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The Palestine Problem and the Israeli-Arab Dispute

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The following statement, written at the beginning of May 1967, was the first public document issued by the ISO on the Middle East question. It was read to a public meeting held in Paris on May 18, 1967, sponsored by Arab and Palestinian student organizations. The meeting was reported in **Le Monde** on May 20, 1967. It must be remembered that this position was held before the beginning of the 1967 crisis. (First published in **World Outlook**)

The nineteenth anniversary of the establishment of the state of Israel will occur this month. During these nineteen years the Israeli-Arab dispute has not come nearer a solution. The Palestine problem is still an open wound in the body of the Middle East; an incessant source of bloodshed, suffering and wrongs; a heavy burden on the economic resources of the region; a pretext for imperialist aggression and military intervention; a grave threat to world peace.

Especially grave is the state of the Palestinian Arabs – the direct victims of the 1948 war and of the collusion between “the friendly enemies,” Ben-Gurion and Abdullah. The majority of Palestine’s Arabs were dispossessed of their homes and fields during and after



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the 1948 war, and have since been living as refugees, in suffering and distress, outside Israel. The leaders of Israel emphatically refuse to recognize their elementary right to be repatriated. The Arabs who were left in Israel are victims of severe economic, civil and national oppression.

During these nineteen years, Israel has been an isolated island in the Middle East, a state which is independent only in the formal sense, being economically and politically dependent on the imperialist powers, especially the USA. It has continually served as a tool of these powers against the Arab nation, against the progressive forces in the Arab world. The clearest manifestation (but not the only one) of this role of official Israeli policy was in 1956, when the Israeli Government joined Anglo-French imperialism in an aggressive collusion against Egypt, and even furnished these powers with a pretext for military intervention.

The state of war and hostility between Israel and her Arab neighbors has continued for nineteen years, and Israel's Zionist leadership has no real prospect of changing this situation. Israeli policy is a *cul-de-sac*.

The present economic crisis in Israel, which has caused grave unemployment of the workers and great hardship to the popular masses, also serves to underline the fact that Israel cannot long continue to exist in its present form, as a Zionist state, cut off from the region in which it is located.

Thus, the present state of affairs is against the interests of the Arab masses: Israel, in its present form, constitutes a grave obstacle for the struggle of these masses against imperialism and for a socialist Arab unity. The continuation of the present state of affairs is also against the interests of the Israeli masses.

The Israeli Socialist Organization, in whose ranks are both Arabs and Jews, holds that the Palestine problem and the Israeli-Arab dispute can and should be solved in a socialist and internationalist way, taking into

consideration the unique features of this complex problem. This is not an ordinary conflict between two nations. Therefore it is not enough to call for coexistence based on mutual recognition of the just national rights of the two peoples.

The state of Israel is the outcome of the colonization of Palestine by the Zionist movement, at the expense of the Arab people and under the auspices of imperialism. In its present Zionist form, Israel is also a tool for the continuation of “the Zionist Endeavor.” The Arab world cannot acquiesce in the existence in its midst of a Zionist state, whose declared purpose is not to serve as a political expression of its own population, but as a bridgehead, a political instrument and a destination for immigration of the Jews all over the world. Israel’s Zionist character is also opposed to the true interests of the Israeli masses, because it means constant dependence of the country upon external forces.

We therefore hold that a solution of the problem necessitates the de-Zionization of Israel. The state of Israel must undergo a deep revolutionary change which will transform it from a Zionist state (i.e., a state of the Jews all over the world) into a socialist state that represents the interests of the masses who live in it. In particular, the Law of Return (which grants every Jew in the world an absolute and automatic right to immigrate into Israel and become a citizen of it) must be abolished. Each request to immigrate into Israel will then be decided separately on its own merits, without any discrimination of a racial or religious nature.

The Palestine Arab refugee problem is the most painful part of the Israeli-Arab dispute. We therefore hold that every refugee who wants to return to Israel must be enabled to do so; he should then obtain full economic and social rehabilitation. Those refugees who will freely choose not to be repatriated should be fully compensated for loss of property and for the personal suffering which has been caused to them.

In addition, all the laws and regulations aimed at discriminating and oppressing the Arab population of Israel and expropriating its lands must be abolished. All expropriations and damages (to land, property and person) caused under these laws and regulations must be fully compensated.

The de-Zionization of Israel implies also putting an end to the Zionist foreign policy, which serves imperialism. Israel must take an active part in the struggle of the Arabs against imperialism and for the establishment of a socialist Arab unity.

The Zionist colonization of Palestine differs in one basic respect from the colonization of other countries: Whereas in other countries the settlers established their economy upon the exploitation of the labor of the indigenous inhabitants, the colonization of Palestine was carried out through the replacement and expulsion of the indigenous population.

This fact has caused a unique complication of the Palestine problem. As a result of Zionist colonization, a Hebrew nation with its own national characteristics (common language, separate economy, etc.) has been formed in Palestine. Moreover, this nation has a capitalist class structure – it is divided into exploiters and exploited, a bourgeoisie and a proletariat.

The argument that this nation has been formed artificially and at the expense of the indigenous Arab population does not change the fact that the Hebrew nation now exists. It would be a disastrous error to ignore this fact.

The solution of the Palestine problem must not only redress the wrong done to the Palestinian Arabs, but also ensure the national future of the Hebrew masses. These masses were brought to Palestine by Zionism – but they are not responsible for the deeds of Zionism. The attempt to penalize the Israeli workers and popular masses for the sins of Zionism cannot solve the Palestinian problem but only bring about new misfortunes.

Those nationalist Arab leaders who call for a *jihad* for the liberation of Palestine ignore the fact that even if Israel would be defeated militarily and cease to exist as a state, the Hebrew nation will still exist. If the problem of the existence of this nation is not solved correctly, a situation of dangerous and prolonged national conflict will be re-created, which will cause endless bloodshed and suffering and will serve as a new pretext for imperialist intervention. It is no coincidence that the leaders who advocate such a “solution” are also not capable of solving the Kurdish problem.

In addition it should be understood that the Israeli masses will not be liberated from the influence of Zionism and will not struggle against it unless the progressive forces in the Arab world present them with a prospect of coexistence without national oppression. **The Israeli Socialist Organization therefore holds that a true solution of the Palestine problem necessitates the recognition of the right of the Hebrew nation to self-determination.**

Self-determination does not necessarily mean separation. On the contrary, we hold that a small country which is poor in natural resources such as Israel cannot exist as a separate entity. It is faced with two alternatives only – to continue to depend on foreign powers or to integrate itself in a regional union.

It follows that the only solution consistent with the interests of both Arab and Israeli masses is the integration of Israel as a unit in an economic and political union of the Middle East, on the basis of socialism. In such a framework the Hebrew nation will be able to carry on its own national and cultural life without endangering the Arab world and without a threat to its own existence by the Arabs. The forces of the Israeli masses will join those of the Arab masses in a common struggle for progress and prosperity.

We therefore hold that the Palestine problem – like other central problems of the Middle East-can only be solved in the framework of a Middle Eastern union. Theoretical analysis and practical experience alike

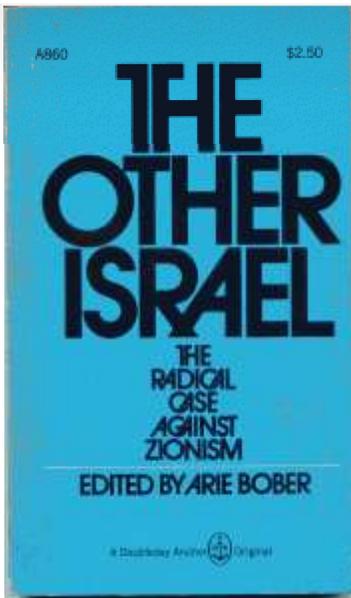
show that Arab unity can be formed and exist in a stable way only if it has a socialist character.

One can therefore sum up the solution which we propose by the formula: de-Zionization of Israel and its integration in a socialist Middle Eastern union. We hold that the problem of the political future of the Palestinian Arabs should also be solved within the framework described above.

There are people who think that justice necessitates the establishment of a special Palestinian Arab political entity. Our view is that this question must be decided by the Palestinian Arabs, without outside interference. However, we think that it would be a grave error to pose the problem of the political future of the Palestinian Arabs separately from and independently of the question of socialist Arab union. At present the Palestinian Arabs are in the first ranks of the struggle for unity. If they would be presented with a separate and dependent aim, the cause of Arab unity may suffer grave damage. Also, the establishment of a small *separate* Arab state is not consistent with the interests of the Arab nation, including the Palestinian Arab people.

We therefore hold that if the Palestinian Arabs decide in favor of establishing a political entity of their own, the necessary political and territorial arrangements should be made within the framework of establishing a socialist union of the Middle East. The countries that now hold parts of the territory of Palestine – Israel, Jordan and Egypt – should particularly contribute to such a settlement.

We call upon the revolutionary socialist forces in the Arab countries and in other countries to consider our present program and to start a wide discussion aimed at working out a common position on the problems of the Middle East.



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