of the change that has occurred in the nature of the bourgeoisie in the imperialist epoch.

It is in this light that the analysis of the slogan "democratic secular state" or "democratic secular Palestine" should be considered.

C. Democratic Secular Palestine

The words "democratic secular Palestine" move through the NC draft like a specter, appearing in various places,

and at times being identified with the currently expressed goal of the Palestinian movement, at times being identified as Palestinian self-determination. Our attitude toward the slogan, as well as the content we ascribe to it, is never satisfactorily spelled out.

It is misleading to state that "the currently expressed goal of . . . [the Palestinian struggle] is the establishment of a democratic, secular Palestine." (Draft, 5, 1, 4) This concept is in fact drawn specifically from the program of Fateh. In reality, the currently expressed goals of the Palestinian struggle are quite varied. The Palestine National Charter, which was endorsed by the National Congress of the Palestine Liberation Organization in July of 1968, has the following to say about the liberated Palestine:

"The Jews who had normally resided in Palestine until the beginning of the Zionist invasion [usually considered to be 1917] will be considered Palestinians." (Article 6, our emphasis. Available from the PLO Research Center, Beirut, 1969, Palestine Books No. 27: *Basic Documents of the Armed Palestinian Resistance Movement*.)

In numerous places, the Charter makes it clear that Palestine is only for the Palestinians as they define them.

The Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine aims at a "people's democratic Palestinian state," which is anticapitalist and which allows the Israeli-Jews "the right to develop their national culture," although not the right of self-determination. (Our emphasis. *Ibid.* p. 173) Because the DPF regards the Israeli-Jews as a national and not a religious community, it never links "secular" to "democratic." These are only two examples.

This is not a pedantic or scholastic objection. The differences in expressed goals are important, because they reflect the fact that the Palestinian movement is an arena of conflicting objective social forces. The NC draft recognizes that no organization has achieved hegemony in the movement. It is thus wrong to equate the currently expressed goals of the movement as a whole to a phrase drawn from the program of one organization within the movement—much less to equate that phrase with "Palestinian self-determination."

A further problem with the draft's use of the term democratic secular Palestine is as follows:

"The struggle of the Palestinian people against their oppression and for self-determination has taken the form of a struggle to destroy the state of Israel We give unconditional support to this struggle of the Palestinians for self-determination."

With these two sentences we completely agree. However, when the intervening sentence is inserted, a double ambiguity appears: "The currently expressed goal of this struggle is the establishment of a democratic, secular Palestine."

First, does the formulation make our "unconditional support" of the Palestinian struggle in fact conditional on the struggle's "currently expressed goal?" Suppose the "currently expressed goal" was the expulsion of the Jews who arrived after 1917? The fact that the NC's very first thesis states that our support is independent of *leadership*, (but it does not say program) deepens the ambiguity.

Second, does the passage imply that the struggle for Palestinian self-determination is the same as the struggle to establish a democratic secular Palestine?

The first ambiguity, we assume, only results from careless wording. But it is an important point, and it should

be clear in any resolution on the Palestinian revolution that our support is independent of specific programs. The counterdraft explicitly states that the Palestinian struggle should be supported even if the perspective of the expulsion of the Israeli-Jews should at some moment have a hegemonic position.

The second ambiguity is more crucial. We will have more to say about it in our discussion of the national question.

Even after the appropriate factual corrections are made, and the above ambiguities removed, the NC's use of the "democratic secular Palestine" is still, we believe, false.

The question that arises is: what does the NC draft mean by the democratic secular Palestine? We know what Fateh means by it: it is the "ultimate goal of liberation," the maximum program. Fateh clearly does not intend it to be an action slogan. In fact, no tendency that we know of in the Arab East views it as such.

It seems to us that there are two possible meanings that this slogan could have for the NC draft. Either it may simply refer to the fact that the new order established by the revolution in Palestine will carry out the democratic tasks; or it could be a transitional demand of some kind—a demand similar to the workers government in the United States. That is, a demand which, if masses led by the revolutionary party are mobilized around it, would lead to the establishment of a workers state.

If the NC is using the term in the first sense, then on one level we have no objection to it. A workers state is most assuredly democratic and secular. The problem is that this abstracts from exactly what is crucial in the real life of the Palestinian struggle.

First, Fateh uses democratic secular state and democratic secular Palestine interchangeably. As we have pointed out, the identification of the state with the nation is an aspect of bourgeois-democratic consciousness. It is not enough to say that we are for democracy. In fact we should steer quite clear of any formulations that refer to some abstract democracy. So we cannot identify the state with the country (or people). But as soon as we begin talking about the state, we must specify its class character. That is, we must describe a workers state, not a democratic state.

Further, we must stress that the only really democratic state is a workers state, and that the manner in which it asserts democracy is through the program of proletarian democracy; and when we do that, we must explain what proletarian democracy means (including the proletarian democratic position on the national question, a point we will return to later).

If the NC means the "democratic secular Palestine" to be a transitional demand, then we think it is simply wrong. This slogan cannot be a transitional demand for a number of reasons. For one thing, it is not a demand at all, so it can't very well be a transitional one. This is because of the reality of the Arab East.

You cannot construct a democratic Palestine until the Zionist state is destroyed. Therefore, to achieve a democratic Palestine, masses of people must be mobilized around concrete demands that destroy the Zionist state. As we have pointed out, "for a democratic secular Palestine" is not a demand on anybody. And this is precisely why even Fateh does not view it as an action slogan. The fedayeen have never mobilized people around

that slogan. They have mobilized people around their desire to smash the Israeli state; and that desire has been manifested in a number of ways (guerrilla raids, etc.). Inside Israel, the axis of the struggle leading to the overthrow of the Zionist state must be the de-Zionization program; it cannot be the demand for a "democratic secular state."

In other words, the democratic secular Palestine is no more a transitional slogan than is peace, freedom, love, brotherhood, sisterhood, or any other phrase connoting such worthy goals.

D. Permanent Revolution vs. Spontaneism

An argument that has been used during the pre-convention discussion against the counterdraft and in support of the NC draft runs:

In the epoch of imperialism, there can be no successful bourgeois democratic revolutions. Therefore, the general democratic tasks—in this case the construction of a democratic secular Palestine—cannot be achieved by the national bourgeoisie. Because of this fact, it is sufficient to call for democracy in the program, because the dynamic of the permanent revolution will transform that democracy, in the course of mass struggle, into socialism, provided the Leninist party forces the struggle to be consistent. Thus, to make a point of calling for a workers state in Palestine ignores the process of permanent revolution. It reverses our priorities, because it postulates a struggle against the national bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation, rather than an embracing of the national struggle as a whole. Further, it hands the slogans of democracy over to the bourgeoisie, which in reality is not for democracy. The problem for revolutionaries is not to programmatically distinguish themselves from the national bourgeoisie by program, but to become the most consistent fighters for the national demands with the understanding that this consistency will produce, after a certain time, socialist consciousness among the oppressed masses.

The entire argument, we feel, turns on a pun—namely, what is meant by "successful bourgeois democratic revolution?" If the statement means that the national bourgeoisie cannot take state power, sometimes at the head of a mass mobilization, and construct a regime that has more than an ephemeral existence; that is, consolidate its power, then the statement is simply contradicted by reality.

One has only to think of the history of the colonial revolution from the Indonesian war of independence in the late forties to the fate of the Algerian revolution, and especially noting Iraq, Syria and Egypt, to mention three countries of the Arab East.

These facts do not contradict the theory of permanent revolution; on the contrary, they confirm it.

The theory of permanent revolution does not imply the inevitable automatic victory of the proletariat in any given concrete, revolutionary situation. Rather it implies that nothing short of the establishment of a workers state will make possible the carrying out of the democratic tasks, and especially the establishment of the conditions of rapid and broad economic development.

It excludes a whole period of capitalist development. But it in no way precludes the national bourgeoisie holding power for extended periods.

Nor does the new rise of world revolution. There is nothing automatic about the victory of the socialist revolution. There is only the real possibility of its triumph, and the fact that the alternative, over the long term, is a return to barbarism.

Whether the possibility is realized depends, in the final analysis, exclusively on whether or not Leninist parties are built that can lead mass struggles, expand and educate their cadre on the basis of the socialist program, and thereby be able to lead the masses to victory by overthrowing the bourgeoisie and establishing the workers state.

The Palestinian bourgeoisie will compromise with Zionism and imperialism; of course it will sell-out. But that is not the point. The Palestinian bourgeoisie will try to seize power in a liberated Palestine. Based on the historical experience up to now there is every reason to assume that it will succeed *unless* there is a revolutionary party enjoying the confidence of the masses that is aware of this danger and has educated the masses to be alert to it. This can only be done if the workers state is central to its program, and is sharply counterposed to the illusion of a "classless" democratic state.

(It should be noted here that there is a strong tendency in the NC draft to identify the successful achievement of the democratic tasks with the destruction of Zionism. That is an incorrect identification. Destruction of Zionism is a necessary, but by no means sufficient, condition for carrying out the democratic tasks.)

Again, we feel that this is the fundamental lesson of the permanent revolution. The counterdraft does not counterpose the workers state to the struggle for democratic demands. We counterpose the workers state to the democratic secular state.

In this we think we are consistent with the Leninist-Trotskyist analysis of the imperialist epoch. The slogan for a democratic state has never been regarded by Marxists as a democratic slogan in the epoch of imperialism. This is because the only state that can consistently carry out democracy is the workers state.

In practice, the bourgeoisie has always triumphed under the slogan of a (general, that is, unspecified) democratic state. To say that it is a democratic slogan thus says that it is a slogan which, when advanced in reality, results in the creation of a state which specifically excludes the carrying out of democracy—which is quite a contradiction.

Lenin, even when he believed that the Russian revolution would lead to the consolidation of a bourgeois state in Russia, never permitted the Bolsheviks to propagate any such slogan as "for a democratic state." He insisted that such a state would be a capitalist state, insisted on pointing this out, and therefore on the Bolsheviks maintaining their organizational independence as a revolutionary party.

Instead of calling for a democratic state in Palestine, it is the task of Leninists there to be in the forefront of all the democratic struggles—the central one being the struggle to destroy the Zionist state—and persistently explain that it is only the workers state that can carry out the thorough democratization necessary, and especially that only the workers state can free the region of national and imperialist oppression in all its forms.

It must recruit on a program that makes this the central point. Only if it does that, and at the same time wins the confidence of the masses through its audacity, intelligence and courage in the conduct of the democratic struggles, will it be able to form the new state as a workers state after the Zionist state has been crushed.

E. A Dangerous Logic

The logic of the concept of some sort of automatic achievement of the workers state through the democratic struggle alone has some extremely dangerous implications. It is saying in practice that a slogan should be raised that historically has resulted in the triumph of the bourgeoisie. If the bourgeoisie seized power, and demonstrated that it cannot consistently solve the democratic tasks, a struggle for socialism would then be launched.

That is, in practice, the "spontaneous development theory" has the same results as the theory of two-stage revolution—although the subjective considerations of those implementing the two strategies are different.

Adherents of both strategies raise the slogan "for a democratic state (or country)" rather than the slogan "for a workers state." Both strategies, in practice, aid the seizure of power by the bourgeoisie either by failing to undermine bourgeois democratic consciousness among the masses (in the case of the spontaneous theory) or by deliberately fostering it (in the case of the two-stage theory).

The theory of spontaneity has implications for party-building that also parallel, in practice, the two-stage theory. The Leninist party is built on program in the first place. If the program of the party is not differentiated from the program of the nationalist organizations, then the question arises: How does the party recruit?

The logic of the theory of spontaneity is that the Leninist should enter the largest of the nationalist organizations, and rather than conducting a sectarian fight around programmatic questions, merely try to force that organization to be consistent in its fight for its existing program. After all, wouldn't it be easier to force Fateh (or any other fedayeen organization) to be consistent from within, by being the best builders of it, than from without, standing on the sidelines with essentially the same program, but proudly announcing that we are more consistent?

Again, for both the two-stage theory and the spontaneity theory, the practice followed is similar, though for different reasons.

Under the two-stage theory, the party tends to be dissolved because it is assumed that the national bourgeoisie will lead the revolution. Under the spontaneity theory, the party tends to be dissolved into the largest nationalist organization in order to serve as a pressure group to force the realization of the spontaneous tendency of development. In either case, the practical result is that the Leninist party is not built.

The National Committee does not recommend this strategy. Nevertheless, it is the objective logic of the NC position. The fact that this logic leads to something the NC is against—the abandonment of party building—indicates that the NC should reconsider its attitude toward the slogan "for a democratic secular Palestine."

There is, however, a further consideration that makes the NC draft even weaker. In the Arab East when one talks about the revolution, one is not talking *purely* about a revolution in an underdeveloped colonial region. One is also talking about Israel, a technologically advanced capitalist nation-state, with a highly skilled proletariat.

From the Palestinian point of view, winning, or at least neutralizing that proletariat is an important part of the revolutionary struggle. What is more, following the revolution, assimilation of its skills, technical level, etc. to the region as a whole will be important in effecting the most rapid possible development of the area. The winning

the Israeli-Jews to the revolution is thus a key aim of the Palestinian revolution, even from a purely nationalist point of view.

The national question as it relates to the Israeli-Jews thus becomes a decisive element in revolutionary program and practice in the region.

Beginning from the assumption that Leninist parties will be built; that the power in a liberated Palestine will be a workers power, the question of the Leninist perspective on the Israeli-Jewish national question becomes intimately interlinked with the general program. In fact, the position that we call the "revolutionary socialist perspective" on the national question becomes one and the same as the revolutionary perspective on the revolution in general. Here also we disagree with the formulations of the NC draft.

II. The National Question

The NC's criticism of the perspective of an Israeli-Jewish right to national self-determination in a workers state in Palestine centers on two points:

1) The perspective is contrary to Leninist principle, according to which the right of self-determination can be considered only with respect to oppressed nationalities:

2) The perspective is a tactical absurdity, since it would in reality have the opposite effect than the one it aims at; it would strengthen, not weaken, the bonds tying the Israeli-Jews to Zionism, and it would cut across the mobilization of the Palestinian masses since it would put in question our support of the Palestinian right to national self-determination—which is what their present struggle is fundamentally about.

Here, we will seek to demonstrate that the position of the Counterdraft is a principled one and that therefore its inclusion in our program, provided it is carefully formulated, is an important tactical element in the revolutionary struggle.

A. The Question of Principle

The NC's concept of self-determination is most clearly formulated in four places in the Draft and in the Report:

1) "To Leninists, the right of self-determination is not an abstract moral right belonging to all nationalities at all times and under all circumstances. It is a political demand that is raised for oppressed nationalities for the following purposes . . ." (Draft, 9, 2, 1)

2) "Since the Leninist demand for the right of oppressed nations to self-determination is designed to guarantee them the state forms they feel are necessary to end their oppression, the implication of the argument for future Hebrew self-determination is that this demand is necessary to guarantee that the Israeli Jews will not face national oppression after the victory of the Arab revolution." (Draft, 9, 2, 4)

3) "While we are for their [the Israeli-Jews'] full democratic rights within the framework of a democratic Palestine, we are opposed to the Israeli state and the concept of self-determination for oppressor nationalities." (Report, 15, 1, 5)

4) "The key principled question is whether or not a given nationality is an oppressor nationality or an oppressed nationality. Even in the latter case raising the demand for self-determination may or may not be appropriate. But we never demand self-determination for oppressor nationalities." (Report, 15, 2, 6)

There are, we believe, several major weaknesses in these formulations. First, the NC makes an absolute and arbitrary

distinction between democratic rights in general and the right to form a national state in particular. Second, the NC does not spell out what it means by an oppressed nationality. It implies, however, that a nationality can be forcibly denied the right to a national state and yet not be an oppressed nationality. Third, by saying that the right of self-determination means the right to "whatever state forms" the oppressed nationalities "feel are necessary to end their oppression," the NC leaps over exactly what is crucial about the concept of the right of self-determination, namely, that it means the right to form a national state, that the consciousness that demands the right to form a national state is one and the same consciousness that demands democratic rights in general. Fourth, the NC confuses support to the right of self-determination with support to the exercise of that right.

These four mistakes account for the NC's misstatement of the Leninist position on the right of nations to self-determination.

1. Democratic Rights for Oppressor Nationalities?

a. An Incorrect Demand

It never occurred to us before reading the NC draft resolution that, *without any qualification*, "an integral part of our program for the Palestinian revolution as a whole is support of full civil, cultural, and religious rights for all nationalities in the Mideast, including the Israeli Jews" (Draft, 5, 2, 1); that "we support the right of the Israeli Jews to pursue their national culture within the framework of a democratic Palestine" (Draft, 7, 2, 4); that "our program includes democratic rights for whites in South Africa and Rhodesia." (Report, 15, 2, 2).

Thus, according to the NC, we are not opposed to democratic rights for oppressor nationalities; rather, we are for them. Hence, there is a distinction between democratic rights in general and the particular democratic right of self-determination.

We assume that "civil . . . rights for nationalities" includes civil rights for individuals of those nationalities, since we don't know what else "civil rights" can mean. We also assume that it will be granted that the right of an individual not to die violently without due process of law is a civil right. Frequently, however, Israeli-Jews die violently at the hands of Palestinian fedayeen without due process of law. Do we then support the right of the Israeli-Jews to be immune to this sort of violence at present, that is, do we support the struggle to destroy the fedayeen? We think not.

We assume that the right of an individual to live wherever he or she wishes is an elementary democratic right. The revolutionary movement has traditionally included the right of free movement, of immigration and emigration, among the demands of its democratic program. It is by no means excluded that in Israel a popular movement will develop demanding the right of Israeli-Jews to settle in larger numbers in the territories occupied since 1967. Would we then support such a movement in its struggle for the democratic right of Israeli-Jews to live in these occupied territories? We think not.

b. A Self-Refuting Argument

Of course, the comrades of the NC do not mean this kind of thing. What they mean is indicated at one point of the Draft where they write of "the right of the Israeli Jews to pursue their national culture *within the framework*

of a democratic Palestine . . ." (Emphasis added). In other words, the NC says that we support the democratic rights of the Israeli-Jews *not today*, when the Zionist state exists and oppresses Arabs, but *in the future*, after the Zionist state is destroyed and the democratization of the region is underway.

That is, the NC introduces a distinction between a *demand* (implying support for a present struggle) and a *perspective* on the norms governing the exercise of power in a liberated Palestine. At the same time, the distinction between the right of self-determination in a liberated Palestine and all other democratic rights in a liberated Palestine is maintained.

We think that in introducing the first distinction (which the NC explicitly rejects in relation to the question of self-determination), the NC has made much of its own argument against the perspective of an Israeli-Jewish right to self-determination self-refuting. This can be seen by simply making the appropriate word changes—in most cases merely substituting "democratic rights" for "self-determination"—in the argument of Draft, 9, 2, 1–10, 1, 3. Precisely the same arguments with the same degree of validity that the NC uses against the perspective of an Israeli-Jewish right to self-determination in a liberated Palestine can be used against the perspective of the maintenance of democratic rights for the Israeli-Jews in a liberated Palestine.

Only two objections can be raised. First, that the Palestinians themselves have conceded democratic rights—except the right of self-determination—to the Israeli-Jews, and therefore the perspective of democratic rights for Israeli-Jews does not infringe on the Palestinian right of self-determination. It is merely an expression of what the oppressed themselves have already determined.

Second, that the right of self-determination is different in kind from all other democratic rights in that it is purely *instrumental* to achieving and securing other democratic rights.

2. Self-Determination in Advance?

The Palestinians cannot "determine themselves" in advance of the achievement of the right to national self-determination. At that moment, the kind of state forms the Palestinians "believe necessary to end their oppression" will be determined by what class and what party has the authority and power to speak for the Palestinian people, that is, by the relationship of forces existing at that time within the Palestinian and Arab national movements.

The fact that a certain perspective—the democratic, secular state, for example—has a majority or even a hegemonic position at some moment by no means implies that the same perspective at the moment of liberation might not contradict the belief of the people about what state forms are necessary to end their oppression.

This is not an abstract question. Five years ago, the perspective of democratic rights for Israeli-Jews was regarded by the Palestinian masses as a disguised form of Zionism. "A few years ago," the Fateh statement, "Towards a Democratic State in Palestine," observes, "discussing this proposal [a democratic, nonsectarian state] would have been considered as a sell-out or high treason. Even today, some Arabs still find it very difficult to accept the proposed goal and secretly—or publicly—hope that it is nothing more than a tactical propaganda move."

It is by no means certain that the future development

of the Palestinian movement will leave the perspective of a democratic, secular Palestine unchanged. A serious, even if conjunctural, defeat for the resistance movement could well produce an ideological regression on this question, among others. It is even possible that, if Hussein is successful in reducing the movement to temporary impotence (which is certainly not a far-fetched possibility) that many Palestinians, and their organizations, might support the establishment of a West Bank puppet state. Presumably, we would still be for the destruction of the Zionist state. On the other hand, we are convinced that the building of a Leninist party that intervenes in the Palestinian struggle will lead the Palestinian national movement towards a position on the national question similar to the one put forward in the Counterdraft.

The conception that the Palestinians have "determined themselves in advance" leads either to making our support of their struggle conditional on their acceptance of our program, whatever it may be, or else to subordination of our program to whatever program happens to have a hegemonic or even majority position in the Palestinian movement at any given moment. Did our program in 1963 include democratic rights for the Israeli-Jews? If it did, was that not placing a "demand" on the oppressed nationality? If the Palestinians change their program in the future, will we also change ours?

If the NC maintains that our program does *not* depend on the Palestinian program, then its argument against the perspective of an Israeli-Jewish right to self-determination in a liberated Palestine falls to the ground at least on one level—the level that states that we cannot make "demands" on the Palestinians. The NC is also making "demands." The question is rather, what is a correct "demand" and what is an incorrect "demand."

3. Democratic Rights and Self-Determination: Separate Questions?

This brings us to the second mistake of the Draft on this point: the rigid separation of the right of national self-determination from other democratic rights. The Counter Draft, on the other hand, makes a distinction between all democratic rights, including the right to self-determination, according to whether those rights are imbedded in a general system of oppression or not. From this distinction follows the Leninist principle that every particular democratic right is subordinated to the general democratic struggle and especially to the completely consistent form of that struggle, the struggle for the socialist revolution.

A right is a norm governing the exercise of socially organized violence. But an inherent aspect of a right is the social consciousness of that right. It is only by virtue of the consciousness that it is possible to state, "This right has been violated," when socially organized violence is in reality exercised in contradiction to the norm.

But this consciousness is itself historically determined—it is the product of a history of class struggles. No one can decree what is and what is not a democratic right—one can only discover, through a study of the histories of societies and social movements, what is and what is not a right.

The Draft states that the right of self-determination, for Leninists, is not an abstract moral right, but a "political demand for oppressed nationalities that is raised"

(9, 2, 1) for certain definite purposes. This is true enough in a certain sense. But it leaves out the fact that it is a political demand that *can* function for certain purposes only *because* it is an expression of the real development of nationality. If this is overlooked, one can, as the NC does, come perilously close to a voluntarist conception of the notion of "right," the assumption that the Leninist party itself can decree what is a right and what is not a right. And in fact, one part of the historical reality that makes the right to national self-determination an actual right is that it does *appear* to the protagonists of the historical process precisely as an abstract moral right. Oppressed nationalities do not fight for the right to a state of their own without the conviction that they *ought* to have it.

4. Self-Determination: 'Any State Form'

According to the NC Draft, the purpose of Leninists fighting for the "right of self-determination for oppressed nationalities is to guarantee them whatever state forms they believe are necessary to end their oppression." This demand "means that the oppressed nationalities have the right to decide to form a separate state, or to exist in a unitary or federated state alongside a former oppressor nationality, or to adopt some other form of self-determination, as the oppressed nationality so chooses. The oppressor nationality has no right to decide this question." (Draft, 8, 1, 4)

These formulations seem to us wrong in several respects.

a. Leninists Cannot Make Guarantees

First, a relatively obvious point. The right of self-determination cannot mean that the oppressed nationality *unilaterally* decides to exist in a *federation* alongside the former oppressor, for wherever federalism is more than an empty form, it is a voluntary, bilateral or multilateral agreement and thus dependent on reciprocal recognition of the right to self-determination.

Second, it is impossible for Leninists to *guarantee* anything to any nationality. They can only fight for certain things with the confidence that their struggle is both consistent with and an expression of the objective, historical tendency.

Presumably, what the Draft means by "guarantee" is that Leninists commit themselves to utilize whatever power they can command to aid the oppressed nationalities in establishing "whatever state forms they feel are necessary to end their oppression."

But this is an impossible commitment for Leninists of the oppressed nationality. Since oppressed nationalities are usually divided into classes, "whatever state forms the oppressed nationality feels are necessary" in fact means whatever state forms the dominant class of the oppressed nationality feels necessary to end *its* oppression, which it identifies with the oppression of the nation as a whole.

The first duty of Leninists is to fight for proletarian hegemony against the ideology of all other classes.

They *do* commit themselves to the fight against foreign domination, because their participation in this fight is a necessary aspect of the general fight for proletarian hegemony and because it objectively weakens imperialism. They *do* commit themselves to support even a national bourgeois state against imperialist intervention. They *do not* commit themselves to aid in the establishment of a

capitalist state merely because the bourgeoisie may at a certain moment have the ability—the power and the authority—to do so.

Concretely, the Palestinian Trotskyists would certainly defend a bourgeois Palestinian state against Zionist and imperialist attacks. But they would also surely be working towards the overthrow of that state and its replacement by a workers state.

It is equally impossible for the Leninists of the oppressor nationality to commit themselves to support the establishment of *any* state forms of the oppressor nationality. They commit themselves to the fight against their own ruling class for the right of the oppressed nationality to create any state form without the interference of the oppressor state. They commit themselves to defend even a bourgeois state of the oppressed nationality against their own state. But they cannot commit themselves to aid the establishment of a bourgeois state of the oppressed nationality against the proletariat of the oppressed nationality, just because the national bourgeoisie may have sufficient material power and sufficient ideological authority over the masses to be able to decide what the oppressed nationality "feels" to be the state form it needs.

In particular, in Palestine Israeli-Jewish Leninists must commit themselves to defend *any* Palestinian state against Zionist or imperialist efforts to crush it. At the same time, they must commit themselves to do everything possible to advance the struggle that leads to the overthrow of a bourgeois state and the establishment of a workers state in Palestine.

In short, Leninists can never be indifferent to the kind of state forms that arise from the struggle of an oppressed nationality. Their primary responsibility is to agitate, propagandize, organize and lead actions such that the state forms the working masses come to believe are necessary to end their oppression are in fact those that are necessary—that is, the workers state.

b. Nationality and Self-Determination

But there is a more fundamental problem. The formulation of the meaning of the right of self-determination according to which the oppressed nationality has the right to any state forms it feels are necessary to end its oppression seems to us to point away from what is specific to this demand—namely, the right to form a *national* state. The implication of the draft's formulation is that the members of the oppressed nationality consider various state forms in a purely *instrumental* manner, posing to themselves the question, Which state forms can best serve as the instrument for ending oppression?

It is a historical fact that, for reasons indicated in Section 9 of the counter draft, a group that is becoming a nationality tends toward the formation of a national state. The demand for the right of national self-determination appeals to this fact as it is reflected in the consciousness of the people involved. Central to the demand is not "any state form," but the fact that the oppressed nationality tends "to feel" that a *national* state of their own is necessary to end their oppression.

The two are not at all the same thing. Leninists know that in reality the state is fundamentally an instrument of violence in the hands of the ruling class. Whether it is a means of struggle against national oppression depends largely on whether or not the ruling class in the state has a class interest in ending national oppression.

On the other hand, the most intense forms of national oppression often befall nationalities that do not possess a national state.

To the masses of the people, the national state—whether they actually possess one or not—does not appear primarily as an instrument at all, but as the very expression of their nationality; they tend to identify the nation with the nation state. Denial of the right to a nation state thus becomes identical to the denial of the right of the nationality itself to exist as a nationality. On this basis, so far as the nation state appears as an instrument, it appears as a *national* instrument for assuring the well being of the nation as a whole.

Once it is evident that the state is primarily an instrument, it becomes almost immediately evident that it is a *class* instrument. And in fact, consciousness of the state as an instrument rather than as the expression of the people as a whole, has historically been one of the crucial aspects of revolutionary class consciousness.

If the state were viewed as an instrument by the masses of the oppressed nationality, the demand for national self-determination would not be able to mobilize masses. The struggle against national oppression would immediately assume the form of a conscious class struggle against the exploiting classes both of the oppressor state and of the oppressed nationality whose class interests are served by perpetuating the oppression. It is precisely because the state appears not as what it primarily is—an instrument—but as the expression of the collective life of the individuals comprising the nationality that the demand for self-determination has the ability to mobilize masses.

In other words, there is an element of mystification in national consciousness itself. But it is a historically inevitable mystification that has its roots in the history of democratic struggle in the capitalist era, struggles directed first against feudal privilege and later against oppressing nation states.

Nationalism is thus inseparable from the general democratic (bourgeois) consciousness that arose in the history of these struggles. Oppressed groups identify themselves as nationalities and seek a national solution to their oppression as a consequence of this general democratic consciousness.

Where oppressed groups are really becoming nationalities—that is, also developing the prerequisites for the formation of a national economy—this nationalism can play a progressive role because it can lead to mass struggles against a real enemy, however mystified that enemy may be in the consciousness of the oppressed. Where the group is not developing such prerequisites—as in the case of world Jewry—such consciousness can only play a reactionary role, because it cannot lead the masses into struggle against a real enemy; it wholly mystifies the source of the oppression.

In the case of an oppressed nationality, this mystification, however, contains the potential of its own overcoming, it can become a bridge to revolutionary class consciousness.

It is a historical inevitability that oppressed nationalities will struggle for the right of national self-determination if they struggle at all. It is also a historical inevitability that the masses of an oppressor nationality will struggle to maintain their right to national self-determination when it is threatened. For Leninists, the question is not

whether or not this right "should" exist in one or another of the cases, but what to do about this reality. The business of Leninists is to perceive reality as it is and on the basis of that perception to change it. It is not to abstract from the historical process and voluntaristically decree who should have rights and who should not.

The historical processes that have produced national consciousness are the same processes that have produced democratic consciousness. One aspect cannot be separated from the other.

This is why Lenin could hold that denial of a nationality's right to form a national state *itself constitutes national oppression*. The Leninist formulation of the problem is not that all oppressed nationalities have the right of self-determination and no oppressor nations have that right. It is rather: All nations have the historically determined right of self-determination along with all other democratic rights. We support the right of any nationality to establish a nation state, provided that the formation of that state does not transform the nationality into the oppressor of another nation or establish conditions that are inconsistent with the maintenance and extension of the proletarian revolution.

Thus, the counterdraft does not distinguish between the right to self-determination on the one hand and all other democratic rights on the other. Rather, it distinguishes between all democratic rights, including the right of national self-determination, as aspects and props of a system of national privilege and oppression on the one side and these same rights embedded in a system of relationships that is undermining national privilege and national oppression, on the other.

Because of this presentation of the question, we are also led to make a distinction between a *demand* for a certain democratic right, which implies support of (leadership of, participation in, etc.) a present struggle to gain, maintain or extend the scope of that right, and a *perspective* on the status of democratic rights under future conditions in which the objective basis of national privilege has been abolished. And, flowing from that distinction, we are led to make the usual distinction between what we *recommend*, and what we may or may not recommend but in any case support the right of. We do not advocate the formation of a separate Israeli-Jewish workers state but do affirm the necessity of recognizing the right of the Israeli-Jews to form such a state in a liberated Arab East.

B. The Tactical Question

What we have tried to demonstrate so far is that the NC's first objection to the perspective of an Israeli-Jewish right to national self-determination is incorrect. It is not contrary to Leninist principle to assert that the workers state in Palestine should recognize the right of the Israeli-Jewish workers to form a politically independent workers state.

There remains the question of whether raising this issue has any place in the revolutionary program, and if so, what that place is.

C. The Question of Strategy and Tactics

1. The Character of the Self-Determination Perspective

It should be clear at the outset that what we are proposing is *not* a guarantee for the Israeli-Jews against possible future degeneration or deformation. On the contrary, it is a positive statement of *non-deformation*. We

regard, as we feel Lenin did, the right of self-determination as a democratic right. As such, it is included in, or rather assimilated to, the program of proletarian democracy, that is, the most consistent form of democracy. In this sense, the right of the Israeli-Jews to self-determination in a workers state in Palestine is simply an aspect of proletarian democracy. Not a slogan, not a demand, not a guarantee against the future, but a statement on the norms that will govern the functioning of the workers state.

This can be clearly seen if one approaches the question from the opposite direction. If one says that the power in a liberated Palestine will be a workers power; and if one further says that the workers state power will not allow the separation of minority nationalities, even if that separation creates a workers state, then one is postulating a workers state that for some reason finds it necessary to keep another nation captive, and *therefore* (according to Lenin) oppressed.

This, we believe, would constitute a degeneration or deformation of not insignificant proportions. What interest would the Palestinian proletariat in power have in opposing the establishment of such a state? Does the NC draft mean to imply that the Israeli-Jews will remain incapable of forming any sort of state aside from an oppressive one?

Is it the case that the Israeli-Jewish proletariat cannot see itself as a nationality except on a chauvinist basis? We do not think so. The Israeli state today, and therefore the Israeli-Jewish nationality, is an oppressor because of its Zionist character, and its class character. A Zionist state can have no other character than the present Israeli state, as we sought to demonstrate in our analysis of Zionism. But that is something substantially different from saying that the Israeli-Jewish proletariat could not form a non-Zionist state—*unless one identifies a Zionist state with any state resting on the basis of the Israeli-Jewish nationality.*

If one makes this mistake, then one is substituting the dictatorship of the oppressed nationality, or at least the dictatorship of the proletariat of the oppressed nationality, for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The position that we are suggesting be adopted bears the same relation to the program as a whole as any other aspect of proletarian democracy. To select one small example: part of the program of proletarian democracy is the notion that officials of Soviets should not receive salaries in excess of the wages of the average skilled worker. This is not a demand. We do not mobilize anybody to do anything about it. It is abstract to a large extent. There are not even any Soviets yet, let alone any danger of bureaucracy within them. Moreover, as we have always said, we have every reason to assume that there will be no pressing danger of bureaucracy after the American revolution. We suppose that one could argue that even the mention of possible bureaucracy merely fosters the workers fear (unjustified) about Stalinism.

But nevertheless, this statement about the norms of functioning of the workers state, in addition to every other aspect of proletarian democracy, *is part of our program now.* We have found it necessary to include proletarian democracy in our program because of the past history of the workers movements. The statement that the norms of functioning of the workers state do not include bureaucracy is important on two levels. First, making this state-

ment to the working class *prior* to the revolution is a part of winning the workers to the revolutionary program and party. Second, *after* the revolution actually adhering to it will be a means of combatting bureaucratic degeneration. It is in no sense a "guarantee" to anybody.

2. Why Does This Question Arise?

Why is it that the question of the future rights of the present oppressor arises in the case of the Arab revolution, but not in the Black struggle, the Chicano struggle, or most struggles of oppressed national minorities.

In at least one major aspect the Palestinian struggle is different from these others. Usually, the oppressed nationality is a captive nation. The programmatic expression of its liberation fight therefore takes several possible forms—from demanding civil rights within the existing system and nation-state through the demand for separation from the state (or some demand with a similar dynamic, such as community control). The thread running through the entire development is, crudely put, "Get off our backs!" That is, an end to national oppression without challenging the national character of the oppressing state.

Because of this, the oppressed nationality usually does not formulate any position whatsoever on the future rights of the present oppressor. This is simply because the problem never arises in the course of the struggle.

This is not so in the Palestinian revolution. Because the Palestinians were expelled from their land, and a new nationality replaced them, their struggle could not have assumed a civil rights form, or a separation form. You cannot demand equal rights in a state from which you are excluded, much less "demand" separation from it.

This fact has been a very important revolutionary impetus in the Palestinian struggle, because it has posed, from the outset, the necessity of *totally destroying* the oppressor state. The same fact has also meant that the Palestinian movement has always had to define its perspective on the status of the Israeli-Jews. The Palestinians are asserting that the Zionist state *will* be destroyed, and that they will *hold power* in the area. We believe that they are not mere windbags when they say this. Palestine is in the Arab East. Demographically the region is Arab. Following the revolution it will be an Arab power that rules the area. That Arab power will have to answer, in real life, the question of the position of non-Arab minorities in the region—including the Israeli-Jews.

The question, then, arises in the course of the real struggle. It is not a question that can be ignored—and no Palestinian organization has attempted to ignore it. It must be faced squarely: what rights will the Israeli-Jews have in the liberated Palestine? If the power in a liberated Palestine is a workers power, then we believe the question nearly answers itself: the workers state must grant the right of self-determination to all nationalities, unless the exercise of that right conflicts with the needs of the proletarian revolution.

3. Zionism and the Israeli-Jewish Nationality

Apart from the fact that from the Palestinian viewpoint an answer to the national question is demanded, the answer that is given is of crucial importance in winning the Israeli-Jews away from Zionism, and to the revolution. Why is it that the Israeli-Jews are tied to Zionism? Why do they persist in acting against their own real interests not only as a class, but as a nation?

Searching through the NC draft and Comrade Gus' report, we find six passages that have a bearing on this

question. We will quote these passages in full:

1) "To consider that the Arab revolution will necessarily threaten the national oppression of the Israeli Jews is an unfounded *fear of the revolution itself*, a fear which is incited for counter-revolutionary reasons by the imperialists and Zionists." (Draft, 8, 2, 3)

2) ". . . the implication of the argument for future Hebrew self-determination is that this demand is necessary to guarantee that the Israeli Jews will not face national oppression after the victory of the Arab revolution." (9, 2,4)

3) "Among the Israeli Jews, such a demand [Israeli-Jewish right to national self-determination] would reinforce the racist fears, fears fostered by the imperialists and Zionists that the Israeli Jewish masses do have something to fear from the victorious Arab revolution." (Report, 9, 2, 5—10, 1, 1)

4) "Instead of raising slogans which reinforce the racist fears that Zionism and imperialism foster among the Israeli Jews, it is the duty of revolutionists to show the Israeli Jews how Zionism is wholly and completely against their interests. . . ." (10,1,3)

5) "At bottom, these unjustified fears [that victory of the Arab revolution will result in oppression of the Israeli-Jews] are psychologically based upon projection, that is, the assumption that the Palestinians would do to the Israeli Jews what the Israeli state is now doing to the Palestinians. They reveal a racist attitude toward the nature, motives, goals, and aspirations of the Palestinian people as a whole." (Report, 16, 1, 5—16, 2, 1)

6) "Portraying the victim as the criminal, imperialist and Zionist propaganda now attempts to equate the Palestinian goal of national liberation with the barbaric genocidal actions of the Nazis. One of the factors enabling the imperialists and Zionists to make this false comparison is the widespread racism against the Arab peoples that exists in Europe, North America and Israel." (6,1,5)

The theory underlying these passages seems to be more or less as follows: What binds the Israeli-Jews to the Zionist state is fear. It is a false fear of a mythical danger of future national oppression that would, the Israeli-Jews believe, flow from a triumphant Arab revolution. It is a racist fear, since it is a fear of the revolution because it is a *Arab* revolution. It is incited and fostered by imperialists and Zionists for counterrevolutionary reasons. The foundation of this fear, the reason the fear can be incited and fostered, is the psychodynamic mechanism of projection—that process whereby an individual falsely attributes its own feelings and behavior to an object other than itself. What the Israeli-Jewish masses really fear is their own nationally oppressive behavior; they falsely attribute this behavior to the Palestinians.

(We may be overinterpreting Comrade Gus' statement. He said only that these fears are *psychologically* based on projection. But since there is no reference in either the draft or the report to any other kind of base for the phenomenon, we must assume that the NC intended to commit itself to the view that the phenomenon is essentially psychologically based.)

We believe that this is not an adequate explanation of the problem. We have the following facts:

1) For several hundred years the world has been dominated by nation-states, struggles to form nation-states, and wars between nation-states. Absence of a nation-state, destruction of a people's nation-state, or even temporary

curtailment of its sovereignty, have often been accompanied by one degree or another of national oppression of that people.

2) As part of democratic consciousness, the masses of nearly every nation-state, identify the interests of the nation-state with their own interests.

3) Those facts referred to in our document on page 18, column 1, paragraphs 2 and 3 relating to the immediate prehistory of the Israeli-Jewish population and the colonial revolution.

4) The real long-term relationship of forces in the Arab East is by no means favorable to the Zionist state.

5) The Palestinians are saying to the Israeli-Jews, "We are going to destroy your state;" because of 4), they are not windbags on this point.

An understanding of these facts should indicate, we believe, that we have here more than a mass phenomenon of projection. The problem is that it does *not* follow from 1) through 5) that oppression of the Israeli-Jews would be attendant on the victory of the Arab revolution. But this cannot be convincingly demonstrated to the Israeli-Jewish population merely by either denying that they are facts, or by simply asserting that although they are facts, oppression will not result from the victory of the Arab revolution.

The Zionists have consistently sought to identify "Jew" and "Zionist." In this we have never given them an inch. But it is equally false, and this we think is not recognized by the NC draft, to identify "Israeli-Jewish national consciousness" with "Zionist consciousness." That is, the concern of the Israeli-Jewish population for its national existence is not the same as its Zionist chauvinist consciousness, although today the two are closely interlinked, and the Zionist ruling class wishes to see them merged into one forever.

If one agrees that the Israeli-Jewish nation must become consciously anti-Zionist if it is to participate in the revolution; and if one also states that Israeli-Jewish national consciousness is identical to Zionist consciousness, then one is saying that the Israeli-Jewish proletariat must renounce its nationality *prior* to its entry into the revolutionary movement.

This is different from saying that the Israeli-Jews must recognize the Palestinian right to self-determination. Unless one can describe the objective social forces that will produce this radical and unusual change in consciousness, one can only conclude that the prospects for mobilizing the Israeli-Jewish working-class in revolutionary action are grim indeed, if not outright nonexistent.

4. Two Analogies

We believe that precisely because the Israeli-Jews are a nationality they can be mobilized on a class basis to support and participate in the Arab revolution. The Israeli-Jewish population is not merely a caste, or a people-class. In their majority they are exploited workers, and those productive workers are therefore reachable on a class basis which does not entail renunciation of their nationality.

In Comrade Gus' report he alludes to the question of the South African whites, seeking to demonstrate that if we are consistent we must also call for the right of white South Africans to self-determination in a South African workers state. We think that the two regions and populations are not analogous in certain crucial respects.

The Israeli-Jews and the white South Africans are analogous in the sense that they are both oppressors of another people. But the white South Africans cannot in our opinion be considered a nationality. The course of colonization in South Africa has not produced a white nationality.

The ruling class in South Africa is wholly white. The working class and peasantry is nearly wholly Black. Those white South Africans who are not themselves members of the ruling class are members of the state bureaucracy, the officer corps, the upper middle class (professionals, etc.), or the world's most privileged labor aristocracy.

The possibility that these people can be won, on the basis of their class interest, to the revolution, is virtually nil. For this same reason, a separate white South African state could not be established without a massive proletarianization of the white population. A state (or a nationality) cannot exist without the existence of a large productive class at its base.

The situation in Israel is quite otherwise. The vast majority of the Israeli-Jewish population is working class, or lower petty bourgeois. They have a strong class interest in opposing their own bourgeoisie. When we say that Zionism created a new nationality, we mean just that. Rather than exploiting the native inhabitants, the Zionist colonization replaced them with a Jewish proletariat. National oppression and class exploitation in the Arab East are not parallel, as they are in South Africa. If they were, then it would not be possible to win the masses of Israeli-Jews to the revolution on a class basis, there would not be a base for national development, and we would not use the conception of the future right of the Israeli-Jews to self-determination because it would be a piece of idealist nonsense with no relation to reality. (And not because it would be immoral.)

In terms of social structure the Israeli-Jews are more similar to white Americans than they are to white South Africans. But here again the analogy breaks down.

In answering those who maintain that Black nationalism is reactionary because it must create a "white backlash" that would inhibit the revolutionary action of the white working class, we have not only said that it is incorrect to ask an oppressed nationality not to struggle until the masses of the oppressor nationality move into class struggle. We have also stated that it is simply not the case that the attitude of the Black movement toward whites has anything to do with whether or not the white working class will enter into struggle.

The reason is quite simple. There is no way that the Black population could threaten the existence of the white Americans as a nation, people, or whatever they may be considered (by us or by themselves). There has never been any oppression of whites by Blacks. Blacks constitute only 20 percent of the population at most. Even if the Blacks wanted to oppress white America (which is an absurd proposition to begin with, because there is no class among the Blacks that would have the slightest interest in doing so), they do not, and could not have the power to do so. There is no such thing as Black chauvinism in this country on any significant scale, because there is no social base for it. The Black nation is a captive nation; the nature of its oppression is not that it has been ousted from its territory, that territory being usurped by another nationality.

Several conclusions follow from all these facts. First, struggle by white workers to destroy the existing state does not raise the question of whether or not the whites will possibly become subject to the power of other nationalities. Second, because of that, the attitude of the Black movement toward the whites cannot be decisive in determining the social activity of the whites. Third, since the Black movement is not fighting for, and could not be fighting for, a unitary state *dominated by Blacks*, the only possible basis on which the whites could oppose a unitary state (i.e., full equality and integration) would be a chauvinist one.

If the Blacks opted for a unitary state, that state would still be demographically a white state, or at least a bi-national state with a large white majority. Thus, a white desire to separate from that state could not be a result of concern for the national existence of white America, which would not be at all questioned by such a development—but simply a chauvinist desire to live apart from Blacks.

But moreover, if the whites did want to separate, there would be nothing the Black population could do about it. So the whole notion of proposing that the Blacks recognize a white right of self-determination becomes fantastic. The Blacks could not suppress that "right," and for that very reason, they could not recognize or grant it either.

Thus, the concept of the right of self-determination for white America, under any circumstances, is firstly a total irrelevancy. Precisely because it is an irrelevancy, it is not just politically incorrect to raise it, but an absurdity to do so.

Again we must stress the two reasons for this:

- 1) Whites are a majority of the American population.
- 2) There is nothing in the history of white Americans, especially vis-a-vis the Blacks, to make concern about oppression an aspect of their national consciousness.

5. *Practical Significance*

In Israel the situation is different. Regardless of how militant the various struggles of sectors of the Israeli-Jewish population have become—strike struggles, the Sephardic struggle, the antimilitarist movement in the high schools, etc.—the question of Zionism has never been seriously spontaneously raised. It is not as though the sectors in struggle have considered the alternatives of Zionism versus the democratic secular Palestine and chosen Zionism. They have not even gotten that far. The questioning of the legitimacy of the Zionist endeavor, or even its relationship to their interests, class or otherwise, has not been raised. How should revolutionaries relate to this reality?

There are several answers. One is to state that the mobilization of Israeli-Jews is either impossible or irrelevant to the Arab revolution, that this problem should be of no concern to revolutionaries.

A second response is to state that the specifically anti-Zionist struggle is secondary; that as Israeli-Jewish workers move into action around their own demands, as the internal class problems of Israel develop, a revolutionary situation will arise, even if the Israeli-Jewish workers are not consciously anti-Zionist.

As we understand the issues involved, this is the view of the Lambertistes who have recently split from the ISO.

We believe that this view is false, that unless the Israeli-

Jewish workers consciously break with Zionism, there will be no significant Israeli revolutionary movement.

This is where the de-Zionization program and the explicit programmatic statement about the Israeli-Jewish right to self-determination in a liberated Palestine interrelate and become concrete.

The transitional program is not the total program, but a subsidiary part of the program as a whole. The actual demands around which the revolutionary party must intervene into the struggles of the Israeli-Jewish proletariat, high-school youth, etc. will flow from the de-Zionization program. That is, at each development, the party must seek to relate the specific issue concerned to the de-Zionization program; that is, raise the point *in action* that problems such as unemployment, inflation, militarism, etc. flow from the attempt of a Zionist state to dominate the Arab East; that as long as the Zionist state exists, it will require such sacrifices from its population.

In this connection, concrete applications of the de-Zionization program will be found—which will be expressed in slogans that have the same relationship to that program as a whole that "Thirty for forty" has to "For a sliding scale of hours and wages."

But that is not enough. If one accepts the outlook that states that the Israeli-Jews must consciously break with Zionism, then an alternative that can appeal to their interests must be found; an alternative that is anti-Zionist and principled. The democratic secular Palestine cannot be that alternative, because it asks the Israeli-Jews to renounce *not just Zionism, but their national identity*.

As we have tried to point out, this is an unrealistic demand. Given the choice: adherence to Zionism or disintegration of the nationality itself, the Israeli-Jewish masses, unless they all at once leap to pure communist consciousness (that is, attain a higher level of consciousness than the Palestinians), will inevitably choose Zionism. If this happens, then however severe the class struggle becomes, a real *political* radicalization will not take place.

The revolutionary party must hold out to the Israeli-Jewish masses an alternative which 1) totally excludes Zionism; 2) mobilizes them to actually destroy Zionism by attacking its major elements; and 3) demonstrates that not only is Zionism not the same as their national identity, but it is *inconsistent* with the continued existence of that national identity; that national identity can be preserved only through the triumph of the revolution in the region.

The only way this can be done, it seems to us, is to include in the program of revolutionary Leninist parties the conception of the Israeli-Jewish right to self-determination in a workers state in the Arab East. The general socialist program, including that conception, must be combined with the creative application of the de-Zionization program

to the actual struggles of the Israeli-Jewish proletariat.

An additional point is that only on this basis can the revolutionary party convincingly explain to the Israeli-Jews that their interests ultimately lie in integration and assimilation into the Arab East. If that integration is not a voluntary one, it cannot occur—because oppression would be necessary to effect it, and oppression will not make the Israeli-Jewish nationality wither away; on the contrary, it will intensify it, and intensify Israeli-Jewish Zionist chauvinism.

The development of such revolutionary Leninist parties is a complex process. Unless there is an anti-Zionist movement in Israel, it is difficult to assume that the Palestinian Leninists would be able to win the Palestinians to an internationalist program—you cannot make an alliance with a nonexistent force. On the other hand, unless the Palestinian nucleus of that party includes the perspective of the right of self-determination for the Israeli-Jews in its program, and demonstrates in real life that it is educating its periphery (and eventually the Arab masses) on this point, it will be extremely difficult to develop a *mass* anti-Zionist movement in Israel, even when the objective conditions exist. Each advance in one sector will stimulate an advance in the other. Each regression in one will tend to produce a like effect in the other.

* * *

In summary then, we think that the NC draft resolution does not present a correct revolutionary position on the Palestinian revolution.

It tends toward an uncritical acceptance of the program of the largest Palestinian organization; in so doing it suggests a too-automatic conception of the permanent revolution—a conception which implicitly minimizes the role of the Leninist party; it presents an oversimplified view of the national question, which when applied to this extremely complex area of the world results in major programmatic inadequacies.

Because of these flaws, if adopted by the party it would not arm the party to properly explain the Palestinian revolution and our attitude toward it; it would not permit the party to take maximum advantage of opportunities to recruit to Trotskyism students from the Arab world who are studying in this country; it would not make a correct contribution to the discussion in the international working-class movement on this question; it would limit the ability of the party to influence and recruit radical youth in the U. S. It therefore would not aid, but would hinder, the work of the party in defending the Palestinian revolution.

We believe that the counterresolution that we have submitted corrects those deficiencies.

July 30, 1971

POSTSCRIPT—AN ANSWER TO COMRADE HOROWITZ
by Berta Langston, Bob Langston, Brooklyn Branch, New
York Local; and Jon Rothschild, Upper West Side Branch,
New York Local

The major charge that Comrade Gus levels against our counterdraft, a charge that he applies to our treatment of every question, is that we are "abstract," while the NC resolution is "concrete." The truth being, as we all know, concrete, the question of who is right and who is wrong is thus immediately settled—in an extremely abstract manner, we may venture to add.

We maintain that it is not the counterdraft that is abstract. It is the NC draft, which operates under the assumption that the designation of which is the oppressed nationality, and which is the oppressor, is sufficient to decide all other questions.

* * *

Most of the arguments that Comrade Gus advances have already been answered in our supporting document. Here we wish only to call comrades' attention to the points we have made, and show what we think are flaws in the new arguments that Comrade Gus advances.

After his introduction, Comrade Gus goes into a two-and-one-half page description of why we are wrong to discuss the "feudal perspective," and the "bourgeois-democratic perspective" on the national question.

Much of his argument, we feel, is regrettably directed against a position that is not, in reality, the position that we asserted.

First, we never said that we were describing the consciousness of the Palestinian landholders, or of the Palestinian bourgeoisie. We direct the comrades to the section of our supporting document on this question, and to the counterdraft itself.

We never said that the feudalists wanted to drive the Jews out of Palestine; and we never said that the bourgeoisie is in favor of mass uncompromising struggles for the democratic state, or the democratic country.

We said that the *masses* has such consciousness, that it represented a contradictory form of expression of the general democratic content of their struggle—but that the forms of consciousness concerned mystified, rather than revealed, the real nature of the oppression of the Palestinian people. For that reason both the feudal and bourgeois-democratic forms of consciousness must be transformed by the intervention of the Leninist party in the course of the real struggle.

We will stand on that analysis, and repeat our challenge to the supporters of the NC draft: If this is incorrect, how do you account for the change in mass consciousness that has occurred? What is its material base?

Second, Comrade Gus refers somewhat sarcastically to our characterization of the social relations prevailing in Palestine at one time as "feudal." He writes that Marx characterized the system in the area as the "Asiatic mode of production."

The term feudal is undoubtedly not the most exact one. However, we will continue to maintain that in the sense in which we are using the term, it is not inappropriate. That is, it refers to a consciousness that views the national territory as "the sum of specific parcels of land, each of

which is the material base for traditional relations of privilege and exploitation between a specific landholding family and its peasantry." That is a description, we think, of a consciousness that actually prevailed among the Palestinian masses.

Furthermore, we have searched through the *Grundrisse*, Marx's major economic work in which the "Asiatic mode of production" is discussed, and we can find no reference to the Arab East, Syria, or Palestine in this regard. We would appreciate it if Comrade Gus could produce it for us. We also, by the way, cannot find any reference to the region as feudal—or as anything else. As far as we know, Marx never gave an analysis of the social relations in the Arab East, and we have to figure this one out for ourselves.

* * *

On the question of the bourgeois-democratic perspective Comrade Gus' objections are more basic. Again we must repeat that we did not say that the national bourgeoisie was providing the cadres to lead the Palestinian struggle; nor did we say that "democracy" is only in the interests of the bourgeoisie.

What we did say, and continue to say, is that the *slogan* of democracy, when raised in the abstract—that is, the slogan of the democratic state, or the democratic country—with no reference at all to the class character of the state, is a slogan that intensifies the hegemony of bourgeois-democratic consciousness over the masses. In its programmatic formulations the revolutionary party must always raise the question of which class is to rule.

Along with misunderstanding what we are saying about the bourgeoisie, Comrade Gus, we think, misunderstands the role that the bourgeoisie played in the era of bourgeois-democratic revolutions. He thinks that we are saying that the bourgeoisie consciously wants to lead a mass mobilization to destroy the Zionist state. To answer us, he writes that we should know that there have been major changes in the political orientation of the bourgeoisie, and especially of the colonial bourgeoisie, in the "past two centuries."

The changes of the "past two centuries" have not been so much that the bourgeoisie once favored revolutionary mass action, and now it doesn't. But rather that the bourgeoisie once was able to create regimes that were successful enough in their solution to certain democratic tasks, and corresponded to the existing level of the development of the productive forces, that they could endure for an entire historical epoch.

The bourgeoisie *cannot* do this any longer because capitalism is no longer an ascending historical system. Because of this, it is perhaps even more fearful of the masses than it once was; but this does not mean that it used to go around fomenting mass revolutionary struggles, and in the "past two centuries" has changed its mind.

The French revolution was not led by the French bourgeoisie in the sense that Comrade Gus thinks we are talking about leadership. Robespierre and Marat were not

conscious agents of the bourgeoisie, and were certainly not members of it. Even the radical leaders of the first American revolution in its period of mass mobilization cannot be characterized as conscious bourgeois agents.

The next major error that Comrade Gus makes in his reply is contained in the second column of page 9. It is not that what he is saying about the bourgeoisie being fearful of an opposed to democracy is completely wrong. Aside from certain questionable formulations, it is substantially correct in the abstract.

The problem is that Comrade Gus seems to draw from the fact that the *fight* for democracy is not in the interests of the bourgeoisie, but it is in the interests of the masses, the conclusion that therefore, the *call for*, or the *slogan of* a "democratic state" (or country) is in the interests of the masses, and not the bourgeoisie.

One does not follow from the other. The fight for democracy is not something that the bourgeoisie favors on a mass scale. But the bourgeoisie does not disappear in the course of that fight. This means that given a mass mobilization, the bourgeoisie will try to influence it, lead it, and eventually ride to power on its crest; and slogans that abstract from the class content of the state aid the bourgeoisie in this process.

We do not hand the fight for democracy to the bourgeoisie; we do not counterpose the fight for democracy to the fight for the workers state; but we do point out that only the workers state can achieve democracy in the most consistent way, that the fight for democracy is part of the fight for the workers state, and that the fight for democracy in the concrete means a fight against the notion of democracy in the abstract. The call for democracy in the abstract paves the way for the denial of democracy in the concrete.

The crucial point here is that although it is true that democracy can only be consistently implemented by the workers state, it does not follow from that truth that the fight for democracy automatically produces the workers state. The Leninist party must insist on the call for the workers state, recruit and educate cadres on that basis.

The fundamental difference between now and two centuries ago is that two centuries ago it would have been utopian to call for solving the democratic tasks through the workers state, but today it is not only not utopian—it is necessary. But that does not mean that it *will* happen without the Leninist party conducting a fight to transform mass bourgeois-democratic consciousness into mass revolutionary socialist consciousness.

* * *

On the question of self-determination:

Again, we do not pose this question abstractly. On the contrary, we seek to describe, in the counterresolution and more fully in the supporting document, that the meaning of the right of nations to self-determination developed in a certain way historically. It is for that very reason that this right cannot be formulated the way Comrade Gus does, because the formulation, "guarantees to the oppressed nationality any state forms it feels necessary to end its oppression," abstracts from the heart of the demand. We will not repeat that analysis here.

We merely wish to make the point that it is precisely

because we consider the question concretely that we are led to put such unusual conditions on our support to the Israeli-Jewish right to self-determination. Like all democratic rights, this particular one is subordinate to, that is, conditional upon, the interests of the general struggle for the most consistent democracy—the struggle for the workers state. In the concrete conditions of the Arab East, Israeli-Jewish self-determination in any form other than the one we describe could not help but be inconsistent with the struggle for the workers state.

We seek to demonstrate that it is necessary to place this perspective in the program now—precisely because of the concrete peculiarities of the situation in the Arab East. Again we will not repeat that analysis here. We urge comrades to closely study our supporting document, and the counterresolution itself, and see whether we have posed this problem in the abstract.

In his reply, Comrade Gus makes an analogy between white Americans and the Israeli-Jews. In his report to the last plenum of the party (published in the same discussion bulletin as the NC's resolution) the analogy is made with white South Africans.

We have indicated in our supporting document that we think these two analogies are inaccurate. Presumably, the NC is telling us that in a colonial situation intermixed with a highly advanced capitalist state (the Arab East), in a country in which an oppressed nationality is forcibly retained under police conditions in an extremely unusual way (apartheid in South Africa), and in the most technologically advanced bourgeois-democratic state in the world, the national question is the same; that they are all analogous as far as the national question is concerned. The algebraic formula "any state forms the oppressed feel necessary" is sufficient to define the program. This, we feel, is an abstract presentation of the problem.

* * *

Comrade Gus states on page 12, column 1, paragraph 5, that "This question [what type of state will replace the Zionist state] will be posed, at least implicitly, at every point of the revolutionary struggle within Israel." We agree! And we answer: "The workers state must be posed." What type of state does Comrade Gus recommend be posed? A democratic state? A secular state? Isn't it necessary to specify its class character?

* * *

On page 12, column 2, paragraph 4, Gus quotes our statement that ". . . violent retention of the Israeli-Jewish nation within an Arab state, under conditions in which political independence of the Israeli-Jewish nation would be consistent with the elimination of Israeli-Jewish privilege, would constitute an element of national oppression of the Israeli-Jews."

In the following paragraph Comrade Gus calls this an "absurd statement." In the next paragraph after that he states, "Denial to a nationality of the right to secede can be a form of oppression only if that nationality is oppressed in other ways as well."

Does denial of separation, all other things being equal, constitute oppression? We say it does. We try to explain

why. We further state that this was Lenin's attitude. We urge comrades to read Lenin's works on the national question, and especially his discussion on Norway and Sweden in "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination." If Gus is wrong about this point, then his argument collapses.

* * *

Besides all the above questions, which we think we have largely already answered in our counterdraft and supporting document, Comrade Gus raises three points that deserve somewhat more attention.

Comrade Gus confuses support of the *right* of self-determination with recommendation of the *exercise* of that right. This is most clear in his reference to the slogan of the United Socialist States of Europe (page 13, column 1, paragraph 2).

Comrade Gus calls this slogan a demand for a unitary state, and says that this is what we demand for oppressor nationalities.

To begin with, one may wonder, if this is a call for a unitary state, why we make the grammatical error of naming it the United States (plural) of Europe. (Unless one views the slogan as having substantially the same content as a call for a socialist USA, which we do not think is the case.)

The fact is that it is not a call for a unitary state, in the sense of demanding the immediate dissolution of all European state forms into a single one.

Ultimately, we are for the integration of *all* nationalities, whether presently oppressed or oppressor. But this must be a voluntary process. If Belgium, an oppressor nation (at least the French-speaking sector of it) does not wish to be part of the United Socialist States of Europe, we are not in favor of forcing it to be. Because forcing it would constitute oppression, and that would foster Belgian chauvinism, not proletarian solidarity.

We seek to explain to all the workers of Europe that a united Europe on a working-class basis is in their interests. We recommend it; we propagandize for it; as the occasion arises we agitate for it; we do not seek to impose it by force.

Likewise in Israel. The interests of all people in the region would be best served by integration and assimilation; and to the Israeli-Jews we especially stress this. This is an aspect of anti-Zionist propaganda. We do not recommend their separation, on whatever class basis. But we cannot force them to integrate, to want a unitary state. To the extent that we attempt to do that we strengthen Zionism and Israeli-Jewish chauvinism.

Again, the only condition that can be introduced is that this right—not to be subject to forced integration—is subordinate to the socialist revolution. And in the concrete case of the Arab East that means that Israeli-Jewish separation cannot take any form other than the formation of a workers state, without being in basic conflict with the revolution. Thus, if the Israeli-Jews wanted to recreate a capitalist state, we would oppose it by force; we would recommend a dictatorship over the Israeli-Jews. But we would not call that a "unitary state." We would call it what it would be: a military occupation, unfortunate, but necessary. And we would seek to end the necessity for that dictatorship as rapidly as possible by politicizing the

Israeli-Jewish workers.

If this sounds complicated, it is because it is concrete; and reality is always more complicated than abstract schemas.

This brings us to the second point. On page 11, column 2, paragraph 8 through page 12, column 1, paragraph 2, Comrade Gus concentrates on the question of preferential treatment. His point is that in a unitary state it will be easier for the Palestinians to insure that preferential treatment is really implemented.

It seems to us that Comrade Gus does not fully follow out the logic of what he is suggesting. If the Israeli-Jews will remain so opposed to preferential treatment that they cannot be trusted to accede to it unless the Palestinians have the ability to force them to accept it, then it would become necessary not only to restrict their right of self-determination, but other democratic rights as well.

They would use their temples as organizing centers against the state; they would use their cultural institutions, schools, etc. for the same purpose. They could not be trusted to serve in the army; they could not be trusted in factories; their press would have to be restricted.

If the Israeli-Jews cannot be politically convinced, by the Palestinian leadership, but above all by the Israeli-Jewish Leninists, to support preferential treatment on the basis of their own interest in bringing about the most rapid possible development of the region, then a dictatorship over them (workers as well as former rulers) would be necessary to guarantee that preferential treatment. That dictatorship would entail not just the suppression of their right to self-determination, but of other democratic rights as well. Again it becomes apparent that considering the right of self-determination as separate from all other democratic rights is a mistake—not just abstractly, but in the concrete too.

* * *

In one small section of his reply, Comrade Gus seeks to demonstrate that our position on self-determination leads to "a sort of politics of the absurd." (Page 11, column 2, paragraphs 3-6)

The absurdity is as follows:

The counterdraft is in general for the right of self-determination for the Israeli-Jews, but it supports the struggle to destroy the state of the Israeli-Jews.

The counterdraft is in general for the right of the Palestinians to self-determination, but we "reject the current self-determination demand of the Palestinians for a unitary state. . . ."

"So we are being presented with a rather unusual argument: In general, each nationality is entitled to whatever state form it wants; and in the concrete, neither is entitled to the state forms it wants now."

We think that it is Comrade Gus who has drifted into the politics of the absurd. And the reason is simple. If self-determination is defined as a nationality's right to "any state form," then it is indeed difficult to avoid politics of the absurd.

Because of that definition, Comrade Gus has unequivocally stated that support to the right of self-determination means support to whatever program the movement for self-determination happens to have at any given time. Note carefully: Comrade Gus considers it a contradiction that we support the right of the Palestinians to self-deter-

mination "in general," but do not support the "current self-determination demand."

Comrade Gus, if the Palestinians were "currently self-determining that the Israeli-Jews should be expelled from Palestine, would we also support that demand? Of course we would support the *struggle*, but the demand? And if the Palestinians determine that they want some other state form, will the program of the Socialist Workers Party alter accordingly?

The final point is the extensive discussion of the variants we mention that might possibly result in the oppression of the Israeli-Jews.

At the outset, this discussion should be put in its proper context. We discuss these possibilities in our counterdraft in section 18, which is devoted to refuting a Zionist position; the argument that states that victory to the Arab revolution would result in the oppression of the Israeli-Jews, and that therefore, Israel must be supported, because the alternative would be worse.

Our answer to that position begins with the statement that the Zionist state *will* be destroyed, no matter what the Israeli-Jews do. Therefore, support to it cannot be a means of defense for the Israeli-Jews.

The question for the Israeli-Jews thus becomes: which manner of destruction of the Zionist state is best for us? The variants then illustrate that oppression of the Israeli-Jews would result not from the victory of the Arab revolution, but from its defeat, partial or total. Therefore, the interests of the Israeli-Jews lie in supporting the revolution to the fullest extent possible, because the extent to which they do this will to a considerable degree determine whether or not they will become oppressed.

In other words, we seek to demonstrate to the Israeli-Jews that (1) the Zionist state is no defense; (2) the total victory of the revolution is the only real defense; and (3) the action of the Israeli-Jews is a factor in determining whether or not the revolution is totally successful.

The reason we favor raising the perspective of the right of the Israeli-Jews to self-determination in a liberated Palestine is *not* because we think one of these variants is likely—and that is shown by the simple fact of the location of the two points in the counterresolution.

As we tried to show through a rather extensive discussion in our supporting document, we do *not* raise the perspective of the right of Israeli-Jewish self-determination as a *guarantee* against these possible variants.

Gus objects to these variants. He says that even if they occurred they would not result in oppression of the Israeli-Jews.

But we think Comrade Gus should consider the implications of his argument. According to him, if the revolution is victorious, the Israeli-Jews will have complete equality. If the revolution does not occur, they will continue to be privileged oppressors. If the revolution is defeated (by Israel, or by Arab reaction, an alternative that Comrade Gus apparently has not considered), they will continue to be privileged oppressors. If the revolution is partially defeated, they will maintain privileged positions under the hegemony of the Palestinian bourgeoisie. And if the revo-

lution degenerates, they will become privileged bureaucrats.

In short, whatever happens, the Israeli-Jews will be at least equal to the Palestinians, or perhaps be privileged oppressors. What has happened to our traditional position that Palestine is a "bloody trap" for the Jews? If the conditions of life of the Israeli-Jews will be at least equal to the Palestinians in any case, then what will motivate the Israeli-Jews to break with Zionism?

We assume that the NC does not mean to jettison this aspect of our anti-Zionist propaganda—that it believes that *if* the Jews constitute themselves as a counterrevolutionary army, they are likely to suffer the fate of counterrevolutionary armies—liquidation.

But even including that "variant," Comrade Gus seems to treat the possibility of the oppression or annihilation of the Israeli-Jews as a small, but *fixed*, probability. We, on the other hand, seek to demonstrate that the Israeli-Jews themselves can, to a considerable extent, determine their future fate by their own actions.

This is important in arguing against the Zionist argument in question, because it clearly shows that the Israeli-Jews can be a subject, and not simply an object, of history.

That is, the Israeli-Jews have a strong interest in having the destruction of the Zionist state occur in the most revolutionary way possible—through complete victory of the revolution. They have an interest—from a national as well as from a class viewpoint—in actively combatting any form of deformation, degeneration, or derailment of the revolution.

The NC argument against this Zionist argument is to merely state that in general the colonial revolution does not result in national oppression (a dubious proposition to begin with), and that therefore the Israeli-Jews should support it.

This argument 1) tends to reduce the Israeli-Jews to objects rather than subjects, and 2) counts on convincing them on a moral basis, rather than presenting them with a real revolutionary choice based on the interrelationship of their own interests and the Palestinians' interests.

Just one final point. In the first column of Comrade Gus' reply to our counterresolution, he writes (his fourth point), "The counterresolution, with all its qualifications, provisos, and contingency analyses, professes to be a model of the dialectical method. It is not. The method of Langston, Langston and Rothschild is schematic and formal."

We leave it to the comrades to decide the relative methodological merits of the two conflicting resolutions. But we wish to point out that it is simply *not true* that the counterresolution "professes to be a model of the dialectical method." It professes absolutely nothing about its methodology.

It may be that Comrade Gus considers that since many counterresolutions submitted for discussion claim to be dialectical, but are not, that it is an effective emotional argument to say, "This resolution is not really dialectical."

But since our counterdraft contains no statement of such profession, we frankly wonder how thoroughly Comrade Gus has read the document.