

The French socialists combine with the Poincare Government in an effort to exploit the conflict in the Far East for the reinforcement of the anti-Soviet front. Everywhere we see the parties of the Second International, now developed into social-fascist parties, standing side by side with counter-revolution, against the Soviet Union, and taking an active part in the drawing up and carrying out of the imperialist war plans.

Working men and women, toiling masses of China! The appeal of the Communist International is directed most of all to you. . . .

. . . The working masses of China will reply to this adventure, organized by generals who have taken leave of their senses, by binding more closely than ever the tie of brotherly alliance with the proletariat of the Soviet Union, and by the revolutionary struggle against the Chinese and Russian White Guardists.

Workers of India and of the whole East! The object of the fresh provocation from the counter-revolutionary Kuomintang is solely the firmer establishment of the positions of the imperialist bandits, and therewith the imposition of the imperialist yoke on the peoples of the East, the crushing of your heroic struggle. Forward to the fight against world imperialism, against the fresh war, and for the defence of the Soviet Union, the stronghold of the world proletariat, leading at the cost of much sacrifice a bold struggle for the liberation of the oppressed peoples of the East.

Working men and women of the capitalist countries! Behind Chiang Kai-shek there stand the imperialists and their lackeys, the social democrats, who are anxious to sweep from the face of the earth the first proletarian republic, which has inscribed on its banner the liberation of the proletariat and the oppressed peoples of the whole world from the yoke of capitalism and imperialism.

#### EXTRACTS FROM A RESOLUTION OF THE ECCI POLITICAL SECRETARIAT ON THE INSURRECTION MOVEMENT IN ARABISTAN

16 October 1929

Inprekorr, x, 11, p. 258, 31 January 1930

[The fighting between Arabs and Jews which broke out at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem on 23 August 1929 provoked a good deal of discussion in the communist press on the nature of the forces involved. The Zionist movement had from the outset been condemned by the Comintern as an agency and tool of British imperialism; it was a counter-revolutionary movement of the Jewish big bourgeoisie run by the financial magnates of Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. An article in the Communist International shortly after the outbreak asserted that: 'The Zionist immigrants . . . turned the country into a suitable strategic base for British imperialism, and . . . were to serve as lightning-conductors towards which, in case of need, British agents could direct the revolt of the Arab masses against the occupation regime.' At

any sign of revolutionary nationalism British agents provoked massacres and pogroms, thus temporarily paralysing the revolutionary movement. The fighting that broke out in August 'was undoubtedly organized by British agents, provoked by the Zionist-fascist bourgeoisie, and arranged by the Arab-Mohammedan reaction'; but the movement got out of hand and became a genuine Arab nationalist revolt. The British purpose was to strengthen their position against the penetration of American capital and to frustrate Arab-Jewish mass solidarity. The Arab masses no longer trusted their bourgeois leaders who, corrupted by the money channelled through Zionism, were conciliatory towards imperialism, but their own movement had been captured by Pan-Islamic reaction.

The official Comintern attitude was disputed by some Jewish members of the Palestinian CP, who denied the existence of an Arab revolutionary movement; the workers' movement was almost entirely Jewish. In an article in *Novy Vostok* Arbuziam [Averbakh] asserted that the fellaheen and the Beduin masses were waging an active political struggle against British imperialism; they did not, however, submit easily to class political discipline and might therefore become the tools of imperialist agents. 'The basic question of the revolutionary movement in the Arab East is to use the immense revolutionary energy of the Beduin tribes for the revolutionary class struggle against imperialism, against the native bourgeoisie and feudalists, and to link it with the movement of the impoverished fellaheen and proletariat.' The Jewish Socialist Party (Poale Zion), including its left wing, had become a national-chauvinist organization defending the plantation owners and colonizers, and the trade unions sacrificed the workers' interests on the altar of Zionism.

An article by a certain Nadab published four years later in *Revoliutsionny Vostok*, which argued that, since Zionism was counter-revolutionary, anti-imperialism in Palestine must be directed against the Jewish national minority as being overwhelmingly Zionist, stated that those members of the Palestine CP who insisted that the 1929 events were a pogrom, and not a rebellion, had been expelled.

The League Against Imperialism interpreted the fighting as an anti-imperialist struggle to which the imperialists had given a religious character; the Zionists and social-democrats had prevented a united front of Arab and Jewish workers. The imperialists welcomed the event as a pretext for annexing Palestine to the British Empire. An article in *Inprekorr* said the Arab Executive now regarded the Zionist leaders not as enemies but as rivals for British favour. An accompanying article (signed J.B.) said the 'street fight' which began on 23 August was 'the signal for a general Arab rising'. The British Government 'dropped a little oil whenever the fire threatened to go out' in an attempt to destroy the Arab-Jewish rapprochement of recent years. The communist party was too weak to 'gain influence on the mass movement which grew from hour to hour and was influenced by blind religious fanaticism'. The Haifa committee of the communist party, claiming that what had happened was a pogrom pure and simple, suppressed the central committee statement which interpreted the events as the work of imperialist stooges, deflecting the anti-imperialist revolt into pogroms. In a letter to the Palestine central committee, the Eastern

secretariat of the ECCI spoke of the dangers of opportunism in the party, and of the conciliatory attitude to Poale Zion.

In October 1930 the ECCI again suggested that preparations should be made for the formation of an Arab Communist Federation, to include the parties of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. At the seventh congress of the Palestine Communist Party in December 1930 the Arab and Jewish delegates were equal in number—previously the Arabs had been in a minority; the two chief dangers facing the party were said to be Jewish Zionist chauvinism and Arab bourgeois nationalism; the central committee elected by the congress had an Arab majority. An article in *Inprekorr* on the congress said prospects were improving because the Jewish workers were turning against their own bourgeoisie while the Arab bourgeoisie were turning away from the nationalist movement. The Pan-Islamic congress held in Jerusalem in the summer of 1931 was described as an attempt to consolidate reaction and mislead the masses; its reactionary character was shown by the resolution it adopted protesting against the oppression of Moslems in the USSR. Early in 1932 a draft programme for the Egyptian CP was published. This described Egypt as a British cotton plantation worked by slave labour, with the monarchy and landowners acting as slave-drivers. All Egyptian parties were subservient to Britain, the Wafd representing 'bourgeois-landlord-counter-revolutionary-national-reformism'. An article in *Inprekorr* in May 1932 noted that 'as a result of the temporary weakness of the labour movement in Egypt, police provocateurs and petty-bourgeois adventurers succeeded in disorganizing the activity of the Egyptian CP, detaching it from the workers, and alienating it from the revolutionary mass struggle'. The seventh congress Materials said that for a time 'an unprincipled group' in the Egyptian CP, behind whom the police was hidden, had condemned communist organizations to complete inactivity. At the congress itself a delegate said that because of internal feuds and intrigues, the party had at one time been expelled from the Comintern; in 1931 the ECCI had appointed a new leadership.

Referring to the events of 1929, the Materials noted that there had been strong opposition to the ECCI's instructions to Arabize the Palestinian CP; these opportunists had been removed and the position was corrected at the seventh congress of the Palestinian Communist Party, but the party was only now (1935) beginning to bolshevizize itself, a process inseparable from Arabization.

A footnote to the present resolution states: 'The resolution is necessarily published in abridged form. In particular, it omits those passages concerning the attitude of the Palestine Communist Party to national-revolutionary trends.'

At the meeting of the LAI Executive in Cologne in January 1929 Heckert (representing the RILU) and Melnichansky (representing the Soviet trade unions) attacked A.J. Cook, a member of the Executive, who protested against outside interference in the League, and against the label of 'traitor' attached to union leaders, and said he was not inclined to support a League that was to become a new red international. Cook shortly afterwards resigned from the League. At the LAI congress in Frankfurt in July 1929 there were 260 delegates, 84 of them representing the colonies, although many did not come directly from

the colonies themselves. Munzenberg reported that the bourgeois nationalists who had been present at the Brussels congress, such as the KMT, had sold out to imperialism, and were not represented at Frankfurt; there were fewer intellectuals, but more representatives of workers' and peasants' organizations. An article on the congress in the Communist International in November said that in all the colonial countries the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie had moved to the right. The ILP and the Indian National Congress had played a treacherous part; Poale Zion was an agent of British imperialism. The left-wing social reformists (such as Maxton and Fimmen) had joined forces with the national reformists (such as Hatta and Gupta) and should have been more thoroughly exposed at the congress. (Maxton was later expelled from the British section of the LAI.) Neither the Indian nor the Indonesian revolutionary movement was represented, and hence there had been serious opportunist errors at the congress, which had failed to expose the left social-democrats, who were 'the worst enemies of the colonial peoples, the most dangerous enemies of the colonial revolution'. The congress resolution had not said a word about the 'treachery and perfidy' of the Indian National Congress. 'The time has come to raise the question of purging the League of elements which are obviously treacherous,']

The uprising of the Arab masses in Palestine and the events in Arabistan as a whole have by and large fully confirmed the correctness of the analysis made by the sixth CI congress and the tenth plenum of the sharpening of the struggle between imperialism and the working masses of the colonial countries, of the new surge of the national liberation movement in colonial and semi-colonial countries, of the appraisal of the English 'Labour' Government and the transformation of the Second International into a social-fascist, openly social-imperialist International.

The national disunity of the Arabs, the fragmented character of Arabistan, broken up into a number of small countries, the division of Arabistan among the various important countries, the complete absence of political rights for the indigenous population, forcible Zionist colonization, and the use of greater pressure by English and French imperialism on the Arab countries—these are one group of causes of the insurrectionary movement.

A second group of causes of the events in Palestine are the robbery of the Arab fellaheens' land for the benefit of Zionist colonization (often with the help of Arab large landowners), and of the Arab large landowners and foreign capitalists . . . the greater exploitation of the peasants by higher rents and taxes and by the moneylenders, the relatively rapid growth of a commodity and money economy . . . and the comparatively rapid development of class differentiation among the Beduin tribes.

The maturing of the revolutionary crisis was accelerated by the growth of unemployment . . . the harvest failure of 1928, the ferment in the Arab countries, the dissolution of the Syrian parliament, the Iraq government

crisis . . . the demonstrations and strikes of workers in Palestine and Syria, the new Anglo-Egyptian treaty ... the approaching offensive by spiritually bankrupt Zionism, which has discarded its socialist mask and appears openly as an agency of capitalism (as shown in the decision of the Zurich Zionist congress in July 1929).

### THE CHARACTER OF THE MOVEMENT

These are the characteristic features of the movement:

1. The Palestine uprising is occurring at a time of revolutionary ferment in the most important industrial centres of India, of crisis in the Chinese counter-revolution, and of a rising wave in the revolutionary labour movement of the West; it represents the beginning of a rising wave in the revolutionary liberation movement of the Arab countries.

2. The movement extends over the whole of Arabia and has a profoundly national character. It spread extremely quickly to the other Arab countries.

3. The movement is changing rapidly and moving on to a higher level. If, in the first days, the clergy and the feudalists, united in the Mejlis Islam, managed to direct it into the channel of an Arab-Jewish national feud, after that the masses turned spontaneously against the Mufti, against the Mejlis Islam, and against the representatives of the Arab Executive, condemning their treachery and their surrender to imperialism . . . the movement is changing rapidly from a Zionist-Arab conflict into a national peasant movement, in which the nationalist urban petty-bourgeoisie are also taking part. The fellaheen and particularly the Beduin are the most active participants in the insurrection movement.

4. The working class has remained in part passive; in any case it has not acted independently, much less tried to assume hegemony of the movement. A section of the Jewish and Arab workers fell under the influence of 'their' bourgeoisie and took part in the national-religious conflict under the hegemony and leadership of 'their' bourgeoisie. Nevertheless there were individual cases of heroic manifestations of proletarian class solidarity by Arab and Jewish workers. Thus, notwithstanding the fact that the insurrectionary movement was a response to an Anglo-Zionist provocation, to which Arab reactionaries (feudalists and priesthood) tried to answer with a pogrom, notwithstanding the fact that in its initial stage it came under reactionary leadership, it was still a national liberation movement, an anti-imperialist all-Arab movement, and in the main, by its social composition, a peasant movement.

5. The movement took place at a time when MacDonald's 'Labour' Government was in power in England. The 'Labour' Government, with the full support of the Independent Labour Party, came out openly in the role of executioner of the colonial revolution.

6. The movement revealed the growing depth of the contradictions between English and French imperialism in the struggle for influence in the Middle East.

## THE CHARACTER AND DRIVING FORCES OF THE REVOLUTION IN ARABISTAN

The general Comintern position in regard to the character and driving forces of the revolution in Palestine and in Arabistan as a whole has stood the test of the revolutionary mass movement and has been confirmed by experience. The main socio-economic content of the revolution is the overthrow of imperialism, the national unification of all Arab countries, the agrarian revolution, and the solution of the national question. It is this which determines the character of the revolution as a bourgeois-democratic revolution in the Leninist sense of the word. The main driving forces of the revolution are the working class and the peasantry. The bourgeois-democratic revolution can be conducted to its conclusion only in revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie. Without doubt this bourgeois-democratic revolution will turn into a socialist revolution. But the thesis advanced by some, about the proletarian character of the revolution in the conditions prevailing in Palestine, is [not] only completely out of accord with the historical reality, and not only reflects the Trotskyist ideology of permanent revolution, but would signify, in the concrete conditions in Palestine, primarily the dictatorship of a small company of Jewish workers over the large masses of the Arab population.

## THE ROLE OF THE DIFFERENT CLASSES IN THE MOVEMENT

The Zionist colonizing bourgeoisie and their lackeys played the part of outright agents of English imperialism . . . . The 'left' wing of Zionism, Poale Zion, merged with the Jewish fascists and sided with English imperialism and the Zionist bourgeoisie.

The Arab large landowners, the feudal lords, and the higher ranks of the priesthood, united in the Mejlis Islam, capitulated long ago to English imperialism, and played a treacherous, provocative, counterrevolutionary role.

The All-Arab National Congress, which in the last few years has revealed with a clarity that leaves nothing to be desired its national-reformist character . . . did not play an independent part in the movement; rather its right wing joined the reactionary camp of the feudals and priests.

The fellaheen and particularly the Beduin were the basic driving forces of the movement. But the peasant movement did not coincide in time with an organized and independent class action by the proletariat in the towns. The peasant movement was unorganized and fragmentary.

## ACHIEVEMENT AND DEFECTS OF THE PARTY

The Arab insurrectionary movement clearly revealed both some positive features and the weaknesses of the Palestine CP.

1. The uprising took the party by surprise; this was because it is composed in the main of Jewish elements; it has no contact with the Arab masses as a whole, and in particular lacks any kind of contact with the peasantry.

The uprising has shown in practice how right the ECCI was in its repeated instructions about the need to Arabize the party. The deficiencies and errors of the Palestine CP, revealed in the course of the uprising, are a result of the party's failure to steer a bold and determined course towards the Arabization of the party from top to bottom. In the past the party has applied its forces and means incorrectly, and concentrated its work primarily on the Jewish workers, instead of concentrating its maximum forces and means on work among the Arab worker and peasant masses. The Arabization of the leadership was interpreted as the mechanical inclusion of a few Arab comrades on the central committee. The party did not succeed in creating solid party organizations among Arab workers and in the local Arab trade union organizations. There was a spirit of pessimism and scepticism as to the possibility of successful work among the fellaheen and Beduin, which in some cases led to passive sectarianism, to an underestimation of the revolutionary possibilities in Arabistan, to an exaggeration of the influence of the reactionary bourgeoisie on the Arab masses. . . .

2. Particularly in the first days of the movement, when it was almost exclusively influenced by events in Jerusalem and some other cities, the party failed to notice that the religious national conflict was turning into a general national anti-imperialist peasant action. Consequently the party failed to include in its slogans the questions of the seizure of the land, the formation of revolutionary fellaheen and Beduin committees, the agrarian revolution, and the national unification of all Arab countries, and to conduct agitation around the slogan of an all-Arab workers' and peasants' government, failures which can be explained by the right-opportunist vacillations in the party about this question in the past. The party failed to advance the slogan of forming Arab-Jewish workers' detachments, of arming the workers, of joint demonstrations of Arab and Jewish workers, of a joint general strike. . . . The exposure of the English 'Labour' Government's assumption of the role of executioner, revolutionary criticism of the Arab and Jewish political parties and organizations, particularly the adherents of Poale Zion and of their attitude during the uprising, was not concrete enough.

At the same time it must be emphasized that the Palestine CP showed

itself to be a firmly welded organization of devoted revolutionaries, anxious to fulfil their revolutionary duty in an honourable fashion. In respect to its theoretical level, its devotion to communism, the CP of Palestine certainly stands high...

### THE TASKS OF THE PARTY

The CPP, as well as the CI sections in other Arab countries, must learn the lessons to be drawn from the uprising.

1. The most urgent task of the party is to steer an energetic and bold course towards Arabization of the party from top to bottom. At the same time it must make every effort to establish Arab or joint Arab-Jewish trade unions, and to capture and extend those already in existence. . . .

2. The party must at all costs eradicate the scepticism and passivity on the peasant question which prevail in its ranks. ... It must draw up an agrarian programme which pays heed to the partial demands of the fellaheen and Beduin.

3. The party must continue its work among the Jewish workers organized in the Zionist-reformist trade unions, as well as among the unorganized workers. The exposure of Zionism, and particularly of its left wing, as an agency of imperialism, remains as before one of the chief tasks, the concrete lessons of the movement being used to demonstrate this.

4. The party must expose the Mejlis Islam ... as a direct agent of English imperialism. No less ruthlessly must it expose the national reformism embodied in the All-Arab Congress. . . .

5. The campaign for an active boycott of the commission appointed to investigate the events, and the organization of the boycott . . . must with the help of other CI sections be placed in the centre of the party's attention. . . .

8. The lessons of the rising clearly show the need for the closest contact between the communist parties of the various countries of Arabistan and of Egypt. The most appropriate form will be the formation of a federation of communist parties of the Arab countries. The condition for such a federation is the Arabization of the CPs of Palestine and Syria, the consolidation of the CPs of Palestine, Syria, Egypt, etc. Steps to accelerate the Arabization of the Syrian CP must be taken at once, to ensure that the communists in Syria, after overcoming liquidationism and opportunism, finally become independent communist parties.

9. These tasks can be accomplished only on condition that a bold and energetic struggle is waged against the right deviation in the party, which is bound to become stronger under the pressure of white terror and the impact of the temporary defeat of the uprising. The right deviation in the CP of Palestine is expressed in an underestimation of revolutionary



possibilities, open or concealed resistance to Arabization of the party, pessimism and passivity in regard to work among the Arab masses, fatalism and passivity on the peasant question, failure to understand the role of Jewish comrades as subsidiary forces, but not as leaders of the Arab movement, exaggeration of the influence of the reactionary bourgeoisie, large landlords, and priesthood on the Arab masses, a conciliatory attitude to opportunist errors, failure to understand the need for courageous and vigorous self-criticism of the mistakes committed by the party, a tendency to emigrate without the permission of the CC, that is, to desert, resistance to the slogan of a workers' and peasants' government. The appraisal of the rising as a 'pogrom' and concealed resistance to Arabization are manifestations of Zionist and imperialist influence on the communists. The eradication of these attitudes is essential for the further development of the party. . . .

The insurrection movement in Arabistan found a strong international echo. The parties of the Second International and a number of petty-bourgeois pacifists sided with English imperialism and counter-revolutionary Zionism. The 'left' social-democrats, above all Maxton, exposed themselves as agents of imperialism. Communists and national revolutionary organizations sided with the Arab uprising.

At the same time it must be noted that in the early stages of the uprising there was vacillation and confusion in some countries (the Jewish section of the CP of the USA) as well as in some communist newspapers (even in the Soviet Union) about the character of the movement. These were rapidly overcome in the CI sections.

#### EXTRACTS FROM A LETTER FROM THE ECCI TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEES OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

26 October 1929\*

Strategiya i Taktika Komintern, p. 252

[The July meeting of the Chinese CC agreed that 'the serious attention of the party must be called to the activities of the Trotskyite opposition in the CCP, which have the possibility of temporary expansion, and are anti-revolutionary'. The Trotskyists argued that power in China was in the hands of the bourgeoisie and that the revolution would therefore be a socialist one. They denied that 'a new revolutionary wave was rising' and urged concentration on the industrial struggle, on the democratic political struggle, and the abandonment of the policy of artificial uprisings.

The second issue of *Problemy Kitaya* wrote that unless the CCP exposed and defeated the followers of Chen Tu-hsiu and the Trotskyist liquidators, it would be unable to ward off war, defend the USSR, or defeat the KMT reorganizes.

\* Harold Isaacs dates this letter 26 October, using as source a communist periodical published in Shanghai. The book from which this text is translated gives as its source Pravda, 29 December.