Zionism: the debate continues

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Specials

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<th>Adidas</th>
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The Crystal-connection

During a tense seven hour debate last Wednesday, Anne du Plessis, Bradley Liebman and Avrom Sevell admitted to receiving funds channelled through Russel Crystal for 'election purposes'. They refused to heed a call for their resignation claiming that they were still 'liberals' and denying that they had deceived their electorate.

The meeting was called to clear the air after allegations of right wing funding were made in Wits Student and the Sunday Express. Du Plessis, Liebman and Sevell, after initially denying 'any connections with right-wing organisations', admitted to the Sunday Express that they had received money from Russel Crystal during the elections.

All three stood as 'liberals' during the election. The Sunday Express also confirmed the Wits Student report that Glen Lambert, Commerce representative, had acted as 'paymaster', keeping receipts of all the 'gifts' which he channelled to election candidates.

A motion drawn up by David Grolman (Medical Rep) and Paul Alexander (SRC Vice-President) claimed that these dealings with Russel Crystal were 'a deception to Campus' and demanded to know 'exactly what was going on'.

The meeting began at four o'clock in a packed 1 D MacCrone room. Grolman immediately challenged the four to reveal the source of their funding and the extent of their SMA links.

Du Plessis countered the attack claiming that Paul Alexander, the fourth member of the liberal 'Positive Action' ticket (with Liebman, Sevell and du Plessis) had also received money.

Du Plessis said 'the day before the election he (Alexander) approached me and said that I was expected to be at a meeting at Russel Crystal's house. 'I wanted to see how far the rot had gone' he said. Grolman and Alexander repeatedly explained that they had withheld their finding for nearly six weeks in order to amass evidence and present a strong case. 'We did not want to be sued by the SMA' Grolman said.

Alexander and Grolman's evidence consisted mainly of affidavits by leading liberals and the 'confessions' of the four to the Sunday Express.

During the seven hour debate, du Plessis admitted to receiving R50 from Glen Lambert for her campaign. Liebman and Sevell both admitted to receiving R100 from Lambert and to signing receipts to this effect.

Glen Lambert then revealed that he had received R300 from Russel Crystal from 'independent business sources'. Despite all attempts by the SRC to get the name of the sources Lambert refused to reveal them. 'They want to remain anonymous', he said.

Lambert claimed that the three hundred rand was divided into R50 for Anne, R100 each for Avrom and Bradley and R50 for Paul Alexander.

When challenged, Lambert dramatically produced a receipt supposedly signed by Alexander for the R50. 'I know this is not Paul's signature' Lambert said in response to the general laughter, 'but it is his handwriting'.

The meeting had its lighter moments. At one stage du Plessis, who translated Chaucer, filed her nails and repeatedly pretended not to hear questions, got up and kissed Russel Crystal.

Her questioners were trying to prove that she had 'more than just a financial relationship' with the SMA and that she was 'no longer a liberal'.

To prove her liberal mindedness du Plessis then tried to kiss well known leftist, Daryl Glaser, who ran to the other end of the room explaining 'Hey no!'

STOP PRESS

Mirryenna Karam has been voted out of her position as Students Arts Council president. In a meeting on Wednesday the needed two thirds majority was obtained.
A Zionist history of anti-Semitism

What transformed this vision into a popular movement was the desperate plight of the Jewish masses in Russia and Eastern Europe. The pogroms of 1881 in Russia were a turning point in Jewish history, leading to a massive emigration from the Czarist Empire where the greatest reservoir of the Jewish people was concentrated.

The first pioneers in Palestine came from this Russo-Polish environment imbued with populist, socialist and revolutionary ideals. They were ethical and utopian socialists, convinced that the Jewish State would be realised only by manual labour, idealism and sacrifice. Their Zionism was rooted in the messianism of Jewish tradition, in the hope for national rebirth. Zionism did not repudiate the revolutionary ideal of the classless society, but they realised that International Socialism could not solve the specific problems of the Jewish people, unless they had a national framework in which to work and struggle.

As a national movement Zionism was responsive to the needs of the Jewish masses, the proletariat, the intelligentsia and the middle class, who looked not only to the security of having their own State, but to the promise of a new social order based on justice, national planning and social solidarity.

**Holocaust**

The extermination of six million Jews by Hitler's Germany during the Second World War provided the final, macabre vindication of the Zionist prognosis. At one stroke it cut off the largest reservoir of world Jewry and at the same time created a traumatic self-awareness and solidarity of Jews all over the world. The state of Israel was born in this moment of deepest despair and anguish out of a desperate will for survival. The emotional ties between this new State and Jewish minorities in all the diasporas of the world can only be understood against this stark background.

Zionism which had previously been the revolutionary movement of a prominent minority now became the expression of a world-wide Jewish national consciousness, the focus of all its hopes and dreams.

Having understood the fundamental roots of Zionism, the second part of this analysis must serve to examine the nature of the Zionist revolution.

The most persistent of myths about Zionism, fostered continually by the Arab world, the Soviets, the New Left, and others, is that it is a form of colonialism, organically linked to imperialism. Even when it is occasionally recognised by more sophisticated analysts that Zionism is not a classic capitalist country or a classic colony, its settler-colonial role is still denounced as reactionary and oppressive.

The basic error underlying such assertions is the failure to distinguish between colonialism and colonization.

Many groups have migrated throughout history to other lands without thereby becoming 'colonialists'. By what right, then, do the Europeans migrate to North and South America; to Australasia and New Zealand; to the Anglo-Zanzibars and Normans in France; to the Spaniards in Mexico or Peru? Not one of these groups had historical, cultural or religious links with the places they settled in—certainly none comparable to the link of the Jews with Palestine.

The Jews were unique even among the colonizers in entering the new environment with the conscious intention of re-establishing themselves in their place of origin, to a land which they had been physically and spiritually connected with throughout their history.

Zionist colonization was the twentieth-century version of a 'colonialist' enterprise, seeking above all to avoid the capitalist exploitation of indigenous labour and the acquisition of private property. It utterly repudiated the ideals of the European colonialism as manifested in societies like South Africa or Rhodesia and what was once called 'the race problem' in French Algeria.

Professor Shlomo Avineri rightly characterizes Zionism as 'the only intentionally downward mobile social movement ever experienced in the history of immigration'.

The early Zionists came to land in with some 300 000 Arabs were working 10% of the land. It should be pointed out that most of the land purchased before the establishment of the State was in fact desolate malaria ridden and did not therefore involve the displacement of Arab peasants.

The lands, bought from absentee feudal landowners, did not become private property, but passed into collective ownership. The money for purchasing this land did not come from wealthy Jewish
The nature of Israel

...capitalists or 'colonialist' agencies; it was acquired by the Jewish National Fund, whose capital emerged from millions of petty Jewish artisans, shopkeepers, workers and professional people in Central and Eastern Europe.

It should be pointed out that the progressive features of Jewish colonisation inspired a great deal of hostility from the Arab feudal class in Palestine, who called the Zionists 'Bolsheviks' rather than colonialists. Paradoxically, it was the democratic, anti-colonialist, anti-imperialist character of Jewish colonisation which alarmed the Arabs most.

Zionism could only realise its potential when the British ruled over this territory for reasons of imperial self-interest connected with their dominant role in the Middle East.

With the brief exception of the period just before and after the Balfour Declaration (which was counter-balanced by similar British promises to the Arabs), Britain in no way specifically supported the Zionist cause.

'Not colonialism'

In fact, far from there having been an organic connection between Zionism and British imperialism, the settlers found themselves engaged in a bitter, anti-colonialist struggle against the British. The Red 'protectionists' between 1945 and 1948. Indeed, Zionism could only realise its goals of free Jewish immigration and developing the country, by obliging the British imperialists to withdraw from Palestine.

As with other national movements, both Zionism and Arab nationalism found that their overall struggle against imperialism, their interest could converge temporarily with those of the imperialists. This is a common experience to all national liberation movements, from the Italians in the 19th century (who sought Czarist assistance against Turkey) from the American colonists of 1776 (who received French backing against the British) to Ho Chi Minh in the late 1940's who wanted American help against the British.

The Arabs have acted in the same way to further their own national movement. In 1913 the first Arab National Congress tried to win French imperialist support against the Turks and the British. During the First World War, the Arab, like the Zionists, needed British imperial backing. In the 1930's they allied themselves with German Nazism and Italian Fascism against Anglo-French imperialism. Since 1955 the Arabs have increasingly relied on Soviet military support in their struggle with Israel. Now once again, Egypt has turned back towards America and the West for assistance.

The mythical picture of a Zionist-imperialist conspiracy completely overlooks the constant nature of big power support for the Arabs and vastly overestimates its much more limited help to Israel. While Soviet, Arab and Leftist propaganda fantasizes about an intricate network of financial, banking and capitalist interests which allegedly back Israel, they are silent about the very real penetration of the capitalist world by Arab oil interests.

Arab export of capital has become a new form of financial imperialism, which has been an organic connection to world imperialism. Zionism is pictured as a criminal conspiracy and its dimensions are global.

Beseiged

The enriched and besieged Jewish State which has been threatened with extinction by its neighbours, ever since its birth, is presented as the aggressor, rather than the victim of aggression.

By constructing this bogy of colonialism imperialism and linking it organically with Zionism, the Soviets and the Arabs have deliberately distorted the true nature of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The various imperialisms of the West, Indian, French, British, German, Italian, Soviet and American which have been involved in the area, have only entered it at a secondary level.

The fundamental conflict has been one between two national movements, the Arab and the Jewish, and it is this fact which the myth of Zionism imperialism has sought to conceal.

To analyse events leading up to the foundation of the State of Israel in terms of a plan to systematically expel the Palestinians from the entire area is to be guilty of distortion and misrepresentation of historical fact.

There can be no doubt that the Zionist movement misjudged the intensity of Palestinian Arab opposition to its ideological aims. Though the labour movement, which became the dominant trend in Israeli society, regarded the Arab worker as a potential ally in the 1930's in its struggle for a bi-national socialist Palestine, it met only with hostility and incomprehension.

With the exception of Feisal, who in a letter to Professor Felix Frankfurter in March 1919, wrote: 'The Jewish movement is national and not imperialist, and there is room in Syria for both of us. Indeed, I think that neither can be a real success without the other.' Subsequent Arab leaders did not show the same recognition of the Jewish right to self-determination in the land of Israel, systematically rejecting Zionist efforts at compromise and offers of a bi-national solution.

Whereas the Zionists accepted the partition plans of 1937 and 1947, the Arabs consistently rejected them, insisting that Palestine must be an Arab State in its entirety. The crux of the partition arguments was the problem of the Palestinian refugees, who up to 1948, were not recognised as refugees, and their right to return was not even mentioned.

The Arab refugees, did not possess property, but when they were expropriated by the Jewish state, they did not resist their displacement. A large number of them did not even have the right to vote in the elections for the Palestinian National Council, and therefore did not participate in the events which led to the end of the British Mandate.

Nevertheless, the Arab Army played a significant role in the struggle for Palestinian independence, and its members were among the first to resist the Israeli occupation of their land. The Arab Army was formed in 1932, and became a symbol of Palestinian resistance to the Zionist onslaught. It was led by Nashashibi, a well-known Arab nationalist who was a skilled military strategist.

In conclusion, it can be said that the conflict in the Middle East is not merely a conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, but is a conflict between the Arab world and the Jewish state, which has been shaped by historical events and geopolitical realities. The conflict is complex and multi-faceted, and requires a comprehensive approach to understanding its dynamics and nuances.
The history of the Middle East is thus the tragedy of the conflict of two nationalisms.

To focus on any one particular period, no matter how tragic, is to lose sight of the underlying reality of the region. To become fixed on events in Lebanon (and the proportions of the tragedy in that country cannot be exaggerated) is to miss the crucial point that this is merely another round in the Israeli-Arab conflict.

What is needed is to rise above and beyond the present, and to consider scenarios for a future solution of these problems.

A Marxist analysis of the region is frequently encountered. There is, however, an inherent contradiction in this approach. For a Marxist is by definition an anti-nationalist, who views all forms of Nationalism as diversions from the Universalist Socialist struggle, and as being in the service of State-Capitalism.

It is therefore a contradiction in terms to apply a Marxist analysis to the region, and then to support Palestinian Nationalism as the conclusion to that analysis. Marxists cannot have it both ways.

If, however, we apply a true Marxist analysis then a different answer is required. For true Marxists would wish to see a socio-economic revolution for all inhabitants of the Middle East, and a disappearance of all ethnic religious and particularist historical differences that currently divide Jews and Arab in the region.

However, the reality of the situation tells us that the possibility of Jews liberating Arab labour and of Arabs liberating Jewish labour is not a likely development. Rather, the history of the Jewish people has shown that before leading protracted revolutions of other peoples, they should be concerned with liberating themselves. Lessons of history have thus taught us that in the context of a world order based on national states, the Jews are left no choice but to take up the form of a Nation for themselves. Until the demise of the concept of the Nation-state, the Jewish pergative of its own nation will remain as legitimate and as justified as the aspirations of any other people.

Options?

Another much vaunted option is that of the Secular Democratic State in Palestine.

This myth is quickly exposed with even the most cursory examination of current realities. It is impossible to divorce the Palestinian cause from Pan-Arabism (Arafat stated in an interview with New York Magazine: 'Palestine is only a small drop in the great Arab ocean. Our nation is the Arab nation extending from the Atlantic Sea to the Red Sea and beyond.')

It is equally impossible to divorce the Arab World from Islam (and let no one underestimate the significance of the Islamic Fundamentalist revival). In addition to this, there is today not a single secular Arab state in the Middle East. How can one even dream of a 'secular' Palestinian State?

As for combining the Arab-Israeli conflict with the Pan-Arab and Islamic movements, it is simply not possible. The Arab Nationalists themselves recognize this. The PLO itself states: 'It is not the Arab Nationalists who are at fault.'

The concept of a permanent solution to the Palestinian problem is thus merely a bogus formula for the consumption of public opinion. That the PLO position is that the state of Israel must be destroyed, most of its Jewish population evicted, and the whole country to become a Palestinian Arab State. Jews remaining might be tolerated as a separate religious minority, but not as a separate National group.

What then are the real options for the resolution of this tragic conflict?

It is clear that there will be no solution until there is mutual recognition by both Jews and Palestinians of each other's rights to national self-determination. If this demand is to be made on Israel, then it must equally be demanded from the Palestinians.

If Israel is to recognise the national aspirations of the Palestinian people, then the Palestinians must compromise on their racist, exclusivist conception that the Jews are nothing more than a religious group, and that only the Palestinians have legitimate national aspirations (Article 20 of the PLO covenant: 'Judaism, in its character as a religion, is not a nationality with an independent existence.')

The basic asymmetry of the Arab-Israeli conflict lies in the exclusivist nature of the Palestinian self-definition, which at every stage of their history, has prevented them from reaching any compromise with Zionism. By insisting on the Arabness of liberated Palestine they demonstrate that their concept of self-determination excludes any possibility for Israel to maintain its Jewish-Zionist identity. As a nationalist movement, the PLO discriminates far more sharply against Israeli Jews, than even the most extremist form of Zionism against the Arabs. They have adopted an ideological position which has nothing to do with the facts of the situation (ie Israel's existence) but continues to assert an absolute claim on the whole of Palestine.

Discussion as to the territorial dimensions of the division of land in resolving this conflict is almost irrelevant until we can overcome the first, psychological barrier, which is a full recognition of co-existence and the mutuality of rights.

Recognition

It is clear that any political arrangement between the Arab States and Israel contradicts the essence of the PLO position which remains the non-recognition of Zionism. Its present vision of a just solution is ideologically incompatible with the existence of Israel, with a recognition of its national character and a right to self-determination. Instead the PLO proposes the fiction of a 'secular' Palestine with a Jewish minority, a State such as exists nowhere in the Muslim, Arab world.

Zionism never was, and never has been predicated upon a denial of the national rights of the Palestinian people, but rather on the necessity for co-existence.

Until this approach becomes mutual, the burden of responsibility for the conflict will continue to lie with the Palestinians who have not yet abandoned their resistance to the very idea of a Jewish State.
Socialisation and Zionism

The recent events surrounding the publication of an alternative view of the Palestinian question has raised a central question: What does it mean to be radical? The reactions of the Zionist lobby to last week's feature were predictable. However, another species seems to have emerged, among them the perspective of the intellectual background of the Zionists. They tend to call themselves left-wing Zionists. This term is not only a contradiction in terms, but it is logically inconsistent if they regard themselves as part of the progressive democratic movement in South Africa.

To be progressive in South Africa entails the transcendence of the systematic indoctrination that is the essence of our socialisation. To choose to jettison our pre-ordained roles as exploiters, racists and chauvinists is a prerequisite for involvement in the democratic struggle.

However, Jewish South Africans are also the product of Jewish socialisation that both defines their identity and expatriates. This is what is being called into question by articles like last week's feature. It tackles the very root of our identity and security. To refuse to accept this challenge is equal to ideologically supporting Israeli oppression and exploitation of the Palestinians both structurally and unilaterally during the recent massacres.

Thus the word radical comes for the Greek word 'radix' which means root. We cease to be radicals when we refuse to dismantle all reactionary aspects of our socialisation. It is therefore in this sense that the term 'left-wing Zionist' is totally incoherent. And those who continue to subscribe to such a self-identification would fall into question their continued participation in the democratic struggle in SA. Mark Swilling

A step backwards?

I question the motivation behind Wits Student particularly as regards the printing of feature articles such as 'Israel and the Palestinians: a history of conflict'. Such articles with their bald facts and misrepresentations only damage any credibility that Wits Student may have.

The idea of using propaganda to 'provide the other side of the story' is morally indefensible since the propagation of two opposing and extreme points of view does not necessarily lead one to the truth, a fact which seems to bother no-one. Furthermore, this article has not enhanced the 'progressive press' image we are striving to create. If anything, it is a step backwards for it does not serve to inform and educate, but merely creates and enhances tensions on campus. Objective debate and discussion would really be more appropriate.

Adam Bethlehem

Editor's letter

[Continued from previous page]

'All nationalism or racialism is evil'

The feature by every implication (and by citing mere expediency) tries to justify Israel's role as an American-subsidised arms-exporting superpower which readily props up reactionary regimes throughout the world. Israel's open support of the South African state (witness Yitzhak Rabin's supposedly in opposition to the present Israeli regime meeting jovially with Magnus Malan ten days ago) is abhorrent to all who value justice and democracy.

Finally, and by omission, this article seeks to justify Israeli-support for the fascist right-wing in the Southern Lebanon and Israel's dedication to wiping out not only the PLO but also the Lebanese Left, the only progressive force involved in Lebanese party politics.

As editor of Wits Student I can only dissociate myself completely from the views expressed in this week's centre-page article.

Progressives around the world have a duty to support the Palestinian people at every turn and not to contribute to the relentless propaganda which seeks to prolong their misery and their exile. It is high time that white progressives overcame their fear of Zionist bully boys and take a firm stand on the issues of the Middle East. I, therefore, have no hesitation in reinforcing my support for the spirit and letter of last week's feature and the previous week's editorial.

Harry Dugmore
Editor Wits Student
The debate over whether you can simultaneously be a Zionist and a Leftist is raging once again among campus activists. I would like to confront some of the arguments which, it is argued, support the claim that one can be both.

Zionism did originate as part of 19th century Imperialism. Not Imperialism in the sense of the drive to open markets and investment outlets but social Imperialism. The depression of the 1880's produced numerous social "problems" not only the Jewish one and many Imperialists, the era of the scramble for Africa saw colonisation as a means of disposing of surplus populations that could not be economically integrated in capitalist Europe. By setting Europeans in foreign lands the Imperialists hoped to gain strategic footholds in those areas, to "civilise" the colonised lands and, where possible, to open them up for profitable investment. Zionism was a form of social imperialism in this sense: it offered a solution to the "Jewish problem" in Europe, it offered a base for protecting the Suez Canal (and in this sense the 1956 war vindicated Lord Shaf- tesbury) and it provided to offer a "civilised" outpost in a land of "primitive" Arabs unable to convert their "malaria-ridden swamps into cultivable land" (and by the 30's it had become a "civilised" Western island in a sea of "anti-Imperialist" Pan-Arabism). Israel did not however prove to be economically profitable, the West, but then neither at least initially, did Rhodesia.

Of course, like all settler forms of colonialism, Zionism generated distinct and autonomous settler interests which eventually came into partial or complete conflict with the interests of the settler colonialism. This is absolutely typical of the settler form of Imperialism. In the case of the American war of Independ-ence, this conflict assumed massive and war-like proportions; in the case of Iran's " subsidised" British sat- tions; in the case of Northern Ireland it generated no me, but rather acrimony. But in a large number of cases the Mother Imperialist found itself having to contend with the naughtiness, sometimes the uncontrolled misbehaviour, of its own prov- enents.

Nationalism and its revo- lutionary role is a complex subject in Marxist theory. But two things are certain: nationalism is viewed in a favourable light only if and when it is territorially inclusive rather than ethnically exclusive; and only when the movement which embodies it carries with it the potential of initiating a transition to socialism. Zionism conforms to neither criterion. It makes an appeal only to Jews, not to all the victims of Imperialism within the nation-state boundary. And socialism, never really present except in a pasto- ral-Utopian and reformist sense becomes further and further enmeshed in the "Zionist Project". As members of the editorial board of Wits Student, we would like to comment on our attitude to the feature: Israel and the Palestinians — a history of conflict, (Vol 34 No 24).

The editorial in this volume states that the feature, "does not necessarily reflect the views of individuals on the editorial board of Wits Student. Many people feel that the feature does reflect the editorial board's opinions because the sub-headline accompanying the feature reads, "Wits Student examines the causes of tensions in the Middle East". We would like to reiterate the cause in the editorial that the feature does not reflect our opinions.

Helene Johe
Debbie Abrahams
Linda Berkowitz

No support

I feel it is vitally important to point out that Zionism does not necessarily imply blatant support of the government of the day in Israel. In a movement for the settlement of the Jewish people in Israel, irrespective of which government is in power.

C Hurwitz